

STRANGE POWER OF
SPEECH
COLERIDGE AND THE
POETIC USE OF LANGUAGE

UNIVERSITÉ DE NEUCHÂTEL
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INTRODUCTION

There is no denying that interest in Coleridge, particularly in his poetic theories, has lately been renewed on a large scale. Bearing witness to this are the carefully edited texts available today as well as the numerous critical studies, some of them crucial as regards the link between Coleridge's thought and his poetics.

Some strongly question Coleridge's originality or object to key arguments of his. Most critics, however, admit that his critical writings represent a major contribution in the filiation of ideas leading from German philosophy to modern theoretical positions. Such notions as the organic nature of poetic discourse and the independent status of poetry are central not only to Russian formalism and the American new criticism but to structuralism as well. Among the authors who have seriously reconsidered Coleridge's poetic theorizing, three stand out: Emerson R. Marks, Paul Hamilton and James C. McKusick.

Marks (1) establishes that Coleridge's theories are confirmed, to an appreciable extent, by modern structuralism; above all he focuses on his crucial position concerning what enables language to become poetic. What does would be in language itself. Coleridge,

he implies, insists that the whole process of poetic creation is based on semantic and syntactic accurateness. The poet is a giver of shape, and as such he actualizes a superior expressiveness inherent in language, through specific semantic and syntactic organizations. This involves a rejection of whatever is ornate (like poetic diction) or prosaic, and an integration of all levels (semantic, syntactic, prosodic) to the whole. Poetic language is imitative, yet it does not consist in imitating a final product but a process. The fundamental principle underlying the process is a synthesis of opposites resulting in a dynamic tension.

If Marks emphasizes Coleridge's dealings with linguistic units, Paul Hamilton (2) examines "the place of poetry in Coleridge's thought."⁽³⁾ He analyses the influence of German philosophy, but likewise Coleridge's criticism of certain philosophical approaches. Of particular interest to me is his discussion of desynonymization, especially as illustrated in Coleridge's practical criticism.

Desynonymization is also a major concern for McKusick (4), who also points out the constance and unity of Coleridge's intellectual pursuits throughout his career. He shows Coleridge's steadfast interest in language, and how he took over from philosophical traditions in this respect. He focuses on Coleridge's belief that language is "natural" rather than arbitrary, and deems it capital to become aware of how much a correct apprehension of his poetry depends on a clear comprehension of his poetic theories.

All the contributions mentioned above are important ones; what I propose to do, however, differs from them in several respects. My chief aim is to set as clearly as possible what Coleridge's conception of poetry actually is, in the light of the theoretical currents he was an

hair to and of today's main theoretical trends, and also to see how he applied this conception to his own poetic corpus. I have deliberately left out, or at least dealt superficially with, what partakes of philosophical speculations having definitely little connection with poetry and a conception of poetic discourse. Not much, therefore, will be said about such notions as imagination, fancy, will, symbol, understanding, reason, insofar as they do not essentially bear upon linguistic and poetic definitions and concepts. I have mentioned them to the extent that they do not belong to the purely philosophical but serve to exemplify and help to prove theoretical demonstrations concerned with poetry and poetics and nothing else.

My dissertation comprehends two parts, and each part is subdivided into chapters. Part one is a survey of Coleridge's chief ideas about poetic language as they can be determined from statements scattered throughout his writings. In the first chapter, I shall attempt to show that for Coleridge poetic language has its source in the very nature of language, and for him more particularly of the English language, with its special virtues of strength and expressiveness. He firmly stuck to the notion that language is not arbitrary but motivated; this, at least, is what poetic language strives to achieve: the fusion of nature and the mind, substance and form, subject and object in discourse. Generally speaking, language is mediatory between the universe and man, and as such creates a privileged space in which poets can perform a new creation.

In the second chapter, I try to make it clear that Coleridge's theories about poetry originate in his cosmology. It is in Leibniz's concept of monad that he found the idea that each part of the universe was both indissolubly linked to the whole while being a whole in

itself. The evolution of matter from a seminal principle to a definite shape - according to a universal rule, all organisms develop from indifferentiation to differentiation - is paralleled in the poetic process. One of the most important documents, here, is the Theory of Life, where Coleridge develops the main points of his cosmology. He explains the crucial function of polarity which sets up the fundamental movement of systole/diastole resulting in a synthesis; it would be characteristic of the way everything in the universe evolves, but also of poetic discourse.

The next two chapters deal more specifically with poetic language regarded as power. In chapter three, I endeavour to demonstrate how, by a proper organization of the linguistic units, language gradually acquires a new status and brings the semantic and syntactic potential of "ordinary" language to its highest level of effectiveness. If the starting-point of the process lies in a seminal idea, its dynamic principle is constituted by a struggle between antagonistic forces and their syntheses that pervades the discourse and at the same time gives it essence and existence. The result of the process is an organic whole, a structure both powerfully alive in its intense uniqueness and fragile because of the perpetual threat of imbalance. The poet is described as a shaper who instils the subjectiveness of his own mind into objective elements. The power of poetic language, actually, derives from a mode of operation which is essentially connective. The connectiveness of language accounts for, and manifests itself, in desynonymization.

The fourth chapter attempts a synthetic definition of the poetic power as it derives from the first three chapters. Emphasizing the Mariner's assertion at the end of "The Rime": "I have strange power of speech", I shall assume

that poetry is speech having gathered power through a number of operations alien to the language of ordinary conversation; as language, it is strange because the space of its occurrence involves a distortion of language. In order to express this distortive and powerful quality, Coleridge had to coin new words such as "esemplastic". A poem is to be seen as a network of interconnected units of meaning that form fundamental isotopies; the various isotopic groups partake in the end of the three basic categories of the universe: man as opposed to the cosmos, both being synthesized in the ultimate mediatory fusion of poetic discourse.

In Part Two, I try and see if Coleridge succeeded in applying those conceptions in his own creative poetic activity. The first chapter briefly considers problems inherent in the application of the basic principles detailed in Part One. After developing some methodological concepts, I pass on to the analysis of some Conversation Poems (chapter two), of "Dejection: An Ode" (chapter three), of "Kubla Khan" (chapter four) and of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (chapter five).

It may be appropriate here to make explicit the chief methods of analysis I have used. What has motivated my choice at the outset derives from Coleridge's poetics. His conception of poetic discourse as a network of semantic areas, as the polymorphous extension of an underlying principle, seems to me to be tantamount to the description of the isotopic process as developed recently by Group Mu (5) from the system set up by Greimas and his followers: Coquet, Rastier and others. (6) A poem should be regarded as an isotopic field, that is to say a set of redundant semantic categories as they appear after desynonymization; each category originates in some breach in a given semantic succession, which gives rise to a new category whose elements are found to be in contradiction

with, or allotropic to, the category from which they derive. All semantic categories can be reduced in the end to the three basic isotopic areas inherent in the universe: anthropos (man) antagonistic to cosmos (the universe or whatever is not man) and mediated by logos (discourse or the textual space). Controversial though it is, the notion of semic analysis provides an analytical tool without which desynonymization would either be impossible or limited to vague proceedings. The concept as Coleridge seems to have thought it out finds appropriate expression in Bernard Pottier's taxonomic analysis (7): a lexeme at the linguistic level is a sememe at the infralinguistic level, or a unit on the plane of content that is made up of three semic sub-categories: classemes (generic semes), semantemes (specific semes) and virtuememes (connotative semes).

From Greimas I have borrowed the idea that discourse has two planes (a notion Hjelmslev developed in connection with signs), content and expression, and that each plane has isotopies of its own. (8) Group Mu divided each plane into two categories: content comprehends the category that partakes of textual meaning, and that belonging to logic (referential); the isotopies of the former are termed isosememes while those of the latter are called isologisms. On the plane of expression, the first category comprehends the isotopies of the phonic or graphic substance (isoplasms) and the second the isotopies of syntax (isotaxes). (9) Isoplasms include the isotopies bearing on the conventional matrix as analysed by Levin. (10)

Here are some objections that my dissertation is likely to give rise to.

One could note that Coleridge's major theories about poetic language were expressed at a much later time than

the writing of the poems I analyse, and which, I assert, may illustrate them. It seems obvious to me, however, that his preoccupations in the main were more or less the same from the early 1790's till the end of his life. If, as Goodson has pointed out, "his notebooks and letters for the autumn of 1800 and then, occasionally, for the next two years exhibit a fresh attention to questions of language," (11) this did not modify in any essential way his conceptions about such notions as desynonymization, motivation and the isotopic nature of poetic language.

If Coleridge's admiration for the "naturalness" of Bowles's poetry dates from 1796, when he was at College, his awareness of the quarrel between the defenders of "natural" language and those who supported the view that language was arbitrary existed prior to this time, since he became acquainted with Plato's Cratylus during 1791-93. (12) He had probably read Monboddo's Of the Origin and Progress of Language by 1801, and he referred to words being things in a letter to Godwin in 1800. (13) By the time he came back from Germany, in 1799, he was familiar with Leibniz's principle of harmony. (14)

Desynonymization, on the other hand, was first mentioned in his 1795 Lectures as a remedy against artificial language, while the term was used for the first time in a notebook entry of 1803. (15) Admittedly he was influenced by Horne Tooke's ideas on etymology, a technique which is linked to desynonymization, in the late 1790's (16), although according to H.J. Jackson, Tooke's influence may have started earlier, at the time of his greatest success, between the publication and reprinting of The Diversions of Purley (1786-1798). (17) Even if Coleridge did not read Tooke's book before 1798, he could have heard about it from his friend Dr Beddoes, whose own work he knew well (1793). Etymology, furthermore, formed "part of his permanent mental equipment" (19) and represented a

general trend: "... at the end of the eighteenth century etymological speculation was as widespread and respectable a practice as it has ever been." (20) Desynonymization and etymology are closely linked to isotopy, inasmuch as they are the necessary condition for its existence. H.J. Jackson has emphasized that Coleridge derived from his dealings with etymology a science that "encouraged the making of connections", for "in the study of etymology, extremes meet". If poetic language is essentially powerful because it is connective and as such is made up of semantic and formal areas that build up isotopies through interconnections at a deeper level, etymology is that which permits the founding of the connections and therefore of the isotopies. "Etymology displayed an underlying unity in the multiplicity and multiformity of languages." (21) Without etymology, there is no possibility of discovering the junction between the units of language: "Etymology could supply cement, that is, a way of expressing the connection of ideas in accordance with normal mental processes." (22) Jackson has appropriately named "etymologic, the association of ideas by etymological kinship" (23) which is the very process through which poetic discourse comes into existence. "Etymologic is a process that depends upon etymology for the linking of ideas." (24) Already Condillac, whose ideas Coleridge knew, had already related common sense, wit, reason to one principle: the connection of ideas with one another. (25) Condillac's ideas have affinities with Locke's notion of words: a word, "like a knot, ties together a bundle of voluntarily joined ideas." (26)

If Coleridge, obviously, did not express the major aspects of his theory of poetic language until after the turn of the century, their general outline and implications were already part of his conceptions since

at least the beginning of the 1790's. My analysis of some of the poems he wrote in this early period should make this clear.

Another objection might concern my reading Coleridge's theories in terms of today's theories, that is to say in terms of theories formulated a century and a half later. A first explanation is that a reader normally approaches the works and ideas of the past with the interests of his own time, which is particularly justifiable. On first considering it, Coleridge's standpoint is related only indirectly to the problem of poetic discourse. With such key terms as "imagination", "reason", "understanding", he seems to be applying psychological criteria to the analysis of literature. For David Punter, "his principal contributions are in giving an account of the kind of activity in which the poet engages, and in fitting this into a hierarchy of mental activities." (27)

Thus Coleridge's theory establishes another locus in the links between literature and psychology since Aristotle described the effects of tragedy through the notion of catharsis. Subsequently to Coleridge, the next phases of this trend have often developed, in many different ways, from Freud and psychoanalysis, either Jung's study of the collective unconscious and of the universal symbols, the Marcusean contribution in the sixties or the more recent developments that followed on structuralism: Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari, and the feminist positions of Juliet Mitchell, Jacqueline Rose, Julia Kristeva and others. (28) Coleridge's interest in the subject is consistent with the eighteenth-century's general concern with the question of the relationship of the mind to society and the natural environment. As Punter has written:

It is partly because of this that, with the arrival in England of ROMANTICISM, we see a shift of attention

onto the creative activity itself. Following on from Kant's classifications of mental activity, and from Schelling's delineation of an aesthetic philosophy, Coleridge provides another crucial locus in Biographia Literaria. (29)

I have chosen to keep clear of the psychological perspective, partly on account of the many studies already available on Coleridge's contribution to this field, but above all because it seems to me that it is only remotely relevant to my subject. The main aspect of his poetics does not lie in such terms as "imagination" or "understanding", though their real import must not be neglected, but in the poetic process itself: what it consists of, its results. Such notions as "organic structures" and the "power" of language are closer to today's achievements in structuralism and post-structuralism than to psychological literary criticism, however interesting its conclusions can be.

The concept of structure, for instance, is central to Coleridge's poetics and poetic discourse. Even though Malcolm Bradbury is right in pointing out that, according to the angle of observation, the term can be replaced by a dozen others, such as "plot", "form", "pattern", etc (30), the organic whole Coleridge arrives at in his description of the poetic process is, I think, identical to the structure I have described in the last two chapters of the first Part of my dissertation. Coleridge's position in the critical field, the chief notions that belong to his conception of poems and poetry - isotopy, structure, power - connect him with modern theories and methods of literary analysis.

This being considered, my task was to adapt them without betraying both Coleridge's theories and the terminology he adopted. And the next objection could be to the fragmental quality and eclecticism I have displayed in

what I borrow from twentieth-century's theorists and from their terminology. An immediate answer can be that owing to the high degree of specialization today's criticism has attained, none of the theorists I have called upon to support my theses is alone the depository of all the tools needed in literary analysis. If one considers the main domains that Coleridge's conceptions compelled me to survey - the power of poetic discourse that results from its connectiveness and the field of isotopy, the problem of structure, desynonymization and the inherent problem of semic analysis - concepts, tools and terms required in each domain could not be borrowed from just one theorist.

Some names do recur. The main framework of my analytical method I owe to Group Mu and Greimas. They seem to me to provide, along with a few others such as Rastier and Coquet, the most reliable corpus as far as the isotopic method is concerned. The basic definition of "structure", as I have assumed Coleridge conceives of it, corresponds to Hjelmslev's. As to semic analysis, although Greimas (31) differs from Pottier in the way they consider it and might be right in doing so, it is Pottier's perspective I have adopted because in my opinion it is more akin to what Coleridge meant to do in his etymological process and subsequently in the process of desynonymization of which it partakes. Whatever the objections, anyway, and the possible answers, it remains that what I have attempted to do can in no way be looked upon as holistic; it merely aims at opening new perspectives in Coleridgean criticism, however tentative they may be. What with Coleridge's vast culture, his fundamentally digressive intellectual process, his somewhat elusive terminology owing to the multidirectional nature of his interests on the one hand, and on the other hand the modern tendency to challenge some of the very notions poetic theories have been based on so far, no holistic theory can hold.

It remains for me now to justify the selection of poems I have analysed in the second Part. The criteria result from the initial intention to illustrate Coleridge's major conceptions about poetic discourse. Especially, the poems should illustrate poeticity and motivation at work as clearly as possible, but in varying degrees. I have begun with some Conversation Poems because in them poeticity and motivation exist at a lower degree than in other poems. The first poem I have analyzed is "The Nightingale" because it is the only one Coleridge called "A Conversation Poem" in the title and because its degree of poeticity and motivation is low. In "Fears in Solitude", there is an obvious distribution between poetic passages of low intensity and others of higher intensity. "The Eolian Harp" is already closer to the purely poetic than to conversation. This is not the case of "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" and "Reflections in Having Left A Place of Retirement"; they are more akin to "Fears in Solitude", and I have not analyzed them to avoid repetitiveness. "The Eolian Harp" is important because it is clearly both a poetic discourse and a discourse on poetic discourse. It is close to "Frost at Midnight" in that both have the same antithetical structure, the same contrast between the unruffled surface of things and an intense activity below the surface; but in "Frost at Midnight" poeticity extends isotopically while performing and describing the poetic process. "Dejection: An Ode" is the first example of a tight combination of content and expression, remote from the conversational tone and texture of the Conversation Poems. Whereas in the latter the operations on content are prevalent and those on expression reduced to a minimum, in "Dejection" the intensity of both motivation and poeticity is very high. The same is true of "Kubla Khan": it is also a poetic discourse and a metadiscourse on poetry; but the fusing of content and expression is so perfect as to be practically indistinguishable. I have

also analyzed "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", first because the poem is a monument of literature. Second because it is a model of mysterious magic - it fulfils Coleridge's ideal presentation of a poem as obscure and only partly understood - blending all levels of content and expression. Powerful language is one of its themes.

I could have selected other poems, such as the poems to Asra. But it seems to me that what I might have been led to say about them is found in the poems I have analyzed. I have decided not to include "Christabel" either because I think that problems of interpretation tend to overshadow those of poetic analysis proper.

PART ONE

COLERIDGE'S IDEAS ABOUT POETIC LANGUAGE

CHAPTER ONE

COLERIDGE'S GENERAL CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE

When one considers the bulk of Coleridge's prose as well as the large number of topics he examined and wrote about, one can, at first, be led to believe his lifelong intellectual pursuits to have been desultory and disproportionately important as compared to their results. The truth, however, as James C. McKusick has shown (1), is that they certainly want neither unity nor interest. Although they are clearly situated in the philosophical traditions Coleridge knew so well, which includes the theories commonly advocated in his own time, he did not fail to give them a personal turn just as he constantly reconsidered the contribution of those, like Berkeley, Hartley, Leibniz and Lord Monboddo, to mention but a few, whose path, for a while, crossed his.

Recurrent in Coleridge's intellectual itinerary are such questions as: Is thinking possible without the mediation of language? What is the nature of the linguistic sign? Is it arbitrary or motivated? In opposition to those who defended the former position - from Aristotle to Hobbes, Locke and his successors in English empiricism - he maintained that the linguistic sign was "natural" (i.e. motivated) and, McKusick asserts, one can even claim that

"Coleridge's quest for a criterion of linguistic 'naturalness' is a persistent element in his poetical, critical, and philosophical endeavors." (2)

It is from a few scattered remarks in his Lectures of 1811-12 that a first notion of the way Coleridge regarded language as a whole can be gathered. Considering the case of the English language, he says he finds in it

that which is possessed by no other modern language, and which, as it were, appropriates it to the drama. It is a language made out of many, and it has consequently many words, which originally had the same meaning; but in the progress of society those words have gradually assumed different shades of meaning. (3)

The specific value of English, it appears, is related to the polysemous quality of its words as illustrated by a passage from Gray's "Stanzas to Bentley," in which the word "prodigality" is pointed out as an example of the semantic resources of English. Coleridge writes that

in German it would be necessary to say "the pomp and spendthriftness of heaven," because the German has not, as we have, one word with two such distinct meanings, one expressing the nobler, the other the baser idea of the same action. (4)

The assertion finds its justification in etymology. The Latin word "prodigus" means both "extravagance and wasteful spending" and "giving abundantly", corresponding to Coleridge's "baser idea", for the former, and to his "nobler idea" for the latter. What the etymological analysis actually achieves is a refining of the word which had come to lose a rather large portion of its original semantic energy through a gradual overlapping of its semantic layers. Thus language is described as a

succession of paradigmatic spaces made up of a number of words occupying a more or less definite part of such spaces, the proper position of each word resulting from their own internal semic distribution.

Coleridge provides a demonstration of the process in a notebook entry of 1818. One can infer from it that a general semantic area / satisfaction / is filled by four sub-units: "pleasure", "gladness," "happiness," and "bliss." The Latin and Greek etymology of each term determines the exact portion they are supposed to cover. Thus:

- "pleasure" = "the sum of agreeable sensations, the congeniality and commensurateness of the exciting causes to the excitability"
- "gladness" = "the appropriate and living complacency that accompanies the successful efforts of the Intellectual Faculties"
- "happiness" = "that which happs, which is our Hap - a congruous disposition of the Contingencies relative to our well-being"
- "bliss" = "Holiness on the side of Life, as Holiness is Bliss on the side of Action" (5)

The operative value of all this seems to gain ample justification in the light of the historic development of the English language. In Old English, Simeon Potter points out, a great many words were endowed with a single meaning common to them all. Hence, "wife" and "queen" and "woman" all meant "woman". They were gradually differentiated through the natural evolution of the language, for "all languages perfect themselves by a gradual process of desynonymizing words originally equivalent." (6) The necessity to "desynonymize," as Coleridge phrases it, is advocated by Potter, who claims that "few words have fixed significations" and that a process of etymological redefinitions

may seem an intolerable burden, but it is a sobering and salutary discipline. It is, indeed, the only effective way to sharpen up a blunted word and to restore its cutting edge. (7)

The English vocabulary has gone through so many stages such as specialization, extension, radiation, metaphor, concretization, and deterioration (8), that whenever it is reconditioned and its various layers are restored, it is provided with newly-grounded, efficient potentialities and pregnancy. The layers of significance are the result of the different periods which witnessed novel settlements and the linguistic influences that accompanied them. Thus the settlement of Germanic tribes in the period which immediately followed the Fall of Rome, the christianization of England at the end of the sixth century and its subsequent Latinization, the Scandinavian invasions during the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries, the Norman Conquest and even, to some extent, the outburst of interest for Greek at the beginning of the Renaissance, have left deep traces in the vocabulary. "English and French expressions," Potter remarks, "may have similar denotations but slightly different connotations and associations. Generally, the English words are stronger, more physical, and more human." (9)

Potter here refers to words of Germanic origin, most of which are one-syllable words. In Coleridge's opinion, these are laden with a particularly conspicuous power to signify:

The monosyllabic character of English enables us, besides, to express more meaning in a shorter compass than can be done in any other language. In truth, English may be called the harvest of the unconscious wisdom of various nations, and was not the formation of any particular time, or assemblage of individuals. (10)

The concentration of semantic energy on a relatively restricted space is such as to enhance the possibilities and the effectiveness of expression:

English, by its (monosyllabic, naturalizing, and) marvellously metaphorical Spirit (for the excellence wholly out of the Question What language can exhibit a style that resembles that of Shakespeare, Jeremy Taylor, or Burke?) can express more meaning, image, and passion triumely in a given number of articulate sounds than any other in the world, not .excepting even the ancient Greek. (11)

Words, therefore, do more than merely transmit a cognitive content; they also supply image and passion. Indeed, although they do involve a cognitive or informational layer, they also, and probably above all, go beyond that.

Coleridge's emphasis on the peculiar power of one-syllable words in English was not really original. As early as 1605, William Camden wrote that

the Monosyllables so rife in our tongue ... are most fit for expressing briefly the first concepts of the minde ... so that we can set downe more matter in fewer lines, than any other language. (12)

Over a century later, in 1711, Joseph Addison said about the English language that it is

its abounding in Monosyllables which gives us an Opportunity of delivering our Thoughts in few Sounds. This indeed takes off from the Elegance of our Tongue, but at the same Time expresses our Ideas in the readiest manner, and consequently answers the first Design of Speech better than the multitude of Syllables, that makes the Words of other Languages more Tunable and sonorous. (13)

Among the major theories on the origin of language in Coleridge's time, biological theories were in great favour. One of them known today as the pooh-pooh theory, held that language developed from emotions. Lajos Csetri demonstrates (14) that all over Europe a renewal of interest for language was experienced between 1760 and 1820, which included genuine curiosity about primitive languages. Rousseau and the empiricists suggested that primitive words had designated general concepts, of which the radicals derived from elementary sensations. Words had therefore been metaphors based on fundamental sensorial impressions, from which more complex notions had been obtained by abstracting and combining. In his Fable of the Bees (1723), Mandeville added the view that the radical of words had come from such primitive ways of communication as gestures and exclamations. The idea prevailed that all languages descended from a primitive language, a "Naturesprache," essentially made of monosyllabic words:

Conformément à cette opinion générale, et à mesure que s'amplifient la critique envers la civilisation rationnelle et la valorisation de l'archaïque et du naturel, une estime de plus en plus grande est vouée aux mots anglais d'origine germanique.

Such words were thought to contain a power, "la force concentrée de l'acte originel de dénomination." (15) Coleridge, of course, accepted this view:

Chez Coleridge, comme chez Southey, comme chez Wordsworth, comme chez tous ceux qui en Angleterre avaient subi l'influence de Shaftesbury et moins directement de Rousseau, on trouve le désir de revenir à un état de nature où dans l'innocence et l'harmonie primitives les besoins affectifs fondamentaux de l'homme seraient pleinement contents. (16)

The power implicit in English words of Germanic origin legitimizes a comparison with German:

It is not that the German can express external imagery more fully than English; but that it can flash more images at once on the mind than the English can. As to mere power of expression, I doubt whether even the Greek surpasses the English. (17)

English words can be said to be forceful because they combine several layers of significance in a limited space, and this faculty makes English suitable for dramatization,

the drama poetry, to distinct painting, rapid association & combination both of images with images, & of images, & combinations of images with the moral and intellectual world, and vice versa words of passion and thought with natural images. (18)

Language, it appears, is endowed with an energy issued from the load of potential significance contained in words. In the case of English, notably in its Germanic words, this load is threefold (meaning, image, passion) and coupled with an outstanding associative aptitude between the three layers. Furthermore, as this network of combinations occurs within the restricted limits of small units of space (monosyllabic words), the expressiveness of the language is remarkably impressive and forceful. The three layers can be made perceptible, along with the complex relationships of their connotations and associations, through a process of desynonymization which involves the infralinguistic level of language. If one reverts to the example on page 3, one soon realizes that the items "pleasure," "happiness," "gladness," and "bliss" function at the

linguistic level, whereas the various traits Coleridge uses to make them explicit and distinguish them constitute a series of component *semes*, not realized linguistically, but belonging to the *semic* field of each word (infralinguistic level). The desynonymizing process, in Coleridge's method, is central. In the third chapter of his book on Coleridge's poetics, Paul Hamilton characterizes it as Coleridge's "true Socratic method" and claims that it was prompted by his need of

a philosophical language different from the one in use, devoid of its errors, imprecisions and inadequacies, providing an alternative to rather than a modification of the existing language. (19)

Coleridge really endeavours to "purify" language by getting deep into the meaning of words in order to recover the *semes* they had gradually lost and which are nonetheless extant:

He postulates a linguistic ideal, pursued by desynonymy, where every word has a separate meaning. Poetry, by being untranslatable, symbolizes the completion of this process. Language encapsulates the crudely abstract views which a creative writer can transcend; and discrimination in the use of language is the model of a progressively more astute apprehension of the world. (20)

Desynonymization, one is bound to understand, is an essential part not only of writing but of reading as well. It is closely tied to language as a human phenomenon and inseparable from its poetic use. By enlarging and deepening the semantic space of words and by extending this space to neighbouring words in the same field, desynonymizing enduces a specific type of relation between the mind, language and the universe. The way the mind and language apprehend the world was

one of Coleridge's lifelong preoccupations and this led him to consider the basic issue of how words actually manifest meaning and of what they actually contain.

The close relationship between language and nature is described in the thirteenth lecture of the course of 1818 known as "On Poesy or Art." Coleridge says:

Man communicates by articulation of sounds, and paramountly by the memory in the ear; nature by the impression of bounds and surfaces on the eye, and through the eye it gives significance and appropriation, and thus the conditions of memory, or the capability of being remembered, to sounds, smells, etc. (21)

The emphasis laid on communication, which, originally, designated the sharing of an experience or of a piece of knowledge, seems to point out the interconnection between nature and man. If man communicates with himself and his fellow-creatures, so does nature with man. The active role of nature proceeds from the fact that God manifests Himself through it:

Nature itself is to a religious observer the art of God; and for the same cause art itself might be defined as of a middle quality between a thought and a thing, or as I said before, the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human. (22)

Yet nature is not conscious of the manifestation of which it is the support:

The wisdom in Nature distinguished from Man by the coinstantaneity of the Plan & Execution, the Thought and the Production - In Nature there is no reflex act - but the same powers without reflection, and consequently without Morality. (23)

Left on its own, nature is insipid and meaningless; it becomes animate only when considered inside its relationship with man:

Art would or should be the Abridgement of Nature. Now the fullness of Nature is without character as Water is purest when without taste, smell or color. (24)

If nature in itself is powerless to transmit a projective message, it is nevertheless the indispensable complement to man's communicative activity. Yet objectively man and nature lie in utter opposition: articulate speech, Coleridge writes,

is so peculiarly human, that in all languages it constitutes the ordinary phrase by which man and nature are contradistinguished. It is the original force of the word "brute," and even "mute," and "dumb," do not convey the absence of sound, but the absence of articulated sound. (25)

Language is seen as the paragon of human production, the artifact par excellence, that which confers upon man the stamp of greatness.

The antithesis of man and nature is developed by Coleridge in his treatment of the notions of subject and object. The difference between the two and the various uses of the terms, as M.H. Abrams has suggested, are one of the great ambiguities in the history of literature and of literary criticism, not only with Coleridge but also with all writers since the Schlegels. (26) Coleridge himself, it seems, did not succeed in steering clear of a regrettable confusion, for he made use of the couple subject - object with four different meanings. It

first serves to distinguish a purely abstract poetry from a sensuous one, sensuousness providing it with a palpability "without which poetry evaporates into day-dreaming." It then separates the poetry of Antiquity from more recent forms. In the third place it characterizes poets or poetic compositions, while in the fourth, "subjective and objective become defining attributes of poetic species, independently, it would seem, of either epoch or authorship." (27) Coleridge, it is true, in a letter to J.H. Green, dated 15 December 1831, complained about "the exceeding inconvenience of the many different meanings of the term, objective - sometimes equivalent to apparent, or sensible, sometimes in opposition to it". Yet whilst he is thus expressing his own dissatisfaction with the terminology he used, he helps confirm the drastic division which exists between nature and man:

Thus, sometimes, it [= object] means real, and sometimes unreal - and the worst is, that it forms an obstacle to the fixation of the great truth - that the perfect reality is predicable, only where Actual and Real are terms of identity - i.e. where there is no potential being - and that this alone is absolute reality - and further, of that most fundamental truth - that the ground of all reality, the Objective no less than of the Subjective, is the absolute Subject. - How to get out of the difficulty, I do not know - save that some other term must be used as the Antithet to phenomenal - perhaps, noumenal. (28)

This passage is capital, for it designates most peremptorily the domain of co-occurrence of the concepts of object and subject: it is the immanent world, the place where subject and object represent two distinct entities, even though both belong to a common reality. The real opposite to the objective or phenomenal is not, when considered absolutely, the subjective but the sphere of noumena. Coleridge's Kantian heritage is obvious here, yet the potentialities beyond the

phenomena do not actually matter; what does is that language - whether man's means of communication or nature's inert though not ineffective message, available to the subject (man's mental powers) through the senses - and the precarious, transient game man establishes between himself and the reality he perceives should concern him hic et nunc.

The palinody Coleridge thought convenient to express much later came as a late corroboration of what had been said years before. In a well-known passage of Biographia Literaria, he made the content of the words subject and object unambiguous:

Now the sum of all that is merely objective we will henceforth call nature, confining the term to its passive and material sense, as comprising all the phenomena by which its existence is made known to us. On the other hand, the sum of all that is subjective we may comprehend in the name of the self or intelligence. Both conceptions are in necessary antithesis. (29)

The distinction is not here merely between passive nature and active man. Even the dead phenomena available to our senses have a function: that of making the very existence of nature reveal itself to us. "Intelligence is conceived of," Coleridge continues, "as exclusively representative, nature as exclusively represented; the one as conscious the other as without consciousness." (30) Nature can only be presented to the self by means of the senses, whereas by itself it is powerless and incapable of making itself known to a conscious observer, precisely because nature is deprived of the precious faculty man possesses of becoming an object to himself: "Object quod Object is necessarily dead, inert, self-capable of no Action but only the Object of the action." (31) Is one to understand, therefore, that but

for the presence of the self (man), endowed by God with powers alike to those He created in growing nature, the latter would not even be there, would have no existence, no Dasein? What is certain is that the power the mind exerts upon the object is an outstanding one. The subject, which Coleridge describes as the I, the Self, the Spirit, (32) unlike the object, which is only able to be an object, can move. "The Spirit therefore cannot be an Object, it is a being it - (nicht seyn, sondern werden). It becomes an Object thro' its own act." (33) As an actant within a communicative process, the subject is at once that which acts upon the world of phenomena and upon itself. It "is definable as a Subject whose only possible Predicate is itself - Ergo, a Subject which is its own Object, i.e. a Subject-Object." Not only that "it is Spirit or Self, only as far as it becomes an Object for itself." Self-consciousness (i.e. the result of the subject becoming its own object) is the condition of the subject's existence as such. It is not finite as the object is but "as in toto the antithesis of Object, cannot be aboriginally, or of its own nature, finite." The issue then is whether the subject can be infinite. Being at the same time subject and object for itself

it can neither be infinite without being at the same time finite, nor can it be finite (for itself) without being at the same time infinite. - It is therefore neither the one nor the other, alone, but in it subsists the primary Union of Finitude and Infinity ... In this absolute Co-presence of the Infinite and the Finite lies the essence of an Individual Nature, of the Self (34).

That the self should become perceptible as such through its own objectivization is not enough. Subject and object exist in a reciprocal relationship of presupposition: each presupposes the other. If this

relationship is fulfilled, knowledge follows, for "all knowledge rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject." (35) To be more precise:

During the act of knowledge itself, the objective and subjective are so instantly united that we cannot determine to which of the two the priority belongs. There is here no first and no second; both are coinstantaneous and one. While I am attempting to explain this intimate coalition, I must suppose it dissolved. I must necessarily set out from the one, to which therefore I give hypothetical antecedence, in order to arrive at the other. (36)

According to the law of an organic universe, to know implies something to be known. Each constituent is what it is in consequence of some other existing constituent; hence, to be and to know are identical, for each involves and supposes the other. Coleridge goes on to explain that

In other words it is a subject which becomes a subject by the act of constructing itself objectively to itself; but which never is an object except for itself, and only so far as by the very same act it becomes a subject. It [= the Sum or I Am] may be described therefore as a perpetual self-duplication of one and the same power into object and subject, which presuppose each other, and can exist only as antitheses. (37)

We are now in a better position to understand what Coleridge means by presenting communication as a process which involves nature as well as man, object as well as subject. How this works is worth careful examination.

Both man and nature are said to communicate. Man does so by means of sounds, nature by exhibiting outlines and surfaces that leave visual impressions on the mind. The interaction of man and nature is not superficial but

must be conceived of as an essential part of the whole communicative experience. What actually happens is known today as categorization and consists of the application of a natural language to the world as it is perceived through our senses: it is the conceptual segmentation of the world. The phenomenon, as it is described by A.J. Greimas and J. Courtés in their Sémiotique (38), reveals several features already emphasized by Coleridge. They define the natural world as the real as apprehended by man; a set of organized perceptible qualities: the surface structure of the universe as opposed to its deeper structure (biological, chemical, physical, etc). For Coleridge, too, reality takes part in the process of communication on a surface plane, intervening through superficial sense-impressions ("bounds and surfaces"). Even more interesting is the standpoint of today's macrosemiotics, which looks upon the natural world as a discursive structure of the subject-object relation type, in which any utterance is constructed by a subject and decipherable by him. Just as this enlarges the notions of referent or extralinguistic context, so does Coleridge's conception comprehend the whole universe in the dual category of subject and object, of man and whatever is not man, of interoceptive and exteroceptive elements, or, a division I prefer to use, of anthropos and cosmos. (39)

Coleridge's categorization, one might argue, seems to amount to making language a mere nomenclature. He, however, always distinguished unambiguously names from words:

The general harmony between the operations of the mind and heart, and the words which express them in almost all languages, is wonderful; whilst the endless discrepancies between the names of things is very well deserving notice. There are nearly a hundred names in the different German dialects for the alder-tree. I believe many more remarkable instances are to be found

in Arabic. Indeed, you may take a very pregnant and useful distinction between words and mere arbitrary names of things. (40)

Coleridge here joins modern preoccupations about the motivation of language. By assuming that there is a "general harmony" between thoughts, emotions and "the words which express them," but an arbitrary link between things and names, he prefigures Saussure and contemporary linguistics.

