

**Shaping Spirits, or, Imagination and “Abstruse Research”: the
perils of metaphysics and Coleridge’s loss of form in the years
of his philosophical accomplishment**

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

The mystical nature of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poems, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan" has intrigued readers for over two centuries. Of these full poems only the "Rime" is complete and yet they all still enjoy the scrutiny of a wide audience. This thesis examines the circumstances surrounding Coleridge's inability to continue writing such poems of imaginative force. In the years immediately following the composition of these great imaginative poems, Coleridge identified himself as lost in "the unwholesome quicksilver mines of metaphysic", and in "Dejection: An Ode" confessed that he lost his "shaping spirit of Imagination" through "abstruse research" (*PWI* ii 700, ll. 86,89). John Lowes refers to this loss as Coleridge's loss of power (Lowes, 1951, 476*n*). This thesis ascertains the factors, both primary and secondary, that contributed to Coleridge's loss of imaginative force, and it also identifies factors that enhanced his imagination.

Increasingly Coleridge made reasoned engagements with the metaphysics of German Idealism. This essentially rendered his poetic access redundant as well as occluding empirical engagement. My primary argument is that Coleridge lost his imaginative force as a result of shifting his interest from a mostly empirical philosophy, to one based in German Idealism of the Kantian inheritance. Coleridge's loss of imaginative force correlates with his residence in Germany from 1798-99, when he studied at the University of Göttingen. Thus the predominant focus of this thesis is on Coleridge's early career. The reason for this choice of subject is that Coleridge himself considered his loss of imaginative force to be significant, and regarded these poems as exemplary examples of a poetics of imagination that he could not regain.

In elucidating Coleridge's loss of imaginative force the methodology of this thesis will move between the secondary sources of other critics and the copious biographical information on Coleridge. It will also include my own analysis of the poems, and alongside these, gently suggest my own theories of imagination.

Coleridge's imagination poems predominantly define the self and his ideas on the will. Coleridge wrote on a variety of subjects relating to philosophy, sociology, politics, epistemology and religion, and in these he includes his intrigue with the faculty of the will. The will is also central to the different philosophies that Coleridge studied before, during and after he wrote his imagination poems. As such, Coleridge's treatment of the will must be closely examined in its role as a participating factor in his imagination poetry. Such an examination must include scrutiny of necessitarianism and Calvinism because these doctrines involve the will in their theories of predetermination and causation. Coleridge's ideas on the imagination are closely associated with the will, and in his theories on these topics he considered the secondary imagination to echo the primary imagination, and to co-exist with the conscious will (*BL* I 304).

Factors affecting Coleridge between 1795 and 1801 are important to this thesis as they influence the development and loss of his imagination poetry, mostly written between 1797 and 1798. Such factors include his marriage to Sara Fricker, abandonment of pantisocracy, friendship with William Wordsworth, the shift from radical politics towards conservatism, deprecating criticism of his imagination poetry from Wordsworth and Southey among others, opium use, and meeting Sara Hutchinson.

These poems shall finally be examined in the context of their classification as Romantic poems that define the individual and the self in solitude. As much as Coleridge's great poems of the imagination are located in his struggle for a comprehensive account of the self and the will, working towards a Romantic statement of the individual, and the self in solitude, they also need to be defined as characteristically irreducible, unfathomable and mystical.

The conclusion of this thesis maintains its introductory assertion that the primary cause of Coleridge's loss of imagination was the result of his research in German Idealism. In particular, his metaphysical speculations diverted him from empirical philosophy and weakened his imaginative force, and are primarily responsible for his loss of imaginative force. The conclusion asserts Coleridge's accomplishment with the imagination poems, but also acknowledges his achievement in his texts of the nineteenth-century, written after his imaginative faculty was effectively lost.

Acknowledgement

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In memoriam

J. D. C. Verdal-Austin

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Introduction

The unwholesome quicksilver mines of metaphysic: Introductory

In 1801, Coleridge claimed that poetry had died in him. He stated with regret, “I was once a Volume of Gold Leaf, rising & riding on every breath of Fancy—but I have beaten myself back into weight & density, and now I sink in quicksilver, yea, remain squat and square on the earth” (25 March 1801, *CL* II 714).

Between 1797 and 1798, Coleridge wrote his most significant poems of the imagination, whilst resident at Nether Stowey. This span of creativity was not only surprisingly brief, but he wrote these poems early in his career, and his ability to write such poetry was lost suddenly thereafter. Throughout his life he exercised great efforts in attempting to explain his lost imaginative ability even while he struggled to regain it. This dissertation examines Coleridge’s loss of imagination, and elucidates several factors that contributed to the imagination poems¹ but primarily it expounds the factors that caused the loss of his imagination. The reason for this choice of subject is that Coleridge himself considered his loss of imaginative force to be significant, and regarded these poems as examples of a poetics of imagination that he could not regain. In all of this the problem offers a new angle of light on to so deeply Romantic and specifically Coleridgean concepts of the imaginative self.

With such a focus, there is the danger of marginalising Coleridge’s genius and vision, and his vast range of ability. The imagination poems comprise a small fraction of his wide range of interests, ability and literary output. In this regard, it is important to establish at this early stage, that his loss of imagination is not a failing of Coleridge’s, but is the result of him applying his attention to other fields, that subordinated his poetry of imagination. Accordingly, this dissertation deals with the

¹ The term “imagination poem” is selected for this dissertation as it is related to the already settled concept of the conversation poems. By it I mean those poems of deliberate yet visionary peculiarity. These poems are “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, “Christabel” and *Kubla Khan*. These three great poems, play into the conversation poems, and make Coleridge’s most profound contribution to the composition of English Romantic poetry; they are co-incident with the project of the epochal *Lyrical Ballads*, and immediately predate the sudden diminution of his poetic force and output. Although the upper case is a directly appropriate orthography for the “Conversation Poems”, what I am calling the

short-lived generation of the poems of imagination, and with the shifts and changes in Coleridge's life that are contemporary to these poems and that influence them.

Coleridge strongly regretted losing his imaginative force and commented on this in several of his texts. Although his imagination was not "burned in a day", the period was brief between his last demonstrated ability to write poetry of imaginative force, and his claims to have lost that ability. Coleridge's inaccuracy about dates, and his conflicting recollections about the writing of these poems, do not always allow for exact references to times of writing. Nevertheless Coleridge's last poems of imagination he wrote in 1798, which was the year after beginning the first, perhaps the "Rime", begun in November 1797, while walking with Wordsworth to Lynton (*PW I i lxvi*). However, he did claim to have written "Kubla Khan" "in the fall of the year 1797" (*Ibid.* n511), "the summer of the year 1797" (511), and in May 1798 (*CN III 4006 f 23r*). Nevertheless, the time span taken by Coleridge to write these poems was brief, and he realised his inability to continue writing poems of this type shortly thereafter.

Coleridge commented on his loss of imaginative force, when in 1816 he complained that he was lost in "the unwholesome quicksilver mines of mataphysic depths." (*BL I 17*). The repeated images of quicksilver characterise Coleridge's grasp on imagination. Mercury is a substance that one cannot hold or manipulate into a permanent and definitive form. Together with silver, this metal is the substance assumed, in the age of alchemy, to most likely be turned into gold. Coleridge's own efforts to solidify his imaginative ability from its elusive indefinable shape are equivalent to this, but he never re-grasped his imaginative force once it was lost. In this respect he never solidified his imaginative ability into an established method, or firmly held it as a workable poetic, and hence failed to render it as gold.

"[T]he unwholesome quicksilver mines of mataphysic" refers to the philosophy that captured Coleridge's fascination after 1799, following his visit to Germany. Herein he steadily gravitated towards the philosophy of German Idealism, dominated by the influence of the strict analytical philosophy of Immanuel Kant. At the time of Coleridge's German residence Johann Fichte propounded and formalised German

imagination poems have not yet won this convention for themselves. In these terms I therefore use lower case for both.

Idealism. Fichte attempted to remove the conflicting elements of Kant's system, by removing the "thing-in-itself" as the element of experience, and instead regard experience as produced by the thinking subject (Kenny, 1999, 274).

Coleridge's philosophical interests prior to Germany were mostly empirical, and in this his primary influences were the doctrines of Hartley and Berkeley, who were empiricists. Unlike the rationalistic focus of German Idealism, Hartley and Berkeley were part of the broad empirical tradition from Bacon through to Hume, who believed that knowledge originated with experience. Once Coleridge began studying German Idealism, his philosophy became progressively less focussed on empiricism.

Coleridge committed his primary philosophical attention to German Idealism after 1799, but his fascination with certain empiricists continued after this year, as in the case of Berkeley, whereas he became increasingly ambivalent toward Hartley. The metaphysics to which Coleridge alludes in his famous quote is the analytical philosophy of German Idealism, and with it Coleridge gained an increasing affinity with the works of Kant. Coleridge does however express his eagerness to study metaphysics prior to 1799. He writes about it in a letter to John Thelwall on 19 November 1796,

I am, & ever have been, a great reader—& have read almost everything—a library-cormorant—I am deep in all out of the way books, whether of the monkish times, or of the puritanical era—I have read & digested most of the Historical Writers—; but I do not *like* History. Metaphysics and Poetry and 'Facts of mind,' (i.e. Accounts of all the strange phantasms that ever possessed your philosophy-dreamers from Tauth [Toth], the Egyptian to Taylor, the English Pagan,) are my darling studies.

(CL I 260)

He made this statement approving of metaphysics before he was immersed in German Idealism, and Coleridge's knowledge of metaphysics was limited when he studied it at this time, in which he gave empiricism his primary attention. Empiricism, by its nature, cannot contain metaphysics, but Coleridge's captivation with metaphysics prior to 1799, indicates a dual interest in metaphysics and empiricism, albeit one primarily focussed on empiricism. What he responds to in Kant is the Kantian determination to acknowledge philosophies based both on reason and empiricism.

Coleridge was strongly aware that his research into metaphysics was primarily responsible for his inability to write poems of “pure imagination”. As a result Coleridge placed the blame for the loss of his imaginative faculty on himself, claiming this in “Dejection: An Ode”, written in 1802,

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural Man--
This was my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my Soul.
(*PW I ii 700, ll. 76-93*)

The “shaping spirit of imagination” destroyed by “abstruse research” asserts that his metaphysical research is responsible, and his claim made years later that he was “lost in the quicksilver mines of metaphysic” repeats this. Here Coleridge admits his loss of imaginative force, and again he recognises the cause. This reference also indicates that he dwelt on his loss of imagination and was concerned to regain it. In this quote from “Dejection: An Ode” Coleridge implies the delicacy of “pure imagination”. He reiterates this delicacy and the effect that metaphysics had on his imaginative force in the *Biographia*, and refers to the time-span during which he was able to write such poetry:

Well were it for me perhaps, had I never relapsed into the same mental disease; if I had continued to pluck the flower and reap the harvest from the cultivated surface, instead of delving in the unwholesome quicksilver mines of metaphysic depths. And if in after time I have sought a refuge from bodily pain and mismanaged sensibility in abstruse researches, which exercised the strength and subtlety of the

understanding without awakening the feelings of the heart; still there was a long and blessed interval, during which my natural faculties were allowed to expand, and my original tendencies to develop themselves: my fancy, and the love of nature, and the sense of beauty in forms and sounds.

(BL I 17)

Here Coleridge refers to the fragility of the imagination that he lost in metaphysical study. He repeats this later in the *Biographia*, and incorporates the imagination's fragility with its illusive tendencies. He refers to the imagination as a "synthetic and magical power" "put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, controul (*sic*)" (BL II 16). The will and understanding, Coleridge discerns as the functions directly involved in activating and controlling the imagination. In this dissertation, the will shall be closely examined in its role as a participating factor in Coleridge's imagination poetry. Coleridge defined "imagination" in the *Biographia*, reasserting the "synthetic and magical power";

For, even as truth is its own light and evidence, discovering at once itself and falsehood, so is it the prerogative of poetic genius to distinguish by parental instinct its proper offspring from the changelings, which the gnomes of vanity or the fairies of fashion may have laid in its cradle or called by its names. Could a rule be given from *without*, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art. It would be [fashioning], not [creation]. The rules of the IMAGINATION are themselves the very powers of growth and production. The *words* to which they are reducible, present only the outlines and external appearance of the fruit. A deceptive counterfeit of the superficial form and colours may be elaborated; but the marble peach feels cold and heavy, and *children* only put it to their mouths.

(BL II 84)

Coleridge explains that the "rules of the IMAGINATION" are illusive and misleading if stated too plainly. He emphasises that the imagination is fragile and illusive, because it is difficult to define, and if explained strictly and precisely it becomes a counterfeit of what it should be.

Coleridge's definition of poetry and the imagination is incorporated in the context of the Romantic movement, which introduced new forms of poetry. The characteristics of Romantic poetics include the abandonment of most prior forms of poetry, and the development of radical new forms. These characteristics include the

interaction of the individual mind with nature, introspection, solitude, isolate context, consciousness of self and social intention characteristic of the Lake Poets. The intention of Coleridge and Wordsworth, in writing and compiling the *Lyrical Ballads*, incorporated many of these characteristics, and the imagination poems are inseparable from this context of production, collaboration and experiment. Coleridge and Wordsworth each wrote different types of experimental poetry in the *Lyrical Ballads*. Coleridge wrote what he called the “first class” of characteristics decided on by Wordsworth and himself:

In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and 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. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency...

In this idea originated the plan of the “Lyrical Ballads;” in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as 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...

With this view I wrote the “Ancient Mariner,” and was preparing among other poems, the “Dark Ladie,” and the “Christabel,” in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my first attempt.

(*BL II 6-7*)

Coleridge recalls his intentions for the *Lyrical Ballads* here, and considers some of the characteristics of his poems for the publication. The transference “from our inward nature a human interest”, and “the willing suspension of disbelief” claim the intentions of the Romantic movement for introspection, consciousness of self and social intention. Coleridge’s poems of imagination share characteristics with Romantic poetry generally, but they also incorporate factors unique to themselves. They are *poems of imaginative force* because they are irreducible, unfathomable, transcendent, mystical and contain “synthetic and magical power”. A key element of

the poems of imagination is their transcendent characteristic, as in them Coleridge develops knowledge beyond his own faculties.

Five poems bear these characteristics prominently, three of which have drawn a significant amount of critical attention. The three are the “Rime”, “Christabel” and “Kubla Khan”. The “Rime” predominates as an example of imagination poetry in this dissertation. Indeed, it predominates as such throughout the entire canon of English poetry. “Christabel” shall also be scrutinised. The remaining two imagination poems are “Lewti; or, the Circassian Love-chant” and “The Ballad of the Dark Lady: A Fragment”. Other poems that are not characterised as the poems of heightened imagination shall be examined either because of their correlations with the imagination poetry, or because of their references to Coleridge’s loss of poetic force.

Coleridge’s imaginative force, which was essential to write the poems of heightened imagination, was lost with the completion of “Christabel” Part II. These poems are unique, and with them, Coleridge’s contribution to poetry in general is invaluable. John Lowes was captivated by the imagination poems, and by how Coleridge wrote them (Lowes, 1951, x). Lowes examines Coleridge’s ability to write these poems, and comments on Coleridge’s loss of power to write them. Less fundamental are Lowes’s analyses of Coleridge’s metaphysics once Coleridge’s imagination was lost (x). Lowes is primarily intrigued with the process through which Coleridge generated the poems of imagination. This is an illusive search of Lowes’s as the characteristics of the poems are transcendent and unfathomable. Their illusive nature is emphasised with Coleridge failing in his own attempts to define and recapture his imaginative ability. However Coleridge’s genius demonstrated itself in other areas, notably in his writing on a wide range of subjects involving philosophy, sociology, politics, epistemology and religion. This notably occurs in the *Biographia*, in which he eagerly incorporates these subjects for analysis and application throughout the text.

The *Lyrical Ballads* has remained a significant text since its first publication despite Coleridge’s attention to these other subjects. Harold Bloom looks at the lasting importance of the *Lyrical Ballads* in general, and reiterates Lowes in asserting that the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* “remains the most important volume of verse in English since the Renaissance, for it began modern poetry, the poetry of the

growing inner self” (Bloom, 2004, 322). The experimental intention of Coleridge and Wordsworth, in their representation of inward nature, human interest and feeling for everyday life began this form of poetry. It is not just the poems individually but the production and collective whole of the *Lyrical Ballads* that Bloom is praising. Coleridge contributed several poems to this volume, including two of the poems of imagination, the “Rime” and “Lewti”. The “Rime” has become established as one of the most identified poems of the English language. Accordingly Coleridge’s contribution to the *Lyrical Ballads* is among his most significant literary content, even though in quantity it is less than Wordsworth’s content in the edition, and is brief relative to Coleridge’s complete range of works. However, despite Coleridge’s accomplishment in the *Lyrical Ballads*, these poems do not undermine his other works.

