

## DEJECTION: AN ODE-SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

### Samuel Taylor Coleridge

- ❖ He was an **English poet, literary critic, and philosopher** who, along with his friend **Wordsworth**, was a founder of the **Romantic movement**.
- ❖ He was one of the '**Lake Poets**', a term coined by **Francis Jeffrey** in **1817**.
- ❖ He wrote the poems "**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**" and "**Kubla Khan**", as well as the prose work "**Biographia Literaria**".
- ❖ He helped introduce **German Idealist philosophy** to **English-speaking culture**.
- ❖ Coleridge coined the term "**Willing Suspension of Disbelief**".
- ❖ Throughout his **adult stage**, he had crippling bouts of **anxiety** and **depression**. He had **bipolar disorder**.
- ❖ He was an **opium addict**.
- ❖ He wrote about his **loneliness** at school in the poem "**Frost at Midnight**".
- ❖ In **March 1796**, Coleridge published a journal "**The Watchmen**", printed every **8 days** to avoid a **weekly newspaper tax**. However, it was discontinued in **May of the same year**.
- ❖ Coleridge wrote **48 sonnets**.
- ❖ His **conversation poems** (a group of **8 poems**) include:
  - **The Lime Tree Bower**
  - **Frost at Midnight**
  - **The Nightingale**, etc.
- ❖ He translated the **dramatic trilogy** "**Wallenstein**" by German poet **Friedrich Schiller**.
- ❖ Coleridge wrote the **ballad poem** "**Love**", addressed to **Sara Hutchinson**, sister of **Mary Hutchinson** (wife of Wordsworth).
- ❖ In **1809**, he published a journal titled "**The Friend**".
- ❖ Coleridge gave a series of **lectures in London and Bristol**, especially on **Shakespeare**.
- ❖ In **1817**, he wrote "**Biographia Literaria**".
- ❖ **Lord Byron, William Hazlitt, and Wordsworth** were Coleridge's companions in a **fanciful scheme** to establish a **Utopian community of free love** on the **banks of the Susquehanna River**.
- ❖ The term "**psycho-somatic**" was coined by **Coleridge**.
- ❖ He introduced **Christabel meters**, the **octosyllabic couplet**, full of **skillful and rhythmic variation**.
- ❖ Coleridge is also referred to as "**High Priest of Romanticism**".

### Quotes

- ❖ He said he had "**a smack of Hamlet in himself**".
- ❖ He used the phrase "**the high road of life**".
- ❖ '**Motiveless Malignity**' is a phrase used by Coleridge for **Iago in Othello**.
- ❖ He wrote a **review of Anne Radcliffe's "The Mad Monk"**.

### Willing Suspension of Disbelief

- ❖ This term was **coined by Coleridge in 1817.**
- ❖ It means **suspending one's critical faculties** and believing the **unbelievable**, or sacrificing **realism and logic** for the sake of **enjoyment** (e.g., watching a **circus**).

### Coleridge's Term 'Esemplastic'

- ❖ Coleridge coined the term '**Esemplastic**' to describe "**the power of poetic imagination**" in **Biographia Literaria**.

### Major Works of Coleridge

- ❖ Lyrical Ballads (1798)
- ❖ The Statesman's Manual or The Bible the best guide to political skill and foresight: A Lay Sesman (1816)
- ❖ Christabel (1816)
- ❖ Kubla Khan: A Vision (1816)
- ❖ The Pains of Sleep (1816)
- ❖ Biographia Literaria (1817)
- ❖ Aids to Reflection in the Formation of A Manley Character.
- ❖ Confession of an Inquiring Spirit.
- ❖ Hints Towards the Formation of more Comprehensive Theory of Life (1848)
- ❖ Seven Lectures upon Shakespeare and Milton (1850)
- ❖ Frost at Midnight
- ❖ Asra Poems
- ❖ 'Osorio' is a tragedy in blank verse by S. T. Coleridge in 1797 but could not be performed due to rejection by Drury Lane Theatre. Coleridge revised it and recast the play 16 years later with the new title - "Remorse".
- ❖ France: an Ode
- ❖ Conversation Poems (Total 8 Poems)
- ❖ Dejection: an Ode

### Criticism on Coleridge

- ❖ According to T. S. Eliot "Perhaps the greatest of English critics, and in a sense that last."
  - Charles Lamb called Coleridge "A Damaged Archangel".