Coleridge's treatment of the topic has been examined by Emerson R. Marks, who has pointed out that according to Bruns (41) "the aphorism that 'nothing can permanently please, which does not contain within itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise,' from the Biographia, Chapter XIV, foreshadows the Russian Formalist conception of motivation, according to which any element in a literary work is justified by its function in a structure, not to any external reference." Marks, however, is wary of comparing Coleridge and modern structuralists more than is necessary; he adds that

Coleridge's sentence is demonstrably only an especially felicitous version of a central item of romantic literary organicism, not his exclusive discovery. He and Russian Formalism simply share a common ancestry on the point. (42)

James C. McKusick has followed the filiation of the "natural" school to which Coleridge belongs. To Cratylus, he says, the name of an object represents its essence, a concept that was further developed by Philo (1st century A.D.) and Eusebius (4th century A.D.), and given its canonical expression by Thomas Aquinas. For Epicurus and Lucretius, language proceeds from human nature as spontaneously as cries from animals, and words

are the outward manifestation of man's inner nature. In the Renaissance, Jacob Boehme expressed the idea that some sounds (phonemes) and hence some words bear traces of their essence. Boehme's position was supported by Leibniz who, besides, admitted that because it was more primitive than other languages, German was more "natural" and thus closer to the purer original language (Adamic theory). Among the British empiricists, some, like Berkeley and Thomas Reid, though thinking that language was mostly arbitrary, agreed that it was instinctive in some of its manifestations. Lord Monboddo, in Of the Origin and Progress of Language (Edinburgh, 1773-92), although to some extent drastically opposed to someone like Reid, described language as a continuum of signs which, between the primitive ear and today, shifted from a natural to an artificial nature.

Coleridge had apparently read Monboddo by 1801, and admitted, for instance, that certain classes of phonemes (such as labials, preferably used by children) were more primitive than others. McKusick also explains Coleridge's admiration, in his youth, for Bowles, in that in a poem like his "Sonnet to the River Otter", he manages to use natural language. He emphasizes, for example, how alliteration and metrical variation function as sound-symbolism. (43)

Michael Kent Havens has shown how Coleridge's view of the evolution of language was bound to lead him to adopt Horne Tooke's theory of etymology. Coleridge discerned three stages in the evolution of language. Originally, all languages descended from a single language, which he calls "Iapetic", and were characterized by a unity of meaning that comprehended the thought, the word and the thing tightly united. Gradually, language lost its unity through the "separative projection of desynonymization",

a process which began when an intelligent power divided the primitive verb-substantive into two (verb and noun). Thus

language begins in unity, divides into polar forces of verb and noun, from there, with the help of poets, philosophers, and historical accidents, unfolds itself into the fullness of clear and distinct discourse.

Whatever spontaneity and greatness has been lost in the process has been replaced by a discursive precision that the development of science required. But then a third stage should follow: a reunification of language, "the reuniting of distinguished meanings in a newly holistic language," a stage about which Coleridge "is less clear, less systematic, yet intelligible and provocative." If the world projects itself into non-poetic language as idea or concept, in poetic discourse it becomes reality; as such,

poetry leads the reunification of language. Poetry, like primitive language, achieves greater unity of effect by sacrificing exhaustive detail to its central idea. (44)

Coleridge nevertheless accurately pointed out an element which is essential to an exact apprehension of his poetic conceptions. No doubt he must have remembered the lessons of the Reverend James Bowyer, at Christ's Hospital: "In the truly great poets, he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word;" (45) besides,

he showed no mercy to phrase, metaphor or image unsupported by a sound sense, or where the same sense might have been conveyed with equal force and dignity in plainer words. (46)

We shall see the consequences this has on poetry; meanwhile, it is worthy of note to what extent Coleridge's education served him later as a poet and a thinker on language.

His preoccupations with the qualities proper to words, names and things are made explicit in the following passage from a letter:

"... it is the fundamental Mistake of Grammarians and Writers on the philosophy of Grammar and Language (to assume) that words and their syntaxis are the immediate representatives of Things, or that they correspond to Things. Words correspond to Thoughts; and the legitimate Order & Connection of Words to the Laws of Thinking and to the acts and affections of the Thinker's Mind." (47)

Words express ideas, concepts, a content which has no connection with referents in the universe other than through the notion it represents. The word "tree" stands for the idea of a tree, a notional one, not a real tree. In his comment on this extract, Marks parallels Coleridge's attempt to distinguish referential from conceptual language with Saussure's refutation of the idea that language should be a nomenclature. (48) But Coleridge, in this respect, is closer to André Martinet, who provides examples of the fact that "learning a language does not consist in labelling objects differently but in an original analysis of reality." (49)

Considering that language is not referential but conceptual (an opinion I share with many modern theorists, such as Group Mu), what exactly is the nature of the interaction between the subjective and objective elements (man and nature, or anthropos and cosmos)? I have already established that for Coleridge man and nature stand in opposition, each producing qualities which can be apprehended through the senses: man

produces sounds, nature visual impressions, though not exclusively so. Macrosemiotics calls this feature of the natural world ("natural" because existing prior to the individual, whose process of categorization cannot alter it) figurative, for it is made up of qualities which appeal to the senses and are capable of acting directly upon man, without linguistic mediation. Coleridge clearly confirms this when he writes:

I believe that the process of thought might be carried on independent and apart from spoken or written language. I do not in the least doubt, that if language had been denied or withheld from man, or that he had not discovered and improved that mode of intercommunication, thought, as thought, would have been a process more simple, more easy, and more perfect than the present, and would both have included and evolved other and better means for its own manifestations, than any that exist now. (50)

Whether thought would have been possible without language is beyond our concern here. The fact remains that the key problem concerns the way thoughts come into existence owing to the interaction of nature and the mind through the senses. Coleridge's description of the process of sensory perception is probably archaic. A "thing" (stimulus) produces an immediate effect in which the stimulus and the impression are concomitant. At this first stage, Coleridge opposes feelings and sensations. A feeling involves a consciousness which is only concerned with itself and unrelated to any actual thing. Thus, one has a feeling of life but nothing can be said to actually represent it: there is in fact no stimulus corresponding to the life one feels must exist. The first immediate impression, on the other hand, is a sensation, a mere act of the senses having a referent - but a chaotic one - and linked to a sentient being. The stimulus, e.g. a burning match against the palm of the hand, produces an immediate impression of heat; the

cause of this impression, however, is, at this early stage, not yet identifiable and cannot be distinguished from the effect itself. Coleridge explains it by the German word Empfindung, implying what one experiences without the analysis which will subsequently lead to the isolation of the cause from the sentient individual and to its projection into the spatial and/or temporal categories. Once the impression has been worked upon by the mind, it is no longer an unconscious presentation of an external stimulus, it becomes a perception, i.e. a sensation organized into an object and independent of the being who experiences it. Thus, a short while after the palm of the hand has been burnt by the match, the subject will have represented in his mind the cause of the pain he feels (i.e. the burning match). Of the latter, he can make out the length, appearance and colour. He can go further and conjure up the match in his mind even though no match is available. He has formed an idea of the object prompted by an act of the will or the memory. In the case of a perception, the stimulus and the impression it has left are dissociated; the stimulus can be either unavailable because non-existent (e.g. abstract notions) or not perceived.

Commenting upon one of Berkeley's treatises, Coleridge objects to the philosopher not having produced a definition of the concept of idea:

If by Idea be meant Image, no doubt, an Image can only be an Image/but yet I can either have an Image of a Horse, as my Eye would give it to me at the proper point of Vision, with all those particularities that would enable me to know recognize that particular Horse/or at a great distance, so that I only am enabled to say, that it is a Horse - in which latter Case a particular Image is an Hieroglyphic, bringing to my memory the notion of a Horse with a consciousness that I should not be able on afterwards seeing a Horse close to me to determine, whether it were that Horse or no, which I had seen in the distance. (51)

When a thing has been worked upon by the mind, it becomes something new, endowed with qualities it did not possess before. A thing, Coleridge says, is antithetical to a fancy, i.e. an image on the mind. It passes on to a new status, that of an object, an impression left, and one either in which the original thing, or stimulus, is perceived, or by which it is recalled to our primary imagination, a representation called through association. In the above illustration, the perception is determined in its double aspect, visual and hieroglyphic. Whenever the external stimulus (the horse) begets an image on our mind at the exact point of vision, the perception is accurate and presents itself with the largest number of its attributes; but whenever the distance increases between the stimulus and the beholder - the more so if the stimulus is merely brought back to memory by an act of the will - the vagueness of its outlook increases in proportion; it comes to lose all but the qualities essential to its existence as a figurative paradigm.

Coleridge develops the contrast by opposing both things and thoughts as well as thought and a thought. Things prior to their existence as objects are figures: they are presentations of the external reality and independent of our minds. As objects, they are images (precise or vague) or ideas, ideas themselves being either images or abstract thoughts. Thought in general, as distinct from one particular thought, is a mere object occupying a position on a paradigmatic line, and it is only as a thought that, by an act or judgement, or notion of the mind concerning any thing as its object (conceptualization), it is projected onto the syntagmatic axis. From their status as general concepts such as walking or sight, things as objects are transformed into specific notions: a walk, a sight, etc.

Coleridge goes on to describe this complex process to a fuller extent in a letter to Edward Coleridge (27 July 1826) where he considers things "abstractly from their relations." He adopts a nominalist point of view, claiming that such a thing if observed by eight different onlookers would be described by each of them in a different way. Therefore, "it is evident that neither of all these is the Figure itself (which in this instance is a four-sided Pyramid) but the Contingent Relations of the Figure." If instead of a geometrical figure, the thing observed is a "substance" or "body" of the sort chemists or physiologists deal with - hence, I shall assume, any other element of the outer reality - :

you will gradually (that is, if you choose & sincerely will it) acquire the power and the disposition of contemplating your own imaginations, wants, appetites, passions, opinions etc on the same principle - and distinguish that which alone is and abides from the accidental and impermanent Relations arising out of it's co-existence with other things or Beings. (52)

Whereas it might be feared that by reaching the stage when it is perceived, and therefore by becoming an object, a thing ultimately loses its essential qualities, just the opposite happens and, by a training of the mind appropriate to the case, the merely accidental can be dismissed while the essential is retained.

In another letter of the same period, Coleridge draws closer to a more precise definition of the relation between things and objects - between reality and the mental apprehension of it - by developing his view of the way senses function:

First however, I must premise that by Sense I here mean a man's power of thinking of himself in relation to the Things and Persons, that he has to deal with, and vice versa, the power of apprehending and looking

at Things & Persons in relation to himself. Only in this way can the Self become a Subject, or the Cir[cu]mstantia Objects. (53)

The perceptive process appears to involve a double power, one which enables the subject to consider his own self relatively to the outer world, and one by means of which he can observe external things relatively to himself. The self or subject thus grounds his own specific existence by being encompassed by them and by encompassing them (circumstantia, i.e. position around), the items of reality, in an actual comprehensive relationship which will make them distinct from his own integrity. For:

it is only, I say, by the habit of referring a number and variety of passing objects to the same abiding Subject, that the flux of the former can be arrested, and the latter made a nucleus for them to chrySTALLIZE round. But again it is only by the habit of referring & comparing the Subject to and with the Objects, that it can be consciously known as the same & abiding - and before it can be compared, it must have been distinguished, thought of separately, and singly for itself. - There must be Reflection - a turning in of the Mind on itself (54).

The opposition is that of external reality being presented as a blind flux nothing will ever stop but the power of the mind acting upon it. Having consequently a central entity round which it can cluster, it is offered a definite shape and escapes out of its original chaotic state. Barth describes the same process and quotes from The Statesman's Manual, introducing the notion of (primary) imagination, which is the mind's perceptive power, as

that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the Reasons in Images of the Sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the Senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the Reason,

gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the conductors. (55)

Barth uses a number of concepts we shall be led to deal with later on ("consubstantiality" and "reason"); meanwhile, he himself insists on showing the influence of the subjective energy over reality as a power issued to assemble and organize the otherwise unmanageable flux of things. (56)

Yet it should be clear that the power which is meant to act on the external flux does not belong to the senses but to the mind. "Sensibility as sensibility," Coleridge writes in a letter to James Gillman, "is always subjective & anti-phaenomenal - it becomes objective in the act of instinctive motion, when it is no longer Sensibility. Again - Sensibility is not an active power - but a source of active power - and it's negative Condition." (57) In other words, once the initial stage has been overcome - which consists of being influenced by external reality without being able to figure it out outside its close link with the senses - the senses themselves become the transmitters of the mental power, the function of which is to act upon the external flux.

The potential value of the English language as poetic language, according to Coleridge, arises from the fact that its lexical items (I shall still call them "words", for the sake of convenience) are semantically loaded with a threefold layer of significance: meaning (i.e. the cognitive layer proper), passion and image. In order to restore the language to its full semantic integrity, one is bound to engage in a process of desynonymization so as to retrieve the intricacies of the significance of words, which, at the same time, establishes their expressive power.

As the highest and the most sophisticated means of communication at work in nature (nature and man being here co-included), language proceeds from an encounter between nature and man, or, using Coleridge's terminology, object and subject. Thus language can be defined as a meeting-place between the two fundamental entities of the universe: *anthropos* (man) and *cosmos* (whatever is alien to man and his powers).

Coleridge has always made himself clear as to language being a mediation. Language, he writes in one of his lectures on poetry, "is the intermediate something between matter and spirit". (58) It is an as yet mysterious space where *cosmos* and *anthropos* mingle so as to produce communication. A long process of meditation on language, he writes to John Murray, enables him to regard it "as the symbolic medium of the connection of Thought with Thought, & of Thoughts, as affected and modified by Passion & Emotion". (59) As a space, it is symbolic, non-palpable, but actually created by connections between thoughts. Language is therefore anything but a place of loose relationships, and we know from Coleridge's contemporaries how adamant he used to be about verbal accuracy. His nephew, Henry Nelson Coleridge, wrote a preface to the 1835 edition of the Table Talk, which, in some respects, is invaluable for an exact apprehension of Coleridge's way of thinking and speaking. Coleridge is presented as a precise if digressive orator, for however complex his speech, the cohesion of the whole is unmistakable. Yet

when he was dealing deeply with a question, the demand upon the intellect of the hearer was very great; not so much for any hardness of language, for his diction was always simple and easy; nor for the abstruseness of the thoughts, for they generally explained, or appeared to explain themselves; but pre-eminently on account of the seeming remoteness of his associations, and the exceeding subtlety of his transitional links.
(60)

Although his discursive range could be so huge as to preclude a thorough comprehension of what he was trying to impart for whoever was not attentive enough - and H.N. Coleridge quotes De Quincey, who says that "the compass and huge circuit, by which his illustrations moved, travelled farthest into remote regions, before they began to revolve" - yet "I can assert, upon my long and intimate knowledge of Coleridge's mind, that logic the most severe was as inalienable from his modes of thinking, as grammar from his language." And if Coleridge was sometimes difficult to understand, it was "because the connections of his parts, though never arbitrary, are so fine, that the vulgar reader sees them not at all." (61)

He himself kept insisting on the necessity of accuracy in expression. Great care, for instance, should be devoted to education, for "to a youth led from his first boyhood to investigate the meaning of every word and the reason of its choice and position, logic presents itself as an old acquaintance under new names." (62) In another passage borrowed from his lectures, it is pointed out most emphatically that he

cannot conclude this Lecture without insisting on the importance of accuracy of style as being near akin to veracity and truthful habits of mind; he who thinks loosely will write loosely, and, perhaps, there is some moral inconvenience in the common forms of our grammars which give children so many obscure terms for material distinctions. (63)

Coleridge carries on such emphases in many passages of his lectures, letters and notebooks. Constant references are made to associations, relations, connections, links and logic. Along with these terms, the word copula appears in several places. Thus in a letter to James

Gillman, in November 1816, he hints to the kind of subtle relations involved in language, in a general way, and, as we shall see later, in poetic language and central to its manifestation, relations which characterize specific spheres of interest throughout the universe. All systems forming a whole, whether linguistic, biological or other, "all things alike", constitute a set of "elementary relations". Hence "the Alphabet of Physics no less than of Metaphysics, of Physiology no less than of Psychology is an Alphabet of Relations, in which N is N only because M is M and O, O." Beyond the essential problem of relations, the scene is set which shows so many elements subsumed by a common item that holds them in unity by means of a subtle play of internal associations. The whole is made one owing to the link between the component parts. And "that which is the same in all things, the α , the ω , and (more truly still) the copula of the two, that in which both are one, and in which each involves the other - is the one indispensable condition of philosophizing." (64) The universe is described - and indeed language itself - as a compound of separate sets of relations, with each set entertaining relations with the other. As regards language, its being considered as an intermediate space where cosmos and anthropos meet lays special emphasis on the type of associations which precisely link both constituents.

In his Logic, a work McKusick has deemed Coleridge's "most coherent, systematic, and intellectually sophisticated work", (65) he grants connections and associations the first place, regarding language as the crucial element that distinguishes man from animal not because it enables us to communicate but to establish relationships. For Coleridge, McKusick has written, "grammar is the aspect of language possessing the greatest philosophical significance." (66) The first

stage in the evolution of language is characterized by "articulate sounds, flowing forth without any intrinsic ordering principles." "Words are used with immediate reference to the things they signify, (affairs of moment,) but without any grammatical or logical interconnections." Only in the second stage, by a conscious act, are words organized according to the logical principles of grammar.

Thus Coleridge considers that grammar and logic are not only closely linked but that the former is prior to the latter. Since Port Royal and the universal grammarians of the eighteenth century had already emphasized the connection between grammar and logic, and the neo-Kantian linguists too, Coleridge's position should be clearly distinguished. Unlike the latter, he grounds both grammar and logic in reason instead of understanding, but by considering grammar to precede logic, he runs counter to the philosophical tradition as a whole. His position is crucial for at least two reasons. First, if language is not merely communication but organization, then man, and especially the poet, can be seen as second to God as "givers of shape" and re-arrangers of the world; second, whereas for Kant "language is entirely instrumental, the dress of thought", for Coleridge "words not only express thought but actually constitute the process of thinking." A capital consequence of this is that if grammar and logic derive from reason, then grammatical structures and the activity of thought they permit can be regarded as universal. (67)

This raises the problem of what associations in language really involve. In other words, one is led to consider what form the encounter of cosmos with anthropos actually takes and what results from it.

There is no ambiguity as to the closeness of the relationship between elements representing cosmos and those representing anthropos in the very process of thinking and subsequently of verbal expression (it being understood once and for all that for Coleridge both processes are indistinguishable). In a letter to Derwent (November 1812), he asserts that

to think (Ding, denken, res, reor) is to thingify. Thing = The Ing, a word found either separately or in the terminations of all the Gothic Dialects, is a somewhat set apart - thus Ingle = the Hearth. Conceive the indistinguishable all of our Perceptions, Conceptions and Notions as a vast Common - In or from this I seclude a determinate portion. (68)

To think, therefore is to abduct a portion from the flux of reality (cosmos) in order to appropriate it to the mind. The association thus engaged involves a mutual appropriation by which part of the cosmos becomes anthropos while anthropos renounces a part of its power to transmute itself into the thing perceived. Coleridge develops his view of the subtlety of the relations in the extract already quoted from "On Poesy or Art" (to be also found in entry 4397 of the notebooks). In it both man and nature are said to communicate, but on a reciprocal basis: they exchange something. One is of course puzzled by the phrase "memory in the ear", foreshadowing the Saussurean notion of "image acoustique". Saussure conceived of the linguistic sign as a unit of communication, not necessarily one word but a sequence (syntagm, phrase, clause), (69) reaching the ear, which, to someone who is familiar with the language the speaker uses, acts as a psychic memory and recognizes what is being transmitted. An utterance leaves what Saussure calls "l'empreinte psychique", that is to say a representation which comprehends the sounds emitted and the concepts attached to them. The representation, so to say, is a something having a unity

and deposited in the ear where it is given due recognition. It has indubitably a material quality on account of the intervention of the senses. In Saussure's description of how verbal transmission is effected, the physical aspect of the process is obvious (70): the sounds conveyed from the speaker's mouth to the hearer's ear (stimulus), for example, vibrate and the vibration ultimately reaches the brain, where an echo responds to it. (71)

To Saussure, the linguistic sign is a dual structure comprehending a cognitive part (signified) and a form which supports it and gives it both psychic and physical reality (signifier). The whole, however, is indissociable and exists as a significant unit. Coleridge's description of the appropriation process becomes clear when considered in a Hjelmslevian perspective, which is at once a more elaborate and a more precise development of Saussure's construction. For Coleridge, man produces the sound which will serve him as a material all-inclusive unit of the concepts to be transmitted. The sounds are still a chaotic phonic mass, or matter (substance of expression), indispensable to embody the chaotic continuum, or flux, of reality that constitutes the inert succession of shapeless thoughts (substance of content). Nature provides that portion of experience to be communicated which Hjelmslev terms "substance of content", in other words, the matter, or purport, of communication (that which "through the eye [...] gives significance and appropriation and thus the conditions of memory, or the capability of being remembered, to sounds") (72). Appropriation (Lat. adipiscere: attribute what belongs to something in proper) consists of the essential stage without which language could have no consistencies and so would be merely an empty succession, or corpus, of noises. "The idea of the mind forming images of itself," Coleridge writes, "is as

aburd as the belief of Descartes with respect to the external world. There is nothing in the mind which was not previously in the senses, except the mind itself." (73) This, I think, could be rendered as follows: The substance of expression is "fed" by the substance of content, the latter being directly conveyed by the senses. Thus someone to whom I would be expressing admiration for a red apple I had just eaten would find no material consistency and concreteness in the adjective red if never in his life he had seen anything red. As to the mind, which is pre-existent to the natural facts of experience transmitted through the senses, its function it is to deal with them, i.e. to fit the substance of content and the substance of expression into a pattern, this pattern being then the form of content and the form of expression. Hjelmslev as well as Saussure seem to have clung to an Aristotelian conception of the notion of form (as opposed to matter): it consists of a power which informs matter, or substance, thereby forming the knowable object, giving it permanence and identity ("significance and appropriation").

The system achieved by language is dualistic and contrastive. The linguistic constituents partake of a twofold structure which in turn is dual. Substance of content as well as substance of expression are first matter in a chaotic state, conceptual and phonic masses, fluxes of concepts and sounds let loose. Through its action, the mind sets limits to such fluxes, forces them into a definite pattern having coherence and significance. This pattern is then organized into a functioning whole by a set of grammatical rules. The general structure is contrastive and dualistic inasmuch as it opposes the levels of content and expression and, at each level, form and substance. Coleridge is positive as to the antagonism that exists on the expression plane.

He says in Table Talk that

Brute animals have the vowel sounds; man only can utter consonants. It is natural, therefore, that the consonants should be marked first, as being the framework of the word; and no doubt a very simple living language might be written quite intelligibly to the natives without any vowel sounds marked at all. (74)

One might legitimately infer from this passage that if both vowels and consonants belong to substance of expression, the latter are expressly provided by man, who uses them to stamp natural sounds (vowels) into a pattern, or form, of expression. The parallel with content is easily made despite Coleridge's rather confusing phraseology. Thus in a Notebook entry, in 1818, he draws an analogy between the "prothesis" of subject and object in God and its counterpart at language level, the "synthesis" of subject and object; in other words, of form and substance (here Coleridge uses the term "essence"): "Hence in all things the Synthesis images what in God only absolutely is, the Prothesis manifested." (75)

That form and substance, subject and object (anthropos and cosmos) should be basically and by nature antagonistic is certain: "The Subject therefore, as in toto the antithesis of Object, cannot be aboriginally, or of its own nature, finite." (76) The latter part of the sentence has been dealt with earlier; what ought to matter, rather, is the peremptory assessment of the dualistic nature of form and substance. Yet, the function of form is to act upon substance so as to make them both into a unified structure: "Hence the absolute identity of the Thing and the Perception, of the present Beholding and of the Presence beheld" (77), it being understood that identity in its perfection can be attained only in God.

Saussure, and after him Hjelmslev, have determined with greater accuracy, and through a terminology more specific to the purpose of the science they helped to establish, the fundamental role of "form" as the organizing power of language, and also the opposite character of the organic relationships within the verbal performance. Saussure points out that "without the help of signs we would be incapable of distinguishing between two ideas in a clear and constant way. Considered in itself, thought is like a nebula where nothing is necessarily delimited. There are no pre-established ideas and nothing is distinct prior to the apparition of language." (78) Thought described here as "a nebula" corresponds to the chaotic state of substance of content, which needs to be delimited in order to gain significance and consistencies. But substance, when informed, enters a definite mould and so participates in an opposite structure:

In language, there are only differences (...). Whether you consider the signified or what signifies it, language contains neither ideas nor sounds that might exist prior to the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences derived from this system. Whatever ideas or phonic matter there are in a sign matters less than what is around it in the other signs. One proof of this is the fact that the value of a term can be modified even though neither its meaning nor its sounds be acted upon, but only through a modification of such or such neighbouring term. (79)

Likewise, on the expression plane, consonants have positive value so far as there are vowels with which they can be contrasted, and vice and versa.

If content and expression are equally important as constituents of the linguistic system, it is the oppositions within the conceptual field (content) which obviously stand as the cornerstone of Coleridge's view of language.

Coleridge devoted much care to the problem of how elements pertaining to cosmos or/and anthropos differed from one another, and of the conditions of their becoming united in language. This bears witness to the importance he thought them to have as components of the linguistic system. They are said to be "two experiences of our nature," two "classes of notices" to which he attributes the names of "Things" and "Thoughts". Things

have all a ratio of vividness each with the other, so that tho' the one may be more vivid than the other, yet in the sane and ordinary course of our nature, they are all alike contra-distinguishable to another class of notices, which are felt and conceived as dependent on the former, and to be to them in some sort as a stamp on paper is to a seal sharp-cut Stone.
(80)

The first class of notices are not only things but "Things & Realities;" by the latter, one can conjecture that Coleridge means whatever is exterior to the sphere of anthropos but not such concrete things as stones or stars or carriage-horses. This includes facts as unpalpable, yet as "real" as feelings or metaphysical notions. Things, one might assume, are referents while Realities are concepts.

The function of referents and concepts is essential because "we find, I say, in this first class a permanency, and expectability so great, as to be capable of being contra-distinguished both by these, and by their vividness to the second class, that is our Thoughts". (§1) If we revert to our previous analysis of content, we understand distinctly perhaps now what constitutes the substance of content and why this could not exist independently of the cosmos, and why but for them, consequently, language itself would be devoid of consistencies. Among the apparently many conceptions he

borrowed from Boehme, Coleridge saw creation as comprehending seven spirits, of which the seventh is nature, "in which stands the corporeal Being of all six Spirits, for the six Spirits generate the seventh. (82)

Nature seen as a provider of concreteness and consistencies did not characterize only Coleridge's conception but was shared by all the Romantics as well. "The Romantics," Maurice Bowra observes

knew how to use their senses, and Coleridge, despite his love of metaphysical abstractions, was in this respect a true member of their company. He used nature to give colour and music, solidity and perspective, to his creations, and it is one of the chief means by which he sustains the enchantment of his poem. (83)

Someone like Paul Rozenberg suspects the Romantics of seeking in nature more than palpability and firmness for their imagination; it is also a refuge and a foster-mother.

Elle n'est ni l'accessoire, ni le contrepoids de la civilisation, mais le guide potentiel d'une réorientation (...). Derrière Nature se profile une puissance qui assure permanence et changement, maintient les métamorphoses et les équilibres de la vie. (84)

Permanence and transformation are part of the paradox Coleridge describes in his cosmology, and the very terms he uses are the words permanency and transformation, metamorphosis and equilibrium.

The great universal paradox includes the realm of cosmos but also that of anthropos. Man's faculties are a set of oppositive potentialities which find in the mind a place to act in. Each of the higher faculties (reason, imagination, will) is matched by lower ones

(understanding, fancy, volition), the latter indispensable to the former, just as vowels are indispensable to consonants:

Genius must have talent as its complement and implement, just as, in like manner, imagination must have fancy. In short, the higher intellectual powers can only act through a corresponding energy of the lower. (85)

Reason, in fact, is the organizing faculty but it acts upon materials supplied by the understanding:

The Understanding suggests the materials of reasoning: the Reason decides upon them. The first can only say, - This is, or ought to be so. The last says, "It must be so." (86)

Enough has already been said about Coleridge's distinction between reason and understanding; not much, however, about the practical function of the understanding as a purveyor of linguistic consistencies. Coleridge avers in a Table Talk entry, in 1827, that

A Pun will sometimes facilitate explanation, as thus; - the Understanding is that which stands under the phenomenon, and gives it objectivity. You know what a thing is by it. It is also worthy of remark that the Hebrew word for the understanding, Binch, comes from a root meaning between or distinguishing. (87)

As a whole, man's intellectual faculties proceed step by step; the distance, though, from one step to another varies with each individual mind's apprehensive ability. The understanding is the less needed as the mind is able to comprehend what is made available to it in one intuitive blink. In a somewhat sibylline entry of the notebooks (February-May 1807), he explains that "the shortest way" to comprehension is most desirable but it is usually "discovered the last", precisely because the

intermediary analytical steps are suppressed and hence accessible only to exceptional minds. The

longest way is more near to the existing state of the mind, nearer to what, if left to myself on starting the thought, I should have thought next. - The shortest way gives me the knowledge beat; the longest way makes me more knowing. (88)

The longer the steps, Coleridge implies, the better the apprehension because it is all-comprehensive and loftier; the shorter the steps, the more accurate the perception we have of the interconnections within the thinking process, yet the less comprehensive because it is fragmentary. One way or the other, the understanding cannot be completely absent.

A good example of the unobtrusive yet fundamental presence of the understanding in the apprehensive process is provided by Coleridge in his short discussion of the problem of taste. In an 1810 fragment, he describes it as distinct from the senses, which seize the object as in itself, per se, independently of any subjective, transforming perception to be transferred upon it. The object as such is given consistence, upon which taste as a subjective power is then able to act.

Taste, therefore, as opposed to vision and sound, will teach us to expect in its metaphorical use a certain reference of any given object to our own being, and not merely a distinct notion of the object as in itself, or in its independent properties. (89)

Whether taste is a higher power issuing from reason to deal intuitively (and in Coleridge's opinion, this always means loftily) with beauty, either in fine arts or literature, does not preclude the fact that, loftily or not, reason, or taste, could not apply without the materials supplied by the understanding. Its effect,

indiscernible though it is from artistic perception, is specifically marked relatively to the object to which it is applied. It is

an intellectual perception of any object blended with a distinct reference to our own sensibility of pain or pleasure, or vice versa, a sense of enjoyment or dislike co-instantaneously combined with, and appearing to proceed from some intellectual perception of the object. (90)

The sense of what the understanding actually does, Coleridge borrowed in part from Boehme. Many marginal notes treat the topic of the function of the understanding in such a way as to corroborate my view that Coleridge's conception of language has some analogies with Hjelmslev's. The understanding, he says, is

that which stands under, supports, and gives the form to, the materials supplied by the Senses - just as the Skeleton of wood upon which the bricks & stones of a Bridge rest while building and receive from it that figure of the Arch, which gives the Bridge all its strength, and constitutes the Cohesion of the material. (91)

One can fairly well illustrate what would become of language should the contribution of the understanding be missing. Of two protagonists engaged in conversation, one is talking to the other in a language the latter does not understand. The listener realizes, of course, that the corpus of words he can hear must have a content and an expression; he has a grasp of the substance and possibly the form of expression as well as of the form of content. But such a form is to him empty and devoid of anything appealing to his intellect because it lacks substance. The structure (content and expression) used by the speaker is prompted by his global consciousness

of what he wants to say; it is directed by the meaning to be conveyed. Even though the hearer should be aware of this general meaning, the sounds heard would be mere unrelated patches inside a floating, inconsistent sonorous mass.

In his comments on the marginal notes, George Whalley notes that

in late 1819 or early 1820 Coleridge made a notebook entry referring to this marginal note. Without the potential moulds, [...] [without form-generating forms] of the Under-standing the notices supplied by the Senses would have no substans, no substance - could not be formed into Experience. Without the materials contributed by the Senses, the forms of the Understanding would have no reality, no content - or as the popular Language, always more philosophical than the Individuals that slight it, truly says - There is no Sense in it. - Being thus interdependent, both are necessarily confined to such subjects as have the predicates of Time and Space - strange are the Bulls that are engendered, where the Logic of the mere Understanding is allowed to bring the entia of the supersensual World to its Procrustes Bed. - See Note MSS, in Behmen, vol 3, p. 33. N28f47. (92)

Coleridge's terminology is here roughly identical to that used by most modern structuralists; yet it is manifest that what he has in mind is slightly different. The result, however, is quite clear. The senses supply materials: substance of content, or the redness of the red apple mentioned earlier (p. 31), the colour of which is now perceived and felt. The understanding provides the form of content. In an entry of Table Talk already quoted (cf. note 87), we have seen that Coleridge makes use of the Hebrew root of the word understanding to make its full meaning explicit. It is defined as meaning both between and distinguishing. The substance subsuming the content of "red" is indexable on a flux of red colours, extending from pale red to dark red, and to this flux the understanding offers a mould, bounding it, setting

it limits, giving the notion "red" as applied to our apple a specific consistence, distinguishable from neighbouring nuances of the same hue.

We are now in a more well-founded position to understand what diverted Coleridge and Wordsworth from each other on the subject of language and why some of the leading arguments in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads could not fail to be rejected by Coleridge, as indeed they are in Biographia Literaria. Wordsworth's assumption that language "feeds" on nature is on the same line of reasoning as has been established so far from Coleridge's statements, but he follows quite a different course when asserting that the most valuable part of language is formed from the rustic's close familiarity with pastoral nature.

Coleridge rightly objects that the language used by rustics has no justification to be considered the best. On the other hand, their daily acquaintance with natural elements and the necessity in which they find themselves to express such basic needs as "food, shelter or safety" result in a language far too limited in scope and characterized by "a very scanty vocabulary". (93) If Wordsworth is indeed entitled to think that passion in man generates linguistic structures that mirror the feeling which is being experienced and sets in motion "a plainer and more emphatic language," at once simpler and more forcible, Coleridge is no less right when retorting that passion can only set in motion units that are already stored in the brain. While Wordsworth remained with the erroneous idea that a close familiarity with nature was enough for men to elaborate adequate verbal structures, Coleridge well knew that language acquisition is a matter of education and social intercourse, and as such depends largely on an individual's knowledge and intellectual abilities, and

on the quality of his emotional responses to external stimuli. If the latter is mainly innate, the former two are as much the result of thinking and studying as of prior potentialities. To one who relies on daily references to his surroundings and satisfies himself with whatever develops from such references, the ensuing language will indeed be primitive and simple. It will in no way be consistent enough with a desire to build up a poetic discourse on its very basis. Yet competence also depends on one's relations to other people, for, Coleridge writes, "every man's language has, first, its individualities; secondly, the common properties of the class to which he belongs; and thirdly, words and phrases of universal use." (94) Beyond the fact that the notion of "phrases of universal use" calls for a proper definition, it must be admitted that the sort of language used by rustics as a class, in addition to vocabulary of "universal use," make up a language which cannot vie with that of "educated" people. For, and this is the second reason set by Coleridge, an individual's specific language, enriched by contributions of his own class, his readings and his verbal availability to outer circumstances, also need that command which comes from sound reflection on the mechanism of speech.

