THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND NATURE IN SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE'S POEMS

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I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyses the individual-nature relationship in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poems. It begins with an overview of Coleridge's inconsistent views on the subject, as reflected in his prose writings, and explains the personal reasons behind such inconsistencies. The thesis then asserts that despite the inconsonant views expressed in his prose writings, Coleridge's poems display a consistent view of the individual-nature relationship. According to this view, the relationship is constituted of three consecutive stages. In the first stage the individual passively perceives nature with his senses. When he ascends to the second stage, he forms spiritual unity with nature and becomes one with her. Finally, in the third stage, through the use of his imagination, he creates a new nature out of the one he has perceived. This view of the individual-nature relationship will be illustrated and exemplified through the analysis of the poems "The Eolian Harp", *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and "Dejection: An Ode".

Keywords: Individual, Nature, Coleridge, Associationism, Pantheism

ÖZ

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERİDGE'İN ŞİİRLERİNDE
BİREY-DOĞA İLİŞKİSİ

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Bu çalışma, Samuel Taylor Coleridge'in şiirlerindeki birey-doğa ilişkisini incelemektedir. Öncelikle, Coleridge'in bu konuyla ilgili düz yazılarında ortaya koyduğu çelişkili fikirler ve şairin fikirlerindeki bu çelişkilere neden olan kişisel etkenler açıklanmakta. Ardından, Coleridge'in düz yazıdaki birey-doğa ilişkisiyle ilgili düşüncelerindeki çelişkilere rağmen, şiirlerinde bu konuya tutarlı bir bakış açısıyla yaklaştığı öne sürülmekte. Bu yaklaşıma göre, birey-doğa ilişkisi ardıl üç aşamadan oluşmaktadır. Birinci aşamada birey, doğayı edilgen bir şekilde ve sadece duyularıyla algılar. İkinci aşamaya geçtiğinde ise, doğayla ruhen birleşir. Üçüncü aşamada birey hayalgücü vasıtasıyla, algıladığı doğadan kendisi yeni bir doğa yaratır. Coleridge'in birey-doğa ilişkisiyle ilgili bu yaklaşımı, şairin "The Eolian Harp", *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* ve "Dejection: An Ode" adlı şiirlerinde örneklendirilip ortaya konulacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Birey, Doğa, Coleridge, Çağrışımcılık, Kamutanrıcılık

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the relationship between the individual and nature in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poems. This relationship was a philosophical issue that deeply concerned Coleridge throughout his life. It was in fact a problematic issue for him due to the various philosophical and theological interests it touched upon, all of which were of profound importance to him; interests including issues such as the contribution of the human mind in acquiring knowledge, the autonomy of the will, the diversity of creation, the mind's aspiration for unity, and God's place and role in the universe and in human life. Coleridge's views on these various interests, and his views on any one interest during various periods of his life, display conflicts and contradictions that make a study of his theoretical views exceedingly difficult. The diversity of philosophical sources that he read and was influenced by, the variety of material in which he states his views, such as letters, notebooks and prose works, and his habit of modifying his outlook according to who he is writing to and to his psychological state at a certain time, increase the difficulty. Therefore, critics writing on Coleridge's views on any one subject generally choose either to be selective about the sources they take into consideration and to ignore points that do not fit in order to put forth a smooth argument, or to give up trying to establish a smooth argument altogether and instead claim that, "in mooting everything, [Coleridge] said (so to speak) nothing" (Hunt in Perry 14), or, like Seamus Perry and Raimonda Modiano, to accept his contradictions and to explore the reasons for them and the essence of the ideas hidden behind them.

In the Theoretical Background, after following the attitude of the latter critics expressed above and explaining only the major lines of Coleridge's theoretical views concerning the individual-nature relationship as expressed in his prose writings, this thesis turns to his poems in order

to analyse his handling of the same topic in this different genre. This analysis reveals that the confused and inconsonant profile that emerges from a study of his prose writings clears into a consistent view of the individual-nature relationship in his poems. This view sees the individual-nature relationship as consisting of three stages, the first of which acts as the starting point, the last as the ultimate goal of the relationship. The Theoretical Background ends with an analysis of these three stages and their relation to the major lines of Coleridge's thought as expressed in his prose writings.

The rest of the thesis focuses on analysing three major poems by Coleridge and showing in them how the individual-nature relationship develops stage by stage. The first of these poems, "The Eolian Harp" (1796), has been chosen to represent Coleridge's conversation poems. The poem handles the individual-nature relationship explicitly, and it is possible to detect the three stages clearly and openly. The next poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), represents the mystery poems. Although it is a much more complex poem, liable to be interpreted in a variety of ways, the individual-nature relationship and the three stages involved in it can still be detected in its thematic and symbolical structure. Finally, one of Coleridge's odes, "Dejection: An Ode" (1802) will be analysed. This poem is also quite complex in its handling of the individual-nature relationship. This complexity arises from the fact that in the poem the persona both openly analyses the relationship, and experiences it in the meantime; and the analysis turns out to be self-contradictory like Coleridge's prose writings whereas the experience again consistently reveals the three stages of the relationship.

Of course, more poems could have been analysed and similar results achieved; yet this might have led to repetition. Therefore, these three important poems representative of three major types of Coleridgean poem were chosen to display Coleridge's presentation of the individual-nature relationship in his poetry. Because the relationship involves a transition from one stage to the next, and because each poem portrays the

relationship in a very different style, the thesis has been organised to proceed poem by poem rather than stage by stage, which would have been discontinuous and incoherent.

Coleridge's poems went through many changes, and many versions of each poem exists, so the thesis makes use of the final, received texts of each poem, as published through E. H. Coleridge's editting in the book Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poetical Works* (1969), and references to previous versions when necessary.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

> Extremely often, in dealing with the world, one arrives at two ideas or ways of dealing with things which both work and are needed, but which entirely contradict one another. (Empson in Perry 9)

Throughout his life Coleridge was fascinated by the philosophical issue of the relationship between the individual and nature. This issue was in fact related to several other philosophical issues – such as epistemology, the relationship between subject and object, the conflict between unity and diversity, and the concept of imagination – that concerned Coleridge in his capacities as poet, philosopher and theologian. Due to the vastness of these issues and the depth necessary for a proper analysis of them, for the sake of concision the present discussion will be restricted to Coleridge's views on the individual-nature relationship.

Coleridge is notorious for the fluctuating and frequently contradictory tendency of his philosophical views. This renders a chronological account of his views on the individual-nature relationship unhelpful, and makes a general outline of his views quite difficult to construct. As Raimonda Modiano, author of the revealing study *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, points out:

> It is difficult to find in Coleridge smooth lines of so-called "development" in his thinking or changes that are clearly earmaked by certain dates....Early attitudes resurface in later years and combine with new and sometimes conflicting views on nature" (5)

Likewise, Seamus Perry, who argues in his book *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* that Coleridge had an extraordinary mind which was capable of simultaneously holding contradictory views on the same subject and

believing them both to be true, and who wittily describes Coleridge as "a man in two minds about which of two minds a man should be in" (2), makes the following remarks about the difficulty encountered in writing about Coleridge's philosophical views:

> Anyone writing about Coleridge must make a decision about coherence, and choose between rounding out the fragments into the resounding success they are (allegedly) on the very edge of attaining – or, more adventurously, discerning in the incomplete works a positive rhetorical strategy – or, my third course, accepting his failure as just that. This last goes against a long line of extremely distinguished and sympathetic commentary, I realise; but one attraction is the way it promises to take account of (without explaining away) what it is actually like to read him, and I think it misguided, though honourably misguided, for the exegete to improve him into something too unified and coherent. (2)

This thesis will endeavour to take an attitude similar to that of Perry, but go on to assert that, in spite of the contradictoriness and inconsistency of the views he expresses in his prose writings (whether they be prose works, or letters, or notebooks), Coleridge's views display a much greater consistency and continuity in his poems. Since a chronological account of his changing views is not possible, it will perhaps be more appropriate to state the major veins of his philosophical thought throughout his life, and the philosophical influences that helped to form them.

The first of Coleridge’s major veins of thought was a mechanical philosophy based on Newton’s scientific theories which were developed and supported by empiricist and associationist philosophies. According to this view, the individual is the passive perceiver of a world working according to mechanical laws of matter and motion. One of the greatest influences on Coleridge's thoughts in this area was that of David Hartley, after whom he named his first son in 1796 (Muirhead 30). Hartley, in his book titled *Observations on Man: His Frame, His Duty, and His*

Expectations (1749), develops Locke's empiricist philosophy and Newton's theories concerning sensation and motion, to form a doctrine of association, according to which sense perceptions are transmitted to the mind through vibrations in the nervous system, and these perceptions then form associations in the mind with the outer world (Muirhead 40-41). Thus, knowledge is attained through sense perceptions, which are mechanically and involuntarily transformed via vibrations in the nervous system and thence transmitted to the mind, where they form associations with the outer world, which become ideas (Muirhead 40-41). These ideas then combine with other similar ideas to form more complex ones (40-41). John H. Muirhead, who makes an extensive study of Coleridge's philosophical views in his work *Coleridge as Philosopher*, describes Hartley's doctrine as "the first sketch of a complete physiological psychology" (41) and sums up the doctrine as follows:

> [T]he theory of mind which in the first place reduces its action to the subconscious one of mechanical association, to the total exclusion of selective attention or imaginative construction, and in the second place explains consciousness as a surface play of material movements, "the quick-silver plating behind the looking-glass," as Coleridge learned to call it, enabling us to see what is going on, but contributing nothing to it. (41-42)

During the period when he was most under the influence of this philosophy, Coleridge writes in a letter that “I am a complete necessitarian, and I understand the subject almost as well as Hartley himself, and believe in the corporeality of thought, namely that it is motion” (qtd. in Muirhead 39). As the quotation suggests, this theory also includes the doctrine of necessity (Wylie 6). Since the universe runs on mechanical laws, and since the individual is completely passive in the perception of the universe, individual freedom is out of the question. As there is no freedom of choice, there can be no guilt, and Coleridge argues during a

necessitarian phase that "[g]uilt is out of the question" (qtd. in Perry 81). Later, in his *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge wittily criticises the doctrine as follows:

> Yet, according to this hypothesis, the disquisition, to which I am at present soliciting the reader's attention, may be as truly said to be written by Saint Paul's church as by *me*: for it is the mere motion of my muscles and nerves; and these again are set in motion from external causes equally passive, which external causes stand themselves in interdependent connection with every thing that exists or has existed. Thus the whole universe co-operates to produce the minutest stroke of every letter, save only that I myself, and I alone, have nothing to do with it, but merely the causeless and *effectless* beholding of it when it is done. Yet scarcely can it be called a beholding; for it is neither an act nor an effect; but an impossible creation of a something-nothing out of its very contrary!...The inventor of a watch, if this doctrine be true, did not in reality invent it; he looked on, while the blind causes, the only true artists, were unfolding themselves. (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* I: 82)

According to this view of the world, then, in the relationship between the individual and nature, nature is active, acting on the passive individual to form associations and ideas in his mind. It is generally believed that Coleridge replaced this "necessitarian philosophy which was in essence antagonistic to the romantic spirit of freedom that was the deepest strain of [his] own intellectual being" (Muirhead 42) with German Idealistic ones after his trip to Germany in 1798. However, according to Leslie Stephen, three years after that trip, in an unpublished memorandum, "Coleridge writes as though he had as yet read no German philosophy...There is none of the transcendentalism of the Schelling kind...He still sticks to Hartley and to the Association doctrine...He is dissatisfied with Locke but has not broken with the philosophy generally

supposed to be in the Locke line" (qtd. in Muirhead 51). Yet, in March of the same year, Coleridge writes:

> If I do not greatly delude myself, I have not only completely extricated the notions of Time, and Space; but have overthrown the doctrine of Association, as taught by Hartley, and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern Infidels – especially the doctrine of Necessity. (qtd. in Wylie 6)

A week later, he believes he has recognised the fallacy that underlies all associationist and empiricist philosophies, namely, that the mind is merely "a lazy Looker-on on an external world" (qtd. in Muirhead 51). Indeed, as Kathleen Wheeler points out, even during the period that this theory most dominated his thought, his poetry showed a contradictory commitment to creativity of mind and an organic view of reality:

> What seems inconsistent in the poetry with the determinism and mechanistic theory of a passive mind inherent in Hartley's Associationism, to which Coleridge was attached in the 1790's, is the general commitment to the creativity of mind and to an organic view of reality suggested in the poems by virtue of their structure and unifying techniques. (qtd. in Wylie 8)

Finally, although Coleridge's acceptance of this mechanical, associationist view was at its peak from the 1790's to 1801, and showed a decline henceforth, it should not be forgotten that it was impossible for Coleridge to forget anything and that "[e]arly attitudes resurface in later years and combine with new and sometimes conflicting ones" (Modiano 5).

