The Relation of Coleridge's Ode on Dejection to Wordsworth's Ode on Intimations of Immortality
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THE RELATION OF COLERIDGE'S ODE ON DEJECTION TO WORDSWORTH'S ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

It is well known that Coleridge had Wordsworth in mind when he wrote his *Ode on Dejection*—the poem is addressed to Wordsworth, mentions Wordsworth’s *Lucy Gray*, and was first published on the day of Wordsworth’s wedding; but that Coleridge’s *Ode* may have been influenced by Wordsworth’s great *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* has been generally overlooked. If the date of Wordsworth’s *Ode* is 1803–1806, as it is often given in the anthologies and histories, such influence is impossible, because we know Coleridge’s *Dejection* was composed April 4, 1802. The date 1803–1806, however, is not accepted by most scholars; Professor John D. Rea emphatically states, “It is known that the date 1803 is wrong; the Ode was begun 1802.” The passage in Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal, written March 27, 1802, “At breakfast William wrote part of an ode,” refers, it is now believed, to the *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*. On March 27, 1802, Wordsworth was writing his great *Ode*; and a week later, on April 4, 1802, Coleridge wrote his.

Some interesting contrasts occur in the two odes. In Wordsworth’s *Ode* grief finds relief and ends in joy; in Coleridge’s, grief finds no relief and ends in dejection. It is morning in Wordsworth’s *Ode*, midnight in Coleridge’s. In the former it is May and the “sun shines warm”; in the

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1 See Alfred Ainger’s article in *Macmillan’s Magazine* (June, 1887) called “Coleridge’s Ode to Wordsworth.”
3 John D. Rea, in an article “Coleridge’s Intimations of Immortality from Proclus,” *Mod. Phil.*, xxvi, 201 ff., noticing a similarity between the two poems calls them “twin odes.” Professor Rea, however, is concerned with pointing out not Wordsworth’s influence upon Coleridge, but Coleridge’s influence upon Wordsworth. He shows that the idealism in Wordsworth’s *Ode* is derived from Coleridge.
4 It was printed in the *Morning Post*, Oct. 4, 1802, with the title, *Dejection: An Ode, Written April 4, 1802*.
7 *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. by William Knight (London, 1897), I, 104.
latter it is the “month of showers.” Wordsworth hears the happy shouts of children; Coleridge hears the wind raving and “screaming of agony.” Notice the following parallel passages:

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,

To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,

It is not now as it hath been of yore (Immortality, 1–6).

There was a time when, tho’ my path was rough,

... Hope grew round me, ...
But now afflictions bow me down to earth (Dejection, 77–83).

In both poems the passage begins, “There was a time when,” and in both there is a contrast between what was and is. Wordsworth says:

*The earth* ...
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*Apparelled in celestial light,*

The glory and the freshness of a dream (Immortality, 2–5),

and Coleridge:

Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth,

*A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud*

*Enveloping the earth* (Dejection, 54–56).

In both poems “the earth” is apparelled or enveloped in a “light” and “glory.” Coleridge’s “luminous cloud!” may be compared to the “celestial light” or the “clouds of glory” of Wordsworth’s Ode (65).

Wordsworth describes the moon when the “heavens are bare” and “the waters on a starry night” as “beautiful” and “fair” (Immortality, 12–15). Coleridge uses the same adjectives when he describes the stars and the moon “in its own cloudless, starless lake of blue” as “fair” and “beautiful” (Dejection, 33–39). Wordsworth says:

*The things which I have seen I now can see no more* (Immortality, 9),

but he adds a little later:

*The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all* (Immortality, 42),

8 Quotations from Coleridge’s poem are from the Morning Post version of Oct. 4, 1802, the first published version. It may be found in The Poetical Works of Coleridge, ed. by J. D. Campbell (Macmillan, 1893), pp. 522–524; and in Coleridge’s Poems, ed. by E. H. Coleridge (Oxford, 1912), ii, 1076–1081.
He can see no more, but he can feel; and now notice that Coleridge says (the italics are his):

I see, not feel how beautiful they are (Dejection, 39).