### The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1798)

- *The Rime of The Ancient Mariner* is the longest major poem by Coleridge written in 1797-98 and published in 1798 in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.
- It is written in VII parts. It has total 625 lines.
- ❖ Kubla Khan: A Vision in Dream (1816)

- ❖ Kubla Khan or A Vision in Dream is a poem by Coleridge written in 1797 but published in 1816.

### Christabel

- ❖ It is a long narrative poem by Coleridge in 2 parts, the first written in 1797 and the second in 1800.
- ❖ He had planned 3 additional parts but not completed.
- ❖ Coleridge prepared first two parts to be included in "Lyrical Ballads" but on the suggestion of Wordsworth it was left.
- ❖ It was published in a pamphlet in 1816.

### Frost at Midnight (1798)

- ❖ It is a poem by Coleridge written in 1798 as part of the conversation poems.
- ❖ The poem discusses Coleridge's childhood experience in a negative manner and emphasizes the need to be raised in the countryside.
- ❖ Poem expresses hope that Coleridge's son Hartley would be able to experience a childhood that his father could not and become a true child of nature.

### Biographia Literaria (1817)

- ❖ *Biographia Literaria* is also called *Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*.
- ❖ It is an autobiography in discourse by S. T. Coleridge, published in 2 volumes written in 1817.
- ❖ It has 23 chapters.

### DEJECTION: AN ODE

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,  
 With the old Moon in her arms;  
 And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!  
 We shall have a deadly storm.  
 (Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence)

I

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made  
 The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,  
 This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence  
 Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade  
 Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,  
 Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes  
 Upon the strings of this Æolian lute,

Which better far were mute.  
 For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!  
 And overspread with phantom light,  
 (With swimming phantom light o'erspread  
 But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)  
 I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling  
 The coming-on of rain and squally blast.  
 And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,  
 And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!  
 Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,  
 And sent my soul abroad,  
 Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,  
 Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

## II

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,  
 A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,  
 Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,  
 In word, or sigh, or tear —  
 Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,  
 To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,  
 All this long eve, so balmy and serene,  
 Have I been gazing on the western sky,  
 And its peculiar tint of yellow green:  
 And still I gaze — and with how blank an eye!  
 And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,  
 That give away their motion to the stars;  
 Those stars, that glide behind them or between,  
 Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:  
 Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew  
 In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;  
 I see them all so excellently fair,  
 I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

## III

My genial spirits fail;  
 And what can these avail  
 To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?  
 It were a vain endeavour,  
 Though I should gaze for ever  
 On that green light that lingers in the west:  
 I may not hope from outward forms to win

The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

#### IV

Lady! we receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does Nature live:  
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!  
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,  
Than that inanimate cold world allowed  
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,  
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth  
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud  
Enveloping the Earth –  
And from the soul itself must there be sent  
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,  
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

#### V

pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me  
What this strong music in the soul may be!  
What, and wherein it doth exist,  
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,  
This beautiful and beauty-making 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,  
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,  
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower  
A new Earth and new Heaven,  
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud –  
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud –  
We in ourselves rejoice!  
And thence flows all that charms our ear or sight,  
All melodies the echoes of that voice,  
All colours a suffusion from that light.

#### VI

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.