The second major philosophical stance adopted by Coleridge, concerning the individual-nature relationship, was that of pantheism. Pantheism appealed to his yearning for unity in multiplicity, and his longing for a union between the individual and nature. One of the most influential philosophers in this line was Spinoza. According to Spinoza, since God is

a “substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence” (Spinoza 7) and since “[i]n the nature of things, two or more substances may not be granted having the same nature or attribute” (3), “[e]xcept God no substance can be granted or conceived” (11). In other words, God is the whole that makes up the universe, and everything in the universe is a part of God. Accordingly, the individual and nature are parts of the same whole, which is God, and are essentially the same. Thus no problem of a relationship between them remains, since they are in fact one. According to Muirhead, Coleridge “found in Spinoza’s idea of God what he describes as an ‘Ararat’” (47), and in 1802 Coleridge argues that “strong feeling and an active intellect will at first lead a philosopher almost inevitably to Spinoza” (qtd. in Salingar 278).

The other important philosopher who influenced this aspect of Coleridge’s thought was the German idealist Schelling. Being one of the *naturphilosophen*, Schelling put forth an organic and dynamic view of nature as opposed to the mechanical one of the associationists. According to his philosophy, nature was constituted of ideal powers interacting according to a principle of polarity. Everything in nature was the same in essence, and co-existed in organic unity (Modiano 139). Individuals were parts of this organic whole. Thus nature and the individual share the same ground and are permanently united (63). Again, this philosophical view appealed to Coleridge’s search for unity and wholeness.

Yet, pantheism always remained a problematic issue for Coleridge. As Muirhead explains: “The Infinite of Spinoza he saw to be the negation of all ‘the determinations that go to make the individual’…While the head demands the universal, the heart yearns for the particular. Coleridge saw no way to ‘reconcile personality’ with such infinity” (47). Moreover, while satisfying Coleridge’s desire for wholeness and unity, pantheism, whether Spinozan or Schellingian, clashed with his faith in a Christian God, not integrated into but separate from nature. For, although most of the *naturphilosophen* did not deny the existence of God, in the system that

they devised, God could only exist as another polar force in the organic unity of the universe (Modiano 148-149). Likewise, in Spinoza's system, "God was = the World" (Coleridge in Muirhead 55). These dilemmas led Coleridge later in life to make contradictory remarks about pantheism, claiming on one occasion that pantheism had only appealed to his head (Salingar 278), and on another that "I still require a deliberate effort to resist my old pantheistic 'habit of feeling'" (qtd. in Salingar 278). In fact, pantheism always remained for him a dangerously attractive philosophy and no matter which philosophical view was dominant in his mind at any one time, he alternately endeavoured either to reconcile it with[1], or free it from[2] pantheism.

Coleridge's final major philosophical predilection concerning the individual-nature relationship was one that elevated the mind and gave the individual the active role in the relationship. Coleridge felt that neither associationism nor pantheism were compatible with the freedom and initiative of the moral will, "the 'I' of every rational being" (Coleridge in Salingar 279). This clashed with both his "romantic spirit of freedom" (Muirhead 42) and his Christian belief.

In all of Coleridge's views about the relationship of the individual and nature, there exists a direct parallel between the relation of God to the world and the relation of the individual to nature. In pantheism God is integrated into the world, being equal to it; the individual is likewise integrated into nature, being a part of the whole. In associationism, since the world is considered to work according to mechanical laws, God can only be passively looking at the world He has created, just as the individual passively perceives nature. Both of these systems deny both God's autonomy over the world and the individual's autonomy over his relationship with nature. Thus, although these systems appealed to

[1] Coleridge tried to reconcile associationism with pantheism especially during the years of his intimacy with Wordsworth (Salingar 279).
[2] Being apprehensive of "the pantheistic pitfalls" of Schelling's system, Coleridge tried to devise a dynamic philosophy that "could be maintained side by side with the belief in a Christian God" (Modiano 139)

Coleridge's desire for wholeness and unity, he frequently realised that they were insufficient in their treatment of these two areas which were essential topics for him. He thus tried, by modifying them, to devise a system of thought that would better suit his desire for freedom of the will (and of the concept of God). He asserts, for example, that "every agent has a life of its own, and yet all are one life; but there is an omnipresent Providence, a higher power that resides over it" (qtd. in Salingar 280). Similarly, although both the individual and nature are parts of the one life, when the individual's will asserts itself, the individual resides over nature and the mind becomes solely active in its perception of her. "[I]f the mind be not passive, if it indeed be made in God's image, the Image of the Creator, there is ground for suspicion that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false as a system" as Coleridge wrote to Thomas Poole (qtd. in Muirhead 51).

It should be noted that in the above statement Coleridge emphasises God's role as Creator, and his views about the individual-nature relationship also effect his views of poetic creation. As Leo Salingar argues, "Coleridge held two different theories about poetic creation. According to the first, it springs from self-identification with Nature; for the second, it is a product of the autonomous will" (280).

In order to support this third vein of his thought, Coleridge turned from Schelling to Kant, and from pantheism to orthodox Anglicanism (Salingar 279). Kant argued that the mind had *a priori* concepts built into it, such as time, space and cause-effect relationships, in the light of which it perceived the world (Thorslev 76-77). In so doing, Kant gave the mind an explicitly active role in its perception of the world, freeing it from passivity and inactivity. Thus, his theory, although establishing "a philosophic dualism that was to frustrate and challenge continental philosophy for more than a century" (77), provided Coleridge with a philosophical basis on which to found his views concerning the autonomy of the human mind. Another, and older philosophical basis for this view was that of Plato, who had also separated the world of ideas from the world of objects and given

priority to the ideas existent in the human mind. Consequently, Coleridge based this third view in his philosophical thought on a "prolonged reinterpretation of Protestantism in the light of Plato and of Kant...the moral or rational will is now outside the chain of natural causes and effects altogether" (Salingar 279). In this vein of Coleridgean thought, then, the individual gains dominance in the individual-nature relationship, re-creating what he perceives in nature to form a new nature in his mind. Thus, the individual both repeats "in the finite mind the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" and consciously "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create" (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* I: 202).

Despite the "vastly troubled history of conflicting attitudes and uncertain aspirations" (Modiano 4) of Coleridge's prose writings, in which no consistent view of nature is ever achieved, Coleridge's poems display a more consistent outlook of the individual-nature relationship. Salingar puts forth that "Keats criticized Coleridge precisely for lacking the 'Negative Capability' of suspending judgement in the midst of mysteries and doubts; he was 'incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge'" (277). Since "[a] poem is that species of composition" that proposes "for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth" (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* II: 10), Coleridge was able to suspend his judgement while writing poetry, and this interestingly cleared his “mysteries and doubts”. Thus, in poetry, his innermost thoughts concerning the individual-nature relationship were able to emerge, without the interference of the philosophic, personal, and religious dilemmas that confused his attempts to rationalise them in prose. William Empson asserts that "life involves maintaining oneself between contradictions that cannot be solved by analysis; for example those of philosophy" (qtd. in Perry 7). Yet, these contradictions can perhaps be solved by poetic intuition, if not analysis. Ian Wylie comments on "[t]he sure flight of [Coleridge's] imagination when no abstract speculations clogged its wings" (5), and it can also be claimed in parallel that his true views came to the surface when no abstract analytical speculations clogged their wings.

In fact, all three of the major philosophic positions explained above are existent in Coleridge's poems. However, they exist together not as contradictory assertions concerning the individual-nature relationship, but as stages of the relationship. The first of the positions analysed above is the basis of the first stage of this relationship, the second position is the basis of the second stage, and the third position is the basis of the third stage.

In the first stage of the interaction between the individual and nature, then, nature has the active role, and the individual merely passively perceives her. The individual's perception is solely sense perception; he sees, hears, feels, smells and tastes the outward forms, without contributing anything to what he perceives. Although this enables him to take in his natural surroundings, it does not enable a communion with nature. M. H. Abrams, in his significant work, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, uses these two metaphors to explain two different types of critical theory. These analogies can also be used in describing the three stages of the individual-nature relationship. Accordingly, in the first stage, the individual is a perfect mirror, reflecting his surroundings without distortion.

In order to be able to see the essence, the spirit of nature, behind the appearance of the outer forms, and in so doing to form a unity with her - "to make the external internal, and the internal external, to make nature thought and thought nature" (Modiano 4) - the individual must rise to the second stage of the interaction. This stage implies "a silent communion of the Spirit with the Spirit in Nature, not without consciousness, tho' with the Consciousness not successfully unfolded" (Coleridge in Modiano 29). Accordingly, the individual and nature both become both active and passive, acting and reacting upon each other as polar powers that become one as a result of their polar activity. Modiano mentions Coleridge's "claim that nature is in effect 'the greatest of Poets', endowed with a creative spirit and the power to exert a unifying action upon the mind equivalent to the imagination" (30). In the second stage, the imagination of nature and the imagination of the individual exert a unifying action upon each other

and consequently become one. In a letter, Coleridge describes true human love as "two hearts, like two correspondent concave mirrors, having a common focus, while each reflects and magnifies the other, and in the other itself, is an endless reduplication" (qtd. in Lau 538). This simile could also apply to the individual-nature relationship in its second stage; the individual and nature are two mirrors facing each other, both reflecting each other and seeing themselves eternally reflected in each other, so that they are one eternal whole.

In evaluating Coleridge's concept of nature, Modiano asserts that "[o]n the one hand, Coleridge finds that the self needs and profits from a continuous engagement with outward objects; on the other hand, he perceives that this activity, while stimulating the imagination to seek new forms of expression can, if pushed too far, cripple man's intellectual progress" (32). Therefore, the individual must rise to the third stage of his relationship with nature after the second one, in order to ensure the mind's intellectual progress and its control over the interaction. In the third stage, the individual must gain dominance and control over the relationship. He must rise above unity with nature, and take control of his perception of nature. Then, via his imagination, he must re-create what he sees and form a new nature out of the original one he perceived. Thus, in this stage, the individual is like the moon. Just as the moon uses the light it receives from the sun to modify the nature it reflects its light upon, the individual uses the creative power he receives from God's eternal creative power to create a new, modified nature out of the original nature created by God. In other words, in this stage, the individual resides over nature as does God; and the outcome of this interaction is usually poetry.

While Coleridge the philosopher and poet was expressing his theoretical views on the individual-nature relationship in his prose and poetry, Coleridge the individual actually experienced this relationship throughout his life. Indeed, Coleridge's personal relationship with nature, which was tied to his other personal relationships, such as his friendship with William Wordsworth and his relationship with himself, greatly

influenced his views (the analytical views put forth in his prose writings) about the individual-nature relationship.

Coleridge's relationship with nature was at its most comfortable and harmonious during his early years of intimacy with Wordsworth. Not only did the two friends, along with Dorothy Wordsworth, go on long nature walks during which they discussed and took note of every interesting detail they observed in nature, but they were also very supportive of each other's poetic career at the time. Indeed, Coleridge had already been heard of as a poet whereas Wordsworth was still not known of. He was also at peace with himself, for he had a happy marriage at the time, and was living near an exceedingly supportive and encouraging friend who showed unconditional love to him, namely Thomas Poole (Weissman 91-129). During this period, Coleridge was easily able to glide from one stage to the next in the individual-nature relationship. He could keenly perceive every detail in nature through his senses (first stage), feel in perfect harmony and unity with her (second stage), and rise above this unity to re-create a new nature in the poems that he wrote (third stage).