Wordsworth:

To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief (Immortality, 22–23),

but there is no relief for Coleridge:

A stifled, drowsy, unimpassion’d grief,
Which finds no nat’ral outlet, no relief (Dejection, 22–23).

It is a curious coincidence that these lines, so alike in wording, and catching as they do the essential moods of the two poets, should in both poems be lines 22–23.

These lines have a similar sound:

The sunshine is a glorious birth (Immortality, 16).
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth (Dejection, 123).

The following parallel passages when taken separately have little value, but when taken together, in conjunction with the parallelisms noted above, all of them found in 58 lines of Wordsworth’s Ode and 139 lines of the Dejection Ode, they merit consideration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Immortality Ode</th>
<th>The Dejection Ode</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Doth the same tale repeat” (56).</td>
<td>“It tells another tale” (111).</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I hear the echoes” (27).</td>
<td>“The echoes of that voice” (74).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The freshness of a dream” (5).</td>
<td>“Dark distressful dream” (89).</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Fields of sleep” (28).</td>
<td>“The sleeping earth” (126).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The cataracts blow their trumpets” (25).</td>
<td>The wind a “Mad Lutanist” (98).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The motto at the head of Wordsworth’s Ode is taken from his poem, The Rainbow, and there is mention of the rainbow in the tenth line of the Ode. Coleridge has as his motto four lines from Sir Patrick Spence about the “new moon with the old moon in her arms,” and the first twenty lines of his poem deal with this sign and the storm it portends. The rainbow is a sign in the heavens that the rain is over and the sun will shine—a symbol of hope. The “new moon with the old moon in her arms” is a sign in the heavens indicating a storm, a “deadly storm.” True, the motto of Wordsworth’s Ode was not added until 1815, but we believe that in the spring of 1802 The Rainbow was closely connected

9 Compare also “This sweet May-morning” (Immortality, 45) with “this sweet primrose-month,” in the poem as sent to W. Sotheby, op. cit., p. 381.
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with the Ode. It was written, according to Dorothy Wordsworth, on March 26;¹⁰ and on March 27 “William wrote part of an ode.” Harper says, “The ode was probably conceived in the spring of 1802, immediately after he had written the nine lines which are its germ, and of which he used the last three as its motto.”¹¹ Garrod, too, closely associates the Ode and The Rainbow: “When in lines 22–23 of the Ode Wordsworth says:

To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
the timely utterance may very well be the Rainbow poem itself.”¹² Rea believes the two poems “are really part of one poem.”¹³ So Coleridge may have regarded them when he composed his Dejection.

I consider these parallelisms too numerous to be mere coincidences, and I think there has been imitation, conscious or unconscious, on the part of one of the two poets. I think Coleridge was the borrower for the following reasons: first, we have Dorothy Wordsworth’s statement to the effect that Wordsworth was writing an ode, now considered the Immortality Ode, a week before Coleridge wrote his; secondly, it is well known that Coleridge was the more imitative of the two poets. Lowes has shown in The Road to Xanadu¹⁴ that Kubla Khan and The Ancient Mariner are full of phrases Coleridge had read or heard. In Coleridge “we have to do,” says Lowes, “with one of the most extraordinary memories of which there is record.”¹⁵ Dykes Campbell says “there are more distinct traces of Wordsworth’s influence on Coleridge’s poetry than of the converse, for Coleridge by virtue of his quicker sense, was the more imitative.”¹⁶ When Wordsworth read to Coleridge the Ode, the phrases probably struck deep.¹⁷

These parallelisms occur in the 139 lines of Coleridge’s ode and the first four stanzas (fifty-eight lines) of Wordsworth’s. According to the Fenwick note, “two years at least passed between the writing of the first four stanzas and the remaining part” of Wordsworth’s Ode. With regard, however, to the accuracy of the notes Miss Fenwick took down from Wordsworth’s dictation, most scholars agree with Harper when he says that “they should not be too unquestioningly depended upon.”¹⁸ Wordsworth was seventy-three when he dictated the notes, many years

had passed since the poems were written, and Miss Fenwick was an "overexcitable lady." 19 Perhaps all that Wordsworth said, or intended to say, was that at least two years passed between the writing of the first and the last parts of the Ode. Rea 20 gives reasons for thinking that Wordsworth wrote the first 129 lines in 1802. Let us look, therefore, for echoes in the Dejection Ode of lines in Wordsworth's Ode after the fourth stanza.