## VII

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,  
 Reality's dark dream!  
 I turn from you, and listen to the wind,  
 Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream  
 Of agony by torture lengthened out  
 That lute sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,  
 Bare crag, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree,  
 Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,  
 Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,  
 Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,  
 Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,  
 Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,  
 Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,  
 The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.  
 Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!  
 Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!  
 What tell'st thou now about?  
 'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,  
 With groans, of trampled men, with smarting wounds —  
 At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!  
 But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!  
 And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,  
 With groans, and tremulous shudderings — all is over —  
 It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!  
 A tale of less affright,  
 And tempered with delight,  
 As Otway's self had framed the tender lay, —  
 'Tis of a little child



Upon a lonesome wild,  
 Nor far from home, but she hath lost her way:  
 And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,  
 And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

### VIII

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:  
 Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!  
 Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,  
 And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,  
 May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,  
 Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!  
 With light heart may she rise,  
 Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,  
 Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;  
 To her may all things live, from pole to pole,  
 Their life the eddying of her living soul!  
 simple spirit, guided from above,  
 Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,  
 Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

### DEJECTION: AN ODE

#### Introduction

- ❖ "*Dejection: An Ode*" is one of Coleridge's most **personal and philosophical** poems, written during a period of deep emotional and creative struggle.
- ❖ The poem reflects his **melancholy, loss of poetic inspiration**, and **inner turmoil**.
- ❖ It was inspired by Coleridge's **unrequited love for Sara Hutchinson** and his declining relationship with his wife, Sara Fricker.
- ❖ The poem also explores the **Romantic idea that nature reflects human emotions**, but Coleridge **rejects this view**, stating that **joy must come from within the human heart** rather than from external beauty.

#### Publication

- ❖ The poem was originally written as a **personal letter to Sara Hutchinson on April 4, 1802**.
- ❖ It was later revised and published as "*Dejection: An Ode*" in 1802 in **The Morning Post**, a British newspaper.
- ❖ This version was **shortened and altered**, making it **less explicitly about his love for Sara Hutchinson** and more focused on his **philosophical struggles**.

### Structure and Rhyme Scheme

- ❖ The poem follows the structure of a **Pindaric ode**, which means it has an **irregular stanza form** with varying **line lengths and rhyme patterns**.
- ❖ It consists of **eight stanzas** of different lengths.
- ❖ The **rhyme scheme is highly flexible**, but it generally follows **ABAB or AABB patterns**, with variations throughout the poem.
- ❖ The meter is also **irregular**, shifting between **iambic pentameter** and other rhythmic patterns to reflect the poet's fluctuating emotions.

### DETAILED SUMMARY

#### Epigraph

- ❖ The poem begins with a **quotation from the old ballad "Sir Patrick Spence"**.
- ❖ The speaker states that he **saw the new moon with the old moon in its arms** during the **late hours of the previous evening**.
- ❖ He believes that this sight **foretells an upcoming deadly storm**.

#### Stanza I - The Approaching Storm

- ❖ The poet wonders if the **author of "Sir Patrick Spence" was correct in predicting weather changes**.
- ❖ Although the **night is currently calm and peaceful**, he senses that this **tranquillity will not last**.
- ❖ The **wind is beginning to gain strength**, soon transforming into a **fierce storm**.
- ❖ The **rain starts falling in a slanting manner**, producing a **loud, forceful sound**.
- ❖ The poet notices that the **new moon appears covered in a ghostly, dim light**, surrounded by a **silvery glow**.
- ❖ In the past, such storms **inspired the poet's imagination and creativity**.
- ❖ Despite feeling **dull and inactive now**, he hopes that this **storm might rekindle his poetic energy**.

#### Stanza II - The Poet's Deep Grief

- ❖ The poet describes his **grief as a piercing and overwhelming sensation**.
- ❖ His sorrow is **dull, undefined, and suppressed**, making it **difficult to express in words, sighs, or tears**.
- ❖ Addressing **Sara Hutchinson**, he shares that he has been **staring at the yellow-green evening sky for a long time**.
- ❖ Though the **song of the thrush (throstle) should inspire joy**, he remains **emotionally numb**.
- ❖ The **clouds appear to be either in fragments or long streaks** across the sky.



