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THE INFLUENCE OF DOROTHY WORDSWORTH  
ON THE POETRY OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE  
DURING THE YEARS 1797-1810

By

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## PREFACE

For both the inspiration and supervision of this thesis, I am indebted to Miss Elizabeth Coleman, and I take this opportunity not only to express my gratitude to her for her assistance but to wish that this dissertation were a tribute worthy of her and my admiration for her, both as a woman and a scholar.

I should also like to thank Professor L. B. Shackelford for his suggestions and criticisms with regard to various problems involved in writing it. To Mr. Fidler and Dr. Sandidge, I am indebted for delightful courses in nineteenth century literature; to Miss Alice Wyman, for her kindness and efficiency in procuring books and periodicals that were seemingly unobtainable; and to Miss Ruby Wilson, for her endless patience and devotion in running down clues and deciphering well-nigh illegible notes.

## INTRODUCTION

"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say --  
What manner of man art thou?"

If confronted by his own question, Coleridge, who was almost as haunting and enigmatic as his *Ancient Mariner*, would be forced, after some metaphysical speculation and psychological analysis, to defend his failure with Descartes' dictum, "il est bon de comprendre qu'il y a des choses qui sont absolument incompréhensibles." For, in spite of his efforts to define it, Coleridge's genius was as utterly inscrutable to him as it is to the world; he did not possess it, but was possessed by it, baffled by it, and thwarted by the very traits from which his greatest talents sprung. Being the apotheosis of that type of genius known as the "literary mind", Coleridge personified both its virtues and weaknesses to such an extent that his life was more shattered by his passion for putting his thoughts into words than by his inability to put his words into actions; his heart, more torn by the idea than by the physical reality; his poetic ability, as effectively paralyzed by an excess of thought as by an over-indulgence in opiates.

Any attempt to analyze his genius further would be as futile as Coleridge's own endeavors to snare his daemon in words. However, I hope to bring to light certain of its characteristics by showing how Coleridge

reacted to his environment, how he was influenced by his human relationships, particularly by those with women--an influence to which he seems to have been extraordinarily susceptible.

These things, however, are the implications, not the objects, of this study. Its specific aim is to prove that Dorothy Wordsworth exerted an appreciable influence upon Coleridge's poetry; an hypothesis that has often been noted by Coleridge's biographers, although, to the best of my knowledge, it has never been fully set forth before. In addition, I have endeavored to ascertain what the nature of her influence was, whether literary or personal; and to show how and in what ways she was able to effect certain specific and patent changes in the character of Coleridge's poetic genius.

My method has been: first, to obtain all possible information from the biographers and critics of Coleridge and William Wordsworth; second, to follow Coleridge in his flights to poetry, psychology, and metaphysics, to dog Dorothy Wordsworth in her endless walks through the Lake country in an effort to recapture something of their individual personalities, and to show how they might be both supplementary and complimentary; wherever possible, I have tried to make them answer the hermit's question by speaking for themselves through their writings; third, I have disinterred, laid side by side, dated

and compared, the similar passages to be found in Dorothy Wordsworth's journal and Coleridge's poems; and fourth, I have made an effort to point out the implications that lie hidden under the factual evidence, and to wring from them some of the fundamental principles of the psychology of the literary mind.

In the first chapter, by an examination of Coleridge's relationships with women during his early life, I have endeavored not only to give a speculum mentis of the poet, but to determine to what extent and in what way his poetry was influenced by the women with whom he came in contact at that period. In the second chapter, which deals with Dorothy Wordsworth's personal influence on Coleridge's life and poetry, I have tried to show: first, in what ways she was fitted to aid and complement his genius; second, to point out how the poet's love for her aroused in him an emotion that was to some extent responsible for precipitating the nebulous stardust of his imagination into the immortal poems of 1798; third, to cite instances in connection with the composition of certain poems which show that Dorothy Wordsworth gave Coleridge the energy, the encouragement, and the will to perform the arduous labor of actually putting the poems on paper; fourth, to quote the poet's tributes and references to her in his letters and poems. In the third chapter, after paralleling such passages from Dorothy Wordsworth's journal and Coleridge's poems

as bear a striking resemblance to each other, I have tried to determine whether Coleridge actually used her journal, as Wordsworth is known to have done, as a mine of poetic ore, or whether the similarity of the passages may be accounted for in another way. In the conclusion, I have deduced from the evidence presented, that while Dorothy Wordsworth's influence upon Coleridge was more extensive than was formerly thought, it was an influence derived chiefly through personal contact with her, rather than through any deliberate use of the descriptions of nature in her journal.

## CHAPTER I

### The Influence of Women on Coleridge's Life and Poetry 1772-1797

It has often been noted that genius shows a keen impressionability to its environment, both natural and human. Coleridge was abnormally sensitive in this respect; even in his early childhood he reacted violently, but indirectly (as he reacted to every physical stimulus) to his home life and the members of his family.

His attitude towards his mother, in view of his exaggerated craving for feminine sympathy and his later dependence upon women for both material and spiritual nursing, is a singularly strange one. The highest eulogy her often extravagant son ever bestowed upon her in his letters was that she was an "admirable economist", and had entire management of the vicarage of Ottery St. Mary. The poet was the youngest of ten children born to her and to the unworldly impractical vicar, John Coleridge<sup>1</sup>, and by the time Samuel arrived, on October 21, 1772, poor Mrs. Coleridge had already expended her small store of tenderness upon his elder brothers and sisters. She was doubtless far too engrossed in stretching the vicar's modest income to provide bread and "crumbly cheese" for the family, to lavish upon her youngest son the affection and attention that his heart hungered for in childhood as well

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S. T. C., vol. I, pp. 5-7.

as in manhood.

If this supposition be true, it accounts largely for Coleridge's unnatural need for maternal love in later years, as well as for his marked indifference to his mother. Only one letter from the poet to her has survived, and its tone is formal, restrained, almost cold, in comparison with his frequent and affectionate outpourings to his brother George,<sup>1</sup> to whom his "letters home" were almost invariably penned. From these letters it is evident that he did write to his mother at rare intervals; never particularly close to her, he seems to have drifted further away from any filial love for her during his "long exile" at Christ's Hospital School.

De Quincey asserts, "It is painful to mention that he was almost an object of persecution to his mother."<sup>2</sup> Coleridge himself confesses that after she whipped him for a murderous assault on his brother Frank, he ran away and spent the night in terror beside the River Otter "thinking at the same time with inward and gloomy satisfaction how miserable his mother must be. All this leads us to suppose that the relationship between mother and son was, if not antagonistic, at least not especially close; yet Mrs. Coleridge influenced her son in three ways. She implanted in him her distrust and aversion for what she quaintly called "harpsichord ladies"; that

1. Ibid., pp. 21-22 and note.

2. De Quincey, Literary Reminiscences, vol. I, p. 185.

is, for women of talent in the social world -- a prejudice that the poet never overcame, in spite of his regard for Mrs. Siddons and "Perdita" Robinson, the two most famous actresses of his day. Again, to all intents and purposes, Mrs. Coleridge furnished the ideal by which, at Southey's instigation, he chose a wife, who was to prove as uncongenial and unsympathetic a companion as his mother. In addition, while Coleridge says that he was his "mother's darling"<sup>1</sup>, we know from the autobiographical letters that he wrote to Thomas Poole in 1797 that he recoiled at an early age from the home life she created at the vicarage and began to seek refuge from the unpleasant realities of her scholdings and his brother's torments in a world of romance opened to him by Belisarius, Robinson Crusoe, and The Arabian Nights. Never directly rebellious, he fled to those books to escape his unhappy surroundings, exactly as in the years to come he turned to poetry, metaphysics, and opium. Thus it was, that before his senses began to investigate the real and sensuous world, he had, as he wrote Poole, become:

"...a dreamer, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity; and I was fretful, and inordinately passionate, and as I could not play at anything, was slothful....Sensibility, imagination, vanity, sloth, and even feelings of deep and bitter contempt for all who traversed the orbit of my understanding, were even then prominent and manifest."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid., vol. I, p. 11.

2. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 12

While his early reading of fairy tales gave Coleridge's youthful mind a grasp upon and "a love of the great and the whole", and habituated his mind to "the Vast", these excursions into the unknown, according to Coleridge's own confession, were responsible for the fact that he never regarded his senses as the criteria of belief but regulated his creeds by his conceptions instead of by observations.<sup>1</sup>

The poet very likely inherited a tendency towards this weakness from his father; certainly, he received his portion of the vicar's loving kindness, his generosity of heart, his unpractical naivete, his expansive piety, and his myopia in all material affairs. And, like that good gentleman, who proposed to solve many of the difficulties of Latin grammar by suggesting the quippe-quare-quale-quia-quiddative case as a new name for the ablative, his son was inclined to meet his problems by resolving them into words. And the more words the better!

To the poet, as well as to the author of the Gospel according to John and all others endowed with the literary mind, "In the beginning there was the Word...and the Word was God".<sup>2</sup> No other man ever worshipped words or was ruled by them to the extent that Coleridge was; the word had more reality for him than the thing it represented; his emotional responses were largely to verbal rather than

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1. Ibid., vol. I, p. 16.

2. John, 1,1.

physical stimuli. As Mr. Lowes points out in The Road to Xanadu, the poet remembered phrases rather than images. He thought in words instead of images; and if he did not feel in them, he suffered untold tortures through them.

Unhappily, too, like many another genius, he had an instinctive and irresistible impulse to express the ideas and emotions within him -- to unburden himself and relax the tension created by an overactive mind -- an impulse that inevitably leads to an intense desire for communication with other persons. Art for him, as for Goethe, was only the means of expressing his sentiments. He expressed in poetic form only the emotions, the supernatural Odysseys, and the exotic dreams that took place within himself; and he might well have said with the spokesman of German Romanticism, "Thus, all I have published are but fragments of a long confession."

Added to Coleridge's imperative need for communication with others was a spiritual yearning, which arose from a human hunger and manifested itself in his pathetic quest for intimacy and his longing to bestow the strange affections of his nature upon others. His sister Anna seems to have been the first object upon whom he lavished his poetry and his love. In a letter to his mother he says almost fearfully, "I suppose my sister Anna's beauty has many admirers."<sup>1</sup> A few years later,

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S. T. C., vol., 1, p. 21.

in his poem, "Anna and Harland", we see that his anxiety lest someone usurp his place in his sister's heart was not unfounded. Although Coleridge was never jealous of his literary fame, this poem gives an early and somewhat comic intimation of the pangs the poet felt later when some one other than himself threatened to monopolize the attention of those women whom he came to call "sisters". Evidently, at the time the verses were written, "an excess of thought" had not yet paralyzed Samuel's good right arm, for he seems to have dealt summarily with his sister's beau:

"Within these wilds was Anna wont to rove,  
While Harland told his love in many a sigh;  
But stern on Harland roll'd her brother's eye.  
They fought; they fell -- her brother and her  
love!"<sup>1</sup>

Coleridge was evidently deeply attached to Anna. In the lines "On Receiving an Account that his Only Sister's Death was Inevitable", she is addressed as "her whom most my soul held dear". Here Coleridge expresses for the first time an idea that he was to re-iterate time and time again: "Better to die, than live and not be lov'd."<sup>2</sup> A year later, in 1791, the sight of his school friend, Evans,<sup>3</sup> being joyously received at home by Mary, brought back to young Coleridge the memory of

1. "Anna and Harland", in Poems, vol. I, p. 16.

2. Ibid.

3. Judging from the dates and circumstances under which the poem was written, I think "On Seeing a Youth Etc." must refer to Evans rather than Lamb.

his own sister, and he composed some verses tinged with a wistful envy, "On Seeing a Youth Affectionately Welcomed by a Sister." Years afterwards in writing to Charles Lamb during Mary Lamb's illness, he laments that:

"I too a Sister had, an only Sister--  
 She lov'd me dearly, and I doted on her!  
 To her I pour'd forth all my puny sorrows  
 (As a sick patient in a Nurses's arms)  
 And of the heart those hidden maladies  
 That e'en from Friendship's eye will shrink  
 asham'd."<sup>1</sup>

These lines, filled with more feeling than poetry, as was so much of Coleridge's early verse, are not only an expression of his devotion to his sister but a description of the poet's conception of love as a source of consolation, sympathetic understanding, and attention to the outpourings of his "puny sorrows" and morbid introspections.

But, to do Coleridge justice, even during the first years of his "long exile" at Christ's Hospital School as a charity boy, he was not always morbid or melancholy. He had one trait that few have ever suspected him of -- a Rabelaisian sense of humor,<sup>2</sup> which he preserved, even after long years of association with Wordsworth, Southey, Sara Fricker, and the English critics. True, he was humorless enough about himself;

1. "To a Friend (Charles Lamb)", Poems, vol. I, p. 78.
2. For additional evidence cf. the epitaphs published in Coleridge, Poems, vol. II, passim.

but any trace of levity in the Lake Poets is encouraging and worthy of note. When coupled with a passion for putting one's sentiments into words, a Rabelaisian sense of humor is a dangerous thing; and so it proved to be for the young poet. According to tradition, Coleridge had a wealthy godmother, who struck him from her will because of one of his outbursts of wit:

My Godmother's Beard

So great the charms of Mrs. Mundy  
That men grew rude, a kiss to gain:  
This so provok'd the dame that one day  
To Pallas chaste she did complain:

Nor vainly she address'd her prayer,  
Nor vainly to that power applied;  
The goddess bade a length of hair  
In deep recess her muzzle hide.

"Still persevere! to love be callous!  
For I have your petition heard!  
To snatch a kiss were vain", (cried Pallas),<sup>1</sup>  
"Unless you first should shave your beard."

He must have been an attractive lad, for during these days at Christ's Hospital, Coleridge received attention even from the stern Boyer. Lamb called him the "inspired charity boy". He was a shy, retiring lad, with pale, ivory skin, glossy black hair, and large gray eyes. His features had an exotic cast; his lips were full and loose. He once described himself by saying that he had "the brow of an angel and the mouth of a beast. For all his shyness, when he chose to talk, he was always surrounded by an admiring group of his fellows, dressed

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1. Ibid., vol. II, p. 976.

like himself in long blue coats, belted with broad red leather girdles, yellow stockings, and black shoes.

Even a ready audience could not compensate Coleridge for the wretchedness caused by the loss of his sister Anna and his brother Luke, the harshness of the masters, and the scanty diet at the school. In the morning, he tells us, the boys had "a bit of dry bread and some bad small beer; in the evening, a piece of bread and cheese... Our food was portioned; and, excepting on Wednesdays, I never had a belly full. Our appetites were damped, never satisfied."<sup>1</sup> "I was in a continual low fever", he wrote later of his years at Christ's Hospital. "My whole being was, with eyes closed to every object of present sense, to crumple myself up in a sunny corner and read, read, read; fixing myself on Robinson Crusoe's Island, finding a mountain of plumb cake, and eating a room for myself, and then eating it into the shapes of tables and chairs -- hunger and fancy."<sup>2</sup>

Set down alone in the great, friendless city, in a school teeming with strange faces, the boy, already lonely and conscious of being set apart from his fellows -- not because he was different, but because he felt differently and yet could not say how -- found himself alone and desolate after the death of his brother and

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. I, pp. 20-21.

2. Ibid., p. 20, note quoting an autobiographical note of 1832.

sister. His grief and his intense subjectivity, deprived of the rational sympathies of others, unmitigated by a love of play, festered into self-consciousness, which nurtured his youthful egotism and made him painfully aware of a feeling of solitude. Frustrated in his craving for human sympathy and affection, he began to manifest a hunger for the infinite, a:

" Yearning to touch, to feel  
The dark impalpable sure."

As Hazlitt puts it, "Coleridge somehow always contrived to prefer the unknown to the known."<sup>1</sup> This hunger for the infinite, which to Coleridge was nothing more or less than a longing for self-escape, alternately produced in him psychic gnawing pains and ecstasies of metaphysical delirium -- sensations that the individualistic and subjective young Romantic sought to project into a creed.

Through Plato and Plotinus, he sought a system of metaphysics that would fill his soul with enough of the infinite, in the finite form of words, to sustain, if not to stay, his voracious hunger for the impalpable - a philosophy that would at once console him, justify his dreaming, and confirm his sense of unreality as the true reality. He walked about the "pale cloisters" of Christ's Hospital, belaboring his own brains and those of his young companions with Socratic questionings and amorphous

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1. Hazlitt, Essays, p. 10.

metaphysical discourses. Like poor Minniver Cheevey, Coleridge "thought, and thought, and thought about it", but all to no purpose. Neither then nor later did he ever succeed in giving satisfactory utterance to what he "felt" about:

"Providence, foreknowledge, will, fate,  
Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute."

His failure was due to the same deficiency that made his early poems so meaningless, so lacking in sensuous imagery, so abstract, so loosely constructed, and so unimpassioned that it is often hard to believe that they are his: he was so lacking in contact with the finite that he could scarcely be expected to exert a firm grasp on the infinite, either in philosophy or poetry.

Even the redoubtable Boyer's attempts to enforce a clear and logical system of thought on him by means of syllogisms (and birches) were without success. Although Boyer's logic undoubtedly strengthened and clarified the boy's precocious reasoning powers, in the end it only served to goad him into seeking further escape into transcendental realms, making renewed efforts to wring a balm from the unreal that was not to be found in the real.

Coleridge was, as we have seen, inclined to interpret the world in terms of his own conceptions, and in his notes on Hamlet he gives an analysis of this particular state of mind, that is, I think, more descriptive

of himself than of the Prince of Denmark:

"It is the nature of thought to be indefinite;- definiteness belongs to external imagery alone. Hence it is that the sense of sublimity arises, not from the sight of an outward object, but from the beholder's reflection upon it; - not from the sensuous impression but from the imaginative reflex....Hamlet (and Coleridge) feels this; his senses are in a state of trance, and he looks upon external things as hieroglyphics. His soliloquy -

'O! that this too, too solid flesh would melt,  
etc.'

springs from that craving after the indefinite - for that which is not - which most easily besets men of genius; and the self-delusion common to this temper of mind..."<sup>1</sup>

This passage, and another from the same source, that will be quoted later, give us a clearer idea of Coleridge's own mental state than any of his many attempts at self-analysis. Here it is obvious that he is drawing on his own experience in his discussion of Hamlet's hunger for the infinite, lack of susceptibility to normal stimuli, self-delusion, and melancholy.

It was on his return from his metaphysical flights that Coleridge tended to be most despondent. If his abnormal sensibility drove him to try to elude the real in the unreal, his sense of solitude sometimes overcame him with a frantic desire to escape from the cold and vast abstract to the concrete warmth and cozy intimacy to be found in tea and talk about the fireside.

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1. Coleridge, Notes on Shakespeare, p. 208.

He was barely fifteen, when on his return from an excursion into the Vast, he made an effort to grasp at the real. Finding himself overwhelmed with loneliness, Coleridge made friends with a shoemaker and his wife, whose shop was not far from Christ's Hospital. He found their hearth such an agreeable oasis in his wretched little life, and was so delighted by the novelty of being petted, comforted, and stuffed with cookies by the good man's wife, that he persuaded the shoemaker to go to the headmaster and ask the dread Boyer for leave to take him as an apprentice.

The headmaster doubtless put an end to his visits to the shoemaker and his wife, for it was not long before Coleridge was eulogizing another source of sympathy in the person of "Genevieve", the daughter of the nurse in the school infirmary. It was an ancient custom at Christ's Hospital for the head boys to fall in love with their nurses' daughters; so young Coleridge, who tells us that he spent half of his time in the infirmary, began to apostrophize "Genevieve" in feverish, languid verses. As to "Genevieve's" identity there is only one clue: in an unpublished letter of December 18, 1807, the poet begs the aid of Richard Sharpe on behalf of a "Mrs. Brewman, who was elected a nurse to one of the wards of Christ's Hospital at the time that I was a boy

there."<sup>1</sup> The "Genevieve" of the poems may have been her daughter; or since pity and solicitude were always more effective in kindling love in Coleridge's breast than youth or beauty, the lines may have been addressed to Mrs. Brewman herself. The verses to "Genevieve" dated 1789, point out clearly what qualities in woman went farthest towards inspiring his love. With more truth than flattery, he tells his "Genevieve" that:

"Within your soul a voice there lies!  
It bids you hear the tale of woe....  
I've seen your breast with pity heave,  
And therefore love I you, sweet Genevieve."<sup>1</sup>

Coleridge himself was frank enough to italicize the "therefore". Love was never a passion to Coleridge; it was a feeling of tender gratitude for sympathy and understanding. The emotion that women aroused in him was not physical love, but an expansive, idealized affection that came, "not from the sensuous impression, but from the imaginative reflex" -- a form of auto-eroticism characteristic of the so-called "literary mind"; typified in what Mary Shelley called Percy's "platonics", in Dr. Johnson's relations with Mrs. Thrale, in Swift's affair with "Vanessa" and "Stella", in Hamlet's love for Ophelia; and found in an exaggerated form in Coleridge's regard for Dorothy Wordsworth.

In another poem to "Genevieve", "Pain: A Sonnet

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. I, p. 20.

composed in "Sickness"<sup>1</sup> in 1790, it is amusing to note that while he declares, "the wild pulse throbb'd anguish thro' the night" -- it was the anguish of pain, not love, to which he referred in addressing his lady. Even the young Coleridge was not wont to love intensely, or long; the idealized love that he experienced from the dream or thought of one woman was vague, diffuse, and by its nature, easily transferrable to another.