The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflections on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man; though in civilized society, by imitation and passive remembrance of what they hear from their religious instructors and other superiors, the most uneducated share in the harvest which they neither sowed or reaped. (95)

The most difficult aspect of language appropriation is found in syntagmatic as well as in paradigmatic requirements. "For the very power of making the

selection implies the previous possession of the language selected." If the acquisition of the number of units which is proper to an adequate expression of the most minute nuances and, as Coleridge himself phrases it, "shades of meaning" is but a delicate operation, it is even more difficult to acquire the ability to settle the suitable logical connections between them. By overlooking these operations, the rustic man manages

solely to convey insulated facts, either those of his scanty experience or his traditional belief; while the educated man chiefly seeks to discover and express those connections of things, or those relative bearings of fact to fact, from which some more or less general law is deducible. For facts are valuable to a wise man chiefly as they lead to the discovery of the indwelling law which is the true being of things, the sole solution of their modes of existence and in the knowledge of which consists our dignity and our power. (96)

Most delicate of all is

that surview, which enables a man to foresee the whole of what he is to convey, appertaining to any one point; and by this means so to subordinate and arrange the different parts according to their relative importance as to convey it at once and as an organized whole. (97)

Groundless, therefore, is Wordsworth's assertion that the simple language of simple people, after it has been purified from its defects and, stranger yet, its rational part, is both more philosophical and more permanent. Such a language, Coleridge objects, is inadequate for any elaborate communication and, finally, merely commonplace.

For Coleridge, therefore, language is polysemous and mediatory. Etymology reveals the semantic effectiveness

of words, particularly of the monosyllables of English, an effectiveness they owe to a gradual process of desynonymization throughout the centuries and to the concentration in a restricted space of a high charge of significance. Language is also a bridge between man and nature, spirit and matter, Man provides sounds and concepts which are given palpability through the objectivization that natural impressions supply. Education, furthermore, enhances the power inherent in language by bringing higher and higher complexity to man's ability to use individual words and to build more and more refined connections between words. Coleridge's conception, however, suggests a dependence of the whole meditation on language upon a wider set of reflections on the universe. His view of language as a system, in fact, is indissolubly linked to the major principles of this cosmology.

CHAPTER TWO

COLERIDGE'S COSMOLOGY : THE CREATIVE POWER

Coleridge's view of language, and more precisely of the poetic utilization of language, cannot be fully apprehended if not considered simultaneously with, and as an extension of, his view of the whole universe. Already, as ought to have appeared from the previous chapter, it is obvious that man and nature, the mind and the cosmos are closely intertwined, and as a result of this the realm of language has been seen to "feed" on the external realm of sensations and visual stimuli, but for which words would be devoid of what can properly be called "senaë".

Exactly how this universe functions is of course the concern of science and, in a different perspective, of philosophy; yet a merely superficial acquaintance with Coleridge's prose works is enough for one to realize how inseparable his preoccupation with science and philosophy happens to be from his considerations on language. The very words he uses to describe "ordinary" and poetic languages is the metalanguage of science in common use at that time; and henceforth "biological descriptions and connotations are so ubiquitous that the scientific world of plants and organisms merges with the literary world." (1)

That Coleridge should have adopted both the standpoint and the language of science when dealing with language and literature is due to several causes, one, not the least, being the deep concern he shared with many writers and thinkers about the growing gap that was beginning to be felt between science and art. Coleridge himself was worried about Newton's speculative developments, which, he thought, amounted to a "philosophy of death"; numerous were the attempts, on the part of people as different as Shelley, Carlyle or Arnold, to achieve a status of autonomy for art against the outrageous claims of science and the arrogance of rationalism. (2)

At the same time, Coleridge was endeavouring to cope with his own ambivalent attitude towards science. Despite his utter refusal of theories, such as the atomists' (Dalton), he looked upon as dangerous, he gave evidence of what came to be a lifelong interest in science. He did not despair of reconciling it with literature; he and Humphry Davy were at one time attracted to Erasmus Darwin in whom, precisely, they saw

a practising scientist and poet, a mind of considerable originality that supported their desire to believe in and understand the necessary links between all aspects of the cosmos and the human mind.
(3)

Coleridge has often been believed to be hostile to science; but this is contradicted by his behaviour throughout his lifetime and particularly, as Kathleen Coburn demonstrates, during the period of his friendship with Davy, from 1799 onwards. We know with what passion he set about attending Davy's chemistry lectures in 1802 and that his interest for chemistry went on growing; he went even as far as asserting that it had something of the poetic (4), and we learn from J.A. Paris's Life of

Sir Humphry Davy that one of the major attractions of the lectures was the possibility he had "to increase his stock of metaphors." (5) But, K. Coburn remarks,

it came also from a desire to understand the links between the perceiver and the perceived, still a major problem in philosophy. Coleridge spent his life searching for the laws within the impalpable, within poems, within persons, within social systems, and for the relation of these to things without us. (6)

One outstanding advantage of the experience, considering the extent to which the scientific metalanguage and methods of investigation pervade Coleridge's practice, is that he "mostly knew what he was talking about from knowing it on the skin, from experience, from strenuous thought and hard word." (7)

Much has already been said about Coleridge's cosmology as such, whether from a scientific standpoint or from a philosophical one. M.H. Abrams, for one, provides an adequate outline of it, not meant to exhaust the interest of men of science today but quite sufficient for whoever is determined to have a brief though satisfactory survey of Coleridge's representation of the mechanisms of the universe. (8) What I shall attempt here is extract from Coleridge's cosmology the elements which stand out as basic both to our understanding of how the creative forces in the universe and in man's mind work and to our realization that the one parallels the other. The very language which serves to explain his system may be out of date, just as the system itself is now as unsuitable scientifically as Poe's in Eureka; the essential struts which support it seem nevertheless, and much to our surprise, consistent with, and even unquestionably part of, the main achievements of modern structuralism. Obsolete though it may seem, the

explanatory language Coleridge uses is no obstacle but is liable to transpositions which, in more cases than one, make Coleridge sound like Jakobson or Greimas.

In chapter twelve of Biographia Literaria, Coleridge warns the reader about the danger of taking too hastily for granted an author's intention, saying that "until you understand a writer's ignorance, presume yourself ignorant of his understanding." Likewise, there is the danger of overlooking a writer's point on pretext that it does not seem relevant to his demonstration. By doing so, one often ignores what later on proves an invaluable complement to the main corpus of the demonstration and so one does without what would have saved time and avoided at least one occasion for making mistakes.

So it is with epigraphs. At the beginning of the thirteenth chapter of Biographia Literaria, Coleridge quotes twenty lines from Milton's fifth book of Paradise Lost as well as a passage from Leibniz's Opera. One might of course feel tempted to read them swiftly and then pass on to the author's own text, and, once the latter has been perused, to wonder what other than a slight connection between their contexts could have justified such an introduction. The truth, however, is that Milton's verse particularly contains the quintessence of Coleridge's cosmology, the elements of which apply most exactly to his poetics. They can be summarized in one sentence: everything in the universe (and subsequently in the mind) proceeds from a seminal principle, to which everything ultimately returns; this original "matter" develops extensively through an infinite variety of shapes, yet remains the same all over; whatever the shapes it is likely to assume, it progresses gradually from indifferenciation to a high level of differentiation, from grossness to refinement, from the physical to the spiritual, from the lower

The hint here is not merely towards a fluid expansion of matter having its source in an originating principle but towards a gradual expansion implying internal strife and duality. As he affirms in in a marginal note,

The Whole Universe must be represented as a single transparent Drop - a divine Chaos, not as the confused Commixture of all Distincts, but as the identity of them all, and therefore as the absence by pre-eminent proesence (quod est proe omnibus - non ut ante omnia, sed ut proe) of all distinctions. (11)

Coleridge illustrates the action of the seminal principle by means of an image. Nature in its progression, he says, - not only from the one point from which everything derives but also from indifferention to differentiation, from the lower stages of the scale of beings to the upper stages, - proceeds not

as links in a suspended chain, but as the steps in a ladder; or rather she at one and the same time ascends as by a climax, and expands as the concentric circles on the lake from the point to which the stone in its fall had given the first impulse. (12)

The ascension, therefore, is hierarchical; each further concentric circle takes precedence over the circle which immediately precedes but also reinforces the whole.

Yet the seminal principle is not enough to account for life itself, nor does it suffice to provide an explanation of the power of life in the universe. Here especially the Theory of Life proves an irreplaceable document, for Coleridge deals with the problem in its most fundamental aspects. It also emphasizes the link between Coleridge's literary preoccupations and his years of dealing with science.

The human understanding, one can read at the outset of Theory of Life, is naturally inadequate to identify the very nature of any power, let alone the power of life. It cannot even conceive the mere idea of such a power. All it is able to do is find out analogies between the forces of growth at work in nature and other forces with identical characteristics. One can assume that the power of life is a power of "growth and organization" and one may therefore expect it to be close to the one which is visible, as an effect, in electricity and chemistry. But growth and organization are the effects of the invisible power of life and as such must not be mistaken for the power of life itself, which is prior to its effects. The hidden power which is the cause of the movement resulting from a machine running is antecedent to the movement produced by the application of the mechanisms of the machine. Besides, only the man who created the machine knows which essential element keeps it running and produces a perceptible effect. All the inquirer can do is endeavour "to reduce its various movements to as few and simple laws of motion as possible." (13) Coleridge elsewhere insisted on the necessity to establish the true relation between cause and effect. In Table Talk, he says that

It is a great error in physiology, not to distinguish between what may be called the general or fundamental life - the principium vitae, and the functional life - the life in the functions. Organisation must presuppose life as anterior to it: without life, there could not be or remain any organisation; but then there is also a life in the organs, or functions, distinct from the other. Thus, a flute presupposes, - demands the existence of a musician as anterior to it, without whom no flute could ever have existed; and yet again, without the instrument there can be no music. (14)

This amounts more or less to saying that there is no smoke without fire and that the smoke, as an effect, is as important as the fire which causes it.

The reduction one is forced to apply in order to render things apprehensible to the understanding leads us to reduce the principle of life to its simplest definition:

the most comprehensive formula to which life is reducible, would be that of the internal copula of bodies, or (if we may venture to borrow a phrase from the Platonic school) the power which discloses itself from within as a principle of unity in the many. (15)

The unity of all substances proceeds from the fact that all arise from the same seminal principle, but at the same time this principle extends throughout nature in assuming many shapes. Each shape, or substance, as Leibniz would call it, strives towards uniqueness. This allows Coleridge at this point to set up a double definition of life: as a system viewed independently of any other thing it is a force of synthesis; as a power existing in the synthetic force, and an essential part of it, it is a force of individuation which compels the whole substance to which it belongs to make its way towards distinction and uniqueness. (16) Both forces, the synthetic and the individuating, are linked together and in a position of presupposition one to the other:

This tendency to individuate cannot be conceived without the opposite tendency to connect, even as the centrifugal power supposes the centripetal, or as the two opposite poles constitute each other, and are the constituent acts of one and the same power in the magnet. (17)

The "scale of beings" that Coleridge sets as a central element of his conception of the universe is part of the Western tradition. Leibniz himself had borrowed it from the Neo-Platonic tradition, although from Plotinus onwards divergences of conception had gradually appeared. The basis, however, remains: reality is seen as a whole which expresses itself at several levels, of which the extremities are dilution, at the bottom of the scale, and, at the top, concentration. The further up one goes towards concentration, the closer one happens to be to the One.

The notion of substance is an essential development of the notion of "scale of being". Not only is a particular substance inseparable from the other substances but each substance forms a whole world, a unit, a mirror of the entire universe. Such a unit, or monad, in Leibniz's terminology, is polymorphous (it can assume various aspects) and contains the multiplicity of the universe. Leibniz's universe, like Plotinus' intelligible world, is made up of ideas which, separately, contain the totality of the real. Each monad is a universe in the succession of universes, and each, at the specific level to which it belongs, repeats all the others according to their own degree of concentration or dilution. Unlike neoplatonism, though, Leibniz's monads do not lose of their unity as they proceed down the scale but remain self-sufficient and in perfect unity. The relationships they entertain with one another are governed by the law of pre-established harmony: God, when He created the monads, considered each and all at the same time. The perception of the universe that one single unit is endowed with responds to the perception of every other unit and corresponds roughly to the many-faceted eye of a bee, each facet viewing the universe from one particular angle.

Leibniz actually offers a key to a possible interpretation of the Ancient Mariner's criminal gesture. Each monad is free to incline towards action or towards passion. Only action ensures a safe passage from a lower to a superior level of consciousness while passion brings about suffering and exile at an inferior level. Passion is said to be an excessive inclination characterized by emotional or intellectual images powerful enough to dominate life and overwhelm any manifestation of the will striving toward the opposite. The rational determinism which constitutes a kind of internal law by which a monad can abide, and by means of which it is free to act spontaneously, is consubstantial with virtue, the internal power it possesses not to be misled by passions. In his undoubtedly intentional avoidance of any mention of a cause for the mariner's act, Coleridge may have been directed by his wish to bear witness to the danger there is in following the law of passion rather than that of action, which inevitably connects to the awareness of the unity of nature.

The idea of a universe which derives its reality from a seminal substance and extends in all directions while it assumes many different forms implies, as we have seen, the concomitant idea of a hierarchical development from a lower to an upper state of reality. Yet Leibniz's influence is obvious in Coleridge's law of individuation. Leibniz refused to admit that the monads established at a lower level should have a degree of unity and integrity inferior to the monads of the higher stages. So did Coleridge when asserting that

in the very lowest link in the vast and mysterious chain of Being, there is an effort, although scarcely apparent, at individualisation; but it is almost lost in the mere nature. A little higher up, the individual is apparent and separate, but subordinate to anything in man. At length, the anima rises to be on a par with the lowest power of the human nature. (18)

The latter part of his remark is said merely to want distinctness and by no means individuality. Whatever the level it occupies in the hierarchy, a monad aims at the utmost undividedness:

If the tendency be at once to individuate and to connect, to detach, but so as either to retain or to reproduce attachment, the individuation itself must be a tendency to the ultimate production of the highest and most comprehensive individuality. This must be the one great end of Nature, her ultimate object, or by whatever other word we may designate that something which bears to a final cause the same relation that Nature herself bears to the Supreme Intelligence. (19)

On the first rung of the ladder, the rung of metals, indifferenciation rules, with only the power of organization of the properties as a unifying force; although they strive towards uniqueness, such monads are at a loss to detach themselves from the substantial uniformity of the natural flux. As one progresses upwards, there is a stronger tendency towards wholeness and the formation of totalities that can be differentiated from the general flux. (20)

Between the incipient movement in the seminal principle and the final stage in the completion of the organic whole, the animating force, the power of life, is at work and its double effect visible, or at least perceptible. The polymorphous expansion goes on as growth - the individuating energy, at all levels of the scale, pushes the bodies towards their maximum development as individual entities - and organization - and the connective energy complements the individuating force by an incentive action aiming at the utmost cohesion of the whole by the best inter-relation of the parts. There remains to define the animating principle

itself. Its effects have already been said to be growth and organization; the question now is "How does it manifest itself as a power of growth and organization?"

Coleridge answers unambiguously:

Polarity, or the essential dualism of Nature, arising out of its productive unity, and still tending to reaffirm it, either as equilibrium, indifference or identity ... Life, then, we consider as the copula, or the unity of thesis and antithesis, position and counterposition. (21)

Life is inconceivable aside from the eternal struggle between opposite forces:

The two counterpoints are the necessary conditions of the manifestations of Life. These, by the same necessity, unite in a synthesis; which again, by the law of dualism, essential to all actual existence, expands, or produces itself, from the point into the line, in order again to converge, as the initiation of the same productive process in some intenser form of reality. (22)

Every time the opposition and synthesis progress, something is gained and the new synthesis enriches the nature of its constituent elements.

Thus, in the identity of the two counter-powers, Life subsists; in their strife it consists; and in their reconciliation it at once dies and is born again into a new form, either falling back into the life of the whole, or starting anew in the process of individuation. (23)

Although by the peculiar way in which he conceived for himself the notion of polarity Coleridge enhanced the subject considerably, he had by no means launched it in the first place. As Thomas McFarland demonstrates in his

work on the doctrine of polarity, the notion is probably as ancient as European thought itself. If, Owen Barfield has remarked, it is fundamental to Coleridge's vision of the world, (24) it is also definitely part of the European intellectual heritage. A key-figure in the evolution of the concept, Heraclitus owed much of it to the Milesians but amplified it so as to form an inescapable fixture of Western thought as well as to influence all forthcoming generations. Coleridge, for one, based everything, from his cosmology to his poetics, upon the essential duality of the universe, whether visible or not.

For Coleridge polarity takes on two forms: a dialectical form, which is a source of evolution and change, and a structural form.

The dialectical form implies the unity of the universe, for the beginning of the process departs from a pulsating point (a notion Coleridge borrowed explicitly from Schelling) and then progresses as a dual movement of expansion and contraction, of repulsion and attraction. Coleridge's reading of the scientists (Newton, Priestley) and of the Germans, in addition to his interest in the experiments of Galvani, Franklin, Volta, found an outcome in his elaboration of a vast picture representing the cosmos as a succession of opposites such as, Dr. Watson writes in his Preface to The Theory of Life, repulsion/attraction, mobility/rest, azote/carbon. (25) The duality can assume other fundamental shapes; thus gravitation, which characterizes the bodies at the upper level of the scale of beings with the higher tendency of individuation, which, by necessity, implies a detachment from universal matter, against repulsion or the tendency for lower bodies to unite with matter. (26) Coleridge says

We ascend from the laws of attraction and repulsion, as united in gravity, to magnetism, electricity, and constructive power, till we arrive at the point representative of a new and far higher intensity. For from this point flow, as in opposite directions, the two streams of vegetation and animalization, the former characterised by the predominance of magnetism in its highest power, as reproduction, the other by electricity intensified - as irritability, in like manner. The vegetable and animal world are the thesis and antithesis, or the opposite poles of organic life. (27)

It is easy to observe how diverse the sources from which Coleridge's disquisitions were drawn can be and one is reminded of Paul Hamilton's statement as to the gap existing between Coleridge's developments and the theoretical foundation he always promises yet never provides. This is especially true of the two parts of Biographia Literaria, the second being the amplification of arguments unexpressed in the first and actually never to be found anywhere. (28) Evidence of this is the number of forms of unacknowledged origins that the fundamental scheme of thesis/antithesis receives in Coleridge's writings: the meeting of extremes, the synthesis of positive and negative forces into a "third something", permanence vs progression as political animating powers (cf. On the Constitution of the Church and State), the fusing force of the imagination as the motor of artistic life, the oscillation between two poles under the appearance of journeys (the mariner), etc.

The most common form, without doubt, is that of conflict. It is the oldest, already pre-Heraclitean, yet given its most forceful expression by Heraclitus. The connection between the philosopher from Ephesus and Coleridge appears clearly in the latter's description of the phenomenon of polarity in Biographia. Although the

avowed patentage is Kant's (but Kant himself is Heraclitus' heir), the line from Heraclitus' basic image of the bow and the two antagonistic forces in essential opposition in chapter thirteen of Biographia seems evident. The antagonism is not between two incompatible forces such as one in motion and not in motion at the same time, but between two real forces in essential opposition, as, for instance, "a motory force of a body in one direction, and a equal force of the same body in an opposite direction." (29) We cannot overlook the spirit of Fragment LXXIX: "The name of the bow is life; its work is death." Charles H. Kahn in his commentaries on the fragment and beyond the immediate problem of the falsity of names or the truth hidden behind them, emphasizes the symbol of the bow he sees as a denial of the irreducible character of the opposition between life and death. The Greek term "bios" reads either as life or as the instrument for hunting and warfare. According to one or the other, the bow can be considered an instrument of life or of death. "The life-signifying name for the instrument of death," Kahn asserts, "points to some reconciliation between the opponents, some fitting together as in the unity of Day and Night." (30) If one examines the mechanism of the bow, one sees it to be animated by precisely the two antagonistic forces Coleridge describes, one pulling in one direction and the second in another. The result is not nullity but surplus of energy, reinforcement of the energy invested and productivity. The arrow flung by the bow can kill but it can symbolize life as well, for "the death of animals sustains the life of the killers." (31) There are two antagonistic forces but only one effective power; the arrow and the movement it is endowed with, which would not be existent without the action of the bow. This is exactly how Coleridge conceives of the whole process; he defines the activity which goes on in electricity as "a law which reigns through all nature,

the law of POLARITY, or the manifestation of one power by opposite forces," (32) and what applies to electricity applies to the totality of the phenomena in the universe.

In Heraclitus, the basic formula is expressed diversely and on different planes yet retains its fundamental structure. The pattern is iterative and this as a consequence founds the eternity of the universe. Death or destruction no longer mean the end of things but rebirth, reconstruction, renewal. The Stoics thought that for Heraclitus the imagery of fire and the cosmic conflagration it usually represents tells us of the recurrent disruptions and restorations such conflagrations bring about. History does not move along a line but cyclically; fire which destroys is at either extremity of the circle, at the end as well as at the beginning. "The vicissitudes of the cycle will then appear as the ever-recurring extinction and rekindling of the eternal flame." (33) Human beings participate in this renewal of things since they share in the universal life of nature. Apart from the oppositive pattern, which is central in Heraclitus' thought, the most capital development we find as an aftermath of the pattern itself and one that founds the identity of the world is the structure of symmetry. In Fragment XLIX, Heraclitus states: "Cold warms up, warm cools off, moist parches, dry dampens." Kahn's comment goes:

Heraclitus here describes qualitative changes between physical opposites in the language of felt experience rather than scientific observation. The verb theretai "warm up" can be used of a person warming himself by the fire. The word for "cools off", psychetai, suggests an application to human souls (psychai). This presentation of the cold and the hot as if they were living beings reflects Heraclitus' view of the underlying identity between the psyche and the physical elements. (34)

The consequences are of tremendous importance for our comprehension of how Coleridge conceives of the consubstantiality of object and subject, nature and the mind, and of how they can possibly mix. For Heraclitus, the general pattern is valid at all levels of human and cosmic life. Day and Night have their counterpart in Peace and War, Summer and Winter, Satiety and Famine. Everywhere is found the common pattern of alternation and interdependence, disruption and restoration. War and Fire become even a principle of universal order and justice, a principle of unity. Everywhere something old gives way before something radically new. The universal movement is not made up of fine destructions but of inevitable destructions leading to transformations according to a repetitive structure of alternation.

The principle of symmetry generates its accomplishment in the pattern of the mirror-image: the chiasmus. Already present in Heraclitus, it was given new importance by Boehme and Coleridge. Some of the prominent poems among those written by Coleridge have a chiasmus as one of their most significant lines. (35) By the reversal, in the second clause of a sentence, of the order in the first, the chiasmus ends either in making up an antithesis or a parallel. In the former, the circular figure is completed by the internal denial of an essential sense in one or several words of the first clause by an essential sense in one or several words of the second clause. In the latter, the figure is made up of a mere parallelism as in line 250 of "The Ancient Mariner":

For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky

in which the displacement of the nouns in the second clause, to which is added the melancholy and deliberate

monotony of the monosyllables increased by the polysyndeton, produces the complex image of a sphere which is at once a prison and a ball rolling slowly towards an infinity of pain. The general impression, although different, is even richer in "The Eolian Harp". The chiasmus is enhanced by a synesthesia and the whole conjures up a notion of finality and completeness:

A light in sound, a sound-like power in light. (36)

In Heraclitus, "the most perfectly symmetrical of all the fragments" is number XCII: "Immortals [are] mortal, mortals immortal, living the others' death, dead in the others' life." Kahn says in his commentary that

The first two clauses of two words each (with copula unexpressed in Greek) are mirror images, identical but for the word order: a-b-b-a. The third and fourth clauses involve more complex inversions: to the participle "living" in the third clause corresponds the noun "life" in the fourth; and conversely for "death" in the former and "dead" in the latter. The symmetry is again reinforced by chiasmic order: participle, noun phrase; noun phrase, participle. The two-to-two, four-to-four structuring of these twelve words points to some tight pattern of unity between life and death whose exact content is not easy to make out. (37)

Easy or not as an interpretation, it is quite clear that the chiasmic order is a fundamental symbol in Heraclitus' representation of the universe. In Coleridge it appears either in the form of the chiasmus or of polarity as such. Polarity is sometimes emphasized as the principle of contrariety, on which progression depends, and which extends to all things, even to male-female relationships, the emblematic image here being the androgynous, a locus classicus ever since Plato's Symposium (189 D - 193 D), the hermaphrodite, a perfect embodiment because it symbolizes totality. "A

great mind must be androgynous," Coleridge exclaims in Table Talk (1 Sept., 1832) transposing the symbol in the ambivalent character of Geraldine in "Christabel".

The structural form of the basic law of polarity is the indispensable complement to its dialectical form. The two poles of the conflicting figure - attraction or contraction alone, repulsion or expansion alone - are not enough as such to generate movement and evolution. They acquire meaning and existence as spaces of encounter, Hegel's "point of indifference", the terms where the antagonistic principles unite. The process is dual and relational: a reciprocal movement of which the components are duly recognizable and so to say valid inasmuch as they maintain their mutual relationship. The term is the condition of their gaining substance, the interspective point which founds a new entity.

What the term actually consists of is described in detail both in the Western tradition and by Coleridge. The first approach to the problem to begin with in Coleridge's writings is that in chapter XIII of Biographia Literaria:

The counteraction then of the two assumed forces does not depend on their meeting from opposite directions; the power which acts in them is indestructible; it is therefore inexhaustibly re-ebullient; and as something must be the result of these two forces, both alike infinite and both alike indestructible; and as rest or neutralization cannot be this result; no other conception is possible but that the product must be a tertium aliquid, or finite generation. Consequently this conception is necessary. Now this tertium aliquid can be no other than an inter-penetration of the counteracting powers, partaking of both. (38)

Important is the fact that the succession of the movement duality-synthesis should be continuous and iterative ("re-ebullient"), as is Heraclitus' conception

of the same thing. Then the synthesis itself cannot be "reat or neutralization", most certainly because either force is indestructible and represents additional energy to be absorbed into the synthesis. The product can only be a "finite generation", i.e. the product of a mutual tribute giving birth to an entity at once different from, yet made up of, the substance of the component forces and resembling them whilst slightly or considerably more than they used to be.

There is unquestionably additional energy; and this accounts for Coleridge's fascination for chemistry and chemical experiments, as Kathleen Coburn demonstrates:

Part of what most attracted him to chemistry, and what was to propel him towards reading English and German chemists for the rest of his life, was his awareness that what Davy in this room was releasing from combinations of matter was energy. Flames, detonations, smells, changes of weight and colour, gases expanding and contracting, metals fusing, minerals making water boil, and so on. (39)

The duality which is conceivable in matter and the synthesis of antagonistic powers ending in supplementary power are no less than natural divergencies unified in a highly productive way.

As one of the promises of poetic genius, Coleridge cites a similar potential for making connexions by "the power [in poetry], of reducing multitude into unity", and secondly, a similar "choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself." (40)

Coleridge, to some extent, tackles the problem of polarity and synthesis from another angle relatively to the perspective usually considered in Western thought and furthermore adds to it in a way unprecedented till

his day. Of course, he often chooses to introduce it in the form of the commonplace "extremes meet", yet even here he goes beyond what might legitimately be expected. In its simplest delineation, the principle is expressed in Heraclitean words, namely: What is old can be renewed:

In philosophy equally, as in poetry, genius produces the strongest impression of novelty, while it rescues the stalest and most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission. Extremes meet - a proverb, by the bye, to collect and explain all the instances and exemplifications of which, would constitute and exhaust all philosophy. (41)

A hint is given as to a close link between the principle and its application to the case of poetic language; besides, it is confirmed as a principle underlying all reality, as serving as explanatory cause and elements of whatever exists in the cosmos. In a notebook entry of December 1803, it is once more set as a symbol of the basic pattern which generates and rules the universe, of which plenty of instances can be found in nature. This extends from the burning impression left by extreme cold to the evil effects of any type of excess, even those intended to bring comfort. Always the synthesis is seen as a surplus of energy such as the overwhelming result obtained from utter smallness added to utter hugeness, which produces a general effect of totality on account of an actual blending of the microcosmic and the macrocosmic. Some are obvious: too glaring lights cause dark through blinding; some evolve an antithetical idea such as: a nightmarish world of mutual aloofness may come from a recognition that pain is obsolete and must be deliberately ignored so that eventually humanitarian care and relief are prevented. The most pertinently illustrative, however, is found in the image of the waterfall: "Sameness in a Waterfall, in the foam Islands of a fiercely boiling Pool at the bottom of the

Waterfall, from infinite Change." (42) This is a forceful exemplification of the dynamic power which issues from polar antagonism, for whoever has watched water falling from high up into a pool, from which it flows on serenely, knows how impressive a contrast there is between the fall and the pool and how rich a spectacle the myriad-minded apume offers to the eyes with its bursting particles, constantly renewed, yet, owing to the speed and violence of the fall, as well as to the clash between the falling and the slow-moving water, apparently remaining one eternal picture of sparkling diamonds.

In another passage of the "extremes meet" type, Coleridge, in a rather enigmatic way, describes the restful, seemingly motionless appearance of the face when on the inside the process of thought is at its highest:

The harmony is produced thus - by the other parts of the Face being not animated but deified by an expression of eye-like Thought, and the Eyes tranquil, in sweetest accord, and the entire Rest of one thought blended with one feeling. (43)

The identity of opposed elements applies also to History where

the very causes, that existing in a due proportion, civilize, the same now barbarize as the quickness to affront, appeal to courage and force to decide at each instant - &c - Either the manners must be let down, & a hundred grossnesses pass current by allowance; or all must be stiffened into ceremonious nothings - But the very notion of being always on guard against affronts generates an irritable and impatient habit, deadly to all quiet investigation and free discussion/What comes instead? Debauchery, Avarice, stupid Pomp/in short, read the History of the Roman Empire after the Antonines. (44)

Coleridge's most interesting contribution to the polar conception of the universe - and one by which he prepared the way for the isotopic movement launched in the second half of the twentieth century by Greimas, but which was prefigured in Jakobson, and amplified by the Belgian Group Mu - lies in rarely-quoted pieces of the Theory of Life or elsewhere.

In an excerpt from The Friend the process which is implied by the law of polarity is presented with great accuracy. Coleridge writes:

The principle may be thus expressed. The Identity of Thesis and Antithesis is the substance of all Being; their Opposition the condition of all Existence, or Being manifested; and every Thing or Phaenomenon is the Exponent of a Synthesis as long as the opposite energies are retained in that Synthesis (45).

The image presented so far of a mere synthesis of antagonistic elements, although suitable to describe diagrammatically the process as a whole, is somewhat crude and Coleridge insists that if one were to stick to it, it would amount to beating about the bush without getting to the heart of things. It is necessary, to reach the core of the problem, to revert to what Coleridge says in Biographia Literaria about the nature of the forces which constitute the thesis and the antithesis. If the two forces in action in a bow happened to be of the first species, as though by stringing the bow one bent only the upper part while its lower part remained straight or were bent in a reversed direction, no impulse would be transmitted to the arrow and the result would be inertness. Whereas by bending both in one direction while the middle of the bow, held tight by the hand, strives to move in the opposite

direction, such impetus is communicated to the arrow as to amplify its swiftness and penetration power in tremendous proportions.

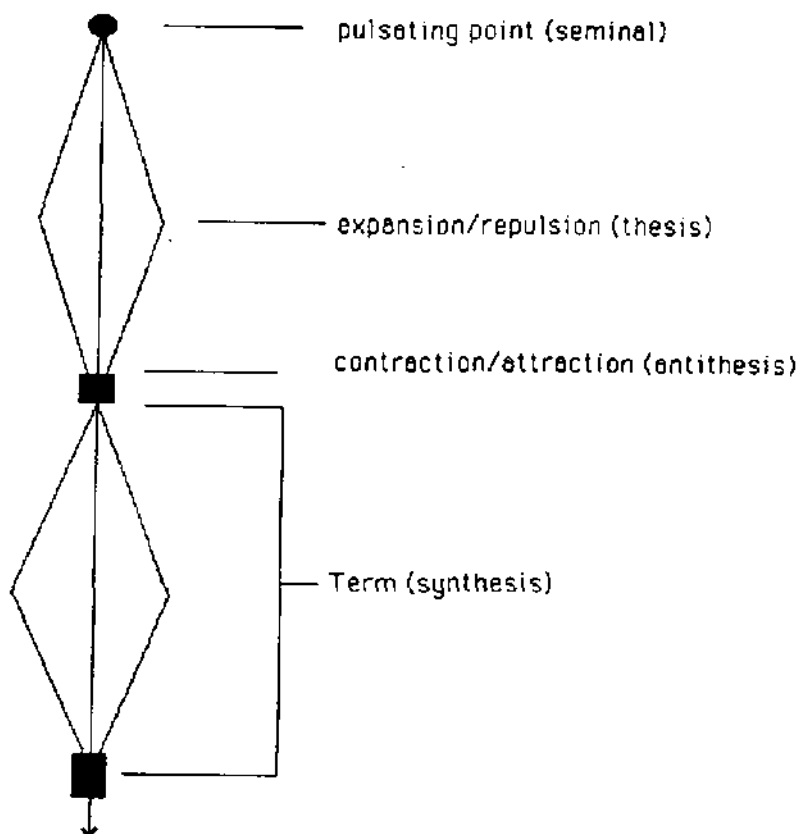
The process, therefore, does not merely consist of an OPPOSITION-SYNTHESIS movement but of a threefold movement of IDENTITY-ANTAGONISM-RECONCILIATION. The identity is a consubstantiality, a sharing of the same substance, failing which no bringing together, and hence no synthesis, would ever occur. The energy contained in either force must be retained in the reconciliatory power, for the synthetic power itself is such so long as it is the combination, much more than the simple addition, of its antagonistic components.

Life, then, we consider as the copula, or the unity of thesis and antithesis, position and counterposition, - Life itself being the positive of both; as, on the other hand, the two counterpoints are the necessary conditions of the manifestations of Life. (46)

Thus life is not only the result of the struggle and ultimate reconciliation of the opposite forces, it is the identity of their substance as well: "the positive of both". Coleridge adds:

These, by the same necessity, unite in a synthesis; which again, by the law of dualism, essential to all actual existence, expands, or produces itself, from the point into the line, in order again to converge, as the initiation of the same productive process in some intenser form of reality. Thus, in the identity of the two counterpowers, Life subsists; in their strife it consists; and in their reconciliation it at once dies and is born again into a new form, either falling back into the life of the whole, or starting anew in the process of individuation. (47)

The blending of the two forces, their converging into a synthesis which is granted existence through their complementary action conjure up the image of a universe in which nothing can possibly be apart from the whole. If the antagonisms were irreducible, nothing could hold together. Antagonisms represent the dynamic conditions of the universe ever coming into actual existence: beyond the identity of substance, evolution and change, in a highly positive sense, are the lot and the consequences of oppositions. The ultimate result of the process itself is at once extension and transformation, a process one might roughly represent as follows:



The black line figures the extension from a point to a line; it is gradually enriched by the systole-diastole movement which includes the struggle of the two antagonistic forces (thesis vs antithesis) and their convergence as well as their fusing into a synthesis which, finally, generates something new, ready to enter another pattern of dynamic transformation.

Coleridge uses another image to portray the law of duality, as appears from a notebook entry of January 1817:

That Life can manifest itself only by Poles, itself being the Equator, under the two forms of Indifference and Identity, we begin from as already proved. (48)

It is the identity of substance which, beyond the antagonistic movement and the struggle which ensues, founds the very possibility of the indifference in the synthesis; indifference, on the other hand, unlike what the word might suggest, is not neutralization but fusion and energetic increase.

The reality of all alike is the Λ and Ω , far rather than ineffable which is neither Alpha separately, nor Omega separately, nor Alpha and Omega by composition, but the Identity of both, which can become an object of Consciousness or Thought, even as all the powers of the material world can become objects of Perception, only as two Poles or Counterpoints of the same Line.

