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1796-1817*

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‘To Keep Alive the Heart in the Head’:
Versions of Transcendence in Samuel Taylor
Coleridge’s Poetry
1796-1817

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PhD in English Literature
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Abstract

My thesis explores the concept and manifestations of Transcendence in selected poems and prose written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge between 1796 and 1817. Amid the dissenting atmosphere in Britain, in the wake of the French Revolution, religious Truth is rigorously contested by Romantic writers and thinkers. For Kant, Transcendence is displaced by Transcendentalism in order to separate speculative reasoning from rational metaphysics. Aspiring to defend religious Truth, Coleridge feels the need to keep the transcendent faith in a living God alive in ways that find congruence with transcendental philosophy. Accordingly, Coleridge explores the meaning of Truth in his writings and seeks to salvage Religion from being sheer dogmatism or superstition. Tracing different versions of Transcendence across the development of the term's transformation in Coleridge's thoughts and poetry is central to my reassessment of the religious and spiritual aspects of the Coleridgean Imagination.

My Introduction explores the dual meanings of 'Versions of Transcendence' in terms of the critical approach adopted in this thesis and its content. Chapter one focuses on 'Religious Musings', 'The Eolian Harp' and 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' to demonstrate Coleridge's Theism and his concept of Transcendence in the late 1790s. Chapter two and three explore the ways in which Original Sin can be viewed as the impediment of Transcendence in 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Kubla Khan' during the period 1798-1804. Chapter four and five argues for the compatibility between Transcendence and Transcendentalism in 'A Letter to——', 'Dejection: An Ode' and 'To W. Wordsworth' during the 1800s. Chapter six explores Coleridge's struggles to reconcile the Fall with God's benevolence in *Christabel* (1816). Chapter seven offers a coda to the thesis and suggests through a discussion of *Biographia Literaria* (1817) that, for Coleridge, the highest (sublime) worth of the human mind is to know the invisible God through an intuitive knowledge accessible through the Imagination.

Statement of Copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

Declaration

No material in this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other University. The work is solely that of the author, Shuet Yin Sharon Tai, under the supervision of Professor Michael O'Neill and Professor Mark Sandy. An excerpt from chapter one, in an earlier form, has been published as "[T]he fear of snapping the flower": Poetic Obscurity in the Sublime System of Samuel Taylor Coleridge', *The Coleridge Bulletin*, 49 (NS), 2017, pp. 103-112.

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Abbreviations

- BL* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 7: Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, 2 vols, ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (London: Routledge & Paul, 1983).
- CKK* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Christabel 1816*, Revolution and Romanticism, 1789-1834, A series of facsimile reprints chosen and introduced by Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1991).
- CL* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, vol. I-VI (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956-1971).
- CN* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. I-III, each volume with two parts, texts & notes, ed. by Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge, 1957-1973).
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. IV, with two parts, texts & notes, ed. by Kathleen Coburn and Merton Christensen (London: Routledge, 1990).
- KJV* Herbert Marks (ed.), *The English Bible: Kings James Version*, A Norton Critical Edition, I: The Old Testament (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2012).
- Gerald Hammond & Austin Busch (ed.), *The English Bible: Kings James Version*, A Norton Critical Edition, II: The New Testament and the Apocrypha (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2012).
- LB 1798* William Wordsworth & Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads 1798*, Revolution and Romanticism, 1789-1834, A series of facsimile reprints chosen and introduced by Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1990).
- LB 1800* William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads with Other Poems, 1800*, Revolution and Romanticism, 1789-1834, A series of facsimile reprints chosen and introduced by Jonathan Wordsworth (Poole: Woodstock Books, 1997).
- LPR* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 1: Lectures, 1795, on Politics and Religion*, ed. by L. Patton and P. Manning (London: Routledge & Paul, 1970).
- Poems* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Lamb, Charles Lloyd, *Poems 1797*, Revolution and Romanticism, 1789-1834, A series of facsimile reprints chosen and introduced by Jonathan Wordsworth (Poole: Woodstock Books, 1997).
- PVS* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poems on Various Subjects 1796*, Revolution and Romanticism, 1789-1834, A series of facsimile reprints chosen and introduced by Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1990).
- PW* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 16: Poetical Works*, 6 vols, ed. by J. C. C. Mays (London: Routledge & Paul, 2001).

- SM* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Statesman's Manual', in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 6: Lay Sermons*, ed. by R. J. White (London: Routledge & Paul, 1972), pp. 1-114.
- TF* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 4: The Friend*, 2 vols, ed. by Barbara E. Rooke (London: Routledge & Paul, 1969).
- TT* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 14: Table Talk*, 2 vols, ed. by Carl Woodring (London: Routledge & Paul, 1990).

Note on Citations

Citations have been made according to the MHRA Style Guide (3rd edition), Modern Humanities Research Association, 2013. Though suggested by the MHRA Style Guide, parentheses have not been used for the year of publication and page numbers of journal articles. Instead, a comma is used to separate volume and issue numbers from the year of publication. Specific page number(s) of an article in a book or in a journal are indicated by 'at p.' or 'at pp.'. In every chapter of my thesis, repeated citations are abbreviated to the last name(s) of the author(s), followed by the page numbers; where confusion may arise due to the occurrence of multiple works by the same author or same last name of different authors, the author's last name will be followed by part of, or the whole of, the title in addition. After the first full citation of a poem in the footnote, all subsequent citations of that poem will be indicated by in-text line numbers. For all notebook entries, item numbers are given in replacement of page numbers. A quotation of a footnote or endnote is indicated by a letter 'n' following the item number or page number, e.g. 'p. 3n'. All quotations from the Bible are indicated by in-text citations.

Introduction

31 March 1817. Highgate.—Monday Morning, six o'clock. *Hen Pen* resenting the being washed, in the nursery, opposite the drawing Room in which I sit.

I will not say, that in our present religious controversies we are disputing about *trifles*: for nothing can be a trifle which tends to keep up even the memory, that there is or maybe, or has been supposed to be, such a power as Religion. But I say, that we dispute about the neutral or interjacent ground, not about the territory itself – and that in this sense 9990 in every 10,000 are *Aθεοι*—if there be a personal God, with will, foresight, and all other attributes of personal Intelligence that distinguish the living God (the idea of) from the Spinozistic Ground of the Universe, or infinite Modifiable. If so, every pang, we feel, every error, we commit, much more every sin, proves an alienation from that God—We must be away from him / for an omnipotent Father would never suffer an *innocent* Son to be tormented in his presence, by mere force of *general Laws*— he must needs give then his own happiness.—Our misery may be a merciful mode of recalling us from our Self-chosen Exile, but only in exile can the Prodigal Son be groaning over the refuse of the Hog-trough—not in his Father's house. The local notions of Heaven (ex. gr. We shall go to a better place &c) have been very injurious. Is God then confined to a Place? Or is not rather Place the phantom, which our limited faculties create, as the *picture*, the *word*, of our own *State* of Being. Is it not the dream of one who in full sun shine has bricked himself up, or excluded the Light by voluntary Blindness?—What can shew more clearly the hollowness of Unitarianism, than that boastfully distinguishing itself as a belief *in one God*, so far from drawing the necessary conclusions from *a* one living God it, more than any other theory in religion, has lost the idea in the vague notion of *a*—Solution of the material World / an arbitrary Attribution of intelligence to Gravity, Attraction, Repulsion, &c. —¹

In this notebook entry dated 1817, Coleridge speaks of 'a power as Religion' that is worthy of contemplation and debate. The major controversy is not whether God exists or not, but the ways in which He does. This distinction suggests that Coleridge explores religion in light of a

¹ *CN*, III, 4341; adopted edits from Seamus Perry (ed.), *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 546.

new Truth which does not necessarily align itself with the orthodox Anglican tradition. The notion of ‘a power as Religion’ did not just emerge in the year 1817, but rather took nascent shape in about 1796 and was more fully developed when Coleridge published *Biographia Literaria* in 1817. Coleridge wants the question of religion to be able to withstand philosophical scrutiny without losing God (the idea of divinity and his faith in Him as the ‘living God’) as the ‘Solution of the material World’. A desire towards, as well as the belief in, a ‘living God’, unbounded by material reality is, in short, Coleridge’s sense of religious Transcendence.

The rationale behind Coleridge’s reassessment of ‘a power as Religion’ is closely related to the Romanticists’ reaction towards the intellectual legacy of their Enlightenment precursors. M. H. Abrams argues in *Natural Supernaturalism* that

A conspicuous Romantic tendency, after the rationalism and decorum of the Enlightenment, was a reversion to the stark drama and suprarational mysteries of the Christian story and doctrines and to the violent conflicts and abrupt reversals of the Christian inner life, turning on the extremes of destruction and creation, hell and heaven, exile and reunion, death and rebirth, dejection and joy, paradise lost and paradise regained. [...] But since they lived, inescapably, after the Enlightenment, Romantic writers revived these ancient matters with a difference: they undertook to save the overview of human history and destiny, the experiential paradigms, and the cardinal values of their religious heritage, by reconstituting them in a way that would make them intellectually acceptable, as well as emotionally pertinent, for the time being.²

Abrams is brilliant at articulating the Romantic impulse to reconstitute religious ideas, under the influence of ‘rationalism’, into new shapes of expressions. This reconstitution allows certain ‘cardinal values of their religious heritage’ to be sustained, but in ‘a secularized form of devotional experience’.³ Abrams specifies that, being part of such a Romantic movement, ‘Coleridge, who from the time of his maturity was a professing Christian, carried on a lifetime’s struggle to save what seemed to him the irreducible minimum of the Christian creed

² M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), p. 66.

³ Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, pp. 65-66.

within an essentially secular metaphysical system'.⁴ This system is recognised by many critics to be Coleridge's use of Transcendentalism in *Biographia Literaria*. In *Romanticism: Keywords*, Frederick Burwick includes the term 'Transcendentalism',⁵ mainly because of its relevance to Coleridge, and traces its origin back to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781):

Immanuel Kant explained the difference between "pure reason" and empirical knowledge. He affirmed that knowledge had its origin in experience, that is, in the encounter of the senses (sight, sound, etc.) with objects. This conjunction, however, did not mean that knowing derived exclusively from experience. Knowledge was constituted by the ability of mind to utilize and organize the data of the senses. Kant's philosophical task was to sort those constituents that already exist in the mind (*a priori*) from those that are acquired through the senses (*a posteriori*). The former are transcendental, the latter phenomenological. Kant's philosophy of *a priori* knowledge is transcendentalism.⁶

In the post-Enlightenment context, Transcendentalism is the preferred term over Transcendence in Kant's philosophy, because Transcendence is deemed to be too speculative. Transcendentalism very often displaces Transcendence in the Romantic period with the intention to rationalise the idea of God and to separate it from the old-school speculative philosophy. While I agree with Abrams about the Romantic urgency to reconstitute religious ideas by means of rationalist philosophy or a secularised frame of reference,⁷ Abrams risks reducing Coleridge's persistence in Transcendence. I argue that Coleridge has done much more than contriving an 'irreducible minimum of the Christian creed' with Transcendentalism. My thesis illuminates Coleridge's religious aspiration by considering how he reconstitutes Transcendence in his poetic and prose writings, without limiting Transcendence to 'an essentially secular metaphysical system'.

Coleridge never sees Transcendentalism as an enemy of Transcendence. Instead Transcendentalism, for Coleridge, is regarded as a gleam of logical light shed upon our eyes to behold the obscure body of Transcendence. Making a major contribution to how and why Transcendentalism emerged as a Romantic keyword, Coleridge went against public opinion

⁴ Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 67.

⁵ Frederick Burwick, *Romanticism: Keywords* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), pp. 321-25.

⁶ Burwick, *Romanticism: Keywords*, p. 321.

⁷ Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 65.

in England and ‘endeavored to dismiss the presumption of Kant’s atheism’.⁸ As Burwick points out with reference to *Biographia*, ‘Coleridge was convinced that Kant could not address questions of deity without exposing himself “to personal danger”’.⁹ This perspective of Coleridge towards Kant’s Transcendentalism can be illuminated further in three distinct ways, with reference to the 1817 notebook entry (*CN*, III, 3267). First, Kant’s Transcendentalism is not among the ‘9990 in every 10,000’ of ‘*Atheoi*’, or at least Coleridge does not think that Kant’s Transcendentalism is intending to take the path of atheism. Secondly, for fear of political persecution, Kant’s Transcendentalism ‘does not address in full the ‘questions of deity’ or those ‘religious controversies’ which Coleridge is interested in. Coleridge’s Transcendence, the notion of the ‘living God’, is therefore a postulate that goes beyond what Kant’s Transcendentalism entails. Thirdly, public opinion that presumed ‘Kant’s atheism’, due to his heterodox tendency, sets religious Transcendence at odds with Kant’s Transcendentalism.

Alternatively, Coleridge is both suggesting and defending the compatibility of these two terms, as he strives to connect Transcendentalism with religion. Current studies of Coleridge are divided into three main camps: those that see him as a poet, or those that call him a philosopher, or the few that regard him as a theologian. While none of these divisions are especially problematic in their own right, such a mapping suggests critical gaps between each of these foci and points up how rarely the co-existence of Transcendence and Transcendentalism occurs in a single study of Coleridge. In *Romanticism and Transcendence: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Religious Imagination*, J. Robert Barth argues that Coleridge’s ‘imagination is founded upon an act of faith—faith in the ability of the human mind to attain something approximating truth, and ultimately faith in a divine empowering source’.¹⁰ This magisterial work of Barth sets the foundation for studies that seek to illuminate the idea of Coleridge’s God in his poems. On the whole, Barth’s use of the term Transcendence denotes moments of encounter with God through spiritual experiences, such as prayers. Barth’s study is an example of criticism that falls into the religious division and employs Transcendence generically as a religious unification with God. If we move from Barth’s study to Thomas McFarland’s *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, we have a different presentation of Coleridge’s thinking about religion. McFarland sees Coleridge’s religious matters from a metaphysical perspective and offers rich accounts of Coleridge’s

⁸ Burwick, *Romanticism: Keywords*, p. 323.

⁹ Burwick, *Romanticism: Keywords*, p. 323.

¹⁰ J. Robert Barth, *Romanticism and Transcendence: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Religious Imagination* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), p. 1.

interactions with a range of philosophical ideas from Baruch Spinoza, George Berkeley, and Immanuel Kant etc.¹¹ McFarland's study only touches upon ideas of philosophy of religion (and to which Transcendentalism belongs) in general terms and so elides the kind of transcendent spirituality central to Barth's account of Coleridge. There is an emergent critical gap between the differing images of Coleridge presented in these studies, which signals the necessity of reading Coleridge as an advocate of both the transcendental and transcendent. McFarland, however, is aware of how his focus on Coleridge and philosophy finds touchstones with the other types of Coleridge criticism: 'There is in reality no tripartite division of rhapsodic poet, maundering metaphysician, and pious theologian: the same Coleridge philosophizes poetizes and theologizes and furthermore, the different fields of his interests are mutually interdependent'.¹² Alert to the interstices of these three distinct, but inter-related, approaches to Coleridge, my thesis occupies the intersection of all three divisions (that is to see Coleridge as Coleridge) by exploring the various ways that his poetry connects religion with reason, theology with philosophy, Transcendence with Transcendentalism, and 'the *heart* in the *head*'.¹³

Coleridge does not directly use the term Transcendence much in his writings, perhaps, in part, because he is anxious about the already notorious reputation of the term. Avoiding direct usage of the term is a way to salvage the concept from secularization and reshape the concept for wider acceptance. Though Coleridge may have shied away from the term itself, his poetry and prose writings reflect versions of Transcendence that bridge between Transcendentalism and religion. The use of Transcendence in my thesis accentuates Coleridge's creative expressions that spill over from Transcendentalism into his discourse on religion. Transcendence is intrinsic to religion, thus the two terms are by and large interchangeable in a majority of critical studies. But in my thesis, where Transcendence is used to describe Coleridge's writings, a specific religious dimension is added. By so defining Transcendence, my thesis explores its presence in Coleridge's poetry, not simply confined to religious moments or metaphysical notions, but how it is conveyed through the words of the poems and is involved with the rhetorical making of Coleridge's poetry. In this sense, Transcendence is transformed from a purely religious concept into one which is revealing about the capacity of the human mind. I argue that Coleridge differs from generic

¹¹ Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

¹² McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

¹³ *BL*, I, p. 152.

understandings of Transcendence and reinvigorates the term, in a post-Enlightenment context, under the auspices of the Imagination.

I

This transformation of Transcendence into an aspect of the Imagination is Coleridge's first reaction to the political turmoil of England in the early 1790s. Young Coleridge was a supporter of Pantisocracy and democratic radicalism, which emerged in England at that time.¹⁴ Schiller's *Die Räuber* (1781) appealed to Coleridge as a work that advocated egalitarian and libertarian ideals against 'the indictment of tyranny'.¹⁵ Coleridge's preference for German literature, prior to his interest in Kant's philosophy, indicates his endorsement of the revolutionary ideals which, however, at the time were unpalatable to the British public. In the following year, Coleridge met Wordsworth in Bristol, and they became good friends in both the private and public sphere.¹⁶ From addressing each other as a dear friend to collaborating in the composition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth and Coleridge became important intellectual companions to one another. Some of their early poems written during the 1790s were conceived as disseminating liberal ideas and were denounced by patriotic critics as a Jacobin threat in *The Anti-Jacobin Review*.¹⁷ Undoubtedly, Coleridge was aware of this jingoistic element in his country which was still at war with revolutionary France. As Ashton argues, this awareness came into existence '[in] 1796, [when] Coleridge, horrified by news of the Terror in France, had given up his Jacobinism'.¹⁸ Ashton's word choice of 'given up' is perhaps too definite, as Coleridge had not eradicated all his revolutionary sentiment and notions from his writing but, in fact, had in some re-publications of his earlier poems, 'subdued' such passion.¹⁹

In late 1790s England, the reception of religion, especially forms of Christianity, is equally unsettled among poets, philosophers, and theologians. Coleridge is one of those who joined in the post-revolution fervour of redefining religion as a means to political progress.

¹⁴ Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 29.

¹⁵ Ashton, *The German Idea*, p. 29.

¹⁶ John Beer, 'Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772-1834)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 1-43 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5888>> [accessed 29 March 2019].

¹⁷ Ashton, *The German Idea*, p. 30.

¹⁸ Ashton, *The German Idea*, p. 6.

¹⁹ Monika Class, *Coleridge and Kantian Ideas in England, 1796-1817: Coleridge's Response to German Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 120.

The politics of religion and its metaphysics is inextricable. As Daniel White comments, ‘dissent[ing] young Anglicans such as Coleridge and Southey seem to have been drawn to Unitarianism for its liberal appeals to free thought and for its anti-authoritarian associations with political and religious liberty’.²⁰ Robert Ryan suggests in *The Romantic Reformation* that ‘British history demonstrated that religion was not the antagonist of social change but rather its most potent stimulus, and perhaps because the Protestant tradition considered not religion *per se* but only corrupt, erroneous religion to be the enemy of progress, the Romantic poets accepted the role of religion as a dynamic ideology behind social and political action’.²¹ Ryan’s study outlines the political context of the Romantic period, during which Coleridge affiliates with dissenting thinkers more than ‘the Protestant tradition’. Traditional ways of conceptualising Transcendence were transformed, as the term was increasingly disassociated from the established Church, but not from religion or Truth itself.

This separation of an authoritative religious tradition from Truth is a movement of religious dissent in which many Romantics participated. This movement results in what I would call the semantic split within the traditional terminology of religion. Martin Priestman carefully discusses, in *Romantic Atheism*, the complications involved with the term atheism, as its meaning becomes elusive amid the confrontation between religious dissent and state religion in the Romantic period. Priestman argues that poets at the time ‘were acutely aware of positive, unapologetic atheism as a phenomenon of the time, and that most had unorthodox moments or periods which they knew could easily be accused of atheism, and that some did indeed participate in aspects of atheist discourse’.²² This insight is particularly useful for comprehending the way in which Coleridge positions himself in terms of his religious view. Coleridge is not a devotee of orthodoxy, which makes his theological view heterodox, thus verging on the brink of being atheistic (relative to orthodoxy) in Romantic England. Coleridge presents himself as the true defender of Truth and Christianity in contrast to the blindly devoted Christian who is, in Coleridge’s eyes, the follower of superstition. Some philosophers were deemed as atheists by Coleridge due to their unsound metaphysical reasoning. Truth in the Romantic period becomes even more subjective. Romantic rhetoric, especially Coleridge’s own, frequently stands against the political reinforcement of one universal and legitimate view of religion as a means to free Truth from authoritarian control.

²⁰ Daniel White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 128.

²¹ Robert Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1798-1824* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 4.

²² Martin Priestman, *Romantic Atheism: Poetry and freethought, 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 7.

The unique political atmosphere during the Romantic period must be taken into account if we are to identify what religious Truth means. As we focus on Coleridge's Transcendence, the meaning of this term appears to be ostensibly mobile during the poet's lifetime. Critics have employed at different stages of Coleridge's career various terms of metaphysical nomenclature, for example, Monism, Pantheism, Unitarianism, and Trinitarianism, to characterise Truth. Drawing a pattern out of these different terms, Ronald Wendling describes, in *Coleridge's Progress to Christianity*, a shift in Coleridge's religious positions from the early 1790s till his death, which is, effectively, a progression to Trinitarianism.²³ This means that the poet shifted from radical dissent towards a more orthodox end. This impression of Coleridge's religious positioning is pertinent to the topic of the poet's concept of Transcendence. Coleridge's Transcendence is affected by his shift of religious positions, and these shifts manifest a constant disparity between what he thinks about a religious position and how he feels about it.

Observing the occurrence of Transcendence in Coleridge's poetry from 1796 to 1817, this disparity often points up two opposing ends. The first is Coleridge's emphasis on the idea of a personal God who is living. The second is the anxiety of not achieving Transcendence due to Original Sin. The first aspires to construct a transcendent future, whilst the second unavoidably derails the first. Examining a selection of poems helps to portray the ways in which these two aspects shape the poetic manifestations of Coleridge's Transcendence. Consequently, my thesis argues that Coleridge's early exploration of Transcendence in his poetry from 1796 culminates in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), which offers a rebirth of the term Transcendence through Coleridge's conceptualisation of the Imagination.

II

Aside from being a political progressivist, who channels his libertarian ideals into transforming the outlook of religious Truth in the late 1790s, Coleridge was also susceptible to German influences, which shaped his conception of Transcendence. In 1796, Coleridge disclosed to Thomas Poole that he had an 'impracticable'²⁴ plan that can, in fact, be seen as a comical miniature of Coleridge's entire life aspiration. He told Poole in a letter dated 5 May 1796 that he would like to go to Germany:

²³ Ronald C. Wendling, *Coleridge's Progress to Christianity: Experience and Authority in Religious Faith* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995).

²⁴ *CL*, I, p. 209.

Plan 1st,—I am studying German, & in about six weeks shall be able to read that language with tolerable fluency. Now I have some thoughts of making a proposal to Robinson, the great London Bookseller, of translating all the works [of] Schiller, which would make a portly Quarto, on the conditions that he should pay my Journey & wife's to & from Jena, a cheap German University where Schiller resides—& allow me two guineas each Quarto Sheet—which would maintain me—. If I could realize this scheme, I should there study Chemistry & Anatomy, [and] bring over with me all the works of Semler & Michaelis, the German Theologians & of Kant, the great german Metaphysician.²⁵

As early as 1796, Coleridge showed enthusiasm for Kant's philosophy and German Theology. Before his trip to Germany in 1798-99, Coleridge published *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796) and, a second edition, under the revised title of *Poems* (1797). Coleridge and Wordsworth collaborated in composing the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* which was published in 1798. By the time this edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was published, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Dorothy Wordsworth had arrived at Germany.²⁶ The Wordsworths stayed at Goslar to live a more economical life. Instead of going to Jena as had been intended in 1796, Coleridge went to Ratzeburg and Göttingen.²⁷

In the same letter to Poole (5 May 1796), Coleridge goes on to elaborate the second half of his plan on his return to England:

On my return I would commence a school for eight young men, proposing to *perfect* them in the following studies in order as follows——

1. Man as an Animal: including the complete knowledge of Anatomy, Chemistry, Mechanics & Optics.—
2. Man as an *Intellectual* Being: including the ancient metaphysics, the system of Locke and Hartley,—of the Scotch philosophers—& the new Kantian S[ystem—]
3. Man as a Religious Being: including an historic summary of all Religions & the arguments for and against Natural & Revealed Religion. Then proceeding from

²⁵ *CL*, I, p. 209.

²⁶ Beer, 'Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772-1834)'.

²⁷ Beer, 'Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772-1834)'.

the individual to the aggregate of Individuals & disregarding all chronology except that of mind I should perfect them. [...] ²⁸

This ‘impracticable’ plan is amusingly ambitious and idealistic, but it shows us rather crudely and powerfully how Coleridge sought to orient the meaning of his life, as well as that of the human race. To ‘*perfect*’ oneself and others is an aspiration built upon the innate imperfection of men. Knowledge can perfect men, but the threshold of knowledge is different for each man, depending on how they define epistemology. In the post-Enlightenment understanding of epistemology, religion is at risk of being too speculative, as philosophers, such as Kant, would not regard transcendent or religious insight as knowledge. The way in which Coleridge orders those studies for his imagined pupils indicate his hierarchical organization of knowledge as a continuum. From ‘an Animal’, to an ‘Intellectual Being’ and to a ‘Religious Being’, Coleridge proposes a vision of a perfect man who evolves from living with his senses to being intellectually transcendent in a Kantian sense and, finally, to engaging in transcendent reflections. Along this continuum, a man begins with knowledge of this material world and ends with knowledge of the spiritual. As such, the path of perfection has God awaiting men by the very end. Coleridge did not execute precisely what this ‘impracticable’ plan set out to achieve, but his scholarship and writings during his lifetime did resonate with the spirit of such a plan. Kant’s Transcendentalism enables Coleridge to be an ‘Intellectual Being’, but it is the rebirth of Transcendence through Coleridge’s ideas about the Imagination that qualifies him as a ‘Religious Being’ in his own right.

If the political atmosphere induces a dissenting religious rigor in Coleridge around the late 1790s, Coleridge’s trip to Germany and his knowledge of Kant’s Transcendentalism, then, mark a turning point for his redefinition of the term Transcendence in the early 1800s. Without knowing exactly how much Kantian philosophy Coleridge knew during his stay in Germany, critics mostly agree that after his return from Germany to England in 1799, Coleridge studied Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* from 1800 to 1801. ²⁹ Kant’s impact on Coleridge poetry writings around the early 1800s can be measured in relation to an emergent special awareness towards an individual subjectivity, or self-consciousness. Through Kantian ‘*a priori*’ reasoning, an individual gains knowledge of his or her own mind. The philosophy of pure reason appeals to Coleridge, as it elevates man from a state of being a sensory being

²⁸ *CL*, I, p. 209. Also qtd. in René Wellek, *Immanuel Kant in England, 1793-1838* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931), p. 69.

²⁹ *Class*, p. 3.

to one in which the mind is actively engaged. In 23 March 1801, Coleridge wrote to Thomas Poole criticising Newton:

Newton was a mere materialist—*Mind* in his system is always passive—a lazy Looker-on on an external World. If the mind be not *passive*, if it be indeed made in God's Image, & that too in the sublimest sense—the Image of the *Creator*—there is ground for suspicion, that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false, as a system.³⁰

A similar satire is found in the Notebook criticising materialists in February-March 1801:

Materialists unwilling to admit the mysterious of our nature make it all mysterious—nothing mysterious in nerves, eyes, &c: but that nerves think &c!!—Stir up the sediment into the transparent water, & so make all opaque.³¹

These criticisms of materialism convey the significant reason why Coleridge would separate Kant from the atheism that he was often accused of. In Coleridge's view, Kant's Transcendentalism should be marked out from the category of Atheists because pure reason is not governed by the senses, but is '*a priori*' to experience. Transcendentalism involves an exploration of the human mind's activities that enables experience. Only metaphysics which permits this active element of the mind is likely to be the right kind of explanation, because a passive materialist system is incongruent with the notion of a 'living God'.

Though Transcendentalism is practical to the idea of God (we can think of God as an idea), Kant refuses to venture into the area of religious Transcendence that suggests the existence of a 'living God'. Yet, this unacknowledged area—Transcendence—is exactly what interested Coleridge. In relation to Kant, Andrew Bowie comments,

Kant faces a serious problem in using self-consciousness as the highest principle of epistemology, and the same problem recurs in his moral philosophy. When considering the reasons for the separation of law-bound appearances and freedom,

³⁰ *CL*, II, p. 709.

³¹ *CN*, I, 920.

we saw that there can be no evidence of freedom, because it cannot be an object of the understanding identifiable by a concept.³²

What Bowie articulates here can be seen as the negative side or limitation of any transcendental philosophy. For Kant's philosophy, the boundaries of epistemology become too restrictive. God at best can be a concept, but not 'an object of' Truth 'identifiable' by our understanding. Kant's emphasis on 'self-consciousness as the highest principle of epistemology' in Transcendentalism is a double-edged sword for Coleridge's Transcendence. On the one hand, when Coleridge employs Transcendentalism, it allows pure reason to shed light upon Transcendence. Transcendentalism also offers an explanation of how our subjectivity (the 'I am') enable us to know something about God. On the other hand, the Kantian sense of Transcendentalism impedes the discussion of Transcendence, simply because Kant separates Transcendentalism from speculative philosophy and the claims of transcendent knowledge. Yet, we should never directly equate Kant's Transcendentalism with that of Coleridge's use of the term. In fact, Coleridge is much more positive than those commentators on Kant's philosophy are about the usefulness of speculative philosophy:

For as philosophy is neither a science of the reason or understanding only, nor merely a science of morals, but the science of BEING altogether, its primary ground can be neither merely speculative or merely practical, but both in one.³³

Coleridge is aware of, and disagrees with, the established form of Transcendence which is solely speculative in nature. To renew Transcendence is to reconcile the practical Transcendentalism with the speculative. For this to work, we need to realise that the sort of Transcendentalism recognised by Coleridge originates from Kant, but it is not wholly the same as that in Kant. Coleridge subsumes Transcendentalism in Transcendence so as to combine 'both in one' under 'the science of BEING'. Transcendence becomes the ultimate purpose for and defines the utility of Transcendentalism. As a result, a transcendental quest into the 'BEING' of the human mind is naturally extended into a transcendent quest for the Creator who creates that very 'BEING' of the human mind. Closing the disciplinary gap

³² Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 23.

³³ *BL*, I, p. 252.

between philosophy and religion, Coleridge redefines the transcendent ability of the human mind through the Imagination.

III

The rebirth of Transcendence emerges throughout 1796 to 1817, as Coleridge seeks to link the one power of the mind of religion with transcendental philosophy. My thesis traces what Transcendence meant to Coleridge at different stages of his development between 1796 and 1817. I demonstrate that the rebirth of Transcendence through the Imagination in *Biographia Literaria* is the culmination of many poetic explorations prior to 1817. The poems I have selected serve to demonstrate Coleridge's sense of Transcendence at the time of their composition or publication. Coleridge raises metaphysical questions in these poems, without necessarily providing theological answers for his readers. The nature of Coleridge's Transcendent power manifests itself not as a high-sounding preaching voice, but as attempts to raise hopes for Truth and the transcendent existence of the 'living God'. Transcendence is also attested to through Coleridge's struggles to walk closer to this 'living God', when Original Sin and the poet's own subjectivity become the obstacles of knowledge. At times, the human mind seems to hold the heaven-descended Light; at other times, it seems to be a prison for its own soul.

When Coleridge's metaphysical reasoning contradicts his faith, he always manages to find resolution of sorts through writing poetry. The images of God, in Coleridge's poems, are often not as benevolent as he wishes God to be. When readers experience Coleridge's poems, conflicted feelings and doubts about God often impair a transcendent faith in a loving reunion with the Creator. More often than not, there are no clear theological solutions for these challenges. But the impressive aesthetics of Coleridge's poetry offer a possible form of redemption. Our love of arts consoles ourselves in the process of reading Coleridge's poetry. The creative power of Coleridge's mind points to the creative power of God who is the Creator of our whole being. The rebirth of Transcendence through the Imagination suggests a new faculty for knowing a God that is beyond Transcendentalism and our worldly experience. I. A. Richards's *Coleridge on Imagination* offers a seminal interpretation of Coleridge's theory of Imagination. Richards notes that 'No one who reads *Biographia* carefully will fail to notice that though his conception of Imagination is the main instrument Coleridge uses, yet when he is applying it to examples, or deciding whether a passage is an instance of it or not, he has another—apparently quite different—principle to appeal to; namely, GOOD

SENSE'.³⁴ The apparent mismatch between how the theory of Imagination works and how Coleridge judges poetry is highlighted. Richards signposts the notion that Coleridge's Imagination is less a theory one could apply to a poem than to the human mind. Poems are those products of the mind which reflect the creative power of the mind through their artistic existence. This is one main reason for proposing the rebirth of Transcendence through an analysis of Coleridge's poetry rather than employing Coleridge's theory of the imagination as a means to analyse his poems.

The rebirth of Transcendence is a process of unification in poetry, as well as symbolising a reunion with the living God. In the post-Enlightenment context, the impulse behind such unification is not simply biblical, as the urgent need for unification stemmed from the multiplicity of sensory experience in reality. How to reconcile the one God with our many senses is a Spinozistic question which had troubled Coleridge since the 1790s. Coleridge, for instance, directly expresses this Spinozistic question in a notebook entry (17 December 1804):

O said I as I looked on the blue, yellow, green, & purple green Sea, with all its hollows & swells, & cut-glass surfaces—O what an Ocean of lovely forms!—and I was vexed, teased, that the sentence sounded like a play of Words. But it was not / The mind within me was struggling to express the marvellous distinctness & unconfounded personality of each of the million millions of forms, & yet the undivided Unity in which they subsisted.³⁵

In response to this Spinozistic question, Coleridge attempts to, as many critics describe, unify opposites in his poems. James Engell argues in *The Creative Imagination* that Coleridge's sense of unification receives inspiration from the Dynamic Philosophy which equates the subjective with the objective.³⁶ Seamus Perry takes this dynamic between the one and many to a whole new level in *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*. Perry offers 'a genuine pattern of oppositions, a consistent double-mindedness ('division', fancifully, as 'di-vision', 'twofold vision')' among Coleridge's works,³⁷ which helps put into perspective the twofold-existence of Transcendence (the living God and the anxiety of not beholding such a God) that my thesis

³⁴ I. A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1934), p. 122.

³⁵ *CN*, II, 2344.

³⁶ James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 333.

³⁷ Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 3.

proposes. My thesis builds upon these critical views to explicate more precisely the meaning of the nature of this unification between Transcendentalism and Transcendence in Coleridge's poetry.

Initially, Coleridge establishes Transcendence through the unification of opposite senses or meanings in his poetry. Transcendence exists in the negation of its very absence by providing readers with the experience of unification within the poetic impulse of the text. For Coleridge, the powerful feelings of poetry move readers towards belief. But soon, Coleridge realises the mind's subjectivity can be counter-productive and acts as an inhibitor to knowledge by establishing a metaphysical limitation to a unification with the external objective world. In this epistemological realisation, Kant's Transcendentalism appears to be a binary opposite of Transcendence. What Kant's Transcendentalism is able to tell about God is bound up with our subjectivity. Consequently, Transcendence lies outside this domain of philosophy. Yet Coleridge suggests that his notion of the 'living God' is not destroyed, even under this metaphysical framework, as we do not have proof for or against God's absolute existence. To reaffirm the mind's ability to know and believe in the 'living God', Transcendence needs to take another abstract formation which surpasses the mere reconciliation of binary opposites. Accordingly, Coleridge suggests the coexistence of opposites by annihilating their differences.³⁸ By annihilating the difference between the transcendental subjectivity of our mind and the transcendent objective of the 'living God', Transcendentalism and Transcendence can cease to be juxtaposed. The initial oscillations between the opposites transform into successive, ebullient changes of a circle, intimating eternity. This circle is at once the infinite changes and the eternity of Oneness. Coleridge advances from producing Oneness out of the negation within opposites to transforming differences into changes within Oneness. This transformation subsumes Transcendentalism under Transcendence. Conveying this transformation in poetry, Coleridge translates Transcendence through its rebirth in the realm of the Imagination.

Wordsworth is read as an important presence in Coleridge's theory of transcendence and the imagination in my thesis. From their companionship to their estrangement from one another, the two poets' lives are so intertwined that critics cannot avoid one when talking about the other. In this thesis, Wordsworth is frequently the addressee or the recipient of Coleridge's writings, such as the 'Conversation Poems' and *Biographia Literaria*.³⁹ Though

³⁸ CN, II, 2915.

³⁹ George Harper, 'Coleridge's Conversation Poems', in *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. by M. H. Abrams, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 118-201.

much can be said about their mutual influence on their respective ideas of Imagination, my thesis regards Wordsworth as one of the many influences on Coleridge's redefinition of Transcendence. I suggest that Wordsworth's major role in Coleridge's rebirth of Transcendence through the Imagination resides in Coleridge's expectation of Wordsworth to produce 'the FIRST GENUINE PHILOSOPHIC POEM', that is *The Recluse*.⁴⁰ Without judging whether Wordsworth's poems are genuinely philosophical or whether Coleridge gives a fair judgement, I explore the significance of this notion of 'the first genuine philosophic poem' as a Romanticised (unachieved) version of Coleridge's Transcendence—an ideal surviving upon hopes and ceaseless attempts.

The dynamics between Coleridge's idealistic notion of a philosophic poem, and the actual (unachieved) production of said poem is indicative of the eternal by means of the poet's ceaseless attempts to achieve such an ideal. The human mind has to engage in perpetual activity so as to 'refine' poetry towards an ideal, and to 'perfect' the ideal in reality.⁴¹ For Coleridge, this is how the capacity of the human mind understands God's eternity through supplying perennial creative imaginings. Constantly revising his own poems, Coleridge lives by a philosophy of the mind which aligns his imaginative faculty with an active quest for Transcendence. His vocation as a poet and a life-long editor of his own writing is also a process he set out in 1796 for both the perfection of his own soul and those of others.

IV

There are two layers of meanings conveyed by the chosen phrase 'Versions of Transcendence' in my title. The first meaning concerns the semantic meanings of Transcendence. Noted elsewhere in my introduction, Coleridge's Transcendence is constantly altered and shaped by his changing political, philosophical, and religious views. The 'versions of Transcendence' we find in his poems are, therefore, multiple manifestations of what Coleridge meant by Transcendence at any particular time and context.

The second meaning more directly relates to literary textual practices in the Romantic period, namely that of versioning. Versioning commonly occurs in Romantic studies in two forms. The first kind reprints earlier manuscripts of the same poem. Exploring, for instance, the lyricism in a number of Wordsworth's poems, Jared Curtis has produced *Wordsworth's*

⁴⁰ *BL*, II, p. 156.

⁴¹ *CL*, IV, p. 575.

Experiments with Tradition: The Lyric Poems of 1802, with ‘Texts of the Poems Based on Early Manuscripts’ printed.⁴² By so doing, Curtis is able to trace the lyrical development of a particular text; for instance, how ‘The Leech-Gatherer’ becomes the later ‘Resolution and Independence’.⁴³ Closer to Coleridge, Stephen Parrish has produced *Coleridge’s Dejection: The Earliest Manuscripts and the Earliest Printings*, and presented these versions in different formats—single-paged reading texts format and parallel-text format.⁴⁴ This kind of study indicates the demand for earlier versions of the poems to be reprinted. They enable critics to compare and contrast different manuscripts, as a way to detect authorial decisions within the later texts.

The second kind of versioning in Romantic studies shows an awareness of the composition history of the poems they have chosen. In *Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue*, Paul Magnuson carefully unfolds a Romantic dialogue between the two poets by ordering the composition of a number of earlier, lesser known, manuscripts, such as the 1799 Two-Part *Prelude*, ‘The Pedlar’ (1802), the four-stanza ‘Ode’ (1802) which precedes the existence of ‘The Immortality Ode’ (1804), and ‘Dejection: An Ode’ (1802) etc.⁴⁵ Another point in case is Reeve Parker’s *Coleridge’s Meditative Art* which specifies the poems he anchors his interpretation to as the copy texts published in *Sibylline Leaves* (1817).⁴⁶

Often, the first kind of these studies facilitates the flourishing of the second kind of versioning, as earlier versions need to be widely available before critics gain an awareness of those hidden influences shaping the composition of the final copy texts. However, these are only periphery applications of textual versioning and do not adequately demonstrate versioning as a literary approach as advocated by my thesis.

Versioning is a critical approach explored among editorial discussions, as many texts have textual variants. Hans Zeller argues that ‘Texts with authorial variation I designate as different versions (“ Fassungen”)’.⁴⁷ I agree with Zeller’s definition as such is necessary. But it is very difficult to pin down what we actually mean by ‘authorial’. Whether some textual improvements have or have not changed the ‘relatedness’ between the variants and the rest of

⁴² Jared Curtis, *Wordsworth’s Experiments with Tradition: The Lyric Poems of 1802, with Texts of the Poems Based on Early Manuscripts* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971).

⁴³ Curtis, *Wordsworth’s Experiments with Tradition*, pp. 97-113.

⁴⁴ Stephen Maxfield Parrish, *Coleridge’s Dejection: The Earliest Manuscripts and the Earliest Printings* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988).

⁴⁵ Paul Magnuson, *Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁴⁶ Reeve Parker, *Coleridge’s Meditative Art* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1975).

⁴⁷ Hans Zeller, ‘A New Approach to the Critical Constitution of Literary Texts’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 28, 1975, pp. 231-63, at p. 236.

the text is debatable, though theoretically ‘A new version implies a new intention’ of the author, even when the variants seem to bear no significance in effect.⁴⁸ Unlike making editorial decisions—such as finding the final intention of the author—the decision to involve versioning in critical analysis does not always require a clear-cut valuation of the relative greatness or authority between different versions.

In the case of Coleridge, versioning comes into play as he repeatedly introduces revisions to his poems throughout 1796 to 1817. Whether these revisions are intentional enough to make new versions is disputable. Jack Stillinger’s *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* is at the heart of this scholarly debate. Stillinger has a different understanding for the concept of ‘version’:

“Version,” at the outset and for much of the book until the final chapter on theories of versions, should be regularly understood as referring to some actual, physically embodied text, most commonly written in a manuscript or printed in a book or periodical (though many other physical forms are possible, including proof markings, published errata lists, manuscript alterations of a printed text, and letters detailing changes to be made in a subsequent printing).⁴⁹

In the event, Zeller and Stillinger come more or less to a consensus about what a ‘version’ is. One single variant is enough for Zeller to call a text a version, whereas a new physical object of a text constitutes a version for Stillinger. One advantage Stillinger’s approach has over Zeller’s own is a relaxation over what qualifies as an authoritative text. Stillinger prefers the notion of ‘multiple versions’ and ‘relative authoritativeness’ which depends on how we interpret ‘authority’ in the first place.⁵⁰

To explore versions of Coleridge’s *Transcendence*, I adopt Stillinger’s notion of ‘multiple versions’ so as to account for a trajectory of textual changes from 1796 to 1817. The advantages of doing so include: 1) when a version of a work is chosen, it is context-specific so long as we know the composition history of that version; 2) when versions of a work are being compared, there lies a possibility that the variants may inform us about critical authorial intentions; 3) only with the versioning of the works may we order the works in a meaningful chronology. In my thesis, all versions of poems are placed in order so that we can

⁴⁸ Zellar, pp. 236–41.

⁴⁹ Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. vii.

⁵⁰ Stillinger, p. 132.

trace the chronological development of Coleridge's notion of Transcendence. Changes in Coleridge's ideas about Transcendence are, at different moments in his career, magnified by comparing different versions of the same poem.

Nevertheless, not all variants between versions occur because of critical authorial intentions. As Zachary Leader argues, in the light of Coleridge's revisionism, '[o]thers object to the revisions on the grounds that they express a neurotic insecurity rather than any falsifying politico-religious agenda or controlling aesthetic'.⁵¹ Leader's point is important as it represents another perspective of versioning that is often entwined with the agencies of the subjective judgements of authors and readers alike. Leader also makes a valid point when stating the fact that not all revisions are 'impositions rather than realizations or clarifications—the original is altered because Coleridge himself has changed, or lost sight of his original intentions, or fallen victim to a neurotic compulsion to tinker'.⁵² Yet I would not, as Leader suggests, juxtapose his view against Stillinger's notion of 'multiple versions'. The two views are not mutually exclusive; and it is the job of literary criticism to specify and debate how those variants come into existence—be they the products of laborious revisions, of 'neurosis', or of meaningful agendas.⁵³

In my analyses of Coleridge's versioning, I trace his 'insecurity' as a poet, as well as the way in which his textual revisions were motivated by various political, philosophical and religious factors. His anxiety and his agenda appear to be concurrent. But in Leader's notion of 'neurosis', a lack of control and agency is implied which is at odds with a planned agenda. Though none of my observations fall into the category of sheer 'neurosis', I would suggest that it does not prevent critics from asking critical questions about the lack of control in Coleridge's revisionary process. *Christabel* is an example in point, as I argue in chapter 6, that one of the reasons why it remains unfinished by 1816 is partly because the poem grew, subconsciously, out of Coleridge's hands, as attested to by revisions in the 1816 version. This textual approach of versioning enhances the precision and depth of a context-based close-reading in my thesis. Cumulatively, these different types of versioning form the critical crux for the kinds of 'Versions of Transcendence' alluded to in my title.

⁵¹ Zachary Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 128.

⁵² Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship*, p. 130.

⁵³ Leader, p. 128.

V

Resisting the reduction of Transcendence into Transcendentalism, my thesis explores the concept of Transcendence in Coleridge's poetry in relation to his conception of the Imagination. Tracing the development of Coleridge's Transcendence in 1796 to 1817, my thesis does not provide an exhaustive account of what Coleridge's Transcendence means in his poems. But in each chapter, I draw out different versions of Coleridge's Transcendence that allow us to plot out a trajectory that anticipates its rebirth through the Imagination by 1817.

In chapter 1, Coleridge's Transcendence is read as a repositioning of Truth that explores man's relationship with God through analyses of versions of 'The Eolian Harp' and 'Religious Musings'. I suggest in relation to versions of 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' that the purpose of Coleridge's Transcendence coincides with his very use of poetry as the means to achieve happiness and pleasure. This sets poetry up as an arena for the poet to have an on-going negotiation with himself over what Truth is and alongside his studies of metaphysics and theology in the late 1790s.

Chapter 2 explores the obstacle of Transcendence. Examining the versions of 'The Ancient Mariner' in the late 1790s to 1800, I suggest that this obstacle is manifested through an experience of Original Sin—that is the ways in which subjectivity impedes our knowledge of the objective. In Chapter 3, I argue that Original Sin is seen by Coleridge as an innate defect of our 'associating Faculty'.⁵⁴ The Crewe Manuscript of 'Kubla Khan' can be seen as Coleridge's myth-making of a prelapsarian world, in which the Fall of mankind is reimaged. This poem contains concurrently the transcendent unity of a prelapsarian state, as well as senses of disunity induced by mankind's fate to Fall. The latter constitutes the epistemological anxiety in Coleridge's writings.

Chapter 4 examines a new stage of Coleridge's Transcendence, as Kantian influence sets in during the early 1800s. I argue that Transcendentalism is subsumed under Transcendence through close-reading 'A Letter to——', a version of 'Dejection: An Ode' that is often regarded as a separate poem. As Coleridge comes to know Kant's metaphysics, his exploration of Transcendence finds a new mission centred on enlightening speculative religion with pure reason. By 1802, Coleridge's Transcendence is neither that signified in

⁵⁴ *CN*, I, 1833.

Kantian terms nor recognisable as any traditional or generic use of the term, as it posits itself as a link between philosophy and religion. The *Morning Post* version of ‘Dejection: An Ode’ has been chosen for chapter 5. I argue that the opposition between body and soul is analogous to that of the difference between Transcendentalism and Transcendence. Chapter 5 also proposes that Coleridge anticipates the rebirth of Transcendence through the Imagination by exploring the analogy between the creative act of poetry writing and the creative act of God. In ‘To W. Wordsworth’, Coleridge advances his conception of Transcendence. The Oneness of the ‘living God’, which often configured through the reconciliation of binaries, is transformed into the annihilation of differences. This gives rise to the possibility of a coexistence of opposites, the subjective and the objective, through their coincidence in reference.

Chapter 6 revisits Coleridge’s anxiety about the theology of a benevolent God. Publishing *Christabel* (1816) without finishing the poem as planned reveals the poet’s dead-end enquiry into the problem of evil. Yet the revisions in this published version also suggest a transcendent redemption of a sort through the aesthetics of the poem. Chapter 7 concludes with a reading of the rebirth of Transcendence conceptually conceived as a part of Coleridge’s theory of the Imagination in *Biographia Literaria*. Examining Coleridge’s expectation of Wordsworth’s ability to produce ‘the first genuine philosophical poem’, I argue that this vision is itself a Romanticised version of Transcendence.

Through discussions of these versions of Coleridge’s poems, my thesis hopes to clarify the problematic notion of displacing Transcendence with Transcendentalism in Coleridge’s works. Only by tracing this rebirth of Transcendence through the Imagination can we illuminate what Coleridge considers to be the highest aspiration of the human mind. Coleridge invites his fellow readers to put aside our habitual ways of understanding the term Transcendence and to engage our minds actively ‘to keep alive the *heart* in the *head*’.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ *BL*, I, p. 152.

Chapter 1

The Sublime of Truth

Poetry has been to me its own “exceeding great reward:” it has soothed my afflictions, it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments; it has endeared solitude; and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the Good and the Beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me.

(*Poems*, p. xix)

For Coleridge in the 1790s religious Transcendence was a question of the human capacity to behold the invisible God revealed to him in the earthly realm. This chapter traces the versions of Transcendence developed by Coleridge in the 1790s through examining his notion of Truth pertinent to the concept of Theism. Part I of this chapter explores the ways in which Coleridge positions himself in relation to, without aligning himself with, orthodox Christianity in the 1795 *Lectures on Revealed Religion*, which itself produced an unstable form of Theism. Part II reads Coleridge’s textual revisions in ‘Effusion XXXV’ (1796) to illuminate how this form of Theism affirms a non-orthodox understanding of God which verges on heterodoxies, such as Unitarian monism and Pantheism. However, as soon as readers detect in Coleridge a sense of dissent from orthodox Christianity, they are brought back to questions of guilt sparked by Coleridge’s deeply felt anxiety of transgression. The discrepancy between his reasoning behind and his feeling for such Theism is well contained in Coleridge’s innovative poetic form of ‘Effusion’, outlining Transcendence through a poetic voice that is ‘not untrue’. Part III argues that, as Coleridge revises ‘Religious Musings’ in *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796) for its second edition in *Poems* (1797), he draws attention to the artistry of poetic obscurity inherent to his thinking and thoughts about God. Obscurity, often regarded as a linguistic fault, is revalorised in the poem as a theistic necessity for Coleridge’s quest of Truth. The ultimate goal of Transcendence is the sublime of Truth, which is characterised by an apprehension of how the human race relates to their Creator rather than a complete understanding of the Absolute Truth. Coleridge’s conscious effort to revise and define his concept of Theism in poetry is also driven by his desire for the happiness of mankind by promoting transcendent Truth. The concluding part of this chapter shows that the pleasure induced by poetry allows Coleridge to intimate the happiness promised by the Truth of religion in ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison’ (1797, 1800).

I

In the first of a series of *Lectures on Revealed Religion, its Corruptions and Political Views* (1795), Coleridge mocks the Church of England and the Atheists of their problematic theistic views in ‘an allegoric vision’.¹ In this dreamy vision, the Church of England is represented by ‘the Temple of Superstition’, which asks followers to ‘Read and believe’ the ‘incomprehensible and contradictory’ ‘Inscriptions’ without understanding them.² The Atheists rely on ‘a microscope’ to see, but all they can behold are material things.³ These Atheists deny God as they see no necessity for His existence. To Coleridge, the ‘sight’ of the Atheists, if any, is ‘infinite Blindness’.⁴ What then is true of Religion for early Coleridge? Religion ‘assist[s] without contradicting our natural vision and enable[s] us to see far beyond the Valley [of Life]’.⁵ What can be identified as Coleridge’s religious Transcendence in the 1790s is the capacity an individual has to behold God’s revelation in Nature, which is the ‘irresistible Demonstration of intending Causality’ between Nature and its Creator.⁶ Early versions of Transcendence in the 1790s operate partly through faith and partly, deductive reasoning: ‘from the Effects we deduce the Existence and attributes of Causes but their immediate Essence is in all other cases as well as Deity hidden from us’.⁷ In terms of epistemology therefore, we are able to tell ‘the Existence and attributes’ of God, but not God’s ‘Essence’.

As God’s ‘Essence’ remains unknown to our understanding, the limit to which we can discern God from Nature within our subjectivity emancipates the possibility of religious dissent. In Lecture 5, we encounter Coleridge’s Unitarian Theism, mainly manifested as repudiation of and swerving away from Trinitarianism. For instance, ‘the Messiah is represented as having sacrificed himself for us it must be understood—as a necessary means relative to man not a motive influencing the Almighty’.⁸ Here lurks a strong reluctance to view Christ as God. Coleridge frames Jesus as a man who ‘evidenced his sincerity by voluntarily submitting to a cruel death, in order that he might confirm the Faith or awaken the

¹ *LPR*, pp. 89-93.

² *LPR*, p. 90.

³ *LPR*, p. 92.

⁴ *LPR*, pp. 92-93.

⁵ *LPR*, p. 91.

⁶ *LPR*, p. 94.

⁷ *LPR*, p. 97.

⁸ *LPR*, p. 203.

Gratitude of men'.⁹ This Unitarian understanding instigates Coleridge's challenge to the orthodox 'Doctrine of Atonement'.¹⁰ Coleridge problematizes the benevolence of God in the light of 'Damnation', which is part of the redemptive schema: 'is this the all-loving Parent of the Universe, who mocks the Victims of his Government with a semblance of Justice and predestines to Guilt whom he had doomed to Damnation [?]'¹¹ To Coleridge, the logic of the Atonement generates contradictions from within, which lead people into the erroneous path of Atheism. The problem of this notion becomes, as Martin Priestman, observes when paraphrasing Coleridge's views:

the false idea that Christ died to atone for our sins, rather than as an example to us and a proof of his own sincerity, is based on metaphors derived from an ancient culture of sacrifice but not meant literally, though similar ideas still linger in the belief that prayer can "work a change in the immutable God". The idea of a universal "original sin" for which his sacrifice was meant to pay "appears to me not to be Blasphemy only because it is nonsense" and the Calvinist who cowers before the allied notion of predestined damnation "is not an Atheist only because he cannot make himself certain that there is not a God!"¹²

Coleridge's uneasiness with the idea of Atonement shapes his position on religious Transcendence in the 1790s as one that was poised between Atheism and Orthodox Christianity—a heterodox theism heading towards Unitarianism while swerving away from Trinitarianism.

The elusiveness of this heterodox theism provokes Coleridge to represent it in poetry. In the Preface to *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796), Atheism is deemed to be incongruent with poetry, as Coleridge differentiates between two kinds of egotisms.¹³ The positive form of egotism is to be found 'in a Monody or Sonnet' which affords pleasure to its readers through its affective qualities.¹⁴ This dissemination of pleasure marks the 'communicativeness' of poetry, which allows the poet to seek pleasure in his 'intellectual activity' of expressing sorrow, whilst the reader is solaced through personal engagement with

⁹ *LPR*, p. 203.

¹⁰ *LPR*, p. 204.

¹¹ *LPR*, p. 205.

¹² Martin Priestman, *Romantic Atheism: Poetry and Freethought, 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 141.

¹³ *PVS*, pp. v-xi.

¹⁴ *PVS*, pp. v-vi.

the poem.¹⁵ This form of egotism is vital to poetry, as Coleridge states in a notebook entry: ‘Poetry without egotism [is] comparatively uninteresting [...]’.¹⁶ In contrast, the negative form of egotism does not ‘lea[d] us to communicate our feelings to others, but [...] would reduce the feelings of others to an identity with our own’.¹⁷ An Atheist is an Egotist of the latter kind, and Coleridge who makes this identification is ‘disgusted’ by this sort of egotism.¹⁸ By stressing that the ‘communicativeness’ of poetry depends upon sharing subjective feelings, Coleridge tacitly entwines theistic belief around positive egotism. This ‘communicativeness’ sustains an intellectual and affective openness towards Transcendence in Coleridge, which is to be explored, experienced and experimented with in verse.

This theological attitude tallies with a new form of poetry, namely ‘Effusions’ as Coleridge propounded in the Preface: ‘I might indeed have called the majority of them Sonnets—but they do not possess that *oneness* of thought which I deem indispensable in a Sonnet’.¹⁹ Coleridge explained away his reluctance to title the poems ‘Sonnet’ as he is mindful of the superior counterparts written by W. L. Bowles. This humble gesture is employed to shroud an ambitious poetic attempt that approaches both generic and theological concerns. Effusions lack ‘that *oneness* of thought’ commonly found in the Sonnet form, for it captures the outpouring of feelings, a mode in which the poetic impulse overrides its readiness in regularities. Far from being a flaw, this lack of oneness purposefully accommodates the content suggested in the epigraph of Coleridge’s Effusions:

Content, as random Fancies might inspire,
If his weak harp at times or lonely lyre
He struck with desultory hand, and drew
Some soften’d tones to Nature not untrue.

BOWLES.²⁰

These lines from Bowles’s *Monody, Written at Matlock, October 1791* are silently revised. Replacing ‘reed’ with ‘harp’ and ‘touch’d’ with ‘struck’, Coleridge points us to ‘Effusion

¹⁵ PVS, p. vii.

¹⁶ CN, I, 62.

¹⁷ PVS, p. viii.

¹⁸ PVS, p. viii.

¹⁹ PVS, p. x.

²⁰ PVS, p. 44.

XXXV' (1796), 'The Eolian Harp' in its later version.²¹ What prompts the adaptation of this epigraph seems to be Bowles's idea of 'Some soften'd tones to Nature not untrue'. This line echoes the lack of a sense of 'oneness' attached to the 'Effusions' form and the elusiveness of Coleridge's theism of the 1790s. Neither as true as orthodox Christianity nor as false as Atheism, Coleridge transforms his religious dissent into those tones 'not untrue', which shall be struck out daringly. Amid this theological outpouring, we find Coleridge's poetic control over his theological themes: the 'soften'd' tones aim to move readers through their poetic melody towards belief.

Exploring the theological aspects of these 'tones to Nature not untrue', readers are encouraged not to discretely classify Coleridge's Theism into generic heterodoxies, but to understand and feel the tension between his passion for Truth and non-orthodox metaphysics. As Coleridge hinted in the aforementioned epigraph, 'Effusion XXXV. Composed August 20th, 1795, At Clevedon, Somersetshire' in *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796) will effectively open out this notion. 'Religious Musings' in *Poems* (1797), the second edition of *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796), is also central to Coleridge's theistic tones which are 'not untrue'. Apart from substantial revision, Coleridge inserts more notes to this 1797 version, some of which are abridged version of thoughts already expressed in *Lectures on Revealed Religion* (1795). Versions of these two poems strain as they employ metaphysical reasoning to justify theism. However, constancy is found in the mind of the poet, whose transcendent capacity enables pleasure to be found in his poetic artistry, intimating the ultimate happiness possible in any true form of theism. This truthfulness is felt by Coleridge and communicated through the complex feelings in his poems. It is in this sense that the complication of religious Transcendence grows out of Coleridge's simple desire for a happy future, but poetry is the testing ground of such ambition.

II

'Effusion XXXV' in *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796) is the first published version of 'The Eolian Harp'. The direct reference to music in the poem (orchestrated with the adaptation found in the epigraph of the 'Effusions' series) encourages us to trace the 'soften'd tones to Nature not untrue' in the sounds and voices of this poem. The poem is addressed to Sara Fricker, but her presence and her voice are constantly subsumed under, and manipulated by,

²¹ J. Douglas Kneale, *Romantic Aversions: Aftermaths of Classicism in Wordsworth and Coleridge* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p. 41.

the poet in various ways, one of which concerns the poetic form. Christopher Miller considers the poem to be a ‘free-standing soliloquy, an extended dramatic speech that creates its own situation and setting’.²² By soliloquy, Miller points to the audience of readers, in lieu of Sara, as the intended hearers of the poem. This idea corresponds with J. Douglas Kneale’s notion of Romantic Aversions: ‘The effusion is defined by its rhetorical structure of address and aversion’, and ‘It depends on the directing and the redirecting of discourse’.²³ It is Michael O’Neill who brings out the poetic purpose of such form, with reference to a lecture (1818) written in Coleridge’s notebook:²⁴

In “Effusion XXXV”, later “The Eolian Harp”, Coleridge makes one of the great generic break-throughs of Romantic poetry. In this version the sense of a “Difference of Form as proceeding and Shape as superinduced” is clear. Coleridge defines such a “Shape” as “either the Death or the imprisonment of the Thing” but such a “Form” as “its self-witnessing, and self-effected sphere of agency”.²⁵

This profound Coleridgean understanding of form opens up the possibilities of his ‘not untrue’ theistic tones. As a ‘Form’ of ‘proceeding’, ‘Effusion XXXV’ is ‘self-effected’ into an emotional fusion of Coleridge’s heterodoxy and Sara’s orthodoxy. The two voices do not cancel out one another. They constitute one beautiful dissonance which is deliberately voiced by the poet through the alluring sounds of the ‘subject Lute’ (l. 35).

These alluring sounds in blank verse in lines 1 to 35 of ‘Effusion XXXV’ are reminiscent of *Paradise Lost*. Catherine Ross suggests that the ‘flowers and myrtle’ in lines 3 to 4 of ‘Effusion XXXV’ parallels the ‘sensuous, natural settings’ in Book 9 of *Paradise Lost* (l. 432).²⁶ A closer look into Book 9 from lines 415 to 438, however, draws attention to the mood of the passage marked by its telltale sounds in ‘Effusion XXXV’. In lines 415-438 the sensuous beauty of the floral fragrance and vibrant colours is heightened to arrest readers’ attention. Among these flowers, Eve blends in with the ornamental language of beauty. Such language gives Eve apparent agency to attract the danger, while being as ‘unsustained’ and

²² Christopher Miller, ‘Coleridge and the English Poetic Tradition’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Frederick Burwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 515-33, at p. 520.

²³ Kneale, p. 34.

²⁴ Michael O’Neill takes the lines from *CN*, III, 4397.

²⁵ Michael O’Neill, ‘Coleridge’s Genres’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Frederick Burwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 375-91, at p. 379.

²⁶ Catherine Ross, “‘Restore me to Reality’”: Revisiting Coleridge’s Figure of “My pensive Sara”, *The Coleridge Bulletin*, 24 (NS), 2004, pp. 74-82, at p. 80.

‘unsupported’ as the flowers; though in reality, we know that it is Satan who actively seeks Eve and wishes her to be alone:

Beyond his hope, Eve separate he spies,
 Veiled in a cloud of fragrance, where she stood,
 Half spied, so thick the roses bushing round
 About her glowed, oft stopping to support
 Each flower of slender stalk, whose head though gay
 Carnation, purple, azure, or specked with gold,
 Hung dropping unsustained, them she upstays
 Gently with myrtle band, mindless the while,
 Herself, though fairest unsupported flower,
 From her best prop so far, and storm so nigh. (*Paradise Lost*, IX, ll. 424-433)²⁷

This virtual shift of agency from Satan to Eve provides a point of parallel between this passage of *Paradise Lost* and Coleridge’s ‘Effusion XXXV’. Mimicking the way in which the sensuous beauty that accompanies Eve distracts readers from the activity of Satan, Sara’s voice is employed to veil Coleridge’s religious dissent from readers’ disapproval. Sara’s ‘more serious eye’ and ‘mild reproof’ (l. 41) virtually shifts Coleridge’s heterodoxy (ll. 36-40) towards her orthodoxy, salvaging his metaphysical tones from outright falsehood into that which is ‘not untrue’.