Wordsworth tells of a "little child," 21 a boy, so happy he seems in Heaven; and this child is, according to the usual interpretation of the poem, Coleridge's own child, Hartley. Coleridge tells of a "little child," 22 a girl who "hath lost her way" and "now moans low in utter grief"; this child is Wordsworth's—that is to say, a child of his imagination, the Lucy Gray of his poem.

Wordsworth speaks of the child as "The little actor" (103), addressing him as "Thou best philosopher" (111) and "Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!" (115). Coleridge addresses the wind as "Thou Actor" (102). "Thou mighty Poet" (103).

In his Biographia Literaria Coleridge objects to Wordsworth's regarding a "six years' darling" as a philosopher. "In what sense," Coleridge asks, "is a child of that age a philosopher? . . . or so inspired as to deserve the splendid title of a mighty prophet, a blessed seer?" 23 Is he in the Dejection Ode saying that the wind is a better actor and more deserving of the splendid title "mighty prophet," because it speaks the truth, telling of the "groans of men"? It tells a tale of a child, not so happy as the child in the Immortality Ode, an unhappy child who "hath lost her way."

Observe that the child in Wordsworth's poem acts his part on a "humorous stage," but the wind is a tragic actor, "perfect in all tragic sounds." Observe also that these passages, in which child and wind are called actors, philosophers, poets, and prophets, occur at the same places in the poems, ll. 100–115.

Wordsworth thinks of life in terms of weddings and funerals; Coleridge in terms of wedding-garments and shrouds.

A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral (Immortality, 94–95).

And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud (Dejection, 49–50).

But he beholds the light, and whence it flows (Immortality, 70).

21 Intimations of Immortality, 122. 22 Dejection, 115.
23 Biographia Literaria, ch. xxii.
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And *thence flows* all that charms or ear or sight,
All colours a suffusion from that *light* (*Dejection*, 73–75).
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind (*Immortality*, 111–112).
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye (*Dejection*, 30).
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight
Heavy as frost (*Immortality*, 127–129).
And what can these avail,
To lift the smoth’ring weight from off my breast (*Dejection*, 41–42).

If we accept the Fenwick note as authentic, then we must say that since lines 59–129 of Wordsworth’s *Ode* were written after April 4, 1802, whatever resemblances we have found between this part of the *Ode* and Coleridge’s *Dejection Ode* are due rather to Coleridge’s influence upon Wordsworth. The accuracy of the Fenwick notes, however, is questioned, and if we reject the date 1803, given by Wordsworth, as inaccurate for the first four stanzas, perhaps we can reject as inaccurate, also, the statement with reference to the break coming after the fourth stanza. These parallels, I believe, show that on April 4, 1802, Coleridge had become acquainted with a good part of the first 129 lines of Wordsworth’s *Ode*. I say “a good part,” for Wordsworth may have added or changed a few lines during the summer.24 I find no resemblances between Coleridge’s *Dejection* and lines 130–204 of Wordsworth’s *Ode*.

We can only conjecture with regard to the reason for the similarity between the two odes, but let us turn to the lives of the two poets in the spring of 1802. Wordsworth was then doing some of his best work; he had entered upon what has been called his “second period of productive energy.”25 Furthermore, he was carrying on a courtship with Mary Hutchinson, which was to end during the year in a marriage that “completed the circle of his felicity.”26 All was well with Wordsworth in the spring of 1802. But it was otherwise with Coleridge. On account of poor health he had become a slave to the opium habit; he had lost his self-respect as well as “the shaping spirit of Imagination.” He was unhappily married and therefore not free to marry Sarah Hutchinson, Mary’s sister, whom he loved.27 He had gone to London in November

