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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

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Visions of Joy:
A Study of the Poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge

by

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Short references appear in parentheses in the following essay to cite Coleridge's own writings. Each reference consists of an abbreviation to indicate the particular work; then, if needed, a Roman number indicating the volume of the edition; and, finally, the page number except for the Notebooks (N) for which entry numbers are given. The text of Coleridge's poetry used in the essay is, except as noted, that of Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London, 1912).


AP Anima Poetae, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Boston, 1895).


Chapter I.

Coleridge as Myth and Mythmaker
One lesson of twentieth century philosophy and literature has been that man's understanding of his past and his present involves the mythic mode. The need for a process of culling and sorting the random data of our consciousness into a desirable and understandable unity, the need to find within the material of our experience a recognizable form, has caused modern thinkers to seek and to define aspects and patterns of human experience which are fundamental to the lives of men and to speak of the changes of life in terms of differing mythologies. We have defined world-pictures, the conscious myths of an age which evolve from formal rites of faith, and we have sought archetypes, the unconscious myths of all ages which in some psychological manner relate all men to common cultural experiences. Myths have been formulated for both public and private experience. Therefore, since art finds the very life it embodies and communicates in reality, the modern way of thinking, this mythic mode, has become technique in literature and approach in criticism. "As a way of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance," as T. S. Eliot describes it,¹ the mythic mode returned to man a method of dealing with external experience, with history, with culture, which had been lost with the decline of faith and the rise of science in the cultural upheaval of the Enlightenment. It was then that the religious framework of thought which had structured man's perspective and his way of life was disrupted and replaced by an empirical viewpoint which in its scientific neutrality precluded traditional order and system. At the same time,
the way of defining man's nature, his personal being, provided by
the moral system of the religious framework was lost. As a result,
psychology in our time has preserved the moral neutrality of science
and created with the mythic mode a new order and a new terminology.
Man's personal being, his response to experience, is no longer con-
sidered in relation to the "great chain of being" or "human sin" but
rather in terms of "complexes" or "neuroses" which frequently bear
names derived from classical myths which seem to the scientists to
exemplify the particular patterns of behavior or conduct. In the
public realm and the private, therefore, in spite of our awareness that
it is simply a system of mythology in itself, the mythic mode has become
the modern means of viewing experience, real and unreal.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge lived at a time when the need to use a
mythic mode of mind to cope with experience was first being realized.
The poet is mythopoetic. Each poem of Coleridge contributes to and
participates in a general mythology which encompasses both the poet's
art and his life. The approach of this essay is a search for the
general literary myth, for the unity of the poet's expression. Each
poem is treated as carrying part of the burden of Coleridge's search
for unity, a burden which manifests itself in extensively used metaphors
and a specific aesthetic structure. The discussion deals with con-
ventions which come into being to carry the burden of the poet's
mythology, strategies which are not unique to individual poems but are
inherent throughout the poet's creative effort. Contributing to the
formation of these essential ways of treating particular concerns is
the private myth of the man. Hence, the discussion is concerned in part
with the man Coleridge in order to suggest how his individual state
of mind contributed to the shaping of the poet Coleridge's artistic form. What the discussion emphasizes is not an abstract definition of the psychology of his age but the poet's own attitudes, the pressures which Coleridge felt, the way in which he responded to them poetically, and what he thought of his artistic effort. Obviously a discussion of this sort will at particular points and as a whole offer support for an interpretation of the general state of mind of the Romantics.

However, the critical concern of the essay is with Coleridge alone and the use to which he puts his creative talent and the manner and style of his imaginative power as revealed in poetry. Coleridge's poetry is shown to be the unique accomplishment of artistry which is the product of both public and private mythologies.

Coleridge himself suggested an ordering myth for his private life when he often compared himself to one particular fictional being. The figure is Shakespeare's Hamlet about whom the poet said: "Hamlet's character is the prevalence of the abstracting and generalizing habit over the practical. He does not want courage, skill, will, or opportunity; but every incident sets him thinking; and it is curious, and, at the same time, strictly natural, that Hamlet, who all the play seems reason itself, should be impelled, at last, by mere accident, to effect his object. I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so" (S VI, 285). Coleridge's interpretation of the character seems to have arisen during the period of his active authorship of poetry. In notes to his Shakespearean lectures, Coleridge defends himself against the charge that he got his view of Hamlet from Schlegel by claiming to have stated his interpretation to Hazlitt at Nether Stowey in the
summer of 1798 (SC, I, 19), but the poet's position was not written
down until the troubled days of 1804 following the cessation of his
major poetic activity. The interpretation of Hamlet itself suggests
that the idea may have been formulated but did not acquire personal
relevance until the time of Coleridge's frustration with not being
able to continue his poetic efforts. The recorded evidence is that
Coleridge wrote down nothing on Shakespeare until 1804. A notebook
entry for November, 1803, lists "Shakespeare" as a projected work
(N, I, 1646), showing that Coleridge had interest in the subject by
that time. He seems to have started on the project in earnest by
February, 1804, when he writes to Sir George Beaumont about his method
of Shakespearian analysis and concludes: "Thus I shall both exhibit
the characteristics of the Plays--of the mind--of Shakespeare--and
of almost every character at greater or less length a philosophical
Analysis & Justification, in the spirit of that analysis of the
character of Hamlet, with which you were much pleased, and by being so,
I solemnly assure, gave me Heart & Hope/and did me much good" (I, II, 1054).
Therefore, notes on Hamlet were in existence in some form by 1804
though no lecture on the topic was delivered until 1808. Coleridge
admits in the lecture notes the fascination of the character for him:
"Hamlet was the play, or rather Hamlet himself was the character in the
intuition and exposition of which I first made my turn for philosophical
criticism, and especially for insight into the genius of Shakespeare,
noticed; first among my acquaintances . . . tho' from motives which I
do not know or impulses which I cannot know . . ." (SC, I, 18). Coleridge
obviously felt at the time a mysterious kinship with the character of
Hamlet.

The poet's friends made the connection, and it may have been a common joke among the group through the years. H. C. Robinson wrote in his diary for January 2, 1812, after attending one of Coleridge's public lectures: "Coleridge's lecture, perhaps his very best. On Richard II and Hamlet, etc., etc. In the latter, striking observations on the virtue of action and the futility of talents that divert from rather than lead to action. I doubt whether he did not design that an application should be made to himself, and whether he is not well content to meet the censure his own remarks convey, for the sake of the reputation of those talents apparently depreciated," and in a letter written the next day Robinson records this incident: "Last night he concluded his fine development of the Prince of Denmark by an eloquent statement of the moral of the play: 'Action,' he said, 'is the great end of all. No intellect, however grand, is valuable if it draw us from action and lead us to think and think till the time of action is passed by and we can do nothing.' Somebody said to me, 'This is a satire on himself.' --'No,' said I, 'it is an elegy.' A great many of his remarks on Hamlet were capable of a like application" (SC,II,219;229). Hazlitt, with whom Coleridge claimed to have first discussed his theory of Hamlet, could not resist a comparison of the physical appearances of the two in his description of his first meeting with the poet: "Coleridge in his person was rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or like Lord Hamlet, 'Somewhat fat and pursy.'" 3

Into his interpretation of Shakespeare's character, therefore,
Coleridge seems to have projected a good deal of his own predicament as a poet and as a man. This becomes obvious when Coleridge's view of Hamlet is compared with the poet's appraisals of himself. First, there is Coleridge's insistence on the idealism which marks Hamlet's nature. In his extensive outline for the lecture which he called the "Character of Hamlet," Coleridge says: "In Hamlet I conceive him (Shakespeare) to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to outward objects and our meditation on inward thoughts—a due balance between the real and the imaginary world. In Hamlet this balance does not exist—his thoughts, images, and fancy (being) far more vivid than his perceptions, and his very perceptions instantly passing thro' the medium of his contemplations, and acquiring as they pass a form and color not naturally their own. Hence great, enormous, intellectual activity, and a consequent proportionate aversion to real action, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities" (SC,I,37). Coleridge viewed himself in the same way.

Writing to Thomas Poole about his childhood, Coleridge tells how after his father burned his favorite books, "So I became a dreamer—and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity..." (L,I,347). This "indisposition" seems to have affected the poet's growth, or at least, his own view of it, for in describing his appearance he writes: "As to my shape, 'tis a good shape enough, if measured—but my gait is awkward, & the walk, & the Whole man indicates indolence capable of energies" (L,I,260). Privately, in his notebooks, Coleridge commented often on his own idealistic nature and its failings. The following entry is typical: "This is Oct. 19. 1803. Wed. Morn. tomorrow my Birth Day,
31 years of age!—O me! my very heart dies!—This year has been one painful Dream/I have done nothing!—O for God's sake, let me whip & spur, so that Christmas may not pass without some thing having been done/" (N,I,1577). The entry continues with Coleridge listing literary projects to be started, a frequent activity of the writer.

Coleridge regarded the idealism he recognized in Hamlet and in himself to be a tragic flaw. According to Coleridge, the result of Hamlet's character is "the aversion to externals, the betrayed habit of brooding over the world within him, and the prodigality of beautiful words, which are, as it were, the half embodyings of thoughts, that make them more than thoughts, give them an outness, a reality sui generis, and yet retain their correspondence and shadowy approach to the images and movements within" (SC,I,36). The critic is particularly fascinated with the soliloquies where the "prodigality of beautiful words" which result from the melancholy brooding are displayed. About the soliloquy in Act II, scene 2 beginning "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I," Coleridge comments: "It is in thought and even in the separate parts of the diction highly poetical, so that this is its fault, that it is too poetical, the language of lyric vehemence and epic pomp, not of the drama. But what if Shakespeare had made the language truly dramatic? Where would have been the contrast between Hamlet and the play of Hamlet?" (SC,I,40). Coleridge obviously understood the tragic flaw of Hamlet to be his being "too poetical"; the problem of the prince then becomes the fact that he is a man of poetry in a situation which demands a man of action. Shakespeare made the flaw clear in Hamlet's soliloquies such as "O, what a rogue and peasant slave
am I" and "How all occasions do inform against me," both passages which Coleridge claims "contain Shakespeare's own attestation of the truth of the idea I have started" (SC, I, 28). Charles Lloyd saw the same flaw of soliloquizing and failing to act in Coleridge: "Coleridge has such a lamentable want of voluntary power. If he is excited by a remark in company, he will pour forth, in an evening, without the least apparent effort, what would furnish matter for a hundred essays—but the moment that he is to write—not from present impulse but from preordained deliberation—his power fails him; and I believe that there are times when he could not pen the commonest notes. He is one of those minds who, except in inspired moods, can do nothing—and his inspirations are all oral, and not scriptural. And when he is inspired he surpasses, in my opinion, all that could be thought or imagined of a human being."¹ Like Hamlet's soliloquizing, Coleridge's own in letters and notes is confessional in nature. The following remarks to William Godwin written in 1802 reveal Coleridge's characteristic Hamletian pose as he places himself on trial before his friend:

I have no other wish, than that you should know 'the Truth, the whole Truth, & (if possible) nothing but the Truth' of me in the sum total of my character, much more in it's immediate relations to you. . . . You appear to me not to have understood the nature of my body & mind—. Partly from ill-health, & partly from an unhealthy & reverie-like vividness of Thoughts, & (pardon the pedantry of the phrase) a diminished Impressibility from Things, my ideas, wishes, & feelings are to a diseased degree disconnected from motion & action. In plain & natural English, I am a dreaming & therefore an indolent man—. I am a Starling self-incaged, & always in the Molt, & my whole Note is,
Tomorrow, & tomorow, & tomorow. The same causes,
that have robbed me to so great a degree of the self-impelling self-
directing Principle, have deprived me too of the due powers
of Resistances to Impulses from without. If I might sa:
say: I am, as an acting man, a creature of mere Impact.
'I will' & 'I will not' are phrases, both of them equally,
of rare occurrence in my dictionary.--This is the Truth---
I regret it, & in the consciousness of this Truth I lose
a larger portion of Self-estimation than those, who know
me imperfectly, would easily believe--/I evade the sentence
of my own Conscience by no quibbles of self-adulation; I
ask for Mercy indeed on the score of my ill-health; but I
confess, that this very ill-health is as much an effect as
a cause of this want of steadiness & self-command; and it
is for mercy that I ask, not for justice (L,II,782-783).

This self-analysis for Godwin is certainly "too poetical" and reveals a
"prodigality for beautiful words"; it is certainly, too, Coleridge
playing the role in private life of Hamlet descrying yet rationalizing
his lack of action.⁵

Coleridge's self-awareness resulted in a personal search for
identity. It would seem to be no accident that amid the riches of
Shakespeare's plays as well as the other fiction on which he commented
Coleridge's particular interest is in "character."⁶ The Biographia
Literaria concerns Coleridge's own character as an effort by the poet
to order his life around the growth of his literary convictions. What
Coleridge later admired about Wordsworth's similar effort, The Prelude,
was that his friend seemed to have been able in telling about the
growth of his mind to "build up" an order for his life which tied
together the revelations of the poem and made it organic. Such are
the implications of the metaphors of construction and plant growth
which Coleridge uses to praise the poem in "To William Wordsworth":

Friend of the wise! and Teacher of the Good!
Into my heart have I received that Lay
More than historic, that prophetic Lay
Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)
Of the foundations and the building up
Of a Human Spirit thou hast dared to tell
What may be told, to the understanding mind
Revealable; and what within the mind
By vital breathings secret as the soul
Of veritable growth, oft quickens in the heart
Thoughts all too deep for words!—

Coleridge perceived in Wordsworth's **Prelude** the kind of ordering of
man's life, at least, the creating of a facade for understanding to
use the metaphor of building, which he himself had wanted desperately
to achieve in his prose effort. However, Coleridge's **Biographia
Literaria** remains confused and disordered while Wordsworth succeeds in
building out of the matter of his life a myth. As a modern student of
autobiography has so aptly said about the **Prelude**: "Wordsworth is the
first autobiographer to realise—and the poetic form of his autobiography
is this realisation—that each man constructs out of his world a unique
framework of meaningful events, and that the deepest purpose of auto-
biography is the account of a life as the projection of the real self
(we call it personality but it seems to lie deeper than personality)
on the world."?

The impulse of both Coleridge and Wordsworth to seek order through
autobiography is the result of the change in understanding the origin
of creative inspiration in the Romantic age. Northrop Frye has defined
this change: "The metaphorical structure of Romantic poetry tends to
move inside and downward instead of outside and upward, hence the
creative world is deep within, and so is heaven or the place of the
presence of God. As a result of this change in metaphoric per-
spective, the heavens yield priority to the constructive energy
of the inner mind. The source of metaphoric ordering becomes
psychological; creative order derives from within the poet's own
being. Consequently, the terminology required to describe this
new source of imaginative power is inevitably Freudian. "In the
Romantic construct," says Frye, "there is a center where inward and
outward manifestations of a common notion and spirit are unified,
where the ego is identified as itself because it is also identified
with something which is not itself." This means that the poet
seeks to be "engaged with and united to a creative power greater
than his own because it includes his own. . . . The sense of identity
with a larger power of creative energy meets us everywhere in
Romantic culture." However, as Frye goes on to point out, the
psychological quest for union with divine energy is inherently
difficult: "For knowledge, and still more for imagination, the
journey within to the happy island garden or the city of light is a
perilous quest. . . . The world of the deep interior in Romantic
poetry is morally ambivalent, retaining some of the demonic qualities
that the corresponding pre-Romantic lowest level had." In the
culture which follows that of the Romantics, the culture of today,
these demonic forces create anxieties and fears for the man of
imagination, and the result is a new metaphor for the human condition:
The major constructs which our culture has inherited from its Romantic
ancestry are also of the 'drunken boat' shape, but represent a later and different conception of it . . . Here the boat is usually in the position of Noah's ark, a fragile container of sensitive and imaginative values threatened by a chaotic and unconscious power below it."^{12}

Coleridge's difficulty with autobiography as a basis for ordering his mind seems to anticipate the troubled and fearful shape of the modern construct. The poet even uses the metaphor of a boat at sea to explain his own anxieties. In a letter he speaks of being "afloat on the wide sea unpiloted & un provisioned" (I, I, 273), and he writes in his notebook: "Mind, shipwrecked by storms of doubt, now mastless, rudderless, shattered,--pulling in the dead swell of a dark & windless Sea" (I, I, 932). The epigraph translated from Goethe which Coleridge chose for his most extended effort at self-analysis, the *Biographia Literaria*, confirms his troubled feelings: "Little call as he may have to instruct others, he wishes nevertheless to open out his heart to such as he either knows or hopes to be of like mind with himself, but who are widely scattered in the world: he wishes to knit anew his connexions with his oldest friends, to continue those recently formed, and to win other friends among the rising generation for the remaining course of his life. He wishes to spare the young those circuitous paths, on which he himself had lost his way" (BL, I, civ). The last line of the epigraph must have seemed to Coleridge fitting to head his ambitious effort to shape his life around the growth of his literary convictions for it expresses the intellectual confusion which had given rise to the effort. At one point, on his trips on "circuitous
paths, on which he himself had lost his way." Coleridge concludes in despair that he has a basic mental failing: "There is a something, an essential something wanting in me. I feel it, I know it--tho' what it is, I can but guess. I have read somewhere that in the tropical climates there are Annuals as lofty and of as ample girth as forest trees. So by a very dim likeness, I seem to myself to distinguish power from strength & to have only the power. But of this I will speak again: if it be no reality, if it be no more than a disease of my mind, it is yet deeply rooted & of long standing & requires help from one who loves me in the Light of knowledge" (L,II,1102). Coleridge's "disease" made autobiography for him an impossible way to achieve a sense of order. The Biographia Literaria could not offer the myth of the mind achieved by Wordsworth in the Prelude. Fortunately, there was another way to order for the Hamletian poet. Coleridge's poetry was influenced by the private myth of the man, but it did not depend on it. Rather, the poetry resulted from Coleridge following an alternate path toward a sense of order, public mythology.

In turning to public mythology to support the form of his artistic effort, Coleridge followed a tendency of his age. The Romantics often sought to create meaningful orders to replace the Christian framework which was disintegrating. The crisis in thought which inspired a search for ways of achieving unity has been analyzed by Earl Wasserman. The critic cites Tristram Shandy as an example of the intellectual disorder of the Enlightenment and writes of the results of the crisis in thought: "For during the eighteenth century the disintegration of cosmic orders widely felt as true was finally completed. In the Middle Ages
and the Renaissance the literate had shared a constellation of synthesizing myths by means of which man could grasp relationships that gave significant pattern to otherwise discrete things and experiences. These systems transformed man and his world into a lexicon of symbols and integrated the symbols by meaningful cross-references. But by the end of the eighteenth century these communally accepted patterns had almost completely disappeared—each man now rode his own hobby-horse.\textsuperscript{13} Wasserman goes on to explain how the "hobby-horses" provided the means for poetry in the Romantic age and after: "What has once again made possible the creation of literature... is obviously not that we once again share cosmic myths, but that the poet has learned to put his private hobby-horse through its paces. By the end of the eighteenth century—and ever since—the poet has been required to conceive his own structure of order, his own more-than-linguistic syntax, and so to engage that structure that the poetic act is creative both of a cosmic system and of the poem made possible by that system... The modern poet must formulate his own special organizing myth, for it is the source of the lexical material and syntactic plan with which language can be transformed into poetry.\textsuperscript{14} One obvious source for such "special organizing myth" for the Romantic age was simply to make use of the material left over from past traditions. There were a number of religious theorists in the age, the most famous being Jacob Bryant, who used the repository of ancient myth to show by various hypotheses that all myths were analogous, being variants of a single great myth. Proving the existence of such an archetypal pattern of religion was regarded as a way of showing the truth of
Christianity. The mythopoetic efforts of poets in the Romantic age were like that of the syncretic mythologizers, as Wasserman indicates: "Only after the many quests for the key to all mythologies could classical mythology again be felt as a kind of universal truth and conceived of as a complex whole, rather than a set of discrete inherited terms. But even so, the new syncreticism made each man his own Dr. Casaubon, so that Shelley conceived of the ancient myths in his own private way, and Keats in his... The nineteenth-century mythological poem is internally constitutive of the myth that makes possible its own existence as poem."

In an effort to create a basis for art, Coleridge found for himself a "hobby-horse" in the manner of the syncretic mythologizers. The poet evoked Greek legend for his effort to construct a personal order for poetry. Coleridge's choice for the figure of the poet was governed by the values traditionally attributed to the deities of Greece. From classic to contemporary times the creative effort of the poet has been defined as either Apollonian or Dionysian. Contrasting modes of creation were associated with the deities by the Greeks themselves for whom Apollo represented the calm and order of reason while Dionysus embodied the ecstasy and revel of inspiration. Because of the influence of Greek thought in Western culture, therefore, two kinds of creative experience, the rational and the revelatory, have traditionally shared responsibility for the Temple of Art. As Coleridge knew from reading the account of Plutarch, Apollo and Dionysus were both worshipped at the temple at Delphi. Plutarch says that Dionysus had no less property at Delphi than Apollo himself, the rites of wine being recognized along with the rites of the sun. Every second year
a festival was held to honor Dionysus, and women were organized into bands of Thyades in his honor. During the winter when Apollo was absent from Delphi, it was believed that Dionysus ruled. Symbols of both gods were incorporated in the structure of the temple. The front pediment showed Apollo, and the back pediment pictured Dionysus; housed within the innermost chamber where the gold image of Apollo rested was a base which was believed to be Dionysus's tomb. Priests of Apollo may have celebrated secret rites of their own at the tomb. Therefore, at the very center of the worship of Apollo by the Greeks, according to Plutarch, the power of Dionysus was represented, and this interpretation of the close relationship of the two deities shaped the conventional views of creative activity into Coleridge's day.

Coleridge believed creative activity to be an act of revelation, not reason, and associated it with a myth of Dionysus, not Apollo. The poet stated his intellectual goal in the *Biographia Literaria* when he wrote: "The theory of natural philosophy would . . . be completed, when all nature was demonstrated to be identical in essence with that, which in its highest known power exists in man as intelligence and self-consciousness; when the heavens and the earth shall declare not only the power of their maker, but the glory and the presence of their God, even as he appeared to the great prophet during the vision of the mount in the skirts of his divinity" (BL, I, 176). Coleridge, therefore, indicates that the goal of his effort is an experience of revelation like that of Moses. Like the prophet, Coleridge seeks to know the universe as a unity, to feel the manifestation of a single God whose
very existence has been called into question by the skepticism of his age. Coleridge, who claimed that he sought "to destroy the old antithesis of Words & Things, elevating, as it were, words into Things, & living Things too" (I, I, 626), was never careless in his choice of words. The word he chose to describe his goal of union with God was "joy," and Coleridge's use of the word in his prose and poetry was conscious and purposeful. A pattern of images was associated with "joy" which gave the term significance as a sign of the nature of the desired aesthetic experience. Through consistent and persistent use of the term, Coleridge establishes "joy" to be the goal of philosophical and aesthetic endeavors, and with it he associates such diverse concepts as the colony, the bower, the child, the maiden, musical form, and the law of polarity. As a result of the analogies created by the poet, a pattern of concrete referents which constitute a myth was created around the concept of "joy." At no point did Coleridge ever clearly and thoroughly define the values which contribute to the myth of "joy" for the revelatory experience is elusive and remains something which the poet desires but cannot attain. The myth of "joy" is, therefore, a pattern of mental associations clustered together in the poet's aesthetic vision which can be reconstructed by tracing Coleridge's use of "joy" through his writings. As the pattern is discovered, Coleridge's complex sense of the significance of the term emerges, and an aesthetic myth becomes apparent in the poet's visions of "joy."

Coleridge closely associated the traditional figure of Dionysus or Bacchus with the myth of "joy." The Greek hero and god represented to the poet a complex of values as this passage from a lecture on the
origin of drama reveals:

With the ancients Bacchus, or Dionysus, was among the most awful and mysterious deities. In his earthly character he was the conqueror and civilizer of India, and allegorically the symbol, in the narrower and popular notion, of festivity, but worshipped in the mysteries as representative of the organic energies of the universe, that work by passion and joy without apparent distinct consciousness, and rather as the cause or condition of skill and contrivance, than the result; and thus distinguished from Apollo and Minerva, under which they personified the causative and preordaining intellect manifested throughout nature. From this cause, aided by his traditional history as an earthly conqueror, Bacchus was honored as the presiding genius of the heroic temperament and character, this being considered not as an acquisition of art or discipline, but something innate and divine, a felicity above and beyond prudence; and hence, too, the connection with the same deity of all the vehement and awful passions and the events and actions proceeding from such passions.

In his description of Bacchus, Coleridge clearly identifies both creative and destructive qualities of the deity whose powers derive directly from the divine, and Bacchus's powers are carefully differentiated from the earthly "causative and preordaining intellect," that is, rational powers, or Apollo and Minerva. As representative of the "organic energies" of the universe, Bacchus promotes artistic activity with unmediated inspiration from the gods. In other lecture notes, the discrimination between the rational and the revelatory deities is even clearer: "Bacchus expressed the organic energies of the Universe which
work by passion—a joy without consciousness; while Minerva, &c.,
imported the preordaining intellect" (SC,II,7). Apollo and Minerva
promote art which is reasonable and conscious craft while Bacchus
inspires visionary art which displays "something innate and divine,
a felicity above and beyond produce." In all of his discussions,
Coleridge always associates the Bacchanalian creative effort with
the experience of "joy." "Joy," therefore, becomes a sign of
direct artistic participation in the energy of the cosmos. For
Coleridge, the historical example of such aesthetic involvement
with the divine is Greek tragedy: "The Greek stage had its origin
in the ceremonies of a sacrifice, such as of the goat to Bacchus,
whom we most erroneously regard as merely the jolly god of wine;—
for among the ancients he was venerable, as the symbol of that power
which acts without our consciousness in the vital energies of nature"
(S,IV,59). Religious involvement by the individual produces "joy" as
well: "...for indeed I find true Joy after a sincere prayer," the
poet comments (L,II,407). Therefore, Coleridge defines both the rites
of Bacchus and his own metaphysical experience as acts of "joy," and
he can, consequently, make metaphoric use of the traditional values
of the Greek deity. Plato in his Ion connects the idea of the poet
inspired by a Muse with the rite of Bacchus: "These Melody-Poets pen
those beautiful Songs of theirs, only when they are out of their sober
Minds. But as soon as they proceed to give Voice and Motion to those
Songs, adding to their Words the Harmony of Musick and the Measure of
Dance, they are immediately transported; and possessed by some Divine
Power, are like the Priestesses of Bacchus, who, full of the God, no
longer draw Water, but Honey and Milk out of the springs and Fountains;
thee unable to do any Thing like it, when they are sober. Plato's image of inspired poets drunk in the creation of their work bears out the popular notion of Bacchus as the god of wine, and this is precisely the way of the Dionysian mode of thought as Coleridge describes it. He seeks to reach the state of Dionysian ecstasy or drunkenness through his art and find the "joy" which comes from harmony with the Universe. Like the Priestesses of Bacchus described by Plato, Coleridge seeks to find a fountain of inspiration through his philosophy and art. He uses the metaphor of the fountain derived from Neoplatonic thought to describe his need for inspiration in a notebook entry: "I have not, I have forgotten, what the Joy is of which the Heart is full as of a deep and quiet fountain overflowing insensibly, or the gladness of Joy, when the fountain overflows ebullient" (IS,61). To achieve "joy," the poet must be able to drink at the creative fountain of Bacchus.