This shift is less a matter of aesthetic cautiousness than a true reflection of how difficult it is for Coleridge to calibrate the extent to which he could induce a sense of religious Transcendence through poetry. Sara’s implied presence in the poem thwarts Coleridge from misrepresenting his dissent from orthodoxy as definitive. Coleridge presents it as nothing more than speculation, which readers should recognise as the intended model of his theism in the 1790s. A comparison between the *Draft 2* of the Rugby Manuscript with the revised lines in ‘Effusion XXXV’ (1796) is suggestive of how this speculative mode functions:

| | |
|---|--|
| And what if All of animated Life Be but as Instruments diversly fram’d That tremble into thought, while thro’ them breathes | And what if all of animated nature Be but organic Harps diversly fram’d, That tremble into thought, as o’er them sweeps, |
|---|--|

²⁷ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Oxford World’s Classics, ed. by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 218-19. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

One infinite and intellectual Breeze?
 And all in different Heights so aptly hung,
 That Murmurs indistinct and Bursts sublime,
 Shrill Discords and most soothing Melodies,
 Harmonious form Creation's vast concént?
 Thus *GOD* would be the universal Soul;
 Mechaniz'd matter as th' organic harps,
 And each one's Tunes be that, which each calls *I*.—
 (*Draft 2*, ll. 36-46)²⁸

Plastic and vast, one intellectual Breeze,
 At once the Soul of each, and God of all?
 ('Effusion XXXV', ll. 36-40)²⁹

According to Paul Cheshire, *Draft 2* of the Rugby Manuscript is dated before April 1796; it is an earlier version written prior to the publication of *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796).³⁰ Coleridge's revision simplifies the musical analogy found in *Draft 2* to foreground the transcendent relationship between creations and their Creator. Lines 44-46 in *Draft 2* presents Pantheism as a mode of dissent which remains in 'Effusion XXXV' after revision: Coleridge retreats from a declarative tone in *Draft 2* to a more interrogative tone in 'Effusion XXXV'—'And what if [...] / At once the Soul of each, and God of all?'. This revision goes hand in hand with the function of Sara's 'mild reproof' to keep the poem theistically 'not untrue'. The uncertainty introduced by such revision is not cautiousness in preaching heterodoxy publicly, but cautiousness attached to the metaphysical reasoning of revealed religion—the extent to which he may affirm.

In 'Effusion XXXV', Coleridge gives priority to monotheism, which stands in contrast to the multiple ways ('organic Harps diversly fram'd') of approaching the Oneness of God. Prioritising the notion of one God over the staging of reasons that support and justify it, Coleridge embraces voices other than those of orthodoxy. Yet, he is well aware of the risk of these voices tipping over into transgression:

Full many a thought uncall'd and undetain'd,
 And many idle flitting phantasies,
 Traverse my indolent and passive brain

Nearer he drew, and many a walk traversed
 Of stateliest covert, cedar, pine, or palm,
 Then voluble and bold, now hid, now seen,

²⁸ Paul Cheshire, 'The Eolian Harp', *The Coleridge Bulletin*, 17 (NS), 2001, pp. 1-22, at p. 9. Cheshire has corrected readings in this version of 'The Eolian Harp' published in Ernest Hartley Coleridge (ed.), *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, II: Poems (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 1021-023, at pp. 1022-023. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers based on Paul Cheshire's corrected version of *Draft 2*.

²⁹ *PVS*, pp. 96-100. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

³⁰ Cheshire, 'The Eolian Harp', p. 7.

As wild and various, as the random gales
That swell or flutter on this subject Lute!
(‘Effusion XXXV’, ll. 30-35)

Among thick-woven arborets and flowers
Embordered on each bank, the hand of Eve:
(*Paradise Lost*, IX, ll. 434-38)

O’Neill suggests, with reference to ‘Effusion XXXV,’ that ‘There the verb “Traverse” evokes mental operation, without being assertive about its source and origin, while the adjectival luxuriance of “indolent and passive” conveys the poet’s enjoyment of “the mind’s self-experience”’.³¹ This observation reminds us of the poet’s state of mind prior to ‘the poem’s central speculation’ of pantheistic monotheism.³² This state of mind involves the removal of an ‘assertive’ orthodox ‘origin’, as Coleridge ‘Traverse[s]’ towards heterodox speculations. But once we are mindful of such removal, we have restored orthodoxy to the hidden background. The risk of religious transgression thus emerges against an orthodox backdrop: the verb ‘Traverse’ in ‘Effusion XXXV’ alludes to that situation of ‘many a walk traversed’ in *Paradise Lost*, in which Satan is approaching Eve prior to the Fall. With the word ‘Traverse’ incurring the danger to, but abstaining from reaching, the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, Coleridge holds back on sounds of transgression in his use of the word ‘Traverse’ in ‘Effusion XXXV’. This textual allusion allows Coleridge to indulge in a delightful wondering of heterodox speculations at the brink of transgression.

Coleridge’s insistence on his speculative pantheistic monotheism is the driving force of his poetic voice in ‘Effusion XXXV’, even when he shows signs of remorse in lines 41-44:

My pensive SARA! thy soft cheek reclin’d
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our cot, our cot o’er grown
With white-flower’d Jasmin, and the broad-leav’d Myrtle,
(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)
(ll. 1-5)

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O beloved Woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallow’d dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
(ll. 41-44)

Richard Berkeley finds this scene from lines 41-44 ‘an image of the conflict between reason and faith’, as ‘all consistent use of speculative reason results in fatalism and atheism’.³³ In viewing this conflict as one between ‘Jacobi’s’ ‘rejection of reason’ and ‘Lessing’s

³¹ O’Neill, ‘Coleridge’s Genres’, p. 380.

³² O’Neill, ‘Coleridge’s Genres’, p. 380.

³³ Richard Berkeley, ‘Silence and the Pantheistic Sublime in Coleridge’s Early Poetry’, *The Coleridge Bulletin*, 24 (NS), 2004, pp. 59-67, at p. 64.

Spinozism',³⁴ Berkeley risks misleading readers to think of Coleridge's poetic voice as unintendedly torn between the two perspectives. In fact, the most powerful yet equivocal sounds that 'struck' the 'soften'd tones to Nature not untrue' can be found in the words 'cot' and 'God'. The anadiplosis of 'our cot' (l. 3) makes us aware, through its monosyllabic assonance with 'my God' (l. 44), of that change in pronoun. As the *OED* points out, 'cot' connotes 'humbleness',³⁵ which seems to be the quality Sara 'bid[s]' Coleridge to share with her. The deviation from the 'our' pronoun to 'my' (l. 44) allows Coleridge's insistence to come in through Sara's voice.

Coleridge's insistence on speculative pantheism is quickly redeemed through a heartfelt confession of being 'A sinful and most miserable man / Wilder'd and dark' (ll. 54-55). What makes the poet 'Wilder'd and dark' is the transgressive danger of his speculative heterodoxy within what, O'Neill calls, the 'self-effected sphere of agency' of the Effusions form. 'The INCOMPREHENSIBLE' (l. 51) Trinitarianism or the doctrine of redemption may not appeal to Coleridge at the time, but that 'Faith' which 'inly* *feels*' (l. 52) is crucial to any heterodox speculation for Theism. The asterisk signals an endnote in French that Coleridge inserted, which references 'Madame Roland's defence of her statesman husband':³⁶

In the subsequent English translation published by Joseph Johnson, it reads: "The Atheist is not, in my eyes, a man of ill faith: I can live with him as well, nay, better than with the devotee; for he reasons more; but he is deficient in a certain sense, and his soul does not keep pace with mine; he is unmoved at a spectacle the most ravishing, and he hunts for a syllogism, where I am impressed with awe and admiration" (*An Appeal to Impartial Posterity*—3 pts London 1795—pt 3 p 112)³⁷

The differentiations found here are interestingly apt for Coleridge's tones that are 'not untrue', for both the 'devotee' and the 'Atheist' are held up to criticism. The 'devotee' of Christianity and the 'Atheist' are set as two extremes. The 'devotee' is problematic for such a believer does not reason enough. The 'Atheist' may seem better in this regard, but an Atheist does not 'keep alive the *heart* in the *head*'.³⁸ An Atheist is 'unmoved' when Coleridge's soul, living up to Roland's words, is 'impressed with awe and admiration'. Coleridge clearly states in one

³⁴ Berkeley, 'Silence and the Pantheistic Sublime in Coleridge's Early Poetry', p. 64

³⁵ 'cot, n.1.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2019 <www.oed.com/view/Entry/42379> [accessed 21 March 2019].

³⁶ *PW*, I. 2, p. 234n.

³⁷ *PW*, I. 2, pp. 234-5n.

³⁸ *BL*, I, p. 152.

of his notebook entry in 1796-97 that 'Unitarian/travelling from Orthodoxy to Atheism—why,—&c.'. ³⁹ The 'travelling' as described 'from Orthodoxy to Atheism' can be interpreted as a movement to 'keep alive the *heart* in the *head*'. Coleridge sees himself as the 'Unitarian/travelling' between these two points of polarity, as he searches for a balance of feeling and reasoning in his Theism. What eventually develops out of what O'Neill calls 'the self-effected sphere of agency' in 'Effusion XXXV' for Coleridge is 'to possess / PEACE, and this COT and THEE, heart-honor'd Maid!' (ll. 55-56). This poem becomes a 'Form as proceeding': as 'PEACE' is the balance attained through Coleridge's heterodox God resounding in 'this COT', and yet 'this COT' is also the abiding place in which 'A sinful and most miserable man' may take shelter, to cultivate the reverence he should be mindful of, as reminded by 'THEE'. Even though the heterodox reasoning and orthodox feeling Coleridge manifested for his Theism seems rather incongruent, Effusion as a 'Form' of 'proceeding'—reconciling opposites—has made possible those 'soften'd tones to Nature not untrue'.

III

In 1796, Charles Lamb commented that 'Religious Musings' (1796) was 'the noblest poem in the language, next after Paradise lost [*sic*], & even that was not made the vehicle of such grand truths'. ⁴⁰ Lamb's approval of Coleridge's rhetoric of the Sublime turns out not to be widely shared. The elusiveness of Coleridge's Theism challenged the receptiveness of readers. An unsigned review upon *Poems on Various Subjects*, dated June 1796, in the *Analytical Review* shows some of the readers' concerns:

The poems, which are, for the most part, short, are written on a variety of subjects, and with very different degrees of merit: some of them appear to have been elaborated with great pains; others to have been the negligent productions of a momentary impulse. The numbers are not always harmonious; and the language, through a redundancy of metaphor, and the frequent use of compound epithets, sometimes becomes turgid: but every where the writer discovers a lively imagination, and a ready command of poetical language. The general character of the composition is rather that of splendour than of simplicity; and the reader is left

³⁹ *CN*, I, 80.

⁴⁰ Charles Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, I: 1796-1801, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 95.

more strongly impressed with an idea of the strength of the writer's genius, than of the correctness of his taste.⁴¹

The reviewer finds faults mostly with the language of the poems, not the subject matter, nor the poet's imagination or his taste. The demand for 'correctness' reflects the uneasiness experienced by the reviewer in reading the poems. This uneasiness could indeed be a problem of Coleridge's poetic execution; yet it could also suggest that the reviewer and possibly other readers as well, are not ready for the thoughts found in these 'turgid' expressions. In order to improve the 'communicativeness' of his writing, *Poems* (1797) was published as the second edition of *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796) after considering comments of this sort. Taking into account the public reception of *Poems on Various Subjects*, Coleridge revised the volume into *Poems* (1797) and wrote a Preface to this second edition which corresponds especially to this review:

I have pruned the double epithets with no sparing hand; and used my best efforts to tame the swell and glitter both of thought and diction. This latter fault however had insinuated itself into my Religious Musings with such intricacy of union, that sometimes I have omitted to disentangle the weed from the fear of snapping the flower. A third and heavier accusation has been brought against me, that of obscurity; but not, I think, with equal justice. An Author is obscure, when his conceptions are dim and imperfect, and his language incorrect, or unappropriate, or involved. A poem that abounds in allusions, like the Bard of Gray, or one that impersonates high and abstract truths, like Collins's Ode on the poetical character; claims not to be popular—but should be acquitted of obscurity. The deficiency is in the Reader. But this is a charge which every poet, whose imagination is warm and rapid, must expect from this *contemporaries*. [...] But a living writer is yet sub judice; and if we cannot follow his conceptions or enter into his feelings, it is more consoling to our pride to consider him as lost beneath, than as soaring above, us. If any man expect [*sic*] from my poems the same easiness of style which he admires in a drinking-song, for him I have not written. *Intelligibilia, non intellectum adfero.*⁴²

⁴¹ J. R. De J. Jackson (ed.), *Coleridge: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 33.

⁴² *Poems*, p. xvii-xix.

Coleridge responds to the criticism through revising the poems. As much as ‘prun[ing] the double epithets’ may help bring out the thoughts, Coleridge also raises two aspects of rebuttal reversing the fault of deficiency to his readers. The simpler one concerns the attitude of the readers, whether they are willing to ‘follow his conceptions or enter into his feelings’. This notion reverberates with the two kinds of egotism he mentioned in the Preface to the first edition. If readers understand the poems by ‘reduc[ing] the feelings of [the poet] to an identity with [their] own’, they are no different from Atheists, in Coleridge’s perspective, who break the ‘communicativeness’ of poetry.

The more complicated rebuttal for Coleridge to make is that of obscurity, which is a ‘heavier accusation’ built upon those other accusations to do with plausible style and language, directed towards ‘Religious Musings’. On the one hand, when Coleridge speaks of the attempt to ‘tame the swell and glitter’, he implies that the grandeur of his subject matter should persuade the reader to overlook the flaws in expressions. On the other, Coleridge articulates a genuine dilemma beyond his voice of offended ego—that is ‘the fear of snapping the flower’. This vivid image seems to be asking: what if the Sublime of Truth is so obscure, so high and abstract, that only representations of obscurity through the extensive use of allusions may suffice to preserve its delicate shape? In reply, Coleridge suggests that clarification may ‘disentangle the weed’ perhaps too forcefully and risk distorting, twisting or compressing the Truth. In his defence, Coleridge expresses through the final Latin phrase that the priority goes to a faithful expression of Truth, albeit difficult to understand: ‘I offer things that are capable of being understood, not a thing [straightforwardly] understood’.⁴³ Therefore, revisions made in the second edition do not sacrifice obscure Truth for plausible clarity: Truth that is obscure remains truthful, whereas clarity of language only expresses a plausible understanding of Truth is falsehood. A strenuous effort from the reader may still be demanded in reading Coleridge’s poems.

This preoccupation with obscurity forms Coleridge’s transcendent aesthetics, which are concerned with the correspondence between language and thought, even as the essence of this is religious. ‘Religious Musings’ exemplifies this transcendent aesthetics, as Coleridge subtly suggested in the Preface of the 1797 *Poems*. A comparison between the 1796 version and 1797 version of ‘Religious Musings’ allows the reader to explore how Coleridge’s Theism is expressed as the Sublime of Truth in poetry. To observe and feel the interlacing between

⁴³ *Tr*: ‘I offer things that are capable of being understood, not a thing [straightforwardly] understood’ (*PW*, I, 2, p. 1233n)

Theism and the (lack of) outward-ness of such thought in language is at the heart of Coleridge's aesthetics of Transcendence in the 1790s.

Coleridge was not the first writer to establish the concept of obscurity in aesthetics. When Edmund Burke entwines the passion caused by the Sublime with 'some degree of horror' in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), he treats obscurity as an attribute of the Sublime.⁴⁴ To illustrate his thought (Part II, Section III-IV), Burke quotes two passages from Book 1 and 2 of *Paradise Lost*, for 'No person seems better to have understood the secret of heightening, or of setting terrible things, if I may use the expression, in their strongest light by the force of a judicious obscurity, than Milton'.⁴⁵ Coleridge shares this oxymoronic view of 'a judicious obscurity' in a 1796 notebook entry, which is 'an abridged quotation from Jonathan Richardson's *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost* (1734)':⁴⁶

A Reader of Milton must be always on his Duty: he is surrounded with sense; it rises in every line; every word is to the purpose. There are no lazy intervals: all has been considered and demands & merits observation.

If this be called obscurity, let it be remembered tis such a one as is complaisant to the Reader: *not that vicious obscurity, which proceeds from a muddled head &c.*⁴⁷

Except for the last half sentence—which I have italicised—the rest was also quoted in MS1⁴⁸ of the Preface to *Poems* (1797), dated 27 February.⁴⁹ A subtle difference is found, however, concerning the way in which Coleridge conceives clearness alongside obscurity.⁵⁰ Instead of elucidating, as Burke did, how 'obscurity' is more emotionally effective than 'clearness' in producing a sublime passion,⁵¹ Coleridge does not juxtapose these terms; rather, he implies a notion of clearness, as he seeks to discriminate between different kinds of obscurity:

⁴⁴ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. by Paul Guyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 47.

⁴⁵ Burke, p. 58.

⁴⁶ *CN*, I, 276n.

⁴⁷ *CN*, I, 276.

⁴⁸ *PW*, I, 2, pp. 1238-39.

⁴⁹ *CN*, I, 276n.

⁵⁰ Coleridge later uses the term 'clearness' in *SM*, p. 48.

⁵¹ Burke, p. 49.

you ought to distinguish between obscurity residing in the uncommonness of the thought, and that which proceeds from thoughts unconnected & language not adapted to the expression of them. When you *do* find out the meaning of my poetry, can you (in general, I mean) alter the language so as to make it more perspicuous—the thought remaining the same? — By ‘dreamy semblance’ I *did* mean semblance of some unknown Past, like to a dream—and not ‘a semblance *presented* in a dream.’—I meant to express, that oftentimes, for a second or two, it flashed upon my mind, that the then company, conversation, & everything, had occurred before, with all the precise circumstances; so as to make Reality appear a Semblance, and the Present like a dream in Sleep. Now this thought is obscure; because few people have experienced the same feeling. Yet several have—and they were proportionally delighted with the lines as expressing some strange sensations, which they themselves had never ventured to communicate, much less had ever seen developed in poetry.⁵²

With reference to Burke’s *Enquiry* (part II, sections III-IV), readers are able to feel the awe of Sublimity primarily through ‘great and confused images’ in poetry ‘which affect because they are crowded and confused’, but will ‘infallibly lose the clearness’.⁵³ For Coleridge, however, Milton’s success derives not simply from creating obscure images, but in employing fitting expressions for ‘the purpose’.

As an advance on, if not a divergence from, Burke’s differentiation, the kind of obscurity ‘residing in’ as a property of the ‘uncommonness of the thought’ itself gestures toward a Coleridgean distinction between clearness and clarity. Unlike Burke who juxtaposes obscurity with clearness, Coleridge juxtaposes clarity and clearness and involves the latter in his interpretation of obscurity. Coleridgean clearness is paralinguistic, or in a way more profound to the intellect than simple clarity in expression: as the *OED* reminds us, clearness is ‘fairness, beauty’; it is also a ‘freedom from [...] obscurity’ or ‘from anything obstructive’.⁵⁴ Judicious representation of the obscurity of a thought is a faithful semblance of reality which coexisted with what Coleridge called a ‘perspicuous’ representation of obscurity. The former is understood as true poetic obscurity that offers readers clearness of

⁵² *CL*, I, pp. 277-78.

⁵³ Burke, p. 51.

⁵⁴ ‘clearness, n.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2019 <www.oed.com/view/Entry/34094> [accessed 21 March 2019].

thought while the latter, if it is not done appropriately, is simply a linguistic defect contingent on ‘thoughts unconnected & language not adapted’.

To place clearness within obscurity in poetry is a notion transcending the epistemological limits implied by Coleridge. This understanding of poetic obscurity, albeit rarely foregrounded as a Miltonic influence, appears to be the motive for some major revisions in ‘Religious Musings’ and ‘Composed at Clevedon, Somersetshire’ (the revised title of the poem first published as ‘Effusion XXXV’ and later entitled ‘The Eolian Harp’) in *Poems* (1797). I take Burke as a point of reference to lay out the complexities and unique dimensions involved in Coleridge’s early thought about his Sublime system. This system concerns with the role of obscurity in justifying God epistemologically through faith and feelings, and in engendering the clearness of Truth in poetry.

Rethinking what Coleridge says in the Preface to *Poems* (1797) that ‘sometimes I have omitted to disentangle the weed from the fear of snapping the flower’ at this point, I think poetic obscurity in ‘Religious Musings’ suggests clearness of Truth is symbolised by ‘the weed’ surrounding ‘the flower’. ‘The weed’ which signifies the difficult language in the poem is in fact the theistic necessity for Truth. ‘The weed’ is reflective of Coleridge’s ‘dim and imperfect’ perception of the Sublime and a disparity between his thought and moral feelings:

I build all my poetic pretensions on the Religious Musings—which you will read with a POET’S Eye, with the same unprejudicedness, I wish, I could add, the same pleasure, with which the atheistic Poem of Lucretius. A Necessitarian, I cannot possibly disesteem a man for his religious or anti-religious Opinions—and as an Optimist, I feel diminished concern.—I have studied the subject deeply & widely—I cannot say, without prejudice: for when I commenced the Examination, I was an Infidel.⁵⁵

In this letter to Thelwall (late April 1796), Coleridge admits that a ‘prejudiced’ (i.e. conventional or orthodox) outlook would fail to appreciate his ambition to examine various religious opinions. As he appraised these religious positions, he was drawn to various modes of transgressive thought. The major revisions during the pre-1798 period reveal Coleridge’s hesitation to commit to a single line of thought, which entails obscurity in the poetic language

⁵⁵ *CL*, I, p. 205

in consequence of a ‘muddled head’. But the poet’s conscious ‘fear of snapping the flower’ urges readers to try to appreciate the clearness of Truth engendered by his poetic obscurity as a metaphysical quality inherent in the nature of the Sublime.

In light of this sense of poetic obscurity, some revisions Coleridge made to the 1796 version of ‘Religious Musings’ may have sacrificed subtle but high thoughts. The improvement in clarity offsets ‘the swell and glitter’ of the poem. A case in point is the opening verse paragraph in which Coleridge exhibits Miltonic extravagance in the 1796 version, yet curbs such extravagance in the 1797 version in favour of greater clarity:

This is the time, when most divine to hear,
As with a Cherub’s “loud uplifted” trump
The voice of Adoration my thrill’d heart
Rouses! And with the rushing noise of wings
Transports my spirit to the favor’d fields
Of Bethlehem, there in shepherd’s guise to sit
Sublime of extacy, and mark entranc’d
The glory-streaming VISION thron’d through the night.

(1796, ll. 1-8)⁵⁶

This is the time, when, most divine to hear,
The voice of Adoration rouses me,
As with a Cherub’s trump: and high upborne,
Yea, mingling with the Choir, I seem to view
The vision of the heavenly multitude,
Who hymn’d the song of Peace o’er Bethlehem’s fields!
Yet thou more bright than all the Angel blaze,
That harbinger’d thy birth, Thou, Man of Woes!

(1797, ll. 1-8)⁵⁷

In the opening paragraph of both versions, Coleridge describes a scene of the birth of Jesus on Christmas Eve. In the 1797 version, readers are led into the imagined scene through the hymnic adoration and ‘song of Peace’. But the reported speech ‘I seem to view’ in the 1797 version distances the readers from the emotional rush of enjambment that stages the ‘Sublime of extacy’ in the 1796 version. The crescendo to the passion of ‘Sublime’ which breaks through the ‘shepherd’s guise’ in the 1796 version is in turn replaced by several end stops in the 1797 version, regulating the interlacing of feelings and meaning, while also curbing the overall magnitude of the Sublime passion. The greatest loss of this revision, however, is the allusion to Milton’s short poem, ‘At a Solemn Music’, through the “loud uplifted” sounds of the trumpet in the 1796 version:

‘At a solemn Musick [*sic*]’⁵⁸

⁵⁶ PVS, pp 135-175. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

⁵⁷ *Poems*, pp. 117-49. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

⁵⁸ John Milton, ‘At a solemn Musick’, The 1645 *Poems*, in *The Complete Works of John Milton*, III: The Shorter Poems, ed. by Barbara Kiefer Lewalski and Estelle Haan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 21-22.

Blest pair of *Sirens*, pledges of Heav'ns joy,
 Sphear-born harmonious Sisters, Voice, and Vers,
 Wed your divine sounds, and mixt power employ
 Dead things with inbreath'd sense able to pierce,
 And to our high-rai's'd phantasie present, 5
 That undisturbed Song of pure concent,
 Ay sung before the saphire-colour'd throne
 To him that sits theron
 With Saintly shout, and solemn Jubily,
 Where the bright Seraphim in burning row 10
 Their loud up-lifted Angel trumpets blow,
 And the Cherubick host in thousand quires
 Touch their immortal Harps of golden wires,
 With those just Spirits that wear victorious Palms,
 Hymns devout and holy Psalms 15
 Singing everlastingly;
 That we on Earth with undiscording voice
 May rightly answer that melodious noise;
 As once we did, till disproportion'd sin
 Jarr'd against natures chime, and with harsh din 20
 Broke the fair musick that all creatures made
 To their great Lord, whose love their motion sway'd
 In perfect Diapason, whilst they stood
 In first obedience, and their state of good.
 O may we soon again renew that Song, 25
 And keep in tune with Heav'n, till God ere long
 To his celestial consort us unite,
 To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light.

The dangerously sweet voices of the '*Sirens*' in the *Odyssey* 'to our high-rai's'd phantasie present, / That undisturbed Song of pure concent'. Amid those voices which lead to destruction and death, the speaker encountered the gloriousness of eternity now lost. The harmony that once was, is not now to be found, as 'disproportion'd sin / Jarr'd against natures chime, and with harsh din/ Broke the fair musick that all creatures made / To their great Lord'.

Milton ends the poem with the wish that all creatures may ‘renew’ the relationship and ‘unite’ with God in the near future. From the Edenic past, to the sinful present, and to the future reunion, Coleridge’s ‘Religious Musings’ follows Milton’s trajectory by making the Christian history of mankind its subject of concern. Unlike Milton’s ‘At a solemn Musick’ however, ‘Religious Musings’ explores the meaning and possibilities of the present in between the birth of Christ, and the second coming of Christ. The meaning of the present hinges upon the realisation of this hope for a reunion with God. To Milton, the present is a world in which sin impedes all creation from its initial harmony with God. From the Argument of the 1796 ‘Religious Musings’—

ARGUMENT.

Introduction. Person of Christ. His Prayer on the Cross. The process of his Doctrines on the mind of the Individual. Character of the Elect. Superstition. Digression to the present War. Origin and Uses of Government and Property. The present State of Society. French Revolution. Millenium [*sic*]. Universal Redemption. Conclusion.⁵⁹

—we learn that this Miltonic abstraction of a sinful world takes shape as ‘superstition’, ‘the present War’, ‘Government and Property’ and the ‘French Revolution’ for Coleridge. These are the factors contributing to the obstructions (the weed) hindering the realisation of Truth (the flower). An understanding of these obstructions nonetheless lends clarity to Coleridge’s outlook on his Theism and Truth (the flower) in the 1790s. The aesthetics of the Sublime underlying this image invite readers to think and feel the entanglement surrounding the Truth as the personal struggle of Coleridge’s faith and its extension into shared human anxiety about the future. Yearning for socio-political progress in post-Revolution England is the driving force behind Coleridge’s imagination of the ‘Millenium’ (millennialism) prior to the ‘Universal Redemption’ (millenarianism).

In search for a transcendent reunion with God, Coleridge suggests in ‘Religious Musings’ that all contradictory feelings of turmoil at the time in England shall be marshalled into an effort to fuse millennialism and millenarianism. This fusion creates meaningful poetic obscurity in ‘Religious Musings’. Morton D. Paley helpfully defines Millenarianism as ‘the idea that the millennium will be dramatically inaugurated by the Second Coming of Christ’,

⁵⁹ PVS, p. 137.

whereas millennialism is ‘the belief “that history, under divine guidance, will bring about the triumph of Christian principles, and that a holy utopia will come into being”’.⁶⁰ There are three dimensions to the central difference between the two concepts. One dimension which closely relates to the Unitarian aspect of Coleridge’s Theism concerns whether Jesus should be considered as a ‘Man of Woes’ or as a consubstantial form of God as in Trinitarianism. Trinitarian Christians are firm believers in Millenarianism, as apocalypse shall bring about the judgement day, and Christ shall befall as the Saviour of the new Kingdom. Millennialism however does not necessarily require the Second Coming of Christ to bring about the new kingdom, for there would be ‘gradual amelioration of this world until it approximates the kingdom of Christ’.⁶¹ Millennialism is then more compatible with Unitarianism, as Jesus becomes a role model of good man whom everyone should mimic for the amelioration of this world. The second dimension through which we may differentiate the two concepts is, as Peter Kitson points out, that ‘Both the millenarian and the millennialist viewpoints have political corollaries’.⁶² The millenarian apocalyptic change can be ‘translated into a faith in the efficacy or the inevitability of political revolution’.⁶³ The failure of the French Revolution is, in this sense, a millenarian setback, whilst the gradualist approach to the kingdom of Christ entails the mission of social progress within millennialism. A millenarian faith would imply that social progress is unnecessary to the new Kingdom, if that is to be achieved by apocalyptic divine intervention. The third dimension concerns time, which is a point of difference that may resolve, paradoxically, any aforementioned contradictions between the two concepts. In this context, John Axcelson argues that ‘Religious Musings’ is a ‘rapprochement’ between the ‘temporality’ of millennialism and the ‘apocalyptic’ millenarianism through the ‘desultory’ mode of ‘temporal experience’ Coleridge’s introduced into the poem.⁶⁴ This ‘rapprochement’ indicates that the millennialist paradise on earth would be formed gradually and meets with the millenarian new heaven and earth when Christ returns.

In the post-Revolution period of the 1790s, Coleridge felt the need to uphold a millennialist view of social progress, a mentality that allowed him channel evolutionary

⁶⁰ Morton D. Paley, *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 3.

⁶¹ Peter Kitson, ‘Coleridge, Milton and the Millennium’, in *The Wordsworth Circle*, 18.2, 1987, pp. 61-66, at p. 61.

⁶² Kitson, ‘Coleridge, Milton and the Millennium’, p. 61.

⁶³ Kitson, ‘Coleridge, Milton and the Millennium’, p. 61.

⁶⁴ John Axcelson, ‘Timing the Apocalypse: The Career of Religious Musings’, *European Romantic Review*, 16.4, 2005, pp. 439-54.

ideals from the political into the religious sphere. However, his theism, which is poised between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, provides no grounds for a firm rejection of millenarianism. Rather, his strong feeling of faith coupled with his sense of worthlessness—based on the orthodox doctrine of Original Sin, as in ‘Effusion XXXV’—prevent Coleridge from discarding millenarianism. The result is that Coleridge endeavours to fuse both concepts in ‘Religious Musings’, as David Collings argues that ‘Religious Musings’ is ‘a flowing-together of various discourses without violence or symbolic unity’:⁶⁵

This poem can be a “timely utterance,” if at all, not because it is linked to the relative temporal break memorialized by Christmas, but because it voices the promise of imminent apocalypse. In the absence of symbolization, time is deprived of an atemporal foundation that might turn it, for example, into the Christian dispensation; no longer the domain of presence, it is the gap between past and future, the process of ending history and beginning a future which has not arrived. Thus the poem is poised between before and after, caught in the break between history and apocalypse. The poet is at once inside and outside history (lines 45-49), sometimes gazing at the divine light from the perspective of history, sometimes at the horrifying scenes of history from the divine perspective (105-26), but always across the gap or break between them.⁶⁶

This understanding of the present (not in ‘the domain of presence’) effectively represents the capacity in which Coleridge accommodates the Sublime of Truth that is ‘not untrue’. His heterodox speculations are somewhat free from or independent of the continuum of orthodox Christian history. At times, there is the possibility of such fusion, at times this seems stymied by their polarised status—readers are plunged into feeling the poetic obscurity of the Sublime.

Though some revisions in the 1797 ‘Religious Musings’ forsake the ‘glitter’ of aesthetic obscurity Coleridge managed to achieve in his Theism, his newly added footnotes spell out his ambition to fuse the millennialist progress with the millenarian faith for his readers. Towards the end of ‘Religious Musings’, Coleridge draws the second coming of Christ closer to the present through Nature’s jubilant celebration:

⁶⁵ David Collings, ‘Coleridge Beginning a Career: Desultory Authorship in *Religious Musings*’, *ELH*, 58.1, 1991, pp. 167-93, at p. 188.

⁶⁶ Collings, ‘Coleridge Beginning a Career’, p. 176.

The SAVIOUR comes! While as to solemn strains
 The Thousand Years lead up their mystic dance,
 Old Ocean claps his hands! The Desert shouts! (1796, ll. 380-82)

The compelling rapture of the 'solemn strains' recalls Milton's 'solemn Jubily' (l. 9), the visionary union between all creatures and God in 'At a solemn Musick'. That 'The SAVIOUR comes!', announcing the second coming of Christ, is a paradigm of millenarianism. Yet, the 1797 footnote to 'The Thousand Years' (l. 365, 1797) fuses this millenarian feature with a statement of millennialism that advocates, 'gradual amelioration of this world until it approximates the kingdom of Christ' before his second coming. In this footnote about 'The Millenium', Coleridge goes on to claim 'That all who in past ages have endeavoured to ameliorate the state of man, will rise and enjoy the fruits and flowers, the imperceptible seeds of which they had sown in their former Life'. The people Coleridge refers to are:

Coadjutors of God. To MILTON's trump
 The high Groves of the renovated Earth
 Unbosom their glad echoes: inly hush'd
 Adoring NEWTON his serener eye
 Raises to heaven: and he of mortal kind
 Wisest, he* first who mark'd the ideal tribes
 Up the fine fibres thro' the sentient brain.
 Lo! PRIESTLEY there, Patriot, and Saint, and Sage,
 Him, full of years, from his lov'd native land
 Statesmen blood-stain'd and Priests idolatrous
 By dark lies mad'ning the blind multitude
 Drove with vain hate [...]

(1797, ll. 370-81)

*David Hartley.

The enjambment of the lines amplifies the rhythm and draws the poem towards the goal of the Millennium. The enjambment of 'he of mortal kind / Wisest' for example, which seems initially to suggest the imperfections of the 'mortal' before the line-ending, ushers in the countervailing word 'Wisest' in the beginning of the next line. Readers are involved in the poem's passionate drama of progressive millennialism by such means. The Millennium is a

state which Coleridge describes in a footnote as ‘Man will continue to enjoy the highest glory, of which human nature is capable’, here prepared for by the works of Milton, Newton, Hartley and Priestley.

Coleridge did synthesise the ideas of these distinguished predecessors, and built his Theism or system of the Sublime out of theirs. In his contribution (written in 1795) to Book II of Southey’s *Joan of Arc*, he criticises the materialist philosophy of Isaac Newton and David Hartley:

But some there are who deem themselves most free
 When they within this gross and visible sphere
 Chain down the winged thought, scoffing ascent
 Proud in their meanness; and themselves they cheat
 With noisy emptiness of learned phrase,
 Their subtle fluids, impacts, essences,
 Self-working Tools, uncaus’d Effects, and all
 Those blind Omniscients, those Almighty Slaves,
 Untenanting Creation of its God. (ll. 29-37)⁶⁷

The Materialists are criticised for being the slaves of their own senses within the earthly realm. They ‘chain down’ the ‘winged thought’ of Transcendence. Truths in their mouths are sheer ‘noisy emptiness of learned phrase’. These Materialists are as deadening to Coleridge as their false god. After line 37, Coleridge turns to criticise a seemingly less materialistic but equally mechanistic system of Leibnizian monads. Leibniz defines ‘The Monad’ as ‘a *simple* substance, which enters into compounds’, while ‘a compound’ is an ‘*aggregatum* of simple things’.⁶⁸ As Leibniz states ‘If we are to give the name of Soul to everything which has perceptions and desires [*appétits*] in the general sense [...], then all simple substances or created Monads might be called souls’.⁶⁹ With reference to Leibnizian Monadology, Coleridge writes:

[...] Others boldlier think
 That as one body is the aggregate

⁶⁷ *PW*, I, 1, pp. 210-24. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

⁶⁸ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, tr. by Robert Latta (London: Humphrey Milford, 1925), p. 217.

⁶⁹ Leibniz, p. 230.

Of atoms numberless, each organiz'd;
 So by a strange and dim similitude,
 Infinite myriads of self-conscious minds
 Form one all-conscious Spirit, who directs
 With absolute ubiquity of thought
 All his component monads, that yet seem
 With various province and apt agency
 Each to pursue its own self-centering end.

[...]

Thus these pursue their never-varying course,
 No eddy in their stream. Others more wild,
 With complex interests weaving human fates,
 Duteous or proud, alike obedient all,
 Evolve the process of eternal good.

(*Joan of Arc*, ll. 40-59)

To Coleridge, the problem of these 'monads' is that they have 'No eddy in their stream'—no life in their 'never-varying course' of mechanistic agency. The problem of their lifelessness is also explained in the footnote to line 34, where Coleridge argues that if the 'thought' is simply 'inherent' properties of these material monads, there is no 'necessity of a God'.⁷⁰ Yet, Coleridge's understanding of Monadology appears to be the partial groundwork supporting his own thoughts in lines 44-46 of the *Rugby MS Draft 2* of 'Effusion XXXV':

Thus *GOD* would be the universal Soul;
 Mechaniz'd matter as th' organic harps,
 And each one's Tunes be that, which each calls *I*.—

The marked difference from his precursors is that Coleridge reimagines Leibniz's monads each to be a living '*I*', which are the source of 'Tunes' produced by each one of 'th' organic harps'. Coleridge's organic picture of 'Tunes' contains a further suggestion: from the harmonious music of all creation, '*GOD*' is inferred as the master mind which each '*I*' shares. The inference of our participation in the unifying force of God is the sublime destiny of

⁷⁰ *PW*, I, 1, p. 212n.

mankind, a 'Truth' (the flower) inseparable from the awareness of our epistemological limits proposed in 'Religious Musings':

'Tis the sublime of man,
 Our noontide Majesty, to know ourselves
 Parts and proportions of one wond'rous whole:
 This fraternizes man, this constitutes
 Our charities and bearings. But 'tis God
 Diffus'd thro' all, that doth make all one whole;
 This the worst superstition, him except,
 Aught to desire, SUPREME REALITY! (1796, ll. 139-48)

The 'sublime of man' conveys two senses here: the grandeur of mankind and the destiny of mankind. This form of splendour, knowing ourselves as parts of 'one wondrous whole', is the Sublime of our humanity. Equally, 'God / diffus'd thro' all' is the 'SUPREME REALITY'—'the flower' or the Truth—that ought to be desired at all times. Our participation in the Sublime of Truth marks the culmination of mankind as God's creation, even if God can only be apprehended as sublimely obscure, remaining beyond the limits of our understanding.

The gist of the 'sublime of man' hinges on a two-fold realisation: 'to know ourselves, / Parts and portions of one wond'rous whole' and to recognise that "'tis God / Diffus'd thro' all, that doth make all one whole'. In this paradigm, there is no place for the second person of the Trinity. The Unitarian Coleridge would have applauded, although the poems tell a slightly different story. In 'Composed at Clevedon, Somersetshire' (1797),⁷¹ for instance, Coleridge further revised 'Effusion XXXV' (1796):

And what if all of animated nature
 Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,
 That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps,
 Plastic and vast, one intellectual Breeze,
 At once the Soul of each and God of all?—
 But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
 Darts, O beloved Woman! nor such thoughts

⁷¹ *Poems*, pp. 96-99. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

Dim and unhallow'd dost thou not reject,
 And biddest me walk humbly with my God. (1797, ll. 36-44)

Erasing the paragraph-break between lines 40 and 41 and adding a dash to the end of line 40 in this 1797 version, Coleridge dramatizes his growing awareness of 'unhallowed' religious infidelity. The same awareness features in a letter to Thelwall dated 14 October 1797:

I can at times feel strongly the beauties, you describe, in themselves, & for themselves—but more frequently *all things* appear little—all the knowledge, that can be acquired, child's play—the universe itself—what but an immense heap of *little things*?—I can contemplate nothing but parts, & parts are all *little*—!—My mind feels as if it ached to behold & know something *great*—something *one & indivisible*—and it is only in the faith of this that rocks or waterfalls, mountains or caverns give me the sense of sublimity or majesty!—But in this faith *all things* counterfeit infinity!—⁷²

The sublimity in Nature sourced from the Oneness of the universe in this passage also appears in 'Religious Musings'. The stark difference, however, lies in the final phrase: 'But in this faith *all things* counterfeit infinity!'. The word 'counterfeit' suggests a gap between a known orthodox reality and the idealised imagination that generates sublime passion. This elucidation sheds light on the lines revised into a rhetorical question ('And what if [...] / At once the Soul of each and God of all?') in both 'Effusion XXXV' (1796) and 'Composed at Clevedon, Somersetshire' (1797). The revision is less a case of linguistic cautiousness than a reflection of the disparity between what Coleridge would like to believe as he pursued both the Sublime and the 'heap of *little things*' he recognised as worldly reality. M. H. Abrams is right to suggest that 'for [Coleridge] the intellectual cultural, and moral aim of man is not to return to the undifferentiated unity at the beginning of development, but to strive toward the multiteity-in-unity at its end'.⁷³ This is precisely why Coleridge paid tribute to his predecessors whose ideas, though incongruent with his, aspired to improve the state of men.

⁷² *CL*, I, p. 349.

⁷³ M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), p. 269.

Unlike these predecessors however, Coleridge spoke of his inner struggle while musing about various unorthodox religious positions in both ‘Effusion XXXV’ (1796) and ‘Composed at Clevedon, Somersetshire’ (1797):

These shapings of the unregenerate mind,
 Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
 On vain Philosophy’s aye-babbling spring.
 For never guiltless may I speak of Him,
 Th’ INCOMPREHENSIBLE! save when with awe
 I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels;
 Who with his saving mercies healed me, (1797, ll. 47-53)

The ‘Bubbles that glitter’ are reminiscent of the stylistic ‘swell and glitter’ that Coleridge attempted to tame in ‘Religious Musings’. The fact that these bubbles would break bespeaks a fundamental problem of his approach to the Sublime: Philosophy’s inability to untangle ‘the weed’ has taken Coleridge further away from ‘the flower’, rendering Truth ‘INCOMPREHENSIBLE’—all done in ‘vain’. The poetic obscurity to which he confesses looks forward to the untangling of the weed by the Divine Being who transcends all imperfection and limitations. By the end of ‘Religious Musings’ (1797), Coleridge gave Truth a Platonic and visionary form:

Believe thou, O my soul,
 Life is a vision shadowy of Truth;
 And vice, and anguish, and the wormy grave,
 Shapes of a dream! The veiling clouds retire,
 And lo! the Throne of the redeeming God
 Forth flashing unimaginable day
 Wraps in one blaze earth, heaven, and deepest hell. (1797, ll. 402-408)

‘Life is a vision shadowy of Truth’—the reality of the obscure Sublime is contrasted with Divine revelation on the ‘unimaginable day’, when the ‘redeeming God’ reconciles the epistemological gap between him and his creations. As a response to Burke, clearness in a Coleridgean sense becomes an integral part of obscurity, as our faith and feeling affirm the reality of the obscure Sublime. Musings on religious positions coupled with a lack of

certainly contribute to Coleridge's poetic obscurity, which is also a kind of imaginative freedom within the inherent obscurity of the Sublime. It is his paradoxical achievement to convey the link between clearness and authentic obscurity, as a means to justify entangling the flower of Sublime revelation with the weed of endless conjectures about the Truth.

A footnote added to this paragraph (ll. 402-408) of the 1797 'Religious Musings' contains a fascinating reflection: 'This paragraph is intelligible to those, who, like the Author, believe and feel the sublime system of Berkley [*sic*]; and the doctrine of the final Happiness of all men'. 'The Bristol Library Borrowings of Southey and Coleridge, 1793-8' confirms that Coleridge wrote to Joseph Cottle about his finishing of 'Religious Musings' for the first edition of *Poems* in early March, meanwhile he also started reading the second volume of George Berkeley's works from 10-28th March 1796.⁷⁴ This particular volume can be traced on the basis of Whalley's record.⁷⁵ Though the record contains ellipsis, it is specific enough to point to the one edition Coleridge read at that time in 1796. The first work of this volume is 'Passive Obedience' which explores the validity of rebellion in light of Romans 8:2—'Whosoever resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God.'⁷⁶ Looking forward ultimately to the divine light of the Kingdom of God yonder, Coleridge unravels the purpose of his high and obscure sublime aesthetics in simplicity—the purpose of this Romantic quest is happiness, which is also what a good poet shall aim to communicate through his positive egotism in poetry. In 'Passive Obedience', good is accompanied by happiness or pleasure, and is antithetical to evil:

V. Self-love being a principle of all others the most universal, and the most deeply engraven in our hearts, it is natural for us to regard things as they are fitted to augment or impair our own happiness; and accordingly we denominate them *good* or *evil*. Our judgment is ever employed in distinguishing between these two; and it is the whole business of our lives to endeavour, by a proper application of our faculties, to procure the one and avoid the other. At our first coming into the

⁷⁴ George Whalley, 'The Bristol Library Borrowings of Southey and Coleridge, 1793-8', *The Library*, s5-IV.2, 1949, pp. 114-32, at p. 122.

⁷⁵ George Berkeley, *The Works of George Berkeley, D.D. Late Bishop of Cloyne in Ireland, To which is added, an account of his life, and several of his letters to Thomas Prior, Esq. Dean Gervais, and Mr. Pope, &c. &c.*, vol. II (Dublin: G. Robinson, Pater Noster Row, and John Exshaw, MDCCLXXXIV [1784]), in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*,

<<http://find.galegroup.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&docLevel=FASCIMILE&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=duruni&tabID=T001&docId=CW3319149219&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0>> [accessed 9 Mar. 2019].

⁷⁶ Berkeley, *The Works of George Berkeley*, p. 5.

world, we are entirely guided by the impressions of sense; sensible pleasure being the infallible characteristic of present good as pain is of evil. [...]

VI. But, as the whole earth and the entire duration of those perishing things contained in it is altogether in considerable, or in the prophet's expressive style, *less than nothing* in respect of eternity, who sees not that every reasonable man ought so to frame his actions as that they may most effectually contribute to promote his eternal interest? And, since it is a truth, evident by the light of nature, that there is a sovereign omniscient spirit, who alone can make us for ever happy, or for ever miserable; it plainly follows that a conformity to His will, and not any prospect of temporal advantage, is the sole rule whereby every man who acts up to the principles of reason must govern and square his actions. [...]⁷⁷

The religious revelation 'evident by the light of nature' to the transcendent capacity in 'Religious Musings' points towards the millenarian future of the possible reunion with God. But it is within human nature—the principle of 'self-love'—to strive for such eternal good, despite all odds and evils, for the final happiness of men. Coleridge's millennial effort is a realisation of the goodness around him, as the epigraph of this chapter has suggested. In 'Religious Musings', the possibility to fuse millenarianism with millennialism may then be attributed to the pleasure engendered by poetry. That this pleasure drifts towards the final happiness of men is the reason why Coleridge chooses Akenside's verses to be the epigraph of 'Religious Musings' (1796, 1797):

What tho' first,
 In years unseason'd, I attun'd the Lay
 To idle Passion and unreal Woe?
 Yet serious Truth her empire o'er my song
 Hath now asserted: Falshood's evil brood,
 Vice and deceitful Pleasure, She at once
 Excluded, and my Fancy's careless toil
 Drew to the better cause!

AKENSIDE.

⁷⁷ Berkeley, *The Works of George Berkeley*, pp. 7-8.

The figure of ‘Truth’ as an ‘empire’ is suggestive of its power in overcoming the earthly falsehood, evil and vice. Her power purges away ‘deceitful Pleasure’, and guides Coleridge’s metaphysical speculations ‘to the better cause’. The word ‘cause’ is crucial to Coleridge’s religious Transcendence: as it is impossible to use ‘—Bad means for a good end—’ in common logic, Coleridge continues to write in his notebook that, ‘I cannot conceive that <there can be> any road to Heaven through Hell—’.⁷⁸ In a deeper understanding of the word ‘cause’, it is not simply a better millenarian end (namely, the second coming of Christ) to which his imagination is directed. ‘[T]he sublime of man’ is to embrace, in Berkeley’s words, ‘a conformity to His will’. This conformity constitutes Coleridge’s millennial worldview: it is an expression of God’s will, or what Coleridge defined as ‘Optimism—by having no will but the will of Heaven, ~~an~~ we call in Omnipotence to fight our battles!—’ against evils.⁷⁹ Poetic obscurity as transcendent aesthetics, first inspired by Coleridge’s ‘vain Philosophy’s aye-babbling’, has now been ‘dr[awn] to the better cause’ in ‘Religious Musings’. Coleridge’s revisions of his poetry, as well as his careful expressions of Theism, form an on-going ratification of the divine will of revelation permeating Coleridge’s religious Transcendence.

IV

Berkeley’s sublime system enlightened Coleridge about the mutuality of happiness between poetry and Theism in ‘Religious Musings’. In 1797, Coleridge goes on to celebrate this mutuality of happiness in ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison’ by foregrounding the mediating Nature. The mesmerising shapes and shades of Nature in ‘This Lime-Tree’ convey and make available the grounds for theistic faith in revealed religion. Jack Stillinger argues that

One could discover numerous subtle implications of these [textual] changes to relate to Coleridge’s shifts in religious thinking more generally. But it would be a serious mistake to overlook the fact that from beginning to end—in both the depressive “prison” aspects of the first part, where the speaker is cut off from the scenes that he imagines, and the celebratory second part, where he discovers

⁷⁸ *CN*, I, 56.

⁷⁹ *CN*, I, 22.

beauty and harmony in his surroundings at hand—the poem is one long eloquent expression of the unity of all things.⁸⁰

Stillinger points to Coleridge's unchanging desire for unity in different versions of this poem. But it would be a mistake to detach this 'expression of the unity of all things' from a theological perspective. Coleridge's impulse for unity is both religious and artistic,⁸¹ achieving a form of transcendent aesthetics in 'This Lime-Tree'. This form of transcendent aesthetics yokes together the rhetorical with the theological, where we cannot mention one aspect without involving the other. Coleridge's Theism is revealed in Nature through the rhetorical union of opposing dualities, which intimates the theological possibility of a union with the creator—a vision enacting 'the doctrine of the final happiness of all men'. The textual revisions Coleridge made in the 1790s for the publication of 'This Lime-Tree' deepen this theological vision. The versions of texts discussed includes the first version of the poem in a letter to Robert Southey dated 17 July 1797, and the first published version of the poem in the second volume of the *Annual Anthology* (1800), edited by Southey. The revisions Coleridge made in these few years foster various senses and modes of Transcendence. Critics have identified the major thematic oppositions of the poem: 'they include prison and bower, confinement and liberation, isolation and communion, depression and elation, internal self and external other, multitude and unity, beauty and sublimity, the present and the future' as Stillinger summarises.⁸² But the senses or modes of transcendence become explicit when these binaries begin to actively build into the emergence of one another in the 1800 version, eventually eliding the gap between the rhetorical and the theological through sublime feelings.

In the letter to Robert Southey, readers learn the biographical setting of the poem as one precipitated by an accident. Coleridge writes that Mrs Coleridge 'accidentally emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot, which confined me during the whole time of C. Lamb's stay & still prevents me from all walks longer than a furlong'.⁸³ The physical confinement of Coleridge to the bower in turn develops into a foil for what the poet demonstrated as imagination—a power to muster up something out of nothingness—to transcend his physical

⁸⁰ Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 52.

⁸¹ See R. A. Durr, "'This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison'" and a Recurrent Action in Coleridge', *ELH*, 26.4, 1959, pp. 514-30. R. A. Durr argues that 'Art is an imitation of nature serving as "the mediatrix between, and reconciler of, nature and man.'" (p. 514).

⁸² Stillinger, p. 50.

⁸³ *CL*, I, p. 334.

seclusion. It is within this creative process that Coleridge comes to realise his fellowship with Nature:

[...] Henceforth, I shall know
That nature ne'er deserts the wise & pure,
No scene so narrow, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love & Beauty: [...]

(1797, ll. 40-44)⁸⁴

Counting on the faithfulness of Nature for companionship, Coleridge gains the will to activate the capacity of his mind. This capacity of the mind may look as if the imagination functions in circularity, as the imagination presupposes Coleridge's realisation of Nature's companionship, even if Coleridge frames the imagination as a mystic power given by Nature. Yet, the origin of this imaginative power should not be external, but internal from within the human mind. It is Coleridge's desire of 'Love & Beauty' that instigates the imagination. This desire entices and endears readers to the imagination of the poet in 'This Lime-Tree', and, from the epigraph of this chapter, we know that poetry is by itself an 'exceeding great reward' to Coleridge. Poetry ignites such desire, even turning it into a habitual yearning. This prepares the ground for us to understand Coleridge's addition to the opening lines of the 1800 version:

[...] I have lost
Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
Had dimm'd mine eyes to blindness! [...]

(1800, ll. 2-5)⁸⁵

There is a subtle difference between losing 'Beauties and feelings' and losing the ability to behold beauties and to feel. The later would mean that one could not identify beauties, nor to know what should be felt. Here in the 1800 version, Coleridge knows what those 'Beauties and feelings' once were in 1797 when the poem was first composed, but he lost touch with the sense (the sweetness) of beauties and feelings. A sense that lives in memory would allow

⁸⁴ *CL*, I, pp. 334-36. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

⁸⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison, A POEM, Addressed to CHARLES LAMB, of the Indian-House, London', in *The Annual Anthology*, vol. II (Bristol: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1800), pp. 140-44. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

a person to experience beyond the here and now. To revivify this sense, the poet relies upon Nature as a source of beauties and feelings, with whom he may revise the sense of sweetness.

Much of what Coleridge revised and expanded from lines 9 to 20 of the first verse paragraph in the 1800 version therefore, is an exercise of poetry writing to set his mind back in the habitual desire to discover beauties and feelings, in order to get back in touch with that sense of sweetness:

To that still roaring dell, of which I told;
 The roaring dell, o'erwooded narrow deep,
 And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
 Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rack
 Flings arching like a bridge;—that branchless ash,
 Unsunn'd and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
 Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
 Fann'd by the water-fall! And there my friends
 Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
 That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
 Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
 Of the blue clay-stone. (1800, ll. 9-20)

Christopher Miller argues that, in these lines, 'Each use of the word ['still'] has a different nuance'.⁸⁶ Miller locates binary meanings transcending into one another by their confluence in this recurring word. Aptly raised by Miller, the word 'still' brings together the past (the 1797 version) and present (the 1800 reimagining) in terms of time and space in 'that still roaring dell'. The movement of 'tremble' is modified by the adverb 'still' to stress its continuation in action, while 'still' as the adjective of 'stillness' suggests the lack of movement—a contrast that brings together imagination and reality; Miller calls this use of 'still' 'contrastive persistence' to stress that 'though the leaves are too sequestered to feel the wind, they are nevertheless ruffled by the waterfall'.⁸⁷ As Coleridge goes on to describe the scenery his friends came across in the 1800 version, the transcending quality, which unites binaries in his rhetoric, sparks an argument: Coleridge's description is treated 'as an address

⁸⁶ Christopher Miller, 'Coleridge and the Scene of Lyric Description', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 101.4, 2002, pp. 520-39, at p. 536.

⁸⁷ Miller, 'Coleridge and the Scene of Lyric Description', p. 536.

to them that actively directs their steps',⁸⁸ rewriting, as it were, his absence from the scene. This argument highlights the rhetorical nuance Coleridge fastidiously crafted, which allows him to recover the sense of beauties and feelings quickly. Thus, the speaker may transcend time and space to share the sense of sweetness with his friends.

But the purpose of this poem is no simple reconnection between Coleridge and his friends. Coleridge attempts to suggest through his transcending rhetoric the possibility of religious transcendence:

[...] —So my friend
 Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
 Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
 On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
 Less gross than bodily, a living thing
 Which *acts* upon the mind—and with such hues
 As cloath the Almighty Spirit, when he makes
 Spirits perceive his presence. (1800, ll. 38-44)

In the 1797 version, Coleridge attached a footnote to 'On the wide view' (the word 'view' is revised into 'landscape' in 1800): 'You remember, I am a *Berkelean*'.⁸⁹ The memory cue of this footnote reminds us of another footnote he inserted to 'Religious Musings' in the second edition of *Poems* (1797), which mentions the 'sublime system of Berkley'. The rhetorical revision Coleridge made in the 1800 version 'This Lime-Tree' allows him to reconnect with that lost sense of beauties and feelings, which in effect serves as the stepping stone for perceiving and feeling a more advanced sense of sublime. With respect to these few lines (ll. 38-44) of the 1800 version, Coleridge appears to hold with the Berkeleian view we have encountered in 'Passive Obedience': 'since it is a truth, evident by the light of nature, that there is a sovereign omniscient spirit [...]'.⁹⁰ Balancing the justification of the existence of this 'sovereign omniscient Spirit' with the fluidity of the 'swimming sense', the poet offers us

⁸⁸ Michael Simpson, 'Coleridge's Swinging Moods and the Revision of "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison"', *Style*, 33.1, 1999, pp. 21-42, at p. 26.

⁸⁹ *CL*, I, p. 335.

⁹⁰ Berkeley, *The Works of George Berkeley*, p. 8. J. A. Appleyard encapsulates the Berkeleian doctrine here involved as 'nature is the language of God, that the existence of sensible beings consists in their being perceived by a mind, that these things of nature are ideas directly communicated to us by God to reveal his creative and conserving presence, and that the apprehension of these ideas is the function of pure intellect, spirit responding to spirit.' See J. A. Appleyard, *Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature: The Development of a Concept of Poetry, 1791-1819* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 49.

a gleam of religious transcendence in ‘This Lime-Tree’. As we witness the way in which Coleridge transcends time (in 1797 and ‘still’ in 1800) and space (his bower) rhetorically to share the experience of, or even join in, the walk with his friends, he slips in the possibility that we may share the same experience of Theism through the mediating Nature. The sublime feeling that transcends the ‘bodily’ permeates the shapes and ‘hues’ of the materiality of Nature; together, they reveal the ‘presence’ of ‘the Almighty Spirit’. R. A. Durr argues that ‘Nature *is* not the Almighty Spirit; it simply veils Him; He is shining in and through Nature, which thus partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible.’⁹¹ The aptness of this remark hinges on its subtle attention to the simile—‘As cloath’—which brings together the outer signs in Nature and the hidden Truth beyond Nature. Yet, not all is ‘intelligible’ here as this simile also signals the image of a cloth to be the barrier of our knowledge in perceiving the invisible God in Nature. The unintelligible is spelled out through an echo between ‘On the wide landscape’ and

Now my friends emerge
Beneath the wide wide Heaven—and view again (1800, ll. 21-22)

In the picturesque scene, ‘the wide landscape’ which Coleridge and his friends inhabit is less broad and hierarchically below ‘the wide wide Heaven’. We can behold ‘the wide landscape’ with our eyes, but there is a touch of poetic obscurity in the vastness of ‘the wide wide Heaven’, as its loftiness cannot be measured with our senses. However, the unintelligible evoked in the word ‘cloath’ sparks hope instead of despair, as

A delight
Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there! [...] (1800, ll. 45-47)

This feeling of delight multiplies as Coleridge endows the word ‘there’ with two potential destinies: in a literal sense, in ‘the wide landscape’ with his friends, but not simply so. ‘[T]here’ also points to ‘the wide wide Heaven’ where he unites with ‘the Almighty Spirit’. This hope, coupled with the faithfulness of Nature, which Coleridge realised thereafter, aligns the final happiness of all men with the ‘lively joy’ (l. 69) that poetry promised. The

⁹¹ R. A. Durr, “‘This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison’ and a Recurrent Action in Coleridge”, *ELH*, 26.4, 1959, pp. 514-30, at pp. 525-26.

possibility of religious transcendence is stirred up in the mind of the readers chiefly by a common desire for joy and pleasure on the Berkeleyan principle of 'self-love'. Jean-Pierre Mileur argues that

nature—its sights, sounds, and smells—is privileged because it provides that level of experience shared by all which serves as the basis for the conviction that there is among men a community of thought and feeling. It is this community of the subjective rather than the unity (elusive indeed) of the individual identity which provides, in this poem, the faith that sustains a vision of an immanent Almighty Spirit.⁹²

The 'community of subjective' Mileur proposes captures the relational dynamics between the 'egotism' of a poet and the 'communicativeness' of poetry, which Coleridge mentioned in the Preface to *Poems to Various Subjects* (1796). However, to avoid elusiveness, Mileur seems reluctant to consider the possibility that this 'community of the subjective' can bring about a transcendent unity among the 'spirits' and 'the Almighty Spirit'. If readers only seek to behold 'a vision of an immanent Almighty Spirit', we lose sight of what Coleridge called the 'irresistible Demonstration of intending Causality' in Nature.⁹³ The immanence of God is the hint to us about God's transcendent existence. I argue therefore that the 'community of the subjective' means that mankind share basic sensory experience with Nature, which facilitate transcendent experience: our collective sensory perception of Nature only 'cloath[s]' the intended transcendent unity of 'Life' (l. 78). This 'causality' is 'irresistible' to Coleridge who sought to communicate such feelings with his readers.

The pantheistic and immanent appearance of the Almighty Spirit in Nature, which serves as a perceivable gleam of the Deity, is not in contradiction with religious transcendence. It is vital for the irresistible causality to bring religious transcendence into possibility. Our subjective feeling of Sublime links the beauties of Nature to the 'presence' of her Creator. 'The wide landscape' stands as a visual and subjectively communal frame for apprehending 'the wide wide heaven', which, as Jonathan Wordsworth argues, 'seems in fact to represent a fusion of Priestley's views and Berkeley's'.⁹⁴ Jonathan Wordsworth

⁹² Jean-Pierre Mileur, *Vision and Revision: Coleridge's Art of Immanence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 43-44.

⁹³ *LPR*, p. 94.

⁹⁴ Jonathan Wordsworth, *The Music of Humanity: A Critical Study of Wordsworth's Ruined Cottage, Incorporating Texts from a Manuscript of 1799-1800* (London: Nelson, 1969), p. 197.

manoeuvres between the materiality and spirituality of the landscape by arguing that ‘The landscape acts upon the mind in a thoroughly Berkleyan manner, but nevertheless has life because in a Priestleyan sense it is an extension of God’.⁹⁵ But the line ‘a living Thing / That acts upon the mind’ on which Jonathan Wordsworth bases his argument is deleted by Coleridge in the 1817 version. The consequence of such revision is that readers are left with a transition from the material to the spiritual through the figurative speech ‘as veil’ (revised from ‘as cloath’) in the 1817 version. The poem is still pantheistic, but to maintain that Nature is ‘an extension of God’ in the 1800 version, given the direction of Coleridge’s textual revision, risks downplaying the quality of ‘counterfeit[ing]’ created by the simile (‘as veil’ / ‘as cloath’) in equating ‘a living Thing’ to a transcendent and invisible Deity.⁹⁶ Lucy Newlyn notices that, in regards to this simile, ‘imagination has its God-like potential’, as ‘It invests Nature with meaning, and the veil it gives to finite forms is one that reveals the imaginative truth which is incarnate within it’.⁹⁷ Here, the pantheistic sense in the 1800 version is supplied by the imagination. What incarnates in Nature is not the whole or part of the Deity Himself, but ‘the imaginative truth’: the possibility of religious transcendence, that is the divinity invested by Coleridge in the ‘hues’ of Nature as deistic traces. The objective observation of ‘an extension of God’ in Nature by Jonathan Wordsworth is reversed into a subjective process of creation in Newlyn’s account. This reversal is central to Transcendence, as Appleyard argues that ‘the apprehension of these ideas is the function of pure intellect, spirit responding to spirit’.⁹⁸ The emotional and intellectual to and fro between one’s subjectivity and Nature count on such imaginative divinity to dwell in among them.

The sense of unity Coleridge arrives at by the end of ‘This Lime-Tree’ relies on the mutual responding between ‘spirits’ to come to realise the possible existence of a Deity:

My gentle-hearted CHARLES! when the last Rook
 Beat its straight path along the dusky air
 Homewards, I blest it! deeming its black wing
 (Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
 Had cross’d the mighty orb’s dilated glory
 While thou stood’st gazing; or when all was still,
 *Flew *creeking* o’er thy head, and had a charm

⁹⁵ Jonathan Wordsworth, *The Music of Humanity*, p. 197.

⁹⁶ *CL*, I, p. 349.

⁹⁷ Lucy Newlyn, *Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 81.

⁹⁸ Appleyard, p. 49.

For thee, my gentle-hearted CHARLES! to whom
 No sound is dissonant, which tells of Life. (1800, ll. 70-78)

ESTEESI.

The enjambment of these lines leads the varying rhythms to glide gently and naturally, responding very much to the movements of ‘the last Rook’ rhythmically ‘beat[ing]’ ‘its black wing’. At first in the 1797 version, Coleridge thinks of ‘Life’ through the orchestrating sounds of Nature, as he uses ‘Flew creaking’ to draw attention to the sound made by a flying rook. Footnoted to ‘Flew *creeking*’ in the 1800 version, Coleridge explains his revision quoting a passage written by William Bartram:

* *Flew creeking*.—Some months after I had written this line, it gave me pleasure to find that Bartram had observed the same circumstance of the Savanna Crane. “When these Birds move their wings in flight, their strokes are slow, moderate and regular; and even when at a considerable distance, or high above us, we plainly hear the quill feathers: their shafts and webs upon one another creek as the joints or working of a vessel in a tempestuous sea.[”]⁹⁹

That ‘their strokes are slow, moderate and regular’ reminds us of the quality of Coleridge’s blank verse. As well as this echoing of sounds, the evolution from ‘creak’ to ‘creek’ invites us to think of ‘Life’ not simply as the harmony of sounds, but the working together of every sound that belong to one whole. The togetherness of ‘the joints’ implies a body as ‘a vessel’ that holds the working of parts. The imagery invokes the ways in which the mutual responses between spirits may find purposeful patterns in chaos (‘a tempestuous sea’). The concept of ‘Life’ is enriched, by Coleridge’s reading of Bartram’s observation, with an implication of an existence (possibly a Deity) who embeds in all ‘spirits’ the working they bear before they knew, towards achieving a purposive unity.

