

Dejection: An Ode

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1802)

*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--
O 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

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

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making 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!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

Friedrich Schiller, "Ode to Joy" (1785)

Joy, beautiful spark of the gods,
daughter from Elysium,
we, drunk with fire, step into
your holy shrine, Heavenly One.
Your magic binds together again
that which custom has rigidly divided:
all human beings become brothers
wherever your gentle wing is.
Be embraced, millions!
This kiss is for the whole world!
Brothers, over the starry canopy
there must be a loving Father dwelling.

Whoever has succeeded in the great attempt
to be a friend to a friend,
whoever has won a dear wife,
may he mix in his rejoicing!
Yes, whoever can call even only one soul
his on the round earth!
And whoever never could, let him leave
secretly, weeping, from this union.
Whatever inhabits the great Circle,
may it honor sympathy!
It [sympathy] leads to the stars,
where the Unknown is enthroned.

All beings drink Joy
at the breast of Nature;
all good [beings], all evil [ones]
follow her rosy trail.
She gave us kisses and grapes,
gave us] a friend, tested by death itself.
Delight was given even to the worm,
and the angel stands before God.
Are you falling down, Millions?
Do you perceive your Creator, World?
Seek him above the starry canopy!
He must be dwelling above the stars.

Joy is the powerful spring
in eternal Nature.
Joy, joy drives the wheels
in the great watch of the worlds.
It entices flowers from the sprouts,
suns from the universe,
rolls spheres in spaces
that the telescope cannot see.
Happily, as His suns fly
through the glorious plane of Heaven,
go, brothers, your way,
happily, like a hero going to victory.

Out of the fiery mirror of Truth
it [joy] smiles at the researcher.
Toward the steep hill of Virtue
it leads the path of the patient one.
On the sunny mountains of Faith
one can see its banners waving,
through the cleft in sprung coffins
one can see it standing in the angel choir.
Wait courageously, Millions!
Wait for the better world!
Up yonder over the starry canopy
a great God will repay you.

One cannot repay the gods;
It is beautiful to be like them.
agony and poverty should come forward,
rejoice with those who are happy.
May complaint and revenge be forgotten,
may our mortal enemy be forgiven.
No tear should pressure him,
no repentance gnaw at him,
may our book of debts be obliterated!
Reconciled the whole world!
Brothers- over the starry canopy
judges God, just as we judge.

Joy bubbles in the beakers;
in the golden blood of the grape
cannibals drink mildness,
despair drinks heroic courage.
Brothers, fly up from your seats
when the full wineglass passes around,
let the foam spray to the sky:
this glass to the good Spirit!
The one whom the stars' whirling lauds,
whom the seraphs' hymn praises--
this glass to the good Spirit
up there above the starry canopy!

Firm courage in heavy sorrows,
help, where innocence weeps,
eternity to sworn vows,
truth toward friend and foe,
manly pride before royal thrones,
brothers, even risking property and life--
let merit be crowned,
downfall to the breed of liars!
Close the sacred circle tighter,
swear by this golden wine,
to be true to what is sworn,
swear it by the judge of stars!

William Wordsworth, "Surprised by Joy" (1815)

Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
But Thee, long buried in the silent Tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee?—Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss!—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

Emily Dickinson, poem 1382

In many and reportless places
We feel a Joy —
Reportless, also, but sincere as Nature
Or Deity —

It comes, without a consternation —
Dissolves — the same —
But leaves a sumptuous Destitution —
Without a Name —

Profane it by a search — we cannot
It has no home —
Nor we who having once inhaled it —
Thereafter roam.

Emily Dickinson, poem 1744

The joy that has no stem no core,
Nor seed that we can sow,
Is edible to longing.
But ablative to show.

By fundamental palates
Those products are preferred
Impregnable to transit
And patented by pod.

Hoyt Axton, "Joy to the World" (1971)

Jeremiah was a bullfrog
He was a good friend of mine
I never understood a single word he said
But I helped him drink his wine
And he always had some mighty fine wine.

Joy to the world,
All the boys and girls,
Joy to the fishes in the deep blue sea
Joy to you and me.

If I were the King of the world
Tell you what I'd do
I'd throw away the cars and the bars and the wars
Make sweet love to you.

Joy to the world
All the boys and girls
Joy to the fishes in the deep blue sea
Joy to you and me.

You know I love the ladies
Love to have my fun
I'm a high night flier and a rainbow rider
A straight-shootin' son of a gun.
I said a straight shootin' son of a gun.

Joy to the world
All the boys and girls
Joy to the fishes in the deep blue sea
Joy to you and me.