- ❖ Although in reality, **clouds move while stars remain still**, it seems as if the stars are **moving behind the clouds**.
- ❖ The **crescent moon appears fixed in a clear area of the sky, surrounded by no clouds or stars**.
- ❖ Despite seeing the **beauty of nature**, he is **unable to feel or appreciate it** due to his emotional state.

### **Stanza III – The Loss of Inner Joy**

- ❖ The poet acknowledges that he has **lost his inner cheerfulness**.
- ❖ Without this **inner joy**, he cannot expect **nature's beauty to uplift his spirits**.
- ❖ **Simply gazing at the beautiful natural scenery will not ease his sorrow**.
- ❖ He realizes that **true happiness must come from within** and not from external sources.

### **Stanza IV – The Reflection of Human Emotions in Nature**

- ❖ The poet tells his beloved that nature only reflects what humans feel within themselves.
- ❖ Nature does not have life, joy, or sorrow of its own – it is humans who project their emotions onto it.
- ❖ If someone is joyful, nature appears bright and cheerful, but if they are sorrowful, nature seems melancholic.
- ❖ The objects of nature are lifeless; they only take on the emotions we give them.
- ❖ Those who lack love and happiness in their lives will not find comfort in nature.
- ❖ To experience nature's true beauty and grandeur, one must possess inner joy.
- ❖ Just as a bright cloud imparts light to the earth, the human soul must radiate joy to bring meaning to nature.

### **Stanza V – The Power of Joy**

- ❖ The poet addresses his wife, Sara, calling her a pure-hearted lady.
- ❖ He tells her that she does not need to ask about the source of the powerful voice and light in the soul.
- ❖ Joy in the heart is the true source of this light and beauty.
- ❖ Only pure-hearted people can experience this joy, and that too in the purest moments of life.
- ❖ Joy is the essence of life, and all thoughts and emotions arise from it.
- ❖ He compares joy to a cloud, which brings rain to nourish the earth.
- ❖ Joy is the spirit and power that unites nature with human experience.
- ❖ This joy allows us to see the world in a new light, revealing a new Earth and a new Heaven.
- ❖ However, proud and materialistic people cannot perceive this joy.

- ❖ The sweet sounds of nature and the beautiful colors around us are simply reflections of the joy within our hearts.

### Stanza VI – The Loss of Imagination

- ❖ The poet recalls a time when he faced difficulties in life, but he remained unaffected because joy was still present in his heart.
- ❖ His imagination turned even his misfortunes into dreams of delight.
- ❖ Hope surrounded him like a vine growing around a tree, supporting him even when success was not his own.
- ❖ However, now earthly sorrows have shattered his imaginative thoughts, bringing him down to reality.
- ❖ He is not saddened by the loss of happiness, but by the fact that his grief has destroyed his poetic creativity.
- ❖ In the past, even sorrow could inspire poetry, but now his grief has made him dull and lifeless.
- ❖ He feels trapped in a state of dejection, where his philosophical and intellectual thoughts are crushing his poetic imagination.
- ❖ Once, poetry was his source of life, but now depression has consumed his entire being.

### Stanza VII – The Wild, Tormenting Wind

- ❖ Poisonous thoughts surround his mind like a viper, making reality seem like a terrifying dream.
- ❖ He turns away from these thoughts and **listens to the sound of the furious wind**.
- ❖ The wind **screams like a tortured man**, suffering endlessly.
- ❖ The poet calls out to the wind, suggesting that it would be more fitting if it blew:
  - Against a **barren rock**
  - Over a **mountain lake**
  - Through a **tree struck by lightning**
  - Across a **dark, haunted house**
  - Among **tall, untamed pine trees**
- ❖ He compares the wind to a mad flute player, creating wild and tragic music.
- ❖ In April, when the gardens are dim and brown, and flowers hide behind leaves, the wind sounds even worse than the melancholy songs of the rainy season.
- ❖ The poet compares the wind's harsh and chaotic sounds to a devilish Christmas, where even demons cry out in pain and fear.
- ❖ The wind plays like an actor skilled in tragic performances, able to mimic all emotions with its sounds.
- ❖ The poet asks: What sound is the wind creating now?
  - It resembles the retreat of a defeated army, filled with groans of wounded soldiers and the shivers of freezing men.