In Coleridge's earliest notable use of the term "joy" in a poem, the Bacchanalian nature of the experience is evident. For a school prize, Coleridge composed an "Ode on Astronomy" in Greek in 1793 which survives only in Southey's translation. The poem is a Miltonic celebration of the topic, and the hero is Newton who attains a special place in the divine realm because of his speculations on the mysteries of the cosmos. What Coleridge portrays Newton's achievement to be is the experience of "joy":

There, Priest of Nature! dost thou shine,
NEWTON! a King among the Kings divine.
Whether with harmony's mild force,
He guides along its course
The axle of some beauteous star on high,
Or gazing, in the spring

 Ebullient with creative energy

 Feels his pure breast with rapturous joy possest,

 Inebriate in the holy ecstasy.

The whole experience of the heavens which Coleridge ascribes to Newton is described in terms of a Dionysian rite. Newton is "ebullient with creative energy," "with rapturous joy possest," and, in the most striking image, "Inebriate in the holy ecstasy." Clearly Newton is envisioned as being immersed to the point of drunkeness in the creative energies of the universe, and he displays the "transport" or inspiration which comes from such an experience. Because he is described as a "priest" and his ecstasy is "holy," Newton's achievement appears to result from participation in a sacred rite of Bacchus. In the next and final stanza of the poem, Coleridge reveals the meaning of his vision of Newton:

 I may not call thee mortal then, my soul!
 Immortal longings lift thee to the skies:
 Love of thy native home inflames thee now,
 With pious madness wise.
 Know then thyself! expand thy wings divine!
 Soon mingled with thy fathers thou shalt shine
 A star amid the starry throng,
 A God the Gods among.

Addressing his soul, Coleridge acknowledges his personal longing to be like Newton and experience the "creative energy" of the cosmos. In doing so, the poet could overcome the traditional gap between the mortal world and heavenly realm to become equal with the divine, "A God the Gods among." Consequently, with this goal, Coleridge under-
stands the creation of poetry to be a Bacchic rite by which man strives to attain a visionary experience of "joy."

The "joy" of Bacchus has a dangerous aspect along with its creative power. As Coleridge warns in his description of the deity, "vehement and awful passions" derive from the intensity of feeling in the ecstatic moment. Connected with the Bacchus legend is the story of the Thracian women who attacked Orpheus and tore his body to pieces during the performances of rites to the deity. The destructive aspect of the god is reinforced by his connection in legend with the Egyptian myth of Osiris. Plutarch says that Osiris "travelled over the rest of the world, inducing the people everywhere to submit to his discipline, not indeed compelling them by force of arms, but persuading them to yield to the strength of his reasons, which were conveyed to them in the most agreeable manner; in hymns and songs accompanied with instruments of music: for which last circumstance, the Greeks conclude him to have been the same person with their Dionysus or Bacchus." Osiris, in spite of sharing with Bacchus a subtle means of persuasion as a "conqueror and civilizer," was identified with both the overpowering energy of the sun and the malevolence of Typhon; therefore, Bacchus through association with the figure from Egyptian mythology retains some qualities of "vehement and awful passions." Included in the mythic complex connecting "joy" with Bacchus is a potential for the deity to be destructive as well as creative. For Coleridge, this destructive aspect becomes real when "joy" is overtaken and infected by evil, and evil always threatens every manifestation of the poet's ideal whether it be symbolized in colony or bower or child or maiden.
Coleridge shows best his appreciation and understanding of "joy" when, in his Hamletian way, he soliloquizes on his inability to achieve the ultimate experience. He uses a variety of metaphors in his melancholy meed to describe his felt lack of creative power and Bacchanalian inspiration. Drawing on traditional mythology, at one point the poet despairingly associates himself with the noble frustration of the mythical figure Tantalus to describe the absence of "joy": 'I write melancholy, always melancholy: You will suspect that it is the fault of my natural Temper. Alas! no.—This is the great Occasion that my Nature is made for Joy—impelling me to Joyance—and I never, never can yield to it.—I am a genuine Tantalus" (N, I, 1609). Like the suffering Greek deity, Coleridge's thirst for achievement is never satisfied, and he expresses his feeling of failure in other ways. He remarks, for instance: "For compassion a human heart suffices; but for full and adequate sympathy with joy, an angel's only. And ever remember, that the more exquisite and delicate a flower of joy, the tenderer must be the hand that plucks it."23 His Hamletian complex made Coleridge believe that he lacked the tenderness to pluck the delicate flower of "joy." In seeking a means for describing the condition of frustration in which he worked, the poet in his notebooks compares his situation to that of a bird in a cage: "It is in prison, all its instincts ungratified, yet it feels the influence of spring, and calls with unceasing melody to the Loves that dwell in field and greenwood bowers, unconscious, perhaps, that it calls in vain. O are they the songs of a happy, enduring day-dream? Has the bird hope? or does it abandon itself to the joy of its frame, a living harp of
Eolus? O that I could so do!" (AP, 163-164). Like the bird, the poet senses within himself "joy," but he cannot realize his feeling as song or poetry because he is hindered by his Hamletian nature. Instead, he remains a Tantalus caught in the hell of frustration created by his psychological condition. Yet, it is the frustration that causes Coleridge to exercise his mind in criticism in which he defines eloquently the qualities of the ideal poet in the Romantic age.

To prepare for an experience of revelation, according to Coleridge, a man can not simply wait passively for the anticipated moment. In a letter of 1801 criticizing Newton's philosophical method, Coleridge writes: "My opinion is this—that deep Thinking is attainable only by a man of deep Feeling, and that all Truth is a species of Revelation... Newton was a mere materialist—Mind in his system is always passive—a lazy Looker-on on an external World. If the mind be not passive, if it be indeed made in God's Image, & that too in the sublimest sense—the Image of the Creator—there is ground for suspicion, that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false, as a system" (L, II, 709). Therefore, Coleridge made Newton a model of false philosophy. In contrast to Newton for the critic is Shakespeare. According to the Biographia Literaria, Shakespeare was "no mere child of nature; no automaton of genius; no passive vehicle of inspiration possessed by the spirit, not possessing it," rather he "first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely, till knowledge, become habitual and intuitive, wedded itself to his habitual feelings, and at length gave birth to that stupendous power, by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class." Consequently, Coleridge defines
the "genius" of Shakespeare to be his "DEPTH, and ENERGY of THOUGHT" (BL, II, 19-20), and the Romantic adopts what he believes to be Shakespeare's way to revelation. Significantly, considering Frye's view of the Romantic perspective, Coleridge expects inspiration to come not from "outside" his being but from "inside," from "DEPTH, and ENERGY of THOUGHT." The critic supports also the Romantic point of view by citing in the Biographia Literaria a passage from Aristophanes in which Bacchus descends into the underworld "to bring back the spirit of old and genuine poesy" (BL, I, 56). In place of this reference, Coleridge could have cited a source which upheld the heavens as a place of inspiration. While placing the origin of inspiration "inside," Coleridge, nevertheless, seeks a Dionysian experience which will result in union with the divine. Consequently, Coleridge's prototypes for the poet, Dionysus and Moses, are men of active mind who are connected with visionary experience. The figures seem to embody all the qualities which the Hamletian Coleridge wishes he had. Coleridge unites Moses and Bacchus and both with John I:1-5 when he describes in a notebook entry his conception of the moment of Revelation. Another example of Coleridge's use of the Romantic construct, the passage describes Mt. Sinai as a kind of Dantean underworld: "The Light commences it's action as a stimulant, & raises the dark and dark Stagnum into Mist, where it thins, and is pierceable, there is a Gleam, and the Light becomes a pale Stain; then it is densest, it is a darkness that ferments, till by its light- enkindled internal action it breaks forth in rendering flashes, & the darkness explodes into Light, the Dionysus from Semel,
or **Jove/**--the **Ground-Lightning.** For Coleridge, the entry describes the ideal moment of truth which he seeks through philosophy and poetry; it tells of the moment of revelation when the light of inspiration "breaks forth" from "within." Coleridge believed that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and he set forth to discover the divine Word. For the poet, the Word meant "joy."
Notes to Chapter I.


2 Other accounts of the interpretation occur in SC, I, lii and SC, II, 272-275.


5 When Carlyle visited the aging Coleridge at Highgate in 1824, he found the old man still playing a tragic role. Carlyle's description of the encounter, published in The Life of John Sterling and reprinted recently in Carlyle, Selected Works, Reminiscences and Letters, ed. Julian Symons (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 451-459, forms a picture of Coleridge who appears in old age to be more like King Lear or Oedipus at Colonus than like Prince Hamlet. Carlyle tells how "Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle; attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there... The practical intellects of the world did not much heed him, or carelessly reckon him a metaphysical dreamer: but to the rising spirits of the young generation he had this dusky sublime character; and sat there as a kind of Magus, girt in mystery and enigma; his Dodona oak-grave (Mr. Gilman's house at Highgate) whispering strange things, uncertain whether oracles or jargon." Carlyle realized the tragic quality of Coleridge who as a man had suffered and felt defeat in spite of having possessed great potential for accomplishment: "The good man, he was now getting old, towards sixty perhaps; and gave you the idea of a life that had been full of sufferings; a life heavy-laden, half-vanquished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment..."
Notes to Chapter I--Continued.

whole figure and air, good and amiable otherwise, might be called flabby and irresolute; expressive of weakness under possibility of strength." The visitor found that Coleridge talked in the characteristic "language of lyric intensity and epic pomp" which Carlyle described as "talk not flowing anywhere like a river, but spreading everywhere in inextricable currents and regurgitations like a lake or sea; terribly deficient in definite goal or aim, may often in logical intelligibility; what you were to believe or do, on any earthly or heavenly thing, obstinately refusing to appear from it. So that, most times, you felt logically lost; swamped near to drowning in this tide of ingenious vocables, spreading out boundless as if to submerge the world." Coleridge's main interest was, like Hamlet at Elsinore, with the "unweeded garden" of the world which he found about him for Carlyle reports that "the constant gist of his discourse was lamentation over the sunk condition of the world; which he recognised to be given-up to Atheism and Materialism, full of mere sordid misbeliefs, mispursuits and misresults." Consequently, Carlyle saw in the poet's talk, just as Coleridge had found in Hamlet's, "the emblem of himself: in it, as in him, a ray of heavenly inspiration struggled, in a tragically ineffectual degree, with the weakness of flesh and blood." "To the man himself," wrote the visitor, "Nature had given, in high measure, the seeds of a noble endowment; and to unfold it had been forbidden him. A subtle lynx-eyed intellect, tremulous pious sensibility to all good and all beautiful; truly a ray of empyrean light;--but imbedded in such weak laxity of character, in such indolences and esuriances as had made strange work of it." Carlyle defines the plot of Coleridge's life as "once more, the tragic story of a high endowment with an insufficient will." Hence, the Coleridge of Carlyle's essay is very like the Coleridge revealed by the poet's own self-appraisals. Carlyle finds Coleridge to be finally like King Lear, "a kind of Heaven-scaling Ixion; and to him, as to the old one, the just gods were very stern."
Notes to Chapter I—Continued.

6Ernest Lee Tuveson, *The Imagination as a Means of Grace* (Berkeley, 1960), p. 30: "The transition from the kind of criticism represented by Dr. Johnson to Coleridge's theory is one from concern with the actions of a character in a situation...to concern with the reactions of that character to a situation as it changes. The interest in public actions is succeeded by interest in states of mind of a sensibility, their sources, and the impressions felt within."


9Frye, p. 17.


11Frye, pp. 18-19.

12Frye, pp. 21-22.


14Wasserman, pp. 172-173.


16Wasserman, p. 175.

17Coleridge may have read Plutarch in the original, but in I, II, 943, the poet speaks of finding an essay in "old Philemon" indicating that he knew the English translation of Plutarch's *Morals* first published by Philemon Holland in 1603.
Notes to Chapter I--Continued.


23. This passage is omitted from Shedd's edition of the Table Talk, but it is printed by T. Ashe in his edition of The Table Talk and Omnia (London, 1909), p. 259.

24. Bacchus was identified with Moses in the guide to classical mythology which Coleridge used at school, Andrew Tooke, The Pantheon (London, 1750), p. 71. See Chapter II, note 1.

25. Quoted from unpublished notebook by Beer, pp. 268-269.
Chapter II.
The Colony and the Bower
The American colony and the English bower, Pantisocracy and Nether Stowey, both represent in Coleridge's life efforts to attain the commonplace goal of rural retirement in peace and contentment. Writers from Theocritus and Horace to Thomson and Cowper recommend and celebrate the pastoral experience before the Romantic period. In the instance of Coleridge, the poet longs for the values of pastoralism in early poems dealing with the scheme of Pantisocracy and celebrates their achievement in later Conversation Poems growing out of life with his family and friends in his bower. The pastoral goals of solitude, calm, retirement, and order are a starting point, a first cause, for much of Coleridge's poetic expression; consequently, his stance and viewpoint as a poet seem conventionally Apollonian. Like the engraving of Apollo in the mythology book he used at school, Andrew Tooke's Pantheon, which pictured the deity meditating alone, sitting informally on some rocks, his harp beside him, surrounded by wild and rugged scenery (See Plate I), Coleridge sought to live a meditative life in his cottage at Nether Stowey amid the rugged country of Somerset. A man who designated his rural home "Apollo's Temple in the odoriferous Lime-Grove" (L,1,538), Coleridge certainly defends the Apollonian values of calm, ease, and order. In his letters of 1796 regarding his plan to settle at Stowey, Coleridge's clear intent is revealed to be to attempt the role of poet and philosopher in the solitude and retirement of nature. He writes to Thomas Poole: "I shall have six companions--My Sara, my Babe, my own shaping and
disquisitive mind, my Books, my beloved Friend, Thomas Poole, & lastly, Nature, looking at me with a thousand looks of Beauty, and speaking to me in a thousand melodies of Love" (L,1,271). Coleridge wants to retire to the country because, as he writes to Thelwell, "I am not fit for public Life; yet the Light shall stream to a far distance from the taper in my cottage window" (L,1,277). In the bower the poet can, as he rather dramatically tells the doubting Charles Lloyd, Senior, "avoid not only evil, but the appearances of evil. This is a world of calumnies! Yea! there is an imposthume in the large tongue of this world ever ready to break, and it is well to prevent the contents from being sputtered into one's face" (L,1,264). Therefore, Coleridge founds his bower for the reason which in the Biographia Literaria he attributes to Cowper; Coleridge "flies to nature from his fellow-men" (BL,1,16n) in the hope of finding the kind of paradise which he describes in his notebooks as "—Some wilderness-plot, green & fountainous & unviolated by Man" (N,1,220).

The bower represents the personal achievement of the ideals inherent in the social scheme of Pantisocracy which in 1794 and 1795 Coleridge advanced along with Robert Southey. Consequently, it had a greater significance to Coleridge than as simply a place of pastoral retirement. Pantisocracy was the outgrowth of Coleridge's interest in social and political reform. He read the books of the reformers of the day, notably William Godwin's Political Justice, and became convinced of man's ability to improve, perhaps perfect, society and human nature. About the same time, Coleridge in his sermons noted about the history of the Jews that the people had been happiest as
agriculturists in a pastoral society where equality of labor prevailed which was "beautiful and ... replete with practical Wisdom and Benevolence," and the Jews had lost their paradisical state "when Towns and Cities were built, and the accumulative system had introduced more enormous Inequality with its accompanying Vices and Miseries then the Depravity of the Heart spread a darkness over the understanding, and the Fears and Appetites of mankind distorted the simple faith of Nature with the grossest and most malignant Superstition." As Coleridge wrote to Southey in defense of the ideal of Pantisocracy, "Whenever Men can be vicious, some will be. The leading Idea of Pantisocracy is to make men necessarily virtuous by removing all Motives to Evil--all possible Temptations" (L,1,111). In order to remove temptation, Coleridge proposed to follow the lesson of a sermon based on Matthew 6:31-33: "Therefore take no thought, saying What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ... But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow," by which the poet meant that "we are to gain our daily bread by our daily Labour and not accumulated from any presumptive Fears of Tomorrow." To further this way of life, Coleridge wanted Southey to join him in leading colonists in emigrating to the New World. In order to overcome the greed which made men "vicious," there would be no private property in the colony; like the ancient Jews, all would work together to serve the colony. A final crucial aspect of the plan was that all of the colonists were to be married in order that a new
generation could be started in the New World which growing up in a healthy and innocent society would be free of the evils of the older generation.

Through his "American scheme," Coleridge wanted to found a kind of Biblical "Peaceable Kingdom" where all creatures could live together in harmony. Consequently, the poet could write jokingly: "I call even my Cat Sister in the Fraternity of universal Nature. Owls I repect & Jack Asses I love: for Aldermen & Hogs, Bishops & Royston Crows I have not particular partiality--; they are my Cousins however, at least by Courtesy. But Kings, Wolves, Tygers, Generals, Ministers, and Hyaenas, I renounce them all—or if they must be my kinsmen, it shall be the 50th Remove—May the Almighty Pantisocratizer of Souls pantisocratize the Earth, and bless you and S. T. Coleridge!—" (L,1,121). However, it was no joking matter to Coleridge to hope that in the New World the colonists could find a paradise like Eden and, hence, the "Book of Pantisocracy" (L,1,120) expressed the hope of the Book of Revelations. Coleridge admitted this point to Southey in a moment of frustration with getting the colony started: "Southey! Pantisocracy is not the Question—it's realization is distant—perhaps a miraculous Millenium—" (L,1,158), and it is this ultimate goal which intensifies the poet's effort, first, with the colony and, later, in the bower. What Coleridge meant by "miraculous Millenium" is revealed in the poem "Religious Musings" which the poet wrote on Christmas Eve, 1794. Echoing Milton's "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," the poem prophesies a greatly improved society which will be perfected at the time of Final Judgment.
For his argument, Coleridge takes the French Revolution to be a sign of the opening of the "fifth seal" described in Revelations which will lead to the awaited "Millenium" and "Universal Redemption." In a footnote to the poem, the poet defines his notion of Millenium: "The Millenium:--in which I suppose, that Man will continue to enjoy the highest glory, of which his human nature is capable.--That all who in past ages have endeavoured to ameliorate the state of man will rise and enjoy the fruits and flowers, the imperceptible seeds of which they had sown in their former Life; and that the wicked will during the same period, be suffering the remedies adapted to their several bad habits. I suppose that this period will be followed by the passing away of this Earth and by our entering the state of pure intellect; when all Creation shall rest from its labours" (P,122n). It is for this time, then, that the pantisocratic colony was to prepare, but lack of cooperation from Southey as well as the impracticality of the scheme caused Coleridge to abandon the plan in 1795. However, the poet fulfilled the ideals which motivated the pantisocratic plan in a personal way by retiring to a bower to write poetry.

Clearly, then, that which Coleridge most valued in his concepts of the colony and the bower was not that both represented pastoral retirement but that both promised the chance of rebirth and the possibility of a "millenium." The need for Apocalypse seems to arise for Coleridge out of the view that ideal or original human nature had been buried under layers of dangerous civilization; the garden of Eden had become a lost paradise. Coleridge's plans for the bower and the
colony, therefore, represent efforts by the poet to prepare for the final restoration of the paradise which had been lost by creating a place where man could once again know directly the divine. In this way, the colony and the bower become symbols in the poetry of places where man can know "joy." The places are symbolic, not actual, and the distinction is significant for the strategy of Coleridge’s art. Because of his Hamletian nature, the achievement of "joy" is always treated by the poet as being beyond his capabilities. "Joy" is always treated as a visionary goal toward which the effort of creating poetry is directed. Consequently, a vision of "joy" for which the poet longs but cannot attain plays the same role in the Conversation Poems which arise from and, in fact, celebrate Coleridge’s real bower as it does in poems upholding the unattained pantisocratic scheme. As a result, throughout the poetry, "joy" represents an end, an ideal, a goal, of the poet, but his aesthetic strategy implies that his real experience is somehow confined and limited and that he must grope imaginatively for a visionary extension of experience. When "joy," the very goal of artistic effort, is represented poetically, the experience is inevitably portrayed as indirect knowledge which comes to the poet from envisioning the direct experience of another being. Coleridge attributes visions of "joy" often to persons to which he is closely attached, his wife, his son, close friends, or even a figure of himself at some past time and occasionally to a fictional or abstract representative. The technique is acknowledged by Coleridge in a letter of 1802: "It is easy to clothe Imaginary Beings with our own Thoughts and Feelings . . ." (L,II,810). Therefore, the Romantic poet's frequent strategy of using a
surrogate that knows "joy" is a habit of mind which becomes essential technique in Coleridge's poetry.

The way in which the vision of "joy" functions in Coleridge's poetry can be demonstrated in poems dealing with both the pantisocratic scheme and the bower at Stowey. In both instances the strategy emerges from attempts to treat commonplace pastoral themes. In 1794 at the height of his plans for a Pantisocracy, Coleridge wrote several poems on the scheme. In "Pantisocracy," a sonnet which he composed for Southey, the poet expresses his hope of escaping from the "evil day" of his age which is full of nightmarish "Fiends," which in another poem of the time attributed to Coleridge are personified as "pale Anxiety," "corrosive Care," "tear of Woe," "Gloom of sad Despair," and "deepen'd Anguish" particularly caused by events in France (P, 69):

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! O'er the ocean swell
Sublime of Hope, I seek the cottag'd dell
Where Virtue calm with careless step may stray,
And dancing to the moonlight roundelay,
The wizard Passions weave an holy spell.
Eyes that have ach'd with Sorrow! Ye shall weep
Tears of doubt-mingled joy, like theirs who start
From Precipices of distemper'd sleep,
On which the fierce-eyed Fiends their revels keep,
And see the rising Sun, and feel it dart
New rays of pleasance trembling to the heart.

Several aspects of the pantisocratic scheme are made clear metaphoric-
ally in the poem. Pantisocracy is conceived as a kind of dream retreat which is, described as a "cottag'd dell," a kind of bower where man can forget the "shame and anguish of the evil day." In the dream dell, where "careless," perhaps childlike, "Virtue" may even stray, the revels of "Fiends" are replaced by the ecstatic dancing of "wizard Passions" weaving the holy spell which will bring "doubt-mingled joy" to unbelieving man who awakens from the old nightmare to find his greatest dreams fulfilled. The whole experience is metaphorically like awakening to a bright, new day from a nightmare, a moment when dream becomes reality which is, in terms of Coleridge's expressed hopes for the Pantisocracy, a revelation of the desired millenium.

In "To a Young Ass" Coleridge is humorously sentimental in advancing the notion of the "Fraternity of universal Nature" which will come into being when the "Almighty Pantisocratizer of Souls pantisocratize the Earth." The letter expressing this idea was written by Coleridge the same day as he composed the poem. In spite of the mockery of the letter and the ridiculous sentimentality of the poem, all of the vision of a "peaceable kingdom" behind Coleridge's concept of the American colony is represented in the poet's promise to the "poor little Foal of an oppressed race" of the achievement of "joy" in the New World:

I hail thee Brother--spite of the fool's scorn!
And fain would take thee with me, in the Dell
Of Peace and mild Equality to dwell,
Where Toil shall call the charmer Health his bride,
And Laughter tickle Plenty's ribless side!
How thou wouldst toss thy heels in gamesome play,
And frisk about, as lamb or kitten gay!
Yea! and more musically sweet to me
Thy dissonant harsh bray of joy would be,
Than warbled melodies that soothe to rest
The aching of pale Fashion's vacant breast!

The sound may be "dissonant harsh" but the bray is specifically one of "joy" as the poem reveals Coleridge's strategy of envisioning in a surrogate—absurdity not withstanding—the experience which the poet himself has not yet achieved.

If "To a Young Ass" presents Coleridge's pantisocratic vision humorously, "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" uses the strategy of the surrogate to present it seriously. Both poems are statements of the same theme of Apocalypse. Coleridge worked on the poem about Chatterton almost his entire poetic life, and in his composition of six versions of the poem the poet tended increasingly to identify his own condition with that of his subject. The first version of 1790 sticks closest to the subject. It begins with the Muse prompting a song about Chatterton from the youthful Coleridge who complies with scenes, first, of the poet's death from "Want and Cold Neglect," second, of Chatterton in youth who because he is inspired to vision by Fanzy "His eyes dance rapture and his bosom glows. With generous joy he views th' ideal gold," third, of Coleridge's futile effort to avoid imagining the horrible spectacle of death, and, finally, of the spectacle of the last moments when "filial Pity" attempts to prevent tragedy by evoking for Chatterton visions of his mother and sister. In the last stanza Coleridge tends to identify himself with his subject when he envisions the spirit of the dead poet blessed in heaven and singing for the angels:
O Spirit blest!
Whether th' eternal Throne around,
Amidst the blaze of Cherubim,
Thou pourest forth the grateful hymn,
Or, soaring through the blest Domain,
Emraptur' st Angels with thy strain,—
Grant me, like thee, the lyre to sound,
Like thee, with fire divine to glow—
But ah! when rage the Waves of Woe,
Grant me with firmer breast t' oppose their hate.
And soar beyond the storms with upright eye elate!

In a note, Coleridge later expressed his regret that "this latter reflection savours of suicide," blaming its occurrence on youthful enthusiasm for his subject (P.15n); but, short of suicide, the desire expressed in the concluding stanza to experience in some way the energy of the cosmos is central to the poet's creative effort.

Shortly after writing the first version of the "Monody," Coleridge expressed the same desire in explicitly Dionysian terms in his "Ode on Astronomy."10 For the next version of the "Monody," Coleridge chose to begin the poem with the idea which had concluded the first version of Chatterton reborn in heaven to become a cosmic singer:

When faint and sad o'er Sorrow's desert wild,
Slow journeys onward, poor Misfortune's child,
When fades each lovely form by Fancy drest,
And inly pines the self-consuming breast:
No scourge of Scorpions in thy right arm dread,
No helmed Terrors nodding o'er thy head,
Assume, 0 DEATH! the Charub Wings of PEACE,
And bid the heart-sick Wanderer's Anguish cease!
Thee, CHATERTON! yon unblest Stones protect
From want, and the bleak freezings of Neglect!
Escap'd the sore wounds of Affliction's rod,
Meek at the Throne of Mercy, and of God,
Perchance thou raisest high th' enraptured hymn
Amid the blaze of Seraphim!

Chatterton has gained in heaven the inspiration which as a youth
he had but soon lost, and "joy," which is only briefly mentioned in
the first version, now defines the whole visionary nature of the
poet in his youth:

Light-hearted Youth! aye, as he hastes along,
He meditates the future Song,
How dauntless Aella fray'd the Danish foes;
And as floating high in air,
Glitter the sunny Visions fair,
His eyes dance rapture, and his bosom glows!
Friend to the friendless, to the sick man Health;
With generous Joy he views th' ideal Wealth.

When this "loveliest Child of Spring" is struck down by misfortune,
Coleridge specifies that what Chatterton loses is "joy": "Whither
are fled the charms of vernal Grace,/And Joy's wild gleams, that
lighten'd o'er thy face!" The treatment of Chatterton echoes Gray's
"Bard," a poem with which Coleridge was "intoxicated" (N,1,383) at
the time of composition. Gray's description of the bard is con-
ventionally Dionysian; consequently, Coleridge may have intended
that the figure of Chatterton as a joyful youth should fit the poetic
mythology he used in the "Ode on Astronomy."

In later versions of the "Monody," the joyous vision repre-

sented by Chatterton is closely identified with Coleridge's personal
poetic goal. During the height of his enthusiasm over Pantisocracy in late 1794, Coleridge wrote a lengthy addition to the poem which concludes it in Poems on Various Subjects (1796) and all subsequent editions. The addition begins with Coleridge grieving for the departed Chatterton, bidding him farewell, and fearing the grave thoughts which are brought to mind by the death. Because he "dared no longer on the sad theme muse,/Lest kindred woes persuade a kindred doom," the poet changes the focus of his attention away from Chatterton's death to his own ideal of Pantisocracy by incorporating into the poem the octave from the sonnet "Pantisocracy." Coleridge, then, identifies Chatterton with his own effort to found a colony in America. Chatterton is envisioned as acting as a kind of tribal bard for the colony who would lead in the founding of poetry in the New World:

O, CHATTERTON! that thou wert yet alive!
Sure thou would'st spread the canvass to the gale,
And love, with us, the tinkling team to drive
O'er peaceful Freedom's UNDIVIDED dale;
And we, at sober eye, would round thee throng,
Hanging, enraptur'd, on thy stately song:
And greet with smiles the young-eyed POESY
All deftly mask'd, as hoar ANTIQUITY.