Signing his poem with ‘ESTEESI’ in the 1800 version, Coleridge reminds his readers that the sense of sublime of his theism is ‘not untrue’. In a letter to William Sotheby dated 10 September 1802, Coleridge explained this signature:

⁹⁹ Coleridge, ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison’, p. 144n. The words following the open quotation mark (“) are copied by Coleridge from: William Bartram, *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws. Containing an Account of the Soil and Natural Productions of those Regions; Together with Observations on the Manners of the Indians. Embellished with Copper-plates* (London: J. Johnson, 1794), at p. 219.

Ἔστησε signifies—*He hath stood*—which in these times of apostacy from the principles of Freedom, or of Religion in this country, & from both by the same persons in France, is no unmeaning Signature, if subscribed with humility, & in the remembrance of, Let him that stands take heed lest he fall—. However, it is in truth no more than S. T. C. written in Greek. Es tee see—¹⁰⁰

Ἔστησε is stemmed from *ἵστημι*, meaning ‘make to stand’ in its basic semantic sense.¹⁰¹ Griggs argues that “*Ἔστησε* signifies “He hath placed” not “He hath stood”. The word should have been *Ἔστηκε*, but then the play on Coleridge’s initials would have been lost.’¹⁰² Griggs’s footnote to this passage of Coleridge’s letter needs to be expanded further. It is true that *ἔστησε* can signify ‘He hath placed’ with ‘place’ being a transitive verb; equally true is that *ἔστηκε* can mean ‘He hath stood’ in the perfect tense. However, both *ἔστησε* and *ἔστηκε* have *ἵστημι* as their root, which is a polysemous word and can mean ‘stand’ or ‘place’ depending on the context.¹⁰³ What Griggs may have omitted is that *ἔστησε* actually can mean ‘he stood’ in the aorist aspect (which usually specifies the completeness of the action).¹⁰⁴ The lack of the aorist aspect in English may have led to Coleridge’s use of the perfect tense in English to specify the aorist aspect of the Greek in lieu of the simple past tense. Instead of Grigg’s reading, it seems that Coleridge has specified his grammatical usage of the word *Ἔστησε* as an intransitive verb with aorist aspect in the early stage of his career, which literally translated as ‘he has made to stand’.¹⁰⁵ In English, it only makes sense if we insert a direct object, as in ‘he has made (somebody) to stand’,¹⁰⁶ but to avoid confusing the sheer sense of having the subject ‘he’ performing the action ‘stand’, it is understandable that Coleridge uses ‘He hath stood’. In other words, Coleridge’s translation is perhaps less forceful—abiding by the sound but not the meaning of *ἔστησε*—than Griggs’s interpretation.

¹⁰⁰ *CL*, II, p. 867.

¹⁰¹ ‘ἵστημι’, *The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, in *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, University of California Regents, 2014 <<http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/#eid=52713&context=lsg&action=from-search>> [accessed 21 March 2019].

¹⁰² *CL*, II, p. 867n.

¹⁰³ See Tim Fulford, *Coleridge’s Figurative Language* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), pp. 28-29.

¹⁰⁴ ‘ἔστησε’, in *Perseus Greek Word Study Tool*, Tuft University, [n.d.] <[http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?!=e\)sthse&la=greek&fbclid=IwAR33XTCyt11Oe1Av8Qu5Kqv1Kd2evvWLj_bSls69aeTqlDBSnWgRHL3Pam8#lexicon](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?!=e)sthse&la=greek&fbclid=IwAR33XTCyt11Oe1Av8Qu5Kqv1Kd2evvWLj_bSls69aeTqlDBSnWgRHL3Pam8#lexicon)> [accessed 25 March 2019].

¹⁰⁵ *PW*, I, 2, p. 972n. J. C. C. Mays translated the same Greek word which appeared in ‘A Character’ as ‘he has made to stand’.

¹⁰⁶ John Beer speculated with reference to ‘A Character’ (1825) that ‘By “the fullest sense”, Coleridge may here mean both “He hath stood himself” and “He hath made others to stand”’. See John Beer, ‘Coleridge at School’, *Notes and Queries*, 203, 1958, pp. 114-16, at p. 116.

But the fact that Coleridge keeps coming back to this Greek pun of his name in his later years shows that the layers of meaning to this pun may also be extending alongside his construction and reflection of the self.¹⁰⁷

My focus here is on ‘This Lime-Tree’ in the earlier period (1797 to 1802), in which this verb ‘stand’ in the signature is strikingly significant to the content of the poem. Coleridge has placed his friends and his readers in his shoes—‘So my friend / Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood’ prior to the moment of religious transcendence ‘when he makes / Spirits perceive his presence’. As Paul Magnuson rightly argues, ‘Coleridge’s signature indicates that it is a poem about standing and taking a politically transgressive stand’; and by transgressive, he means that ‘Coleridge stands opposed to established religion and the government’.¹⁰⁸ Coleridge’s abridged version of the bible verse, 1 Corinthians 10:12, KJV—‘Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.’—in the letter is hence often read as an admonition to the standing power at the time. Seldom do we think of it as an admonition of the religious stance Coleridge has taken in ‘This Lime-Tree’: the word ‘humility’ brings back a note of dissonance from ‘Effusion XXXV’—‘thy more serious eye’ of Sara who ‘biddest me walk humbly with my God’. Standing against established Christianity in poetry is not uniquely Coleridgean. Yet, to stand where Coleridge stands, in ‘This Lime-Tree’, and to feel the Sublimity of Truth that is ‘not untrue’ is both unique and revolutionary, as we as readers are permitted to perceive God’s presence with our own senses and sensibility.

¹⁰⁷ See Seamus Perry, ‘Coleridge’s Name’, *The Coleridge Bulletin*, 11 (NS), 1998, pp. 37-47; Seamus Perry, ‘Coleridge and the End of Autonomy’, in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Sciences of Life*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 246-68, at p. 262.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 60-61.

Chapter 2

The Experiential Original Sin

Mind, shipwrecked by storms of doubt, now mastless, rudderless,
shattered,—pulling in the dead swell of a dark & windless Sea.

(*CN*, I, 932)

Coleridge aspires to a sense of Oneness in Nature in his poetry of the 1790s, but his desire for religious Transcendence is not always expressed with the same confident hope. Readers come to know Coleridge's Transcendence through the anxiety and metaphysical challenges he underwent, while he tries to represent this transcendent unity in poems. One of the greatest challenges Coleridge encountered is the notion of Original Sin. So complex is this challenge to Transcendence, I have divided a discussion of this and related issues across this chapter and the next. This chapter focuses on the question of what is understood here as an experiential Original Sin, and the next on related matters of epistemological anxiety.

This chapter focuses on the ways in which Coleridge explores Original Sin in 'The Ancient Mariner' (1798, 1800), not so much as an orthodox doctrine, but how it is experienced by the Mariner and the poem's readers. Part I argues that this attempt initially stems from Coleridge's queries concerning the Spinozistic God in 1798 to 1803. In this sense, Coleridge struggles to reconcile the various senses we perceive in reality with the notion of the Oneness of God. This Spinozistic consideration scrutinises the connection between the material and the spiritual. To seek to understand this connection locates the intellectual impasse at which Coleridge's idea of Transcendence emerges between the material and the spiritual. In 'The Ancient Mariner', this connection is expressed through how subjectivity influences the reliability and the scope of knowledge we may gain from reality. It is ideas of subjectivity which anticipate Coleridge's distinction between Transcendence and Transcendentalism at a later stage of his life around the 1800s (see chapter 4). The Spinozistic dilemma of the one and the many is analogous to the problem of representing God among the multiplicity of reality in 'The Ancient Mariner'. Part II contextualises Coleridge's intellectual exposure to Spinozism during his stay in Germany in 1798-99 and foregrounds the poet's revisions to the 1800 version of 'The Ancient Mariner'. The subjective narrative framework of the poem mediates the partial and fractured reality in which sin impedes our perception of Truth. The Mariner's and readers' inability to fully understand this

reality is telling about experience of Original Sin in the poem. Part III explores Coleridge's understanding of guilt in the poem, and how it contributes to an experience of sins which is perhaps not objectively logical, but subjectively powerful. The guilt exhibited in the subjectivity of the Mariner weighs so heavily that it both problematizes the Christian scheme of salvation and the notion of God's benevolence.

I

In the version of 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' found in a letter to Robert Southey, written on 17 July 1797, Coleridge offers the reader a possibility of glimpsing a unified Deity through his transcendent rhetoric. Yet, hinted at in the discussion of the previous chapter, there is a disconcerting element lurking beneath the surface of the harmonised vision amid the poem's closing lines:

My Sister & my Friends! when the last Rook
 Beat it's straight path along the dusky air
 Homewards, I bless'd it; deeming it's black wing
 Cross'd, like a speck, the blaze of setting day,
 While ye stood gazing; or when all was still,
 Flew creaking o'er your heads, & had a charm
 For you, my sister & my Friends! to whom
 No sound is dissonant, which tells of Life!¹

The apostrophe addressing William and Dorothy Wordsworth, and Charles Lamb effectively excludes Coleridge from sharing in the proposed vision of harmony or Oneness. It sparks a self-reflexive moment of doubt and uncertainty. Deeming 'the rook as a bird of ill-omen, associated with the primordial dark, destruction, and death', Mark Sandy insightfully argues that 'These associations are absorbed into the speaker's avowed positive universal vision which is [...] dependent on "inward vision" and subjective sensibility, but also in this case reliant on that "gentle-hearted Charles" for "whom" no such "sound is dissonant".'²

Extending such thoughts, we may trace the source of this self-reflexive doubt back to the

¹ *CL*, I, p. 336.

² Mark Sandy, *Romanticism, Memory, and Mourning*, Nineteenth Century Series (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 51. Later versions of 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' use 'gentle-hearted Charles' to substitute 'For you, my sister & my Friends'.

psyche of Coleridge—his sinful nature once confessed in ‘Effusion XXXV’—‘A sinful and most miserable man / Wilder’d and dark’ (ll. 54-55). The harmonious Oneness of ‘Life’ by the end of ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison’ can be translated, in theological terms, into a transcendent union with God. However, the doctrine of Original Sin still holds a fascination for Coleridge, because it acts as an impediment to this idea of Oneness.

Coleridge was notably drawn to the topic of Original Sin around November 1797. He composed Canto II of *The Wanderings of Cain*, a fragment built upon the first murder in the Bible. In its Prefatory Note written in 1828, Coleridge spells out retrospectively his intention to write this canto in the first place:

Almost thirty years have passed by; yet at this moment I cannot without something more than a smile moot the question which of the two things was the more impracticable, for a mind so eminently original to compose another man’s thoughts and fancies, or for a taste so austere pure and simply to imitate the Death of Abel?³

Coleridge’s tone may seem dismissive, but it highlights, rather than buries, his impressive metaphysical ambition for this work. The adjectives—‘eminently original’, ‘austere pure’—relates the unfinished piece to aesthetic considerations, yet the ‘two things’ which were the most ‘impracticable’ refer to Coleridge’s attempt to relive the ‘thoughts and fancies’ of Cain, as well as ‘imitate’ in an imaginative world ‘the Death of Abel’. Unable to fully access Cain’s subjectivity imaginatively, Coleridge aborted his scheme, but clearly not his interest in exploring an experience of Original Sin. Consequently, as we know from the Prefatory Note of *The Wanderings of Cain*, ‘the Ancient Mariner was written instead’.⁴

The implication of Original Sin in the story of the Ancient Mariner is met with objection from Harold Bloom who finds it rather unnatural for critics to ‘baptize the poem by importing into it the notion of Original Sin and the myth of the Fall’.⁵ Resisting a theological reading of ‘The Ancient Mariner’, Bloom can only consider the killing of the bird, at best, as a moral problem, but not a theological one:

³ *PW*, I. 1 p. 360.

⁴ *PW*, I. 1 p. 360.

⁵ Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 203.

the Mariner is neither disobedient in his dire action nor altered in nature by its first effects. There is nothing in him to suggest the depravity of the natural heart, nor is the slaying of an albatross at all an adequate symbol of a lapse that demands expression in the language of theology.⁶

What needs to be clarified here is that I do not think Coleridge attempts to illustrate Original Sin by importing systematically the orthodox doctrine into ‘The Ancient Mariner’. With philosophic sensitivity, Coleridge wrestles with this theological doctrine in ‘The Ancient Mariner’: he questions its very nature, explores how a person might learn about Original Sin from sinning, and reflects upon the solution (salvation) preached by orthodox religion. In *Specimens of the Table Talk* (1836), Coleridge mentions that (May 31, 1830):

Mrs. Barbauld once told me that she admired the Ancient Mariner very much, but that there were two faults in it, —it was improbable, and had no moral. As for the probability, I owned that that might admit some question; but as to the want of a moral, I told her that in my own judgment the poem had too much; and that the only, or chief fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination. It ought to have had no more moral than the Arabian Nights’ tale of the merchant’s sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well, and throwing the shells aside, and lo! a genie starts up, and says he *must* kill the aforesaid merchant, *because* one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie’s son.⁷

Coleridge’s reflection on his own work is suggestive of the ways in which we may relate the notion of Original Sin to ‘The Ancient Mariner’ without imposing a rigid allegorical structure onto the poem.

The first issue raised by Anna Barbauld is that of ‘probability’, to which Coleridge conceded that the workings of the poem were ‘improbable’. This *Table Talk* recorded in 1830 retrospectively points to ‘some question’ of ‘probability’, mentioned in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), concerning the discrepancy between Wordsworth’s understanding of the word ‘real’ and that of Coleridge’s. The discussion of the word ‘real’ is inseparable from ‘The Ancient

⁶ Bloom, p. 203

⁷ *TT*, II, p. 100

Mariner'. It all begins with the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* where Wordsworth commented in a 'Note to the Ancient Mariner' that

The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural.⁸

Wordsworth's criticism centres on the fact that Coleridge's Mariner is a highly 'improbable' character in real life. Wordsworth demands the 'real' to be the question of how likely a character can be found in our everyday life, whereas Coleridge is thinking of 'real' in terms of how vividly true a surreal character can be in a work of art. In *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Coleridge defends himself by explaining that his role in the *Lyrical Ballads* is to write poems that are 'in part at least, supernatural'.⁹ 'The Ancient Mariner' is one such poem in which 'the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real'.¹⁰ Coleridge's sense of the 'real' is not what Wordsworth thought of as 'things of every day'¹¹ or 'the Real language of men [...] in low and rustic life'.¹² The kind of 'probability' Coleridge aims at is 'real' to human emotions so that readers will believe in the supernatural moment: it aims 'to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith'.¹³ Though 'The Ancient Mariner' is 'improbable' in a Wordsworthian sense, its effects of realness and vividness created by the imagination shall lure readers into a 'willing suspension of disbelief'. We may relate the notion of Original Sin to 'The Ancient Mariner' through the 'poetic faith' procured by the intense emotions of the poem. Our 'poetic faith' in the supernatural happenings of the poem invites us into a delusion of treating pure association as causality, linking the killing of a bird with all strange happenings thereafter as a matter of *cause* and *effect*—*sin* and *punishment*. The notion of Original Sin is translated into an experience of wilful association, conditioned by our suspension of disbelief in the possibility of such causality.

⁸ *LB 1800*, at p.200.

⁹ *BL*, II, p. 7.

¹⁰ *BL*, II, p. 6.

¹¹ *BL*, II, p. 7.

¹² *BL*, II, p. 55.

¹³ *BL*, II, p. 6.

Secondly, considering ‘the want of a moral’ in response to Barbauld, Coleridge resists the immediacy of stretching or moulding the moral sentiment involved in a simple act of killing into ‘a principle or a cause of action’. It is not a cohesive moral lesson that Coleridge endeavours to offer in ‘The Ancient Mariner’. Nonetheless, the moral sentiment which invites religious understanding is unsurprisingly present in the poem, for such moral sentiment is much expected by Coleridge himself. As the moral sentiment does not constitute a lesson for us to be learnt as ‘a moral’, what more than ‘pure imagination’ could we call the moral sentiment, if they are never intended to be formed into ‘a moral’. ‘[T]he want of a moral’ is in fact bound to be frustrated, as Michael O’Neill argues

Lyrical Ballads takes as a central topic the issue of “pre-established codes”, sometimes contesting, always making us look hard at, agreed norms of behaviour, judgement, and feeling. “The Ancient Mariner: A Poet’s Reverie” (its 1800 title) is the most disturbingly flamboyant example: the Mariner, “Alone on the wide wide Sea” (l.225), is, at least temporarily, unmoored from a “pre-established” (primarily Christian) value-system.¹⁴

Taking note of these ‘primarily Christian’ oriented ‘pre-established codes’ in Coleridge’s ‘The Ancient Mariner’, I think Coleridge’s emphasis on the ‘pure imagination’ in *Table Talk* means not to yield to moral lessons. Yet Coleridge does not banish ‘the moral sentiment’ entirely from the reader’s experience of the poem.

This tension between the lack of a moral and the saturation of moral sentiments in ‘The Ancient Mariner’ corresponds to Coleridge’s attitude towards Spinozism around 1798 to 1803. His experiential notion of Original Sin is interwoven with his queries concerning Spinozism. In a notebook entry dated November 1799, Coleridge writes:

If I begin a poem of Spinoza thus it should begin /
I would make a pilgrimage to the burning sands of Arabia, or &c &c [,] to find the
Man who could explain to me [how] there can be *oneness*, there being infinite

¹⁴ Michael O’Neill, ‘*Lyrical Ballads* and “Pre-Established Codes of Decision”’, in *1800: The New Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by Nicola Trott and Seamus Perry (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 123-40, at p. 124.

Perceptions—yet there must be a *oneness*, not an intense Union but an Absolute Unity, for &c—¹⁵

In October 1803, Coleridge revises this plan in another notebook entry:

Poem on Spirit—or on Spinoza—I would make a pilgrimage to the Deserts of Arabia to find the man who could make [me] understand how the *one can be many!* Eternal universal mystery! It seems as if it were impossible; yet it *is*—& it is every where!—It is indeed a contradiction *in Terms*:—It is the copresence of Feeling & Life, limitless by their very essence, with Form, by its very essence limited—determinate—definite.—¹⁶

The insistence of an Arabian setting anticipated Coleridge's reference to 'the Arabian Nights' tale' in *Table Talk*, accentuating 'pure imagination' as the method Coleridge employed to express his metaphysical concerns. Seamus Perry notes, with respect to the 1799 entry, that

The One and the many is an ancient philosophical question, and perhaps the central concern of STC's metaphysics. What is the relationship between the unity of God and the immense plurality of the sensory world? Or, putting it another way: how can a *universe* be diverse?¹⁷

In a way, Coleridge answered these questions through the 1803 notebook entry with an ardent preference for the One as 'the copresence of Feeling & Life, limitless by their very essence'. Yet, his preference is mixed with the very struggle to explain in full how this can be true. This struggle can be seen analogous to his rhetoric in the 1800 version of 'The Ancient Mariner': for those who want 'a moral', the poem is only a fruitless work filled with moral sentiments.

Before we unravel this analogy, we need a basic grasp of the Spinozistic God. In *Ethic*, Spinoza states that 'God is the immanent, and not the transitive cause of all things'.¹⁸ The

¹⁵ *CN*, I, 556; adopted edits in Seamus Perry (ed.), *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 98.

¹⁶ *CN*, I, 1561; adopted edits in Seamus Perry (ed.), *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 248.

¹⁷ Seamus Perry (ed.), *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 98n.

¹⁸ Benedict De Spinoza, *Ethic: Demonstrated in Geometrical Order and Divided into Five Parts*, trans. by W. Hale White, rev. by Amelia Hutchison (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 22.

word ‘transitive’ is from ‘Transiens’, meaning ‘passing over and into from the outside.’¹⁹ This Spinozistic God is apparently not a transcendent God whom Coleridge appears to believe in. But the question of how the human mind can know the one God immanently in this earthly realm still attracts Coleridge to Spinozism. In the simplest sense, Spinoza thinks that God is nature, as the two are interchangeable: ‘God or Nature’ (Latin: *Deus sive Natura*); as Spinoza attests, ‘nature does nothing for the sake of an end, for that eternal and infinite Being whom we call God or Nature acts by the same necessity by which He exists’.²⁰ The Oneness implied in this definition of God appeals to the Unitarian Coleridge. Although Coleridge remains baffled by Spinoza’s idea that ‘The human mind possesses an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God’.²¹ The many senses mankind experience in reality often confuse or obscure us from God’s Oneness. Such confusion Spinoza explains is: ‘The reason why we do not possess a knowledge of God as distinct as that which we have of common notions is, that we cannot imagine God as we can bodies; and because we have attached the name God to the images of things which we are in the habit of seeing, an error we can hardly avoid, inasmuch as we are continually affected by external bodies’.²² Steven Nadler’s commentary helps to comprehend this Spinozistic idea:

Sense experience alone could never provide the information conveyed by an adequate idea. The senses present things only as they appear from a given perspective at a given moment in time. An adequate idea, on the other hand, by showing how a thing follows necessarily from one or another of God’s attributes, presents it in its “eternal” aspects—*sub specie aeternitatis*, as Spinoza puts it—without any relation to time.²³

In short, then, Coleridge’s struggle between the one and the many is a problem concerning how he could map his manifold perceptions of reality onto Spinoza’s notion that ‘all things are in God and are conceived through Him’.²⁴

As Nadler comments, ‘Spinoza’s conception of adequate knowledge reveals an unrivaled optimism in the cognitive powers of the human being’.²⁵ But Coleridge seems to

¹⁹ Spinoza, p. 22n.

²⁰ Spinoza, p. 177.

²¹ Spinoza, p. 93.

²² Spinoza, p. 93.

²³ Steven Nadler, ‘Baruch Spinoza’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2016 <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/spinoza/>> [accessed 22 March 2019].

²⁴ Spinoza, p. 93.

suggest through the Mariner's narrative that it is impossible to know anything adequately. In 'The Ancient Mariner', there is a lack of actual causality known to the human mind, as we are unsure if the death of the albatross is related at all to the supernatural encounters thereafter—let alone God, in whom all things 'are conceived through Him' in a Spinozistic sense. Tracing the random associations between sense experiences in the poem, I argue that Coleridge expresses an understanding of Original Sin as an experience of imperfect knowledge about God. This idea arisen from 'The Ancient Mariner' shows Coleridge's refusal to accept Spinoza's interpretation of good and evil. Spinoza argues that:

Many people, for instance, are accustomed to argue thus:—If all things have followed from the necessity of the most perfect nature of God, how is that so many imperfections have arisen in nature—corruption, for instance, of things till they stink; deformity; exciting disgust; confusion, evil, crime, &c.? But as I have just observed, all this is easily answered. For the perfection of things is to be judged by their nature and power alone; nor are they more or less perfect because they delight or offend the human senses, or because they are beneficial or prejudicial to human nature.²⁶

In 'The Ancient Mariner', Coleridge contests Spinoza's answer, which, basically, says the human mind is not in a position to judge, and that good and evil is a distinction made by our imagination and not a valid understanding of Truth. Unlike Spinoza, Coleridge thinks that an experience of Original Sin has a lot to do with our subjectivity; the fact that subjectivity does not always know the objective Truth constitutes such experience. As a result of this idea, any belief in the orthodox doctrine of salvation or in the benevolence of God in 'The Ancient Mariner' is also problematized. Coleridge does not hold the kind of 'unrivaled optimism' Naddle finds in Spinozism. In fact Coleridge is haunted by another aspect of Spinozism outlined by Thomas McFarland:

in the system of Spinoza we are here not as inhabitants, bright even in our fall, of a world created for us by a loving and merciful God, whose image we see in our own likeness, but we are cast adrift, momentary and insignificant particles in the

²⁵ Nadler, 'Baruch Spinoza'.

²⁶ Spinoza, p. 46.

vast, blind efflux of deity. “God” says Spinoza, “is not affected by any emotion of pleasure or pain; consequently he does not love or hate anyone.”²⁷

Spinozism is sharply at odds with human experience here. ‘The Ancient Mariner’ exemplifies how Coleridge is troubled by this Spinozistic aspect of God, whom we used to know from the Bible as love. In the poem, God is too insulated from human emotions, and he appears to be utterly alienated from what love normally means.

With these juxtapositions in mind, we may better apprehend what Coleridge meant in *Biographia Literaria*: ‘For a very long time in deed I could not reconcile personality with infinity; and my head was with Spinoza, though my whole heart remained with Paul and John’.²⁸ This statement is suggestive of Coleridge’s religious passion: Coleridge was intrigued by the Spinozistic Oneness, but he did not want to invalidate what the heart is, or multiple feelings are, capable of telling him about God. Therefore, I argue that, on the one hand, religious transcendence realises itself in ‘The Ancient Mariner’ as an individual’s capacity to feel and be convinced by the ‘irresistible Demonstration of intending Causality’ between the moral sentiment in the poem and an elaborate experience of Original Sin.²⁹ On the other hand, Coleridge finds the notion of salvation emotionally and logically inadequate to resolve sins, such that God’s presence and mercy is called into question through the Mariner’s subjectivity. Spinozistic Oneness or ‘an Absolute Unity’ is, after all, unintelligible in the ‘Poet’s Reverie’.

The sense of confusion created by the plurality of senses is consciously incorporated in Coleridge’s choice of poetic form—a hybrid of the lyric and the ballad. As Max Schulz argues,

The ballad and the lyric actually represent two ways of looking at things (animistic and moral, impersonal and social). The union—and divergence—of these two points of view in ‘The Ancient Mariner’ produces the occasional disjunction between narrative and descriptive facts, which strains symbolic readings of the poem.³⁰

²⁷ Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 69-70.

²⁸ *BL*, I, p. 201.

²⁹ *LPR*, p. 94.

³⁰ Max Schulz, *The Poetic Voices of Coleridge: A Study of His Desire for Spontaneity and Passion for Order* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964), at p. 56.

Such concerns entwine the formal and thematic preoccupations of Coleridge's ballad. 'Unity and diversity', as Perry argues, 'feature in the poem not in the form of a unifying vision that redeems an experience of disorder, but as a futile, superstitious dream of salvation perpetually thwarted by an unyielding meaninglessness'.³¹ Admitting these struggles, Coleridge strives to intercede with this much destined 'meaninglessness' through textual revisions from the 1798 version to the 1800 version. By the end of 'The Ancient Mariner' however, the experience of a lack of oneness overtakes these rhetorical interventions and leaves the reader with a fractured view of God: 'a cracked Looking-glass—such is man's mind—Spinoza'.³² In this notebook entry from March 1800, Coleridge explains his ambivalent attitude towards Spinoza. The dashes in this remark have elided interrelationships between each of these phrases. But my conjecture would be that Coleridge is not prepared to define for certain the interrelationships between these three elements which he continues to explore through poetry. In 'The Ancient Mariner', the incoherence of our senses as visions through 'a cracked Looking-glass' and the limitation of 'man's mind' do not seem to conform to Spinozism. Only splintered pieces of 'Life' can be seen, which challenges Coleridge's aspiration to the Oneness of the divine. The difficulty to comprehend the Oneness in essence lies in piecing together the small things. However, the narrative framework of 'The Ancient Mariner' is designed in such a way that readers cannot confirm the truthfulness of the pieces of knowledge they encounter through the Mariner's subjectivity. This problem of narrative reliability plays out Coleridge's struggle with Spinozism as mentioned in the notebook entry: 'with Form, by its very essence limited—determinate—definite'.³³ How can the Spinozistic Oneness or God be conceivable in reasoning when the contrary is always felt? Coleridge teases out the complexity of this question in 'The Ancient Mariner'.

II

Soon after the attempt to write *The Wanderings of Cain*, Coleridge began his composition of 'The Ancient Mariner', from November 1797 to March 1798. The poem was then published in the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. With a strong interest in German philosophy and literature, Coleridge went to Germany with William and Dorothy Wordsworth in September 1798. During his stay, he was exposed to many philosophic ideas, including Spinozism.

³¹ Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 284.

³² *CN*, I, 705.

³³ *CN*, I, 1561.

Coleridge returned to England by late July 1799, and a revised version of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ was published in (January 1801) the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. As John Beer states,

Whether or not Coleridge recognized the fact at the time, the German stay had proved to be a turning point in his career. He could not simply return to the provincial English society he had left and take up the threads as he had left them. Although he did not formally acknowledge the fact at the time, his enthusiasm for Unitarianism, also, was dying. Instead he was working out the implications of Spinozism as encountered in Germany.³⁴

These biographical details help to place the relevance of Spinozism to my argument and its concern with the textual changes Coleridge made to the 1800 version of ‘The Ancient Mariner’. Revising the title and the opening Argument of the poem, Coleridge reshapes the focus, if not the purpose, of his poem in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. The title of the 1798 version of the poem is ‘The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere, In Seven Parts’. The archaic spellings reinforce the character of the poem as one that mimics medieval balladary. Coleridge revised the title into ‘The Ancient Mariner. A Poet’s Reverie’ in the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*. This alteration re-places a reader’s perspective towards the poem from a mere story about the Mariner to a story within the imagination of a poet. The word ‘Reverie’, in its most casual sense, can mean daydream, suggestive of free flowing of thoughts. This alteration foregrounds ‘The Ancient Mariner’ as a poem of ‘pure imagination’, yet the textual changes found in the Argument preceding the main body of text introduce a greater emphasis on ‘moral sentiment’:

ARGUMENT [1798]

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.³⁵

³⁴ John Beer, ‘Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772–1834)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 1-43
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5888>> [accessed 29 March 2019], at p. 13.

³⁵ *LB 1798*, p. 3.

ARGUMENT [1800]

How a Ship, having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by Storms, to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner cruelly, and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killed a Sea-bird; and how he was followed by many and strange Judgements; and in what manner he came back to his own Country.³⁶

Unlike the 1798 narrative Argument, the 1800 version consciously weighs up the morality of the act of killing the albatross, as perceived through ‘the laws of hospitality’. Ambivalence sets in though, when Coleridge uses the phrasal verb ‘followed by’ which objectively draws out the lack of causality between the act of killing and the strange events. At the same time, ‘strange things’ is subjectively revised into ‘strange Judgements’, associating the act of killing to those ‘strange things’ through causality.

Rooted in this revised Argument, the 1800 version can be seen as a poem ‘where actions are often punished on the basis of some arbitrary rule which the human being who committed them could not have known or been expected to know’.³⁷ John Beer succinctly spells out Coleridge’s reflection upon the notion of Original Sin. Coleridge creates a process in which the Mariner may acquire an understanding of Original Sin, not as moral fixities, but from experience, in which the Mariner subjectively associates the ‘strange judgements’ as a consequence of his deed. Readers are, however, relatively free from this subjective manipulation, if we withhold our ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ and inspect the narrative framework of the poem. Through these 1800 textual revisions, Coleridge directs readers to seek out what is being judged, who is being judged and who judges throughout the poem.

J. C. C. Mays argues in *Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner* that ‘two changes in the 1800 text [...] do appear to result from Wordsworth’s intervention’.³⁸ The first one Mays refers to is of the title addition ‘A Poet’s Reverie’: ‘Just possibly Coleridge allowed it: after all, he and Wordsworth must have discussed their different conceptions of the supernatural, whence they arose and where they led, and “reverie” was not a word for Coleridge with such negative meanings as might be supposed’.³⁹ A scrutiny of the evidence Mays grounds his presumption

³⁶ *LB 1800*, p. 153.

³⁷ John Beer (ed.), ‘Introduction’, in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Poems* (London: Everyman, 1993), pp. xxi-xlv, at p. xxxvi.

³⁸ J. C. C. Mays, *Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 123.

³⁹ Mays, p. 124.

on is necessary. Unmentioned by Mays, some additional relevant evidence can be found in the Fenwick notes. In these notes dictated to Isabella Fenwick in 1834, Wordsworth describes the afternoon during which he discussed possible alterations to the poem with Coleridge:

Accordingly we set off, and proceeded, along the Quantock Hills, towards Watchet; and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of the ‘Ancient Mariner’, founded on a dream, as Mr Coleridge said, of his friend Mr Cruikshank.⁴⁰

It is clear from Wordsworth’s description that the word ‘Reverie’ is connected with ‘a dream’ of Coleridge’s friend, Mr Cruikshank. As I shall argue in the next chapter with reference to notebook entries in 1803 and 1804, ‘Reverie’ plays a profound role in Coleridge’s exploration of Original Sin, or in more philosophical terms, the origin of moral evil which has, for Coleridge, a strong correlation with dreams.

The second change concerns the 1800 Argument. Mays suggests that Coleridge revised it so as to make the poem fit in with the rest of Wordsworth’s poems:

Coleridge’s poem—a tale of a world beyond the boundaries of ordinary comprehension, of strange discovery, and of unexplained horror and wonder—thereby becomes something else: its theme much closer to Wordsworth’s poems like “Goody Blake and Harry Gill” and “The Thorn,” or “The Idiot Boy” and “The Mad Mother,” that lead up to it in the re-arranged 1800 volume.⁴¹

Even though the end result is a more coherent collection, Mays seems to be too eager to dismiss all possibilities of moralising the poem, when it is very hard to purge out the moral relevance, given the theological language in the poem. Coleridge’s exposure to metaphysics in Germany seems in all likelihood to have led to the alterations in the Argument. Moreover, the exchange between Coleridge and Wordsworth over how the new edition should appear in the ordering of its contents is not one-directional. For instance, Heidi Thomson points out that

⁴⁰ Alun Jones and William Tydeman (ed.), ‘Correspondence and Comment: The Wordsworths, Coleridge and Byron’, in *Coleridge, The Ancient Mariner and Other Poems: A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 23-44, at p. 24.

⁴¹ Mays, p. 124.

Wordsworth's 'Song for the Wandering Jew' seems to have Coleridgean overtones;⁴² O. Bryan Fulmer conjectures that the shared project of *The Wanderings of Cain* in its original plan has now been split into Coleridge's 'The Ancient Mariner' and Wordsworth's 'Song of the Wandering Jew' in the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*.⁴³ In my analysis of the 1800 version of 'The Ancient Mariner', I single out Coleridge's originality in this particular version and the importance of his exploration of Original Sin and ideas about the transcendent Oneness of God.

The 1800 version of the poem begins and ends with, what Charles A. Owen, Jr calls 'the narrative of encounter' between the narrator (the Mariner) and the wedding guest (the recipient).⁴⁴ This structural setting positions the readers as auditors, while the wedding guest is the intended hearer who is compelled to listen to the Mariner. In part I, the wedding guest was first detained physically, as the Mariner 'stoppeth one of three' (1800, l. 2)⁴⁵ and 'holds him with his skinny hand' (l. 16); after another two quatrains, his mind is also arrested by the 'glittering eye' (l. 17) of the Mariner, and the narrative is absorbed into the subjectivity of the Mariner:

The Ship was cheer'd, the Harbour clear'd—
Merrily did we drop
Below the Kirk, below the Hill,
Below the Light-house top. (Part I, ll. 25-28)

The first collective 'we' (l. 26) appears here, and in effect, it invites both the intended hearer and the readers to board the ship, and to sink, as the ship did 'drop', into the mind of the Mariner. We too, as readers, are held by 'The bright-eyed Mariner' (l. 44). This manipulation of perspective is further justified as Coleridge rewrites the following two quatrains:

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Listen, Stranger! Storm and Wind, A Wind and Tempest strong For days and weeks it play'd us freaks—</p> | <p>But now the Northwind came more fierce, There came a Tempest strong! And Southward still for days and weeks</p> |
|--|--|

⁴² Heidi Thomson, 'Wordsworth's "Song for the Wandering Jew" as a Poem for Coleridge', *Romanticism* 21.1, 2015, pp. 37-47.

⁴³ O. Bryan Fulmer, 'The Ancient Mariner and the Wandering Jew', *Studies in Philology*, 66.5, 1969, pp. 797-815.

⁴⁴ Charles A. Owen, Jr, 'Structure in *The Ancient Mariner*', *College English*, 23.4, 1962, pp. 261-67, at p. 261.

⁴⁵ *LB 1800*, pp. 151-99. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Like Chaff we drove along.</p> <p>Listen, Stranger! Mist and Snow, And it grew wond'rous cauld: And Ice mast-high came floating by As green as Emerauld.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1798, ll. 45-52)⁴⁶</p> | <p>Like Chaff we drove along.</p> <p>And now there came both Mist and Snow, And it grew wond'rous cold; And Ice mast-high came floating by As green as Emerald.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1800, ll. 45-52)</p> |
|---|--|

As Coleridge omits the phrases 'Listen, Stranger' (l. 45, 49) in the 1798 version, the imperative tone subsides and the differentiation of perspectives relaxes, which gives way to a deliberate fusing of the past and the present in the 1800 version. The word 'now' (1800, l. 45, 49) elides the temporal gap between the Mariner's past experience and his retelling of it to the wedding guest as well as to the readers. Readers do not have open access to the truth about the reality of the poem. But the narrative framework enables readers to experience the Mariner's subjectivity, whose emotions induce within our minds 'a willing suspension of disbelief' towards what we have been told.

The use of a subjective narrative in 'The Ancient Mariner' serves a larger purpose, which is to foster a sense of causality between the act of killing and the 'strange judgements' that follow. Objectively speaking, this sense of causality is a logical fallacy, as readers can never prove if the killing is the cause of the supernatural happenings. But the moral sentiment in the poem would, at least, make this false causality available as an experience to the readers through the Mariner's subjectivity. In other words, this causality is emotionally felt in the Mariner's perspective. To engender this effect in the poem, Coleridge arranges contrapuntal effects of sound in the poem: silence or the lack of speech becomes associated with guilt; whereas sounds of prayers are often linked with redemptive moments. This can be viewed as an art of delusion, for such counterpoint between sounds and theological implication are made through pure associations. This art of counterpoint is part of the poem's substructures that influence how readers associate the killing of the albatross with the 'strange judgements' and are invited to align themselves to the subjective causality of the Mariner's perspective.

Before the act of killing, there is a concert of sounds among Nature, men and the Albatross. When the ship enters the South Pole, ice is ubiquitous. In the 1800 version, several

⁴⁶ *LB 1798*, pp. 1-51. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

textual changes were made by Coleridge specifically to note the presence of sounds, one of which is the sound of ice:

The Ice was here, the Ice was there,
 The Ice was all around:
 It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd —
 A wild and ceaseless sound. [Like noises of a swound. 1798] (1800, ll. 57-60)

Lines 59-60 characterises the existence of Nature through animating the sounds of physical cracking as the roaring and howling voice of a mystic form of life. Reminiscent of the final line of 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison', this arrangement has more to tell about the Life of Nature compared with what the sheer 'noises of a swound' may convey. This is the sound of Nature which introduces readers to an Albatross, 'A Christian Soul' (l. 63), which the Mariner and the crew 'hail'd' in 'God's name' (l. 64). Through the 'pre-established codes' of theological language, both the listener and the auditors can hear the to and fro of a Christian communion between the men and the bird implied by the Mariner's perspective:

And a good south wind sprung up behind.
 The Albatross did follow;
 And every day for food or play
 Came to the Mariner's hollo! (ll. 69-72)

As the rhyme implies, the Albatross responded ('follow') to 'the Mariner's hollo'; and in return to the Mariner's voice, the Albatross 'perch'd for vespers nine' (l. 74). This religious communion or encounters forms what Coleridge called 'the laws of hospitality' in the Mariner's mind. But these moral laws are not an authorial imposition, as they are deduced from the Mariner's subjectivity.

While readers are still relatively free to choose whether to align themselves completely with the Mariner's point of view, the interrupting question from the wedding guest, as well as the Mariner's reply, implies a subjective causality between the killing and the state of the Mariner at present:

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
 "From the fiends that plague thee thus—

“Why look’st thou so?”—with my cross bow

I shot the Albatross.

(ll. 77-80)

Apparently, the wedding guest assumes a benevolent God, a saviour, in his comment. His question ““Why look’st thou so?”” is the product of a mismatch between such an assumption and the unpleasant look of the Mariner—with ‘long grey beard’ (l. 3), ghastly ‘skinny hands’ (l. 13) and the daunting ‘glittering eye’ (l. 3). The Mariner’s answer completes a subjective causality by associating an action—‘with my cross bow / I shot the Albatross’ (ll. 79-80)—with the visible abnormality of the present countenance of the Mariner. The line break creates a final line in Part I of simple syntax and powerful impact: ‘I shot the Albatross’. On the one hand, the statement sounds rather objective in tone and in the choice of words, if we consider the fact that ‘shot’ is a verb which is much less loaded with ‘moral sentiment’ than *killed* or *murdered*. But the ‘strange judgements’ thereafter makes this line exceptionally haunting to the readers’ ears in retrospect: the Mariner takes up the subject position and confesses to be the doer of the action of shooting and names the Albatross as the victim of this murderous act.

The Mariner’s narration in Part II describes his coming into consciousness of his deed, and the way in which he realises his moral crime:

And I had done an hellish thing

And it would work ’em woe:

For all averr’d, I had kill’d the Bird

That made the Breeze to blow

Nor dim nor red, like an Angel’s head, *1800* [Ne dim ne red, like God’s own head, *1798*]

The glorious Sun uprist:

Then all averr’d, I had kill’d the Bird

That brought the fog and mist.

That bring the fog and mist.

(ll. 89-98)

Without much explanation, the Mariner acknowledges that he has done ‘an hellish thing’— a sin for which he deserves to go to hell, though the word ‘hellish’ can also take a ‘weakened

sense: extremely difficult or unpleasant'.⁴⁷ Being 'aver'd' of his 'hellish' deed in repetition has convinced the Mariner into being conscious of the sin he committed. Coleridge lessens the theological reference in the 1800 version by replacing 'God's own head' with 'an Angel's head'. This replacement makes the concept of God even less accessible to the Mariner. By doing so, Coleridge seems to indicate that an inaccessible God is an experiential result of breaking 'the laws of hospitality', that is of sinning. And from the moment of his confession, the subjectivity of the Mariner animates Nature's judgement. A vivid laceration which reflexively reverberates in an imagery of Nature accuses the Mariner of his slaughtering:

The breezes blew, the white foam flew,
 The furrow follow'd free:
 We were the first that ever burst
 Into that silent Sea. (II, ll. 99-102)

The bird's 'follow' which used to rhyme with the Mariner's 'hollow' is now unrhymed in 'follow'd', and our attention is displaced by the alliterations of the /f/ sounds between 'furrow' and 'follow'd'. 'The furrow' that cuts the surface of the sea is Nature's reflexive accusation to the Mariner's deed through mirroring the violence of the moral crime. From this mirror image, the Mariner also comes to an understanding of the crime, and his Original Sin, for their 'first' intrusion that 'burst' into the silent sea is bound to resonate with further chaos psychologically:

They very deeps did rot: O Christ!
 That ever this should be!
 Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
 Upon the slimy Sea. (ll. 119-122)

 And every tongue thro' utter drouth
 Was wither'd at the root;
 We could not speak no more than if
 We had been choked with soot. (ll. 131-134)

⁴⁷ 'hellish, adj. and adv.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2019
 <www.oed.com/view/Entry/85680> [accessed 22 March 2019].

The decay of the ‘deeps’ and the withering of the ‘root’ invite us to dive into the history and the very basic origins of human nature, which slimy things inhabit and our own darkness (‘root’, ‘soot’) emerges. ‘O Christ / That ever this should be’ refers not only to the supernatural horror in front of the Mariner; it can also refer to the doctrine of Original Sin. If ever the notion of Original Sin be true, there seems to be not a single chance that the Mariner may choose not to Fall. The Mariner’s inability to utter sounds is entwined with the recognition of his Original Sin. Hence, the Mariner laments:

Ah wel-a-day! what evil looks
 Had I from old and young;
 Instead of the Cross the Albatross
 About my neck was hung. (ll. 135-138)

The end-weight of guilt hanging about the Mariner’s neck in Part II also pushes away ‘the Cross’ of salvation in favour of retaining the cross of suffering. The burden on the Mariner’s shoulders is the guilt brought about by his sin, which endlessly torments him ‘old and young’.

III

Readers may not be persuaded by the experience of Original Sin undergone by the Mariner, but the sense of guilt invoked in the ‘strange judgements’ is difficult to overlook. Peter Kitson, for instance, interprets this sense of guilt as a kind of ‘collective guilt’ related to ‘the failure of the French Revolution’ and the lack of ‘improvement of mankind by political actions’.⁴⁸ Seeking a more personal way of reading ‘The Ancient Mariner’ than Kitson’s social dimension, David Miall is aware of the inadequacy of using biographic details to account for the ‘motiveless guilt’ in the poem.⁴⁹ Rather than using the term guilt which should have a reason behind it, Miall prefers to label this ‘motiveless guilt’ as ‘*dread*’ towards the undesirable consequence of death—a view established with reference to Coleridge’s childhood experience and repression of his father’s death.⁵⁰ Whether we use public reasons or private sentiments to account for this sense of guilt or dread in the poem,

⁴⁸ Peter Kitson, ‘Coleridge, the French Revolution, and “The Ancient Mariner”’: Collective Guilt and Individual Salvation’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 19, The French Revolution in English Literature and Art Special Number, 1989, pp. 197-207.

⁴⁹ David Miall, ‘Guilt and Death: The Predicament of *The Ancient Mariner*’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 24.4, Nineteenth Century, 1984, pp. 633-53.

⁵⁰ Miall, pp. 633-53.

what needs to be contemplated, if we regard the poem as purely imaginative, is how and why Coleridge would express guilt in the way it is expressed. As a 'shape' (l. 157) approaches in Part III of 'The Ancient Mariner' (1800), the sun is setting, the brightness and colour of which dyed the waves into spells of flames. A haunting vision is formed, 'When that strange shape drove suddenly / Betwixt us and the Sun' (ll. 167-8):

And strait the Sun was fleck'd with bars
 (Heaven's mother send us grace)
 As if thro' a dungeon grate he peer'd
 With broad and burning face. (ll. 169-172)

Before this 'grace' could be sought from the transcendent symbol, the sun, the word ironically rhymes with the 'burning face'. There is ambiguity in the pronoun 'he' used here, as the 'broad and burning face' logically refers to the sun, but it could also be the Mariner's face which is painfully burnt by the sunlight. From a psychological perspective, the Mariner is placed in 'a dungeon'—the earthly hell far beneath the Heaven. The reference to the dungeon echoes 'The Dungeon', a poem composed earlier as Albert's soliloquy in Act V of *Osorio* during April to November 1797, and first published as an excerpt (with minor revision) in the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*. As George Erving remarked with regard to 'The Dungeon', 'Albert expostulates upon nature's ability, to quell rather than inflame the impulse toward revenge, unlike incarceration.'⁵¹ Unlike Albert, who is the victim and has a reason towards revenge (though he chose not to), the Mariner resembles Osorio (the doer of the crime), to whom the revenge may be directed. The 'broad and burning face' points to the burning source, the 'sun', which symbolises either 'God's own head' (1798) or 'an Angel's head' (1800). The sun torments the Mariner with heat through the 'dungeon grate', as if punishment (vengeance for the Albatross) is at his door. And the Mariner risks becoming the one behind bars who is

[...] Uncomforted

And friendless solitude, groaning and tears,
 And savage faces, at the clanking hour,
 Seen through the streams and vapour of his dungeon,

⁵¹ George Erving, 'Coleridge as Playwright', in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Frederick Burwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 392-411, at p. 400.

By the lamp's dismal twilight! So he lies
 circled with evil, till his very soul
 Unmoulds its essence, hopelessly deformed
 By sight of ever more deformity! (‘The Dungeon’, ll. 12-19)⁵²

The unpleasant look of the Mariner, which perplexed the wedding guest in Part I, seems to have explained itself here: such ‘deformity’ of one’s soul is translated into the physicality of the Mariner through his guilt-induced dread for punishment.

Yet, as such a thought lingers and expands, even neurotic guilt would turn itself into a form of punishment without divine intervention—the self-inflicted vengeance for the albatross. In *Osorio*, Osorio plays dice with Albert over who should drink the poisoned wine. Just like Osorio who attempts to kill Albert, the Mariner has killed a brother in Christ. In ‘The Ancient Mariner’, Coleridge let Albert (the victim of the Dungeon scene) turn the tables, metaphorically, on the Mariner (the killer), as that strange shape wins the game of dice and death (vengeance) falls upon the Mariner’s crew:

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>ALBERT. There’s poison in the wine.</p> <p>OSORIO. Thou hast guess’d well. There’s poison in the wine. Shall we throw dice, which of us two shall drink it? For one of us must die!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(<i>Osorio</i> 1797, V)⁵³</p> | <p>The naked Hulk alongside came And the Twain were playing dice; “The Game is done! I’ve won, I’ve won!” Quoth she, and whistled thrice. (1800, ll. 203-206)</p> <p>Four times fifty living men, With never a sigh or groan, With heavy thump, a lifeless lump They dropp’d down one by one. (1800, ll. 220-223)</p> |
|---|---|

The strange shape ‘playing dice’ with ‘the naked Hulk’ alludes to this scene in *Osorio*. But now, Coleridge imposes the vengeance for Albert upon the Mariner’s crew who ‘dropp’d down one by one’ like ‘a lifeless lump’ after the strange shape (‘she’) wins her game of dice. The Mariner associates the death of the crew with the result of his deed: he narrates the way

⁵² *LB* 1798, pp. 139-40.

⁵³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Osorio: A Tragedy, as Originally Written in 1797* (London: John Pearson, 1873), p. 148.

in which the souls of his crew flew passed him as ‘Like the whiz of my Cross-bow’ (l. 227). The ‘whiz’ invokes the sound which takes away the life of the Albatross and disturbs the initial harmony. In the Bible, ‘the wages of sin is death’ (Romans 6:23, KJV), and this price of death is now inflicted upon the sailors in the poem. The Mariner survived, but his feeling of guilt, in Coleridge’s understanding of the matter, can be far more destructive than death itself.

The arbitrariness involved in playing dice is central to Coleridge’s feeling towards the doctrine of Original Sin and the present state of men. The Fall of Man seems fatalistic, and this understanding of Sin and judgement troubles Coleridge as it problematizes the benevolence and possibility of salvation. As early as 1795, Coleridge wrote in his *Lectures on Revealed Religion*:

if Sin be of so heinous a nature that God cannot pardon it without adequate satisfaction—if each man must have expiated his individual Sins by eternal Torture, how is it consistent with this dreadful Equity, this Tartarean Justice, that the sufferings of one Being for a few hours should prove an adequate Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World—Did this Being miraculously suffer in that brief Day as much as all mankind would have suffered through all Eternity? [...] But however mysteriously yet a full and adequate Satisfaction has, it seems, been thus made to the divine Justice for all sins that were and are and will be. How then does it happen, that Repentance and good works are necessary?⁵⁴

The logical inconsistency expressed here suggests that Coleridge’s ultimate concern over Original Sin is centred on how the orthodox proposition of salvation could serve as a resolution at all. In Part IV of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ (1800), Coleridge raises yet another inconsistency:

Alone, alone, all all alone
 Alone on the wide wide Sea;
 And Christ would take no pity on
 My soul in agony

⁵⁴ *LPR*, pp. 205-06.

The many men so beautiful,
 And they all dead did lie!
 And a million million slimy things
 Liv'd on— and so did I. (ll. 236-243)

'If sin be so heinous a nature', why would Christ 'take pity on / My soul in agony'?— Coleridge raises such a question through the subjectivity of the Mariner. Accentuated by the alliteration is the loneliness of the Mariner's 'I' (l. 243), who is left alone at the end to live on with his sin and guilt. This sense of guilt is again entwined with the Mariner's inability to speak:

I look'd to Heaven, and try'd to pray;
 But or ever a prayer had gusht,
 A wicked whisper came and made
 My heart as dry as dust. (ll. 248-251)

What makes this counterpoint between guilt and speechlessness special is the Mariner's unsuccessful attempt to pray. As the Mariner is all alone in the wide sea with no one to pray to, Coleridge seems to be at the very brink of disbelief—perhaps not so far as to deny the existence of God, but at least God's presence, steadfastness and mercy:

An orphan's curse would drag to Hell
 A spirit from on high:
 But O! more horrible than that
 Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
 Seven days, seven nights I saw that curse,
 And yet I could not die. (ll. 261-266)

The loneliness of an orphan is understandably severe, but the Mariner's loneliness is more acute, for he has experienced companionships which an orphan would not have known. There is an extra sense of loss incurred in the Mariner's mind which brings in visions of the Edenic root of Original Sin and Coleridge's *The Wanderings of Cain*. The Mariner's voyage might be read as his wanderings in exile from Eden. And if God is devoid of pity for the Mariner,

this sense of isolation is far worse than the non-existence of God within one's subjectivity in the first place.

The feeling of isolation in 'The Ancient Mariner' can be traced through the intertextuality between *The Wanderings of Cain* and Genesis 4. As shall be seen, Coleridge's doubts about the doctrines of Original Sin and Salvation are formed first through his attempt to approximate Cain's feelings and thoughts concerning God's judgement (Genesis 4) in *The Wanderings of Cain*. 'The Ancient Mariner' is written to restate the same in 'pure imagination' with more artistry and depth of original thinking. There are two elements in *The Wanderings of Cain* that are elaborated in 'The Ancient Mariner': first, the Mariner has the same desire to die as Cain, due to the unbearable guilt he suffers; second, the barrenness of sounds and speechlessness in Cain also occurs to the Mariner, for they have both sinned:

And Cain lifted up his voice and cried bitterly, and said, "The Mighty One that persecuteth me is on this side and on that; he pursueth my soul like the wind, like the sand-blast he passeth through me; he is around me even as the air! O that I might be utterly no more! **I desire to die**—yea the things that never had life, neither move they upon the earth—behold! they seem precious to mine eyes. O that a man might live without the breath of his nostrils. So I might abide in darkness, and blackness, and an empty space! Yea, I would lie down, I would not rise, neither would I stir my limbs till I became as the rock in the den of the lion, on which the young lion resteth his head whilst he sleepeth. For the torrent that roareth far off hath a voice: and the clouds in heaven look terribly on me: the Mighty One who is against me speaketh in the wind of the cedar grove; **and in silence am I dried up.** [emphasis added]⁵⁵

Notably different from Coleridge's depiction here is that, in Genesis 4 Cain was kept alive from persecution by God's mercy and protection upon him: 'And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him' (Genesis 4:15, KJV). In *The Wandering of Cain*, however, Coleridge distorted Cain's worry over death into a 'desire to die'. The distortion goes on in 'The Ancient Mariner', such that the original mercy of and protection from God as told in the Bible becomes a curse to the Mariner. When the Mariner

⁵⁵ PW, I, 1, at p. 362.

narrates that ‘*Seven days, seven nights I saw that curse*’ (l. 253), he does not find himself fortunate to be alive, rather, he feels that God’s vengeance is upon him *sevenfold*. All that the Mariner is left with ‘*Alone on the wide wide sea*’, seems to be God’s wrath and vengeance on him. This outcome may match up with how ‘heinous’ Sin is, but it actually problematizes Christ’s salvation by questioning its rationale of benevolence and utility as a solution to Original Sin.

Redemption of a sort is still needed, yet Coleridge could not come up with a moral theory that would resolve Original Sin without Christ’s salvation. In ‘*The Ancient Mariner*’, the Mariner’s guilt is much easier to be redeemed than his sin. Scrutinising the appearance and movements of ‘*the water-snakes*’ (l. 277) and its surroundings, the Mariner exclaims:

O happy living things! no tongue
 Their beauty might declare:
 A spring of love gusht from my heart,
 And I bless’d them unaware!
 Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
 And I bless’d 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. (ll. 286-295)

J. Robert Barth (1988) argues that ‘This vision, which brings the Mariner to a fresh perception of the world, is pure gift, from a power beyond himself—yet it appears within him. He has done nothing to earn it; he is not even aware of its coming’.⁵⁶ After a decade, Barth (1999) changed his mind and asked the questions: ‘What then opened the Mariner’s eyes to see the beauty of the water-snakes, and the springs of his heart to bless them? Something he did himself, or a gift gratuitously given?’⁵⁷ This time Barth argues that ‘I suggest that it is both. His attempt to pray, itself a gift occasioned by his desperate need, is met by the gift of

⁵⁶ J. Robert Barth, *Coleridge and the Power of Love* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988), p. 65.

⁵⁷ J. Robert Barth, “‘A Spring of Love’: Prayer and Blessing in Coleridge’s ‘Rime of the Ancient Mariner’”, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 30.2, 1999, pp. 75-80, at p.77.

love from his “kind saint,” and out of this mutual causality comes prayer’.⁵⁸ However, building upon Empson’s comment of ‘Why the Mariner blesses the snakes is of course as much a mystery as why he shot the Albatross’,⁵⁹ Perry suggests that ‘Coleridge contrives to make the Mariner seem somehow non-volitional while killing the albatross, as he is at the second of the poem’s two apparent turning-points, the blessing of the snakes’.⁶⁰ In Barth’s account, the transcendent faith of Coleridge is extolled, whereas in Perry’s account, the sense of disruption is foregrounded, problematizing Transcendence. These varying opinions showcase how difficult it is to pin down whether blessing ‘the water-snakes’ is a form of redemption or not. In terms of the effect of such an act, however, at least the guilt of the Mariner appears to have lessened.

The obscurity inherent in the idea of God is expressed through the concurrence of both Barth and Perry’s accounts, as the emotions of the poem align readers with Barth, but the logical reasoning of the poem makes us concord with Perry. Grasping Coleridge’s unstable position in this sense describes the exact mode with which the ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ in God operates in ‘The Ancient Mariner’. As Barth stresses the transcendent reunion between God and the Mariner through prayer, Perry offers us the ‘counter-vision’ of its ‘disorder’ and ‘meaninglessness’.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the Mariner claims that ‘Christ would take no pity on / My soul in agony.’ (ll. 238-39), and here at the climax and the turn of the poem, the Mariner still avoids, if not denies, the much needed pity from Christ by substituting the former with ‘my kind saint’. How is reconciliation between a vengeful God and the Mariner possible? The word saint is used here, perhaps, not because Coleridge believed in the saint, but rather the sainthood is a more humane figure than the cold Spinozistic God, and so more likely to show pity to the Mariner—the poet loses hopes in a benevolent God. As Perry points out, ‘One of the few theological positions that we can confidently declare Coleridge to have consistently shunned was Catholicism: his anti-Catholicism is often vehement’.⁶² A question needs to be asked then: why is the poem populated with various Catholic figures (the Saint, the Angel etc.)? I would say that the saint, in particular, is but a substituting figure of God when Christ is unavailable in one’s faith. The Saint is rather intuitively summoned to the Mariner’s mind for the mere scenic effect of divinity it offers culturally. These Catholic figures are there to try to fill up the spiritual emptiness of the Mariner, after his loss of God’s

⁵⁸ Barth, “‘A Spring of Love’”, p. 77.

⁵⁹ Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*, p. 283n.

⁶⁰ Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*, p. 283.

⁶¹ Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*, p. 284.

⁶² Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*, p. 286.

presence, mercy and love. They are summoned to the subjectivity of the Mariner to accompany him over his loneliest time. They are also the threads that keep a transcendent God alive in the background even when Coleridge still struggled to be upfront and to represent the divine and his salvation to his audience.

As Mays discovered, ‘There is a copy of the same first 1800 volume, corrected in Coleridge’s hand and later given by him (almost certainly) to Edward Irving in which the last part of the new Argument (from “and in what manner” to “Country”) is cancelled and replaced by an extension that ignores talk of crime and instead emphasises “the Spirit, who loved the Sea-bird,” and his “<guardian> Saint” and the “choir of Angels” who descended into the bodies of the dead sailors and accompanied the Mariner home (PW 2:536)’.⁶³ I disagree with Mays that this is another case which ‘strengthens the thought that an argument about crime, punishment, and redemption was not originally at the forefront of Coleridge’s mind’.⁶⁴ The crucial revision of ‘strange judgement’ in the 1800 Argument is retained in the new version of the Argument Mays flags up. God remains unavailable to the Mariner even when those Catholic transcendent figures provide aids from above. These Christian concepts or moral notions are at the forefront of Coleridge’s experiential exploration of the Oneness of God. Coleridge’s poetic explorations often reveal our subjectivity to be a double-edged sword: on the one hand, subjectivity assists our search for Oneness by piecing together the fractured lens of the world, and on the other, subjectivity belies its own faith in divine Oneness when empirical evidence confuses the mind. This subjective confusion is an experience of one’s own Original Sin. As the Oneness of God is so hard to perceive, his presence, benevolence and salvation are all subjected to doubt.

⁶³ Mays, p. 125.

⁶⁴ Mays, p. 125.

Chapter 3

The Epistemological Anxiety

Catling, i.e. Kitten sitting on the Garden Wall
 Underneath the old Plum Tree
 Playing with the Falling Leaves
 On a calm grey Autumn Day—
 And many a time before the Leaf had reached the Ground,
 The Sun had been out & in
 And the Leaf had been smitten with Light,
 A Pilgrim of manifold Fate
 In its brief perpendicular Fall.

(CN, I, 1813)

This chapter shifts the focus from an experience of Original Sin to how this experience becomes in Coleridge's eyes an epistemological impediment to Transcendence in 'The Ancient Mariner' and the Crewe Manuscript of 'Kubla Khan'. What is crucial here is how the notion of Original Sin is reinterpreted by Coleridge as an epistemological limitation to knowing the transcendent God. Part I contemplates the unsettling resolution in 'The Ancient Mariner' and its relevance to how Coleridge struggles to represent the Oneness of God. Those struggles indicate limits of knowledge inherent in the human condition. Original Sin becomes the innate defect of the human faculty. The intellectual flaws are, for Coleridge, the evidence of the origin of moral evil. Part II relates the Crewe Manuscript to 'The Ancient Mariner' through a historical point of view. In the Bible, Original Sin is expressed through the myth of the Fall of Adam and Eve. Coleridge too attempts to offer his readers a mythical origin of sins. I argue that the Crewe Manuscript of 'Kubla Khan', composed around the same time as the 1798 'Ancient Mariner', can be seen as a mythical prehistory of this sinful world. A historical perspective in this sense implies Coleridge's creative reconstruction of biblical history into human experience and understanding. Part III argues that in this version of 'Kubla Khan', a prelapsarian world is presented to readers. Yet the imagination is in itself sinful, as Original Sin taints the faculty of our intellect and inhibits us from grasping the full view of transcendent Truth. This contradictory mode of creation marks the energy of the apocalyptic vision in the poem. Though no distinction of good and evil seems to be implied in this prelapsarian world, the habitual minds of the readers notice the semantic splits

involved in Coleridge's word choices in 'Kubla Khan'—reading good and evil into a supernatural world which does not necessarily conform to any known moral systems in real life. Despite his effort to yoke together conflicting dictions to forge the sense of Oneness in a paradisiacal landscape, Coleridge uses this poem to reaffirm Original Sin as the epistemological barrier to Transcendence which is inherent to men. The poet becomes a failed prophet of Oneness, for if the defect is in the mind, what comes out of the mind is bound to be contaminated. Original Sin constitutes the epistemological anxiety that impedes the poet from achieving Transcendence in the text.

I

William A. Ulmer argues that the 1798 version of 'The Ancient Mariner' 'displays a typically Unitarian disinterest in Original Sin and the loss of Eden'.¹ Ulmer points out that the poem reaffirms 'Necessity' and 'One Life' as central to Coleridge's belief in Unitarianism at that time.² Unitarianism contributes to Coleridge's insistence in seeking the Oneness of God. When, however, Ulmer suggests that Coleridge 'subscribe[s] to a Unitarian theodicy which envisioned mundane tribulation as an educative precondition for salvation',³ Ulmer restricts the power of the poem to a manifestation of Coleridge's Unitarian faith and forgets that Coleridge's Unitarianism is in many ways a counteraction of some orthodox doctrines and notions. Following Coleridge's observation, 'A great Vice is *metaphysical Solution* in Poetry', I contend that 'The Ancient Mariner' ultimately serves to describe rather than to solve metaphysical problems, which he deemed to be troubling mankind in general.⁴ Such metaphysical problems as they emerge in 'The Ancient Mariner' (1800) concern the ways in which the experience of Original Sin is engendered. Other prose writings from 1798 -1804 suggest that Original Sin is understood by Coleridge as an inherent defect of the human mind. In this sense, Original Sin is a product of men's epistemological limitation. This Coleridgean understanding renews the biblical exile from Eden as an intellectual separation from God. Coleridge's anxiety in representing Oneness in his poems thus becomes the epistemological interruption frequently present in his hope for a transcendent reunion with God. This

¹ William A. Ulmer, 'Necessary Evils: Unitarian Theodicy in "The Rime of the Ancyent Mariner"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 43.3, 2004, pp. 327-56, at p.330.

