This was more than his might
And still Heaven be prais'd! in contempt of the Loon
I am I myself I, the Jolly full Moon.

291. ANSWER TO A CHILD'S QUESTION

[Early May 1802?]

The poem was originally a sonnet, entitled "The Language of Birds, Lines spoken extempore, to a little child, in early spring." C pruned couplets from the end of the octave and from the end of the sestet when the poem was included in *SL* (1817) and subsequent collections. One ms title—"Extempore to a Child of six years old"—prompted WW to subtitle his poem *To H. C.* in a similar way when he included it in his 1807 collection (see Reed II 180–1n). The texts differ little apart from the omission of the four lines. The present text is from *SL*.

Do you ask what the birds say? The Sparrow, the Dove,
The Linnet and Thrush say, "I love and I love!"
In the winter they're silent—the wind is so strong;
What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud song.
But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,
And singing, and loving—all come back together.
But the Lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
That he sings, and he sings; and for ever sings he—
"I love my Love, and my Love loves me!"

6+. The first published and early ms versions here include the couplet:

"I love, and I love," almost all the birds say,
From sun-rise, to star-rise, so gladsome are they!

10. Adapted from the refrain "I love my love, because I know my love loves me", from Matthew Prior's song *One Morning Very Early, One Morning in the Spring*.

10+. The poem originally concluded with an additional couplet:

'Tis no wonder that he's full of joy to the brim,
When He loves his Love, and his Love loves Him!

292. EPITAPH ON LORD LONSDALE

[1802? 1809?]

C's lines were published in the 1812 *Friend* among other epigrams which were first published in Sept–Oct 1802, and which derive from German sources; no such parallel has been found for the present poem. John Payne Collier also recorded two slightly different versions which he heard from C in 1811 and 1832, and on both occasions C described the lines as referring to the late Lord Lonsdale.

Sir James Lowther, Earl of Lonsdale, died on 24 May 1802. C had been staying with WW and DW at DC, and left that same day for Keswick (Reed II 173). The troubles the Wordsworth family had with the "bad earl", who (in C's words to Collier) "seemed to make himself happy by making everybody else unhappy", are recorded in Moorman *William Wordsworth: The Early Years 1770–1803* 167–9 and, more fully, in Kenneth R. Johnston *The Hidden Wordsworth: Poet, Lover, Rebel, Spy* (New York 1998) 19–31, 452–3, and esp 781–2, and WW was pressing for a settlement of the case throughout Jun 1802. The poem may have been composed on 10–12 Jun, when C returned to Grasmere and discussed various matters relating to Lord Lonsdale. See also **307** *Epigram on the Devil*.

The version given here reproduces the untitled text of the 1812 *Friend* (*CC*) II 170.

An excellent Adage commands that we should
Relate of the Dead, that alone which is good;
But of the great Lord, who here lies in lead,
We know nothing good but that he is dead.

293. DEJECTION: AN ODE

[Jul 1802?]

There are two transcripts of the poem in C's hand, another transcript, perhaps written c 1806, and records of another from 1814. It was published in *M Post* (4 Oct 1802), and was collected in *SL* (1817) and *PW* (1828, 1829, 1834). The various texts incorporate different selections of the text published in *SL* and thereafter, and are divided into parts in different ways, but otherwise they vary relatively little. The origins and such development as the poem underwent are to be seen against the background of **289** *Letter to* ——. The *Letter* forms the

matrix and for a long time a kind of shadow alternative, which inhibited C from committing himself to the other version he had extracted.

C wrote the *Letter* between 4 Apr (perhaps in part before) and 21 Apr 1802. He certainly never intended to publish it and he appears not to have shown it to friends as close as RS and CL; it is not even known if he sent it to SH. He was sufficiently detached by 7 May to pretend to TP (and to himself) that he had written it to TP (*CL* II 801), but further work on the poem probably depended on the building confidence of succeeding months. The first version of the *Ode*, sent in Jul to RS, may have been put together not long before—perhaps between 16 and 19 Jul, or actually on the latter date.