24 D. W. Journals, I, 132; and see Rea, *op. cit.*
27 For an account of Coleridge’s love for Sarah Hutchinson see Thomas M. Raysor, “Coleridge and ‘Asra,’” *SP*, xxvi, 305 ff.
hoping a change would do him good, but returned in low spirits to the Lake District on March 18 and spent the next two days with the Wordsworths. The week after Coleridge returned to Keswick, Wordsworth worked upon some of his happiest poems, *The Cuckoo, To a Butterfly, The Rainbow*, and an ode which we believe was the *Immortality Ode*. On April 4, the date of the *Dejection Ode*, Dorothy and her brother visited Coleridge, and “William repeated his verses to them.” The verses must have been those Wordsworth had been recently writing, and as Coleridge listened, he heard numerous phrases testifying to Wordsworth’s joy in life—“I hear thee and rejoice” (*The Cuckoo*), “my heart leaps up” (*The Rainbow*), “with joy I hear” (*Immortality Ode*). Happy Wordsworth, unhappy Coleridge! Perhaps Wordsworth talked about his approaching marriage, for he was leaving next day for Yorkshire to spend a week with the Hutchinsons. How Coleridge would have liked to go with him to visit Sarah.

After Dorothy and her brother depart, Coleridge cannot help contrasting his own condition with that of his friend. Once they were both writing poems; those were happy days when they planned the *Lyrical Ballads*. Now Wordsworth is composing one good poem after another, experimenting with new verse forms, writing his first ode; but Coleridge’s best work is behind him. Happy love and marriage are for Wordsworth, but Coleridge’s domestic life is a failure. If only he were free to marry Sarah! Certainly to him alone come many thoughts of grief, but unlike Wordsworth’s experience as described in the *Ode* to which he has been listening, he cannot find relief. Let us suppose that Coleridge in this mood reviews the poems he has heard Wordsworth recite, and as he does so a poem begins to take form. The following account of Coleridge’s mental processes is, of course, conjectural, and is offered merely as a suggestion as to what may have occurred, while at the same time it points out parallels. Let us suppose, then, that Coleridge with the contrast between his own situation and that of Wordsworth in mind and with the phrases from the poems Wordsworth had recited resounding in his ears, meditated thus:

> My heart does not leap up [*The Rainbow*] whether I contemplate a rainbow or a storm. Would that the storm now on its way might “raise me” and “send my

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28 D. W. Journals, I, 103.  
29 Ibid., I, 103–104.  
30 Ibid., I, 105.  
31 Harper, op. cit., II, 22.  
32 “I think it may be said Coleridge the creative poet died about 1802.”—William Knight, *The Life of William Wordsworth* (Edinburgh, 1889), II, 165.  
33 As several years later, after Wordsworth had read to him *The Prelude*, Coleridge wrote the poem called *To a Gentleman, Composed on the Night after his Recitation of a Poem on the Growth of an Individual Mind*. 
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soul abroad” [Dej. 17-18] as it once did. In my case the child has not been “father of the man” [The Rainbow], for once I could feel these things. Wordsworth, too, says that “it is not now as it hath been of yore” [Im. 6], that nature is less “fair” and “beautiful,” that there are things which he “can see no more” [Im. 9]. I can see they are “fair” and “beautiful,” but I can not feel as he does [Dej. 39]. When such a thought of grief comes to Wordsworth he can find relief. He hears the cuckoo and rejoices because it brings him “a tale of visionary hours,” it begets “that golden time again,” he hears it and rejoices [The Cuckoo]; “while the birds thus sing a joyous song” [Im. 19] he can find relief. “Yonder thrush” has been trying to woo me to happier thoughts [Dej. 26], but in vain. “A timely utterance” gives Wordsworth relief, and again he is strong [Im. 23-24], but I find no relief, “in word, or sigh, or tear” [Dej. 24]. I can not from “outward forms” [Dej. 46]—from the rainbow, the cuckoo, the butterfly, the happy shouts of children—win the passion and the life whose fountains are within [Dej. 47]. Whether nature wears for us a wedding-garment or a shroud [Dej. 50] depends upon one’s soul. For Wordsworth nature wears a wedding-garment, for me a shroud. “In our life alone does Nature live” [Dej. 49]. If the child is happy, if to him the earth seems “apparelled in celestial light and glory” [Im. 4-5], it is because there is joy in his heart, because his soul is right. If Wordsworth can share the joy of children, it is because he is “pure of heart” [Dej. 60], he has the “simple spirit” [Dej. 136] of the child, there is joy in his heart. If a thought of grief comes to him, he can become “strong” again [Im. 24], because there is “strong music” [Dej. 61] in his soul. Wordsworth has much to say of joy in his ode: “the birds sing a joyous song” [Im. 19], “thou child of joy” [Im. 34], “with joy I hear” [Im. 51], “he sees it in his joy,” [Im. 71]234 “with new joy and pride” —Im. 102]. Joy is the “beauty-making power,” Wordsworth. “Joy, blameless poet! Joy that never was given save to the pure” [Dej. 65-66]. “If the earth we pace, again appears to be an unsubstantial, faery place” [The Cuckoo], “if Heaven lies about us in our infancy”—[Im. 67]. “Joy, William, is the spirit and the power that gives in dower a new Earth and a new Heaven” [Dej. 67-69]. If the birds sing “a joyous song” [Im. 19], if the “wandering voice” of the cuckoo makes one rejoice [The Cuckoo], if the earth seems “apparelled in celestial light” [Im. 4], if the heart leaps up when one beholds a “rainbow in the sky” [The Rainbow], “Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—we, we ourselves rejoice” [Dej. 71-72].