- Then, the wind suddenly pauses, bringing a deep silence.
- When the wind resumes, it mimics the cries of a lost child in a dark forest, calling for her mother.
- The poet compares this to the sorrowful tale written by Thomas Otway, where a little girl, lost and afraid, cries out for help.

### Stanza VIII - A Prayer for Sara

- ❖ It is now **midnight**, but the poet **does not desire sleep**.
- ❖ He reflects that his friend, Sara, may have never experienced such a restless night.
- ❖ The poet prays that she finds peace and happiness through gentle, soothing sleep.
- ❖ He hopes that the storm will inspire him to write poetry again.
- ❖ He wishes for the stars to shine brightly above her home, like guardians watching over the sleeping earth.
- ❖ In the morning, he hopes she awakens in a carefree mood, with joyful thoughts and radiant eyes.
- ❖ He prays that joy lifts her spirit, making her voice sweet and full of happiness.
- ❖ He envisions all living creatures dedicating their lives to her, adding to her soul's greatness.
- ❖ The poet blesses her, calling her a simple-hearted lady, guided by divine grace.
- ❖ He declares her to be his dearest and most devoted friend, wishing her eternal joy and happiness.

### Literary Devices

**Imagery** : The use of descriptive language to create vivid sensory experiences.

#### ❖ Example:

- *"The night is calm and cloudless, / And still as if the earth had ceased to move."*
- **Effect:** The peaceful imagery contrasts with the storm that follows, symbolizing the poet's inner turmoil.

**Personification** : Giving human characteristics to non-human objects or abstract ideas.

#### ❖ Examples:

- *"O Lady! We receive but what we give, / And in our life alone does Nature live."*
- **Effect:** Nature is personified, reinforcing the idea that its beauty is dependent on human perception.
- *"O wind! If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"* (inspired by Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*)
- **Effect:** The wind is treated as an active force, mirroring the poet's emotions.

**Symbolism** : The use of symbols to represent deeper meanings.

#### ❖ Examples:

- **The Moon:** Symbolizes inspiration and creativity, which the poet fears he has lost.
- **The Storm:** Represents Coleridge's internal struggles and dejection.
- **The Wind:** A metaphor for poetic inspiration, which now only produces sorrowful sounds.

**Metaphor :** A direct comparison between two unrelated things.

❖ **Examples:**

- "A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear, / A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief."
- **Effect:** Grief is compared to a void, emphasizing its overwhelming and numbing nature.
- "Hope grew round me, like the twining vine."
- **Effect:** Hope is metaphorically described as a vine, showing how it once supported him but is now lost.

**Alliteration :** The repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words.

❖ **Examples:**

- "The sound of the wind is like the scream of a man who is being tortured for a long time."
- **Effect:** Creates a musical and rhythmic quality while reinforcing the poem's sorrowful tone.

**Apostrophe :** A direct address to an absent person, object, or abstract idea.

❖ **Examples:** "O Wind! Thou art a mad musician."

- **Effect:** The poet speaks directly to the wind, treating it as a conscious force affecting his emotions.

**Enjambment :** When a sentence or phrase continues beyond the end of a line without a pause.

❖ **Example:** "My genial spirits fail; / And what can these avail / To lift the smothering weight  
front off my breast?"

- **Effect:** Mimics the poet's restless thoughts and emotional distress.

**Parallelism:** The repetition of similar sentence structures for emphasis.

❖ **Example:**

- "Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud – / We in ourselves rejoice!"
- **Effect:** Reinforces the central idea that joy comes from within, not from external nature.