In some of his other texts Coleridge continued developing concepts, such as the imagination, that he had used in the *Lyrical Ballads*. He developed the role of the imagination in the *Biographia*, and defined the imagination with a word of his own invention, the “esemplastic power” of the imagination that shapes into one (*BL* I 168). This he separated into primary imagination and secondary imagination;

The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. 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.

(*BL* I 304)

The primary imagination as Coleridge expressed it principally assists perception, and functions “esemplastically” in that it shapes into one. However, the secondary imagination does not act in this way, and is not characterised by this definition. Of the secondary imagination he details,

The secondary Imagination 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.

(*Ibid.*)

The activity that “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates” to “re-create” in the struggle of the secondary imagination to “idealize and to unify” is reminiscent of the characteristic of quicksilver. The secondary imagination struggles to take on a definitive form and idealise and unify itself, as does quicksilver. These characteristics are found in Coleridge’s poems of imagination and render deep analyses of these poems ambiguous.

All of the references above, spanning twenty years, point out Coleridge’s frequent attention to and analysis of the imagination poetry, and his reflections on his loss of imaginative force. He not only recognises the cause of this loss, but he attempts to revive the ability. These references also indicate Coleridge’s constant and eager scrutiny of German Idealist philosophy, despite its incompatibility with the imagination poetry. This incompatibility necessitated that Coleridge choose between these two options, hence his regret in “Dejection: An Ode”, in which he feels the effects of metaphysics, “Till that which suits a part infects the whole, // And now is almost grown the habit of my Soul” (*PW I ii 700*, ll. 92-3).

The circumstances that necessitated this choice began when Coleridge left for Ratzenburg in October 1798. On his return to Nether Stowey, in July the following year (Sisman, 2006, 253, 269), he had little imaginative ability remaining. Exceptionally, “Christabel” Part II, completed in 1800-1, is Coleridge’s only work of imagination that post-dates his stay in Germany, and is remarkably divided by this visit. Alluringly a third section was written thereafter, but went unpublished and was lost, “a part of the third book” Coleridge recalled in a letter to Byron (22 October 1815, Griggs, 1930, 1091). This letter is absent from Griggs’s *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, but Griggs quotes it in full in his article “Coleridge and Byron”, published in 1930. A marked decline in Coleridge’s poetic output only occurs after 1800. This decline has more to do with his preoccupation with alternative philosophical subjects than the mere poetic disillusionment found in “Dejection: An Ode”, a poem which not only describes his loss of imagination, but also bears signs of an attempt to regain it.

The general circumstances of the late 1790s, when Coleridge wrote the poems of imagination, did not contribute to Coleridge’s disillusionment and loss of poetic force.

At this time there were political and military upheavals across Britain and Europe. The French Revolution had begun a decade earlier, and was ongoing throughout the 1790s (Fairer, 2009, 285-290). It had initiated political and social radicalism that had filtered into Britain, and was adopted by political protagonists. This radicalism became one of the wells on which Romanticism drew. New identities of statehood provoked new identities about self and individualism, and within these societies, the industrial revolution developed. The idea of sovereignty pertaining to the individual and to the nation as a whole was developing. Society and values rapidly shifted as new political and socio-economic circumstances rooted themselves in Europe. With a society and nation in a state of change philosophical and social reformers such as William Godwin emerged and flourished.

These changing circumstances developed new theories and ideologies of society, learning and politics, as found in examples such as pantisocracy, in which Coleridge was involved. Works by theorists such as Godwin explored these aspects of society and influenced Coleridge (Sisman, 66). Pantisocracy provided a distinct relationship between the self and the other that was not dependent on materialism. In this respect the non-materialist position of pantisocracy drew on non-materialist philosophy for its bearing, opposing the doctrine that only matter exists. Therefore, the role of philosophy, sociology, politics, epistemology and religion, in the making of the self, became a topic of greater scrutiny and contention. These circumstances induced thought on the perception of self, and these perspectives of selfhood occur in Coleridge's writings of the 1790s, including the *Lyrical Ballads*.

The time in which the poems of heightened imagination were written necessitates attention to the context of unprecedented upheaval in the 1790s. Discussing his "organic sense of history", David Fairer elucidates that in the 1790s, during the political reform in France, "more subtle and challenging ideas about the self and the world" emerged in Europe (Fairer, 60).

Also enlivening and impacting on the 1790s and Coleridge's imagination poetry are the market forces affecting publishing at this time. Factors influencing the market included war and revolution in Europe, which caused an array of different political and social perspectives to emerge, and with these, new perceptions of the self and citizenship. The industrial revolution enhanced economics and expenditure, and with

industrialisation and its associated technologies arose new occasions for commodity related materialism based on economics. This type of materialism is different to the philosophical materialism above, and deals with increased wealth and new economic opportunities, and the ability of the individual to interact in the changing economic space. In this context, the *Lyrical Ballads* also contained the newness of the age, as it was experimental poetry, written partly to clarify the reaction of the readership to a new type of poetry. These poems were compiled and published in this context.

Chapter 1

Reliques of sensation: psychological interpretations of the unconscious in the imagination poems

Throughout the twentieth century, Coleridge's imagination poems have undergone a fascinating variety of interpretations. These poems have attracted such interpretations due, in part, to their inexplicable and transcendent nature. However, in this they have a mercurial attribute and cannot sustain a constant explanation. Some interpretations attempt to explain how Coleridge wrote these poems, and they also attempt to infer, using their own findings, how Coleridge lost his poetic force.

Topics that interested Coleridge, and that are used in the interpretation of the imagination poetry, are the conscious and the unconscious. Coleridge's attraction to the conscious mind included attention to the personal will and volition. This interest extended to its opposite, the unconscious, which led him to journalise his dreams. Coleridge recalled his father's dream on the night that his father died, of Death touching him with his dart (16 October 1797, *CL* I 355). This also compelled his scrutiny of the unconscious and dreams.

Writing *The Ego and the Id* in 1923, Freud explains his theory of the unconscious. Although this dissertation doesn't use Freud to support or validate any of its assertions or findings, Freud's text is of interest for its chapter on "Conscious and Unconscious", and the manner in which it correlates with certain methods of John Lowes in analysing the "Rime" and "Kubla Khan". Lowes wrote the first edition of *The Road to Xanadu* in 1927, which deals with Lowes's fascination for the origin and content of the imagination poems of Coleridge.

Lowes notes of his own content that it is written in a period of extensive focus on Freudian psychoanalysis (Lowes, 400*n*) which is relevant as some of Lowes's analysis offers a now dated, but seminal psychological interpretation of the "Rime" and "Kubla Khan". Lowes, however, marginalises Coleridge's true range and genius by representing his imagination according to his vast reading, which amounted to his influences (Holmes, 1989, xv). Holmes's judgement here, that Lowes represents

Coleridge by his influences from vast reading, is equivalent to Coleridge's explanation of the fancy. Coleridge indicates that compared to the imagination, the

Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space;

(*BL I 305*)

Holmes surmises, with the word “influences”, that Lowes reduces the magnitude of Coleridge's imaginative genius. Lowes does this by aligning the imagination poems too closely with fancy. This he uses to support his psychological interpretation of these poems.

Freud divides the unconscious into two types: one is latent, “and is capable of becoming conscious”, the other is repressed, and of itself is not capable of becoming conscious. The first Freud terms “preconscious”, the second he terms “unconscious” (Strachey, 1961, 15). Freud notes that all that is repressed is unconscious, “but not all that is unconscious is repressed” (18). Lowes was aware of the danger of finding Freudian complexes in everything (Lowes, 400 n.), and admits that he is no psychologist, acknowledging that he is “playing with fire” in his use of the term “unconscious” (55). Unlike Freud, Lowes attends to its use in terms of what Coleridge called “the twilight realms of consciousness” (*BL II 120*, Lowes, 55) “in that shadowy half-being, that state of nascent Existence in the Twilight of Imagination and just on the vestibule of Consciousness” where ideas and images exist (19 July 1802, *CL II 814*, Lowes 55).

From this, it is evident that Lowes differs from Freud in his perspective on sublimated content. Lowes relished the idea that the “Rime” and “Kubla Khan” originated from a shadowy state of consciousness, and thus showed eager interest in finding links between the poems and Coleridge's reading and experience during and before the writing of the poems. Lowes believed this content resurfaced in altered and randomly amalgamated states after a time in the unconscious (Lowes, 46). He elucidates, “But at the zenith of its power the creative energy is both conscious and unconscious in one and the same exercise—controlling consciously the throng of images which in the reservoir have undergone unconscious metamorphosis.” (104). Lowes queries the association of ideas in the “Rime”, and the way in which their

content resurfaced, in Coleridge's mind, in altered and randomly amalgamated states.

Lowes questions

whether those associations wrought their synthesis before the impressions so combined sank into the subliminal reservoir, or during their submergence there, or at the instance of their flashing back to consciousness.

(401)

Lowes was convinced that some form of subliminal union occurred, although he was uncertain where or how. Upon this point lies the basis of his analytical method, which he repeatedly applied in *The Road to Xanadu*. This method is inconclusive, but many of Lowes's renderings are illuminating. This unconscious metamorphosis Lowes termed the "gestation" of the "Rime" and "Kubla Khan" (46). The subliminal process and correspondingly its "birth" into consciousness is an idea found not only in Freud but in Coleridge himself, and are accounts of similar processes in the *Biographia*. In this Lowes capitalises on Coleridge's concepts of the unconscious to broaden and enliven his theory.

The impression itself: alternative analyses of the imagination poems

There are a wide variety of analyses of Coleridge's imagination poems by other critics, who are intrigued by the poems of heightened imagination. When first published, Coleridge's poems of imagination were difficult to expound, because of their transcendent and mercurial nature. With time, they moved further from their contemporary contexts, and hence exposition has become increasingly difficult. For example, William Ulmer welcomes the consideration that Wordsworth's *Borderers* shaped the "Rime" through rhetorical influence.

The "Rime" Ulmer suggests is a rhetorical response to the *Borderers*. In writing the latter Wordsworth analysed the politics and philosophy of William Godwin. His critique in turn borrows from earlier criticisms of Godwin by Coleridge (Ulmer, 2008, 243). Consequently Ulmer contextualises Wordsworth's play and Coleridge's ballad

as political and moral discourse. Wordsworth represents Godwin through the character Rivers, whose “rhetorical power” and “moral relativism” was an “unacceptable morality” (239). Godwin’s doctrine incorporated the denial of moral obligation. This is based on his perspective of necessitarianism, that people are not responsible for their actions as their actions are causally necessitated by nature (236). Rivers, Ulmer maintains, represented Godwin’s political theory with this “unacceptable morality”, which was then transferred by Coleridge into the “Rime”. Ulmer, like Lowes, imposes a specific interpretation on the “Rime”, in this instance that it represents ethical and political analogy. Ulmer has an advantage over Lowes, as he has the critical hindsight of numerous analyses developed throughout the twentieth century, whereas Lowes’s psychological theory mostly predated these analyses.

By comparison, a further example of imposed analysis is from Lesa Corrigan, who supports Robert Penn Warren’s rendering of the “Rime”, as an allegory of “Original Sin” (Corrigan, 1999, 54). All of these analyses, despite their attraction to it, impose a method or an assumption on the “Rime”, that only explain it from a limited perspective. Ulmer examines the general features of Godwin’s philosophy, and applies this to the “Rime”. By comparison, Corrigan’s reference to Warren is theological but no less specific. Despite Warren’s lack of focus on Godwinism, Warren’s theological standpoint of original sin has a commonality with Ulmer. This is because the doctrine of Godwinism specifically opposes original sin, perceiving society and humanity as fundamentally good. Both of these analyses therefore acknowledge original sin as an element emphasised by Coleridge in the “Rime”. Warren sees it as an element used directly by Coleridge to represent the Mariner’s circumstances. Ulmer, on the other hand intervenes in this argument, eager to enhance his inquiry that Coleridge used original sin as a device to describe Godwinian doctrine. By comparison, Coleridge’s explanation of the secondary imagination, and poetry related to it, refers to mercurial characteristics such as “dissolving, diffusing” and “dissipating” (*BL I 304*), which elude clarification.

Coleridge faced similar difficulties attempting to illuminate his own imagination poetry, and define these poems. He failed to retain their quicksilver-like indistinctness of form in order to continue writing them. No coordinates are present with which to define them further, beyond their characteristic as Romantic poetry and their

prevailing quality as imagination poetry. Coleridge's own comments about the "Rime" reinforce this indistinctness. He describes it as "inexplicable", "incomprehensible, and without head or tail" (BL I 28n). For these reasons Coleridge opted for explaining and analysing his poems of imagination theoretically, notably in the *Biographia*. Here occur ideas of Coleridge, with which Lowes's theory correlates, about the imagination poems. Coleridge enhances his definition of the imagination, using the immensity of an impression of St. Paul's church:

If, therefore, we suppose the absence of all interference of the will, reason, and judgment, one or other of two consequences must result. Either the ideas (or relicts of such impression) will exactly imitate the order of the impression itself, which would be absolute *delirium*: or any one part of that impression might recall any other part, and (as from the law of continuity, there must exist in every total impression some one or more parts, which are components of some other following total impression, and so on ad infinitum) *any* part of *any* impression might recal (*sic*) *any* part of any *other*, without a cause present to determine *what* it should be.

(BL I 111-112)

Concerning such impressions, and what Coleridge eagerly asserts is proof thereof, he gives the example of an illiterate "young woman" in Göttingen. In a fever, she "continued incessantly talking Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, in very pompous tones and with most distinct enunciation" (113). For a few years, in her childhood she had been under the care of a pastor who had read texts aloud in these languages, oblivious to her overhearing him. Coleridge resolves

that no doubt could remain in any rational mind concerning the true origin of the impressions made on her nervous system.

This authenticated case furnishes both proof and instance, that reliques of sensation may exist for an indefinite time in a latent state, in the very same order in which they were originally impressed;

(Ibid. 113)

These impressions, scrutinized above, are independent of the will, as they stem from the unconscious. This is due to their assimilation with each other in the unconscious mind, wherein the will has no part. Later they resurface into the consciousness, which is also an activity independent of the will. Here then is a process of sublimated content, alluringly called "reliques of sensation" and "impressions", by Coleridge, and

these resurface into the consciousness. Coleridge's research into such possibilities of memory grew in part out of motivation from his longing to complete the remainder of "Kubla Khan". This resurfacing of content from the unconscious has similar characteristics to the theories proposed by Lowes about Coleridge's poetics of imagination. However, Coleridge looked to examples, such as those above, to attempt an explanation of the poetics of his own imagination for himself, but he never accomplished this to the extent of regaining his imaginative force.

Coleridge continued to investigate the unconscious content of the mind. He suggests the possibility "that all thoughts are in themselves imperishable". Continuing to explore this possibility, he argues

that if the intelligent faculty should be rendered more comprehensive, it would require only a different and apportioned organization, *the body celestial* instead of *the body terrestrial*, to bring before every human soul the collective experience of its whole past existence. And this, this, perchance, is the dread book of judgment, in whose mysterious hieroglyphics every idle word is recorded! Yea, in the very nature of a living spirit, it may be more possible that heaven and earth should pass away, than that a single act, a single thought, should be loosened or lost from that living chain of causes, to all whose links, conscious or unconscious, the free-will, our only absolute *self*, is co-extensive and co-present.

(BL I 114)

The intrigue of the potential capability of the unconscious is here theorised by Coleridge, referring, as in the passages quoted above, to unconscious content, and its re-emergence, in a way similar to that of Lowes over a century later.

Some contemporary critics search for ideas in the early poems of Coleridge through the interpretation of his later philosophical writings. Gian Orsini cautiously considers that this form of analysis uses the concepts of "subjectivity", "objectivity", and "unity in multieity" to explicate these poems. Orsini is aware that these describe the content of the poetry, and further claims, quoting M. F. Schulz, that they "confirm obliquely his [Coleridge's] contention that he found in Kant and Schelling what his own predilections had already led him to." Orsini regards this comment as "Oblique", denouncing it with his argument that Coleridge's best poems, the "Rime" and "Kubla

Khan” require an aesthetic interpretation. With this sort of interpretation, “no system of philosophy can be derived from them, or is adequate to them” (Orsini, 1969, 41-2).