Later, after the trip to Germany and after the Coleridges had moved to the Lake District to be nearer to the Wordsworths, certain problems began to surface in the relationship between the two poets. Wordsworth was bluntly critical of several of Coleridge's poems and Coleridge gave great importance to his thoughts (171-179). These problems, along with his own domestic problems with his wife, triggered Coleridge's opium addiction which in turn negatively influenced every area of his life and amplified the guilt he felt due to his problems (171-179). All of these factors combined to cause a problematic relationship between Coleridge and nature. Sometimes he would turn to nature in hope of escape or salvation. Modiano, who makes an extensive study of the personal factors behind Coleridge's problematic relationship with nature, argues that "[a]t times nature takes the upper hand, particularly when an enfeebled self, tormented by nightmares, guilt and disappointment with friends, seeks in the outside world a principle of stability and order" (31). Modiano goes on

to explain that when Coleridge's relationship with Wordsworth began to deteriorate, being of a dependent nature, Coleridge transferred his dependency from his friend to nature and that in a notebook entry Coleridge

> [s]peaks of Nature as a steadfast and loyal companion, lulling one's grief and extending generous protection and sympathy "even when all men have seemed to desert us". While the "Love of Nature is ever returned double to us", the love of man appears to Coleridge as a one-way, inconstant and disappointing affair. (42-43)

Yet, this dependency on nature, which seems to be a positive development in his relationship with her, "caused, as relationships of dependency normally do, a disquieting awareness of an imperfect guardianship" (43), for frequently, when Coleridge turned to nature for poetic inspiration and relief from his troubles, he found that this strategy did not succeed (43). Thus, in the long run, he also became disillusioned with nature. In fact, the real problem was that, having forgotten the necessity of his own contribution to the relationship with nature in order for it to be a proper one, Coleridge, the individual, endeavoured to claim her aid via passive perception. In other words, as will also be observed in the chapter on "Dejection: An Ode", he tried to form a beneficial relationship with nature only through the first stage of the relationship. Hence his failure to do so.

Another problem was that:

> Coleridge perceived a direct link between one's communion with natural objects and poetic power, a link fully and somewhat painfully confirmed by Wordsworth's fortunes as a poet. Wordsworth was at once completely integrated in his natural environment at Grasmere...and happily productive completing the second volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*...It is as if, having failed to prove himself as a poet, Coleridge

> could not seriously claim a great attraction to nature, but only a fated passion for metaphysics. (Modiano 35)

Consequently, Coleridge actually somewhat forced himself away from nature because he did not believe himself capable of forming a relationship with her. Because of his inability to rise to the third stage of the relationship - due to the suspension of his creative powers – he felt himself incapable of experiencing the second stage of unity with nature either; and the first stage only became torturous for him because of its insufficiency in forming a healthy relationship when separated from the other two stages. Finally, as the rift between the two friends grew greater, Coleridge felt the need to dissociate himself from Wordsworth's values, the most imortant of which was the love of nature (45). As will also be displayed in the analysis of "Dejection: An Ode", "[a]s a way of asserting his independence from Wordsworth, Coleridge is likely to make radical claims that are not fully representative of his view of nature at a given time" (45). Hence the contradictory statements that frustrate critics endeavouring to analyse Coleridge's views on the individual-nature relationship.

In conclusion, the consistent view that emerges in Coleridge's poems concerning the individual-nature relationship, which sees the relationship as being composed of three stages - all of which are hierarchically different, but each of which is indispensable for the relationship to develop appropriately – can also be applied to Coleridge's life in general and be stretched to involve his prose writings as well. For it can be argued that the inconsistent views Coleridge expressed in his prose writings concerning the individual-nature relationship were inconsistent because his view changed according to the stage he himself was in at a particular time. Consequently, when he was in unity and harmony with nature, in the second stage - which immediately implies a successful experience of the first stage, and which frequently leads to a successful experience of the third stage, namely poetic creation – he

viewed nature and the individual as one whole and as sharing a relationship in which each influences the other and each is beneficial to the other. When he was stuck in the first stage of mere sense perception, without being able to ascend to the second one because of lack of sympathy with what he perceived (as in his states of dejection), he ironically emphasised the individual's role in forming the relationship with nature, because he thought his inability to be caused by insufficient activity of the will rather than by insufficient sympathy and feeling. In conclusion, Coleridge the poet, along with the personas and main characters in his poems, experienced the three stages of the individual-nature relationship during different periods of his life, and these experiences influenced his theoretical views on the relationship. While leading to inconsistent and contradictory views in his analytical writings, these experiences emerged as a consistent theory of the individual-nature relationship in Coleridge's poems.

CHAPTER 3

"THE EOLIAN HARP"

Coleridge's conversation poems[3], are perhaps the most suitable poems for analysing the individual-nature relationship. Not only do these poems have this interaction of the individual with nature as their subject matter, but their style is also conducive to a clear and explicit demonstration of it.

Firstly, as Humphry House points out, the centre of each conversation poem is dominated by "the Ego, the 'I' - the seeing, projecting mind" of Coleridge himself (qtd. in Hill 20). The poet's self is the necessary point of departure for the exploration of the universe and the necessary terminus for subsequent return (20). The individual, represented by the persona in each poem, unites with his natural surroundings and these surroundings trigger meditations in his mind, at the end of which the individual returns to a transformed perception of the natural surroundings. George Watson remarks that

> the occasion of the poem is less often a mere landscape than a human tie. The stimulus now is man, but man set in a landscape which may still yield parallels of a moral kind: the just vehicle, as one can now perceive, for a poet fascinated with the status of the poem as something obscurely hovering between mind and nature, between a thought and a thing. (63)

John S. Hill gives an extensive account of the structure and style of the conversation poems, relating certain structural and stylistic patterns to the theme of the individual-nature relationship in the poems. The structure

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[3] The conversation poems are a group of six poems, "The Eolian Harp", "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement", "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison", "Frost at Midnight", "Fears in Solitude", and "The Nightingale". These poems were thus labelled by G. M. Harper, who applied Coleridge's own subtitle for "The Nightingale" to these poems which are similar in style, structure and tone. (Hamilton 193).

of the conversation poems, what Hill calls their "tripartite rondo structure" is an important characteristic and is also important in conveying Coleridge's view of the relationship between the individual and nature. The individual mind is triggered by external nature (during the first stage of the interaction) to internal meditations (during the second stage of the interaction) which are expressed using symbols, analogies and descriptions related to external nature, and finally returns both to himself and to his natural surroundings with a modified view of them (in the third stage of the interaction). As Paul Hamilton suggests, “[s]ublime self-knowledge comes from a conscious participation in nature which dissolves nature's otherness in order to reconstitute it on a higher level instantiating 'one Mind'” (192). By employing such a pattern, Coleridge also accomplishes an important poetic theory, for he claims that: "The common end of all narrative, nay of all Poems is to convert a series into a Whole: to make those events which in real or imagined History move in a straight line, assume to our Understandings a circular motion - the snake with its Tail in its Mouth" (qtd. in Hill 20).

Hill describes the conversation poems as self-revelatory, since the self that returns home to itself is transformed and deepened by its experience. He also expresses the individual-nature relationship in the poems as "the dynamic interaction established between the poet's intelligence (his thoughts, feelings and memories) and the objects of the external world that trigger and sustain his meditation" (21). In other words, the conversation poems are dominated by the second stage of the relationship, in which the individual and nature mutually interact in a state of unity with one another.

The fact that the conversation poems are symbolic is also significant in relation to the individual-nature relationship. Coleridge defined symbols as "the products of the imaginative blending of mind and nature" (qtd. in Hill 21). Thus, in these poems, nature is both realistic and symbolic. It is simultaneously sensuously descriptive and subtly analogical. In Hill's words, "[l]andscape, that is to say, is also inscape - for

the natural settings detailed so vividly and minutely serve to describe the geography of the poet's soul as well as the topography of his situation" (21).

Furthermore, the familiar, benevolent, contented tone and the fluent, relaxed blank-verse measure of the conversation poems all accord with the peaceful mood achieved in the state of unity with nature, in the second stage of the interaction.

Finally, the conversation poems are intensely subjective; the persona of each of them is the poet himself, and the addressee is always a close friend or relative; thus they can be seen as autobiographical poems. Yet, they are at the same time decidedly descriptive and set in a distinct time and place which has an evident effect on the personal thoughts and feelings expressed. Thus, they reveal Coleridge's view of the essential unity between subject and object, mind and nature in perceiving life.

In conclusion, as Hill also argues, Coleridge's conversation poems are "unique in their...particular synthesis of man and nature, a fusion of self and non-self that lies at the heart of Coleridge's visionary realism - and effected, through him, much of the tone and substance of the entire Romantic Movement" (22). For these reasons, an analysis of "The Eolian Harp" should provide a significant contribution to the discussion of the relationship of the individual and nature in Coleridge's poems.

It is interesting that, although written at an early stage in his career, "The Eolian Harp" presents a summary of Coleridge's major philosophic predilections concerning the individual-nature relationship, as have been explained in the Theoretical Background.

The first part of the poem reflects Coleridge's Hartleian phase, during which he believed the mind to be a passive perceiver of the external world of objects. This Hartleian outlook is evident in the third stanza in which the poet describes himself in a state of passive perception:

> And thus, my love! as on midway slope
> Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
> Whilst thro' my half-closed eye-lids I behold
> The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main
> And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;
> Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
> And many idle flitting phantasies,
> Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
> As wild and various as the random gales
> That swell and flutter on this subject Lute!
> (34-43)

In this stanza, "full many a thought" traverse his "passive brain" "uncalled and undetained". The sense perceptions he receives from the external world cause associations in his mind, while he passively perceives all of this, without having any influence upon it. He thus compares himself to the lute; he is being played on by nature just as the lute is being played on by the breeze. This is precisely the condition Hartley's philosophy of associationism claims the individual to be in during the act of perception.

Suddenly, just after the persona's comparison of himself to the lute, we witness a reversal of this idea, and the associationism of the previous stanza is replaced by pantheism and Schellingian idealism:

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

Thus, this stanza portrays the view that every individual is part of one whole. God is the whole and the parts. Therefore everything is part of God, and God is part of everything.

In terms of poetry, the "intellectual breeze" which is "the Soul of each, and God of all" becomes the poet's mind, which creates a new world, rather than passively perceiving the already existent one as in the previous paragraph. In this sense, the stanza reflects Coleridge’s view

concerning the dominant role of the individual in his relationship with nature.

Finally, in the last stanza, we are presented with an orthodox Christian perspective. Coleridge, in the final phase of his philosophic thought, was to turn away from Schelling, in the view that his philosophy was dangerously close to pantheism, and that, by stating that everything was one, it sacrificed the individual to the whole, and left no space for multiplicity. This transformation from pantheism to Christianity is foreshadowed in this poem. Immediately after his pantheistic hypothesis, Coleridge is called back to Christian faith by his wife (who, as will be explained in more detail later, represents a feature of Coleridge's own mind):

> But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
> Darts, O beloved Woman! nor such thoughts
> Dim and unhallowed dost thou not reject,
> And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
> Meek Daughter in the family of Christ!
> Well hast thou said and holily dispraised
> These shapings of the unregenerate mind;
> ...
> For never guiltless may I speak of him,
> The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
> I praise him, and with Faith that inly *feels*;
> Who with his saving mercies healed me,
> A sinful and most miserable man
> (49-55,58-62)

In real life, it was not to be Sara, the "meek Daughter in the family of Christ" that Coleridge was to turn to after Schelling, but to the system of belief that she represents in the poem.

The fact that a summary of the theories concerning the relationship of the individual with nature is given in a poem written in a very early stage of Coleridge's career, further reveals that Coleridge simultaneously believed in contradictory theories. His differing ideas do not evolve over a chronological period of time, but rather different theories dominate his

thought at different times, without being able to overcome the other theories also existent therein.

As for the reflection of the individual-nature interaction in the poem, "The Eolian Harp" begins in a transition from the first stage to the second stage of the interaction. During this transition, the persona endeavours to endow with meaning the natural surroundings which he strongly perceives with his senses. Since he has not yet become one with nature, these efforts only serve to bring about allegorisations, rather than symbols.

> ...our cot o'ergrown
> With white-flower'd Jasmin, and the broad-leav'd Myrtle
> **(***Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!*)
> ...
> ...and mark the star of eve
> Serenely brilliant (*such should Wisdom be*)
> ...
> The stilly murmur of the distant Sea
> *Tells us of Silence.*
> (3-5, 7-8, 11-12) (my italics)

The persona is forcing allegorical meaning onto his surroundings; he is not yet able to perceive the meaning in his surroundings spontaneously. In other words, his thoughts and feelings have not yet united with nature in such a way as to make the persona unconsciously see his inscape in the landscape. Rather, he sees his inscape and the landscape separately and tries to bring them together consciously. Only at the very end of the stanza does he actually succeed in achieving this union of inscape and landscape:

> …and the world *so* hushed!
> The stilly murmur of the distant Sea
> Tells us of silence. (10-13)

In these lines, with “the contrapunctal conjunction of expiring sibilants and assertive ‘s’ alliterations in the ocean’s distant voice” (Hill 26), the

language used parallels the description of nature, which itself parallels the persona's thoughts and feelings, to establish a perfect unity of the individual and nature. Thus, the persona has risen from the first to the second stage of the interaction.