² Ulmer, 'Necessary Evils', p. 331.

³ Ulmer, 'Necessary Evils', p. 341.

⁴ *CN*, I, 673.

epistemological anxiety exists most overtly in ‘The Ancient Mariner’ where readers expect resolution, yet find a lack of emotional closure by the end of the poem.

With doubts about God and the orthodox notion of salvation, Coleridge explores ways that may at least redeem or lessen the overwhelming guilt of the Mariner. Some readers find the water-snakes scene to be the onset of the climatic resolution or the turning point of sort in the poem. But what is resolved and what remains unresolved needs further discussion. The beauty of the water-snakes and the ‘spring of love’ that gushes from the Mariner’s heart remind us of the re-accentuated theme in the 1800 ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison’: ‘I have lost / Such beauties and such feelings, [...] // Henceforth I shall know / That Nature ne’er deserts the wise and pure, / No scene so narrow but may well employ / Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart / Awake to love and beauty! [...]’.⁵ Anthony Harding argues that ‘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 selfhood for the first time’.⁶ The ‘divine origin’ should indeed be the focus here, but Harding is too optimistic about ‘God’, who, in Harding’s opinion, ‘acting perhaps through some “kind saint”, has made the Marinere’s self a centre and source instead of an enclosing defensive wall’.⁷ Coleridge’s ‘The Ancient Mariner’ complicates the view that Transcendence is revealed religion, as it is expressed in the 1800 version of ‘This Lime-Tree’ (as discussed in chapter 1). The reliability of the Mariner’s narrative is subjected to question, as the Mariner’s belief in transcendent power within his subjectivity can be seen as sheer superstition in the minds of others.

With so little confidence in locating a widely shared form of Transcendence, Coleridge resorts to the power of the human mind. As the Mariner blesses ‘unaware’, almost unconsciously, he notices his act of blessing through introspection. Yet, such blessing is not meant to be the cause of praying, rather the Mariner’s ability to bless and to pray are all outward signs of an inner power of the mind—the real cause of these actions. This power, which Coleridge has drawn our attention to, is closer to the ‘transcendental’ or ‘*a priori*’ in Kantian terms. Hinting that the ‘divine origin’ resides with a power of the human mind, Coleridge suggests that if there is an inherent darkness in men, which propels us to Fall, there is equally a source of light, which guides us forward, and lessens our sense of guilt. Such an inherent source of light is the product of some transcendent power.

⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘This Lime Tree-Bower My Prison, A POEM, Addressed to CHARLES LAMB, of the Indian-House, London’, in *The Annual Anthology*, vol. II (Bristol: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1800), pp. 140-44.

⁶ Anthony Harding, *Coleridge and the Idea of Love: Aspects of Relationship in Coleridge’s Thought and Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 63.

⁷ Harding, p. 63.

However, Coleridge's epistemological anxiety makes representing the transcendent power (God) in the foreground difficult. The redemptive resolution in 'The Ancient Mariner' is there, but the isolated Mariner seems not be part of it. Coleridge improves the consistency of the contrapuntal effect, associating the sounds of prayer with redemption through revising Part V in the 1800 version of 'The Ancient Mariner'. With such revisions, the redemptive element of the poem is enhanced, but it is still only marginally felt by the Mariner:

The body of my brother's son
 Stood by me knee to knee:
 The body and I pull'd at one rope,
 But he said nought to me—
 And I quak'd to think of my own voice
 How frightful it would be!
 (1798, ll. 331-336)⁸

The body of my brother's son
 Stood by me knee to knee:
 The body and I pull'd at one rope,
 But he said nought to me.
 "I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
 Be calm, thou wedding guest!
 'Twas not those souls, that fled in pain,
 Which to their corses came again,
 But a troop of Spirits blest:
 (1800, ll. 345-353)⁹

Replacing lines 335-36 of the 1798 version with a verse paragraph (ll. 349-53) in 1800, Coleridge takes away the disturbing horror of sustained loneliness. However, redemption seems to be given only to the dead crew who come back as 'a troop of Spirits blest' (l. 53)—at least this is felt by the Mariner subjectivity for he cannot get passed his sinfulness to be alive among the dead. In parts V and VI of the poem, the Mariner enters into a trance in which angelic voices converse:

The other was a softer voice,
 As soft as honey-dew:
 Quoth he the man hath penance done,
 And penance more will do. (1800, V, ll. 410-413)

 Second Voice

⁸ *LB 1798*, pp. 1-51. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

⁹ *LB 1800*, pp. 151-99. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

“Still as a Slave before his Lord,
 “The Ocean hath no blast:
 “His great bright eye most silently
 “Up to the moon is cast— (VI, ll. 418-421)

These voices suggest that the Mariner remains ‘Still as a Slave before his Lord’ with more ‘penance’ to do in the rest of his life—he does not feel like he is redeemed. The mercy of God is far-fetched, though it does explain logically the need for good works, in response to Coleridge’s own question in *Lecture on Revealed Religion*.¹⁰ The Mariner feels unforgiven—

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
 Had never pass’d away;
 I could not draw my eyes from theirs
 Nor turn them up to pray. (VI, ll. 442-445)

—and he must repent perpetually:

Like one, that on a lonesome road
 Doth walk in fear and dread,
 And having once turn’d round, walks on
 And turns no more his head:
 Because he knows, a frightful fiend
 Doth close behind him tread. (VI, ll. 450-455)

The rhymes disclose to us that the ‘dread’ remains a haunting presence in the Mariner’s ‘head’, where memory of his unforgiven sin ‘tread[s]’ behind him, enslaving him to more penance. Skilfully utilising the oral tradition of the ballad form, Coleridge represents the enslavement as the repetitive telling of the story to another. The Mariner first tells his tale to ‘the Hermit good’ (l. 513), with the hope that ‘He’ll shrieve my soul, he’ll wash away / The Albatross’s blood’ (VI, ll. 516-17); then the Mariner tells the wedding guest and the readers. When the Mariner finishes narrating the story, he then tells the wedding guest his view of God, directly for the first time, yet in conflicting statements:

¹⁰ *LPR*, pp. 205-06.

O Wedding-guest! this soul hath been

Alone on a wide wide sea:

So lonely 'twas, that God himself

Scarce seemed there to be.

(VII, ll. 601-604)

Farewell, farewell! But this I tell

To thee, thou wedding-guest!

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.

(VII, ll. 614-621)

These statements illustrate Coleridge's struggle with Spinozism, as well as with how the multiple conflicting experiences of God could reconcile with the essence of God (his Oneness). Lines 614-621 convey an idealised image of God, which in fact is, in Perry's words, 'a ghastly parody of the sunlit world of "This Lime-Tree Bower": more like a modernist text; indeed the expression of those fears that the unifying theology came to slave'.¹¹ Barth places more confidence in a genuine reconciliation between God and the Mariner, as he argues that, through prayers, 'the Mariner has reached not only a new level of awareness but a new state of being; newly touched by the presence of the divine in the world and in himself, he is now awake to beauty and to love'.¹² In the same vein as Barth, Malcome Ware transposes the prayer model, found in the *Gutch Notebook*, onto 'The Ancient Mariner' to stage the Mariner's full reconciliation with God through prayers.¹³ Coleridge writes in his notebook in 1797:

¹¹ Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 284-85.

¹² J. Robert Barth, "'A Spring of Love": Prayer and Blessing in Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 30.2, 1999, pp. 75-80, at p. 79.

¹³ Malcolm Ware, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner: A Discourse on Prayer?', *The Review of English Studies*, 11.43, 1960, pp. 303-04.

Prayer—

First Stage—the pressure of immediate calamities without earthy abundance makes us cry out to the Invisible—

Second Stage—the dreariness of visible things to a mind beginning to be contemplative—horrible Solitude.

Third Stage—Repentance & Regret—& self-inquietude.

4th stage—The celestial delectation that follows ardent prayer—

5th stage—self-annihilation—the Soul enters the Holy of Holies.—¹⁴

Ware uses lines 614-621 of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ to argue that Coleridge has attained the 5th stage of prayer.¹⁵ But reviewing the ending of ‘The Ancient Mariner’, I remain doubtful as to whether the Mariner has successfully attained all five stages as Ware argues. Leaning towards Perry’s view, I argue that the Mariner somehow fails to proceed from ‘the Third Stage’ as his ‘self-inquietude’ never seems to have ceased; rather this ‘self-inquietude’ becomes a contagion to the listener in the form of the wedding guest:

With other ministrations thou, O nature!
Healest thy wandering and distempered child:
Thou pourest on him thy soft influences,
Thy sunny hues, fair forms, and breathing sweets,
Thy melodies of woods, and winds, and waters,
Till he relent, and can no more endure
To be a jarring and a dissonant thing,
Amid this general dance and minstrelsy;
But, bursting into tears, wins back his way,
His angry spirit healed and harmonized
By the benignant touch of love and beauty.

(‘The Dungeon’, ll. 20-30)¹⁶

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone; and now the wedding-guest
Turn’d from the bridegroom’s door.

He went, like one that hath been stunn’d
And is of sense forlorn:

A sadder and a wiser man
He rose the morrow morn.

(1800, ll. 622-629)

‘He went’— there is ambiguity in the pronoun ‘He’. Literally, this ‘He’ (l. 626) refers to the listener, ‘the wedding-guest’. But the kind of emotions the wedding guest carried with him as

¹⁴ *CN*, I, 257.

¹⁵ Ware, p. 304.

¹⁶ *LB* 1798, pp. 139-40.

he left is sourced from the Mariner. In turn, 'He' (l. 626) is also reflexively the Mariner, such that the 'sense forlorn' of the wedding-guest is extended from the Mariner's 'self-inquietude'. As the wedding guest 'Turn'd from the bridegroom's door', he found himself becoming 'a jarring and a dissonant thing, / Amid this general dance and minstrelsy'. The wedding guest becomes 'wiser' but 'sadder' at the end, as the Mariner fails to enlighten his listener and readers through the narrative of his experience to share in any confident forms of Transcendence.

This unsettling ending reflects Coleridge's perplexity towards Spinozism: how can the multiplicity of senses and fractured truth the Mariner knows about his world possibly bring him or anyone towards what Spinoza calls the 'intellectual love of God'? Spinoza says, 'The more we understand individual objects, the more we understand God', and the knowledge cultivated from this process is called 'the third kind of knowledge'.¹⁷ Spinoza elaborates, 'The third kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things';¹⁸ and that 'From the third kind of knowledge necessarily springs the intellectual love of God', which means that 'from this kind of knowledge arises joy attended with the idea of God as its cause, that is to say, the love of God, not in so far as we imagine Him as present, but in so far as we understand that He is eternal'.¹⁹ Yet, the Mariner's feeling of God's absence, his loneliness and 'self-inquietude' in the poem does not reciprocate with this stream of Spinozistic thoughts. As God is absent from our subjective scope of knowledge in 'The Ancient Mariner' (1800), this idea corresponds to Coleridge's belief in Original Sin, in a 1798 letter to George Coleridge, as part of the human depravity of the mind:

Of GUILT I say nothing; but I believe most steadfastly in original Sin; that from our mothers' wombs our understandings are darkened; and even where our understandings are in the Light, that our organization is depraved, & our volitions imperfect; and we sometimes see the good without *wishing* to attain it, and oftener *wish* it without the energy that wills & performs—And for this inherent depravity, I believe, that the Spirit of the Gospel is the sole cure—but permit me to add, that I look for the spirit of the Gospel 'neither in the mountain, nor at Jerusalem'—²⁰

¹⁷ Benedict De Spinoza, *Ethic: Demonstrated in Geometrical Order and Divided into Five Parts*, tr. by W. Hale White, rev. by Amelia Hutchison (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 270.

¹⁸ Spinoza, p. 270.

¹⁹ Spinoza, p. 274.

²⁰ *CL*, I, p. 396.

Arguing against Ulmer by suggesting that ‘The Ancient Mariner’ ‘marks the beginning of the end of [Coleridge’s] Unitarian faith’,²¹ Christopher Stokes comments on this passage of the letter: ‘What is striking about this passage is not only the admission of human imperfection, but the identification of an *inherent* depravity which appears prior to the reception of sense data and the formation of associations’.²² Stokes takes this ‘depravity’ as the ‘providentially-directed destiny’ that is consistent with Necessity and Unitarianism,²³ unlike Ulmer who claims that Unitarianism has ‘disinterest in Original Sin’. Sharing Stokes’s view, I wish to explicate further the significance of such a notion of ‘inherent depravity’ in relation to Coleridge’s Transcendence.

The orthodox doctrine of Original Sin means that all of mankind are born sinful because of Adam’s Fall. This is a mythical explanation of the origin of sin. To re-interpret ‘original sin’ as the ‘inherent depravity’ of men, Coleridge endeavours to relocate Original sin from its mythical origin to a metaphysical one. Defending the doctrine but also deviating from its original orthodox implication, Coleridge deals with Original Sin as a defect of the human mind. Coleridge strives to prove this with his thought experiments recorded in his notebook entries. In December 1803, Coleridge wrote in a notebook entry that

I will at least make the attempt to explain to myself the Origin of moral Evil from the *streamy* Nature of Association, which Thinking = Reason, curbs & rudders / how this comes to be so difficult / Do not the bad Passions in Dreams throw light & shew of proof upon this Hypothesis?—Explain those bad Passions: & I shall gain Light, I am sure—A Clue! A Clue!—an Hecatomb a la Pythagoras, if it unlabyrinths me. [...] In short, as far as I can see any thing in this Total Mist, Vice is imperfect yet existing Volition, giving diseased Currents of association, because it yields on all sides & *yet* is—So think of Madness:—O if I live! Grasmere, Dec. 29. 1803.²⁴

The idea of vice ‘giving diseased Currents of association’ prompts us to recall the ‘strange judgements’ after the Mariner’s killing of the albatross. Alerting readers to the lack of

²¹ Christopher Stokes, “‘My Soul in Agony’: Irrationality and Christianity in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, *Studies of Romanticism*, 50.1, 2011, pp. 3-28, at p. 12.

²² Stokes, p. 13.

²³ Stokes, p. 13.

²⁴ *CN*, I, 1770.

causality and motive in the Mariner's killing of the albatross, many critics remain doubtful about whether such an act is a moral crime or not. But if we consider the fact that, the Mariner is the narrator who narrates his own deed, the 'diseased Currents of association' in his mind suffice to make him recognise his vice in the first place. The Mariner subjectively considers his own deed as an act with full 'Volition'—whether or not objectively he really has full volition in killing the albatross is another matter. In another notebook entry in January 1804, Coleridge confirms that the effects of association are not acquired through education, but from the deficient faculties of our minds:

Tuesd. Morn. Jan. 10. 1804.—After I had got into bed last night, I said to myself, that I had been pompously enunciating, as a difficulty, a problem of easy & common solution/ viz. that it was the effect of Association, we from Infancy up to Manhood under Parents, Schoolmasters, Tutors, Inspectors, &c having had our pleasures & pleasant self-chosen Pursuits (self-chosen because pleasant, and not *originally* pleasant because self-chosen) interrupted, & we forced into dull unintelligible Rudiments or painful Labor/—*Now*, all Duty is felt as a *command*, commands *most often*, & therefore by Laws of Association felt as if *always*, from without & consequently, calling up the Sensations &c of the pains endured from Parents', Schoolmasters', &c &c—commands from without.—But I awoke with gouty suffocation this morning, ½ past one/& as soon as Disease permitted me to think at all, the shallowness & falsity of this Solution flashed on me at once/ I saw, that the phænomenon occurred far far too early—in early Infancy, 2 & 3 months old, I have observed it/& have seen it in Hartley, turned up & lay'd bare to the unarmed Eye of merest common sense. That *Interruption* of itself is painful because & as far as it acts as Disruption/& then, without any reference to or distinct recollection of my former theory, I saw great Reason to attribute the effect wholly to the streamy nature of the associating Faculty and especially as it is evident that *they most* labor under this defect who are most reverie-ish & streamy—Hartley, for instance & myself/This seems to me no common corroboration of my former Thought on the origin of moral Evil in general.²⁵

²⁵ CN, I, 1833.

That an ‘associating Faculty’ must be innate is a belief which Coleridge affirms through observing the ‘streamy nature’ of his son’s mind. The ‘bad Passions in Dreams’ which Coleridge sought to explain in the 1803 entry are, as described in the 1804 entry, the ‘labor’ of the mind interrupting or disturbing our thoughts and understanding, and thus our actions. By now, we may finally understand why Coleridge revised the 1800 title to ‘A Poet’s Reverie’—for ‘it is evident that they most labor under this defect who are most reverie-ish & streamy’. Admitting to be ‘reverie-ish & streamy’, Coleridge licensed critics to read the 1800 version of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ as a telltale experience of Original Sin. These notebook entries allow readers to see the doubling of such experience: first in terms of the streamy associations in the Mariner’s subjectivity, as he went in and out of trances or sleeps; and second, in terms of the ‘Poet’s Reverie’. Original Sin is re-interpreted by Coleridge as the inability of the Mariner to comprehend his world thoroughly. Believing himself to be sinful, the Mariner’s account of his voyage is focalised through his ‘associating Faculty’, while the Mariner’s point of view takes up a majority of the lines in the poem. The lack of objective truthfulness in the Mariner’s subjective account of Original Sin is in turn the ‘corroboration’ of the Mariner’s sin. ‘The Ancient Mariner’ (1800) as ‘A Poet’s Reverie’ can also be seen as Coleridge’s ‘corroboration’ of his own sins.

In other words, Original Sin finds its way into the 1800 ‘The Ancient Mariner’, at an epistemological level, by challenging the various Christian, Catholic and metaphysical notions in the poem. Coleridge mentioned in the 1798 letter to his brother George that the ‘sole cure’ of this human depravity is ‘the spirit of the Gospel “neither in the mountain, nor at Jerusalem”’—this quotation is biblical (John 4:19-24, KJV).

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Original Sin becomes ultimately the epistemological impediment that hinders the perception of the Oneness of God. 'The Ancient Mariner' is a voyage to look for 'the Spirit of the Gospel', but in vain. The thinking and thoughts involved in this voyage makes one 'wiser', as we come to know our sins from a different perspective than that of its biblical tradition, but inevitably 'sadder', for our separation from God and our Original Sin have no other resolution, apart from the problematic scheme of salvation.

II

In 'The Ancient Mariner' (1798, 1800), God is represented by his absence when the Mariner encounters horrifying events which make him thirst for the transcendent. From a religious perspective, the traditional worldview of sins and subsequent judgments (or punishments) is not the cause of his actions, since the Mariner does not act pre-knowing this moral system. The ballad form focalised mainly through the Mariner impedes readers' subjectivity from gaining an unbiased omniscient view, mirroring the way in which sins prevent our intellectual reunion with God. The Original Sin is reinterpreted as the imperfection of our faculties, hence our incomplete knowledge of God. To Coleridge, the imperfectability of the human mind constrains one's subjectivity to transcendent understanding. The human subjectivity is rendered as an inhibitor to Transcendence by sins. Paradoxically however, Coleridge also sees subjectivity as the enabler of Transcendence, so long as we come into consciousness of the God-given guiding light, which inheres deep in the human mind. This light maintains Coleridge's hope for the unity and Oneness of Transcendence in poetry. Both positive and negative dimensions of subjectivity are manifested in the Crewe Manuscript of 'Kubla Khan', which is composed during 1797-98, around the time when 'The Ancient Mariner' was composed. On the one hand, Coleridge demonstrates in the Crewe MS of 'Kubla Khan' his desire for Oneness through creating a prelapsarian world. On the other hand, the imperfectability of the human mind undercuts his intended Oneness with divisive meanings. Through my analysis of the Crewe MS, I show how this poem reflects Coleridge's view on human subjectivity and participates in his metaphysical mapping for Transcendence.

The prelapsarian world of 'Kubla Khan' (the Crewe Manuscript, which is the earliest version of 'Kubla Khan') offers an imagined pre-history before the Fall, while 'The Ancient Mariner' exhibits a world after the Fall. The biblical history of mankind is reworked in a metaphysical language through these two poems. This notion of history takes its point of departure from Jerome McGann's essay on 'The meaning of the Ancient Mariner'. McGann

reminds critics that ‘a historical analysis becomes a cultural imperative, for it is through such an analysis that we can recover what the past has sent to us and redefine the future of our own work’.²⁶ McGann acknowledges the ‘ideological gulf’ between the mindset of present-day readers and ‘the resources made available through the “Rime” and its critical history’.²⁷ The reiteration of ‘the standard reading’ as ‘some kind of One Life allegory’ for ‘The Ancient Mariner’ would be rather inadequate in the light of this ‘critical history’.²⁸ My argument draws on McGann’s comment that ‘A poem like the “Rime” dramatizes a salvation story, but it is not the old story of our salvation *in* Christ; rather it is the new story of our salvation *of* Christ’.²⁹ A Christianising or moralising reading of the poem soon becomes inadequate, when we are aware of the Romantic context in which Coleridge’s religious dissent leads him to rethink religion through metaphysics. Coleridge’s intention to defend and explore Christianity under the light of philosophy urges us to reconsider what sort of religious implications there are in these poems. Raimonda Modiano argues contrary to McGann’s notions that ‘The Ancient Mariner’ is

not a story about “salvation” either “in Christ” or “of Christ” in McGann’s terms (54), but about a “fracture at the heart of things” (Quinones 3), as the enduring Cain-Abel story commemorates. This fracture is caused by history itself, which in Coleridge’s time provided terrifying spectacles of what “man can do to man” in every corner of the world, posing a formidable challenge to Christian values as well as radical political standpoints on the French Revolution or the slave trade, a fact that some historicist critics have not fully taken into account, hanging on to sacramental readings of the poem.³⁰

Modiano is right about the ‘formidable challenge to Christian values’, as well as detecting other possible political implications in the poem. But Modiano risks taking ‘the salvation *of* Christ’ at face value and side-lines religion from the political movement in the Romantic period. The restructuring of Christian notions in metaphysical language is part of the dissenting culture that resulted from political radicalism after the failure of the French

²⁶ Jerome McGann, ‘The Meaning of the Ancient Mariner’, *Critical Inquiry*, 8.1, 1981, pp. 35-67, at p. 54.

²⁷ McGann, p. 54.

²⁸ Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*, p. 282.

²⁹ Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*, p. 282.

³⁰ Raimonda Modiano, ‘Sameness or Difference? Historicist Readings of “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”’, in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism*, ed. by Paul H. Fry (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), pp.187-219, p. 215.

Revolution. McGann's 'salvation of Christ' is not necessarily at odds with the "fracture at the heart of things" found in reality. In fact, the 'salvation of Christ' is part of Coleridge's impulse for Transcendence, yet his epistemological anxiety accompanying such an impulse is evident in those fractures of Oneness he perceived in reality. Additionally, McGann argues that

At the outset of the nineteenth century and in reaction to the revolutionary intellectual developments of the Enlightenment, Christian ideas find a new birth of freedom, not in the fact of Christ's resurrection, which is the traditional Pauline view, but in the symbol of the resurrection, in its *meaning*.³¹

Irrespective of McGann's mode of historicising the poetic text, his insight into 'the salvation of Christ' does not necessarily sustain a Christian reading of the poem through historicism, but is necessary to sustain any '*meaning*' at all. It is the resurrection of '*meaning*' which warrants proper historicism, so that the poem 'will cease to be an object of faith—whether Romantic or Christian—and become, instead, a human—a social and a historical—resource'.³²

Coleridge endeavours to salvage Religion from merely being 'an object of faith' amid trends of secularisation after the Enlightenment. He does so by means of metaphysical exploration and incorporation of some religious values into an account of the intellectual progress of society through his poetic writings. Therefore, we have seen in the previous section of this chapter that Coleridge's interest in Original Sin directs him to relocate the orthodox doctrine in the 'associating faculty' of the human mind in the 1800 version of 'The Ancient Mariner' and other prose writings during 1797-1804. Manifest also in the Crewe Manuscript of 'Kubla Khan', Coleridge's interest in the biblical myth of Eden should not be overlooked, especially in the light of the Higher Criticism Movement he was exposed to in Germany. Focusing on Coleridge's active role in this Movement, E. S. Shaffer proposes that Coleridge engages in creating 'a mythology of the invisible' for 'the completion of the prophecies'.³³ This engagement with mythologizing in poetic writings is demonstrable of a 'new concept of history' which

³¹ McGann, p. 60.

³² McGann, p. 67.

³³ E. S. Shaffer, *'Kubla Khan' and The Fall of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 53.

bridged precisely that epic gap between “fact” and “sacred story” that so plagued the Enlightenment. History itself was neither fact nor revelation, but the mythological milieu enabling events of a particular society to take place. The reply to the onslaught against miracles, then, was fundamentally rational—there are no miracles, that is, breaches of natural laws—but what is natural is stretched to include not merely physical but anthropological and sociological laws. What would be miracle to one society may occur naturally in another. Nature is subjectivized; events are mental. The concern of history is not disembodied event, but human nature.³⁴

Shaffer argues that ‘By mythologizing history, the doubting faithful could still place their credence in the Bible narrative’.³⁵ I argue therefore that the Crewe MS can be seen as the apocalyptic myth that prophesies the Fall of men—a necessary pre-history explaining the ‘pre-established code’ of Christianity in the ‘The Ancient Mariner’. This myth in the Crewe MS is not the old tale of Eden, but ‘the Edenic scene intensified’ in it.³⁶ The prophetic vision of our future fallenness which Coleridge tries to portray in the Crewe Manuscript thus represents a reconstructed history of mankind or, in Shaffer’s words, ‘the great primordial myth of the origin and end of civilization in the religious spirit of man’.³⁷

‘Kubla Khan: or, A Vision in a Dream’ was first published in 1816, with a prefatory note that dates its composition to ‘the summer of the year 1797’, but this date is known to be questionable. Other possibilities suggested by biographers and critics include September to November 1797, May 1798 and October 1799.³⁸ However, in the Crewe Manuscript, Coleridge notes in prose that:

This fragment with a good deal more, not recoverable, composed, in a sort of Reverie brought on by two grains of opium, taken to check a dysentery, at a Farm House between Porlock & Linton, a quarter of a mile from Culbone Church, in the fall of the year 1797.—S.T. Coleridge³⁹

³⁴ Shaffer, p. 53.

³⁵ Shaffer, p. 54.

³⁶ Shaffer, p. 105.

³⁷ Shaffer, p. 106.

³⁸ *PW*, I, 1, p. 509.

³⁹ Justin Shepherd, *In Xanadu . . . : A Companion to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s Kubla Khan* ([n.p.]: *The Friends of Coleridge*, 2016), p. 41

Whether Coleridge started his composition of the poem in the summer or the fall of 1797 is uncertain. As Elisabeth Schneider states,

We do not know when Coleridge wrote the preface that he himself printed, but the evidence as far as it goes suggests that the Crewe manuscript was written first, perhaps much earlier. The watermark of the paper, Miss Snyder noted, is the same as that of a letter written by Coleridge in 1796.⁴⁰

The Crewe manuscript is probably earlier. The watermark, the closer resemblance of the text to Purchas and Milton, and the character of the explanatory note all point to an earlier date. The note does not, however, appear to have been written immediately after the poem was composed. Both notes appear to be retrospective and are therefore weak reeds to lean upon. Their date of 1797 has been either questioned or abandoned by most writers on Coleridge in the present century, chiefly because it appears to conflict with another statement by Coleridge himself.⁴¹

With reference to the Crewe MS, Justin Shepherd points out that, ‘In addition to Coleridge’s note there is also a pencilled inscription stating that the copy had been “sent by Mr Southey, as Autograph of Coleridge.”’⁴² This pencil inscription is written by Mrs Elizabeth Smith, to whom Robert Southey gave the autograph (Crewe MS) as a gift.⁴³ As Shepherd suggests, ‘Scholars generally agree that this manuscript was in existence by early 1804 and was probably written out by Coleridge for Robert Southey at some time before that’.⁴⁴ We cannot easily pin down when ‘Kubla Khan’ was first written, nor do we know whether the Crewe MS is the very first draft of the poem, or just an improvement of the first draft copied to Southey. But the Crewe MS is the earliest version of the poem before the published version in 1816. Consequently, it is sensible to think of it as composed around the time when Coleridge was composing the 1798 version of ‘The Ancient Mariner’. Whether the Crewe MS was composed a little before or after the composition of the 1798 ‘Rime’ does not matter much to my argument, for their shared focus on Original Sin during 1797-1804 is what connects them.

⁴⁰ Elisabeth Schneider, *Coleridge, Opium and Kubla Khan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 25.

⁴¹ Schneider, p. 157.

⁴² Shepherd, p. 29.

⁴³ Shepherd, p. 29.

⁴⁴ Shepherd, p. 29.

Drawing out the different literary sources of ‘Kubla Khan’, John Livingston Lowes’s *The Road to Xanadu* is impressively influential to criticisms of ‘Kubla Khan’ in general.⁴⁵ Through importing historical, geographical and literary annotations to the poem, Lowes’s ambitious book conveys his passion in cracking the mystery of every word in the poem. It should be noted that *The Road to Xanadu* was written at a time before the Crewe MS ‘first came to the notice of scholars in 1934’.⁴⁶ Elisabeth Schneider therefore revised Lowes by highlighting some necessary corrections induced by the discovery of the Crewe MS:

Kubla Khan itself in the version of the Crewe manuscript contains a number of variants from the printed text, and of these at least three are closer to their source in Coleridge’s reading. “Kubla” is there “Cubla”, “Mount Abora” is “Mount Amara” (altered to “Amora”), and “twice five miles is “twice six miles.” In Purchas the name is Cublai” or “Cublay”; “Mount Amara” is the false Abyssinian Paradise in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*, from which comes much else in Coleridge’s poem. The discovery of these and other variants, minor as they all are, must have been a blow to Lowes, who had argued passionately for his conviction that Coleridge’s dream had reached the printed page without the slightest revision or any other intervention of a waking mind.⁴⁷

Reviewing Schneider’s *Coleridge, Opium and Kubla Khan*, Abrams sensibly questions whether she is right to suggest that Coleridge’s description of the poem’s genesis in the Note to the Crewe MS (“composed in a sort of Reverie brought on by two grains of Opium”) contradicts with another account of it in the 1816 Prefatory Note (‘composed “in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses,” during which “all the images rose up before him as things. . . .”).⁴⁸ As Abrams puts it, ‘The second can be interpreted as an elaborated analysis of the peculiarly deep reverie, often attested in the literature of opium, in which the dreamer, rendered oblivious to his surroundings by what Coleridge called a “profound sleep, at least of the external senses,” is lost in the inner world of his phantasy’.⁴⁹ Abrams raises another issue

⁴⁵ John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination* (London: Constable, 1930).

⁴⁶ Hilton Kelliher, ‘The *Kubla Khan* Manuscript and its First Collector’, *The British Library Journal*, 20.2, 1994, pp. 184-98, at p. 184.

⁴⁷ Schneider, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁸ M. H. Abrams, ‘Review: Elisabeth Schneider, *Coleridge, Opium and “Kubla Khan”*’, *Modern Language Notes*, 70.3, 1955, pp. 216-19, at p. 217.

⁴⁹ Abrams, ‘Review’, p. 217.

that challenges many hermeneutic readings of the poem: he observes that ‘It may be queried whether this professedly “literal” reading of the poem is any less arbitrary than the many and diverse “symbolic” interpretations that the author sharply rejects’.⁵⁰ Seeking after neither a literal reading or a symbolic reading, George G. Watson thought of ‘Kubla Khan’ as ‘a poem about poetry’, and how it inspired Coleridge into writing his famous distinction between Fancy and Imagination in *Biographia Literaria*.⁵¹

My interpretation of the Crewe MS can be traced among these studies in two directions. First, in the note to the Crewe MS, Coleridge says that the poem was written ‘in a sort of Reverie brought on by two grains of Opium’. This mode of ‘Reverie’ corresponds to Coleridge’s explanation of the origin of moral evil in the notebook entries (*CN*, I, 1770, 1833) discussed earlier in this chapter. The ‘streamy nature of the associating Faculty’ is at work during the dreamy state of mind, and ‘the bad Passions in Dreams’ are ‘corroborations’ of our sinful nature. What Coleridge meant by ‘the bad Passions’ is explained in his observation of Hartley (*CN*, I, 1833) whose mind comes to slave under what we call the common sense. And the process of this interruption of the mind is most ‘reverie-ish & streamy’, constituting what Coleridge identifies as Original Sin. Considering these notebook entries, Schneider and Abrams’s debate about whether a dream under the influence of opium should be read literally or symbolically seems to be an unnecessary division for Coleridge. This is because Coleridge is gaining symbolic meaning about the mind from the literal meanings of reveries in the notebook entries. What comes from the mind can always be symbolic of the mind itself, even when the creative process is not fully accompanied by perfect consciousness. Therefore, secondly, critics who read ‘Kubla Khan’ as a poem about writing poetry, such as George Watson, are also dealing with symbolic meaning of the mind’s creative process. My interpretation of the Crewe MS adds a twist to this line of argument. Coleridge attempts to create a prelapsarian world where the Oneness of Transcendence is reconstructed in ‘Kubla Khan’. This world before the Fall in the Crewe MS is however engendered by Coleridge’s mind, which inheres in a real world after the Fall. The Spinozistic puzzle about the one and the many remains unresolved. Coleridge’s prelapsarian world is not intended to have a division between good and evil, but our mind habitually associates such division with the words employed in the poem. The disparity between the intended unity and actual division within the semantics of dictions in the poem engenders a sense of friction within readers’

⁵⁰ Abrams, ‘Review’, p. 218.

⁵¹ George G. Watson, “‘Kubla Khan’”, in *Coleridge, The Ancient Mariner and Other Poems: A Casebook*, ed. by Alun R. Jones and William Tydeman (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 221-34.

comprehension. Through such an experiential account, the idea of religious Transcendence is communicated through the intended unity in meaning, whereas the Fall is prophesied when our divisive understanding reaffirms it. Mythologizing the poem, Coleridge offers a ‘twofold vision’⁵² of the living Oneness (God) to all men and the anxiety of not knowing God amid the confusion of dividing and divisive perceptions.

III

The Crewe MS has no title. It begins with a vision of a ‘Pleasure-Dome’ in ‘Xanadu’ (l. 2) from which runs a river called ‘Alph’ (l. 3).⁵³ Among lines 1 to 5, the river outshines this ‘stately’ (l. 2) dome of pleasure. Its flow guides our eyes to its ‘sacred’ (l.3) effulgence, then to the unbound vastness of some caves, in a downward motion to ‘a sunless Sea’ (l. 5), a place of darkness that deepens with its depth. Elements that seem at odds with one another are linked together by this flow, forging a sense of Oneness without a clear-cut division between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘sunless’. Contrary to the river ‘Alph’, the ‘Pleasure-Dome’ is a more crafted image:

So twice six miles of fertile ground
 With Walls and Towers were compass’d round:
 And here were Gardens bright with sinuous Rills
 Where blossom’d many an incense-bearing Tree,
 And here were Forests ancient as the Hills
 Enfolding sunny spots of Greenery. (Crewe MS, ll. 6-11)

The source of the images in lines 6 to 11 comes from ‘Coleridge’s reading of Samuel Purchas’s *Pilgrimage* (1614)’;⁵⁴ a literary source which the poet acknowledged also in the 1816 Preface ‘Of the Fragment of Kubla Khan’—

⁵² Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*, p. 3.

⁵³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘The Crewe Manuscript’, in *In Xanadu . . . : A Companion to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s Kubla Khan*, ed. by Justin Shepherd ([n.p.]: The Friends of Coleridge 2016), pp. 38-41. This transcription is accompanied with photos of the Crewe MS in a parallel text fashion. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

⁵⁴ Douglas Hedley, ‘Coleridge’s Intellectual Intuition, the Vision of God, and the Walled Garden of “Kubla Khan”’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59.1, 1998, pp. 115-34, at p. 120; Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions* (London: Flamingo, 1999), p. 163.

he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in “Purchas’s Pilgrimage:” “Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were in-close with a wall.”⁵⁵

Douglas Hedley persuasively identifies the ‘walled garden’ image in the poem as one that invokes images of biblical paradises: ‘As Christianity moved into the rest of the Hellenistic world, the sacred significance of Jerusalem was lost, but the connection between the Temple-City and paradise is perpetuated through the imagery of the Church as paradise provisionally regained’.⁵⁶ These subtle references to the paradise (Eden) lost and provisional paradise (church) regained places the imaged landscape of the poem right between the material and the spiritual where yearnings for Transcendence are most strong. In Hedley’s analysis, Transcendence is to be found within the wall, for ‘God, within these walls, is the trans-categorical unity, the coincidence of opposites’.⁵⁷ The goal of creating such expression is not, for Coleridge, to repeat an image of Eden or other known paradises, as Shaffer argues that

Coleridge identified poetry with myth; this being so, he could absorb allegory into his scheme of development, not as characterizing Christian thought as against myth, but as one legitimate phase of mythological poetry. This, of course, does not mean that poetry reproduces primitive myth, but rather that it creates, at each stage of the development of consciousness, the metaphysical event.⁵⁸

Endorsing Shaffer’s definition of myth making, I believe the focus is not how closely primitive myths are imitated in the poem, but how the creative process of writing the poem brings into consciousness the metaphysical act of myth making, that is to say the ways in which the paradisiacal is expressed. Among those lines, the pastoral vision is saturated with various rays of light: ‘Gardens bright’, ‘sinuous Rills’, and ‘sunny spots of greenery’. The walls and towers are ‘Enfolding’ these beaming images as arms embracing them with

⁵⁵ *CKK*, p. 52.

⁵⁶ Hedley, ‘Coleridge’s Intellectual Intuition, the Vision of God, and the Walled Garden of “Kubla Khan”’, p. 121.

⁵⁷ Hedley, ‘Coleridge’s Intellectual Intuition, the Vision of God, and the Walled Garden of “Kubla Khan”’, p. 123.

⁵⁸ Shaffer, p. 141.

affections. In a notebook entry dated January 1804, Coleridge reiterates an image of a walled garden in which ‘A Leaf had been smitten with Light’:⁵⁹

Catling, i.e. Kitten sitting on the Garden Wall be
 Underneath the old Plum Tree
 Playing with the Falling Leaves
 On a calm grey Autumn Day—
 And many a time before the Leaf had reached the Ground,
 The Sun had been out & in
 And the Leaf had been smitten with Light,
 A Pilgrim of manifold Fate
 In its brief perpendicular Fall.⁶⁰

Here, the paradisiacal vision is romanticised as an intense love of Light. Extending the image of the walled garden in Purchas’s *Pilgrimage*, Coleridge tells us that his ‘Pilgrim’ in ‘Kubla Khan’ is one ‘of manifold Fate’ which ends ‘In its brief perpendicular Fall.’ The word ‘manifold’ reminds us of the various happenings in ‘The Ancient Mariner’, and the arbitrariness of them. The pronoun ‘its’ refers to ‘the Leaf’, but the final ‘Fall’ rhymes with ‘Wall’ in the first line, shifting ‘its’ to the ‘Catling’ which trifles with ‘the Falling Leaves’ at the brink of falling off from the wall. Even in a paradisiacal world, the human fate to ‘Fall’ is hinted at by that rhyme with ‘Wall’—the symbol of the Edenic threshold which marks human’s exile from the ‘Garden’.

From line 12 of the Crewe MS, the volta occurs. And the turn is signalled, with enhancement of a paragraph break, such that line 12 marks the start of the second verse paragraph in the 1816 version.

But o! that deep romantic Chasm, that slanted
 Down a green Hill athwart a cedarn Cover,
 A savage Place, as holy and enchanted
 As e’er beneath a waning Moon was haunted
 By Woman wailing for her Daemon Lover:

⁵⁹ CN, I, 1813.

⁶⁰ CN, I, 1813

From forth this chasm with hideous Turmoil seething,
 As if this Earth in fast thick Pants were breathing, (Crewe MS, ll. 12-18)

The enigma of these lines hinges on how Transcendence has become, for readers, a wilful effort to force together elements and feelings that resist one another: the ‘savage’, ‘holy’ and ‘enchanted’—we notice the sense of deliberate unity they represent in the poet’s intention. The mood and texture of the images in lines 15 to 18, which describe the ‘deep romantic Chasm’, is bewilderingly gothic and sexual and attended by implications of the ‘waning’ of Light, which is in stark contrast with the pastoral vision in lines 6 to 11. Sounds of ‘seething’ and ‘breathing’ add to the sexual dimension of a ‘Woman wailing for her Daemon Lover’. As Lowes points out, ‘a dæmon and a demon are not one and the same thing’, and Coleridge used the right word in ‘Kubla Khan’ as ‘it is dæmon, in its Platonic sense of a being intermediary between gods and men—not demon, with its Judæo-Christian import of an unclean, evil, or malignant spirit—that we must keep in mind’.⁶¹ Interestingly, Coleridge uses the very same word in ‘Religious Musings’ differently: ‘She that work’d whoredom with the DÆMON POWER / And from the dark embrace all evil things’ (1796, ll. 353-354). I agree with Lowes’s view in the case of the Crewe MS and ‘Kubla Khan’, as it is the making of a myth, the pre-history before the Fall of man, that the poet attempts to tell. The way in which Coleridge renews the usual connotations of some dictions support Lowes’s understanding of ‘dæmon’ which help accommodate Transcendence as a ‘trans-categorical unity’ in the paradisiacal landscape. But it is wrong to disregard the second meaning of ‘DÆMON’ in ‘Religious Musings’, as it is not the only word in the Crewe MS which we would associate with morality and evil elsewhere in ‘Kubla Khan’. When reading words or images, such as the ‘savage Place’, the ‘waning Moon’, ‘hideous Turmoil’, readers ‘must put aside’ their ‘discursive differentiating reflection’ in the mind.⁶² This conscious effort bespeaks the poem’s very struggle to forge Transcendence into being. It is true that the ‘Platonic sense’ of ‘Daemon’ as ‘intermediary between gods and men’ corresponds to Coleridge’s concept of Transcendence as a connection between the material and the spiritual. However, readers more habitually associate ‘Daemon’, alongside those sexual and gothic dictions, with its alternative usage that entails a division of good and evil.

⁶¹ Lowes, p. 234.

⁶² Hedley, ‘Coleridge’s Intellectual Intuition, the Vision of God, and the Walled Garden of “Kubla Khan”’, p. 122.

This moral and epistemological struggle shakes the paradisiacal landscape to the core, like an earthquake disturbing the prophetic vision in the poet's mind:

A mighty Fountain momentarily was forc'd,
 Amid whose swift half-intermitted Burst
 Huge Fragments vaulted like rebounding Hail,
 Or chaffy grain beneath the Thresher's Flail.
 And mid these dancing Rocks at once & ever
 It flung up momentarily the sacred River. (ll. 19-24)

The sexual and gothic energy from 'that romantic Chasm' suddenly explodes like a volcanic 'Fountain', just as Piper puts it: 'the fountain of this poem is unquestionably volcanic, hurling rocks, shaking the earth, and rising in "half-intermitted bursts"'.⁶³ Yet, not quite the same as an outburst of heat, Coleridge estranges from the readers the eruption by comparing the pieces of 'Huge Fragments' as 'rebounding Hail', icy and cold, entwining the image to the ice caverns in this imaginative landscape. Coleridge does not end the parallelism here; he then proceeds to compare the vision of 'rebounding Hail' in his imagined landscape to a biblical image: 'Or chaffy grain beneath the Thresher's Flail' (l. 22). Since the prophetic Book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament, the act of threshing is a trope for God's wrath against the Whore of Babylon.⁶⁴ In Jeremiah, it is written: 'For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshingfloor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.' (Jeremiah 51:33, KJV). This prophecy concerned with the judgement of the Great Whore, or of the evil power, is recast in the New Testament, in the Book of Revelation, chapter 17 to 18. In other words, we can view the energy unleashed from the Chasm as a vision of the wrath of God. But in a neutralised world of Oneness—the pre-history of what we knew from the Bible—this wrath is manifested rather objectively as a supernatural change that 'flung up momentarily the sacred River' (l. 24), yet subjectively felt as a disruption to that flow of Oneness. This change has a lasting impact in history, as it happened 'momently'—this word usually connotes *at once* (a 'transitory' time), but it can also mean 'recurring or operative at every moment' or in the poet's words

⁶³ H. W. Piper, 'The Two Paradises in *Kubla Khan*', *The Review of English Studies, New Series*, 27.106, 1976, pp. 148-58, at p. 153.

⁶⁴ Threshing is also a trope of God's Wrath in Habakkuk 3:12. Coleridge had cited Habakkuk 1 in the footnote of the 1796 'Religious Musings'.

‘once & ever’.⁶⁵ In the 1816 version, ‘hideous turmoil’ (l. 17) is revised to ‘ceaseless turmoil’, consolidating this idea of once and ever. The temporal reference of ‘momently’ captures the Fall of man in the transitory world of reality while the ‘once & ever’ captures the atemporal Apocalypse of the Judgement Day.⁶⁶ Through this mix of temporality, the mythologised history of mankind is discerned to Cubla:

Five miles meandering with a mazy Motion
Thro’ Wood and Dale the sacred River ran,
Then reach’d the Caverns measureless to Man
And sank in Tumult to a lifeless Ocean;
And mid this Tumult Cubla heard from far
Ancestral Voices prophesying War. (ll. 25-30)

Ineluctable differentiations set in these lines, where the images of River Alph in lines 1 to 5 are repeated with obvious changes. The sacred river is frenzied by the energy of the Chasm, as it meandered in ‘a mazy motion’, twisting the elegance of ‘sinuous’ (l. 8) in the beginning. Through the same ‘Caverns measureless to Man’, the flow of the River nevertheless ‘sank in Tumult’ before reaching the ‘sunless sea’ (l. 5) or ‘a lifeless Ocean’. I suggest that the ‘Tumult’ outside the garden has two levels of meaning. The first is psychological, that sin has confused our mind epistemologically and fractured the vision of Oneness through differentiations. And the second is symbolic, the disorderly crowd and violence involved in a war, which attunes our mind to the apocalyptic prophecies in the Bible about the Whore of Babylon that comes after this mythical prehistory—after the ‘Ancestral Voices prophesying War’ between God and the evil power. Perry argues that ‘The coexistence in the poem of the Khan’s gardens with the great subterranean sea (beneath the ground, presumably, since it is sunless) implies a grave undermining of the ‘gardens bright’: there is the strong suggestion of a vast natural power, a ‘savage place’ (14; Beer, 205) oblivious to the Khan’s ambitions, which his artistry cannot successfully control or contain’.⁶⁷ In Perry’s observation, Khan’s ‘would-be “divine” creative act can only imperfectly tame’ what lies outside the garden, because ‘the Alpha and Omega of the heedless river has its own divine ring’ as an ‘alternative

⁶⁵ ‘momently, adj.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2019 <www.oed.com/view/Entry/121012> [accessed 24 March 2019].

⁶⁶ See John Axcelson, ‘Timing the Apocalypse: The Career of Religious Musings’, *European Romantic Review*, 16.4, 2005, pp. 439-54.

⁶⁷ Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*, p. 202.

power' with 'some of the aura of deity'.⁶⁸ The relative power between Khan and the river is intriguing in the light of Coleridge's epistemological anxiety towards Transcendence. The creative mind of Coleridge yearns for intellectual unity with God, but the limits of Khan's creative power, as observed by Perry, resembles the extent of Coleridge's poetic power in achieving Transcendence.

The division of good and evil readers suggested by the word 'Daemon' leads readers to ponder the nature of the wisdom left behind by the 'Ancestral Voices' to Cubla as, essentially, a prophecy of 'War' between opposites. This 'War' symbolises Original Sin epistemologically as an inherent depravity in the human faculties that prevents a full comprehension of God in our understanding. Readers eventually come closer to a vision of sin than that of God (a fate Coleridge also explored in 'Religious Musings'):

| | |
|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Believe thou, O my soul, Life is a vision shadowy of Truth, And vice, and anguish, and the wormy grave, Shapes of a dream! [...]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(1796 'Religious Musings', ll. 422-425)</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">The shadow of the Dome of Pleasure Floated midway on the Wave Where was heard the mingled Measure From the Fountain and the Cave.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">It was a miracle of rare Device, A sunny Pleasure-Dome with Caves of Ice!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Crewe MS, ll. 31-36)</p> |
|--|---|

The 'shadow of the Dome of Pleasure' is 'a vision shadowy of Truth'—a mythical paradise that comes close to Truth. But this mythical paradise lives in Coleridge's mind with 'vice', and exhibits in the Crewe MS in the shape of 'a dream'. 'It was a miracle of rare Device' that the poet can build the Dome in a transient vision. Allegorically and formally, the poem is fragmentary, as Coleridge knew 'Kubla Khan' was a 'fragment with a good deal more, not recoverable'.⁶⁹ In search for a prelapsarian world through the imagination, this creative act of writing the poem is constrained by the fact that Coleridge's mind is one which exists after the Fall and is habitually divisive in understanding—nothing more than 'a cracked Looking-glass' (CN, I, 705). A sinful mind is one inherent with epistemological flaws and not capable of realising Oneness onto the page, thus a paragraph-break after line 36 of the Crewe MS abandons the vision incomplete.

⁶⁸ Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*, pp. 202-03.

⁶⁹ Coleridge, 'The Crewe Manuscript', at p. 41.

Paradise Lost. Bound to fail—‘Mount Amara’ is yet another false paradise which the poet attempted to draw enough delight from to build his ‘Dome in Air’. The epistemic modality in ‘I would build that Dome in Air’ which idiomatically resembles *to build castles in the air*, points up the futility of Coleridge’s rhetorical question. Seamus Perry also notes that ‘the conditional mood is important: at the very least, it allows for the possibility of failure, and, more perhaps, admits the wishfulness of the whole ambition’.⁷¹ If we recall the first two lines of the Crewe MS ‘In Xanadù did Cubla Khan / A stately Pleasure-Dome decree,’ at this point, this futility seems destined from the start, as Jean-Pierre Mileur draws our attention to the word ‘decree’—the Dome was never built, it existed only in an order from Cubla to build it.⁷² Mileur states that ‘Kubla’s created order of dome and garden stands between us and the Word, demanding either that we interpret them as a text or accept a permanent exile’.⁷³ This attentive remark refreshes our understanding of the tone in the remainder of the poem:

And all, who heard, should see them there,
 And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
 His flashing Eyes! his floating Hair!
 Weave a circle round him thrice,
 And close your Eyes in holy Dread:
 For He on Honey-dew hath fed
 And drank the Milk of Paradise.— (ll. 38-44)

Emphatic in tone, Coleridge wishes to erase the hurdle that stands between us and the words as well as to overcome the limitations of our own subjectivities (such limits are central to the 1800 ‘The Ancient Mariner’), such that ‘all, who heard, should see them there’. Through the ‘flashing Eyes’ of Cubla, we come to see the inward *I* of the poet idealising himself to be a real prophet with dæmonic power in the Platonic sense—supernatural and ‘intermediary’ between God and men. The line ‘And close your Eyes in holy Dread’ is imperative, as if the readers should be sent into a trance like the Ancient Mariner, and Coleridge becomes the angelic voice ‘As soft as honey-dew’ (1800 ‘The Ancient Mariner’, l. 411)—‘For He on Honey-dew hath fed / And drank the Milk of Paradise.—’.

⁷¹ Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*, p. 206.

⁷² Jean-Pierre Mileur, *Vision and Revision: Coleridge’s Art of Immanence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 74.

⁷³ Mileur, p. 75.

The 'poetic faith' cultivated among readers through the artistry of both 'The Ancient Mariner' (1800) and the Crewe Manuscript of 'Kubla Khan' repeatedly convince us that Original Sin is the impediment to religious Transcendence.⁷⁴ Coleridge as a failed prophet struggles to bring readers closer to his desired Truth, yet we share in his frustration by imaginatively experiencing and understanding the nature of this epistemological barrier to his belief in a unifying God and to his imagination in bringing this vision alive in poetic texts.

⁷⁴ *BL*, II, p. 6.

Chapter 4

Transcendentalism in Transcendence

To *think* of a thing is different from to *perceive it*, as ‘to walk’ is from [‘]to feel the ground under you[’]—perhaps in the same way too— namely, a succession of perceptions accompanied by a sense of *nisus* & purpose.

(CN, I, 886)¹

The Spinozistic question of the One and the many leads Coleridge to reflect upon human subjectivity. If God is an objective truth, how can we gain access to such truth through our subjectivity? The experience of Original Sin in ‘The Ancient Mariner’ and Coleridge’s epistemological anxiety foregrounds the limitation of subjectivity. But it is also through our subjectivity that we become conscious of the objective and are able to know something of it. Our subjectivity may seem like a barrier to Transcendent knowledge, but having conscious control of our subjectivity is the ability of the mind, if we are to know anything at all. To what extent the human mind can know about Truth subjectively is then the next question in line. My chapter explores the ways in which Kantian philosophy has influenced Coleridge, since 1802, in conceiving the extent of human knowledge about God. I suggest that subjectivity and Kant’s Transcendentalism play key roles in assisting Coleridge to come up with his own way of threshold drawing, marking the epistemological scope for Transcendence. In part I, I explain the contradictions involved in Coleridge’s handling of Spinozism and Kantian philosophy. Despite various incompatible properties, I argue that Coleridge merges Kantian philosophy with Spinozism in order to give specifications to his version of Transcendence around 1802. To do so, Coleridge necessarily redefines and reimagines the Kantian notions of *a priori* and Transcendentalism. In part II, I explore the textual history of ‘A Letter to——’ and the *Morning Post* version of ‘Dejection: An Ode’ (1802), and their relevance to Wordsworth’s Two-Part *Prelude* of 1799 and the four-stanzas *Ode*, in order to map the influence of Kantian philosophy. In turn, I argue that to think of ‘A Letter to——’ as a more personal and private poem can be misleading, for Coleridge’s conception of Transcendence, Transcendentalism and *a priori* are interwoven with his

¹ Punctuations modified according to Seamus Perry (ed.), *Coleridge’s Notebooks: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 139.

domestic issues. To illustrate this point in part III, I focus my discussion on those lines and stanzas in ‘A Letter to——’ that were subsequently omitted in the *Morning Post* version for reasons of being private and domestic. These omitted parts help explain Coleridge’s re-imagination of those Kantian notions. I illustrate how Transcendence and Transcendentalism can be mapped onto the objective and the subjective. In part IV, I argue that Coleridge employs these distinctions between the subjective and the objective to navigate his response to Wordsworth’s four-stanza *Ode* by stressing the possibility of hope, despite the necessary coexistence of grief and joy in life.

I

Wrestling with Spinozism in the early 1800s, Coleridge articulated the essential challenge to religious Transcendence as a problem about subjectivity. In previous chapters, subjectivity appears to be the experiential barrier that bespeaks disparity amid our wish to connect with the Absolute in religious Transcendence; that is to say, our subjectivity has no access to the mind of the Absolute. The cause of such epistemological gap between the Creator and the creations can be attributed theologically to the Fall which tarnishes their initial unity. In 1803-1804, Coleridge suggested that the Fall is exhibited metaphysically through the ‘*streamy nature*’ of our ‘associating Faculty’.² The flaws of Associationism are hence deemed as ‘corroboration’ of ‘the origin of moral Evil in general’.³ This notion justifies Original Sin at two levels, namely its existence and its being the reason why one’s subjective mind is bound to engender partial or erroneous understanding. We have seen from the lack of objective causality in the 1800 version of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ that Coleridge struggled to represent God as the epitome of Spinozistic Oneness in Nature. It comes as no surprise to see Coleridge declaring the falsity of Spinoza’s philosophy in 1812:

Spinoza’s system has been demonstrated to be false, but only by that philosophy which has demonstrated the falsehood of all other philosophies. Did philosophy commence with an *it is*, instead of an *I am*, Spinoza would be altogether true.⁴

² *CN*, I, 1833.

³ *CN*, I, 1833.

⁴ Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, in 3 vols, vol. II, ed. by Thomas Sadler, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1869), p. 400.

Stanley J. Spector explains this quotation in Henry Crabb Robinson's diary and states: '[Coleridge] indicated that a major problem was Spinoza's beginning the philosophic system of the *Ethics* from the perspective of an "IT IS" rather than an "I AM"'.⁵ Richard Berkeley argues with reference to the same quotation that 'It seems safe to assure that the philosophy that Coleridge believed had demonstrated the falsehood of Spinozism was German idealism, since it is idealism that literally begins with an "I am"'.⁶ This way of distinguishing philosophies involves, what James Engell has described, 'the two basic approaches, easily recognizable in themselves, spawned pairs of labels: materialist or naturalist versus transcendentalist, dogmatic versus spiritual, objective versus subjective, "*Es gibt*" versus "*Ich bin*".'⁷ In 1802, Coleridge's attitude towards Spinozism becomes clearer, as German idealism becomes its counter-vision and Coleridge's new hope of Transcendence. With Engell's 'philosophical terrain'⁸ in mind, I would say that Coleridge's emphasis upon the 'I am' is influenced by his previous exploration of the subjectivity in, for instance, the 1800 version of 'The Ancient Mariner'. That to know God is conditioned by our subjectivity is something Coleridge carried forward from the late 1790s into the 1800s.

Henry Crabb Robinson continues in his diary,

And without allowing a breathing time, Coleridge parenthetically asserted, "I however, believe in all the doctrines of Christianity, even the Trinity." A. Robinson afterwards observed, "Coleridge has a comprehensive faith and love." Contrary to my expectation, however, he was pleased with these outbursts, rather than offended by them.⁹

In the course of a dozen years from 1800 to 1812, Coleridge seems to have switched from his Unitarian faith to a Trinitarian one. There are many reasons behind such a change, but one of which has do with Coleridge's notion of the 'I am'. After all, God is not to Coleridge a cold, eternal essence of Nature, in the Spinozistic sense, with no emotions and almost unreachable in the objective. Jesus as one consubstantial form in Trinitarianism allows a much better confluence of love between God and his creation, something that Coleridge yearns for

⁵ Stanley J. Spector, 'Coleridge's Misreading of Spinoza', in *The Jews and British Romanticism: Politics, Religion, Culture*, ed. by Sheila A. Spector (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 233-44, p. 233.

⁶ Richard Berkeley, *Coleridge and the Crisis of Reason* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 42.

⁷ James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p.329.

⁸ Engell, p. 329.

⁹ Robinson, pp. 400-01.

through his approach of the 'I am'. Appended to a copy of Spinoza's *Epistle*, Coleridge wrote a note to correct Spinoza, illustrating how his philosophy could be true, if it ties itself closer to the 'I am':

The truth is, Spinoza, in common with all the metaphysicians before him (Böhme perhaps excepted), began at the wrong end, commencing with God as an object. Had he, though still dogmatizing *objectively*, begun with the *natura naturans* in its simplest terms, he must have proceeded on 'per intelligentiam' to the subjective, and having reached the other pole=idealism, or the 'I,' he would have reprogressed to the equatorial point, or the identity of subject and object; and would thus have arrived finally not only at the clear idea of God, as absolute Being, the ground of all existents (for so far he did reach, and to charge him with atheism is a gross calumny), but likewise at the faith in the living God, who hath the ground of his own existence in himself. That this would have been the result, had he lived a few years longer, I think his Epist. lxxii. authorizes us to believe; and of so pure a soul, so righteous a spirit as Spinoza, I dare not doubt that this *potential* fact is received by the Eternal as actual.¹⁰

Coleridge says that Spinoza has begun his philosophy 'at the wrong end, commencing with God as an object'. To lessen this error, Coleridge proposes to start with 'the *natura naturans* in its simplest terms', even though to do so is 'still dogmatizing *objectively*'. The '*natura naturans*' (naturing nature) is employed by Spinoza in *Ethics* to contrast with '*natura naturata*' (nature natured). Spinoza says that 'by *natura naturans* we are to understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself, or those attributes of substance which express eternal and infinite essence, that is to say [...], God in so far as He is considered as a free cause'.¹¹ If we take nature as a verb of being nature in English, '*natura naturans*' means that nature is naturing herself, thus the action of naturing is self-causing. Coleridge is expressing a crucial view of epistemology here: to know must involve the 'I am', that is we must subjectively know something by our self-causing control over the intellect. It is even better if what we know equals the objective; but if Truth is only the objective, we risk not knowing anything.

Though Spinoza is the only philosopher named in this appendix, the alterations Coleridge made to Spinoza's philosophy suggested his admiration for an unnamed

¹⁰ Robinson, pp. 400-01n.

¹¹ Spinoza, p. 30.

philosopher—Immanuel Kant. Analysing the same comment of Coleridge (the first quotation: ‘Spinoza’s system has [...]’) concerned with Spinoza in Robinson’s diary, Spector hinted that ‘Coleridge seemed to accept Kant’s analysis in showing that Spinoza’s philosophy is false in the way that all other philosophies are false’.¹² This strain of thinking verges on describing the relationship between Kant and Spinoza as more supplementary than antithetical, in Coleridge’s view. As we can comprehend from Coleridge’s note to *Epistle*, despite the falsity in Spinoza’s philosophy, Coleridge strongly favours Spinozism. But the juxtaposition between ‘a clear idea of God’ and ‘the faith in the living God’ alludes to the Kantian distinction between Transcendental philosophy and Transcendent philosophy in *Critique of Pure Reason*—the former is to become the core of metaphysics as Kant argues, while the latter is to be taken out of metaphysics, so as to preclude subjective speculations that may contradict with the objective.¹³ The distinction between the ‘*potential*’ and the ‘actual’ is also reflective of Kant’s epistemological boundaries: ‘we cannot have knowledge of any object as a thing in itself, but only insofar as it is an object of sensible intuition, that is an appearance; [...] all speculative knowledge of reason is limited to mere objects of **experience**; but it should be carefully borne in mind that we must at least be able to **think** the same objects as things in themselves, though we cannot **know** them’.¹⁴ Kant is a follower of the ‘I am’ as he is aware of the fact that ‘we cannot have knowledge of any object as a thing in in itself’. In turn he places his philosophy in the perspective of the ‘I am’, stressing the involvement of our subjectivity in thinking and knowing. It is a high commendation to Spinoza, as Coleridge thought, that the ‘*potential* fact’ Spinoza proposed may be accepted ‘by the Eternal as actual’, even though the ‘actual’ in a Kantian sense is something that can be conceived or thought of, but remains unknown to us. If we think of Coleridge’s struggle with Spinozism from 1800—his difficulty to reconcile the plurality of senses with his belief in oneness—and connect it with these afterthoughts in 1812, the subtle interconnections with Kant’s philosophy become central to Coleridge’s imagination of religious Transcendence across the decade, the 1800s.

Before elucidating their interconnection, it is necessary to specify Kant’s influence upon Coleridge: when and to what extent Coleridge was exposed to Kant’s philosophies, especially the first *Critique* which appears to relate strongly to his reflection upon Spinozism

¹² Spector, p. 233.

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. & ed. by Marcus Weigelt (London: Penguin, 2007).

¹⁴ Kant, p. 23. According to the editor, ‘italics are never used to highlight text highlighted by Kant. To highlight such text we have always used bold print (as is also found in Kant’s original edition).’ (p. lxviii)

later on. René Wellek (1931) dates Coleridge's 'decisive study of Kant' to 'the first months of the year 1801'.¹⁵ This dating relies on a letter to Thomas Poole in March 1801:

The interval since my last Letter has been filled up by me in the most intense Study. 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.¹⁶

Quoting the lines above, Wellek suggests that this part of the letter 'declares even clearly what Coleridge liked in Kant: the ideality of space and time, the creativity of mind in opposition to laws of mechanic association, the justification of the ideas of God and moral freedom'.¹⁷ Foreseeing Kant's far-reaching influence upon Coleridge from this letter, Wellek's observation helps us elaborate how 'decisive' it was for Coleridge to read the first *Critique*, though it would be mistaken to think that Coleridge had no knowledge of Kant before 1801. Monika Class reminds critics that Coleridge was acquainted with Kant's moral law before 1801, as he read *Perpetual Peace* in mid-1790s.¹⁸ The reason why Coleridge's 'intense Study' of the first *Critique* could be considered as 'decisive', therefore, hinges on the sort of influence we intend to trace. And in the case of Transcendence, the notion of the '*a priori*' in the first *Critique* is the crux of Kant's philosophy that appeals to Coleridge. Coleridge wrote in an essay for *The Friend* dated September 28, 1809 that

"Metaphysics" are the science which determines what can, and what can not, be known of Being, and the Laws of Being, *a priori* (that is from those necessities of the mind, or *forms* of thinking, which, though revealed to us by experience, must yet have pre-existed in order to make experience itself possible, even as the eye must exist previously to any particular act of seeing, though by sight only can we know, that we have eyes).¹⁹

¹⁵ René Wellek, *Immanuel Kant in England 1793-1838* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931), p. 72.

¹⁶ *CL*, II, p. 706.

¹⁷ Wellek, p. 72.

¹⁸ Monika Class, *Coleridge and Kantian Ideas in England, 1796-1817: Coleridge's Responses to German Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 69.

¹⁹ *TF*, II, pp. 105-06n.