By 1969, Orsini had encountered several non-aesthetic analyses of Coleridge’s poems of imagination. His willing assertion that philosophical systems can neither be applied to nor derived from these poems is true of those who have attempted to do so, both those who predate and postdate Orsini. Coleridge’s inability to sufficiently elucidate a method for the poetry of imagination, in the *Biographia*, or to expound a related system of philosophy justifies Orsini’s point. Even for Coleridge his own poetics of imagination eluded his attempted analysis of them, ever changing, never retaining a regular form and ever mercurial. This illuminates Lowes’s system of interpretation as informative, and is partly related to Coleridge’s own fascination with the unconscious, but it also reveals it as tenuous. This is because the “Rime” and “Kubla Khan” are beyond any interpretation using strict analogy, by virtue of their nature as poems of pure imagination. Their mercurial and transcendent characteristics do not tolerate analysis via analogy or psychology. It follows that Coleridge’s loss of imagination is in part due to the unfathomable and transcendent characteristics of the imagination poems that eluded his own attempts to repeat or substantially define them. To follow him in these attempts we now need, like him, and as hazardously, to turn to the problem of the will.

Chapter 2

The secondary imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will: the faculty of the will

Coleridge's extensive reference to the will includes its close association with the imagination. In his theories on these topics he considered the secondary imagination to echo the primary imagination, and to co-exist with the "conscious will" (*BL* I 304). He states this in the *Biographia*, published sixteen years after finishing his last poem of the imagination. Despite this time difference, this reference indicates the affinity of the will with the imagination in Coleridge's explanation of the activity of the imagination. This is all the more pertinent to the imagination poems, as in Coleridge's explanations of the imagination in the *Biographia*, he intends ultimately to elucidate how these poems were written. By extension the "conscious will" coexistent with the secondary imagination is therefore essential to the production of the imagination poems. Coleridge refers to the imagination and its relation to the will and poetry further in the *Biographia*. Of the imagination he states,

But in common language, and especially the subject of poetry, we appropriate the name to a superior degree of the faculty, joined to a superior voluntary controul (*sic*) over it.

(*BL* I 125)

The will is relevant and illuminating in the context of the failure of Coleridge's imagination due to its treatment under Kantian metaphysics. Converse to the will and its co-existence with the secondary imagination is the *a priori* supposition of the will as a metaphysical principle. Orsini refers to this principle in consequence of a Coleridge quote reminiscent of Schelling found in the Egerton MS. 2801 f. 104 (Orsini, 236). As such Coleridge affirms the will as subject and object, and defines the following:

Now, Will of Spirit contemplated finely, must fall under the predominance of Subject)-(Object—that is, must be conceived by the Understanding now as subjective, now as objective, in antithesis to the

power, in order to its final contemplation of the Identity of both in the Reason.

(Orsini, 236)

Coleridge is dealing here with the will as subject and the will as object. Kant's theory maintains that space and time are subjective and are forms of transcendental perception (Orsini, 92). Space and time, according to Kant's theory, organise experience into an ordered whole, and perceived objects "are based on our subjective sensations, and framed by our intuitions of space and time" (92-3). These subjective sensations have the "thing-in-itself" as the element of experience (187).

The Coleridge quotation above, in its reference to the will, sets out this philosophical approach to subjectify what is perceived rather than to objectify it, an approach which steered Coleridge away from empirical engagement and rendered his poetic force redundant. Accordingly Coleridge's establishment of the will during his empirical focus of the 1790s was objectively grounded, and is different to the subjectively established will once he adopted German Idealism. Kant's philosophy and German Idealism are both concerned with reason, but they differ in that Fichte attempted to remove the Kantian "thing-in-itself" and regarded experience as produced by the thinking subject (Kenny, 274). Despite this difference the subjective approach that both take of philosophy had a mutual effect of occluding empirical interaction and rendering Coleridge's poetic access ineffective.

Coleridge's loss of imagination occurred in the early stages of his research into German Idealism, which gained momentum while he visited Göttingen. His fascination with Immanuel Kant increased shortly thereafter. Kant gives the will close attention, and so too does German Idealism, although to a lesser extent than Kant. Coleridge had given the will some attention prior to his adoption of German Idealism, but thereafter, his ideas concerning the will shifted. Combined with his later abandonment of necessitarianism, referred to later, his concept of the will shifted further. What follows details Coleridge's concept of the will, and ideologies relating to the will, and how these differed before and after his adoption of German Idealism.

Coleridge paid constant attention to philosophy, sociology, politics, epistemology and religion and was greatly intrigued with the will in these contexts, and its relationship to reason, understanding and imagination. In numerous instances in his

Marginalia, and in his own texts, he refers to the will. He attended to its importance and reasserted it until his death in 1834. In these, so frequently is the subject of the will mentioned that James Engell considers any scrutiny of Coleridge's psychological and religious examinations after 1815 to necessitate a close regard for the will for them to be grasped correctly (Engell, 2002, 66.).

Thus, Coleridge's understanding of the will is detailed and vast, with numerous references to it appearing throughout his writings, any analysis of which requires specific attention. His texts, written between 1801 and 1834, require caution in associating Coleridge's ideas and perspectives of the will to the imagination poems. This is because the poems of heightened imagination predate the majority of his references to the will. For this reason his concept of the will at the time of writing the poems of imagination does not necessarily reflect his renderings of the will thereafter. Accordingly Coleridge had a lifelong attraction to the will and it was regularly a subject of his attention.

A subject in which the will plays a role is necessitarianism, which is important to this thesis because at the time that Coleridge wrote the imagination poems, he was a necessitarian. William Ulmer regards necessitarianism as the doctrine of a "chain of events" predetermined by causation (Ulmer, 236). Here causation is the natural force involved in the circumstance. William Godwin incorporated necessitarianism into his doctrine, which he developed with radical proposals for change to society, politics, epistemology, religion and economics. Necessitarianism however, is not synonymous with Godwinism, but Godwinism incorporated necessitarianism into its fundamental basis.

Coleridge's necessitarian beliefs had affected his political and religious outlook in the 1790s, and had complemented his belief in pantisocracy. Writing to Southey in 1794 he claimed to be a "complete Necessitarian", understanding "the subject as well almost as Hartley himself" (11 December 1794, *CL* I 137). Years later, in 1796 he wrote to John Thelwall, whilst categorising "vice" and the classification of "sinners", "We mean these men when we say—Men of bad *principles*. —*Guilt* is out of the Question—I am a Necessitarian, and of course deny the possibility of it" (13 May 1796, *CL* I 213). Here he denies personal responsibility and "bad principles" on account of predetermined causation. Coleridge at this time, in 1796, had just

abandoned pantisocracy, which had included a necessitarian outlook in its philosophy and theology. However, he took more time to abandon necessitarianism altogether. His marriage to Sara Fricker, and the poems of imagination, soon to be written, occurred within this necessitarian paradigm.

The necessitarian interpretation of the will, influenced and determined by causation, is a prominent focus of several theorists in Coleridge's time. Coleridge's necessitarianism rested on a theistic outlook, not an atheistic standpoint. Godwin's atheistic necessitarianism was accordingly different to that of Coleridge's theistic necessitarianism. Coleridge claimed that an atheistic view of necessitarianism rendered men "outcasts of a blind idiot called Nature / ruled by a fatal Necessity" as opposed to "the children of an all-wise and infinitely good God" (18 January, 1796, *CL I 177*). Consequently even in the case of necessitarianism, in which Coleridge and Godwin did agree, their perspectives of it were from opposite ends of its theistic range. Another point on which they agreed was their stance against materialism, found in Godwin's doctrine and Coleridge's adherence to pantisocracy. This is evident in Coleridge's reminiscence of this political and social system, after its abandonment, in a letter to Southey wherein he refers to the removal of the "selfish principle" from themselves and to undertake the "abolition of property", as he named it (13 November 1795, *CL I 163*), resulting in communal property. This demonstrates that Coleridge continued against materialism subsequent to abandoning pantisocracy.

William Godwin's doctrine, where it concerned necessitarianism, did not entirely deny free-will, but limited the will to the confines of necessity. Hence he believed the will to be causally necessitated (Ulmer, 236). In the context of necessitarianism, the will is limited to the extent that necessity allows it to act, as espoused by numerous empiricists.

The theories of Godwin, Priestly and Hartley, amongst many others, had in part informed and motivated pantisocracy, and all had theories approving necessitarianism. Coleridge had never been completely partial to Godwin, admitting to Southey, in 1794, that he did not quite share his high opinion of Godwin (21 October 1794, *CL I 115*). Coleridge's attitude to Godwin became more adverse once he abandoned this political and social system. He wrote to Benjamin Fowler,

My answer to Godwin will be a six-shilling Octavo; and is designed to shew not only the absurdities and wickedness of *his* System, but to depict what appear to me the defects of all the systems of morality before and since Christ.

(11 December 1796, *CL* I 267, Graham)

Two months later he wrote his opinions of several people, stating of Godwin's theory, "I abominate Godwinism" (6 February 1797, *CL*, i, 306). The year before writing "Dejection: An Ode" Coleridge wrote to Thomas Poole in 1801, declaring that he has overthrown many of his previous philosophical beliefs:

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—This I have done.

(16 March 1801, *CL* II 706, Orsini)

This emphasises that Coleridge abandoned necessitarianism at a similar time to his philosophical shift to German Idealism. This abandonment also corresponds to the period in which he lost his imaginative force. His extrication of time and space leads to *a priori* metaphysics. This disengagement from Hartley occurs because the empirical doctrines Coleridge held when he wrote the imagination poems gave way to the doctrines of German Idealism. The doctrines of Hartley and other empiricists complemented imagination poetry. Coleridge's decision to overthrow these doctrines is due to the influence of German philosophy on him. As a result the primary reason for his loss of poetic force is this philosophical shift.

Once Coleridge had committed his attention to German Idealism, he encapsulated his opinion of empiricism in 1801, Orsini states, in an explication of its worst consequences, namely atheism and infidelity. In particular he looked at Hobbes and Gassendi, who believed that "[a]ll knowledge & rational Belief were derived from experience—we had no experience of a God, or a future state—therefore there could be no rational Belief" (February 1801, *CL* II 701, Orsini, 67).

Coleridge was concerned that necessitarianism, once it had gone too far led to a disbelief in moral obligation. William Ulmer discerns the character Rivers in Wordsworth's *Borderers* as an atheist, and eagerly claims that Wordsworth parodied

Godwin with Rivers in this play. Ulmer quotes Godwin's claim, in *Political Justice*, that "the assassin cannot help the murder he commits any more than the dagger" (Priestley, 1946, 232, Ulmer, 236). Thus, an extreme form of necessitarianism could rule out personal accountability for one's actions.

As Coleridge increasingly became familiar with and approved of the philosophical doctrines of Kant, he was immersed in a system that disagreed with necessitarianism. In *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* Kant explains, about the power of choice,

Man *himself* must make or have made himself into whatever, in a moral sense, whether good or evil, he is or is to become. Either condition must be an effect of his free choice; for otherwise he could not be held responsible for it and could therefore be *morally* neither good nor evil.

(Greene, 1934, 40)

Coleridge's overthrowing of necessity agrees with Kant's assertion about the individual's freedom of moral choice. Coleridge reiterates this explanation of Kant in *Aids to Reflection*, published in 1825, which demonstrates his consistency in abandoning necessitarianism in 1801.

The Will is ultimately self-determined, or it is no longer a *Will* under the law of perfect Freedom, but a *Nature* under the mechanism of Cause and Effect.

(AR 285)

Coleridge's close Hartleyan focus lasted until it was superseded by German Idealism. A prominent idea within Hartley's philosophy that fascinated Coleridge was "mechanical" psychology, and its associated philosophy. Stephen Prickett explains that Hartley's "mechanical" psychology (mechanistic theory of association) perceived the human mind "as a thing, passive and cumulative in its organisation" (Prickett, 1970, 44). Both Locke and Hartley agreed with the concept of the *tabula rasa* of the passive mind, stimulated externally. Coleridge and Wordsworth, in contrast, saw the mind as "active and originating" (44). Hartley attempted to analogise the principles of physical science onto the mind, and he perceived mankind as a thing wherein religion and intellect were mechanised (33-4). These principles of Hartley, Coleridge ousted

with organism and dialectic that are two opposing models. Prickett maintains that these two elements were the polarities that Coleridge attempted to incorporate into the *Biographia* (46-9). Prickett explains that Coleridge only accepted Hartley “so long as he could believe that he offered an adequate scientific explanation not merely of his own creativity, but also his consciousness of value.” This Coleridge rejected when he realised that physical science was incapable of doing this by its very nature (49). All of this rests on Coleridge’s attention to organism and its association with mechanism, which Hartley considered one and the same (Fairer, 17), and that Coleridge emphasises in his Romantic poetry of the 1790s.

Concerning the changes that Romanticism caused at this time, David Fairer quotes Morse Peckham’s enquiry about the identity of Romanticism: that “it is the revolution in the European mind against thinking in terms of static mechanism and the redirection of the mind to thinking in terms of dynamic organicism” (17). This Romantic organicism originated in German Idealism, Fairer recognises, clarifying that Coleridge did not perceive organicism as a fact of nature, but as a means to thinking about wholes (27). Prior to this perception of organicism, is Coleridge’s organic perception of identity, motivated by “Locke’s organic concept of identity” (46), which Coleridge held throughout the 1790s, and that complemented his empirical standpoint.

While Coleridge interacted with Romanticism and its organicism, he kept in step with his typical characteristic for contradiction. Soon after he claimed to have abandoned Hartley’s philosophy he praised the metaphysics of Hartley, in a letter seven months after writing to Thomas Poole in 1801. Coleridge’s opinion swung back and forth until finally he rejects Hartley permanently in the *Biographia* (Orsini, 22). However, Coleridge had a less variable opinion of Berkeley’s empiricism. Consequently, Coleridge displays relative philosophical stability during the writing of the imagination poems, but shows growing indecision about empiricism as he adopts German Idealism. Hartley significantly influenced Coleridge at the time he was writing the poems of imagination, despite Coleridge’s trust in Hartley’s empiricism steadily declining at this time, in which Berkeley gained prominence.

Lawrence Hanson, who observes that in 1794 Coleridge’s focus was on Hartley the “Necessitarian and Believer”, plots changes Coleridge made to his philosophical outlook. Hartley’s materialist elements he shifted from, but not his thinking in

general. By 1796, Berkeley's empiricist influences began gaining precedence alongside Hartley, becoming by 1798 his primary focus (Hanson, 1938, 300). Hanson elucidates Hartley's survival in Coleridge's philosophical estimation, although he estimates that Kant eventually replaced him (350). This is a generalised truth, as several comments made by Coleridge indicate repeated approval of Hartley followed by denunciation of him until eventually, after the *Biographia*, he threw him off entirely (Orsini, 22).

Coleridge's closest philosophical guide throughout his espousal of pantisocracy was Hartley, but concurrent with his relinquishment of it in 1795, is his shift from Hartley to Berkeley. Soon Berkeley was his primary empirical focus, but he retained Hartley, though he was of reduced value to him (33). This correlates with the writing of the imagination poetry and his conversation poems written in the 1790s. The empirical philosophy of Hartley and Berkeley was accordingly complementary to imagination poetry, and as empiricists, they did not emphasise metaphysics or rationalism. Coleridge followed Berkeley's doctrine from the 1780s through to his last days, but within this period, from 1796-8 he gave prominent attention to Berkeley.

Between September 1798, when Coleridge left for Germany, and his return in July 1799, his philosophical outlook shifted. This shift is the gradual abandonment of empiricism, dominated by Berkeley's doctrine, and the steady adoption of German Idealism. Although this shift was not sudden, and took several years, it was underway on this visit to Germany. However, Kant's influence occurs later, once Coleridge is already immersed in German Idealism.

Orsini objects to any shift happening at this time, and mentions that only several months earlier Coleridge showed no signs of having any familiarity with German Idealist philosophy (48-9). This, Orsini accepts, indicates that Coleridge's knowledge of Kant post-dated Coleridge's studies in Göttingen, and therefore post-dated his loss of imagination, and had no part in it.

However, Coleridge did marginally know Kant's philosophy before his time in Germany. Coleridge's familiarity with Kant began at least as early as May 1796, Norman Fruman suggests, when his attitude to the philosopher was "the most unintelligible Emanuel Kant" (*CL I* 284n, Fruman, 1971, 82). Familiarity, at this time, was limited, whereas Coleridge refers to Kant as "the illustrious sage of Königsberg" years later in 1799 (*BL II* 153). However, he only started a serious study of Kant in

1801 at the earliest (Fruman, 82-3). This indicates that it was Coleridge's obsession with the analytical philosophy of German Idealism in general that shifted his imagination, rather than the exclusive influence of Kant. Concerning Kant's later influence on Coleridge, Orsini affirms, in 1969, that it was substantial:

If one were to enumerate the works of Coleridge in which ideas of Kant are adopted or discussed, one would have to list all the prose works of Coleridge published by him in the nineteenth century, plus his letters and notebooks, only now being published in their entirety.