Soon after his last poem was written to "Genevieve", Samuel met another girl, who not only soothed his pains but helped to dispel the melancholy that his first love seems to have fostered in him. One of the boys at Christ's Hospital, a lad named Evans, who listened eagerly to Coleridge's fluent conversation, asked the young philosopher to his home. In that cheerful and pleasant household, Coleridge fell in love with the mother, who was a widow and "such a nice lady", as well as with Evans's three sisters. In the course of his intimacy with them, his affections gradually centered upon Mary, one of the sisters; but Coleridge was exceedingly fond of them all, and they of him. They treated him as a member of the family; he called Mrs. Evans his foster-mother, and was nicknamed "Brother Coly" by the sisters. Under their wholesome influence, the boy was happier, more normal, and more in touch with reality than he had been

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1. Ibid., p. 19.

in his own home.

An undated letter to his brother George, written about the time he first met the Evans family, reflects an unprecedented worldliness in the poet, as well as a boyish eagerness to please his new lady-love:

"Dear Brother,

You will excuse me for reminding you that, as our holidays commence next week, and I shall go out a good deal, a good pair of breeches will be no inconsiderable accession to my appearance. For though, my present pair are excellent for the purpose of drawing mathematical figures on them, and though a walking thought, sonnet, or epigram would appear on them in very splendid type, yet they are not altogether so well adapted for a female eye--not to mention that I should have the charge of vanity brought against me for wearing a looking-glass. I hope you have got rid of your cold--and I am your affectionate brother,

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

P.S. Could you let me have them time enough for readaptation before Whitsunday? I mean that they may be made up for me before that time."<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning, Coleridge's attachment to Mrs. Evans, who all but spoiled him with motherly attentions, had far more warmth and sentiment than his affection for Mary. In later life he wrote of his "foster-mother" to Thelwall, "Blessings descend on her! emotions crowd on me at the sight of her name...She is no common being who could create so warm and lasting an interest in our hearts....she is without exception the greatest woman I have been fortunate enough to meet in my brief pilgri-

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. I, p. 22.

mage through life."<sup>1</sup>

When the Christmas holidays came, Coleridge did not go home, but spent a fortnight with his new friends. Soon afterwards he confessed to his brother that:

"...the relaxation from study, cooperating with the cheerfulness and attention which I met there, proved very potently medicinal. I have indeed experienced from her (Mrs. Evans) a tenderness scarcely inferior to the solicitude of maternal affection."<sup>2</sup>

Under encouragement from Mrs. Evans and her daughters, he suddenly began to develop both scholastic and poetic ambitions. He was Exhibitioner of Christ's Hospital 1791, having already been made a "Grecian". The same year, he entered Jesus College, Cambridge, as a sizar and Rustat Scholar. Soon after his entry, he was awarded the Browne Gold Medal, and was inspired to compete for the Craven Scholarship, which he almost succeeded in winning, being one of the last four candidates to be eliminated.

The harvest of poetry for the years 1791-1792 was large. Most of the poems were included in Coleridge's letters to the Evans family. On February 13, 1792, after hearing that Mrs. Evans and her daughters were to spend the summer in Wales, he wrote to her enclosing an imposing Miltonic poem on his disappointment at not being able to see them during the holidays.

1. Ibid., vol. I, p. 216.

2. Ibid., vol. I, p. 23; Letter to George Coleridge, Jan. 24, 1792.

"My Very Dear, - What word shall I add sufficiently expressive of the warmth which I feel? You covet to be near my heart. Believe me, that you and my sister (he must be referring to Mary, for his own sister had died the year before) have the very first row in the front box of my heart's little theatre. God knows! you are not crowded. There, my dear spectators! you shall see what you shall see -- Farce, Comedy, and Tragedy -- my laughter, my cheerfulness and my melancholy...."<sup>1</sup>

In the enclosed lines "To Disappointment" and "With Fielding's Amelia"<sup>2</sup>, which was also written to Mrs. Evans, Coleridge hails her as "parent and friend". The soft emotions he was luxuriating in during his first two years at Cambridge, though centered about Mary Evans, were readily attachable to any sympathetic woman. Indeed, so far as he loved Mary Evans, he was more enamored of her as an excuse for "complimentary effusions in the poetic way" than as a charming young girl.

On the other hand, Mary Evans and Dorothy Wordsworth are the only women who ever aroused in Coleridge the slightest spark of any real, deep, or lasting emotion worthy of the name of love. And as Mrs. Evans' kindness stimulated the poet's ambition, so his love for her daughter gave new vitality to his poetic impulse. Mary Evans's importance to Coleridge and to us lies in that she was the first woman to do for his poetry what Beatrice did for Dante's, Nelly Kilpatrick for Burns's, Fanny

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1. Coleridge, *Letters of S. T. C.*, vol. 1, p. 26.

2. Coleridge, *Poems*, vol. 1, pp. 34-37.

Brawne for Keats's and Mrs. Unwin for Cowper's.

Now, leaving all sentiment aside, we know that the physical emotion of love does exercise very definite psychological effects: it is a stimulus to all that lies hidden waiting expression; the perceptions are quickened; the imagination is kindled with the glow of vivid, sensuous imagery. Furthermore, it acts as a dynamic influence, particularly upon the creative mind. It is no surprise then, to find a definite change wrought in Coleridge's poetry by his attachment to Mary Evans. Languid and indolent by nature, the poet was constantly in need of some dynamic force to impel him to action. In addition, he desensualized his mind by abstract thought to such an extent that he not only became discursive, but tended to envelop the world of men and things in a metaphysical mist. When he tried to objectify his nebulous thoughts in poetry, having had slight experience and contact through his senses with the real world, he multiplied metaphors and personifications, but the desired image eluded his grasp, and he was forced to resort to allegory and "dim similitudes in moral strains," except when he was under the influence of an emotion sufficient to fire the alembic of his mind, boil down his thought, and condense his vaporous images.

But let there be no mistake: the emotion that Mary Evans and Dorothy Wordsworth awakened in Coleridge, which spurred him to write down the poetry he was forever

dreaming, and precipitated his philosophical thought into definite, concrete images, was in no sense a physical passion. That is evident from his action, his letters, and his poetry; particularly in a "To the Evening Star" written to Mary Evans about 1790, in which he says:

"Must not the maid I love like thee inspire  
 Pure Joy and calm Delight?....  
 Must she not be as is thy placid sphere  
 Serenely brilliant? Whilst to gaze a while  
 Be all my wish 'mid fancy's high career,  
 E'en till she quit this scene of earthly toil;"<sup>1</sup>

If this be passion, it most certainly was, in Coleridge's own phrase, "passion with a languid eye". The poet had too faint a pleasure in "things contingent and transitory" to experience any great physical love. Yet his love for Mary Evans was not purely an intellectual or Platonic love; it was more ardent, more sensual than that, but sensual only in retrospect, revery, and poetic expression.

It was a type of love peculiar to the "literary mind" -- and a phenomenon understood by few people. To summarize it: it was a love, kindled not directly through the senses by the object of its desire, but arising indirectly in the imagination as a result of the poet's reflection, his memories of the lady; it was stimulated chiefly through words; it derived pleasure "not from the sensuous impression but from the imaginative reflex"; it manifested itself in poetic effusions rather than in caresses; and was further modified by an abnormal sensibility in the poet, which made him feel that it was sweeter to love,

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. I, p. 17.

and love in vain, than to risk tarnishing his emotion by giving it a normal and direct expression.

Here, let us make clear on other point: it must not be assumed that because of its slight physical basis, Coleridge's "love" -- for there is no other word to express it -- was not a powerful emotion. It was. Being a thing of the mind, the imagination, and the word, it had more reality for him than any love grasped directly but imperfectly by his senses. Indeed, in Coleridge the dreamy communion of detached contemplation aroused an emotion no less fervent, passionate, and vivid than that love, which in the normal man is stimulated and seeks expression through physical channels. It differed from ordinary love not in intensity but in quality; and in that, having so little physical basis, it was more easily transferred from one object to another.

Coleridge's affair with Mary Evans points out so many of his characteristics that it is illuminating to follow its course. In a letter to her from Cambridge, written in February, 1792, two of his striking peculiarities are brought out in a way that make it worth quoting:

"I cast my eyes around, and what should I behold but a Ghost rising out of the floor... The spirit advanced with a book in his hand, and having first dissipated my terrors, said as follows: 'I am the ghost of Gray. There lives a young lady (then he mentioned your name), of whose judgment I entertain so high an opinion, that her approbation of my works

would make the turf lie lighter on me...  
 And, as for you, O young man! (now he addresses himself to me) write no more verses. In the first place your poetry is vile stuff; and secondly (here he sighed almost to bursting) all poets go to --ll; we are so intolerably addicted to the vice of lying".<sup>1</sup>

From the above letter it will not only be seen that Coleridge was on such familiar terms with the supernatural that he invokes the spirit of Gray to present a book to Mary, but that he confesses one of his great weaknesses through the lips of his ghostly friend. Coleridge was a habitual but unconscious prevaricator. It is typical of the literary mind that it hold universal truth as the summum bonum of knowledge and has an utter disregard for its particulars-- a trait that was abnormally strong in Coleridge. He regulated his judgments of the world according to his conceptions, instead of in the light of the facts; he felt things he could not comprehend; he sensed what was impossible to reduce to verbal truths; and like Shelley, he was forever recounting as real experiences things that had never taken place except in his imagination. Three weeks after he moved to Stowey, in the dead of the winter of 1797, he wrote that he had an acre and a half behind the cottage on which:

"I raise potatoes and all manner of vegetables; have an orchard, and shall raise corn (with the spade) enough for my family."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. I, p. 34.
  2. Ibid.

Knowing the poet, it is safe to surmise that neither the vegetables nor the corn were ever planted except in his fertile fancy. In his letters he concocts one fabrication after another, all full of invention and exquisitely adapted to the taste of each correspondent. In 1799, on his return from Germany, he wrote lengthy letters to the Wordsworths, claiming to be contributing articles to the Morning Post, when in reality those appearing had been written by Thomas Poole. De Quincey tells of another amusing incident that illustrates the poet's tendency to romance about himself:

"From Malta, on his return homewards, he went to Rome and Naples. One of the Cardinals, he tells us, warned him, by the Pope's wish, of some plot, set on foot by Bonaparte, for seizing him as an anti-Gallican writer. This statement was ridiculed by the anonymous assailant in Blackwood as the very consummation of moon-struck vanity."<sup>1</sup>

While Mary Evans succeeded to some extent in reclaiming Coleridge from the imaginary and the abstract, even in his letters to her he wandered off into the vast to return with the confession:

"'Pon my word, Miss Evans, I beg your pardon a thousand times for bepraising you to your face, but really I have written so long that I had forgot to whom I was writing."<sup>2</sup>

But whether Coleridge could remember to whom he was writing or not, Mary Evans provided him with as satisfying a

1. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., vol. 1, p. 211.

2. Coleridge, E. H., Letters of S.T.C., vol. 1, p. 50.

vent for tender emotions as William Friend and his Jacobism afforded him for his political enthusiasm. His letters to her from Cambridge are filled with poems dedicated to her, but inspired by Bowles and Ossian. Among the best of them are: "An Ode in the Manner of Anacreon", "On An Autumnal Evening", and "The Complaint of Ninethoma". The latter, inspired by Ossian, has the same pictorial quality that later manifested itself in "Kubla Khan". The "Lines on an Autumnal Evening," a recast of an earlier poem, were revamped as a reply to the felicitations received from Mary Evans after he was awarded the Browne Gold Medal in 1793. The poem, voluptuous, half emotional, half sensuous, reflects one of the rare moments of personal feeling that appears in the conventional effusions of Coleridge's youth. It was sweet to imagine Mary Evans twining a laurel wreath around his brow, and to discourse day and night on republicanism, but Coleridge's happiness at Cambridge was short-lived.

Reality attacked him in the guise of an irate upholsterer, who demanded payment for having furnished Coleridge's rooms. Staggered by the bill, the poet, true to his invariable impulse when hurt by life to run away and hide like a child, fled to London, where the lottery was to be drawn, and bought a ticket in the hope of retrieving some, at least, of his fortunes. And while awaiting his fate, he addressed the fickle goddess in a

set of verses at once frivolous and pathetic, speaking of the "one flower of hope" - a flower mystically composed of Mary Evans and the lottery ticket. When the goddess refused to be suborned by the lines "To Fortune",<sup>1</sup> and Mary Evans proved unkind by engaging herself to another man, Coleridge ran away again, hoping to lose himself in a strange, insensitive world by borrowing the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbacke from a shop front and enlisting in the 15th Light Dragoons. He was attested at Reading on December 2, 1793, sworn in for service against the very French Republic that a week before he had loudly acclaimed as the champion of liberty and the hope of the world.

Before he had been in service a month, Coleridge was seeking another escape. His brothers eventually came to his rescue and purchased his discharge from the army. Humbled, repentant, and self-accusatory; the poet wrote his brother:

"O my wayward soul! I have been a fool even to  
madness.  
What shall I dare to promise? My mind is illegible to myself.  
I am lost in the labyrinth, the trackless,  
wilderness of my own bosom."<sup>2</sup>

And never were words more truly spoken. While it is true that much of Coleridge's genius lay in the "trackless

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 55.

2. Coleridge, Letters of S. T. C., vol. 1, p. 59.

wilderness" of his own bosom, the wisdom gathered, as he suggested, "from the maddest flights of imagination, as medicines were stumbled upon in the wild processes of alchemy,"<sup>1</sup> was not of the kind to lead him out of the morasses of thought, or guide him on his way in the world. Many of Coleridge's failures were due to his tendency to lose himself in the labyrinths of his own mind, to what might be called "the Hamlet complex". In his Notes on Shakespeare, with reference to Hamlet's aversion to action, he says:

"Man is distinguished from brute animals in proportion as thought prevails over sense: but in the healthy processes of mind, a balance is constantly maintained between the impressions from outward objects and the inward operations of the intellect;- for if there be an overbalance in the contemplative faculty, man thereby becomes the creature of mere meditation, and loses his natural power of action."<sup>2</sup>

Coleridge, like Hamlet, was so "constantly occupied with the world within, and abstracted from the world without",<sup>3</sup> that, after his imagination had created the masterpiece, he was satisfied. His egotism prompted him to give reality to his vision by putting it on paper, but by that time the creative urge had been dissipated in the "trackless wilderness", and the resultant aversion to real action paralyzed his hand.

As we have already seen, Coleridge had to a super-

1. Ibid., vol. I, p. 64.

2. Coleridge, Notes on Shakespeare, p. 207.

3. Ibid., p. 208.

lative degree two of the three qualities that Matthew Arnold construes in his Notebook as being the "tokens of genius; extraordinary understanding, extraordinary conduct, and extraordinary exertion." Under certain conditions, such as the inspiration and emotional tension furnished by his affair with Mary Evans, the happiness and sense of well-being that sprang from her mother's solicitude and affection, Coleridge was capable of "extraordinary exertion" as well. But deprived of the external forces that strengthened his will and impelled him to write down his verses, poetry died unborn in the labyrinths of his own bosom. For his genius was an exotic flower that only thrived in a hothouse atmosphere of love and understanding.

After he was discharged from the army, the poet returned to Cambridge in April, 1793, after an absence of five months. However, he did not come back to find the contentment there that he had known before and had celebrated in "Happiness" and "A Wish Written in Jesus Wood, February 10, 1792."<sup>1</sup> He was shamed and repentant from his escapade; Mary Evans' figure had been rudely dispelled from his dreams, and with it had fled his poetic impulse.

At the end of the session, Coleridge, in an effort to escape his own morose thoughts, set out with his

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, pp. 45-46.

friend Hucks on a walking tour through Wales. On their way they visited Oxford, where Coleridge met Southey, and the two poets laid the foundation plans of a pantisocracy to be established on the banks of the Susquehanna. Coleridge continued his journey with a light heart; the ingenious Southey had not only suggested another air castle to shelter him from the real world, but had proposed to supply him with a substitute for Mary Evans. Sara Fricker, to whom Southey had Coleridge engaged, almost before he had seen her, was the daughter of a Bristol manufacturer of Candy Pans and the sister of the latter's fiancée. She would make, the two poets agreed, an ideal companion for Coleridge in the pantisocratic venture. Once the marriage had been settled in theory, the poet gave it no more thought.

By the time July came, his attention had been diverted from Miss Fricker to Fanny Nesbitt, whom he had met in the diligence between Tiverton and Exeter. To her, he addressed the lines "Imitated From Ossian:"

"To-morrow shall the Traveller come  
Who late beheld me blooming.....

Thus, faithful Maiden! thou shalt seek  
The youth of simplest song.....

'And dwell, the moon-beam of thy soul  
In Slumber's mighty hour."<sup>1</sup>

It would not be surprising either if she were the young

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 38.

lady "of stature elegantly small, and of complexion colourless yet clear," whom Coleridge proclaimed the Faery Queen in the "Songs of the Pixies".<sup>1</sup>

While he was on a visit to Plymouth that summer, he presented a moss rose to Fanny Nesbitt. When Dick Hart, a relative of Coleridge's, asked her if she were not afraid to put it in her bosom, as perhaps there might be love in it, Coleridge wrote "The Rose" as a reply... "a little ode or song or what you please to call it.... of the namby pamby genus."<sup>2</sup> The description might well apply to all the poems inspired by Miss Nesbitt.

In August, he must have gone to see her again, for on the fifth of the month he writes:

"I stayed at Tiverton about ten days and got no small kudos among the young belles by complimentary effusions in the poetic way. A specimen:-  
"Cupid Turned Chymist:"

And 'Kisses' was the precious Compound's name.  
With half, the God his Cyprian Mother blest,  
And breath'd on Nesbitt's lovelier lips the  
rest.

Do you know Fanny Nesbitt?....(She is), I think,  
a very pretty girl."<sup>3</sup>

This poem, afterwards entitled, "Kisses", and "The Rose", are particularly significant for two reasons: first, because of the variant readings of later versions, which show that the poems were constantly being altered to fit Coleridge's new loves. The rose that first reposed on

1. Ibid., p. 40.

2. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. 1, p. 54, Letter to George Coleridge.

3. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. 1, p. 56.

"lovely Nesbitt's breast" was later successviely bequeathed to "Angelina", "Anna Bucle", and at last to "spotless Sara". The kiss, first given "on lovely Nesbitt's lips", was bestowed upon Mary Evans and Sara Fricker in subsequent versions.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, in view of these changes, the text of the poems prove that Coleridge was a verbal sensualist. Desire might fret him for a moment, but his love was satisfied by his imagination. It was quite safe for him to write:

"Ah, why refuse the blameless bliss?  
Can danger lurk within a kiss?"<sup>2</sup>

For him a kiss was an imaginary sensation. As a lover, he projected his emotions into dreams of desire, and through excess of sensibility recoiled from the world of fact outside himself, by contact with which both his desire and his idealism might have discovered reality.

All the while that Coleridge was writing poetry to Fanny Nesbitt he was pouring out eulogies of Mary Evans in his letters to Southey. When he met her and her sister in Wales, he ran away to keep from speaking to them, but that night he wrote to Southey:

"I turned sick and all but fainted away!  
The two sisters, as Hucks informs me, passed by the window anxiously several times afterwards; but I had retired....My fortitude would not have supported me, had I recognized her - I mean appeared to do it! I neither ate nor slept yesterday. But love is a local anguish; I am

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. I, notes to poems on pp.45,47.  
2. Coleridge, Poems, vol. I, p. 47.

sixteen miles distant, and am not half so miserable. I must endeavour to forget it amid the terrible graces of the wild wood scenery that surround me. I never durst even in a whisper avow my passion, though I knew she loved me. Where were my fortunes? And why should I make her miserable! Almighty God, bless her! Her image is in the sanctuary of my heart, and never can it be torn away but with the strings that grapple it to life. Southey! There are few men of whose delicacy I think so highly as to have written all this. I am glad I have so deemed of you. We are soothed by communications."<sup>1</sup>

It was this incident that gave rise "To the Sigh" - a poem in which he expresses his longing for Mary Evans. It was written, strangely enough, several months after his engagement to Sara Fricker had been made public.

At the same time that Coleridge was writing poetry to Fanny Nesbitt, sighing for Mary Evans, and proposing to Sara Fricker, he was also inscribing verses to a certain mysterious Julia. The first poem in which she is mentioned, a mock-heroic episode, modeled after Pope, was written while he was still in Christ's Hospital. This poem, "To Julia" and "A Lover's Complaint to his Mistress Who Deserted Him in Quest of a More Wealthy Husband in the East Indies", in which he tells "cruel Julia" that the winds and the ocean will punish her for sporting with his heart - are similar in their light, urbane tone. Who Julia was, we do not know. From the poems, one would judge that she was something of "a harpsichord lady." She may have been a society woman,

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S. T. C., vol., 1, p. 78.

whom Coleridge had met in London; or she may have been only an imaginary creature, christened with the conventional name of "Julia".