Existence, then, is "that which is the same in all things, the ∞ , the ω , and (more truly still) the copula of the two, that in which both are one, and in which each involves the other". (49)

One of the most important developments of the law of polarity, and one resulting in some of the most

conclusive theoretical and practical issues of today's poetics, is Coleridge's personal elaboration of the notion of space. Not that it was particularly a new one at the time, for it turned out to be the outcome of numerous contributions ever since Heraclitus; yet what Coleridge in some way perfected, thanks also to Kant's theoretical contribution, is undoubtedly one of the few patterns leading to another notion modern literary studies could not do without, that of structure. D.M. MacKinnon justly remarks that Coleridge's treatment of the German philosopher is that of a poet, and as a consequence one must "be ready to receive insights as unexpected as they are unsystematic". It would be a mistake, however, to infer from it that what he might possibly have derived from his encounter with Kant's works is worth a mere perfunctory mention and nothing more. Once the charge of plagiarism against Coleridge has been set aside (identical charges were directed against him about Schlegel and even Keats), it is necessary to point out that

Coleridge found in the study of Kant's work what he required in order to free himself from bondage to ideas of the speculative, romantic Schelling, to whom he was enormously attracted. (50)

Although this cannot be proved, it seems manifest that Coleridge's final elaboration of the notion of space was worked out much later than 1802, a time when part of Kant's philosophy was already known to him.

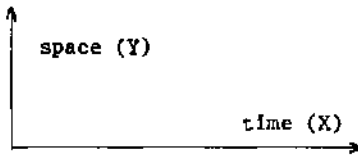
Space, as dealt with by Kant, is related to his conception of the monad. In his Monadologia physica (1756), he evolved a theory of the monad intermediary between Leibniz and Newton. It is presented as a finite space which is a centre of attractive and repulsive forces, each monad exerting its influence over the others. Force, power, energy, one finds in the Essay on the Introduction of the Negative Quantity Concept in

Philosophy, is the only substantial reality. In a real opposition, two counteracting forces are conceivable for they are opposed to each other by the essential quality of their power, while, at a more global level, they are closely inter-related. This conception of space being essentially dynamic, owing to the constant struggle between the antagonistic powers which constitute it, is clearly akin to Coleridge's notion of the same thing, as developed in the last twenty pages or so of the Theory of Life.

Space appears inevitably linked to its counterpart: time. Both are the very conditions that make perceptible the omnipresence of the Supreme Being (space) and of the latter's eternity (time). Both serve as "specifications" and "symbols" of the universe, of its law (duality) and of its forms (diversity). Time and space are by necessity closely connected not only intellectually but also in their manifestation as inevitable constituents of reality. Things are actually made real in the unity ("oneness") of space and time. Both are related so as to form the necessary predicate of things conceived of as subjects. In other words, whatever is spoken about becomes real only through the co-manifestation, the concomitance, the cum-advenire, co-inherence of time and space as its predicate, as whatever is said about it. This unity is representable even theoretically, since, according to Coleridge, they involve the notions of circle and of line. As he writes:

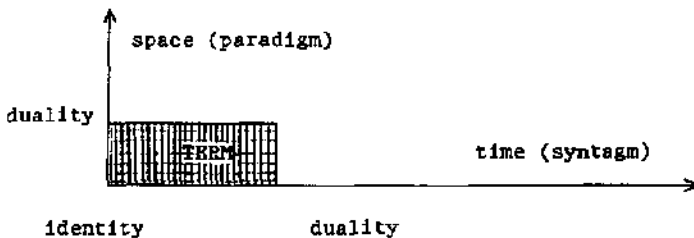
That both time and space are mere abstractions, I am well aware; but I know with equal certainty that what is expressed by them as the identity of both is the highest reality, and the root of all power, the power to suffer, as well as the power to act. However mere an ens logicum space may be, the dimensions of space are real, and the works of Galileo, in more than one elegant passage, prove with what awe and amazement they fill the mind that worthily contemplates them.
(51)

Time and space as manifestations are more than two opposites facing each other; they co-occur each in each, with a predominance of one over the other according to whether space manifests itself within time, in which case the result is the circle, or time manifests itself in space, which produces the line. It is now possible to represent the relation as the two sections of a plane:



Space (the ordinate, Y axis) is the predominance of space over time, while time (the abscissa, X axis) is the predominance of time over space.

Coleridge's conception of the oneness is, as might be expected, that of a "mid-point producing itself on each side" or, more explicitly, as "manifesting itself on two opposite poles". (52) The concept retains the image of the process described earlier, namely that of a threefold succession of identity-duality-synthesis, to be represented thus:



Proceeding from one pulsating-point (identity), the process unrolls as an expanding duality, a struggle of antagonistic forces synthesized into a "punctum saliens"

(53), a space where something new, the tertium aliquid mentioned in Biographia Literaria, springs forth and is being generated. Space (paradigm, at language level) and time (syntagm) partake in an active combination of which the term or synthesis manifests at once a state of transformation, a unity, a surplus of energy.

The term, actually, - owing to the predominance now of space and now of time, of surface or of line, which line and surface are the necessary components of the whole (synthesis or reality), - is by nature unstable: an unsteady totality in motion.

The process is inscribed in an eternal symbol in "Kubla Khan". The term or chasm is a space where "a mighty fountain momentarily was forced". The achievement, ideally, is a dome. In the Theory of Life, Coleridge remarks that

The line is Time and Space, under the predominance of Time: Surface is Space + Time, under the predominance of Space, while Line + Surface as the synthesis of units, is the circle in the first dignity; to the sphere in the second; and to the globe in the third.
(54)

This globe (the dome is only one half of it, but the synthesis, in "Kubla", is a mere shadow of the ideal one) is not inert but "Floated midway on the waves" and there was heard "the mingled measure/From the fountain and the caves." Thus the process is now complete: "It was a miracle of rare device,/A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!": diversity made into one united whole.

Even this achieved whole can be represented theoretically. Matter (reality) is the product, the tertium aliquid of antagonistic powers (repulsion vs attraction, etc), a "fluxional antecedent", (55) a continuous succession of changes; in the diagram drawn

above, it is the combination, the synthesis of space and time, of length and breadth: it is depth; and "these simple ideas of time, space, and motion, of length, breadth, and depth, are not only the simplest and universal, but the necessary symbols of all philosophic construction." (56) It serves as a symbol of existence at all levels of the universal life, from the lower stages of matter (at the weakest level of differentiation) to the upper stages: man, who represents the highest application of the principle of individuation, and from man to what he himself makes his, e.g. language. "Nature, ever consistent with herself, presents us everywhere with harmonious and accordant symbols of her consistent doctrines." (57) Analogy, once again, is given its legitimation by Coleridge. If the very notion of life and action is unattainable as such, and if its effect is conceivable only by analogy in such powers as electricity and magnetism, analogy is therefore likely to become the only justifiable way of approaching creation and universal activity. "Analogy implies a difference in sort, and not merely in degree; and it is the sameness of the end, with the difference of the means, which constitutes analogy." (58) Different though the various stages of matter and life may be in the universal process, the ultimate result is the same. This is why "the progress of Nature is more truly represented by the ladder, than by the suspended chain, and that she expands as by concentric circles." (59) We are now in a position to visualize the process:

The requisite and only serviceable fiction, therefore, is the representation of CHAOS as one vast homogenous drop! In this sense it may be even justified, as an appropriate symbol of the great fundamental truth that all things spring from, and subsist in, the endless strife between indifference and difference. (60)

The activity within the space of the term, one must note, is essentially unstable. Inevitably so, naturally, because of the strife between opposite forces which above all characterizes it; but also because as a system of inter-related parts, the whole is always subject to internal transformations on account of its strict dependence on each of the constituents. Coherent though it is, the tertium aliquid is in constant unsteadiness (a dynamic one, by necessity) because it is organic.

The concept was by no means original in the nineteenth century but dated back from as early as Heraclitus. About Fragment CXXIV: "Graspings (syllapsias): wholes and not wholes, convergent divergent, consonant dissonant, from all things one and from one thing all", Charles H. Kahn comments:

This spatial imagery may be taken as a figure for the dynamic tension between totality and partiality, unity and diversity that runs through all cases of opposition: But we should also take these participles literally, as depicting an actual process of alternating motion towards unity and diversity, as in the concluding antithesis: "from all things one and from one thing all". (61)

The universe contains, as fundamental to its structure, a subtle combination of organic entities that are wholes because they are complete and autonomous but at the same time not wholes because they are in turn incorporated into a larger whole which, along with other autonomous entities, they contribute to form.

There is enough evidence in Coleridge's works as to what the wholes built up by the power of life actually consist of; and first that they begin in the seed which already contains them. It not only does that but it also determines and conditions their final appearance. In the marginal notes Jakob Böhme inspired him with, Coleridge

mentions, in a different, so to speak higher, order of ideas, the reticence people have to consider the separation between "the Word and the Spirit", which

lies in our not devoutly attending to the infinite disparateness of an eternal and creative Mind, whose ideas are anterior to their Objects, from Minds whose Images and Thoughts are posterior to the Things, and produced or conditioned by their Objects! (62)

The originating seed he calls, in another note to his readings, "the first Hint of the purpose to be realized", and this hint he shows as developing into what he calls "the Structure or Organ in its most perfect form", thus launching the very words modern criticism uses to describe the process at work in nature and in art, a process whose description Coleridge himself contributed to with astonishing modernity. If nature, he goes on in the same passage is indeed able to handle the process in its utmost complexity, it has to take into account all the most minute components of the wholes it forms, attributing to them the position that is theirs according to the predetermined scheme contained in the seed, which seed contains at the same time the internal principle of the development of the whole. (63)

It is fascinating to observe the extent to which Coleridge's definition of the final organic whole coincides with today's definitions of the concept of structure.

Overlooking the diachronic point of view, with its climactic metaphysical quarrels, I shall stick to the definition of the term "structure" that modern linguistics has made operative, the best definition being, in my opinion, Hjelmslev's which sees the structure as an autonomous entity of internal relations constituted in hierarchies. (64)

Priority is here given to three elements. Being an autonomous entity, it can be considered separately from other structures of the immediate environment and studied per se, even though as an element partaking of a larger whole it will have to be regarded as such, together with the neighbouring wholes with which it builds up something more important. The modern conception of structure is the natural result of a long process which extends from Heraclitus to linguistics via Leibniz's and Kant's conceptions.

As it is above all based upon internal relations, it implies another priority given to relation rather than to elements; or, to be more precise, beyond the importance of the nature of the component elements, it is according to the way they are granted a proper position in the whole that the ultimate figure actually depends.

Finally, the network of internal relations is completed by a hierarchical constraint which makes it dividable into smaller parts, each being in turn analyzable and observable as constitutive of a larger whole.

The three components of the definition, as we shall see, are clearly comprehended in the various descriptions Coleridge offers of the creative power and its effects both in nature and in art.

We already know that the dual power in life aims at maximum individuality in the organisms it forms, in other words, it strives to tear off a definite matter from the undifferentiated mass which, at the lower level, constitutes the reality of the universe. The organism that results from the process is a structure which, I shall postulate, corresponds to the definition

Hjelmslev provides (cf. p. 76). The principle of individuation in an organism is respected when the interdependence of parts causes each part to be both a means and an end, when the greatest interdependence of parts is combined with a like dependence of the whole on its parts, and when the effectiveness of the whole organism comes from an importance of the parts similar to the general importance of the whole, or Coleridge explains, when the effectiveness of the whole "derives its importance as an End from its importance as a Means, relatively to all the parts under the same copula." (55) If the purpose of nature is the generation of individualities, then the individual organisms reach their maximum and their perfection when the parts which make up the whole are themselves a whole. But not only that:

The unity will be more intense in proportion as it constitutes each particular thing a whole of itself; and yet more, again, in proportion to the number and interdependence of the parts, which it unites as a whole. But a whole composed, ab intra, of different parts, so far interdependent that each is reciprocally means and end, is an individual, and the individuality is most intense where the greatest dependence of the parts on the whole is combined with the greatest dependence of the whole on its parts; the first (namely, the dependence of the parts on the whole) being absolute; the second (namely, the dependence of the whole on its parts) being proportional to the importance of the relation which the parts have to the whole, that is, as their action extends more or less beyond themselves. (66)

The image of the tertium aliquid, the ultimate product of the coincidentia oppositorum is now distinct: it is an organic whole of which all the component parts are themselves complete: the wholes, which, according to Heraclitus, are also "not wholes" because they enter a new relationship with the larger components of the figure. As Coleridge insists:

Finally, of individuals, the living power will be most intense in that individual which, as a whole, has the greatest number of integral parts, presupposed in it when, moreover, these integral parts, together with a proportional increase of their interdependence, as parts, have themselves most the character of wholes, in the sphere occupied by them (67)

It is necessary to keep in mind how much the unity of the whole as well as the individuality of the figure depend on the number and quality of the connections between the components, besides the importance of the components as wholes. There is no doubt, Coleridge asserts in a letter to Joseph Cottle, that "one mind could command an unlimited direction over any given number of limbs, provided they were all connected by joint and sinew." (68) Here again, one finds the expression, so often provided, of the parallelism between the universe and the human mind; for Coleridge, who was the supreme conversationalist that all who came in contact with him constantly praised (or, sometimes, deprecated), reasoned organically. This is confirmed by Henry Nelson Coleridge in his Preface to the Table Talk. He presents his father-in-law as exhibiting astonishing intellectual powers in speech. If he was not always easy to follow, it is because, far from speaking in a desultory manner, he spoke according to a rigorous plan, yet one which allowed all types of digressions. Most important of all, however, were the number and accuracy of the logical connections in his discourse. Often did his interlocutors lose the main thread of what he was saying because they failed to perceive the links between the several parts. "However," De Quincey says, "I can assert, upon my long and intimate knowledge of Coleridge's mind, that logic the most severe was as inalienable from his modes of thinking, as grammar from his language." (69)

The outcome of the creative process in nature is indeed a structure, owing to the relative autonomy it is endowed with but even more to the capital function of the interconnected parts which, at the same time are a means and an end, or are in themselves a complete whole while partaking, in an eminent way, of the larger wholes they constitute.

As to such organisms forming a hierarchy, this has already been examined and confirmed. Coleridge describes most emphatically the ladder which, from the lower level of natural organization, that of metals, to the top, man, attributes to each organism not only a definite function in the process but also enables it to symbolize the organism which immediately precedes. That these form a hierarchy is evident from the fact that the lower organisms are still imperfect as individualities, an individuality that only organisms at the upper level come near to achieving. Lower organisms, such as metals, represent the power of individuation at its most primitive level of exertion. Thus,

Of the two counteracting tendencies of nature, namely, that of detachment from the universal life, which universality is represented to us by gravitation, and that of attachment or reduction into it, this and the other noble metals represented the units in which the latter tendency, namely, that of identity with the life of nature, subsisted in the greatest overbalance over the former. It is the form of unity with the least degree of tendency to individuation. (70)

"Nature", in short, "ever consistent with herself, presents us everywhere with harmonious and accordant symbols of her consistent doctrines." (71) On each plane of reality, the lower power is closely related to the one immediately superior, so that they respond to each other so to say naturally. (72) Coleridge expresses this idea indirectly through the translation of a passage from German into English in the marginal notes:

Now can a man have the organ of apprehension for something unless he has the seed of it in himself? That which I am to understand must develop organically in myself; and that which I seem to learn is only nutriment, incitement of the organism. (73)

Against Newton and his "philosophy of death", (74) Coleridge creates the image of a living universe, in which all things respond to each other and of which none can be destroyed without damaging the whole structure. The cosmos is a huge place where space and time have a role to play, each being indispensable to the other. Their precise relationship and the construction they contribute to establish will be examined in the next section, for they set up the very knot which makes of the mind the uppermost locus where the creative power of man is capable of acting, where the contradictory forces at work in the cosmos are both symbolized and actualized in order to produce a new organic whole for which man alone on this earth is responsible.

CHAPTER THREE

LANGUAGE AND THE POETIC POWER

Coleridge, I hope I have demonstrated in Chapter one, conceived of language as much more than only a means of informational communication. He considered the English language, in particular, to be endowed with an expressive force it owed to three elements: the semantic charge of its words, the tremendous possibilities of its internal connections and the link it establishes between cosmos and anthropos, elements which he thought were particularly characteristic of English, on account of its monosyllabism.

Semantically, the English language, more than others, contains the virtualities which will found it as poetic language. Historical circumstances brought it the contributions of the languages of many peoples; it is moreover largely monosyllabic, which, in the eyes of Coleridge's contemporaries and of himself, added considerably to its semantic value. In English we already understand words to comprehend a triple layer of significance (1): meaning, image, passion. I shall assume that they correspond more or less to cognitive (or intellectual or notional) content, figurative content, affective (or emotional) content. Such a statement as

"man walks on two legs" is essentially cognitive, while "your cheeks are roses" is figurative as well as affective (the syntagm contains a metaphor and senses which connote a sentimental appreciation). The configuration they form in a verbal unit, far from being a mere collocation of statically laid semantic envelopes, is on the contrary a lively intermixture made up of the cognitive, figurative and emotional levels at the same time. These are subtly linked by means of logical connections and enhanced by the role they play as intermediary between the two irreducible immanent antagonistic categories language deals with: man and the universe.

What I have attempted in the second chapter was to present a rapid survey of Coleridge's cosmology, a subject otherwise often and exhaustively explored, so as to make available the main structures of the cosmos and of the power at work therein, it being understood that both the structures and the power are to be found in the mental texture of man, as a sort of echo of active nature. Yet if man and the cosmos are irretrievably adversaries or at least antithetical domains, they can be mediated. From the superstitious offerings that primitive men made to the forces of nature up to modern symbolisms, man has felt the necessity to build up bridges between himself and the universe. We know, since Claude Lévi-Strauss, that myth fulfils the purpose of providing a tentative passage between contradictory aspects of the real (2), and elements as different as woman, agriculture or war serve as mediatory objects. So does language: its most outstanding function is perhaps to be "the intermediate something between matter and spirit" (3): Coleridge here uses Dante's caution to drive home a basic notion of his poetics and one he establishes in a different manner when examining how language comes to existence through its encounter with nature. In a letter

he wrote to Thomas Clarkson in 1806, he described the formative effect of things on thoughts, presenting the process as an exchange between nature and the mind, each leaving something to the other and having a transforming impact on the other. Thoughts, he says

we deem the Images and imperfect Shadows of the former [things]. Language seems to mark this process of our minds/Res - Reor. So Thought is the participle of the Past: Thing, derived from the Participle present, or actuality in full and immediate action. - Consequently, all our Thoughts are in the language of the old Logicians inadequate: i.e. no thought which I have of any thing comprizes the whole of that Thing. I have a distinct Thought of a Rose-Tree; but what countless properties and goings-on of that plant are there, not included in my Thought of it? (4)

Coleridge uses a rather enigmatic idiom to express the idea that the relation between a thing and a thought, a natural impression and its verbal counterpart is that of a seal to a stamp. The latter, owing to the fading that takes place during the operation, is less vivid than the former. The reality which is being transcribed by language is trimmed of its more or less numerous and complex attributes in the transference and there remains of it a faded, incomplete, less glaring substance. That language itself should express the intervening operation (the final -ing, in thing, being the mark of the present participle and therefore of action in progress, while thought represents the past participle and -ought the final mark of the past participle of several irregular verbs, generally fundamental ones) is of course interesting, and, what is more, coherent. But more important is the fact that between the operation and the final impact on language, something has been dropped which leaves a floating gap between the two elements. This "inadequacy", as Coleridge calls it, is the inevitable distance between an element of reality and the sign which symbolizes it. For language and the linguistic

signs are nothing but symbols and as such they involve a loss and a gain. Something of the reality symbolized is lost but a new set of values is obtained, and this will serve as a basis to construct a system at once original and capable of overpowering the original system without ever claiming to replace it in the proper sense.

Yet language is a crude mediator, and because of the informational function it fulfils the obligation it has to convey a significance is often purely referential. In order to overcome the referential significance, man feels the need for a system that permits him to soar above the utilitarian function of language, a system based on the structures of language while being superior to it. This function is precisely fulfilled by art. "Now Art," Coleridge says in a fundamental passage of "On Poesy or Art" already quoted, "used collectively for painting, sculpture, architecture and music, is the mediatrix between, and reconciler of, nature and man." (5) The term "reconciler" is explicit and it also illustrates what I have endeavoured to demonstrate in my second chapter. The relationship between man and the universe is one of strife; to bridge the tragic opposition between them, man has to work out something.

This is why, Coleridge thinks, he has to become conscious of his own faculties. He has to realize that his mind is endowed with the qualities or the potentialities of which God makes use, or at least, which are at work in nature, which actually make nature. At the same time he has to understand "the infinite disparateness of an eternal and creative Mind, whose ideas are anterior to their Objects, from Minds whose Images and Thoughts are posterior to the Things, and produced or conditioned by their Objects:" (6) There is all the difference between the original idea from which everything sprang and the idea which, in the mind of man, can in turn create a reality but from materials preexistent to the idea itself. We can better understand what is meant by the words

In this sense nature itself is to a religious observer the art of God; and for the same cause art itself might be defined as of a middle quality between a thought and a thing, or as I said before, the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human. (7)

Art, and hence literature, occupies a middle position between reality and referential language. If language is a symbol, one may infer that art is a symbol too, but also that it possesses characteristics which differentiate it from language.

An important hint of the difference between artistic and non artistic expression is provided in extracts from "On Poesy or Art" and the notebooks which have already afforded observations as to the nature of language.

The so called music of savage tribes as little deserves the name of art for the understanding as the ear warrants it for music. Its lowest state is a mere expression of passion by sound which the passion itself necessitates; - the highest amounts to no more than a voluntary reproduction of these sounds in the absence of the occasioning causes, so as to give the pleasure of contrast, - for example, by the various outcries of battle in the song of security and triumph. (8)

The limit is explicitly described and it is quite obvious that the mental activity of man is involved to a great extent. There is no art when the cause of the expression (the "passion") and the expression itself are concomitant. Undeliberate and unconstrastive, the gestures and cries produced consist merely of a kind of epontaneous catharsis undergone to get rid of the pervading passion (e.g. the fear and anger prevailing in the battle).

Art begins when the emotional element is in absentia and

the sounds produced are actually a re-production at once deliberate and contrastive. The cause is absent while the imitation is real, a reminiscence of the original passion which is thus given a new shape through the entire operation of the mind. Being a renewed production and a product of the mind, it implies two leading mental faculties: the memory and the will. The effect besides, is powerful on account of the contrast between the absent emotion and the mental production which reproduces it. The result is a victory of the reminiscient mind over nature as well as a human reproduction of the antagonism between nature and man which is the primary cause of the discourse. The result is clearly a mediatory act in which the sounds and gesticulations produced (the logos) (9) symbolize the struggle and reduce it verbally. Instead of the spontaneous, unchecked, overpowering flow of emotion provoked by the passion, there takes place a voluntary process of which man alone is the instigator. Instead of the involuntary affective response to a stimulus launched by nature that leaves man without resources other than mechanical gestures and noises, one has a conscious handling of something nature is responsible for but which is mastered by the human mind, shaped anew by man's demiurgic powers, reconsidered and transformed through the medium of language.

If, according to Coleridge - and group Mu would agree to this -, art is mediatory between man and nature, poetry subsumes all arts and therefore its spirit characterizes expressions which use different materials and pass through different senses: the ear (music), the eye (statuary, painting).

The common essence of all consists in the excitement of emotion for the immediate purpose of pleasure through the medium of beauty; herein contra-distinguishing poetry from science, the immediate object and primary purpose of which is truth and possible utility. (10)

We shall return to the opposition between science and art; it is more to the point, at this stage, to consider the features common to all types of art: effect, purpose and medium.

The effect is emotional. Having been mastered by the mind, the passion which is at the origin of the artistic expression has not been eliminated but given a proper structure. The purpose is pleasure, not, as can be the case with science, occasional or as an asset, but fundamental: a catharsis, yet a controlled one, one which has been deliberately provoked. As to the medium, if the materials used by the different arts vary, that which transmits and at the same time matters as well as what it transmits, is common to all: beauty.

One problem arises here, that of the universal value of the poetic and of such abstract notions as that of beauty.

Modern criticism roughly agrees about the presence of the poetic elsewhere than in poetry or literature. Group Mu aver that "what we say about poetry will hold for all forms of literary art insofar as these forms derive from art." (11) More specifically, A.J. Greimas asserts that poeticity is indifferent to the language of its manifestation and can be the central elements in arts such as film and drama but also in dreams and religious rites. (12) Tzvetan Todorov, among contemporary poeticsians, refuses the universalist point of view and devotes a whole book to the question, showing that the notion of literature and that of poetry are closely connected to specific cultures at specific moments and that it would be better to focus on literary genres. Genres can be said to be found everywhere and always, but not literature as such. (13)

For Coleridge, poetry is unequivocally "the regulative idea of all the Fine Arts" (14) and so he provides a distinction between poetry, restricted to the field of language, and poesy to characterize all the other artistic fields concerned with the poetic spirit. (15)

Wherever its realm of manifestation, the poetic can be determined by a number of characteristic features. First, it comes from the mind with a view to master nature. "Poetry also is purely human; for all its materials are from the mind, and all its products are for the mind." (16) The cooperation is absolute between the mind and nature, for

by excitement of the associative power passion itself imitates order, and the order resulting produces a pleasurable passion, and thus it elevates the mind by making its feelings the object of its reflexion. (17)

The mind as well as nature are thus enriched through their mutual operative contact. Not only does nature gain something because it is reflected upon by man but man himself benefits from the operation because he has drawn constructive attention to his own emotions and to the influence nature has over him. (18)

The opposition between cosmos and anthropos is indeed fundamental; it is a generic antagonism involving the brutal, untamed aspect of nature on the one hand, and the civilized, highly reflective human being on the other.

As soon as the human mind is intelligibly addressed by an outward image exclusively of articulate speech, so soon does art commence. But please to observe that I have laid particular stress on the words "human mind," - meaning to exclude thereby all results common to man and all other sentient creatures, and consequently confining myself to the effect produced by the congruity of the animal impression with the reflective

powers of the mind; so that not the thing presented, but that which is re-presented by the thing, shall be the source of the pleasure. (19)

The passage quoted here is essential because it lays in a few words the foundations of Coleridge's mimetic conception of the poetic art. That the result of the process should be a representation and not a presentation establishes in advance the dichotomy so important in his eyes, between copy and imitation. Art is not copying nature but imitating its active process of creation; at the same time, it involves the participation of the mind and of nature itself. That is why it is an image in words, a blending of natural impressions with man's speech. Outward nature serves as a stimulus and induces man to respond, to set in motion the powers of his mind. Nothing is possible without what Coleridge calls the "congruity" of the impressions from reality with the mental powers, producing a bridge between the two. The operation, of course, is not passive; there is undoubtedly a mutual effect, both a modification and a transformation. After the operation, the matter or substance provided by nature will no longer be the same; likewise, man's thoughts and feelings will have been given a new form, a new being.

Coleridge's art, I say, is mimetic. There is nothing original here: from Plato onwards, art has always been considered an imitation of nature.

"The mimetic principle," Group Mu have written, "has exerted too much aesthetic authority not to have corresponded to an artistic practice, which is going on today." (20)

The mimetic principle originated both in Plato and Aristotle. If Plato was the first to mention the word,

the conception that was later to prevail is Aristotle's. Plato saw the poet's work as a counterfeit image of reality, which is itself a mere appearance of the world of Ideas. Genuine imitation of eternal forms was deemed possible by Cicero and Plotinus through short-circuiting the senses, a notion which was adopted by most thinkers from the Renaissance onwards, who described it rather as a process through which poetry draws near to mirroring supra-experimental truths.

Aristotle conceived of art as an imitation of the generic forms present in the phenomena of the sensible world, a notion which was advocated, in the eighteenth century, by Batteux, Hurd, Lessing and others. But he did not separate this view from the more complex idea that the artistic work is an object having a growth like a living organism. As such it is conditioned by its internal logic. (21) Since Aristotle the notion has been prevalent that the work of art is an entity in itself. The Renaissance admitted that the poet is a maker creating his own world (Scaliger, Tasso), that he is the inventor of his world (Sidney, Puttenham). In the eighteenth century, Bodmer and Breitinger described the poem as a heterocosm having an internal coherence. The nineteenth century witnessed a natural development of this conception in the doctrine of art for art's sake. The Kantian heritage came to reinforce the notion: if beauty has no purpose beyond itself, then the poem can exist per se. In the twentieth century, the autotelic nature of the work of art has been focused upon as well by Russian Formalism as by the American New Criticism and structuralism.

Coleridge is more a disciple of Aristotle than of Plato. Poetry, he says in his second lecture on Shakespeare and Milton,

is an art (or whatever better term our language may afford) of representing, in words, external nature and human thoughts and affections, by the production of as much immediate pleasure in parts, as is compatible with the largest sum of pleasure in the whole. (22)

Coleridge's originality, however, lies in the fact that to him the poetic process is analogical to the creative process at work in nature. This leads us straight to his cosmology, which can roughly be outlined as follows:

1. Everything in the universe originates in a seminal principle which extends throughout matter and pervades all things; 2. although one, it is polymorphous; 3. the extension is effected hierarchically, according to a double law: polarity and individuation; 3.a everything struggles through a basic opposition of antagonistic forces 3.b which synthesize, in an attempt toward the maximum individuation 4. so as to escape from their primary state of indifferentiation, into a new whole, an organic structure, made up of the antagonistic forces, yet original.

Analogically, the poet, who possesses adequate mental powers, aims at creating according to similar principles. The result might be asserted as follows:

1. Everything in a work of art proceeds from a seminal idea. 2. This idea pervades the whole, fulfilling the requirement of "unity in multitude", 3.a as regards the poem, there is a struggle, through a fundamental opposition between antagonistic elements, 3.b towards uniqueness, 4. the opposition being synthesized into a new, organic structure, constituted by the original forces yet different.

In this respect, and in this respect only, Coleridge conceives of the poem as of an imitation of the creative

process in nature, as of man being endowed with demiurgic powers that enable him to effect, in a limited way, what God does infinitely and without any limit.

It is now my purpose to show that Coleridge's conception of the poetic process abides by the principles stated above, thus following what he considers the process at work in nature.

It is implicit in Coleridge that the loss of inspiration he experienced after 1810 was imputable to the utter disappearance of personal happiness when his affair with Sara Hutchinson came to a tragic end. Without hope, there could be no joy, and joy was the stimulus to real poetic inspiration. No critic or analyst of Coleridge's poetry has ever underrated the part played by emotions in his art. And indeed, Coleridge himself, faithful in this respect to Wordsworth's opinion in the Preface, says of poetry: "pleasurable excitement is its origin and object" (23). Finding its source in "a state of excitement" (24) it has "intellectual pleasure" as its object. (25) Poetry, therefore, is not merely the spontaneous outburst of feelings one is liable to expect of someone who is emotionally excited, but the deliberate and controlled expression of feelings and thoughts. This accounts for the presentation of poetry as "a rationalized dream dealing [?] about] to manifold Forms our own Feelings, that never perhaps were attached by us to our own personal Selves." (26) This rather sibylline sentence mixes two antithetical words, "rationalized" and "dream", and the oxymoronic effect that results illustrates better than refined demonstrations the paradoxical nature of poetry, its blending of the affective with the intellectual, the spontaneous with the voluntary. It is in the emotions that a kind of pre-kindling element takes form, and without it nothing can happen, but it is in the mind that the process is launched.

One of the best accounts of how the poetic process begins is found in a notebook entry of March 1818. By applying his mind to external nature, the poet actually impresses his consciousness upon it, after first measuring distancing steps from reality to revert to it more effectively. It is here that true imitation takes place. Instead of merely giving back what he has perceived in nature, which, in that case, is sheer copying, the poet reflects upon it, incorporates himself into nature, obtaining through the coordination of the conscious and the unconscious, cosmos and anthropos, the very embodiment of that which is going to pervade the developing structure: the seminal idea. The connection with nature, or, to be more accurate, the blending of the mental powers with nature, implies first that the poet should have apprehended the very essence of what he has settled to be linked to,

not to acquire cold notions, lifeless technical Rules, but living and life-producing Ideas, which contain their own evidence/and in that evidence the certainty that they are essentially one with the germinal causes in Nature, his Consciousness being the focus and mirror of both - for this does he for a time abandon the external real, in order to return to it with a full sympathy with its internal and actual. (27)

For the ideas to become "life-producing" and real counterparts of the generating causes in nature, there must be a correspondence between the poet and the universe: "the substance is and must be in ourselves" and "to know is to resemble." The seminal idea is above all made up of the truly human part which, superior to forms, represents the generic, the universal element whose function is to englobe the elements of nature so as to produce the ultimate structure which is already contained in it from the beginning.

The connecting operation between nature and the mind into an idea is not the artificial addition of the latter to the former but the transformation of one through the other. Nature itself, Coleridge claims, provides forms, that is to say meaningless units (contours, colours, motifs).

Art would or should be the Abridgment of Nature. Now the fullness of Nature is without character as Water is purest without taste, smell or color - but this is the Highest, the Apex, not the whole - and Art is to give the whole ad hominem/hence each step of Nature has its Ideal, and hence too the possibility of a climax up to the perfect Form, of harmonized Chaos. (28)

Once more the explanatory image is an oxymoron, the symbol of the fundamental idea enveloping the essentially different, the antagonistic, the seed ready to evolve into a new whole, made up of the opposed forces yet more than their mere addition.

The poet, consciously or not, acts like God Himself. The influence of Jakob Boehme, as appears from some marginal notes and Biographia Literaria, is felt here, for Coleridge describes the poet's power as proceeding from the mind and pervading that which is about to grow and become an organic structure. It echoes the lines on the divine Sound "which goes forth through the Word, executes the Edict of the Father, which he had outspoken through the Word, and that is the Birth or geniture of the holy Trinity." (29) It is no mere coincidence if, using the image as an exemplification of Boehme's words, Coleridge mentions the triangle as a symbol of the many in the one, of the polymorphous quality of the original principle, and if he declares that he is about to publish "a large volume on the LOGOS, or the communicative intelligence in nature and in man". (30) The poet towers above the mob; he utters sounds and these sounds blend the basic opposites in the universe, generating, as if by a

miracle, a sacred discourse. Logos, anthropos, cosmos: the trisodic model or pattern (31), born in a man's mind and blown out as a counterpart of the universe. No wonder, therefore, that this should be seen as a power:

This power first put in action by the will and understanding and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, controul (laxis effertur habenis) reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities. (32)

He shows the mind itself as a source of power in everything man does.

Is it not deserving of notice, as an especial subject of meditation, that our limbs, in all they do or can accomplish, implicitly obey the dictation of the mind? that this operating power, whatever its name, under certain limitations, exercises a sovereign dominion, not only over our limbs, but over all our intellectual pursuits? The mind of every man is evidently the fulcrum, the moving force, which alike regulates all his limbs and actions; and in which example, we find a strong illustration of the subordinate nature of mere matter. That alone which gives direction to the organic parts of our nature, is wholly mind; and one mind, if placed over a thousand limbs, could, with undiminished ease, control and regulate the whole. (33)

The seminal idea, the mental counterpart of the seminal principle in nature, appears more and more consistently to form a complex whole. It is clearly indissociable from the very notion of antagonistic forces, the components of the idea, and from the notion of pervading power, that which blends and fuses and reunites into a new whole.

More important, perhaps, than the antagonistic elements and the seminal idea is the power that fuses and unifies. What this power is is well known. One of the simpler definitions Coleridge provides, of poetry and the poetic power, is in the fourteenth chapter of Biographia Literaria:

The power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. (34)

The elements we have encountered so far are all here: nature and the mind, power and modification. Imagination, obviously, modifies. As such it is a power, and even though the poet is not the only individual to possess it, he nevertheless possesses a capital portion of it.