Hill sees in this first stanza a "subtle balancing of inertia and activity" (26) and this seems to be symbolic of the alternating activity and passivity of the mind in its interaction with nature during the act of perception, especially during the second stage of the interaction. In the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge compares the mind to a water-insect walking on a rivulet:

> Most of my readers will have observed a small water-insect on the surface of rivulets, which throws a cinque-spotted shadow fringed with prismatic colours on the sunny bottom of the brook; and will have noticed, how the little animal *wins* its way up against the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion, now resisting the current, and now yielding to it in order to gather strength and a momentary fulcrum for a further propulsion. This is no unapt emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking. (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* I:85)

The union of the individual and nature in the second stage of interaction, which had resulted in the description of the silence of the sea at the end of the first stanza, produces music in the second stanza.

> And that simplest Lute,
> Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
> How by the desultory breeze caressed,
> Like some coy maid half-yielding to her lover,
> It pours such sweet upbraiding… (12-16)

The image of the breeze playing on the lute and the music produced as a result, can be interpreted on two levels. "The Eolian Harp" being predated to the Coleridges' honeymoon (although written before their marriage), according to the first interpretation, the lute, resembling a "coy maid",

symbolises Sara, and the breeze caressing the lute symbolises Coleridge making playful advances to her. In this case, the music is both symbolic of the "sweet upbraiding" of Sara, and symbolic of their love. According to the second interpretation, the breeze is nature and the lute is the poet's mind, or vice versa, and the outcome of their interaction is poetry. It is vague at this point which of the two, the individual mind or nature, are symbolised by lute and which by breeze, because in the second stage of the relationship these roles are interchangeable, since both the individual and nature act and react upon each other.

With the next line, however, the roles become clearer since, as the lute's "strings" are "boldlier swept" by the breeze, the third stage of the relationship is reached. After his complete unity with nature in the previous lines, the poet rises above this unity to become the breeze exclusively and to re-create nature by 'playing' on it.

> …the long sequacious notes
> Over delicious surges sink and rise,
> Such a soft floating witchery of sound
> As twilight Elfins make, when they at eve
> Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
> Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
> Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
> Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!
> (18-25)

In these lines, the poet rises from the forced allegorical descriptions of paradise in the first stanza to this metaphorical and symbolic one. During the first stage of the relationship, he had tried to convey a paradisal image by describing a pastoral scene and making side remarks in parentheses as to the emblematic meanings of what he was describing and by using images from Milton's description of the Garden of Eden in *Paradise Lost*:

> The tranquil lovers by their cottage overgrown with luxuriant vegetation recalls the prelapsarian bower of Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost, IV 690-703 – an echo reinforced

> both by the references to jasmine and myrtle (plants mentioned by Milton) and by Coleridge's effort to allegorise these flowers as Edenic emblems of Innocence and Love (line 5). (Hill 26)

After having reached the third stage of the interaction, however, the poet is able to see and feel a paradisal scene in the music of the lute. Through his creative power, he turns the music made by the breeze blowing on the eolian harp to the music made by Elfins from a Fairy-land where honey-dropping flowers grow. Thus, he creates a new reality by playing his imagination over what he perceives, just as nature had created music by blowing over the harp.

Finally, as a result of the train of meditations that have taken place in his mind due to his interaction with nature, he suddenly has an insight into the harmonious unity of all existence:

> O! the one Life within us and abroad,
> Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
> A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
> Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere
> ...
> Methinks, it should have been impossible
> Not to love all things in a world so filled;
> Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
> Is Music slumbering on her instrument. (26-33)

The first line displays the poet's realisation of his unity with nature; they are united by a "one Life" which exists both within and without, bringing the individual together with nature.

Hill, who argues that "The Eolian Harp" has a complex double helix structure within its rondo framework, claims that the first helix begins in line 1 and ends in line 33, the end of the second stanza (25-26). This first helix portrays a widening of vision, from cottage to cosmos, from the immediate physical situation to a metaphysical perception of unity in multiplicity. As a result of this widening of vision, simile evolves into

metaphor, allegory into symbol, fancy into imagination, and particular love (of his wife) to universal love (26-27):

> From particular love (his relationship with Sara) the poet has ascended in lines 12-33 to a participation in universal ‘joyance’, and the shift from simile to metaphor – or from fancy to imagination – marks the progression of Coleridge's growth into visionary insight. (Hill 27)

This widening of vision is a result of the persona’s transition from the first stage, through the second, to the third stage of the interaction with nature.

The third and fourth stanzas more explicitly deal with the second and third stages of the individual-nature relationship. The former gives a description of the second stage. The persona thinks of how he sometimes lies on a slope at midday and lets nature play on his thoughts:

> Whilst through my half-closed eyelids I behold
> The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,
> And tranquil muse upon tranquillity:
> Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
> And many idle flitting phantasies,
> Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
> As wild and various as the random gales
> That swell and flutter on this subject Lute! (36-43)

In this stage, he is analogous to the lute, passively letting trains of thought develop in his mind under the influence of nature. Although the individual is passive in this stanza and although he seems to be perceiving nature with his senses, since he meditates on what he senses and on what he feels, "[t]ranquil muse upon tranquillity", he is in unity with nature. As John A. Hodgson points out, "[t]he thoughts that play breezily on the lute of Coleridge's brain are also alternatively the thoughts that issue harmoniously from the lute. The traverse across the passive strings of the brain is also a crossing from infusion to effusion" (74). Therefore the individual is not in the first but in the second stage of the interaction.

In the latter stanza, the relationship changes and the individual and nature change roles. Nature becomes the harp that "trembles into thought" as the individual's unifying and creative faculty of imagination sweeps over it:

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

The last line can be interpreted on two levels, in accordance with which the meaning of the previous lines is also modified. On the first level, it can be read as an expression of pantheistic philosophy. God is an "intellectual breeze", "plastic and vast" and he is both the soul and the creator of every creation, since everything is part of the unified whole of God.

The second level is parallel to the first one. In his act of creating poetry, the poet echoes the creative act of God. He takes God's creation, nature, and re-creates it. Thus, he becomes a "plastic and vast" "intellectual breeze", (plastic referring to the "esemplastic"[4] power of imagination that he employs in creating poetry) sweeping over the "diversely framed Harps" of "animated nature", making new music out of God's already existent creation. Having created a new world, he becomes the soul of each part of it and the God of all of it. In this interpretation, then, the third stage of the individual-nature relationship is evident; the individual rises above their mutual interaction to re-create what he has perceived.

The last stanza of "The Eolian Harp" is quite problematic. It has already been observed that the conversation poems have a circular structure, and that the persona who at the end of the poem returns to the original scene of departure has been transformed by his experience and

[4] Coleridge coins the word "esemplastic" in the *Biographia Literaria*. He explains that his reason for coining it is to distinguish his definition of imagination, which esemplastic denotes, from "the usual import of the word" (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* I: 107)

returns with deepened insight. In "The Eolian Harp", however, he returns to Sara and their cottage in a state of repentance for the metaphysical speculations he has entertained throughout the poem. Thus, rather than gaining deeper insight, he "sinks back into safe orthodoxy" (Hill 27):

> But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
> Darts, O beloved Woman! nor such thoughts
> Dim and unhallowed dost thou not reject,
> And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
> Meek Daughter in the family of Christ!
> Well hast thou said and holily dispraised
> These shapings of the unregenerate mind; (49-55)

Most critics are displeased with this ending. According to George Watson, "[t]he blunt fact is that Sara is merely a nuisance in the poem, which ought to have closed on the penultimate paragraph" (66) and Humphry House describes her as "an extremely narrow and governessy orthodox Christian" (qtd. in Hill 28). Yet, neither in his German idealist years, nor even after his relationship with Sara had collapsed did Coleridge ever change this stanza, despite the many changes he made to the poem in general. Thus, as Hill argues, in the poem, Sara represents "an important facet of Coleridge's own mind" (28). He dramatises his own internal conflict between metaphysics and faith using her presence. In Harold Bloom's words, "'The Eolian Harp' thus established a dialectic between two Coleridges, the imaginative and intellectually daring poet, and the timidly orthodox young husband" (qtd. in Hill 28). Interestingly enough, Coleridge was indeed to repent his pantheistic speculations during the orthodox Anglican phase of his philosophical views.

Consequently, "The Eolian Harp" is an important poem which not only displays and describes the three stages of the individual-nature relationship, but also summarises Coleridge’s philosophic predilections concerning this relationship. Thus, being written at an early stage of his career, the poem proves that these philosophic stances were indeed always co-existent in Coleridge's mind. Finally, as a representative of the

conversation poems, "The Eolian Harp" conveys a healthy relationship between the individual and nature, in which all stages of the relationship are experienced with ease; for even the slight unease that comes with the last stanza comes after the relationship has already been successfully experienced in all its stages, "it shuts the gate after Pegasus has bolted" (Hill 29).

CHAPTER 4

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

> Nature has her proper interest, and he will know what it is who believes and feels that everything has a life of its own, and that we are all ONE LIFE. (qtd. in Gose 18)

Coleridge symbolically illustrates this belief in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which can be seen as the journey of an individual through the stages of his relationship with nature. J. Robert Barth interprets the relationship of the individual and nature in terms of a relationship of love according to which "love is the eternal that unifies multeities" (5-6) and the individual can only experience a limited form of love until he comes into contact with the power of love pervading nature (God's love), after which he reaches a deeper and more meaningful experience of love. Barth perceives the poem as portraying a "movement from a limited experience of love, through an encounter with the natura naturans - the active powers of nature - to a deeper experience of the meaning of Love" (Barth 62). Geoffrey H. Hartman interprets the poem in a similar way, arguing that "Coleridge's poem traces the 'dim and perilous way' of a soul that has broken with nature and feels the burdenous guilt of selfhood" (48). Robert Penn Warren, in his famous essay "A Poem of Pure Imagination", labels “the primary theme in this poem as the theme of sacramental vision, or the theme of the 'One Life'” (Warren 348).

The Mariner begins his journey in the first stage of the individual-nature relationship. He perceives nature with his senses. For him, it is only something that affects the way his ship sails.

> And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
> Was tyrannous and strong:
> He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
> And chased us south along. (41-44)

This part of the poem is full of imagery of the sun and ice - both of which can be interpreted as symbols of the rational intellect (as opposed to the creative intellect, or the imagination), the sun because of its light which brings out differences rather than unifying and blending, ice because of its coldness and its rigid and sharp shape . Nature is thus presented as cold and forbidding, through the Mariner's eyes. The individual and nature are apart.

> The Sun came up upon the left,
> Out of the sea came he;
> And shone bright, and on the right
> Went down into the sea.
> ...
> And now there came both mist and snow,
> And it grew wondrous cold:
> And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
> As green as emerald. (25-28, 51-54)

Then, nature performs an act of benevolence upon the individual and sends an Albatross as a "representative", an ambassador of peace, and for a while a positive interaction begins.

> At length did cross and Albatross:
> Thorough the fog it came;
> As if it had been a Christian soul,
> We hailed it in God's name.
>
> It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
> And round and round it flew.
> The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
> The helmsman steered us through! (63-70)

The individuals on board are "feeding" nature, and nature in turn is helping them on their way. This part of the poem is pervaded by imagery of the moon and the colour white, both symbolising imagination (since the moon has a soft, white light that blends and unifies, as opposed to the sun which outlines, thus bringing out the differences rather than unifying).

> Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,

Glimmered the white Moon-shine. (77-78)

However, the Mariner is not yet spiritually or morally ready for such an interaction. His "esemplastic" power is weak. The fact that he interprets the crew's friendliness towards the Albatross as a strange state, brought about by their isolated circumstances, and remarks that they hailed it "*as if* it had been a Christian soul" reveals that he is not yet aware that "everything has a life of its own, and that we are all ONE LIFE" and hence his ignorance of the fact that the Albatross actually deserves their love and friendliness, whatever the circumstances. He drops even below the first stage by killing the Albatross and actually acting in a hostile manner towards nature. John Beer remarks that:

> The theme of the shooting gave [Coleridge] an opportunity to explore the idea of the "one Life" which had been haunting his thinking in previous months. For here was a perfect example of a crime against the one Life - thoughtless and motiveless, possible only to a man who had not seen the unity of all life in the world. (Beer 169)

Critics interpret this crime in several different ways. According to Gose, Warren takes a theological view of the subject, in which by killing the Albatross, the Mariner commits the original sin, which is defined as separating himself from God (Gose 9). Likewise, Hill explains Warren's interpretation as follows: “In Coleridge's sacramental universe a crime against Nature is a crime against God. [Warren] finds in the Fall an analogy for the Mariner's symbolic killing of the albatross” (156). From the point of view of love, Barth claims that the Mariner kills the Albatross out of lack of love. In more general terms, John Beer argues that "[t]he shooting of the Albatross is only one blatant example of all the offences against life by which men cut themselves off from the central harmony of the creation" (170). Many critics object to these views, arguing that the Mariner's act does not justify the punishment he endures, and that therefore there is no crime, nor punishment, nor redemption at all, but a nightmare world of

chaos in which "all evidences of moral value are mutually contradictory" (Ferguson 61). However, as Warren argues:

> We cannot blandly pass by such a crucial event as the shooting of the Albatross with merely a literal reading, the kind of reading which Lowes, among others, gives it - the kind of reading which makes the bird but a bird; the bird has a symbolic role in a symbolic pattern. (355)

The crime must be looked at symbolically as a crime against nature, therefore ultimately being a crime against the Mariner's own being, since he is part of the unity that he unjustly attacks. Warren adds:

> What is at stake...is not the objective magnitude of the act performed - the bird is, literally, a trivial creature - but the spirit in which the act is performed, the condition of the will. (364)

He also makes the following remarks, which also accord with Barth's view of the crime as one due to a lack of love:

> The crime is, symbolically, a murder, and a particularly heinous murder, for it involves the violation of hospitality and of gratitude (*pious* equals *faithful* and the bird is "of good omen") and of sanctity...This factor of betrayal in the crime is re-emphasized in Part V when one of the Spirits says that the bird "had loved the man who killed it". (361)

Finally, surely the shooting of an Albatross cannot be claimed to be a lesser crime than the eating of an apple, the one signifying an act against God's creation, the other an act against His will; both result in a separation from God and from nature, which is "the veil through which God shows himself" (Barth 69).

The fact that the Mariner kills the "pious bird of good omen" without apparent motive, which is another point put forth by critics supporting the view that the poem portrays a chaotic world on which no meaning or order

can be imposed, can be interpreted as revealing the meaninglessness of the act, therefore emphasising its maliciousness. Warren, too, argues that:

> The lack of motivation, the perversity, which flies in the face of the Aristotelian doctrine of *hamartia*, is exactly the significant thing about the Mariner's act. The act re-enacts the Fall, and the Fall has two qualities important here: it is a condition of the will, as Coleridge says, "out of time," and it is the result of no single human motive....having just said that, in its "state of immanence or in-dwelling reason and religion," the will appears indifferently as wisdom or love, Coleridge proceeds: "But in its utmost abstraction and consequent state of reprobation, the will becomes Satanic pride and rebellious self-idolatry in the relations of the spirit to itself, and to find in itself alone the one absolute motive of action." (360)

It is also psychologically plausible when one thinks of the meaningless, motiveless acts of violence committed every day against nature by humankind. It even reminds one of the cruelty with which small children sometimes treat animals, again with no apparent motive. Even the nature-worshipper Wordsworth had spent his childhood snaring birds with his friends (Weissman 100). Finally, according to necessitarianism, such criminal acts are in fact involuntary since the individual is in fact passive and does not act but is acted on.

After his crime, the Mariner enters a nightmare world of penance, whether this be created externally by the spirits of nature, or internally by his conscience, or whether it is symbolically the state a man finds himself in when he separates himself from nature, due to his inability to partake of the One Life. Lindgren suggests that "the Mariner's alienation and sense of guilt could suggest an 'inner hell' due to his crime" and that "the Mariner exhibits all the characteristics of someone suffering from separation, from God, himself and community" these characteristics being "guilt, perturbation, despair, confusion of thought and loss of context in his wondering homeless state" (79)

In this part of the poem, the sun comes to the foreground again, burning and scorching the mariners. As Warren observes,

> With the announcement of the crime, comes one of the most effective turns in the poem. As the Wedding Guest recoils from his glittering eye, the Mariner announces:
>
> ...with my crossbow
> I shot the Albatross.
>
> And then the next line of the poem:
>
> The Sun now rose upon the right.
>
> The crime, as it were, brings the Sun. (Warren 370-371)

According to George Herbert Clarke, the sun is here "conceived in Coleridge's imagination as suggesting the stern, just, masculine, punitive side of the nature of God; and...the Moon normally symbolizes the gentle, feminine, redemptive side" (qtd. in Gose 8).

> All in a hot and copper sky,
> The bloody Sun, at noon,
> Right up above the mast did stand
> No bigger than the Moon. (111-114)

In view of Clarke's interpretation, this last line, "No bigger than the Moon", could be seen as signifying the fact that God's stern, punitive side is not more important than, or a greater part of his nature than his gentle, redemptive side (as orthodox Christianity usually seems to suggest), but rather both of these natures are equal in God; as a sign of hope for the Mariner, perhaps.

In the meantime, the ancient Mariner grows more and more hostile towards nature. The sun is hellishly hot, the sea is full of slimy things and burns like witch's oil, and there are death fires at night.

> The very deep did rot: O Christ!
> That ever this should be!
> Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
> Upon the slimy sea.
>
> About, about, in reel and rout
> The death-fires danced at night;
> The water, like a witch's oils,
> Burnt green, and blue and white. (123-130)

There is also a significant stanza in this part of the poem, which supports the idea that the Mariner's crime was a crime against nature and, therefore, God. Both are alluded to in the lines:

> Instead of the cross, the Albatross
> About my neck was hung. (141-142)

Nature and God are alluded to together in this imagery, and the fact that "cross" and "Albatross" rhyme, beautifully emphasises this.

"There passed a weary time" of thirst and stillness, after which the Mariner sees "a speck, a mist, a shape" which he first joyfully thinks to be a ship; a ship, however, that moves "without a breeze, without a tide". In the words of the Gloss, "horror follows. For can it be a ship that comes onward without wind or tide?" An interesting image occurs when the "strange shape drove suddenly/Betwixt us and the Sun "

> And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
> (Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
> As if through a dungeon-grate he peered,
> With broad and burning face. (177-180)

Apart from revealing the fact that the "strange shape" is a skeleton ship, as the Gloss also makes clear, these lines can be taken symbolically, especially the startling imagery of the last two which portray the sun as peering through a dungeon-grate. If the sun is taken as the rational intellect, then these lines imply that this faculty is overcome (trapped behind bars), and the Mariner enters a world of delirium due to his "guilt,

despair, confusion of thought, and loss of context" as Lindgren lists (79). The events that take place immediately after these lines would support this view. If taken as the stern aspect of God, then the lines can be seen as implying the fact that God abandons him, or he abandons God (and the One Life) completely in his consciousness, to enter a chaotic world where fate is determined by chance (as the dice-throwing game will show). This view is supported by the Mariner's words at the very end of the poem:

> So lonely 'twas, that God himself
> Scarce seemed there to be. (599-600)

The rest of Part Three of the poem is perhaps its most frightening part. As the skeleton ship nears, the Mariner and the rest of the crew see that its crew consists of Death and Life-in-Death who are, as the Gloss explains, dicing "for the ship's crew and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner"

> Are those *her* ribs through which the Sun
> Did peer, as through a grate?
> And is that Woman all her crew?
> Is that a DEATH? and are there two?
> Is DEATH that woman's mate
>
> *Her* lips were red, *her* looks were free,
> Her locks were yellow as gold:
> Her skin was white as leprosy,
> The Night-Mair LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
> Who thicks man's blood with cold.
>
> The naked hulk alongside came,
> And the twain were casting dice;
> "The game is done! I've won! I've won!"
> Quoth she, and whistles thrice. (185-198)

Critics arguing for the lack of any moral statement in the poem, use this event as proof of their theory, claiming that the "misfitting nature of this supposedly One Life cosmos is most emphatically implied by the dice-throwing episode, a decisive moment of apparently sheer randomness" (Perry 284). However, by breaking unity with nature, the Mariner has

already entered a chaotic world of moral instability, meaninglessness and randomness, and the fact that his fate is determined by a dice-throwing game (or the fact that this is how he perceives it to be determined, for we only have his subjective account of what happened), further supports this view. Moreover, people who do not believe in a One Life or any other kind of unifying element in the world do believe it to be controlled by randomness and coincidence, and the Mariner is in this state at the reported moment, being in the first stage of the individual-nature relationship. Finally, all of these events could be seen as hallucinations caused by the Mariner's state of delirium due to his sense of guilt at having wronged and broken unity with nature.

As a result of the dice-throwing game, the Mariner's ship-mates die one by one, leaving the Mariner completely alone.

> One after one, by the star-dogged Moon
> Too quick for groan or sigh,
> Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
> And cursed me with his eye.
>
> Four times fifty living men,
> (And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
> With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
> They dropped down one by one.
>
> The souls did from their bodies fly, -
> They fled to bliss or woe!
> And every soul, it passed me by,
> Like the whiz of my CROSS-BOW! (212-223)

Again, critics who do not believe in any symbolic pattern in the poem give the appearance of the moon in these lines as an example. Hill claims that:

> Moon-imagery in 'The Ancient Mariner'...is by no means always beneficent or always to be associated with the healing power of Imagination: the Mariner's ship-mates in Part III, for example, die beneath 'the star-dogged Moon' (Hill 158)

However, the moon in this scene is "horned", probably referring to a new moon, which is thin and powerless. Therefore, the presence of the moon here does not mean that bad things can happen under the moon and that moon imagery is not stable in the poem, but that the thinness and powerlessness of the Mariner's unifying power, or God's redemptive, forgiving aspect, cause these bad things to happen.

Moreover, these critics claim that the other mariners are wrongfully killed although they are not the ones who have committed the crime. However, the Mariner's ship-mates "become accomplices in the crime" as the Gloss explains, because after seeing the sun come out, they believed that the Albatross had caused the mist and fog, and were happy to be rid of it. As Warren also comments:

> they first condemn the act, when they think the bird had brought the favorable breeze; then applaud the act when the fog clears and the breeze springs back up, now saying that the bird had brought the fog; then in the dead calm, again condemn the act. Their crime has another aspect: they have violated the sacramental conception of the universe, by making man's convenience the measure of the act, by isolating him from Nature and the "One Life"...They judge the moral content of an act by its consequence. (Warren 364)

After the crew dies, the worst part of the Mariner's penance follows, for now he is completely alone:

> Alone, alone, all, all, alone,
> Alone on a wide wide sea!
> And never a saint took pity on
> My soul in agony. (232-235)

This feeling of isolation and forsakenness is actually the ultimate effect of being out of unity with nature. Lindgren points out that "William Godwin had elaborated the notion that if man participates in an act against nature, she takes her revenge" (79). This is partly what happens. Moreover, if the

Mariner had felt in unity with nature, he could have realised the existence of many other life forms on the "wide wide sea" and not felt so very alone. The creatures he does notice, disgust him:

> And a thousand thousand slimy things
> Lived on; and so did I.
>
> I looked upon the rotting sea,
> And drew my eyes away;
> I looked upon the rotting deck,
> And there the dead men lay. (238-243)

The fact that he compares himself to the slimy things reveals that he in fact projects his feelings of guilt about himself onto the external world. This brings us to the concept of inner-hell again, for the individual perceives nature in accordance with how he feels, especially about himself. And if analysed from the point-of-view of love that Barth puts forth, it can be further claimed that in order to love nature, one must first love his own being, since he himself is a part of nature. Warren argues that "for [Coleridge] Nature symbolizes God, though, as a matter of fact, there is also in Coleridge's thought the idea of a projective symbolism in Nature by which man realizes not God but himself" (353).

Having separated himself from God, the Mariner cannot even pray:

> I looked to Heaven, and tried to pray;
> But or ever a prayer had gusht,
> A wicked whisper came, and made
> My heart as dry as dust. (244-247)

Thus he is utterly and completely alone; so lonely "that God himself/Scarce seemed there to be" (599-600) as he remarks at the end of his narrative.