(Orsini, 50)

During his residence in Germany Coleridge's universal interests took precedence over his attention to Kant. Coleridge's universal range of interests is notable, as he wrote on a wide variety of topics. The numerous works he intended to write allude to this, as he explained to Joseph Cottle, referring enthusiastically to one of his more ambitious ideas, one that also demonstrates his extensive range of enquiry:

I should not think of devoting less than 20 years to an Epic Poem. Ten to collect materials and warm my mind with universal science. I would be a tolerable Mathematician, I would thoroughly know Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Optics, and Astronomy, Botany, Metallurgy, Fossilism, Chemistry, Geology, Anatomy, Medicine—then the *mind of man*—then the *minds of men*—in Travels, Voyages and Histories. So I would spend ten years—the next five to the composition of the poem—and the last five to the correction of it.

(Early April 1797, *CL I* 320-1)

While Coleridge was in Göttingen, Orsini notes, he took courses in natural history, physiology, the New Testament and the Gothic language, but nothing on Kant, despite its availability as a lecture topic (Orsini, 46). It is suggested that Coleridge knew little Kantian philosophy while in Germany (Magnusson, 1988, 145); despite this there is further contrary evidence that his knowledge of Kant was then adequate (Hanson, 300). Coleridge did refer to Kant in conversation whilst there. Carolyn recalled a discussion between Coleridge and a German girl, whom he astonished with his understanding of a Kantian text in her language, which was unfathomable to her (300). Concerning his ability to converse in the German language Coleridge wrote to Thomas Poole in 1799,

On very trivial, and on metaphysical Subjects I can talk *tolerably*—so, so!—but in that conversation, which is between both, I bungle most ridiculously.

(4 January 1799, *CL I 453*)

The date of this letter, 4 January, is the month prior to Coleridge attending lectures in Göttingen. Years later, in the *Biographia*, Coleridge's study of German Idealism and Kant is demonstrated, and is preferred to Hartley. In it *a priori* elucidations from Kant are found. In Chapter VII, Coleridge criticises the proponents of Hartley for "mistaking the *conditions* of a thing for its *causes* and *essence*; and the process by which we arrive at the knowledge of a faculty, for the faculty itself" (*BL I 123*). This criticism is also characteristic of German Idealism as it focuses on the thinking subject and not on the thing-in-itself. Without direct reference to German Idealism, he here demonstrates its replacement of the doctrines of Hartley. This serves as an example of how his thoughts developed from his stay in Germany into the nineteenth century. This adherence to German Idealism and analytical philosophy was underway when Coleridge returned to England, and he introduced this tradition into Britain (Cobban, 1929, 160). Coleridge's imaginative force was thus lost, not through neglect but through his change in philosophical focus.

One hour was thine—thou'st had thy will: the activity of the will

Coleridge's imagination failed when he came under the influence of German Idealism. Increasingly Coleridge interpreted the will according to the subjectivity of the metaphysics of Kant and German Idealism. It is this that steered him away from objectively focussed engagement with the will through empirical philosophy, and caused his poetic access to end. Despite the coexistence of the secondary imagination with the "conscious will" (*BL I 304*), it follows that this relationship is only effective if the will is engaged empirically.

The will is active in Coleridge's conversation poems, which he wrote from the second half of the 1790s until 1806. Frederick Burwick asserts, in his article

“Coleridge’s Conversation Poems: Thinking the Thinker”, that the conversation poems have a close affinity to the will (Burwick, 2008, 169). Coleridge developed the activity of the will in these poems from “The Eolian Harp” in 1795, to “Dejection: An Ode” in 1802. The importance of the will in these poems is that from the earlier poem to the later poem, the role of the will progresses from its passive reference to its active reference (169). The conversation poems from “This Lime-tree Bower my Prison”, written in July 1797, to “The Nightingale”, written in April to May 1798, align chronologically with the poems of imagination.

As a subject, the will occurs in the imagination poems, but its role is different to that of the conversation poems. The relevance of the will in the poems of heightened imagination is mainly in the loss of agency.

Of great philosophical wonder to Coleridge was the self, the “I” and “me”. The recurrence of the word “me” in section six of “Dejection: An Ode” reinforces that Coleridge associates his loss of imaginative force with his own philosophical volition. Combined with this is his attention to the will, defining volition and conscious effort. Conceptually the conversation poems develop the purpose of the will, traced by Burwick (169). The will as a result experiences chronological growth in the conversation poems, whereas in the poems of imagination it is a stable entity depicting loss of agency.

Burwick associates the development of the will in the conversation poems with Coleridge’s rejection on 23 March 1801 of the philosophical materialism of Locke and Newton for describing the mind as “always *passive* – a lazy *Looker-on*.” (CL II 709, Burwick, 169). Tracing the development of this conclusion, Burwick begins with “The Eolian Harp”, written in 1795, in which no effort of will is necessary in the lines

And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;
Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
(PWI i 233, ll. 38-41)

By inference, Coleridge’s use of the will pertains to any deliberate action, but contains no dynamic range beyond this, with passivity as its opposite. On the next conversation poem, “Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement”, written in

1796, Burwick comments that the “auditor must not listen passively” (Burwick, 170). This requires active listening to the skylark:

“The inobtrusive song of Happiness—
“Unearthly minstrelsy! then only heard
“When the Soul seeks to hear; when all is hush'd,
“And the Heart listens!”

(*PW I* i 262, ll. 23-6)

The self is a focus of Coleridge in these poems, and he ties it in directly with the will. He develops the self and structurally forges it so that its operation is conducive to the will in such renderings as these, primarily in the context of perception and how the self perceives what is perceivable.

Coleridge includes the activity of the will, and therefore also perception, further in “This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison” the following year. Of this Burwick explains, “no matter how glorious the scene, the revelation occurs only with a committed act of perception” (Burwick, 170).

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

(*PW I* i 352, ll. 37-43)

With this as an example, the perspective of the will is further emphasised characterising deliberate action.

Burwick recognises that in the four years between “The Nightingale” and “Dejection: An Ode”, spanning April 1798 to April 1802, Coleridge “affirmed joy” in the former only to lapse into “despair” in the latter (Burwick, 177). Burwick’s examples respectively state,

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!

(*PW I i* 518, ll. 42-49)

My genial spirits fail,
And what can these avail,
To lift the smoth'ring weight from off my breast?

(*PW I ii* 699, ll. 39-41)

In the conversation poems, Coleridge develops the perception as the will becomes more assertive. Hence in “Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement” active listening is required (Burwick, 170); “then only heard//When the Soul seeks to hear; when all is hush'd,//And the Heart listens!” Coleridge develops the will chronologically in the conversation poems, and accordingly develops the perception.

Coleridge’s development of the will in the conversation poems includes its progressive activity. However they do not represent Coleridge’s developing understanding of the will, but instead depict how he develops his representation of the will. These poems also express an idea of the will and its function limited to the context of perceptive effort and deliberate action.

Several categories of will exist in the context of the range of Coleridge’s writing, that result from his variety of interests. For example, there is the autonomous free-will expounded by Kant, as opposed to the necessitarian will subject to underlying controls necessitated by existence and function.

Coleridge’s application of the will in the conversation poems does not correlate directly with his use of the will in the imagination poems. In these, the will becomes evident through the loss of volition and reduced personal agency. Christabel’s agency and ability to act diminishes progressively as Geraldine advances herself in the castle.

A Star hath set, a Star hath risen,
O Geraldine! since Arms of thine
Have been the lovely Lady’s Prison.
O Geraldine! One hour was thine—
Thou’st had thy will!

(*PW I i* 492, ll. 305-6)

Geraldine's coercion causes Christabel to lose volition. Christabel continues to perceive the circumstances, but her will has reduced freedom to act. In the "Rime", the "storm-blast" blows the ship south,

And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

(PWI i 375-377, ll. 41-44)

The Mariner's volition diminishes progressively. The "storm-blast" sends the ship far off course, and once the Mariner kills the Albatross, his last remaining volition is spent. Nevertheless, he incurs moral responsibility for the killing, and becomes an opposite to Godwin's necessitarianism that incurs no moral responsibility.

Coleridge's definition of fancy best describes the ideas of Godwin and Hume on the will, in which fancy remains reliant on empirically based impressions obtained *a posteriori*. Of fancy Coleridge states,

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phaenomenon of the will, which we express by the word Choice. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.

(BL I 305)

Constantly overlooked, as Engell notices, "Coleridge emphasises that no material or associationist theory accounts for the power of the will, 'our absolute self'" (Engell, 66). This complements Coleridge's interpretation of the fancy and imagination, where fancy is a choice made between already extant objects and images, whereas the imagination experiences control from the will. This also hints at why the imagination poems of Coleridge are able to assert the self.

Wandering mazes lost: Calvinism, necessitarianism and free-will

Coleridge's concepts of the will align closely with his theology and his ideas of the self, and his thoughts on the will cannot be analysed outside of these perspectives. Coleridge's qualification of the will extends to defining it in relation to his point of view of Christianity and God. For certain purposes, he calls God the "Absolute will". He commented much concerning the will in his marginal notes on the works of Jakob Böhme, whose works he acquired in 1808. Coleridge was familiar with Böhme's works prior to this year, and had known about them since his school days, and he included a journal entry in 1795 that he intended to write about Böhme, indicating serious enquiry into Böhme's works (*CM* VI 554). In one marginal note on Böhme Coleridge affirms "that the Absolute will *becomes* the Paternal Mind = the Father Almighty" (696). Coleridge enthusiastically analysed the will, and developed his own understanding of it, when he found it conceptualised by others.

Coleridge continuously explicated the will in his texts, and amalgamated the secondary imagination as co-existent with the "conscious will". This emphasis of his asserts their inseparability, although they are not synonymous. Throughout his texts and marginalia that concern the will, he clarifies the activity of the will. Its context in relation to the secondary imagination, agency, consciousness and perception is mostly unsaid in these texts, but this context remains pertinent all the same. Böhme's works primarily induced Coleridge to interpret the will from a theological perspective.

The theological viewpoint of the will included the debate between the doctrines of Calvinism and free-will that was prominent and ongoing throughout the eighteenth century. One of Coleridge's distinctive points of scrutiny on the will is the debate between free-will and Calvinism. This is a theological debate, but Calvinism contains similarities to the doctrine of necessitarianism. Where the doctrine of necessitarianism is a chain of events predetermined by natural or divine causation, the doctrine of Calvinism is substantiated by a chain of events predetermined by God. By extension Calvinism is in some respects a type of necessitarianism. Calvinism accordingly holds to the doctrine of predestination, and fixed-fate for humanity, which has developed conceptually and ranged across several definitions of necessity by Coleridge's time.

The theological debate between Calvinism and free-will was exemplified in the eighteenth century by the debate between the Wesleyan Methodists and the Anglican and Calvinistic Methodist churches. It most prominently occurred in the Wesley–Whitfield debates. In the context of religious denominations adhering to Calvinism Coleridge refers to “the progress of Methodists, and other disciples of Calvinism” (*Watchman* 12-13, Canuel, 87), thus referring to the Calvinistic Methodists.

Theologically the debate between free-will and predestination Coleridge distinguished early in life. He recalled this in the *Biographia* in which he laments the fruitless conversations he pursued with this debate as his focus. His childhood sentiment to this he explains:

In my friendless wanderings on our *leave-days* (for I was an orphan, and had scarce any connections in London), highly was I delighted, if any passenger, especially if he were drest in black, would enter into conversation with me. For I soon found the means of directing it to my favourite subjects

Of providence, fore-knowledge, will, and fate,
Fix'd fate, free will, fore-knowledge absolute,
And found no end in wandering mazes lost.

This preposterous pursuit was, beyond doubt, injurious, both to my natural powers, and to the progress of my education.

(*BL* I 16)

Without siding with either option, he criticises the whole free-will vs. fixed-fate debate, considering such disputes futile. In a marginal note on *The Pilgrim's Progress* he calls this debate “the error and hollowness of the Antithesis between Liberty and Necessity” (*CM* I 827). The *Biographia* passage quoted above also reveals Coleridge's early fascination with philosophical and religious subjects and discussion. Here however philosophical debate and metaphysics, he surmises, are impaired by Calvinistic sentiment, which he finds most at fault. David Riede regards this reference as concerning Coleridge's political, philosophical and in particular religious pursuits (Riede, 1991, 203). Although Riede's conclusion is correct and relevant, the entire quotation deals with will, fate and predestination, all elements pertinent to Calvinism. Coleridge's reluctance to use the word “Calvinism” in this quote has to do with theology in his time grappling with several working definitions of “Calvinism”, all of

which were interrelated. This resulted in the potential for misrecognition of a theologically sensitive topic important to him. He describes Calvinism without identifying it as such, and by doing so he asserts his specific view on Calvinism, and avoids extra explanation. He therefore coerces his reader to identify the characteristics of what he disapproves, and only after that they recognise and associate them with Calvinism, by themselves. This consequently alleviates misrecognition. John Bunyan wrote an editorial comment that preceded *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which concerns Bunyan's own Calvinism. To this Coleridge responded with,

If by "metaphysics" we mean those truths of the pure Reason, which always transcend and not seldom appear to contradict, the *Understanding*—or (in the words of the great Apostle) spiritual verities which can only be spiritually discerned—/ and this is the true and legitimate meaning of "Metaphysics", i.e. μετα τα φυσικα/ then, I affirm, that this very controversy between the Arminians and the Calvinists, in which both are partially right in what they *affirm*, and both wholly wrong in what they *deny*, is a proof that without *Metaphysics* there can be no *Light* of Faith.

(CM I 819-20)

Coleridge's non-conformist attitude to the Calvinist debate occurs once more here, but the Kantian borrowing and explication of metaphysics is illuminated. He gives metaphysics a spiritual role here, that of defining things only spiritually discerned, and incorporates "understanding" as a synonym of it.

Calvinism, as a setback, framed Coleridge's early existence. Although he does not discredit it on certain points, the Calvinistic debate he generally sees as pointless and misleading. His quote about "wandering mazes lost" alludes to how Calvinism motivated his early sense of himself in relation to society, religion and the identity of the individual. Accordingly topics about will, providence and fate have a far-reaching grasp on the individual's self-perception, and their relation to society. Lost time in "mazes lost" was the result of Coleridge's focus on this debate, and the activity of debating such a doctrine gained him nothing, dealing him educational and spiritual hurt. In relation to this Coleridge says of Calvinism,

It is of vital importance for a theological Student to understand clearly the utter diversity of the Lutheran, which is likewise the Calvinistic denial of *Free* will in the Unregenerate and the doctrine

of the modern Necessitarians and...of the later Calvinists, which denies the proper existence of will altogether. The former is sound scriptural, compatible with the divine justice, a new, yea, a *mighty* motive to morality, & finally, the dictate of common Sense grounded on common Experience. The latter the very contrary of all these.

(*CM III 737*, Beer, 2002, 217)

Here Coleridge separates early Calvinism from later Calvinism, the distinction he avoided in the *Biographia* passage quoted above. He approves of the early Calvinistic “denial of *Free* will in the Unregenerate”. This also demonstrates theological opinion changes that he made that correspond with the transition from his earlier theologically radical perspectives to his later religious conservatism.

Reflecting in the *Biographia* on his errors in theology, Coleridge recalled his tour for the periodical work, *The Watchman*,

For I was most sincere, most disinterested! My opinions were indeed in many and most important points erroneous; but my heart was single. Wealth, rank, life itself then seemed cheap to me, compared with the interests of (what I believed to be) the truth, and the will of my maker. I cannot even accuse myself of having been actuated by vanity; for in the expansion of my enthusiasm I did not think of *myself* at all.

(*BL I 180*)

Here, unlike his reference to childhood, he was satisfied with his errors, doing what he perceived as the will of his “Maker”. The change here is his focus on divine will rather than the Calvinistic debate about it, in which he engaged in his youth. Coleridge ranks his own erroneous wanderings, in this theological doctrine, as non-injurious here on the grounds of his sincerity. This, although his Christian conviction is misguided, ranks as a form of marred virtue, in his concept of theology and perception of what the Christian individual should be. He describes his errors as a philosophical trinitarianism, but religious unitarianism and philanthropy (180). Immediately after this reference Coleridge refers to an interaction he had with a Calvinist in Birmingham. He describes the incident, but reveals nothing more about his actual stance towards Calvinism. However, it asserts that he strongly opposed the manifestation of Calvinism in this person. He had already dealt with his opinion of Calvinism at the beginning of the *Biographia*, and need not repeat himself:

My campaign commenced at Birmingham; and my first attack was on a rigid Calvinist, a tallow-chandler by trade. He was a tall dingy man...O that face!...the countenance lank, dark, very hard, and with strong perpendicular furrows, gave me a dim notion of some one looking at me through a used gridiron! But he was one of the thorough-bred, a true lover of liberty, and...had proved to the satisfaction of many, that Mr. Pitt was one of the horns of the second beast in THE REVELATIONS, that spake as a dragon.