On Coleridge's return to Cambridge, yet another young lady engaged his heart and pen. In reply to Southey's letters, reproving him for not having written to Sara Fricker, his fiancée, the poet answered with characteristic lack of discretion:

"On the Friday I received your letter of phlogistic rebuke. I answered it immediately, wrote a second letter to Miss Fricker. Much against my will, I am engaged to drink tea and go to the play with Miss Brunton (Mrs. Merry's sister). The young lady, and indeed the whole family, have taken it into their heads to be very much attached to me, though I have known them only six days. The father (who is the manager and proprietor of the theatre) inclosed in a very polite note a free ticket for the season. The young lady is said to be the most literary of the beautiful, and the most beautiful of the literatae. It may be so; my faculties and discernments are so completely jaundiced by vexation that the Virgin Mary and Mary Flanders, alias Moll, would appear in the same hues."<sup>1</sup>

It was to this Brunton that Coleridge sent the works that occupied his attention during the autumn of 1794. The Robespierre he and Southey had contracted to write together to support themselves and their prospective wives, he sent to her with some lines, "To a Young Lady With a Poem on the French Revolution", begging "Nor, Burton! thou the blushing wreath refuse",<sup>2</sup> a plea

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. 1, p. 86.  
2. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 64.

changed the next year to "Nor, Sara! thou these early flowers refuse"<sup>1</sup>. Likewise, it was to Miss Brunton, who for the moment was acting as the "enchanting mistress of virtuous woe", he directed his "Translation" and lines "To Miss Brunton".

However, Miss Brunton proved a poor substitute for Mary Evans. Now that the latter was no longer a reality but a memory, she was dearer to Coleridge than ever. When Southey became more vehement in his expostulations with the poet for his neglect, Coleridge sat down and composed a fictitious letter from Mary Evans to himself, wherein she purports to beg him to renounce the Pantisocracy. This he enclosed in a wild letter to Southey, declaring that:

"No name was signed, - it was from Mary Evans. I received it about three weeks ago. I loved her, Southey, almost to madness. Her image was never absent from me for three years, for more than three years. My resolution has not faltered, but I want a comforter. I have done nothing; I have gone into company; I was constantly at the theatre here till they left us; I endeavored to be perpetually with Miss Brunton; I even hoped that her exquisite beauty and uncommon accomplishments might have cured one passion by another. The latter I could easily have dissipated in her absence, and so have restored my affections to her whom I do not love. I am resolved, but wretched.- But time shall do much."<sup>2</sup>

It was in this same letter, dated October 21, 1794, that Coleridge confesses that when he is unhappy, he

1. Ibid.

2. Coleridge, Letters of S. T. C., vol. 1, p. 89.

writes "damned bad poetry". The task of completing the "Imitations" of the Latin poets had become arduous and depressed his spirits. Then, as if to contradict his insertion, he enclosed "On a Discovery Made Too Late", one of the finest poems of his early period. What could have driven him to writing it at this time when poetry hung heavy on his heart? What emotion was it that gave this poem and "Lewti", such intensity of feeling, vivid imagery, and poignant melody? Coleridge himself tells us:

"The joy of grief. A mysterious pleasure broods with dusky wings over the tumultuous mind, and the Spirit of God moveth on the darkness of the waters. She was very lovely. Southey! We formed each other's minds; our ideas were blended...Every day her memory sinks deeper into my heart."<sup>1</sup>

For eight months Coleridge had nursed his sorrow without making any effort to communicate with Mary and ascertain what real basis there might be for it. Yet she was more in his thoughts than ever before. He reveled in the "joy of grief" that arose, not from the loss of Mary but from the death throes of a romantic illusion. As yet, he had no proof that "Lewti"<sup>2</sup> had been unkind; but he loved to languish in a heart-rending emotion, which to him was only the more vivid and devastating because it was imaginary rather than real. In the poem, "Lewti", it

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1. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 97, Letter to Southey.

2. In the first draft of "Lewti" the beloved was referred to as "Mary"; in the second, "Cora" was substituted for "Mary", crossed out and replaced by "Lewti". Cf. Coleridge, Poems, vol. II, pp. 1049-1052.

is interesting to note that the source of the poet's sorrows was not so much Mary Evans as her "image":

"I saw a cloud of palest hue,  
 Onward to the moon it passed;  
 Still brighter and more bright it grew,  
 With floating colors not a few,  
 Till it reached the moon at last:  
 Then the cloud grew wholly bright,  
 With a rich and amber light!  
 And so with many a hope I seek,  
 And with such joy I find my Lewti;  
 And even so my pale wan cheek  
 Drinks in as deep a flush of beauty!  
 Nay, treacherous image! leave my mind,  
 If Lewti never will be kind.  
 .....  
 Nay, treacherous image! leave my mind--  
 And yet, thou didst not look unkind.  
 .....  
 Soothe, gentle image! soothe my mind!  
 To-morrow Lewti may be kind."<sup>1</sup>

It was the vision of Mary Evans that Coleridge loved; it was his dream of her, shattered by his own imagination, that he lamented so poignantly.

Coleridge's recovery from his self-induced melancholy is a remarkable study in the psychology of the literary mind, whose processes, as we have noted, are so easily traceable, so beautifully illustrated in one who chose to make his heart a theatre.

While the poet was little affected by things transitory and contingent, once he had translated the "things" in words and the words into ideas, he felt them with increasing acuteness. With the normal man, the immediate pain arising from any unpleasant situation, either

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. I, p. 253.

passes away with the circumstances that occasioned it, or eventually produces a blessed numbness. In contrast, to a mind like Coleridge's, little affected by the immediate pain, the ideas given rise to by distressing events became more vivid as he brooded over them and the grief they induced grew instead of diminishing with time. The emotion thus derived explains the wild, unbearable anguish that always began to rend the poet's heart after he had extracted the first balm of self-pity from his griefs. Such pain is one of the most excruciating forms of mental torture; and Coleridge, who had little control over his imagination, could not have borne it, had it not been that he discovered for himself and utilized one of the most fundamental laws of psychology - that any emotion tends to disappear when subjected to analysis. He describes one of these investigations in a letter to Southey of December 11, 1794, written in the height of his distress over Mary Evans:

"My dear Southey, - I sit down to write you, not that I have anything particular to say, but it is a relief and forms a very respectable part in my theory of "Escapes from the Folly of Melancholy". I am so habituated to philosophizing that I cannot divest myself of it, even when my own wretchedness is the subject. I appear to myself like a sick physician, feeling the pang acutely, yet deriving a wonted pleasure from examining its progress and developing its causes."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. I, p. 106.

Within a week he had so far recovered his equilibrium, that after six months of uncertainty, melancholy joy, and imaginary tortures, he finally decided to go up to London and find out upon what actual ground his fears rested.

About December 17, 1794, he set out from Cambridge on his voyage to discover reality. However, when he got to London, he could not bring himself to face Mary Evans. Instead of going to see her, he dined with the editors of the Morning Chronicle and spent his evenings with Lamb in the smoky little room at the Salutation and Cat, puffing away at a pipefull of Cronoco, as he poured out his troubles to "the gentle Charles" and "beguiled the cares of life with poetry."<sup>1</sup>

Within a few days, he screwed his courage to the sticking point and wrote Mary Evans:

"Too long has my heart been the torture house of suspense. After infinite struggles of irresolution, I will at last dare to request of you, Mary, that you will communicate to me whether or no you are engaged to Mr.-----.

For four years I have endeavored to smother a very ardent attachment ...I had harboured a passion which I had neither the power nor courage to subdue...I thought of you with the purity of a brother. Happy were I, had it been with no more than a brother's ardour.

... I saw that you regarded me merely with the kindness of a sister. What expectations could I form? I formed no expectations. I was ever resolving to subdue the disquieting passion; still some inexplicable suggestion palsied my efforts, and I clung with desperate fondness to this

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1. Lamb, Life and Works of Charles Lamb, vol. V, p. 25, Letter from Lamb to Coleridge.

phantom of love, its mysterious attractions and hopeless prospects. It was a faint and rayless hope! Yet it soothed my solitude with many a delightful day-dream. It was a faint and rayless hope! Yet I nursed it in my bosom with an agony of affection even as a mother her sickly infant. But these are the poisoned luxuries of a diseased fancy. Indulge, Mary, this my first, my last request, and restore me to reality, however gloomy.<sup>1</sup>

In the above letter, Coleridge out-Hamlets Hamlet, and reveals in himself many of the characteristics that this chapter has endeavored to point out and explain.

Almost immediately he received a reply, which by confirming his suspicion that Mary Evans was in love with another, destroyed his disquieting hopes and dreams and restored him not only to reality but to calm!

In answer, Coleridge penned her a brief, restrained, and affectionate note, saying that, although he would always love her from force of habit, he could, now that the last shadow of his dream had faded, bring himself to a quiet resignation. No sooner had he written it, than his dream of Mary Evans vanished like an airy bubble. However, there was still a last melancholy joy to be wrung from the situation by dramatizing the pathos of his resignation in a letter to Southey--an enlarged and theatrical version of his note to Mary, presumably written on the same day:

"I am calm, dear Southey! as an autumnal day, when the sky is covered with greay moveless clouds...When she was present, she

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1. Coleridge, Letters to S.T.C., vol. I, pp. 124-125.

was to me only a very dear sister; it was in absence that I felt those gnawings of suspense, and that dreaminess of mind, which evince an affection more restless, yet scarcely less pure than fraternal. The struggle has been well nigh too much for me; but, praised be the All-Merciful! the feebleness of exhausted feelings has produced a calm, and my heart stagnates into peace.

Southey! my ideal standard of female excellence rises not above that woman. But all things work together for good. Had I been united to her, the excess of my affection would have effeminated my intellect...

To lose her! I can rise above that selfish pang. But to marry another. O Southey! bear with my weakness, 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. Mark you, Southey! I will do my duty."<sup>1</sup>

Coleridge dissipated the remnants of his feelings for Mary Evans by putting them into words. Then, two paragraphs further on in the same letter, in spite of the aversion he has expressed with regard to marrying Sara Fricker, he tells Southey he is so firmly determined to do his duty by her as to have written her that he was coming to Bristol to see her.

Unfortunately, the poet was as incapable of doing his duty as of experiencing a low desire. Whether from another "refinement" that made him wish to avoid seeing his fiancée after his imaginary infidelities, or whether

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. I, pp. 125-126.

from native irresolution, Coleridge lingered in London, until Southey came down and fetched him back to Bristol and Sara Fricker.

Coleridge's marriage to Sara Fricker was a result of the same tendencies that motivated him in his attempt to become first a cobbler's apprentice and then a dragoon: he wanted feminine sympathy, an immediate way out of his present difficulties, and the protection of a safe harbour.

He met Sara Fricker for the first time in the summer of 1794 while on the walking tour with Hucks and Southey. On their return to Bath, he became engaged to her at the house of Southey's mother. Undoubtedly the match was instigated by the latter, although in a letter to Cottle, he professes to have been greatly astonished, "because he (Coleridge) had talked of being deeply in love with a certain Mary Evans."<sup>1</sup> When, after a few weeks with Sara Fricker in Bristol, Coleridge returned to Cambridge, Southey had to expend reams of oratory on him to persuade him to write to the poor girl, to say nothing of having to go down to London and bring him back to fulfil his engagement.

Whether Coleridge ever loved Sara Fricker is a debatable question. The day after he arrived at Cambridge, September 18, 1794, he tried to convince both Southey and

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1. Harper, Life of Wordsworth, vol. I, p. 279.

himself that he did:

"Since I quitted this room what an how important events have been evolved! America! Southey! Miss Fricker! Yes, Southey, you are right. Even Love is the creature of strong motive. I certainly love her. I think of her incessantly and with unspeakable tenderness, - with that inward melting away of soul that symptomizes it."<sup>1</sup>

The next day, in reply to a letter from Southey, admonishing him for not having written to the lady, he does not seem to be so certain about his affections. He excuses himself for his neglect of her with the plea that "Miss Fricker (to whom he had been engaged some weeks) did not authorize me to direct communication to her";<sup>2</sup> that he has been ill; that he has been writing "a few guineas worth of nonsense for the booksealers"; and half a dozen other patent subterfuges. A month later, he seems to have forgotten her entirely in his agony over Mary Evans, just as a month before he seems to have lost sight of the latter in his enthusiasm for Sara as a Pantisocratic wife.

Coleridge went to Bristol sometime in January, 1795, but he did not marry Miss Fricker until the following October. On his arrival in Bristol he took lodgings with his friends Burnett and Southey. He was engaged in lecturing and writing for the newspapers, and seems to have been very happy: he had a ready audience in Burnett

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. I, p. 81  
 2. Ibid., vol. I, p. 84.

and Cottle, the publisher; there were Sara Fricker and Mrs. Estlin to understand and sympathize with him in his melting moods.

Mrs. Estlin was the wife of a clergyman, who was the headmaster of a school near Bristol. She seems to have been very fond of Coleridge, and he of her, for he never speaks of her except as "dear, dear, Mrs. Estlin". She took a great interest in Coleridge's poetry and encouraged him to make a transcript of his poems for her. After some delay, he did complete a manuscript and give it to her. This, called the "Estlin MSS", is the only source for many of his early poems.

The first poem that was originally addressed, not merely transferred, to Sara Fricker was "The Kiss". It was "of the namby-pamby genus" and appeared in the Poems 1796 under the appropriate title of "Effusion XXVIII". In the lines "To the Nightingale" he compliments highly:

".....the soft diversities of tone  
 .....  
 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."<sup>1</sup>

Next time he mentions her in a poem, however, her name is added as a prosaic afterthought of the "Lines Composed while Climbing the Left Ascent of Brockley Comb."<sup>2</sup>

1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. I, p. 94.

2. Ibid., loc. cit.

The "Lines in the Manner of Spenser" had their origin in a characteristic and amusing incident. Coleridge had an engagement with Miss Fricker which he calmly forgot; the verses are his plea for forgiveness on the grounds that he was so engrossed in dreams of her that he overslept.

The poet's estrangement from Southey was as much responsible for his marriage as his friendship with him had been for his engagement. Southey, after first proposing that the idea of a Pantisocracy be replaced by the more conservative plan of cooperative farming in Wales, finally deserted the cause altogether. In the "Lines Written at Shurton Bars", Coleridge no doubt alludes to the difference of feeling between Sara and Edith Fricker, Southey's fiancée, which must have originated as a result of the alienation between the two poets. Now that the Pantisocratic scheme had been abandoned by Southey, Sara Fricker was to Coleridge the sole symbol of a lost cause. Marriage to her was no longer a duty; it was the proof of a faith in the ideal that had been threatened by Southey's treachery.

On a bright Sunday morning in October, 1795, Coleridge was married to Sara Fricker. A few days later he wrote Thomas Poole:

".....I was married at St. Mary's Redcliff, poor Chatterton's church! The thought gave 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! Mrs. Coleridge! I like to  
 write the name...."<sup>1</sup>

As the poet had built a romantic dream about Mary Evans, so he wove a vision of domestic bliss about Sara Fricker. His ideal of marriage was a peaceful, tranquil one that found embodiment in many of the poems written in the happy months that he spent during his honeymoon at Clevedon, where he and Sara had taken a simple cottage. There he wrote the "Aeolian Harp" and the better portion of the "Religious Musings", both poems that reflect Coleridge's contentment and momentary complacency.

Sara Fricker, as described by De Quincey, does not appear to have been a woman who would either inspire the poet, or hold his attention for long. She was, he says, "in person full and rather below the common height; whilst her face showed, to my eye, some prettiness of a rather commonplace order."<sup>2</sup> De Quincey notes further that from Coleridge's manner in introducing his wife, "I gathered, what I afterward learned redundantly, that Coleridge's marriage had not been a happy one."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, he adds:

"Coleridge, besides, assured me that his marriage was not his own deliberate act; but

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. I, p. 136.  
 2. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., vol. I, p. 196.  
 3. Ibid.

was in a manner forced upon his sense of honor, by the scrupulous Southey, who insisted that he had gone too far in his attentions to Miss F--, for any honorable retreat. On the other hand, a neutral spectator of the parties protested to me, that if ever in his life had had seen man under fascination, and what he would have called desperately in love, Coleridge, in relation to Miss F--, was that man."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the truth of the matter was at the time of Coleridge's marriage, the domestic dream had begun to fade long before De Quincey's meeting with the poet in 1807. As early as 1799, Coleridge wrote the epigram:

"Sly Beelzebub took all occasions  
To try Job's constancy and patience  
He took his honors, took his health,  
Took his children, took his wealth,  
His camels, horses, asses, cows,  
And the sly Devil did not take his spouse.

But Heaven that brings out good from evil  
And loves to disappoint the Devil,  
Had determined to restore  
Twofold all Job had before  
His children, camels, horses, cows, --  
Short-sighted Devil not to take his spouse."<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Coleridge made a virtuous wife and conscientious mother, but she was as incapable of appreciating her husband's flights into the empyrean as she was of understanding his descents into the depths. And it was not long after their marriage, that the poet awoke to the realization that she could never give him the love or understanding so necessary to his nature. His life with her was unpleasant, for she was not only a

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1. Ibid., p. 179.

2. Coleridge, Poems, vol. II, p. 957.

continual reproach to his inability to support a family but she was forever trying to constrain him to adopt her more conventional ideas and mode of living. Coleridge's domestic dream had not the hardihood to withstand her petulance and his own disillusion; and sometime before his intimacy with the Wordsworth began, he wrote Thelwall that: "Wife is a solemn name to me because of its influence on the more solemn duties of mother".<sup>1</sup>

As we have tried to show, Coleridge exemplified many of the traits of the literary mind to such an extraordinary degree that the workings of that particular form of genius are clearly revealed in a study of his life and work. In dissecting the influence exerted upon him by the women who were important in his early life, we have aimed to show that he was particularly susceptible to such influences, and we have attempted to make an analysis of the psychological characteristics revealed by his relations with his feminine relative and friends.

We have discovered in him a craving for feminine sympathy, an intense desire to communicate his thoughts and feelings to others, and a spiritual loneliness that developed into a hunger for the infinite and a jealous regard for the women in whom he was able to find companionship and solace. His abnormal sensibility to his environment has been pointed out as one of the chief

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. I, p. 217.

causes of his desire to escape from the real into the unreal. We have likewise endeavored to explain how the natural tendency of the literary mind to act and react in terms of words became so exaggerated in him that his senses were numbed to normal stimuli; how this tendency, combined with his hunger for the infinite, led him into metaphysical speculations; how melancholy, aggravated by the endless brooding and superfluous activities of his mind, developed a "Hamlet complex" in him that did much to paralyze the effectiveness of an already slothful poet. We have seen how his vagueness of perception, lack of clear thought, and his overbalance of imaginative power kept him, not only from grasping the significance of the real, but from distinguishing it from the unreal. We have noted the effects of encouragement, happy surroundings, physical activity, and emotion on his poetry; and concluded that such stimuli exerted a profound and beneficial influence upon the quality of his work.

We have seen that the best of his early poetry was wrung from him by a state of emotional tension resulting from his love for Mary Evans. It has been observed that his love for her was a sincere and intense emotion that was indirectly initiated, that the motion arose "not from the sensuous impression but from the imaginative reflex", and was sensual only in revery and poetic

expression. We have seen that Coleridge loved, or fancied that he loved, a number of women, about whom he wrote "complimentary effusions in the poetic way"; and concluded that the most telling and truthful lines of his youth were those in which he addresses the one constant object of his devotion:

"Imagination, Mistress of my love!"<sup>1</sup>

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. I, p. 49; "An Effusion at Evening".

## CHAPTER II

Dorothy Wordsworth's Personal Influence Upon Coleridge's  
Life and Poetry, 1797-1810

Wordsworth's sister "was more than half a poet". Her Journal reveals her as gifted with delicacy of perception, with what De Quincey called "an electric aptitude for seizing analogies," and with an imaginative vision that played about the horizon of the Lake country, illuminating with her love and insight into nature, the most minute as well as the grandest aspects of the landscape. She sees the daffodils beside the water; she marks the silver line on the backs of the sheep as they graze between her and the setting sun, and sees them as Coleridge did, "with something of strangeness about them...as if they belonged to a more splendid world."<sup>1</sup> And since she shared the peculiar gift of his poetic vision, it is not remarkable that Coleridge came to rely upon her eyes.

She shared her vision with both him and her brother, but that sharing was the least of the many ways in which she aided them. Her early life, as well as her temperament, seems to have fitted her admirably for the place that she was to fill in the lives of the two poets.

She and her brother inherited a fine sensibility and appreciation of natural beauty from their mother,

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1. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 114.

Anne Cookson Wordsworth. Their father, John Wordsworth, an attorney of Cockermouth, bequeathed them his intellectual curiosity and a "golden store" of books with which to satisfy it. Although there were several other children in the family, William and Dorothy were early made inseparable companions by their mutual love of nature and their fondness for roaming the hills and fields along the Derwent. Dorothy was the tenderer, more passionate of the two children; she had none of the young Wordsworth's selfishness or egotism. And, her long residence with the conventional, straight-laced Cooksons at Penrith, whither she was sent after her mother's death, did much towards teaching Dorothy the restraint and self-forgetfulness needed to deal with two such men as Coleridge and Wordsworth.<sup>1</sup> De Quincey says that while she was staying with her uncle, Canon Cookson at Windsor, she lived near enough to royal circles to have "seen most of life and even of good company".<sup>2</sup> However, as soon as her brother returned from a year spent in France following his graduation from Cambridge, Dorothy left the Canon's "quiet and decorous" household to become the companion of William's wanderings, and "the pupil of a brother (who was) the most original and meditative man of his own age."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Harper, Geo. McL., William Wordsworth, Vol. I, passim.

2. DeQuincey, Lit. Rem., Vol. I, p. 279.

3. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 308.