After seven days and seven nights in this death-in-life existence, the moon comes out (or the Mariner finally notices it). With the appearance of the moon, three important things happen. Firstly, the light of the moon gives a different view to the nature around the Mariner - he

perceives the world with "newly awakened senses" (Barth 65) - because it is the light of the imagination, which unifies and idealises what it perceives:

> Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
> Like April hoar-frost spread
> ...
> The charmed water burnt always
> A still and awful red.
>
> Beyond the shadow of the ship,
> I watched the water-snakes:
> They moved in tracks of shining white,
> And when they reared, the elfish light
> Fell off in hoary flakes.
>
> Within the shadow of the ship
> I watched their rich attire:
> Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
> They coiled and swam; and every track
> Was a flash of goldenfire. (267-281)

The hoar-frost reminds one of the frost in "Frost at Midnight" which reflects back the moon's light. It can be claimed that metaphorically, the Mariner, like the frost, begins to reflect the moon's light back to the moon, thereby forming a second stage relationship with nature; for in the second stage, as suggested in the Theoretical Background, the individual and nature are like two correspondent mirrors reflecting one another. In other words, as the moon projects its unifying and idealising light onto the Mariner, the Mariner begins to see the moon in that light, thus his perception of the moonlight becomes identical to the light itself. Secondly, by forming empathy with the moon, in his yearning for the way it journeys, yet is at home, - the very opposite of the Mariner's situation, being fixed yet far away from home - he forms a relationship with nature, and becomes aware of an aspect of beauty and peacefulness in it. "Life, order, universal communion and process, joy - all these things from which the Mariner is alienated are involved here in the description of the moon and stars" (Warren 374). As the Gloss remarks:

> In his loneliness and fixedness, he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and every where the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country, and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

According to Barth, this relationship with nature produces love in his heart (64). Finally, this scene reveals that God has shown mercy to the Mariner after his penance, and has therefore softened his heart. As a result of all of these:

> A spring of love gushed from my heart,
> And I blessed them unaware!
> Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
> And I blessed them unaware.
>
> The self-same moment I could pray;
> And from my neck so free
> The Albatross fell off, and sank
> Like lead into the sea. (284-291)

The fact that the Mariner blesses the snakes "unaware" is another example critics use when they argue that the poem portrays a chaotic world, claiming that the Mariner cannot be punished for his crime, nor rewarded for his blessing since both were done unconsciously. Anthony Harding, however, interprets this as an act of God's mercy; an act that enables him to open himself up to nature and form contact with her:

> It is not the recipients of the blessing who are important, but its divine origin, and the fact that the "spring of love" enables the Marinere to transcend his self-hood...God, acting perhaps through some "kind saint", has made the Marinere's self a center and source instead of an enclosing and defensive wall. (qtd. in Barth 65)

Likewise, Beer remarks that:

> Human beings find their true home in the universe only when they are able to perceive the correspondences between the spring-like heart of man and the fountainous heart of nature. (qtd. in Barth 71)

The "kind saint" through which God acts is in fact nature herself, for she shows her order, harmony, and beauty to the Mariner through the movement of the moon, its harmony with the stars in the sky, its light which beautifies the water-snakes, and the beautiful colours of the snakes themselves. W. H. Auden interprets the sequence of the crime, penance and redemption as follows:

> But for the Fall (the shooting of the Albatross), Adam (The Ancient Mariner) would never have consciously learned through suffering the meaning of Agape, i.e. to love one's neighbour as oneself without comparisons or greed (the blessing of the snakes) (qtd. in Lindgren 57)

The Mariner is rewarded in several different ways for his blessing, other than the falling off of the Albatross from his neck. Firstly, he is able, finally, to sleep, something he has not been able to do ever since his crime, perhaps due to his sense of guilt. Now,

> Oh sleep! It is a gentle thing,
> Beloved from pole to pole!
> To Mary Queen the praise be given!
> She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
> That slid into my soul. (292-296)

Secondly, it rains, and his long-lasting thirst is finally ended:

> The silly buckets on the deck,
> That had so long remained,
> I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
> And when I awoke, it rained.
>
> My lips were wet, my throat was cold,

My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank. (297-304)

Thirdly, a wind begins to blow after such a long time of motionlessness, and the ship starts to move:

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;
The Moon was at its edge
...
Yet now the ship moved on! (309, 318-321, 328)

Of course, the Mariner cannot handle the ship on his own, so, next, his dead shipmates' bodies are inspirited by angels:

The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.
...
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest. (330-4, 347-9)

Thus, a death-in-life existence and guilty conscience is replaced by "blessed sleep" and a feeling of lightness,

I was so light - almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost. (306-308)

thirst by water, fixedness by wind and motion, dead corpses by blessed spirits, and finally, silence by music made by the spirits, a sky-lark, and the sound of the wind in the sails:

Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is like an angel's song,
That makes the Heavens be mute

It ceased; yet the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune. (352-372)

Nature is generous towards the Mariner, and rewards his one step towards unity with many steps on her side. As Watson suggests, "Nature heals the man who makes no effort but simply opens himself, 'unaware', to its influence" (103). Also, the Mariner is now able to perceive the beauty in nature around him, through the love that has been placed in his heart by God, and through his awakened imagination; for rain and wind are both symbols of the imagination, and music the symbol of the outcome and output of the imagination. He is now completely in the second stage of the individual-nature relationship.

Yet, shortly after, the sun appears again, and justice is seen to be still incomplete, for "the lonesome Spirit from the South Pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance" explains the Gloss:

The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Has fixed her to the ocean: (381-384)

Then, it seems as if there is a struggle between mercy and justice, or harmony and separation, or the second stage and the first stage of the individual-nature interaction, for the ship starts bounding to and fro:

But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion -
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

The like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound. (385-392)

Even though the spirits that speak while the Mariner is in a fit say that "The man has penance done,/And penance more will do", it seems as if the side of mercy, harmony, unity with nature, and the imagination won the "tug-of-war" for the Mariner, for when the Mariner awakes, "the moon was high", and after a realisation that his shipmates still carry the look that they had on their faces when they died, the curse is finally broken, and the Mariner reaches home:

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapped: once more
I viewed the ocean green
...
Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree? (438-443, 464-467)

Like the scene in which the Mariner re-unites with nature, this scene in which he re-unites with society is also pervaded by moonlight:

> And on the bay the moonlight lay,
> And the shadow of the Moon
> ...
> And the bay was white with silent light, (474-475, 480)

Watson, who sees the Mariner's experience as changing from that of an animal existence (in which he perceives the world through his senses, as in the first stage) to a spiritual existence (in which he begins perceiving the world spiritually, as in the second stage), remarks that "in the new existence, experience is no longer 'animal', as in youth, but spiritual or angelic" (Watson 103). He gives the following lines as example:

> Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
> And, by the holy rood!
> A man, all light, a seraph-man,
> On every corse there stood. (488-491)

Watson adds that:

> the Mariner, in the 'return' of the poem, sails into harbour to review the home port described in Part I, in a pattern that reflects the movement of the conversation poems; and sees it now no longer steeped in sunshine and holiday mood, but of a silent, ghostly beauty lost to all that is human and sensual, eerily bright and inviting only dispassionate praise. (Watson 103)

This is due to the fact that upon leaving the port, the Mariner perceived his surroundings in the first stage, through his senses and his rational intellect, symbolised by the sun, but upon returning he perceives it in the second stage, through his spirit and imagination, symbolised by the moon. Similar to Watson, Beer sees the movement of the poem as "passing from the world of the sense first to a landscape of the sublime and then to a world where sensibility has been illuminated and transfigured by that terror

and glory" (171); in other words, from the first stage to the second stage of the individual-nature relationship.

When the Mariner is rescued from his sinking ship by the Hermit, the Pilot, and the Pilot's Boy, the Mariner, upon seeing the Hermit, exclaims:

> It is the Hermit good!
> He singeth loud his godly hymns
> That he makes in the wood.
> He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
> The Albatross's blood. (509-513)

The Mariner believes that the Hermit, being a person in harmony with both nature and God (he makes godly hymns in the wood), will be able to cleanse him of his sin; these lines show that, no matter how much penance he does, or how much mercy he is shown, the Mariner will always feel the guilt of what he has done. It is the Hermit who first inspires in the Mariner the urge to pass his experiences and wisdom on to others in order to abate his feeling of guilt by helping others learn from his mistakes:

> “Say quick,” quoth he, “I bid thee say –
> What manner of man art thou?”
>
> Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
> With a woeful agony,
> Which forced me to begin my tale;
> And then it set me free.
>
> I pass, like night, from land to land;
> I have strange power of speech;
> That moment that his face I see,
> I know the man that must hear me:
> To him my tale to teach. (576-590)

The Second Voice had said that the Mariner "penance more will do", and perhaps this penance is his continual urge to travel from land to land and tell his tale to others. According to Barth, since the Mariner first blessed the water snakes and was redeemed through the mercy of God,

who put love in his heart, "penance remains, for he must learn to exercise the love granted to him by God" (Barth 66). This the Mariner does by, through his story, teaching others to respect and take part in the One Life. The continual repetition of his story takes the Mariner to the third stage of the individual-nature relationship, for he relates his experiences to others by modifying them (through adding moral significance to seemingly chaotic events) based on his newly-gained insight about the relationship between the individual and nature.

The Mariner's return home can be interpreted symbolically. If we see him as having undergone a journey of separation from nature, penance, forgiveness and reunion with nature, "home" can be interpreted as the state of unity with nature, the second stage of the individual-nature relationship. It is in this state that one feels at home in the world. Barth defines "home" as the place "where one 'belongs', where one is always forgiven…and where love is not conditioned". It is the relationship of the sky to the moon and stars in the blessing scene, and it is the state that the Mariner reaches after his experiences. The Mariner "learns to love all things, as God loves his creation" (Bloom 5) and ends his tale with the moral:

> He prayeth well, who loveth well
> Both man and bird and beast.
>
> He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all. (612-617)

Consequently, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* becomes a poem which symbolically relates the spiritual journey of the individual through the stages of his relationship with nature. During the journey, the individual learns the agony and chaos of a life separated from nature, the inadequacy of sense perceptions and rational judgements and the importance of love, sympathy and the imagination in forming a beneficial

relationship with nature, and the sense of contentment and peace that comes from being able to form a harmonious relationship with her.

CHAPTER 5

"DEJECTION: AN ODE"

"Dejection: An Ode" deals primarily and explicitly with the relationship of the individual with nature, since it is about the persona's inability to interact with nature. The poem "records an experience, later recollected in tranquillity, when the poet had felt excluded from life and bereft of 'passion' – a time of severe depression when he had no inner strength to respond or interact with the natural beauty of earth and sea and sky" (Hill 181).

"Dejection: An Ode", is considered as constituting part of a poetic dialogue between Coleridge and Wordsworth and John S. Hill gives a detailed account of the development of this dialogue (191-197). Originally written as a letter in blank-verse to Sara Hutchinson, the dialogue, first prompted by Coleridge's "The Mad Monk" (1800), is about the "nature of poetic creation and the relationship between the perceiving mind and the external world of nature" (Hill 192). More precisely, the dialogue discusses the effect of time and experience in the changing relation between the individual and nature. In the second stanza of "The Mad Monk", the persona expresses this change:

> There was a time when earth, and sea, and skies,
> The bright green vale, and forest's dark recess,
> With all things, lay before mine eyes
> In steady loveliness:
> But now I feel, on earth's uneasy scene,
> Such sorrows as will never cease; -
> I only ask for peace;
> If I must live to know that such time has been!
> (*Poetical Works* 348, lines 9-16)

The persona, who previously perceived the world in "*steady* loveliness", now sees it as an "*uneasy* scene". When in unity with nature, the world

had seemed harmonious and stable to him; now that he is isolated from her, however, the world seems discordant and unstable.

Stephen Prickett points out that these lines were “taken up by Wordsworth for the opening of the ‘Immortality Ode’, and…used by him as the initial schema from which he can move towards a more precise analysis of his own sense of loss, and of its relation to his development” (qtd. in Hill 192).