(BL I 180)

Describing the tallow-chandler as “one of the thorough-bred”, Coleridge’s irony deprecates a particular Calvinistic view of election, as a perceived state under grace foreordained for the tallow-chandler personally. Extending the irony “a true lover of liberty” points to foreknowledge and fixed fate kin to endless “mazes lost”. This explains the damage caused to the self and the will through the particular Calvinistic reasoning that “denies the proper existence of will altogether”, in which Coleridge sees in the tallow-chandler the same gridiron perceived by himself as a youth. This denotes the damage caused to the self with its natural powers, and to society through perpetuation of this Calvinistic “gridiron”. His social interaction was also injured. Primarily his objections to this form of Calvinism are its role in impeding Christianity and Romantic subjectivity, and hence are injurious to his “natural powers”.

Recalling these opinions and occasions, Coleridge describes himself existing in a state of imaginative bankruptcy as a youth that he later overcame. In so doing, the foundation for Coleridge’s later imagination poems remained undamaged. Later injury was done to his imagination through “the unwholesome quicksilver mines of metaphysic” coupled with the rationalistically orientated philosophy he pursued from 1799 onward. This he did not unravel or plough through. This however led him to apply his genius in philosophical, sociological, political, epistemological and religious writings that also emphasised his extraordinary range of ability.

And I bless'd them unaware: theological interpretations of the will

Coleridge agrees, in a marginal note, to a statement by Jakob Böhme that “every Man is *free*, and is as *a God* to himself; he may *change* and alter himself in this Life either into Wrath, or into Light”; Coleridge considers “all guilt is in and of the *will*” (*CM* I 605). He surmises here that people are aware of their guilt and it is not inadvertent. The Mariner bears guilt for killing the albatross, and while “[a]lone on a wide wide sea” (*PW* I i 391, ll. 233), he looks “upon the rotting deck//And there the dead men lay” (242-3) whereupon he finds himself unable to pray. His volition is thus impaired:

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

(*PW* I i 391, ll. 244-47)

In a marginal note in the *Book of Common Prayer*, Coleridge affirms that “Prayer is *Faith* passing into act—a union of the will and the Intellect realizing in an *intellectual act*” (*CM* I 701). By extension the Mariner’s will is impaired but not his intellect. His affection for the water-snakes breaks the preceding spell, and this inadvertent sympathy induces his ability to pray:

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed 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.

(*PW* I i 393-4, ll. 282-91)

Blessing them “unaware” construes an act outside of the will. It is also mercurial, without a definitive explanation of which the Mariner is aware. Referring to Karl Friedrich Bahrdt’s *Glaubens-Bekänntniss*, and objecting to his Grotian theory of

redemption, Coleridge notes that “[s]in is a disease in the will. The will is a mystery[:]
the Disease is a mystery: must we not therefore [e]xpect, that the Remedy should be a
mystery?” (CM I 201) The mystery, Coleridge infers, is that of Christianity. The
Mariner’s diseased will is remedied with his love and blessing toward the water-
snakes. Coleridge’s perspective of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* replicates this regeneration
in his comment,

in Bunyan’s judgement there must be at least a *negative* co-operation
of the Will of Man with the Divine Grace—an energy of Non-
resistance to the workings of the Holy Spirit. But the error of the
Calvinists is, that they divide the regenerate Will in Man from the
Will of God—instead of *including* it.

(CM I 820)

The regeneration of the Mariner is due to the realignment of his will with the Absolute
will, and inclusion with it. This does not occur in “The Wanderings of Cain”, in which
a destiny beyond free-will has been allocated Cain, but one that he was once free to
choose.

The *Lyrical Ballads* were published early in Coleridge’s career and predate the
influence of German Idealism, which motivated his texts thereafter. The result of
these philosophical endeavours is reassessed by Lucy Newlyn, who affirms that it is
not Coleridge’s ability to write poetry that is lost, but “an assumption about how
perception works, and how writing is related to it” (Newlyn, 1986, 60). Newlyn refers
to what she terms the loss of perception, quoting Coleridge’s letter to Godwin: “I look
at the Mountains only for the Curves of their outlines” (25 March 1801, CL II 714,
Newlyn, 59). Coleridge did not lose his ability to write all types of poetry, but his
imaginative force was lost. Here the result of his “abstruse researches” is a stifled
imaginative ability, and due to this a loss of perception. Given the nature of
Coleridge’s imagination poetry, the loss of imaginative force resulted in the loss of
perception complementary to the imagination. The function of perception is vital to
the production of the imagination poems, and with its loss, the imaginative ability is
impaired. Coleridge considered the primary imagination “to be the living power and
prime agent of all human perception” (BL I 304). His lost perception resulted from the

influence of German Idealism and his elevated exposure to philosophy between 1798 and 1801.

An old acquaintance: Coleridge, Chatterton and Wesley

Coleridge's theological examination of the will is found throughout his poetry. Written in 1790, "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" is an early success of Coleridge's. Holmes argues that this poem reveals the early influence of Thomas Chatterton on Coleridge (Holmes, 2000, 17). Fairer indicates an even closer affinity, enhancing the influence with "[i]n the 1790s Coleridge's poetic character was intriguingly bound up with that of Thomas Chatterton" (Fairer, 138). Chatterton's poem "Apostate Will" alludes to Coleridge's eagerness to examine the debate between the doctrine of Calvinism and the doctrine of free-will. This he enlivens through the character of the preacher, who has more to do with apostasy in his perspective of the will, than with the will itself. The poem contains constant irony in reference to the concept of the will and the standpoints of each of these doctrines on it. Chatterton personifies the "will" in his poem, and represents the pastor as such, who also symbolises the debate mentioned above.

But, be his outward what it will,
His heart was an apostate's still.
He'd oft profess an hallow'd flame,
And every where preach'd Wesley's name;
(Gregory, 1803, 9, ll. 29-32)

The phrase "preach'd Wesley's name" is opposite to the Calvinistic obsession with predestination. The Wesley brothers had separated from Calvinistic Methodism, and had established their own non-Calvinistic Wesleyan Methodism. In this poem the character of Chatterton's preacher is contextualised by this debate between Calvinism and the doctrine of free-will. The preacher cared for neither of these doctrines, but was content to adopt the one that was most convenient for him. In both contexts, this fault is the apostate preacher's for his choice of subject. Chatterton concludes his

poem with reference to the pastor. The last words of the poem “And keeps it with dissembled grace” (Ibid. ll. 54) with which the apostate preacher keeps his renewed place with the Anglicans, alludes to the differing Anglican and Wesleyan perspectives on the will. It also deduces the preacher’s apostasy from both standpoints.

Coleridge’s poem “The Devil’s Thoughts” replicates the hypocritical and apostatical stance of Chatterton’s poem “Apostate Will”. “The Devil’s Thoughts” refers to an array of moral and religious dilemmas and circumstances concerning a variety of religious and social types in English society. This 1799 poem by Coleridge has close affinities to “Apostate Will”:

[XII]

He met an old acquaintance
Just by the Methodist meeting;
She held a consecrated flag,
And the Devil nods a greeting.

[XIII]

She tip’d him the wink, then frown’d and cri’d
Avaunt! my name’s —————
And turn’d to Mr. ——— ———
And leer’d like a love-sick pigeon.

(*PW I* i 565-6, ll. 45-452)

These social types, similar to Hogarthian visual portrayals of society in a moral context, include moral and religious depictions. Chatterton’s influence is notably found here in the correlations of extensive religious hypocrisy.

One abiding hope, one thought, one love: Coleridge’s infatuation with Sara Hutchinson

Methodism influenced Romanticism in ways outside of the Calvinist and free-will debates. Methodism was a growing force in the eighteenth century and gained strong religious and social influence. Frederick Gill maintains that Romanticism was infused by religious sentiment that predated it. Resulting from religious awakening, this

infusion Gill regards is a hidden source of literary recovery that stimulated emotions and sensibility (Gill, 1937, 15). This emotion and sensibility became characteristic of Romanticism. Gill asserts this with reference to Sir Leslie Stephen's claim, about literary influence, that "Wesleyanism is the most important phenomenon of the eighteenth century" (16). These assertions by Stephen that were later agreed by Gill imply that the Romantic poets derived influence from Wesleyanism.

Paul Magnusson suggests that Coleridge's conversation poems introduce the short blank verse poem into English. A notable Methodist and Romantic poet was William Cowper, whose blank verse poem "The Task" Magnusson identifies as the nearest model of blank verse to Coleridge's conversation poems. Magnusson does however also acknowledge the influence of Collins, Gray and Bowles on Coleridge (Magnusson, 2002, 33-34).

Three characteristics of Methodism that Gill states permeated Romanticism are its forms of speech, images of nature and concepts of personality (Gill, 16). Coleridge's poem, "Love", was provoked after he had met and become besotted with Sara Hutchinson. This occurred on November 26, 1799, and he wrote the poem the next day (*CM I* xliii, Mays, 2002, 89). It opens with the stanza,

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.
(*PWI ii* 606, ll. 1-4)

This stanza correlates with the first stanza of Charles Wesley's hymn, the first line amounting to the title,

Blest be the dear uniting love
That will not let us part;
Our bodies may far off remove,
We still are one in heart.
(*The Methodist Hymn-Book*, 1933, pp. 273, # 712)

Correlations here are numerous, but most prominently Coleridge borrows from Wesley's hymn the concept of the mystical union of saints and unity of all believers. He superimposes this concept onto his new obsession with Sara Hutchinson in

“Love”. Structurally they are similar, with syllabic counts differing only in the second line.

Years later, his affection for her is unabated. Coleridge recorded his thoughts about her while on Malta, in a notebook entry whilst referring to what Raysor construes as his enforced absence (Raysor, 1929, 311):

Long years of seriousness, of deep Passion, awful incidents, seas
traversed, and the famous Things of the world seen, and all
connected with the one abiding Hope, one Thought, one Love—
this will surely give a delicacy, an awe/a fear of saying <or doing>
light or *coarse* Things in her Presence/& lengthen on the Passion
by still combining it with a manly Feeling.

(17 April 1804, *CN* II 2019)

His obsession with Sara Hutchinson caused him to elevate her to an ethical measure, in “fear of saying or doing *light* or *coarse* Things”.

The forms of speech, images of nature and concepts of personality that Methodist hymnology and Romanticism share, include other thematic similarities. Elemental correlations exist in the subject matter, prominently in the depictions of space and astronomical bodies, and remoteness and distant geographical regions and landscapes. From Methodism the references following acknowledge these elements, and include borrowings from Cartesian philosophy; Henry Francis Lyte describes “Dwellers all in time and space,” (*The Methodist Hymn Book*, pp. 5, # 12, ll. 22), and Charles Wesley states, “Meet and right it is to sing, // In every time and place,” (*Ibid.* pp. 6, # 17, ll. 1-2).

Methodism was emphasising the accepted order of the universe in these references, whereas Coleridge, despite using similar elements, dealt occasionally with them in their chaotic state, such as the plight of the Mariner. The awareness of the universe in the Romantic period predates Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. The theories of space and geological time were not as developed then, as they later became in Darwinian Theory.

Gill mentions characteristics that both Methodism and Romanticism shared, that they are both cosmic in range and meaning, and have encyclopaedic tendencies (Gill,

19). The subject matter of eighteenth century hymnology was not limited to biblical themes, but was universal, and incorporated the geographic and astronomical.

Chapter 3

This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist: the influences of the 1790s

Several factors affected Coleridge in the 1790s and influenced the development and loss of the imagination poetry between 1797 and 1798. These factors include his marriage to Sara Fricker, abandonment of pantisocracy, first meeting and ensuing friendship with William Wordsworth, shift from radical politics to conservative politics, deprecating comments about his imagination poetry from Wordsworth and Robert Southey, opium use, and meeting Sara Hutchinson.

Coleridge changed from his earlier radicalism to conservatism in the mid-1790s. Indicators of this change to conservative politics were evident with his work as a journalist for the *Courier*, at the end of the 1790s. In this publication his writings on the war with France saw him, as Kelvin Everest recognises, becoming “emphatically pro-government, alienating some among the dwindling band of his admirers” (Everest, 2002, 25).

Coleridge’s political focus intensified in the early 1790s, when he first encountered Wordsworth’s *Descriptive Sketches* in 1793, and already his primary enthusiasm was for politics (Newlyn, 1986, 4). The politics Coleridge favoured was radical, and he approved of the political upheaval in France prior to 1796, but his disillusionment with radical politics grew and his political standpoint changes in 1796. His thoughts about developing circumstances in France arise in his letters, in which he expresses his changed outlook. To Benjamin Fowler he writes, in 1796,

I seldom see *any* paper. Indeed I am out of heart with the French. In one of the numbers of my Watchman I wrote ‘a remonstrance to the French Legislators’: it contain’d *my* politics; & the splendid victories of the French since that time have produced no alteration in them. I am tired of reading butcheries; and, altho’ I should be unworthy the name of man, if I did not feel my Head & Heart awfully interested in the final Event, yet, I confess, my Curiosity is worn out with regard to the particulars of the Process.

(11 December 1796, *CL I* 268-9)

Coleridge further reinforces his drift away from radical politics in a letter to John Prior Estlin in 1797, about the relationship between politics and religion:

—and I am wearied with politics, even to soreness.—I never knew a passion for politics exist for a long time without it swallowing up, or absolutely excluding, a passion for Religion—.

(23 July 1797, *CL I* 338)

These comments mark an important change in Coleridge's political perspective that occurs while his philosophical outlook is still primarily empirical, prior to Germany. These political opinions Coleridge wrote immediately before he began his poetry of imagination. Initially, Coleridge had approached revolutionary politics with enthusiasm, along with Southey and Wordsworth, but he abandoned it, stating, in a letter to his brother in 1798, "I have snapped my squeaking baby-trumpet of Sedition, & the fragments lie scattered in the lumber-room of Penitence" (*CL I* 397).

Alfred Cobban makes the worthwhile point that following Coleridge's turn from radical politics he went on to study "German metaphysics", from whom Cobban argues that Coleridge was one of the first thinkers (in the English-speaking world) to recognise the significance of German Idealism (Cobban, 160). Cobban is not specific about the particular time that these changes occur. Nevertheless Coleridge's abandonment of radical politics did occur prior to and during the time that he wrote his poems of imagination.

This change in Coleridge's political opinions is reiterated by the political and military turmoil occurring in Europe and the constant threat of a French invasion. Between October 1797 and May 1798 Napoleon's army was encamped along the Channel coast (Fairer, 286, 286n), and England was constantly under threat from a French invasion. Coleridge wrote the initial versions of the imagination poems, and several conversation poems that allude to these political conditions and military threat. Yet these tense circumstances did not dampen his imaginative force.

Lesa Corrigan considers that the early Romantics anticipated "apocalyptic and millennial transformations" in politics and society, but the repercussions of the French Revolution destroyed this vision. These circumstances give way to large-scale industrialisation that reduced the rural existence that had preceded the Revolution

(Corrigan, 7). Consequently a new disillusioning factor exists in the aftermath of these events, unanticipated by those who upheld them.

Coleridge moved to Nether Stowey in 1797 and settled where he would soon write the poems of heightened imagination. Richard Holmes refers to Coleridge's move as "a deliberate rejection of any conventional career in literature or journalism" (Holmes, 1989, 135). About his move to Nether Stowey Coleridge commented, "I say plainly, that literature was not a profession by which I could expect to live" (*BL* I 121, Holmes, 135). Under these circumstances his letter to John Thelwall states his need for employment: "I have neither money nor influence—& I suppose, that at last I must become a Unitarian minister as a less evil than starvation—for I get nothing by literature" (14 October 1797, *CL* I 349). This letter was contemporaneous with the "Rime" and "Kubla Khan", and was written while he endeavoured to write poems for the *Lyrical Ballads*. Nevertheless his financial circumstances led him away from literature as a form of employment.

A characteristic of Coleridge's conversation poems is that they contain biographical and autobiographical content. Coleridge experienced several changes in the latter half of 1795, when he wrote the first conversation poem, "The Eolian Harp". There was upheaval for him due to his arguments with Robert Southey, and in conjunction with this he abandoned pantisocracy. Shortly thereafter Coleridge met Wordsworth, and on 4 October, Coleridge married Sara Fricker, to whom he had been engaged since August the previous year.

The first two conversation poems predate the imagination poetry, and the second to last, "Dejection: An Ode", laments its loss. Their themes and content indicate the thoughts and directions of Coleridge at specific moments during the development leading to the imagination poetry and, following this, its apex and decline. There is evidence in "The Eolian Harp" and "Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement" that he and Sara² discussed religion and philosophy.