I argue that this definition of '*a priori*' is anticipated in 'Dejection: An Ode' (1802). Yet, there is no simple answer to the question as to whether this poem is Kantian: the sense of cautiousness I intend to cultivate here is that Kant's notion of the '*a priori*' differs from Coleridge's assimilation of it, yet without the former, the latter could hardly be formed. I would stress that Coleridge's notion of the '*a priori*' shall be the focus in this chapter, as we trace its effect upon Coleridge's versions of Transcendence.

An apparent contradiction is noticeable in my argument: Kant set out to separate his Transcendental Aesthetics from Transcendence, whilst I am suggesting a mingling of the two. This contradiction is, nonetheless, exactly what Coleridge endeavours to reconcile through poetry. In the Preface (first edition) to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant footnoted that

Our age is the very age of criticism, and everything must submit to it. **Religion**, on the strength of its **sanctity**, and **legislation**, on the strength of its **majesty**, try to exempt themselves from it; but they thereby arouse a just suspicion, and cannot claim that sincere respect which reason grants only to that which has been able to withstand its free and open examination.²⁰

Kant's notion of '*a priori*' knowledge is an attempt to purge away speculations based purely on subjective experience which, as in the old school metaphysics, is likely to arouse suspicions. Now, '*a priori*' knowledge has no such problem as it is 'raised above all teachings of experience' with 'reason' being 'its own pupil'.²¹ To test these '*a priori*' propositions, Kant suggests in the Preface (second edition) that

we can therefore only try with **concepts** and **principles** which we adopt *a priori*, by so contriving that the same objects may be considered **on one side**, for experience, as objects of the senses | and of the understanding, and **on the other side** as objects which are merely thought, intended for isolated reason alone, which strives to go beyond all the limits of experience. And if we find that, by looking on things from this twofold point of view, there is an agreement with the principle of pure reason, while by adopting only one point of view there arises an

²⁰ Kant, p. 7.

²¹ Kant, p. 17.

inevitable conflict with reason, then the experiment decides in favour of the correctness of that distinction.²²

Transcendent experience in revealed religion would be deemed as speculations under Kant's metaphysics of pure reason. Even so, Coleridge sees Kant's notion of the '*a priori*' and Transcendentalism as a systematising and rationalising tool for the broader view of Transcendence. In that letter to Thomas Poole which Wellek quoted from to date Coleridge's 'decisive study of Kant', Wellek overlooked an important passage:

This I have *done*; but I trust, that I am about to do more—namely, that I shall be able to evolve all the five senses, that is, to deduce them from *one sense*, & to state their growth, & the causes of their differences——& in this evolvment to solve the process of Life & Consciousness.²³

This part of the letter spells out Coleridge's impulse to assimilate Kant's Transcendental Philosophy, so as to reconcile the plurality of senses with the possibility of Oneness—a problem formerly sparked by his struggle with Spinoza's conception of God. However, his intention is bound to cause some level of deviation from Kant's Transcendentalism.

At first, the deviation is not obvious when Coleridge wrote in his notebook around December 1800 to January 1801 that 'Space—is it merely another word for the perception of a capability of additional magnitude—or does this very perception presuppose the idea of Space?—The latter is Kant's opinion'.²⁴ The word 'presuppose' indicates Coleridge's interest in Kant's notion of '*a priori*', but this word, which seems to be purposefully linked to experience, also incurred a danger of confusion to the intrinsic meaning of '*a priori*' being non-experiential. Christoph Bode points out Coleridge's deviation from Kant by stating that '*a priori* forms of knowledge can neither be "revealed" nor can they be confirmed by empirical experience'.²⁵ Bode is quite right in the sense that the sensory experience or the empirical do not affect the pure reason in Kant's philosophy; yet he risks being too clear-cut about the '*a priori*' relation which divides pure reason from experience. Kant's pure reason is, in a way, para-experience because the pure reason is what is enabling experience. But without

²² Kant, p. 19.

²³ *CL*, II, p. 706.

²⁴ *CN*, I, 887.

²⁵ Christoph Bode, 'Coleridge and Philosophy', in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Frederick Burwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 588-619, at p. 595.

experience, how could one think of the existence of pure reason? If Kant's motif of his first *Critique* is to limit metaphysics to the realm of pure reason, the most remarkable extension Coleridge made is to insist upon the fact that our pursuit of pure reason actually comes from our experience. In other words, whereas concepts like God and freewill are only practical and useful 'assumptions' in Kant's philosophy of pure reason,²⁶ Coleridge dares to defend their existence by specifying the pure reason behind subjective experience of God and freewill. This is the trajectory he thus proposed as an improved version of Spinozism in the note appended to *Epistle*, which results in both 'a clear idea of God' and 'the faith in the living God'. This chapter illuminates this unique Coleridgean twist. I argue that the composition development of 'Dejection: An Ode' (1802) is constitutive of such deviation from and the re-imagination of Kant's philosophy.

II

A digression to the textual history and composition development of 'Dejection: An Ode' is necessary. Coleridge wrote the poem with its intended readers in mind. This aspect of the poem encourages intertextual analyses in hermeneutic criticism, lest otherwise we risk truncating the depth of the poem. Indeed, readings that consider the connections within the poem would allow more layers of meaning to come through. In early 1802, the Wordsworths and Coleridge stayed in the Lakes, the Dorothy and William at Dove Cottage and Coleridge at Greta Hall. On 27th March 1802, Dorothy Wordsworth wrote in *The Grasmere Journal*: 'At breakfast William wrote part of an ode'.²⁷ Critics generally agree that this 'part of an ode' includes what we later know to be the first four stanzas of 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood'. The version of Wordsworth's *Ode*, which contains these four stanzas, written in late March 1802, would be the 'MS M' that is untitled and completed in early 1804.²⁸ '[W]ith the beginning of the *Ode* fresh in his mind, on 28 March Wordsworth walked with Dorothy from Dove Cottage up to Keswick to stay for a week with the Coleridges', according to Stephen Maxfield Parrish, 'During their week together the two poets rambled about a good deal [...], and once again read or talked about William's recent

²⁶ Bode, p. 594.

²⁷ Dorothy Wordsworth, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, vol. I, ed. by E. de Selincourt (London: Macmillan, 1941), p. 129.

²⁸ Jared Curtis, *Wordsworth's Experiments with Tradition: The Lyric Poems of 1802, with Texts of the Poems Based on Early Manuscripts* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp.164-70. 'MS M' is believed to be the earlier manuscript in 1804.

verse, this time including the opening stanzas of the *Ode*'.²⁹ As Paul Magnuson argues, 'the best evidence for the lines that were written on March 27 is Coleridge's verse letter to Sara Hutchinson of April 4', because 'It contains a good half dozen clear references to the four opening stanzas and perhaps another half dozen allusions to and comments on the images and themes in those stanzas'.³⁰ This verse letter to Sara Hutchinson is the earliest version of 'Dejection: An Ode' available.

However, the version of this verse letter found in the *Collected Letters*, volume II, is unlikely to be the one which was actually sent to Sara Hutchinson.³¹ Jack Stillinger argues that this version printed in *Collected Letters* is a holograph (*H*) copied from the initial text Stillinger denotes as X, 'written on a rectos of seventeen leaves sewn up into a booklet'.³² There should be another version copied from text X which was sent to Sara Hutchinson, and Mary Hutchinson produced a transcription of this letter version.³³ The Mary Hutchinson (*MH*) transcription should therefore be the earlier version of the two.³⁴ Unlike the *H* fair copy which is titled 'A Letter to—— / April 4, 1802.—Sunday Evening.', the *MH* transcription of the verse letter has no title.³⁵ I would therefore opt to cite the *MH* transcription as the earliest version of the poem Coleridge wrote to Sara Hutchinson, and also implicitly for Wordsworth who had just written the first four stanzas of the *Ode*.

When Coleridge decided to give this verse letter a title in the *H* fair copy, Parrish points out that there had been 'three successive ideas' before 'A Letter to—— / April 4, 1802.—Sunday Evening.' was formed: 'The original title (as the false start reveals) may have been nothing but a date; the second appears to have been *A Letter* followed by the date in the form of a subtitle; finally Coleridge added 'to——'.³⁶ Heidi Thomson suggests that 'The addition "to——" on the manuscript does not follow directly from "A Letter"; it is situated slightly below, as if it is not necessarily meant to be read together with "A Letter".'³⁷ Naming a verse letter 'A Letter' sounds provisional, as a greater question for Coleridge at this stage seems to be: apart from Sara Hutchinson, to whom should 'to——' be send? I agree with Thomson

²⁹ Stephen Maxfield Parish, (ed.), *Coleridge's 'Dejection': The Earliest Manuscripts and the Earliest Printings*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 5.

³⁰ Paul Magnuson, *Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), at p. 278.

³¹ Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 92-93.

³² Stillinger, pp. 92-93.

³³ Stillinger, pp. 92-93.

³⁴ Stillinger, pp. 92-93.

³⁵ Stillinger, pp. 92-93.

³⁶ Parish (ed.), p. 105.

³⁷ Heidi Thomson, *Coleridge and the Romantic Newspaper: The 'Morning Post' and the Road to 'Dejection'* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 223.

that the long dash after ‘to’ is a marker of ‘indeterminacy’ as to its possible addressees,³⁸ but more specifically, I would stress that it is fundamentally a kind of ‘indeterminacy’ directed towards Wordsworth. Coleridge was not ready to form a version of the poem with Wordsworth as the recipient, at least not until this letter was first published on 4 October 1802 in the *Morning Post* (*MP*). Two intermediate fragments of the poem before the *MP* version help to illustrate my point.

The verse letter as a whole was sent to Sara Hutchinson, but Coleridge told William Sotheby that part of the verse letter, or a dimension of it, was written to Wordsworth:

for being a little out of place here——& partly too, because I wished to force myself out of metaphysical trains of Thought—which, when I wished to write a poem, beat up Game of far other kind—instead of a Covey of poetic Partridges with whirring wings of music, or wild Ducks *shaping* their rapid flight in forms always regular (a still better image of Verse) up came a metaphysical Bustard, urging it’s slow, heavy, laborious, earth-skimming Flight, over dreary & level Wastes. To have done with poetical Prose (which is a very vile Olio) Sickness & some other & worse afflictions, first forced me into *downright* metaphysics / In a poem written during that dejection to Wordsworth, & the greater part of a private nature—I thus expressed the thought—in language more forcible than harmonious.³⁹

Before giving ‘A Letter to——’ a new title ‘Dejection: An Ode’, Coleridge used the word ‘dejection’ to describe his ‘slow, heavy, laborious’ experience with ‘metaphysical trains of Thought’. These pervasive metaphysical thoughts came into his mind unbidden, in ways that drag down his versification, and strip away the pleasure accompanying the act of writing. Coleridge’s dejection is sparked by this unwanted collision between the will to write a poem and a mind that was steeped in metaphysics. While this dimension of the poem was written ‘to Wordsworth’, aside from ‘the greater part of a private nature’ already sent to Sara Hutchinson in April, Coleridge selected parts of stanzas 16 and 17 and most of stanzas 1, 2, 20 and 14 of the *MH* transcription (with minor revisions) to be included in this letter to William Sotheby on 19 July 1802. What governs this selection process for Sotheby is rather simple, as Coleridge stated in the letter that ‘I have selected from the Poem which was a very

³⁸ Thomson, *Coleridge and the Romantic Newspaper*, p. 223.

³⁹ *CL*, II, pp. 814-15.

long one, & truly written only for “the solace of sweet Song”, all that could be interesting or even pleasing to you’.⁴⁰ On 29 July 1802, Coleridge wrote to Robert Southey, copied the altered parts of stanzas 16 and 17 of the *MH* transcription into the letter, and inserted a noteworthy transition between the part of stanza 16 and that of stanza 17: ‘(Here follow a dozen Lines that would give you no pleasure & then what follows—)’.⁴¹ From these attentive statements towards the recipients of his letters, we may say that Coleridge tailored for his addressees of each letter a selection of stanzas that would arouse interest and pleasure.

However, in each of these letters that include lines from ‘A Letter to——’, Wordsworth intruded as the ultimate addressee in Coleridge’s mind. In the letter to Sotheby, Wordsworth is at the forefront, being addressed repeatedly in place of Sara Hutchinson in the altered stanzas. In the letter to Southey, Wordsworth lurks in the backdrop as a figure of comparison:

[Wordsworth] has written lately a number of Poems [...] the greater number of these to my feelings very excellent Compositions / but here & there a daring Humbleness of Language & Versification, and a strict adherence to matter of fact, even to prolixity, that startled me / his alterations likewise in Ruth perplexed me / and I have thought & thought again / & have not had my doubts solved by Wordsworth / On the contrary, I rather suspect that some where or other there is a radical Difference in our theoretical opinions respecting Poetry—⁴²

Having suspected a ‘radical Difference’ between himself and Wordsworth, Coleridge only included in the letter the lines that begins with ‘There was a Time when’—a clear allusion to Wordsworth’s four-stanza *Ode*. These are important hints for us to characterise the kind of textual revision Coleridge made from April until the poem was first published on 4 October 1802 in the *Morning Post*. These two intermediate versions, sent respectively to Sotheby and Southey, seem to test out the poem in preparation for publication in the *Morning Post*. The textual revisions already made in these two versions were by and large incorporated in the *MP* version; and the *MP* version can be seen as a remaking and a selection from ‘A Letter to——’ that was eventually sent to Wordsworth in the public pages of the newspaper. As the first published version, the *MP* version titled ‘Dejection: An Ode, written April 4, 1802’, is as much a poem as is a letter.

⁴⁰ *CL*, II, p. 818.

⁴¹ *CL*, II, p. 831.

⁴² *CL*, II, p. 830.

From the perspective of textual history, ‘Dejection: An Ode’ (1802) is a poem formed out of revised selected stanzas from ‘A Letter to——’, but literary critics sometimes convey a different view: that they should be seen as two different poems. In terms of poetic form, their distinction—a verse letter versus an ode—is obvious, even if we simply inspect the titles. Anya Taylor argues that the two poems ‘dramatize the differences in representing the private and the public self, the inner and the outer “I”’.⁴³ Taylor’s view is ingenious, as it marks the explicit difference in perspectives between the two poems, yet asserts aptly their necessary connection through Coleridge’s Self. As shall be illustrated with further textual analyses, this paradigm of textual relations is parallel to the metamorphic mapping of Coleridge’s metaphysical theology during 1802. This metamorphosis is impelled by Coleridge re-imagining the notion of ‘*a priori*’, for the sake of reconciling the subjective experience of multiple senses in Nature and the Absolute Oneness in God. Through his own interpretation of ‘*a priori*’, I argue that Coleridge’s metaphysical theology introduces us to a new page of Transcendence that yearns to break the prison cell of the Self, the subjectivity of the human mind, in order to connect with God.

Accentuating the assimilation of ideas Coleridge brought into his understanding of Kantian philosophy, my approach prevents an over-generalised imposition upon the poem such as the claim that it ‘marks Coleridge’s turn to the work of Immanuel Kant’.⁴⁴ S. F. Gingerich argues that Coleridge turned from Necessitarianism to Transcendentalism after his trip to Germany in 1798-99—a view that directly corresponds to the same 1801 letter to Thomas Poole which helps us date Coleridge’s study of Kant’s philosophy.⁴⁵ ‘Dejection: An Ode’ is one of the poems that exhibit ‘radical transcendentalism’, Gingerich suggests, in the sense that ‘[t]he mind now is not an automaton, but an original creative force; nature becomes a mirror, a mere mechanical instrument, in which man’s mind can reflect itself’.⁴⁶ Arthur O. Lovejoy however resists traces of Kantian Transcendentalism, especially upon the doctrine of freedom, as a result of Coleridge’s departure from Necessitarianism.⁴⁷ Lovejoy’s arguments are convincing as they latch on to a comparison between Kant’s philosophy and Coleridge’s misunderstanding of it; therefore, from a philosophical standpoint, arguments that introduce Kantian Transcendentalism into ‘Dejection: An Ode’ ‘seems to [him] to rest upon a pure

⁴³ Anya Taylor, ‘Coleridge’s Self-Representations’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Frederick Burwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 107-24, at p. 118.

⁴⁴ William A. Ulmer, ‘Radical Similarity: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Dejection Dialogue’, *ELH*, 76, 2009, pp. 189-213, at p. 196.

⁴⁵ S. F. Gingerich, ‘Necessity to Transcendentalism in Coleridge’, *PMLA*, 35.1, 1920, pp. 1-59.

⁴⁶ Gingerich, p. 29.

⁴⁷ Arthur O. Lovejoy, ‘Coleridge and Kant’s Two Worlds’, *ELH*, 7.4, 1940, pp. 341-62.

confusion of ideas'.⁴⁸ I lean towards Lovejoy's view, for failure to realise how different Coleridge's notion of '*a priori*' is from that of Kant would not be a proper depiction of what I called Kantian influence in Coleridge. I would not therefore view Lovejoy's criticism as William A. Ulmer does. Ulmer thinks that Lovejoy's criticism 'authoritatively dismissed the Kantianism of Coleridge's poem', and that 'a lyrical encapsulation of Kantian transcendentalism courts further difficulties [...] ignoring the evolving drama of Coleridge's address to Sara'.⁴⁹ In fact, Coleridge's Transcendentalism, a re-imagination of Kant's, is braided into the 'drama' with Sara and Wordsworth in 'A Letter to——' and 'Dejection: An Ode'. I argue in the following parts of this chapter that readers come to realise Coleridge's position with Transcendentalism and Transcendence by means of the emotional drama played out in these works. I argue that Coleridge has hinted in 'A Letter to——' that Transcendentalism is subsumed under Transcendence. Transcendentalism lives within the boundary of our subjectivity, and we remain uncertain if God exists as a separate being outside this world. Yet Transcendence articulates the hope that our subjective idea of God coincides with the actual existence of God. Coleridge's Transcendentalism is a part of his conception of, and his hope for, Transcendence.

III

Critics tend to treat Coleridge's 'A Letter to——' and 'Dejection: An Ode' as responses to Wordsworth's four-stanza *Ode*, forming one of the most researched Romantic dialogues that probe into the poets' relationship and their relative achievements. Wordsworth's four-stanza *Ode* and Coleridge's 'A Letter to——' (or 'Dejection: An Ode') do not tackle identical issues, though they share explicit overlapping interests or concerns. Before writing the four-stanza *Ode*, Wordsworth wrote a version of *The Prelude* in 1799, an untitled version containing two parts. Now generally referred to as the Two-Part *Prelude* of 1799, this poem is known to be an elaborate, though not exhaustive, guide for some key ideas in the four-stanza *Ode*:

| | |
|---|--|
| [I] | I began |
| There was a time when meadow grove and stream | My story early, feeling, as I fear, |
| The earth and every common sight | The weakness of a human love for days |
| | Disowned by memory—ere the birth of spring |

⁴⁸ Lovejoy, p. 348.

⁴⁹ Ulmer, 'Radical Similarity', p. 197.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>To me did seem Apparel'd in celestial light The glory and the freshness of a dream It is not now as it has been of yore Turn whereoe'er I may By night or day The things which I have seen I see them now no more (Ode [MS M], ll. 1-9)⁵⁰</p> | <p>Planting my snowdrops among winter snows. Nor will it seem to thee, my friend, so prompt In sympathy, that I have lengthened out With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale. Meanwhile my hope has been that I might fetch Reproaches from my former years, whose power May spur me on, in manhood now mature, To honourable toil. [...] (Prelude 1799, I, ll. 443-453)⁵¹</p> |
|--|---|

The two spots of time in the first stanza of the *Ode* are more significant than the sheer contrast of the past 'There was' and the present 'now'. As hinted in the last verse stanza in part I of the 1799 *Prelude*, they represent the change incurred in the growth of a man from childhood to 'manhood'. But growth does not guarantee pure acquisition or gain for betterment. The 'celestial light' that used to clothe the outward forms during childhood is now no longer perceptible to the subjectivity in his adulthood. What exactly is the 'celestial light' that the poet cannot behold now? It is impossible to grasp its shape; but looking back to the 1799 *Prelude* helps us understand this loss to be the assimilation of a state in which the 'celestial light' is subjectively 'Disowned by memory'. The haziness of old memories endears and mystifies 'the charm' of this unfound 'celestial light'. It is as though one still remembers the 'dream', but '[t]he glory and the freshness' of it is now dissipated.

Though the Two-Part *Prelude* sets the backdrop at home in this world, and that the *Ode* does not, both poetic works delve into some form of loss of the human mind. The 'celestial light' in the *Ode* is connected with what Wordsworth described as 'those first-born affinities that fit / Our new existence to existing things' (ll. 387-88) in the Two-Part *Prelude* of 1799. These 'first-born affinities', such as 'the celestial light' that cloth those outward forms, are shaped during childhood by Mother Nature who

[...] love[s] to intertwine

The passions that build up our human soul

Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,

⁵⁰ William Wordsworth, '[Ode]', in *Wordsworth's Experiments with Tradition: The Lyric Poems of 1802, with Texts of the Poems Based on Early Manuscripts*, ed. by Jared Curtis (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 164-70. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

⁵¹ William Wordsworth, 'The Two-Part Prelude of 1799', in *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850: Authoritative Texts, Context and Reception, Recent Critical Essays*, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams and Stephen Gill (London: W. W. Norton, 1979), pp. 1-27. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

But with high objects, with eternal things. (1799 *Prelude*, ll. 133-136)

The sense of loss in ‘The things which I have seen I see them now no more’ sets the *Ode* in pastoral mode with a touch of nostalgia. Much has been said about the pastoral tone of loss in the *Ode*. Paul H. Fry takes on the dimension of form and argues that ‘If the eighteenth-century poet proved himself to be a poet by writing an ode, the Romantic poet proved himself *still* to be a poet by writing an ode, but no longer a poet gifted with unmediated vision’; the pastoral mode, in Fry’s argument, is defined by comparing Romantic odes with the nostalgic convention of some great eighteenth-century evening odes. Fry regards ‘The turning of Wordsworth and Coleridge to the unnatural conventions of ode writing is itself a farewell to the natural holiness of youth’.⁵² Paul Magnuson attributes this loss to Wordsworth’s ‘lack of progress on his major poems’ in 1802.⁵³ A biographical and creative crisis might have prompted Wordsworth to write the *Ode* in 1802, but, as we have seen, from the comparison between the first stanza of the *Ode* and the last verse paragraph of part I in the 1799 *Prelude*, an anxiety about the loss of the ability to perceive is a recurring issue for the poet.

From the second to fourth stanzas of the *Ode*, Wordsworth shows that he is aware of his repetitive thoughts. Jared Curtis finds a ‘pattern of clausal repetition’ and recurrent use of ‘*And*’ ‘based upon the principle of doubling’ in the first four stanzas of the *Ode*.⁵⁴ All forms of repetition concords with an ‘image in which the concept of repetition is actually introduced: “The pansy at my feet / Doth the same tale *repeat*.”’ (ll. 54-55).⁵⁵ Apart from syntactic repetition as such, the poetic voice accumulates through ‘*And*’ the joy Wordsworth could gather from Nature; yet, a ‘*But*’ offsets its success in both stanza two and four to remind readers of loss. Looking back on Wordsworth’s course of writing, the four-stanza *Ode* can be seen partly as a reiteration of ‘the same tale’ the poet tells in the 1799 *Prelude*. While this repetition, in a negative tone, has so often been associated with Wordsworth’s sterility in writing, I emphasise the hidden positive:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| [...] Yet, should it be | Whither is fled the visionary gleam |
| That this is but an impotent desire— | Where is it gone the glory and the dream |

⁵² Paul H. Fry, ‘Wordsworth’s Severe Intimations’, in *Critical Essays on William Wordsworth*, ed. by George H. Gilpin (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990), pp. 55-83, at p. 59.

⁵³ Magnuson, p. 275

⁵⁴ Jared Curtis, *Wordsworth’s Experiments with Tradition: They Lyric Poems of 1802 with Texts of the Poems based on early Manuscripts* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 117-20.

⁵⁵ Curtis, p. 120.

That I by such inquiry am not taught
 To understand myself, nor thou to know
 With better knowledge how the heart was framed
 Of him thou lovest—need I dread from thee
 Harsh judgements if I am so loth to quit
 Those recollected hours that have the charm
 Of visionary things, and lovely forms
 And sweet sensations, that throw back our life
 And make our infancy a visible scene
 On which that sun is shining?

(1799 *Prelude*, ll. 453-464)

(four-stanza *Ode*, ll. 56-57)

Although this tale of loss is repeated, in Wordsworth's poetry (and lamented once again in his pastoral *Ode*), he distrusts in the sheer hopelessness it presents. In the last verse paragraph of part I of the 1799 *Prelude*, the negative outlook is placed under question by how Wordsworth phrased rhetorical questions. Instead of asking '[*would*] it be / That this is but an impotent desire', Wordsworth used 'should'. Whether such desire is 'impotent' or not, it becomes a matter of obligation, as if this lamentation for a sense of loss is in fact an *important* desire to have. Wordsworth then asks in a similar vein, yet more profoundly, 'need [he] dread' that he indulged in those fair forms from the lost hours of childhood; this question of necessity challenges a straightforward association between loss and anxiety. If the answers to these rhetorical questions are affirmative, part II of the 1799 *Prelude* perhaps would not have existed—after all, 'an impotent desire' and the 'dread' of 'Harsh judgements' might well be enough to mar the poet's spur to write on. But if the answers are negative, we may review the questions Wordsworth asked by the end of the four-stanza *Ode* with a notably different—more positive—attitude: 'Whither is fled the visionary gleam / Where is it gone the glory and the dream'. These are not questions formulated out of utter hopelessness, but high philosophical questions springing forth from an important desire to regain what he has lost, or at least to resolve that sense of loss. Wordsworth took this journey of contemplation seriously, and the rest of the *Ode* was finished in 1804 which extends beyond what part II of the 1799 *Prelude* asserts, as well as my current focus. For now, let us consider Coleridge's participation in the dialogue in 1802, before the remainder of the *Ode* was composed.

This positive attitude with which Wordsworth raised those intriguing philosophical questions by the end of the four-stanza *Ode* influences our understanding of Coleridge's

response. It seems that Coleridge wrote ‘A Letter to——’ not only because he too experienced some kind of loss by 1802, but that he too regards the desire one has amid any sense of loss as philosophically important. For a long time, some criticisms exaggerate similarities between the loss lamented in the four-stanza *Ode* and that in ‘Dejection: An Ode’. Explicitly addressed to Sara Hutchinson, ‘A Letter to——’ as the intermediate piece of this Romantic dialogue suggests that the similarities between the four-stanza *Ode* and ‘Dejection: An Ode’ hinge not on the urgency to lament, but their will to resolve the sense of loss through poetry. There are roughly two chunks of lines in ‘A Letter to——’ (*MH*) that are omitted in the *Morning Post* version, namely stanzas 5 to 13 and 17 to 19. If we recall Taylor’s distinction between the two poems, these omitted lines can be considered as voicing Coleridge’s ‘private’ self, especially his relationship with Sara Hutchinson. Yet, among these lines, what appears to be his personal ‘drama’ and love affair also contain philosophical thoughts that suggest Coleridge’s consideration of the questions raised by Wordsworth in the four-stanza *Ode*. Instead of resolving Wordsworth’s problems squarely, Coleridge reformulates in ‘A Letter to——’ his own tale of loss, dramatized by his relationship with Sara Hutchinson, and comes up with new metaphysical perspectives echoing, but differing from, those of Wordsworth.

Stanza 5 of ‘A Letter to——’ speaks to Wordsworth’s pastoral theme of childhood and perception. But Coleridge’s reminiscence of his boyhood has a more softened tone of nostalgia compared with that of Wordsworth’s account. Memory, for Coleridge, is an agent that draws forth the inkling of his present grief:

5

Feebly, o! feebly!—Yet
 (I well remember it)
 In my first dawn of Youth, that Fancy stole,
 With many gentle Yearnings, on my Soul!
 At eve, Sky-gazing in “ecstatic fit”
 (Alas! far-cloister’d in a city school
 The Sky was all I Knew of Beautiful)
 At the barr’d window often did I sit,
 And often on the leaded School-roof lay
 And to myself would say—
 There does not live the Man so stripp’d of good Affections
 As not to love to see a Maiden’s quiet Eyes
 Uprais’d and linking on sweet dreams by dim Connexions

V

Befriend me night best Patroness of grief,
 Over the Pole thy thickest mantle throw,
 And work my flatter’d fancy to belief,
 That Heav’n and Earth are color’d with my wo;
 My sorrows are too dark for day to know:
 The leaves should all be black wheron I write,
 And letters where my tears have washt a wannish white.

VI

See see the Chariot, and those rushing wheels,
 That whirl’d the Prophet up at *Chebar* flood,
 My spirit som transporting *Cherub* feels,
 To bear me where the Towers of *Salem* stood,

To Moon, or Evening Star, or glorious Western Skies!
 While yet a Boy, this thought would so pursue me,
 That often it became a kind of Vision to me!

(‘A Letter to——’ [MH], ll. 58-73)⁵⁶

Once glorious Towers, now sunk in guiltless blood;
 There doth my soul in holy vision sit
 In pensive trance, and anguish, and ecstasick fit.

(John Milton’s ‘The Passion’, ll. 29-42)⁵⁷

This childhood ‘Vision’ that Coleridge ‘well remember[s]’ is intriguingly prophetic. In the simplest sense of the words, Coleridge portrays a memory of his youth, in which nature matches the ‘Beautiful’ in his understanding of the word. Coleridge marks “ecstatic fit” in double quotation marks as these words are borrowed most probably from Milton’s ‘ecstasick fit’ in an unfinished poem ‘The Passion’. ‘Sky-gazing in “ecstatic fit”’—a strong feeling of extreme happiness—Coleridge as a boy could not imagine someone ‘so stripp’d of good Affections / As not to love to see’ what he loves to see most. But the grief within the adult voice blends into this memory, and pervades the ‘far-cloister’d’ reality in the past with dark passion of Miltonic imagination in ‘The Passion’. Coleridge perverts the surface meaning of ‘ecstatic fit’ with Milton’s vision of ‘the Towers of *Salem*’ sinking in Christ’s ‘guiltless blood’. ‘In pensive trance, and anguish’, the ‘ecstasick fit’ that follows in the same line becomes a bout of jarring laughs. Little did Coleridge know when he was a boy, that one day he would come to understand and almost align himself with ‘the Man’, whose grief is so poignant, and who loses the will to search for Beauty. A seemingly joyous childhood memory turns into a ‘Vision’, which serves to lessen the grief. There is subtle disparity between Wordsworth’s loss and that of Coleridge’s. Wordsworth describes the loss of a man’s ability to behold the same ‘celestial light’ he perceived in Nature as a child. But Coleridge does not own the same nostalgia as does Wordsworth, for it is the will to search for Beauty which Coleridge has lost in adulthood. The similarity lies in both poets’ art of lamentation that, unanimously, suggests the realisation of poetry as the fitting mode for this metaphysical quest:

[III]

Now while the Birds thus sing a joyous song
 And while the young lambs bound
 As to the tabor’s sound
 To me alone there came a thought of grief

6

Sweet Thought! And dear of old
 To Hearts of finer Mould!
 Ten thousand times by Friends and Lovers blest!
 I spake with rash Despair

⁵⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘A Letter To——’, in *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems*, ed. by Jack Stillinger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 226-36. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

⁵⁷ John Milton, ‘The Passion’, *The 1645 Poems*, in *The Complete Works of John Milton*, III: The Shorter Poems, ed. by Barbara Kiefer Lewalski and Estelle Haan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 17-19.

A timely utterance gave that thought relief

And I again am strong

(*Ode*, ll. 19-24)

And 'ere I was aware,

The weight was somewhat lifted from my Breast.

('A Letter to——' [*MH*], ll. 74-79)

Wordsworth's 'timely utterance' is, however, more confident and egotistic than Coleridge who 'spake with rash Despair' and is dependent upon the blessings from his 'Friends and Lovers', especially those from Sara Hutchison. The rest of stanza 6 in 'A Letter to——' (ll. 80-91) revives into 'finer' imaginings of Sara with a relieved mind of 'finer Mould', especially as readers hear the vowel 'oo' sound of the rhymes (ababbccdeedd) start to vary from the sixth line:

Dear Sara! in the weather-fended wood,

Thy lov'd Haunt, where the stock-doves coo at Noon,

I guess that thou hast stood

And watch'd yon Crescent and that ghost-like Moon!

And yet far rather, in my present mood,

I would that thou'dst been sitting all this while

Upon the sod-built seat of Camonmile—

And tho' thy Robin may have ceas'd to sing,

Yet needs for *my* sake must thou love to hear

—The Bee-hive murmuring near,

That ever-busy and most quiet Thing

Which I have heard at Midnight murmuring!

(ll. 80-91)

These are rhymes of strong affection carried in a letter which Sara 'needs for *my* sake must [she] love to hear' (l. 88); Coleridge's private and personal wish for acceptance and attention is fervently expressed.

Yet, braided into his yearnings for Sara is Coleridge's metaphysical consideration of Transcendentalism—through 'a Maiden's quiet Eyes / Uprais'd and linking on sweet dreams by dim Connexions / To Moon, or Evening Star, or glorious Western Skies!'. If we recall Coleridge's explanation of '*a priori*' in *The Friend*—

a priori (that is from those necessities of the mind, or *forms* of thinking, which, though revealed to us by experience, must yet have pre-existed in order to make

experience itself possible, even as the eye must exist previously to any particular act of seeing, though by sight only can we know, that we have eyes)⁵⁸

—Sara’s ‘quiet Eyes’ in ‘A Letter to——’ appear to be the eyes that shape Coleridge into his succinct analogy used for defining ‘*a priori*’ in *The Friend*. This development begins with Coleridge tracing his experience of loss beyond Wordsworth’s problem of *seeing*, to that of *feeling*, that is, what is ‘*a priori*’ to the sight—the *eyes*.

3

All this long Eve so balmy and serene
 Have I been gazing on the Western Sky
 And it’s 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 and between,
 Now sparkling, now bedimm’d, but always seen;
 Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
 In it’s own cloudless, starless Lake of Blue,
 A Bout becalm’d! dear William’s Sky-Canoe!
 I see them all, so excellently fair,
 I *see*, not *feel*, how beautiful they are!

(ll. 31-43)

7

I feel my Spirit moved—
 And, wheresoe’er thou be,
 O Sister! O beloved!
 Thy dear mild Eyes, that see
 The very Heaven, *I see*,
 There is a Prayer in them! It is for *me*!
 And I dear Sara! *I am blessing thee!*

(ll. 92-98)

Coleridge ‘with how blank an eye’ can only ‘*see*, not *feel*, how beautiful’ the scenery is in stanza 3, but in stanza 7 he ‘see[s]’ Sara’s ‘dear mild Eyes’ as he feels his ‘Spirit moved’. The marked difference is not in the sensory act of seeing, but in what is being seen, in order to fill those blank eyes of Coleridge with feelings. To behold objects in Nature is, of course, not the same experience as to see Sara’s eyes; ‘the Maiden’s quiet Eyes’, as we know, are dearest to Coleridge’s ‘soul’. Accompanying these expressions of ‘gentle yearnings’ for Sara Hutchinson is the metaphysical significance that can be found when Coleridge sees what is ‘*a priori*’ to Sara’s sight, her eyes, ‘that see / The very Heaven’. The parenthetical commas indicate that it is Sara’s ‘mild Eyes, that see / The very Heaven,’ but the line break enables a brief moment of religious Transcendence for Coleridge—‘The very Heaven, *I see*’. Sara’s

⁵⁸ *TF*, II, pp. 105-06n.

eyes become the transcendental lens through which Coleridge can behold the Heaven; such that he is able to return the blessings he received from his ‘Friends and Lovers’.

These lines, which are considered by many to be too private for publishing, anticipate the logic behind Coleridge’s notion of ‘*a priori*’: ‘even as the eye must exist previously to any particular act of seeing, though by sight only can we know, that we have eyes’.⁵⁹ Sara’s transcendental spectacles enable Coleridge to experience God in a way that provokes the question of what is ‘*a priori*’ to Sara’s eyes? ‘The Prayer’ in those eyes subtly raises the possibility of what if the transcendent God is ‘*a priori*’ to the transcendental? We may not know if this could be true, but it is reassuring to the ‘I am’, our subjectivity that there is a hope of Transcendence presupposing our subjective experience of God. The subjective mind regains conscious control, as ‘*I am blessing thee*’ actively.

With this transcendent discovery in mind through his transcendental experience with Sara, Coleridge outlines the metaphysical questions he deemed important to raise in stanzas 8 to 10. The first set of questions comes after an imaginative memory of intimate interactions with Mary and Sara Hutchinson.

Ah fair Remembrances, that so revive
My Heart, and fill it with a living power,
Where were they Sara?—or did I not strive
To win them to me?—on the fretting Hour, (ll. 111-114)

From this set of questions, we notice that Coleridge considers ‘fair Remembrances’ as a source of ‘a living power’ that can ‘revive’ him ‘on the fretting Hour’. But to summon these fair memories to consciousness is no easy task, because what Coleridge has lost is not the sight of the Wordsworthian ‘celestial light’. Echoing Wordsworth’s rhetorical questions by the end of the four-stanza *Ode*, ‘Whither is fled the visionary gleam / Where is it gone the glory and the dream’, Coleridge points out that his loss, and perhaps Wordsworth’s loss too, is more subjectively bound to nature. Coleridge anchors the loss to the power of the mind. Relative to this subjective power, the object, with which our senses (the sight) interact, appears to be rather unchanging. This power of the mind is one which connects with the realm above as Coleridge wrote in stanza 10:

⁵⁹ *TF*, II, pp. 105-06n.

Thinking of the ‘now and then’, Coleridge is a visionary writer who manages not to become too caught up with present barriers. The vision of ‘One Home the sure *Abiding* Home of All’ is a powerful image of Transcendence to be realised. The ‘trust’ Coleridge put into this vision for resolving those ‘idle wishes’ stemmed from the ultimate Oneness he articulated in 1790s. This ‘Home’ is a progression of ‘The very Heaven’, ‘revealed’ to Coleridge through transcendental experience with Sara’s eyes. Transcendence becomes ‘*a priori*’ to Transcendentalism in Coleridge’s understanding of the matter. This novel metaphysical idea smouldered in Coleridge’s yearnings for Sara as early as 1802, and was then succinctly redefined in *The Friend* in 1809. In response to Wordsworth with this vision, Coleridge does not offer the particular ‘celestial light’ that Wordsworth sought after. Wordsworth’s loss is not recoverable: Coleridge is aware that from ‘now and then’, life will oscillate between the rhymes—happy moments that come round ‘not too oft’, and at other times, ‘idle wishes roam, / Morbidly soft’. Therefore, the source of light and glory, which Coleridge advises Wordsworth to fix his eyes upon, is a very different ‘Coronal’ from that ‘coronal’ in Wordsworth’s ‘head’. In the *Ode*, though Wordsworth can share the earth’s ‘jollity’ echoed by the Heaven’s ‘jubilee’, the sense of loss persists by the end of the forth stanza. In other words, Wordsworth’s ‘coronal’ has never made up for the loss of the ‘celestial light’; and only when we turn our eyes to Coleridge’s ‘Coronal’ could we then explain why this is the case. The ‘coronal’, experienced by Wordsworth in the here and now of this earthly realm, is much more transient than the ‘Coronal’, which Coleridge could claim in the future in Heaven. The deeper biblical contrast here is that Wordsworth owns the ‘coronal’ as a shepherd to his imagination of Nature, leading the ‘Creatures’ to joy in words, but Coleridge let God be the Shepherd of all shepherds—‘And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.’ (1 Peter 5:4, KJV). By accepting ‘inglorious toils’ at present with the hope that there is a greater reward in the future, Coleridge rewrites and tries to resolve Wordsworth’s nostalgia and his struggle to spur on ‘in manhood now mature, / To honourable toil’ (*Prelude* 1799, I, ll. 452-453). The adjective ‘honourable’ only makes Wordsworth’s ‘toil’ more worthwhile and bearable. But the double negative in ‘I shall wear away / In no inglorious toils the manly Day’ highlights the weight of Coleridge’s trust in the meanings of these lines. The negation, ‘no’, exerts its influence not only to ‘inglorious’, but to Coleridge’s ‘toils’.

This trust is the most significant deviation from Kantian philosophy; perhaps it is also, for some philosophers, the worst confusion Coleridge introduced into his metaphysics.

Being ‘the miserablest Man alive / To know it, and be absent’, Coleridge points out within this display of affection a metaphysical understanding. The situation in which man knows of ‘the Permanent’ and its very absence simultaneously causes the persisted misery in Wordsworth’s *Ode* and ‘A Letter to——’. However, misery ‘shall’ not be the end as Coleridge would ‘partake’ in the ‘Delights’, even when these joys are ‘Far off’ in the afterlife. ‘By this Voice, which thou lov’st, and by this *earnest* Eye—’, Coleridge attempts to rouse the ‘hope’ of Transcendence through his poetic voice, and through his ‘*earnest* Eye’ that dimly connects with Sara’s eye transcendently.

IV

‘Always to *know* than sometimes to *behold*’ (l. 152) is an important line for us to think and rethink through what Coleridge meant by the understanding of the human mind and its epistemological role in our knowledge of Truth. As James Engell astutely argues:

The faculty of understanding includes within itself the receptivity of the senses but adds the power of reflection and judgment. Understanding compares and groups; it orders empirical data, puts them in abstract terms, and generalizes from them. The understanding can distinguish individualities from a class and consequently exercises induction and deduction. It tends to separate the objective and subjective elements of experience; we are conscious, then, of being “separated beings, and place nature in antithesis to the mind, as object to subject, thing to thought, death to life.” Truth is known through the understanding, but this is not the source of truth. The senses alone have direct contact with the purely objective, and reason alone receives ideas and spiritual truths.⁶⁰

If the understanding ‘includes within itself the receptivity of the senses’, Coleridge’s ‘to *know* than sometimes to *behold*’ (l. 152) separates, to a degree, the sensory reception from the understanding. This separation is actually between the objective, to which ‘senses alone have direct contact’, and the subjective, to which ‘reason alone receives ideas and spiritual truths’. Therefore, line 152 which favours ‘to *know*’ over ‘to *behold*’ is another example of Coleridge’s emphasis of the ‘I am’ and the subjective. Engell further suggests, with reference

⁶⁰ James Engell, pp. 335-36.

to a notebook entry dated December 1800/ January 1801 (which also serves as the epigraph of this chapter), that:

“To think of a *thing* is different from to perceive it, as ‘to walk’ is from to ‘feel the ground under you.’” Understanding grapples with the polarity or dynamic of experience through words, images, and symbols. By these alone both sense impressions and ideas are represented. But Coleridge believes that while the understanding (Kant’s *Verstand* and Milton’s “discursive reason”) can grasp the two poles of the Dynamic, it cannot unify them. It cannot create the images on which it depends.⁶¹

There is a shared rationale behind Coleridge’s suggestion that Spinoza should begin with ‘natura naturans’ to inch towards the ‘I am’ and the notebook entry Engell’s quoted (‘To think of a *thing* is different from to perceive it, as “to walk” is from to “feel the ground under you.”’).⁶² Their commonality lies in the fact that Coleridge is aware of the dynamics between the subject and the object, as well as alert to how the condition of human understanding depends upon their unification. The transcendental is projected from the subjective, which is different from our sensory experience of the external objects. In transcendental philosophy, we ‘cannot unify’ the subjective with the objective in our understanding. But the hope of their unification and perfect alignment is Transcendence.

Transcendence is thus an idea that goes beyond the human understanding as conceived in Kantian philosophy. In this sense, the second half of the notebook entry, which Engell does not cite, becomes intriguing: ‘—perhaps in the same way too— namely, a succession of perceptions accompanied by a sense of *nisus* & purpose’.⁶³ Coleridge tries to outdo Kant here by producing his own metaphysical explanation for Transcendence in this half of his notebook entry. Here, ‘a succession of perceptions’ and ‘a sense of *nisus* & purpose’ are combined to express a form of the many and the One. Conjecturing with the word ‘perhaps’, Coleridge subtly suggests a potential alignment between the perceptions of the objects and the subjective accompanies the formation of these perceptions. Transcendentalism helps Coleridge to unify the subject and the object in a way that entwines many perceptions under one purposive will. By doing so, Coleridge is raising an important question through his

⁶¹ James Engell, pp. 335-36.

⁶² *CN*, I, 886.

⁶³ *CN*, I, 886.

conjecture: what if to know the existence of God is the '*nisus* & purpose' accompanying the multiplicity of this sensory reality?

Transcendentalism does not help Coleridge resolve problems of faith. But reasoning of Transcendentalism contributes to Coleridge's development of how Transcendence might be possible. Transcendent Joy is perhaps '*a priori*' to the human mind, such that the loss of which is simply a sign that we are not in control of our subjective consciousness. This understanding consoles the poet by shifting his focus to the emotions accompanying the loss. This shift in focus is one that moves away from the loss itself to a potential state of recoverability:

| | |
|--|--|
| [15] | [16] |
| <p>Like elder Sisters, with love-twinkling Eyes! Healthful, and light my Darling! may'st thou rise, And of the same good Tidings to me send! For O! beloved Friend! I am not the buoyant Thing, I was of yore, When like an own Child, I to Joy belong'd, For others mourning oft, myself oft sorely wrong'd, Yet bearing all things then, as if I nothing bore.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(ll. 223- 230)</p> | <p>I speak not now of those habitual Ills, That wear out Life, when two unequal minds Meet in one House, and two discordant Wills— This leaves me, where it finds, Past cure and past Complaint! A fate Austere, Too fixed and hopeless to partake of Fear!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(ll. 242-247)</p> |

These lines from stanza 15 and 16 of 'A Letter to——' that are also omitted in the *MP* version suggests the absolute futility to undo what growth has done to the human mind—a reply to Wordsworth's loss of a particular sight of 'celestial light'. What can be flipped over, in Coleridge's opinion, is our subjective perspective, not so much the objective fact: 'Yet bearing all things then, as if I nothing bore'. In other words, the feelings of loss, instead of the loss itself, seem to be what Coleridge targeted to deal with. The key to unlock this paradoxical line (l. 230) hinges upon the deliberate comparison between Coleridge's visionary imagery of the 'One Home' in stanza 11, which is now in stark contrast with the 'one House' in stanza 16. Coleridge's domestic hurdles around 1802 are, after all, the reality which he *feels*. The 'two unequal minds' and the 'two discordant Wills' point to Coleridge and his wife, Sara Fricker. Even though he '*knows*' (l. 152) the transcendent hope ahead, the present difficulties strangle such hope and leave him with 'Past cure and past Complaint! A fate Austere, / Too fixed and hopeless to partake of Fear!'. Indeed, Coleridge brings readers

to search for his own human nature from introspection for 'Joy', so as to allow that incomplete, yet natural, part of the self to take the lead, and make him almost whole again, as he once was. This metaphysical plan is initiated by Coleridge's transcendental effort 'to steal / From my own Nature', yet the origin of his 'own Nature' is anchored to a transcendent idea of 'all the Natural Man'.

In response to Wordsworth, the growth of a man is a journey of no return and ongoing struggle, despite the availability of the 'wisest Plan'. Coleridge mourns his immediate feelings of discontent and woes again in stanza 18, despite the hope he holds out for:

My little children are a Joy, a Love,
 A good Gift from above!
 But what is Bliss, that ever calls up Woe,
 And makes it doubly keen?
 Compelling me to feel what well I know,
 What a most blessed Lot mine *might* have been!
 Those little Angel children (woe is me!)
 There have been hours, when feeling how they bind
 And pluck out the wing-feathers of my mind,
 Turning my Error to Necessity,
 I have half-wished, they never had been born. (ll. 271-281)

John Worthen gives a detailed biographical account of Coleridge's complaints about his children who burdened and disturbed moments of contemplation.⁶⁵ Aside from the biographical details, it is indeed the feeling of no return that makes these lines remarkable. Children are objectively wonderful gifts 'from above', but their existences are subjective reminders of the poet's growth. Coleridge is no longer a carefree being, as children 'bind' him to his duty. Despite being bitterly regretful, walking down this path in life is Coleridge's 'Error' with no remedies as the fatherly duty turns it into 'Necessity'. This dramatized depiction of his thoughts and feelings towards his children in stanza 18 serves a metaphysical purpose. The growth of man into his adulthood is, in Coleridge's imagination, an unavoidable regression into resilience. The more he knows, the more he is compelled to feel, especially when bliss and woe are so tightly interlaced in life.

⁶⁵ John Worthen, *The Gang: Coleridge, the Hutchinsons & the Wordsworths in 1802* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 89-90.

Yet, if grief took the stage, Coleridge would make sure that the transcendent hope can find its way back to the spotlight. Like a swinging pendulum, adulthood for Coleridge is a balance of ups and downs, just as his children both ‘bind / And pluck out the wing-feathers of my mind’ (ll. 278-279). The more woes seem to saturate the lines, the more potent the underlying transcendent hope becomes:

I have half-wished, they never had been born.
 THAT—*seldom*; but sad Thought they always bring,
 And like the Poet’s Nightingale, I sing
 My Love-song with my breast against a Thorn.

(‘A Letter to——’, ll. 281-284)

My Friend, and my Friend’s Sister! we have learnt
 A different lore: we may not thus profane
 Nature’s sweet voices always full of love
 And joyance! ‘Tis the merry Nightingale
 That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates
 With fast thick warble his delicious notes,
 As he were fearful, that an April night
 Would be too short for him to utter forth
 His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul
 Of all its music! [...]

(‘The Nightingale; A Conversational Poem,
 Written in April, 1798.’, ll. 40-49)⁶⁶

Coleridge think of ‘A Letter to——’ as a ‘Love-song with my breast against a Thorn’, but I would argue that he is not equating the pain of his unrequited love for Sara Hutchinson to the tragic suffering of Ovid’s Philomel. Coleridge willed his Nightingale to be ‘the merry’ (l. 43) bird in ‘The Nightingale; A Conversational Poem’ (published in 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*), rewriting the tragedy of Ovid’s Philomel for the sake of perceiving nature as it is, ‘full of love / And Joyance’. Nevertheless, ‘the Poet’s Nightingale’ in ‘A Letter to——’ can be set against Philip Sidney’s ‘To the same tune [The Nightingale]’. Sidney is sickly jealous of Philomela, for forlorn state is proof of having suffered excessive attention and unwanted attention from Tereus:⁶⁷

But I who dayly craving,
 Cannot have to content me,
 Have more cause to lament me,
 Since wanting s more woe then too much having.

⁶⁶ *LB 1798*, pp. 61-69.

⁶⁷ Lee A. Ritscher, *The Semiotics of Rape in Renaissance English Literature* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), pp. 33-34.

O *Philomela* faire, ô take some gladnesse,
 That here is juster cause of plaintfull sadnesse:
 Thine earth now springs, mine fadeth:
 Thy thorne without, my thorne my heart invadeth.

(Sidney's 'To the same tune', ll. 17-24)⁶⁸

Coleridge too shares Sidney's 'woe' in 'A Letter to——', since his 'Love-song' for and want of Sara Hutchinson reminds him of what he does not have. The melodrama and complexity of thoughts involved in such grief allow readers to have a gleam of Coleridge's spring of imagination rested deep in his mind. Before Coleridge is aware of this fountain from within, as he is affected by 'the deep power of Joy' which dimly discloses to him the transcendent image of *Life*:

—and the deep power of Joy
 We see into the Life of Things—

i.e. —By deep feeling we make our *Ideas dim*—& this is what we mean by our Life—ourselves. I think of the Wall—it is before me, a distinct Image—here I necessarily think of the *Idea* & the Thinking I as two distinct & opposite Things. Now let me think of *myself*—of the thinking Being—the *Idea* becomes dim whatever it be—so dim that I know not what it is— but the Feeling is deep & steady— and this I call *I*—identifying the Percipient & the Perceived.—⁶⁹

In this notebook entry dated February or March 1801, 'the two poles of the Dynamic' in Engell's words are being unified through having the Self 'I' being both the percipient (the subject) and the perceived (the object). Philosophically speaking, Engell is right to point out the limit of understanding, to unify the subjective and the objective, and to 'create the images on which it depends'. From the perspective of poetry however, the more Coleridge believes in such a limit, the more he yearns to break through it, and the more he endeavours to create such image through the Self. When the jarring 'Love-song' strikes the readers' ears, the 'Thorn' (that rhymes with 'born'), along with Coleridge's power of imagination, springs up once again to offer the remote hope of Transcendence. The 'Thorn' as Jesus's 'Coronal' on

⁶⁸ Philip Sidney, *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by William A. Ringler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 137.

⁶⁹ *CN*, I, 921.

earth foretells His glorious rebirth, connecting Coleridge to that 'One Home the sure *Abiding* Home of All'.

Coleridge's insightful differentiation and unification of the subjective and the objective in turn becomes his explicit response to Wordsworth:

With no unthankful Spirit I confess,
 This clinging Grief too in it's turn awakes,
 That Love and Father's Joy; but O! it makes
 The Love the greater, and the Joy far less!
 These Mountains too, these Vales, these Woods, these Lakes,
 Scenes full of Beauty and of Loftiness
 Where all my Life I fondly hope to live—
 I were sunk low indeed, did they *no* solace give!
 But oft I seem to feel, and evermore to fear,
 They are not to me now the Things, which once they were. (ll. 285-294)

That grief and joy must oscillate in life for either feeling to exist becomes Coleridge's realisation. Coleridge agrees with Wordsworth on the note that the growth of man sometimes 'makes / [...] the Joy far less'. And Nature does not seem to console the mind as it did. However, Coleridge 'awakes' a transcendent hope in Wordsworth's 'The things which I have seen I see them now no more'. The loss of the 'celestial light' as object has troubled Wordsworth with a sense of an irrecoverable loss. But this loss is rewritten by Coleridge as a product of subjective 'fear' that is independent of the objective truth: 'They are not to me now the Things, which once they were', i.e. it only appears 'to me' that the Things have changed, but they themselves have not necessarily changed; the transcendent hope is precisely that they have not. As Coleridge consciously leaves room for the Absolute of 'the Things' to be conceived in this line, the grief he feels becomes transient, thus allowing the transcendent hope of 'the Permanent' to thrive.

From these lines and verse paragraphs that are trimmed away by Coleridge before the poem is renamed and published as 'Dejection: An Ode' in the *Morning Post*, we can see that they are concealed from the public because of their private nature. However, this concealment does not exclude them from being metaphysically significant when we trace Coleridge's metaphysical notion of Transcendence, its associated qualities and manifestations. The ways in which the layering of contrast and oscillations between the subjective and the

objective are repeated and stressed in the poem anticipate Coleridge's remarks about Spinoza and his definition of '*a priori*' around 1809 to 1810s. They also set the conceptual basis for our understanding of the *Morning Post* version in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

'Ideas in the divine mind anterior to the Creation'

Quiet stream, with all its eddies, & the moonlight playing on them, quiet as if
they were Ideas in the divine mind anterior to the Creation—

(CN, I, 1154)

This chapter explores how the *Morning Post* version of 'Dejection: An Ode' (1802) and 'To W. Wordsworth' (1807) help anticipate the rebirth of Transcendence in Coleridge's definition of imagination in *Biographia Literaria* (1817). In part I, I discuss briefly what Coleridge means by Transcendence during 1817 to give readers a glimpse of the distant vision Coleridge's writing anticipates. I argue that Transcendence and Transcendentalism, albeit different, are not binaries. In Coleridge's mind, the wisdom of religion is inclusive of philosophy that partakes of Truth. In part II, I point out that binaries are frequent rhetorical devices that Coleridge used in his poems, such as 'A Letter to——', with 'Dynamic Philosophy' being his source of such metaphysical inspiration.¹ However, the inadequacy of binaries is that they differentiate without considering commonalities. And if we conceive Transcendence and Transcendentalism as simple binaries, we will lose sight of Coleridge's marvellous interpenetration of the two concepts in his poems. One better way of considering Coleridge's Transcendence is through Regina Schwartz's concept of 'Vertical' Transcendence and 'Horizontal' Transcendentalism.² I employ the division of 'vertical' and 'horizontal' for the ease of describing how Transcendence and Transcendentalism are different dimensions that must intersect one another. The division of 'vertical' and 'horizontal' is also metaphorically apt for distinguishing Transcendence as going beyond this world and Transcendentalism as going beyond our subjectivity, though bound by our own mortality. In part III, I explore the difference between Joy and dejection in the *Morning Post* version of 'Dejection'. In the light of Coleridge's Platonism, I argue that dejection belongs to the body and is perishable, but Joy belongs to the soul and is 'anterior to' our mind. This Joy is a transcendent power within us and one which the poets can create. To know or express the existence of Transcendence in the mind requires an analogy. The poetic imagination is the

¹ James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment To Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

² Regina Schwartz (ed.), *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. x-xi.

object produced by the poet's subjective ideas. This subject-object relation is analogous to the poet's being as the object created by God's 'Idea'. If the imagination is reflective of the poet's creativity, the human mind is reflective of God's creative 'Idea'. We can equate God's 'Idea', which shapes the poet into a creative being from within the poet's mind, to the way in which readers find the poet's ideas of his imagination within the poems he writes. In the *MP* version of 'Dejection', Coleridge offers Wordsworth a metaphysical statement that answers the four-stanza *Ode*: the 'celestial light' can be found from within in the soul when we are not distracted by our body. Through oscillations of dejection and Joy in the poem, Coleridge brings forth a basic shape (in the form of Joy) of Transcendence from the lack of it in certain dejected moments of life. But Coleridge does not want to posit Transcendence as a possibility surviving only upon the negation of its opposite (dejection). In part IV, I discuss how Coleridge constructed a new level for Transcendence with the dynamics of opposites as its base. I argue that Coleridge offers to think of opposites in terms of 'changes', thus what was thought of as oscillations between opposites are now changes that set two elements into motion. The eddying motions of these changes can counterfeit, be analogic to and symbolise permanence. In 'To W. Wordsworth', Coleridge tries to actualise such permanence through combining rhetorical 'activity' and 'passivity' into changes that give the poem its vitality. Through writing the poem, Coleridge experiences his activity in creating but also the passivity of being led by the transcendent power of the mind in so doing. Permanence is found when Coleridge finds himself in prayer as a creation of God by the end of the poem.

I

Anticipating Coleridge's philosophical interpretation of Transcendentalism in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), this chapter continues to explore the place of Transcendence in Coleridge's thinking before 1810. To cultivate an understanding of both concepts by the 1810s prepares us for reviewing their antecedents over the previous decade. In Coleridge's words, the 'transcendental' 'is exclusively the domain of PURE philosophy [...] in order to discriminate it at once, both from mere reflection and *re*-presentation on the one hand, and on the other from those flights of lawless speculation which abandoned by *all* distinct consciousness, because transgressing the bounds and purposes of our intellectual faculties, are justly condemned, as *transcendent*'.³ Notably, Coleridge's metaphysics aligns with the tradition of

³ *BL*, I, p. 237.

Kantian Transcendentalism, such that Transcendence is cast away as speculative through this desynonymization because it is beyond what we can know in our understanding. However, to take this view as the whole of how Coleridge thought of God is fraught. As Coleridge hinted in Thesis IX of chapter 12 in *Biographia*,

philosophy would pass into religion, and religion become inclusive of philosophy.
We begin with the I KNOW MYSELF, in order to end with the absolute I AM.
We proceed from the SELF, in order to lose and find all self in GOD.⁴

Subsuming philosophy under the domain of religion appears to clash with Coleridge's effort to desynonymise Transcendentalism from Transcendence, as if Transcendence is different from, but not discontinuous, with Transcendentalism. Thesis X further suggests that Transcendentalism is a concept isolated from its conventional continuity with Transcendence: 'The transcendental philosopher does not enquire, what ultimate ground of our knowledge there may lie out of our knowing, but what is the last in our knowing itself, beyond which we cannot pass'.⁵ If religion is 'inclusive' of transcendental philosophy, the unknown which 'lie[s] out of our knowing' is compartmentalised into the more encompassing domain of religion. Transcendent reasoning is simply speculative and erroneous to Coleridge and other mainstream Transcendentalists. But transcendent belief is at the heart of religion which Coleridge defended ardently in *The Statesman's Manual* (1816):

If it be said, that we should endeavor not so much to remove Ignorance, as to make the Ignorant religious: Religion herself, through her sacred oracles, answers for me, that all effective Faith presupposes Knowledge and individual Conviction. If the mere acquiescence in Truth, uncomprehended and unfathomed, were sufficient, few indeed would be the vicious and the miserable, in this country at least where speculative Infidelity is, Heaven be praised, confined to a small number. [...] For to know God is (by a vital and spiritual act in which to know and to possess are one and indivisible) to acknowledge him as the Infinite Clearness in the Incomprehensible Fulness, and Fulness Incomprehensible with Infinite Clearness.⁶

⁴ *BL*, I, p. 283.

⁵ *BL*, I, pp. 283-84.

⁶ *SM*, pp. 47-48.

In this passage, Coleridge offers a rather non-Kantian view, namely ‘that all effective Faith presupposes Knowledge and individual Conviction’. It is non-Kantian since Kant argues in Preface to the Second Edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* that

I am not allowed even to assume, for the sake of the necessary practical use of my reason, **God, freedom, immortality**, unless at the same time I **deprive** speculative reason of its pretensions to transcendent insights. Reason, namely in order to arrive at these, must employ principles which extend only to objects of possible experience and which, if in spite of this they are applied also to what cannot be an object of experience, actually always change this into an appearance, thus rendering all **practical expansion** of pure reason impossible. Hence I had to suspend **knowledge** in order to make room for belief.⁷

Though Coleridge’s Transcendentalism is profoundly Kantian, Kant would not have allowed religion to have such a proximity to Transcendentalism, lest ‘pretensions to transcendent insights’ creep in. That the ontology of God is beyond knowledge, both Kant and Coleridge recognise. Unlike Kant, Coleridge sees religion as another approach to God, justly separated from, but certainly inspired by the perusal of the philosophical or transcendentalist approach to God.

In *The Statesman’s Manual*, ‘to know God’ involves acknowledging ‘Fulness Incomprehensible with Infinite Clearness’: despite the fact that the fullness of God is incomprehensible to human beings, a transcendent belief in God is aware of this unintelligible quality of God with ‘Infinite Clearness’. To recall Coleridge’s uses of poetic obscurity in the 1790s (chapter 1), the kind of ‘clearness’ residing in the inherent obscurity of God is spelled out in *The Statesman’s Manual* by 1816. On the other hand, to know God as ‘the Infinite Clearness in the Incomprehensible Fulness’ is to draw out the knowledge accessible to pure reason ‘in’ God. Knowledge here suggests the extent to which we can know, that is, ‘I KNOW MYSELF, in order to end with the absolute I AM’ in Thesis IX of *Biographia*. Coleridge is particularly good at balancing the two approaches to God by registering the unknowing as what we know about God, i.e. what we know about God is that

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. & ed. by Marcus Weigelt (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 25. According to the editor, ‘italics are never used to highlight text highlighted by Kant. To highlight such text we have always used bold print (as is also found in Kant’s original edition).’ (p. lxviii)

we do not know about God fully. This realisation is vital transcendental knowledge about God in philosophy, yet simultaneously, it leaves open transcendent possibilities in religion. Therefore, ‘the Infinite Clearness in the Incomprehensible Fulness’ entails that Coleridge places Transcendentalism ‘in’ God. *Biographia*’s sense that ‘philosophy would pass into religion, and religion become inclusive of philosophy’ stems from Coleridge’s earlier writing in *The Statesman’s Manual*.

The most important point Coleridge made with regard to both the religious and philosophical approaches is their concurrent relevance upon one intellectual mind, that ‘all effective Faith presupposes Knowledge and individual Conviction’.⁸ Coleridge was careful about not confusing transcendental knowledge with speculative and erroneous transcendent knowledge. In Kantian philosophy, transcendent knowledge is logically forbidden as Transcendence lies beyond human understanding. The word ‘Faith’ is acceptable, perhaps even for Kant, as long as we ‘suspend **knowledge** in order to make room for belief’. Yet, if ‘all effective Faith presupposes Knowledge’, Coleridge leaves us the impression that faith is ‘*a priori*’ to transcendental knowledge. In *Biographia*, Coleridge says that

there had dawned upon me, even before I had met with the Critique of the Pure Reason, a certain guiding light. If the mere intellect could make no certain discovery of a holy and intelligent first cause, it might yet supply a demonstration, that no legitimate argument could be drawn from the intellect *against* its truth.⁹

Transcendence is a faith, a belief or ‘a certain guiding light’ for which Coleridge has guaranteed a place alongside transcendental knowledge. This light, Coleridge elaborates in *The Statesman’s Manual*, is the sun—the same image used in the 1798 *Ancient Mariner* for God’s head (chapter 2):

Not that Knowledge can of itself do all! The light of religion is not that of the moon, light without heat; but neither is its warmth that of the stove, warmth without light. Religion is the sun whose warmth indeed swells, and stirs, and actuates the life of nature, but who at the same time beholds all the growth of life

⁸ *SM*, p. 47.