At this point, Coleridge finally acknowledges the fact of Chatterton's death, but in the stanza which concludes the poem, the poet promises to erect a monument in America in honor of the bardic figure which will provide inspiration for poetic activity:
Alas vain Phantasies! the fleeting mood.
Of Woe self-solac'd in her dreamy mood!
Yet will I love to follow the sweet dream,
Where Susquehannah pours his untam'd stream;
And on some hill, whose forest-frowning side
Waves o'er the murmurs of his calmer tide,
Will raise a solemn CENOTAPH to thee,
Sweet Harper of time-shrouded MINSTRELSY!
And there, sooth'd sadly by the dirgeful wind,
Muse on the sore ills I had left behind.

The figure of Chatterton who "raisest high th' enrapтур'd hymn/
Amid the blaze of Seraphim" has come to symbolize for Coleridge
the experience of "joy" which will derive from the Apocalypse for
which the pantisocratic colony prepares mankind. Hence, Chatterton
is the proper guide of the poet to the "sweet dream" of the New
World and, symbolized by a monument, the proper inspiration of
poetry there. In this way, the cenotaph which the poet actually
raises to the dead poet, the monody itself, celebrates finally not
Chatterton's accomplishments but Coleridge's apocalyptic hope for
the future. Thus, "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" in a serious
mode, like "To an Ass" in a humorous mode, reveals the aesthetic
strategy of creating a surrogate to represent "joy" and the promise
of a millenium.

Coleridge's use of the surrogate to embody his vision of "joy"
fitted not only into poems advancing the idea of the pantisocratic
colony but also into the poetic form which critics like to term the
Conversation Poems. George McLean Harper originally defined the form
and established the critical term in describing such poems as "The
Bolian Harp," "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," "This Lime-tree Bower my Prison," "Frost at Midnight," "Fears in Solitude," "The Nightingale," and "Dejection: An Ode." Harper was quite clear in his definition of Coleridge's intent in these poems: "These are his Poems of Friendship. They cannot be even vaguely understood unless the reader knows what persons Coleridge had in mind. They are, for the most part, poems in which reference is made with fine particularity to certain places. They were composed as the expression of feelings which were occasioned by quite definite events. Between the lines, when we know their meaning, we catch glimpses of those delightful people who formed the golden inner circle of his friends in the days of his young manhood . . . . They may all be termed, as Coleridge himself names one or two of them, Conversation Poems, for even when they are soliloquies the sociable man who wrote them could not even think without supposing a listeners. They require and reward considerable knowledge of his life and especially the life of his heart."12 Critics since Harper have tended to define the Conversation Poems for their own purposes, most of them viewing the poems in terms of informality or intimacy created by the rhetoric.13 These critics distort Harper's emphasis on the creations as "Poems of Friendship" which portray and celebrate the family and intimate friends who surround Coleridge in the bower he created for himself. The Conversation Poems are the poetry of the bower, with all of the significance of the place for the poet relevant to their understanding; the poems depend on Coleridge's deepest sense of the place and the people. In designating some of the poems by the term "conversation," therefore,
Coleridge may have had in mind the oldest meaning of the word: "The action of living or having one's being in a place or among persons." 14

Certainly Coleridge's poems convey the oldest sense of "conversation" in much the same way as the very popular paintings of the eighteenth century in England known as "conversation pieces." There is no evidence that the poet was aware of the genre when composing his poems, but the effort of the artists and Coleridge in creating "conversations" is remarkably similar. In painting, a "conversation" implied a small-scale informal portrait group representing real people in their familiar surroundings, in or out of doors, thereby closely identifying the sitters with their particular environment. Because the subject was usually husband and wife or family groups or groups of close friends, the artist attempted to show a sense of dramatic or psychological relationship between the figures in the portrait. 15 Thomas Gainsborough's "The Artist, His Wife, and Child" (c. 1751) is typical of the genre and very like Coleridge's poetry in artistic intent (See Plate II). The family is seated comfortably and informally amid a landscape which represents a place near their home, the tower of which is clearly visible in the background. The artist is sitting impressively erect but casually, with one hand resting against his hip and legs crossed. He is holding in the other hand a sign of his profession, a landscape sketch. The family dog is drinking from a pond in the foreground. In the center of the picture to the right of the artist sits his wife, but she is leaning slightly towards her husband creating a sense of relationship between the figures. Between the parents is the child who holds her mother's dress tightly
with one hand. Both mother and child hold flowers which they have
apparently just picked and which, like the landscape sketch, relate
them to the pastoral surroundings. By organizing his "conversation"
in this way Gainsborough's picture is an artistic act of celebration
of his family and their life together at their rural home.

A Conversation Poem by Coleridge represents no less an artistic
act of celebration than a "conversation piece" by Gainsborough.
Coleridge usually begins by creating, like the painter, a sense of
his bower world. The development of a poem like "The Eolian Harp"
reveals the initial intent. The first draft is little more than a
verbal portrait of the poet and his wife together in their honeymoon
cottage at Clevedon. A sense of their affection and a definite feeling
of attachment to their surroundings is conveyed by their pose. Aspects
of the cottage symbolize, in fact, certain values of the poet's re-
relationship with his wife; in this way persons and place are intimately
connected:

My pensive SARA! thy soft Cheek reclin'd
Thus on my arm, how soothing sweet it is
Beside our Cot to sit, our Cot o'ergrown
With white-flow'r'd Jasmine and the blossom'd myrtle,
(Met'emblems they of Innocence and Love!)
And watch the Clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow-sad'ning round, and mark the star of eve
Serenely brilliant, like thy polish'd Sense,
Shine opposite! what snatches of perfume
The noiseless gale from yonder bean-field wafts!
The stilly murmur of the far-off Sea
Tells us of Silence! and behold, my love!
In the half-closed window we will place the Harp,
Which by the desultory breeze caress'd,
Like some coy maid half willing to be woo'd,
Utters such sweet unbraiding as, perforce,
Tempt to repeat the wrong!

This is all of the first version of the "Eolian Harp," and it is
no more than a picture of the bower which displays, as Harper puts it
"fine particularity" of place and the "life of the heart." In later
versions the image of the harp will serve to release the poet
imaginatively from the particular time and place, but the poem will
remain in part a celebration of the bower and the relationship of
those who share its world. Other Conversation Poems reflect the
same artistic intention and remain celebrations of the bower in spite
of transcendental concerns. "Frost at Midnight," for example, por-
trays the poet with his child close beside him sharing the intimacy
created by their being together in the "extreme silentness" of the
bower; the description of the scene creates in the reader a sense that
the moment expressed in the poem is stranglely special:

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind, The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before,
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, 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.

Like the harp in the "Eolian Harp," the image of the fluttering
"film" in "Frost at Midnight" will carry the poet's thoughts away
from the curiously dramatic moment. Nevertheless, the poem begins
with description which is a kind of celebration of the particular
place and night of "extreme silentness" when the poet sat by his
sleeping child. Therefore, like the painter of a "conversation
piece," Coleridge in his Conversation Poems offers portraits of a
bower world which celebrate the place and the people who share
experiences there.

But Coleridge's Conversation Poems always offer an experience
beyond that of merely celebrating the bower. The poet is never
really satisfied, never quite fulfilled intellectually, with the
actual world. He has a visionary sense of the future, and through
his use of the device of the surrogate a revelation of "joy" enters
the poetic portrait in each instance. The surrogate may be a real
person like Charles Lamb in "This Lime-tree Bower my Prison" or a
fictional figure like the maiden in "The Nightingale." Coleridge even
uses for a surrogate an image of himself as he recalls an ideal time
in his own past in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement,"
and the poem is typical of the form of the Conversation Poems. The
poet in the past has experienced that which Coleridge writing his
poem can no longer directly know and feel; therefore, the figure of
memory whose experience can be recalled only indirectly is a suitable
surrogate for the poem. Coleridge's attitude in the poem is exactly like that expressed by the poet in a letter which he wrote to his neighbor, Thomas Poole, while away from Nether Stowey in 1798: "I wish to be at home with you, indeed, indeed—my Joy is only in the bud here—I am like that Tree, which fronts me—The Sun shines bright & warm, as if it were summer—but it is not summer & so it shines on leafless boughs. The beings who know how to sympathize with me are my foliage—"(L.I,381). Away from it, therefore, the bower seems to represent that which nurtures the poet's very growth as a man, that which he calls "joy," and "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement" expresses a similar point of view though the bower for which the poet longs is not at Nether Stowey but at Clevedon where he spent his honeymoon. The tense is past as the poet begins the poem by describing the bower which he has left:

Low was our pretty Cot: our tallest Rose
Peep'd at the chamber-window. We could hear
At silent noon, and eve, and early morn,
The Sea's faint murmur. In the open air
Our Myrtle's blossom'd; and across the porch
Thick Jasmín's twined: the little landscape round
Was green and woody, and refresh'd the eye.
It was a spot which you might aptly call
The Valley of Seclusion!

The bower where man is "refresh'd" by his surroundings is a place of obvious harmony between man and nature, and the poet goes on to show how anyone who intrudes on the "Valley of Seclusion" from the evil, materialistic world from which the poet has fled will appreciate this
quality. The experience of an intruder is portrayed as being similar to looking through the door of a church without being able to enter:

Once I saw

(Hallowing his Sabbath-day by quietness)
A wealthy son of Commerce saunter 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 gaz'd all around,
Then eyed our Cottage, and gaz'd round again,
And sigh'd, and said, it was a Blessed Place.
And we were blessed.

To conclude the first section of the poem, Coleridge recalls how he and his mate appreciated their surroundings:

Oft with patient ear
Long-listening to the viewless sky-lark's note
(Viewless, or haply for a moment seen')
Gleaming on sunny wings) in whisper'd tones
I've said to my Beloved, 'Such, sweet Girl!
The inobtrusive song of Happiness,
Unearthly minstrelsy! then only heard
When the Soul seeks to hear; when all is hush'd
And the Heart listens!

Described as "unearthly minstrelsy," the happy song of the skylark is an important part of the bower world which the poet celebrates for it hints at the kind of transcendental experience which life in such a place of retirement prepares man to know.

As part of every Conversation Poem, the transcendental experience enhances the value of the bower world where it can occur and inten-
sifies the experience of the poetic portrait. For "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," Coleridge recalls an experience which he himself once had at Clevedon. The poet tells of climbing a mountain near his bower and sensing there the presence of God. Coleridge's description of his climb to the top of the mountain conveys a sense of the difficulty of achieving vision:

But the time, when first
From the low Dell, steep up the stony Mount
I climb'd with perilous toil and reach'd the top,
Oh! what a goodly scene! Here the bleak mount,
The bare bleak mountain speckled thin with sheep;
Grey clouds, that shadowing spot the sunny fields;
And river, now with busky rocks o'er-brow'd,
Now winding bright and full, with naked banks;
And seats, and lawns, the Abbey and the wood,
And cots, and hamlets, and faint city-spire;
The Channel there, the Islands and white sails,
Dim coasts, and cloud-like hills, and shoreless Ocean—
It seem'd like Omnipresence! God, methought,
Had built him there a Temple: the whole World
Seem'd imag'd in its vast circumference:
No wish profan'd my overwhelmed heart.
Blest hour! It was a luxury,—to be!

The poet strives for a sense of immediacy in his reflection; with verbal gestures, "here" and "there," the Coleridge of memory seems to guide the remembering Coleridge toward the vision of "joy." Coleridge's experience on the mountain must be compared with that of the visitor to the "Valley of Seclusion" in the first section of the poem. "A wealthy son of Commerce," the visitor remains outside the bower in spite of his appreciation of its blessedness, but the Coleridge of
memory gains his sense of "Omnipresence" by being fully within the "Temple" of God's creation.

In the third section of the poem, the memorable moment has ended, and the poet sighs, longing to know again such visionary experience: "Ah! quiet Dell! dear God, and Mount Sublime!/I was constrain'd to quit you." The remembering Coleridge is like the "wealthy son of Commerce" in being outside the "Valley of Seclusion" imagining but unable to know directly the place of retirement. He claims that he is not able to ignore the human suffering in the great world outside the bower and wants to join in the work of reform being carried on by John Howard, a noted philanthropist of the day, and others:

Was it right,
While my unnumber'd brethern toil'd and bled,
That I should dream away the entrusted hours
On rose-leaf beds, pampering the coward heart
With feelings all to delicate for use?
Sweet is the tear that from some Howard's eye
Drops on the cheek of one he lifts from earth:
And he that works me good with unmov'd face,
Does it but half: he chills me while he aids,
My benefactor, not my brother man!
Yet even this, this cold beneficence
Praise, praise it, 0 my Soul! oft as thou scarn'st
The sluggard Pity's vision-weaving tribe!
Who sigh for Wretchedness, yet shun the Wretched,
Nursing in some delicious solitude
Their slothful loves and dainty sympathies!

The view of man's condition which inspired the scheme of Pantisocracy is still strong in Coleridge as he berates himself for giving up the goal of reform and excluding himself from the problems of the world.
He attempts to convince himself of the need to leave his bower
by arguing that the generosity of Howard or even some "cold" bene-
factor not truly motivated by charity is better than his own concern
for wretched humanity which he takes no action to help. As a result,
still trying to convince himself, the poet dramatically announces his
intention to become a Christian soldier of reform:

I therefore go, and join head, heart, and hand,
Active and firm, to fight the bloodless fight

The resolution is ironic in the context; for, having made his state-
ment, the poet's thoughts immediately return to memories of the bower.
It is obvious that in spite of his effort Coleridge has not convinced
himself that he can do anything about the problems of the world, and
at the end of the poem he envisions the real solution coming only
with the Last Judgment. Coleridge's desire is still pantisocratic,
to find a pastoral retreat where man has the freedom to prepare for
the Apocalypse:

Yet oft when after honourable toil
Rests the tir'd mind, and waking loves to dream,
My spirit shall revisit thee, dear Cot!
Thy Jasmin and thy window-peeping Rose,
And Myrtles fearless of the mild sea-air.
And I shall sigh fond wishes--sweet Abode!
Ah!--had none greater! And that all had such!
It might be so--but the time is not yet.
Speed it, O Father! Let thy kingdom come!

The result of the indecision indicated by the last section of the poem
was borne out by Coleridge's life. Written after the poet and his wife
returned from their honeymoon stay of a few weeks at Clevedon where the bower and the mountain commemorated in the poem were located, "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement" is the expression of Coleridge while between bowers in his life. The notion of becoming a Christian soldier in a movement of reform quickly passed, and the poet sought, as the conclusion of the poem foreshadows, to return to a place of retirement to await the divine moment. Less than a year after the poem was written, Coleridge and his family settled at Nether Stowey.

Coleridge was always intensely aware of the destructive aspect inherent in his Dionysian effort, and he occasionally reveals poetically a fear that the bower of "joy" will be invaded and corrupted by evil. He had good reason for his fears. Like his contemporaries, Coleridge had seen in recent French history the rise and fall of the idealistic hopes of transforming human nature by establishing a new political, social, and economic order. In the early years of the Revolution, France had seemed to Coleridge to be fulfilling the prophetic hope of the Book of Revelations. In "Religious Musings" Coleridge treated the suffering and destruction in France merely as signs of the coming "Millennium," and in the incomplete "Destiny of Nations" the figure of Joan of Arc is connected with revolutions in America and France as an indication that the "fifth seal" leading to Apocalypse had been opened. However, Coleridge eventually realized the failure of the French to fulfill the ideals of the Revolution. He describes the failure of the apparent Apocalypse to his brother in 1798: "Of the French Revolution I can give my thoughts the most
adequately in the words of Scripture—"A great & strong wind rent
the mountains & broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the
Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the
Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a Fire—&
the Lord was not in the Fire" (L,1,395). In despair and anxiety,
Coleridge concludes that evil may invade even his bower of "joy."
In "France: An Ode" the poet recalls how at the beginning of the
Revolution "With what a joy my lofty gratulation/Unawed I sang" in
anticipation of the achievement of "divinest Liberty" in France.
In spite of the horrors of the domination of the Terrorists, the
poet regarded them as a transient storm and still expected the kind
of political stability which could allow individual freedom and moral
accomplishment:

'And soon,' I said, 'shall Wisdom teach her lore
In the low huts of them that toil and groan!
And, conquering by her happiness alone,
Shall France compel the nations to be free,
Till Love and Joy look round, and call the Earth their own!

The poet, however, must renounce his enthusiasm for the apocalyptic
potential of the Revolution because of the failure of France to esta-
ablish political freedom. A new order of "Love and Joy" is not
possible in a nation which "mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,/And
patriot only in pernicious toils!" The poet's disillusionment causes
him to express fears about preserving his bower world and the sanctity
of "joy" itself in "Fears in Solitude." As the poem begins, the poet's
surroundings are apparently favorable for achieving a sense of "joy,"
and the poet exults that he is in "A green and silent spot, amid the
hills, /A small and silent dell" which seems a "quiet spirit-healing
nook." The moment seems proper for ecstatic experience for the poet
who describes himself in the third person:

    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 hears thee still, O singing lark,
    That singest like an angel in the clouds!

As in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," the lark
associated with the heavenly realm seems to lead the poet toward
knowledge of the divine, but the poet's meditation is suddenly
interrupted by the intrusion of his fears about being invaded by France:

    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 brethren--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--.

The spirit of despair evokes in the poet a vision of misery and
suffering for mankind which reflects the destructive potential
inherent in the myth of "joy." Though not attributed to the
deities, "vehement and awful passions" like those of Bacchus
associated with Osiris and Typhon are described as loose on earth.
Amid the envisioned disaster, even "joy" is infected by Atheism which
becomes "bold with joy" in seeking divinity to threaten the "very
name of God." With such fears, the poet can only pray and seek for mankind the proper kind of "joy," the "joy and greatness of its future being." Even amid his intense awareness of the destructive aspect of "joy," Coleridge still hopes for the Apocalypse: "I wrap my face in my mantle, & wait with a subdued & patient thought, expecting to hear 'the still small Voice,' which is of God" (L.I,395).

In spite of his fears, therefore, Coleridge in his poetry continues to uphold the Dionysian goal of gaining paradise anew and knowing directly the Divine. Both the coloquy and the bower symbolize for the poet ways toward achievement of his ultimate aim, though he always describes himself as cut off from ecstatic experience. Coleridge can only celebrate his attainment of commonplace pastoral pleasures which do not include the "joy" of knowing the presence of God directly. Consequently, the desired experience is poetically conveyed by Coleridge through the aesthetic strategy of using various surrogates in place of himself. Because pressures of reality, public and private, inhibit the poet's Dionysian desire to feel the energy of the cosmos, Coleridge, while awaiting the "Millennium," must content himself with finding symbols which represent for him the potential for "joy." Two figures in his poetry seem to satisfy Coleridge's symbolic need particularly well. These are the child and the maiden, and both help Coleridge to explore in his poetry the way toward a vision of "joy."
Notes to Chapter II.

1. Andrew Tooke's Pantheon, a translation of P. Francisco Pomar's work in French, was the most popular mythology guide of the eighteenth century in England. Coleridge mentions the work in his notebooks and planned a similar effort. Though I have not determined which of the many editions Coleridge used at school, I have examined four editions, the earliest being an edition in French published in 1717, and found the details of the plates to be the same in all of the editions although the engravings in some instances have obviously been recut. Other editions examined, all in English, were the "seventeenth" published in London, 1750; the "new edition" published in Edinburgh, 1793; and the "thirty-first" published in London, 1803. The edition cited throughout this essay and from which plates have been reproduced is the "seventeenth" published in London, 1750.


3. Quoted by Deen, p. 238.

4. Coleridge wanted to establish the colony near the Susquehanah River, a location about which the poet may have read in a popular guidebook of the day, Thomas Cooper's Some Information Regarding America (1794). Joseph Cottle in his Early Recollections: Chiefly Relating to the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge, During His Long Residence in Bristol (London, 1837), I, 32, suggests that the choice of site seemed to arise "nabbity from its imposing name, which, if not classical, was at least, poetical; and it, probably, by mere accident, became the center of all of his pleasurable associations."

5. Inherent in Coleridge's scheme was the idea of America as a new Eden which R. W. B. Lewis has discussed in The American Adam (Chicago, 1955). The well-known painting "The Peaceable Kingdom" by the American
Notes to Chapter II—Continued.

"primitive" artist Edward Hicks (1780-1849) perhaps portrays what Coleridge had in mind for his Pantisocracy.


Coleridge adds the following footnote to his use of the image of the "fifth seal" in "Religious Musings," l. 304 (P,122n): "See the sixth chapter of the Revelation of St. John the Divine.--And I looked and beheld a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the FOURTH part of the Earth to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with pestilence, and with the beasts of the Earth.--And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were should be fulfilled. And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, the stars of Heaven fell unto the Earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind: And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, &c."


8I. A. Gordon in "The Case-History of Coleridge's Monody on the Death of Chatterton," Review of English Studies, XVIII (1942), 47-79, discusses the various revisions by Coleridge and his increasing identification with Chatterton. Gordon reprints all of the important version of 1794 which was used as a complimentary preface to the 1794 edition of Chatterton's Rowley Poems.
Notes to Chapter II—Continued.

10. See discussion of "Ode on Astronomy" in Chapter I.

Gordon, p. 56, calls attention to Coleridge's modeling of lines on words like "glitter" and "visions" used effectively by Gray in "The Bard" and "The Progress of Poesy." Gray's description of "The Bard" who has a "voice more than human" is conventionally Dionysian in ll. 15-22:

On a rock whose haughty brow
Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,
Robed in the sable garb of woe,
With haggard eyes the poet stood
(Loose his beard and hoary hair
Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air),
And with a master's hand and prophet's fire
Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.

The pictorial origins of the bard's appearance are explained by Gray in a letter which supplements a note to the poem, and the models cited by him reveal the nature of the divinity and inspiration inherent in his concept of the figure: "The thought, wch you applaud, in these lines, Loose his beard &c: is borrowed from painting. Raphael in his vision of Ezekiel . . . has given the air of head wch I tried to express, to God the Father; or (if you have been at Parma) you may remember Moses breaking the Tables by the Parmegiano, wch comes still nearer to my meaning" (Correspondence, ed. P. Toynbee and L. Whibley /Oxford, 19357 II, 476-477). The "air of head" of the models as well as the whole stance of the figure as pictured by Richard Bentley in his "Design for Gray's 'Bard'" is a conventional Dionysian pose. The head turned abruptly and awkwardly to the side is the sign of a man strangely possessed by divine power, and the condition of the body in Bentley's illustration, the twisted form, the fluttering robes, the precarious, momentary pose, expresses ecstasy. Indeed, the bard is identical in treatment to the Bacchus pictured in Titian's Bacchus and Ariadne to cite a strikingly similar example of the
Notes to Chapter II—Continued.

conventional figure. Therefore, Bentley's illustration confirms
the idea of Gray's poem of the bard as a Dionysian figure. A dis-
cussion of the convention of Dionysian figures and a reproduction
of the Bacchus in Titian's painting can be found in the chapter called

12 Harper's article, "Coleridge's Conversation Poems," first
published in 1928, is reprinted in English Romantic Poets: Modern

13 For example, Albert Gerard in "The Systolic Rhythm: The
Structure of Coleridge's Conversation Poems," Essays in Criticism,
Ⅺ (1960), 307, defines the poems as "a personal effusion, a smooth
outpouring of sensations, feelings and thoughts, an informal re-
leasing of poetic energies"; and M. H. Abrams in "Structure and
Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," From Sensibility to Romanticism,
ed. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (New York, 1965), p. 351,
says that "they are written (though some of them only intermittently)
in a blank verse which at its best captures remarkably the qualities
of the intimate speaking voice ..."

II, 914. Actually only one poem, "The Nightingale," was called by
Coleridge "A Conversation Poem" or "Conversational" as the word appeared
in the first edition of the Lyrical Ballads only. If "Conversational"
was intended, Coleridge probably coined the form for the first usage
is credited by the New English Dictionary to Southey in 1799. The
phrase "A Conversation Poem" was omitted from the title of "The
Nightingale" in the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads, but it was restored
in the 1828 edition of Sibylline Leaves and retained thereafter.
Richard Harker-Fogle in "Coleridge's Conversation Poems," Tulane Studies
in English, Ⅴ (1955), 103, maintains that Coleridge may have intended
to indicate similar efforts in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of
Notes to Chapter II—Continued.

"Retirement" by affixing to the poem the motto "Sermoni propriora.—Hor.,” ("Better suited to talk"), Horace's description of his Satires and Epistles and in "Fears in Solitude" by a note stating "N.B. The above is perhaps not Poetry,—but rather a sort of middle thing between Poetry and Oratory—sermoni propriora.—Some parts are, I am conscious, too tame even for animated prose."


16 M. H. Abrams deals with the significance of the French Revolution for the Romantic poets in his essay "English Romanticism; The Spirit of the Age" previously cited.
Chapter III.
The Child
Coleridge emphasizes the importance of childhood for achieving "joy" in one of his fullest expressions of a desire for transcendental experience in a lecture of 1819:

In joy individuality is lost and it therefore is liveliest in youth, not from any principle in organization but simply from this that the hardships of life, that the circumstances that have forced a man in upon his little unthinking contemptible self, have lessened his power of existing universally; it is that only which brings about those passions. To have a genius is to live in the universal, to know no self but that which is reflected not only from the faces of all around us, our fellow creatures, but reflected from the flowers, the trees, the beasts, yea from the very surface of the waters and the sands of the desert. A man of genius finds a reflex in himself, were it only in the mystery of being (PL,179).

The "hardships of life" which inhibit the poet's power of "existing universally" are apparently the same as the "multitude of causes" cited by Wordsworth in his "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads which act "with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor."\(^1\) Among the most obvious pressures in Coleridge's life were, domestically, his disappointed love for Sara Hutchinson and unhappy marriage to Sara Fricker, socially, his concern for the particular political and social evils of the day, and, philosophically, his ever-present sense of the fallen state of mankind.
Therefore, it was necessary for the poet to have a symbol which upheld an image of "joy" against the "hardships of life," and he found it in the traditional figure of the innocent child. Coleridge's appreciation for childhood was made acute by his own unhappy youth which he described in detail in autobiographical letters to Thomas Poole. At the same time, the emphasis of Rousseau on childhood innocence contributed to Coleridge's interest. As a result, the conflict between innocence and experience becomes an important theme of Coleridge's poetry as the poet held up childhood as an ideal time of "joy" in man's life.

Coleridge reveals his particular view of childhood in letters and notes which, along with proposals for literary projects such as poems and a prose study of infancy (N,I,330 and 605), record moments of "joy" experienced by the poet's own children:

July 29, 1807: Hartley is all Health & extacy--He is a Spirit dancing on an aspen Leaf--unwearied in Joy, from morning to night indefatigably joyous--(L,I,615).

Sunday, November 1, 1801. Hartley breeched--dancing to the jingling of money--but eager & solemn Joy, not his usual whirl--about gladness--but solemn to & fro eager looks, as befitted the importance of the aera (N,I,1001).