The influence of Dorothy Wordsworth and her journals upon her brother and his poetry has been so fully discussed elsewhere and is so well known, that we will not go into here except to repeat the exquisite tribute paid her by Wordsworth in "The Sparrow's Nest:"

"The Blessing of my later years  
 Was with me when a boy;  
 She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;  
 And humble cares and delicate fears  
 A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;  
 And love and thought and joy."<sup>1</sup>

De Quincey, who also shared in Dorothy's tender solicitude, gives similar testimony as to what she meant to Wordsworth. His analysis of her influence upon her brother is likewise an excellent exposition of that which she was later to exert on Coleridge. In his Literary Reminiscences, he notes that the Greek meaning of "Dorothy" is "a gift of God," and adds:

"...well did this name prefigure the relation in which she stood to Wordsworth, the mission with which she was charged -- to wait upon him as the tenderest and most faithful of domestics; to love him as a sister; to sympathize with him as a confidante; to counsel him as one gifted with a power of judging that stretched as far as his own for producing; to cheer him and sustain him by the natural expression of her feelings -- so quick, so ardent, so unaffected -- upon the probable effect of whatever thoughts, plans, images he might conceive; finally, and above all ministrations, to ingraft, by her sexual sense of beauty, upon his masculine austerity that delicacy and those graces, which else...it would not have had."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Wordsworth, Poetical Works, ed. Morley, p. 170.  
 2. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., Vol. I, p. 364.

She it was, De Quincey declares elsewhere, who first trained Wordsworth's eye and mind to a sense of beauty and "clothed the forest of his genius with a foliage corresponding in loveliness and beauty to the strength of its boughs and the massiveness of its trunks."<sup>1</sup> And, she it was who led her brother to find in nature consolation for the spiritual conflicts and philosophical doubts that beset him upon his return from the scenes of the French Revolution.

In the autumn of 1795, a few months after Raisley Calvert had left Wordsworth a legacy of nine hundred pounds, which enabled the latter to devote himself wholly to poetry, William and Dorothy took a house and settled at Racedown. It was while the Wordsworths were living there that Coleridge first met Dorothy. The two poets had been known to each other for some time. Coleridge acknowledges an indebtedness to Wordsworth in a note to "Lines Written at Shurton Bars"; in the same year, 1795, the names of the two poets appeared in print together in the Poems, published by Francis Wrangham, in which they were both credited with some translations.<sup>2</sup> The evidence available seems to indicate that Wordsworth and Coleridge first met at a lodging house in Bristol in September, 1795.<sup>3</sup> They saw each other upon several oc-

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1. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 277.

2. Harper, Geo. McL., William Wordsworth, Vol. 1, p. 351.

3. For further discussion cf. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., Vol. I, p. 163; Harper, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 351.

casions during the following year, but Coleridge does not seem to have known the poet's sister until he visited the Wordsworths at Racedown in June, 1797. On that memorable day, after having delivered a sermon at the Unitarian Chapel at Bridgewater, Coleridge stopped by Racedown to see his friend. Catching sight of Wordsworth walking in the fields with his sister, he left the highroad, leapt over a gate, and bounded down the path to meet them.

Dorothy was as delighted with Coleridge as he was with her. At this time, like her brother, the visitor was an ardent Democrat and a "semi-atheist". He was a man of brilliant understanding, of splendid, if immature abilities; a profound and discriminating critic of works that he liked, though somewhat capricious and prejudiced in his antipathies,<sup>1</sup> and inclined to be led away by the feelings of the moment". However, he spoke with much "elegance and energy, and uncommon facility",<sup>3</sup> and when he recited his poetry, there was a "chaunt" in his voice, which, Hazlitt observed, acted as a spell upon his hearers. His manner was full of life and vivacity, and kindness. When animated by conversation, he lost "that fat vacuity of face" which he charges himself with having. In person he was tall, dignified, and "rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or like Lord

1. Hazlitt, Essays, p. 21.

2. Harper, Geo. McL., William Wordsworth, vol. I, p. 278.

3. Ibid., op. cit., loc. cit.

Hamlet 'somewhat fat and porsy'". There was a purplish cast to his skin such as is seen in "the pale, thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait-painters, Murillo and Velasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin, good-humored and round; but his nose the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing -- like what he has done."<sup>1</sup>

Dorothy's description of him is more kindly than Hazlitt's. After his departure she wrote:

"You had a great loss in not seeing Coleridge. He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mirth, and spirit, and -- like William -- interests himself so much about every trifle. At first I thought him very plain -- that is for about three minutes. He is pale and thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, long loose growing half-curling rough black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, not dark but grey; such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression, but it bespeaks every emotion of his animated mind. It has more of the 'poet's eye in fine frenzy rolling' than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eye brows, and an overhanding forehead.

The first thing he read after he came was William's new poem The Ruined Cottage with which he was much delighted; and after tea he repeated to us two acts and a half of his tragedy Osorio."<sup>2</sup>

This was the beginning of the "mystic, sweet communion" between Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Dorothy. And from that time forward they were, as Coleridge said,

1. Hazlitt, Essays, p. 4.

2. Letters of the Wordsworth Family, vol. 1, p. 109.

"three persons with one soul."

At this first meeting, we see Dorothy acting as an audience to the two poets. She was to Coleridge what neither Sara Fricker nor Mary Evans was intellectually capable of being -- a helpful and sympathetic critic of his poetry. And knowing Coleridge's expansiveness and desire for appreciation, we may be sure that he found this one of her most endearing qualities.

So rapidly did their intimacy develop, that before he left Racedown, Coleridge had invited Wordsworth and his sister to visit him. Two weeks later, in June, 1797, Dorothy and William set out to Nether Stowey. The cottage the Coleridges had taken there was small; and "dear Sara" was so upset by having Wordsworth, his sister, Lamb, and Southey all descend upon her at the same time, that in her consternation, she spilt a skillet full of boiling milk on Coleridge's foot. This mishap prevented his accompanying his visitors on their walks. But as he sat in the garden and watched them disappear over the hill-top, he followed them with an inward eye and wrote "This Lime-tree Bower my Prison". The poem is not only much happier in tone, and more vivid in imagery than many of his earlier poems; but his "dim similitudes and moral strains" have been replaced by delicate observations of nature in such a way as to make us suspect that he has already begun to share the harvest of another pair of eyes.

It is important to note how impressed Coleridge seems to have been by Dorothy's keen sightedness and critical abilities. While she and her brother were visiting him, he wrote Cottle:

"Wordsworth and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman indeed! in mind, I mean, and in heart; if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her rather ordinary; if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty! but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion, her most innocent soul outbeams so brightly, that all who saw her would say,

'Guilt was a thing impossible to her'

Her information various. Her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature; and her taste, a perfect electrometer. It bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties, and most recondite faults."<sup>1</sup>

No one can read Dorothy Wordsworth's journal without being struck with how sensitive she was, both to nature and emotion. A depressing letter from Coleridge made her ill. She and William wept after reading Milton. Her new friend likewise felt and remarked another quality in her -- an electric intensity that made her as responsive as a delicate scientific instrument. She was quick and ready in her sympathy with either joy or sorrow, "laughter or with tears, with the realities of life or the larger realities of the poets".<sup>2</sup> Her great-

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S. T. C., Vol. I, p. 218 note.

2. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., Vol. I, p. 365.

est talent lay in her ability to understand and aid creative genius. For, as De Quincey points out:

"...she was a person of very remarkable endowments intellectually; and, in addition to the other great services which she rendered to her brother, this I may mention as greater than all the rest, and it was one which equally operated to the benefit of every casual companion in a walk -- viz. the exceeding sympathy, always ready and profound, by which she made all that one could tell her, all that one could describe...reverberate as it were... to one's own feelings by the manifest impression it made upon her. The pulses of light are not more quick or more inevitable in their flow and undulation, than were the answering and echoing movements of her sympathizing attention. Her knowledge of literature was irregular, not systematically built up. She was content to be ignorant of many things; but what she knew and had really mastered, lay where it would not be disturbed -- in the temper of her most fervid heart."<sup>1</sup>

Such a woman would seem to have been purposely designed to encourage Coleridge in his moods of despondency, to banish the sense of loneliness that oppressed him. He would have loved her for her sympathy alone, even had she not had a willing ear and observant eye, a poet's heart and a woman's insight. And there was yet another thing about Dorothy Wordsworth which would have an irresistible appeal for Coleridge, who saw reflected in the character of Richard II his own "intellectual femineness which feels a necessity of ever leaning on the breast of others". There was a well-spring of love in Dorothy's heart, whose spontaneous flow she constrained

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1. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., Vol. I, p. 277.

that she might pour it out in the service of those about her.

All that was maternal in her nature was sublimated into the desire to wait upon and care for Coleridge and her brother. Her greatest joy, next to sitting at their feet as they read their poems, was to look after their needs: to cook and sew for them; to transcribe their manuscripts; to nurse them when they were ill. Consequently, we may surmise that it was Coleridge who persuaded Wordsworth and his sister not to return to Racedown. At his instigation they procured Alfoxden, a "large mansion" situated in a wooded park, some four miles from Nether Stowey. It was a large and delightful house with a view of the sea, a garden full of moss roses, and a natural waterfall in one of the "deep romantic chasms" of the glen. These natural beauties did much to attract the Wordsworths to lease Alfoxden, but as Dorothy confesses, "Our principal inducement was Coleridge's society."<sup>1</sup>

Together she and William and Coleridge roamed the Somersetshire hills, gathering from them a golden harvest of the scents and sights and sounds that are the raw stuffs of poetry. Dorothy was always at her best in the open. No one could ever accuse her of being a "harpsichord lady". She wandered over the country-side as free

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1. Letters of the Wordsworth Family, Vol. I, passim.

as a gipsy girl. The sun and wind tanned her skin till "her face was of Egyptian brown". Her eyes were not soft, as her brother's were, nor were they fierce and bold; but they were wild and startling. Her manner, De Quincey tells us was:

"...warm and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition..."<sup>1</sup>

Dorothy Wordsworth never married. Instead, she chose to consecrate her life to William and to Coleridge, whom she grew to love with more than sisterly ardor. She had and refused several offers of marriage. Hazlitt, we know, was in love with her. Indeed, it is said that he proposed to her. It is not improbable that there was some jealousy over Dorothy Wordsworth at the bottom of the animosity that developed between Coleridge and Hazlitt. Certainly there must have been some personal malice in Hazlitt's description of Coleridge quoted above, for we know that the essayist was a profound admirer of his poems. Coleridge also respected Hazlitt's work, and yet he wrote:

"Beneath this stone does W-- H-- lie,  
 Who valued nought that God or man could give.  
 He lived as if he never thought to die,  
 He died as if he dared not hope to live."<sup>2</sup>

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1. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., Vol. I, p. 276.  
 2. Coleridge, Poems, Vol. II, p. 962.

This bitter epitaph was published in the Morning Post, September 22, 1801, not long after Hazlitt had visited the Wordsworths at Dove Cottage. It first appeared with initials W. H. The full name was not supplied by Coleridge until after Hazlitt's death some thirty years later.

Coleridge, as we have already seen, was quick to resent any other man's attention to "his sisters". Moreover, we may be sure, the poet was in love with Dorothy Wordsworth for a number of years, and it is significant to note that these were the years in which he produced his finest poems. In addition, we know that the "Ancient Mariner", "Christabel", "Kubla Kahn", and the "Ode to Dejection" - the supreme achievements of his poetic genius - were written during the periods 1797-1798 and 1800-1802, when he was constantly with her and at the times when their intimacy was unclouded by any of the misunderstandings that took place between them.

We have already seen how Dorothy Wordsworth was both supplementary and complementary to Coleridge in many ways, but she exerted a still more profound influence over him in that his love for her acted upon him as a dynamic force. She was, if we are to believe De Quincey, "all fire and ardor"; there was an electric intensity about her, an impassioned power that,

"O'er informed its tenement of clay,"

and looked out in every gleam of her wild eyes.<sup>1</sup> It must have been her most striking characteristic, for De Quincey comments upon it a half-dozen times. Again he says:

"Miss Wordsworth was too ardent and fiery a creature to maintain the reserve essential to dignity; and dignity was the last thing one thought of in the presence of one so artless, so fervent in her feelings, and so embarrassed in their utterance -- sometimes, also, in the attempt to check them. It must not, however, be supposed that there was any silliness or weakness of enthusiasm about her. She was under the continual restraint of severe good sense, though liberated from the false shame which, in so many persons, accompanies all expressions of natural emotion."<sup>2</sup>

In this respect, she was the exact antithesis of the languid, slothful, expansive, unrestrained poet. It was this hidden fire in her that kindled a kindred flame in Coleridge and aroused a reflex emotion intense enough to fuse the nebulous images seething in his brain into clear and liquid poetry -- poetry that was both "sensual and impassioned". In some strange fashion she communicated to him something of her own intensity; it not only stimulated him to action, but it flashed through his imagination like a galvanic current and precipitated into the crystalline poems of 1797-1798 the dreams that hung there in solution.

It is difficult to put into words the subtle influence that her love exerted on the poet. We can feel it

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1. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., Vol. I, p. 349.  
 2. Ibid., p. 363.

in the poems, and hear its echo in their music, and we know that when it had passed, gone too was Coleridge's "shaping spirit of Imagination".

Their relationship is one of the most mysterious that ever left its traces on English poetry. In the poems that Coleridge wrote during the years mentioned, particularly in the "Ancient Mariner" and in "Christabel", there are clues enough to fill a volume on abnormal psychology. But these must not detain us here. It may be well to note, however, that both Christabel's transgression, and the crime of the Ancient Mariner, are sins of the imagination, not of the flesh. Coleridge loved Dorothy Wordsworth exactly as he loved Mary Evans. His love for her produced the same emotion in the same strange way. It was not a physical love, nor a wholly intellectual one; it was a love that arose "not from the sensuous impression but from the imaginative reflex." It was another "phantom of love" with "mysterious attractions and hopeless prospects" that haunted Coleridge. He declared it to be "pure" and "brotherly" -- and it was in the sense that it found expression in poetical rather than physical terms. Soon after Coleridge went to Germany with Wordsworth and his sister, he wrote his wife:

"My dear Sara! I think of you with affection and a desire to be home, and in the fullest and noblest sense of the word, and after the antique principles of Religion, unsophisticated by Philosophy, will be, I trust, your

faithful husband unto death,"<sup>1</sup>

While the letter sounds as if Coleridge were trying to reassure Sara as to his fidelity and to interpret for himself exactly what constituted it, there is no reason to believe that he ever broke the sanctity of his marriage vows -- or even experienced any temptation to do so.

Sara's greatest sin in the poet's eye was that she lacked an appreciation of his intellectual powers. While she was a kind and diligent mother, she wanted the depth of understanding necessary to make an affectionate and patient wife; and the insight to overlook his glaring faults and penetrate the genius from which most of them sprang. She had married Coleridge believing him to be a man of extraordinary gifts, but to Sara's practical mind there was no distinction between popular talents that flowered overnight in pounds and shillings, and those which by their very nature are doomed to slow growth and an even slower harvest; if she had been capable of distinguishing between the two classes, she was too worldly not to have preferred the former in her husband.

It is difficult to say whether Coleridge would not, under any circumstances, have become indifferent to such a wife. But as it was, there was little chance for harmony in a household where Coleridge's carelessness and improvidence were continually contrasted with Southey's

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T. C., vol. I, p. 262.

methodical habits and prudence; or where Sara's discontent and worldly values were compared with Dorothy Wordsworth's understanding heart and appreciation of poetic genius.

To make matters worse, Sara loathed the isolated, unsocial life at Stowey, nor did she share her husband's love of long walks and rural scenery. Coleridge had never before seen nature objectively or vividly. He had always been too "occupied with the world within and abstracted from the world without";<sup>1</sup> his senses, which for years had been reacting only indirectly through what he read or fancied, had almost ceased to receive any stimulus from the external world; his life had been not a life in motion but a life in thought and sensation; and his poetry had been a series of ineffectual attempts to give substance to the shadows of abstract thought and to throw a sentimental mist over commonplace actualities. When he began rambling the countryside with the Wordsworths, he not only saw poetry in fresh light, but through Dorothy's eyes the familiar scenery was revealed to him as a new and brighter world. Both William and his sister derived "a pleasure, originally and organically more profound than is often witnessed, both from the forms and the coloring of rural nature."<sup>2</sup> And we can see from

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1. Coleridge, Notes on Shakespeare, p. 208.

2. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., Vol. I, p. 78.

Coleridge's poems written at the time, that they were teaching him to share it. Wordsworth quickened his intellectual powers; Dorothy gave a profounder resonance to his emotional life, deepened his sympathy for individual and concrete objects in life, and taught him to do what she has done so beautifully in her Journal, to observe the bare facts of nature and transmute them into exquisite images. Encouraged by her, strengthened by her vital energy, and shamed by the industry with which her brother labored at his poetry, Coleridge worked steadily all during the autumn of 1797 on his tragedy, "Osorio",<sup>1</sup> which probably represented the hardest, most consecutive toil of his life.

Coleridge was not only happier with the Wordsworths than at home, but he realized how much both he and his poetry were profiting by association with them. Therefore, when Sara protested against being left alone, he probably told her that he had a business engagement, and went off on a walk with William and Dorothy. Of course the gossips of Nether Stowey made much of their intimacy; even years later De Quincey considered it something of a scandal. With regard to it, he says:

"A young lady became a neighbor, and a daily companion of Coleridge's walks, whom I will not describe more particularly than by saying that intellectually she was very much superior to Mrs. Coleridge. That superiority alone, when made

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1. Harper, Geo. McL., Life of Wordsworth, Vol. I, p. 330.

conspicuous by its effect in winning Coleridge's regard and society, could not but be deeply mortifying to a young wife...However, it was moderated to her feelings by two considerations, 1st, That the young lady was much too kind-hearted to have designed any annoyance in this triumph, or to express an exultation; 2d, That no shadow of suspicion settled upon the moral conduct or motives of either party; the young lady was always attended by her brother: she had no personal charms; and it was manifest that mere intellectual sympathies, in reference to literature and natural scenery, had associated them in their daily walks.....

"Accidents of another kind embittered it still further: often it would happen that the walking party returned drenched with rain; in which case the young lady, with laughing gaiety, and evidently unconscious of any liberty that she was taking, or any wound that she was inflicting, would run up to Mrs. Coleridge's wardrobe, array herself, without leave asked, in Mrs. Coleridge's dresses, and make herself merry with her own uncerimoniousness and Mrs. Coleridge's gravity. In all this, she took no liberty that she would not most readily have granted in return; but Mrs. Coleridge viewed her freedoms with a far different eye: she felt herself no longer the entire mistress of her own house; she held a divided empire; and it barbed the arrow to her womanly feelings. That Coleridge treated any sallies of resentment which might sometimes escape her, as narrow-mindedness: whilst on the other hand, her own female servant, and others, in the same rank of life, began to drop impressions, which alternately implied pity for her as an injured woman, or sneered at her as a very tame one."<sup>1</sup>

The most lasting damage of the gossip was that it resulted in the destruction of most of the evidence of Coleridge's regard for Dorothy. In spite of the mentions in the Journal of letters from Coleridge, only one or two have survived. She is mentioned but twice in his letters, July 1797 and January, 1798. Once, he sends his love to her in a note to her brother. Again, on another

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1. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., Vol. I, pp. 179-180.

occasion, he tells Southey that he has driven Miss Wordsworth over forty miles of execrable roads, and that she is "a most exquisite young woman in mind and in heart". However, on a leaf of one of Coleridge's notebooks appear the following chaotic and cryptic entries:

"The Vernal Hours."  
Leg. Thomson

Moon at present uninhabited owing to its little or no atmosphere but may be in time -- an atheistic Romance might be formed -- a Theistic one too.-- Mem! -

I mix in life and labor to seem free,  
With common persons pleas'd and common things--  
While every Thought and action tends to thee  
And every impulse from the Influence springs.

Sometimes to a gibbet, sometimes to a Throne,  
always to Hell.

The flames of two Candles joined give a much stronger light than both of them separate --evid. by a person holding the two Candles near his Face, first separate and then joined in one.

Picture of Hymen--

The lowest part of the flame (of a) Candle is always blue w(hen) the flame is sufficiently elongated) so as to be just ready to (smoke) the Tip is very red. --

Little Daisy -- very late Spring. March--  
Quid si vivat?-- Do all things in faith.  
Never pluck a flower again! -- Mem.--"<sup>1</sup>

As incoherent and obscure as these jottings seem at first glance, they are silt from the poet's stream of consciousness, deposited so freely, so at random, that it is safe to assume they were never meant for any eye but Cole-

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1. Lowes, J. L., The Road to Xanadu, p. 14, facsimile of the first seven entries of the so-called "Gutch Memorandum Book", Add. MSS. 27901, in the British Museum.

ridge's own. If such is the case, they can certainly be taken as a more honest and reliable mirror of what was passing in the poet's thoughts at the time they were written than his high-sounding letters to his friends, the journalistic harangues that he exchanged with the public for "bread and cheese", or the poetry that he contracted to write for his publisher, Amos Cottle, for a guinea and a half a hundred lines. From this point of view the notebook affords a soil rich in conjecture. Buried in the entries quoted above lies the germ of this present thesis.

For our purposes, the most important of the jottings are the four lines of poetry:

I mix in life and labor to seem free,  
 With common persons pleas'd and common things--  
 While every Thought and action tends to thee  
 And every impulse from thy Influence springs.