⁹ *BL*, I, p. 201.

with a master-eye, makes all objects glorious on which he looks, and by that glory visible to others.¹⁰

The beams of glory that are ‘visible to others’ can be perceived empirically, and thus be processed by our reasoning. Lights are therefore not the incomprehensible part of God. On the contrary, the warmth cannot be seen but felt, and yet, the warmth of the sun animates and ‘actuates the life of nature’. Among these layers of symbolisms, Coleridge stresses that there is a part of God, which can be felt by the ‘*heart*’, though, not explained by the ‘*head*’.¹¹ Resembling the writings of the mystics, true religion also ‘keep[s] alive the *heart* in the *head*’, because they ‘gave [Coleridge] an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentment, that all the products of the mere *reflective* faculty partook of DEATH, and were as the rattling twigs and sprays in winter, into which a sap was yet to be propelled, from some root to which I had not penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter’.¹² The ‘first cause’ comes ‘from some root to which’ the living ‘had not penetrated’, but Coleridge can feel that he is ‘propelled’ by an unknown origin. This feeling of propulsion is the main reason why the warmth of religion and the writings of mystics stir Coleridge’s ‘*heart*’. But religion is not merely dependent on the ‘*heart*’ if we shed the light of reasoning upon it through Transcendentalism, and such is the purpose of metaphysics. In a notebook entry dated October 1803, Coleridge states that

What is it, that I employ my Metaphysics on? To perplex our clearest notions, & living moral Instincts? To extinguish the Light of Love & of Conscience, to put out the Life of Arbitrement—to make myself & others *Worthless, Soul-less, Godless?*— No! To expose the Folly & the Legerdemain of those, who have thus abused the blessed Organ of Language—, to support all old & venerable Truths, to support, to kindle, to project, to make the Reason spread Light over our Feelings, to make our Feelings diffuse vital Warmth thro’ our Reason—these are my Objects—& these my Subjects. Is this the metaphysics that bad Spirits in Hell delight in?¹³

¹⁰ *SM*, p. 48.

¹¹ *BL*, I, p. 152.

¹² *BL*, I, p. 152.

¹³ *CN*, I, 1623.

Coleridge employs metaphysics for the holy Truths which need the fire of enlightenment in our ‘head’ to ‘spread Light over our Feelings’ through transcendental knowledge. And the warmth which ‘diffuse[s]’ through ‘our Reason’ locates within our ‘heart’ the intelligible part of the incomprehensible fullness of God. Placing the metaphysics of Transcendentalism within the context of his religious Transcendent belief in the 1810s, Coleridge has begun to explore this complex notion in some of his poems a decade before *The Statesman’s Manual* and *Biographia Literaria* were published. The purpose of this chapter is to explore those antecedents in poetry that place Transcendentalism in Coleridge’s transcendent belief.

II

As seen from ‘A Letter to——’ in the previous chapter, Coleridge makes the ‘I am’ the centre of judgement, ‘They are not to me now the Things, which once they were’ (l. 294), in response to Wordsworth’s crisis of losing the objective sight of the ‘celestial light’ forever—‘The things which I have seen I see them now no more’ (Four-stanza *Ode* in ‘MS M’, l. 9).¹⁴ Coleridge’s subtle differentiation between the subject and object is a reminder to Wordsworth that Truth shall never be simply objective. Coleridge is not denying his shared experience of Wordsworth’s crisis, one that critics have made more noticeable to the readers. For instance, Peter Manning suggests, ‘The crisis [‘The Immortality Ode’] explicitly describes, that of the fading of the celestial light, thus discloses itself as a myth concealing another conflict, between resistance to the everyday adult world that the transformative myth reduces to sterility, and assimilation to that same world’.¹⁵ With respect to Coleridge, M. H. Abrams argues,

Coleridge’s *Dejection: An Ode* is the most impressive instance of another circuitous form which he inaugurated in *The Eolian Harp*, perfected in *Frost of Midnight*, and repeated in several other “conversation poems.” Typically this type of lyric begins with a description of the landscape, moves into a sustained meditation which involves the speaker’s past, present, and future, and ends in a return to the outer scene, but on a higher level of insight. In *Dejection: An Ode*

¹⁴ William Wordsworth, ‘[Ode]’, in *Wordsworth’s Experiments with Tradition: The Lyric Poems of 1802, with Texts of the Poems Based on Early Manuscripts*, ed. by Jared Curtis (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 164-70. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

¹⁵ Peter Manning, ‘Wordsworth’s Intimations Ode and Its Epigraphs’, in *Critical Essays on William Wordsworth*, ed. by George Gilpin (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990), pp. 83-97, at p.87.

this meditation constitutes a brief crisis-autobiography which parallels the two books of Wordsworth's *Prelude* on "Imagination, How Impaired and Restored," except that Coleridge both begins and ends in the state of imagination impaired, and foresees no possibility of recovery from his personal crisis of isolation, apathy, and creative sterility.¹⁶

Abrams and Manning tease out the paradox between the 'sterility' of the mind experienced and felt by Wordsworth and Coleridge, and their poetic fertility in representing such 'sterility' in verses. Paradox by default plays with the coincidence of oppositions. The coincidence of opposites, sterility and creativity, in poetry is a significant feature of the critical tradition in relation to these crisis poems.

The takes on opposing concepts or ideas in literary criticisms of Coleridge are indeed not foreign to us. The prime example would be James Engell who considers Coleridge's poetry playing with oppositions as exemplars of the 'Dynamic Philosophy'.¹⁷ In Engell's philosophical investigation of the creative imagination, Coleridge belongs to the kind of philosopher who tries to 'reconcile' opposites, the subjective and the objective, 'and bring them into one'.¹⁸ Engell argues further:

Translated into poetical practice, this philosophical concept amounted to the same process that Addison, Akenside, Moritz, and Herder had identified as among the highest offices of poetry, especially of myth, namely the communion of corporeal and spiritual, the birth of gods to represent the human perception of nature, or as Keats saw in *Psyche*, the birth of gods to symbolize the inner life of the self.¹⁹

What Engell meant by 'the birth of gods' appears to be the 'one' emerged from a reconciliation of opposites, between the 'human perception' and the 'nature' perceived, and between the material and the 'spiritual'. In the light of Engell's 'Dynamic Philosophy', critical works of Abrams lead us to view 'The Immortality Ode' and 'Dejection: An Ode' as involving the paradoxical communion of thematic sterility and poetic creativity. But this coincidence of opposition differs between the two poets. In the four-stanza *Ode*, Wordsworth

¹⁶ M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), p. 275.

¹⁷ Engell, p. 333.

¹⁸ Engell, pp. 333-34.

¹⁹ Engell, pp. 333-34.

has yet to turn his sterility into perfected poetic creativity, as the composition stagnates. But, for Coleridge, the coalescence of sterility and creativity foregrounds his differentiation between the subject and the object, which can be projected onto a discussion of the non-binary nature between Transcendentalism and Transcendence.

Whether it be in Engell's 'Dynamic Philosophy' or Abrams's notion of creativity in crisis, the forces of oppositions involved are transcendental. Transcendentalism implies that the Oneness or 'the birth of gods', as a result of reconciling opposites, belongs to the pure reason which does not provide adequate evidence for the actual existence (the ontology) of God. But the potential alignment of the objective and the subjective in 'A Letter to——' implies an idea of the Absolute that forms the basis of Transcendentalism. This base is Transcendence through which reconciliation of opposites confirms faith and the living God in the human heart. Coming from the philosophical viewpoint, Engell touches upon Transcendence when he quotes from Coleridge's *Philosophical Lectures*:

If we start from a religious assumption that "the mind is beforehand impressed with a belief of a providence guiding this great drama of the world to its conclusion," then it seems inevitable in all forms of life, matter, and spirit "that a certain unity is to be expected from the very circumstances of opposition [...] one point comprising the excellencies of both".²⁰

In Coleridge's poems, this 'religious assumption', if it is an assumption at all, is often expressed more emphatically through emotions. Even though philosophical ideas intensely influence Coleridge's descriptive approach to theology, I argue that the poet always has a religious belief underlying and informing his transcendental and dynamic philosophy.

Despite the philosophical difference between Transcendentalism and Transcendence, Coleridge exhibits a tendency towards reconciliation of the two in his poetry ('Dejection: An Ode' and 'To W. Wordsworth'), that is a placing of Transcendentalism within his Transcendent belief. Contemporary studies of Transcendence in *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond* reveal a similar idea of reconciliation, though Coleridge's contribution is out of sight in this book. In the introduction of the book, Schwartz differentiates Transcendence by means of the 'vertical' and 'horizontal':

²⁰ Engell, p. 335.

“vertical transcendence” suggests leaving the immanent world, leaving the phenomenal, for another world, either in a transascendence to the heights or a transcendence to the depths. But to understand transcendence as a negation of immanence, as beyond this world, is fraught with contradiction. . . . If we “transcend” this world for another world and then reach it, it becomes immanent, hence, transcendence is not beyond the world; rather, is a passage from one world to another.²¹

The second sense of transcendence would be “horizontal.” On the one hand, this is the project of self-transcendence, the understanding that we are incomplete, thrusting ourselves into an incomplete future. Our encounter with our death is such a transcendence, the heroic grasping of the last possibility.²²

Coleridge’s Transcendence resembles the ‘vertical transcendence’ as ‘passage’ to God that is religiously beyond the world, but philosophically ‘to another’ world. In other words, Coleridge’s Transcendence is caught up in addressing the inconceivable God within human understanding. Coleridge maintains that we can neither prove the truthfulness of this inconceivable God, nor can we prove His non-existence. Feelings and faith therefore is the gist of Transcendence which nonetheless should not conflict with transcendental insights. Coleridge’s Transcendentalism is ‘horizontal’, as it is a form of ‘self-transcendence’, transcending one’s subjectivity, the barrier that marks human knowledge as incomplete. Transcendentalism yields no ultimate knowledge which lies beyond human’s understanding or our death.

Schwartz argues that ‘Of course, these categories—vertical and horizontal—are heuristic distinctions that ultimately break down, for the vertical inflects the horizontal, and vice versa; “There can be no ‘knowledge’ of God separated from the relationship with men.”’²³ To place Transcendentalism in transcendent belief however, Coleridge aspires to dissolve the self in order for God to exist beyond the world in his poems. This way of reconciling Transcendentalism and Transcendence displaces their oppositions and mutual inflections. In turn, I argue that Transcendence becomes ‘anterior to’ Transcendentalism, and transcendent belief is a faith in the ‘first cause’ to life, or symbolically the oneness, which

²¹ Schwartz (ed.), pp. x-xi.

²² Schwartz (ed.), p. xi.

²³ Schwartz (ed.), p. xi.

Coleridge endeavoured to apprehend among and through the plurality of senses. Though philosophers could accuse Coleridge's ideas of being 'fraught with contradiction', his poetry may win them over to this understanding of Transcendence. This understanding is about the fact that God exists out of this world is a dim and obscure idea in the 'head', but it is revealed to us through feelings, affirming our subjective faith in such a God. By exploring the symbolism and artistry in 'Dejection: An Ode' (1802) and 'To W. Wordsworth' (1807), I argue that Coleridge uses poetic 'Language & all *symbols*' to 'give *outness* to Thoughts',²⁴ which precede and foster his theoretical placement of Transcendentalism in Transcendence after 1810.

III

When 'Dejection: An Ode' was first published in the *Morning Post* on 4 October 1802, it was an abridged version. To make a shortened version publishable, Coleridge sought to maintain a flow and a centre in his poem; that centre is 'Dejection', and that flow, I believe, is Coleridge's Transcendentalism. This flow of Transcendentalism is propelled by a transcendent intuition Coleridge records in his notebook (March – April 1802): 'Quiet stream, with all its eddies, & the moonlight playing on them, quiet as if they were Ideas in the divine mind anterior to the Creation—'.²⁵ The scenic moment Coleridge described in this notebook entry is extraordinary: the 'eddies' of the 'stream' suggest movements, yet the 'moonlight' projected upon the 'stream' seems to contribute to, if not cause, those movements as it is 'playing' on those 'eddies'. This imagery is an emblem suggesting a higher origin inducing the perceivable movements of the living 'stream'. As Coleridge depicts, this transcendent intuition is rather subdued and can only be noticed through a kind of analogy—'as if'. To see those 'eddies', and to feel them as ripples of the mind, Coleridge quietly suggests a divine origin that plants 'Ideas' in the human mind when men were being created by God. The transcendent intuition is 'anterior to' our being as God's creation; just as Coleridge's religious symbolism is 'anterior to' his imaginative creation of the scenic moment. The word 'anterior' as the antonym of 'posterior' can mean 'in the front of another structure'; but the way in which Coleridge employs the term in this notebook entry suggests the alternative meaning of 'anterior'—meaning 'That comes before in time or logical order; preceding,

²⁴ *CN*, I, 1387.

²⁵ *CN*, I, 1154.

former, earlier, prior'.²⁶ Those 'Ideas' that were 'anterior to the Creation' therefore bears two layers of meaning. First, there is a sense of horizontal propulsion or transcendental ideas that live within Coleridge's mind and precede his imaginative creation upon nature. Second, this Transcendentalism between Coleridge and those 'eddies' is analogous to the vertical propulsion from the 'moonlight' to those 'eddies'. As the transcendent reflection of the moon lights up those eddies, Coleridge can feel within his mind that such reflection of lights were 'anterior to' his being as a creation of God. The moment he wrote this notebook entry becomes a Platonic moment, in which God was quietly addressed when his creative faculty is propelled by some higher order alongside his own consciousness. This notebook entry is essential to interpreting the *Morning Post* version of 'Dejection: An Ode'.

Apart from shortening the poem, Coleridge rearranged the order of lines and stanzas in the *Morning Post* version to reply formally to Wordsworth's questions in the four-stanza *Ode*. Registering a crisis of imaginative sterility, 'Dejection: An Ode' is also a great poetic statement of creativity that counteracts this crisis. As 'Dejection' resolves itself with rigour, the focus of this investigation is therefore not so much upon the crisis, or the biographical relevance to this crisis which we may discover around 1802; instead, I suggest that this crisis moment in the poem assists Coleridge in exploring the potential of transcendent intuition through his transcendental imagination of nature.

This transcendent intuition is an abstract sense of propulsion lurking under the conscious voice of the poem. To give this quiet propulsion a visible presence in 'Dejection', Coleridge addresses a transcendent intuition with transcendental symbolisms of the moon. Resonating with the transcendent intuition attested to in the notebook entry (*CN*, I, 1154), these transcendental symbolisms in 'Dejection' are founded upon an epigraph attached to 'Dejection' (*MP*) for the first time among various versions of the text. It should be noted that the lines Coleridge quoted as the epigraph are not entirely the same as 'Sir Patrick Spens' printed in Bishop Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765).²⁷

"LATE, late yestreen I saw the New Moon,

"With the Old Moon in her arms;

"And I fear, I fear, my master dear,

²⁶ 'anterior, adj.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2019 <www.oed.com/view/Entry/8306> [accessed 26 March 2019].

²⁷ R. A. Benthall, 'New Moons, Old Ballads, and Prophetic Dialogues in Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 37.4, 1998, pp. 591-614. Benthall explains a few speculations upon the source of Coleridge's epigraph. This epigraph with conflated lines from different stanzas in Percy's *Reliques* does not affect our understanding of the story conveyed in the ballad.

“We shall have a deadly storm.”

BALLAD OF SIR PATRICK SPENCE.²⁸

As Michael O’Neill suggests, through this epigraph of the poem, Coleridge ‘shows how balladic images stay in an individual memory as though bearing witness to a common plight; the incorporation of the ballad’s hints of tragedy in a poem marked by its conversational if odic ebb and flow bears witness to the way in which genre undergoes change and hybridised transformation.’²⁹ O’Neill’s remark inspires me to think of the tragic fate of the sailor in ‘Sir Patrick Spens’, and how this fate in those balladic images is translated into ‘the eddying’ (l. 135) of thoughts ‘from pole to pole’ (l. 134) in ‘Dejection’. This tragic fate resembles, as it were, the circularity vested in the eddying of polarities, such as Joy and dejection, in ‘Dejection: An Ode’. Yet, the transcendent ideas which were ‘anterior to the Creation’ propels Coleridge’s concept of Joy to challenge and to break such circularity and dejected fate. As a result the eddying movement ceases to be mere oscillations between opposites; instead, the opposites become the counteracting forces that fused together and are projected as one and perpetual.

The expression of ‘I saw the New Moon / “With the Old Moon in her arms’ in the epigraph describes a state of the New Moon as a waxing crescent: the new moon becoming less aligned with the shadow of the sun can now be seen as a crescent, but the circular outline of the old moon is still faintly visible, as light is reflected from the earth back to the moon; this circular ring of light is commonly known as the ‘Earthlight’ in Astronomy.³⁰ In Coleridge’s transcendental imagination of the new moon, the earthlight is a hint of its transcendent origin encompassing the waxing crescent:

For lo! the New Moon, winter-bright!
 And overspread with phantom light,
 (With swimming phantom light o’erspread,
 But rimm’d and circled by a silver thread)
 I see the Old Moon in her lap, foretelling
 The coming on of rain and squally blast: (‘Dejection’ [MP], ll. 9-14)

²⁸ Stephen Maxfield Parrish (ed.), ‘Dejection: An Ode. The Morning Post text, 4 October 1802’, in *Coleridge’s Dejection: The Earliest Manuscripts and the Earliest Printings* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 48-62. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

²⁹ Michael Hurley & Michael O’Neill, *Poetic Form: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 191.

³⁰ Benthall, pp. 601-03.

The ‘phantom light’ that ‘rim’d and circled’ the invisible Old Moon allow us to have a dim gleam of the transcendent origin of moonlight, which is the light of the sun. The sun, as a symbol of the Divine in *The Statesman’s Manual* (1816), is only perceived indirectly through the reflection of the moon. This gleam of the Transcendence is often seen as Platonic, as if we are seeing the True light in a mirror. Ben Brice points out with reference to Douglas Hedley’s *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion* that,³¹ “‘the term reflection can also mean mirroring’”, and that viewing your own self “‘can only be done through objects like mirrors through which the eye can see both the object and itself’”.³² Brice’s argument here is essentially transcendental, for he suggests that a reflective mind can subjectively observe ‘its own operations while thinking about objects outside of itself’ in the natural world.³³ Coleridge’s ‘They are not to me now the Things, which once they were’ (l. 294) in ‘A Letter to——’ demonstrates the reflective power of the mind in addressing precisely the objective outside world, despite the dejected inner world of the subjective. But in the case of the moonlight in ‘Dejection’, Beth Lau proposes a distinction between mirroring and reflecting:

Both mirror and moon are reflecting surfaces, but where the former reflects physical appearances, the latter receives and transmits the divine light of the sun. While this reading may not account for all the implications of moons and mirrors in Coleridge’s work, it does point out a significant and hitherto unnoticed relationship between the two images that brings new meaning to several important passages in the poetry and prose.³⁴

Through this meticulous distinction, Lau offers a seat for Transcendence and vertical mirroring between the unknown divine and nature in ‘Dejection: An Ode’. The word ‘swimming’ modifying the ‘phantom light’ of the sun also aligns itself with the ‘moonlight’ upon the ‘Quiet stream’ in the notebook entry (*CN*, I, 1154). That this notebook entry

³¹ See Douglas Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion: Aids to Reflection and the Mirror of the Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.109-16. ‘The image of the mirror in Plato is not very prominent; his hints are taken up and developed by Neoplatonists. Yet the distinctive point of the mirror imagery – the communion of God and man through the spirit – is reinforced, or even intensified within the Christian Platonist tradition.’ (p. 109)

³² Ben Brice, *Coleridge and Scepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), at p. 97.

³³ Brice, p. 97.

³⁴ Beth Lau, ‘Coleridge’s Reflective Moonlight’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 23.4, Nineteenth Century, 1983, pp. 535-48, at p. 534.

anticipates the development of Transcendence and Transcendentalism in 'Dejection: An Ode' is thus established textually and symbolically.

The rimmed phantom light of the moon adds a theological dimension to the imaginative crisis Coleridge encountered in 1802 which has largely been overlooked. When Coleridge moves onto stanza 2, 'the crescent moon' appears again to impart deeper theological meanings to 'I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!':

Now sparkling, now bedimm'd, but always seen;
 Yon crescent moon, as fix'd as if it grew,
 In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue,
 A bout becalm'd! a lovely sky-canoe!
 I see them all, so excellently fair—
 I see, not feel, how beautiful they are! (ll. 34-39)

Critics in general agree that 'I see, not feel' is a differentiation between the sensuous and the spiritual. This understanding fits in with Beth Lau's suggestion that Coleridge was 'strongly opposed' to 'the mechanistic philosophy' and 'the sensationalist mirror' in the eighteenth century.³⁵ Coleridge's imaginative crisis is a fear that he too may have sunk into the superficiality of the sensationalist, only seeing the appearance of objects reflected through the sensationalist mirror. The wish 'to feel, how beautiful they are' in turn can mean, in Lau's sense of the matter, that sheer passivity of the sensationalist mirroring is not acceptable, because 'Coleridge preferred to think of man's relationship with God, nature, and his fellow human beings as a communion of energies, each serving to evoke a response in the other'.³⁶ There is a mixture of activity and passivity involved in a communion of energies. Lau's discussion sheds light upon the kind of differentiation or opposition we frequently encounter in Coleridge's 'Dynamic Philosophy'. Yet, I think 'I see, not feel' is also an extended symbolism of 'the yon crescent moon'. As discussed with reference to *The Statesman's Manual*, Coleridge explained his own symbol for religion as the sun, as 'The light of religion is not that of the moon, light without heat'.³⁷ The absence of the sun alongside its 'phantom' presence with the 'crescent moon' is significant to our understanding of 'I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!'. The imaginative crisis is in fact addressing a greater enquiry into the

³⁵ Lau, p. 537.

³⁶ Lau, p. 538.

³⁷ *SM*, p. 48.

creative origin, that to see God's creation and the reflection of his glory without feeling his stirring warmth is the crux of the crisis and the reality humans in exile from Eden have to deal with. The reason why Coleridge was dejected is far more theological than critics have suggested.

The dejection of an imaginative crisis concerning Coleridge's poetry writing in 1802 is easily counteracted by the subsequent production of 'Dejection: An Ode'. However, the ongoing dejection within the poem cannot be explained away simply through listing all biographical hurdles. This dejection is a human condition in the post-Edenic time, during which the Edenic sense of loss is not easily compensated even by therapeutic Nature. Even if Coleridge can see the celestial light, which Wordsworth is said to have lost, the larger issue would be that he cannot feel the warmth of religion in nature. To this theological issue, Coleridge replies with a new insight:

I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within! (ll. 46-47)

The 'fountains' in our mind correspond to those 'Ideas in the divine mind anterior to the Creation'. Coleridge believes that there is a transcendent intuition 'anterior to' our mind and soul when God created us. From the 'fountains' 'within' men, there lie 'The passion and the life' which serve as the stirring warmth from God. This understanding has a profound impact upon how we interpret the famous line 'we receive but what we give' in 'Dejection: An Ode'.

The stanza containing 'we receive but what we give' used to be part of the last (twentieth) stanza in 'A Letter to —', but in 'Dejection: An Ode', it is placed as the fourth stanza following 'whose fountains are within. This new arrangement makes Coleridge's intended meaning for the first two lines of stanza 4 more complex:

O EDMUND! we receive but what we give,
And in *our* life alone does Nature live: (ll. 48-49)

Lovejoy argues that 'Coleridge is not expressing the thesis of "transcendental" idealism that the mind gives form to the world of objects that it perceives; he is expressing, out of a painful personal experience, the psychological fact that the power of natural beauty to give us

pleasure is conditioned by our subjective states'.³⁸ I agree with Lovejoy that 'we receive but what we give' is not an example of Kantian Transcendentalism, because Coleridge, as I have argued previously, has his own understanding of transcendence and transcendentalism. In order to show that Coleridge is not applying Kant's transcendentalism here, Lovejoy shifts the focus of his discussion to whether Coleridge can 'command at will' to feel the Joy or to be dejected. However, if we follow Lovejoy's view and think of 'we receive but what we give' as 'the aesthetic transfiguration' of nature based upon Coleridge's will or mood, then 'Dejection: An Ode' risks being reduced into a merely psychological drama.³⁹ Rearranging the order of this stanza in the *Morning Post* version, Coleridge shows command of higher thoughts in an emotionally provocative poem. Addressing Wordsworth with apostrophe 'O Edmund!', Coleridge answers the metaphysical problem Wordsworth raised in the four-stanza *Ode*, 'Whither is fled the visionary gleam / Where is it gone the glory and the dream' (ll. 56-57). To know that 'The passion and the life' are 'the fountains' 'anterior to' the creation of all men, Coleridge directs Wordsworth to find that glory from 'within'—'we receive but what we give, / And in *our* life alone does Nature live'.

Given the transcendent 'Ideas' within our mind, Coleridge's view of Nature is formed from a conviction that our subjectivity can exert creative control over the objective world. Perception of Nature is therefore a wedded image of one's subjectivity and the objectivity outside of the mind. Lovejoy notices the pervasiveness of subjectivity in modifying what Coleridge perceived, but Lovejoy's pessimistic outlook upon this wedded image shows a lack of differentiation between a passive subjectivity from an active subjectivity. In the *Morning Post* version, Coleridge reconsidered his punctuations to express an active subjectivity in response to Wordsworth's *Ode*:

Our's is her Wedding-garment, our's her Shroud!
 And would we aught behold of higher worth
 Than that inanimate cold world allow'd
 To the poor loveless, ever-anxious Crowd,
 ('A Letter to——', ll. 297-300)⁴⁰

Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
 And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
 Than that inanimate cold world, *allow'd*
 To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
 ('Dejection' [MP], ll. 50-53)

³⁸ Arthur Lovejoy, 'Coleridge and Kant's Two Worlds', *ELH*, 7.4, 1940, pp. 341-62, at p. 348.

³⁹ Lovejoy, p. 348.

⁴⁰ Jack Stillinger (ed.), 'A Letter To——', in *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 226-36. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

The comma before *'allow'd'* in the *MP* version invites readers to ponder *who* allows. In 'A Letter to——', one could read the word *'allow'd'* in the sense of *what 'that inanimate cold world' can afford to show to the 'Crowd'*; in turn 'we' are the only ones who would ought to 'behold' nature 'of higher worth'. In the *MP* version, that comma however breaks the control of 'that inanimate cold world': perceiving nature 'of higher worth', 'we' creates the wedded image which is *'allow'd'* to the public. This *'allow'd'* suggests that 'we' *make available* a vision of Nature to the public; and the 'we' in the *MP* version are, Coleridge and Wordsworth (Edmund), the poets who have a stronger sensibility than 'the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd'. This sensibility is an active subjectivity that creates and clothes Nature with the 'fountains' from 'within'. It strives to overcome the dejected passive subjectivity which produces 'that inanimate cold world'. To command their subjectivity and engage with creativity actively is Coleridge's response to Wordsworth's problem.

This activity of the mind is deeply Neo-Platonic, as we shall see from Coleridge's concept of 'Joy', which is also the 'celestial light' Coleridge sought back for Wordsworth:

Ah from the soul itself must issue forth,
 A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
 Enveloping the earth—
 And from the soul itself must there be sent
 A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
 Of all sweet sounds the life and element!
 O pure of heart! Thou need'st not ask of me
 What this strong music in the soul may be?
 What, and wherein it doth exist,
 This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
 This beautiful and beauty-making pow'r?
 JOY, virtuous EDMUND! joy, that ne'er was given,
 Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
 Joy, EDMUND! is the spirit and the pow'r
 Which wedding Nature to us gives in dow'r
 A new earth and new Heaven,
 Undream'd of by the sensual and the proud—

(ll. 54-70)

In Plato's *Phaedo*, when the soul is separated from the body through death, it enters a process of 'purification'⁴¹ in which the 'immortal' soul is free from bodily senses,⁴² pain and pleasure. If the soul is the part of human that is immortal even through death, it bears a transcendent power, which is akin to Coleridge's 'beauty-making pow'r'. Separating 'the sensual' from 'the soul itself', Coleridge follows Plato's notion of 'purification' in his transcendent concept of 'Joy'. 'O pure of heart', that this 'Joy' is only 'Save to the pure, and in their purest hour' reminds readers of the platonic immortality of the soul. This 'Joy' 'issue[d] forth' from the soul is therefore not a bodily induced emotion as is dejection. Dejection bears bodily associations, as we learn that one of the dejected conditions is to '*see, not feel*' (l. 39). The bodily equates with the sensory, for instance, when Coleridge imagine the sounds of wind mingling with dejection: 'At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold' (l. 107). On the contrary, the 'Joy' owns a transcendent power to Truth for it 'ne'er was given' to us through the senses or our perception of Nature. Yet when this 'Joy' from our soul is projected to Nature, we can receive from the wedded image, that is the 'wedding Nature', the same 'Joy', carried with us in our soul as dowry to our afterlife in 'A new earth, and a new Heaven'⁴³. Plato argues in *Phaedo* that a true philosopher would practice philosophy out of a desire 'to have his soul alone by itself',⁴⁴ because

soul is something that's very like what's divine, deathless, the object of intellect, uniform, undissolved, and always in exactly the same state as it ever was; while body in its turn is something very like what's human, mortal, mindless, multiform, tending to dissolution, and never the same as it was before.⁴⁵

This 'Joy' is immortal and resembling the divine in a Platonic sense, for it comes from the soul alone, and thus is transcendent to Coleridge. This sort of Platonism helps explain the dynamics between 'Joy' and the seemingly unrivalled dejection in the poem: if 'Joy' is transcendent, dejection belongs to the bodily that shall perish through death; and to live would be an ongoing battle between the bodily and the pure soul. In stanza V, Coleridge described such a battle 'This joy within me dallied with distress' (l. 78), yet Coleridge starts being ultra-attentive to these terms by differentiating 'joy' from 'happiness' (l. 80):

⁴¹ Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo*, tr. & ed. by Christopher Rowe (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 100.

⁴² Plato, p. 154.

⁴³ See Revelation 21:1, KJV.

⁴⁴ Plato, p. 100.

⁴⁵ Plato, p. 119.

special province of art in mediating—perhaps even transcending—through a distancing aesthetic response, the realities of suffering[.]⁴⁹

Coleridge translates this transcending delight of a reader of ‘Lucy Gray’ into a vision that explains the oscillating moments between dejection and Joy. Amid his own personal dejection, Coleridge finds ‘a pause of deepest silence’ which takes him out of his indulgence in grief. This moment of silence is as the ‘purest hour’ during which Coleridge comes to understand the here and now as a true philosopher. Coleridge ‘tells another tale’, one that is ‘less affright’ than the beginning of the poem when he was steeped in grief. This is because this life is ‘Not far from home’—the ‘new earth and new Heaven’—but for ‘now’ it is a time when the pure soul is still trapped in the perishable body, when humans are still ‘wander[ing] up and down’ (‘Lucy Gray’, l. 30), in a world outside of Eden. And any ‘tender lay’ of grief is but a cry ‘to make’ the Almighty ‘hear’. Coleridge’s dejection is indeed related to his sense of desolation and grief in life, but a focus upon this dejection will bring forth hopes, in a way which Plato explains with reference to opposites in *Phaedo*:

the two things refuse to present themselves to a person at the same time, but if anybody pursues one of them and catches it he’s practically forced always to take the other as well; it’s as if they were two things growing out of a single head.⁵⁰

In so doing, Coleridge places himself in the category of poets who, though, grounded in the here and now like the rest of humanity, does not lose visionary sight of what is to come. He is prophetic and transcendent at heart, and yet Transcendence is not spelled out in verses of egotistical sublimity. Coleridge elicits transcendent hopes from dejection as if they both grew from ‘a single head’.

Forming an omniscient vision of hopes upon dejection in the final stanza of the *MP* version, Coleridge’s imagination affirms vertical transcendence, as the omniscient view hints at the existence of God above. God’s existence is above humanity:

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

⁴⁹ Reeve Parker, *Coleridge’s Meditative Art* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 205.

⁵⁰ Plato, p. 90.

And may this storm be but a mountain birth,
 May all the stars hang bright above his dwelling,
 Silent, as tho' they *watch'd* the sleeping earth! (ll. 120-125)

As the 'stars hang bright' and '*watch'd*', the roaring 'storm' of the earth is subdued, as the rhymes indicated, from 'a mountain birth' to 'the sleeping earth'. The presence of vertical transcendence is silence, undetected by the senses, but *lives in* the soul and is known to the subjective when Joy thus issued forth. Coleridge's final blessing and response to Wordsworth is therefore a subtle expression addressing the presence of this vertical transcendence in life:

To thee do all things live from pole to pole,
 Their life the eddying of thy living soul! (ll. 134-135)

Coleridge suggests to Wordsworth that in our life everything has its opposite, such that even when dejection and Joy would not present themselves to us at the same time, we know that one of them will entail the other. When we recognise that 'all things live from pole to pole', we would know that our soul has already been set into activity. This subjective activity is discovered when the eddying motions of the objectives stand as the reflection of our 'living soul'—'we receive but what we give'. An eddy therefore becomes an image of the living. A necessary question that follows would be what the living souls may reflect through the eddying image. According to the *OED*, an eddy means not only 'a circular motion in water', but also "'The water that by some interruption in its course, runs contrary to the direction of the tide or current"' (Adm. Smyth).⁵¹ The 'eddying' of our soul is not simply the circular motion 'from pole to pole'; it entails a higher force, the main 'direction of the tide' to which we are counter-responding. Setting 'Dejection: An Ode' in the darkness of the night, Coleridge may indeed want to create 'disturbing impressions that provoke the images of desolation and grief', as Beth Lau argues, and that "These fearful and destructive impulses could come from either a wrathful and capricious God, as in "The Ancient Mariner," or from evil powers that usurp God's control, as in "Christabel"."⁵² But from the image of an eddy amid a tide, Coleridge's dejection, pain and grief seem to be those 'interruption in its course' which serve a purpose in life: they make us realise the existence of this bigger tide, and the

⁵¹ 'eddy, n.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2019 <www.oed.com/view/Entry/59485> [accessed 26 March 2019].

⁵² Beth Lau, pp. 547-48.

tide is under the influence of the moon, and the moon is reflecting ultimately the light of the sun. In a platonic sense, this reflection is a way to recollect the knowledge we have forgotten after our birth, but our souls possess that knowledge even before we were born.⁵³ In a notebook entry thereafter, Coleridge confirms that God is a knowledge already known to our soul and is now, symbolically, recollected through the moon:

Saturday Night, April 14, 1805— In looking at Objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering thro' the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were *asking*, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing any thing new. Even when that latter is the case, yet still I have always an Obscure feeling as if that new phenomenon were the dim Awakening of a forgotten or hidden Truth of my inner Nature / It is still interesting as a Word, a Symbol! It is *Λογος*, the Creator! And the Evolver!

What is the right, the virtuous Feeling, and consequent action, when a man having long mediated & perceived a certain Truth finds another, [?] foreign Writer, who has handled the same with an approximation to the Truth, as he had previously conceived it?— Joy!—Let Truth make her Voice *audible*.

While I was preparing the pen to write this remark, I lost the train of Thought which had led me to it. I meant to have asked something else, now forgotten: for the above answers itself—it needed no new answer, I trust, in my Heart. 14 April, 1805—⁵⁴

IV

'To W. Wordsworth' is often regarded as a poem that marks a point of change in Coleridge's career or his life. Lucy Newlyn, for instance, anticipates the falling-out between Coleridge and Wordsworth from this poem:

In the poignant regret for his own past youth, and manhood come in vain,
Coleridge is evidently weighing himself (as he had done in the *Letter to Sara*)

⁵³ See Plato, pp. 112-13.

⁵⁴ *CN*, II, 2546; adopted edits in Seamus Perry (ed.), *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 405.

against the achievements of Wordsworth. It was to be his most bitter complaint, during the quarrel of 1810, that he had given his genius to and for this friend, subordinating his own creative powers and receiving nothing in return.⁵⁵

As the *MP* version of 'Dejection: An Ode', 'To W. Wordsworth' (1807) is another poem addressed to Wordsworth. It is therefore one of the poems central to discussion about the relationship between the two poets. Even Coleridge, as Newlyn points out, compared himself with Wordsworth. What has been largely overlooked is perhaps that this poem also marks a new phase of Coleridge's conception of Transcendence—a phase that entwines religious Transcendence to the literary definition of imagination. It is a new phase for opposites no longer relies on their differences to exist, but fuses as one through their concurrences in 'To W. Wordsworth'. The opposite that bounces from 'pole to pole' has become a matter of 'Change and Permanence':

The quiet circle, in which Change and Permanence *co-exist*, not by combination or juxtaposition, but by an absolute annihilation of difference / column of smoke, the fountains before St Peter's, waterfalls / God!—Change without loss—change by a perpetual growth, that [at] once constitutes & annihilates change. [T]he past, & the future included in the Present // oh! it is awful.⁵⁶

This notebook entry dated 30 October 1806 anticipates and condenses a non-binary concept of Transcendence that eases out those contradictory tensions that occur when it is juxtaposed with Transcendentalism. The coexistence of 'Change and Permanence' helps illuminate a possible reconciliation of the subsisting friction between 'the plurality of senses' and 'the one'—another way of rephrasing 'a succession of perceptions accompanied by a sense of *nisus* & purpose'.⁵⁷ Transcendence is the ideal of 'Permanence' which marks the 'purpose' of our manifold transcendental 'changes' in life. For Coleridge, Transcendentalism is rendered purposeless if it is separated from Transcendence.

The relationship between Wordsworth and Coleridge plays a role in easing the frictions between Transcendence and Transcendentalism. As Coleridge pays tribute to Wordsworth in the poem, he constantly places himself hierarchically lower in terms of their relative poetic

⁵⁵ Lucy Newlyn, *Coleridge, Wordsworth and the Language of Allusion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 195.

⁵⁶ *CN*, II, 2915; adopted edits in Seamus Perry (ed.), *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 420.

⁵⁷ *CN*, I, 886.

talent. Yet, just when we thought that Coleridge is passively receiving Wordsworth's poetic power, he also actively creates the good in Wordsworth. The rhetorical concurrences of activity and passivity in 'To W. Wordsworth' transform opposites into modes of change. The 'annihilation of differences' involved in change applies to the opposites, and in the case of the two poets, to their differences in achievements. The artistry of 'To W. Wordsworth' is thus Coleridge's 'Change without loss', indicating his 'perpetual growth' through the imagination. Consequently, Transcendence is attained by this 'perpetual growth' intimating 'Permanence'. The version of 'To W. Wordsworth' on which I focus is the 1807 text transcribed from a MS. Coleridge sent to Wordsworth.

O Friend! O Teacher! God's great Gift to me!
 Into my heart have I receiv'd that Lay
 More than historic, that prophetic Lay,
 Wherein (high theme by Thee first sung aright)
 Of the Foundations and the Building-up
 Of thy own Spirit, thou hast lov'd to tell
 What may be told to th' understanding mind
 Revealable; and what within the mind
 May rise enkindled. Theme as hard as high!
 Of Smiles spontaneous, and mysterious Fear;
 (The First-born they of Reason, and Twin-birth)
 Of Tides obedient to external Force,
 And Currents self-determin'd, as might seem,
 Or by interior Power: of Moments awful. (ll. 1-14)⁵⁸

The prosodic craftsmanship in the first 14 lines (an unrhymed sonnet) is impressive. Coleridge begins this epistolary poem with multiple heavy beats to express his excitement upon 'receiving' *The Prelude* from a poet he describes as 'God's great Gift to me'. Alliteration and internal (half-) rhymes reinforce the flowing enjambment of the lines that follows, yet the line breaks work against the flow. Coleridge adroitly clusters together activity and passivity in the enjambment: 'thou hast lov'd to tell / What may be told to th'

⁵⁸ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'To William Wordsworth', in *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850: Authoritative Texts, Context and Reception, Recent Critical Essays*, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (London: W. W. Norton, 1979), pp. 542-45. I have corrected 'To William Wordsworth' to 'To W. Wordsworth' based on the fair copy at the Jerwood Centre. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

understanding mind / Revealable'. Yet he differentiates, at either side of the line break, the active verb 'to tell' from the passivity of 'be told', and likewise 'th' understanding mind' from what is 'Revealable' to the mind. More complex is the case of 'Twin-birth': the 'Tides' and the 'Currents'. Coleridge tames the movements of the 'Tides' with the word 'obedient' and sharpens the latent motion of 'Currents' with the word 'self-determin'd'. Varying their supposed meaning, Coleridge depicts in each (and between them) the 'external Force' reacting to the resilient 'interior Power'.

Seamlessly merging the opposites into one flow of idea, Coleridge consolidates the non-binary nature between Transcendence and Transcendentalism. This is an intellectual advancement from the kind of binary opposites Coleridge played with in poems of the late 1790s. The advancement is expressed first through exposing the inadequacy of his former thoughts:

Th' unusual Joy awoke a throng of Pains—
 Keen Pangs of LOVE, awakening, as a Babe,
 Turbulent, with an outcry in the Heart:
 And Fears self-will'd, that shunn'd the eye of Hope,
 And Hope, that would not know itself from Fear:
 Sense of pass'd Youth, and Manhood come in vain;
 And Genius given, and Knowledge won in vain: (ll. 70-76)

'Joy' and 'Pains', 'Fears' and 'Hope', these opposites stand against one another still, and one pole informs us its polar opposite. Yet, Coleridge has mutated these emotions, estranging them from their own opposites. The result is a strong sense of vanity constituted by a lack of motions between these emotions. To put an end to this vanity, Coleridge brings upon his old self a symbolic death, through which he demonstrates new dynamics between activity and passivity.

The concurrences of activity and passivity bridge Coleridge's self-deprecating ability and his urge towards what Robert Frost calls 'counter-response' in 'The Most of It': 'He would cry out on life, that what it wants / Is not its own love back in copy speech, / But

counter-love, original response'.⁵⁹ Through words of self-annihilation, Coleridge voices a self-burial:

[...], and all
 Commune with Thee had open'd out, but Flowers
 Strew'd on my Corse, and borne upon my Bier,
 In the same Coffin, for the self-same Grave!
 —That way no more! and ill beseems it me,
 Who came a Welcomer in Herald's Guise
 Singing of Glory and Futurity,
 To wander back on such unhealthful Road
 Plucking the Poisons of Self-harm! and ill
 Such Intertwine beseems triumphal wreaths
 Strew'd before thy Advancing! (ll. 78-88)

Reeve Parker considers this poem as 'Coleridge's counter-elegy' in the sense that 'It is antiphonal to what he heard in Wordsworth's poem, conceived as though the whelmed poet was answering the verses sung over him by his sorrowing friend'.⁶⁰ Parker captures the gist of Coleridge's sense of inferiority and passivity. Yet, the conjunction 'but' sadly announces a departure from the Wordsworth who used to engage in 'Commune with' Coleridge and a departure from his own life. Even if Coleridge ventriloquizes these lines as though his voice is from Wordsworth in form of a counter-elegy, the activity of burial is in the mind of Coleridge. Coleridge annihilates the difference between *I am to be buried* (passively lying in the coffin) and *I buried myself* (actively burying the coffin in his grave). Harold Bloom argues that 'Coleridge wanders back as Wordsworth advances', and that 'The only two activities possible for Coleridge are either to pluck the poisons of self-harm on the now unhealthful road of memory, or else to strew triumphal wreaths before his friend'.⁶¹ However, if we realise how marvellous the concurrences of activity and passivity are in Coleridge's self-burial, we would start to see that this symbolic death is but a change in his poetic

⁵⁹ Robert Frost, 'The Most of It', in *Robert Frost: Selected Poems*, ed. by Ian Hamilton (London: Penguin, 1973), pp. 198-99, at p. 198.

⁶⁰ Reeve Parker, "'To William Wordsworth": Coleridge and the Art of Analogy', in *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. by M. H. Abrams, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) pp. 240-60, at p. 243.

⁶¹ Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 225.

trajectory. This is a new trajectory separate from Wordsworth and a departure from merely creating transcendence through negating its absence or its inconceivable presence.

As Paley argues, ‘By representing himself as dead and in his coffin, Coleridge seems to represent the end of his poetic career while actually, as we shall see, leaving open the possibility of its rebirth in another form.’⁶² I propose that a rebirth has already been promised and prophesied in this 1807 version:

In silence list’ning, like a devout Child,
 My soul lay passive, by thy various strain
 Driven as in surges now, beneath the stars,
 With momentary Stars of my own Birth,
 Fair constellated Foam still darting off
 Into the darkness! now a tranquil Sea
 Outspread and bright, yet swelling to the Moon! (ll. 101-7)

These lines represent Coleridge’s prelude to his future rebirth in which imaginative transformations—‘Changes without loss’—take centre stage. From being a passive soul to be driven by Wordsworth’s ‘strain’, Coleridge has transformed and regained his activity, as his imaginative fertility procreates ‘momentary Stars of [his] own Birth’. This creativity occurs ‘beneath the stars’, as though his imagination of ‘momentary Stars’ partakes of God’s creative universe. Echoing his stars, the ‘constellated Foam’, though still swiftly moving towards the darkness, has gained its momentum to swell towards the brightest light at night—the Moon. His imagination here revived a scene that was ‘not *lively*’ to him during those days in Malta where he tried to recover from his illness and addiction:

Thursday Morning, April 19th, 1804.—Yesternight with a bright moon,
 the Light of which rolled, like an Island of grey white Reeds on a tossing Lake—
 how hard to describe that sort of Queen’s metal plating, which the Moonlight
 forms on the bottle-green Sea / the water bright, but the Green of the water not
 bright—& therein Moonlight bright as if even it yet seemed to partake <of> or
 rather to be modified by, the color in which it floated—made a different color
 from its natural blue whiteness without or only obscurely resembling that of the

⁶² Morton D. Paley, *Coleridge’s Later Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 12.

Sea water—*this* as a Mem. That the moon silvering the Sea is not *lively* to
Nature— [...] ⁶³

The transformation from this notebook entry in 1804 to the almost exuberant lines in 1807 demonstrates the poet's advancement after 'Plucking the Poison of Self-harm!'. Coleridge's rebirth is within reach in this scintillating visualisation of the moon that, within his mind, at least, reflects to him the warmth of the sun.

When the poem comes to an end, those concurrences of opposites are fused into one, and there comes a beautiful moment of Transcendence:

Thy long sustained Lay finally clos'd
And thy deep Voice had ceas'd—(yet thou thyself
Wert still before mine eyes, and round us both
That happy vision of beloved Faces!
All, whom I deepliest love, in one room all!),
Scarce conscious and yet conscious of it's Close,
I sate, my Being blended in one Thought,
(Thought was it? or aspiration? Or Resolve?)
Absorb'd, yet hanging still upon the sound:
And when I rose, I found myself in Prayer! (ll. 108-118)

As Wordsworth's reading of *The Prelude* is coming to an end, Coleridge's 'To W. Wordsworth' too is at its closing remark. Coleridge was 'conscious of [*The Prelude*'s] Close'. There is a doubling in 'yet hanging still upon the sound': is it the sound of Wordsworth's *Prelude* which Coleridge just heard, or perhaps the sound of his 'one Thought' to which he is far less conscious of? By 'Being blended in one Thought' and 'found myself in Prayer', Coleridge performs what he in *Biographia* described as 'We proceed from the SELF, in order to lose and find all self in GOD'. ⁶⁴

Coleridge's rebirth is marked by his new conception of Transcendence featured by the concurrences of opposites. To reconstruct his poetic selfhood relative to Wordsworth's achievement (*The Prelude*), Coleridge revises a few lines of 'To W. Wordsworth' and presents them in a letter to, and by, himself in chapter 13 of *Biographia*, prior to the

⁶³ CN, II, 2026.

⁶⁴ BL, I, p. 283.

definitions of imagination. Why a letter to himself, we may ask—the poet once wrote ‘To W. Wordsworth’, an epistolary poem, for his friend, whereas in *Biographia*, Coleridge is at once the subject who wrote the letter and the object whom he wrote about—he seems to hold himself firm under his pen, but he does so to lose himself in the perpetual loop of creation predicated upon changes constituted by the lack of harmony between opposites.

| | |
|---|---|
| An Orphic Tale indeed, | —————An orphic tale indeed, |
| A Tale divine of high and passionate Thoughts | A tale <i>obscure</i> of high and passionate thoughts |
| To their own music chaunted! | To <i>a strange</i> music chaunted! |
| (‘To W. Wordsworth’ ll. 38-40; <i>TF</i> , II, p. 258) | (<i>BL</i> , I, p. 302) |

The centripetal force (‘their own’) of Wordsworth’s ‘divine’ music in 1807 is not what Coleridge would produce. The centrifugal force in ‘a strange’ music, instead of *the strange* music, points to infinite possibilities in creation. To Coleridge, rebirth lies not in his apparent difference from Wordsworth as suggested by these parallel texts. Coleridge’s rebirth is the vitality of creativity, which springs up within and out of those contradictions, forever chasing after thoughts and ceaselessly attempting to catch them in verse in a bid to constitute ‘the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.’⁶⁵

⁶⁵ *BL*, I, p. 304.

Chapter 6

The Problem of Evil

If a man could pass thro' Paradise in a Dream, & have a flower
presented to him as a pledge that his Soul had really been there, &
found that flower in his hand when he awoke—Aye? And what then?

(CN, III, 4287)¹

The significance of *Christabel* to Coleridge's concept of Transcendence is closely related to its history of composition. Though different parts of the poem were written between late 1790s and early 1800s, it was not published until 1816. In part I of this chapter, I examine various trajectories of reading the poem: the logical, the psycho sexual and the symbolic models. While they are all valid ways of understanding *Christabel*, a symbolic reading offers readers a chance to deal with Coleridge's Transcendence, as the readers' experience of the symbolic world in the poem is a means of apprehending transcendent Truth. However, as the poem remains unfinished even when it is published in 1816, the kind of Oneness which Coleridge often sought becomes fragmented. And I suggest in part II that *Christabel* (1816) therefore falls short of its function as the means to Truth. Instead of realising the initial hope of Transcendence, Coleridge addresses more unanswerable questions, when he re-purposes lines written in 1801 as the conclusion to part the second of *Christabel* in 1816. I explore how this ending to the unfinished poem bears significance to a number of theological issues that Coleridge struggled to think through in the poem. These theological issues centre upon whether Coleridge is willing to give up prelapsarian innocence in exchange for virtues. In this metamorphic process, the Fall and evil are necessities, as well as the suffering they often incur. Orthodox Christianity sees this Fall as a necessary good: through being a virtuous being after the Fall, one comes to know the value of Christ's salvation and love. Such a view often conceives of evils, in Coleridge's understanding, as serving a purpose. However, this argument of the purposefulness of evil is subject to challenge. In part III, I describe this challenge with reference to PART I of *Christabel* and argue that Coleridge has demonstrated a stronger than expected privileging of Christabel's prelapsarian innocence. Consequently, Christabel's Fall is questionable in terms of her

¹ Modified according to Seamus Perry (ed.), *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 536.

agency, free will and the doctrine of Original Sin. In part IV, I explore how the symbolic world in *Christabel* overlaps with the reality of a world of sin and argue that Coleridge struggles to illuminate God's love with reference to PART II of *Christabel*. As Coleridge mocks the notion of martyrdom in his own poem in 1821, Christabel's suffering in the poem seems pointless. The divine will that causes her misery appears to be brutal for no good reason. Through the artistic versification of the conclusion to part the second, Coleridge, nonetheless, manages to offer some kind of resolution to the unfinished poem, which can be understood as a form of transcendental self-salvation and comfort.

I

The epigraph of this chapter is a notebook entry in 1815-1816. This entry is derived from a passage in Jean Paul's *Geist*,

Tr: Oh, if a mortal man were to wander in a dream through Elysium, if vast unfamiliar flowers were to close above him; if one of the blessed were to offer him one of these flowers, saying: "Let this remind you when you awake that you have not been dreaming"—how he would yearn for that Elysian land, whenever he looked at the flower.²

Jean Paul's passage describes an unintentional encounter with 'Elysium' by 'a mortal man'. The writer concludes that a desire for 'that Elysian land' can be cultivated, as the 'unfamiliar' flower will remind this mortal man of the extraordinary experience he had in that transcendent other world. Coleridge's adaptation in the notebook entry (*CN*, III, 4287) is, however, much less emphatic than its original. The modality in 'If a man could' suggests: it is unlikely and impossible that one might reach a transcendent other world through a dream, yet Coleridge tasks himself with imagining this possibility and its subsequent implications. To facilitate the imagination, Coleridge frames it with Platonism, as it is the 'Soul', not the body, that is said to have experienced the journey to and from this transcendent other world. The 'Pledge' the man received from this journey is a rare proof of such a world, a visible piece of transcendent knowledge. In Coleridge's notebook entry, Jean Paul's nostalgia for Elysian beauty is replaced by a metaphysical enquiry—'Aye? And what then?'. Returning to the

² *CN*, III, 4287n.

present, Jean Paul talks about the loss of the transcendent experience, but Coleridge's 'Aye? And what then?' puts this sense of loss, or even the transcendent experience, into question. From sleeping to dreaming, and from dreaming to awakening, these are changes in and out of permanence in Jean Paul's passage. Jean Paul's yearning 'for that Elysian land' in this passage is an expression that annihilates the differences between dreams and reality, with the flower being the medium of proof for such annihilation. Retracting from the euphoria of Elysium, Coleridge's adaptation however alienates the flower, as this 'Pledge' from a dream is at odds with reality, and one is left to wonder which of these, the dream or reality, he should believe, thus '—Aye? And what then?'. The 'quizzical' tone here does not affirm much at all, but it shows that Coleridge would not so easily accept the flower as a piece of transcendent knowledge as Jean Paul.³ Perhaps, there is even a touch of scepticism in 'Aye? And what then?', in the sense that knowing the existence of a transcendent other world seems to be of no help to what a mortal experiences in reality. And this reality is the world of *Christabel* (1816) in which the problem of evil complicates Coleridge's transcendent belief to a point that the poem is not and cannot be finished. I first discuss the ways in which the concept of evil is rooted in *Christabel*, before moving onto the textual history of *Christabel*, and propose that Coleridge's enquiry into the problem of evil may be a reason why this poem remains unfinished.

The concept of evil is almost inseparable from literary analyses of *Christabel*. Traditional interpretations of *Christabel* can be divided into three main streams, 'the logical and the psychological' according to Virginia Radley,⁴ and the symbolic. The logical 'holds that the evil is a supernatural evil typically seen in the medieval romance, one which can be explained logically in terms of the machinery of demonology, demonolatry, and like trappings, that Geraldine is an enchantress, a witch, a lamia, that she has been commissioned by sources external to man to bring about the fall of innocence, to pervert, to corrupt good incarnate in the persons of Christabel and perhaps also Sir Leoline'.⁵ The psychological 'attempts to interpret the poem in terms of a psycho-sexual evil'; 'innocence falls (as it does

³ Paul Cheshire, 'The Notebooks of S. T. Coleridge', in *The Friends of Coleridge*, 2003-6 <<http://www.friendsofcoleridge.com/membersonly/CB32/Notebooks.htm>> [access: 16 October 2018]. Cheshire has 'adopted Perry's transcription "Aye?" in place of Coburn's "Aye!"', because 'Where a choice is available, one should always favour the quizzical in Coleridge'.

⁴ Virginia L. Radley, 'Christabel: Directions Old and New', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 4.4, Nineteenth Century, 1964, pp. 531-41, at p. 532.

⁵ Radley, p. 532.

in the former reading) but the causes are natural and not supernatural; that is, they are found within the mind and psyche of man and do not redound upon man from external sources'.⁶

These two types of argument are to a degree obsolete, as later critics tend not to think of Geraldine as an isolated or one-dimensional evil entity. Some critics think of Geraldine as a repressed self of Christabel in the psyche of the poet. As J. Robert Barth rightly summarises, 'It is no new idea to see in Christabel and Geraldine—as Richard Harter Fogle does—"different aspects of the same person"', and 'Robert Siegel calls Geraldine "Christabel's double"'.⁷ Readings as such can humanise a supernatural story to consider the concurrence of good and evil in both characters. Extending this notion of doubling, William A. Ulmer proposes another kind of doubling in the form of Christabel's mother and Geraldine: 'Figuring Christabel's unconscious as the site where her banished desires have gathered and intensified, Geraldine becomes the dutiful daughter's ominous double. Yet in what can appear the single most brilliant move of Coleridge's poem, Geraldine also becomes the mother's double'.⁸ This doubling, unlike the former one, complicates the nature of Geraldine: is her supernatural evil nature simply a cover that allows her to mother Christabel? As for the psycho-sexual argument, it is still retained in contemporary criticism, but gradually put aside, as the supernatural power of Geraldine is employed and combined into the dynamics of natural human relations.

This combination turns *Christabel* as a poem into a mystical rhetoric that serves to articulate religious ideas of love. Exploring the theological implications of love in *Christabel*, Barth argues that Christabel's prayers are not 'without avail', for a prayer itself is an expression of 'hope', even when we live in 'the world of sin'.⁹ To seek theological implications in *Christabel* also prompts a symbolic reading of the poem. Jeanie Watson proposes a marvellous notion in *Coleridge's Symbolic World of Faery*. Exploring the 'faery' as an alternative form to the ballad for deciphering Coleridge's poems, including *Christabel*, Watson argues that

The Land of Faery is a state of being, a mental/emotional construct, an act of creation. In Faery, Contraries are reconciled, diversity unified. Faery is the home of soul before the Fall; it is the Garden, the place of Oneness with Spirit. But the

⁶ Radley, p. 533.

⁷ J. Robert Barth, "In the Midnight Wood": The Power and Limits of Prayer in "Christabel", *The Wordsworth Circle*, 32.2, 2001, pp. 78-83, at p. 79.

⁸ William A. Ulmer, "'Christabel' and the Origin of Evil", *Studies in Philology*, 104.3, 2007, pp. 376-407, p. 390.

⁹ Barth, "In the Midnight Wood", pp. 81-82.

Garden also held the Snake and the Forbidden Fruit—possibilities for disorder, division, irrationality. Faery is the desire of the heart, but the Land is perilous indeed. As Coleridge's tales of Faery grow more complex, they inevitably shift from fairy tale to ballad, from the happy ending to the tragic.¹⁰

'The Land of Faery' is a symbolic world in which an understanding of symbolic experience is not 'the end of knowledge', but rather, 'the means' to transcendent Truth.¹¹ Based on Watson's symbolic paradigm, I intend to expand upon that 'shift' from the prelapsarian world of 'Faery' to 'the Fall' to trace Coleridge's views of the problem of evil and his realisations of the 'tragic' end of the human in the world of sin.

The topic of evil preoccupied Coleridge for years. Around February to March 1796, Coleridge drafted in his Notebook a list of 'My Works' which included 'The Origin of Evil, an Epic Poem'.¹² Ulmer suggests that Coleridge turned this epic, which surely was never written, into *Christabel*, despite previous suggestions that the poem became 'The Ancient Mariner', an idea proposed by George Whalley, or 'Religious Musings', as Peter Kitson suggests.¹³ Instead of adding further speculation to what this 'Epic Poem' eventually became, I conjecture that the work that would be closest to such an enterprise would be John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and it would not be surprising if Coleridge wished to surpass it or create his own version of Miltonic epic. Yet, readers of Coleridge all know that he has never written something as long; many of his shorter poems or fragments however touch upon the crucial theme of Original Sin.

In chapter 2, I explained the ways in which Coleridge explores Original Sin in 'The Ancient Mariner' (1800) as an impediment to our subjective faculty of the mind, hence transcendent experience. Then, in chapter 3, the Crewe Manuscript of 'Kubla Khan' (1797) serves as a mythical prehistory of 'The Ancient Mariner', in which a prelapsarian world is built by an imperfect (sinful) mind. We can form an opinion about Coleridge's conviction to the notion of original sin through these two poems. Coleridge celebrates what many critics refer to as *doublings* in *Christabel* (1816) to complicate and intensify the tension between freewill and the problem of evil. The problem of evil and freewill is contradictory as the former seems to suggest that the Fall is compelled by evil, whilst the latter suggests that the

¹⁰ Jeanie Watson, *Risking Enchantment: Coleridge's Symbolic World of Faery* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1943), pp. 23-24.

¹¹ Watson, *Risking Enchantment*, p. 43.

¹² *CN*, I, 161.

¹³ Ulmer, "'Christabel' and the Origin of Evil', p. 376.

Fall is the result of the will of humanity. The frictions between the problem of evil and freewill renders the word *original* in Original Sin ambiguous: are men born sinful in an orthodox sense of the doctrine, or do human beings only partake of Adam's death and are not tainted by his sin?

Ulmer regarded *Christabel* as a 'prophetic explanation of Coleridge's abandonment of Unitarianism',¹⁴ that 'anticipates Coleridge's 1805 conversion to Anglicanism'.¹⁵ According to Ulmer, Coleridge has a growing dissatisfaction towards this Priestleyan philosophy of Necessity following the death of his son (Berkeley).¹⁶ Quoting Coleridge's letter to Mrs Coleridge on 8 April 1799, Ulmer notes the reason behind those signs of Coleridge's dissatisfaction in his rhetorical question—'What and who are these horrible shadows necessity and general law, to which God himself must offer *sacrifices*—hecatombs of Sacrifices?'.¹⁷ Coleridge's objection centres on a contradiction between Priestley's notion that 'God works by *general laws*' and the 'sacrificial atonement' of Anglican Christianity.¹⁸ Yet the relevance of this contradiction to Transcendence is conveyed in the following lines of the letter (omitted by Ulmer in his quotation):

I feel a deep conviction that these shadows exist not—they are only the dreams of reasoning Pride, that would fain find solutions for all difficulties without Faith!—that would make the discoveries which lie thick sown in the path of the eternal Future unnecessary; and so conceiving that there is sufficiency and completeness in the narrow present, weakens the presentiment of our wide and ever widening Immortality!¹⁹

Effectively, these lines put into perspective Coleridge's conviction concerning transcendent futurity and his interest in 'the discoveries which lie thick sown in the path of the eternal Future'. Coleridge's conviction about the imperfectability of 'the narrow present' brings *Christabel* (1816) to mind, because 'sufficiency' of God's love and 'completeness' of the poem are both hard to conceive. Watson's 'Land of Faery' precisely accommodates both the ideal of 'completeness' and the actual insufficiency of reality. To read *Christabel* (1816), symbolically, as Watson has done, I argue that Coleridge emerges as a poet who struggles to

¹⁴ Ulmer, "'Christabel' and the Origin of Evil', p. 378.

¹⁵ Ulmer, "'Christabel' and the Origin of Evil', p. 407.

¹⁶ Ulmer, "'Christabel' and the Origin of Evil', pp. 405-06.

¹⁷ *CL*, I, p. 482.

¹⁸ Ulmer, "'Christabel' and the Origin of Evil', p. 405.

¹⁹ *CL*, I, p. 482.

articulate and make sense of ‘completeness’. And the stumbling block here is the problem of evil. Augustinian Christianity interprets the doctrine of Original Sin as, in short, all humans are born sinful:

the one in whom [(Adam)] all die also infects in himself with the hidden corruption of his carnal concupiscence all those who are to come from his lineage. For this reason and none other, the apostle says, Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned (Rom 5:12).²⁰

Coleridge’s understanding of Original Sin, however, deviates from this orthodoxy. In the 1797 ‘Religious Musings’, he handles the Problem of Evil with a rare insight into the purpose served by ‘Evil’:

Lord of unsleeping Love,
From everlasting Thou! We shall not die.
These, even these, in mercy didst thou form,
Teachers of Good thro’ Evil, by brief wrong
Making Truth lovely, and her future might
Magnetic o’er the fix’d untrembling heart. (1797, ll. 196-201)²¹

Footnoting ‘Lord of unsleeping Love’, Coleridge elaborates:

In this paragraph the Author recalls himself from his indignation against the instruments of Evil, to contemplate the *uses* of these Ev[il]s in the great process of divine Benevolence. In the first age, Men were innocent from ignorance of vice; they fell, that by the knowledge of consequences they might attain intellectual security, i.e. Virtue, which is a wise and strong-nerv’d Innocence.²²

²⁰ Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Answers to the Pelagians: The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones, the Spirit and the Letter, Nature and Grace, the Perfection of Human Righteousness, the Deeds of Pelagius, the Grace of Christ and Original Sin, the Nature and Origin of the Soul*, Book 23, Part I, tr. by Roland J. Teske, ed. by John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), p. 39.

²¹ *Poems*, pp. 133-34

²² *Poems*, p. 133n.