> There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
> The earth, and every common sight,
> To me did seem
> Apparelled in celestial light,
> The glory and the freshness of a dream.
> It is not now as it hath been of yore; -
> Turn wheresoe’er I may,
> By night and day,
> The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
> …
> Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
> Where is it now, the glory and the dream?
> (Wordsworth 460, lines 1-9, 56-7)

Although "Wordsworth's poem ends with a seeming confidence, firmly focused on the speaker and on his faith that age brought gifts greater than the losses, that memory had made it possible to feel thoughts 'too deep for tears'" (Mahoney 125), he had only written the first part quoted above when Coleridge first read the poem. Prompted by these lines, and his own state of dejection, Coleridge composed the verse letter to Sara Hutchinson, listing, among other causes for his dejection, his inability to respond to nature. In this letter, however, "[w]e find no Worthsworthian sense of the possibility of growth, of compensation" (123). Hill also points out that Coleridge's loss was “more profound, more crippling, and more enduring than that described by Wordsworth” (193):

> The loss described in Wordsworth’s ode is…a loss of a *degree* of perceptual insight rather than that of the ability to perceive at all. For Coleridge, on the other hand, it is precisely this

> inability to feel, to respond sympathetically to natural joy, that lies at the heart of his dejection: “He felt”, in Stephen Prickett’s words, “his whole imaginative intercourse with the created world – his whole capacity for open response – to be threatened”. (Hill 194)

In response to Coleridge's description of profound dejection, Wordsworth penned “Resolution and Independence”. This poem begins with the poet’s description of how “he is out of tune with Nature’s joy” (194) and the dejection he feels as a result. In the midst of these reflections, however, he meets a leech-gatherer who patiently and perseveringly searches in pools for leeches, very few of which are to be found (195). “The old man’s sufferings and patient resolution put the poet’s situation in perspective, and the leech-gatherer assumes a didactic and symbolic function" (195):

> And the whole body of the Man did seem
> Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
> Or like a man from some far region sent,
> To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.
> (Wordsworth 156, lines 109-112)

Thus, Wordsworth seems to be sending Coleridge the message that he should persevere and try to make the best of his remaining abilities.

By revising his verse-letter to more fully emphasise his dejection concerning his inability to respond to nature in the writing of “Dejection: An Ode”, Coleridge seems to be giving the reply that “his creative loss is more profound than the leech-gatherer’s” (Hill 196). As Charles S. Bouslog points out, “[m]ore than half of the final poem is devoted to natural description and his inability to respond to it” (49). Therefore, the Coleridge-Wordsworth dialogue on the loss of the ability to respond sympathetically to nature ends in Coleridge's declaration of the fact that the loss he experiences is deeper and more profound than that experienced by

Wordsworth, but, as will be seen in the following analysis of the poem, that there is still some hope of a return to his previous state.

"Dejection: An Ode" seems at first to reveal a transformation in Coleridge's views about the individual-nature relationship. Coleridge claims in the poem that nature is dead and that only certain individuals have the power to give it life in their perception of it. However, the poem actually contains many contradictory statements about the individual-nature interaction, and a careful reading displays that, in essence, the poet's thoughts have not changed; rather, he feels that nature is dead due to his state of dejection and his inability to respond to her. The personal reasons for Coleridge's alienation from nature, that have been discussed in the Theoretical Background, are at their most evident in this poem and this greatly influences the way he analyses his relationship with nature in the poem. During these years of problematic relations with Wordsworth, Modiano explains, "Coleridge felt the need to dissociate himself from Wordsworth's values. As a way of asserting his independence from Wordsworth, [he] is likely to make radical claims that are not fully representative of his view of nature at a given time" (45).

The poem begins with an epigraph taken from the “Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence”:

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

Besides expressing a superstitious belief about the weather, these lines refer to two important images Coleridge frequently uses in his poems, the moon and the wind (indirectly through the mention of the storm). As has been observed earlier, both of these images are closely connected with the individual-nature relationship in Coleridge's poems.

The poem itself begins with the persona's remark on the epigraph, and then moves on to a description of the state of the wind at that moment, hinting in the meantime at the mood in which he observes it:

> Well! If the bard was weather-wise, who made
> The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
> This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
> Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
> Than those which mold yon cloud in lazy flakes,
> Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
> Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute,
> Which better far were mute. (1-8)

As Leo Salinger points out:

> In the first stanza of Dejection Coleridge is in the situation he often describes, looking at the sky and trying to find ‘a symbolical language’ there for something in himself. But his usual sources of inspiration seem to fail him, and he is only dispirited by the noise of the wind-harp outside his room. (285)

The breeze and the harp of "The Eolian Harp" have changed drastically. The "gentle gales" have become a "dull sobbing draft" and the lute, which used to give forth such "sweet upbraiding" and "long, sequacious notes" is now "far better mute". This evidently reveals a change in the perceiver, who imposes his own feelings onto the nature he observes. The rest of the stanza describes a moon similar to the one described in the epigraph and expresses the poet's hope that the storm will indeed break out:

> For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
> And overspread with phantom light,
> (With swimming phantom light o'erspread
> But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
> I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
> The coming-on of rain and squally blast.
> And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
> And the slant night shower driving loud and fast!

Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!
(9-20)

The bad omen of the “Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence” ironically becomes a good omen for Coleridge, because a storm with rain and wind implies inspiration for him, and he hopes that the influence will help him win back his poetic inspiration. In this first stanza, we see the persona still believing in the influence of nature on the individual.

As has been mentioned in relation to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, in Coleridge's poems, the moon frequently symbolises the creative imagination, which is the faculty that enables the interaction of the individual with nature. In this case, the new moon, winter-bright, "*but* rimmed and circled" could be claimed to represent the present state of the persona's imagination; it is thin and limited. It is similar to the "horned" moon in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, underneath which the crew die one by one. On the other hand, the old moon was a full, round moon, and is seen in the lap of the new one. Yet, it is dim. It therefore symbolises Coleridge's previous state; he used to have great creative powers, but they are dim now. Yet, they are still visible within his new self (in the lap of the new moon), thus there is still hope of reviving them. This accords with the fact that the image of the new moon with the old moon in her lap awakens the hope for "rain and squally blast", symbolising inspiration.

The second stanza of the poem, “which develops the disparity between internal and external nature” (Hill 201), describes the poet's mood in detail. It is a "wan and heartless mood",

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

Due to this mood, or perhaps as the cause of it, the persona is unable to interact with nature. He describes in detail the beautiful scenery in front of him, yet he is only able to "see, not feel, how beautiful they are". He is unable to rise above the first stage of the relationship; he can only perceive nature with his senses. “The language of cool particularity which Coleridge had developed in the earlier poems is now used, with brutal precision, to evoke a mood of Life-in-Death frigidity” (Watson 79):

> All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
> Have I been gazing on the western sky,
> And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
> And still I gaze – and with how blank an eye!
> And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
> That give away their motion to the stars;
> Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
> Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
> Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
> In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
> I see them all so excellently fair,
> I see, not feel, how beautiful they are! (27-38)

The moon described in these lines reminds one of the moon under which the Mariner blesses the water-snakes:

> The moving Moon went up the sky,
> And nowhere did abide:
> Softly she was going up,
> And a star or two beside— (263-266)

Ironically, the moon that had helped the Mariner form an interaction with nature was mobile, the one Coleridge now perceives is fixed; the former was accompanied by stars, the latter is lonely in a "cloudless, starless lake of blue". It almost seems to be a parody of the moon in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Indeed, the moon in "Dejection: An Ode" is more similar to the Mariner himself who "[i]n his loneliness and fixedness" is stuck in the middle of an ocean of blue. This is suggestive of the fact that the moon is not going to be able to help the persona from escaping his dejection as it had helped the Mariner. In other words, the persona of "Dejection" is

even further removed from nature than the Mariner was, and nature itself seems to be as lonely and dejected as the persona, an impression that has already been created by the description of the breeze as a "dull sobbing draft" (6).

The third stanza begins with the direct statement "My genial spirits fail" (39) and just as the reader is led to believe that this is the cause of the persona's inability to interact with nature, the stanza continues:

> And what can these avail
> To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
> It were a vain endeavour,
> Though I should gaze forever
> On that green light that lingers in the west: (40-44)

These lines imply that the actual cause of Coleridge's problems, including the loss of his imagination, is the inability to respond to nature, for they suggest that even if his genial spirits were restored, "it were a vain endeavour" to try to interact with nature. Thus, one comes to the conclusion that, since the genial spirits from within cannot bring about the interaction, something from without, from nature herself must bring it about. However, the poet continues:

> I may not hope from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

Therefore, when read carefully, this stanza implies that the poet can achieve unity with nature neither through his own creative powers, nor through nature's power of influence. This raises the question of how he was previously able to form an interaction with nature if it could neither be formed from internal influence nor from external influence. Moreover, in a notebook entry written only a few years after the composition of "Dejection: An Ode", during a similar situation of inability to respond to nature, Coleridge makes the exact opposite claim:

> O! Heaven! one thousandfold combinations of Images that pass hourly in this divine Vale, while I am dozing & muddling away my Thoughts & Eyes – O let me rouse myself – If I even begin mechanically, & only by aid of memory look round and call each thing by a name – describe it, as a trial of skill in words – it may bring back fragments of former Feeling – *For we can live only by feeding abroad*. (qtd. in Modiano 30) (my italics)

Thus, these statements should be interpreted as revealing the dejected and hopeless state Coleridge is in rather than his changing views on the individual-nature relationship. The lines express not what he *thinks* about his relationship with nature, but how he *feels* about it at the moment.

The next stanza elaborates on the statement made in the last two lines of the previous one. The theory put forth is one that stresses the individual's activeness and nature's passiveness. “Only the mind’s dynamic encounter with experience creates meaning” (Mahoney 124). Only the individual’s mind can give life to nature. What Coleridge describes in this stanza seems to be a modified version of the third stage of the individual-nature interaction. The only difference is that he now believes nature to be dead, whereas he previously believed both parties to be alive during all stages of the interaction, one being dominant over the other according to the stage. As has been mentioned above, however, this belief is due to the fact that the persona himself cannot rise above the first stage of the interaction, and thus cannot feel the life in nature. Thus, he believes that nature does not have the power to influence him while in fact he in unable to respond to her influence.

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

Enveloping the Earth – (47-54)

There are two very revealing lines in this stanza. Firstly, in line 49: "Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud", "wedding garment" implies union and "shroud" signifies death. Had he been able to rise above the first stage of the relationship, the persona would have been able to unite with nature, to dress her in a wedding garment. Being stuck in the first stage (like the Mariner stuck in the middle of the ocean), he covers nature with a shroud, believing her to be dead. Secondly, line 51, "[t]han that inanimate cold world allowed" contains a paradox that displays Coleridge's confused views about nature at the time, for if nature is a cold, inanimate world without life, how can it "allow" anyone anything? Moreover, ironically, during the same year that he wrote "Dejection: An Ode", Coleridge criticised the Greek poets and praised the Hebrew poets stating that "for the Greeks, all natural Objects were dead" whereas "in the Hebrew Poets, each Thing has a Life of its own, & yet they are all one Life" (qtd. in Salingar 279).

This again shows that the persona *knows* nature to be alive, but *feels* her to be dead due to his inability to rise above the first stage. However, there is a vicious cycle involved, because this belief then further disables him from rising above the first stage, since he now believes that from his "soul must issue forth/A light, a glory" in order to unite with nature, when in fact he first has to open himself up to nature, half actively half passively surrendering to her influence. The persona is trying unsuccessfully to rise from the first stage to the third stage, because he has forgotten about the intermediary second stage in which he must become one with nature. Instead of using the first stage of sense perception as a step towards the second stage, he sees it as an obstacle before the third stage.

The fifth stanza gives a description of the "strong music in the soul" (60) that the persona believes to enable interaction with nature. This power, which the persona calls "Joy", is generally interpreted as signifying

the imagination. If the persona's dejection is due to several factors, such as the loss of love in his relationship with his wife, the loss of his creative powers and the inability to interact with nature, then "Joy" can more generally be read as standing for everything that he has lost: happiness, imagination, love, and interaction with nature. On the other hand, as John T. Ogden suggests, “[t]he Lady stands as a foil to the poet: as he idealizes the joyful marriage of mind and nature that is denied to him, he seems to move into a deeper grief” (84).

In the poet's description of the nature of Joy, it is possible to see a parallelism with the second stage of the individual-nature relationship. The description is one of reciprocality and simultaneous activity and passivity:

> This beautiful and beauty-making power.
> ...
> Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
> Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
> Which wedding Nature to us... (63, 66-68)

Thus, Joy is the power that the individual possesses, or to be more accurate, the condition the individual finds himself in, during the second stage of his interaction with nature. In this stage the individual and nature are wed, because they are in perfect unity.

If the second stage of the interaction is the condition brought about by Joy, the third stage is the result of this condition:

> Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
> A new Earth and new Heaven, (68-69)

The union achieved with nature in the second stage gives the individual the power to rise above that union into the third stage during which he creates a "new Earth and new Heaven". Thus, these lines describing Joy actually show Coleridge's original, unchanged views concerning the individual-nature relationship.