In "The Eolian Harp", dated 1795, Coleridge portrays adjustments he made to his religious and philosophical interests. This poem is addressed to Sara Fricker, and in it

² Conscious as I am of the feminist objection to the use of first names for women, when men are denoted by their surnames, for the sake of mimetic stimulus, I will maintain this convention. Such

Coleridge relinquishes his philosophical inquiries, and agrees with her disapproval of them. This poem follows the influence of his future wife on his interest in these enquiries. In Coleridge's reference to this, he provides an insight into the subjects that they spoke about and that concerned them both.

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O beloved woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallowed dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
Meek Daughter in the family of Christ!
Well hast thou said and holily dispraised
These shapings of the unregenerate mind;
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.
For never guiltless may I speak of him,
The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels;
Who with his saving mercies healed me,
A sinful and most miserable Man,
Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace, and this Cot, and thee, heart-honour'd Maid!
(*PW I i* 234, ll. 49-64)

This stanza refers to Sara's influence on Coleridge, concerning his philosophical move away from certain types of thinking, because she persuades him to do so. This passage is his reply to her about conversations that they had about philosophy. She accordingly has influence on his primary interests, and disapproves of some, such as the philosophy in question, as indicated by the "mild reproof" of her eye. She also encourages other interests of his, such as religion. In this passage, he agrees with his wife to be, and refers to "vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring." His message to her in this poem is that he intends, henceforward, to dispense with this type of study. For this reason this poem acknowledges an agreement between them, which results from their conversations.

Coleridge wrote "The Eolian Harp" soon after he and Southey abandoned pantisocracy. The engagement of Coleridge to Sara, in August 1794, had until that time existed with the intention of emigration to the Susquehanna valley in

conventions were deeply ambiguated by Coleridge, who himself designates his wife as Sara and Mrs Coleridge.

Pennsylvania, with the intention of establishing a pantisocratic political and social system there. This political and philosophical context to their engagement was now over. Pantisocracy had a strong philosophical emphasis that Sara had become disillusioned with, along with her sister Edith, who had recently married Southey.³

Southey and Coleridge had been obsessed with this political and social system, and this may have alarmed Sara. She thus condemned this type of study and the politics associated with pantisocracy. Therefore, his future wife may have been indifferent to philosophy when she first was engaged to Coleridge, but this changed as she learned more about this political and sociological system. Hence the philosophy in question, of which Sara disapproved, was that in which pantisocracy was involved. However, this disapproval did not extend to Coleridge's enthusiasm for the doctrines of Hartley and Berkeley. Coleridge abandoned this political system due to Southey's abandonment of it, and not for philosophical reasons.

The conversation poems of the 1790s predate Coleridge's adoption of German Idealism, but postdate his pantisocratic ambition. He wrote the imagination poems in the later part of this same timeframe. Both types of poem consequently fall within this same period of philosophical study, which turned away from pantisocracy and focussed primarily on empiricism.

Coleridge repeats his claim that he has turned away from the philosophy mentioned in "The Eolian Harp". In "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement" he reasserts this in the context of honourable toil;

I therefore go, and join head, heart, and hand,
Active and firm, to fight the bloodless fight
Of Science, Freedom, and the Truth in CHRIST.
(*PW I* i 263, ll. 60-62)

Sara's involvement in Coleridge's interests at this time should not be construed as harmful. Her intrusion diverted him toward a heightened focus on the empirical doctrines of Hartley and Berkeley. It was during the time of this empirical focus, and accordingly under its influence, that Coleridge wrote the poems of imagination. Coleridge's ability to write the poems of heightened imagination at this time,

³ Sara's rejection of philosophy is conjecture on my part, but Holmes's and Sisman's treatment of her comments about Coleridge's politics lightly suggest her disapproval of this subject.

demonstrates that were complemented by the doctrines of Hartley and Berkeley, but these poems were antithetical to the philosophical project Coleridge took up in Göttingen.

As a result and despite her interference, Coleridge's wife inadvertently sent him more specifically in the direction of the empiricism that complemented the imagination poems. Due to this freedom his imaginative force progressed unhindered. This poetic ability Coleridge later unknowingly ousted using the "unwholesome quicksilver mines of mataphysic" that he blames for his loss of imagination in "Dejection: An Ode". Hence he wrote the poems of imagination whilst mostly focussed on the empiricism of Hartley and Berkeley, and once distanced from pantisocracy and prior to commencing with German Idealism.

The brief time-span he took to write the imagination poems is that which he spent primarily in studying empiricism. Coleridge acknowledges his loss of imaginative force as the result of his studies in German Idealism. However, he does not mention if his earlier imaginative force was the result of his particular philosophical foci at that time, primarily the empirical focus and the circumstances that led him to it.

A later reference concerning philosophy and politics is found in a letter written the following year, on 11 December 1796, to the bereaved Benjamin Fowler. This letter reveals Coleridge's perspective of philosophy relative to religion at this time, the year before beginning the poems of imagination:

I have been myself sorely afflicted, and have rolled my dreary eye from earth to Heaven, and found no comfort, till it pleased the Unimaginable High & Lofty One to make my Heart more tender in regard of religious feelings. My philosophical refinements, & metaphysical theories, lay by me in the hour of anguish, as toys by the bedside of a child deadly sick.

(*CL I 267*, Graham, 530)

This sentiment indicates that his philosophical inclinations had not altered his religious position. He repeats here his emphasis on faith, found in the first two conversation poems, and his abandonment of certain philosophical theories.

His wife's influence is lost in late 1798, when Coleridge leaves for Germany, and this correlates with his loss of imagination. He never again falls as closely under her influence, even after his return to England in 1799. After his return, they were

increasingly at variance, and his declining health and growing addiction to opium, led to his long spell abroad, chiefly spent on Malta. Thereafter, in England, Coleridge chiefly spent his life estranged from his wife.

In the first two conversation poems, written in Sara's presence, Coleridge harmoniously describes the agreements about philosophy between them. They contain no bitterness or resentment about abandoning the study that they concern. Coleridge included, in several letters, his later judgment of Sara's influence on him. To Southey he wrote,

In an evil Day for me did I first pay attention to Mrs Coleridge; in an
evil day for me did I marry her; but it shall be my care & my passion,
that it shall not be an evil day for her

(17 February 1803, *CL II 929*)

He regrets what their marriage did to his literary and philosophical interests, but he did not target his resentment at Sara. Southey influenced the engagement of Coleridge to Sara for the purposes of pantisocracy, and further persuaded Coleridge to marry her after they had abandoned this political and social system. Anya Taylor considers Coleridge's marriage to Sara Fricker as the fulfilment of Southey's duty to her, as Southey was a close childhood friend of Sara who, in marrying her sister, he neglected to marry Sara herself (Taylor, 2005, 23). Thus, Coleridge directed his anger about his marriage to Mrs Coleridge at Southey, not her. He had primarily adored Mary Evans, to whom he wrote on hearing of her engagement in early November 1794 (*CL I 129-31*). This he did despite his own existing engagement to Sara Fricker. Returning to the 1803 letter, Coleridge asks Southey never to mention the letter to Mrs. Southey [Edith], and adds,

Good heaven! what a shocking Thing that there should be such
unnecessary canker-worms in your Happiness! You only need a little
courage to give a little pain. You are happy in your marriage Life; &
greatly to the honour of your moral self-government, Qualities &
manners are pleasant to, & sufficient for, you, to which my Nature is
utterly unsuited.

(*CL II 929*)

This statement is ironic. Southey understands the context well, and Coleridge implies that Southey obtained the "Happiness" he enjoys selfishly, at his expense. This

expense was his marriage to Sara, and accordingly it is also at Sara's expense. Coleridge's reference to Southey's "moralities" and "manners" implies their opposite, that Southey's coercive measures to have Coleridge and Sara married in 1795 were immoral. Coleridge's request, that Southey never mention this letter to Edith, is further irony. It occurs early in the letter, and Coleridge adds that not speaking about it to Edith may be converse to Southey's "marriage-code". It is ironic, as Southey never could mention the content of the letter to Edith. This is because Southey would then have to explain his complicity in influencing the marriage between Coleridge and Sara, something of which neither Sara nor Edith were fully aware. It follows that Southey's "moral self" was lacking and could not retreat to a place of security.

This letter consequently refers to circumstances in which Southey had been involved in 1795. These led to the situation in which the conversation poems, and later the imagination poems, were written. In an earlier letter that Coleridge wrote to Southey, in July 1802, he asserts how different he and Sara are from one another,

—for Mrs Coleridge's mind has very little that is *bad* in it—it is an innocent mind—; but it is light, and *unimpressible*, warm in anger, cold in sympathy—and in all disputes uniformly *projects* itself *forth* to recriminate, instead of turning itself inward with a silent Self-questioning. Our virtues & our vices are exact antitheses—.

(29 July 1802, *CL* II 832)

By contrast Coleridge sent Sara Hutchinson a version of "Dejection: An Ode", earlier that year, on 4 April 1802 (*CL* II 790). In it Coleridge represents to her the issues surrounding his loss of imagination, and refers to earlier times in his poetry. Newlyn states that his "past and present selves are invoked, contrasted, used to pinpoint change", and via this focus she examines his relationship to his former self (Newlyn, 1986, 61). This letter to Sara Hutchinson indicates that Coleridge knew her closely enough that he judged she would understand the personal and literary implications of his poem. This requires that Sara Hutchinson's understanding of Coleridge's literary interests extend beyond any understanding Sara Fricker possessed of his interests, and that Sara Hutchinson's knowledge of Coleridge was intimate.

Of the conversation poems, the last two have several characteristics that differ from the others. "Dejection: An Ode", written in 1802, mourns the loss of

imagination, amongst several other factors, such as his marriage. In 1807, he wrote “To William Wordsworth”, in which Coleridge comments on past circumstances in relation to their present. Lamenting his loss of imagination, Coleridge poetically consolidated his thoughts about this loss in “Dejection: An Ode”. It was published on the day of Wordsworth’s marriage to Mary Hutchinson in 1802, and Coleridge’s own wedding anniversary (Ashton, 1996, 201).

II

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassion’d grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear—
(*PW I ii 698, ll. 21-24*)

Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
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;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!
(*PW I ii 698-9, ll. 33-38*)

This last line is a reminder of his words, “I look at the Mountains only for the Curves of their outlines” (25 March 1801, *CL II 714*), quoted through Newlyn earlier. This loss of “feeling” is part of Coleridge’s imaginative perception that is lost. His perception is diminished and with it he has lost his poetic ability and imaginative force, to induce the “reliques of sensation” from their mercurial formlessness.

In its entirety the sixth section of “Dejection: An Ode” forms a concise autobiographical elucidation of his loss of imagination; this is quoted earlier, in the introduction, and therefore referenced only in part here.

But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man--

This was my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.
(*PW I ii 700, ll. 84-93*)

Coleridge identified that his loss of imagination was due to his “abstruse researches”. Despite this knowledge, he did not relinquish his study of German Idealism as an attempt to regain his imaginative force. The “abstruse researches” have an ironic grasp on him. He recognises that they prevent him from gaining his imaginative force, because once chosen this philosophy had grown into “the habit of [his] soul”. Coleridge implies here that he has a choice between imagination and German Idealism. But they are mutually exclusive. Choosing imagination requires him to abandon German Idealism, and continuing with this philosophy renders him incapable of writing imaginative poetry. Thus, he chose German Idealism.

The *Mariner* and *Christabel* lose their volition as their narratives progress. Similarly, Coleridge loses his volition to write imagination poetry as his attention to German Idealism progresses. In “*Dejection: An Ode*”, he refers to his circumstance of imagination loss:

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
Reality's dark dream!
I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
Which long has rav'd unnoticed. What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthen'd out
That lute sent forth!
(*Ibid. ll. 94-99*)

This poem is not entirely retrospective of imagination poetry, but here Coleridge attempts imaginative poetry, although unsuccessfully. His last successful imaginative poem suggests this loss, in “*Christabel*” Part II. As Anya Taylor points out, *Christabel*’s will is silenced when Geraldine assumes power, a shift revealed in lines 305-6: “O Geraldine! One hour was thine—//Thou’st had thy will!” (*PW I i 492, Taylor*). Coleridge comments about Geraldine’s actions, and in so doing recalls the “hour” of his own imagination now lost, although temporarily revived to complete Part II. The reference is more pertinent considering it is the last of Coleridge’s imagination poems, and the only section written after Germany. Because of his

obsession with imagination, and his stronger philosophical leaning, Coleridge merged these two fields in certain chapters of the *Biographia*, using the latter to explain the former.

In “Dejection: An Ode” the origin of his imaginative power is mystically portrayed in section five, and is granted according to conditions of virtue:

This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful, and beauty-making power.
Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's Effluence, Cloud at once and Shower,
(PWI ii 699, ll. 62-66)

Equivalent moods occur in Methodist hymnology, as in stanza two of Charles Wesley's “Christ, Whose glory fills the skies”:

Dark and cheerless is the morn
Unaccompanied by Thee;
Joyless is the day's return,
Till Thy mercy's beams I see;
Till they inward light impart,
Glad my eyes, and warm my heart.
(The Methodist Hymn-Book, pp. 353, ll. 7-12)

Genius given, and knowledge won in vain: further discouragements

Familial estrangement now was underway, never to be resolved, but more importantly, and compounding this, opium took a stronger hold upon Coleridge than it had ever before. Such was its influence that four years on from “Dejection: An Ode”, his ode “To William Wordsworth” describes a state more diminished than before:

And even as Life returns upon the drowned,
Life's joy rekindling roused a throng of pains---
Keen pangs of Love, awakening as a babe
Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart;
And fears self-willed, that shunned the eye of Hope;

And Hope that scarce would know itself from Fear;
Sense of past Youth, and Manhood come in vain,
And Genius given, and Knowledge won in vain;
And all which I had culled in wood-walks wild,
And all which patient toil had reared, and all,
Commune with thee had opened out--but flowers
Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my bier,
In the same coffin, for the self-same grave!

(*PW I* ii 818, ll. 63-75)

Throughout the time that Coleridge wrote the imagination poems he occasionally took opium, hence the now famous origin of “Kubla Khan”. Coleridge required doses of opium as a painkiller, but he became addicted to it, which he called a “habit”. This is one of the factors that alienated him from his family in the early nineteenth century. In a letter to Southey, Coleridge describes his opium addiction:

My only medicine is an universal & regular Stimulus—Brandy,
Laudanum &c &c make me well, during their first operation; but the
secondary Effects increase the cause of the Disease.

(17 February 1803, *CL II* 930)

In a marginal note on Emanuel Swedenborg’s *De coelo et inferno*, Coleridge commented on what Swedenborg called “reigning love” and claimed he did “not distinctly understand” this notion but compared it to his own prevailing problem with opium. He responds,

But this I *feel* with tremendous depth, that for a man enthralled in any
habit condemned by himself, and bitterly bitterly incessantly groaned
over—exempli gratiâ, the ruinous use of anodynes & opiates, which
he loathes while he takes, yet still takes, goaded on by pain, and more
than pain, and by the dread of both—that for such a man, I say, this
chapter is of unspeakable Horror.

(*CM IV* 419)

The depredation in question he does not openly reveal, but he alludes to opium and describes more clearly its “ruinous” effects on him. He remembers, in several of his letters, long-suffering friends who tolerated him while he dealt with this “habit”. This eventually leads to his stay on Malta, beginning in 1804, although it is questionable

whether his stay on this island was primarily intended for opium recovery or to work for the British government.

Newlyn considers Coleridge to have been weak in personality, evidenced, according to her, by his propensity to write to suit his audience (Newlyn, 2002, 7). Patronisation of his audience, as she implies, is a highly unconvincing claim. As a singular example, the risk involved in his primary contribution to the *Lyrical Ballads*, namely the “Rime”, is considerable. Owing to the experimental nature of the *Lyrical Ballads* in general, and the “Rime” in particular, it has several characteristics that were unique and new on the first publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Due to these factors at the time of publication, there was no guarantee of a pleasing audience response, and the experimental content of the *Lyrical Ballads* was not a safe way to acquire an appropriate response, with more secure alternatives available. Coleridge refers, with revulsion, to occasions when he did write for the popular audience. He recalls to Thomas Poole,

I cannot express to you, dear Friend of my heart!—the loathing, which I once or twice felt, when I attempted to write, merely for the Bookseller without any sense of the moral utility of what I was writing.

(16 March 1801, *CL* II 707)

This same position against the popular audience also holds true for the new criticism later espoused by Coleridge and Hazlitt. Coleridge took this to the extent that in the *Biographia* he insulted certain echelons of his readers, who fall into particular categories of readership and theology. In this regard, despite his awareness of market forces, he did not forfeit his focus on the importance of a subject for the sake of popularity or “property” and therefore ownership and economics. The readership for the Romantic poets also represented market-forces. Byron alludes to this in stanza six of the “Dedication” of *Don Juan*, and describes his attitude to Coleridge and Wordsworth:

I would not imitate the petty thought,
Nor coin my self-love to so base a vice,
For all the glory your conversion brought,
Since gold alone should not have been its price.
You have your salary; was't for that you wrought?