It is not my purpose to develop the subject of imagination, with its two parts and its opposition to, or rather distinction from, fancy. All this has been minutely described and belongs to the commonplace about Coleridge. I shall practically overlook the primary imagination - which is common to all human beings, and consists in the recreation in the mind of reality as it is perceived through the senses - and shall focus on the secondary imagination, which belongs to the poet only. (35)

The secondary imagination, one reads in a notebook entry, is the

power of modifying one image or feeling by the precedent or following ones -- So often after afterwards to be illustrated that a present I shall speak only of - one of its effects - namely, that of combining many circumstances into one moment of thought to produce that ultimate end of human Thought, and human Feeling, Unity and thereby the reduction of the Spirit to its Principle and Fountain, who alone is truly one. (36)

From this passage we get to know what imagination modifies, how it does so and by what means. We know that it operates on images and feelings, that it combines, that it produces unity. It is actually possible to represent the work of imagination by a diagram (cf. Table

1). The first lesson this diagram teaches is that imagination, so far a philosophical notion, has become a concrete notion, a power which effects a number of operations one can determine and which operate on specific items of reality. Passing on from the theoretical aspects of Coleridge's definitions of the poetic language to their application to the language itself, it should be possible to penetrate gradually into the reality of language. Essential now is the approach to the phenomenon of poetic language: how does "ordinary" language depart from its ordinariness and become "poetic"?

Table 1				
IMAGINATION				
characteristics	action	objects	modes	result
power energy	modifies struggles	images variety	combines connects blends fuses forces (many into) brings to- gether	ONE (NESS) UNITY Rules: growth production
one image/ feeling	modifies dissolves diffuses dissipates	many im- ages/feel- ings	(to idealize to unify to recreate	
vital		inert dead		

Five features of the poetic process are set forth in the diagram about imagination:

- 1) Imagination is a power, an energy, but more concretely, it is an element in the mind (image or feeling) which operates upon other elements.
- 2) If the main activity of imagination is to modify, it does so by destroying then reconstructing, or, more simply, by taking something from an object and then building it anew.
- 3) The mode of operation of the power is essentially connective; it provides a logical link between elements according to a pre-conceived plan.
- 4) The result of the operation is a new construction characterized by its unity.
- 5) Like a plant, the construction is organic: it is the outcome of a process and as such characterized by its growth.

We are entitled, manifestly, to reason analogically, since Coleridge, as has been demonstrated, pointed out this type of logical operation when dealing with the creative process. Hence, analogy enables us to draw a parallel between the protagonists of the process in nature and in poetry: God - antagonistic forces (nature)/Man (poet) - opposite forces (cosmos-anthropos) (poetry).

If one intends to leave the domain of theoretical reasoning and the field of philosophical speculation, in

order to enter the sphere of concrete application to language of the rather abstract delineations established above, it is capital that we follow Coleridge not in the principles everybody has more or less heard of, but in his own attempts to apply what he thought poetic language consists of.

Let us revert once again to the invaluable text of "On Poesy or Art" to get a first clue as to the nature of the synthesis which it is the function of imagination to exert. Art, the text says, is

the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation; colour, form, motion, and sound, are the elements which it combines, and it stamps them into unity in the mould of a moral idea.
(37)

The poetic process is here described in a short yet complete survey of its different stages: the seminal idea in which the whole process originates (the "moral idea"); its formative function, since it is the seminal idea which determines what is to come ("mould"); the antagonistic powers to be connected: the substance of content provided by nature ("colour, form, motion, and sound") and the substance of expression as well as the form of content and expression supplied by the mind, which Coleridge expresses as being "the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation". What the process actually involves is implied by the word "infusing" and the oxymoron "humanizing nature". Somehow elements of the discourse bearing a direct connection to man penetrate elements pertaining to nature. Or, using the terminology I have already referred to, units indexing on cosmos are penetrated by units indexing on anthropos. The operation

is rendered explicitly by Coleridge in many passages. Thus about Shakespeare's historical drama, he remarks that it is "poetical", for it "infuses a principle of life and organization into the naked facts, and makes them all the framework of an animated whole" (38) One is inevitably reminded of Aristotle: poetry is superior to history inasmuch as it goes beyond the mere observable, inalienable facts, and creates a world of its own. Poetic drama - for such is Shakespeare's historical drama - enhances the historic facts by making them pregnant with elements of a purely verbal import. Widely applied, the principle qualifies the poetic process at large. In a notebook entry of March 1808, Coleridge says the poetic power "acts by impressing the stamp of humanity, of human feeling, over insinuate Objects" (39), a distinction which marks the poet as a shaper, a giver of form, a supreme craftsman endowed with the power to modify the inner structure of things. (40)

The two images - of the poet as an infuser of humanity and as a giver of shape - are found conjointly and abundantly throughout Coleridge's writings. In his tenth Lecture on Dante, he praises the Italian's power: "He thus takes the thousand delusive forms of a nature worse than chaos, having no reality but from the passions which they excite, and compels them into the service of the permanent." (41) Although the prompting passes from the mind through the elements of nature, the impact is reciprocal.

The images in Dante are not only taken from obvious nature, and are all intelligible to all, but are ever conjoined with the universal feeling received from nature, and therefore affect the general feelings of all men. (42)

As a shaper, on the other hand, the poet imposes a form upon matter. Taking the substance of language (content and expression), he stamps a form on it.

The Substance is fact; but the form is the Historian's work as an Artist - his choice being determined by the particular purpose for which, or the View, in which he presented the facts. (43)

Arguing about "the nature & laws of historical Composition in Ancient Times", Coleridge regards it in a light similar to Shakespeare's mode of composition; besides, the singular identity of terminology with our own time's is worthy of note.

One goes a step further in the description of the process on the last page of chapter XIV of Biographia Literaria. Coleridge quotes from Sir John Davies and establishes a parallel between the workings of the soul and of the poetic power. The three quatrains involve notions on which I have already commented, such as the fact that poetry idealises, refines, elevates from the lower level of indifferentiation in the scale of beings to the uppermost level of differentiation, when the resulting body is no longer lost in the mass of universal matter but individualized. Of more consequence, however, is the minute description of the process which "Turns/Bodies to spirit by sublimation strange".

Following Coleridge's own method, I have applied desynonymization to the words which determine a physical or a chemical process, which all denote one capital stage in the poetic process. Thus "sublimation" (Lat. sublimare) designates a raising in the air, an elevation, an exaltation which meets Coleridge's severest requirements as to the purpose and effect of poetry; but it also designates a transformation, like the operation which transforms a solid into vapour. Poetry is again a shaping of a given matter into something new, a passage from one state to another. It does so - the detail is essential - chiasmically. Here, the Heracleitean concept

of fire as both destroyer and renewer adds up the polar dimension: the transformation occurs through a clash of antagonistic forces, a recurrent succession of change and regularity, of disruption and restoration. The principle of symmetry is introduced (all things go to, and are generated from, flame), which is going to play an important part in the whole process.

The next word to designate a physical or chemical process, "converts", from Latin convertere, implies a reversion, a turning upside down, but it also means transform into one's proper self. The imaginative power impregnates, seizes upon matter to turn it to the form chosen.

Finally, the poetic power "abstracts" form from matter and gets at the quintessence of things. Latin abstrahere points to "a pulling so as to separate or isolate a property" or matter, considered as a mere chaotic flux (resulting from the preparatory work of the secondary imagination, whose function it is to chaotize substances), ridden of the particularities which relate it to the undifferentiated mass of matter generic items in isolation. It is this abstracting from matter which provides a basis for the spiritualization of the process, a spiritualization Coleridge describes in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison":

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 yet he makes
Spirits perceive his presence. (44)

It is from observation of nature and under the influence of its very forms (it would be more convenient to say "substances") that matter is perceived no longer as an

unrefined flux of impressions, however ordinate these may seem, but as pure spirituality: a gathering of generic entities to be reshaped. From it all, the poet draws a quintessence, the fifth or subtle substance hidden in bodies, isolates it from other thicker elements, from the naked facts nature provides to the active imagination. The imagination properly trans-forms, i.e. changes the forms of objects into its own form, one that it impresses from the inside (nature humanized).

The "harmonized chaos" (45) actually achieved by the exchange between cosmos and anthropos does not, however, occur on an equal footing: "the reconciliation of the external with the internal" (46) witnesses the domination of the latter. A poet, as Wordsworth does in The Prelude, is anxious about "informing the senses from the mind, and not compounding a mind out of the senses." (47) Poetry is a tendency to reconcile the irreconcilable, an attempt to match passion, which tends towards disorganization, with order or the power to organize, the product of this at first sight unnatural union being an ordered disorder. (48)

The oxymoronic character of the synthesis of cosmos and anthropos still leaves us in the dark as regards the mode of the procedure at the level of language itself. We know that the operation involves a mediatory act between the two opposites but it remains for us to determine exactly how this takes place.

The reiteration of Coleridge's statements about poetic language makes it easy to understand which pieces of the skeleton he considered to be the main articulations of his system, even though he never intended to develop any system whatever. When insisting, for instance, on desynonymization, asserting repeatedly that there is no absolute synonym in English (49), he leaves us in no

doubt as to the position desynonymization ought to occupy in a primary approach of the phenomenon of language and a fortiori of poetic language. When evolving as accurately as he does the gradual differences between the words "gladness, pleasure, happiness and bliss" (50), he clearly points out the inadequacy of the plane of the manifestation of language taken as the only area where an analysis of poetry is to apply. If the four words can be said to have a common significance: "satisfaction", they are made distinct from one another through subtler elements. Coleridge most certainly conceived of the need to consider a level at once below the degree of the manifestation of language but also superior to that degree because fundamental to it and apt to found a suitable instrument for the poetics to come.

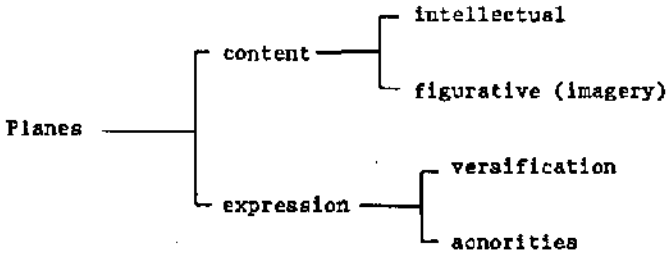
Coleridge's intuition, or perhaps precise conception, of an infralinguistic level - however remote the terminology he used to describe it and the articulatory description itself from the ones in use in our own time - cannot be doubted from the many passages that deal with the topic.

One of the safest procedures consists in examining one passage dealing with Coleridge's theoretical considerations and, following the latter, their application to a concrete case.

In chapter XV of Biographia Literaria, Coleridge analyses the promises of genius in Shakespeare's early works Venus and Adonis and Lucrece. He considers successively the versification and the sonorities, the imagery and the intellectual content of the poems. This corresponds to the division of language into the two planes of expression and content. Both planes are interrelated by the organic requirement, namely the necessity to adapt the formal structures to the seminal principle, to the predominant project which is at the basis of the poem.

and not the other way round. Coleridge points out "the perfect sweetness of the versification; its adaptation to the subject". (51) Likewise, the sonorities are "not the result of an easily imitable mechanism" but bear witness to a true sense of musical delight, which is the mark of genius. (52) At the level of content, the imagery must be faithful to nature and avoid the clever "combination or intertexture" a man of talent can achieve instead of being the genuine consequence of "the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling". (53) Intellectually, also, the poems show "depth and energy of thought": the creative power and the intellectual energy are two streams merging in one current.

We are now in a position to draw a first picture of the planes, levels and units Coleridge considers in a text:



Obviously, the organic requirement is valid on both planes; this corresponds to the postulate of Jakobson, Greimas, Group Mu and other modern poetics: the planes of content and expression are isomorphic. On the content plane, we recognize two elements of the three which constitute the semantic charge of a word: the intellectual or cognitive aspect and the figurative aspect. On the expression plane, we find what Greimas terms the conventional matrix (versification) and the other suprasegmental modulations (sonorities). (54) If,

on the other hand, one follows Group Mu's divisions, calling metabole any of the fundamental operations on language, one obtains the two operations exerted on content: metasememe and metalogism (imagery can belong to either), and the two operations exerted on expression: metaplasm (versification and sonorities) and metataxis (logical connections: not mentioned explicitly here but deducible from the larger Coleridgean context).

We now have an instrument it should be possible to use when following Coleridge in his application of his own theories, as is the case with the couple of lines he provides as an example of the poetic:

Behold yon row of pines, that shorn and bow'd
Bend from the sea-blast, seen at twilight eve. (55)

In such a descriptive poem, he says, provided the rhythm were changed, the words "would be equally in their place in a book of topography, or in a descriptive tour." In order to resemble genuine poetry, it ought to be transformed to this:

Yon row of bleak and visionary pines,
By twilight-glimpse discerned, mark! how they flee
From the fierce sea-blast, all their tresses wild
Streaming before them. (56)

In our intention to understand what actually happened to favour the transformation of the lines from what I shall call for convenience's sake "non poetry" to poetry, we are entitled to apply to the second set of lines two analytical patterns.

The first pattern consists of the division into planes as established on the previous page. The second is based on the fundamental operation which reads as "nature humanized" or, as stated again here, "when a human and

intellectual life is transferred to them [thoughts and images] from the poet's own spirit." (57)

Let us deal with expression first. The conventional matrix, which usually comprehends such devices as rhymes and assonances, is represented by repetitions: diphthong [ai] in "pines", "twilight-glimpse" and "wild" or vowel [i:] in "blesk", "flee", "fierce", "ses-blast" and "atreaming". The diphthong characterizes the static heaviness of the trees and contrasts it with the flight prompted by the assaulting storm. Sonorities like alliterations should indeed index on the conventional matrix too, or, using Mu's conception, on metaplasms. Alliterations play an important part, for they contribute to the effect produced, by which, Coleridge says, "you seem to be told nothing, but to see and hear everything." (58) After the separating exclamation mark, the succession of [f] and [s] sounds suggests the swiftness and violence of the wind chasing the slapping houghs.

But if we consider, as seems to be advocated by Coleridge, that expression, although important, is there to serve the purpose actualized by content, it is the latter which predominates. The general pattern applicable in the circumstances is the synthesis of the oxymoronic figure "humanizing nature". The process of desynonymization emphasized by Coleridge appeals to the process of segmentation of the discourse by which the level of manifestation is distinguished from premanifestation, which in turn has to be subdivided into the two surface and deep sub-levels. Taking only content into account, one obtains the figure:

MANIFESTATION	lexemes
PREMANIFESTATION . Surface . Deep	<pre> graph TD lexemes --> sememes sememes --> semes </pre>
Levels	Units

The process here consists therefore in transferring human semes into lexemes indexing on cosmos. Cosmos is represented by the trees and the sea-blast standing in opposition.

I refer to A.J. Greimas and J. Courtés in their Sémiotique (59) and consider that the manifestation of discourse implies a semiosis, that is to say an operation consisting of a relation of presupposition between the form of expression and the form of content (reciprocal), an operation which constitutes the sign. The sign or lexeme comes into existence when its immanent form, anterior to semiosis, the sememe, which contains the potential layers of significance out of which a specific layer, or several layers, are to be selected so that the discourse shall pass on from significance to meaning (from a state of indefiniteness due to the range of possible meanings to a state of definiteness owing to the selection operated) becomes realised through its manifestation. So as to be able to select a definite meaning out of the potentialities of significance, it is necessary, especially as regards poetic discourse, to separate the two planes of the discourse and to consider them in isolation.

A lexeme, therefore, before being articulated as such, forms a configuration made up of a number of sememes, each sememe being in turn composed of a number of semes. Desynonymization, in Coleridge's acceptation, can be described as the necessary semic analysis which, alone, is likely to enable the reader to select a proper meaning.

In the lines mentioned here, according to Coleridge's theories, we can expect the lexemes indexing on /cosmos/ to be "penetrated" by a number of semes indexing on /anthropos/, the latter constituting the deep level of lexemes occupying a position of reciprocal relation with the lexemes indexing on /cosmos/. It is possible to obtain the following picture as far as the prevalent lexemes "pines" and "sea-blast" are concerned:

PINES	SEA-BLAST
bleak visionary flee tresses wild	fierce

The semic analysis of the lexemes qualifying "pines" and "sea-blast" produces the following results:

- BLEAK: a. 2 semes attributed to the weather
(cold, cheerless)
b. 1 seme attributed to a place (bare)
c. 1 seme attributed to a person (dreary)

The seme "dreary" indexes on /human/, or at least /animate/, hence on /anthropos/.

- VISIONARY:** a. several semes related to the visual
(unreal, spectral, fanciful or unpractical
view, etc)
b. although a relates to /human/ or at least
/animate/ exclusively, other semes point
even more specifically to /anthropos/ :
speculative, dreamy, imaginative.
- FLEE:** a. escape, run away, avoid = /anthropos/
b. flow away, e.g. time (→ anthropos)
- TRESSES:** a. plait or braid of the hair of the head,
long lock of hair (usually of a woman) =
/anthropos/
b. long leafy shoots or tendrils =
/vegetable/ (cosmos)
- FIERCE:** essentially idea of violence; qualifies
people as well as natural elements = /cosmos/
and /anthropos/.

Poetic discourse, it appears, tends to the opaque. The
lexemes "pines" and "sea-blast", which, in an "ordinary"
context read on the unequivocal isotopy /inanimate/ or
/cosmos/, undergo an operation which "shakes" or
"unsteadies" the monosemous meaning issuing from the
familiar context in which they are used by the specific
relationship to which they are submitted through the
poet's will. The contrast, however, is clearly marked
between the lexeme "sea-blast", which is weakly qualified
by the isotopy /anthropos/, and the lexeme "pines",
qualified by four lexemes which are made up of several
sememes:

BLEAK	:	S1	weather
		S2	place
		S3	human
VISIONARY	:	S1	human
FLEE	:	S1	time
		S2	human
TRESSES	:	S1	human
	:	S2	vegetable

The only seme common to all lexemes is "human"; this allows us to select the sememe corresponding to "human" and thus to read the discourse metaphorically. The lexeme "pines", justified to a dual reading under the isotopy /vegetable/ and the isotopy /human/, becomes invested with a semantic charge which spreads a polysemy over the lines; it enriches the poem with a new dimension. The basic image of trees bending under the fierce blowing of a sea-wind changes to the powerful conjuring up of huge human beings, half-men, half-women, looking more like witches than mere humans, endeavouring to escape, perhaps in vain, from the staggering blows of an infuriated giant representing nature itself personified. The protagonists even rise to the mythical dimension of personifications of man and nature in their eternal struggle, as seems to be suggested by the semes "violence" common to the "sea-blast" and to the "pines" (wild, fierce).

The impression of unsuccessful flight from the danger of the sea is reinforced by the syntactic structure of the poem. The exclamation mark after the imperative "mark" (particularly forceful) sets free an uninterrupted flow which, with the help of the alliterations, suggests a running away. The metataxis here consists of run-on lines or enjambments, the function of which, Leech states, is to set up "a tension between the expected pattern and the pattern actually occurring." (60)

The above presentation calls for a number of commentaries. As regards expression, it is of course too early to assert that Coleridge sees it as I do; however, it is already clear that in his opinion, expression played an important part. First, because we know that no item in a poem can escape the organic requisite, namely that it is not artificial but necessarily linked to the

other constituents and to the whole. Secondly, it is a fact of observation that what I affirm about expression in this short poem really takes place and is no chance occurrence.

The separate role of the two planes, analysable as such although they cannot be regarded except as co-occurring in the discourse, has to be connected to a wider view of what is subsumed and what happens in the lines examined.

If we keep in mind the notion of concentration which seems so important to Coleridge, a notion which today might be called semantic charge or correspond to the double concept of economy and density of meaning, we are indeed right in analysing the content of the lines as we have done. The poem constitutes a micro-universe. This instrumental concept enables the analyst to account for the totality of the poetic space by articulating it into categories and sub-categories. Syntagmatically, the micro-universe finds its expression by generating a discourse, the connection between the discourse and the micro-universe being effected through isotopies.

If we try to apply this scheme: isotopies - micro-universa - discourse, to the lines here, this is what can be obtained:

1. The two lexemes which stand out are "pines" and "sea-blast". This entitles us to suppose them part of a set of lexical units subsumed by a structural organization, in other words a semantic field. (61)
2. The semic analysis, which aims at accounting for the semantic organization of a semantic field and operates taxinomically, determines the paradigmatic organization of the linguistic facts of the poem on the semantic plane. In order to do so, it established distinctions by means of relevant features such as the opposition of semes and constituents.
3. The lines observed here single out a double paradigmatic organization: "pines" and its qualifiers, "sea-blast" and its qualifiers. Namely:

"pines" : bleak
 visionary
 flee
 tresses (wild)

"sea-blast: fierce

4. The semic distribution opens the two classes to the following isotopies (62):

"pines" : i1 /vegetable/
 i2 /human/

"sea-blast: i /nature/

This gives a micro-universe in which the constituents subdivide globally into two paradigmatic classes ("pines" and "sea-blast") which index on two isotopies, one which is deprived of ambiguity ("sea-blast" = /nature/), the other which leads to an ambivalence ("pines" = /vegetable/ + /human/). (63) Although the ambiguity adds expressive power to the whole, the "humanization" of the lexeme "pines" stands out.

5. But this is not enough to build up a discourse. There must be a junction of the isotopies which provides the underlying substance of the text. Here it is violence.
6. It is now possible to present a tabular reading of the lines as discourse:

Semantic Field		Micro - universe I
pinet	sea-blast	
Semic Analysis		
bleak visionary flee tresses	fierce	
Isotopies		
(vegetable) human	nature	
Discourse II		
Man vs violence	Nature	

7. Thus the seminal principle, which reads: "Man and Nature are opposed in an eternal and violent strife", expands throughout the discourse. The discourse is therefore poetic according to Coleridge's criteria because:

- 7.1 We have a deliberate re-production of an event the poet was able to observe (trees bending under the violent blows of a storm coming from the sea).
- 7.2 The re-production is contrastive, for the discourse does not produce the event as it is occurring but re-produces it in absentia.
- 7.3 The event itself, which is natural, is re-shaped by the poet's mental powers. The "naked facts" of nature, manifested as forms (pines as rows, floating boughs), colours (twilight-glimpse), motion (boughs blown away) and sound (the fierce sea-blast), are modified, forced and fused into a unity, a

new something, a structure. The substantial flux represented by the mere natural picture is chaoticized and reconstructed.

- 7.4 The moral idea (seminal principle) - man and nature opposed in eternal strife - changes the natural spectacle as well as the "ordinary" (purely denotative content) meaning and structure of words to something else.
- 7.5 The process is mimetic inasmuch as it imitates nature in its creative function; it synthesises the antagonistic forces at work in the universe: anthropos and cosmos into a new whole, i.e. the discourse. The *synthesis* has been effected through the humanization of nature, or the penetration by *semes* indexing on /anthropos/ of *lexemes* indexing on /cosmos/.

The allegations above need to be sustained all the more because there seems to be a wide gap between the metalanguage attached to the description of Coleridge's own demonstration (explicit in the theories displayed, implicit in the lines examined) and the language of the demonstration itself. And first of all: does the seminal principle really have to pervade the whole discourse? And if so, does it really do so through what is termed today isotopies?

Coleridge makes it clear that what distinguishes Shakespeare from other playwrights of a lesser quality, such as Beaumont and Fletcher, is the fact that "in the Shakespearian drama there is a vitality which grows and evolves itself from within, - a key note which guides and controls the harmonies throughout." This "key note" is obviously a certain something which invades the plays, something unapprehensible and yet manifest, therefore not perceptible at the level of the "visible" discourse, something at once more subtle and subsuming the whole.

What is "Lear"? - It is storm and tempest - the thunder at first grumbling in the far horizon, then gathering around us, and at length bursting in fury over our heads, - succeeded by a breaking of the clouds for a while, a last flash of lightning, the closing in of night, and the single hope of darkness! And "Romeo and Juliet?" - It is a spring day, gusty and beautiful in the morn, and closing like an April evening with the song of the nightingale; - whilst "Macbeth" is deep and earthy, - composed to the subterranean music of a troubled conscience, which converts everything into the wild and fearful! (64)

The isotopic function of the images in Shakespeare's plays requires more than a superficial comment. Images are to be read on several isotopies, actually on the layers which depart from the first knot of meaning likely to open on another level than the immediately denotative. Such forks often intervene at the very beginning; thus in Macbeth: in the very first scene, the witches exclaim:

Fair is foul, and foul is fair (65)

thereby announcing the major isotopy of the play: the values inverted, the opposition between the visible, which is mere appearance, and the invisible, the secret, the deep, which is troubled and foul. The gap between the surface and the deep levels of Macbeth's conscience, and indeed of the prevalent mood in the play, reeks of the false, of fake, of the unavowable. The leading semes express darkness and night; they are the pervading feature of the world, and "what Macbeth perceives in the world about him pertains to himself as well." (66)

Likewise in King Lear; the whole play is subsumed by the isotopies /dark/ and /wild/. From the start Lear admits that he has summoned his daughters and witnesses for "we shall express our darker purpose". (67) The play is full of images about the night, Hecate, darkness and devils. The second isotopy, /wild/, meaning anger, disorganized,

unnatural, mad, is launched ever since the King's wrath against Cordelia and culminates in the second scene of the third act.

The question of the key note is developed more extensively as regards Romeo and Juliet.

A unity of feeling pervades the whole of his plays. In "Romeo and Juliet" all is youth and spring - it is youth with its follies, its virtues, its precipitancies; it is spring with its odours, flowers, and transiency: - the same feeling commences, goes through, and ends the play. The old men, the Capulets and Montagues, are not common old men, they have an eagerness, a hastiness, a precipitancy - the effect of spring. With Romeo his precipitate change of passion, his hasty marriage, and his rash death, are all the effects of youth. With Juliet, love has all that is tender and melancholy in the nightingale, all that is voluptuous in the rose, with whatever is sweet in the freshness of spring, but it ends with a long deep sigh, like the breeze of the evening. This unity of character pervades the whole of his dramas (68)

What I choose to call iteration of sameness (or isotopy,) is expressed by Coleridge when he describes Mercutio, as: "the whole world was, as it were, subject to his law of association." Content and expression partake of the same drift to the unique purpose of the text; or, as Coleridge puts it, "all things become his [Mercutio's] servant for the purpose: all things tell the same tale, and sound in unison." (69)

This raises several questions, and first of all whether what takes place in the process resembles what has been described. Is it not tempting to apply a posteriori a model to a discourse which in any case is what it is and cannot be altered? For after all, in the majority of cases it is not possible to compare the result of the process with some sort of flat pattern of the discourse before it was submitted to the process itself. But precisely, Coleridge provides us with an ideal set of

models: one before the process was applied to it and one after it has been dealt with by the poet's powers. In the couple of lines which are to be submitted to the transformation, we are merely given an insipid description of a scene anyone might behold in nature, deprived of any "intellectual" sub-meaning other than the immediately denotative: "i can see trees bending before the wind blowing from the sea". Beyond the fact that the arrangement imitates that of versified passages and the subordinate clause is interrupted by a tmesis, no element suggests anything but what appears at first reading. "Pines" indexes on nothing but /vegetable/, "sea-blast" on nothing but /meteorological phenomenon/ and no notion of /human/, /violent/ or /flight/ is likely to be induced. It is only after the transformation that the trees take on that human shape which gives them the appearance of shabby beings fleeing in awe before an element of the universe seemingly endowed with a mysterious overpowering energy.

The second question - if we assume that the very nature of poetic discourse consists of the iteration of identical structures (semantic, syntactic, morphological), the iteration itself conferring upon the text a unity of meaning - is whether our assertion that the iterativeness of such structures is actually traceable on both planes (content and expression) and furthermore whether expression is here to prop up content or has an identity of its own.

That the isotopies of content should exist is unquestionable: the evidence I have provided undoubtedly justifies the leading lexemes "pines" and "sea-blast" to be indexed on /cosmos/ and /anthropos/. Although the problem of how the mediation between them is effected has not yet been tackled, I think I can designate the same "violence" as affording a link between the lexemes. The

seme itself opens the text on a series of sub-meanings which reinforce the effect of the main one. The important idea of attempted escape from the onslaught of the sea, the dual notion of heavy, powerless awkwardness on the part of the trees as compared to the swiftness of the wind, all these are reinforced by the isoplasms (alliterations, assonances) and the isotaxes (run-on line) of the text. (70)

As to the delicate subject of the statute of isotopies of expression, whether such isotopies are a necessary condition of the homogeneity of the discourse of merely additional structures, it is indispensable to consult Coleridge himself. In the first case, however, we must not forget that the two planes are supposedly independent and follow a logic of their own; in the second, the implication is that expression is strongly related, traditionally, to rhetoric.

Group Mu consider that metaboles, i.e. operations on language, are of four basic types: metaplasms and metataxes (expression), metasemes and metalogisms (content), and intervene at three levels: infralinguistic, elementary, complex. Metaplasms deal with the morphological aspect of linguistic units and are rarely relevant at the infralinguistic level (phemes and formal characteristics of graphemes) in poetry. Even if one considers the four basic operations (suppression, adjunction, suppression-adjunction and permutation), they scarcely matter as far as the poetic discourse is concerned. They are much more important at the elementary level, dealing with phonemes and up to morphemes and syllables, the leading metabole here, and one particularly favoured by Coleridge, being archaism (suppression-adjunction). The level generally considered, however, the complex level, covers what is usually meant by versification: metre, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, etc.

Tzvetan Todorov (71) has divided the theories about poetry into four main kinds: verbal, pragmatic, semantic and syntactic. Verbal theories consider that versification rules constitute the essential of poetic discourse; yet most commentators on language and poetry consider versification a mere subsidiary function in the process. Neither Plato nor Cicero had ever regarded the poet as being a mere versifier, and Sidney describes *versus* as "being but an ornament and no cause to poetry". (72)

He insists again that "it is not rhyming and versing that maketh poesy" (73) just as, in eighteenth-century theories, the general trend will be toward a rejection of mere adornments, verbal playing or "false wit", such as were attacked by Dryden in Mac Flecknoe or in the Preface to Annus Mirabilis. A clearer understanding of what versification is supposed to do is provided by this statement by Pope, namely that "the sound must be an echo to the sense". (74) In Batteux, who also emphasized the inadequacy of the poet and the versifier, one can perhaps find the origin of Coleridge's representation of metre as the extraneous part of a poem: the bark to the tree. (75) For German Romanticism, skilfulness in manipulating verse, metre and musicality are not enough to qualify the true poet and musicality must be intrinsically part of the thought which pervades the whole composition. The entire tradition, from the nineteenth century onward, from Shelley to Yeats and from T.S. Eliot to contemporary theoreticians, has stuck to this very notion, the tendency, after the 1920's or the 1930's, being even to overlook metre as a subsidiary element.

Coleridge, of course, did not diverge from tradition. Moreover, he places himself in the Aristotelian tradition as regards his explanation of the origin of metre.

Aristotle viewed rhythm and melody as an imitation of passion (76) while Coleridge, rejecting the idea that poetry should consist of mere invention or harmonious versification (77), includes his theory of versification in the emotional origin of the whole poetic process. Already Quintilian stated that rhythm is a natural tendency in man, and that it is endowed with some secret power; thus even poor words can gain strength and vigour through an appropriate syntactic and rhythmical arrangement. (78)

In a notebook entry of 1805, Coleridge admits that

'Tis one source of mistakes concerning the merits of Poems that to those read in youth men attribute all that praise which is due to Poetry in general, merely considered as select language in metre. (79)

Yet metre provides satisfaction because it joins variety with uniformity. Coleridge confirms here the paradoxical nature of poetry, a paradox which solves itself if by "variety" is understood that poetry is polymorphous and if by "uniformity" is understood iteration of identical structures. Now among the characteristics of versification, most of which even today are controversial, there is at least one which is not: the principle of isochronism, or, Leech says, the supposition "that on some level of analysis, an utterance in that language can be split into segments which are in some sense of equal duration." (80) The notion of isochronism serves us as a confirmation of the isoplasms we found in Coleridge's lines about pines and the sea-blast.

This being established, at least superficially, we can now pass on to Coleridge's view of the origin and function of metre. He treats the subject in some detail in chapter eighteen of Biographia Literaria, saying that

this I would trace to the balance in the mind effected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion. It might be easily explained likewise in what manner this salutary antagonism is assisted by the very state which it counteracts; and how this balance of antagonists became organized into metre (in the usual acceptation of that term) by a supervening act of the will and judgement, consciously and for the foreseen purpose of pleasure. (81)

Beyond the fact that the principle of polarity applies here too - passion remembered is mastered and turned to organized energy by judgement and will - Coleridge's explanation raises the problem of the effect of organized passion and the very structure of verse. And above all, there is the delicate question of the clash between what Leech terms "the ideally, quasi-mathematical pattern called METRE, and the actual rhythm the language insists on, sometimes called the 'PROSE RHYTHM'." (82) Quoting from Yeats's A General Introduction for My Work, Leech adequately poses the problem of whether to prefer the scansion of the folk-singer, with its effect of charm and mysterious, ritual fascination, or the spontaneous expression of prose rhythm.

Coleridge does not of course ask the question in such definite terms, nor does he answer it directly. The only thing of which we can be certain is that he was aware of the distinction, even though he mentioned the subject in a way which sounds peculiar. In his Preface to "Christabel" he writes:

I have only to add that the metre of Christabel is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless, this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion.

His claim that "counting in each line the accents, not the syllables" should be "a new principle" is rather perplexing, for, G.S. Fraser reminds us:

The earliest metre in English and the most natural to the language is pure stress metre. Lines in pure stress metre have an equal number of stresses, primary stresses of the sense-stress sort, but not necessarily an equal number of syllables and they do not divide into feet. (83)

Indeed, the alliterative characteristic of "Christabel", its stylized rhythm, at once supple like spontaneous speech and beaten as though in a ritual celebration, makes it nearer Anglo-Saxon poetry and Middle English alliterative poetry than Neo-Classical poetry. Humphry House is right to "call attention [...] to the part which metrical experiment played in Coleridge's life" (84) and his writings are full of studies of other poets' metrical compositions. Thus he devotes a few pages to "the scientific construction of the metre of the 'Faerie Queene'" and emphasizes that "one of Spenser's arts is that of alliteration". (85) Numerous are the pages dealing with the respective qualities of dactyls and trochees, comparing the effect of lines which alternate long and short words with the various feet available. It is true that "along with many others from Harvey and Spenser to Clough and Robert Bridges, he was interested in the experimental adaptation of classical Greek and Latin metres to English verse" and, Humphry House remarks, "to write hexameters or hendecasyllables acted on him like the use of a rosary on the ideal Catholic, providing a focus for distractions so that the heart-felt stream of prayer might flow." (86) But Coleridge was perhaps the first to assign metre the position which is actually due to it.

"To read Dryden, Pope, etc, you need only count syllables; but to read Donne you must measure time, and discover the time of each word by the sense of passion." (87) Here, as in the Preface to "Christabel", Coleridge's comment on metre is related to the word passion. F.H. Fogle observes that

His terminology makes frequent reference to passion. Though it is most evident in Coleridge's treatment of Shakespeare, it might well be said that all his literary criticism is an attempt to explain the language of passion, or "the logic of passion", and its relations with and differences from the language of ordinary logic and exposition.