In 'Religious Musings', Coleridge attempts to process the failure of the French Revolution as a means of bringing about the greater good for the future, which is a deeper realisation of Truth and its loveliness, known only to the virtuous. Here, the idea of perfectibility enmeshes itself in the paradox of necessary evil. Disappointed by the ephemerality of revolutionary hope, Coleridge explores how to reconcile evils with 'the everlasting love of God'. He drafted his answer in the footnote we have just looked at, but later poems, such as 'The Ancient Mariner' and *Christabel*, tend to shift the focus from sin to a state of innocence in a post-Adam world, one in which the 'original' state of innocence in men 'In the first age' should have ceased to persist. Innocence, then, becomes pointedly challenging to the orthodox understanding of Origin Sin. Coleridge sees 'the positive' value in both Innocence and Virtue.²³ Contrary to the *Felix culpa* theodicy, which affirms 'the instruments of Evil', the experience of the Fall is too greater price for Coleridge's *Christabel* to pay. I argue that Coleridge's reluctance to proceed with the transformation from innocence to 'Virtue' is reflective of his uncertainty about God's love.

II

From the inception of *Christabel* until its publication in 1816, the unfinished poem bears witness to how the problem of evil challenges Coleridge's faith in the love of God and the desire and the hope of Transcendence. The process of publishing *Christabel* was both stumbling and hesitant. Coleridge refused the suggestion to use *Christabel* as the opening piece for the *Annual Anthology*, edited by Robert Southey in 1799 and 1800.²⁴ The second opportunity came in 1800 when Wordsworth decided to publish a second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, including additional poems, and one of which was *Christabel*; but a change of plan occurred before printing, which saw *Christabel* abandoned by Wordsworth in favour of other poems of his own.²⁵ Reflecting on such a delay in publishing *Christabel*, Coleridge attributed it to his own failings:

The delay in Copy has been owing in part to me with labor-pangs. I abandon Poetry altogether—I leave the higher & deeper Kinds to Wordsworth, the delightful popular & simply dignified to Southey; & reserve for myself the

²³ *CN*, III, 3312.

²⁴ *CL*, I, p. 540.

²⁵ *CL*, I, p. 592.

honourable attempt to make others feel and understand their writings, as they deserve to be felt & understood.²⁶

A touch of bitterness and crushed confidence lurks in this humble reflection. Eventually, *Christabel* was published in 1816 by John Murray in the form of an octavo, as shown in the title page of its facsimile, named *Christabel: Kubla Khan, A Vision; The Pains of Sleep*.²⁷ The use of a colon after *Christabel* is strikingly indicative and introduces two shorter pieces of poetry as its companion reading. The 1797 Crewe Manuscript of ‘Kubla Khan’ which forms the most lines of its 1816 version precedes the composition of *Christabel*. ‘The Pains of Sleep’ has slight changes to the original written in 1803. Though Coleridge claims, in the Preface to the 1816 published version of *Christabel*, that part I of the poem was written in 1797, textual scholars agree that Coleridge wrote part I in 1798, and part II in 1800 after he returned from Germany. According to Jack Stillinger, the holograph and transcripts of *Christabel* form the basis of 1-655 lines of the 1816 published version, and those 1-655 lines include part I, conclusion to part I and part II of the poem.²⁸

The conclusion to part II was written, with few variants, in a letter to Robert Southey on May 6, 1801, but these lines, given the context, were in no way originally intended to be part of *Christabel*, as they were addressed to Hartley Coleridge:

Dear Hartley! we are at times alarmed by the state of his Health—but at present he is well—if I were to lose him, I am afraid, it would exceedingly deaden my affection for any other children I may have——

A little child, a limber Elf
Singing, dancing to itself;
A faery Thing with red round Cheeks,
That always *finds*, and never *seeks*—
Doth make a Vision to the Sight,
Which fills a Father’s Eyes with Light!
And Pleasures flow in so thick & fast
Upon his Heart, that he at last
Must needs express his Love’s Excess

²⁶ *CL*, I, p. 623.

²⁷ *CKK*, p. iii.

²⁸ Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 79-91.

In Words of Wrong and Bitterness.
 Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
 Thoughts so all unlike each other;
 To mutter and mock a broken charm;
 To dally with Wrong, that does no Harm—
 Perhaps, 'tis tender too & pretty
 At each wild Word to feel within
 A [s]weet Recoil of Love & Pity;
 And what if in a World of Sin
 (O sorrow & shame! should this be true)
 Such Giddiness of Heart & Brain
 Comes seldom, save from Rage & Pain,
 So talks, as it's most us'd to do. —

A very metaphysical account of Fathers calling their children rogues, rascals,
 & little varlets——&c——²⁹

In 22 lines, Coleridge explicates the metaphysical intricacy involved in a father's verbal distortion of what he actually thinks his child is. Written in rhyming couplets (aabbccddeeffgg), the first 14 lines begin with a narrative voice which is closer to Coleridge's own. Coleridge strikes a personal note and speaks of his child, so innocent and adorable, whom was perceived by him, the father, with delight and love. But when this love grows 'excess'(e), beyond any loving expression could hold, the rhyming 'bitterness'(e) conveys what goes over the brim. Changing to alternate rhymes (hihi), lines 15-18 perform the forcing together of 'thoughts unlike each other', using half rhymes—the embodiments of harmony and dissonance—to interlock 'pretty'(h) 'within'(i) those 'wild words' and 'pity'(h) in 'sin'(i). 'Love's excess', perhaps deformed, reveals itself only amid the accompanying distortion as 'a broken charm'. Finally, in an enclosed rhyme scheme (jkkj), lines 19-22 suggest that the recollection of 'Love & Pity' from 'Words of Wrong' does not happen frequently in life. Most people express love often with 'Rage & Pain' enclosed in their feeling of the heart and reasoning of the head. The 'Giddiness' of love, which is concealed deep in the 'Heart & Brain', is unrhymed and submerged in the middle of line 20. As these feelings are unfolded line by line, we come to understand that Coleridge's love towards his son is permeated with

²⁹ CL, II, pp. 728-29.

immense fear of losing Hartley. The death of Berkeley Coleridge in 1799 must also have contributed to the vividness of Coleridge's language.

Stillinger thinks that 'it is not known when [Coleridge] decided to use [these 22 lines] as the conclusion to part 2 of *Christabel*';³⁰ however, J. C. C. Mays suggests that it is 'not brought into the poem until perhaps as late as early 1816, when the text was being set up in type'.³¹ I am inclined to agree with Mays, as these 22 lines, which were excluded from all existing transcripts of the poem, seem not to be written for *Christabel* in the first place, either in terms of purpose or meaning. More importantly, Coleridge wrote to John Murray on 23 April 1816 that 'I have not felt myself well enough to finish the *Conclusion* of the 2nd Part of *Christabel* as I had wished'.³² The probability of Coleridge employing those lines written in 1801 as a result of his inability to write is high, given that the 1816 *Christabel* was published on 25 May, only roughly a month after this statement. Coleridge managed to revise these lines in this month to provide an end to *Christabel* and for the poem to be sent to the press for printing. Though the revision is not extensive, the decision to put these lines as the conclusion suggests a new reception of these lines from the author's point of view—perhaps even, a new realisation of his unfinished work.

Whether these lines marked arguably *an end* or *the end* to *Christabel* in 1816 is significant to why I have chosen the first published version instead of any earlier holograph or transcript as the basis for my later arguments. On more than one occasion, Coleridge stated that he envisaged *Christabel* to be a five-book poem. As early as March 1801, Coleridge wrote to Thomas N. Longman to ask if he would like to publish *Christabel*, which Coleridge described in supplementary phrases as 'a Legend, in five Books'.³³ This idea of a five-book *Christabel* lasted for years, as Coleridge wrote to Byron on 22 October 1815: 'It is not yet a Whole: and as it will be 5 Books, I meant to publish it by itself: or with another Poem entitled, the Wanderings of Cain'.³⁴ Eventually, Coleridge did publish it in 1816 and restated this idea in the Preface to *Christabel*:

But as, in my very first conception of the tale, I had the whole present to my mind, with the wholeness, no less than with the liveliness of a vision; I trust

³⁰ Stillinger, p. 82.

³¹ *PW*, I, 1, p. 478.

³² *CL*, VI, p. 634.

³³ *CL*, II, p. 716.

³⁴ *CL*, VI, p. 601.

that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year.³⁵

The fact that Coleridge did not, and probably could not, finish *Christabel* casts suspicion on whether the five-book plan was just a bluff to get the two-book *Christabel* fragment published. Arguing against this suspicion, B. R. McElderry, Jr raises the issue of critics' expectations of how concrete Coleridge's 'plan' was—how detailed would such a plan have to be to justify Coleridge's intentions and his planned five books of *Christabel*. The strongest evidence of such a 'plan' occurs in James Gillman's *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* published in 1838,³⁶ which is at odds with what Wordsworth told Justice Coleridge (Coleridge's nephew) that '[Wordsworth] did not think [Coleridge] had ever conceived, in his own mind, any definite plan for it' in 1836.³⁷ I share McElderry's view that, even though Gillman records the idea of a 'plan' in prose, it is likely that such a plan existed. McElderry also attributes the broken friendship between Coleridge and Wordsworth in 1810 as the reason why such a plan went unacknowledged by Wordsworth.³⁸

Nonetheless, quoting a prose narrative of part I and part II of *Christabel* written by E. H. Coleridge, McElderry overlooks a problematic description in a summary by E. H. Coleridge: 'The lyric Conclusion of Part II, whatever its precise significance, adds nothing to the narrative.'³⁹ Despite its uselessness for clarifying whether Coleridge had planned another ending for *Christabel*, the conclusion of part II remains as *the ending* recognised by the poet through publishing—a crystallisation of ideas at one stage—and the one known to readers of the poem. When these lines were taken out from the 1801 context from which they emerged, and reapplied to conclude part II of *Christabel* in 1816, they become not only *the ending* to a unfinished poem, but also potentially an explanation of why Coleridge did not finish *Christabel*.

Focusing on *Christabel* in terms of narrative perspective, I rethink how the 1816 ending echoes the main body of 1-655 lines, which emerged in 1798-1800. Though variants to the main body of text exist, they are mostly aesthetics touch-ups; the printed 1816 version of

³⁵ *CKK*, pp. v-vi.

³⁶ 'This plan, printed in the notes to Campbell's edition, is familiar to most readers of Coleridge: it involves principally the disappearance of Geraldine in the character of the daughter of Lord Roland de Vaux, her re-appearance in the guise of the absent lover of Christabel, and the foiling of her evil influence by the return of her true lover.' B. R. McElderry, Jr, 'Coleridge's Plan for Completing *Christabel*', *Studies in Philology*, 33.3, 1936, pp. 437-55, at p. 437.

³⁷ McElderry, p. 440.

³⁸ McElderry, p. 440.

³⁹ McElderry, p. 447.

Christabel, therefore, will suffice the purpose of investigation. Claire B. May adopts Julia Kristeva's theories of narrative and poetic language to argue that Coleridge was haunted by his own narrative, thus producing an ambiguous and incoherent narrative.⁴⁰ May's analysis fulfils her own goal of putting *Christabel* 'on trial' as the title of her article suggests. Aligning ambiguity in Coleridge's poetic language with the product of a haunted mind, May comes close to suggesting what, I think, Coleridge might have felt at the time when he could not further the ballad in verse—that the poem itself was growing out of hand. The sense of horror given becomes the terror received. Arguably, Coleridge deliberately engendered confusions and ambiguity in his narrative by oscillating between different voices or subjectivities, focalised by various characters, narrators, as well as the poet or editor in the poem. The frequent doublings of identities of characters makes any coherent world of symbolism difficult. And yet it is through this difficulty of comprehension that readers will understand the theological struggle Coleridge contemplates. Put differently, *Christabel* is not necessarily offering a system of symbols, but instead a fragmented symbolic knowledge of Truth. Seeking for that symbolic image of Oneness in the poem, readers, ironically, experience the fracturing of such a transcendent image. The following analysis in III and IV, respectively, corresponds to Part I and Part II of *Christabel* (1816).

III (PART I)

Shared between Coleridge and his readers, *Christabel* is in itself a transcendental other world, and one reminiscent of the vision of heaven in the eyes of Sara Hutchinson in 'A Letter to—'. The narrative of *Christabel* is vital for creating such transcendental experience of a symbolic other world. The poem begins with the omniscient narrator, who ensures the reader-audience becomes lost in time, in a moment far removed from the here and now:

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awaken'd the crowing cock;
Tu—whit!——Tu—whoo!

⁴⁰ Claire B. May, "'Christabel' and Abjection: Coleridge's Narrative in Process/on Trial', in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 37.4, 1997, pp. 699-721.

And hark, again! The crowing cock,
 How drowsily it crew. (ll. 1-5)⁴¹

Though the tale is set in ‘the middle of night’, the sounds of the night owls (and that of the morning cock) disorient nature’s temporal signals. Ending the lines with words of /k/ sounded initial consonant (castle clock, crowing cock, crew), the narrator infuses the auditory perception with ticks of a clock that hypnotise the audience. ‘Tu—whit!—Tu—whoo!’—the short and long vowels, mimicking a slow inhale-exhale breath, detain the night and prolong the time for sleep. Listening to the crowing cock, as the narrator commands, the audience too ‘drowsily’ falls into a trance. Coleridge creates an entrance in the first paragraph for the audience to enter his tale in a trance-like mood. We become part of this other world, as readers soon hear a folktale from this strange place:

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
 Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
 From her kennel beneath the rock
 She makes answer to the clock,
 Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
 Ever and aye, moonshine or shower,
 Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
 Some say, she sees my lady’s shroud. (ll. 6-11)

The folktale expresses a series of mystified events that happen ‘ever and aye, moonshine or shower’. Through the narrative of a folktale, readers would realise that they have entered another almost a-temporal world. As Watson brilliantly points out, ‘In “The Rime,” we know we are going on a voyage of exploration, that we have left the safe harbour and are moving into strange and unknown waters’,⁴² but ‘In “Christabel,” there is no safe harbour, no movement from the familiar to the unknown and back again’.⁴³ Coleridge closes that gap between the subjectivity of the characters and that of the readers in the case of *Christabel*, so that, while disbelief is no longer an option for us, we constantly struggle to comprehend the poem’s environs. ‘Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour’ is, on purpose, a line with

⁴¹ CKK, pp. 1-48. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

⁴² Watson, *Risking Enchantment*, p. 164.

⁴³ Watson, *Risking Enchantment*, p. 165

more syllables than other lines in the verse paragraph. It means the clock strikes at midnight, which as readers would know, shall become important imagery connected to Christabel's mother. The 'Sixteen short howls' are the sum of 'four' and 'twelve' of the clock at midnight. As the dog keeps barking sixteen times when the clock strikes at midnight, there comes a folktale by means of pure association as the dog suspects that which men cannot sense: 'Some say, she sees my lady's shroud'. The Lady, of course, is Sir Leoline's dead wife, whose actual existence is yet to be revealed. Not until the next verse paragraph does the narrator recede back to *the* night of 'the middle of night' in line 1. This is performed through a repetition of the audience's query in free indirect speech: 'Is the night chilly and dark? / The night is chilly, but not dark.' (ll. 14-15). The more information of this symbolic world we receive, the more anxious we feel, as this world is, as Watson argues, a 'perilous' land.

Continuing the narrative of place in verse paragraphs 3-5, Coleridge introduces Christabel as a pious Christian who prays amid ominous signs in these surroundings. Humphry House points out that the landscape in part I has drawn elements, such as 'the castle in the woodland, with oak and moss and mistletoe', from Somerset in which Coleridge stayed during the year of the poem's composition.⁴⁴ What intrigued House were the entries found in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal*, Coleridge's *Gutch Memorandum Book* and William Wordsworth's 'A Night-Piece' that delineate scenes of cloudy skies and the effects of the moonlight upon them.⁴⁵ These passages may provide readers with the source of inspiration to verse paragraph 3 of *Christabel*, but House rightly observes that 'The Coleridge lines, by contrast, suggest both by vocabulary and rhythm that cloud and moon are behaving oddly and ominously, just out of the way of ordinary behaviour, as if proportion is thrown out and normal vision perplexed':⁴⁶

The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull. (ll. 18-19)

House suspects that Coleridge might 'pronounce the word "dull" to rhyme with "full"' so as to enhance the 'mysteriousness and vagueness of the midnight light' but,⁴⁷ in my view, the fact that they are the only two lines within the verse paragraph that do not form a rhyming

⁴⁴ Humphry House, "'Kubla Khan" and "Christabel"', in *Coleridge, The Ancient Mariner and Other Poems: A Casebook*, ed. by Alun R Jones and William Tydeman (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 200-16, at pp. 207-08.

⁴⁵ House, p. 208.

⁴⁶ House, p. 209.

⁴⁷ House, p. 209.

couplet reinforce the broken charm of a usually pleasant full moon. The unrhymed pair produce ominous sounds that disturb our ears and engender unsettling tensions.

This unsettling and ominous atmosphere is at odds with the quiet and pious image of Christabel praying ‘in the midnight wood’ (l. 31) for her lover in verse paragraph 4. The incoherence here sets the tone for Coleridge to articulate his mixed feelings about the Fall—was it fate or a product of human freewill? Those dreams Christabel has dreamed the night before, ‘that made her moan and leap’ (l. 29) in bed, vex her over the wellbeing of her betrothed knight. As she is praying under ‘the huge oak tree’ (l. 37), there is an overwhelming ‘silence’ (l. 38) in verse paragraph 5, to such a degree that even the winds became still. Silence in the process of praying should be calming to Christabel, but the unsettling tensions mount up and transform this silence into a suspension of terror for the reader-audience. Contributing to this mounting sense of terror is the terrible fate of Christabel suggested in her name: Christ-Abel. The sinless Jesus was nailed to the cross, whereas Abel, the blessed keeper of sheep, was killed by his brother Cain. As mentioned, Coleridge told Byron in 1815 that he meant to publish the five-Book *Christabel*, if it were finished, either in its own right or with other poems such as *The Wanderings of Cain*. Instead of finishing *The Wanderings of Cain*, Coleridge wrote ‘The Ancient Mariner’. All these poetic works re-accentuate a belief in Original Sin. Although here the suffering of Christabel sparks the Problem of Evil and corrupted love results.

The idea of suffering is central to readings by many critics, such as John Beer and Geoffrey Yarlott. This is also true of early responses to *Christabel*, including James Gillman’s outline of Coleridge’s plan for *Christabel* in *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* and Derwent Coleridge’s similar account of such a plan in the Preface of *Poems*, edited by Derwent and Sara Coleridge in 1868.⁴⁸ Both Gillman and Derwent endorse the notion of the good Christabel suffering for her lover far away. I would however abstain from an overly schematised reading in which Christabel is the good and holy, while Geraldine is the evil spirit, since these figures do not exist in polar opposites. Christabel is a pious Christian who is set to follow the meaning of her own name: that is the steps of Christ. As Jesus says ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me’ (Matthew 16: 24, KJV); suffering is therefore part of the making of a good Christian. From a theological perspective, suffering is involved in the journey of abandoning the old self so as to live a new holy life after Jesus. The definition of suffering by Gillman or Derwent seems to

⁴⁸ John Beer, *Coleridge the Visionary* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), pp. 176-77; Geoffrey Yarlott, *Coleridge and the Abyssinian Maid* (London: Methuen, 1967), pp. 178-79.

imply the innocence or even the purity of Christabel, as she endures the infliction caused by Geraldine without obvious sin.

From a psycho-sexual perspective, Christabel's purity is questionable, as she is tainted by both her moaning in the dreams of her betrothed knight and the supernatural encounter in bed with Geraldine. In the light of Christabel's sexual desires, the idea of suffering is mingled with an implied sinful nature of her character that is in part an extension of the Fall. However, more often than not, Coleridge seems to want to sustain Christabel's innocence through blindfolding her from her deeds—in the case of her moans and leaps in dreams, for example, Christabel is unconscious of them. It is almost as if the innocent old self is more appealing to Coleridge than the new self after suffering the Fall. More importantly, as the poem is unfinished, we in fact never encounter the new virtuous Christabel, because the metamorphosis is never complete.

The only panacea to the suffering of the Fall is that of redemption and God's love—a transcendent salvation that goes beyond our death. The need for a transcendent futurity, be it in the form of redemption or eternity, resides in Coleridge's imagery of the oak tree. The image of the oak tree first appears in the background when Christabel kneels to pray, but is not conspicuous until paragraph 6:

The lady leaps up suddenly,
 The lovely lady, Christabel!
 It moan'd as near, as near can be,
 But what it is, she cannot tell.—
 On the other side it seems to be,
 Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree. (ll. 39-44)

The alliterations throughout this paragraph quicken our eyes to the impeded vision of the moaning sounds—the 'huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree' which elicits a gothic mood that intimidates and diminishes the beholder. Ted Hughes suggested that the oak tree is a symbol of strength that Coleridge felt was missing in a notebook entry in 1808:⁴⁹

My inner mind does not justify the Thought, that I possess a Genius—my *Strength*
 is so very small in proportion to my Power—I believe, that I first from internal

⁴⁹ Ted Hughes, *A Choice of Coleridge's Verse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p. 9.

feeling made, or gave light and impulse to this important distinction, between Strength and Power—the Oak, and the tropic Annual, or Biennial, which grows nearly as high and spreads as large, as the Oak—but the *wood*, the *heart* of Oak, is wanting—the *vital* works vehemently, but the *Immortal* is not with it—⁵⁰

Hughes's premise of '*an absence of strength*', which Coleridge constantly felt, is not how I read the gist of this passage.⁵¹ Hughes risks twisting Coleridge's idea of '*Strength*', as he takes it out of a relative comparison with 'Power'. The '*Strength*' symbolised by the Oak is itself high and spreading large, but its cumulative effect is still incomparable to the 'Power'. This 'Power' is '*Immortal*', or transcendent relative to the '*Strength*' that struggles to survive. This comparison of '*vital*' and '*Immortal*' finds an analogy with Christabel, who is praying under the oak tree, and Geraldine, who has a supernatural power so great that the old oak tree cannot protect Christabel from it. Instead of peace, the 'Power' (represented by Geraldine) is the cause of Christabel's trepidation and weakening '*Strength*':

The night is chill; the forest bare;
 Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
 There is not wind enough in the air
 To move away the ringlet curl
 From the lovely lady's cheek—
 There is not wind enough to twirl
 The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
 That dances as often as dance it can,
 Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
 On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky. (ll. 45-54)

The question, 'Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?', is ostensibly focalised by Christabel. Readers are answered by the omniscient narrator that the ringlet curl on Christabel's face is still; then we are put into Christabel's perspective, and see through her eyes 'The one red leaf', as the scene deepens with psychological significance with the leaf as 'the last of its clan', a detail so minute that magnifies the trepidation in Christabel's mind. Yet, what stirs up

⁵⁰ *CN*, III, 3324.

⁵¹ Hughes, p. 9.

such trepidation is unknown to Christabel—her fate to Fall. The caesura in lines 50-54 quickens the rhythm and stirs Christabel's nerves:

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
 Jesu, Maria, shield her well! (ll. 55-56)

Even the narrator sympathises with Christabel, as he knows what transcendent power she is about to face:

I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
 A lady so richly clad as she—
 Beautiful exceedingly! (ll. 64-66)

The first person 'I' is the narrator who remarks that the scene is 'frightful' by contrast to what Christabel saw, which is the figure of Geraldine who is 'beautiful exceedingly'. Nonetheless, Christabel shares in and senses the frightfulness, as well as echoing the narrator's anxiety with 'Mary mother, save me now!' (l. 67). The excessiveness of beauty complies with Geraldine's supernatural power; in turn, Christabel as a mortal could only pray to Virgin Mary, mother of Christ, for help. Little does Christabel know that it is Geraldine, not the Virgin Mary, who is the embodiment of transcendent power.

If Geraldine is seen as a transcendent substitute of the Virgin Mary, the dramatic irony of Christabel's hospitality towards Geraldine is profound:

So free from danger, free from fear,
 They cross'd the court: right glad they were. (ll. 130-31; 138-139)

These two lines have been repeated twice in a manner that is at odds with the carefree /f/ sounds. The first instance (ll. 130-131) is after Christabel assisted Geraldine to cross 'the threshold of the gate' (l. 127). Christabel thinks they are free from the warriors who may harm them, when she in fact has invited the most treacherous figure in the form of Geraldine into the hall. She then praised 'the Virgin all divine' (l. 134), whilst Geraldine is unwilling to

join in the prayer, as Charles Tomlinson suggests.⁵² These dramatic ironies of Christabel's hospitality depend upon her ignorance.

Comparing Christabel to Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Lucy Newlyn comments that 'If Christabel's innocence is already qualified, then hers is not a world of moral polarities, black against white, but of more indeterminate shades of grey.'⁵³ To think of Christabel in terms of shades of grey is to deal with the alternative meaning of innocence—ignorance. Newlyn's Miltonic reading of the poem invites readers to envision a form of active and wilful fallenness alongside Christabel's ignorance: 'like Eve, [Christabel] wanders off alone—conscious, as the words "a furlong from her father's gate" remind us, of the beginnings of transgression'.⁵⁴ Christabel is deemed to have fallen voluntarily, as she would not have been tempted by Geraldine's exceeding beauty in the forest, had she not been there. The act itself—to wander out in the woods at night—appears to be, at most, dangerous, but not sinful. Hence her fate of suffering is preceded by a cause—her innocent act. Coleridge seems to be rather reluctant to convict Christabel as a figure who was born sinful in accordance to the orthodox doctrine of Original Sin. Evidence of such reluctance can also be found in an excerpt from a notebook entry in May 1808:

Thus Innocence as distinguished from Virtue, & vice versa—In both there is a positive, but in each opposite. A Decomposition must take place in the first instance, & then a new Composition, in order for Innocence to become Virtue. It loses a positive —& then the base attracts another different positive, by the higher affinity of the <same> Base under a different Temperature for the Latter/.⁵⁵

Coleridge has changed his view on Original Sin, if we compare this notebook entry to the footnote in 1797 'Religious Musings': 'In the first age, Men were innocent from ignorance of vice; they fell, that by the knowledge of consequences they might attain intellectual security, i.e. Virtue, which is a wise and strong-nerv'd Innocence.'⁵⁶ Subtly, Coleridge raises a new notion of 'the <same> Base' in this notebook entry. I suggest that Christabel's ignorance is a 'positive' aspect of 'Innocence', which serves to pardon her of any activity that may have contributed to her Fall. The 'positive' in 'Virtue' is that it is 'strong-nerv'd' compared to

⁵² Charles Tomlinson, "Christabel", in *Coleridge, The Ancient Mariner and Other Poems: A Casebook*, ed. by Alun R Jones and William Tydeman (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 235-44, at p. 240.

⁵³ Lucy Newlyn, *Paradise Lost and the Romantic Reader* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 170.

⁵⁴ Newlyn, *Paradise Lost and the Romantic Reader*, pp. 169-70.

⁵⁵ *CN*, III, 3312.

⁵⁶ *Poems*, p. 133.

‘Innocence’. But the notion of ‘the <same> Base’, which stresses the neutrality before and after the Fall or ‘Decomposition’, contradicts the doctrine of Original Sin.

With no ‘*Strength*’ to resist, Christabel encounters the transcendent Power, Geraldine, who compels her toward the metamorphosis of the Fall to make her virtuous. While Christabel’s innocence is ambivalent, Geraldine too has an unconventional nature—neither straightforwardly good, nor completely bad. Consuming the ‘wine of virtuous powers’ (l. 186), Geraldine becomes, what Ulmer calls, ‘the mother’s double’. The acquisition of such identity is done when Geraldine purges away the ‘guardian spirit’ (l. 206), the spirit of Christabel’s mother, with two direct speech acts: “‘ ’tis given to me” (l. 207)—Geraldine takes over the mothering duty—and “‘ ’Tis over now!” (l. 213)—Geraldine substitutes the mother spirit. Saturated with ‘virtuous powers’, Geraldine is also ‘a new composition’, an indeterminate transcendent Power, whom we find difficult to classify as either good or evil. There are even signs of remorse from Geraldine before she casts a spell upon Christabel:

And thus the lofty lady spake—
 All they, who live in the upper sky,
 Do love you, holy Christabel!
 And you love them, and for their sake
 And for the good which me befel
 Even I in my degree will try,
 Fair maiden, to requite you well.
 But now unrobe yourself; for I
 Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie. (ll. 220-28)

Through Geraldine’s free direct speech, the audience is reminded once again of Christabel’s innocence, as Geraldine addressed her as ‘holy’. The deep remorse—‘Even I in my degree will try’—prepares the audience for a forthcoming supernatural moment that may shatter the holiness and innocence of Christabel. Indeed, when Christabel witnesses Geraldine’s erotic performance of undressing—

Behold! her bosom and half her side—
 A sight to dream of, not to tell!
 And she is to sleep by Christabel. (ll. 246-48)

—we notice a moment of unconscious realisation focalised through Christabel’s mind. Christabel’s erotic desire is mediated through indirect discourse: ‘A sight to dream of, not to tell!’. I agree with Watson that ‘Sexual encounter is the traditional metaphor for knowledge’,⁵⁷ for the knowledge of one’s sexuality is a marking of maturity. A being ceases to be a child when she is no longer ignorant of her own sexuality. This moment of realisation resembles the biblical moment when Adam and Eve consumed the forbidden fruit, ‘And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons’ (Genesis 3:7, KJV). But unlike this moment, Christabel is not yet conscious of her sexuality. Covering themselves with ‘aprons’, Adam and Eve feel ashamed of their ‘naked’ bodies. Before Christabel realises it for herself, a feeling of shame marks Christabel’s awakening into sexuality, when Geraldine embraces her:

Ah wel-a-day!

And with low voice and doleful look

These words did say:

In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,

Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!

Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow

This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow; (ll. 252-257)

If we view Geraldine as a double for Christabel’s mother, we are surely bewildered by this supernatural consequence to Christabel’s sexuality. Watson argues that ‘Geraldine and the mother are one’, ‘who loves and protects from harm’, but also ‘brings the daughter into the world of experience, the fallen world’.⁵⁸ If bringing Christabel safely through her ‘Decomposition’ is Geraldine’s mothering task, then, Geraldine seems not to be evil at all. Geraldine is not, as Newlyn would have her be, ‘Christabel’s fallen other’,⁵⁹ but a necessary evil for greater good. Watson manages to fuse the good and evil together by reconciling Geraldine with Christabel’s mother. However, there are questions that I think Coleridge has in mind that have remained unnoticed by critics: to become virtuous, why does Christabel have to be compelled by the mother or Geraldine to Fall? If Christabel’s suffering alongside the Fall is so unpleasant, would it not be better if we all remain innocent? Does Christabel

⁵⁷ Watson, *Risking Enchantment*, p. 189.

⁵⁸ Watson, *Risking Enchantment*, pp. 190-91.

⁵⁹ Newlyn, *Paradise Lost and the Romantic Reader*, p. 170.

have freewill over her supernatural encounter prior to her Fall? Why must God's love be shown through the salvation scheme, such that the Fall is necessary for greater good?

The metamorphic change from innocence to virtue is constructed as an attempt to explain the '*uses*' of evils and a means to solve the problem of evil. Yet Christabel's suffering (and her subsequent Fall) is devastating, rather than metamorphic, in Coleridge's poem. In the conclusion to the first part, we hear a review of the same incident through a third-person narrator:

With open eyes (ah woe is me!)
 Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
 dreaming fearfully, yet I wis,
 Dreaming that alone, which is——
 O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,
 The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?
 And lo! the worker of these harms,
 That holds the maiden in her arms,
 Seems to slumber still and mild,
 As a mother with her child. (ll. 283-288)

This objective narrative carries the subjective judgement of Coleridge with it, who thinks of Geraldine as 'the worker of these harms'. Perhaps, 'these harms' are for the greater good in orthodoxy, but to Coleridge, 'O Geraldine! Since arms of thine / Have been the lovely lady's prison' (ll. 290-291), it is the passivity of Christabel that is reinforced. That Christabel lacks free will in her 'Decomposition' makes it hard for us to convict her. Unlike Adam and Eve whose 'eyes [...] were opened' at the point they transgressed, Christabel is 'Asleep' and unconscious of her sexuality, which has been aroused by Geraldine:

And see! the lady Christabel
 Gathers herself from out her trance;
 Her limbs relax, her countenance
 Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids
 Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds—
 Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
 And oft the while she seems to smile

As infants at a sudden light!

Unconsciously asleep, Christabel appears to have experienced pleasure from her erotic vision and sensual contact with Geraldine. Yet, to be unconscious of the nature of the deed, the feeling of shame is delayed; and in her sleep, Christabel is still innocent ‘As infants at a sudden light!’, though sinful. Coleridge hangs onto Christabel’s innocence and refuses to let go, for fear that without it, there is no way to heaven or to be in union again with God.

In a 1825 notebook entry, Coleridge articulates a personal account of why he insisted on prolonging these states of innocence:

Poor—embarrassed—sick—unpatronised, unread—/Yet But (replied the soft consoling Friend) innocent. —I felt only as one that recoils—& sinful dust and ashes that I am—groaning under self-reproached inproaches! —I innocent? —.— Be thankful still! (repeated the same so sweet Voice) you are an *innocent* man— Again I draw back but as a little child from a kind Stranger but without letting go of the Stranger’s hand/—“You have the child-like Heart. —Ah but even in boyhood there was a cold hollow spot, an aching in that heart, when I said my prayers—that prevented my entire union with God—that I could not *give up*, or that would not give *me* up— ~~a snake~~ as if a snake had wreathed around my heart, and at this one spot its Mouth touched at & inbreathed a weak incapability of willing it away—/—Never did I more sadly & sinkingly prostrate myself in sense of my worthlessness—and yet, after all, it was a *comfort* to me—/My innocency was a comfort—a something, for which that was the name, there were which I would *not* resign for Wealth—Strength—Health—Reputation—Glory—/—Hence I learnt—that a sinful Being may *have* an innocence/ ~~but not his own yet not so innocent~~ I learnt, that the Skirt of Christ is nearer to a Man than his own Skin! For that *spot upo* in my heart even my <remaining &> unleavened *Self*—all else the Love of Christ in and thro’ Christ’s Love of me!

S.T.C.⁶⁰

Regressing back ‘from a kind Stranger’ to be ‘as a little child’, Coleridge produces this powerful image which, succinctly, consolidates his fixation upon the kind of innocence that

⁶⁰ CN, IV, 5275.

existed prior to the Fall. Coleridge spells out in this notebook entry ‘that a sinful Being may *have* an innocence’. This thought informs us about the poet’s attitude towards Christabel’s ‘vision sweet’ in the conclusion to part the first of *Christabel* (1816): ‘it was a *comfort* to’ Coleridge to imagine an innocent character as Christabel, who had such a phase of purity before, and even after, the Fall. By putting a sinful but innocent Christabel in a symbolic world, Coleridge attempts to prove to himself that he still stands a chance in heaven, despite his heartfelt sinfulness and lovelessness in life. Christabel is the testing ground for Coleridge to resolve the impediments he felt in seeking for eternity; yet Christabel is also the opposite of how Coleridge felt about himself:

All they, who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them, [...]
(*Christabel*, ll. 221-223)

But this she knows, in joys and woes,
That saints will aid if men will call:
For the blue sky bends over all!
(ll. 316-318)

I wept as I had been a child;
And having thus by tears subdued
My anguish to a milder mood,
Such punishments, I said, were due
To natures deepliest stain’d with sin:
For aye entempesting anew
Th’ unfathomable hell within
The horror of their deeds to view,
To know and loathe, yet wish and do!
Such griefs with such men well agree,
But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?
To be loved is all I need,
And whom I love, I love indeed.

(‘The Pains of Sleep’, ll. 51-52)⁶¹

Christabel is told that all the Spirits in heaven love her, and that even when she is suffering, transcendent hopes are there, as constant as when ‘the blue sky bends over all’ for her ‘call’. Coleridge however struggles with his sins and he struggles to locate his innocence, but all he can find is innocence in tainted form as embodied in Christabel.

Quoting part of the same notebook entry, Ted Hughes proposes that Coleridge has ‘two selves’: ‘The Christian Self was the one [Coleridge] wanted to be’, but ‘The unleavened Self’, refusing to have anything to do with Christianity or its moralizing intelligence, wrapped with

⁶¹ CKK, pp. 61-64.

a great snake, who constantly kissed him'.⁶² John Beer in response comments that if we consider the source of the 'unleavened self' from 1 Corinthians 5,

Coleridge uses the metaphor rather differently, figuring human nature as something which can normally be leavened by true Christianity but which may still retain an unleavened element of self-centredness. Hughes gave the metaphor a further twist, assuming that Coleridge's despised unleavened self was in fact the true one, struggling to waken into activity and to be leavened by the sincerity and truth of his animal nature.⁶³

However, both Hughes and Beer have slightly misconstrued the Bible and Coleridge. The snake which coiled around and sank its teeth in Coleridge's heart is a confession of his sins. Once again, Coleridge recognises his need for salvation through the transcendent Power ('the Skirt' with reference to the woman 'diseased with an issue of blood' in Matthew 9:20, KJV) of Christ—the healing Power—which is 'nearer to him' than his own '*Strength*'; and that 'Power' is 'the Love of Christ in and thro' Christ's Love of me'.⁶⁴ And yet what is emphasised throughout the passage is Coleridge's inability to get rid of the snake from that tainting '*spot*' of the heart. And the poison of the snake precludes him from feeling the love of God and from an 'entire union with God'. In 1 Corinthians 5: 7-8 (KJV), Paul said

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Clearly, Coleridge felt his struggle in purging out 'the old leaven' to become 'a new lump, as ye are unleavened'. What Paul is accentuating here, through metaphoric expression, is that the new lump bears the purity also found in men's initial innocence—'as ye are unleavened'. In Coleridge's terms, the purity of the new lump, which has gone through the abandoning of the old leaven, is virtuous. Yet, what he wants to find in himself is not the new composition of virtue, but the innocence of the old self that has, unfortunately, been tainted. It is no longer

⁶² Hughes, pp. 6-7.

⁶³ John Beer, *Coleridge's Play of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 251.

⁶⁴ '*Strength*' and '*Power*' in *CN*, III, 3324; *CN*, IV, 5275.

a child's heart which he holds, if anything, it is a 'child-like heart' instead. To describe the fine line between the two, we can look at the two definitions of innocence Coleridge suggests:

I stated the legal use of the word Innocent as opposed to mere *not guilty*, only to shew the Existence of a *Positive* in the former; by no means as confounding this use of the word with the moral pleasurable feeling connected with the word when used of little children, maidens, & those who in mature age preserve this sweet fragrance of vernal life, this Mother's Gift & so seldom kept Keepsake to her Child, as she send him forth into the World.⁶⁵

Coleridge does not employ 'the legal use of the word Innocent' in *Christabel*, though to those who have no innocence in their mind, this word may mean 'mere[ly] *not guilty*'. In a child's mind, or even in Christabel's mind, innocence has a 'sweet fragrance of vernal life', which she retains as she is sent forth by Geraldine into the fallen world. This innocence is a 'Mother's Gift & so seldom kept Keepsake to her Child'. This depiction of innocence as a 'Keepsake' reminds us of the flower, the 'Pledge', from 'Paradise' (a symbolic Eden) in the epigraph of this chapter. 'Aye? And what then?'—perhaps this 'Pledge' is just a 'Keepsake' and no more than that, for in a fallen world, as Coleridge tries to hold onto the state of innocence in recollection, such a state is no longer available in experience.

IV (PART II)

In part II of *Christabel*, Coleridge constructed a fallen world in which he seems to have no means to articulate his innocence, as Christabel, under Geraldine's spell, struggles to explain events. In such a world, *rage* and *death* are the prelude to and consequence of sin respectively. We have no trace of God's love or salvation, but endless suffering that makes the poem endless (unfinished). Yet, Coleridge still finds fulfilment and comfort of sorts for his wandering soul through the artistry of his verses.

The beginning of part II is curiously inauspicious, as audiences are told first and foremost about death:

⁶⁵ CN, III, 3321.

Each matin bell, the Baron saith,
 Knells us back to a world of death.
 These words Sir Leoline first said,
 When he rose and found his lady dead:
 These words Sir Leoline will say
 Many a morn to his dying day.
 And hence the custom and law began,
 That still at dawn the sacristan,
 Who duly pulls the heavy bell,
 Five and forty beads must tell,
 Between each stroke—a warning knell,
 Which not a soul can choose but hear
 From Bratha Head to Wyn'dermere. (ll. 319-330)

We are told in three rhyming couplets—‘saith’/ ‘said’/ ‘say’— about ‘death’/ ‘dead’/ ‘dying day’. Alluding to ‘The Ancient Mariner’, Coleridge writes ‘Which not a soul can choose but hear’ about the consequences of sinning. In Chapter 3, I have argued that the Mariner’s narrative to the wedding guest is part of his penance. *Christabel* hence serves as another tale of penance, which once again ends without the warmth of salvation. In the prophetic allegory of Bracy the bard, the ‘sinful sextons’ ghost’ were trying to remind their living brothers of their fate to remain sinful. Regrettably, admonitions are often neglected. The devils who reign in this sinful world thus laugh in mockery—‘The devil mocks the doleful tale / With’ the sounds of ‘a merry peal from Borrowdale’ (ll. 345-346). These lines echo a letter to Josiah Wedgwood on November 1800:

But immediately on my arrival in this country I undertook to finish a poem which I had begun, entitled *Christabel*, for a second volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*. I tried to perform my promise; but the deep unutterable Disgust, which I had suffered in the translation of that accursed *Wallenstein*, seemed to have stricken me with barrenness—for I tried & tried, & nothing would come of it. I desisted with a deeper dejection than I am willing to remember. The wind from Skiddaw &

Borrodale was often as loud as wind need be—& many a walk in the clouds on the mountains did I take; but all would not do—⁶⁶

While Yarlott remarks that ‘A striking feature of the above letter is Coleridge’s confession that the mountain wind—a sure stimulus usually for his creative energy—would no longer function for him’,⁶⁷ I would add that the loud winds resemble mockery (the word ‘peal’ is also commonly used as peals of laughter) to Coleridge. These sounds of mockery from the devils are the very subversion of Coleridge’s creative breezes. They endlessly speak to the poet’s ears of his insurmountable sinfulness—the ‘one spot’ in his heart at which the snake’s ‘Mouth touched’ and ‘inbreathed a weak incapability of willing it away’. The former ‘dejection’ that prevents him from writing is but a proof of his sin that mar the transcendent light ‘anterior to’ his mind from functioning. It is the poison of the serpent that paralyses his creative mind and prevents him from ever finishing the writing of *Christabel*.

As the new dawn comes after the devils’ mockery, Christabel slowly realises her sinfulness:

And Christabel awoke and spied
The same who lay down by her side—
O rather say, the same whom she
Rais’d up beneath the old oak tree!
Nay, fairer yet! And yet more fair!
For she belike hath drunken deep
Of all the blessedness of sleep!
And while she spake, her looks, her air
Such gentle thankfulness declare,
That (so it seem’d) her girded vests
Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.
“Sure I have sinn’d” said Christabel,
“Now heaven be prais’d if all be well!”
And in low faltering tones, yet sweet,
Did she the lofty lady greet

She shrunk and shudder’d, and saw again
(Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee,
Thou gentle maid! Such sights to see?)
Again she saw that bosom old,
Again she felt that bosom cold,
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound:
Whereat the Knight turn’d wildly round,
And nothing saw, but his own sweet maid
With eyes uprais’d, as one that pray’d.

The touch, the sight, had pass’d away,
And in its stead that vision blest,
Which comforted her after-rest,
While in the lady’s arms she lay,
Had put a rapture in her breast,

⁶⁶ *CL*, I, p. 643.

⁶⁷ Yarlott, p. 183.

With such perplexity of mind
As dreams too lively leave behind.

(ll. 357-373)

And on her lips and o'er her eyes
Spread smiles like light!

(ll. 441-456)

At first, the memory of that sinful night was still concealed from Christabel's consciousness. Yet, Christabel's fresh view of Geraldine disturbs her awakening mind, as guilt stirs and informs her of her sinful status. The active involvement of Christabel's will is indicated and sharpened through the free indirect discourse in lines 361-367, whereby Christabel's sexuality is projected upon her vision of Geraldine. This vision is conveyed with an implied sensuality of 'girded vests' which 'Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts'. The omniscient narrative, '(so it seem'd)', interjects the vision to alert audiences that such sensual vision is shaped through Christabel's imagination. Christabel is also aware of her own shaping influence upon her sight, thus realising "'Sure I have sinn'd'" in direct speech. It is fascinating to see Coleridge arranging such a moment of realization before 'a vision fell / Upon the soul of Christabel' (ll. 439-440) to remind her of the actual happenings later in lines 441-456. This is because her memory of the night's events challenges the subjective confession of 'I have sinn'd'. 'Ah, woe is me!' is a repetition of a line in the conclusion to part the first when Christabel was asleep. Yet here, Christabel is conscious of her sexuality as a form of passive sinfulness, for it is Geraldine who subjugates the verb to 'put a rapture in her breast'. In between these two passages, Christabel prays for forgiveness:

So quickly she rose, and quickly array'd

Her maiden limbs, and having pray'd

That He, who on the cross did groan,

Might wash away her sins unknown,

(ll. 374-377)

What is disturbing here is the epistemic modality used—'Might wash away her sins unknown'. One would expect a pious believer of Christianity, like Christabel, to have a stronger faith in Christ than that she 'Might' be forgiven, for to believe in God is to believe in his grace of salvation. In *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, St. Augustine states in a session on 'The Christian Faith Rests upon These Two Man: Adam and Christ' that:

But take the case of these two men. By one of them we are sold under the power of sin; by the other we are redeemed from sin. By the one we were cast down to

death; by the other we are set free for life. The former destroyed us in himself by doing his own will, not the will of him by whom he was created; the latter saved us in himself, not by doing his own will, but the will of him by whom he was sent. The Christian faith then truly consists in the influence of these two men. *For God is one; one too is the mediator between God and human beings, the man Christ Jesus* (1Tm 2:5), for *there is no other name under heaven given to human beings in which we can be saved* (Acts 4:12), and in him God established *the faith for all, raising him from the dead* (Acts 17:13). Therefore, without this faith, that is, without faith in the one mediator between God and human beings, the man Jesus Christ, without faith, I say, in his resurrection which God has established for all—which, of course, cannot be truly believed without his incarnation and death—without faith, then, in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, the Christian faith firmly holds that the righteous of old could not be set free from their sins and be justified by the grace of God so that they might be righteous.⁶⁸

By the grace of Christ who transcends death, Christabel *shall* be cleansed, yet by using the word ‘Might’, Coleridge reveals his uncertainty about, and his lack of confidence in, God’s grace. Coleridge leaves readers wondering whether he is in fact unsure of God’s salvation or unsure that salvation is deserved. The endless suffering of Christabel thereafter, despite this prayer, enhances this ambivalence. Once Christabel comes into consciousness of her sexuality and sin, should Geraldine still take the blame for compelling Christabel to Fall? Coleridge contrives to represent in *Christabel* an intriguing insight into the sense of passivity of sinning underlying the Augustinian remark that ‘By [Adam] we are sold under the power of sin’. Even without Geraldine, Christabel cannot escape from sinning due to Original Sin. This fate intensely problematizes God’s love, especially when there is a lack of confidence in God’s grace altogether. It speaks to a state of the poet’s mind in which the human is abandoned and lost in a fallen world with little hope of salvation.

Re-examining the role of Geraldine again at this point in part II of *Christabel*, Geraldine becomes more akin to what Newlyn argues as ‘at once Satan and Christabel’s fallen other’ with reference to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.⁶⁹ As the new dawn breaks, Geraldine wakes up ‘belike hath drunken deep / Of all the blessedness of sleep!’. The word ‘drunken’ is reminiscent of the ‘wine of virtuous powers’; it also suggests a vampiric quality of sucking

⁶⁸ Saint Augustine, pp. 447-48.

⁶⁹ Lucy Newlyn, *Paradise Lost and the Romantic Reader*, p. 170.

away Christabel's 'blessedness' and innocence. The appearances of Geraldine and Christabel in turn inform the nature of one another, instead of reflecting their own nature: Geraldine, as the Satanic figure, appears to be innocent and 'fair', whereas the innocent Christabel, now bearing the 'mark' of 'shame' and the 'seal' of 'sorrow', appears to have an evil countenance. As Barth argues, 'The fact that Geraldine is not simply evil nor Christabel simply good but both struggling within themselves implies that these two warring forces, the spirit and the flesh, are not meant to be in opposition'.⁷⁰ Whether we read part II through Miltonic symbols as does Newlyn, or through Barth's theological symbols, the commonality between these views is that oppositions are not resolved. Again, dynamism of opposite concepts fails to reconcile and to deliver Transcendence. This failure is manifested as the problem of evil in part II of *Christabel*, especially when Christabel seems to suffer more than she deserves after having prayed for forgiveness and an understanding of what her sin actually was. Previously, Coleridge has argued that the problem of evil can be solved through viewing evil dissonances as part of 'one intellectual Breeze' in 'Effusion XXXV' (1796). Later, in a notebook entry dated 28 October 1803, Coleridge states:

To return to the Question of Evil—woe to the man, to whom it is an uninteresting Question—tho' many a mind, overwearied by it, may shun it with Dread / and here, N.B scourge with deserved & loft Scorn those Critics who laught at the discussion of old Questions—God, Right & Wrong, Necessity & Arbitrement—Evil, &c—No! forsooth!—the Question must be new, *new spicy hot* Gingerbread, a French Constitution, a Balloon, change of ministry, [...] Something new, something *out* of themselves—for whatever is *in* them, is deep within them, must be *old* as elementary Nature. To find no contradiction in the union of old & novel, to contemplate the Ancient of Days with Feelings new as if they then sprang forth at his own Fiat—this marks the mind that feels the Riddle of the World, & may help to unravel it. But to return to the Question—the whole rests on the Sophism of imagining Change is a case of positive Substitution.—This, I fully believe, *settles* the Question /—The assertion that there is in the essence of the divine nature a necessity of omniform harmonious action, and that Order, & System / not number—in itself base & disorderly & irrational—/ define the creative Energy, determine & employ it—& that number is subservient to Order, regulated,

⁷⁰ Barth, "In the Midnight Wood", p. 80.

organised, made beautiful and rational, an object both of Imag[ination] & Intellect, by Order—this is no mere Assertion / it is strictly in harmony with the Fact, for the world appears so—& it is proved by whatever proves the Being of God—. Indeed, it is involved in the Idea of God.—⁷¹

If instead of opposites or differences, Coleridge conceives good and evil as changes that are part of ‘a necessity of omniform harmonious action’; the problem of evil could be solved as evil ‘is subservient to Order, regulated, organised, made beautiful and rational’. The ‘Idea of God’ is possible as Transcendence of opposites is ‘an object both of Imag[ination] & Intellect, by Order’. However, Christabel’s suffering in part II of the poem seems to far exceed the benevolent ‘Order’ of God, raising once again the rather unsettling problem of evil.

Since Christabel recalled the sinful vision (ll. 441-56), the narrative reveals several dramatic ironies that attend to Sir Leoline alongside the martyrdom of his daughter. The idea of Christabel’s martyrdom reaffirms her as a figure of suffering, as many critics argue, with reference to a January 1821 extract from *Table Talk*. In this extract, Coleridge comments on Richard Crashaw’s ‘A Hymn to the Name and Honour of the Admirable Saint Teresa’ lines 43-64:

These verses were ever present to my mind whilst writing the second part of ‘Christabel’; if, indeed, by some subtle process of the mind they did not suggest the first thought of the whole poem.⁷²

These lines of Crashaw’s poem centre upon the notion of martyrdom. In theology, martyrdom is addressed in Mark 8:34, KJV: ‘And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.’ As a footnote to this verse, Gerald Hammond and Austin Busch explain that ‘Take up his cross’ is ‘a vivid image of public execution’ which ‘refers primarily to persecution and martyrdom, although it may also figure radical self-denial more broadly understood’.⁷³ To follow Jesus is to be like Christ and to take up one’s cross, a powerful symbol of suffering. Barth agrees with Humphry House that the reference to

⁷¹ *CN*, I, 1622; adopted edits in Seamus Perry (ed.), *Coleridge’s Notebooks: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 262.

⁷² *TT*, II, p. 369.

⁷³ Gerald Hammond and Austin Busch (ed.), *The English Bible, King James Version*, A Norton Critical Edition, II: The New Testament and The Apocrypha (London: W. W. Norton, 2012), at p. 100n.

Crashaw's poem and to martyrdom are reasons for us to believe Gillman's account of Coleridge's plan to continue *Christabel*, 'that the original story, when fully told, would have had Christabel by her suffering defeat the power of evil personified by Geraldine, and thus save her lover'.⁷⁴ But the fact that *Christabel* remains unfinished gives a sardonic twist to this unfulfilled ending. The spiritual blindness of Sir Leoline intensifies Christabel's suffering. And to be devoid of the speech that helps resolve her father's spiritual blindness, Christabel lacks the glory and love that normally accompanies the noble and virtuous act of martyrdom. In lieu of love and glory, she finds only rage and a loveless father in her martyrdom.

The narrator makes the readers aware that Sir Leoline misreads the situation with Geraldine and his daughter three times. The first time is when 'The vision of fear, the touch and pain!' (l. 440) ails Christabel, and yet she could not have explained further:

Yet he, who saw this Geraldine,
 Had deem'd her sure a thing divine,
 Such sorrow with such grace she blended,
 As if she fear'd, she had offended
 Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid!
 And with such lowly tones she pray'd,
 She might be sent without delay
 Home to her father's mansion.

"Nay! (ll. 462-69)

How ironic the rhyme between 'Geraldine' and 'divine' is when Sir Leoline uttered 'Nay!' to the chance that might separate his daughter from danger 'without delay'. The pauses in 'As if she fear'd, she had offended / Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid!' creates softness and tenderness in the slowing rhythm, endearing and luring Sir Leoline towards the very source of danger. The second time is when Sir Leoline pays little heed to the allegorical prophetic dream of Bard Bracy, as Sir Leoline 'Half-listening heard him with a smile; '(l. 552) and mistakenly aligns Geraldine with the dove:

Then turn'd to Lady Geraldine,
 His eyes made up of wonder and love;

⁷⁴ Barth, "'In the Midnight Wood'", at p. 78.

And said in courtly accents fine,
 Sweet maid, Lord Roland's beauteous dove,
 With arms more strong than harp or song,
 Thy sire and I will crush the snake! (ll. 553-58)

With his misdirected affections, Sir Leoline's ears and eyes are bewitched by the evil Geraldine and he is, ironically, deaf and blind towards the truth. According to Barth,

In Coleridgean terms, Bracy exercises imagination, the reconciling and mediating faculty; Leoline can achieve only the work of fancy, which deals with "fixities and definites," which are all he can see in the world of death over which he presides. Bracy has "reason," which can see beyond the appearances of things, to conceive the spiritual idea beyond; Leoline is caught in the world of mere "understanding," the faculty "which judges according to sense."⁷⁵

Is Sir Leoline's impaired understanding caused by a lack of sensibility comparable to a bard? I think not. In the dream, Bard Bracy is eager to find out 'what the sweet bird's trouble meant' (l. 530), and so he 'stoop'd' to behold 'a bright green snake / Coil'd around its wings and neck.' (ll. 535-36). The action of stooping implies the activeness of Bard Bracy delving into the truth. By contrast, Sir Leoline's attitude towards discovering the truth is only that of 'half-listening'. The warning and the teaching is given, but the seed of truth does not take hold of his heart. Recalling the 'Parable of the Farmer Scattering Seed', Bracy's prophetic warning 'fell on shallow soil' (Matthew 13:5). Then comes the third time, when in a trance Christabel 'passively did imitate / That look of dull and treacherous hate' (ll. 592-93) of a serpent:

But when the trance was o'er, the maid
 Paus'd awhile, and inly pray'd,
 Then falling at her father's feet,
 "By my mother's soul do I entreat
 "That thou this woman send away!" (ll. 600-605)

⁷⁵ Barth, "In the Midnight Wood", p. 80.

Again he fails to listen fully, and misses again the opportunity to save his daughter from danger. Coleridge's juxtaposing of Bard Bracy and Sir Leoline leads us to the keyword 'wroth' or 'rage'—the theological prelude to sins and its consequence, death:

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

(ll. 395-400)

Within the Baron's heart and brain
If thoughts, like these, had any share,
They only swell'd his rage and pain,
And did but work confusion there.
His heart was cleft with pain and rage,
His cheeks they quiver'd, his eyes were wild,
Dishonour'd thus in his old age;
Dishonour'd by this only child,
And all his hospitality
To th' insulted daughter of his friend
By more than woman's jealousy,
Brought thus to a disgraceful end —

(ll. 623-34)

Lines 623-34 show the 'rage' of Sir Leoline in 'his old age' towards his daughter, which is anticipated by lines 395-400 through the emotion of 'wroth' exhibited to his friend 'in youth'; and together, these two sections of verse inform the audience of the repeated mistakes made by Sir Leoline. These particular repeated mistakes are universalised to represent the condition of mankind through the narrator's remark: 'And constancy lives in realms above; / And life is thorny; and youth is vain'. This tone of universality brings us back to Cain who also raged before killing his brother (Genesis 4:3-8, KJV):

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt

rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

Rage is the prelude to sin, as God said, 'sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him'. Symbolically, Geraldine is the sin 'at the door' and who, eventually, is chosen by Sir Leoline over his own daughter. From chapter 1 to chapter 11 in *Genesis*, sin enters the world through Adam, and even the great flood did not eradicate sins from the land (*Genesis* 8:21, KJV):

And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

But rage has created in Sir Leoline a 'hollow heart' (l. 407) after he broke off his friendship with Lord Roland. This 'hollow heart' is like Coleridge's 'cold hollow spot' (*CN*, IV, 5275) in 'boyhood'. Evil is the snake that sinks its teeth into this spot and occupies the hollow heart from Leoline's youth through to old age, fulfilling God's revelation that 'the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth'. Although Sir Leoline tries to repent, evil 'would not give *me* up', as Coleridge says in the notebook entry. Sir Leoline's 'hollow heart' is filled with 'rage and pain' (l. 625) that 'rent asunder' (l. 409) his familial love for Christabel. In 'wroth' against Christabel, Sir Leoline 'Led forth' Geraldine at the end of part II, signalling 'his dying day' (l. 324), as foretold in the beginning of part II.

Even though Geraldine is the source of supernatural evil power in part II of *Christabel*, what ails the hearts of readers, or even Coleridge's own mind, seems to be the suffering inflicted upon Christabel by Sir Leoline. The worst form of harm ever done to Christabel is not the tainting of her with sin but, in fact, having a father's love stripped away from her in a fallen world. If we, at this point, revisit lines 43-64 in Crashaw's 'A Hymn to Sainte Teresa' from which Coleridge quoted in 1821, the brief notion of noble suffering now seems to be undercut by a tone of mockery. Surveying the whole poem, Barth aptly argues that 'It is ultimately not martyrdom Teresa seeks but union with the beloved; Crashaw is concerned

above all not with death but with love'.⁷⁶ However, the lines Coleridge quoted are specifically at odds with the overall sense of the poem:

Since 'tis not to be had at home
 She'l travail to a Martyrdom.
 No home for hers confesses she
 But where she may a Martyr be.
 Sh'el to the Moores; And trade with them,
 For this unvalued Diadem.
 She'l offer them her dearest Breath,
 With CHRIST'S Name in't, in change for death.
 Sh'el bargain with them; and will give
 Them GOD; and teach them how to live
 In him: or, if they this deny,
 For him she'l teach them how to DY.
 So shall she leave amongst them sown
 Her LORD'S BLOOD; or at lest her own.
 FAREWEL then, all the world! Adieu.
 TERESA is no more for you.
 Farewell, all pleasures, sports, and joyes,
 (Never till now esteemed toyes)
 Farewell what ever deare may bee,
 MOTHER'S armes or FATHER'S knee
 Farewell house, and farewell home!
 SHE'S for the Moores, and MARTYRDOM. (ll. 43-64)⁷⁷

The rhyme between 'home' and 'martyrdom' embodies a movement from the home, where she used to have her 'MOTHER'S armes or FATHER'S knee', to another home 'where she may a Martyr be'. This movement is driven by a desire to die after being touched by love:

⁷⁶ Barth, "In the Midnight Wood", p. 79.

⁷⁷ Richard Crashaw, 'A Hymn to the Name and Honour of the Admirable Saint Teresa', in *The Poems, English, Latin and Greek of Richard Crashaw*, ed. by L. C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), pp. 317-321. All subsequent citations will be indicated by in-text line numbers.

Love touch't her HEART, and lo it beates
 High, and burnes with such brave heates;
 Such thirsts to dy, as daress drink up,
 A thousand cold deaths in one cup.
 Good reason. For she breathes All fire.
 Her weake brest heaves with strong desire
 Of what she may with fruitles wishes
 Seek for amongst her MOTHER'S kisses. (ll. 35-42)

Yet the 'burnes' and 'heates' seems to baffle 'Good reason'. Her feverish mind seems to impel her to incinerate her own life with 'fire' that she 'desire[s]'. No doubt she 'daress' to follow Jesus drinking up the cup of deaths, but is she not more impetuous than heroic, to carry out such a 'strong desire' when her 'weake brest' is devoid of capacity? The undercurrent of mockery pierces through the monosyllabic words, which are permeated with a strange sense of sexuality that pollutes the innocent desire for death.

Lines 43-64 that follow forms a vision of Martyrdom Teresa envisaged, in which she will 'trade' and 'bargain' with the Moores and bet her life on God. Robert Petersson suspects that 'Perhaps there is irony in this', for 'In such a transaction, life and death are not things to be traded but freely given and received'.⁷⁸ The dictions distorting martyrdom into a deal are cultivated from an immature thought: '[...] she thinks it shame / Life should so long play with that breath / Which spent can buy so brave a death.' (ll. 15-17). Together, 'buy', 'trade' and 'bargain' strike a dissonant chord with the expected sacrificial attire of martyrdom, as though to die is to fulfil that intrinsic desire for death only. A death facilitated by the Moores, who lend Teresa a 'Good reason'—an excuse in disguise—for martyrdom. The sarcastic tone of the farewell is emphatically bound up in its repetition (ll. 57-64): 'TERESA is no more for you', and 'Farewell what ever deare may bee, / MOTHER'S arms or FATHER'S knee'. It almost sounds like she wants to be missed, as she missed the love from home, thus in haste the narrative commands 'SHE'S for the Moores, and MARTYRDOM', lest otherwise she might flee. Of course, as Petersson points out, 'Then very quickly, in the second phase, the tone changes to almost paternal sympathy, with "Sweet, not so fast!"'.⁷⁹ Crashaw distinguishes this kind of Martyrdom conveyed in lines 43-64 from 'a milder MARTYDOM'

⁷⁸ Robert T. Petersson, *The Art of Ecstasy Teresa, Bernini, and Crashaw* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 114-15.

⁷⁹ Petersson, p. 118.

(l. 68), with Christ as her 'Spouse' (l. 65), to fulfil an aim 'more mysticall and high' (l. 75). It is fascinating to see, therefore, that Coleridge makes the *Table Talk* reference not to the milder martyrdom that seeks for love ultimately, but the extreme kind that obscures the love and glory associated with martyrdom by magnifying the terror and pain it incurs.

When Coleridge remarks that 'if, indeed, by some subtle process of the mind they did not suggest the first thought of the whole poem,'⁸⁰ he shows an awareness of how Teresa's martyrdom becomes a reflection of why *Christabel* remains as an unfinished fragment. This martyrdom in part II of *Christabel* has directed the poem away from Coleridge's 'first thought of the whole poem'. After scrutinising Crashaw's verses, the conclusion to part the second of *Christabel* (1816) suggests a whole new range of meanings that its 1801 context does not provide:

Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
Thoughts so all unlike each other;
To mutter and mock a broken charm;
To dally with Wrong, that does no Harm—⁸¹

The 'sentimental mock-heroism'⁸² within Teresa's farewell is but a 'broken charm' which Coleridge also finds in Christabel's suffering. From the ironic Fall of Christabel—'With CHRIST'S Name in't' ('A Hymn to Sainte Teresa', l. 50)—in part I, to the stagnated metamorphosis of becoming a virtuous woman in part II, God's benevolence was scarce, so, too, was Sir Leoline's love for his daughter. To be in a fallen world, the sexuality in language ('Her weake brest heaves with strong desire') undercuts the holiness of St. Teresa, as does the mark of shame and sorrow that undercuts and mutes the innocence of Christabel:

And what, if in a world of sin
(O sorrow and shame should this be true!)
Such giddiness of heart and brain
Comes seldom save from rage and pain,
So talks as it's most used to do. (ll. 660-64)

⁸⁰ *TT*, II, p. 369.

⁸¹ *CL*, II, pp. 728-29.

⁸² Petersson, p. 118.

The revision of 'And what if in a world of sin' (1801) into 'And what, if in a world of sin' (1816) reveals the tone of the verses shifting from the speculative to the definitive. The constancy of this realm is that it is a world of sin: 'And what', so hollow this short phrase is in meaning, and yet loaded with frustration, as the poet is unable to do anything other than witness the genealogy of sins repeating itself.