G. September 27, 1802: The wisdom & graciousness of God in the infancy of the human species--its beauty, long continuence &c &c. Children in the wind--hair floating, tossing, a miniature of the agitated Trees, below which they play'd--the elder whirling for joy, the one in petticoats, a fat Baby, eddying half willingly, half by the force of the Gust--driven backward, struggling forward--both drunk with the pleasure, both shouting their hymn of Joy (N,I,330).
In these passages, Coleridge sees the play of the children as a kind of Dionysian rite. Several elements of such a rite are evident: ecstasy, dancing, drunken sensations, shouts which seem a ritualistic hymn. Coleridge suggests in his descriptions of the children the traditional iconography associated with ecstasy and joy. From Greek drinking cups to the Renaissance sculpture of Donatello and Michaelangelo, artists employed conventional poses to express physical abandonment and to image the spiritual liberation achieved through the thiasos or processional dance.\(^2\) These images were inevitably associated with Bacchus who represented the irrational elements in human nature to the Greeks, and the deity was often represented as a somewhat fat infant. Coleridge was familiar with this portrayal of Bacchus from seeing it in Tooke's *Pantheon*, the mythology guide which he studied at Christ's Hospital. Tooke says that the god is sometimes depicted as a "smooth and beardless Boy" with "a naked Body, a red Face, lascivious Looks, in an effeminate Posture, dispirited with Luxury, and overcome with Wine. His swoln Cheeks resemble Bottles; his great Belly, fat Breasts, and his distended swelling Paunch represent a Hogshead rather than a God to be carried in that Chariot."\(^3\) Significantly for Coleridge's view of children, the illustration which accompanies Tooke's commentary shows Bacchus in this way and included in the plate are a group of dancing revelers (See Plate III).

Another significant aspect of Coleridge's interpretation of children at play is that he sees in them the "genius" for living in the "universal" which he establishes as his goal in the lecture of 1819. Dancing children reflect the scene about them to become
like a "Spirit dancing on an aspen leaf" or a "miniature of the agitated Trees"; therefore, they seem in harmony with nature. In his "joy" Coleridge's "fat Baby" is described as "eddying half-willingly, half by the force of the Gust--driven backward, struggling forward" in a condition of Dionysian ecstasy that implies the achievement of the kind of involvement with the cosmos that the poet sought. When Wordsworth in his "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads answers the question "what then does the Poet?," he deals with the poet's relationship with nature. Wordsworth says that the poet "considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions, which from habit acquire the quality of intuitions; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding everywhere objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature, are accompanied by an over-balance of enjoyment." However, when Coleridge discusses the same issue in his lecture "Poesy or Art" in 1818, he suggests that the poet must experience not only his natural surroundings but the cosmic forces which support his environment. Man must seek to know the divine essence of life and in so doing experience an ecstatic dance of "joy" like that of children. More formally philosophical in approach than Wordsworth, Coleridge begins by discussing the classic Aristotelian problem of mimesis stating that "it is sufficient that philosophically we
understand that in all imitation two elements must exist, and not only exist but must be perceived as existent. These two are likeness and unlikeness, or sameness and difference; all imitation in the fine arts is the union of disparate things. Wax images—statues—bronze—pictures: the artist may take his point where he likes, provided that the effect desired is produced—namely, that there be a likeness in difference and a union of the two" (NC, 208). As an example Coleridge cites "Tragic dance" and explains that "the Greek tragic dance rested on these principles, and I can deeply sympathize in imagination with the Greeks in this favorite part of their theatrical exhibitions, when I call to mind the pleasure I felt in beholding the combat of the Horatii and Curiatii most exquisitely danced in Italy to the music of Cimarosa" (S, IV, 331). Continuing his thought, Coleridge finds the same principles in man's relationship with nature: "So Nature, i.e., Natura naturata. And hence the natural question, 'What, imitate all and everything?'—No, but the Beautiful? The definition is at once undermined. If the artist painfully copies Nature, what an idle rivalry! If he proceeds from a form that answers to the notion of beauty, namely, the many seen as one, what an emptiness, an unreality, as in Cypriani! The essence must be mastered—the natura naturans, and this presupposes a bond between Nature in this higher sense and the soul of man" (NC, 208-209). Children in the "joy" of their play seem to represent for Coleridge in his description of them the achievement of such a bond between man's very "soul" and the supernatural.

Coleridge's poetry by presenting the conflict between innocence and experience reveals that the ability of the child to enjoy a sense
of the cosmos is short-lived. The theme of innocence threatened by experience appears in Coleridge's earliest poetry in the Dionysian terms which the poet later uses for describing his own children at play. For example, in the schoolboy poem "Easter Holidays" written in 1787 and obviously modeled on Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," Coleridge portrays youths on a holiday from school, but, unlike its source, the celebration in the Romantic poem is a rite of "joy" which includes dancing:

   With mirthful dance they beat the ground,
   Their shouts of joy the hills resound
   And catch the jocund noise:
   Without a tear, without a sigh
   Their moments all in transport fly
   Till evening ends their joys.

In another poem, "Sonnet: To the River Otter" written in 1793, sight of the river stirs in the poet memories of youthful play when he skimmed stones across the surface of the water, and he longs to return to the past, exclaiming, "Ah! That once more I were a careless Child!" That which intensifies the poet's desire for youth is his awareness that experience ends the carefree joy of childhood. As a result, in "Easter Holidays" the poet foresees the end of the "mirthful dance" of the youths but not because of "Misfortune" alone as in Gray's poem:

   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.
"Misfortune" in Coleridge's poem represents the result of the fallen state of mankind, and the poem concludes not with the platitudinous "where ignorance is bliss," 'Tis folly to be wise" but with a firmly religious moral. The poem suggests that with "steady Virtue" as a guide man will find "His hours away in bliss shall glide/Like Easter all the year." Therefore, not only the occasion but the deepest significance of the poem is religious as Coleridge reveals his awareness that the "joy" imaged in the innocence of youthful play is eventually doomed.

Coleridge believed that children were quickly and easily corrupted by their environment. Indeed, in his plans for the Pantisocracy in America, Coleridge feared that children who were to accompany the colonists might endanger the success of the project. In a letter to Southey, the poet wrote: "But, Southey!—there are children going with us. Why did I never dare in my disputations with the Unconvinced to hint at this circumstance? Was it not, because I knew even to certainty of conviction, that it is subversive of rational Hopes of a permanent System? These children ... are they not already deeply tinged with the prejudices and errors of Society? Have they not learnt from their Schoolfellows Fear and Selfishness—of which the necessary offspring are Deceit, and desultory Hatred? How are we to prevent them from infecting the minds of our Children?" (1,119-120).

Aware as he was of the danger of environment to innocence, Coleridge, nevertheless, believed in the manner of Rousseau that the child could be redeemed through the ministry of nature. There are a series of characters in Coleridge's poetry as a result who can be regarded as
"children of nature." The qualities which distinguish these children are their origins—in a sense, birth—and their education in Nature as well as their distinct connection with elements of romantic fiction such as strange voyages, fanciful castles, and supernatural personages which link these characters to activity of the imagination. These figures perhaps have their origins in characters found in Coleridge's youthful reading of books like The Arabian Nights. For instance, the youth in the "Foster Mother's Tale" is found as "a baby wrapt in mosses, lined/With thistle-beards, and such small locks of wool/As hang on brambles." Retrieved like Moses from this womb of nature, the child is "most unteachable" except in the ways of Mother Nature.

He never learnt a prayer, nor told a bead,
But knew the names of birds, and mock'd their notes,
And whistled, as he were a bird himself:
And all the autumn 'twas his only play
To get the seeds of wild flowers, and to plant them
With earth and water, on the stumps of trees.

A priest succeeds in teaching the youth to read but the boy has "unlawful thoughts of many things." His "heretical and lawless talk" results in his being imprisoned by society into which he cannot fit. Eventually the "child of nature" escapes and flees into a romantic realm marked by the mystery and adventure of imaginative fiction:

He went on shipboard
With those bold voyagers, who made discovery
Of golden lands. Leoni's younger brother
Went likewise, and when he return'd to Spain,
He told Leoni, that the poor mad youth,  
Soon after they arriv'd in that new world,  
In spite of his dissuasion, seized a boat,  
And all alone, set sail by silent moonlight  
Up a great river, great as any sea,  
And ne'er was heard of more: but tis: suppos'd  
He liv'd and died among the savage men.

The fate of the youth in the "Foster Mother's Tale" is similar to  
that of Chatterton in Coleridge's "Hmody on the Death of Chatterton."  
Chatterton, too, is a "child of nature" who cannot fit into society  
and seeks to escape from it. While the youth sails to a realm of  
adventure with Spanish explorers in search of gold, Chatterton is  
imagined by Coleridge participating in the voyage to the "new world"  
with the pantisocratic settlers. Coleridge must admit finally that  
Chatterton regains the "joy" of his childhood only in heaven after  
committing suicide, and that may have been the end, in effect, for  
the "Foster mother's child who set out alone "Up a great river,  
great as any sea, /And ne'er was heard of more."

Coleridge also portrays "children of nature" who do not flee from  
their world, and, instead, represent a way toward the achievement of  
"joy." In "The Wanderings of Cain," Enos, like the foster-mother's  
son, is introduced involved intimately with nature in the brief  
opening stanza which the poet retained in his "Prefatory Note" to  
the poem:

Encircled with a twine of leaves,  
That leafy twine his only dress!  
A lovely Boy was plucking fruits,  
By moonlight, in a wilderness.
In the second canto, written in prose, Enos leads his father Cain out of the forest into "the open moonlight" of a desert-place where they encounter a "Shape" which is like the murdered Abel. The result of the meeting is a reconciliation of the good and evil brothers, and they leave together at the end of the canto apparently in forgiveness of each other. Enos, the "child of nature," by leading Cain to a reunion with the spirit of Abel and apparent forgiveness accomplishes in his world an affirmation of the good side of Creation over the evil side manifested as the murder which resulted from man's fallen state. Such a condition in human history would come, Coleridge thought, with the anticipated "miraculous Millenium," and poetic images of "children of nature" like Enos prepare for the apocalyptic moment.

A "child of nature" leads to a more commonplace vision of "joy" in "The Nightingale" which, nevertheless, has the same ultimate purpose in its presentation. In this instance, the guide is a "most gentle Maid" who like both the foster mother's child and Enos seems educated in the ways of nature and even is tied in some way with supernatural forces. She is described as "a Lady vowed and dedicate/To something more than Nature in the grove" who "glides through the pathways" and "knows" all the notes of the singing nightingales. As a result, the maiden experiences a moment of "joy" distinguished as in other poems by moonlight:

The moon
Emerging hath awakened earth and sky
With one sensation, and those wakeful birds
Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy,
As if some sudden gale had swept at once
A hundred miry harps!
The moment of natural harmony achieved in the moonlight and to the significant accompaniment of music (which shall be explained in a later chapter) evokes an image of Dionysian "joy" through actions of the nightingales:

And she hath watched

Many a nightingale perch giddily
On blossomy twig still swinging from the breeze,
And to that motion tune his wanton song
Like tipsy Joy that reels with tossing head.

In this way, the "child of nature" acts in the poem as a surrogate for the experience of "joy" which the poet himself cannot know.

According to the poet, the qualities of childhood and the characteristics of the "child of nature" are necessary to all men of genius. In a poem titled "The Dunciad," which is a fragment of the dramatic work Remorse, Coleridge applies the need for the ministry of nature to all men who "circled with evil" are, in fact, infected by the "loathsome plague-spot" which is the evil in Creation. Consequently, Coleridge calls on nature to heal her children through a kind of natural baptism:

With other ministrations thou, O Nature!
Healest thy wandering and distemper'd child:
Thou pourest on him thy soft influences,
Thy sunny hues, fair forms, and breathing sweets,
Thy melodies of woods, and winds, and waters.

The result of such a baptism of man in nature is, like the times when Coleridge's own children are in the moonlight, the re-establishment of harmony in human life and the experience of a rite of "joy"
complete with music and dancing:

Till he relent, and can no more endure
To be a jarring and a dissonant thing,
Amid this general dance and minstrelsy.

In this way, the "angry spirit" of mankind is "heal'd and harmoniz'd"
by the "benignant touch of Love and Beauty."

Because of the importance of the concept of childhood to his
philosophy, Coleridge set about to insure the "joy" of his own
babes. His interest in helping his children achieve a harmonious
relationship with nature and to become truly "children of nature"
was influenced and certainly intensified by the poet's own unhappy
childhood, a subject which he frequently discussed with friends. In
an autobiographical letter to Poole in 1796, Coleridge describes the
jealously and dislike of his brothers and sisters for him because he
was the favorite of his parents, and he recalls that because he was
"fretful, & timorous, & a tell-tale" his classmates at school drove
him from play and frequently tormented him (L, I, 357). The result of
this treatment was that in later life Coleridge had recurring night-
mares about his troubled childhood, and in 1802 he wrote in his note-
book: "N.B. The great importance of breeding up children happy to at
least 15 or 16 illustrated in my always dreaming of Christ's Hospital
and when not quite well having all those uneasy feelings which I had
at School/feelings of Easter Monday &c--" (N, I, 1176). As a result of
his own troubled youth, the poet makes the concern of educating his sons
in nature a theme of his poetry. In "Frost at Midnight," Coleridge
addresses his babe to promise him an education in nature which will
contrast sharply in manner and value to the poet's own childhood:

My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw 'mought lovely but the sky and stars.
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountains, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: 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.

With this concern for their education, Coleridge watched his children carefully for any signs which would verify his belief in the ministry of nature. Hence, he notes that "Derwent laughed at six weeks old--the first thing he appeared to take notice of was the Trees bending &c in the strong wind--this too at 6 weeks" (N,I,835). At another moment, Coleridge records a time when Hartley fell and hurt himself and "the Moon caught his eye--he ceased crying immediately--& his eyes & the tears in them, how they glittered in the Moonlight!" (N,I,219).

This observation of the healing effect of nature on his son supports the poet's belief in the ministry of nature, and it becomes the basis of an important statement about the value of educating children in
nature in "The Nightingale":

And I deem it wise
To make him Nature's play-mate. He knows well
The evening-star; and once, when he awoke
In most distressful mood (some inward pain
Had made up that strange thing, an infant's dream--)
I hurried with him to our orchard-plot,
And he beheld the moon, and hushed at once,
Suspends his sobs, and laughs most silently,
While his fair eyes, that swam with undropped tears,
Did glitter in the yellow moon-beam! Well!--
It is a father's tale: But if that Heaven
Should give me life, his childhood shall grow up
Familiar with these songs, that with the night
He may associate joy.

The "songs" from which the child will learn "joy" are those of the
nightingales which display the quality of Bacchanalian drunkenness
that Coleridge sees in children at play and which are heard by the
maiden who represents in the poem a surrogate for the experience of
"joy" which the poet wants his child to have. Unable to feel "joy"
himself because of the pressures of reality which make the bird's song
seem melancholy to him, the poet, nevertheless, is convinced that
"Nature's sweet voices" are "always full of love/And joyance." There-
fore, he intends that his innocent child should experience "joy." Cut
off himself from nature by experience, the poet uses the strategy of
letting the image of the singing nightingales convey the message of
"joy." Eventually Coleridge becomes satisfied with the success of his
effort to educate his own child properly, and he records his achieve-
ment with pride. To Godwin, he writes: "I look at my doted-on
Hartley—he moves, he lives, he finds impulses from within & from without—he is the darling of the Sun and of the Breeze! Nature seems to bless him as a thing of her own! He looks at the clouds, the mountains, the living Beings of the Earth, & vaults & jubilates!" (I,1,625). To himself, Coleridge notes the child's "Brahman, love & awe of Life" (N,1,959).

Because of his belief in the full sense of life possessed by children, Coleridge discovered the beginnings of imaginative experience in childhood, and he traces the development of his own imagination in his autobiographical letters to Poole. The process apparently began for the young Coleridge when he started reading certain childhood books, "all the gilt-cover little books that could be had at that time, & likewise all the uncovered tales of Tom Hickathrift, Jack the Giantkiller, &c&c&c. . . ." The poet continues to report how "at six years old I remember to have read Belisarius, Robinson Crusoe, & Philip Quarle [Quarll] and then I found the Arabian Night's entertainments—one tale of which . . . made so deep an impression on me . . . that I was haunted by spectres, whenever I was in the dark—and I distinctly remember the anxious & fearful eagerness, with which I used to watch the window, in which the books lay & whenever the Sun lay upon them, I would seize it, carry it by the wall, & bask, & read." The result of his reading to Coleridge's mind was that he became a "dreamer" which made him among the boys at school a "character" (L,1,347-348). After his father spent an evening pointing out to Coleridge the astronomical features of the winter sky, the poet believed his imaginative sense was more or less
formed, and he describes his intellectual debt to his childhood education at length to Poole:

For from my early reading of Faery Tales, & Genii &c&c--my mind had been habituated to the vast--& I never regarded my senses in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions not by my sight--even at that age. Should children be permitted to read Romances, & Relations of Giants & Magicians, & Genii?--I know all that has been said against it; but I have formed my faith in the affirmative.--I know no other way of giving the mind a love of 'the Great', & 'the Whole'.--Those who have been led to the same truths step by step thro' the constant testimony of their senses, seem to me to want a sense which I possess--They contemplate nothing but parts--and all parts are necessarily little--and the Universe to them is but a mass of little things.-- ... I have known some who have been rationally educated, as it is styled. They were marked by a microscopic acuteness; but when they looked at great things, all became a blank & they saw nothing--and denied (very illogically) that any thing could be seen; and uniformly put the negation of a power for the possession of a power--& called the want of imagination Judgment, & the never being moved to Rapture Philosophy!—(L, I, 354-355).

In his concept of childhood, Wordsworth is similar to Coleridge. Like Coleridge with his own children, Wordsworth along with his sister Dorothy believed in educating a "child of nature" which they did in the case of Basil Montagu. Dorothy wrote of the effort:

"Till a child is four years old, he needs no other companions than the flowers, the grass, the cattle, the sheep that scamper away from him, when he makes a vain unexpected chase after them, the pepples
upon the road etc." In the Prelude, Wordsworth defines the unique quality of a child to be his "poetic spirit" and, in much the same way as Coleridge, acknowledges the decline and doom of this characteristic as a result of experience:

Such, verily, is the first
Poetic spirit of our human life,
By uniform control of after years,
In most, abated or suppressed; in some,
Through every change of growth and of decay,
Pre-eminent till death.  

As the passage indicates, the youthful "poetic spirit" lingers in some men apparently as the source of the imaginative force which makes them artists. Like Coleridge, Wordsworth attributes some of the stimulation of the imagination in youth to the kind of reading which particularly cultivates this sense. "It stuck me ...," writes Wordsworth in a letter of 1845 in which the education of children is discussed, "too little attention is paid to books of imagination which are imminently useful in calling forth intellectual power. We must not only have Knowledge—but the means of wielding it, and that is done infinitely more thro' the imaginative faculty assisting both in the collection and application of facts than is generally believed." Wordsworth describes the importance of youthful reading to developing the imaginative sense, and, like Coleridge singles out The Arabian Nights for particular praise, in his discussion of "Books" in The Prelude:

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
And o'er the heart of man: invisibly
It comes, to works of unproved delight,
And tendency benign, directing those
Who care not, know not, think not what they do.
The tales that charm away the wakeful night
In Araby, romances; legends penned
For solace by dim light of monkish lamps;
Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised
By youthful squires; adventures endless, spun
By the dismantled warrior in old age,
Out of the bowels of those very schemes
In which his youth did first extravagate;
These spread like day, and something in the shape
Of these will live till man shall be no more.
Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,
And they must have their food. Our childhood sits,
Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne
That hath more power than all the elements.\textsuperscript{10}

The last two lines reflect Wordsworth's belief and frequent theme
that, as he succinctly states in the lyric "My heart leaps up,"
"the Child is father of the Man."\textsuperscript{11} Therefore, Wordsworth shares
Coleridge's belief that the origin of the imaginative faculty is
in childhood and that the faculty should be cultivated through
proper education.

Wordsworth's belief that "the Child is father of the Man" and his
treatment of the importance of childhood to the development of the
imaginative faculty in man may have contributed to Coleridge's most
significant poetic statement about the child. In his poem "The
Blossoming of the Solitary Date-tree," the poet states that the
imagination is "the buoyant child surviving in the man." This line
summarizes, as only the condensation of meaning in poetry can,
various aspects of the poet's view of childhood. First, it indicates with the adjective "buoyant" the lightheartedness and sprightliness of the "joy" which Coleridge sees in children. At the same time, "buoyant" suggests the condition of ecstasy usually described by the poet as being like a dance or drunkenness and resulting from the deep involvement which children enjoy with their natural surroundings. Second, Coleridge's use of the term "surviving" suggests that obstacles exist which make the presence of the imagination in a man remarkable. This, of course, indicates the theme of innocence and experience which is so important in Coleridge's treatment of childhood. Finally, by using such terms as "child" and "man," the line suggests the process of growth. Of course, the idea of organic development which takes its metaphoric expression from plant life permeates Coleridge's thinking about the nature of art, and the statement that the imagination is "the buoyant child surviving in the man" reveals that the poet believes the organic metaphor is useful as well for understanding the growth and success of artistic genius.

The idea of organic unity was thoroughly stated by Coleridge in Aids to Reflection:

Again; in the world we see everywhere evidences of a unity, which the component parts are so far from explaining, that they necessarily pre-suppose it as the cause and condition of their existing as those parts; or even of their existing at all. . . . That the root, stem, leaves, petals, &c. cohere to one plant, is owing to an antecedent power or principle in the seed, which existed before a single particle of the matters that constitute the size and visibility of the crocus, had been attracted from the surrounding soil, air, and moisture (S,I,150-151).
As applied to the achievement of the "unity" which is the sign of artistic genius, the seed out of which the imaginative power to create any entity grows is planted in childhood. Coleridge describes in a notebook entry an indication of the use of imaginative thought by his own son when he sees "Hartley, just able to speak a few words, making a fire-place of stones, with stones for fire.--four stones--fire-place--two stones--fire--/arbitrary symbols of the Imagination" (N,I,918). Once the seed of imaginative thought begins to grow, it must be nourished into manhood in spite of the pressures of reality in order to provide the capability for poetry: "The poet is one who carries the simplicity of childhood into the powers of manhood; who, with a soul unsubdued by habit, unshakled by custom, contemplates all things with the freshness and the wonder of a child; and, connecting with it the inquisitive powers of riper years, adds, as far as he can find knowledge, admiration; and, where knowledge no longer permits admiration, gladly sinks back again into the childlike feeling of devout wonder" (SC,II,148). Viewing the development of the imaginative power in this way, Coleridge uses the organic metaphor to distinguish Wordsworth, whom he sees as a successful artist, from himself, whose creative growth he believes has been stunted. In his notebook in 1801, Coleridge, by what he himself calls "a fantastic analogue," describes Wordsworth as "Fagus exaltata sylvatica," a towering beech tree, which is fertile because its "soil" is "rich" (N,I,926). In contrast, Coleridge describes himself as barren. He writes in 1798 to Poole to say that away from his bower he is a tree with "leafless boughs. The beings who know how to sympathize
with me are my foliage" (L.I,381), and the title for "The Blossoming of the Solitary Date-tree," a poem concerned directly with the poet's sense of creative failure, derives from, as the poet tells the reader in his preface to the poem, "a fact mentioned by Linnaeus, of a date-tree in a nobleman's garden which year after year had put forth a full show of blossoms, but never produced fruit, till a branch from another date-tree had been conveyed from a distance of some hundred leagues" (P,395n). In spite of the Hamletian sense of failure expressed in this poem and others, Coleridge continues to uphold the figure of the child as the model for imaginative activity. At times in his despair, Coleridge believes the talent for creativity can come only from being a "child of nature": "The gift of true Imagination, that capability of reducing a multitude into unity of effect, or by strong passion to modify series of thoughts into one predominant thought or feeling—those were faculties which might be cultivated and improved, but could not be acquired. Only such a man as possessed them deserved the title of poet a who nascitur non fit—he was that child of Nature, and not the creature of his own efforts" (SC,II,91). However, his more general view, expressed in the Biographia Literaria, is that recovering the sense and viewpoint of childhood can inspire "genius": "To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances, which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar . . . this is the character and privilege of genius, and one of the marks which distinguish genius from talents" (BL,II,59). Because in organic theory the part is contained within and contributes to the whole, Coleridge
throughout his work uses the logic of synecdoche to cite the child as the part to indicate the whole, artistic genius, and the power of the imagination. Thus, the image of the child in Coleridge's work is not only a symbol of innocence which opposes the pressures of reality brought on mankind by experience, it represents as well the condition of "joy" which makes possible genius and the function of the imagination.
Notes to Chapter III.


4 Poetical Works of Wordsworth, p. 738.


6 See Coleridge's remarks on his childhood reading below.

7 Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth: The Early Years (Oxford, 1957), I, 334-336. Moorman, pp. 333-335, discusses a view of education which contrasts sharply with that of the Wordsworths and Coleridge. Thomas Wedgwood believed that the child should be imprisoned indefinitely within a gray-walled nursery and deprived of contact not only with nature but all objects not deliberately presented to him by his teachers. Ironically, Wedgwood at one time thought that Wordsworth and Coleridge would be suitable superintendents for his proposed nursery.


Notes to Chapter III--Continued.

12 In the particular instance of "The Blossoming of the Solitary Date-tree," written in 1805, the "branch" from another "date-tree" which Coleridge needs to fertilize his creative being is the love of Sara Hutchinson. See next chapter.
Chapter IV.

The Maiden
While the condition of childhood represented to Coleridge the possibility for imaginative experience, the figure of the maiden meant to him ultimate knowledge of the divine. In a notebook entry of 1805, Coleridge made quite clear his association of the maiden with God:

The best, the truly lovely, in each & all is God. Therefore the truly Beloved is the symbol of God to whomever it is truly beloved by!—but it may become perfect & maintained lovely by the function of the two/ The Lover worships in his Beloved that final consummation(of itself which is)produced in his own soul by the action of the Soul of the Beloved upon it, and that final perfection of the Soul of the Beloved,(which is in part)the consequence of the reaction of his (so ameliorated & regenerated) Soul upon the Soul of his Beloved/ till each contemplates the Soul of the other as involving his own, both in its givings and its receivings, . . . and thus still keeping alive its outness, its self-oblivion united with Self-warmth, & still approximates to God! (N,II,2540).

In its "self-oblivion," therefore, the union of lovers seems to represent for Coleridge an ecstatic experience like that felt by children at play, but the full significance of the figure of the maiden did not come to Coleridge until he gained a full sense of the meaning of "beloved" from his relationship with Sara Hutchinson. Up to that point the poet's use of the figure of the maiden lacked an intense personal significance and merely fitted well into the myth of "joy" through the Platonic connection of the Priestesses of Bacchus with
poetic inspiration. The origins of Coleridge's use of a symbolic maiden is in an early poem in which he links together the idea of "joy," the figure of the maiden, and a quite conventional personification of Fancy. In later poems, the personification disappears to leave the figure of the joyous maiden as a symbol of the creative moment; the maiden at this point is a kind of "muse" for the poet. Finally, under the pressure of Coleridge's frustrated love for Sara Hutchinson, the figure of the maiden displaces the poetic focus of attention from other concerns like the bower or even the child to become the all-consuming center of the poet's interest. At this point, the maiden becomes fully integrated into the mythology of "joy" and embodies the poet's highest aspirations for transcendental experience. However, when the maiden comes to embody "joy," the figure is threatened with corruption and destruction like other emblems of the experience. The figure of the maiden, therefore, is no exception to the destructive aspect inherent in the Bacchus myth which supports Coleridge's artistic effort. As a result, Coleridge composes his most intriguing, "Christabel," amid the tension of ambivalent feelings toward the figure of the maiden.