Almost equally significant in the observation, copied from Priestley's History and Present State of Discoveries relating to Vision, Light, and Colors,<sup>1</sup> that "the flames of two Candles joined give a much stronger light than both of them separate". Likewise highly suggestive in the note that Coleridge added to the quotation, showing that to him this ocular phenomenon was symbolical of love's heightening the flame of inspiration. The importance of these entries lies in the fact that they warn us of the poet's susceptibility to the influence of others,

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1. Lowes, J. L., Op. cit., p. 38.

describe the quickening effect of such influence on him, and afford a clue towards discovering the person to whom Coleridge was referring when he confesses that "every impulse from thy Influence springs".

The identification of this person is worthwhile, for we know, that these notes date from the years during which Coleridge's poetic genius suddenly and inexplicably flowered in "The Ancient Mariner", "Christabel", "Kubla Khan," "Love", and perhaps half a dozen other poems, worthy of being called true poetry. It is on these few poems that his claim to poetic genius lies, and scholars have long been at pains to account for their production and to explain why the poet was never able, either before or afterwards, to perform the miracle of moulding his vast and endless poetic visions into concrete images, painting them in words, or giving them the haunting, yet sensuous and musical beauty that makes "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan" unique in English poetry. Their production has been variously attributed to the exotic fruition of his early reading, to dreams induced by laudanum, and to his contact with Wordsworth. But assuredly he would not call Purchas or opium or Wordsworth the influence to which "every thought and action tends" and from which "every impulse springs". Then to whom or what is he referring? Most probably, to some one of the many women to

whom he looked "to make him a poet".<sup>1</sup>

Whether the two entries are merely prophetic, whether they refer, as Mr. Lowes asserts, to "Mary Evans, whom he wanted to marry, or Sarah Fricker, whom he married,"<sup>2</sup> the poem is too applicable to Dorothy Wordsworth, the note on the candle flames too descriptive of the influence that she exercised over him and others, it is too reminiscent of that communion between Wordsworth, Dorothy, and himself which made Coleridge exclaim, "We are three persons with one soul!" - for us to pass over these notes without some further investigation.

The crux of the matter lies in the date of the jottings quoted from the Gutch Memorandum, for any decision as to their reference must rest largely on whether they were written before or after Coleridge's visit to Race-down, in June, 1797.

The Gutch Memorandum has been dated from internal evidence alone, and is believed to cover a period from the spring of 1795 to the summer of 1798.<sup>3</sup> The entries quoted are the first seven notes in the manuscript.

(Perhaps, it is for this reason that Mr. Lowes interprets them as referring to Mary Evans or Sara Fricker.) But the first note of the manuscript may quite as well have been

1. Harper, Life of Wordsworth, Vol. 2, p. 204.

2. Lowes, op. cit., p. 39.

3. Ibid., p. 5; also Coleridge's Poetical Works, p. 453, where date is given as "circa 1795-1797"; and Coleridge's Poems Vol. 2, p. 988, E.H. Coleridge places the notebook as covering the period "circa 1796-1798".

written in 1798 as in 1795, for the leaves of the memorandum are not bound together. Reasonable doubt may, therefore, exist as to whether the passage under discussion was jotted down in 1795; so let us investigate the other five entries to see what evidence they afford in dating the leaf of the Memorandum.

Mr. Lowes thinks that the second entry, which is a prospectus for a theistic or atheistic romance on the moon, inspired the first rune, "The Vernal Hours. Leg. Thomson." Coleridge's note was taken from Erasmus Darwin's Botanic Garden<sup>1</sup>. The idea of founding "an Utopia in one of the planets (the moon, for instance.)" probably came from Lamb's letter of February, 1797, from which the above is quoted. When, then, did he come to associate Lamb's plans for a Utopia on the moon with Darwin's speculation that that planet "possessed little or no atmosphere," and the idea of an atheistic or theistic romance? All that can be said is that Coleridge did not begin to lean to theism until he moved to Stowey in 1797; that in the same month in which Lamb's letter was written Coleridge observes to his friend John Thelwall: "Dr. Darwin will no doubt excite your respectful curiosity. On the whole, I think he is the first literary character in Europe, and the

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1. Lowes, op. cit., vol., 1, p. 35.

most original-minded man."<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, however, it might be well to note also that in the autumn of 1797, Coleridge, in another letter to Thelwall, when the latter contemplated moving to Stowey to be near him and Wordsworth, says, "Either of us separately would be tolerated, but all three together, what can it be less than plot and damned conspiracy -- a school for the propagation of Demagogy and Atheism?" And let us observe that Wordsworth's "Goody Blake and Harry Gill," which was largely drawn from Darwin, was written at Alfoxden in 1798. This evidence seems to point to the possibility of the second entry's having been made - not in 1795, as suggested by Mr. Lowes, but at sometime during 1797-1798.

Now we must return to the first note, which, as Mr. Lowes points out, was very likely suggested to Coleridge by the couplet in Darwin's Botanic Garden:

"Unite, illustrious Nymphs! your radiant powers,  
Call from their long repose the Vernal Hours."<sup>2</sup>

and which reminded him that he wanted to read Thomson's Seasons. Just when he did read the Seasons it is impossible to determine, but we know that when Hazlitt visited Coleridge in May, 1798, he tells how Coleridge pointed to a worn copy of Thomson's Seasons, lying in a window seat, and exclaimed, "That is true grandeur."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S. T. C., vol. 1, p. 215.
  2. Darwin, Botanic Garden, Canto 1, pp. 427-428.
  3. Hazlitt, "My First Acquaintance with Poets", in Essays, p. 20.

This incident, I think, implies a recent reading of Thomson. In the next paragraph, Hazlitt quotes Coleridge as saying that in the Lyrical Ballads he and Wordsworth intended "making use only of such words as had been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II."<sup>1</sup> This reminds us that we must also consider the first two lines of the poem that forms the third entry:

"I mix in life and labor to seem free  
 With common persons pleas'd and common things -  
 While every Thought and action tends to thee  
 And every impulse from thy Influence springs."

It is as difficult to imagine Coleridge's having written the first line of the poem before he moved to Stowey in 1797 and began "raising corn with a spade, keeping pigs, ducks and geese", and bringing up a family, as it is to think that Coleridge, preoccupied with metaphysics, psychology, exotic voyages, and pseudo-Miltonic poetry, began to take any great interest in common persons and things until he met Wordsworth and his sister. Here it is significant to remember two things: first, that it was Dorothy who led Wordsworth to seek refuge from the spiritual conflicts, moral crises, and philosophical doubts of his early manhood in the love of nature and the joy of simple things, that it was she who delighted in recording to him the incidents in the lives of "common persons", which he used as material for many of

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1. Hazlitt, op. cit., loc. cit.

his poems; and second, that we know that during the spring of 1798, the minds of both Coleridge and Wordsworth were occupied by the preparation of the Lyrical Ballads in which, as they state in preface:

"The principal object, then, proposed in these poems, was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men..."<sup>1</sup>

In view of these things, it hardly seems probable that the little poem was written before the early months of 1798. It did not appear among Coleridge's published works until it was inserted without title in Literary Remains 1836. In the edition of 1893, it was headed "To-----"; in the edition of 1907, it was given the title Ubi Thesaurus Ibi Cor; E. H. Coleridge in his monumental edition of Coleridge's Poems, dates it as 1798, and places it, significantly enough, between the fragment of "The Wanderings of Cain," known to have been written in concert with Wordsworth,<sup>2</sup> and "The Ballad of the Dark Ladie" which Fausset thinks was written with Dorothy Wordsworth in mind.<sup>3</sup>

Now to turn to the mysterious note, "Sometimes to a gibbet, sometimes to a Throne, always to Hell". If we guess aright, it is a disillusioned observation on the destiny of the leaders of the French Revolution. Fur-

1. Wordsworth, Poetical Works, ed. Morley, p. 935.
2. Coleridge, Poems, ed. E. H. Coleridge, vol. 1, pp. pp. 285-295.
3. Fausset, Coleridge, p. 175.

thermore, we know that Coleridge's Revolutionary enthusiasm outlasted that of many of his friends. He tells us in "France: an Ode," which was published in the Morning Post, April 16, 1798, as "The Recantation: an Ode," he regarded the Reign of Terror as a transient storm, and until his hopes had been blasted by the French invasion of Switzerland, he looked to France and her leaders to:

".....compel the nations to be free,  
Till love and joy look round and call the  
Earth their own."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that in this poem, written in April of 1798, and in a letter to his brother, George, bearing the same date,<sup>2</sup> he expresses much the same opinion of the French "Rulers" and "Philosophers" that we find implied by the fourth entry makes it fairly evident that the note must have been written early in 1798.

As we have already considered Coleridge's observation on the candle flames, let us pass over it now and examine the last entry, "Little Daisy -- very late Spring. March -- Quid si Vivat? -- Do all things in faith. Never pluck a flower again! -- Mem. --" This is at once the most mysterious and most illuminating of the notes. For one thing, it seems to indicate that Coleridge was observing nature concretely and objectively -- a thing which he would hardly have been doing in the spring of 1795,

1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 246.
2. Letter to George Coleridge, April, 1798, in Letters of S. T. C., vol. 1, p. 240.

when he was living in lodgings in Bristol and calling on Cottle to send him Cronoco to fumigate his stuffy room; nor in the first months of the next year when he was engrossed with the Watchman. The note must have been made either in March of 1797 or 1798, most probably in the latter year. For, turning to Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal, we find that on March 20, 1798, she too notes that there is a "very late spring" this year.

"Coleridge dined with us. We went more than half way home with him in the evening. A very cold evening, but clear. The spring seemingly very little advanced..."<sup>1</sup>

Four days later she records again that:

"The spring continues to advance very slowly; no green trees; the hedges leafless; nothing green but the brambles that still retain their old leaves, the evergreens, and the palms, which are indeed not absolutely green."<sup>2</sup>

If on the basis of the evidence presented, we hazard an opinion that entries quoted from the Gutch Memorandum were made in the spring of 1798, the poem must have been written to Dorothy Wordsworth, and Coleridge must have had her in mind when he interpreted Priestley's observation on an ocular phenomenon as symbolical of spiritual communion, for he could scarcely have been referring to Mary Evans, who had long ago passed out of his mind, or to Sara Hutchinson, whom he had not yet met, or to his wife, Sara Fricker, who was at that time more of a cross

1. Wordsworth, Journals, pp. 14-15. Italics mine.  
2. Ibid. Italics mine.

than an inspiration to Coleridge. During the spring of 1798, Dorothy Wordsworth was certainly spiritually closer to Coleridge than any woman ever had been, or ever would be; and, if his every thought and action did not tend to her, his footsteps most assuredly did, for Dorothy records twenty-seven meetings with him during February and March. And it was a good eight miles from his house to hers and back!

For further evidence of Dorothy Wordsworth's personal influence upon Coleridge during 1797-1798, we must look chiefly to her Journal and Coleridge's poems composed at that time. There is in existence, however, a letter from Dorothy that describes the genesis of the first masterpiece produced by that "mystic, sweet communion" between Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Dorothy. On November 20, 1797, she tells us:

"We have been on another tour: we set out last Monday evening at half-past four. The evening was dark and cloudy; we went eight miles, Wordsworth and Coleridge employing themselves in laying the plan for a ballad, to be published with some pieces of Wordsworth's."<sup>1</sup>

William and Dorothy had been planning a walk down the Devonshire coast to the Valley of Stones. Coleridge did not hesitate in leaving Sara to accompany them, for:

"O sweeter than the marriage-feast,  
'Tis sweeter far to me,

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1. Lowes, John Livingston, The Road To Xanadu, p. 222. This part of the letter does not appear in Letters of the Wordsworth Family.

To walk together to the kirk,  
With a goodly company!-"<sup>1</sup>

As they walked along, they planned a poem, which was to be written to defray the expenses of the journey. By the time they reached the Bell Inn, in the ancient seaport of Watchet, the Ancient Mariner had begun his voyage.<sup>2</sup> The story had been suggested to Coleridge by a dream, told him by Mr. Cruikshank, one of his neighbors in Stowey. Wordsworth, who had been reading Shelvocke's Voyages, contributed the shooting of the albatross, the idea of the Mariner's retribution, the navigation of the ship by the dead men,<sup>3</sup> and the lines:

"And thou art long, and lank, and brown,  
As is the ribbed sea-sand."<sup>4</sup>

Dorothy suggested the use of the ballad form, which Coleridge was to employ very successfully, not only in "The Ancient Mariner," but in many others of his best compositions. There are, likewise, several startling parallels between passages in her Journal and lines in Coleridge's poem. These, however, will be pointed out in the following chapter. Here it is sufficient to note that the lines that bear a similarity to Dorothy's entries in the Journal, are more characteristic of her than of Coleridge. We know that "The Ancient Mariner" 'grew and grew' from

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 208.
  2. Coleridge, E. H., "The Genesis of the Ancient Mariner", in The Living Age, vol. 229, passim.
  3. Wordsworth, C., Memoir, vol. 1.
  4. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 196.

November 20, 1797, to March 23, 1798, when Dorothy records that:

"Coleridge dined with us. He brought his ballad finished. We walked with him to the Miner's house. A beautiful evening, very starry, the horned moon."<sup>1</sup>

Further, the entries in the Journal that might seem to have suggested the lines, occur between the dates January 20, 1798, when the Alfoxden Journal begins and March 23, 1798, when the poem was completed. But as there is no manuscript version of "The Ancient Mariner" now extant, it is impossible to say whether the lines referred to were present in the first draft, or whether they were gleaned from Dorothy's Journal and later added to the poem. These similarities, however, are most probably to be accounted for in another way: While Coleridge walked along with his head in the clouds, Dorothy's quick eye noted the "restless gossameres" and "a star or two beside". She undoubtedly called Coleridge's attention to them; the things that they saw together assumed an importance too great to allow them to slip from their memory; therefore, we find the same observations cropping out time and time again in Coleridge's poems and Dorothy's Journal.

It seems, too, that there is another explanation for the production of "The Ancient Mariner". The poem

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1. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 14.

has been supposed by many critics to have originated as the result of an abnormal mental condition in Coleridge, induced by opium. This hardly seems likely for two reasons: first, Coleridge had not yet begun to take laudanum regularly or in large doses;<sup>1</sup> second, it is scarcely probable that he would have been indulging in opiates while he was on a walking tour with Wordsworth and his sister. In addition, it seems highly improbable that a poem as long, complete, and architectonically perfect as "The Ancient Mariner" could have been produced by Coleridge when he was under the influence of opium. For with reference to the effect produced on Coleridge by the drug, De Quincey, who was himself addicted to opium, says that indulgence in the narcotic was always followed by "a sensation of profound disgust with any subject upon which he had occupied his thoughts, or had exerted his powers of composition for any length of time, and equal disgust with the result of his exertions - powerful abhorrence, I may call it, absolute loathing, of all that he had produced." He goes on to say that the incapacitation produced by opium "is mere childish helplessness, or senile paralysis, of the judgment, which distresses the man in attempting to grasp the upshot and the total effect.....of what he has himself so recently produced. There is the same imbecility in at-

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1. For further substantiation of this statement see the discussion of Coleridge's use of opium in the following pages of this study.

tempting to hold things steadily together, and to bring them under a comprehensive or unifying act of the judging faculty, as there is in the efforts of a drunken man to follow a chain of reasoning."<sup>1</sup> Certainly this "abnormal" mental condition, described by De Quincey, who knew so well whereof he spoke, would not seem to be conducive to the production of a great poem.

A more plausible explanation for this sudden and unprecedented flowering of Coleridge's genius will be revealed by an examination of the circumstances under which it was written. Coleridge himself has both stated and proved "that when a man is unhappy, he writes damned bad poetry". One of his contemporaries also observed that:

"...the restless activity of Coleridge's mind in chasing abstract truths, and burying himself in the dark places of human speculation, seemed to me, in a great measure, an attempt to escape out of his own personal wretchedness."<sup>2</sup>

With reference to these statements, it is significant to observe that during the period in which "The Ancient Mariner" was written, Coleridge was so happy he had no need to drug himself with either opium or metaphysics. His financial anxiety had been relieved by the annuity of one-hundred and fifty pounds a year, specifically granted him by the Wedgewoods to enable him to pursue

1. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., vol. 1, pp. 113, 117.
2. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., vol. 1, p. 181.

the study of poetry and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Then, too, Coleridge was well contented in Stowey. His friend, Thomas Poole, lived within a stone's throw of him. There were Poole's sisters, Ellen, and Anna Cruikshank -- the Anna Buclé to whom he addressed the lines "On the Christening of a Friend's Child" -- and "a number of pretty young women", with whom he declared himself to be "an immense favorite: for I pun, conundrumize, listen, and dance."<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth and his sister were near him. And as Dorothy's journal testifies scarcely a day passed that they did not walk or talk or read together. For the first time in his life, Coleridge was living in what Matthew Arnold described as "a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power". Dorothy had opened his eyes to a new world; where, instead of the discord, melancholy, and doubt that had heretofore torn his subjective cosmos, he discovered under her guidance, "a union of a earth and sky and sea."<sup>3</sup> And the significance of this discovery can scarcely be overestimated in view of the opinions of two of his best critics; for Lowes declared:

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is to a remarkable degree a poem of the elements. Its real protagonists are Earth, Air, Fire, and Water."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Hazlitt, Essays, p. 8.

2. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. I, p. 219.

3. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 7.

4. Lowes, J.L., op. cit., p. 74.

and Gingerich adds:

"The highest and final expression of the spirit of unity...by Coleridge is to be found in the greatest poem of his life--'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'"<sup>1</sup>

The poem projects into a vivid and unified narrative the story of Coleridge's own inner discord, remembered and reflected in a moment of tranquillity. The Mariner's crime against nature in shooting the Albatross portrayed the poet's own morbid divorce from the physical world.<sup>2</sup>

But it must not be thought that Coleridge's happy surroundings, his discovery of the reality and unity in nature, and the sudden coordination of his powers were the only factors that wrought such a miracle in the substance and technique of his poetry as we see in the "Ancient Mariner". Surely it is significant to find that the ballad lacks that toedium vitae, so characteristic of his early and languid effusions. "This toedium vitae," Coleridge points out, "is a common oppression on minds cast in the Hamlet mould, and caused by disproportionate mental exertion... In such cases passion combines with the indefinite alone."<sup>3</sup> Now, Coleridge's great "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", was, we know, composed for the most part on the walk to Dulverton; and the physical activity no doubt played its part in

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1. Gingerich, S.F., "From Necessity to Transcendentalism in Coleridge", P.M.L.A. vol. 35, p. 342.
  2. Fausset, S.T. Coleridge, p. 167.
  3. Coleridge Notes on Shakespeare, p. 219.

giving the poet the vitality that not only combined passion with definite imagery, but made the supernatural real and vivid.

With reference to this last achievement, it is hard to conceive of the effort that it must have cost poor Coleridge to "make the supernatural real"; for in spite of his continual attempts to express the inexpressible, he, like Mallarmé, had an intense aversion to any definite effort to name things, "To drag them down into the known and analyzable". Furthermore, as we have seen, once Coleridge's imagination had created a masterpiece, the difficulty of executing it on paper, began to overwhelm him. For, if, as Schopenhauer declared, "the normal man consists of two-thirds Will, and one-third Intellect; the genius, on the contrary, has two-thirds Intellect and one-third Will;" Coleridge again presents an exaggerated representation of genius in that he was proportionately deficient in will. He, like Hamlet, always "lost the power of action in the energy of resolve". Knowing this, who can doubt that Dorothy Wordsworth's vitality and encouragement were instrumental in the achievement of completing "The Ancient Mariner".

In addition, in trying to account for the miracle that Coleridge accomplished in producing the poem, it must be remembered that he was not only receiving for-

tuitous stimuli from the external world, but that for some time previous to the composition of "The Ancient Mariner," Coleridge had been mentally as well as physically active. As Lowes has proved in The Road to Xanadu, he had been reading innumerable books of travel. With sponge-like passivity, his mind absorbed their vivid descriptions and stored away a wealth of verbal imagery. But even so, as Shelley asserts, "poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say 'I will compose poetry'. The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness." To write "The Ancient Mariner", Coleridge not only needed favorable mental and physical conditions and a store of the raw stuffs of poetry, he required an emotion that would wring it from him as water is wrung from a sponge; he required an inspiration to fire him in his work. And these things he found in his love for Dorothy Wordsworth. For, as Lowes says, in "The Ancient Mariner":

"The presence of Dorothy Wordsworth, felt, though not seen ('her voice,' wrote her brother, 'was like a hidden Bird that sang'), lingers like a gracious and somewhat wistful shade...behind some of the loveliest portions of the poem..."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Lowes, John Livingston, The Road to Xanadu, p. 175.

Moreover, her influence was manifest in helping to create the favorable circumstances, and in a more subtle way; for she was to him:

"Like that great Spirit, who with plastic sweep  
Mov'd on the darkness of the formless Deep!"<sup>1</sup>

There are likewise traces of Dorothy Wordsworth's influence on Coleridge in another work, jointly begun by Wordsworth and the latter, but never completed by either. They planned to write a prose rhapsody, "The Wanderings of Cain". Coleridge composed a part of one canto, portions of which bear close resemblance to certain passages in Dorothy's journal.<sup>2</sup>

In "Frost at Midnight", written in February, 1798, there are not only lines that have a mysterious kinship with Dorothy's journal, but I think the following passage illustrates how stimulating he was beginning to find the world of nature, first opened to him by Wordsworth and his sister:

"....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 cloister dim,  
And saw nought 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 mountain, 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

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 84.