--And he has no difficulty in providing examples of the omnipresence of passion:

Thus his critiques of Shakespeare's plays discourse on passion in Roderigo, in Cleopatra, in Cressida; the passions of nature in the storm scenes of King Lear; passions as a cause and justification of word-plays (rather a sore point with Coleridge), and as a justification of breaches of conventional grammar and word-order; passion as a cause of poetic language; passion and the English language; and, as a whole, the relation of passion to figurative language, and the considerations of naturalness, probability, appropriateness, and propriety that arise from the relationship. In this entire matter I myself find Coleridge extremely Longinian, though I am forced to note his lack of enthusiasm for Longinus. (88)

Longinus' On the Sublime, long forgotten when it was published by Robortello in 1554, did not really come back to life until Boileau translated it in 1674. In it a new emphasis is laid on the importance of conceptual power and genuine emotional vehemence and inspiration. Longinus did not fail to insist on the necessary link between emotions - and not all emotions are worth translating - and the language which embodies them; it follows that

we shall find one factor of sublimity in a consistently happy choice of these constituent elements, and in the power of combining them together as it were into an organic whole. (89)

It is this organic requisite, which Coleridge always keeps in mind, that one is to consider when writing poetry to which metre is added. He was lucid enough to admit that versification was not an indispensable part of the poetic process and that a true poet could very well do without it. Of course, as M.H. Abrams points out, Coleridge, along with Wordsworth, was above all eager to expose the falsity he found in the poetic style of his time, a falsity due mainly to the merely artificial, ornamental quality of poetic diction. A letter of 1802, quoted by Abrams, confirms, if need be, an impression communicated by the poem "Melancholy", in the early 1790's, that Coleridge was aware of his position as "the arbitrator between the old school and the new school" of poetry, "that truth lies in the reconciliation of opposing doctrinal systems", that it was indispensable "to save the valid elements in both the traditional and the innovative theories of poetry and poetic diction." (90) The only means at the poet's disposal was the emotional intensity he was to press out of himself through appropriate verbal structures. In this respect, naturally, Coleridge differed from Wordsworth, as we have seen, for he did not agree that the spontaneity of ordinary language, used by simple people expressing their feelings, should constitute the essence of poetic language. On the contrary, a powerful emotional state leads to a language which is both spontaneous and elaborate; it opens out on correspondent changes and transformations that call for inherent patterns that only educated people possess. Neither the simple patterns of simple peasants, nor the poetic diction of eighteenth-century poets, which, "whether one felt it as meretricious or beneficial, was by its very elegance and

admitted efficacy in the most memorsble poetry an obstacle to fresh composition" (91), actually translated the passion which alone generates poetry.

In a passage from the Letters, one reads:

In my opinion, every phrase, every metsphor, every personification, should have it's justifying cause in some passion either of the Poet's mind, or of the Characters described by the poet - But metre itself implies a passion, i.e. a state of excitement, both in the Poet's mind, & is expected in that of the Reader. (92)

Metre, therefore cannot possibly be seprated from other operations occurring either on the plane of expression or of content, which are the result of the emotions in the poet's mind. And "poetry justifies, ss Poetry independent of any other Passion, some new combinations of Language, & commands the omission of many others allowable in other compositions". (93)

Passion it is which prompts Coleridge's choice in his Preface to "Christabel" of the stressed line, and there is no doubt in his mind that quantity alone, if respected as a leading principle in a poem, is an obstacle to a proper rendering of the original emotion. For

the distinction between accent and quantity is clear and was, no doubt, observed by the ancients in the recitation of verse. But I believe such recitation to have been always an artificial thing, and that the common conversation was entirely regulated by accent. (94)

Why does Coleridge praise Massinger and "his excellent metre"? Because Massinger and the poets before Pope made it necessary for the reader to understand the meaning of

poems before they were able to say them correctly; and outstanding among them was Massinger, for

it is the nearest approach to the language of real life at all compatible with a fixed metre. In Massinger, as in all our poets before Dryden, in order to make harmonious verse in the reading, it is absolutely necessary that the meaning should be understood; - when the meaning is once seen, then the harmony is perfect. Whereas in Pope and in most of the writers who followed in his school, it is the mechanical metre which determines the sense. (95)

Although specific to poetry, metre does not represent the landmark which separates poetry from prose. I shall examine the real difference between them in the forthcoming section on syntax, yet it is already convenient to state that according to Coleridge prose is at least opposed to metre. (96) Metre is thus seen as something which, if used at all, is inherent in poetry alone. But it is not enough to distinguish the two sorts of composition.

So consistent, in spite of appearances, is Coleridge's conception of the poetic process, that his treatment of metre leads us to precisely the same points developed in his cosmology and the outlook we have had of a global poetic construction (his analysis of the line of "pines" and "sea-blaet").

And first of all, metre, being emotional in its origin, functions according to the fundamental law of polarity.

A first approach of the way metre functions relatively to this law is given when Coleridge says that "as the elements of metre owe their existence to a state of increased excitement, so the metre itself should be accompanied by the natural language of excitement." The statement obviously requires amplification of some sort;

we already deduce from it, however, a notion of the dynamic character of the discourse, a character which is made explicit when Coleridge emphasizes that

as these elements are formed into metre artificially, by a voluntary act, with the design and for the purpose of blending delight with emotion, so the traces of present volition should throughout the metrical language be proportionally discernible. (97)

But to be faithful to the principle of duality, the opposition between will and spontaneity has to be mediated. There must be a fusion or, Coleridge goes on,

these two conditions must be reconciled and co-present. There must be not only a partnership, but a union; an interpenetration of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose.

In the reconciliation of its antagonistic elements the metrical structure properly becomes rhetorical:

This union can be manifested only in a frequency of forms and figures of speech (originally the offspring of passion, but now the adopted children of power) greater than would be desired or endured where the emotion is not voluntarily encouraged and kept up for the sake of that pleasure which such emotion so tempered and mastered by the will is found capable of communicating. It not only dictates, but of itself tends to produce, a more frequent employment of picturesque and vivifying language than would be natural in any other case in which there did not exist, as there does in the present, a previous and well understood, though tacit, compact between the poet and his reader, that the latter is entitled to expect and the former bound to supply this species and degree of pleasurable excitement. (98)

The two well-known elements mentioned here, namely the definition, familiar to commentators of Coleridge, of poetry as "that species of composition which is opposed to works of science by proposing for its immediate object

pleasure, not truth", (99) as well as the notion of "picturesque and vivifying language", must be considered in the light of the subjacent requisite of poetic discourse: its organic character.

What mistakes are we not bound to make if we overlook the real status Coleridge attributes to metre, for the step which separates our consideration of the role expression fulfils from an undue estimation of what might eventually amount to mere formalism, is quickly taken.

Coleridge's description of metre is apparently close to the problem of expression as dealt with by Jean-Claude Coquet and Jacques Geninasca. (100) Coquet applies Jakobson's principle of equivalence, without actually subscribing to it, and thus determines, besides grammatical and semantic parallelisms, parallelisms of expression comprehending the parallelisms of the axis of conventions (metre) and suprasegmental parallelisms (phonic and prosodic). He contrives to establish pregnant isoplasms in lines by Hugo, Baudelaire and Apollinaire while he points out the shortcomings of the method and suggests palliatives. (101)

Geninasca, on the other hand, recalls Ruwet and his assertion that "positional facts convey meaning". He therefore feels entitled to state that the segmentation of a poem (here: a sonnet) into isometric units produces the manifestation of specific semic contents in a stanza and thus permits an isotopic reading. (102) He does not conceal that his notion of coupling is borrowed from Levin.

Our analysis of Coleridge's lines in chapter fifteen of Biographia Literaria already revealed that to isotopies of content manifestly corresponded isotopies of expression, particularly alliterations and assonances.

This correspondence, of course, is designated by Coleridge by means of a different terminology. This, I think, is what he calls harmony, as, for instance, in this definition of "a legitimate poem":

It must be one the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement. (103)

It may seem strange that while all sorts of evidence so far have helped to support the theory that expression exists to reinforce content, Coleridge here is apparently reversing the position by saying that the parts in the poem support metre. This is contradicted by his saying then that "poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre". (104) What then is the purpose of metre?

One of the most helpful studies of the function of metre for Coleridge is E.R. Marks's in the excellent second chapter of his work on Coleridge's poetry. "The value Coleridge placed on metrical expression," he writes, "involved much more than a sensitivity to its pleasurable effects; he saw in it the ideal vehicle for embodying and inculcating the deepest truths." (105)

The virtues of metre, one is therefore justified in assuming, must be such as to go beyond mere pleasure, in adding to the poem a part which, harmonizing with the rest, will increase the general effect.

Coleridge himself answers partly by delivering a message which draws him close to one aspect of today's definition of the function of metre. He writes in Biographia that

As far as metre acts in and for itself, it tends to increase the vivacity and susceptibility both of the general feelings and of the attention. This effect it produces by the continued excitement of surprize, and

by the quick reciprocations of curiosity still gratified and still re-excited, which are too slight indeed to be at any one moment objects of distinct consciousness, yet become considerable in their aggregate influence. As a medicated atmosphere, or as wine during animated conversation, they act powerfully, though themselves unnoticed. (106)

Are we to understand, therefore, that metre, exacerbating Jakobson's poetic function, serves as a signal, some kind of additional structure, which, although compelled to conform to the rule of general harmony or organic composition, is nothing but a device to attract the reader's attention to the text itself?

Tzvetan Todorov relates this view to the pragmatic theories of poetry and suggests that

one could imagine up-to-date variants to the pragmatic theory: for instance that versification performs the function of signal that introduces a specific contract between sender and receiver, one specifying that poetic reading must abide by rules different from those that apply to other acts of speech, etc. (107)

Is there then any evidence that Coleridge defends this version of the role of metre? He writes most emphatically that

Metre in itself is simply a stimulant of the attention, and therefore excites the question: Why is the attention to be thus stimulated? Now the question cannot be answered by the pleasure of the metre itself; for this we have shown to be conditional and dependent on the appropriateness of the thoughts and expressions to which the metrical form is superadded. Neither can I conceive any other answer that can be rationally given, short of this: I write in metre because I am about to use a language different from that of prose. (108)

The last sentence appears to me to be capital: metre is convenient as a signal, as some specific form of which

the function is both mnemotechnic and to draw attention to the fact that the structure I have built is of a species of its own.

Besides, Coleridge says, if metre as a constituent of the poem must follow the organic rule, it is because

it is a necessity of the human mind; and all nations have felt and obeyed it, in the invention of metre, and measured sounds, as the vehicle and involutum of poetry - itself a fellow-growth from the same life, - even as the bark to the tree! (109)

But even if the purpose of using metre is to serve as a signal, it is nevertheless "the proper form of poetry, and poetry [is] imperfect and defective without metre." (110) The explanation is apt to reinforce the quality of metre in its function of drawing attention to the poem:

Metre therefore having been connected with poetry most often and by a peculiar fitness, whatever else is combined with metre must, though it be not itself essentially poetic, have nevertheless some property in common with poetry as an intermedium of affinity, a sort (if I may dare borrow a well-known phrase from technical chemistry) of mordant between it and the superadded metre. (111)

If one keeps in mind that poetry originates in passion, one must admit that "every passion has its proper pulse, so will it likewise have its characteristic modes of expression." (112)

Marks, however, goes deeper into his analysis of the role of metre. Metre is attributed a lofty function because it is mimetic. According to Marks, mimesis is the universal principle of all artistic creation. Developing Coleridge's capital distinction between "copy" and "imitation", he shows how for Coleridge imitation stands in close connection to his notion of the polymorphous

expansion of the seminal principle or idea and the essential duality of both the universe and the work of art. Metre, along with the specificities of the other components of the poem, requires a precision of which the aim is for the audience (here the reader) to feel not the absence of any difference between nature and the poem but, on the contrary, to feel an essential difference between them. Just as the spectator at a play has come to feel the artificiality of what is going on on the stage, the reader of a poem wants to notice and, so to say, to enjoy, the divergences between the work, the newly-shaped nature "en second", and the landscape or situation or character he might see every day.

In this perspective, therefore, Marks recognizes,

Meter is a mechanism of control, a technique of mimetic mastery available to the creative imagination, which, we recall, reconciles among other discordant elements "a more than usual state of emotion, with a more than usual order," in this case the order imposed by the isometric segmentation of the verse line. (113)

This is why poetry is not merely prose changed to verse, or versified conversational language; for "meter for Coleridge, though nothing or almost nothing in isolation, is nonetheless the form in which the peculiarities (inversion, figurative language, the aural devices of rhyme, assonance, etc.) attain their fullest effect." (114) Although practically deprived of value in itself, metre enforces the effectiveness of the poem to a considerable extent, acting as an indispensable catalyst, as the living witness that poetry is an act both of the emotions and of their counteracting counterpart, the will, and that the transformations, or rather the shapings which follow, are the inevitable consequences of the dual and concomitant cause of it all. Marks recalls that

as Coleridge sees it, poetic language no less than meter originates in passion. They are the offspring of a common psychic impulse. The distinctive features of poetic syntax, unless they are prompted by mental excitement, are only tasteless verbal posturings. Inversions, for example, result from the train of thought being directed by passion. (115)

Isometric, isochronic: the pieces of evidence are now ample which point to the iterative nature of the poetic construction and, even more important, the repetitive correspondences between the two planes of the discourse on the one hand, and the different levels on each plane on the other hand.

Although apparently contradictory, Coleridge's assertions about the function of metre are quite logical. As a signal, metre draws attention to the specific status assumed by poetic language. It differs from the status it had as a part of poetic diction in that far from being an artificial, mechanical means of adding charm to a poem, or of versifying a piece of language which is not essentially poetic, it tells the reader that the language he is about to read is neither ordinary language nor prose, but something unique. If used at all, it partakes of the very language it signals to attention by being more than a mere ornamental device. Its mnemotechnic and emotional features are meant to serve deeper and more fundamental qualities. While enhancing the reader's receptivity and conveying unexpectedness to the reading process, it must echo the more essential elements which create poeticity: the isotopies of content: When Coleridge says that poetry may exist without metre, he makes it clear that the very nature of the poetic lies in the semantics of the poems. And yet it does not prevent a poem from being even more perfect if its inner poeticity is improved by the effective, though not immediately conspicuous, action of metre. If to the field of semantic

isotopies is joined the field of metrical (and, generally speaking, metaplastic) isotopies, the result - as is the case with "The Ancient Mariner" - can only be closer to the highest poetic motivation.

The question of isotopies, however, leads as though by necessity to the central problem, essential to Coleridge in particular, of the organic structure the poem constitutes just as the universe is an organic whole. One might inquire, of course, as to the reason why I have not dealt with such a capital issue earlier in this study. The answer is that I wanted to introduce it gradually, especially after I had made it as inescapable as possible by means of a complete description of one level of the poetic whole, namely here the description of the metaplastic level. The latter, I have demonstrated, is not only a specific mark of poetic discourse, a signal which attracts attention to it, but it must also abide by the fundamental rule of the correlation of the passion which is at the origin of the composition and the language which transcribes it; or, one might say, by the requisite of the true work of art being an imitation of the creative force in nature, thereby having to work analogically and thus to construct a whole of which all parts and constituents hold together through the internal project which generates it.

A poem, one must remember,

is that species of composition which is opposed to works of science by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part. (116)

The above quotation is probably one of the most illuminating in view of understanding the nature itself

of poetic discourse. Examining the statements one after the other, one is bound to realize how consistent Coleridge is in his theoretical delineations both in the field of philosophy and cosmogony as well as in the field of poetics.

From the Theory of Life, one gets a threefold picture of the synthesis of dual forces ending in the construction of an organic whole: two belong to nature as such and one is specific to man. The first comprehends the opposition between vegetable and mineral life which results in the animal but also between the vegetable and the animal which produces human life. The second consists of the opposition between the mental powers of man and the substance provided by cosmos reconciled in the work of art. If one reasons analogically - and again Coleridge himself supports us in this respect - one cannot but admit that what characterizes organic creation in nature should likewise characterize organic creation with respect to the domain of art.

One must remember that Coleridge emphasizes that the unity of the work of art "will be more intense in proportion as it constitutes each particular thing a whole of itself; and yet more, again, in proportion to the number and interdependence of the parts, which it unites as a whole." (117) The organic necessity, failing which no poem can ever exist, applies to the constituent parts and to the whole as well. The wholeness they form depends on the intricacy of the connections between the constituents, the value, intensity and gratification of the whole being proportionate to the number of the constituents as well as to the complexity of their interconnections.

The constituents, in fact, are not mere units, nor are they essentially units to be estimated by their intrinsic

worth. They become precious only if they are fully integrated in the process and recognized, and thus appreciated, as parts and wholes, or, Coleridge writes, as "means and end". A whole is organic, formed, he says, ab intra (otherwise, it is formed ab extra, i.e. mechanically not organically,) if it is as perfect as possible, like the sphere, a symbol of perfect achievement. Only thus is it truly individual (one must not forget the principle of individuation),

and the individuality is most intense where the greatest dependence of the parts on the whole is combined with the greatest dependence of the whole on its parts; the first (namely, the dependence of the parts on the whole) being absolute; the second (namely, the dependence of the whole on its parts) being proportional to the importance of the relation which the parts have to the whole, that is, as their action extends more or less beyond themselves. For this spirit of the whole is most expressed in that part which derives its importance as an End from its importance as a Mean, relatively to all under the same copula. (118)

I have quoted here extensively because Coleridge's assertion is central to everything he may say about the poem. I have already mentioned the passage, in Biographia Literaria, in which he clearly defends the mutual support the component parts in a poem must afford to one another, (119) but there is an almost endless succession of other passages dealing with the organic nature of a poetic discourse, and it is sufficient to mention only some of the most significant ones.

In one of his Lectures, Coleridge describes the relationship which exists between the organic creation and the seminal idea which prompts it:

A living body is of necessity an organized one; and what is organization but the connection of parts in and for a whole, so that each part is at once end and means? - This is no discovery of criticism.

And he goes on:

No work of true genius dares want its appropriate form, neither indeed is there any danger of this. As it must not, so genius cannot, be lawless: for it is even this that constitutes it genius - the power of acting creatively under laws of its own organization. (120)

The project of the whole being pre-determined, so to say preexistent, it develops the laws it requires for the organization which inevitably follows, laws that cannot be otherwise than what they are. Whereas a mechanical form, one prompted from the outside, "as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened," leaves no trace of a project whatsoever, "the organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes, as it develops, itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form." (121)

Proof of the difference stated here is provided by Coleridge's comment on Michelangelo's Moses as reported in Biographia Literaria. In his perspicuous description of the statue and definition of the function of its horns and beard, Coleridge sets their position in the whole and makes it clear that they are indissolubly linked to it. Their role, he says, is double. First, they fulfil their organic function by supporting each other, by taking part in, and therefore reinforcing, the general effect - about a text, one might say: the unity of meaning - of the whole, and as such they are indispensable to each other and to the whole. Secondly, they are capital members of the chain of connotations of the statue by connoting

power and sovereignty [...] and the probable ideas and feelings that originally suggested the mixture of the human and the brute form in the figure by which they

realized the idea of their mysterious Pan, as representing intelligence blended with a darker power, deeper, mightier and more universal than the conscious intellect of man, than intelligence. (122).

By altering either the position of the appearance of one or two of the attributes of the Moses, one would actually mar the general effect of the statue and spoil it as a work of art for ever. For, and this is an unavoidable consequence of organic construction, no single element of a piece of art can be removed without changing the meaning of the whole.

Coleridge repeats in several places what he says in his Table Talk about this subject:

The collocation of words is so artificial in Shakspeare and Milton, that you may as well think of pushing a brick out of a wall with your fore-finger, as attempt to remove a word out of any of their finished passages. (123)

Such "artificial" passages, i.e. artistically accomplished, derive from the idea which existed as a project in the poet's mind. Thus in writers like Milton, Hooker, Taylor and others:

The unity in these writers is produced by the unity of the subject, and the perpetual growth and evolution of the thoughts, one generating, and explaining, and justifying the place of another, not, as it is in Seneca, where the thoughts, striking as they are, are merely strung together like beads, without any causation or progression. The words are selected because they are the most appropriate, taking into account the dignity of the total impression, and no merely big phrases are used where plain ones would have sufficed, even in the most learned of their works. (124)

Words in a text, bricks in a wall, beard and horns on the statue of Moses respond to the same exigency: faithfulness to the organic necessity of artistic creation.

As a result, a work of art is by essence untranslatable. About this Coleridge is most emphatic, in his Lectures and in the Biographia:

Style is, of course, nothing else but the art of conveying the meaning appropriately and with perspicuity, whatever that meaning may be, and one criterion of style is that it shall not be translatable without injury to the meaning. (125)

And again:

In poetry, in which every line, every phrase, may pass the ordeal of deliberation and deliberate choice, it is possible, and barely possible, to attain that ultimatum which I have ventured to propose as the infallible test of a blameless style, namely its untranslatableness in words of the same language without injury to the meaning. (126)

It will be convenient, when dealing with content, to ask ourselves more seriously why the language used in a poem cannot be rendered as well by any other discourse in the same language if the other discourse is, close to it though it may be, not the language of the poem itself. One is justified in assuming then that there must be a quality about the language of a poem which enables it to be language yet not just language.

A further study of Coleridge's notion of organic whole will lead us to a discovery of other paths likely to introduce us to the very heart of poetic discourse.

In "On Poesy of Art", a few interesting pages are devoted to the problem of the organic nature of a work of art, pages which start right from the beginning, namely from the fundamental opposition between man and nature.

"As soon as the human mind is intelligibly addressed by an outward image," Coleridge says, "exclusively of articulate speech, so soon does art commence."

But please to observe that I have laid particular stress on the words "human mind," - meaning to exclude thereby all results common to man and all other sentient creatures, and consequently confining myself to the effect produced by the congruity of the animal impression with the reflective powers of the mind; so that not the thing presented, but that which is re-presented by the thing, shall be the source of the pleasure. (127)

We are therefore reminded of some essential points. And first that man is the single creature to be regarded as endowed with a sparkle of God's power; thanks to this power, he is capable of working actively on reality as handed him through the primary imagination and of transforming it, presenting it anew to the primary imagination of others.

In this sense nature itself is to a religious observer the art of God; and for the same cause art itself might be defined as of a middle quality between a thought and a thing, or as I said before, the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human. (128)

How is man to put up with the impassable abyss, or at least with the idea of an impassable abyss between himself and the cosmos? Because he has never been able to admit, indeed because he has always considered it unworthy of his dignity to admit the inevitable lapse

into the tragic, he has endeavoured to create a bridge, a mediation procuring at any rate a diversion from the unacceptable, a sublime illusion, the more so because it is fragile, which, he hopes, should provide a momentary pleasure making up for the forthcoming loss.

The question now is how to build up such a mediatory object, made up at once of the normally ungraspable constituents of the real and of man's most precious belongings, his mental powers: thoughts, images, feelings? It must be nature but nature chaoticized and re-worked upon: "It is the figured language of thought, and is distinguished from nature by the unity of all the parts in one thought or idea." Just as God in nature departs from one idea or project and builds up everything as a polymorphous extension of the original idea, so too does the poet or the artist create a unity of meaning from an original thought which then shapes the units it uses, units it has borrowed from reality, into an organic whole. The force at work in the poet's mind is similar to that in nature, for

nature herself would give us the impression of a work of art, if we could see the thought which is present at once in the whole and in every part; and a work of art will be just in proportion as it adequately conveys the thought, and rich in proportion to the variety of parts which it holds in unity. (129)

Coleridge also uses another formula to characterize both the power of the mind and the unifying work it accomplishes in its attempt to build up an organic whole. I have already mentioned his tendency to use terminology borrowed from science, particularly from biology and botany. In a letter of 1814, he compares an organic body to a human one:

Is it not deserving of notice, as an especial subject of meditation, that our limbs, in all they do or can

accomplish, implicitly obey the dictation of the mind? that this operating power, whatever its name, under certain limitations, exercises a sovereign dominion, not only over our limbs, but over all our intellectual pursuits? The mind of every man is evidently the fulcrum, the moving force, which alike regulates all his limbs and actions; and in which example, we find a strong illustration of the subordinate nature of mere matter. That alone which gives direction to the organic parts of our nature, is wholly mind; and one mind, if placed over a thousand limbs, could, with undiminished ease, control and regulate the whole.

This idea is advanced on the supposition, that one mind could command an unlimited direction over any given number of limbs, provided they were all connected by joint and sinew. (130)

The analogy provides us with a more complete picture of what an organic whole really consists of, for we know what units are part of it and how the whole functions.

Coming through the poet's mind is the seminal idea which exerts sovereignty over the limbs and the mental equipments of the body; or, to use my own terminology, the words and patterns of the discourse along with their semantic content. The units of the discourse, before they are acted upon by the "moving force" beaming from the mind, are "mere matter"; in other words, substance of both content and expression. They pass on from an original lifeless state (they are a verbal chaos, a linguistic matter undetached from the general flux of language, still undetermined and indefinite, striving towards individuality) to an animate state when the mind operates upon them as a shaping power. Through the seminal principle, it sends a unifying force over the substance so as to imprint on it a form (of content and of expression). The unity of the whole is obtained by means of connectors linking the units just as joints and sinews link the limbs of a human body.

If one thinks of Coleridge's description of the operating power which transformed the flat couplet about pines bending under the sea-blast into the lively quatrain I have analyzed, one can already admit that one has enough evidence to justify our selecting isotopic elements as connectors. My brief description referred especially to isotopies of content, yet I have said a word about isotopies of expression (morphological and syntactic). On the previous pages, moreover, I have dealt with morphological isotopies in more detail and attempted to demonstrate that in Coleridge's opinion the function they fulfil, although not an indispensable one, is invaluable. In his discussion of metre in Biographia Literaria, he insists that there are many "causes elsewhere assigned which render metre the proper form of poetry and poetry imperfect and defective without metre." (131) Besides the isochronic quality of metre, which thus indexes it on the general iterativeness of poetic discourse in toto, and which, furthermore, answers to the organic requisite of each part as well as of the whole, metre also serves as a signal to attract the potential reader's attention to the language itself but also to the fact that the language used is precisely such as to differ radically from any other.

The organic requisite, of course, implies that the substance of expression and of content should be imposed upon by the poet, through the seminal principle and the connectors at its disposal, the appropriate form. Now the question of how appropriately well suited to each other form and substance can be leads to the controversial yet central issue of the motivation of poetic language. No organic solution can ever be reached without considering the problem of what the form actually does to the substance. Coleridge, quite clearly, tackles the problem seriously; he even makes it the sine qua non condition of the beautiful in art.

It is in "On the Principle of Sound Criticism" that one finds one of the most important passages in which Coleridge deals with the organic aspect of a work of art. "The beautiful," he writes, "contemplated in its essentials, that is, in kind and not in degree, is that in which the many, still seen as many, becomes one." (132) There is no question, one is to understand, of seeing the specific traits of each component of an organic whole suppressed or in some way erased so that the result of the exertion of the unifying power should be uniformity. Isotopies, we shall see, are by no means supposed to reduce the discourse to univocity, which, as the case may be, would not be enriching but impoverishing it. The heterogeneity of the language, coming from the plurivocity of the words, although to some extent disciplined to a unity of meaning and form, is still in some way retained. The heterogeneous features of words must absolutely be traceable and felt, otherwise the attempted transformation of the discourse - as made up of words which do not change their substance - to a poetic object is merely annihilated.

In "On Poesy or Art" Coleridge states that

In all imitation two elements must coexist, and not only coexist, but must be perceived as coexisting. These two constituent elements are likeness and unlikeness, or sameness and difference, and in all genuine creations of art there must be a union of the disparate. The artist may take his point of view where he pleases, provided that the desired effect be perceptibly produced, - that there be likeness in the difference, difference in the likeness, and a reconciliation of both in one. (133)

We shall have to remember this when examining metaphor; however, it is quite clear that the general direction of the process lies in some province close to the metaphorical.

Whether it should be "the froat on a window-pane" or the stalk, branches and buds of a tree, images used to illustrate the phenomenon always point to the same thing. The effect is all the greater if the whole displays harmony, that is to say a pleasing composition of related things, agreeableness, or "that namely which is naturally consonant with our senses by the pre-established harmony between nature and the human mind," and a distinction of parts; or, I think, in its remotest consequence, what Greimas calls segmentation, which is conceivable at two levels: an immediate one, at first looking at the work of art, yet a rather superficial one; a deeper one, after going over the work several times with a specialist's eye. "Those objects," Coleridge says, "only can be admitted (according to rule the first) which belong to the eye and ear, because they alone are susceptible of distinction of parts." (134) And therefore one is entitled to ask oneself whether a red canvas framed and hung in a museum is beautiful and indeed deserves to be called a work of art.

The whole is organic; more than that, it really forms a structure. Coleridge himself uses the term:

Nature may pursue a hundred Objects at the same time, and each by a different Line or Chain of Facts from the first Hint of the Purpose to be realized to the Structure or Organ in its most perfect form, & in which the final cause of the whole Series has attained its full evidence, and determines the place of all the intermediate Facts. (135)

This is one of the most complete definitions of what an organic whole must be like ever achieved by Coleridge. The "first Hint" is the seminal idea from which everything derives and through whose power the subordinated parts are shaped, what he calls the "intermediate Facts". In the structure the initial

project is made obvious - or else it is not worthy of the name "work of art" - the "final cause of the whole Series".

The result of the process is that "the shapely (i.e. formosus) joined with the naturally agreeable, constitutes what, speaking accurately, we mean by the word beautiful (i.e. pulcher)." (136)

It is interesting to note - and by doing so we follow Coleridge's own methodology - that by desynonymizing, i.e. by establishing its semic distribution, the word "formosus" we obtain the word form, i.e. to shape, to organize. The artist, therefore, is in effect a giver of shape. This has been seen by E. R. Marks, who describes the stages of the poet's transformation of matter. The words a poet uses must be an imitation of reality, and so the construction of a poem must consist of the reconciliation of the opposite forces that pervade the universe. The imagination is dynamic: by the reconciliation it operates, it produces a tension coming from the dynamic equilibrium of the conflicting forces, a tension and reconciliation which are suitably symbolized by the "metrical control of passion" or what the Ancients called furor poeticus. The poet then is a demiurge, a tamer of chaos, who struggles to "impose order on the chaotic flux of experience." (137)

The form which is imposed upon the substance, the varied appearances of the related parts, the subtlety of their connections are illustrated by "Raphael's admirable Galatea":

The circle is perceived at first sight; but with what multiplicity of rays and chords, within the area of the circular group, with what elevations and depressions of the circumference, with what an endless variety, and sportive wildness in the component figure, and in the junctions of the figures, is the

balance, the perfect reconciliation, effected between these two conflicting principles of the FREE LIFE, and of the confining FORM. (138)

Set free from its material ore, subjected to form, matter has been made into a symbol through which the spirit of the artist reveals itself, but also, at the same time, the spirit which is concealed everywhere in the universe. The process, of course, reminds us of lines 39-42 in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison".

We have been led so far to examine poetic creation under a number of aspects which all centre upon the following key notions: the seminal principle, the polymorphous spreading, unity through isotopic pervading, and the organic structure. The poetic process is an imitation of the creative process in the universe and as such it operates in the same way.

This being group Mu's position, they consider that the poetic object is characterized by:

1) its being a semantic object distinguished by a poly-isotopy; 2) its being an artistic work aiming at an effect of totality which it obtains by opposing the two fundamental categories of anthropos and cosmos; 3) by its being a purely poetic object which produces a euphoric ethos by semiotically reducing the opposition (mediation). (139)

In the main, Coleridge's conception is identical. From the theoretical passages we have developed as well as from the lines examined, we have derived the conviction that as well as language in general, and the English language in particular, poetic language is a fortiori endowed with a semantic charge which, as regards English, comprehends, in Coleridge's own terms, meaning, image and passion on the one hand, associativeness or

suggestiveness and concentration on the other. As to the poly-isotopy, the term will have to be investigated, but from what we have already seen we can assume that it is granted. When we examine the isotopies of content, it will already be clear, for instance, that the isotopic connectors at this level are completely dependent on the concept of desynonymization.

As a work of art, poetic discourse for Coleridge is a miniature model of the world, a heterocosm, a self-sufficient space in which the opposition of the antagonistic powers is reduced. It is the mechanism of this reduction that we shall have to amplify and explain.

We must now revert to a capital point in the definition of the poetic structure: the connections which hold the discourse together and give it its unity.

And above all, we should ask ourselves whether we have established with sufficient evidence Coleridge's recognition of the two planes of language.

Let us proceed, once again, inductively. In a notebook entry of 1808-1811, Coleridge comments upon the opening stanza of Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis; from what he says, it is possible to infer a number of elements. The six lines go:

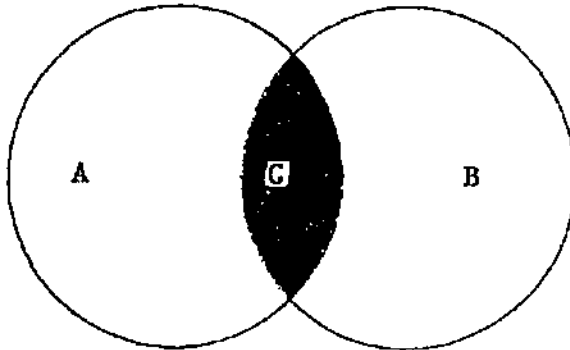
Even as the sun with purple-colour'd face
 Had ta'en his last leave of the weeping morn,
 Rose-cheek'd Adonis hied him to the chase;
 Hunting he lov'd, but love he laugh'd to scorn:
 Sick-thoughted Venus makes amain unto him
 And like a bold-fac'd suitor gins to woo him.

The main articulation is afforded by a simile introduced by "even as" and therefore belonging to the plane of content. Adonis' attitude is expressed by a paradox

(content) articulated by the conjunction "but" which is an element of syntax. Both the sun and the moon are characterized by what Coleridge calls "humanizing Imagery and Circumstance". Indeed, into both is instilled a seme /animate/ coming from the qualifiers:

purple-colour'd face			
taken his leave	→	/animate/	→ Sun
weeping	→	/animate/	→ Moon

The process is metaphorical and consists in fusing two terms into one by means of one or several common semes, the identity of the intersective area extending to the figure as a whole, as appears from the following figure:



Term A, the sun, essentially possessed of a seme /inanimate/, exchanges semes with Term B, connoting a human being in absentia, only represented by his qualifiers ("purple-colour'd face" and "taken his leave", which indicates an ability to will something as well as notions of courtesy). The intersective area C is of course capital, for it legitimates the passage of the central seme /animate/ from B to A; this is justified by the common semes contained in this area: /round outline/ (the round shape of the sun suggesting a human face), /yellowish/ (the colour of the sun suggesting a human complexion), /movement/ (the general motion of the sun in space being near the motion of a human on the earth), etc. The same occurs about the moon. (140)

The very form of the diagram presented above illustrates the process which, according to Coleridge, characterizes poetry; for "imitation is the mesothesis of likeness and difference. The difference is essential to it as the likeness; for without the difference it would be copy or fac-simile." (141) Michel Le Guern uses the expression "attribut dominant" to emphasize the major seme, in the intersective area, which founds the fusion of the two terms into one, and concludes that "la sélection sémique opérée par le mécanisme métaphorique suppose donc une organisation hiérarchique des éléments de signification." (142) In our example, one could determine that the seme /round outline/ or the seme /movement/ - or both - are hierarchically the most important; what really matters is that they are indispensable to the metabole because they permit the exchange of seme from Term B to Term A. As a matter of fact, both terms as well as the intersection

are indispensable and have to be kept all along. Once the attribution of senses has been effected, there is no question of dismissing any part of the figure. Term A, the image of the sun, and Term B, the image of a human being, remain; they form what Le Guern calls "une image associée" consisting of the mental representation of both the sun and a man. (143)

This brief consideration of the stanza leads to two important notions. First, the poetic process displayed here is essentially made up of images involving the intellect (for a reduction of the difference between the two terms of the metaphor is necessary), the intersective elements, it is true, being enough to move the reader's sensitivity (emotional function). There is only one logical connector belonging to syntax having an important role, the remainder of the stanza being fulfilled by the conventional metaplasm (metre, alliterations, etc). It is therefore possible to already ascertain that both planes of the discourse are taken into account by Coleridge, but that even though expression is carefully studied by him and considered to be fundamental, it is content which actually constitutes the essential part of the poetic process.

We are reminded of this in "On Poesy or Art" when Coleridge insists on communication. Poetry, he writes, "avails itself of the forms of nature to recall, to express, and to modify the thoughts and feelings of the mind." (144) The poet writes because he experiences the need to express something and thus to establish a communication between him and a potential reader. The basis of a good poem - we shall develop this when dealing with content - is good sense and logic, by which words Coleridge means sound denotative content and a strictly logical use of syntactic devices.