Coleridge's use of the figure of the maiden begins with the poem "Lines: On an Autumnal Evening" written in 1793 as a revision of a draft called "Effusion at Evening" written the year before. The poem begins with the poet calling upon Fancy to halt her other flights and help him "dream up" a maiden to love. As one whose thoughts turn to marriage in describing "Spring" as "blushing, like a bride, from Hope's trim bower/She leapt," the poet in evoking
Fancy as his muse portrays himself as having received the rewards of education and ready to settle down with a maiden who to him will embody "joy":

Aid, lovely Sorceress! aid thy Poet's dream!  
With faery wand O bid the Maid arise,  
Chaste Joyance dancing in her bright-blue eyes;  
As erst when from the Muses' calm abode  
I came, with Learning's meed not unbestowed;  
When as she twin'd a laurel round my brow,  
And met my kiss, and half return'd my vow,  
O'er all my frame shot rapid my thrill'd heart,  
And every nerve confess'd the electric dart.

The poet's thought continues to be amorous as his muse, Fancy, responds and evokes for him a dream-maiden full of the joy he seeks: "O dear Deceit! I see the Maiden rise, / Chaste Joyance dancing in her bright-blue eyes!" To the tune of a lark's "high-soaring swells," the impassioned poet pursues the maiden through an imaginary forest until he catches her only "in moon-beams clad" and the violent chase gives way to a quiet moment when the two "list the warblings of the grove." In this manner, the poet celebrates his imaginary love, significantly connecting the maiden by his description with not only "joy" but also the figure of the child. He calls her an "infant Maid" created by the "wond'rous Alchemy of Heaven" and tells how "Love lights her smile--in Joy's red nectar dips/His myrtle flower, and plants it on her lips." Therefore, the girl of Coleridge's dreams in this early poem in some aspects already fits into the mythology of "joy," and it is not surprising when the poet proclaims his desire to make for her a bower. However, his method
in this instance has the fantasy of an erotic daydream as the poet imagines himself to be all things with which the maiden will be intimate;

O (have I sigh'd) were mine the wizard's rod,  
Or mine the power of Proteus, changeful God!  
A flower-entangled Arbour I would seem  
To shield my Love from Noontide's sultry beam;  
Or bloom a Myrtle, from whose od'rous boughs  
My Love might weave gay garlands for her brows.  
When Twilight stole across the fading vale,  
To fan my Love I'd be the Evening Gale;  
Mourn in the soft folds of her swelling vest;  
And flutter my faint pinions on her breast!  
On Seraph wing I'd float a Dream by night,  
To soothe my Love with shadows of delight:—  
Or soar aloft to be the Spangled Skies,  
And gaze upon her with a thousand eyes!

There is irony in the poet's vision by this point in the poem for Coleridge has manipulated a literary source, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, to the extent that he no longer appears as loving Adam wooing Eve in the garden but as lustful Satan assuming various protean shapes and using a dream for seduction. Consequently, after this moment of humorous self-appraisal which climaxes the erotic daydream, a Miltonic simile occurs which is strikingly irrelevant in the context. The poet awakes to the autumnal evening left only with the hope that he might eventually gain the "Infant Love," as he reiterates, about whom he has dreamed. He is left finally unloved and unmarried with only a memory of the maiden which keeps alive the poet's love even though it is described as being unfruitful.
"And Memory, with a Vestal's chaste employ/Unceasing feeds the lambent flame of joy!"

Perhaps what causes Coleridge to end his daydream in "Lines: On an Autumnal Evening" so abruptly is his true abhorrence of any sign of lust in human nature. The awkwardness of the conclusion of the vision suggests that the poet may have suddenly realized amid his poetic thought that his vision was more satanic than innocent for he had a strong sense of Original Sin and human lust. A notebook entry of 1803 acknowledges the evil in man and cites passionate dreams as a manifestation of it: "I will at least make the attempt to explain to myself the Origin of moral Evil from the streamy Nature of Association, which Thinking, Reason, curbs & rudders/how this comes to be so difficult/Do not the bad Passions in Dreams throw light & shew of proof upon this Hypothesis?--(N,I,1770). Coleridge's companion in Germany, Clement Carlyon, noted that the poet "disliked to see the arm of a German peasant, as often happened, locked in that of the woman who was walking with him. 'Where pure affection,' he remarked, 'predominates in the lover's breast, the fair lady's arm is allowed to be gently intertwined with his, thus seeming to claim the support due from him to her sex' (N,I,480n). In a notebook entry, Coleridge clearly reveals that he could make out of such matters a comparison of love to lust: "A fellow that puts his arm inside the Girls & so walks cuddling to her, is in lust with her--a fellow who walks with a girl in his arms, with a face of tenderness, but without pressing on her or perhaps looking on her, is in love perhaps--the first is certain--"(N,I,488). Because of his concern, Coleridge in a
letter puts human lust first among those things which would be destroyed by the Apocalypse: "The Terrors of the Almighty are the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the Fire that precede the still small voice of his Love. The pestilence of our lusts must be scattered, the strongly laid Foundations of our Pride blown up, & the stubble & chaff of our Vanities burnt, ere we can give ear to the inspeaking Voice of Mercy, "Why will ye die?" (L, I, 267). Therefore, in the way that he treats feelings of affection even in a youthful poem like "Lines: On an Autumnal Evening," the poet considers lust to be a force which threatens to corrupt the ideal maiden and to destroy the joy of her love. Coleridge even feared the presence of such corruption in his own marriage. He and Southey proposed marriage to the Fricker sisters in order to start the families necessary for their plan of founding the pantisocratic colony in America. Consequently, when the American scheme failed, Coleridge felt himself committed to Sara Fricker and wrote Southey, "I will do my Duty." The anticipated marriage, however, was feared by Coleridge as possibly being lustful and corrupt: "Love makes all things pure and heavenly like itself:--but to marry a woman whom I do not love--to degrade her, whom I call my Wife, by making her the Instrument of low Desire--and on the removal of a desultory Appetite, to be perhaps not displeased with her Absence!--Enough!--These Refinements are the wildering Fires, that lead me into Vice" (L, I, 145). As a result, from the beginning Coleridge saw within his own domestic arrangement love threatened by the lust he feared.

Yet, in spite of his misgivings Coleridge celebrates the idea of marriage and merges the figure of Sara Fricker with the girl of his dreams in poems written during the time of courtship and marriage in
1795. The poet sought in the union the pastoral and visionary values which had originally inspired the pantisocratic scheme and which would eventually lead to the bower at Nether Stowey. Ideally, Sara Fricker was the maiden of romance for whom the poet had longed in "Lines: On an Autumnal Evening." She was the Eve with whom the Adamic poet would cultivate a paradisical garden as the poem "To the Rev. W. J. Hort While Teaching a Young Lady Some Song-Tunes on his Flute," the lady being Sara Fricker, makes clear. The sound of the instrument seems to the listening poet like the song of Hope, "that soars on sky-lark wing," a sound similar to that heard by the poet in his earlier vision while pursuing the imaginary maiden. Now, however, the notes inspire in the poet thoughts of a real "chaste-eyed Maiden mild" as his intended wife, to whom the poet makes promises which incorporate pastoral and pantisocratic notions:

In Freedom's UNDIVIDED dell,
Where Toil and Health with mellow'd Love shall dwell,
    Far from folly, far from men,
    In the rude romantic glen,
    Up the cliff, and thro' the glade,
    Wandering with the dear-lov'd maid,
    I shall listen to the lay,
    And ponder on thee far away
Still, as she bids those thrilling notes aspire
    ('Making my fond attuned heart her lyre'),
    Thy honour'd form, my Friend! shall reappear
    And I will thank thee with a raptur'd tear.

In this poem, then, marriage to Sara promises the poet the chance to found a place of "joy," and he, therefore, connects the figure of his wife with a symbolic element associated with the dream maiden which
is always a sign of Dionysian experience, the music created either by a singing bird or a lyre or both. Coleridge's "To the Nightingale" clusters these images around the figure of Sara Fricker. Addressing the singing bird as "Sister of love-lorn Poets, Philomel!," the poet explains that though he has always delighted in the bird's song he has found sweeter music in the maiden who he is to marry:

'Most musical, most melancholy' Bird!  
That all thy soft diversities of tone,  
Tho' sweeter far than the delicious airs  
That vibrate from a white-armed Lady's harp,  
What time the languishment of lonely love  
Melts in her eye, and heaves her breast of snow,  
Are not so sweet as is the voice of her,  
My Sara--best beloved of human kind!  
When breathing the pure soul of tenderness,  
She thrills me with the Husband's promis'd name!

In the "Eolian Harp," the first version of which was composed just after his marriage, it is Coleridge's pleasure in his "pensive Sara" and the moment of harmony he shares with her in their honeymoon cottage at Clevedon that carries his poetic thoughts to the wind-harp and the speculations which result from considering it metaphorically. That having a maiden and the condition of marriage made the poet feel "joy" and inspired his imaginative power is confirmed by a letter which Coleridge wrote to Poole very shortly after the union: "On Sunday Morning I was married...The thought gave me a tinge of melancholy to the solemn Joy, which I felt--united to the woman, whom I love best of all created Beings.--We are settled--nay--quite domesticated at Clevedon--Our comfortable Cot!--I--!...
The prospect around us is perhaps more various than any in the kingdom—Mine Eye glutonizes.—The Sea—the distant Islands!—the opposite Coasts!—I shall assuredly write Rhymes—let the nine Muses prevent it, if they can—" I, I, 160).

Marriage to one who represented to him the girl of his dreams did indeed inspire Coleridge for the two years following his union with Sara Fricker were the most productive of his poetic career. However, except for a few poems written at the time of the marriage, the figure of Sara Fricker herself disappears from Coleridge's poetic consideration. A maiden who represents "joy" and inspires creativity remains, but she is an abstract figure who is not the center of Coleridge's loving attention. She is, rather, like the maiden in "Lines: On an Autumnal Evening," a fictional figure of romance taken from the Arabian Nights or Spenser. This figure appears in "The Nightingale" as a surrogate for the experience of "joy" and as a model for the kind of experience the poet wants his own son to know. As presented in the poem the maiden is surrounded by the usual symbolic elements which herald a vision of "joy": moonlight, singing birds, and the music of harps:

A most gentle Maid,
Who dwelleth in her hospitable home
Hard by the castle, and at latest eve
(Even like a Lady vowed and dedicate
To something more than Nature in the grove)
Glides through the pathways; she knows all their notes,
That gentle Maid! and oft, a moment's space,
What time the moon was lost behind a cloud,
Hath heard a pause of silence; till the moon
Emerging, hath awakened earth and sky
With one sensation, and those wakeful birds
Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy,
As if some sudden gale had swept at once
A hundred airy harps! And she hath watched
Mary a nightingale perch giddily
On blossom twig still swinging from the breeze,
And to that motion tinge his wanton song
Like tipsy joy that reels with tossing head.

Being "like a Lady vowed and dedicate/To something more than Nature
in the grove" and as a model for educating his son in Nature, the
figure of the maiden is treated by the poet like that of a "child
of nature." Hence, it is clear that at times the two symbols, the
maiden and the child, merge in Coleridge's mind for both are useful
to the poet as surrogates of the visionary experience.

In "Kubla Khan," Coleridge's most abstract treatment of the
figure, the maiden functions like a muse to inspire poetic effort.
The poet's description of a paradisial garden threatened by "voices
prophesying war"--the state of Xanadu is like the poet's own bower
as described in "Fears in Solitude" written the same year as "Kubla
Khan"--breaks off abruptly, and the poetic thought changes to an
effort to inspire again the vision. As if in answer to the poet's
need to sustain his presentation of Xanadu, a maiden appears. She is
a "damsel with dulcimer" whose effect and associations in the poet's
mind are those of a muse. Like the maiden in "The Nightingale," the
image of the damsel seems to occur to the poet out of some obscure
source or combination of sources in his reading of romantic literature:
A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abysinnian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.

The poem continues with the poet expressing his belief that if he could revive within his own being the music which marks the creative power of the remembered maiden he could complete the poetic effort he has begun. As in the earlier "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," Coleridge hypothesizes on experience of "joy" for himself in completing the description of Xanadu, except that in this instance the experience is to occur in the future rather than in the past:

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!

Maintaining the subjunctive mood of his hypothesis, Coleridge in the concluding lines of the poem describes how creative success would give to him as a poet a moment of ecstacy. He foresees the warnings of those about him who would find him in a state very similar to that of the youthful and joyful Chatterton who in the "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" is described as

floating high in air,
Glitter the sunny Visions fair,
His eyes dance rapture, and his bosom glows.
In this way, the poet would finally be associated with the Priestesses of Bacchus described by Plato as drunk and "full of the God":

And all who heard should see them 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,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

In "Kubla Khan," therefore, the figure of the maiden helps the poet hypothesize for himself an experience of "joy," even though, as usual, the poet cannot immediately attain his goal. As the poet's inspiration, the "damsel" herself has, of course, achieved the ecstatic state of one of Bacchus's maidsens through her "symphony and song." She has "drunk the milk of Paradise." Coleridge, however, cannot finish his song and reach the ideal state of the maiden; hence, the remembered "damsel" remains for him only a muse upon whom he tries to rely for poetic inspiration as a surrogate for the experience of "joy."

The culmination of Coleridge's understanding of the figure of the maiden came when he met and fell in love with Wordsworth's sister-in-law in 1799. After that time his love for Sara Hutchinson became the sole center of Coleridge's thought in every way including poetic. As he acknowledged in 1810 after nearly a decade of enduring his affliction to the point of idolatry: "My love of Sara is not so much in my Soul, as my soul in it. It is my whole Being wrapt into one Desire, all the Hopes & Fears, Joys & Sorrows, all the Powers, Vigor,
and Faculties of my Spirit abridged into (one) perpetual Inclination. . . .
You are the God within me, even as the best & most religious men have
called their Conscience the God within them. But you, tho' existing
to my senses, have ever abode within me—you have been; & you alone
have been, my Conscience—\(^2\) As a result of his idolatrous and over-
powering love, Sara Hutchinson takes Sara Fricker's place as the
maiden in the mythology of "joy." Sara Hutchinson is associated with
the figure of the child when the poet describes "the childish sim-
plicity of her smiles"\(^3\) and with the figure of the singing bird in
"Sara Hutchinson's Poétè," the notebook in which she transcribed
poems from her admiring friend:

But the lark is so brimful of gladness & Love,
The green Earth below him, the Blue Sky above,
That he sings & he sings, & for ever sings he,
I love my Love, & my Love loves me!
No wonder that He's full of Joy to the brim
When he loves his Love, & his Love loves him!\(^4\)

In his notebook, the passionate Coleridge even uses a metaphor of
marriage, that which he had celebrated at the time of his union with
Sara Fricker, to describe his relationship with Sara Hutchinson. He
writes, addressing his beloved directly as was his custom in the
notebooks, that, "every living atom that composed him was wedded and
faithful to you" and that she was "In short, a Wife, in the purest,
holiest sense of the word--yea, even tho' Fate or Fortune should have
forbidden the outward and sensible sacrament of our union, and have
denied us to be, or to have the chance of becoming the parents of the
same children . . . .\(^5\) Associated was she with the ideas inherent
in the concept of "joy," the child, the singing bird, and the condition of marriage, Sara Hutchinson in the years of his suffering love represented to Coleridge the goal of his personal and artistic quest. Therefore, Coleridge wrote, once again addressing his beloved: "I know, you love me!—My reason knows it; my heart feels it/yet still let your eyes, your hands tell me/ still say, o often & often say, 'My beloved! I love you'/indeed I love you/ for why should not my ears, and all my outward Being share in the joy—the fuller my inner Being is of the sense, the more my outward Organs yearn & crave for it—O bring my whole nature into balance and harmony."^6

As the embodiment of what he sought in his search for "joy," Sara Hutchinson became a symbol which haunted Coleridge's mind:

"Every single thought, every image, every perception was no sooner itself than it became you by some wish that you saw it and felt it or had—or by some recollection that it suggested—some way or other it always became a symbol of you. I played with them as with your shadow, Shakespeare has so profoundly expressed it in his Sonnet."^7

As symbol, Sara was often designated by Coleridge by the anagram which he made of her name, "Asra." "Asra" took over the role of the maiden who had always played an important role in Coleridge's poetic thought, and, with the poet in love, the figure came to govern the whole pattern of his mental associations. "I began strictly and as matter of fact to examine," notes Coleridge, "that subtle Vulcanian Spider-web Net of Steel—strong as Steel.yet subtle as the Ether, in which my soul flutters inclosed with the Idea of your's—to pass rapidly as in a catalogue thro' the Images only, exclusive of the
thousand Thoughts that possess the same force, which never fail
instantly to awake into vivid and flame the forever and ever Feeling
of you..

Because she is unavailable to him except as the maiden
"Asra," the poet has amorous daydreams about Sara which he records
in his notebooks: "Prest to my bosom & felt there--it was quite
dark. I looked intensely toward her face--& sometimes I saw it--
so vivid was the spectrum, that it had almost all its natural
sense of distance & outness--except indeed that, feeling & all, I
felt her as part of my being--twas all spectral--But when I could
not absolutely see her, no effort of fancy could bring out even the
least resemblance of her face" (N,I,985). Sara is "Asra" is a
spectral-lover like the girl of the poet's dreams in "Lines: On
an Autumnal Evening." At the same time, like the damsel in "Kubla
Khan," she is a muse for the poet, a figure who appears to Coleridge
in his need to provide an organizing center for further creative
activity. In this function, the figure of the maiden continually
haunts Coleridge: "If I have not heard from you very recently," he
writes, addressing Sara, "& if the last letter had not happened to be
full of explicit Love & Feeling, then I conjure up Shadows into Sub-
stances--& am miserable/Misery conjures up other Forms, & binds them
into Tales & Events--activity is always Pleasure--the Tale grows
pleasanter--& at length you come to me/you are by my bed side, in some
lonely Inn, where I lie deserted--there you have found me--there you
are weeping over me--Dear, dear, Woman!" (N,I,1601). The result of
Coleridge's concern with the image of the maiden in his dreams is that
he is inspired to poetic effort. After meeting Sara Hutchinson Coleridge
records in his notebook his intention "to write a series of Love Poems—truly Sapphic, save that they shall have a large Interfusion of moral Sentiment & calm Imagery on Love in all the moods of the mind—Philosophic, fantastic, in moods of high enthusiasm, of simple Feeling, of mysticism, of Religion—/comprise in it all the practice, & all the philosophy of Love—" (N11,106h). Like most of his projects Coleridge never wrote a group of poems which represented the unity of a "series." However, his love for Sara and the symbol of "Asra" which arose from it to serve as the center of his poetic thought instigated a number of poetic creations involving the figure of the maiden.

Coleridge proclaimed his love for Sara Hutchinson in a number of poems which either directly or indirectly concern "Asra." To the poet, these poems represented "a curious and the fanciful yet strictly true and actual, exemplification" of his mental "associative force" dealing with the symbol which stands in the midst of the "subtle Vulcanian Spider-web Net of Steel" of his mind.10 Addressing Asra, Coleridge sometimes in his poetry says "you shaped my thoughts" (P,402) or "you fashion me within" (P,499). Coleridge found a model for his act of "exemplification," of turning "Shadows into Substances" as he also described the creative effort, in his own poem "Lewti" which was composed before the poet's first meeting with Sara Hutchinson. "Many of my Instances recalled to my mind my little poem on Lewti," he wrote later of the Asra Poems.11 "Lewti" begins with the longing poet, the characteristic voice for the later Asra Poems, describing his effort to escape from the "Image of Lewti" which in his despair and desire for his love seems "treacherous" to him. Yet, he experiences "such joy"
from thoughts of Lewti that the poet finally allows himself to envision or dream about his beloved's bower. Distinguished by a singing nightingale and the presence of jasmine which Coleridge in other poems associates with such a place, the bower surely promises loving "joy":

I know the place where Lewti lies,
When silent night has closed her eyes:
   It is a breezy jasmine-bower,
The nightingale sings o'er her head:
   Voice of the Night! had I the power
That leafy labyrinth to thread,
And creep, like thee, with soundness tread,
I then might view her bosom white
Heaving lovely to my sight,
As these two swans together heave
On the gently-swelling wave.  

As a result of his dream, the poet no longer despairs for his love, but hoping that she has seen him in a dream, concludes that "Tomorrow Lewti may be kind."

For the Asra Poems, "Lewti" provides conventional elements: the voice of the poet, confused feelings of hope and despair, the vision of the bower, and the "joy" which the maiden and her bower promise. In simple expressions of his feeling like "To Asra" and "Separation," the poet addresses the maiden directly to tell her of his exhilaration or of his despair. In more complex proclamations of his affection, Coleridge clearly merges "Asra" not only with the maiden in "Lewti" but with the figure in even earlier poems. The loved one is these poems is often designated by names other than "Sara" or "Asra" for as the maiden in the brief poem "Names" replies
when the poet asks what to call her, "Beloved, what are names but air? Choose thou whatever suits the line." For instance, "Genevieve" is the poem "Love" is an Asra figure who is envisioned in a state similar to that of the maiden in "The Nightingale." Typical of the Asra Poems, the poem begins with the poet longing for his love whom he soon envisions. She is imagined in the moonlight near a gothic ruin:

Oft in my waking dreams do I
Live o'er again that happy hour,
When midway on the mount I lay,
Beside the ruined tower.

The moonshine, stealing o'er the scene
Has blended with the lights of eve;
And she was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Genevieve!

In this instance, the vision of the maiden may have been inspired by real life for before he wrote the poem Coleridge visited with Sara Hutchinson and other friends an old church which had a statue of an armed knight like that which inspires the lover's tale (P,331n); nevertheless, the maiden's state is very like that described in "The Nightingale." Seeing her leaning against the statue of "the armed knight," the poet sings as his "hope" and "joy" an "old rude song" in an effort to woo her. Occurring as part of a vision or dream, the effect of the song is more successful than the poems of affection which Coleridge wrote to Sara Hutchinson and which she recorded in her notebook. At the end of the poet's song, Genevieve is delighted and in love, and the result is the promise of marriage:
I calmed her fears, and she was calm,
And told her love with virgin pride;
And so I won my Genevieve,
My bright and beauteous Bride.

In another of the Asra Poems, "The Keepsake," the result of the poet's pursuit of the maiden is also the promise of marriage. As in "Lines: On an Autumnal Evening," the poet follows the maiden "Emmeline" with "her full bosom's joyous restlessness" through the woods. He finds her to his "joy" in a natural bower:

There, in that bower where first she owned her love,
And let me kiss my own warm tear of joy
From off her glowing cheek, she sate and stretched
The silk upon the frame, and worked her name
Between the Moss-Rose and Forget-me-not.

The poet gets from Emmeline a kiss which is a "keepsake" signifying her promise that "She would resign one half of that dear name,/And own thenceforth no other name but mine!" The bower as a place of "joy" is also celebrated by Coleridge in "A Day-Dream" which is finally, in effect, a Conversation Poem. In the poem, the poet daydreams about a moment in the past, probably real to Coleridge, in the company of Sara Hutchinson and Dorothy Wordsworth:

My eyes make pictures, when they are shut:
I see a fountain, large and fair,
A willow and a ruined hut,
And thee, and me and Mary there.
O Mary! make thy gentle lap our pillow!
Bend o'er us, like a bower, my beautiful green willow!

The pastoral moment occurred during the day, but it is nighttime when
the poet awakens to celebrate the fact that he is still united with his friends, particularly Asra whom he addresses:

'Twas day! but now few, large, and bright,
The stars are round the crescent moon!
And now it is a dark warm night,
The balmiest of the month of June!
A glow-worm fall'n, and on the marge remounting
Shines, and its shadow shines, fit stars for our sweet fountain.

O ever—ever be thou blest!
For dearly, Asra! love I thee!
This brooding warmth across my breast,
This depth of tranquil bliss—ah, me!
Font, tree and shed are gone, I know not whither,
But in one quiet room we three are still together.

At this point the poem becomes a Conversation Poem celebrating the poet's friendship with his companions, but it is evident that the real impetus for the poem, like so many others of this time in Coleridge's life, is his desire to know the "joy" of Sara Hutchinson's love.

Except for the singularly important "Dejection: An Ode" which will be discussed in a later chapter, the longest and most interesting of the Asra Poems is "The Picture." The poem is one of Coleridge's most unusual for it is a lengthy work in the ironic mode and, occurring as it does as one of the poems in "Sara Hutchinson's Poets," may have been conceived by Coleridge in a playful moment to tease his beloved friend. A comic version of "Lewti," "The Picture" is subtitled "The Lover's Resolution" referring to the poet's claim of having escaped from the bonds of love. The irony of the sub-title becomes increasingly more evident as the poem progresses. Wandering alone in
in the woods, the poet's way is absurdly difficult and dangerous:

Through weeds and thorns, and matter underwood
I force my way; now climb, and now descend
0'er rocks, or bare or mossy, with wild foot
Crushing the purple whorts; while oft unseen,
Hurrying along the drifted forest-leaves,
The scared snake rustles.

What the poet claims inspires his effort is the "new joy" which he has gained from freeing himself from the suffering of love:

A new joy
Lovely as light, sudden as summer gust,
And gladsome as the first-born of the spring,
Beckons me on, or follows from behind,
Playmate, or guide! The master-passion quelled,
I feel that I am free.

In spite of his claim of freedom from love, the poet finds his wooded path a good place for envisioning the figure of a "love-lorn man," "a Gentle lunatic," who is "sick in soul" and haunts the poet's thoughts. In a quick change of mood, however, the poet chastises the image for contaminating the scene:

But hence, fond wretch! breathe not contagion here!
No myrtle-walks are these: these are no groves
Where Love dare loiter!

The poet in his "hour of triumph" over love celebrates his natural surroundings; nevertheless, amorous images of a maiden intrude into his thought in spite of his effort to negate them. He describes the breeze as one that
never raised
The tendril ringlets from the maiden's brow,
And the blue, delicate veins above her cheek;
Ne'er played the wanton--never half disclosed
The maiden's snowy bosom, scattering thence
Eye-poisons for some love-distempered youth.

He finds a pool that did not "e'er reflect the stately virgin's robe,/
The face, the form divine, the downcast look/Contemplative." At the
same time, the poet cannot ignore the image of the "love-lorn" youth
which haunts him; consequently, the poet tells the youth that he
wastes his time "In mad love-yearning by the vacant brook." Then,
the poet praises at length his "chosen haunt" where he is "eman-
cipate/From Passion's dreams, a freeman, and alone." The irony of
the poem has been developing as the poet in spite of his "resolution"
has not quite been able to rid his mind of images of the youth and
the maiden, and the ironic effect is complete when the poet's lyrical
celebration of his freedom is suddenly broken off with the exclamation,
"but what is this?" He has discovered "a curious picture" which des-
troys his resolution and transforms the poet into the figure of the
"love-lorn" youth who has haunted his thoughts from the beginning.
As a result, the poet pours forth praise of his own love Isabel
which includes an association of her with the figure of the child:

0 Isabel!
Daughter of genius! stateliest of our maids!
More beautiful than whom Alcaeus wooed,
The Lesbian woman of immortal song!
0 child of genius! stately, beautiful,
And full of love to all.
The poet tries feebly to restrain himself by asking

    Why should I yearn
    To keep the relique? 'twill but idly feed
    The passion that consumes me,

but, at the end of the poem, he admits that his real reason for
being in the woods is to pursue the maiden Isabel: "She cannot blame
me that I followed her; And I may be her guide the long wood through."
The "playmate, or guide" of the poet, therefore, has not been, as he
first claimed, a "new joy" but, rather, an old one. The irony of the
poem is that the poet from the beginning has been trying to delude
himself about his love and his pastoral purpose. That the pursuit of
the maiden represents for Coleridge a pursuit of "joy" is confirmed
by a passage originally included at the beginning of "The Picture"
to describe that which motivates the poet's wanderings in the woods:

    Joy lifts thy Spirit, joy attunes thy voice,
    To thee do all things live from pole to pole,
    Their life the eddying of thy living soul!
    O simple Spirit, guided from above,
    O lofty Poet, full of life and love,
    Brother and Friend of my devoutest choice,
    Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice!