2. Cf. parallel passages in Chapter Three of this study.

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."<sup>1</sup>

It is even more significant to compare the version of "Lewti", written in 1795, with the revision, which appeared in *The Morning Post* on April 18, 1798, and to note the intensity of feeling and exquisite imagery (drawn from the observation of nature) that have been grafted on the first draft. The observations of nature that appear in the 1798 version can, without exception, be traced to Dorothy's journal.<sup>2</sup>

In "The Nightingale", a poem written about the same time, he says to William and his sister:

"My Friend, and thou, our Sister! we have learnt  
A different lore; we may not thus profane  
Nature's sweet voices, always full of love  
And joyance!"<sup>3</sup>

and refers to Dorothy as:

"A most gentle Maid, Who dwelleth in her hospita-  
ble 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;"<sup>4</sup>

The poet's statement that Dorothy knows all the notes of

1. Coleridge, *Poems*, vol. 1, p. 240.
2. Cf. parallel passages in Chapter Three of this study.
3. Coleridge, *Poems*, vol. 1, p. 265.
4. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 266.

the nightingale, is interesting in view of Hazlitt's account of his visit to Nether Stowey in the spring of 1798. He remarks that:

"Returning that same evening, I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of the nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible."<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks before Hazlitt arrived at Nether Stowey, "the three persons in one soul", had evolved important plans for the future. One was that the two poets were to write a series of poems, in which Coleridge was to endeavor to give "a human interest and a semblance of truth" to things supernatural, and Wordsworth "the charm of novelty to things of every day. They invited Cottle, the publisher, to visit them, and persuaded him to bring out the Lyrical Ballads, which were to be, as Coleridge told Hazlitt while he was in Stowey, "...an experiment ...to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artificialities of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II."<sup>2</sup> On July 18, 1798, Dorothy wrote: "William's poems are now in the press; they will be out in six weeks;" and on September 13:

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1. Hazlitt, Essays, p. 17.

2. Ibid., p. 20.

"They are printed, but not published...in one small volume, without the name of the author; their title is 'Lyrical Ballads, with other poems'. Cottle has given thirty guineas for William's share of the volume."<sup>1</sup> It was printed at Bristol on or about September 1.

The second plan they hatched between them that spring was not so successful as was that for the Lyrical Ballads. They decided that the three of them should go to Germany the next summer for a two years stay. They purposed in those two years "to acquire the German language", and to furnish themselves "with a tolerable stock of information in natural Science..."<sup>2</sup>

Before they left, however, two very unpleasant events occurred to grieve Coleridge. The owners of Alfoxden refused to renew the lease on "the mansion of my friend" and Coleridge knew that he was no more "with light and quickened footsteps, thitherward to tend". The blow of knowing that the Wordsworths were to leave Stowey was followed by another bitter sorrow - a blow from which Coleridge was never to recover. Charles Lloyd, who for some years had lived with the poet and occupied the place of a son in his affections, wrote a novel, Edmund Oliver, satirizing the poet's early life. As a result of his quarrel with Lloyd, I am quite sure that a misunderstanding arose between Dorothy and Cole-

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1. Harper, Geo. McL., William Wordsworth, vol. 1, p. 355.

2. Hertzberg, Max J., "William Wordsworth and German Literature." P.M.L.A., vol. 40, p. 303.

ridge. On Wednesday, May 16, Dorothy notes to her

Journal:

"Coleridge, William, and myself set forward to the Cheddar rocks; slept at Bridgewater..... 22nd, Thursday. Walked to Cheddar. Slept at Cross."<sup>1</sup>

With this entry the Alfoxden journal, that idyllic record of Dorothy's friendship with Coleridge, comes to an abrupt end. However, we know something of what followed from Coleridge's letters. In May, 1798, Coleridge wrote Rev. J. P. Estlin:

"We visited Cheddar, but his (Wordsworth's) main business was to bring back poor Lloyd, whose infirmities have been made the instruments of another man's darker passions. But Lloyd (we found by a letter that met us in the road) is off for Birmingham. Wordsworth proceeds, lest possibly Lloyd may not be gone, and likewise to see his own Bristol friends, as he is so near them."<sup>2</sup>

As this communication was posted from Cross, Dorothy Wordsworth must have accompanied her brother when he left Coleridge to search for Lloyd, for in an undated letter from Coleridge to Charles Lamb, evidently written about a week later, he says:

"Dear Lamb,- Lloyd has informed me through Miss Wordsworth that you intend no longer to correspond with me."<sup>3</sup>

The Wordsworths seem to have overtaken Lloyd, and Dorothy evidently brought back the tale to Coleridge.

1. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 18.
2. Coleridge, Letters of S. T. C., vol., 1, p. 246.
3. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 249.

Coleridge was deeply cut by the fact that Lamb had taken Lloyd's part in the quarrel, and Dorothy too, was included in his resentment.<sup>1</sup>

Significantly enough, there are no letters and no entries in the journal surviving to cover the period, May to October, 1798. The Bishop of London states that Wordsworth and his sister left Alfoxden in June and set forth on foot towards Bristol. The only evidence we have with regard to Coleridge's reaction to the quarrel is a fragment of "Kubla Khan" and a note that its author prefixed to it. From this we know that in the summer of 1798,<sup>2</sup> Coleridge:

"...then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farm-house between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, for the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in 'Purchas's Pilgrimage'."<sup>3</sup>

While he slept, he continues, he composed some two or three hundred lines of "Kubla Khan". He hastened to write it down, but before he had put more than sixty lines on paper, he was interrupted by a "person on business from Porlock".

There is no doubt but that the "anodyne" which produced the vision was opium. There are traces of earlier

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1. Harper, Geo. McL., William Wordsworth, vol. 1, p. 252.  
 2. Lowes, Road to Kanadu, p. 356.  
 3. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 295.

indulgences in "the accursed drug" in Coleridge's letters.<sup>1</sup> But both Lowes and E. H. Coleridge state this recourse to opium, (prompted by the distress occasioned the poet by the quarrel with Lloyd, and by the misunderstanding with Dorothy and Lamb that resulted), marks the beginning of his secret and habitual resort to opiates as a relief from mental anguish.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, there is abundant evidence to show that it was not until the late spring of 1801 that Coleridge could be said to be under the domination of opium.

I do not propose to say that the end of Coleridge's romance (not friendship) with Dorothy was the beginning of his resort to opium and the decline of his poetic power. However, there is considerable evidence in support of such a conclusion. In the first place, her influence hovers over "Kubla Khan" like "a vision in a dream". The landscape of the poem:

"....that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover;  
A savage place as holy and enchanted  
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!"

is a strange compound of Bruce's descriptions of oriental scenery in his Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile<sup>3</sup> and a familiar spot near Stowey, where he and Dorothy

1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. I, passim.
2. Ibid., vol. I, p. 173; and Lowes, op. cit., p. 415.
3. Lowes, op. cit., p. 377.

loved to walk -- a "dell romantic and beautiful", which she describes several times in her Alfoxden Journal.

In this connection it is amusing to note that an eminent psychoanalyst, Mr. Graves, says that in this poem Coleridge is thinking of himself in terms of the serene and powerful Kubla. The pleasure dome, which Mr. Graves thinks symbolical of the influence of opium, was built midway between the haunted chasm, supposed to represent his ambitions, and the gloomy caverns, interpreted to mean his life with Sara Fricker. In the romantic chasm and the woman wailing for her demon lover, the ingenious psychoanalyst sees a reference to Coleridge's departed love for a wife who was now bitterly reproaching him for his supposed unfaithfulness. The caves of ice puzzle Mr. Graves, but only for a moment; he declares, "We do not know who the beloved was who lay fondly at his side in his usual dreams, certainly it was not his wife at this time (further comment is unnecessary)<sup>1</sup>. For Dorothy, Coleridge's admiration was an intellectual one only...so that the caves of ice are possibly a symbolic way of saying that thoughts of a passionate nature did not disturb his reverie."<sup>2</sup> This patently ridiculous interpretation of "Kubla Khan" is highly significant in one respect: it is illustrative of the folly of trying

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1. Berkeley Coleridge was born May 14, 1798.

2. Graves, The Meaning of Dreams, p. 144.

to say what poetry means. Having given this warning, we will throw caution to the winds for a moment, and wonder whether he was brooding over the loss of his poetic dream of Dorothy (as he lamented the loss of his romantic dream of Mary Evans in "Lewti") in the lines that bring to an abrupt close both "Kubla Khan" and the one golden year in which Coleridge produced the greater part of his exquisite poetry. Was it Dorothy's image he wished to call back?

"Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such deep delight 'twould win me,  
With music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny pleasure dome! those caves of ice!  
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."<sup>1</sup>

Or was the Abyssinian maid his "shaping spirit of imagination"? Was Dorothy identified in Coleridge's mind with his poetic power, with his "shaping power of imagination"? These are questions we are admittedly too prejudiced to answer. But as Coleridge himself testifies, the charmed circle of "three persons with one soul" was broken forever, and the magic spell under which "The Ancient Mariner," "Kubla Khan", and the first part of "Christabel" were written had fled never to return. He

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 298.

says in a note to an autographed manuscript of *Christabel*:

"The first part of the following poem was written in the year 1797, [sic] at Stowey. Since the latter date, my poetic powers have been, till very lately, in a state of suspended animation. But as, in my very first conception of the tale, I had the whole present to my mind, with the wholeness, no less than the liveliness of a vision; I trust that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come in the course of the present year."<sup>1</sup>

From this note it is clear that Coleridge realized that his genius had temporarily failed him. It is also highly significant that he did not begin work on "*Christabel*", his favorite of all his poems, until he was with William and Dorothy again at Dove Cottage. We know from the Journal that during the time he was writing the second part of the poem, he had recovered in the Windy Brow woods some fragment of the spell that hung over the "Squire's grounds". Once again in Dorothy's entries we find frequent mention of those sweet and cryptic symbols of the Alfoxden idyll-- the nightingale, the glow-worm, and the horned moon. Then on Sunday August 31, 1800, she tells us that:

"At 11 o'clock Coleridge came, when I was walking in the still clear moonshine in the garden...We sat and chatted till half-past three...Coleridge read us a part of Christabel."<sup>2</sup>

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1. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 213. Note and variations.
  2. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 47.

The influence of the Journal on "Christabel" will be set forth presently. But here, with reference to the part Dorothy herself played in the creation of the poem, let us note that Lowes says that "Christabel was born between them. Coleridge's was the fantastic fancy; Dorothy's was the vivid sense of the sights and sounds of nature that supplemented his vaguer vision."<sup>1</sup>

What connection Dorothy had with the lady Christabel, is a question we leave to the psychoanalysts. However, the poem does indicate that the poet was haunted, as he was in the "Ancient Mariner", by the idea of retribution for an imaginary crime. In "Christabel" the imaginary crime is an unholy love for a supernatural being. Enough has been said before to make it plain that the poet at times felt himself as guilty of the sin of loving something imaginary as he did of the crime of Mariner, viz., an unnatural antipathy to the physical world and to living things, as implied in the shooting of the albatross. But why Coleridge should have chosen to represent unholy love in the person of Geraldine instead of in Christabel's "own betrothed knight" is difficult to say, unless he hoped that the witch would throw dust into the eyes of De Quincey and the Stowey gossips, who, he feared, might associate him too closely with Christabel's lover. Such must have been

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1. Lowes, Road to Xanadu, p. 218.

the case, for if Coleridge had intended the poem to have the implication it bears upon the surface, it is hard to believe that he would have read or discussed it before Dorothy.

In the ancient quarrel between Sir Leoline and the Lord of Tryermaine in the second part of "Christabel", written in 1800, there may be some reference to the estrangement between Coleridge and the Wordsworths, which we believe began when Dorothy became implicated in Coleridge's quarrel with Lloyd and Lamb and lasted until late in 1799. Certainly, the following lines seem to point to such a conclusion:

"Alas! they had been friends in youth;  
But whispering tongues can poison truth;  
And constancy lives in realms above;  
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;  
And to be wroth with one we love  
Doth work like madness in the brain."<sup>1</sup>

The hypothesis of a misunderstanding between Coleridge and Dorothy is not one of mere convenience to explain the decline of Coleridge's poetic power and its subsequent revival for a short period after their reconciliation; on the contrary, it is supported by substantial evidence. If there was any communication between the Wordsworths and Coleridge during the summer of 1798, the letters have been destroyed. About September 10, Coleridge did join William and his sister in London,

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 229.

and the three of them set out for Germany, accompanied by John Chester, a young friend of Coleridge's. The avowed purpose of the two poets in going abroad had been to study the German language and natural science together, but they separated almost immediately upon their arrival in Hamburg. Dorothy notes that "Coleridge and Chester went to Ratzeberg at seven o'clock"<sup>1</sup>, on the morning of October 1, 1798. The next day her Hamburgh Journal comes to just such an abrupt close as the Alfoxden one did, as if there were nothing to write about after Coleridge's departure. In a letter to Thomas Poole, Wordsworth says somewhat shortly:

"Coleridge has most likely informed you that he and Chester have settled at Ratzeburg. Dorothy and I are going to speculate further up the country."<sup>2</sup>

Coleridge explains their separation by saying that they realized they would never learn German if they stayed together, and off he went to Ratzeburg with Chester, another Englishman. His letters contain no more affectionate references to Dorothy, no more eulogies of "that giant Wordsworth". When he does mention Dorothy again, in a letter written to Sara on January 14, 1799, he speaks of her as if she were a nuisance:

"His [Wordsworth's] taking his sister with him was a wrong step; it is next but impossible for any but married women, or in the suite of

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1. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 26.

2. Letters of the Wordsworth Family, vol. 1, p. 118.

married women, to be introduced to any company in Germany. Sister here is considered as only a name for mistress."<sup>1</sup>

This is assuredly a strange connection in which to mention one of whom he had declared, "Guilt was a thing impossible". However, this statement does afford a further explanation as to why they separated. Now what is even more strange, is that Coleridge left Ratzeburg on February 6, on his way to Gottingen, and passed by Goslar, where the Wordsworths were staying, without stopping to see them.<sup>2</sup>

However, in his sorrow and distress after the death of his son, Berkeley, Coleridge's thoughts began to turn to Dorothy again. In a letter to Poole, April 6, 1799, he says:

"Some months ago Wordsworth transmitted me a most sublime epitaph. Whether it had any reality I cannot say. Most probably, in some gloomier moment he had fancied the moment in which his sister might die:

Epitaph

A slumber did my spirit seal,  
I had no human fears;  
She seemed a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.  
No motion has she now, no force,  
She neither hears, nor sees;  
Mov'd round in earth's diurnal course  
With rocks, and stones, and trees!"

Coleridge, then homesick and wretched, felt the need of a sister's sympathy; and forgetting his resentment

1. Coleridge, Letters of S. T. C., vol. I, p. 273.
2. Harper, Geo. McL., William Wordsworth, vol. 1, p. 368.

against William and Dorothy, he once more poured out his sorrows to them in a poem:

"William, my teacher and my friend! dear William  
and dear Dorothea!

.....  
William, my head and my heart, dear poet that  
feelist and thinkist.

Dorothy, eager of soul, my most affectionate  
sister!

Many a mile, O! many a wearisome mile are ye  
distant.

Long, long comfortless roads, with no one eye  
that doth know us.

O! it is all too far to send you mockeries idle:  
Yea, and I feel it now right! But O! my friends,  
my beloved!

Feverish and wakeful I lie, -- I am weary of  
feeling and thinking,

.....  
William, my head and my heart! dear William  
and dear Dorothea!

For you have all in each other; but I am lonely,  
and want you!"<sup>1</sup>

The poem, it seems likely, began the reconcilia-  
tion; for a few days later, Wordsworth and his sister  
came from Goslar to pay him a visit. After they left,  
Coleridge wrote his wife:

".....had I followed my impulses, I should  
have packed up and gone with Wordsworth and his  
sister, who passed through (and only passed  
through) this place two or three days ago. If  
they burn with such impatience to return to  
their native country, they who are all to each  
other, what must I feel with everything pleasant  
and everything valuable and everything dear to me  
at a distance -- here, where I may truly say my  
only amusement is to labour!"<sup>2</sup>

In the letter we find the same hint of envy that  
closes the poem. From this time on, Coleridge seems to

1. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 369.

2. Coleridge, Letters of S. T. C., vol. 1, p. 288.

feel that he had been excluded from the charmed circle of the "three persons with one soul", and consequently, he became a little jealous of Dorothy's love for William -- a love that he had once shared. He envied Wordsworth in having such a sister, and it is probable that he hoped to find in Sara Hutchinson, a sister of his own -- one who would give him her entire and undivided devotion.

Dorothy must have suffered much from her love for Coleridge. Through all the turbulent years that followed, though hurt by his neglect and cut by his obvious efforts to wound her, Dorothy's affection for Coleridge never wavered until his quarrel with her brother in 1810. Even after friendly relations between the two poets had been broken off, she seems to have continued to worry over him and cherish an undying tenderness for him. Many critics, Harper and Fausset among them, believe that Dorothy's love for Coleridge smouldered in her like a hidden flame until her vital energies were consumed, her health wrecked, and her mind disorganized.

In connection with these statements it will be illuminating to examine Coleridge's "Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie", which was written shortly after his return from Germany. Soon after he landed in London, the poet hastened to Sockburn to see Wordsworth and his

sister, who were visiting the Hutchinson's on their farm there. While he was with Dorothy in Sockburn, Coleridge wrote those stanzas of the "Introduction" or "Love" as the poem is sometimes called, behind which Wordsworth's sister hovers like a consoling phantom:

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

.....

I told her how he pined; and ah!  
The deep, the low, the pleading tone  
With which I sang another's love,  
Interpreted my own.

and those in the same poem that seem to allude to his estrangement from her the year before:

But when I told the cruel scorn  
That crazed that bold and lovely knight,  
And that he crossed the mountain-woods  
Nor rested day nor night;

There came and looked him in the face  
An angel beautiful and bright;  
And that he knew it was a Fiend,  
This miserable Knight.

And how she wept, and clasped his knees;  
And how she tended him in vain --  
And ever strove to expiate  
The scorn that crazed his brain;--"1

This poem was written as a prelude to "The Ballad of the Dark Ladié", in which Fausset<sup>2</sup> thinks Coleridge recognized, in tragic self-accusation, what his love had cost Dorothy Wordsworth; and realized the completeness with which she was to pay for it:

1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, pp.331-333.

2. Fausset, Hugh I'Anson, S. T. Coleridge, p. 283.

"My friends with rude ungentle words  
 They scoff and bid me fly to thee  
 O give me shelter in thy breast!  
 O shield and shelter me!

My Henry, I have given thee much,  
 I gave thee what I can ne'er recall,  
 I gave my heart, I gave my peace,  
 O Heaven, I gave thee all."<sup>1</sup>

Ironically enough, it was while Coleridge was at Sockburn writing these poems that he first met Sara Hutchinson, who was later to take Dorothy's place in the succession of those women who cared for him and aroused his tender sentiments. Sara Hutchinson, was a lively, sensible little soul but not the woman to fill the place that Dorothy Wordsworth had occupied in Coleridge's life. It was to Sara Hutchinson that Coleridge wrote his "Asra", "Separation", and "A Day Dream". The last of these poems, though inspired by Sara Hutchinson's presence, has in it a peculiar admission that the affection she inspires in him can never rise to the heights of his love for Dorothy,

".....when we first  
 Together wandered in wild poesy."

The poet is sitting before the fire at Dove Cottage with Asra and Mary Wordsworth, waiting for William and Dorothy. He says:

"Our sister and our friend will both be here  
 to-morrow."

And in the next stanza, his mind drifts back to the

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 294.

scenes and the symbols always associated with Dorothy:

"'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 the shadow shines,  
           fit stars for our sweet fountain."

Then, as the fire dies and the shadows fade into one deep shade, he seems to be thinking of the vision of Dorothy rather than the presence of Sara Hutchinson, when he declares:

"But not from me shall this mild darkness steal  
                                   thee;  
 I dream thee with mine eyes, and at my heart  
                                   I feel thee."<sup>1</sup>

The years during which these poems were written, 1800-1802, were in a sense very trying ones for Coleridge. His relations with Sara Fricker were becoming more and more strained. He was harassed by financial worries, and forced to spend much of the time in London doing hack work for the Morning Post, when he longed to be at Dove cottage with William and Dorothy. On the other hand, Coleridge's spirits were lifted by finding a partial renewal of the Alfoxden idyll in Grasmere and a brief recovery of his "poetic powers".

We know from Dorothy's Journal that in June, 1800, after a three weeks visit to the Wordsworths, Coleridge and his family took a small house in Keswick. He was

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. I, p. 385.

in walking distance of Dove cottage, and as the Journal testifies, there was scarcely a day that he did not come over to sail with William and Dorothy or have tea with them in the orchard. The two poets read their latest compositions while Dorothy listened, or busied herself with making tea or "broiling a mutton chop for Coleridge."