And if Coleridge had become acquainted with more than the first four stanzas of Wordsworth’s Ode, he might have proceeded:

Wordsworth says, “Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting—trailing clouds of glory do we come—the growing Boy beholds the light—at length the Man perceives it die away and fade into the light of common day” [Im. 59-77]. Rather say, “each visitation of afflictions suspends what nature gave me at my birth, my shaping spirit of Imagination” [Dej. 85-87]. Wordsworth says that because “Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own” [Im. 78] man forgets the glories

234 Bracketed, to show that it is not included in the first four stanzas.
he has known [Im. 83–84]; rather say that because earth fills her lap with afflictions, I have lost that early glory. "Afflictions bow me down to earth" [Dej. 83]. "There was a time when" I, too, out of misfortunes could make dreams of happiness [Dej. 79–80] as Wordsworth shows he can in his ode. Wordsworth says, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy" [Im. 67]. "Hope grew round me" [Dej. 81], too, when I was a boy. Wordsworth says that the child because he keeps his heritage is an "eye among the blind" [Im. 112]; I have lost my heritage and now "I gaze—and with how blank an eye" [Dej. 30]. Because of inner joy, that beauty-making power, Wordsworth sees a "little child" [Im. 122] happy in his "mother's kisses" [Im. 89]. The "little actor" [Im. 103] on the stage of life is to him a "mighty prophet, seer blest" [Im. 115] because on him rest truths "which we are toiling all our lives to find" [Im. 117]. Thus Fancy makes for Wordsworth a dream of happiness [Dej. 80], but viper thoughts "haunt my mind" [Dej. 88–89]. Instead of rainbows I see signs of storm. The raving wind outside is my "actor" [Dej. 102], my "Mighty poet" [Dej. 103], and speaks not of immortality but of the "groans of men" [Dej. 105]. It tells a tale not of a little child happy in his mother's kisses but of a "little child" [Dej. 115]—Wordsworth knows her—who has lost her way and screaming "hopes to make her mother hear" [Dej. 119]. Wordsworth does warn the child that as he grows older his soul shall have her earthly freight and custom lie upon him with a weight heavy as frost" [Im. 128–129]. And Wordsworth can point to the boy's father as an example, for what can there avail "to lift the smothering weight from off my breast"? [Dej. 41–42]. Seldom does Wordsworth feel this weight, but if he does, may he rise with "light heart" [Dej. 126] and "gay fancy" [Dej. 127] to join the children who when "all the earth is gay" [Im. 29] "give themselves up to jollity with the heart of May" [Im. 31–32]. "Joy lifts his spirit, joy attunes his voice" [Dej. 135].