This passage was deleted by Coleridge from "The Picture" for use in
his "Dejection: An Ode" in which the significance of "joy" is fully
presented.

    In his "rude draught" for the poem "The Blossoming of the Soli-
tary Date-tree," Coleridge wrote: "The finer the sense for the beauti-
ful and the lovely, and the fairer and lovelier the object presented to
the sense; the more exquisite the individual's capacity of joy, and
the more ample his means and opportunities of enjoyment, the more
heavily will he feel the ache of solitariness, the more unsub-
stantial becomes the feast spread around him. What matters it,
whether in fact the viands and the ministering graces are shadowy
or real, to him who has not hand to grasp nor arms to embrace him?" 
(P,396). With this view, then, Coleridge maintained his dream of
the maiden who promised "joy" until late in life. In the poem
"Constancy to an Ideal Object," written possibly as late as 1825,
Coleridge celebrates his dream because it is "the only constant
in a world of change" even though he accepts the fact that it
"liv'st but in the brain." The poem reiterates once again the theme
of all the Asra Poems, the appeal to the maiden to join him in his
bower which associated with the moon and a singing bird signifies a
place of "joy" where the poet is safe from deep fears:

I momzn to thee and say--'Ah! loveliest friend!
That this the meed of all my toils might be,
To have a home, an English home, and thee!'
Vain repetition! Home and Thou are one.
The peacefull'st cot, the moon shall shine upon,
Lulled by the thrush and wakened by the lark,
Without thee were but a becalmed bark,
Whose Helmsman on an ocean waste and wide
Sits mute and pale his mouldering helm beside.

Coleridge is almost ready to admit that the real maiden, Sara Hutchinson,
has eluded his pursuit and that the poetic maiden is now just a poetic
image no longer supported by life:
An image with a glory round its head;
The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
Nor knows he makes the shadow, he pursues!

Near the end of his life, the poet questions his dream again in the verse dialogue "Phantom or Fact." The "Author" describes a dream he has about a maiden who visits his bedside and represents love to him—the dream is that which Coleridge records much earlier in life specifying Sara as the visitant, and his "Friend" asks, "Is't history? vision? or an idle song?" The aging "Author" is no longer quite sure for all life has come to seem to him to have the quality of a dream.

The distinction between art and life blurs to his fading vision:

Call it a moment's work (and such it seems)
This tale's a fragment from the life of dreams;
But say, that years matur'd the silent strife,
And 'tis a record from the dream of life.

Finally, near the end, in 1833, Coleridge wrote "Love's Apparition and Evanishment" in which the figures of Hope and Love described as bridesmaid and bride for whom the poet had searched for so long through the Asra Poems die:

O genial Hope,
Love's elder sister! thee did I behold,
Drest as a bridesmaid, but all pale and cold,
With roseless cheek, all pale and cold and dim,
   Lie lifeless at my feet!
And then came Love, a sylph in bridal trim,
   And stood beside my seat;
She bent, and kiss'd her sister's lips,
   As she was wont to do;--
Alas! 'twas but a chilling breath
Woke just enough of life in death
To make Hope die anew.

The maiden of Love has finally killed hope, and, as the poet adds in his "L'Envoy," "there is no resurrection for... Love." In causing death rather than "joy," the Asra figure in this late poem finally succumbs to the destructive force inherent in Coleridge's myth of "joy."

Coleridge always displays a strong fear of evil and lust, and the girl of his dreams is easily transformed at times in his mind and art into a nightmarish figure of "joy" infected by lust. The poet's sleep was frequently troubled by the recurrent image of a menacing female pursuer who threatened Coleridge not only with seduction but physical violence. Entries in the notebooks associate the perverse maiden with Coleridge's youthful experiences at Christ's Hospital and Cambridge, but, perhaps, the figure originated from a disturbing relationship between the poet and his mother. Coleridge wrote in a letter to his brother in 1794 of the "sore travail of her who bore me--intolerable Images of horror! They haunt my sleep--they enfever my dreams!" (L, I, 63). However, the source for the image of the female pursuer which the notebook entries more obviously verify is experience with prostitutes at Cambridge and the poet's resulting shame and fear of venereal disease. In one entry, the poet records a "frightful Dream" of a "Woman" attempting to pull out his right eye (N, I, 848), and in another entry he tells of being "carried back to bed, & was struggling up against an unknown impediment, some woman on the other side about
to relieve me" (N, I, 1649). The single figure can have Satan's pro-
tean quality and multiply into a variety of forms:

I was followed up & down by a frightful pale woman
who, I thought, wanted to kiss me, & had the property
of giving a shameful Disease by breathing in the face/
& again I dreamt that a figure of a woman of a gigan-
tic Height, dim & indefinite & smokelike appeared--&
that I was forced to run up toward it--& then it changed
to a stool--& then appeared again in another place--&
again I went up in great fright--& it changed to some
other common thing--yet, I felt no surprize (N, I, 1250).

The role of the nightmare figure in Coleridge's literary myth of
"joy" is strongly suggested in a remarkable dream recorded in the
notebooks which connects the maiden to Bacchus and to the idea of
a pastoral escape to a garden. Coleridge in the dream is pursued
by the usual menacing female, but in this instance the maiden joins
a youth who looks like Bacchus and who threatens the poet with
violence. The boy's threat appears to be that of homosexual play
because of Coleridge's close linking of this dream with another in
which a homosexual act involving the poet occurs:

Wednesd. Morn. 3 O'clock, Dec. 13, 1803. Bad dreams/How
often of a sort/at the university--a mixture of Xts Hospital
Church/escapes there--lose myself/trust to two People, one
Maim'd, one unknown/insulted by a fat sturdy Boy of about 14,
like a Bacchus/who dabs a flannel in my face, (or rather soft
hair brown Shawl stuff) (was this a flannel Night-cap?) he
attacks me/I call to my Friends--they come & join in the
Hustle against me--out rushes a university Harlot, who insists
on my going with her/offer her a shilling--seem to get away a
moment/when she overtakes me again/I am not to go to another
while she is "biting"—these were her words—this will not satisfy her/I sit down on a broad open plain of rubbish with rails & a street beyond & call out—whole Troops of people in sight—now I cannot awake. —Wind & the τα αἰχμαλώτικα περιοδία & somewhat painful— but what wonderful wandering thro' the Hall, with bad Portraits of the Emperor of Russia, the Hall belonging to the E.—the wanderings thro' Streets, the noticing the Complex side of a noble Building, & saying to my Guides—"it will be long before I shall find my way here—I must endeavor to remember this"/the turning up a Lane with wall & magnificent Trees (like a quiet Park-garden wall) . . . The Harlot in white with her open Bosom certainly was the Cambridge girl, (Sal Hall)—One thing noticeable in an after Dream/a little weak contemptible wretch offering his Services, & I (as before afraid to refuse them) literally & distinctly remembered a former Dream, in which I had suffered most severely, this wretch leaping on me, & grasping my Scrotum /—I therefore most politely assured him of the 3 guineas, but I meant only to get rid of him /—Again too the slight pain in my side produced a fellow knuckling me there/ (N.I,1726).

By portraying the poet molested by a Bacchic youth and pursued by a whorish maiden, Coleridge's dream expresses the destructive aspect of the myth of "joy."

The nightmare maiden is manifested first poetically in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and, then, in "The Three Graves," a poem very similar in theme to "Christabel." In "Mariner," the "Spectre-Woman" as she is called in the gloss, or "Life-in-Death" as she is called in the poem, reflects the evil and corruption which the pursuing maiden of Coleridge's dreams embodies. The whorish
figure threatening infection who appears to the Mariner aboard a skeleton ship after he has shot the albatross heralds the great suffering and horror which he has caused for his shipboard world:

And is that Woman all her crew?  
Is that a DEATH? and are there two?  
Is DEATH that woman's mate?  

Her lips were red, her locks were free,  
Her locks were yellow as gold:  
Her skin was as white as leprosy,  
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,  
Who thickens man's blood with cold.

The figure of the perverse maiden is also the agent of a curse in "The Three Graves" which Coleridge and Wordsworth wrote in collaboration. In Wordsworth's half, the first two parts, the poet tells of a mother who becomes enamoured of her future son-in-law, Edward, and, after making every effort to get him to transfer his affection away from her daughter, Mary, to herself and after being ridiculed for her effort curses both her own child and the lover. As a result, Mary and Edward flee to the house of their friend Ellen. Eventually the lovers marry and create a bower for themselves. Coleridge takes up the ballad to tell of the mother's curse on Ellen as she kneels in church. With her belief that "God's good, and what care I?", Ellen dismisses the "wicked woman's curse."

However, the affect of the curse is to pervert and destroy the loving relationship of Ellen, Mary, and Edward. Edward suddenly finds that he loves equally both his wife and his friend, and the women sense his dilemma:
And in the moment of his prayers
He loved them both alike:
Yea, both sweet names with one sweet joy
Upon his heart did strike!

He reach'd his home, and by his looks
They saw his inward strife:
And they clung round him with their arms,
Both Ellen and his wife.

And Mary could not check her tears,
So on his breast she bowed;
Then frenzy melted into grief,
And Edward wept aloud.

Dear Ellen did not weep at all,
But closelier did she cling,
And turned her face and looked as if
She saw some frightful thing.

What Ellen sees anticipates the evil jealously brought on her by the mother's curse. Ellen, consequently, is mentally haunted by the "frightful thing," and Edward is fearful of the mirth with which she tries to hide her feelings. Finally, the "frightful thing" takes shape in Ellen's jealous words to Mary:

She felt them coming, but no power
Had she the words to smother;
And with a kind of shriek she cried,
'O Christ! you're like your mother!'

In this moment of evil the sanctity of marriage and the happiness of bower are shattered, and Ellen, Edward, and Mary are haunted from that moment by thoughts corrupted as a result of the evil curse. Finally all three are driven mad and die.
"The Three Graves" seems to support the suggestion of Coleridge's letter to his brother that the origin of his "intolerable Images of Horror" is in his relationship with his mother as a child. Edward Bostetter claims that "it seems evident that evil and sexual aggression by women are identified in Coleridge's mind, and sexual relations become, for him, a perversion of the mother-child relation." This pattern finds confirmation in "Christabel" which is a rather thorough study by Coleridge of the values of love and lust represented to him by contrasting figures of the maiden. Christabel and Geraldine embody the qualities of the two maidens who haunt Coleridge's dreams; the first is ideal, the second, nightmarish. When the poem begins, the ideal maiden, Christabel, is portrayed finding solitude for thoughts of her absent lover in the woods near the castle of her father, Sir Leoline. Posed like the maiden of romance in "The Nightingale," Christabel is a "child of nature" associated with singing birds and moonlight. In this instance, however, the associations seem to hint vaguely of danger. The birds are owls, not the more melodious larks and nightingales of other poems, and their song may foreshadow betrayal by awakening a "crowing cock." The moonlight is threatened with extinction by a thin grey cloud. That against which the signs of danger warn the "child of nature" is meeting Geraldine. The mysterious Geraldine appears to be an innocent maiden like Christabel when she is discovered in the woods dressed in white, but her presence evokes hints of the evil associated in superstition with witches and vampires. She is too weak to pass into the castle without being assisted over the threshold by a resident, Christabel, yet once inside
she immediately regains her strength. Christabel's praise of the Virgin for the rescue seems to distress Geraldine who replies, "Alas, alas! . . . I cannot speak for weariness." As Geraldine passes through the castle the watchdog moans and the dying fire spurts up as if to suggest the presence of a demonic being. However, throughout the early part of the poem Geraldine's nature remains a mystery; a sense of evil is simply suggested by the signs which accompany her presence. But, when Geraldine undresses to join Christabel in bed, there is a moment like that in "The Three Graves" when the cursed Ellen "saw some frightful thing" which confirms Geraldine's evil. In this instance, as in "The Three Graves," Coleridge leaves the image of evil undiscerned:

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
And slowly rolled her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud,
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast:
Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side—
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

As a "sight to dream of, not to tell" Geraldine at this moment in the poem is defined as the night-mare maiden, and she has the protean quality associated by the poet with the satanic figure of lust and corruption. Critics have proposed Geraldine's appearance to be that of various predatory and supernatural creatures, particularly the vampire and werewolf, but obviously Coleridge intended the
appearance of evil to remain elusive as in his dreams in which the
menacing maiden took various forms. However, a hint of Coleridge's
concept of the maiden is provided by a manuscript correction for the
poem in which Geraldine's evil side is described as "dark & rough
as the Sea-Wolf's hide."17 This conception might have come from
Coleridge's reading of Tooke's _Panteon_ in which the figure of Scylla,
a daughter of Neptune's son Phorcus, is described as resembling a
woman in her upper parts and a serpent and a wolf in her lower parts.18
Tooke's interpretation of Scylla certainly agrees with Coleridge's
own view of the nightmare maiden for he writes: "Lust, like Scylla,
engages unwary Passengers by the Beauty and Pomp of her Outside,
and when they are entangled in her Snare, she tortures, vexes, tor-
ments, and disquiets them with Rage and Fury, which exceed the Mad-
ness of Dogs, or the Ravenousness of Wolves."19 The serpentine
quality of a Scylla-like Geraldine emerges in Part II of the poem, and
it is prepared for in "The Conclusion to Part I" when the relation-
ship of the two maidens is described as that of mother and child:

O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,
The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?
And lo! the worker of these harms,
That holds the maiden in her arms,
Seems to slumber still and mild,
As a mother with her child.

The image of mother and child has been anticipated earlier in the
poem by Christabel telling Geraldine of her mother's death in child-
birth and of her longing for her mother's presence. Consequently, as
she sleeps with Geraldine, Christabel dreams smilingly of her mother:
She hath a vision sweet.
What if her guardian spirit 'twere,
What if she knew her mother near?

Therefore, Part I of the poem concludes with the "child of nature,"
Christabel, in the arms of the mysterious Geraldine who in Part II
will show her nature to be like that of the lustful mother in
"The Three Graves" who perverts loving relationships through jealousy.

The image which dominates Part II of "Christabel" and defines the
relationship of the two maidens is one which Coleridge usually
associates with evil, the serpent. In a notebook entry, Coleridge says:
"I have never loved Evil for it's own sake; no! nor ever sought pleasure
for it's own sake, but only as the means of escaping from pains that
coiled round my mental powers, as a serpent around the body & wings
of an Eagle! My sole sensuality was not to be in pain!—." 20 The
metaphor of the serpent also appears in "The Dungeon" when the poet
speaks of being "circled with evil" and in "Dejection: An Ode" when
he describes "viper thoughts, that coil around my mind/Reality's dark
dream!" 21 In Part II of "Christabel" Bard Bracy's dream about
Christabel as a dove in trouble in the forest focuses on the metaphor:

And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,
That thus lay fluttering on the ground.
I went and peered, and could descry
No cause for her distressful cry;
But yet for her dear lady's sake
I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
When lo! I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck.
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!

Bracy's nightmare represents an allegorical view of the relation-
ship of the two maidens for Geraldine is described as serpentine,
and she seems to infect the innocent dove-like Christabel with her
evil. Although the guest appears to her to be simply a maiden
who is perhaps "fairer yet! and yet more fair!" the morning after
the ordeal in the forest, Christabel reacts jealously when she sees
the Baron embrace Geraldine in a fatherly manner:

    Again she saw that bosom old,
    Again she felt that bosom cold,
    And drew in her breath with a hissing sound:
    Whereat the Knight turned wildly round,
    And nothing saw, but his own sweet maid
    With eyes unraised, as one that prayed.

Like Ellen in "The Three Graves," Christabel cannot prevent her spon-
taneous expression for "so mighty was the spell" she is under. As
a result, Geraldine in the arms of the Baron arouses in Christabel
feelings of jealousy as thoughts of "that bosom old" and "that
bosom cold" suggestive of her dead mother occur to the maiden. The
hissing sound which Christabel makes is a fitting consequence of a
spell cast by Geraldine who after Bracy tells of his dream is shown to
be in reality a serpent-like figure with strange hypnotic powers:

    A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy;
    And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
    Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,  
At Christabel she looked askance!—

Geraldine induces Christabel at this moment to make again a "hissing sound," and the serpent-maiden then transforms the innocent maiden through a trance into an even closer imitation of her evil self:

The maid, devoid of guile and sin,  
I know not how, in fearful wise,  
So deeply had she drunken in  
That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,  
That all her features were resigned  
To this sole image in her mind;  
And passively did imitate  
That look of dull and treacherous hate!

"O'er-mastered by the mighty spell," Christabel with uncontrollable passion protests Geraldine's presence to her father, evoking again the memory of her dead mother whose place seems threatened by Geraldine: "By my mother's soul do I entreat/That thou this woman send away." Christabel's statement under the power of the trance serves to alienate her from the Baron who is shocked by his daughter's discourtesy:

Honoured thus in his old age;  
Honour by his only child,  
And all his hospitable  
To the wronged daughter of his friend  
By more than woman's jealousy  
Brought thus to a disgraceful end—.

Certainly Christabel's act is the result of "more than woman's jealousy"; it is the result of evil brought into the Baron's castle by the Scylla-
like Geraldine. Hence, at the end of Part II, an evil figure similar to that of the lustful mother in "The Three Graves" has succeeded in perverting a relationship of love.

The menacing maiden and lustful mother of Coleridge's dreams and poetry are manifestations of the poet's crucial concern with the problem of evil in God's Creation. As Coleridge wrote to his brother in 1798, "I believe most steadfastly in original Sin; that from our mother's wombs our understandings are darkened; and even where our understandings are in the Light, that our organization is depraved, & our volitions imperfect; and we sometimes see the good without wishing to attain it, and oftener wish it without the energy that wills & performs" (L,I,396). Therefore, even in a poem focusing on the problem of evil like "Christabel," Coleridge seems to "see the good" at times through his use of two figures which relate his effort to the myth of "joy." Bard Bracy is the first of these figures. Warned of danger by his dream, Bracy intends to oppose evil with a song:

And thence I vowed this self-same day
With music strong and saintly song
To wander through the forest bare,
Lest aught unholy loiter there.

The power of Bracy suggests that of Bacchus who, according to Plutarch's account, induced people to submit to his will not with force of arms but through "hymns and songs accompanied with instruments of music: from which last circumstance, the Greeks conclude him to have been the same person with their Dionysus or Bacchus." This connection may be temuous, but, in any event, the bard does plan to oppose evil with art.
The image of the child described in "The Conclusion to Part II"—
a passage which for want of an explanation critics of the poem tend
to ignor—is the other Bacchic figure in "Christabel":

    A little child, a limber elf,
    Singing, dancing to itself,
    A fairy thing with red round cheeks,
    That always finds, and never seeks,
    Makes such a vision to the sight
    As fills a father's eyes with light.

Similar to the poet's accounts of his own son Hartley as well as
children in other poems of Coleridge, this figure may repre-
sent to the poet the experience of ecstasy possible through involve-
ment in the cosmos. Certainly a "joyous" vision to support him
through his narrative of sin and evil seems necessary to the poet,
who identifies himself with the father of the child:

    And pleasures flow in so thick and fast
   Upon his heart, that he at last
   Must needs express his love's excess
   With words of unmeant bitterness.
   Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
   Thoughts so all unlike each other;
   To mutter and mock a broken charm,
   To dally with wrong that does no harm.
   Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty
   As each wild word to feel within
   A sweet recoil of love and pity.
   And what, if in a world of sin
   (O sorrow and shame should this be true!)
   Such giddiness of heart and brain
   Comes seldom save from rage and pain,
   So talks as it's most used to do.
The fiction of "Christabel" can exist finally because the poet can compensate for the sense of terrible evil he feels by evoking thoughts of "joy" such as that represented by the child. At the same time, the poet can appreciate better the Dionysian experience of "giddiness of heart and brain" amid a context of "rage and pain." "Joy" relates to the good order of Creation which necessarily contains within its system disorderly and irrational evil qualities which alway try to infect figures of goodness as in the story of Christabel and Geraldine. Evil is always held in check by the created order as Coleridge makes clear in a notebook entry dealing with the "Question of Evil":

This, I fully believe, settles the Question.--The assertion that there is in the essence of the divine nature a necessity of omniuniform harmonious action, and that Order, & System/not number--in itself base & disorderly & irrational--/define the creative Energy, determine & employ it--& that number is subservient to order, regulated, organized, made beautiful and rational, an object both of Imag. & Intellect, by Order--this is no mere assertion/it is ≋ strictly in harmony with the Fact, for the world appears so--& it is proved by whatever proves the Being of God--.Indeed, it is involved in the Idea of God--" (N,I,1622).

Hence, while evil can threaten symbolic places, the colony and the bower, and symbolic persons, the child and the maiden, associated with "joy," other Bacchic symbols like the bard and the child in "Christabel" continue to affirm the ultimate goodness of God's Creation.
Notes to Chapter IV.

1 The lady is identified as Sara Fricker by Edward E. Bostetter, The Romantic Ventriloquists (Seattle, 1963), p. 89.


4 Whalley, pp. 1-32, describes the notebook entitled Sara Hutchinson's Poets. The poem printed in Whalley, pp. 7-8, in which these lines appear was revised and published as "Answer to a Child's Question" (p. 386).

5 Quoted from unpublished notebook by Raysor, p. 321.

6 Quoted from unpublished notebook by Whalley, p. 63.

7 Quoted from unpublished notebook by Raysor, p. 321.

8 Quoted from unpublished notebook by Whalley, p. 111.

9 Coleridge's figure is like the maiden played by Claudia Cardinale in Fellini's film 8½. "Asra" for the poet and "Claudia" for the director both represent, to use a Jungian term, the "anima" or requisite helper, a feminine element of the male unconscious which stands in compensatory relation to the conscious mind. The artist's "anima" is his muse. See S. K. Heninger, "A Jungian Reading of 'Kubla Khan,'" Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XVIII (1960), 358-367.

10 Quoted from unpublished notebook by Whalley, p. 111.

11 Quoted from unpublished notebook by Whalley, p. 111.
Notes to Chapter IV--Continued.

12"Lewti" is apparently based on Wordsworth's early poem "Beauty and Moonlight" (1786?) about a lover who attempts to escape from thoughts of his love but cannot. Coleridge uses the idea for his poem and directly borrows the image of the swans from Wordsworth.

13E. H. Coleridge (P, 369n) suggests the source for the idea of the "resolution" that fails was Gessner's Idyll Der feste Vorsatz ("The Fixed Resolution").

14Bostetter, p. 121.

15J. B. Beer, Coleridge the Visionary (London, 1959), pp. 183-184, discusses Coleridge's general use of the image of "sun or moon veiled to express his view that apparent evils are really good seen in distortion."

16See particularly Arthur H. Nethercot, The Road to Tryermaine (Chicago, 1939).

17Beer, p. 191.

18Beer, p. 190.

19Andrew Tooke, Pantheon (London, 1750), p. 244.

20Quoted from unpublished notebook by Beer, p. 192.

21Beer, p. 192.

22This passage is quoted from Plutarchi de Iside et Osiride Liber, ed. S. Squire (Cambridge, 1744), II, 16-17, by Beer, pp. 194-195, who connects Bard Bracy's manner with that of the Egyptian hero Osiris. Plutarch claims that Osiris and Bacchus were essentially the same mythic figure represented in different cultures.
Chapter V.

"The Sense of Musical Delight"
"The sense of musical delight, with the power of producing it, is a gift of imagination," writes Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria* (BL, II, 14), and he often cites in his criticism the aesthetic effects of the "gift." For instance, Coleridge shows his critical concern by discussing the sound effects in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*: "The first and most obvious excellence is the perfect sweetness of the versification; its adaptation to the subject; and the power displayed in varying the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm than was demanded by the thoughts, or permitted by the propriety of preserving a sense of melody predominate. The delight in richness and sweetness of sound, even to faulty excess, if it be evidently original, and not the result of an easily imitable mechanism, I regard as a highly favourable promise in the compositions of a young man" (BL, II, 14). At another time Coleridge discriminates between poets in musical terms, finding the poetry of Spenser because of its "indescribable sweetness and fluent projection" of his verse, very closely distinguishable from the deeper and more interwoven harmonies of Shakespeare or Milton" (MC, 33). A favorite critical term of Coleridge for describing sound effects in a successful work is "harmony." In the *Biographia Literaria*, he states that "each part should be melodious in itself, but contribute to the harmony of the whole, each note referring and conducing to the melody of all the foregoing and following words of the same period or
stanza; and lastly with equal labour, the greater because unbetrayed, by the variation and various harmonies of their metrical movement . . . ." (BL,II,23-24). This is Coleridge's most revealing statement about how he believed poetry should sound. He meant that the effects in a poem--rhyme, alliteration, assonance--should evoke in the reader an auditory sensation of anticipation and retrospection as the individual sounds functioned in a harmonious relationship to create a certain general effect. Coleridge cites an example of such a desired effect and discusses it in his lecture on Milton's minor poems. He quotes and comments on Lycidas, ll. 37-44:

But, 0 the heavy change, how thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn:
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.

Coleridge's comment on the passage is that "there is a delicate beauty of sound produced by the floating or oscillation of assonance and consonance in the rhymes gone, return, caves, o'ergrown, mourn, green, seen, lays. Substitute flown for gone in the first line: and if you have a poet's ear, you will feel what you have lost and understand what I mean" (MC,175-176). In cultivating his own "ear," Coleridge filled notebooks with experiments in verse and copies of poems in several languages which displayed interesting technique, and he searched for poetry with the kind of "oscillation" of sound
effects admired in Milton. In one notebook entry in which he records an Italian madrigal by Giovambatista Strozzi, Coleridge reiterates his description of the metrical form which achieves the kind of musical effect he seeks. In the Italian madrigal, Coleridge notices "the studied position of these words, so as not only to be melodious, but that the melody of each should refer to, assist, & be assisted by, all the foregoing & following words of the same period, or Stanza, and in like labor, the greater because unbetrayed, in the variety of harmony in the metres . . ." (N,II,2599). Obviously Coleridge had a clear notion of the technique necessary to create the "harmony" which would give to a listener "the sense of musical delight."

Music, however, had a greater significance for Coleridge's art than simply to prescribe the poet's use of sound effects. Coleridge also used a structure for his poem derived from a musical model. He wrote to Joseph Cottle in 1815 that "the common end of all narrative, nay of all, Poems is to convert a series into a Whole: to make those events, which in real or imagined History move on in a strait line, assume to our Understandings a circular motion—the snake with it's Tail in it's Mouth" (L,IV,545). This description of ideal poetic structure is analogous to the poet's concept of musical structure. Coleridge viewed music as a kind of continuum, an experience of timelessness, and he described the form used by one composer he admired as follows:

If we listen . . . to a symphony of Cimarosa, the present strain still seems not only to recall, but almost to renew, some past movement, and present the same! Each present movement bringing back, as it were, and embodying the
spirit of some melody that had gone before, anticipates and seems sometimes trying to overtake something that is to come: and the musician has reached the summit of his art, when having thus modified the present with the past, he at the same time weds the past in the present to some prepared and corrosive future. The auditor's thoughts and feelings move under the same influence: retrospection blends with anticipation, and hope and memory (a Female Janus) becomes one power with a double aspect (FL, 305-306).