However, by revising 'Words of Wrong and Bitterness' (1801) into 'words of unmeant bitterness' (1816), Coleridge entreats his readers to look to the 'giddiness of heart and brain' (l. 662), as he has been, for the most part, too bitter and grim in *Christabel*:

Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty
 At each wild word to feel within,
 A sweet recoil of love and pity. (ll. 657-659)

At least, 'At each wild word' that inflicts and ails Christabel, 'A sweet recoil of love and pity' rebounds in our minds, like a thirst for Transcendence from 'within' the mind. This tenderness and 'pity' of a heart is 'pretty', especially 'in a world of sin'. Through the couplets in the conclusion of part II of *Christabel*, Coleridge brings back some form of salvation and comfort for himself through the pairs of rhyming sounds, which elide the dissonances of the 'sin' 'within'.

Chapter 7

Coda: The Rebirth of Transcendence

Critics, who are most ready to bring this charge of pedantry and unintelligibility, are the most apt to overlook the important fact, that besides the language of words, there is a language of spirits (*sermo interior*) and that the former is only the vehicle of the latter.

(*BL*, I, p. 290)

From the mid-1790s to 1817, Coleridge wrote many poems exploring the human capacity to perceive God, which he felt was an instinctive desire of human beings that also operated at the level of the intellect. Some of these poems, considered in previous chapters, contemplate a sense of unity and explicate the struggles involved in sustaining and recreating that unity. To perceive God is not so much a matter of our bodily senses, but rather an intellectual quest of our soul. This human capacity requires the harmony between our bodily senses and our intellect to produce a clearer understanding of the divine. The capacity to behold God is what we call, in the most generic use of the term, *Transcendence*; where its adjective *transcendent* is being used, the noun with which it modifies is often connected with the concept of God, whose existence is out of this world. For instance, the transcendent 'Joy' in 'Dejection: An Ode' is 'anterior to' our mind, as 'God's 'Idea' constitutes the very being of our mind, with Joy as part of our soul (chapter 5). This 'Joy' bears some attributes of God, just as does the soul. Coleridge thinks that they are the parts of our being which can transcend worldly death. As a capacity of the human mind, Transcendence means that we, as God's creations, are using all that we have to exercise our capacity to behold the Creator, even when God is infinitely greater than the measure of our comprehension. In other words, Coleridge thinks that we can know some truths, but not all, about God. Such truths partake of the Absolute Truth which is the whole of God. On these matters, Coleridge, his precursors and other Romantics could not agree about either the concept or the existence of God. For Coleridge, the Imagination is the faculty of the mind that carries and executes Transcendence.

Coleridge's theorisation of the Imagination happens in his famous two-volume prose work *Biographia Literaria* (1817). It is a work that is an accumulation of his thoughts and experience of reading and writing. For Coleridge, the Imagination is the faculty for

perceiving and creating unity and as such in many ways reflects his theology. Before we delve into Coleridge's theorisation of the Imagination in *Biographia*, readers will have formed, from the readings of poems in preceding chapters, a sense of the key features that suggest how the notion of Transcendence relates to Coleridge's conception of the Imagination. First, Coleridge's poems often discern truths through Imagination, as the poet is said to receive transcendent revelation (some truths about God) in the moment of creating. Second, in succession to the first, that even when poems are the products of pure imagination, Coleridge's understanding of the poet's ability to create is, by itself, an analogy of the Divine process of Creation: 'Ideas in the divine mind anterior to the Creation'.¹ Third, when those creative breezes struggle to strike a harmonious chord in Coleridge's poetry, the situation often bespeaks a fractured reality, in which the sinfulness of humanity accounts for their intellectual impediments to Transcendence in a world outside of Eden. These three cases are suggestive about those yearnings of the human mind to feel, to know and to understand our relationship with the Maker and, ultimately, to unite with whom we call God.

Critics of Romanticism are familiar with Coleridge's definition of the Imagination in *Biographia*, but not all give due consideration to the significance and relevance of Transcendence to the Imagination. Imagination does not have to link to Transcendence, but Coleridge introduces such a connection by regarding Transcendence as the highest purpose for the Imagination. In other words, to employ the Imagination for a quest into Transcendence (our capacity to perceive God) is considered by Coleridge as the highest purpose of our imaginative faculty: 'Tis the sublime of man, / Our noontide Majesty, to know ourselves / Parts and proportions of one wond'rous whole' ('Religious Musings' 1796, ll. 139-141). To recast Imagination in this way is an attempt to spell out Transcendence in *Biographia Literaria*, and to argue that the intrinsic value of Coleridge's Imagination is the realisation of Transcendence and its hope for our reunion with God. To illuminate this notion requires us to read beyond what Coleridge calls 'the language of the words' and to be alert to the fact that 'there is a language of spirits (*sermo interior*) and that the former is only the vehicle of the latter', as the epigraph of this chapter attests. This chapter prioritises an exploration into what is—the '*sermo interior*'² of—the Imagination, in order to explain how yearnings towards Transcendence directly shape what Coleridge considers to be the role of the Imagination, the highest vocation of a poet, and aesthetic judgements in *Biographia Literaria*, and other prose works written by Coleridge around the mid to late 1810s.

¹ CN, I, 1154

² The interior of the word.

Inspired by Coleridge's notion of 'sermo interior', my approach to an interpretation of the Imagination is twofold. I explain the system of Imagination as Coleridge puts it 'in the language of words', as well as scrutinise the 'spirits' of his prose which help define the Imagination in *Biographia*. It is the latter that suggests Transcendence to be the guiding Light 'anterior to' the human mind (a capacity planted in the human mind and created by God), and consequently is capable of influencing how Coleridge conceives of the Imagination. Part I focuses on the ways in which the 'spirits' in the defining words of the Imagination help us rethink what the Imagination is in *Biographia*. In part II, I map out the context in which Transcendence, for Coleridge, is reborn into the Imagination. Imagination here is considered a unifying faculty for Reason and Religion, despite the Enlightenment trends of philosophy which, at times, threaten to alienate Religion from Reason. In part III, I illustrate how the application of Coleridge's Imagination is practically voiced through his criticism on Wordsworth in *Biographia*. I argue that the 'first and only true Phil. Poem', *The Recluse*, which Coleridge expects Wordsworth to produce, would never come to be 'in existence' in the way Coleridge wants it to be.³ Coleridge's vision for *The Recluse* becomes a Romanticised version of Transcendence. This is a Romanticised version of Transcendence, because the vision of such a poem is a ceaseless quest to try to close the gap between idealisation and realism—the perfect intellectual union of mankind and God. Coleridge's vision is not achieved by Wordsworth's *Recluse*, and, indeed, may never be achieved, for the pursuit of such an ideal of Transcendence is a perpetual font to the ceaseless Imagination.

I

Coleridge divides the human creative capacity into three categories: the 'Primary Imagination', the 'Secondary Imagination' and 'Fancy'.⁴ What marks them as distinct from one another? What is the governing rule to such compartmentalisation? Do they affect one another in their actual application? An understanding of Coleridge's Imagination requires us to consider answers to these questions, as well as how each of these categories can be defined. This is because the organisation within Coleridge's Imagination turns out to have an implicit connection with the exploration of Transcendence. The operations of the Imagination are, with the underlying desire and purpose of such a faculty to behold God, shaped into being by the God they seek to apprehend. Consequently, the understanding of Transcendence through

³ *CL*, IV, p. 574.

⁴ *BL*, I, pp. 304-05.

the Imagination graces Imagination with its 'sermo interior'. Put differently, Transcendence marks the highest worth of what the faculty of Imagination can achieve.

Coleridge states that 'The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.'⁵ This category of Imagination is 'primary' to 'all human Perception' in the sense that every human has this basic capacity in their minds. This capacity is said to be 'living', as a perception is not a mere idea in the mind. It is received as, at once, the subjective idea and the objective existence. It is also said to be the 'prime Agent' of the will, as it actively controls our perception. The first half of Coleridge's definition of the 'primary imagination' is expressed in 'the language of words'; in the second half, he extends the first by drawing the 'spirits' of the words out into an analogy—and, as Robin Stockitt argues, with reference to the second half of the definition, that

In its creative power the primary imagination is reflective of and participates in the very creative imaginative powers of God. It repeats in the finite realm what God performs in eternity. The allusion to the infinite "I AM" draws strongly upon biblical imagery. The imagination, for Coleridge, was not merely the human tool for perception, a "lazy Looker-on on an external world." Rather, it possessed an active, creative, synthetic function of its own that mirrored the very actions of God.⁶

On the whole, Stockitt interprets Coleridge's 'primary imagination' in terms of its Platonic implications and argues that the basic form of imagination 'mirrored' God's act of creation. However, as Beth Lau argues, and as I have discussed in chapter 5, mirroring is still the product of the 'sensationalists',⁷ and is at risk of affiliating with the 'lazy Looker-on on an external world'. Stockitt's 'biblical' reading of the definition is nonetheless still important to my argument here. The 'infinite I AM' is a condition in which 'object and subject, being and knowing, are identical, each involving and supposing the other'.⁸ In this condition, the human Imagination can be employed as Transcendence—the capacity of the mind to perceive the Absolute Truth, God. This is because, in the state of the 'I AM', the subjective perception we

⁵ *BL*, I, p. 304.

⁶ Robin Stockitt, *Imagination and the Playfulness of God: The Theological Implications of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Definition of the Human Imagination* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011), p. 64.

⁷ Beth Lau, 'Coleridge's Reflective Moonlight', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 23.4, Nineteenth Century, 1983, pp. 535-48.

⁸ *BL*, I, p. 273.

create ‘in the finite mind’ coincides with the objective nature God creates; and the ‘repetition’ of our finite creative act possesses a quality of successiveness that coincides with God’s ‘eternal act of creation’. To phrase these coincidences of the two forces as one, Jonathan Wordsworth treats the ‘primary imagination’ as ‘an incarnation of the eternal in the finite, a personal reenactment of God’s original, and endlessly continuous, moment of self-naming’.⁹ The coincidences embodied in the ‘I AM’ not only becomes the ground for us to say that we know a tree exists as a perception, but as a material object that God created in the external world. More importantly, the ‘I AM’ is a condition where a window is opened in our mind with which we can transcend the material world and intuitively perceive the invisible Maker of that tree. Stockitt aptly claims that the ‘primary imagination’ ‘participates in the very creative imaginative powers of God’, but I would want to stress that Coleridge is not suggesting an elevation of human’s power to a God’s level. Coleridge’s analogy is not for displacing God’s creative act with the human Imagination as its semblance. The participation of God’s creative power is an expression of a state, where the holy will and the will of our mind coincides as the ‘prime Agent’ of perception. In this unity of the Will, the human mind is active (with a will to create) and passive (under the influence of the holy will). What we imagine therefore ‘re-enact[s]’ the Creation created by God. The ‘primary imagination’ is the faculty of human knowledge founded upon a belief that God is the Maker of the universe. And in the state of the ‘I AM’, this belief of the living God is reaffirmed in the perpetual coincidence of opposites in ‘all human Perception’. As for the ‘secondary imagination’, Coleridge states that:

The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.¹⁰

What does ‘an echo’ of the ‘primary imagination’ mean? Among various meanings of the noun ‘echo’, two senses are markedly fundamental to the semantics of this word—‘repetition’

⁹ Jonathan Wordsworth, ‘The Infinite I AM’, in *Coleridge’s Imagination*, ed. by Richard Gravil, Lucy Newlyn and Nicholas Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 22-52, at p. 24.

¹⁰ *BL*, I, p. 304.

and ‘imitative’.¹¹ The ‘secondary’ is essentially an imitative repetition of the ‘primary’. In a way, the secondary is more akin to the idea of mirroring, as ‘an echo’ is also reflexive in nature—if we think of an echoing sound for instance. The ‘secondary’ is an attempt to repeat the ‘primary’ through an imitative process of mirroring, yet such reflection is also a modification of the ‘primary’, not a mere copy of it. The mirrored image ‘re-creat[ed]’ by the ‘secondary imagination’ is thus different from its original (the ‘primary’) ‘in degree’. Jonathan Wordsworth argues that ‘If one asks the question which imagination is meant to seem more impressive, the drop in style, the common associations of ‘secondary’, the diminishment implied by the word “echo”, all point to the same conclusion’.¹² However, I do not think that Coleridge is necessarily comparing relative degrees of greatness between the ‘primary’ and the ‘secondary’ Imagination. Rather Coleridge stresses how the ‘secondary’ is dependent upon the ‘primary’. If the two vary ‘in the mode of its operation’ (with the ‘primary’ envisaging Truth in the ‘I AM’; and the ‘secondary’ mirroring such Truth with ‘conscious will’), they differ ‘in degree’ chiefly because the ‘primary’ is marked as the original of the ‘secondary’. The mirroring involved in the ‘secondary imagination’ is an active creative process that decomposes what God creates ‘in order to re-create’. The ‘secondary imagination’ turns the human mind into a kaleidoscope in this case.¹³ Even when the object is unchanging (‘fixed and dead’), the ‘secondary imagination’ gives the object a life and makes it ‘vital’ by two major steps. First, there is a complex kaleidoscopic act of mirroring that ‘dissolves, diffuses, dissipates’ the original perception of the object; and then the human mind remakes and reorders the parts of the original in order to bring out new meaningful forms and patterns. If such recreation is ‘rendered impossible’, we shall still find that the human mind strives to ‘idealise’ and to ‘unify’ the parts of the original into a whole of sorts. The ‘secondary imagination’ is therefore the desire of the human mind to re-innovate God’s original. It brings hope to the human mind through re-creating a sense of unity in the world in which we live.

For many critics, the relationship between the ‘primary’ and the ‘secondary’ imagination is a matter of their relative greatness, as though one is necessarily better or lesser than the other one. In fact, when Coleridge uses the word ‘degree’, the relative greatness is just one aspect of comparisons we can inspect. To specify in which dimension of comparison

¹¹ ‘echo, n.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2019 <www.oed.com/view/Entry/59326> [accessed 26 March 2019].

¹² Jonathan Wordsworth, ‘The Infinite I AM’, p. 25.

¹³ See Helen Groth, ‘Kaleidoscopic Vision and Literary Invention in an “Age of Things”’: David Brewster, Don Juan, and “A Lady’s Kaleidoscope”’, *ELH*, 74.1, 2007, pp. 217-37, at p. 221.

we explore the word ‘degree’ is rudimentary to our understanding of the Imagination. I argue that the word ‘degree’ is used by Coleridge to indicate the relative connection of his divisions. The power of the mind is divided into ‘Primary’, ‘Secondary’ and ‘Fancy’, based on a criterion of counteraction. As I have described, it is in the ‘primary imagination’ that God’s Creation is the original to which the human imagination aims to reach and coincide. In terms of the ‘secondary imagination’, the ‘primary’ is the original which the human imagination modifies to recreate; and Fancy is the last in ‘degree’, for it falls out of this pattern, and it ‘has no other counters to play with’¹⁴ —

The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.¹⁵

Compared to the Primary and Secondary imagination, Fancy is the regrouping of the existent by a wilful ‘choice’ of words. The ‘language of the words’ changes in Fancy, but the ‘sermo interior’ is not recreated from ‘Memory’. In each of these three kinds of the human creative capacity, the mind is actively operating, creating or choosing, even when the original materials employed by the mind are old, ‘fixed’ or ‘dead’. Each of these three kinds of capacity generates distinct products of the human mind. The relative greatness of Primary and Secondary Imagination may vary, but the claims made about their relative greatness are not in complete contradiction. Those critics who are inclined to think that the Secondary Imagination is greater and more important regard poetry as its product. For instance, I. A. Richards regards the products of the Primary Imagination to be ‘the usual world of the senses’, and ‘All the supernumerary perceptions’ to be the Secondary Imagination.¹⁶ James Engell argues that the Primary Imagination ‘is a reflex or instinct of the mind’, whereas the Secondary is the more crafty ‘poetic imagination’.¹⁷ Such critics value the Secondary more highly as a form of Imagination, because they foreground the human value of poetry. One notable exception is, Jonathan Wordsworth, who suggests that Coleridge implies the Primary to be a higher form through his use of expressive ‘grandeur’ in ‘*living Power*’, ‘*prime Agent*’,

¹⁴ *BL*, I, p. 305.

¹⁵ *BL*, I, p. 305.

¹⁶ I. A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1934), pp. 58-59.

¹⁷ *BL*, I, p. lxxxix.

‘all human Perception’.¹⁸ Nonetheless, Jonathan Wordsworth recognises a ‘drop in style’ in the definition of the Secondary Imagination, such as ‘the diminishment implied by the word “echo”’ (first raised by Jackson Bate and endorsed by Jonathan Wordsworth).¹⁹ For Jonathan Wordsworth, the relative greatness hinges on God’s creativity relative to human creativity, as the Primary is to perceive God’s creation, whereas the Secondary is a creative act echoing such perception. My following interpretation of the Primary and Secondary Imagination indicates that these seemingly conflicting critical approaches are less contradictory than may at first appear.

The ‘primary imagination’ is the most exalted form of human ‘Perception’, as *to perceive is to create* a version of God’s Creation in the mind. Transcendence, the human capacity to perceive the Absolute Truth (God), is reassured through the role of the ‘primary imagination’. Engell argues that ‘There is no originality in the primary imagination; it repeats and copies’.²⁰ Though it seems that the creativity involved in the ‘primary imagination’ is a reproduction of God’s original, it may be misleading to think of such creative process as merely copying. Instead of simply copying the Creation, the human will of the ‘primary imagination’ participates in the holy will of creation, thus the human mind partakes of God’s originality through the moment of perceiving. That the mind is actively creating in this Perception, not passively receiving is essential for differentiating a ‘sensationalist’ copy from an act of Imagination. (By a ‘sensationalist’ copy, I am borrowing the sense of the word from Beth Lau who specifies how mirroring shows only a copy of the appearance of an object, and only some sensory details are reproduced in such a ‘sensationalist’ copy; such copy is essentially not a perceptual transmission from the original, as light is transmitted through reflection.)²¹ In the ‘secondary’, the kaleidoscopic mirroring happens between the human ‘conscious will’ trying to imitate and recreate that sense of unity of the Will in the ‘primary imagination’. For Coleridge, it is natural that a philosophic mind desires oneness, for when we perceive the sublime unity of the Will in the ‘I AM’ of the ‘primary imagination’ we are in awe. The ‘secondary imagination’ is thus a creative act that aspires to originate the same unity. Jonathan Wordsworth argues that

With the primary imagination there had been no uncertainty, no envisaging of failure: the finite human mind had been said categorically to be capable of its

¹⁸ Jonathan Wordsworth, ‘The Infinite I AM’, p. 25.

¹⁹ Jonathan Wordsworth, ‘The Infinite I AM’, pp. 24-25.

²⁰ *BL*, I, p. xci.

²¹ Beth Lau, ‘Coleridge’s Reflective Moonlight’.

godlike act of creative perception. The febleness of struggling “at all events . . . to idealize” replaces a process that had been clearly and unwaveringly ideal. As Bate pointed out, the secondary imagination must inevitably be restricted in scope if it deals with materials that the human mind is able to unify. One cannot unify the universals.²²

The notion that the secondary imagination is ‘restricted in scope if it deals with materials that the human mind is able to unify’ does not seem to be a valid point. There must be an impulse behind why humans exercise the ‘secondary imagination’ as an imitation of the ‘primary’. For Coleridge, it is a natural impulse of the mind which desires to comprehend everything as a whole, not as scattered and meaningless parts. Unity can be deemed as the goal of this imitation, and this ideal is not limited to things that can be unified. This notion of restriction is somewhat against what Coleridge considered to be the natural instinct of the human mind to seek for the whole. What Jonathan Wordsworth marks as ‘the febleness of struggling’ is the evidence that no such restriction has ever applied. The ‘envisaging of failure’ in the ‘secondary imagination’ reflects Coleridge’s own experience in poetry writing, where the sense sublime, meaningful unity and harmony of the soul is under pressure. The ‘sermo interior’ of Coleridge’s struggling in the ‘secondary imagination’ speaks of a reality of sin in which absolute unity is hard to achieve, even momentarily, in the poetic process. And yet, we as readers can always detect Coleridge’s wish for the ideal of unity, which itself is analogous to religious yearnings towards the reunion between God and men—a transcendent desire with unity as its goal.

These three categories of capacity are like different facets of one creative power living in the human mind. Where the secondary is dependent upon the primary imagination, ‘fancy’ blends with them in the synthetic production controlled by one creative power. I. A. Richards quotes by far the best example of Coleridge’s notebook entry which showcases the application of the different facets of this one creative power:

One of the most noticeable and fruitful facts in Psychology is the modification of the same feeling by difference of form / The Heavens lift up my soul, the sight of the Ocean seems to widen it. We feel the same Force at work, but the difference from Body & Mind both that we should feel in actual travelling horizontally or in

²² Jonathan Wordsworth, ‘The Infinite I AM’, p. 25.

direct ascent, that we feel in fancy—for what are our feelings of this kind but a motion imagined? with the feelings that would accompany that motion less distinguished more blended, rapid, confused, & thereby coadunated—as white is the very emblem of one in being the confusion of all.

S. T. C.²³

This note (1804) precedes Coleridge's definition of the 'Imagination' and 'Fancy' in *Biographia*, yet it shows how perceiving, creating and feeling are all intermingled in a transcendent experience—'The Heaven lifts up my soul, the sight of the Ocean seems to widen it'. In this experience, Imagination and Fancy are synthesised into one power of the mind, carrying with it a transcendent connection between the earthly realm and the 'Heaven' in the moment of the creative act.

II

Why does it matter if Transcendence is transfused with Coleridge's Imagination? The compelling reason is rooted in the wider context in which Coleridge ventures to define the human creative capacity in *Biographia*. Coleridge's definitions far exceed the famous two passages of the *Biographia*, as these key definitions also serve as a concluding result of volume one, where volume one and *The Statesman's Manual* (1816) present an elaborate argument that tries to unify religion and reason. In this part, I illustrate the ways in which Coleridge establishes his system of reason for religion, so as to argue that it is his yearnings for Transcendence that instigate his definitions of the Imagination.

In Kantian philosophy, Transcendence is commuted into Transcendentalism for Kant finds the former too speculative for a philosopher to avow universally. It is true that Coleridge is not using the word Transcendence much either, and this is clearly a Kantian influence on him, in the sense that a true religion has to maintain integrity in reason. But it would be rather misleading if we were to equate Coleridge's transcendental system in *Biographia* to Kant's Transcendentalism. What allows qualities of Transcendence to be reborn in *Biographia*, despite Kant's influence, is 'Coleridge's distinction between reason

²³ CN, II, 2357; Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination*, p. 73.

and understanding' as Thomas McFarland meticulously argues.²⁴ As McFarland describes, 'Where for Kant the understanding worked with materials supplied by the senses, while the reason had no separate source of material but could work only with what the understanding supplied to it', Coleridge is more akin to Jacobi who thinks that 'reason, like understanding, had direct access to intuitive knowledge, but in this instance not intuitive knowledge of sense data but intuitive knowledge of God'.²⁵ In other words, Kantian interpretation of pure reason is inadequate for Coleridge. To explain why this is the case we must make recourse to Coleridge's own insistence on the possibility of 'intuitive knowledge of God' through reason. As McFarland points out that

The French Enlightenment, the so-called Age of Reason, is the true background of Coleridge's discrimination of reason and understanding, and the true background as well of the urgency of his emphasis on reason. The "reason" which Coleridge made the keystone of his philosophy was far more deeply involved with "la raison" than with "die Vernunft". The continuing agenda of Coleridge's philosophical life was an attempt to defend Christianity against the rationalism of the French Enlightenment, and his use of German thought was merely instrumental in this larger venture.²⁶

This context is crucial for an interpretation of Coleridge's Imagination and defence of religion, which is the very impulse, contra to irreligious Enlightenment reason, for him to rework a system of reason in *Biographia*. The Imagination is given the concluding remark of in the Coleridgean system of reason built up throughout volume one of *Biographia*. This is because Coleridge regards the Imagination as that one power of the human mind which unifies religion with reason. This is the very purpose of Coleridge coining the word 'esemplastic'²⁷, de-familiarising readers from the ordinary understanding of Imagination, to stress his re-definition of it as essentially 'having the function of moulding into unity'.²⁸ It is against this backdrop that the Imagination can be understood as a new rational power which

²⁴ Thomas McFarland, 'Aspects of Coleridge's Distinction between Reason and Understanding', in *Coleridge's Visionary Languages: Essays in Honour of J. B. Beer*, ed. by Tim Fulford and Morton D. Paley (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), pp. 165-80.

²⁵ McFarland, 'Aspects of Coleridge's Distinction between Reason and Understanding', p. 177.

²⁶ McFarland, 'Aspects of Coleridge's Distinction between Reason and Understanding', p. 169.

²⁷ *BL*, I, p. 295.

²⁸ 'esemplastic, adj.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2019 <www.oed.com/view/Entry/64343> [accessed 26 March 2019].

Coleridge employed as an advancement of Transcendence. To trace Transcendence in the Imagination is at the heart of how and why Coleridge ‘defend[s] Christianity against the rationalism of the French Enlightenment’. Yearnings for Transcendence are first channelled into Coleridge’s conception of Reason which permits an ‘intuitive knowledge of God’. In this sense, Coleridge’s philosophy is one that ‘would pass into religion’.²⁹ In Coleridge’s system of Reason, Kantian Transcendentalism, which only avows the knowledge of pure reason, is commingled with the transcendent intuitive knowledge. Coleridge states in the margin of Kant’s *Vermischte Schriften* that

All we can or need say is, that the existence of a necessary Being is so transcendently Rational, that it is Reason itself—and that there is no other form under which this Being is contemplable but that of a holy and intelligent Will—admit this and all is solved—deny it, all is darkness—substitute any Form, and we have a chaos of absurdities.³⁰

With McFarland’s distinction between Reason and Understanding as the foundation, I argue that Coleridge’s ultimate goal of reason is in fact religion, so the Imagination emerges as the one power that unifies reason with religion. The overarching argument Coleridge has in mind to defend Christianity, in the light of the Enlightenment, is a notion of one power. This one power is the human capacity to know some truths of God. In *The Statesman’s Manual*, readers encounter this one power in ‘Appendix C’ when Coleridge states that ‘Reason and Religion differ only as a two-fold application of the same power’.³¹ I argue that this power is, eventually, the Imagination in *Biographia Literaria*; in other words, through Imagination, ‘Reason and Religion’ can be reconciled. Reason is to Coleridge the natural desire within human to seek oneness; and for this desire, men falls—as when we struggle to unify, we may arrive at heterodoxies:

The Reason first manifests itself in man by the *tendency* to the comprehension of all as one. We can neither rest in an infinite that is not at the same time a whole, nor in a whole that is not infinite. Hence the natural Man is always in a state either

²⁹ *BL*, I, p. 283.

³⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by Roberta Florence Brinkley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1955), p. 128. This is an ‘unpublished marginal note on second flyleaf, recto, of Vol. II’ of Kant’s *Vermischte Schriften*. (p. 128n)

³¹ *SM*, p. 59.

of resistance or of captivity to the understanding and the fancy, which cannot represent totality without limit: and he either loses the ONE in the striving after the INFINTE, (i.e. Atheism with or without polytheism) or the INFINITE in the striving after the ONE, (i.e. anthropomorphic monotheism.)³²

The rational instinct, therefore, taken abstractedly and unbalanced, did *in itself*, (“ye shall be as gods!” Gen. iii. 5.) and in its consequences, (the lusts of the flesh, the eye, and the understanding, as in verse the sixth,) form the original temptation, through which man fell: and in all ages has continued to originate the same, even from Adam, in whom we all fell, to the atheists who deified the human reason in the person of a harlot during the earlier period of the French Revolution.³³

Coleridge’s Edenic vision of Reason disassociates him from Enlightenment Reason. Describing the Reason as ‘the *tendency* to the comprehension of all as one’, Coleridge explains the reality of sin as an imbalance of our ‘rational instinct’. In a sense, humanity’s tendency to sin is, for Coleridge, a natural defect of our uncontrolled Reason. In this interpretation of reason, Coleridge regards ‘Religion’ as the application of ‘the same power’ that ‘assigns the due limits, and is the echo of the “voice of the Lord God walking in the garden”.’³⁴ This voice, derived from Genesis 3:8, is the voice Adam and Eve heard after the Fall and drives them, subsequently, to hide themselves from God.³⁵ The voice is an imagery of alert and a reminder of God’s omniscient eye’ that is offered to the mind through ‘Religion’. Aligning ‘Religion’ as ‘the due limit’ of ‘Reason’, Coleridge conceives this one power as a self-sustaining balance between the ‘One’ and the ‘Infinite’ for Truth. This one power of the mind is equally Coleridge’s attempt to untie the long-standing Spinozistic knot in his head concerning how the one God and our experience of the multiplicity of this sensory world can be reconciled.

In what way is this one power similar to the ‘esemplastic power’ of the human mind? Coleridge suggests that one can observe from the works of Art the unity between Reason and Religion. In a straightforward way, Coleridge defines Reason as ‘the science of the *universal*’,³⁶ whereas Religion is ‘the consideration of the particular and Individual’.³⁷ The

³² *SM*, p. 60.

³³ *SM*, p. 61.

³⁴ *SM*, p. 62.

³⁵ *SM*, p. 62n.

³⁶ *SM*, p. 59.

³⁷ *SM*, p. 62.

unity of Reason and Religion is in turn manifested as ‘the union of the Universal and the Individual’ in ‘the Fine Arts’:³⁸

In this union, moreover, is contained the true sense of the IDEAL. Under the old Law the altar, the curtains, the priestly vestments, and whatever else was to represent the BEAUTY OF HOLINESS, had an *ideal* character: and the Temple itself was a master-piece of Ideal Beauty.³⁹

The ‘Ideal Beauty’ that we can observe in ‘the Fine Arts’ is an experience through which Coleridge locates the ‘esemplastic power’, i.e. the Imagination is *a priori* to such experience of unity in Arts. In this framework, Coleridge points to the Imagination as the unifying power for Reason and Religion. A product of the Arts crystallises how the mind fashions our perceptive experience into being. The emphasis here is on how the mind moulds our senses into being, so that the mind is actively engaged and not merely ‘a lazy Looker-on on an external World’.⁴⁰ It is in this sense that Transcendence is the glow of ‘the BEAUTY OF HOLINESS’, which transfuses into the Imagination and its capacity to create in order to perceive God. Coleridge describes this scenario in *Biographia* as the counteraction between the ‘active’ (to create) and the ‘passive’ (to perceive) of ‘an intermediate faculty’, ‘the IMAGINATION’.⁴¹

To see the Imagination as ‘an intermediate faculty’ capable of reconciling ‘Reason and Religion’, Coleridge assigns the power of transcendent possibilities to the Imagination as a faculty of the mind. McFarland positions ‘Coleridge’s distinction between reason and understanding’ as a deviation from Kantian philosophy and alignment with Jacobi’s ideas. McFarland, however, does not explore the ‘intermediate’ between Coleridge’s distinction of reason and understanding. In *The Statesman’s Manual*, Coleridge explains his epistemology first by delineating Reason and Religion: Reason is ‘the science of the *universal*’ which yields ‘the knowledge of the laws of the WHOLE considered as ONE’;⁴² Religion is ‘the consideration of Particulars and Individual’⁴³ which ‘suppl[ies] the rules and constitute the possibility of EXPERIENCE’.⁴⁴ Put differently, Reason is a commonality in the human mind,

³⁸ *SM*, p. 62.

³⁹ *SM*, p. 62.

⁴⁰ *CL*, II, 709.

⁴¹ *BL*, I, pp. 124-25.

⁴² *SM*, p. 59.

⁴³ *SM*, p. 62.

⁴⁴ *SM*, p. 59.

which contains a universal vision of the One, whereas Religion is a personal faith, and our understanding of this faith controls how we feel and experience the world. Of course, our understanding has functions other than religious purpose, but Coleridge regards Religion to be ‘the excellence of the *Understanding*’.⁴⁵ The highest worth of the human understanding is Religion. Kant’s Transcendentalism and pure reason comes into Coleridge’s account as a mediating position between Reason and Religion, i.e. the consideration of the ‘Individual’ as ‘it exists and has its being in the Universal’.⁴⁶ This position reminds us of what Abrams calls, ‘the irreducible minimum of the Christian creed within an essentially secular metaphysical system’.⁴⁷ In other words, Kant’s pure reason aims to find out what is universal to our individual’s subjectivity. Coleridge’s Imagination is inspired by Kant’s mediatory pure reason, but the Imagination is more ambitious in bridging Reason with Religion. Coleridge’s Imagination looks for Transcendence in the human understanding—that is, it explores the laws and rules of Transcendence, as well as the possibility of transcendent experience.

From my account of Coleridge’s Reason and Understanding, we can start to sense that the purpose of *Biographia* is an expansion of the ‘intermediate faculty’ which, in philosophy, is pure reason and, in literature, is the Imagination. This conjecture is confirmed when Coleridge states that, partly, his plan for *Biographia* is to be ‘the application of the rules, deduced from philosophical principles, to poetry and criticism’.⁴⁸ Read in conjunction with *The Statesman’s Manual*, it is possible to conceive the purpose of *Biographia* as Coleridge’s attempt to extend Kant’s transcendental pure reason into his transcendent Imagination. Coleridge’s Imagination is an advancement concerning the intermediate function of the human intellect between Reason and Religion, as the Imagination can offer more transcendent knowledge than Kant’s pure reason dares to avow. Coleridge’s attempt carries with it an impulse to defend Christianity. Old school transcendent philosophy is ‘justly condemned’⁴⁹ by Kant to be speculative, but Coleridge has never truly deserted the transcendent spirit, due to his religious impulse. Coleridge’s Transcendence is reborn into the Imagination as he begins his theory of Imagination with a sense of transcendental pure reason and inches towards the possibility of the ‘intuitive knowledge of God’ and transcendent experience. The Imagination is a greater step forward from Reason towards Religion. The

⁴⁵ *SM*, p. 62.

⁴⁶ *SM*, p. 62.

⁴⁷ M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), p. 67.

⁴⁸ *BL*, I, p. 5.

⁴⁹ *BL*, I, p. 237.

‘sermo interior’ of the ‘Imagination’ in *Biographia* is thus crucial for explaining what the ‘intuitive knowledge of God’ is. The ‘intuitive knowledge of God’ is the key conceptual contribution Coleridge made to the epistemological balance between Reason and Religion.

In *Biographia*, Coleridge depicts the ‘intuitive knowledge’⁵⁰ of God in an allegorical manner that allows religious Light to shine through:

The first range of hills, that encircles the scanty vale of human life, is the horizon for the majority of its inhabitants. On *its* ridges the common sun is born and departs. From *them* the stars rise, and touching *them* they vanish. By the many, even this range, the natural limit and bulwark of the vale, is but imperfectly known. Its higher ascents are too often hidden by mists and clouds from uncultivated swamps, which few have courage or curiosity to penetrate. To the multitude below these vapors appear, now as the dark haunts of terrific agents, on which none may intrude with impunity; and now all *a-glow*, with colors not their own, they are gazed at, as the splendid palaces of happiness and power. But in all ages there have been a few, who measuring and sounding the rivers of the vale at the feet of their furthest inaccessible falls have learnt, that the sources must be far higher and far inward; a few, who even in the level streams have detected elements, which neither the vale itself or the surrounding mountains contained or could supply.⁵¹

Here, ‘the natural limit and bulwark of the vale’ represents the blurry and indeterminate threshold of human knowledge. The ‘higher ascents’ of the mountain ranges that are obscure to human knowledge points to the ultimate knowledge of God from which humans are veiled ‘by mists and clouds’. These ‘higher ascents’ refer to the area of human knowledge that is ‘uncultivated’. Yet Coleridge argues that the Imagination is a human capacity that allows us to gain ‘intuitive knowledge’ of this ‘uncultivated’ area of Truth. This is because the human intuition resembles the pure reason, as they both are ‘intermediate’ between the universal Reason and the individual Religion. The human intuition is subjective, thus intuitive knowledge is essentially individual to oneself; but intuition as a human capacity is universal, as everyone who looks into his or her own being would have a religion, even those who are irreligious or atheistic are counted as possessing possible forms of conviction or belief

⁵⁰ *BL*, I, p. 239.

⁵¹ *BL*, I, pp. 237-39.

phenomenally. This interpretation helps us to comprehend why Coleridge would describe the ‘intuitive knowledge’ of God as though it is only for a few people. Far from suggesting any form of elitism, Coleridge is aware of the phenomenal fact that not everyone would venture into the intuitive knowledge of God, even if we all have the same organs to support the same discovery of intuitive knowledge. Those ‘few’ people who ‘have courage or curiosity to penetrate’ into the depth of the unknown shall behold ‘the sources’, further boundaries that are closer to the Absolute Truth of God which is ‘far higher and far inward’. In this very passage, the intuitive knowledge of God is the pure reason which is *a priori* to his sensory experience with nature. The response of Coleridge’s imagination to nature becomes an analogy of Truth, as his ‘intuitive knowledge’ of God suggests.

The ‘intuitive knowledge’ of God not only marks Coleridge’s own differences from Kant’s pure reason, it also differentiates Coleridge’s Imagination from Wordsworth’s ‘The vision and the faculty divine’, which Coleridge deems to be ‘discursive’.⁵² What does Coleridge mean when he subtly criticises Wordsworth’s ‘faculty divine’ to be ‘discursive’? *The Statesman’s Manual* may provide a hint, when Coleridge describes what is meant by ‘the *discursive* understanding’.⁵³ Coleridge states that

the *discursive* understanding [...] forms for itself general notions and terms of classification for the purpose of comparing and arranging phaenomena, the Characteristic is Clearness without Depth. It contemplates the unity of things in their limits only, and is consequently a knowledge of superficialities without substance.⁵⁴

It seems that Coleridge finds Wordsworth’s ‘faculty divine’ in *The Excursion* to be not transcendent enough for him, when Wordsworth could have looked ‘far higher and far inward’, as it were, adding ‘Depth’ to *The Excursion*. With reference to Plotinus’s *Ennead*, Coleridge explicates such depth of ‘self-intuition’ to be the essence of intuitive knowledge:

[Plotinus] says: “it is not lawful to enquire from whence it sprang, as if it were a thing subject to place and motion, for it neither approached hither, nor again departs from hence to some other place; but it either appears to us or it does not

⁵² *BL*, I, p. 241.

⁵³ *SM*, p. 69.

⁵⁴ *SM*, p. 69.

appear. So that we ought not to pursue it with a view of detecting its secret source, but to watch in quiet till it suddenly shines upon us; preparing ourselves for the blessed spectacle as the eye waits patiently for the rising sun.” They and they only can acquire the philosophic imagination, the sacred power of self-intuition, who within themselves can interpret and understand the symbol, that the wings of the air-sylph are forming within the skin of the caterpillar; those only, who feel in their own spirits the same instinct, which impels the chrysalis of the horned fly to leave room in its involucre for antennæ yet to come. They know and feel, that the *potential* works in them, even as the *actual* works on them! In short, all the organs of sense are framed for a corresponding world of spirit; tho’ the latter organs are not developed in all alike. But they exist in all, and their first appearance discloses itself in the *moral* being.⁵⁵

In this passage, Coleridge reaffirms for us that ‘the organs of sense’ are universal, but ‘the organs of spirit’ are universally individual (different across individuals). That every man has the ‘eye’ to behold the ‘sun’ is one thing, but those with ‘the philosophic imagination, the sacred power of self-intuition’ can behold the spirit of the ‘sun’, its ‘sermo interior’, as the very symbol of God. The metamorphosis of ‘the caterpillar’ is analogous to one’s introspective (‘self-intuitive’) knowledge of God’s creative will upon their own being. The ‘highest and intuitive knowledge’⁵⁶ is therefore to perceive ourselves as the Creation of God. Intuitive knowledge involves the speculative realisation of ‘the *potential* works’ of God in us, and the practical realisation of ‘the immediate reality’ which assures our ‘intuitive knowledge’ of ‘the *actual* works’ in us.⁵⁷ The ‘intuitive knowledge’ of God, which is extended from the pure reason of our intellect, supplies Coleridge’s definition of the Imagination in chapter 13 of *Biographia* with its ‘sermo interior’.

III

The rebirth of Transcendence through the Imagination is Coleridge’s theoretical achievement. But when it comes to the actual application of the Imagination for the purposes of Transcendence, we see the poet passing on his own vision to Wordsworth, whom Coleridge

⁵⁵ *BL*, I, pp. 241-42.

⁵⁶ *BL*, I, p. 241.

⁵⁷ See *BL*, I, p. 252 for ‘speculatively’ and ‘practically’; p. 278 for ‘the immediate reality’.

considers most likely to achieve what he himself could not. I argue that the actual work which Coleridge has been waiting for to be the best exemplar of his age in demonstrating the ‘sermo interior’ of his theory of Imagination is Wordsworth’s *Recluse*. Coleridge imagines *The Recluse* to express, what Coleridgeans usually call, the organic unity, among a group of works, including *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*. *The Recluse* was never finished, and Coleridge explains his disappointments in *Biographia* about the one part of the existing work, *The Excursion*. Coleridge’s expectations for *The Recluse* therefore become the remaining clues for readers to apprehend what the rebirth of Transcendence into the Imagination actually may look like in the ‘first and only true Phil. Poem in existence’.⁵⁸ Coleridge wishes that the organic unity of *The Recluse* would spring up a tree of Life, communicating a part of the transcendent Truth intuitive to the human mind. This version of Transcendence is an idealistic one as *The Recluse*, within Coleridge’s mind, appears to be an ideal unachieved in reality. But Coleridge’s vision of *The Recluse* is remarkable in terms of the forward-looking vision of Transcendence it brings forth.

Critics have not paid enough attention to the intellectual value of Coleridge’s expectations upon *The Recluse*, which I aim to illuminate, in due course, in relation to the rebirth of Transcendence in *Biographia*. A brief discussion of why this idea is under-discussed is first necessary. One reason is that critics often emphasise *Biographia* as a work dependent upon Wordsworth’s earlier works. George Whalley argues that Wordsworth is the centre of ‘integrity of *Biographia Literaria*’, as he traces how Wordsworth’s writings and his deteriorating friendship with Coleridge lead to the genesis of *Biographia*.⁵⁹ Developing Whalley’s study, Lawrence Buell proposes to examine *Biographia* ‘as a kind of counter-*Prelude*, in effect if not in intent’.⁶⁰ Whalley argues that ‘Wordsworth’s Preface of 1800 (revised 1802, 1805)’, ‘the Appendix added in 1802’ to *Lyrical Ballads*, and ‘the 1815 *Poems*’, are the major works that impel Coleridge’s writing of *Biographia*.⁶¹ As for Buell, he comments that ‘Coleridge seeks to base criticism on sound principles, but his critique of Wordsworth finally amounts to a questioning of the possibility of such a criticism’.⁶² While these studies excel at keeping in line with Coleridge’s Romantic ideal of unity in a work ‘so immethodical a miscellany’, the process of involving Wordsworth as the glue for a unity of

⁵⁸ *CL*, IV, p. 574.

⁵⁹ George Whalley, ‘The Integrity of *Biographia Literaria*’, *Essays & Studies*, 6, 1953, pp. 87-101.

⁶⁰ Lawrence Buell, ‘The Question of Form in Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria*’, *ELH*, 46.3, 1979, pp. 399-417, at p. 402.

⁶¹ Whalley, ‘The Integrity of *Biographia Literaria*’, p. 94.

⁶² Buell, p. 413.

sorts often engenders unintended consequences.⁶³ Raimonda Modiano describes these unintended consequences to be the wave of studies in ‘the late 1970s and early 1980s’ which try ‘to overturn the unfavourable view of Wordsworth generated by Coleridge’ in *Biographia*, ‘exposing his critique as largely inaccurate, transparently hostile, and based on principles that were incongruous with Wordsworth’s views on poetry and poetic practice’.⁶⁴ If Coleridge’s critique of Wordsworth is taken as misreading only, it is not hard to comprehend why there is not much exploration into the intellectual worth of his critical discussion of Wordsworth. Modiano states that ‘Many critics have expressed a manifest distaste for Coleridge’s theory of organic art on the ground that it misrepresents the actual “process by which poems have to be produced” (Bloom 1972:265)’.⁶⁵ Buell objects to this critical narrative, as he argues that *Biographia* is a ‘self-conscious “critique” of Coleridge’ himself, ‘of the theory of organic unity’.⁶⁶ Buell may have excused Coleridge from the accusation of ‘misrepresent[ing]’, but the ‘manifest distaste for Coleridge’s theory of organic art’ is not overturned in a ‘self-conscious “critique”’. I suggest that the impracticality of Coleridge’s organic unity in poetry does not take away the intellectual value of the theory itself. Coleridge’s expectations of *The Recluse* convey the visionary application of Transcendence—the ‘sermo interior’ of Coleridge’s Imagination. The fact that this vision of *The Recluse* was never realised, perhaps, is suggestive of the on-going struggles of the human mind to achieve any sense of transcendent unity.

Right after the definition of ‘the philosophic imagination, the sacred power of self-intuition’ in the first volume of *Biographia*, Coleridge offers an extensive critique of Wordsworth in the second volume.⁶⁷ The continuity from Coleridge’s notion of the Imagination and his critique of Wordsworth is actually a matter of application: ‘the FIRST GENUINE PHILOSOPHIC POEM’ is the ultimate product of Coleridge’s notion of Imagination, which Wordsworth is envisaged by Coleridge to be ‘capable of producing’.⁶⁸ This vision of a ‘philosophic poem’ ties in with Coleridge’s disappointment towards *The Excursion* which is a part of *The Recluse*. Coleridge and Wordsworth envision *The Recluse* to be very different. To Wordsworth, *The Recluse* is a collection of poems that he has

⁶³ *BL*, I, p. 88.

⁶⁴ Raimonda Modiano, ‘Coleridge as Literary Critic: *Biographia Literaria* and *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism*’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Frederick Burwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 204-34, at p. 211.

⁶⁵ Modiano, ‘Coleridge as Literary Critic’, p. 215.

⁶⁶ Modiano, ‘Coleridge as Literary Critic’, p. 216.

⁶⁷ *BL*, I, p. 241.

⁶⁸ *BL*, II, p. 156.

undertaken to write in response to Coleridge's demand for 'a philosophic poem', according to Wordsworth's Preface to *The Excursion*.⁶⁹ Wordsworth portrays them in an image of an architectural establishment: *The Prelude*, which is 'the preparatory Poem', and *The Excursion*, which is subtitled 'Being a Portion of *The Recluse*, a Poem';⁷⁰ *The Prelude* and *The Recluse* therefore 'have the same kind of relation to each other [...] as the Anti-chapel has to the body of a gothic Church', whereas 'the minor pieces' are 'likened to the little Cells, Oratories, and sepulchral Recesses, ordinarily included in those Edifices'.⁷¹ To Coleridge, *The Recluse* is not a complex of individual establishments, but an organic whole which he discusses in detail in a letter to Wordsworth (22 May 1815). If we explore Coleridge's idealistic plan for *The Recluse*, we may gain access to an imagined sketch of a poem that helps us to consolidate the concept of Transcendence.

This letter is the most detailed description of what a philosophical poem meant to Coleridge. It foretells the actual yardstick of Truth with which Coleridge measures Wordsworth's poetic language in *Biographia*. Wordsworth learnt from Lady Beaumont that Coleridge criticised his work in a letter dated 3 April 1815.⁷² Wordsworth thus wrote to Coleridge, 22 May 1815, in response to the criticism he knew of from Lady Beaumont:

I have rather been perplexed than enlightened by your *comparative* censure. One of my principal aims in the Exn: has been to put the commonplace truths, of the human affections especially, in an interesting point of view; and rather to remind men of their knowledge, as it lurks inoperative and unvalued in their own minds, than to attempt to convey recondite or refined truths.⁷³

We can see from this letter that Coleridge has taken Wordsworth's own words to be the reason why he targets Wordsworth's notion of 'real' language of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* in *Biographia*. The 'modifying colours of imagination' is to 'put the commonplace truths [...] in an interesting point of view', which is different from offering 'recondite or refined truths' that are at risk of falsehood. In *Biographia*, Coleridge re-interprets what is meant by the 'real language of men' in the most literal way possible. Such an interpretation is Coleridge's philosophical method to test if poetic language conforms to 'the commonplace

⁶⁹ William Wordsworth, *The Excursion and The Recluse*, ed. by Jared Curtis (Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks, 2014), p. 85.

⁷⁰ Wordsworth, *The Excursion and The Recluse*, p. 84.

⁷¹ Wordsworth, *The Excursion and The Recluse*, pp. 85-86.

⁷² *CL*, IV, p. 570.

⁷³ *CL*, IV, p. 571.

truths' in reality. Coleridge is not saying that we should take Wordsworth's literally, for Wordsworth himself clearly does not mean to have his manifesto in the *Lyrical Ballads* to be read literally, but for a philosophical poem to be created, it has to withstand such a test. This test demands the transcendent intuition and pure reason of a poet to support his philosophic imagination in poetry, reconciling reason with religion, as well as the universal with the individual, in order to serve the highest purpose of mankind. This view is succinctly expressed by Coleridge in the letter to Wordsworth, dated 30 May 1815:

How can common [trut]hs be made permanently interesting but by being *bottomed* in our common nature—it is only by the profoundest Insight into Numbers and Quantity that a sublimity & even religious Wonder become attached to the simplest operations of Arithmetic, the most evident properties of the Circle or Triangle—. ⁷⁴

Coleridge urges Wordsworth to look 'far higher and far inward' in hope for the highest form of Transcendence possible in the human mind. By this, Coleridge means to say that poetry needs to attain a sort of permanence through the poetic pleasure enabled by truths '*bottomed* in our common nature'—'Ah! From the soul itself must issue forth, / A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud / Enveloping the Earth—' ('Dejection: An Ode', ll. 53-55).⁷⁵ The knowledge of those truths within our mind is the divine 'Idea' 'anterior to' our being, which is the power necessitating 'religious Wonder', in the form of 'intuitive knowledge' and 'philosophic imagination'. To defend Christianity against materialism, and to remind readers not to be a 'lazy Looker-on on an external world', Coleridge strives to prove through a philosophical poem that 'the Senses were living growths and developments of the Mind & Spirit in a much juster as well as higher sense, than the mind can be said to be formed by the Senses'.⁷⁶ *This* is the transcendent purpose of a philosophical poem.

What exactly is the philosophical poem that Coleridge expects Wordsworth to produce in terms of the scope and content then? In that letter to Wordsworth (30 May 1815), Coleridge tries to illuminate *The Recluse* as 'the *first* and *only* true Phil. Poem in existence'.⁷⁷ To map out the relations between *The Prelude*, *The Excursion* and *The Recluse*, Coleridge

⁷⁴ *CL*, IV, p. 576.

⁷⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Sibylline Leaves 1817*, Revolution and Romanticism, 1789-1834, A Series of Facsimile Reprints Chosen and Introduced by Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1990), p. 240.

⁷⁶ *CL*, IV, p. 574.

⁷⁷ *CL*, IV, p. 574.

interweaves them into an image of, what critics broadly agree as, the organic whole. *The Prelude* ‘was as the ground-plot and the Roots, out of which the Recluse was to have sprung up as the Tree—as far as the same Sap in both, I expected them doubtless to have formed one compleat [sic] Whole, but in matter, form, and product to be different, each not only a distinct but a different Work’.⁷⁸ There is perhaps a subtle difference between Coleridge’s image of an organic whole and Wordsworth’s image of ‘Ante-chapel’ with ‘the body of a gothic church’. *The Prelude* as an ‘Ante-chapel’ takes on a greater independence than is suggested by the analogy with the ‘Roots’ of a tree, as a living tree cannot be separated from its root. Kenneth Johnston probably would find this sense of proximity inherited in the organic whole perplexing, as it seems almost impossible to separate *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* in Coleridge’s explanation of them in the letter. Johnston argues with reference to the letter that ‘when Coleridge quotes the lines from “To W. Wordsworth” (ll. 12-47) that synopsise the plot of *The Prelude*, and concludes, “This I considered as ‘the EXCURSION,’” he leaves both us and Wordsworth in confusion, unless we infer, dubiously, that he has conflated *The Excursion*’s prefatory reference to “passing events, and to an existing state of things” with the sociohistorical portions of *The Prelude*’.⁷⁹ I agree with Johnston that Coleridge’s explanation is far from adequate, but Johnston’s conjecture may be far too discursive for a philosophical poem in Coleridgean terms. In the letter, those lines quoted from ‘To W. Wordsworth’ are followed by two crucial sentences that help explicate my point:

Indeed thro’ the whole of that Poem ‘με Ἀῶρα τις εἰσέπνευσε μυστικωτάτη.’ *This I considered as ‘the EXCURSION’; and the second as ‘THE RECLUSE’ [...]*⁸⁰

In these two lines, ‘that Poem’ is anaphoric to the lines of ‘To W. Wordsworth’ Coleridge quoted in the letter; and these lines point to *The Prelude* with no dispute. But Johnston does not try to decipher the line in Greek which is anaphoric to ‘*This I considered as “the EXCURSION”*’. This line in Greek is from Aristophanes’s *Ranae* (*Frogs*), line 314;⁸¹ an in-text translation of *Ranae* reads this line as ‘a whiff of torches wafted over me most

⁷⁸ *CL*, IV, p. 573.

⁷⁹ Kenneth Johnston, *Wordsworth and The Recluse* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 343.

⁸⁰ *CL*, IV, p. 574.

⁸¹ *CL*, IV, p. 574n.

mystically'.⁸² A more literal translation could be *some course of events*—the word *Aura* ('*ἄρα*') in Greek can be metaphorically taken as *some breezes—breathed upon me* (i.e. happened to me) *most mystically*. If there is something which Coleridge would like Wordsworth to expand and continue in *The Excursion*, it would be this inspirational and mystic aura he gained from hearing *The Prelude*. The 'passing events, and to an existing state of things', as suggested to be the content of *The Excursion* in its Preface, are just the discursive reality which Coleridge would have the least to complain about. Coleridge's concern here is to have such discursive reality 'sung aright'⁸³ like *The Prelude*—'A SONG DIVINE OF HIGH AND PASSIONATE TRUTHS / TO THEIR OWN MUSIC CHAUNTED' ('To W. Wordsworth' ll. 46-47, capitalised in the letter, not in other versions of the poem). If we further review Coleridge's expectation of *The Recluse*, we can grasp the ultimate result of which is what he would like to see in a philosophical poem.

The Romanticised version of Transcendence lies in the fact that Coleridge has a detailed plan of what a philosophic poem should be like, which is the best exemplar of the 'sermo interior' of his Imagination. It is Romanticised as no such philosophic poem has ever been produced to meet Coleridge's satisfaction. I would not go so far as to mock the idea of such a poem as unachievable. It is simply unachieved because Coleridge's Imagination is, as I have argued by the end of chapter 5, caught in the centrifugal force of 'a strange music'.⁸⁴ The indeterminate determiner 'a' points to infinite possibilities. If the philosophic poem is so easily attained, Coleridge could stop writing poetry all together. Coleridge knows all too well that infinite creativity is predicated upon the lack of satisfaction in the existing works. A poet pursuing the highest form of Transcendence would never cease to produce higher works that might render such an ideal into reality. This ideal, as Coleridge suggests in the letter to Wordsworth, is

a grand didactic swell on the necessary identity of a true Philosophy with true Religion, agreeing in the results and differing only as the analytic and synthetic process, as discursive from intuitive, the former chiefly useful as perfecting the latter [...] for the philosophy of mechanism which in every thing that is most worthy of the human Intellect strikes *Death*, and cheats itself by mistaking clear

⁸² Aristophanes, *Frogs*, ed. by Matthew Dillon, in *Perseus Digital Library*, Tufts University [n.d.] <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text.jsp?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0032%3Acard%3D268>> [accessed 27 March 2019].

⁸³ *CL*, IV, p. 573.

⁸⁴ *BL*, I, p. 302.

Images for distinct conceptions, and which idly demands Conceptions where Intuitions alone are possible or adequate to the majesty of Truth.⁸⁵

The usefulness of this idealistic insight is challenged by Wordsworthians who find Coleridge's expectation of *The Recluse* a mere repetition of his praise towards Wordsworth's *Prelude* in 'To W. Wordsworth'. Johnston attempts to map the various parts of this letter to what Coleridge has already said in 'To W. Wordsworth', in a way to support the critical perspective that 'On the internal evidence of this important letter, *The Prelude* has already accomplished what *The Recluse* was supposed to'.⁸⁶ However, Johnston's perspective is contingent on two notions: first, what Coleridge says about *The Prelude* in 'To W. Wordsworth' is taken as what *The Prelude* actually is, which is rather belittling to *The Prelude*, and as such is not Coleridge's intention; second, our subjective judgement of *The Prelude* is the closest existing text worthy of being entitled a philosophical poem. I do not doubt that Coleridge thought highly of *The Prelude*, but 'To W. Wordsworth' is a hybrid of what *The Prelude* is and its potential as the 'Roots' of something bigger, *The Recluse*. One should not accept Coleridge's high compliments about *The Prelude*, while disregarding how these compliments are formed in the light of the long-standing plan of *The Recluse*. Coleridge's artistry in writing 'To W. Wordsworth' is interlaced with the concurrences of activity and passivity that anticipates some ideas in *Biographia* and are more than a synopsis of *The Prelude*. Many of Coleridge's advice to, or views of, Wordsworth are somewhat repetitive, but they are so by nature because the ideal of a philosophical poem has not yet been attained. We must not allow scepticism to prevent us seeing what Coleridge suggested to be the highest vocation of a poet through his plan for *The Recluse*—'true Idealism necessarily perfecting itself in Realism, & Realism refining itself into Idealism'.⁸⁷ There will always be a gap between the ideal and the real, such that the human intellect is compelled into activity in an attempt to reach for 'Idealism'. The point here is not whether this ideal of a philosophical poem is actually attainable, but that the poet's mind repeatedly chases after 'the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM', 'or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify'. To differing degrees, *The Recluse* exists for both Wordsworth and Coleridge as an ideal and a struggle in reality. Coleridge's

⁸⁵ *CL*, IV, p. 575.

⁸⁶ Johnston, p. 346.

⁸⁷ *CL*, IV, p. 575.

insistence on the achievability of a philosophical poem is a telltale illustration of the ‘sermo interior’ of his notion of Imagination.

Insisting on his ideal vision of a philosophical poem, Coleridge’s criticisms of Wordsworth’s poetic language in the *Biographia*, especially of *The Excursion*, elaborate Coleridge’s own aesthetic judgements. Coleridge explains the intricate relationship between his vision of a philosophical poem and that of Truth by elevating aesthetic judgements to a religious level:

That *illusion*, contradistinguished from *delusion*, that *negative* faith, which simply permits the images presented to work by their own force, without either denial or affirmation of their real existence by the judgment, is rendered impossible by their immediate neighbourhood to words and facts of known and absolute truth. A faith, which transcends even historic belief, must absolutely *put out* this mere poetic Analogon of faith, as the summer sun is said to extinguish our household fires, when it shines full upon them. What would otherwise have been yielded to as pleasing fiction, is repelled as revolting falsehood. The effect produced in this latter case by the solemn belief of the reader, is in a less degree brought about in the instances, to which I have been objecting, by the baffled attempts of the author to *make* him believe.⁸⁸

Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is an example of ‘illusion’ for Coleridge, but Wordsworth’s poetic language is at risk of being delusional.⁸⁹ In the case of delusionary poetic language, the wisdom it offers to readers through ‘negative faith’ is limited to the light of ‘our household fires’—artificial and weak. But ‘A faith, which transcends even historic belief’ must overcome such falsehood like the powerful light of ‘the summer sun’. This transcendent faith in our ‘immediate neighbourhood to words and facts of known and absolute truth’ becomes, as it were, Coleridge’s guiding light of aesthetic judgement. The notebook entry, dated 10 March 1818, which was later published by scholars as the essay ‘On Poesy or Art’, further consolidates such a view of aesthetic judgement. In this entry, Coleridge defines ‘*Art*’ to be ‘the Mediatress, the reconciliator of Man and Nature’, as ‘Nature itself is to a religious Observer the Art of God’.⁹⁰ Poetry is one form of Arts that ‘imitate’ God’s Art, and thus

⁸⁸ *BL*, II, p. 134.

⁸⁹ *BL*, II, pp. 133-34.

⁹⁰ *CN*, III, 4397.

become ‘the Abridgment of Nature’.⁹¹ Poetry, and even Arts as a whole, is the realisation of our transcendent faith through the very act of Imagination; and through the same power of the mind, we differentiate falsehood from illusionary artistry.

Tracing the ways in which Transcendence operates in different parts of Coleridge’s ideas allow us to appreciate the unity he brings to *Biographia* in its conclusion. Whalley argues that ‘The Conclusion’ of *Biographia*, ‘in no sense a summary of the book, reaffirms his reason for vindicating himself in public, and rests his hopes upon Christian belief and the goodness of God’.⁹² Though Coleridge’s ‘Christian belief’ does not serve to summarise the *Biographia*, it does invest his ‘language of words’ with their ‘sermo interior’ throughout its two volumes. The holy beauty elicited through the final lines of the last paragraph in the conclusion crystallises this dimension of unity and shows a mature example of Coleridge’s belief in the synthetic power of the mind:

Religion passes out of the ken of Reason only where the eye of Reason has reached its own Horizon; and that Faith is then but its continuation: even as the Day softens away into the sweet Twilight, and Twilight, hushed and breathless, steals into the Darkness. It is Night, sacred Night! the upraised Eye views only the starry Heaven which manifests itself alone: and the outward Beholding is fixed on the sparks twinkling in the awful depth, though Suns of other Worlds, only to preserve the Soul steady and collected in its pure *Act* of inward Adoration to the great I AM, and to the filial WORD that re-affirmeth it from Eternity to Eternity, whose choral Echo is the Universe.⁹³

This end brings Coleridge out of the maze he created at the beginning of *Biographia*. To invite readers to be patient with the miscellaneous nature of *Biographia*, Coleridge opens his work with an epigraph. This epigraph is a variant excerpted from Goethe’s *Propyläen Einleitung* followed by Coleridge’s own translation:

TRANSLATION. Little call as he may have to instruct other, he wishes nevertheless to open out his heart to such as he either knows or hopes to be of like mind with himself, but who are widely scattered in the world: he wishes to knit

⁹¹ *CN*, III, 4397.

⁹² Whalley, ‘The Integrity of *Biographia Literaria*’, p. 97.

⁹³ *BL*, II, pp. 247-48.

anew his connections with his oldest friends, to continue those recently formed, and to win other friends among the rising generation for the remaining course of his life. He wishes to spare the young those circuitous paths, on which he himself had lost his way.⁹⁴

The literary sense is altered silently in the phrase ‘he wishes nevertheless to open out his heart to [...]’ (German: ‘so wünscht er doch sich denen mitzuteilen’).⁹⁵ In German, the sense of this phrase is less psychological, as ‘mitzuteilen’ is semantically closer to verbs such as ‘communicate’, ‘report’ or ‘share’. Romanticising the original, Coleridge introduced a twist that binds himself to his readership in a personal way. To ‘knit’ is a figurative addition to the original in German (‘er wünscht sein Vergältniss zu den ältesten Freunden wieder anzuknüpfen’),⁹⁶ which expresses how intimate this readership should be, interweaving Coleridge himself with his friends intellectually. The word ‘anew’ also deviates from the German ‘wieder’ in the sense that the former tends to mean ‘to do something again *differently*’ whilst the latter simply means ‘again’. If one can do something again differently, it is as though he has a chance to be reborn. Coleridge’s ‘rebirth’ was indeed promised in ‘To W. Wordsworth’ (1807) in which Coleridge buried himself.⁹⁷ Coleridge would like readers to be mindful of his ‘rebirth’ as he procreates the Self as a thinker, a poet and a critic again, albeit very differently in *Biographia Literaria*. Addressing his readers in the epigraph, Coleridge displaces Goethe’s friends with his own. Those old ones imply Wordsworth and Southey, or even his literary precursors such as Shakespeare, Bowles and Milton, whereas the new ones include critics and those who aspire to pursue the same path. The closing remark of the epigraph is most intriguing, as the mentioning of Coleridge’s ‘circuitous paths’ sets forth an intellectual maze in which ‘he himself had lost his way’.

Finally, Coleridge’s efforts to delineate the ‘sermo interior’ of Imagination, the intuitive knowledge of God, the expectations of a philosophical poem, and the transcendent faith required for aesthetic judgements became the intricate complexities of his notion of Transcendence. For Coleridge, Transcendence is reborn through, and into, a larger system of philosophic Imagination, which invokes an Idealised vision of a ‘genuine philosophic poem’. This vision is a Romanticised (unachieved) version of Transcendence that brings Reason, Understanding and Passion to one power of the mind. Yet, the insights he gained from this

⁹⁴ *BL*, I, p. 4.

⁹⁵ *BL*, I, p. 4.

⁹⁶ *BL*, I, p.4.

⁹⁷ See Chapter 5 of this thesis.

journey of confusion and struggle cultivate an understanding of one power, the power of the human mind. Through the power of such a mind, Transcendence accounts for its success and highest worth, whereas sin and our manifold imperfectability accounts for all of the impediments of our faculties and those of life itself.

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