In some such way Coleridge's poem may have outlined itself in his mind. He would compose an Ode on Dejection. It was late, but Coleridge found night the best time for composition.35 He would write a companion piece36 to Wordsworth's "L'Allegro."

There is nothing to show that Wordsworth recognized in Coleridge's Ode a companion piece to his own. We are not told when he first became acquainted with it. Dorothy writes on April 21, "Coleridge came to us, and repeated the verses he wrote to Sara. I was affected with them, and repeated the verses he wrote to Sara. I was affected with them, and in miserable spirits." Knight37 thinks these verses may have been the Dejection Ode even though the earliest known version shows the poem was addressed to Wordsworth. The poem was inspired, let us say, by Wordsworth's Ode and the contrast between Wordsworth's success and Coleridge's failure; but the mood of dejection was inspired in part

35 Lowes, op. cit., 176.
36 Both odes are irregular. The closest resemblance in structure is found in the second section of Wordsworth's ode and the third section of Coleridge's.
37 D. W. Journals, 1, 110.
by Coleridge’s hopeless love for Sarah. Therefore, he had the choice of addressing the poem to Wordsworth or to Sarah; and perhaps he addressed the poem to both in two different versions. An explanation somewhat like this is suggested by Raysor when he says that the verses repeated to Wordsworth and his sister “may in reality be a second draft developing the poem and adapting it to a different purpose in order to conceal its original application.”

Perhaps Coleridge did not wish his friend to feel that the contrast between Wordsworth’s success and his own failure was a cause of his dejection; it would look as if he were begrudging Wordsworth his happiness. In reading the poem to the Wordsworths, therefore, Coleridge decided to address the poem to Sarah, as the great reason for his unhappiness.

Wordsworth may have felt, nevertheless, that the contrast was troubling Coleridge, and therefore decided to write a poem giving his friend some advice in regard to success and happiness. The Leech Gatherer was begun on May 3, when the new moon appeared again with the old moon in her arms; if Wordsworth had become acquainted with Coleridge’s Dejection Ode, he must have thought of it at this time. The Leech Gatherer, sometimes called Resolution and Independence, could have been written as a reply to the Dejection Ode:

As high as we have mounted in delight  
In our dejection do we sink as low (24–25)

We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;  
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness (48–49).

Yet Coleridge himself is to blame; what he needs is some of the resolution and independence of the old leech gatherer.

But how can he expect that others should  
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call  
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all? (40–42)

And what if there is a storm as the new moon foretells, and what if the wind does rave as Coleridge says in the Dejection Ode, tomorrow the sun will shine again,

There was a roaring in the wind all night;  
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;  
But now the sun is rising calm and bright (1–3).

Could the version published in the Sibylline Leaves, 1817, with its “Dear Lady” in the place of “Wordsworth,” be the “verses to Sara”?  
D. W. Journals, i, 116.
This poem was started by Wordsworth on May 3. Two days later Dorothy writes: "The moon had the old moon in her arms, but not so plain to be seen as the night before. When we went to bed it was a boat without the circle." Lowes thinks that Dorothy must have become acquainted with Coleridge's poem, for there is reference not only to the new moon with the old moon in her arms, but also to Coleridge's comparison of the moon to a "sky-canoe." Why did Coleridge publish his ode in the Morning Post on Wordsworth's wedding day? Harper says, "He doubtless chose that date out of compliment to his friend." It was a sort of wedding gift. Dykes Campbell calls it "a sad enough Epithalamium." I believe it was Coleridge's way of emphasizing his own great disappointment. When Wordsworth was bound for the Hutchinsons, probably to make arrangements for his marriage, Coleridge wrote the poem; when the marriage took place he published it. Wordsworth was marrying Mary Hutchinson, but Coleridge, alas, was not marrying Mary's sister. Nevertheless, "he rejoiced," Harper thinks, "that what he lacked his friend possessed," and ended his poem with the lines in praise of Wordsworth:

O lofty Poet, full of life and love,
Brother and friend of my devoutest choice,
Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice!

Along with his rejoicing at Wordsworth's happiness there was, I believe, a feeling of "It might have been," and just a little envy because his friend through marriage to Mary will be closer to Sarah than he can ever hope to be.

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