And Wordsworth has his place in the Excise.
You're shabby fellows—true—but poets still,
And duly seated on the immortal hill.

(Steffan, 1971, 12, lines 42-49)

Byron wrote and published his own poetry in the apparent security of social credit despite being bankrupt, and he traded on his social position and became wealthy from his poems. In the “Dedication” he queries the motives of Coleridge and Wordsworth, implying that their literary intention is to please the market-forces of the day, and as a result to earn an income. Accordingly Newlyn agrees with Byron that Coleridge wrote to suit his audience. Coleridge however doubted the ability of the mass-audience to understand literature. He was not merely concerned about his readers’ reception of his literature for the sake of his own finances, but he laboured to reform the reader to perceive and discern works of genius from ordinary writing. In the *Biographia* Coleridge disapproves unapologetically of idle readers. Criticising readers in his reference to new types of easily comprehended poetry, he states that

it spares the reader the trouble of thinking; prevents vacancy, while it indulges indolence; and secures the memory from all danger of an intellectual plethora. Hence of all trades, literature at present demands the least talent or information; and, of all modes of literature, the manufacturing of poems. The difference indeed between these and the works of genius, is not less than between an egg, and an egg-shell; yet at a distance they both look alike.

(*BL I 39*)

There is continuity between this criticism in the *Biographia* and his poetry of imagination, as Coleridge does not flatter his audience in either of them. In this quote Coleridge is concerned about the critical ability that his readers and all other readers in general possess to read poetry.

The range of styles in which Coleridge wrote his poems is vast. His variety of subject matter and volume of work in other areas, such as philosophy, religion and politics, demonstrate his genius. Coleridge’s shift to German Idealism that leads to his loss of imaginative force, may likewise be misconstrued as an attempt to tap into alternative literary markets, and attract a wider and more diverse readership. However, in many of these texts he deals with ethical and religious topics that contradict the type of personality weaknesses about which Newlyn speaks. The idea

that Coleridge had an inordinate longing to be liked is Newlyn's interpretation of his literary range, which she suggests explains his "experimentation" with so many methods of communication (Newlyn, 2002, 7). This fails to explain why several of his texts accuse his readers of inadequacy instead of flattering them, or why he ignored the financial safety of convention to write experimental poetry. His literary range and experimentation is better discerned as the result of a search for philosophical, sociological, political, epistemological and religious knowledge, and to deepen his universal interests. Coleridge also focussed on exploring muddles, and this activity also contained an experimental element, as he developed associations between concepts. Many of these concepts were vague and difficult to discern. His comment to John Thelwall on 19 November 1796 suggests the topics and focus of these muddles; "Metaphysics and Poetry and 'Facts of mind,' ... are my darling studies" (CL I 260).

Furthermore, Newlyn bolsters her contention for Coleridge's weakness with reference to his opium addiction, and his assumed obsessive-compulsive condition and self-consciousness (7). Self-consciousness in Coleridge's case was, of necessity, unique considering he trod new paths in literary representations of the self, the I, consciousness, the will, and perception. This literary territory necessitated meticulous self-scrutiny that might be misconstrued as weakness or self-consciousness.

Coleridge's modesty about his poetic and literary ability is notable, and his comments about his ability allude to this. To Joseph Cottle he writes, "I have heard from Sheridan, desiring me to write a Tragedy—I have no genius that way—Robert Southey has" (10 March 1797, CL I 313). Later that year in June he stated of his tragedy *Osorio*,

Wordsworth admires my Tragedy—which gives me great hopes. Wordsworth has written a Tragedy himself. I speak with heart-felt sincerity & (I think) unblinded judgement, when I tell you, that I feel myself a *little man by his side*; & yet do not think myself the less man, than I formerly thought myself...

T. Poole's opinion of Wordsworth is—that he is the greatest Man, he ever knew—I coincide.

(8 June 1797, CL I 325)

Coleridge repeats in several letters the acclamation, “Wordsworth is a great man” (Ibid. 334). It was not only German Idealism that changed Coleridge’s literary trajectory; so too did Wordsworth’s discouragement. Coleridge’s comments about Wordsworth complemented and praised him regularly. Wordsworth, by comparison, occasionally maligned Coleridge’s poetry. Wordsworth was reluctant to include “Christabel” in the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800, even if complete. About this Coleridge reasoned to Humphrey Davy, that

the poem was in direct opposition to the very purpose for which the Lyrical Ballads were published—viz—an experiment to see how far those passions, which alone give value to extraordinary Incidents, were capable of interesting, in & for themselves, in the incidents of common Life.

(9 October 1800, *CL I 631*)

John Jordan recognises that this appears more like Wordsworth’s preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* than Coleridge’s own opinion (Jordan, 1976, 13). Coleridge emphasised this disparity further in a letter, written from Keswick, to Josiah Wedgwood several weeks later. He refers to undertaking to finish “Christabel” on his return from Germany the previous year, and in the context of regaining his imaginative force, describes how,

The next day, my verse making faculties returned to me, and I proceeded successfully—till my poem grew so long & in Wordsworth’s opinion so impressive, that he rejected it from his volume as disproportionate both in size & merit, & as discordant in its character.

(1 November 1800, *CL I 643*)

Unfinished poems of imagination, which Coleridge had written by this time, awaited publication for almost two decades. These later publications are for this reason characteristic of his mind and poetry at this time, changes permitting. “Christabel” is one such example: Part I he wrote in 1797, and Part II he completed in 1800-1. He had intended to publish it in 1801, anticipating that “I shall therefore take a Week’s respite; & make Christabel ready for the Press” (16 March 1801, *CL II 707*). The publication date, for its incomplete state, is 1816, for the first two of five prospective parts.

Thus, the narrative of “Christabel” Part II stems from this time and is chronologically isolated from the other poems of imagination. It is unclear and cannot be established what the latest date of Coleridge’s imaginative force was. J. C. C. Mays proposes that Coleridge’s progress with “Christabel” was irregular, ranging between 1797 and 1801 (*PW* I i 478). “Christabel” Part II however does not indicate newly generated imaginative content by Coleridge following his return to England. It rather demonstrates that he wrote Part II primarily from memory. His reason for ceasing to write “Christabel” he clarifies, over a decade later, in a notebook reference (3 November 1810, *CN* III 4006). In this reference Coleridge recalls that he abandoned “Christabel” in its incomplete form because he quarrelled with Lamb and Lloyd. This quarrel Coleridge also mentions in a letter of early May 1798 (*CL* I 403-5). In the letter, he describes the quarrel as something that has given him “little pain”, yet the notebook entry reveals that it was enough of an upheaval for him that he ceased writing “Christabel”.

With Part I of “Christabel” complete in 1798, his thoughts would naturally have extended to its further development, which he discussed with others. Wordsworth and Southey read Part I. He communicated with Southey about it, and hence reiterated his intentions for the text. This he did to the point where it had sufficient structure and content to survive in his mind until penned in the last days of 1800. Adam Sisman observes that Southey encouraged Coleridge to complete “Christabel”, desiring it as the opening poem for an edition of the *Annual Anthology*, of which Southey was the editor in 1799 and 1800 (Sisman, 276). Wordsworth also commented on Part I of the “Christabel” text, although derisively (280). It follows that both Wordsworth and Southey read the text and gave their opinions of it to Coleridge. He wrote to Byron about “Christabel”,

I should say that the plan of the whole poem was formed and the first Book and half of the second were finished-and it was not till after my return from Germany in the year 1800 that I resumed it and finished the second and a part of the third book.

(22 October 1815, Griggs, 1930, 1091)

The fragmentary reference to “a part of the third book” indicates where this planning of structure and content had ended years before and consequently Coleridge’s

inability to write beyond that point. Influence to either complete or abandon it Coleridge received from close quarters. Nevertheless the initial loss of his imaginative ability he realised when he attempted to complete “Christabel”.

Wordsworth’s comments about “Christabel” convey his attitude toward Coleridge’s poetry of imagination in general. Wordsworth’s admiration for “Christabel” softens his dismissal of Coleridge’s poetry behind a veil of approval. These comments by Wordsworth, Coleridge repeats in his own letters, and it appears that he did not repeat them for their ironic essence, but rather that he took them on trust. When Wordsworth classified “Christabel” as “disproportionate both in size & merit” he was reasserting their initial intention that they gave for the *Lyrical Ballads* in its introduction. He used these intentions to protect and reserve its next edition primarily for his own poetry. Coleridge, however, accepted Wordsworth’s explanation, and even repeated it years later in the *Biographia*. Here he refers to their agreement that he would attend to “persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic” in the context of human nature and the “semblance of truth”. He even refers to “Christabel” from this perspective (*BL II 6*).

Such rejection may also contribute to Coleridge’s lack of poetical output at this time, and his reluctance to apply his perception to imagination poetry and, it follows, to complete “Christabel”. Emphasising this circumstance, Sisman implies that it may have caused Coleridge’s reduced poetic output. His reply to Southey’s appeal for a complete version of “Christabel” is that he was “not in a poetical Mood” (30 September 1799, *CL I 535*, Sisman, 276) and that

those who dislike it [“Christabel”] will deem it extravagant Ravings,
& go on thro’ the rest of the Collection [*Lyrical Ballads*] with the
feeling of Disgust – & it is not impossible that were it liked by any, it
would still not harmonize with the *real-life* Poems that follow.

(15 November 1799, *CL I 540*, Sisman, 276)

The “*real-life* poems” were those of Wordsworth. Coleridge judged “Christabel” an inappropriate choice to open the collection, and Sisman considers this the result of Wordsworth’s influence, after dropping the “Rime” from the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (Sisman, 274, 276). Southey had also ridiculed the “Rime” when he reviewed the *Lyrical Ballads* for its “single” “anonymous” author (272-3).

Coleridge's refusal to finish "Christabel" at Southey's request suggests his suspicion of Southey using this as a means of apology for his comments about the "Rime". Coleridge may in fact have foreseen that Southey did not intend to publish "Christabel", but was using the offer as a ploy to restore their friendship through flattery. Coleridge's reply to Southey, quoted above, also provides an insight into his opinion of himself and his own poetry. Sisman refers to a letter dated 25 March 1799 that Sara Coleridge wrote to Thomas Poole, noting that the *Lyrical Ballads* "are laughed at and disliked" (272), and that the ballad given primary derision was the "Rime", which was Coleridge's principal contribution to the edition. This gave Wordsworth further reason to resent Coleridge's poetry. In 1799, Coleridge's poetic productivity was vast, but this output dwindled in 1800. He wrote more poetry between 1796 and 1800 than he wrote for the following 25 years.

The most straightforward reason for this is his increasing attention to German Idealism from 1799 onwards. Despite his loss of imagination, Coleridge never stopped writing significant literary content, which is a testimony to his literary genius, range and insight. The sting of Wordsworth's comment about Coleridge's imagination poetry may also have been responsible for his reduced poetic output, and may also have given him a melancholic disposition toward imagination poetry. Social and relational circumstances also discouraged Coleridge from writing poetry of imaginative force, as is observed in his quarrel with Lamb and Lloyd, mentioned above, that halted the writing of "Christabel".

Wordsworth's comments about Coleridge's contributions to the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* indicate Wordsworth's perception of and sensitivity to readership in the late 1790s. The content contributed by both poets was new, the reading public was unaccustomed to it, and the *Lyrical Ballads* were revolutionary in their poetic content, stepping out of the accepted poetic conventions of the 1790s in England. Coleridge's *Biographia* on the other hand intends, as one of its numerous objectives, to correct and reform the reading public, and improve the focus of its reading. It therefore had an intended epistemological role that defines Coleridge's fascination with knowledge and philosophy. This he valued above regaining his imaginative force.

Chapter 4

A ballad of about 300 lines: content for the *Lyrical Ballads*

Coleridge spoke to Wordsworth, in the autumn of 1797, about the revival of the ballad form (Holmes, 1989, 169). In a letter of 20 November 1797, Coleridge attends to his progress translating the *Oberon* of Wieland. He also briefly mentions recently writing “a ballad of about 300 lines”, which was the “Rime” (CL I 357). Translating the *Oberon* also indicated his anticipation and determination to read and derive influence from German texts, and pre-empted his interest in German Idealism.

Many of Coleridge’s poems, written between 1797 and 1798, he intended for mutual publication with Wordsworth’s poems in the *Lyrical Ballads*. Thus, the “Rime” was part of a collaborative process, begun by Coleridge on a walk with Wordsworth.

In the introduction, it was mentioned that Coleridge’s imagination poems were inseparable from their context as prospective content for the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Along with this context is the poems inseparability from the ballad form and its characteristic narrative progression. This form of poetry was longstanding in English literature, and it was on this old ballad form that Coleridge and Wordsworth structured their poems for the *Lyrical Ballads*. Coleridge commented on the ballad form of poetry, in the context of everyday life, which was Wordsworth’s foundational theme in his contribution to the publication;

In this form the “Lyrical Ballads” were published; and were presented by him, as an *experiment*, whether subjects, which from their nature rejected the usual ornaments and extra-colloquial style of poems in general, might not be so managed in the language of ordinary life as to produce the pleasurable interest, which it is the peculiar business of poetry to impart.

(BL II 8)

The generation of the “Rime” occurred at a significant time in maritime history for Britain and the world. The Cook voyages to latitudes further south than previously voyaged were key undertakings at this time. There is a link between Coleridge’s own

past and this history, as Tim Fulford elaborates. A school mathematics teacher of Coleridge's, William Wales, had been the astronomer aboard the particular Cook voyage that reached the most southerly point attained at that time, in 1774. Cook voyaged beyond known limits and so does the Mariner (Fulford, 2002, 50). In particular Wales worked the chronometers to determine longitude, calculating that they crossed the Antarctic Circle three times searching for a south polar continent (*CM* I 615). The correlation here is an obvious but shallow one, namely the association between Coleridge and Wales. However, this does demonstrate that maritime characteristics appropriate to the "Rime" were at play in Coleridge's mind from an early date, even though he did not anticipate what they would become in time.

For some of the time that Coleridge wrote the "Rime" he was concurrently writing his play *Osorio*. In October 1797 he referred to this play, and recited a lament by Alhadra, the persecuted Moorish woman (14 October 1797, *CL* I 351),

It were a lot divine in some small Skiff
Along some Ocean's boundless solitude,
To float for ever with a careless course,
And think myself the only Being alive!
(*PW* III i 207, Act 5 Sc. i, ll. 55-8)

This content asserts the intentions of Romanticism to explore the individual mind in relation to nature, introspection, solitude, isolate context, and the consciousness of self. "The Foster-mother's Tale", which J. C. C. Mays notes was originally part of *Osorio* (*PW* I i 329), concludes with the boy sailing off alone:

In spite of his dissuasion, seized a boat,
And, all alone, set sail by silent moonlight
Up a great river, great as any sea,
And ne'er was heard of more;
(*Ibid.* 333, ll. 77-80)

Coleridge wrote to John Thelwall at the same time as he worked on these other texts, about becoming a Unitarian minister for employment. In this letter, Coleridge provides further insight into his intentions regarding Alhadra, and he also establishes how personally a comparable sensibility was present within himself.

I should much wish, like the Indian Vishnu, to float about along an infinite ocean cradled in the flower of the Lotus, and wake once in a million years for a few minutes just to know that I was going to sleep a million years more. I have put this feeling in the mouth of Alhadra, my Moorish Woman. She is going by moonlight to the house of Yelez, where the band turn off to wreak their vengeance on Francesco, but She moved steadily on, Unswerving from the path of her resolve.

(14 October 1797, CL I 350)

These lines from *Osorio*, “The foster-mother’s Tale”, and the letter to John Thelwall are distinctly similar to the Mariner’s suffering. Alhadra’s longing for solitude and isolation is the Mariner’s despair. The Mariner exclaims, in the 1798 version of the “Rime”,

Alone, alone, all all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And Christ would take no pity on
My soul in agony.

(*PW I* i 390, ll. 232-5)

These four references were all written within months of each other, in the second half of 1797 and the beginning of 1798. Consequently the same themes of Romanticism emerge in each reference, namely those of solitude and the individual self in an isolate context. The introspection of the self occurs while it interacts with a perspective of a boundless world in solitude. However, the response to these characteristics expressed by Alhadra is opposite to that of the Mariner. She finds the prospect welcoming, whereas the Mariner’s reaction to it is despair. Accordingly Coleridge uses the same circumstance, but the Mariner and Alhadra have different reactions to it.