Let a man be known first, as capable of doing, and as having done, some one objective Whole, having a Beginning, Middle, and End - a Whole, in which the Thinker and the Man of Learning appears as the Base of the Poet. (145)

In a marginal note, Coleridge comments on a couple of lines by Virgil; he admits that whatever belongs to expression is perfect, that the metre, composition and harmony of the lines are beautiful, but that this is not enough. Something is wanting:

What is there that might not have been said of any other hopeful young Roman who had died in his youth - what one distinct Image? what one deep feeling that goes to the human heart? I see not one. (146)

If the elements of expression - a plane we can definitely admit Coleridge considers - are subsidiary, however, they have an important function to fulfil in the hierarchy: they are there to serve, to support, to reinforce and, eventually, to form a whole with, content! We can be certain of the fact when examining an entry of the notebooks in which Coleridge details the importance of punctuation. (147)

Stops are said to mark either movement or the indefinite or fragmentary (a stroke). "The comma is either simply additive, and equivalent to the conjunction 'and'; or it is parenthetic, i.e. marks the insertion of a sentence, between a sentence uncompleted and its completion." While the semicolon "is accumulative", the colon "is distinguished from the full stop by this, that tho' the speaker connects with it & during speaking it presses the grounds, cause, or reason, or confirmation of it."

Punctuation, besides indicating as best it can "connection, accumulation, disjunction, and completion of sense," - but it can do that very imperfectly - must sustain the general meaning.

It expresses - say, rather - generally hints the sorts of pause which the Speaker makes, and the tones accompanying & leading to them from the Speaker's foresight of his own meaning. Punctuation therefore is always prospective: that is, it is not made according to the actual weight & difference or equality of the logical connections, but to the view which the Speaker is supposed to have at the moment, in which he speaks the particular sentence. Therefore I call them not symbols of Logic, but dramatic directions, enabling the reader more easily to place himself in the state of the writer or original Speaker.

Punctuation, and indeed all elements of expression comprised in syntax, are expected to accomplish something particularly delicate: they have to support the meaning, or rather, for the term may sound a little too simple, the content of poetic discourse; they have to act as stage managers or conductors of the magnificent, complex orchestra of poetry. If they do not serve the main theme, they destroy the architecture of the whole composition.

Is poetry, therefore, very much a matter of organization? What exactly is the function of syntactic elements and of isotaxes - and metataxes - in the process? The answer to these questions, although by no means simple, can be found in part by examining the difference between prose and poetry.

In an important chapter of Biographia Literaria, Coleridge proceeds to establish step by step what distinguishes the language of prose from the language of poetry. He starts from Wordsworth's statement, in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads, that if asked "Is there then [...] no essential difference between the language of

prose and metrical composition? I answer that there neither is nor can be any essential difference." (148) To this Coleridge replies that undoubtedly there is something the three types of language normally known - conversation, prose, poetry - have in common: the three of them use a stock of words he compares to the blocks used to build up houses or edifices. In other words, the language which enters the composition of any of the three sorts of linguistic constructions is made up of identical units; writers or users of the three types draw their elements from the same paradigmatic source. In fact, he writes, if one sets as a corresponding example the field of architecture, we can admit that "the style of architecture of Westminster Abbey is essentially different from that of Saint Paul's, even though both had been built with blocks cut unto the same form and from the same quarry." (149) The substance of content as well as the substance of expression are identical in either case.

The next question then is as to whether there are units which, substantially and formally (in Rjelslev's acceptations), are specific to poetry but not to prose. This, Coleridge answers, is a subsidiary problem, for

the number of such words would be small indeed in our language; and even in the Italian and Greek they consist not so much of different words as of slight differences in the forms of declining and conjugating the same words. (150)

What, therefore, is the essential difference between prose and poetry? Coleridge begins by the adjective "essential", which, he says, determines that which individualizes something, which enables it to be what it is and no other. Metaphysically, the essence characterizes "ce qui est considéré comme formant le fond de l'être, par opposition aux modifications qui ne

l'atteignent que superficiellement ou temporairement." (151) The word is here opposed to "accident", that which only modifies an object superficially but does not affect its being. Relatively to "existence", it qualifies the nature of a being and not its being there ("Dasein").

But Coleridge also considers the word "essential" in a second aspect "in which it signifies the point or ground of contradistinction between two modifications of the same substance or subject." (152) By way of illustration he makes use of the comparison between St. Paul's and Westminster. It seems obvious then that we must understand language, or the units selected from the axis of paradigms, to provide for the user merely a substance upon which he will have to press a form. We are to deduce, therefore, that the difference between prose and poetry is one of form; whether form of content and/or expression, or some other form we shall have to determine further.

Coleridge then inquires whether what distinguishes both types is not something suitable to one of them only. This something he divides into two groups: modes of expression and figures of speech appropriately selected on the one hand, a specific way of organizing the units - and he uses the words "construction", "order of sentences", "arrangement of words and sentences" - on the other hand. Thus they are units paradigmatically chosen in view of the type of discourse considered but also their organization into an order of its own. Indeed, in chapter XIV, he states that

a poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object proposed. According to the difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. (153)

By "combination" is meant the action of coupling or joining together, or of associating and uniting; while "organize" implies the action of forming into a whole with interdependent parts, giving a definite and orderly structure, systematizing. (154) Thus we get a double distinction between prose and poetry. On the one hand, the finality of each is different. This being established, they differ doubly from each other, on the other hand, by connecting units each in their own way and by forming wholes which globally will appear, and actually be, different.

The difference is not simply due to one part, such as the category of metaphisms. Metre, rhyme, etc as such constitute only a superficial divergence from prose, even though there is no denying the pleasure afforded by the iteration of patterns - the "recurrence of sound and quantities" - by which an isotopy is respected but accidental (e.g. in the example chosen by Coleridge, mnemotechnic) and therefore not organic. (155)

The difference of finality appears in what prose and poetry communicate. Not objective truth: this is the object of science; not the truth of experienced and recorded facts: this is the object of history. Does not poetry communicate truth of some sort? It does but the truth a poetic text communicates depends on its author as well as on a specificity of its own. The purpose, of course, can be the communication of pleasure, something that poetry does but also shares with novels or romance.

Where else are we to look, for the real difference if not there where our first clue lies: in an internal organization which is proper to poetry and to poetry alone. Some passages in chapter XIV that I have already quoted make it clear that poetry constitutes an organic

whole, made up of two planes (content and expression) and three levels (metaplasms, metataxes, i.e. morphological and syntactic elements and isotopies; and metasemes and metalogisms, i.e. elements and isotopies of content). The fact that both planes, organized hierarchically (expression reinforces content while it forms a single whole with it), and that all levels on each plane are fused in a structure with a unity of meaning results in the whole discourse to be meaning actualized. Coleridge writes that

The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. (156)

What he very aptly calls "journey" admirably qualifies the construction which the reader has to effect while reading, the dynamic construction of the meaning endlessly re-enacted. It represents the attraction to the message per se (Jakobson's poetic function), which does not imply any teratological quality:

The philosophic critics of all ages coincide with the ultimate judgement of all countries in equally denying the praises of a just poem on the one hand to a series of striking lines or distiches, each of which absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself disjoins it from its context and makes it a separate whole, instead of a harmonizing part; and on the other hand, to an unsustained composition, from which the reader collecta rapidly the general result unattracted by the component parts. (157)

If reading is not emphasizing one aspect of the text, nor interest for the merely literal or snecdoctical, it is because what matters is the process of construction itself, in which everything takes part: all words, all

planes, all levels. This, on the part of the potential reader, amounts to demanding that he should partake in the constructing effort: poetry, after all, is the most accomplished of all literary types.

Now that we know what poetry ought to be like, let us try to determine what the language of prose should be.

The poetic function, at least, does not apply to prose:

The words in prose ought to express the intended meaning, and no more; if they attract attention to themselves, it is, in general, a fault. In the very best styles, as Southey's, you read page after page, understanding the author perfectly, without once taking notice of the medium of communication; it is as if he had been speaking to you all the while. (158)

Poetry, on the other hand, we know is characterized by attraction to the language itself:

But in verse, you must do more; - there the words, the media, must be beautiful, and ought to attract your notice - yet not so much and so perpetually as to destroy the unity which ought to result from the whole poem. (159)

It is now obvious that expression, in any of its aspects, must serve content and not the other way round. Or else it becomes artificial and the structure is ruined.

But, as we have seen, the difference is also one of organization. "The definition of good prose is - proper words in their proper places; - of good verse - the most proper words in their proper places. "This is specified by Coleridge adding that

the great thing in poetry is, quocumque modo, to effect a unity of impression upon the whole; and a too great fulness and profusion of points in the parts

will prevent this. Who can read with pleasure more than a hundred lines or so of Hudibras at one time? Each couplet or quatrain is so whole in itself, that you can't connect them. There is no fusion, - just as it is in Seneca. (160)

In prose, it is necessary that words should be selected from the axis of paradigm according to the exact meaning the writer intends to convey; then they should be organized syntagmatically according to the same principle. In poetry, the paradigmatic axis must not only be requested for the exact meaning it can provide but also for the best possible juncture between the forms of content and expression. The morphological aspect of the units, their metaplasmic qualities, the value of their phonemes, are not merely a vehicle of meaning but, once inserted in the whole of the discourse, they are the meaning they convey.

The next question is therefore obvious; it is one modern criticism has recognized to be specific to the Romantic period: it is concerned with the link between expression and content of both words and texts. This is known as the principle of motivation.

Jean-Marie Schaeffer rightly remarks that the problem of the motivation of poetic language goes back to the German Romantics, who influenced more or less all our own views of poetry. He then observes that today's attempts at describing poetic language are precluded by the rather awkward position poetics occupies between the philosophical heritage bequeathed by the Romantics and the scientific angle adopted nowadays. He goes as far as calling the corpus of results modern poetics by and large share a doxa, which gives us to understand that their very foundations are conjectural.

As regards Coleridge, I think I have demonstrated how erroneous such a conception is; for, paradoxically, he who is widely known for his passion for philosophy, once the bulk of his seemingly desultory disquisitions on the philosophical aspect of whatever domain has been sorted out, is found to have supplied a theoretical basis which is closer to the scientific bias of post-Saussurian poetics than to the philosophical position of the post romantics.

Schaeffer attributes to Romantic poetics two propositions which, I think, are dealt with by Coleridge in a convincing manner. One proposition states that:

The relationship that poetry entertains with "ordinary language" is identical to the relationship that any art entertains with its matter: what stone is to the sculptor, everyday language is to the poet. (161)

I think I have been positive enough about the cogency of all this. Language as a whole - content as well as expression - is valued by the poet as a matter, a substance to be worked upon; for as a substance it is in search of a form which will remodel the ever-to-be-reshaped raw material it in fact is. Language is made up of blocks, Coleridge says, extracted from a quarry (or words selected from the paradigmatic axis), so that the units, integrated in the syntagmatic chain, are both the vehicle of meaning and meaning itself.

In the other proposition - "la poésie est un langage autonome par rapport au langage quotidien, l'essence du langage comme tel. Ses caractéristiques principales sont l'autotélisme (Intransitivité) et la motivation (il transcende l'arbitraire du langage véhiculaire)" - is expressed a fundamental principle of poetry: if content and expression constitute a whole inside a relationship of subordination one to the other (expression to content)

being perceived as an organic structure, this implies that the link between both planes of the discourse should not be entirely arbitrary.

Motivation, according to Schaeffer, raises the ever-recurring question of Cratylism. His formulation - "le langage à son origine aurait été motivé, mais cette motivation se serait ensuite perdue" (162) - is reminiscent of the primitivist theories I have alluded to in my first chapter. What matters is whether Coleridge considers poetic language motivated or not, whether he thinks that between the two planes of a text there is a motivation of some sort.

Schaeffer distinguishes three types of motivation. The first type is the horizontal motivation between the signifiers. Thus in the syntagm: "The frost performs its secret ministry", motivation consists of the iteration of phonemes spreading over the line and therefore forming an isoplasm. Obviously, the phonemes (and graphemes) [f] and [r], [s] and [t] extend all over the syntagm; they issue from the lexeme "frost" and perpetuate the notion of the "frost performing" throughout the first line:

The frost performs its secret ministry

thus conferring a new import upon words otherwise indistinguishable from words of "ordinary" discourse.

The second type of motivation is called vertical and is established between signifiers and signified. For instance in the lexeme "frost", the content of the lexeme, "freezing weather", is supported by expression, here the imitative sounds [fr] and [st] suggesting the cold and, possibly, shivering.

The third type, referential, connects the sign to its referent, a typical case being that of onomatopoeia; but today, Schaeffers says, it is difficult to sustain.

The first two types, as appears from the examples, are present in Coleridge. The horizontal type illustrates Jakobson's principle of the projection of the axis of paradigms upon the axis of syntagms. The word here is no longer regarded as a vehicle for the meaning but is valued per se and forms a whole along with its syntax (internal relationship between units of the syntagm) and its forms (of content and of expression). The central element consists of parallelisms, either symmetries or asymmetries, which apply to the three levels of language most scholars agree upon: morphological, syntactic (expression), and lexical (content). This division is admitted by Schaeffer but also, for instance, by Leech, whilst Group M_n subdivide the lexical into what relates to content (isosememes) and what relates to logic (isologisms).

The vertical type, Schaeffer says, has been defended by Fonagy but also by Jakobson, except that for the latter such motivations are not restricted to poetry. Unlike Jakobson, however, who considers the plane of expression as more important than the plane of content (cf. his analysis of "Les chats"), Schaeffer rightly supports the idea that the selection of units must be relative to the degree of coherence the form of expression has with the form of content. Where I disagree is when he complains that the criterion should not be internal but external. To him, the choice of units is governed by semantic criteria, which he calls external, whereas internal criteria, i.e. emanating from the expression itself, should normally prevail; or, he says, decision should intervene through criteria to be consulted at the phonological level. By supporting such a point of view,

he reverts to Jakobson's formalism and overlooks the fact that precisely in order to avoid formalism, one must base selection on criteria to be found on the plane of content only. The process, it is true, is analogical but it is a hierarchic or subordinate analogy. Content rules; expression must suit it.

That Coleridge should consider motivation as important has been, I think, sufficiently elucidated on the previous pages, but it is a specific conception of motivation. The two types, vertical and horizontal, are indistinguishable because the relationship between content and expression is of a subordinate kind. In a poem, content leads; meaning acts as a guiding principle of paradigmatic selection. The form of expression must suit the form of content and is entirely dependent on it, not the other way round.

When Coleridge states that "one criterion of style is that it shall not be translatable without injury to the meaning" (163) he actually defends motivation. If poetry cannot possibly be rendered into any other means of expression it is because content and expression are inseparable. No element of the form of expression can be altered without prompting some identical alteration of the form of content, as this peremptory statement shows: "Try this upon Shakspeare, or Milton, and see if you can substitute other simpler words in any given passage without a violation of the meaning or tone." (164) There is no doubt as to the subordinate relationship of the two planes when one reads what follows:

For in all, that truly merits the name of Poetry in its most comprehensive sense, there is a necessary predominance of the Ideas (i.e. of that which originates in the artist himself), and a comparative indifference of the materials. (165)

A poet, after all, writes because he has something to tell readers; everything in the language he uses must contribute to the meaning he wants to convey, but it is this meaning which matters first of all even though all particles of the expression glitter in harmony with the content.

In a recent article, Gérard Genette has added a subtler distinction in the debate about Cratyliism. He states that what poetic language does is akin to a "Secondary Cratyliism". Non-poetic language, even, let us say, non-literary language, has never been able to realize "Primary Cratyliism", that perfect adequation between words and things that was dreamed of. "Secondary Cratyliism" is precisely possible because "the nonmimetic character of language is [...] in a certain way, the opportunity and the condition for poetry to exist. Poetry exists only to 'remunerats' (the word is from Mallarmé), in other words, to repair and compensate for the 'defect of languages'." (166) Poetic language restores the "incantatory" power of language by making the content and expression of words the echo and mirror to each other.

From what we already know about Coleridge's conception of poetic language, it is manifest that, steering clear of some irrelevant cult of mere form (expression), he values - a most "modern" trait in him - what is today regarded as poetic language in its essence, in other words poetic language reduced to its fundamental principle. The form of expression, although deemed an important element, the conventional side (metre) being even said to be necessary because traditionally regarded as a specific signal, is esteemed inasmuch as it enters into a set of relationships with content, inside of which it stands as hierarchically subordinate to, so to say at the service of, the form of content.

If, considering once again Coleridge's definitions of poetry, one tries to determine the major points the term covers (namely: 1. communication 2. the seminal idea and its polymorphous expansion 3. the reconciliation of opposites seen as a connection of elements so as to build up a set of patterns running parallel and contributing to the whole, emphasis being especially laid on a semic connection. 4. the organic structure constituting a unity of meaning through isotopies), one is bound to realize that content is outstanding. Even if the text is a whole made up of parts that have a role of their own to play, each part, beyond its specificity, participates in a general scenario which it has to serve.

The reader is supposed to take part in the process of poetic construction by means of a dynamic apprehension of the discourse; for it is his duty not only to perceive the meaning in its literalness but to be pervaded by meaning along with all its implications and entanglements. Severed from the apprehension of its parts, poetic discourse is truncated, ridden of its core, separated from its living principle and its essentials.

But how is the reader to tackle this complex proof a comprehensive reading consists of? This is precisely what one should learn from Coleridge himself. The question is above all: did he provide a clue as to a correct reading not merely of his texts but of poetic texts in general?

As usual, one cannot expect the answer to be written in plain letters in one of the prose works; the answer will have to be extracted from a mass of considerations. "In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth," Coleridge writes in Biographia Literaria, "we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts; and this is the technical process of philosophy." At least two elements enable us to interpret this as a rule to analyze any

whole we purport to draw a truth from. The first one comes from the fact that both his cosmology and his considerations about language are subsumed by an insight pertaining more or less to the field of philosophy. But there is a second element, to be gathered from the fourteenth chapter. It is no mere chance if Coleridge tells us that he will explain what he means by the words poem and poetry, and before he sets out to do so, he devotes an important paragraph to "the office of philosophical disquisition", which, he says, "consists in just distinction". (167)

One does not need to ponder at length to notice that Coleridge's process in this respect is close to Greimas discoursing on the same subject.

"In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts" is Coleridge's version, while Greimas writes that a theory of discourse must consider both planes and "se construire un appareil conceptuel susceptible de fonder et de justifier les procédures de reconnaissance des articulations de ces deux discours" or planes. (168)

An appropriate analysis of a poetic discourse implies therefore that what at first appears a closed set of units having an obscure, and at the same time, fascinating unity, will not reveal itself to us unless we segment it into its articulations:

The articulations to be identified are of two types: they make possible, on the one hand, what is conventionally termed the segmentation of discourse into unities of varying sizes, from the totalizing grandeurs poetic objects are to the minimal elements, the distinctive features relevant to the two planes, that is to sayemes and phemes; but they must also establish a distinction between the linguistic levels of analysis so that the recognition of a specific type of unity should render it possible to define homogeneously a given linguistic level, and vice versa.

And Greimas goes on to say that:

having at its disposal several homogeneous linguistic levels on each plane, poetic semiotics must be able to establish a typology of possible correlations between the planes of expression and content and, as a consequence, to set up a typology of poetic objects based on the taking over, in view of their correlation, of such or such linguistic level of poetic discourse. (169)

This, he adds, leads to "the concept of reading," which, one must remember, is dynamic, for it is as much a re-construction of the poetic object, parallel to the poet's initial construction, as a search for a unity of meaning.

In my brief analysis of some lines Coleridge himself examined, I have somewhat sketched out this procedure. I have roughly determined the major articulations of the discourse and thus singled out patterns which correspond to homogeneous levels (morphological, syntactic, lexical). But such a segmentation is not the aim of the process. In Greimas's own words:

The division of the text into parts is not merely a syntagmatic segmentation, it is also an early projection onto the text of a systematic and syntagmatic order. The recognition beyond the mere appearances of a complex linguistic sign is consequently not the complete description of the sign until its articulations are exhausted, but an operation in the construction of the object which emerges and takes shape from the state in which it is offered to our senses. (170)

Likewise, Coleridge says that having divided the text into its articulated parts, "we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity in which they actually co-exist; and this is the result of philoaphy." (171)

The difference between a correct division of a text into its articulations and an unsuitable atomization is made explicit in Coleridge's analysis of some of Wordsworth's defects, more particularly his "matter-of-factness".

Such descriptions too often occasion in the mind of a reader who is determined to understand his author a feeling of labour, not very dissimilar to that with which he would construct a diagram, line by line, for a long geometrical proposition. It seems to be like taking the pieces of a dissected map out of its box. We first look at one part, and then at another, then join and dove-tail them; and when the successive acts of attention have been completed, there is a retrogressive effort of mind to behold it as a whole. (172)

This, which he terms "paint to the fancy", is the opposite of what is found in Milton, who, on the contrary, paints to the imagination. Quoting lines 1101 to 1110 of Paradise Lost he declares them to be "creation rather than painting, or if painting, yet such, and with such co-presence of the whole picture flash'd at once upon the eye, as the sun paints in a camera obacura." And now to what is, I think, a most capital passage:

But the poet must likewise understand and command what Bacon calls the vestigia communia of the senses, the latency of all in each, and more especially as by magical penna duplex, the excitement of vision by sound and the exponents of sound.

The Latin words are essential, for they point to both the dual aspect of the discourse and the element(s) which, at a deeper level, connect(s) the two parts. This is illustrated by

"the echoing walks between" [which] may be almost said to reverse the fable in tradition of the head of

Memnon in the Egyptian statue [a statue on the Nile said to utter a musical sound when first struck by the sun. So the vision is prompted by the line of Milton, but in reverse, sound is prompting sight]. Such may be deservedly entitled the creative words in the world of imagination. (173)

If adapted to a poetic discourse, the example illustrates the function one must expect of expression, that of "prompting" or reinforcing the effect aimed at by content. One would otherwise be at a loss to understand exactly what is meant by this judgement of poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, especially "those of Italy":

The excellence at which they aimed consisted in the exquisite polish of the diction combined with perfect simplicity. This, their prime object, they attained by the avoidance of every word which a gentleman would not use in dignified conversation, and of every word and phrase which none but a learned man would use; by the studied position of words and phrases, so that not only each part should be melodious in itself, but contribute to the harmony of the whole, each note referring and conducing to the melody of all the foregoing and following words of the same period or stanza; and lastly, with equal labour, the greater because unbetrayed, by the variation and various harmonies of their metrical movement. (174)

There is, on the one hand, insistence on diction and metre, on the position of units and syntagms, and, on the other hand, on the choice of words. That is to say that one recognizes a double concern for both the expressive and the semantic planes, each part having a specific role to play and, being organic, producing a specific effect; but also, and foremost, entering the general pattern of the poem, contribution to the general meaning and effect, conditioning the units and the parts that precede and follow.

If we assume that a poetic discourse generates a set of relationships between the two planes of the discourse and that this set is based on a hierarchy comprehending a subordinate part (expression) and a "determining" part (content), it is now necessary to establish the nature of content.

In my first chapter, I have dealt with Coleridge's conception of language in general and endeavoured to show that if he thought English to be particularly suitable for poetry, this was essentially due to its semantic quality. Owing to the monosyllabic structure of its words, the polysemic potential of its lexemes and the connective possibilities of the system, the English language is endowed with a tremendous expressive might. It is therefore on these two outstanding features - semantic and connective - that we must now concentrate.

If one assumes that the semantic quality of English makes it especially qualified to enter into poetic combinations, it is most certainly on the problem of content that a proper approach to poetry has to centre. Yet semantic power does not only imply lexical content but, as E.R. Marks has not failed to notice, Coleridge has "clearly glimpsed the relation between the syntactical structure of a language and its expressive potential." (175) He makes use of a letter in which Coleridge compares Latin and English and emphasizes the advantage of the latter in not having to unfold a sentence to its last word before the listener understands the meaning of the whole. The flexibility of English syntax is of course an asset, for the connections between words are immediately perceptible and thus more effectively conveyed.

As to what is to be conveyed, Coleridge is positive that it is more than merely informational, as is evident from his rejecting the following lines for being unpoetic:

I put my hat upon my head
 And walked into the Strand;
 And there I met another man
 Whose hat was in his band.

This parody by Samuel Johnson, although perhaps amusing because of the signal afforded by the metre and rhyme, is not more poetic than the well-known example devised by Jean Cohen:

Hier, sur la Nationale sept
 Une automobile
 Roulant à cent à l'heure s'est jetée
 Sur un platane
 Ses quatre occupants ont été
 Tués.

Of course, he comments, this is not poetry; but it is no longer mere prose: "Les mots s'animent, le courant passe, comme si la phrase, par la seule vertu de son découpage aberrant, était près de se réveiller de son sommeil prosaïque." (176) In Cohen's instance as in Coleridge's, we find proof that if the literal content of a message is alone imparted, the effect is practically nil; but also, it shows that with the addition of as superficial an element as versification, something more is effected which, however little, affects the reader.

But if the transmission of information is not enough, what, then, does content consist of? It is, Coleridge says repeatedly, made up of more than the merely acceptable but it must at least be that. In a letter to Sotheby, he comments deprecatively on a poem by Gessner because it runs against logic and verisimilitude. Besides the artless characteristic of the piece, the content is contrary to common sense. What a poet must achieve is not some kind of external coating of words as one puts a coat

of paint on a wall, for "it is easy to cloathe Imaginary Beings with our own Thought & Feelings; but to send ourselves out of ourselves, to think ourselves in to the Thoughts and Feelings of Beings in circumstances wholly & strangely different from our own" is what must be done, and this is not easy. (177) We find ourselves once again having to decide whether what is actually aimed at is purely mechanical or will abide by the organic requisite I have formerly developed. "Figures and metaphors" which are deprived of the original impetus that justifies them are "mere artificas of connection or ornament" (178); increasing the semantic value of a sentence or stanza is not achieved by simply additioning the semic collection of the individual words as in the translation of an epithet Coleridge came across "in some Greek (MSS.) hexameters", a compound epithet which translates "tail-horn-hoofed" and the component parts of which "are indebted for their union exclusively to the printer's hyphen." By simply juxtaposing lexemes united by hyphens one does not cause the "flashing on the mental eye" a real poetic construction ought to effect. (179) Connection then does not consist of adding semes to semes regardless of any other consideration. It must be some specific combination of semes respecting a definite order and involving definite constituents that must be determined clearly.

Words, at least, must come loaded with what is appropriate to their denotation but also to verisimilitude and the logic of the context. Ronald Blythe, in his Introduction to Hardy's Far From The Madding Crowd, has described that sort of expectancy from people that assumes that nothing should disturb the ordinariness of landscapes, animals and individuals, that people cannot behave otherwise than those of their own classes have always behaved. Any disturbance of the immemorial scheme brings about shocks because it

challenges an eternal order. (180) Likewise, Coleridge praises some of Wordsworth's characters because they abide by the rule. Thus

the characters of the vicar and the shepherd-mariner in the poem of the "Brothers," those of the Shepherd of Green-head Gill in the "Michael", have all the verisimilitude and representative quality that the purposes of poetry can require. They are persons of a known and abiding class, and their manners and sentiments the natural product of circumstances common to the class. (181)

In the very meaning it conveys the poetic message must be in agreement with logic: "Poetry is something more than good sense, but it must be good sense at all events". (182)

Coleridge is indeed adamant as regards logical breach. In the line by Gray -

And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire

- there are

almost as many faults as words. But then it is a bad line not because the language is distinct from that of prose, but because it conveys incongruous images, because it confounds the cause and the effect, the real thing with the personified representative of the thing; in short, because it differs from the language of good sense. (183)

If asked, he says, by what principle the poet is to abide, he cannot but retort:

by the principles of grammar, logic, psychology! In one word, by such a knowledge of the facts, material and spiritual, that most appertain to his art as, if it have been governed and applied by good sense and rendered instinctive by habit, becomes the

representative and reward of our past conscious reasoning, insights and conclusions, and acquires the name of taste. (184)

In his discussion of Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality", we have a confirmation that by what precedes Coleridge means not only that the literal meaning of a poem should relate to the most basic logic but also that the general context should not go beyond the pale of the logically acceptable. He violently attacks the passage in which children are depicted as wise beings:

In what sense is a child of that age a philosopher? In what sense does he read "the eternal deep"? In what sense is he declared to be "for ever haunted" by the Supreme Being? or so inspired as to deserve the splendid titles of a mighty prophet, a blessed seer? By reflection? by knowledge? by conscious intuition? or by any form or modification of consciousness? (185)

Seen in the light of his criticism of Wordsworth's considerations in the Preface on the language of simple men and of rustics as being the essence of poetic language, his questions make sense. For the same reason which prevents peasants from expressing more than commonplace feelings and reflections when moved by extraordinary events, namely the non-existence of structures previously acquired by education, a child cannot possibly be believed to possess an awareness and a wisdom that only study and experience can bring. Because of such incongruities a poem loses a part of its credibility; because of such lapses in the plot which weaves the web of its structure, it ultimately fails.

This Coleridge explains and renders explicit by saying that

poetry must be more than good sense, or it is not poetry; but it dare not be less, or discrepant. Good sense is not, indeed, the superstructure; but it is the rock, not only on which the edifice is raised, but likewise the rock-quarry from which all its stones have been, by patient toil, dug out. (186)

If one tries to interpret this in the light not only of what we already know about Coleridge's conceptions but also of modern linguistics, one is led to consider that the superstructure of a poem consists of the main body which has to be erected on the solidity of an infrastructure. The latter, paradoxically, is probably visible first, and as such it directs the reader's attention to what is less evidently perceptible and yet what is to be the aim and object of the reader's poetic re-construction. If the infrastructure misses its point in some way, the finality of the poem is blurred and the whole is flawed. Coleridge does not mean anything else when he says that poetry must be

simple, that it may appeal to the elements and the primary laws of our nature; sensuous, since it is only by sensuous images that we can elicit truth as at a flash; impassionate, since images must be vivid, in order to move our passions and awaken our affections. (187)

This is to say that man cannot respond to a poem which falls short of the verisimilitude he is bound to expect of a structure that purports to build up anew a reality to which he is used but which, at the same time, follows rules he knows to be inevitable. Poetry must be simple and not thoroughly cut off from what the reader is aware of as belonging to intimate context as a man. It must also be objective and therefore based on what the senses can bring; otherwise it becomes something disincarnate and unaccountable. Eventually, it must be generated by

emotions or else the reader does not recognize anything likely to arouse in him a state of mind he can admit to be an echo of what he is confronted with.

But poetry cannot be only literal meaning, for literal meaning is not equal to the task of increasing the expressive power of a poem. One must remember what Coleridge states about prose, that it must be accurate enough to convey the meaning it is incumbent upon the discourse to convey, and nothing more. In poetry, on the other hand, the words themselves syntagmatically organized both transmit a meaning and are the meaning itself. The structure as a whole is much more than a mere addition of significant units; it is a swollen mass of subtly interwoven levels of meaning, having a unity as well as a sonorous and even graphic combination which sustains the edifice. The talent one can expect in a poet is "the talent to seek only the apt expression of the thought, and yet to find at the same time with it the rhyme and the metre." (188) Poetic creation involves an infinity of minute operations to be realized at once, and not only with the finality constantly in the poet's mind, constantly, but with the finality actually governing the construction. In the poet's mind, Coleridge says, "Images and Thoughts are posterior to the Things, and produced or conditioned by their Objects." (189) He must keep present to his mind that nothing is available to him that does not pre-exist somewhere in the reality about us. If such a constraint were to be overlooked, the result, inevitably, would be a disconnection between the work and the reader.

Admitting that the content of words in poetic discourse must at least be consistent denotatively and, so to speak, according to what can be logically recognized but also that it is more than this, what does it consist in? And what is it that transforms a language which,

basically, makes use of units that do not differ from those of ordinary language? The issue is aptly formulated by Marks when he says that

quite apart from any wish to dissociate himself from the views expressed by Wordsworth in the 1800-1802 prefaces to Lyrical Ballads, Coleridge would have had to give some thought merely as poet to how and why words take on special value in poetry. (190)

The question itself, he adds, leads to our having to "take account of Coleridge's unsleeping preoccupation with the phenomena of words and language." If one considers Coleridge's admittance of three types of language - poetic, neutral, prosaic - and his rejection of the prosaic as a type entitled to be used in poetry, one is bound to ask oneself why it is so.

In Samuel Johnson's parody mentioned in chapter eighteen of Biographia Literaria, the lines are said to be unsuitable to poetry, despite the superaddition of the metre, because the words in them do not mean more than they say. The style is "justly blameable as prosaic, and solely because the words and the order of the words would find their appropriate place in prose but are not suitable to metrical composition." (191) The language of prose, as a matter of fact, uses words which are "the arbitrary mark of thought" while in poetry they

convey pictures either borrowed from one outward object to enliven and particularize some other; or [they are] used allegorically to body forth the inward state of the person speaking; or such as are at least the exponents of his peculiar turn and unusual extent of faculty. (192)

By the latter sentence, however, Coleridge does not qualify the language of poetry but the language used in

conversation by people anxious to load their speech with something more than an informational content. Such a language we should today call "figurative", i.e. endowed with a potential which drives it beyond the flat conveyance of situations one wishes to communicate apart from any emotional consideration. The lively type of language called figurative is actually based on a similar pattern to what is to become the poetic type. In it the words mean more than what they apparently show of themselves.

Marks, admitting that for the structuralists poetic language is endowed with characteristics of which many are to be found in Coleridge, and also, indeed, in the Romantics in general, seems to concentrate the phenomenon of the poetic process itself in what occurs at the semantic level, asserting that

Coleridge's position perhaps finds its closest twentieth-century confirmation in a nonstructuralist stylistic critic, the late W.K. Wimsatt, who concluded that it is precisely "through being supercharged with significance" that a poem achieves aesthetic power. (193)

If it is so, therefore, it cannot be because words convey a content which is merely logical and grammatically correct. There must be more to it than this.

The answer to the question, or rather the solution of the problem lies in the second great quality of language: its connective power.

Reverting to the parallel between nature and the poet, one reads in a marginal note that although nature begets thousands of creations at the same time, it is nevertheless wonderful in its power to unite them, thus preventing them from falling apart or standing unrelated.

The importance, therefore, is one of links. The poet is here comparable to the physiognist. "A class of phenomena which for the Physiographer lie dispersed more widely than the limbs of Absyrtus, scattered by the fratricidal Enchantress, may for the Physiognist re-unite and co-organize." (194) The poet, let us not forget this, has the gift that enables him to find - and also to reproduce - "unity in multieity" and to discover the universal in the particular. How he is to achieve this when facing the tremendous diversity of things can only be explained by his faculty, the secondary imagination, to perceive the link which subsumes such a diversity. He is a giver of shape, the magician who impresses a new form upon elements that already had one or had none whatever and had nothing which might possibly have related them to one another.

"By Form the Stoicks meant God, or the efficient Cause of all Things," Coleridge writes in a note. We know enough of Coleridge's conception of poetic composition to attribute to the concept of "efficient cause" the meaning it was generally given by Kant, namely that of an entity exerting an action, in other words modifying another entity without losing or yielding of its own nature or of its energy. (195) In the passage I mention here, the shaping power is described as a coadunating force: one which forces many things into one. (196) The exertion of this power partakes of the dual movement described in the Theory of Life since it is at once polar - it opposes two antagonists - and individualizing, i.e. striving towards uniqueness.