C had a clear objective at this first stage of the poem's evolution, but was profoundly uncertain as to whether it would be acceptable. His purpose was to convert a gesture of love and an appeal for sympathy into a poem about imagination. His revision omits about ten stanzas concerning his domestic life, and brings forward the original conclusion to the centre of the new poem, where it becomes a postulate. Specifically, the *Ode* follows the *Letter* closely for stanzas I, II, and III; turns to the end of the *Letter* for stanzas IV and V, which it also follows closely; turns back to the preceding passage for stanza VI, which is constructed by running together several stanzas and omitting the personal material; and turns back to the passage before this again for stanzas VII and VIII. Stanza VIII is completed by using the last few lines of the original poem. The effect of the revision—or, rather, reconstruction—is to ascribe the loss of the shaping spirit of imagination to an infection of the soul caused by abstruse research, with no reference to the trials of C's domestic life and his love for SH, to which the research had been an antidote.

The new poem thereby ceases to trace a circling process of uncertain self-examination and instead makes a general proposition about life. In the new context, the replacing of SH's name with WW's was not opportunistic or evasive, and the first publication on WW's wedding-day was a tribute with no trace of conscious irony. WW's example in *The Leech Gatherer*, the poem he wrote and rewrote between early May and early Jul, was instrumental in buoying up C's confidence, and the two poems were copied out one after another in the second ms in C's hand.

The intimate connection between *The Leech Gatherer* and C's poem may be reflected in the anxiety of WW's commentary on it for SH (*WL—E* rev—366–7), just before he left for France to make a settlement with Annette Vallon and just before C copied out the first version of his own poem. There are a number of thematic and other links between the two poems: for example, the close of the first published version (see VAR lines 133.1.3–4) may be read as a tribute to WW in WW's own language. *Dejection: An Ode* anticipates **300** *The Picture* and **301** *Hymn before Sun-rise* in its attempt to surmount self-concern, to affirm larger principles. The numbering of the stanzas and the new format heighten the sense of formality and control, of resolution and independence, as do the

amendments of punctuation in their slowing down of the pace of individual lines.

Whether or not the revision was thoroughgoing enough is another matter, and C remained uncertain until he went to Malta, perhaps until after his return. He continued to quote or paraphrase the unpublished, personal parts of the *Letter* to different correspondents (e.g. *CL* II 875: to Thomas Wedgwood 20 Oct 1802; *CL* II 901: to TP 17 Dec 1802; *CL* II 903–4: to Mary Robinson 27 Dec 1802); and the second ms in his hand, for Sir George and Lady Beaumont in Aug 1803 (*CL* II 970–2), breaks off at a crucial point (line 86).

The problem was partly technical: for instance, how to integrate the storm passage, a difficulty which C met by adding four lines to the end of stanza I. Even more, it was caused by doubts concerning the ability of the new poem to exist apart from its personal background, as is apparent in C's hesitation over the second part of stanza VI.

C continued to think of the poem as private, even unpublished, until at least 1814—as a poem whose parts were not in an inevitable final form—but the text arrived at in *SL* was thereafter reprinted with changes of punctuation only, the first poem in the section "Odes and Miscellaneous Poems". In their new setting, phrases like "abstruse research" and "natural man", "joy" and "lady", have an altered, sufficient new meaning; and the *Letter* and the *Ode*, even while they share many lines and whole groups of lines, make up two poems with separate tendencies and aspirations, in their own right.

The text given here is that of *SL* (1817), taking in the Errata. Annotation of the personal and literary background is given at **289** *Letter to* —— EC.

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. 1.5

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
Unrous'd by winds, that ply a busier trade

epigraph. C has modernised and selected from five lines of *Sir Patrick Spens*, in Bishop Percy's version (*Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*—4th ed 3 vols 1794—I 80). He had read and drawn upon this collection at the time of his most fruitful collaboration with WW (see *RX* 244, 331).

Than those which mould yon clouds 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 rimm'd and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming on of rain and squally blast.
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, unimpassion'd 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 it's peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them 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;

17–20. One of the few instances of a passage added to the *Letter* to make up the *Ode*. See also line 66, which was not added until the proof stage of *SL*.

25. Lady] In earlier versions C here and elsewhere addressed his poem to "Edmund" or "dearest William". In the personal context of the *Letter* he appealed directly to SH.

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 smoth'ring weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavor,
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 allow'd
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,

66. A late addition to the poem (see 17–20EC). This line adds to the Miltonic echoes: cf *PL* III 6 "Bright effluence of bright essence increate". See **289**EC for more examples.

Which wedding Nature to us gives in dow'r
  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 or 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, seem'd 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!

87–93. C was particularly sensitive about these lines, and for a long time uncertain of their place. They appear in the first ms version of the *Ode*, out of sequence, and were quoted separately in letters thereafter (*CL* II 815, 831–2, 875, 1008, 1201); but another ms version breaks off just before them, while a further ms and the first published version omit them. They were not restored to the poem until the proof stage of *SL*. The lines have a different meaning in the other context of the *Letter* (lines 265–71), although clearly C was uncertain how obvious this significance would be.