In the instance of Cimarosa, Coleridge probably is referring in his use of the term "symphony" to an Italian operatic overture of three or four movements similar in form to a sonata in which a theme is stated, developed, and recapitulated. By analogy, the poet in a poem, as Coleridge explains in the Biographia Literaria, should also blend retrospection with anticipation: "Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power; or like the path of sound through the air; at every step he pauses and half recedes, and from the retrogressive movement collects the force which again carries him forward" (FL, II, 11). Coleridge makes a similar statement of the effort of the artist in his notebooks: "The Serpent by which the ancients emblem'd the Inventive faculty appears to me, in its mode of motion most exactly to emblem a writer of Genius. He varies his course yet still glides onwards—all lines of motion are his—all beautiful, & all propulsive." To emphasize his point, Coleridge quotes a description of the serpent from Paradise Lost:

Circular base of rising folds that tower'd
Fold above fold a surging maze, his Head
Crested aloft, and Carbuncle his eyes,
With burnish'd Neck of verdant Gold, erect
Amidst the circling spires that on the Grass
Floated Redundant--
So varied he & of his tortuous train
Curls many a wanton wreath,

and concludes by adding, "Yet still he proceeds & is proceeding" (N,I,609). It is obvious from Coleridge's statements comparing the effort of the poet and the form of his art to a serpent and to the path of sound waves that the critic believes that a poem should "oscillate" in structure in the same manner that it does in sound. Structure as well as sound should involve the reader by creating in him a sense of anticipation and retrospection. In this way, structure and sound in a poem will function together to provide a single unified aesthetic experience.

Coleridge's concern for musical sound and musical form creating an effect of harmony in a work reflects a well-known tradition in Western thought. The Greeks first advanced the notion that Creation was an act of music, and as a result the sign of order in the universe has since been taken to be the "music of the spheres" which was said to represent the "harmony" in the order of the cosmos from the beginning.\(^2\) Coleridge acknowledged his interest in the tradition when he told visitors to Highgate that "he had conceived that the Creation of the Universe must have been achieved during a grand prevailing harmony of spherical music.+\(^3\) What Coleridge wanted to achieve through the musical sound and form in his poetry was imitation of the harmony of the orderly universe. He believed that such imitation was the inevitable result of the effect of Christianity on art "in which finites, even the human
form, must, in order to satisfy the mind, be brought into connexion with, and be in fact symbolical of, the infinite; and must be considered in some enduring, however shadowy and indistinct, point of view, as the vehicle or representative of moral truth" (MC, 148). Coleridge made this remark in connection with the work of Dante, and his point of view seems quite conventional for discussing art prior to the Romantic period. For instance, dancing in the Renaissance depended on an aesthetics based on religious symbolism. About the formal dance in the sixteenth century, one critic has written: "Movement, abstract pattern and floor-plan, and the symbolic significance of 'the general dance' were all utilized to make the dance . . .

truly imitate the universal dance of all parts of the organism of Nature." Coleridge was familiar with the idea of the cosmic dance reflected in natural and human events from his reading of Renaissance poets in Anderson's British Poets. In fact, one of the poets he sometimes quotes in connection with the nature of the imagination is Sir John Davies who wrote The Orchestra in which the order of Creation is described in terms of a universal dance. Therefore, it is not surprising to find Coleridge connecting the cosmic significance of musical form to the writing of poetry.

Obviously concerned with the creation of sound effects in poetry, Coleridge in a fragmentary notebook entry of 1805 speaks of "those conceits of words which are analogous to sudden fleeting affinities of mind/even as in a dance touch & join & off again, & rejoin your partner that leads down with you the whole dance spite of these occasional off-starts, all still not merely conform to, but (of, and) in, & forming,
the delicious harmony—" (N,II,2396). Because of his concern for "delicious harmony," Coleridge in his criticism emphasizes the importance of every word being in its proper place in an artistic creation. This is the important lesson which Coleridge said that he learned from his favorite teacher, the Reverand James Bowyer, who believed that "in the truly great poets . . . there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word" (BL, I,4). In his lectures, Coleridge offers "rules for the placing of words" to the end that "harmony will come of itself" (NC,227), and he speaks of creating "A Harmony so divine that a crash of discordant sound by accident did not at all affect the aloofened mind" (N,I,1296). Therefore, Coleridge believed the words of poetry to be like the individual steps of a Renaissance dance, and he thought that every artist should strive for the "Harmony so divine" which is a sign that the separate elements of the work all contribute to the general design.

Not only does Coleridge seek to imitate cosmic perfection in the internal structure which produces the sound of the work, he also wants to follow the "general dance" of the universe for the structure of art. Coleridge believed that the human mind "be indeed made in God's Image, & that too in the sublimest sense—the Image of the Creator" (L,II,709), and, consequently, he said of art that "what the Globe is in Geography, miniaturing in order to manifest the Truth, such is a Poem to that Image of God, which we were created into, and which still seeks that Unity, or Revelation of the One in and by the Many, which reminds it, that tho' in order to be an individual Being it
must go forth from God, yet as the receding from him is to proceed towards Nothingness and Privation, it must still at every step turn back toward him in order to be at all—" (L, IV, 545). As a necessary act of looking toward the divine, therefore, the creation of aesthetic structure must conform to the formal nature of the divine creative act. To describe the Logos in his notebook, the poet draws a serpentine orbit of the moon and talks about the act of creation in terms of it: "A bodiless Substance, an unborrow'd Self--God in God immanent, the eternal Word, That goes forth yet remains, Crescent, and Full, and Wane, Yet ever entire and one . . . "6 The poem "Ad Vilmum Axiologum" of 1804 associates the Logos with musical form:

This is the word of the Lord! it is spoken, and Beings
Eternal
Live and are borne as an Infant; the Eternal begets the
Immortal:
Love is the Spirit of Life, and Music the Life of the
Spirit!

As an imitation of the Logos, therefore, the human mind inevitably creates in a form which is serpentine and musical. Coleridge found it fascinating that the inherent form of human creative activity was represented in the etymology of the word "mind." In his notebook he mused,

Mind--min--meinen--mahlen--machen
vibratory yet progressive motion (N, I, 378),

and in a letter Coleridge notices that the origins of the German word not only sounds like but originally defined the nature of the creative act: "The insertion of the n in the middle of a German verb is admitted on all hands to be intensive or reduplicative/as the Dictionary
Phrase is. In reality it is no more than repeating the last syllable as people are apt to when speaking hastily or vehemently. Mahnen therefore is Mahenen, which is Mähnen spoken hastily or vehemently. But the oldest meaning of the word mähnen is to move forward & backward, yet still progressively—thence applied to the motion of the scythe in mowing—from what particular motion the word was first abstracted, is of course in this as in all other instances, lost in antiquity" (I,II,696-697). Since the very origins of the German word for "mind" suggest to Coleridge the shape he has defined for the creating Logos, the art of man naturally takes the form of "the snake with it's Tail in it's Mouth" for which musical structure is a suitable analogue.

Music in poetry is not just a sign of successfully imitating the cosmic order in sound and structure for Coleridge. It ultimately meant to him active participation in the cosmos which would bring to man "joy." A "sense of mimëcal delight," in fact, indicated for Coleridge that the desired harmony between natura naturata and natura naturans which "presupposes a bond between Nature in this higher sense and the soul of man" (MC,208-209) had been accomplished. Coleridge found in all good music the symbol of such transcendental experience: "Music is the most entirely human of the fine arts, and has the fewest analogy in nature. Its first delightfulness is simple accordance with the ear; but it is an associated thing, and recalls the deep emotions of the past with an intellectual sense of proportion. Every human feeling is greater and larger than the exciting cause,—a proof, I think, that man is designed for a higher state of existence; and this
is deeply implied in music in which there is always something more and beyond the immediate expression" (BL, II, 261). Hence, Coleridge's interest in music is more than technical; the imitation of transcendental form is actually an effort to prove that man is suited to aspire to a "higher state of existence" by attempting through art to participate in the order and perfection of God's Creation. In his notebooks, Coleridge quotes a poem in German by Schiller in which a dancing couple are mysteriously absorbed into a whirling general dance then reappear "exultant." Translated by Kathleen Coburn, the quotation reads:

Now, as if seeking by force to break through the chain of the dance,/There where the throng is most dense, a fair couple begins to whirl,/At once a path arises before them, disappears as swiftly behind them,/As if by a magical hand the way is opened and closed./See! now they have vanished from sight; in wild entangled confusion/The delicate structure of this world of movement collapses—./But no! there they come, newly exultant, the knot is unravelled,/And the rule of the dance is restored— but with a new form of charm./Ever again destroyed, this whirling creation renews itself ever again,/And an unspoken law governs this play of transformations./Tell me, how is it that the figures of dance can be involved in endless change/And that utter repose still lives in these moving patterns./How is it that each is his own master, free to obey the dictates of his heart,/But as he pursues his swift course, yet finds the sole path he must take? (N, II, 2363n).

Schiller's poem raises the philosophical question of free will and determinism, and Coleridge's answer in his note is both philosophical
and aesthetic: "It is harmony. Will you admire it in dance--& not in the Universe--&c" (N,II,2363). Like the dancers in Schiller's poem and his own dancing children, Coleridge wants to involve himself through individual acts of mental activity in the general dance of the cosmos. The Dionysian poet seeks to participate through the creation of poetic harmony in the general harmony of Creation, and he looks to the power of the imagination to fulfill his goal of supreme order. To him, it is the imagination which is "that reconciling and mediating power, which incorporating the reason in images of the sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors" (S,I,136). The poetic order created by the imagination, then, satisfies the demands of the Dionysian poet by signifying his joyous immersion through an act of mind in the eternal realm of the Divine. In a letter criticizing Newton's philosophical method written in 1801, Coleridge asserts the divinity of the human mind and its aspirations: "My opinion is this--that deep Thinking is attainable only by a man of deep Feeling, and that all Truth is a species of Revelation. . . . Newton was a mere materialist--Mind in his system is always passive--a lazy Looker-on on an external World. If the mind be not passive, if it be indeed made in God's Image, & that too in the sublimest sense--the Image of the Creator--there is ground for suspicion, that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false, as a system" (L,II,709). There is nothing
"false" about the aesthetic "system" of Coleridge's poetry. In his most extreme definition of his artistic effort, the poet claims to be striving for the "joy" of creating a "species of Revelation."

Coleridge displays the same vital concern for musical sound and form in his poetry as he does in his criticism. Wordsworth called him "an epicure of sound," and the poetry testifies for the designation. 7 A brief look at some of Coleridge's musical techniques shows that he attempted to achieve in his own poetry the kind of "oscillation" in sound effects which he admired in Milton. Aside from his obvious use of rhyme, alliteration, and assonance, Coleridge's methods include the foreshadowing of terminal rhyme or other terminal sounds by a preparatory echo in the preceding words: "She was most beautiful to see" ("Christabel"); "Stood by me, knee to knee" ("Ancient Mariner"); "And tranquil muse upon tranquillity" ("Eolian Harp"). The poet may use double or triple rhyme as when "King, away" rhymes with "Stings display" ("Monody on the Death of Chatterton"), and he may combine this technique with his method of foreshadowing final sounds as when "blossom's bloom" rhymes with "soft perfume" ("Lines at Shurton Bars"). Another trick of Coleridge is to extend the use of assonance until certain vowel sounds dominate a passage such as e and i in the opening lines of "Fears in Solitude":

A green and silent spot, amid the hills,
A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place
No singing sky-lark ever poised himself,

or in an entire poem such as a in "Kubla Khan" which even prescribes the choice of proper names: Kubla Khan, Alph, Xanadu, Abysinnian,
Abora (or, as in an earlier version, Amara). Kenneth Burke in a essay called "On Musicality in Verse" which resulted from a study of Coleridge's poetry finds even subtler techniques in the poetry. He perceives the use of "phonetic couplets" which are sounds related by the fact that they are made in a similar physiological manner. "If you place the lips in the position to make the sound m," says Burke, "from this same position you can make the sounds b and p." Another such group is n, ñ, and r. Consequently, there is a cognate relationship between n and ñ in the line "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan" and a relationship between m and b in the line "While my unnumber'd brethern toil'd and bled" ("On Having Left a Place of Retirement"). "Acrostic scrambling" is what Burke terms the use of two words in which the consonantal structure of one is a rearrangement of the consonants in the other. The outstanding example in Coleridge's poetry is the line "A damsel with a dulcimer" where d:m-z-l of "damsel" is repeated with variation in the d:l-s-m plus r of "dulcimer." Another technique which Burke mentions is the use of chiasmus not only in the arrangement of words but also in the arrangement of tones. Coleridge's use of such elaborate and subtle sound effects shows his desire to create a "sense of musical delight" which reflects the transcendental harmony, and the poet would probably have been pleased with Elisabeth Schneider's judgment that the techniques combined in a work like "Kubla Khan" "keep the music of this poem fresh through many rereadings. Even when one knows it well, it is still full of half-caught echoes, correspondences of sound felt but too complex to be anticipated or to remain tabulated in the mind
even after they have been analyzed. And so they retain a subtle, secret harmony."  

Coleridge's musical effects occur within a poetic structure which also acknowledges the serpentine and musical form inherent in mental activity from Creation. Reflecting the "self-circling energies of the reason" (S, I, 436), the poems often take the cyclic form of "the snake with it's Tail in it's Mouth" to which the poet often referred. In the Conversation Poems, the poet begins by celebrating through description his bower world. At some point an aspect of the bower serves to release the poet imaginatively from the particular time and place into a vision, usually involving a surrogate, of the "joy" which he wants to experience. Abruptly the visionary moment ends, and the poet returns again to thoughts of the bower. The end of a poem may reveal that the poet has gained new appreciation and understanding of his way of life from his vision. This use by Coleridge of a serpentine pattern which includes a central experience of "joy" demonstrates forcefully that the poet is never satisfied with his actual condition but, rather, is always striving intellectually to achieve involvement with the cosmos. In "The Nightingale" Coleridge begins and ends the work by celebrating the bower world where he has the friendship of Wordsworth and his sister, but in the canto of the poem, inspired by the singing of a bird, the poet's thoughts are transported to the imagined scene of a maiden of romance watching nightingales "tipsy" with "joy." Coleridge's fond memories of the honeymoon bower which he terms his "pretty Cot" in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement"
are punctuated by the poet's recollection of a time when he climbed
the mountain near his home and at the top knew God's "omnipresence."
Typically, these poems begin and end in tranquil circumstances yet
contain at their center a vision which represents the expansion of
great intellectual energy. At the same time, sound effects within
the poems create the "oscillation" which Coleridge took to be a
sign of proper imitation of the divine harmony.

"This Lime-tree Bower My Prison" is a typical example of
Coleridgean structure. The poem begins and ends with the poet's
awareness of the garden-bower of his cottage to which he is con-
fined because of an injured foot. Some friends, Charles Lamb
among them, who are visiting the poet have taken an evening walk,
and the poet is unable to accompany them. Consequently, although
the bower is apparently serene and quiet, the poet views it as a
"prison." Since he cannot accompany his friends, the poet imagines
their path along a way which Coleridge knows well and to which, in
fact, he has directed them:

Friends, whom I never more may meet again,
On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told.

As the poet mentally follows their path, the friends eventually
achieve a kind of immersion in nature at which point the poet knows
that Charles Lamb, who like Coleridge has been "In the great City
pent," should feel "joy." Characteristic of Coleridge's work, the
moment occurs at the structural mid-point of the poem. In the
vagueness of experience created by the multiple directions of his thought toward past and future experience, a method of blending recollection with anticipation which he noted in Cimarosa's symphony, Coleridge describes the ecstatic moment of Lamb's contact with the cosmos:

So my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes Spirits perceive his presence.

The experience which Coleridge envisions is clearly Dionysian, and it is upheld as a perception of the divine like the poet describes himself as having in a similar situation in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement." As soon as the visionary moment passes, the poet's thought snaps back to his actual situation imprisoned in the garden, a juxtaposition of vision and reality characteristic of Coleridge's poetic form. The poet's attitude has been changed by his sharing vicariously in Lamb's "joy," and the result is that the bower no longer seems confining:

A delight
Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,
This little lime-tree bower, have I not mark'd
Much that has sooth'd me.

The poet has been made aware through the vision of the beauty of his actual surroundings which he, then, celebrates by describing effusively.
Also, he has learned a lesson from his experience:

Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
No plot so narrow, be but Nature's there,
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty!

The poet even acknowledges in a way his aesthetic technique of projecting his own desires into the experience of a surrogate and in this manner knowing "joy" vicariously. Coleridge makes clear, however, that the experience of vision touches him only indirectly. "We may lift the soul," he comments, "and contemplate/With lively joy the joys we cannot share." Therefore, the poem concludes where it began with the poet in his bower, but through his mental participation in his friend's experience of "joy," Coleridge has achieved not "joy" but at least "delight" in his surroundings.

The most striking example of Coleridge's use of the serpentine structure with a vision of "joy" at its center aside from the Conversation Poems is the poet's only completed poem about the supernatural, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Like a Conversation Poem, it begins if not in at least very near a "garden-bower." What is taking place in the bower and which serves as a background for the Mariner's story is a wedding feast. Marriage had great significance for Coleridge as a sign of the achievement of perfection in human relations which, in turn, imaged the sacred union of man and God. Coleridge wrote of marriage: "In a word, the grandest and most delightful of all promises has been expressed to us by his practical state--our marriage with the
Redeemer of mankind" (SC:II, I43). As the real setting of the poem as well as a fact which is kept obvious throughout the Mariner's narrative through the character of the listening "Wedding-Guest," the marriage affirms a human state which being ideal contrasts sharply with the evil and suffering resulting from the disrelation between man and God which is described in the Mariner's tale. The fact that the Mariner detains the Guest just outside the "garden" to relate his tale may be representative of Coleridge's idea expressed in art in "Fears in Solitude" and expressed in life in settling at Nether Stowey that evil lurks around every bower and threatens to infect it. Therefore, while the Mariner in the foreground of the poem relates his story of evil and suffering, the wedding celebration takes place in the background to suggest the alternative human state which is good and ideal. The "garden-bower" and wedding feast that occurs there, then, provide, as in a Conversation Poem, a context appropriate for a vision of "joy."

The vision of which the marriage feast prepares occurs in the Mariner's tale. Of course, the scene is that of the Mariner blessing the water-snakes which breaks the spell resulting from the killing of the albatross and brings redemption to the cursed sailor. The prose gloss describing the Mariner's state which introduces the scene in the poem suggests it to be an experience of "joy": "In his loneliness and fixitude he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and every where the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced,
as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival. The gloss indicates that the Mariner desires harmony with the cosmos and the "silent joy" the union will bring. What follows in the poem is a vision of natural harmony as the Mariner views water-snakes playing about the ship reflecting the light of the moon:

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship;
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

Because elements of earth, the snakes, and heaven, the moon, are united in the image of the reflected moonlight, the description suggests a harmonious relationship between the natural and the supernatural realms. The following notebook entry of Coleridge records a scene with similar significance: "Quiet stream, with all its eddies, & the moonlight playing in them, quiet as if they were Ideas in the divine Mind anterior to the Creation" (N.I,115b). J. B. Beer believes that "in this vision of the snakes interweaving harmoniously beneath the light of the moon can be discerned the wished-for harmony between natura naturata and natura naturans. The snakes and the moon are for the Mariner a revelation of the inner, ideal harmony of the universe." As a revelation of the divine, the moment for the Mariner is one of
"joy" which causes him to bless the water-snakes:

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure some kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The blessing is an acknowledgment of the divine force in the universe which re-establishes the bond between man and god that was broken by the killing of the albatross, and, consequently, the curse is lifted and the Mariner is saved. In this way, the scene functions as both the turning-point in the action of the Mariner's tale and the visionary center of Coleridge's poem. The Mariner serves the poet as another surrogate figure by means of which the significance of "joy" can be made known and which contributes the final element of Coleridgean form, a vision of "joy," to the serpentine structure of the poem.

Coleridge's poetry is linked to the divine by the sound, structure, and theme of music, and it is often imagistically used by Coleridge to suggest a sense of "joy." Naturally Coleridge associates his sense of "joy" in music with his sense of "joy" in children. In a lecture of 1819, Coleridge suggests that music produces a quality of experience like that of childhood and that it is an escape from the pressures of reality. He says that music "is an innocent recreation and produces infinite joy—while the overbusy worldlings are buzzed round by night-flies in a sultry climate." Indicative of the manner in which the poet mentally equates images associated with his concept of "joy," another
manuscript reads "infantine" instead of "infinite Joy" (PL,168n).
There is no doubt, however, that Coleridge connects music to the
state of freedom from the cares of the world enjoyed by children
when he continues: "If we sink into music our childhood comes back
with all its hopes and all its obscure reminiscences and with it
faith, a reliance on the noble within us on its own testimony.
We feel ourselves moved so deeply as no object in mortal life can
move us except by anguish, and here it is present with Joy. It is
in all its forms still Joy" (PL,168). Therefore, just as childhood
is a referent for the experience of "joy" in Coleridge's poetry,
music is also, and the images sometimes appear together.15

Coleridge in his poetry shows that music is not only a source
of "joy" in infancy and beneficial to a child's education, but he
treats it also as a vital force for instilling creative power in
man. In his treatment of the theme of education in "The Nightingale,"
the poet emphasizes the need for his son to grow up with the ex-
perience of the music of nature. The poet wants his son to be
"familiar" with the songs of the birds and to have the kind of
experience felt by the imagined maiden when she hears the night-
ingales and sees their Dionysian revel of "tipsy Joy." In "Ode to
Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire," Coleridge cites "enchanting
music" as a formative influence on the infancy of the poetess whom
he praises in the refrain of each stanza as "free Nature's un-
corrupted child." After perusing Mrs. "Perdita" Robinson's poem
"Snow-Drop," Coleridge portrays the music of an eolian harp not only
evoking amorous dreams in a beautiful maiden but shaping visions of
sleep:
The Harp uphung by golden chains
Of that low wind which whispers round,
With coy reproachfulness complains,
In snatches of reluctant sound:
The music hovers half-perceived,
And only moulds the slumberer's dreams;
Remember'd Loves relume her cheek
With Youth's returning gleams.

In "Hymn to the Earth," the poet, speaking like Apollo with his
creativity represented by his harp, asks for creative sustenance
from nature's "musical murmurs" of "joy":

Green-haired goddess! refresh me; and hark! as they
hurry or linger,
Fill the pause of my harp, or sustain it with
musical murmurs.
Into my being thou murmur'st joy, and tenderest
sadness
Shedd'st thou, like dew, on my heart, tell the joy
and the heavenly sadness
Pour themselves forth from my heart in tears, and
the hymn thanksgiving.

Through his prayer, the poet seeks to be like his son who educated
in nature has the chance to experience the sounds of the super-
natural music which brings poetic inspiration. A comment by Coleridge
on the beneficial effect of music on his own creativity is recorded
in the Table Talk of 1833. "Good music," said Coleridge, "never
tires me, nor sends me to sleep. I feel physically refreshed and
strengthened by it, as Milton says he did. I could write as good
verses now as ever I did, if I were perfectly free from vexations, and
were in the ad libitum hearing of fine music, which has a sensible
effect in harmonizing my thoughts, and in animating, and, as it were,
lubricating my inventive faculty. . . ." (S,VI,471). Music, in other words, gave to the poet "infinite"—or "infantine"—"joy" and inspired him, and his statement could almost be a prose account of the theme of the second part of "Kubla Khan." In the poem, the poet quite clearly indicates that with the help of music played by the Abysinnian maid he could continue to create the description of Xanadu which he has started:

    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!

Hence, the poem indicates that the artist needs the inspiration of music to create and, indeed, he would create in music. The obvious musical effects in the poem itself attest to the thought. Certainly Coleridge associated music with his own moments of creative activity. In his notebooks, he exclaims at one point, "There are times when my Thoughts flow, like Music/O that they were more frequent!" (M,II,2552), and he states conclusively in his Biographia Literaria, with some help from Shakespeare, that "'the man that hath not music in his soul' can indeed never be a genuine poet" (BL,II,14).

Coleridge's concept of music provides the form for his poetry, but in one of his most famous poems, "The Eolian Harp," music is also the subject. As a result, the various aspects of Coleridge's view of music as sound effect, structure, and theme unite and are
demonstrated by the poem. The poem begins and ends with a picture of
the poet in his cottage with his wife at his side:

    My pensive Saral thy soft cheek reclined
    This on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
    To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o'ergrown
    With white-flower'd Jasmin, and the broad-leav'd Myrtle,
    (Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)

The picture is one of quietness and tranquillity with the poet at ease
in his house which is a kind of bower enrap by nature; it is a
perfect time and place for meditative speculation. At the end of the
poem, the poet's attention returns to the scene of "Peace, and this
Cot, and thee, heart-honour'd Maid!" Within this typical Coleridgean
context in which the bower is described and celebrated, the poet
experiences a vision of "joy!" What inspires his vision and carries
his thought away from the bower and into a timeless, speculative
realm is the music of the eolian harp which hangs in the window of
the cottage. At first, the mental distance to which the music trans-
ports the poet is short. The sound inspires an image of caressing
lovers in a fairy-land full of magical music:

    And that simplest Lute,
    Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
    How by the desultory breeze caress'd,
    Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
    It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
    Tempt to repeat the wrong!

The picture is an idealized recreation of the poet's actual situation
as he sits with his wife in the cottage. The daydream, however, carries
the poet's thoughts further from the scene into romantic speculation. As a result, he believes the love he feels for Sara and imaged in the imagined lovers evoked by the music of the harp to be universal:

O! the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where—
Methinks, it could have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so fill'd;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

These lines, added to the poem in 1817, represent the visionary climax of the poet's meditative effort as he feels the "joyance" of being fully in harmony with the cosmos. Adding the passage, therefore, represented a significant improvement in the Coleridgean structure of the poem by giving it a characteristic central experience of "joy." Following the vision of "joy," the poet's thought—as usual—snaps back to reality:

And thus, my Love; as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-clos'd eye-lids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds on the main,
And tranquil wise upon tranquillity.

But, once again, the music of the eolian harp urges his thoughts into speculative flight:

Full many a thought uncall'd and unstain'd,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject late!

At this point, the original climax of the poem occurs which is more speculative and less visionary than the addition:

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?

Because it is less visionary, the poet's feeling toward his speculation seems less intense as he compares the effect of the wind on the harp to the influence of God on the Soul. There is no sense of ecstasy as the poet logically constructs his analogy, and his philosophical concentration ended the second time not by exhausting the experience but by his wife Sara whose look of reproof leaves the poet's philosophical question dangling unanswered. The "serious eye" of Sara does not let Coleridge finish his thought and seems to the poet to rebuke his speculation as vain in attempting to comprehend the "Incomprehensible":

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O beloved Woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallow'd dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.

Consequently, the poet confesses his error and praises God for the pleasures of his bower:

I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels;
Who with his saving mercies healed me,
A sinful and most miserable man,
Wilder'd and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace, and this Cot, and thee, heart-honour'd Maid!

In this way, the serpentine form of the poem is fulfilled by the poet's humoring his wife as the focus of attention returns to a picture of the poet and his wife in their peaceful bower.

Just as the music of the eolian harp carries the poet's attention away from the bower and to joyous vision, the sound effects in "The Eolian Harp" transport the reader to a state of "musical delight." The first three lines of the poem—to choose at random—reveal the complexity of technique:

My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus, on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o'ergrown.

In this brief passage, the ay sound of the first word "my" anticipates the last syllable of the line "-cline" and is echoed in the next two lines in "mine" and "beside." There is a sibilate quality of s sounds throughout the passage in such words as "pensive," "Sara," "soft," "thus," "most," "Soothing," "sweet," "is," "sit," "beside."

Other sound effects are the assonance of the long e in "cheek," "Sweet," and "beside," and the frequently employed back vowels of "soft," "thus," "most," "soothing," "cot," and "o'ergrown." The more subtle effect of "phonetic couplet" m and p functions in the very first two words.