Those were happy months, but before the year was out, Coleridge began to resort to opium in large doses, presumably as a relief from rheumatism, but in reality as an escape from the "heart-gnawing melancholy of which he complains in a letter to Poole."<sup>1</sup> Dorothy does not seem to have known of his weakness. In November, 1801, she writes with characteristic tenderness and reserve:

"Poor C. left us, and we came home together... C. had a sweet day for his ride. Every sight and every sound reminded me of him--dear, dear fellow, of his many talks to us, by day and by night. I was melancholy, and could not talk, but at last I eased my heart by weeping -- nervous blubbering says William. It is not so. O! how many, many reasons have I to be anxious for him."<sup>2</sup>

After going to London, Coleridge went to visit the Hutchinsons at Sockburn. As he had fled from realities of domestic life with Sara Fricker to the enchanted world of nature and poetry he found through Dorothy, he now tried to escape the sad memories she revived in him by hastening to seek consolation from Sara Hutchinson.

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1. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. 1, p. 345.

2. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 64.

Dorothy's very sympathy and patience were reproaches to his failures, reminders of happier days. Sara Hutchinson gave him "a sister's and a mother's love" uncomplicated by the visions of dead romance and extinguished poetry. And so deep was his need of sympathy, so shallow his recognition of love as anything but a source of solace and the fountain head of "complimentary effusions in a poetic way", that he never gave a thought to the effect that this new attachment might have on Dorothy.

At Dove Cottage, William and Dorothy were anxiously awaiting news from him. He wrote them that he was ill, suffering, depressed. Day after day, Dorothy wrote in her journal, "Coleridge's were melancholy letters"...."We were very sad about C..." "His letter made us very uneasy about him. I was glad I was not by myself when I received it." With true Wordsworthian reserve, she buried her own feelings and wrote letter after letter trying to cheer and encourage him. Both she and William urged him to come back to Grasmere. Suddenly one morning, while Dorothy was out collecting "green moses to make the chimney gay for William's return, Coleridge turned up at Dove Cottage, evidently under the effect of an overdose of laudanum, for Dorothy says:

"...Coleridge came in. His eyes were a little swollen with the wind. I was much affected by the sight of him, he seemed half stupefied. William came in soon

after. Coleridge went to bed late, and William and I sate up till four o'clock... My spirits were agitated very much."<sup>1</sup>

Coleridge spent most of his time with them during the early months of 1802. Dorothy was as kind to him as ever, and perhaps fonder of him than before, for she loved with pity and a recognition of his weakness. We can find only one hint in her journal of the hurt that Coleridge's attachment to Sara Hutchinson must have caused her. On Wednesday, April 21, 1802, she tells us that:

"Coleridge came to us, and repeated the verses he wrote to Sara. I was affected with them, and in miserable spirits."<sup>2</sup>

William's marriage to Mary Hutchinson seems to have brought Dorothy and Coleridge closer for some months during 1802. It is noteworthy that during that time, in a last fitful burst of genius, Coleridge composed "Dejection: an Ode", addressed first to Wordsworth and then to Dorothy:

"Dear Lady, friend, devoutest of my choice."<sup>3</sup>

The next year, on July 15, 1803, Dorothy and Coleridge acted as godfather and godmother to William's first child. A few days after the christening, the three of them set out on a tour of Scotland. The walk brought back to Coleridge memories of other walks in

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1. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 103.

2. Ibid., p. 110.

3. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 368.

other days. Dorothy and William had come to remind him too poignantly of that happy period when they had been "three persons in one soul." Before they had accomplished half the projected walk, Coleridge parted from them. However, he was back at Dove Cottage again almost before they were. He was in wretched health and talking constantly of seeking a warmer climate for his health. On January 4, 1804, Coleridge wrote his benefactor, Thomas Wedgwood that:

"Wordsworth had, as I may truly say, forced on me a hundred pounds, in the event of my going to Madeira. ....I stayed at Grasmere (Mr. Wordsworth's) a month, three-fourths of the time bed-ridden; and deeply do I feel the enthusiastic kindness of Wordsworth's wife and sister, who sat by me one or the other, in order to awaken me at the first symptoms of distressful feeling: and even when they went to rest continued often and often to weep and watch for me even in their dreams."<sup>1</sup>

Two weeks later, Dorothy told Mrs. Clarkson in a letter that she regretted not having written her sooner, but that her time had been consumed in caring for Coleridge. One of Coleridge's sons, Derwent, was also staying with them. The bed had been moved into the sitting room. The serving girl was sick, and she herself had been obliged to wait on Coleridge, who was continually wanting "coffee, broth or something or other".

In spite of all their kindness to him, Coleridge

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1. Cottle, Joseph, Reminiscences, p. 346.

was no sooner out of England and on his way to Malta, than the Wordsworths were out of his thoughts. Again they waited anxiously for letters from him, but no news came. He did not even write them on hearing of the death of their brother, John Wordsworth. They could not believe his silence could have arisen from neglect or indolence, and wrote him touching letters, full of apprehension for his health and spirits. In April, 1805, Dorothy wrote Mrs. Clarkson:

"We look forward to Coleridge's return with fear and painful hope, but I dare not look to it. I think as little as I can of him. Oh, my dear friend, my heart seems to be shut against worldly hope!"<sup>1</sup>

After he returned to England, Coleridge delayed going north for some time. Finally, when he did come back to William and Dorothy, their worst fears were realized. He no longer was the person they had known before. He was in a kind of delirium and "the divine expression of his countenance" had given way to a "fat vacuity of face". Now and then there was a shadow, a gleam of his old self about him, but how faint and transitory.<sup>2</sup>

Near the end of 1807, the Wordsworths took a larger house known as Allen Bank, situated not far from Dove Cottage. Dorothy wrote that they had taken the house with the idea that Coleridge, now definitely separated from

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1. Letters of the Wordsworth Family, vol. 1, p. 184.

2. Harper, Geo. McL., William Wordsworth, vol. II, p. 95.

Sara Fricker, would bring his two boys and come to live with them. It was an act of blind love, for they had already seen that it was not in their power to make him happy; they knew the odium they would draw upon themselves by having him and his boys with them.

Coleridge spent the years 1807-1810 partly in London, where he was delivering a series of lectures at the Royal Institution, and partly at Allen Bank, where he was occupied with The Friend. Perhaps, it would be better to say that the whole household was occupied with this "Delphic Oracle" -- the kindest of the nicknames that was conferred on Coleridge's new venture. Sara Hutchinson, Dorothy, and even Wordsworth were kept busy helping Coleridge with The Friend. But in spite of their heroic endeavors, Coleridge could not be made or persuaded to fill his columns with anything but metaphysical digressions. Subscribers fell off, and after having "ploughed heavily along for nine-and-twenty numbers, the journal was given up".

As Lord Egmont once said, "Coleridge talked very much like an angel and did nothing at all". Moreover, he had "prodigal and magnificent eccentricities" that made him difficult to live with: in his carelessness he scattered snuff all over the house, and ruined books; his habits were so irregular that they would have disarranged any household, for he read until five or six

o'clock in the morning and did not appear for breakfast until two or three o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>1</sup> Mary Wordsworth must have been an angel to put up with him as patiently as she did, for as dearly as they loved him, even William and Dorothy were beginning to lose confidence in him. In 1810, poor Dorothy wrote, "His whole time and thoughts, except when he is reading (and he reads a great deal) are employed in deceiving himself and seeking to deceive others."<sup>2</sup> Sara Hutchinson, exhausted by the strain of trying to force him to turn out his copy for The Friend on time, left Allen Bank and went to Wales on a visit. As Harper points out, "In a busy household...his irregular and selfish habits must have been little less than intolerable. Yet they were tolerated to the end."<sup>3</sup>

Late in the fall of 1810, Basil Montagu and his wife passed through Grasmere and invited Coleridge to travel with them to London. After listening to Coleridge's brilliant conversation they were so charmed with him that they began to urge him to make their London house his home. Before they left, Wordsworth, believing that he was acting in Coleridge's interest, warned Mr. Montagu that the poet's irregular habits were

1. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., passim.

2. Harper, Geo. McL., William Wordsworth, vol. II, p. 192.

3. Ibid.

likely to make him a troublesome guest.

Coleridge had scarcely established himself at the Montague's before Wordsworth's delicate words were thrown in his face. Mr. Montagu had written a tract against the use of wine and intoxicating liquors of every sort. Coleridge, knowing this and aware that Montagu did not countenance the use of wine at his own table, saw fit to ask a Captain Pasley to dinner and furnish the wine himself. A quarrel ensued between the poet and his host in which Wordsworth's warning was repeated to Coleridge.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of Montagu's tale-bearing, an estrangement arose between Coleridge and the Wordsworths, which resulted in complete separation of the three friends for a number of years. Several reconciliations took place, but none of them ever healed the breach between the two poets. Strangely enough, Coleridge seems to have felt more resentment against Dorothy than against William or his wife, for on February 28, 1812, he wrote his new protectors the Morgans:

"I passed through Grasmere; but did not call on Wordsworth. I hear from Mrs. C. that he treats the affair as a trifle, and only wonders at my resenting it, and that Dorothy Wordsworth before my arrival expressed her confident hope that I should come to them at once! I who 'for years had been ABSOLUTE NUISANCE in the family!'"<sup>2</sup>

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1. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., vol. I, p. 236.

2. Coleridge, Letters of S.T.C., vol. II, p. 578.

Perhaps, his bitterness was directed against Dorothy because a fancied wound from her went deeper than the words her brother had spoken. But Coleridge was incapable as we have seen of grieving deeply or long. He poured out his sorrow in long self-pitying letters to his friends, and soon it was spent. Crabb Robinson saw him in London a few months after the quarrel, and certainly the picture he draws of him is not that of a gloomy man. Coleridge, he says, was very "eloquent" and spoke of Wordsworth "with great praise, but objected to some of his poems".

So if Coleridge was quick to forget his friends, he was also quick to forget his grudge against them. And there are some lines of his written on the fly leaf of Benedetto Menzini's Poesie, that from internal evidence alone seem to have been written about this time - lines that seem to imply a forgiveness of Dorothy and an appreciation of what she had meant to him:

"I stand alone, nor tho' my heart should break,  
 Have I, to whom I may complain or speak.  
 Here I stand, a hopeless man and sad,  
 Who hoped to have been my Love, my Life.  
 And strange it were indeed, I could be glad  
 Remembering her, my soul's betrothed wife.  
 For in this world no creature that has life  
 Was e'er to me so gracious and so good.  
 Her loss is to my heart, like the Heart's  
 blood." <sup>1</sup>

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. II, p. 1010.

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## CHAPTER III

## The Influence of Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals Upon Coleridge's Poetry

Coleridge has been accused so often of plagiarism that a comparison of the similarities between his poems and Dorothy Wordsworth's journal has a significance, not only in bringing to light many examples of her influence upon him, but in showing how and in what way he made use of other people's ideas.

The charges of plagiarism against Coleridge were begun by Southey long before DeQuincey took them up. Coleridge inclosed the sonnet "Pantisocracy" in a letter to Southey, September 18, 1794; he not only stated that the poem was his, but apologized for its faults. A month later Southey sent the same sonnet to his brother, and attributed the authorship of it to S. Favell, a friend of Coleridge's.<sup>1</sup> The poem is too characteristic of Coleridge, however, for Southey's statement to occasion any doubts as to its origin. But the statement is worthy of remark, in view of the fact that in a note to "Lines on Autumnal Evening," published 1796, we find Coleridge making his first defense against the oft-repeated charge. He jots down a more subtle retaliation in an observation in the Gutch Memorandum:

"Plagiarists suspicious of being pilfer'd-  
as pickpockets are observed commonly to

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 68.

walk with their hands in their breeches pockets."<sup>1</sup>

The poet was naturally imitative because he was hypersensitive, but as we shall see in comparing his poems with the Journal, he reflected only those things that were in harmony with his train of thought at the moment when they were brought to his attention. His borrowings are further to be explained by the knowledge that it was not always possible for him to distinguish the real from the unreal, nor the things floating in his memory from the creations of his own intellect and imagination. Indeed, as DeQuincey remarked:

"Coleridge's amiable infirmity to project his own mind, and his own very peculiar ideas, nay, even his own expressions and illustrative metaphors, upon other men, and to contemplate these reflex images from himself, as so many characters having an absolute ground in some separate object."<sup>2</sup>

Coleridge's daughter said of him, "If he took, he also gave". There is no better illustration of this giving and taking to be found than in a comparison of the parallel passages in his poems and in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal.

Such a study likewise reveals many interesting differences in the temperaments of the two people. Coleridge's thought was lofty rather than profound. With

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1. Lowes, The Road to Xanadu, p. 455.

2. De Quincey, Lit. Rem., vol. 1, p. 210.

Wordsworth and his sister there were "thoughts that lie too deep for tears"; but not so with Coleridge, for he shed his tears in poetry. In contrast, in Dorothy's journal, we find few lamentations, no metaphysical flights, no psychological analyses, no subjective impressions of the people about her; it is strictly a reserved, objective record, written tenderly but with few touches of sentiment. Even the Alfoxden journal, which chronicles the spring of 1798, when her intimacy with Coleridge must have filled every thought, is as impersonal, detached, and occupied with nature and the weather as a garden almanac for that year.

Neither she nor her brother shared Coleridge's preoccupation with the supernatural; the natural was sufficiently wonderful to them. Dorothy's eye gives a charm and freshness to the familiar scenes about her; each day she sees the world as if she were looking at it for the first time. She has the painter's gift for seeing objects as they appear to the eye, not as the mind knows them to be. For instance, she sees the sea as, "big and white, swelled to the very shores, but round and high in the middle". As Harper points out: "She knew, as Ruskin and many other famous describers have not so well known, how to exclude her feelings and report what her eyes actually saw. Though upon occasion she could, after the manner of her brother and of other poets since the world began, infuse her soul into her senses, and re-

produce the impression of "both what they half create and half perceive"; but she kept the processes distinct, and seems to have worked upon the principle that material truth and imaginative truth should not be blended without due warning."<sup>1</sup> She has a miniaturist's eye for observing and painting the most minute detail of sky and sea and flower--details that would have escaped Coleridge's broad, unfocused vision and detached senses, had she not pointed them out to him. She was concerned not with the universal but with the particular; her gaze was always directed by a ruddering thought, while Coleridge's eyes wandered hither and thither, seeing further but less clearly. In contrast with Coleridge's long, discursive poems, Harper notes that Dorothy has a talent, perhaps unmatched outside Japan, for making a nature poem with the smallest possible number of words.<sup>2</sup>

Having noted these general differences, let us remark the specific example of parallel ideas or expressions to be found in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal and in Coleridge's poetry.

Knight sees a parallel between lines in the "Eolian Harp" and the entry in Dorothy's Journal:

"January 23, 1798. The sound of the sea distinctly heard on the tops of the hills, which we never hear in summer. We attribute this partly to the barness of the trees, but chiefly

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1. Harper, George McL., William Wordsworth, vol. II, p. 53.

2. Ibid., vol. II, p. 13.

to the absence of the singing birds, the hum of insects, that noiseless noise which lives in summer air."<sup>1</sup>

The poem does have a similar thought:

ll. 11-12. "The stilly murmur of the distant  
sea  
Tells us of silence."<sup>2</sup>

However, if there was any borrowing done here, it was Dorothy who was indebted to Coleridge, for the lines quoted above appear in the first draft of "The Eolian Harp,"<sup>3</sup> which was written, August 20, 1795, almost two years before Coleridge met Dorothy. It may have been that as she stood on the hilltop, she remembered the lines of the poem that described the scene before her so well; or there may have been a mysterious kinship between them that led them to see and hear and feel the same things in nature.

There are many such inexplicable resemblances in "The Ancient Mariner". On March 6, 1798, Dorothy walked over to Stowey to see Coleridge, who was very ill. That night she noted in her Journal:

"The sea was white and bright and full to the brim....the evening became very foggy...the fog overhead became thin and I saw the shape of the central stars."<sup>4</sup>

Within two weeks, a similar landscape appears in "The Ancient Mariner", which Coleridge was writing at that

1. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 4.
2. Coleridge, Poems, Vol. I
3. Ibid., vol. II, p. 1021.
4. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 12.

11. 76-78. "Whiles all the night, through fog-  
 smoke white,  
 Glimmered the white Moon-shine."<sup>1</sup>

It is hardly likely that the poet had seen the entry in the Journal. The poem was not yet written to suggest the scene to Dorothy, so we must conclude either that the similarity of thought was sheer coincidence, or that they had seen the foggy night together and remarked upon it.

March 21, 1798, Dorothy wrote in her Journal:

"We drank tea at Coleridge's....At our return the sky partially shaded with clouds. The horned moon was set...(Two days later, on the 23d, she wrote:) Coleridge dined with us. He brought his ballad finished. We walked with him to the Miner's house. A beautiful evening, very starry, the horned moon."<sup>2</sup>

And in the "finished" "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" we find:

"Till clomb above the Eastern bar  
 The horned Moon, with one bright Star  
 Almost atween the tips.

One after one by the horned Moon  
 (Listen, O Stranger! to me)  
 Each turn'd his face with a ghastly pang  
 And curs'd me with his ee."<sup>3</sup>

Who can say whether Dorothy or Coleridge first saw the "horned moon"? All we know is that they both observed it at the same time, that it had a peculiar significance for them, and that they were constantly thinking and talking of the raw stuff of poetry.

Here again is an even more striking instance of

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 189.
  2. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 14.
  3. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 195. Omitted in the later versions.

that "mystic sweet communion". On February 18, 1789,

Dorothy wrote in her Journal:

"Walked after dinner beyond Woodlands. A sharp and very cold evening; first observed the crescent moon, a silvery line, a thready bow, attended by Jupiter and Venus in their palest hues."<sup>1</sup>

And Coleridge borrowed her description for "The Ancient Mariner":

11.263-269. "The moving Moon went up the sky,  
And nowhere did abide:  
Softly she was going up,  
And a star or two beside-"<sup>2</sup>

Exactly three years later, in the month of February, the haunting scene came back to Dorothy, recalled by a letter from Coleridge, and noted this time in the poet's words. She and William had set out that evening towards Rydal for letters. They met the postman on the way, and had received from him a letter from Coleridge. That night she wrote:

"I put it in my pocket....At the top of the White Moss I took it to my bosom - a safer place for it....The moon came out, and a star or two besides."<sup>3</sup>

There are no quotation marks in the Journal, but evidently the letter in her bosom brought back the lines of Coleridge's poem, and set her thinking of the moon and the stars, as they had seen them so long ago at Stowey.

On February 8, 1798, six weeks before "The Ancient

1. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 10.
2. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 197.
3. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 87.

"Mariner" was published, Dorothy writes in her Journal:

"Went up the Park, and over the tops of the hills, till we came to a new and very delicious pathway, which conducted us to the Coombe. Sat a considerable time upon the heath. Its surface restless and glittering with the motion of the scattered piles of withered grass, and the spiders' threads..... In the deep Combe, as we stood upon the sunless hill, we saw miles of grass, light and glittering, and the insects passing."<sup>1</sup>

And in the poem we find:

ll. 83-84. "Are those her sails that glance in the  
Sun,  
Like restless gossameres?"<sup>2</sup>

On February 1, 1789, Dorothy describes a storm:

"The wind blew so keen in our faces that we felt ourselves inclined to seek the covert of the wood. There we had a warm shelter, gathered a burthen of large rotten boughs, blown down by the wind of the preceding night. The sun shone clear, but all at once a heavy blackness hung over the sea. The trees almost roared, and the ground seemed in motion with the multitudes of dancing leaves, which made a rustling sound, distinct from that of the trees. Still the asses pastured in quietness under the hollies, undisturbed by these forerunners of the storm. The wind beat furiously against us as we returned. Full moon. She rose in uncommon majesty over the sea, slowly ascending through the clouds. Sat with the window open an house in the moonlight."<sup>3</sup>

And very soon we hear echoes of the storm in "The Ancient Mariner".

ll. 308-330. "And soon I heard a roaring wind:  
.....  
And the coming wind did roar more loud,  
And the sails did sigh like sedge;  
And the rain poured down from one  
black cloud;

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1. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 8.

2. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 83.

3. Wordsworth, D.V., Journals, p. 6.

The moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still  
The moon was at its side;  
Like waters shot from some high crag,  
The lightning fell with never a jag,  
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the Ship,  
Yet now the ship moved on!  
Beneath the lightning and the Moon  
The dead men gave a groan."<sup>1</sup>

On the night of February 27, Coleridge returned with Dorothy after an evening spent at Stowey, for that day she records in the Journal:

"Coleridge returned with me, as far as the wood. A very bright moonlight night. Venus almost like another moon. Lost to us at Alfoxden long before she goes down the large White sea."<sup>2</sup>

Compare these lines in "The Ancient Mariner".

ll. 474-475. "And on the bay the moonlight lay,  
And the shadow of the Moon."<sup>3</sup> (Venus?)  
ll. 480. And the bay was white with silent  
light".<sup>4</sup>

These parallels, please observe, are similar in thoughts and observation, but not in phrasing. They do not seem to indicate that Coleridge took Dorothy's Journal and read it, as William did, to glean poetry from it. On the other hand there are too many similarities to attribute them all to coincidence. Furthermore, the ideas and observations shared by the Journal and "The Ancient Mariner" are more characteristic of Dorothy's entries

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1. 1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 199.
  2. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 11.
  3. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 100.
  4. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 204.

than of the abstractions and personifications of Coleridge's early poetry. So we must conclude that at this time, Coleridge was seeing nature through Dorothy's eyes rather than through her Journal.