I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
  Which long has rav'd unnotic'd. What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthen'd 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 show'rs,
Of dark brown gardens, and of peeping flow'rs,
Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wint'ry song,
The blossoms, buds, and tim'rous 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 temper'd with delight,
As Otway's self had fram'd the tender lay—
    'Tis of a little child

* Tairn is a small lake, generally if not always applied to the lakes up in the mountains, and which are the feeders of those in the vallies. This address to the Storm-wind will not appear extravagant to those who have heard it at night, and in a mountainous country.

100fn. Tairn] C added a note to the transcript of **176** *Christabel* he made for SH, in which he elucidated the etymology of the word with reference to Edward Lye *Dictionarium Saxonico et Gothico-Latinum* (2 vols 1772).

120. Thomas Otway (1652–85), remembered here as the author of *The Orphan* and other sentimental tragedies. In earlier versions of the poem C instead addressed WW (as "Edmund" or, in the *Letter*, "William"), whose *Lucy Gray* better fits the lines that follow than does Otway's play. Otway was himself an object of pity, as Chatterton became: see e.g. Charlotte Smith's sonnets on him (*Elegiac Sonnets* 26, 30, 32); C drew on this edition for *A Sheet of Sonnets*.

Upon a lonesome wild,
Not 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 watch'd 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 may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice.

294. THE DAY DREAM

[Jul–Aug 1802]

The poem centres on an incident which took place between 2 and 13 Mar 1802, when C stayed at Gallow Hill on his way home from London—an incident described at greater length and more directly at **289** *A Letter to* —— 99–110 (4–21 Apr 1802). It is not known whether the present poem preceded the *Letter*, or if it grew out of attempts to find a more public significance and form for the longer poem. The latter possibility is the more likely. The poem might have been one of those C sent to the Wordsworths on 27 Apr or 6 May (*DWJ* I 139, 144); or it might have followed on the extraction of **293** *Dejection: An Ode* from the *Letter*, perhaps in Jul–Aug 1802.

The lines were almost certainly written before **300** *The Picture*—a poem, in C's words, "on the endeavor to emancipate the soul from day-dreams" (*CN* I 1153). MH copied it out, without a title, following on her transcript of the *Letter*, and this is the version given here, with minor corrections. A slightly revised version was published in *M Post* (19 Oct 1802), with the title "The Day Dream, From an Emigrant to his Absent Wife" over the signature "ΕΣΤΗΣΕ."

In fact, as C appears to have realised, the suggested public meaning involves a troubling inconsistency. Instead of republishing the poem, he redrafted it entirely as **629** *A Day Dream*, in a form closer to the *Letter*, perhaps as late as 1826–8.

If Thou wert here, these Tears were "Tears of Light"!
—But from as sweet a day-dream did I start
As ever made these Eyes grow idly bright;
And tho' I weep, yet still about the *heart*
A dear & playful Tenderness doth linger
Touching my Heart as with a Baby's finger.

My Mouth half-open like a witless Man,
I saw the Couch, I saw the quiet Room,
The heaving Shadows, & the fire-light Gloom;
And on my Lips, I know not what there ran—
On my unmoving Lips a subtile Feeling—
I know not what—but had the same been stealing

Upon a sleeping Mother's Lips I guess
It would have made the loving Mother dream
That she was softly stooping down to Kiss
Her Babe, that something more than Babe did seem—
An obscure Presence of it's darling Father,
Yet still it's own sweet Baby self far rather!

Across my chest there liv'd a weight so warm
As if some bird had taken shelter there;
And lo! upon the Couch a Woman's Form!
Thine, Sara! thine! O Joy, if thine it were!

1. "Tears of Light"] From WW *Matthew* 24 (*WPW* IV 69).

5–6. Anticipated—in a form curiously closer to the printed rather than the ms version—in a notebook entry of early Feb 1802 (*CN* I 1105):

a playful Tenderness
Touching the Heart, as with an infant's finger

7. Mouth half-open] "I cannot breathe thro' my nose—so my mouth, with sensual thick lips, is almost always open" (*CL* I 260: to John Thelwall 19 Nov [1796]). C's description is confirmed by other reports and by portraits; for a possible bearing on the phonetic patterning of his poetry see **178** *Kubla Khan* 1 EC.