These circumstances also emphasise personal identity. Fairer scrutinises the Lockean notion of personal identity, that “to be a ‘person’ is to be conscious of a self that persists through any number of temporal and spatial relocations: it ‘can consider it self as it self, *the same thinking thing in different times and places*” (Locke in Fairer, 35). A characteristic of Coleridge’s imagination poems, which predate his adoption of German Idealism, is the empirical notion of existence and identity. The inner thinking self of the Mariner continues despite the changes in the Cartesian components of time and space. There is also the same thought and sentiment of the

self in four different contexts in the four quotes that echo one another. The Mariner's identity remains constant despite the chaos that he experiences: it should be remembered that, Coleridge wrote this whilst primarily focussed on the empirical philosophies of Hartley and Berkeley.

Fairer also regards Coleridge's thought to have "distinctive Lockean elements" and asserts that "continuity of self is 'produced' by recollection" which has empirical implications (36). A primary element of the "Rime" is its recollective nature. The narrative of this ballad is framed by the Mariner accosting the wedding-guest to recall his tale. This element of recollection also contains strong empirical values that predate Coleridge's focus on German Idealism.

Coleridge affirms chaotic states in the poems of imagination, the "Rime" and "Christabel" being outstanding examples. There are, moreover, the unfathomable and mercurial characteristics that cause these chaotic states and complement them. Once Coleridge has established these states, the Mariner and Christabel occupy a new position, which offers the opportunity for introspection and self-perception from a new perspective. Their positions occur in circumstances of isolation and lost volition. In these, the isolated self has limited agency due to circumstances that disable the ability to act, and that place the self in a new context. Thus, the will is limited.

In these imagination poems, and in several other poems of Coleridge's where these states of limited volition occur, they begin with trespass, signalled by the crossing of boundaries or lines. This line-crossing that leads to these states is a significant factor in several of Coleridge's poems.

With reference to crossing lines, Bloom elucidates that the "romance-of-trespass" or the violation of sacred ground is central to modern literature (Bloom, 1975, 35). This trait of crossing lines into forbidden ground or activity is a central element in Coleridge's poems of heightened imagination.

Trespass also occurs in other poems of his. "The Three Graves" Coleridge developed from Wordsworth's version of this poem in 1798 (*PW* I i 336). In it Edward marries Mary. He is indiscreet and causes his future mother-in-law to fall in love with him. He and Mary incur the fury of her mother, who curses them and their marriage. This action is not understood by Mary. Edward reveals his indiscretion to Mary and Ellen at the end, and reveals about his mother-in-law, "O God, forgive me!

(he exclaimed)//“I have torn out her heart.” (Ibid.155, ll. 313-4). His flirtatiousness is the line crossed that provokes her curse, leading their situation into the realm of trespass. Christabel, interrupted while she prays for her knight, acts on compulsion to help Geraldine, which enables the evil of Geraldine to enter the castle. Christabel does not think out her decision to help Geraldine, and does not enquire within herself about it. She does not enquire from God about it, to whom she appeals for the safety of her knight. Instead, Christabel brings Geraldine home “in love and in charity” (Ibid. 491, ll. 277). Her oversight is similar to the error of Saul, king of Israel, who consulted the Witch of Endor instead of God (Thompson, 1990, 1 Samuel 28), which is one of the acts that led to his downfall.

Many critics explain that Geraldine’s condition and presence beneath the “old oak tree” is the result of the abuse and malevolent intent of the “warriors” who temporarily left her there. In hindsight of Parts I and Part II of “Christabel”, it is revealed that Geraldine is a liar and a deceiver, among several other suggested evils. It follows that the abuse she received at the hands of the warriors might have been their attempt to be free of her, and bring to an end her activities in their domain, which Geraldine endeavoured to continue in Leoline’s castle. As the ballad continues Geraldine reveals characteristics, in Leoline’s castle, that if already present in the warriors’ domain, would certainly legitimise their actions to get rid of her. If this is the case, then they are honourable and their abandonment of her is justifiable. In this respect Christabel takes the situation for granted, that Geraldine is an innocent victim, and this carelessness is what causes Christabel’s trespass.

The causation of trespass in “The Three Graves” is moral whereas in “Christabel” it is spiritual. In the “Rime” several forms of trespass occur. The first trespass concerns the poems association with alternative forms of art at the end of the eighteenth century. Common traits exist between Joseph Turner’s paintings and Coleridge’s “Rime”. James Heffernan elucidates that in part three of the “Rime”, beginning as a speck, the ship grows into a “certain shape” described as moving through the sky rather than the sea. Turner’s paintings of ships on the open sea and the Mariner’s ship both have the sky behind them (Heffernan, 1984, 56-7). Both have geometric qualities of which Heffernan states, “[w]here we look for the vertical we find a bowed and slanted mast, where we look for a level horizon, we find another

slant with a curve at the end". This, he recognises, is "defiance towards the doctrines of parallel perspective" (68-9). The relationship between the "Rime" and Turner's paintings lies in their simultaneous representations of similar concepts. However, there is no evidence of any influence on the one by the other; rather they indicate an equivalent but separate move from accepted and conventional representations. Both defy and fragment the accepted modes and functions of previous representations.

Several instances of geometric reference emerge in the "Rime". These include geographic markers and the implication of a wider and infinite world. Preceding the poem the "Argument" refers to "[h]ow a Ship having passed the Line was driven by Storms to the cold Country" (*PW I i 370*). Here "the Line" is the equator. Further geographic indicators are found immediately after the ship has left the harbour. The following is from the 1834 version of the "Rime":

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—

(*PW I i 373-375*, ll. 21-30)

The geographic references in these stanzas indicate astronomical geometrics. The ship drops beyond sight of the kirk, hill and lighthouse, which implies the curvature of the earth. Sunrise and sunset refer to the earth's rotation and the opposite horizons. A juxtaposing angle occurs in the vertical mast at noon. These three orientations Coleridge links using the sun's position from three different angles in relation to the ship. They are separated by 90 degrees, sunrise, midday and sunset. The position of the sun directly over the mast at noon once more refers to the equator, or equatorial zone. This geometric harmony is broken eleven lines on, when next the Mariner speaks:

And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dripping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

(*PW I i* 375-377, ll. 41-50)

When the “Line” of the equator is crossed, the ship induces the “storm-blast”. The Mariner is now at the storm’s mercy. Coleridge amended the 1834 text to read, “And chased us south along” (ll. 44), where the 1798 version reads, “Like Chaff we drove along” (376, ll. 44). The later version gains a directional bearing, but loses the Biblical reference to useless chaff blown away by the wind. The wind disturbs the horizon, sets the sky in turmoil and slopes the mast. The previous ordered and geometrically perfect image of the ship and the sea Coleridge turns into a portrayal similar to Turner’s deliberate “disarrayal” of artistic convention.

Sea-travel was, for Coleridge, a thing he had never experienced at the time that he wrote the “Rime” in 1797-8. His knowledge of the geography and sailing details that he incorporated in the 1798 text he learned from people who had observed them, such as William Wales. As Richard Holmes points out Coleridge later incorporated elements from his own sea journeys into the 1817 edition of the “Rime”. This later edition included the light from the compass and the lamp of the steersman that Coleridge observed aboard the *Speedwell* (Holmes, 1999, 3).

Secondary sources were of great value to Coleridge, as a contribution to the imagination poetry, when he wrote the first edition of the “Rime”. By contrast the compass and the lamp he incorporated into the 1817 edition from first-hand experience. The first edition of this imagination poem however had marine subjects almost entirely derived from secondary sources. Despite this, they do not provide a format for Coleridge’s construction of this poem. This marine reference is in keeping with Coleridge’s universality. Coleridge uses these sources to inform his formidable imagination wherein he incorporates them in the context of the self represented in the

“Rime” regarding solitude, introspection and isolation. The purpose of the voyage is also unknown, despite guesses including slavery and discovery, but the ship’s arrival in the Antarctic carries no sense of discovery. Instead the Mariner finds solitude and inadvertent wonderment, which are factors relating to the self, and its reaction to the new environment. These characteristics of Romanticism are what Coleridge found important.

After the ship crosses the equator and is blown to the latitudes of ice, a second line is trespassed when the Mariner kills the albatross. This brings about further wandering, but now in a lost state. In the “Rime” the line between cause and effect is explicit, without the subtlety found in “Christabel”. “The Raven”, like “The three Graves” is not a poem of the imagination, but is also unambiguous in its reference to cause and effect. The line-crossing in “The Raven” is marked by the felling of the oak, although the woodman who commits this trespass is probably not drowned in the wreck. Cain’s recollective emphasis on causation occurs in “The Wanderings of Cain”, in which Cain “denies” Abel’s murder, but his situation as a wandering exile is the fruit of his work.

Adversity follows the wrongful actions or omissions in each poem, and reaches those who are not responsible for it. This sets a new trajectory for the protagonist in each case. It either limits the freedom of the individual or brings about his/her demise or that of others. The Raven, which caused no harm, and the Mariner survive, but with loss for the Raven, and for the Mariner the necessity to recount his magical tale. In each case a line is crossed that is faint in most instances but which divides the circumstances at the beginning from the resolution at the end.

Terrible rudderlessness: a footnote, or, prior notes towards a conclusion

The *Biographia* forms a biography, a study of Kantian thinking and an account of imagination poetry, and contains a kind of conclusion to Coleridge's imagination. It says goodbye to the imagination, which has been dissolved by the metaphysical.⁴

Coleridge developed his thought on German Idealism after his return from Germany, and this significantly influenced the later growth of his own philosophical theories. This is denoted in a letter to Southey (29 July 1802, *CL* II 830), in which Coleridge explains his intention to establish a critical theory. Newlyn regards this as an early purpose for the *Biographia* (Newlyn, 1986, 87). Coleridge's intention in the *Biographia* was to explicate his theories on politics, religion and philosophy, and apply the rules deduced from philosophical principles "to poetry and criticism" (*BL* I 5). As part of this project, he longed to rediscover his imaginative ability, hence, among his other intended functions for the *Biographia* was his focus on metaphysics, imagination and fancy.

Philosophically Coleridge conceived the *Biographia* against empiricism and materialism (Engell, 65). He had opposed philosophical materialism throughout his life, and in the *Biographia* he finally dispensed with Hartley. However, concerning empiricism, he continued with Berkeley, and also manifested Lockean characteristics thereafter.

The *Biographia* is Coleridge's attempt to establish his rendering of metaphysics and the nature of poetry, and the poetry of imagination in particular. The *Biographia* is widely criticised for its incoherence, disjointedness, and failure to accomplish what it sets out to. James Wood refers to this perceived failure of Coleridge as "[t]errible rudderlessness" (Wood, 45). However what Wood does not acknowledge, and nor do

⁴ Coleridge added the glosses to the "Rime" at the same time as he wrote the *Biographia*. It represents a farewell to the imagination and is a dull aftershock to his loss of imaginative force. It is the last muted rumbles of imagination as it disappears, and is Coleridge's conclusion to the life and structure of the imagination poems.

many other critics of Coleridge, is that the *Biographia* is a new and persuasive form of criticism. Paul Hamilton asserts that despite its failings the *Biographia* established the need for a philosophical explanation of critical activity (Hamilton, 1983, 11). In it Coleridge also attempted to explicate imagination poetry, and demonstrate the relevance of philosophy to poetry. Hamilton clarifies that this was only possible through German aesthetic theories, most appropriately those of Kant and Schiller (Hamilton, 41).

Its universality also established it as unique. Hamilton considers that sympathetic critics fill the gap in Coleridge's argument with their own theories (Hamilton, 14). Coleridge however did not try to mould the *Biographia* into a standard form of criticism by limiting its universal range or focus, or by reducing it to what he could explain, but he forfeited solutions to some of its arguments as a result. It also remains unresolved despite the two-hundred years of scrutiny that it has experienced.

Despite Coleridge's reduced poetic output after 1800, his other literary output escalated. Coleridge and William Hazlitt, Nichol Smith affirms, are regarded by modern critics as the most influential of the figures involved in establishing the new criticism,⁵ although Coleridge's contribution is considered fragmentary in this area. What deepens this critical focus is Hazlitt and Coleridge's propensity for discussing the nature of poetry in their lectures that extends their "philosophic depth in the new criticism" (Smith, 1906, xxvi).

The inability of critics to resolve the *Biographia* is the result of Coleridge insisting on adhering to his initial intention in this text but failing, instead of adapting it. As a result, it possesses a universal nature. Engell quotes Wilfred Cantwell Smith's remark that the *Biographia* could have the heading "Arts and Humanities," and "Interdisciplinary" owing to its unconventional nature and its range of disciplines, with the exception of "national or social history" (Engell, 65).

The newness of Coleridge's universal ambition in the *Biographia*, to provide an explanation of his critical activity and the imagination poems, naturally required ironing out. As a pioneering text of the new criticism, its experimental newness would render it unsatisfactory. The modern critics of the *Biographia* have almost two

⁵ The "new criticism", as the ambition of Coleridge and Hazlitt, is not to be mistaken for the "New Criticism" of the twentieth-century.

centuries of hindsight on which to judge this text. Ironically, many of the modern critical and analytical standpoints, from which it is judged, are derived from its context in this new criticism, and thus have the *Biographia* as a partial ancestor.

Conclusion

Once a volume of gold leaf: Conclusion

At this stage we can concur with Coleridge in his 1801 apprehension that poetry had died in him. As we began this thesis, so let us be reminded of that self-judgement: “I was once a Volume of Gold Leaf, arising and ringing on every breath of Fancy—but I have beaten myself back into weight and density, and now I sink in quicksilver, yea, remain squat and square on the earth” (25 March 1801, *CL* II 714).

Metaphysics confounded Coleridge’s imagination when he encountered Kantian philosophy and German Idealism. With this subjective focus Coleridge became disengaged from objectively focussed empirical philosophy. Specifically his speculations in metaphysics diverted him from the empirical philosophy that underpinned his imaginative force, and are thus primarily responsible for the diminution of that power in him, and for the cessation of the imagination poems.

It was in particular Coleridge’s empirical gauge with the late 1790s that fed into his treasure house of imagination. Coleridge left this behind by devoting his attention to the philosophy relating to reason, which does not speak to poetry. He turned to philosophy for an account of the unworldly, and the less occasion poetry found in him. Of the factors that caused Coleridge to lose his poetic force, this is the most significant.

Richard Holmes opens the second half of his illuminating and deeply perceptive biography, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections*, with Coleridge bound for Malta aboard the *Speedwell* in 1804 (Holmes, 1999, 1-10). It may well be that Coleridge was much more robust in mind on Malta than at first it seems, Nicholas Roe affirms.⁶ On Malta he was the secretary to the governor of a site of primary importance, politically and militarily, to the British government during the greatest war it had yet faced. The

⁶ This reference to Coleridge’s purpose on Malta I obtained from a conversation with Nicholas Roe at the 12th Coleridge Summer Conference, The Friends of Coleridge, Cannington, England (21-28 July 2010).

responsibility required to meet this position permits Coleridge no recovery from his opium habit.

It is on this voyage that we encounter Coleridge commenting in his notebooks about the mercurial nature of the surrounding fleet, the characteristics of his fellow passengers, and most significantly the exercise of his understanding whilst attempting to awaken “the feelings of the heart” (*BL* I 17). His faculties, in their entirety, he constantly nurtured, even if the choice of content was incompatible. He continued to find impressions, perceptions and reference to the self and his surroundings. The *Speedwell* he describes in characteristic fashion, exploring the geometric effect of its shape.

2. The proportion of the solid height to the Height above the Hull, about as 40 to 160, made graceful & right by the strongly felt Lightness & Airiness of the Sails /...

5. The harmony of the Lines—the ellipses & semicircles of the belying Sails & of the Hull, with the variety from the permanence of the one & the contingency of the other/

6. The terminating Lines of the Sails forming a similar curve with the sail...

7....nothing more administers to the Picturesque than this phantom of complete visual wholeness in an object, which visually does not form a whole, by the influence ab intra of the sense of its perfect Intellectual Beauty or Wholeness...

(*CN*, ii, 2012)

His need to define the mercurial “permanence of the one & the contingency of the other/” and the “ellipses & semicircles” of the sails recalls the shifting geometry in the “Rime”. It also recalls the shift and temporality of impressions in the imagination poems. His natural faculties he continued to expand, and his original, inherent tendencies remained true, and so too did his “fancy, and the love of nature, and the sense of beauty in forms and sounds” (*BL* I 117). His collective experience of his past existence he continued to assert, despite his loss of imaginative force. His aspirations to poetry, and there were many as his letters and notebooks tell, in many cases remained unfinished, and in some cases were not started. His epic poem, “The Siege of Jerusalem” he never began, along with many other texts.

Coleridge’s thought and intention had not altered, and in some respects the imaginative force that threw up the imagination poems was a moment in his continual

development, which was regrettably lost in his broader intention for universal knowledge. Consequently the directions that his poetry, philosophy and learning took proved “abstruse” to his “shaping spirits of imagination”.

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