These are only examples from a short section of the poem of the complex techniques of musical effect used by Coleridge throughout the poem to create a kind of "oscillation" which he thought would give the reader a "sense of musical delight." Therefore, in "The Eolian Harp"
Coleridge is true to his subject in both structure and sound. The poem is a statement about the effect of music on man which at the same time illustrates its point through its effect on the reader.

Music inspires the sound, structure, and theme of a number of Coleridge's poems. Through the "oscillation" of sound in his poetry the poet seeks to make the reader know a "sense of musical delight" from his creation just as the music of the spheres traditionally recalls divine Creation. At the same time, Coleridge celebrates the divine creative act by giving to his art a structure which fits his notion of the nature of the creating Logos. Finally, music, like childhood, is for the poet an analogue for the experience of "joy" which man can only have when he can participate in the infinite and divine order of the cosmos. Music is another essential referent in the fabric of associations which the poet uses in his effort to achieve involvement in the mysteries of the universe. Thus, the idea of music incorporated into the sound, structure, and content of his poetry helps Coleridge in his effort to create art which has the spiritual significance of Revelations.
Notes to Chapter V.

1 See, for example, N,II,222f.


3 Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, Recollections of Writers (London, 1878), p. 64.

4 Hollander, p. 192.


7 Elisabeth Schneider, Coleridge, Opium, and "Kubla Khan" (Chicago, 1953), pp. 262-277, analyzes sound effects in "Kubla Khan." Schneider is the first critic to attempt such an analysis of a major poem, and I am indebted to her effort for calling attention to a significant aspect of Coleridge's style and, also, to Wordsworth's fitting comment on his friend in his Memoirs (1851).


9 Schneider, p. 274.

Notes to Chapter V--Continued.

Poems," Essays in Criticism, X (1960), 307-319, also comments on
the cyclic structure of the Conversation Poems. M. H. Abrams,
"Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," From Sensibility
to Romanticism, ed. Frederick W. Hillel and Harold Bloom (New York,
1965), pp. 527-528, defines what he believes to be the earliest
formal invention of the Romantic poets which is represented in
Coleridge's work by the Conversation Poems. Abrams says that the
"greater Romantic lyric" presents "a determinate speaker in a par-
ticularized, and usually a localized, outdoor setting, whom we
overhear as he carries on, in a fluent vernacular which rises
easily to a more formal speech, a sustained colloguys, sometimes
with himself or with the outer scene, but more frequently with a
silent human auditor, present or absent. The speaker begins
with a description of the landscape; an aspect or change of aspect
in the landscape evokes a varied but integral process of memory,
thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely inter-
volved with the outer scene. In the course of his meditation the
lyric speaker achieves an insight, faces up to a tragic loss, comes
to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem. Often the
poem rounds upon itself to end where it began, at the outer scene,
but with an altered mood and deepened understanding which is the
result of the intervening meditation."

11 See discussion of "Reflections on Having Left a Place of
Retirement" in Chapter II.

12 I offer here an explanation for the structure of the poem, and
some interpretation is unavoidable. In general, I agree with the
following summary of the Mariner's tale by Robert Penn Warren in his
essay, "A Poem of Pure Imagination: An Experiment in Reading," The
Rime of the Ancient Mariner (New York, 1946), pp. 77-78: "The fable,
in broadest and simplest terms, is a story of crime and punishment
and repentance and reconciliation (I have refrained from using the
word sin, because one school of interpretation would scarcely accept the full burden of the implications of the word), an example, if we adopt for the moment Maud Bodkin's term, without necessarily adopting the full implications of her theory, of the archetypal story of Rebirth or the Night Journey. The Mariner shoots the bird; suffers various pains, the greatest of which is loneliness and spiritual anguish; upon recognizing the beauty of the foul sea snakes, experiences a gush of love for them and is able to pray; is returned miraculously to his home port, where he discovers the joy of human communion in God, and utters the moral, 'He prayeth best who loveth best, etc.'! We arrive at the notion of a universal charity, ... the sense of the 'One Life' in which all creation participates and which Coleridge perhaps derived from his neo-Platonic studies and which he had already celebrated, and was to celebrate, in other and more discursive poems."

13 Humphry House, Coleridge: The Clark Lectures 1951-52 (London, 1962), p. 102, says of the gloss: "The emphasis there seems unmistakable; that the moon and stars express order and joy. And the word 'joy' was a key word for Coleridge to express the fullest and richest happiness in experience." Warren, p. 95, says: "Life, order, universal communion and process, joy—all these things from which the Mariner is alienated are involved here in the description of the moon and stars."

14 Beer, p. 160.

15 Coleridge's association of music with childhood and his belief in the power of music to evoke youthful remembrances appears to be the poet's unique generalization of the eighteenth-century tradition known as the "Swiss theme" described by Alan D. McKillop in his essay "Local Attachment and Cosmopolitanism," From Sensibility to Romanticism, pp. 205-206. McKillop has traced briefly the history of the tradition in England. The gist of the tradition is that a Swiss soldier sent
Notes to Chapter V--Continued.

abroad to fight is moved to great nostalgia by the notes of a certain tune familiar to him in his youth. This story was told in England as early as 1738, given wide circulation in Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de Music* of 1768, and adapted from Rousseau by James Beattie in his *Essays on Poetry and Music* of 1776. In Beattie's account, the effect of the tune is to recall childhood memories. "This tune," says Beattie, "having been the attendant of their childhood and early youth, recals to their memory those regions of wild beauty and rude magnificance, those days of liberty and peace, those nights of festivity, those happy assemblies, those tender passions, which formerly endeared to them their country, their homes, and their employments; and which, when compared with the scenes of uproar they are now engaged in, and the servitude they now undergo, awaken such regret as entirely overpowers them" (quoted by McKillop, p. 205). That Coleridge was aware of the "Swiss theme" is suggested by his passing reference in the *Biographia Literaria* to "strong local attachments" as a particular characteristic of the Swiss (BL,II,32), and the inherent theme of the tradition, that is, escaping hardship by involvement in a form of art, fitted well with the Romantic sense of the pressures of experience blunting a person's, particularly a poet's, mental powers. Therefore, Coleridge expanded the "Swiss theme" and associated all good music, not just a specific tune, with the "joy" he saw in innocent children and the feeling essential for creativity.

16 See Schneider, pp. 262-277.

17 See discussion of early draft of "The Eolian Harp" in Chapter II.
Chapter VI.

Final Vision
"Love to all the Passions & Faculties, as Music to all the varieties of Sound/" (N,I,1229), Coleridge noted at one point. What the poet meant by his analogy was that "Love" provides formal support for personal experience, that which he designates "Passions & Faculties," just as music provides formal support for artistic experience, that which he designates "varieties of Sound." For Coleridge, literary and personal experience are not only analogous but are one in the same for the goal of both is the achievement of "joy." Coleridge says in his notebook: "Love will vent his inmost and veriest Griefs in sweet and measured sounds . . . a divine Joy being its end it will not utter even its woes and weaknesses, sorrows & sicknesses, except in some form of pleasure? pleasure the shadow & sacramental Type of that Joy . . . or is it rather, that its essence being a divine synthesis of highest . . . reason--and . . . vehemest Impulse, it must needs the soul in its two faculties, or perhaps of the two souls, vital power of Heat, & Light of Intellect--attract & combine with poesy, whose essence is passionate order" (N,II,3092). "Joy" can come through both love and art because both human efforts promise "passionate order" which results from total commitment of a man's being to a creative act, the kind of intense involvement often described by Coleridge in Dionysian terms. Hence, Coleridge's description of both acts, the one of art and the other of love, celebrates the union of both effort and effect which comes from such total commitment. "The poet, described in ideal perfection," writes Coleridge, in a famous
passage in the Biographia Literaria, "brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination" (BL,II,12). There is a strong suggestion of the achievement of a similar kind of union of effort and effect when the poet speaks as a lover and describes his joy in a moment of intense personal emotion: "I fear to speak, I fear to hear you speak--so deeply do I now enjoy your presence, so totally possess you in myself, myself in you. The very sound would break the union, and separate you—me into you and me. We both, and this sweet Room, it's books, it's furniture, & the Shadows on the Wall slumbering with the low quiet. Fire are all our Thought, /some dear/ harmonious Imagery of Forms distinct on the still substance of one deep Feeling, Love & Joy-- . . . That state, in which all the individuous nature, the distinction without Division, of a vivid Thought is united with the sense and substance of intensest Reality."¹ Coleridge, therefore, affirms that through the act of love and the act of art man creates an ideal order or union which offers "joy" in being an imitation of the same divine perfection that the poet feels is evident in nature when he writes: "Quiet stream, with all its eddies, & the moonlight playing on them, quiet—as if they were Ideas in the divine mind anterior to the Creation—" (N,I,1154).

To describe the presence of the Logos in life which man can most intensely feel and thoroughly imitate in his creative acts of love and
art, Coleridge in his metaphysical studies relied on the concept of polarity in which he became interested through his acquaintance with Sir Humphrey Davy's experiments in electromagnetism. Coleridge wrote that "philosophers . . . contemplate in the *phaenomena* of electricity the operation of a law which reigns through all nature, the law of polarity, or the manifestation of one power by opposite forces;—who trace in these appearances, as the most obvious and striking of its innumerable forms, the agency of the positive and negative poles of a power essential to all material construction . . ." (S,I,434). Coleridge believed that the polarity of a magnet "exhibits an image of life" (S,VI,366), and, therefore, he even finds the principle manifested as moral law in social institutions, commenting at one point that "it is curious to trace the operation of the moral law of polarity in the history of politics, religion, &c" (S,VI,388). Being so pervasive, Coleridge defines the nature of the magnetic metaphor: "the tendency to individuate can not be conceived without the opposite tendency to connect, even as the centrifugal power supposes the centripetal, or as the two opposite poles constitute each other, and are the constituent acts of one and the same power in the magnet. We might say that the life of the magnet subsists in their union, but that it lives (acts or manifests itself) in their strife" (S,I,391). Consequently, the nature of life itself can be explained in terms of the principle of the magnet: "Life, then, we consider as the copula, or the unity of thesis and antithesis, position and counterposition,—Life itself being the positive of both; as, on the other hand, the two counterpoints are the necessary
conditions of the manifestations of Life. These, by the same necessity, unite in a synthesis; which again, by the law of dualism, essential to all actual existance, expands, or produces itself . . . in order again to converge, as the initiation of the same productive process in some intenser form of reality (S,I,392). Therefore, by defining the principle of polarity to be in some way the vital form of life, the very force of the Logos in human experience, Coleridge seeks to know an "intenser form of reality" which is ideal and divine.

For Coleridge, then, the best way to celebrate and to achieve some knowledge of God is through those human creative acts which display, ideally, the polar vitality of the Logos, art and love. Coleridge discovers as a result that the functioning imagination "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities" (BL,II,12) which achieve the effect of "reducing a multitude into unity" (SC,II,91) or "multity in unity" (BL,II,230). The same principle dominates the poet's idea of love: "But what is love?--love as it may subsist between two persons of different senses? This--and what more than this? The mutual dependence of their happiness, each on that of the other, each being at once cause and effect. You, therefore I--I, therefore, you. The sense of this reciprocity of well-being is that which first stamps and legitimates the name of happiness . . ." (AP,197). Therefore, participation in the polarity of life through the creative acts of art and love means to Coleridge a way toward attaining "joy." He understands his goal to be participation through intense imitation in a kind of ideal marriage of the mortal
and the divine based on Platonic thought. In his notebooks, Coleridge speaks of "the suspending Magnet, the Golden Chain from the Staple Ring fastened to the Footstool of the Throne," an image which derives from Plato's description of the chain of inspiration in the Ion. Socrates describes Ion's artistic powers in the dialogue in terms of the action of a magnet: "The gift which you possess ... is not an art, but, ... an inspiration; there is a divinity moving you, like that contained in the stone which Euripides calls a magnet, but which is commonly known as the stone of Heraclea. This stone not only attracts iron rings, but also imparts to them a similar power of attracting other rings; and sometimes you may see a number of pieces of iron and rings suspended from one another so as to form quite a long chain: and all of them derive their power of suspension from the original stone. In like manner the Muse first of all inspires men herself; and from these inspired persons a chain of other persons is suspended, who take the inspiration." For Coleridge, Plato's figure evokes the traditional idea of the "great chain of being" which emanates from God as the notebook entry indicates, and through the ideal marriage represented by both art and love the poet seeks to ascend the hierarchy toward a direct encounter with God by imitating the heavenly marriage of the divine and the mortal in his personal creative acts. The poet's intention is clearly stated in one of the Shakespearian lectures reported by Collier. In the lecture, Coleridge, first, defines love as "a desire of the whole being to be united to some thing, or some being, felt necessary to its completeness, by the most perfect means that nature permits, and reason
dictates." Then, he notes the pervasive effort for unity in human experience and celebrates the marriage which results as a superior state of human existence ordained by the Creator: "In everything the blending of the similar with the dissimilar is the secret of all pure delight. Who shall dare to stand alone, and vaunt himself, in himself, sufficient? In poetry it is the blending of passion with order that constitutes perfection; this is still more the case in morals, and more than all in the exclusive attachment of the sexes. True it is, that the world and its business may be carried on without marriage; but it is so evident that Providence intended man . . . to be the master of the world, that marriage, or the knitting together of society by the tenderest, yet firmest ties, seems ordained to render him capable of maintaining his superiority over the brute creation." Whether consummated by means of love or signified in the effort of art, marriage articulates a covenant between man and God which promises the lifting up of man on a hierarchy of love toward an intenser experience of the divine. Coleridge states: "All the operations of mind, in short, all that distinguishes us from brutes, originate in the more perfect state of domestic life.--One infallible criterion in forming an opinion of a man is the reverence in which he holds women. Plato has said, that in this way we rise from sensuality to affection, from affection to love, and from love to the pure intellectual delight by which we become worthy to conceive that infinite in ourselves, without which it is impossible for man to believe in a God. In a word, the grandest and most delightful of all promises has been expressed to us by this practical state--our marriage with the
Redeemer of mankind" (SC,II,1h2-1h3). Marriage, then, achieved in life or celebrated in art promises to man apocalyptic knowledge.

But Coleridge's anticipation of "joy" in these philosophical statements is ideal and does not take into account the effect of the Hamletian quality of his nature on his life as a poet. In 1802, consequently, at the end of his major activity as a poet, Coleridge expresses an intense sense of failure and dejection, claiming that he has lost his poetic genius and inspiration. He writes Godwin in a characteristic mood of this time: "The Poet is dead in me—my imagination (or rather the Somewhat that had been imaginative) lies, like a Cold Snuff on the circular Rim of a Brass Candle-stick, without even a stink of Tallow to remind you that it was once clothed & mitred with Flame. That is past by!" (L,II,7h). Coleridge believed that art was supported by the ideal and abstract thought of philosophy for he states emphatically in the Biographia Literaria that "no man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher" (BL,II,19). However, the idealistic activity of metaphysics could continue for Coleridge even after the emotional activity of art had ceased as a result of the pressure of intense personal problems. Even in such a year of accomplishment as 1796, Coleridge believed himself more suited for philosophy than poetry. The poet claims "I think too much for a Poet" and compares himself to Southey who "abjures thinking—& lays the whole stress of excellence—on feeling." As a result, Coleridge believes that "an admirable Poet might be made by amalgamating him & me" (L,I,29). Therefore, at the time of his personal crisis
in 1802 Coleridge is driven away from poetic activity into the meta-
physical efforts for which he had previously considered himself better
suited. Coleridge tries to blame his loss of poetic power at this
time on his philosophical interests, writing to Southey: "As to
myself, all my poetic Genius, if ever I really possessed any Genius,
& it was not rather a mere general aptitude of Talent, & quickness
in Imiation/is gone--and I have been fool enough to suffer deeply
in my mind, regretting the loss--which I attribute to my long &
exceedingly severe Metaphysical Investigations." In fact, Coleridge's
interest in philosophy probably compensated for his feeling of failure
as a poet, and he continues his letter by pointing to other reasons
for his failure which appear more pertinent, attributing it "partly
to Ill-health, and partly to private afflictions which rendered any
subject, immediately connected with Feeling, a source of pain &
disquiet ... " (L,II,831).

The specific source of Coleridge's "pain & disquiet" is his
unhappy marriage to Sara Fricker and his unrelieved yearning for
Sara Hutchinson. At times Coleridge is able to define his dilemma
in a reasonable manner: "A lively picture of a man, disappointed
in marriage, & endeavoring to make a compensation to himself by
virtuous & tender & brotherly friendship with an amiable Woman--
the obstacles--the jealousies--the impossibility of it.--Best advice
that he should as much as possible withdraw himself from pursuits
of morals &c--& devote himself to abstract sciences--" (N,I,1065).
Yet, the domestic problem reached such a state of crisis in 1802
that writing poetry became laborious and painful for the poet who
believed that "when a Man is unhappy, he writes dammed bad Poetry, I find--" (L,I,116). Clearly evident in the problem of poetic creation, the dilemma was deeply personal as well, involving Coleridge's whole sense of being and self-identity. Coleridge finds himself in the position of a eunuch who previously he had tied to "joy" in a notebook entry: "And inly agonize mid fruitless Joy, as Ἐν ἵππηξ that embraceth a virgin & groaneth--" (N,I,266). The idea of emasculation haunts the poet's thoughts: "Impotence--," he writes, "Painful Sensation and Loss of Hope castration of the self-generating Organ of the Soul/---" (N,II,1552). In another entry, he extends the condition to his national environment: "A curious & more than curious Fact that when the country does not benefit, it depraves. Hence the violent vindictive passions--& the outrageous & dark & wild cruelties--of many country folks.---Continual Sight of Human Faces & human Houses, as in China, emasculates & dwarfs--" (N,I,1553). Coleridge's use of the sexual metaphor suggests that his feeling of frustration is so intense that he feels his very nature as a man threatened. Psychotic depths to his despair are hinted. At the height of the poet's crisis, Coleridge proposes to write a poem about his relationship with Sara. He proposes a "Poem on the length of our acquaintance/all the hours that I have been thinking of her &c" (N,I,1157), and for once Coleridge fulfills his intention. The result is the poem "Dejection: An Ode" which marks the end of Coleridge's major poetic activity while being the poet's most comprehensive expression of a vision of "joy."
"Dejection: An Ode" was originally composed as a verse letter addressed to Sara Hutchinson, and for publication Coleridge revised the manuscript, omitting certain personal references and rearranging the position of passages in the structure. The published version follows the poet's usual structural strategy of placing a vision of "joy" at a mid-point in a poem. However, for studying Coleridge's concept of "joy" as expressed in the poem, the original version is more useful than the published version because in revising the poet obscured the true cause of his feeling of dejection and divided his definition of "joy" which appears together as the conclusion of the verse letter. The poem reveals the Hamletian Coleridge in a melancholy mood intensified to the point of a crisis of dejection by the frustration of his married life and his love for Sara Hutchinson. Coleridge feels intense pressures in his domestic life which hinder his search for universal existence in the cosmos. Coleridge the artist and the philosopher is thwarted by Coleridge the man in love, and the metaphor which the poet uses to describe his dilemma is that of "Poison in the Wine" which "Eats out the pith of Joy, makes all Joy hollow." Dionysian ecstasy is impossible as long as emotional problems prey on the poet's mind, disrupt meditation, and prevent him from bringing "the whole soul of man into activity." Coleridge emphasizes in his verse letter that his frustration as a man and thinker is more serious than his previous Hamletian declarations of despair in which he still had some hope of knowing "joy":

...
Yes, dearest Sara, yes!

There was a time when tho' my path was rough,
The Joy within me dallied with Distress;

and he uses an image of childhood to provide an example of the condition which he has lost in his dejection. He comments: "I am not the buoyant Thing, I was of yore/ When like an own Child, I to Joy belong'd."

When the poet claims his misfortune "Suspends what Nature gave me at my Birth,/My shaping Spirit of Imagination!," he is confessing that he has lost the child-like potential for creative activity which is one way to "joy" unless he can convince Sara of his need for her. In his notebooks, the poet pleads in one instance: "O Sara wherefore am I not happy! Why for years have I not enjoyed one pure and sincere pleasure! one full Joy!--one genuine Delight, that rings sharp to the Beat of the Finger!--all cracked, and dull with base Alloy!" and in another entry, he comments: "Why we two made to be a Joy to each other, should for so many years constitute each other's melancholy--O! but the melancholy is Joy--" (N,1,1394). Therefore, Coleridge attempts in his verse letter to convince Sara Hutchinson of the significance of her love for him not only as a man, but as a philosopher and as an artist.

In the concluding section of the verse letter, Coleridge explains to Sara the meaning to him of "joy" and why he needs her love to experience it. Coleridge begins by emphasizing that in order to attain a proper relationship with the Universe, he and Sara must unite their separate lives to the extent of reflecting the "passionate order" of the marriage imaged in nature:
O Sara! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live.
Our's is her wedding Garment, our's her Shroud--.

The poet prophesies that if their love is not properly climaxxed
in this supreme unity, they will never know anything but what
the "inanimate cold World allow'd/To the poor loveless ever-
anxious Crowd." However, if they do love, the poet envisions all
the forces of "joy" will be unleashed by their ecstasy:

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

O pure of Heart! thou needs't not ask of me
What this strong music in the Soul may be,
   What, & wherein it doth exist.
This Light, this Glory, this fair luminous Mist,
This beautiful & beauty-making Power!
JOY, innocent Sara! Joy, that ne'er was given
Save to the pure, & in their purest Hour,
JOY, Sara! is the Spirit & the Power,
That wedding Nature to us gives in Dower
   A new Earth and a new Heaven
Undreamt of by the Sensual & the Proud!

What Coleridge means is that through their love he and Sara can
take part in the "joy" of the cosmos. The soul is the source of
mankind's tendency to seek union with the community of God, and its
flow of energy is apocalyptic. In the ecstasy of a perfected union
of love, "joy" is unleashed in man as divine revelation, a "Light," a "Glory," a "luminous Mist," a "luminous Cloud," a "sweet and potent Voice," such as Moses encountered on Mt. Sinai. In explaining the power of "joy" to Sara, Coleridge calls her "innocent" and explains that the revelation can only be known to the "pure, and in their purest Hour." In this way, Sara is like the children which serve as surrogates for the poet of the experience which he seeks to have; the maiden has the potential for Dionysian ecstasy. As a way of participating in the divine unity of the cosmos, "joy" is creative; it is the source of the "beautiful & beauty-making." Therefore, in acting like a priest who performs the rite of marrying man to nature and the universe, "joy" evokes a beautiful apocalyptic vision of the "new Earth" and "new Heaven" which will come of the union. To this perfected state, Coleridge and Sara can escape through the marriage represented by their creative act of love; they can leave behind the lustful evil of the "Sensual & the Proud" which infects the "loveless ever-anxious Crowd" of fallen mankind. Through the transcendental experience which is the promise of their loving union, Coleridge and Sara can finally know in sight and sound and can celebrate the new order emanating from divine revelation and spreading throughout Creation as "Joy":

Joy is that strong Voice, Joy that luminous Cloud--
We, we ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the Echoes of that Voice,
All Colors a Suffusion of that Light.
Coleridge's letter to Sara, therefore, is an act of persuasion in which the "joy" of Apocalypse is upheld as the ultimate promise of the fulfillment of love.

The "joy" which can lift the poet toward the divine involves every aspect of his life. For Coleridge, the achievement of "joy" depends on the integration of the lover, the philosopher, the artist into a single agent of ecstasy and energy. Consequently, if one aspect of his nature is frustrated, then, the whole being suffers a loss of "joy." When he wrote his verse letter, Coleridge was suffering such a general loss which he termed "dejection," and it cannot be said that the poet is suffering in the poem from either his frustrated love for Sara or philosophical failure or a loss of imaginative power. He is suffering from a general loss of the condition of "joy" which, ideally, would enable him to experience the ecstasy of existing universally in the cosmos. This is the basis of Coleridge's appeal to Sara. He wants to make her understand that without her love he feels the state of dejection which marks a general breakdown of his very nature. The poet contrasts his state with that of Sara who enjoys an ideal domestic situation by sharing in the love manifested in the bower of the Wordsworths:

Thou being innocent & full of love,
And nestled with the Darlings of thy love,
And feeling in thy Soul, Heart, Lips, and Arms;
Even what the conjugal and mother Dove,
That borrows genial Warmth from those, she warms,
   Feels in the thrill'd wings, blessedly outspread—
Thou free'd awhile from Cares & human Dread
By the Immenseness of the Good & Fair,
Which thou seest everywhere---.

In comparison to Coleridge, Sara has love throughout her very being,
"Soul, Heart, Lips, and Arms," and, like a mother dove with her
children, she spreads the "genial Warmth" of it to all those near
her. In place of such a calm existence, Coleridge urges Sara to
acknowledge ecstatically the polarity which is the vital law of life:

Thus, thus, should'fst thou rejoice!
(To thee would all things live from Pole to Pole,
Their Life the Eddying of thy living Soul.

In the published version, Coleridge adds the line "Joy lift her
spirit, joy attune her voice" before the image of the magnet to
emphasize that which supports Sara's ideal existence, and at the
conclusion of the verse letter the poet in a kind of blessing
foresees a joyous future for his beloved:

O dear! O Innocent! O full of Love!
A gentle A very Friend! (A)Sister of my Choice---
O dear, as Light & Impulse from above,
Thus mays't thou ever, evermore rejoice!

The poem ends, therefore, with Coleridge having made Sara Hutchinson
aware not only of the significance of the dejection which is destroying
his very being but also of the "joy" within her own being which could
redeem the poet.

"Dejection; An Ode" is the culmination of Coleridge's poetic
expression of the concept of "joy." Only in a moment of great
personal trial could the poet describe "joy" with authority; but, then, that was characteristic of this Hamletian man. A melancholy intensified to a state of dejection allowed the poet to realize fully for once what he needed to experience the Apocalypse he sought. After the crisis which inspired "Dejection: An Ode," the poet's concept of "joy" was incorporated into the metaphysician's law of polarity which became the new organizing center for the man's thought. For the poet, "joy" had provided both a mythology of places and persons--the colony, the bower, the child, the maiden--and a form of expression--"the sense of musical delight"--but it had more than aesthetic significance for the man. "Joy" for Coleridge was the key to life. "Joy" was the condition necessary for artistic achievement, philosophical understanding, and personal happiness. Perhaps Coleridge never could describe "joy" thoroughly because, as he himself realized, the nature of the Dionysian way was finally both illogical and unutterable. He knew that "joy" arose from within, from the depths of man's being, from the soul, and at the same time was inspired from without, from the infinity of the cosmos, from the deity. Coleridge felt the energy and longed to know more, but, as he well understood: "The material universe, saith a Greek philosopher, is but one vast complex mythus; that is, symbolical representation, and mythology the apex and complement of all genuine physiology. But as this principle can not be implanted by the discipline of logic, so neither can it be excited or evolved by the arts of rhetoric. For it is an immutable truth, that what comes from the heart, that alone goes to the heart; what proceeds from the divine impulse, that the godlike alone can awaken" (S,II,472).
Notes to Chapter VI.


2The law of polarity is a central concern of much of Coleridge's later philosophy and discussion of the notion culminates in the essay "Hints Towards the Formation of a More Comprehensive Theory of Life" (S.I, 373-416). For an account of the relation of Coleridge's thought to the scientific experimentation of Sir Humphry Davy, see L. Pearce Williams, Michael Faraday (New York, 1965), pp. 53-94.


6Quoted by House, p. 133.
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Plates
38. THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH
The Artist with his Wife and Child
Private Collection, England

Plate II.
Thomas Gainsborough, "The Artist, His Wife, and Child"
Plate III.

"Bacchus" from Tooke's Pantheon