There are even more striking instances of Dorothy's observations appearing in Coleridge's poetry in "Frost at Midnight". On February 26, 1789, Dorothy writes:

"The sea very uniform....Walked to the top of the hill to see a fortification...A winter prospect shows every cottage and form of distant trees."<sup>1</sup>

This same scene we find described in "Frost at Midnight", dated February, 1798:

ll.10-12 "Sea, hill, and wood,  
This populous village! Sea, hill, and wood."<sup>2</sup>

Again, in the entries in the Journal for February 2 and February 3 we read:

"The redbreast makes a ceaseless song in the woods....The redbreast sang upon the leafless boughs."<sup>3</sup>

Surely these are the same redbirds we find in "Frost at Midnight":

ll. 65-66...."The redbreast sit and sing  
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare  
branch."<sup>4</sup>

In the entry for February 4, 1789, Dorothy speaks of the "furze, gay with blossom". On March 10, she sees "the old man at the top of the hill gathering

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1. Wordsworth, D.W., Journals, p. 11.  
2. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 240.  
3. Wordsworth, D.W., Journals, p. 7.  
4. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 242.

furze".<sup>1</sup> In April of the same year, a month later, the furze blossoms out in "Fears in Solitude":

ll. 6-7. "All golden with the never-bloomless  
furze,  
Which now blooms most profusely:"<sup>2</sup>

ll. 204. "The fruit-like perfume of the golden  
furze."<sup>3</sup>

However, in another poem written that spring, there is evidence that Coleridge's lines often made Dorothy conscious of objects that had a special significance because her friend had written of them. Coleridge composed "The Nightingale" in April, 1798, and addressed it to Wordsworth and his sister. If we note the lines of the poem quoted below:

ll. 8-12. "vernal showers  
That gladden the green earth, and we  
shall find  
A pleasure in the dimness of the stars.  
And hark! the Nightingale begins its song,  
'Most musical, most melancholy' bird!

ll. 68. "...While many a glow-worm in the shade  
lights up her lover torch."<sup>4</sup>

And compare them with Dorothy's entry for May 6, we know she had formed a sentimental attachment for the poem, for she notes:

"Met Coleridge as we were walking out. Went with him to Stowey; heard the Nightingale; saw a glow-worm."<sup>5</sup>

"The Nightingale" also describes a spot that must have

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1. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 7.
  2. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 257.
  3. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 263.
  4. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 266.
  5. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 18.

had tender associations for Coleridge and Dorothy:

ll. 49-55. ".....a grove  
 Of large Extent, hard by a castle huge,  
 Which the great Lord inhabits not; and so  
 This grove is wild with tangled underwood  
 And the trim walks are broken up, and  
     grass,  
 Thin grass and king-cups grow within the  
     paths.  
 But never elsewhere in one place I knew  
 So many nightingales."<sup>1</sup>

In the same month in which the above lines were written, Dorothy writes of the Squire's grounds, where she and Coleridge so frequently had heard the Nightingale:

"April 15....Quaint waterfalls about, about which Nature was very successfully striving to make beautiful what art had deformed - ruins, hermitages, etc. In spite of all these things, the dell romantic and beautiful, though everywhere planted with unnaturalized trees. Happily we cannot shape the trees, or carve out the valleys according to our fancy."<sup>2</sup>

Two months later, the scene came back to Coleridge in a dream. Memories of the Squire's ground likewise linger in "Kubla Khan";

ll. 3-15. "Where Alph, the sacred river ran  
 Through caverns measureless to man  
     Down to a sunless sea.  
 So twice five miles of fertile ground  
 With falls and towers were girdled  
     round:  
 And there were gardens bright with  
     sinuous rills  
 Where blossomed many an incense-bearing  
     tree;  
 And here were forests ancient as the  
     hills,  
 Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 265.

2. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 17.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
 Down the green hill athwart a cover!  
 A savage place! as holy and enchanted  
 As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
 By woman wailing for her demon-lover!"<sup>1</sup>

This similarity is noted in Lowes, "The Road to Xanadu", and is also pointed out as reminiscent of the Absinian Landscape, in Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile:

"In a very romantic situation, stands St. Michael, in a hollow space like a niche between two hills. The Nile here is not four yards over. (The whole company) were sitting in the shade of a grove of magnificent cedars....the ascent is very easy slope...From (the) west side of it the ascent is very easy and gradual...all the way covered good earth, producing fine grass."<sup>2</sup>

Several months before "The Ancient Mariner" was composed, Wordsworth and Coleridge began a joint venture, "The Wanderings of Cain". The one canto written by Coleridge has many descriptions of nature similar to those in Dorothy's Journal, but they are too unimportant to reproduce in full. A more significant instance of the influence of Dorothy's Journal on Coleridge is to be found by comparing the 1795 draft of "Lewti" with portions of the version of 1798 and noting the concrete imagery and observations of nature that have been suggested to him, if not by the actual Journal, by association with the author.

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 297.

2. Lowes, The Road to Xanadu, vol. 1, p. 377.

## 1795

At midnight by the stream I roved,  
 To forget the form I loved.  
 Image of Lewti! from my mind  
 Depart; for Lewti! is not kind.  
 The Moon was high, the moonlight  
 gleam

And the shadow of a star  
 Heaved upon Tamaha's stream;  
 But the rock shone brighter far,  
 The rock half sheltered from my view  
 By pendent boughs of tressy yew.-  
 So shines my Lewti's forehead fair,  
 Gleaming through her sable hair.  
 Image of Lewti! from my mind  
 Depart; for Lewti is not kind.

## 1798

I saw a cloud of palest hue,  
 Onward to the moon it passed;  
 Still brighter and more bright it  
 grew,  
 With floating colours not a few,  
 Till it reached the moon at last:  
 Then the cloud was wholly bright,  
 With a rich and amber light!  
 And so with many a hope I seek,  
 And with such joy I find my Lewti:  
 And even so my pale wan cheek  
 Drinks in as deep a flush of  
 beauty!  
 Nay, treacherous image! leave my  
 mind,  
 If Lewti never will be kind.

.....  
 Hush! my heedless feet from under  
 Slip the crumbling banks for ever:  
 Like echoes to a distant thunder,  
 They plunge into the gentle river.  
 The river-swans have heard my tread,  
 And startle from their reedy bed.  
 O beauteous birds! methinks ye  
 measure  
 Your movements to some heavenly  
 tune!  
 O beauteous birds! 'tis such a  
 pleasure

p. 18.  
 April 27, "Coleridge breakfasted and drank tea... afterwards walked on hills, a many colored sea and sky."<sup>1</sup>

p. 105. Monday, 12th. "The moon travelled thru the clouds, tinging them yellow as she passed along."<sup>2</sup>

p. 14. March 21st. "We drank tea at Coleridge's. At our return.. Startled two night birds."<sup>3</sup>

1. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 18.

2. Ibid., p. 105.

3. Ibid., p. 14.

To see you move beneath the moon,  
I would it were your true delight  
To sleep by day and wake all night.

.....  
And creep, like thee, with soundless  
tread,

I then might view her bosom white  
Heaving lovely to my sight,  
As these two swans together lave  
On the gently-swelling wave.

Oh! that she saw me in a dream,  
And dreamt that I had died for care;  
All pale and wasted I would seem,  
Yet fair withal, as spirits are!  
I'd die indeed, if I might see  
Her bosom heave, and heave for me!  
Soothe, gentle image! soothe my mind!  
To-morrow Lewti may be kind."<sup>1</sup>

After the decline of Coleridge's poetic powers began, the parallels between Dorothy's entries and the poet's work are closer and more numerous, a fact which might lead us to think that at this time he may have read and used her Journal.

On Sunday, August 31, 1800, Dorothy records in her Grasmere Journal that:

"A great deal of corn is cut in the vale, and the whole prospect, though not tinged with a general autumnal yellow yet softened down into a mellowness of colouring, which seems to impart softness to the forms of hill and mountains. At eleven o'clock Coleridge came, when I was walking in the clear moonshine in the garden. He came over Helvellyn. William was gone to bed, and John also, worn out with his ride round Coniston. We sate and chatted till half-past three.... Coleridge read us a part of "Christabel". Talked much about the mountains, etc. etc....."<sup>2</sup>

"The Keepsake", written shortly afterwards, begins with the same observation:

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 253.
  2. Wordsworth, D.W., Journals, p. 46.



by Coleridge's association with Dorothy and his communion with nature through her eyes, rather than by his use of the Journal itself. The first part of "Christabel", we know to have been written at Stowey, 1797-1798. The second part was written in 1800, during the same period that we were supposing him to have used the Journals in the composition of "The Snow-drop" and "The Keepsake". This supposition is discounted by the fact that without exception, such similarities as occur between the poem and Dorothy's entries, are to be found only in the first part of "Christabel" and in the Alfoxden Journal of 1798. Coleridge does not seem to have used the Grasmere Journal in the composition of the second part of Christobel.

In the Alfoxden Journal, on January 27, 1798, after she and Coleridge had been for a walk, Dorothy writes:

"The moon burst through the invisible veil which enveloped her, the shadows of the oaks blackened, and their lines became more strongly marked...The manufacturer's dog makes a strange, uncouth howl, which it continues many minutes after there is no noise near it but that of the brook."<sup>1</sup>

And Coleridge, who through her had lived these moments as vividly as she had, turned to his poem and metamorphosed the manufacturer's dog into:

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1. Wordsworth, D. W., Journals, p. 5.

11. 4-13. "....a toothless mastiff, which  
From her kennel beneath the rock  
Maketh answer to the clock,  
Four for the quarters, and twelve  
for the hour;  
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,  
Sixteen short howls, not ever loud,  
Some say, she sees my Lady's shroud."<sup>1</sup>

On March 7, 1798, Dorothy writes:

"One only leaf upon the top of a tree -  
the sole remaining leaf - danced round  
and round like a rag blown by the wind."<sup>2</sup>

Did this suggest the lines in Christabel? Or  
had Dorothy herself pointed out the leaf to him:

11. 49-52. "The one red leaf, the last of its clan,  
That dances as often as dance it can,  
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,  
On the topmost twig that looks up at  
the sky."<sup>3</sup>

On March 7, Dorothy drank tea with her brother at  
Coleridge's .... "A cloudy sky", she wrote, "observed  
nothing particularly interesting. On March 24, she ob-  
serves:

"It was a dull night. A sort of white shade  
over the blue sky. The stars dim. The spring  
continues to advance very slowly, no green  
trees, the hedges leafless; nothing green but  
the brambles that still retain their old leaves...  
The crooked arm of the old oak tree points up-  
wards to the moon."<sup>4</sup>

And the next evening, spent at Stowey she noted:

"The night cloudy but not dark."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 216.
  2. Wordsworth, D.W., Journals, p. 13.
  3. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 13.
  4. Wordsworth, D.W., Journals, p. 14.
  5. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 15.

And in Coleridge's poem we find:

11. 14-52. "Is the night chill and dark?  
 The night is chill, but not dark.  
 The thin gray cloud is spread on high,  
 It covers but not hides the sky.  
 The moon is behind, and at the full;  
 And yet she looks both small and dull.  
 The night is chill, the cloud is gray:  
 .....  
 She stole along, she nothing spoke,  
 The sighs she heaved were soft and low,  
 And naught was green upon the oak  
 But moss and rarest mistletoe.  
 She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,  
 And in silence prayeth she.....
- 'The night is chill; the forest bare;  
 Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?  
 There is not wind enough in the air  
 To move away the ringlet curl  
 From the lovely lady's cheek -"<sup>1</sup>

On April 6, Dorothy notes:

"Went a part of the way home with Coleridge.  
 A pleasant warm morning, but a showery day.  
 Walked a short distance up the lesser Combe,  
 with an intention of going to the source of  
 the brook, but the evening closing in cold,  
 prevented us. The spring still advancing very  
 slowly. The horse-chestnuts budding, and the  
 hedgegrows beginning to look green, but nothing  
 fully expanded."<sup>2</sup>

Coleridge somewhere proposes the plan of following the  
 course of the stream, and recording its life in a poem  
 or series of poems. And there is more than an accidental  
 resemblance between Dorothy's words and the lines in  
 Coleridge's "Christabel":

11. 21-2. "'Tis a month before the month of May,  
 And the Spring comes slowly up this  
 way."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 216.  
 2. Wordsworth, D. W., Journals, p. 6.  
 3. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 216.

As Lowes points out, "what the divining eye (Dorothy Wordsworth's) meant to Coleridge in the intimate years of their association may be dimly guessed as one ponders over the excerpts from Alfoxden Journal which Ernest Hartley Coleridge has set beside the text of 'Christabel' in his great edition of the poem...."<sup>1</sup>

After noting the similarities of scenes and phrases in "Christabel", it may be well to point out that many of the experiences recorded in the Journal furnished Coleridge with incidents for poems. For example, on August 13, 1800, Dorothy says:

"Made the Windy Brow seat."<sup>2</sup>

On October 1, 1800, he published in the Morning Post, a poem intitled, "Inscription For a Seat by the Road Side, Halfway up a Steep Hill Facing South". It was printed under the signature Ventifrons. Venti Frons is dog-Latin for Windy Brow, a point of view immediately above the River Greta, on the lower slope of Latrigg, where Wordsworth, Dorothy, and Coleridge "made the Windy Brow seat" - a "seat of sods".

On Tuesday, May 4, Dorothy wrote in her Grasmere Journal:

"William and Coleridge repeated and read verses. I drank a little brandy and water, and was in heaven....We drank tea at a farm house...We parted from Coleridge at Sara's crag, after having looked for the letters which Coleridge

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1. Lowes, The Road to Xanadu, p. 173.
  2. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 46.

carved in the morning. I kissed them all. William deepened the T. with Coleridge's pen-knife. We sate afterwards on the wall, seeing the sun go down, and the reflections in the still water. Coleridge looked well and parted from us cheerfully, hopping upon the side stones ....We had the crescent moon with the 'auld moon in her arms'. We rested often, always upon the bridges. Reached hom at about ten o'clock...."<sup>1</sup>

Evidently, Coleridge and Dorothy had been reading the "Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence" , for the next day she writes again:

"The moon had the old moon in her arms, but not so plain to be seen as the night before. When we went to bed it was a boat without the circle."<sup>2</sup>

And on Thursday, May 6:

"...When we came in we found a magazine, and review, and a letter from Coleridge, verses to Hartley, and Sara H. We read the review, etc. The moon was a perfect boat, a silver boat, when we were out in the evening."<sup>3</sup>

In less than a month Coleridge gives us a beautiful description of the same moon in:

11. 8-13. "For lo! the New Moon, winter-bright!  
And overspread with phantom light  
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread,  
But rimmed and circled with a silver  
thread)  
I see the Old Moon in her lap fore-  
telling  
The coming of rain and squally blast!"<sup>4</sup>

There is an even closer similarity to the entries in the Journal in the lines:

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1. Ibid., p. 117.

2. Ibid., p. 118.

3. Wordsworth, D., Journals, p. 118.

4. Coleridge, Poems, vol. 1, p. 363.

"In its own cloudless, starless, lake of blue,  
A boat becalm'd! thy own sweet sky-canoë."<sup>1</sup>

This passage appeared in the Morning Post of July 19, 1802, but has been omitted and the lines:

"Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew  
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;"<sup>2</sup>

substituted in their place.

There are additional parallels to be gleaned from a comparison of Coleridge's poems written between 1803 and 1810, and Dorothy Wordsworth's Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland. But the poems are not important enough, nor are the resemblances sufficiently illuminating to warrant noting them here. We have already seen from the similarities set forth above that during the periods 1797-1798 and 1800-1802, when Dorothy and Coleridge were closely associated, there was a definite connection between the journals and the poems written at that time. From a comparison of the dates of the entries and the composition of the poems, we have observed that in the majority of cases the poems follow the entries. However, there are instances in which Coleridge's lines seem to have suggested descriptions to Dorothy, and we repeat again, "if he took, he also gave".

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1. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 364. Note.
  2. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 364.

## CONCLUSION

The results of our investigation of Dorothy Wordsworth's influence upon Coleridge's life and poetry lead us to conclude that she played a more vital part in his career than she was formerly thought to have done.

Our psychological analysis of Coleridge's relationships with women has revealed that both his life and poetry were affected to an unusual degree by his feminine friends. Furthermore, it has shown the central weaknesses of the poet's character to be: a spiritual loneliness that made him abnormally dependent upon the sympathy of women; an unusual degree of sensitivity to his environment; which tended to encourage him to try to elude the real in the unreal; a "Hamlet complex" that aggravated his natural tendency to think vaguely and generally and increased his aversion to any real action; an anaesthesia of the senses to the stimuli of the physical world that led him to react to words rather than to realities and to confuse imagination and fact; and a resultant abstraction from the real world to the world of dreams. These defects, exaggerated by a lack of will power and vital energy, we conclude to have been largely responsible for the nebulous, ineffectual character, the "dim similitudes and moral strains," of Coleridge's poetry. In addition, we

have remarked that the poet's weaknesses were such that they might be remedied by understanding, happy surroundings, direct contact with the physical world, and the stimulation of emotions which were suitable, definite, and vigorous enough to condense his vaporous thoughts and fancies into poetry and galvanize his passive genius into giving positive and concrete expression to its powers.

These conditions, we have noted, were fulfilled for Coleridge during 1797-1798 and 1800-1802 -- that is, during the periods in which he produced his best poetry. As we have endeavored to point out, the poet's association with the Wordsworths and his love for Dorothy were large and important factors in creating the favorable circumstances under which his greatest poems were written. Moreover, we know that Dorothy Wordsworth not only supplemented and complemented Coleridge's genius as no other woman was ever able to do, but she also contributed largely to the poems that were composed during the poet's intimacy with the Wordsworths. She gave Coleridge the sympathy and understanding that were necessary to him in producing superior poetry; her criticism of his work was, as he testifies, almost as helpful and invaluable as that of Wordsworth himself. However, her greatest gifts to him were a poet's love and insight into nature and the power of observing its concrete

manifestations and translating them into vivid and concrete imagery; and a love that gave him a dream real and vital enough to generate the emotion that precipitated his great poems and aroused in him the will and energy to write them down.

On the basis of these conclusions, we have arrived at another, which is that the mysterious rise and decline of Coleridge's poetic powers noted by him in the prefatory note to "Christabel" is largely to be accounted for by his love for Dorothy Wordsworth and her brother, his alienation and separation from them during 1798-1799 -- the period of his "loss of his poetic power" -- and his reconciliation with them after their return from Germany, and his intimacy with them during the time that "Love", "The Ballad of the Dark Ladie" and "Dejection: an Ode" were composed,

After a consideration of the similarities that exist between Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal and Coleridge's poetry, there can be no doubt as to the spiritual kinship that existed between Dorothy and the poet. It is too close to be explained away by the fact that they were frequently associated and had many tastes in common. The evidence presented seems to indicate that she influenced him through personal channels rather than through the entries in her journal. It has been mentioned before that the nature of the lines that re-

semble passages in the Journal is such as to make us feel sure that they originated with Dorothy, not with Coleridge. The scenes she describes, her minute and delicate observation of flowers and skylscapes, her concrete imagery, and her sense of the manifold beauties of the physical world could never be mistaken as having originated with anyone but her. This fact, however, does not lead us to conclude that Coleridge employed her Journal as a storehouse of poetic material. On the contrary, the tenderness and sentiment with which Coleridge uses her observations seem to indicate that she pointed them out to him on their walks together, made him see nature as she saw it, and brought him into direct contact and understanding with a real and beautiful world.

Whatever significance this study may have, as we endeavored to point out in the introduction, does not lie in the conclusions we have just set forth, but in their implications. The examination of the influence that Dorothy Wordsworth exerted upon Coleridge is important chiefly in showing how and why his poetry was affected by his association with her, not in merely proving that it was. For, as we have seen, so many characteristics of that type of genius known as the literary mind appear in an exaggerated form in Coleridge's life and poetry, that any study of the poet's work and

his human relationship should serve to throw some new light upon the psychology of genius. And in considering the influence of Dorothy Wordsworth on Coleridge, our chief concern has been to wrest from the factual and particular conclusions some knowledge of the nature of the literary mind, of the peculiar states which govern its functions, and to determine what conditions serve to refine and stimulate its production.

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## PERSONAL HISTORY

The writer of this thesis, Sara Martin Mayfield, was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, September 10, 1905.

She received her early education chiefly from the members of her family, private tutors, and from teachers outside their classrooms. After a desultory fashion, she attended Miss Woodruff's Private School, the Marbury High School, and the Margaret Booth School. At the age of fifteen, she received a diploma from the Margaret Booth School, and in the same year entered Goucher College. At the end of her sophomore year in college, she withdrew and spent the better part of the next year in attending lectures at the University of Paris. In January, 1927, she re-entered Goucher, and by attending the University of Chicago during the Summer Quarter of the year, was graduated from Goucher College in June 1928. The next year she spent in London, where she attended University College, University of London, during the session 1928-1929. In January, 1930, after having spent six months in free-lancing for the Baltimore Sun and The Herald Tribune, she entered the University of Alabama, and completed the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in 1931.

For whatever appreciation of art and literature she may have she is indebted to her parents, to Miss Ola E. Winslow of Goucher College, to M. Regis Michaud of the University of Paris, and to Miss Elizabeth

Coleman of the University of Alabama; for whatever ideals of scholarship to Dean Stimson of Goucher, Dean Nicholson of Smith, and Dean Barnwell of the University of Alabama.