In the next stanza, the poet turns from analysing his problems to actually facing them. He compares his past condition of joy with his present one of dejection.

> There was a time when, though my path was rough,
> This joy within me dallied with distress
> And all misfortunes were but the stuff
> Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
> For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
> And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
> But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
> Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
> But oh! each visitation
> Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
> My shaping spirit of Imagination. (76-86)

Previously, because he was in harmony with nature, “fruits and foliage” not his own seemed his; for they belonged to nature, and he was one with nature, so they also belonged to him. Since he has parted with nature, however, such natural objects do not belong to him anymore. In line 85, the persona gives further evidence of the fact that he indeed believes nature to have an active role in human life; his imagination is a power that nature *gave* him at his birth. It is through this gift of nature that the individual is then able to interact with and become one with her. In other words, the “light and glory” that must issue forth from the soul in order to reach nature, has in fact been initially bestowed by her.

In the rest of the stanza, the persona earnestly reveals the reason for his dejection, his inability to respond to nature, and the loss of his imagination:

> For not to think of what I needs must feel,
> But to be still and patient, all I can;
> And haply by abstruse research to steal
> From my own nature all the natural man –
> This was my soul resource, my only plan:
> Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
> And now is almost grown the habit of my soul. (87-93)

These lines remind one of Coleridge's opinion that "a Poet's Heart & Intellect should be *combined*, *intimately* combined, & unified with the great appearances in Nature" (qtd. in Salingar 279). The persona has wilfully (in order to suppress his love for Sara Hutchinson and his contempt for Sara Coleridge, perhaps) separated his head from his heart, and consequently both his head and his heart from nature. He has stolen "all the natural man" from his "own nature"; he has separated himself from nature in order to be able to keep his head and heart apart (for a unity with nature means a unity between them) and given himself to "abstruse research" instead[5]. Thus, he has forced himself to be trapped in the first stage of the individual-nature relationship.

As a result of finally being able to turn from abstruse research to his own inner-self, the persona is now able to turn to nature again. This shows that in order to be able to respond to nature, the individual must first respond to his own inner-self, and in order to be able to harmonise with nature, he must first harmonise his inner faculties of heart and head.

> Hence, viper thoughts[6], that coil around my mind,
> Reality's dark dream!
> I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
> Which long has raved unnoticed. (94-97)

The persona has not noticed the storm breaking out due to being focused completely on his meditations, but after facing his problems earnestly and with feeling, he is finally able to turn from his thoughts to nature. At this point, the persona finally ascends to the second stage of the interaction.

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[5] Coleridge began working on optical experiments in an "attempt to replicate Newton's research (Weissman 164). He also experimented with the effect of opium in the perception of light and colours, hence increasing his opium intake (165-166)

[6] There are many references throughout the poem to Milton's twin poems "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso", which, like "Dejection: An Ode", juxtapose the concepts of Mirth (Joy) and Melancholy (Dejection). Just as he turns the omen of the "Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence" upside down at the beginning of the poem, Coleridge turns Milton's "Il Penseroso" upside down here. After describing a life of mirth in L'Allegro", Milton begins "Il Penseroso" with the words "Hence, vain deluding Joys" (Milton 93, line 1). Coleridge does just the opposite and turns from dejection to joy. Milton compares joy to foolish "hovering dreams" (line 9) while Coleridge compares dejection to "Reality's dark dream".

Throughout this stanza, he becomes one with nature; the wind not only belongs to the external storm that he had anticipated, but also symbolises an inner inspirational storm that he had longed for.

> What a scream
> Of agony by torture lengthened out
> That lute sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
> Bare crag, or mountain-train, or blasted tree,
> Or pine-grove whither woodmen never clomb,
> Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
> Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
> Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
> Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
> Mak'st Devil's yule, with worse than wintry song,
> The blossoms, buds and timorous leaves among. (97-107)

"The howling wind sends the poet's soul abroad, as it has done in the past; it makes his 'dull pain' 'move and live,' as he longed for at the beginning of the poem" (Ogden 85). The wind that "rav'st without" is also the wind that raves within. "The division of sight and feeling in stanza 2 is overcome in the synesthesia where sound creates a vision that contains powerful feelings" (85). The feelings produced by the sounds made by the wind are also the feelings produced by the poem created by the poet during this inspirational storm. This becomes more evident in the final address to the wind as "Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold". "The histrionics of the ode's description of the wind – "Lutanist", "Actor", "Poet – is the sign of the poet's revived sensibility" as Hamilton points out (213). Thus, after rising to the second stage and becoming one with nature, the persona finally ascends to the third stage by expressing this unity and the release of his grief. In the second stage he is parallel to the wind-harp that responds to the storm-wind; in the third stage he is parallel to the wind that raves and brings forth music from the harp.

After such stormy release of his grief and pain, the persona, finally having been able to interact with nature, ends the stanza on a hopeful note:

> But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
> And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
> With groans, and tremulous shudderings – all is over—
> It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
> A tale of less affright,
> And tempered with delight,
> As Otway's self had framed the tender lay, --
> 'Tis of a child
> Upon a lonesome wild,
> Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:
> And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
> And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.
> (114-125)

According to Reeve Parker, the "sounds less deep and loud" are "correlative to a mind that, having gone through the process of deliberately exploring the melancholy grief with which the poem opens, is winning its way to a substantial calm" (qtd. in Barth 92). The description of the child lost "upon a lonesome wild" "not far from home" reminds one of Coleridge's own childhood adventure, when he ran away from home and spent a rainy night under a thornbush on a hill (xviii-xx). Like this little child, and the child of his own memory, the poet is lost, but not far from home. Similar to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, home represents the state of harmonious interaction with nature. M. H. Abrams sums up the stanza, and the poem in general, with the following words:

> The poetic meditation is set in April, which turns out, as in Eliot's *Waste Land*, to be the cruellest month because, in breeding life out of the dead land, it painfully revives emotional life in the observer, mixing memory and desire….In implicit parallel with the wind-harp, the poet also responds to the storm with mounting vitality…until, in the lull of the wind, the poem rounds on itself and ends where it began, with a calm both of nature and of mind. But the poet has moved from the calm of apathy to one of peace after passion. By the agency of the wind storm it describes, the poem turns out to contradict its own premises: the poet's spirit awakes to violent life even as he laments his

> inner death, achieves release in the despair at being cut off from all outlet, and demonstrates the power of imagination in the process of memorialising its failure. (qtd. in Hill 205)

After fully exploring his personal grief and dejection, an “exploration [that] is in effect and even perhaps in intention, a kind of therapy” (Barth 91), the persona is able to ascend it and to unite with nature. He is also able to ascend himself completely and finish the poem with a prayer for another individual. “Having achieved calm, the poet is then able to ‘send his soul abroad’ in the blessing that constitutes the final stanza” (Parker in Barth 92). In the last stanza, after having “neared home” himself, Coleridge prays for the “Lady” to always be in harmony with nature:

> 'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep
> Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
> Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
> And may this storm be but a mountain-birth[7],
> ...
> With light heart may she rise,
> Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
> Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
> To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
> Their life the eddying of her living soul!
> O simple spirit, guided from above,
> Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
> Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice. (126-9,132-9)

As Ogden remarks:

> In wishing for her the utter joy of imagination, he displays a generosity of spirit and conviviality that go far beyond his own dejection...Stanza 7 has served as a purgation, bringing the poet out of the self-pity and dejection of stanza 6 into the benediction and contentment of stanza 8 ... his

[7] In "L'Allegro", Milton mentions a "mountain nymph" called "sweet Liberty". Perhaps Coleridge is making another reference to Milton and expressing the wish that the storm may act like the "mountain nymph, sweet Liberty" (Milton 89, line 36) and liberate him from his dejection.

> thoughts, feelings, and actions are no longer limited to [his] dejection. (85)

Consequently, “Dejection: An Ode” is a poem in which Coleridge, in lamenting his inability to interact with nature and facing his problems earnestly, is able to form an interaction with her again. It is also a poem in which we observe his wavering views on the individual-nature relationship due to the dejection he feels. Yet, his original views can still be read amid the contradictory statements he puts forth, and the revival of his abilities and the calm prayer at the end further strengthen these original views. As has been mentioned in the Theoretical Background, when Coleridge tries to analyse his relationship with nature (which he generally does in his prose writings, but is also true of this poem), he becomes inconsistent in his view, but when he actually experiences the relationship, he is consistent; and we follow both the persona's and the poet's transition through the three stages of the individual-nature relationship in the experience related in "Dejection: An Ode".

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis has aimed to analyse the relationship of the individual and nature in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poems. An overview of his major views about the subject, as reflected in his prose writings has been given, with the result that these views are inconsistent, contradictory and volatile due to personal factors in the poet's life. An analysis of Coleridge's poems with regard to the individual-nature relationship, on the other hand, has revealed that, contrary to his prose writings, Coleridge's poems display a consistent view of the relationship. This view has then been exemplified in three of Coleridge's major poems, namely "The Eolian Harp", *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and "Dejection: An Ode".

According to the view that emerges in Coleridge's poems, the individual-nature relationship takes place in the form of three stages. In the first stage, the individual passively perceives nature with his senses. As nature acts on his sense perceptions, he takes in his natural surroundings in detail. In the second stage, the individual rises from mere sense perception of the outward forms in nature to a spiritual unity with her essence, or spirit. They become one whole composed of two polar parts continuously acting and reacting upon each other and asserting unifying power upon each other. After achieving this harmony with nature, the individual must rise above her. In the third stage, the individual asserts the unifying power of his imagination over nature and creates her anew. The outcome of the third stage is generally poetry. In order to form a beneficial relationship with nature, the individual must go through these stages one by one and experience each of them in turn.

Each of the poems analysed handles the individual-nature relationship differently, but all with the same result. In "The Eolian Harp", the persona explicitly meditates on the relationship while experiencing it

successfully. We not only follow his experience of the three stages one by one through the poem, but also read his meditations on each one of the stages (although Coleridge himself does not consciously separate his experience into stages). At the end of the poem, we also come across one of the personal reasons for Coleridge's problematic relationship with nature, as reflected in his analytical writings on her; in other words, his orthodox Christian faith, which is personified in the poem by the stern-eyed Sara.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner deals with the individual-nature relationship more implicitly and symbolically. A symbolical reading of the poem reads it as the journey of an individual's relationship with nature; a journey which the individual begins in ignorance of the one life of nature, and ends with the moral "He prayeth best, who loveth best/All things both great and small" (lines 614-5). The individual, represented by the Mariner, at first perceives nature only with his senses, and not very appreciatively. He goes so far as to kill an innocent Albatross guiding the ship. This causes a complete separation between him and nature, and the poem displays the chaos and agony of the world for an individual who is not in harmony with nature. In the midst of this chaos, the Mariner learns to sympathise with nature, as a result of which he sees the order and beauty in her and blesses her. Hence his ascent to the second stage of the relationship. After returning home from his voyage, the Mariner travels and preaches his story to other individuals, and his creation of the story takes him to the third stage of the relationship.

"Dejection: An Ode" is very complex in its handling of the individual-nature relationship. This complexity arises from the fact that, in the poem, we see the persona both analysing and experiencing the relationship. Unlike "The Eolian Harp", however, the analysis and the experience contradict one another. In fact, Coleridge's analysis of the relationship in this poem is similar to his analyses in his prose writings, and just as his poems refute the views he puts forth in his prose, in the poem his experience refutes the analysis he makes. The individual begins the poem

in a state of dejection due to his inability to harmonise with nature; he can only perceive nature with his senses. In other words, the individual is stuck in the first stage of the relationship and cannot go forward. A close reading of the poem reveals that this inability is due to the fact that the individual is in fact endeavouring to rise from the first stage of sense perception to the third stage of re-creation without first ascending to the second stage of spiritual unity. He finally achieves the second stage, however, when he stops analysing his relationship with nature and actually surrenders himself to her influence. When he achieves the second stage of the relationship, the individual is also able to ascend to the third stage, and the poem ends in hope of a renewed relationship between the individual and nature.

In conclusion, the essence of Coleridge's views of the individual-nature relationship can be found in his poems in which he conveys experiences of the relationship rather than in his prose writings in which he analytically and philosophically tries to solve it. Coleridge's poems reveal a consistent view of the individual-nature relationship that sees the relationship as a beneficial one which both the individual and nature have important roles in maintaining.

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