In a letter of 1814, Coleridge explains that "an Imitation differs from a Copy in this, that it of necessity implies & demands difference - whereas a Copy sim at identity." (197) This sounds very much like the definition of metaphor given above; for as I stated, if

metaphor is the union of identity and antagonism, the existence of both elements is indispensable for the metabole to function. The antagonistic existence must manifest itself as well as a feeling of unity. Coleridge provides a definition of metaphor, a figure he puts in the same category as allegory and fable. Allegory, in fact, covers metaphor and from what he says about both, it is possible to infer that what he affirms about the former actually applies to the latter. He defines it as

the employment of one set of agents and images to convey in disguise a moral meaning, with a likeness to the imagination, but with a difference to the understanding, - those agents and images being so combined as to form a homogeneous whole. (198)

By modern criteria, the definition would be deemed far too imprecise. The "set of agents and images" has no accurate referent and the "with" introducing the notions of likeness and difference provides too loose a link between the two parts. Yet we can take for granted that the "moral meaning" conveyed refers to the subjectivization of nature we already know to be the characteristic of the poet's action. The process, therefore, consists in the instillation into a lexeme indexing on /cosmos/ of senses belonging to a lexeme indexing on /anthropos/. Understanding, which is man's rational intelligence, perceives at once the difference or what opposes the two lexemes or sets of lexemes.

What unites them being at a deeper level (infralinguistic) appeals to the imagination and thus requires a greater effort before it is detected.

If we take as an illustration a famous metaphor in Coleridge's poetry, the result appears clearly. Let us use, for instance, the image of the leaf at the beginning of "Christabel":

There is not wind enough to twirl
 The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
 That dances as often as dance it can,
 Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
 On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky. (199)

The set of words (why not call them "agents"?) "the last of its clan" suffices to divert the lexeme "leaf" from its usual isotopic category /vegetable/. The Shorter OED defines "clan" as being either "a number of persons claiming descent from a common ancestor, and associated together; a tribe" or "a collection of people having common attributes; a fraternity, party, set, lot". "Leaf" and "clan" possess at least one seme that opposes them: "vegetable" vs "human" or, at a more general level, "inanimate" vs "animate". The difference is at once perceptible while what connects them really has to be discovered, to be constructed. The intersective area comprehends such semes as /ultimate position/, /motion/, /organic whole/ prompted by the image of a genealogical tree. If the reader is immediately aware of what distinguishes the lexeme "leaf" from the lexeme "clan", he is led to discover what makes them similar. Both elements, the opposing and the identical, are co-present and this concomitance produces a semantic enriching and hence an increase of the expressive effect.

It is interesting to consider again Coleridge's leading dichotomies between fancy and imagination and reason and understanding. Not that as key terms of his metalinguistic universe they matter one way or another: they can be founded on no rational grounds and are mere terminological items of a philosophical speculation. But they are given a value inasmuch as they cover definitions that are relevant to the poetic process, for they help separate domains which, while often overlapping, are nevertheless clearly specific.

When Coleridge describes imagination as the

power of modifying one image or feeling by the precedent or following one -. - So often after afterwards to be illustrated that at present I shall speak only of - one of its effects - namely, that of combining many circumstances into one moment of thought to produce that ultimate end of human Thought, and human Feeling, Unity and thereby the reduction of the Spirit to its Principle & Fountain, who alone is truly one, (200)

he not only confirms that the essential part of the poetic process is metaphorical but also draws attention to the capital role of syntagmatic combinations and the importance of opposition inherent in language as such, something Saussure had insisted on. If, now, we compare this description with what he says about fancy, the result we obtain is somewhat puzzling. Fancy, he says, is "the aggregative Power [...] the bringing together Images dissimilar in the main by some one point or more of Likeness." (201) The essential dissimilarity of the elements fancy brings together seems at first very close to the combination of elements effected by imagination. Things become clearer, however, if we remember that in the case of imagination, the modification involves a succession of images or feelings - expressed by words - having an effect one upon another, whereas the action of fancy applies on specific points providing the one element which, being similar to others, justifies an aggregation. The result, one must not forget, is aggregative and therefore implies the association of units of the type found in metaphors and similes. The work of imagination, on the other hand, seems to involve larger units and points to wider associations of the sort witnessed in larger isotopic areas.

The poet's prerogative, no doubt, lies in his being able to find the dim traces of identity in the hidden part of things, and "the Essence of Identity lies in recollective Consciousness". (202) If the reader has to make an effort to recognize what is going on in a poem, the poet himself must be endowed with a special gift which alone will permit him to find identities in the universe and in the common elements of his mind and the universe he wants to bring together in order to shape a new reality. This he will find in himself, after he has thought and recollected for a long time. The faculty that will enable him to use what he has found is reason. Here again, no matter how Coleridge chooses to call it; the issue is that the poet has in him a faculty which enables him to develop and organize what he has found according to laws of its own.

Using the image of a triangle, Coleridge says that men must have a faculty to recognize and apprehend the magnitude, colour and consistency of the figure, and this is understanding; but he also needs one to perceive the essential quality which, through the various forms or appearances afforded by a triangle allows it to retain its quality as a triangle; and this is what reason achieves. Reason is therefore

the forma formans, which contains in itself the law of its own conceptions. Nay, it is highly probable, that the contemplation of essential Form as remaining the same thro' all varieties of color and magnitude and development, as in the acorn even as in the Oak, first gave to the Mind the ideas, by which it explained to itself those notices of its Immortality revealed to it by its conscience. (203)

The elements described here are identical to what we have read about the combination of units inside an isotopic area and also in the simile and metaphor. If the essence of poetry lies in its effecting "unity in multecity,"

there is no doubt that multiteity will be perceived first and unity last, after a search for identity has been made. The search may end in the reader's (and the would-be poet's) absence of discovery and therefore in failure. In that case, of course, the process comes to nothing and has not even really begun. Taken as a whole which has succeeded, however, it involves the numerous elements I have described. What the synthesis of these elements consists in, what the process in its globality actually achieves, is what we are going to examine now.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF THE POETIC POWER

In the first chapter, my purpose was to consider Coleridge's conception of language in general and from that conception - considered as a general approach - move on to something more specific: Coleridge's theories about how language - a matter to be worked upon, like the clay sculptors mould into definite shapes - is to be made into poetic language. The artist possesses a power to act upon language which, analogically, resembles the creative power at work in the universe. This is what I have tried to show in chapter two. In chapter three, I have attempted to analyze the poetic process; we have paced along the winding path which goes from the seminal idea to the final product: the organic whole, the self-sufficient structure - and it is now time to synthesize and risk a definition. The latter, of course, would certainly fail to satisfy Coleridge, who, as we know, distrusted systematization; his comprehensive mind could never be content with cursory definitions, expressed in sentences aiming to contain the infinite complexity of a meandering thought. Yet, having gone over the sundry stages of the poetic development, we must now evolve a theoretical pattern to serve as a model we can apply to a poem.

"I have strange power of speech," says the Ancient Mariner to the Hermit. This rather terse statement we can

find as an illustration of poetry as Coleridge sees it, but also indeed as modern poetics sees it.

Poetry is "speech": it is language with its units, with its grammar and above all with its meaning. The attitude of the Mariner throughout the poem bears witness to the fact that he cannot resist something within his frame that pushes him to deliver a message. This done, the individual who is ready to listen and has paid attention will, like the wedding-guest, benefit from it.

Poetry is language but it is "strange". Poetic discourse is the space of the encounter of content and expression but also, Greimas reminds us, the space where language is distorted; it is "the place of distortions of signification due to the contradictory demands of freedom and the constraints of communication, as well as to the opposition of the divergent forces of inertia and history." (1) Stress, in the poetic process, is laid on content; inside it, polarity is at work, like the frost secretly performing on a winter night; it is the locus where antagonistic forces confront each other.

Language to the poet is a substance to be shaped into a third entity, and for this reason it has to undergo distortions, prompted by the power of the mind. The necessity the poet experiences to grasp language with all his might is what accounts for Coleridge's physical love of words, his fondness, as Marks says, for punning, his wonder at the awful power contained in words. "The vital agency which Coleridge assigns to words actually endows them with quasi-autonomous value." Paronomasy, for instance, is a device in which he finds "evidence that words are not mere symbols of thoughts and objects but things in themselves." Through the eminent quality of its sounds language gains expressiveness. "In the assonances, exploiting as they do a correspondence of phonic and

semantic elements which is lost in the English version of an apophthegm by Epictetus, he sees a special beauty of what he calls the homogeneous languages." (2)

All these qualities merge in the most outstanding aspect of language, at its utmost in poetry: power.

Poetic language thought of as power can be traced as far back as Aristotle, who described the poet as a maker, a giver of shape. This conception is found in writers as different as Horace, Quintilian, Gascoigne, Dryden, Pope, the early Romantics, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Shelley, Baudelaire, Wilde, Croce and T.E. Hulme. It assumes different hues according to one or the other of them: the poet is an informer, a maker (Aristotle, Horace, Gascoigne, the Romantics, Wilde, Croce, Hulme), an organizer of chaos (Horace, Quintilian, Dryden, Carlyle), a combiner of emotions (Longinus), a methodizer of nature (Pope), a transformer using the power of imagination controlled by reason (Bacon), etc. Each of these elements - informing and shaping, organizing, combining, methodizing, transforming - involves energy and therefore partakes of power.

In Coleridge's time and afterwards, the notion that poetic language implies some sort of power remains a central aspect. In his Lectures on the English Poets (1818), Hazlitt writes: "... wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony [...] there is poetry, in its birth." He conceives of poetry as "an imitation of nature" in which "we shape things." Poetry "is strictly the language of the imagination; and the imagination is that faculty which represents objects, not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings, into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations of power." (3)

The idea that poetry involves "shaping" and "moulding" as a way of imitating nature is shared by Shelley:

In the youth of the world, men dance and sing and imitate natural objects, observing in these actions, as in all others, a certain rhythm or order. And although all men observe a similar, they observe not the same order, in the motions of the dance, in the melody of the song, in the combinations of language, in the series of their imitations of natural objects. For there is a certain order or rhythm belonging to each of these classes of mimetic representation, from which the hearer and the spectator receive an intenser and purer pleasure than from any other: the sense of an approximation to this order has been called taste by modern writers. (4)

Here poetic language is power manifested through an ordering of the emotions which involves rhythm. It was left to De Quincey to express clearly the relation between literature and power as opposed to science and knowledge. He was influenced by Wordsworth, who had found in nature a moral and spiritual force he called "power" in The Prelude (VIII, 753-5). In "Letters to a Young Man Whose Education has been Neglected" (1823), De Quincey writes:

All that is literature seeks to communicate power; all that is not literature, to communicate knowledge. Now, if it be asked what is meant by communicating power, I, in turn, would ask by what name a man would designate the case in which I should be made to feel vividly, and with a vital consciousness, emotions which ordinary life rarely or never supplies occasions for exciting, and which had previously lain unawakened, and hardly within the dawn of consciousness - as myriads of modes of feelings are at this moment in every human mind for want of a poet to organise them? I say, when these inert and sleeping forms are organised, when these possibilities are actualized, is this conscious and living possession of mine power, or what is it? (5)

With De Quincey, poetic power is explicitly seen as the organizing of "inert and sleeping forms", it originates in the ability of the poet to instil a principle of order, a structure in materials that were previously chaotic and unavailable to consciousness. It is also a power to communicate feelings and images, a conception we find in Alexander Smith's the Philosophy of Poetry (1835). The poet's fancy, he writes,

lights on the figures or images that will most vividly and rapidly convey the sentiment that fills his soul. The mind, anxious to convey not the truth or fact with regard to the object of its contemplation, but its own feelings as excited by the object, pours forth the stream of its associations as they rise from their source. (6)

Poetry is a power of communication that makes sentiments and emotions available to oneself and others.

From antiquity onwards, the key words to qualify the power of poetic language have been "shaping" and "moulding", "organizing" and "ordering", "associating" and "combining". What has failed to take place, however, is a clear demonstration of what, apart from emotions and other vague notions, is implicated in the process. What exactly does the imaginative force combine and fuse? In this respect, Coleridge is more explicit.

Intrinsically and owing to the potentialities it offers, language is an instrument of power that a man of genius can use to play the demiurge in creating anew the universe God made. Coleridge was never more aware of this power than when he realized he was gradually losing it. The pathetic cry he utters in "Dejection" is a song of grief, the song of one who, like the Ancient Mariner, has a message to transmit to the world; someone who wants men to understand that nature is but an "inanimate cold world" and that "in our life alone does Nature live".

From the poet's mind comes the beaming creative subjectivity, the shaping force that spreads itself over language and plies it to its inherent will. We must not forget that

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! (7)

The voice that generates beauty, "the Productive Logos human and divine" that Coleridge intended to write about in a comprehensive sum, (8) the primary word which makes what it says, that perennial dream of man in his wish to imitate the Creator, all this becomes effective in poetry. In order to identify this creative energy, Coleridge coined the word esemplastic; he borrowed it from Greek as meaning "to shape into one". (9)

It is possible to analyze power in nature, and by analogy we can conceive of it and represent it in poetry. Coleridge illustrates it by the image of a stone. He asks:

What if the vital force which I sent from my arm into the stone, as I flung it in the air & skimm'd it upon the water - what if even that did not perish! - it was life - ? it was a particle om O'Shanter it was Power! - & how could it perish - ? Life, Power, Being! - organization may & probably is, their effect; their cause it cannot be! (10)

Poetic language, obviously, is not a new language, made up of units different from, and originating in another

idiom than, ordinary language. It is language but organized in a different way, made more forceful by a specific use of the potentialities it already has, by a linking together of elements normally scattered over the discourse, spread so as to make it a heterogeneous whole, in which the meaning and the language that expresses it are connected arbitrarily.

We have seen, in the third chapter, that the border between art and non art marks the limit from which a deliberate and contrastive use of language for imitative purposes departs. A passion prompts the mimetic process but the process itself is set in motion while the primary cause, the initiating passion, is absent.

But though only recalled - yet the recalling of the original emotion must not be underrated - passion is the seed, now intellectualized, which conditions the ensuing process; it appears as a seminal idea that extends all over the space of language just as God's willed idea of the universe spread so as to create the world He imagined. Through the infinite variety of nature, the basic idea expands, realizing the synthesis of the polar forces - expansion vs contraction - just as the seminal idea expands itself over the poem, blending the antagonistic forces of anthropos and cosmos. Passion, in the poet, arouses a content, and so strong is this content that it conjures up the appropriate expression, the only expression to suit it by necessity.

The difference between the original creation of the universe and the poet's is that God acted upon a void while the poet cannot but use units and elements already in existence. He uses the forms, figures, elements provided by nature: its colours, silhouettes, sounds, and he transforms them into his own substance. Only, the transformation is not unilateral, it involves an

enriching reciprocity. The action is in fact an interaction, implying the elements provided by cosmos and the subjective elements contained in the poet's mind. As bodies in nature strive towards individualization, endeavouring to escape the massification which is their inevitable condition at the beginning, likewise the power at work in language represents a striving towards uniqueness. The words, otherwise uncontrasted against the uniformity of language - a uniformity due to excess of variety, due to heterogeneity - gradually detach themselves, under the influence of the transforming power, from the mass of the linguistic units and form a unique whole, of which all the elements are interdependent because the structure is organic.

Poetic language, this must be clearly understood, is the space of the activity of a power, and as a power, it is essentially connective.

As a giver of shape, a tamer of chaos, the poet has the supreme ability to find the connections latent in elements apparently and from a superficial point of view thoroughly different from one another. What founds their connectiveness is the linking line which runs through them, a line that the poet perceives, and one which makes them part of a network of whose subtle weaving he is the creator and which the reader will have to reconstruct in his mind.

The connective power operates through imagination led by reason. The result is a body made up of joints and sinews relating the limbs, each limb being a perfectly complete whole in itself. In this it imitates the power operating in nature and the outcome of the process is an organic structure such as a tree, a plant or a man. That connection should be the basis of the activity is obvious from many passages in Coleridge's writings and some of

these passages we have already seen. From fancy which is an "aggregative Power" to imagination which modifies and combines, everything is "Energy, depth, and activity of Thought without which a man may be a pleasing and affecting Poet; but never a great one." (11) "Fancy," Coleridge says again in a Lecture, is "the faculty of bringing together images dissimilar in the main by some one point or more of likeness" and imagination, at a higher level, is "the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others, and by a sort of fusion to force many into one." The result, and actually the purpose of so many connections and combinations, is unity (12).

The poetic power is a connective power. But passing from a general, so to say philosophical, conception of this power to its description in the field of poetry, we shall attempt to delimitate its characteristics when attached to the domain of language. The question to be examined is: how does the connectiveness of the poetic power manifest itself in a poem, and, subsidiarily, how, concretely, does it apply so as to transform "ordinary" language into poetic language?

Coleridge defines the beautiful as being the stamping of a form onto a substance. The poet applies his power to a matter afforded by nature and he acts towards it as a demiurge does. But he does not use any referential matter such as real trees, stars, lakes or flowers, he uses words. Now, the beautiful, Coleridge says, is made of associations, however remote those can sometimes be or appear from the obvious: "So far is the Beautiful from depending wholly on association, that it is frequently produced by the mere removal of associations." (13) We have enough ground to postulate that associations or disassociations settle between words or groups of words. If so, then language can be regarded as a space of

connections or "as the symbolic medium of the connection of Thought with Thought, & of Thoughts, as affected and modified by Passion & Emotion." (14) The Latin word "medium" designates an intermediate space; the word is therefore doubly adequate when used relatively to poetic language since it denotes both a space and a mediatory process between opposites. Enough evidence has been gathered in the previous chapter for us to surmise that the association between words or groups of words implies one or several common elements in several words or groups to allow the connection. This is confirmed by the following extract:

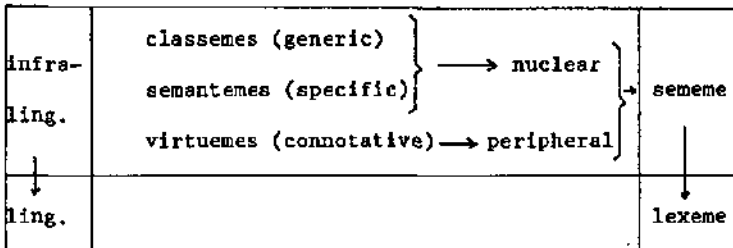
In nature all things are individual, but a word is but an arbitrary character for a whole class of things; so that the same description may in almost all cases be applied to twenty different appearances. (15)

This means that a word covers a class of significances, that it is generic. If we revert to what we already know about Coleridge's conception of a word, we know it to consist of a triple layer: notional, figurative and emotional. What could such a definition of a word correspond to in the view of modern linguistics?

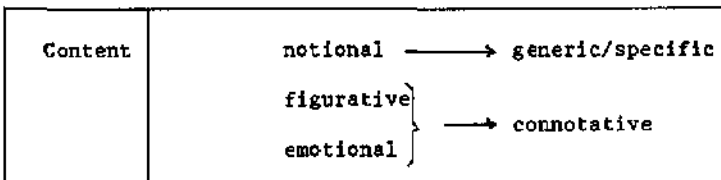
There are two main lines of research on lexemes today. One is Greimas's, who defines it as a unit one can represent either virtually or as manifested. The latter intervenes when content is tied to its expression, thus realizing a semiosis. But Greimas prefers to consider the lexeme as a mere unit of the plane of content and as such as containing one or several sememes. The sememe is in turn made up of several semes: one group of semes being central (sèmes nucléaires), the other contextual. However more adequate, as Greimas convincingly argues, his

definition of both lexeme and sememe perhaps is than Bernard Pottier's (16), the latter's conception seems closer to Coleridge's.

Pottier regards the sememe as the combination of several groups of semes: the generic group (classeme), the specific group (semanteme) and the connotative group (virtueme). The first two categories constitute the nucleus of the sememe while the virtuememes belong to its peripheral part. The whole can be represented thus:



Let us compare Coleridge's notion of a word with Pottier's notion of a lexeme:



What founds the connective process between two or several words can only be the existence of at least one common seme between them, such as, for instance, the seme /dynamic/ common to both "performs" and "ministry" qualifying "frost" in "Frost at Midnight".

The position of both the poet and the reader appears in a new light. The reader will need intelligence, concentration and probably talent to trace the subsuming connections between the elements of a poem, but the poet will need genius because he is at the outset of the creation of the poem. His task is a difficult one because he has to construct the structure the reader will "only" have to decipher. He starts from a mere seminal idea in his mind and then applies it to language which, in this case, has become a set of chaotized units to be assembled according to a mental pattern that still has the fragility of thin air.

How is one to detect, while reading a poem, the connections which form the structural pattern of the whole? The answer is: through desynonymization.

Poetry, Coleridge reveals, is a matter of the utmost precision; and as such it is closely linked to mathematics, "the Quintessence of Truth;" for "the verse (particularly in the introduction of the Ode) may be accused of unwarrantable liberties; but they are liberties equally homogeneal with the exactness of Mathemat." (17) If the paradigmatic selection must be effected with care - "The words are selected because they are the most appropriate, regard being had to the dignity of the total impression" (18) - it is because the word to be inserted has to abide by the rule of the isomorphism of discourse. A mere superficial procedure would indeed consist of approximately choosing a word, perhaps for the beauty of its sound, even though its necessary appearance in the syntagm might be deemed doubtful; a really adequate selection must consider the semic organization of the word first.

Coleridge places the necessity to desynonymize at the bottom of poetic composition:

There are few mental exertions more instructive, or which are capable of being rendered more entertaining, than the attempt to establish and exemplify the distinct meaning of terms, often confounded in common use, and considered as mere synonyms. Such are the words, agreeable, beautiful, picturesque, grand, sublime: and to attach a distinct and separate sense to each of these, is a previous step of indispensable necessity to a writer, who would reason intelligibly, either to himself or to his readers, concerning the works of poetic genius, and the sources and the nature of the pleasure derived from them. (19)

Here Coleridge advocates not only the extreme precision required of writer and reader alike so as to discern the common seme(s) which, in a set of words, found(s) their being incorporated into a poetic structure, but also the necessity there is to mark off the distinction between words which apparently are mere synonyms. The enriching elements in a poem are not only the seme or semes that connect(s) the words but also the semes that oppose them. In "Frost at Midnight" the common seme /dynamic/ connects the words "performs" and "Ministry", but the semes that give each of the words their specific meaning contribute to the impression of semantic depth provided by the opening lines.

The poetic process would not exist if one of the two component parts of identity and opposition were missing. This process, once again, is clearly described in an article of The Friend already mentioned:

EVERY POWER IN NATURE AND IM SPIRIT must evolve an opposite, as the sole means and condition of its manifestation: AND ALL OPPOSITION IS A TENDENCY TO RE-UNION. This is the universal Law of Polarity or essential Dualism, first promulgated by Heraclitus, 2000 years afterwards republished, and made the foundation both of Logic, of Physics, and of Metaphysics by Giordano Bruno. The Principle may be

thus expressed. The Identity of Thesis and Antithesis is the substance of all Being; their Opposition the condition of all Existence, or Being manifested; and every Thing or Phaenomenon is the Exponent of a Synthesis as long as the opposite energies are retained in that Synthesis. Thus Water is neither Oxygen nor Hydrogen, nor yet is it a commixture of both; but the Synthesis or Indifference of the two: and as long as the copula endures, by which it becomes Water, or rather which alone is Water, it is not less a simple Body than either of the imaginary Elements, improperly called its Ingredients or components. (20)

This vision of power applied to poetic language involves:

1. an opposition between two words, or two sets of words, representing the fundamental categories of cosmos and anthropos; in this opposition only poetry (but, we shall see, not a poem) has existence;
2. an identity of substance, the substance of words being their semes, a seme being "l'unité minimale de signification, non susceptible de réalisation indépendante, et donc toujours réalisée à l'intérieur d'une configuration sémantique ou sémème;" (21)
3. a synthesis, i.e. the mediation of the fundamental opposition, a mediation effected by language used as a space of connection which does not annihilate one of the two antagonistic terms but retains both of them in a kind of union of contraries by which something is gained, a new energy or a surplus of semantic charge.

The identity between words or sets of words representing cosmos, on the one hand, and anthropos, on the other hand, constitutes the consubstantial existence of poetry. Without a common seme between the opposites, the result would not be a blending of the two but an untransgressible antagonism. Cosmos and anthropos would be recognized as contraries and the effect of the admission would be merely a sense of the tragic. The mediation actually occurs because of the communication between the two categories which transforms the basic opposition into a higher type of construction with the

result of conveying pleasure to the reader who is a witness of the construction (provided the construction exists and he is given the elements to perceive it).

The opposition and its synthesis illustrate once more the motto "extremes meet". Because the universe is made up of wholes that are all inter-related, each whole symbolizing each other whole as well as the totality, each component part of the universe possesses one atom of the general substance. Likewise, each word inside one vaster category possesses at least one seme which relates it to the other words of the category. It is this isomorphism, brought to a perfection in poetry, that the poet uses to impress a form upon the substance supplied by the semic configurations.

The poet's function as one who perceives the unity of the seminal idea subsuming the multiplicity of appearances was already attributed to the philosopher by Plato. Owing to the seme they have in common, two words or sets of words enter in a relation; the poet "diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends and (as it were) fuses, each into each," (22) by which we can assume that the relation consists of an exchange of semes. Only by such an exchange is it possible to "make the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought, and thought nature," for "in every work of art there is a reconciliation of the external with the internal." (23)

In order to obtain a clear notion of how the process of semic exchanges is effected, let us compare Group Mu's description of the isotopic process with Coleridge's isosemic constitution.

Group Mu determine two conditions for isotopies to take place. The first one is called juxtaposition; it implies the iteration of at least one seme in at least two words.

The iteration, or redundancy, must be quantitative (it must comprehend a number of redundant semes in lexemes of a given context as well as a number of such lexemes covering recurrent semes in due proportion) and qualitative (the value of the isotopy is proportionate to the regularity of the semic distribution along the syntagmatic axis but also to the position of lexemes as well as to the nature of the syntactic connections between them). The second condition is the composition condition; it is a matter of logic and implies that exclusive semes in a syntactic position of determination should be absent. The absence of one of the two conditions or, of course, of both of them, leads to an allotopy which most often founds a new isotopy. (24)

The reading of a poetic text (and a fortiori its creation) proceeds by re-evaluations of its elements. The morphemes, syntagms and sentences are gradually integrated in either of two ways, or both. The re-evaluation can be proversive: new elements are corrected by being added to the seme(s) recurrent in the field already determined, and they are then indexed on the field itself. But the seme(s) of a new element can also be spread over the field and the elements selected so far are re-interpreted; this re-evaluation is called retrospective.

More simply, we can say that when reading a poetic text - reading being defined as "balayage dynamique en quête d'une unité de sens" (25) - one takes into account the modifying action of words relatively to one another, it being understood that the whole structure forms a network of mutual relations conditioned by a guiding and generating idea: a project. Coleridge, it is worthy of note, traces out the reader's progress while "at every step he pauses and half recedes, and from the retrogressive movement collects the force which again

carries him onward." (26) Do we not have here a less technical yet more elegant description of the proversive re-evaluation? In any case, Coleridge defines imagination as the "power of modifying one image or feeling by the precedent or following ones." (27) And we have a confirmation of the whole process in the three words that stand out in Davies's lines quoted in Biographia Literaria (28): "sublimation", "abstracts" and "converts". The process changes the form of words by the action of other words; it connects by isolating senses; most important of all, some words change the form of other words by absorbing their characters and substances (Lat. convertere).

It should be possible, and indeed it would be helpful, to find another application by Coleridge of the principles I have just emphasized.

As Coleridge writes in one entry of the notebooks,

Imagination, or the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others, & by a sort of fusion to force many into one - that which after shewed itself in such might & energy in Lear, where the deep anguish of a Father spreads the feeling of ingratitude & Cruelty over the very Elements of Heaven - . (29)

This perfect illustration of the object subjectivized being provided (nature, represented by "heaven", is instilled by senses indexing on /anthropos/: "ingratitude" and "cruelty"), Coleridge then proceeds by commenting on two lines by Shakespeare, quoted from Venus and Adonis:

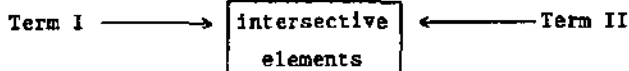
Look! how a bright star shooteth from the Sky,
So glides he in the night from Venus' Eye - .

He points to the importance of the connections linking the various layers of meaning: "how many Images and

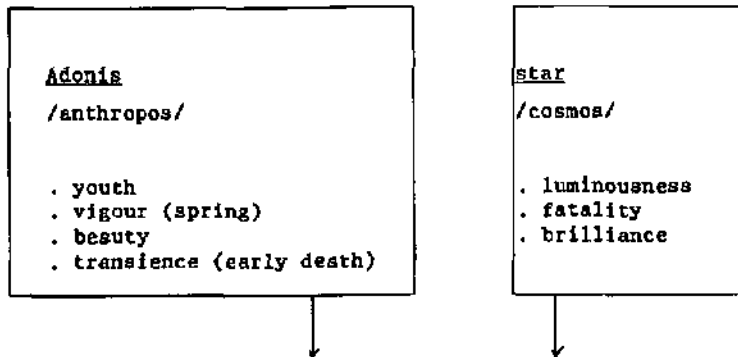
feelings are here brought together without effort & without discord." Each of the basic meanings - beauty, swiftness, hopelessness - is given amplified expressiveness owing to the additional senses combined with their own:

"the beauty of Adonis"	:	"a bright star"
"the rapidity of his flights"	:	"shooteth", "glides"
"the yearning yet hopelessness of the ensmoured gazer"	:	"shooteth from the Sky", "So glides he in the night from Venus'Eye".

But the whole effect is based on the metaphor: Adonis = a bright star. Poetry is the power of connecting images; more precisely, of combining cosmic and anthropomorphic senses. The general scheme of the combination reads as follows:



In this case:



instillation of semes indexing on anthropos into lexemes indexing on cosmos is obvious.

The words indexing on /cosmos/ are "star", "sky" and "night"; those indexing on /anthropos/ are "he" (= Adonis) and "Venus' Eye". The couplet, besides, is made more explicit if one quotes the whole stanza:

With this, he breaketh from the sweet embrace
Of those fair arms which bound him to her breast,
And homeward through the dark laund runs apace;
Leaves Love upon her back deeply distress'd. (31)

The space of the sky is occupied by the two young lovers; the notion of space is indeed made outstanding by the prepositions of place (from, in) and two verbs related to displacement in space: "shooteth" and "glides". The metaphor, which forms the frame of the couplet, combines the young adolescent but also the young beauty (Venus) so as to entangle them into an inseparable image, blending celestial bodies and human shapes. Night and sky are seen as one vast space, and in this space the movement of the bodies (celestial and human) is inscribed, suggesting at least the following gestures:

1. the movement of the hand writing words on paper and conjuring up glittering images
2. two bright stars performing some mysterious, fascinating evolution on the nocturnal surface
3. two young, bright, fresh human figures likewise performing on the nocturnal screen of the velvet sky.

But Coleridge has always insisted on the triangular shape of the poetic process. The opposition between nature and man is mediated in a poem; in this case, it has been mediated, but it is through language. Coleridge, of

course, remains vague about how the mediation is effected; the indications he gives, however, make sense when considered in the light of today's theories, more precisely if compared to Group Mu's triadic model and threefold mediative pattern.

They define three types of mediation taking place in the discourse. The first type is referential; it comprehends the textual elements which allude more or less explicitly to the process of mediation. The second type is discursive and manifests the inter-isotopic connections syntactically. The difference between this type and the third one, the rhetorical, is one of degree; the connector par excellence in this type is the metaphor, but the simile belongs to the third and the second types as well. (32) Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis has recourse to the third and the first types simultaneously. The simile connects the chief lexeme representing anthropos ("he") to the main lexeme indexing on cosmos ("star"), but the mediation is overtly said to be effected by language by the fact that Adonis and Venus are characters of the Greek mythology. The mediation is therefore achieved by referential elements (Mu include in the referential type whatever refers to "langage (parole, écriture, mythe)"; they add: "Comme le poème est avant tout une oeuvre de langage, ces médiations occupent une place privilégiée." (33) The mediation effected by the simile is double. On the one hand, it is referential because metaphores belong to the field of poetry and poetry is part of language; on the other hand, it is rhetorical because its very process is at the quintessential level of the mediatory act. Night and sky, therefore, constitute a symbolical space where the poetic process can occur. The two antagonists meet, are mediated and synthesized into a new whole: a mental space which is neither merely the nocturnal sky nor merely the representation of the vicissitudes of two young lovers,

but the spiritual sphere where man and the universe are one great whole, nowhere to be touched yet overwhelmingly present in our minds and in our hearts.

But the exchange of senses does not involve only lexemes representing cosmos and anthropos. A poem, let us not forget, is above all language organized in a specific way. Imagination and fancy - and no matter what the terms actually mean from the philosophical point of view - are the instruments through which the organizing power of reason manifests itself. As Coleridge writes,

You may conceive the difference in kind between the Fancy and the Imagination in this way, - that if the check of the senses and the reason were withdrawn, the first would become delirium, and the last mania. The Fancy brings together images which have no connection natural or moral, but are yoked together by the poet by means of some accidental coincidence [...]. The Imagination modifies images, and gives unity to variety; it sees all things in one. (34)

Whatever the exact value one attributes to the words fancy and imagination respectively, one realizes that they act through connecting so as to essemble elements which, in a normal way, are separated. The part of the process reserved to fancy is more concerned with the linking together of portions of the final discourse while imagination has a direct influence on the whole. The result, if one or both came to fail in their action, would be mania and delirium, which, following the rule of desynonymization, one finds to mean chaos and disorganization.

But let us not misunderstand Coleridge's conception of poetic organization just because he insists upon the importance of word position and syntactic ordinance. The rules he sets in a manuscript to be found today in the Harvard College Library are, in this respect, very clear.

"Express yourself logically," he writes, and this is rule number one, "i.e., let your words and the position of your words be correspondent and appropriate to your thoughts, and to the order of your thoughts." We have here stated the primary principle that regulates poetic composition: once the emotional impulse has been given, the response in the poet's mind is one of thoughts, concepts, ideas and images, to which correspond words; these words have a content and this content generates a set of units and structures embodying it for the constitution and selection of which are taken into account the syntactic, prosodic and semic appropriateness of each and of the whole.

In the second rule, Coleridge confirms the impression by saying that poets must express themselves grammatically,

i.e. in the idiom of the language you write in. For grammar, as far as it is not included in the former rule (logic), is the code of the conventional laws of speech in every country. - Let us place and modify our words so and so for [?] such and such meanings, and we shall then know what we have to expect.

In other words, unlike the poets of our own time who express themselves in a way which recedes from the "logical" syntax the user of the language is entitled to expect if he is to understand, Coleridge's conception is found to adhere to the full expression of logical connections, and this not only concerns the semantic level but the grammatical level as well. That the content engendered by the emotional impulse should then beget the grammatical structure is obvious from the assertion that words ought to be modified and placed by reason of the very meaning to be conveyed.

But the completion of the poem and its effect will come from the internal connection between all the elements in the poem, a connection, ultimately, to be achieved above all at the semantic level: "Express yourself so as if not to aid yet assuredly not to disturb the impression we wish to make, by excitement of associated images and feelings." (35) This is rule number three; at the same time, it fixes the definite notion Coleridge tries to render explicit throughout his poetics, namely that the basic laws of polarity and synthesis between cosmos and anthropos, and between the components of the text, stand foremost and must not be disturbed by irrelevant considerations.

An example of the modifying power contained in words and of how it acts connectively is provided by a passage Coleridge quotes from The Tempest (I,2,128-32). Prospero is telling Miranda that:

One midnight,
Fated to the purpose, did Antonio open
The gates of Milan; and i' the dead of darkness,
The ministers for the purpose hurried thence
Me, and thy crying self.

"Here," Coleridge comments, "by introducing a single happy epithet, 'crying', in the last line, a complete picture is presented to the mind, and in the production of such pictures the power of genius consists." (36) The statement is consistent with what we know of Coleridge's conceptions. The picture conjured up is the consequence of an addition of *semes* drawn from the semantic layers English words are endowed with; but the *semes* added do not come from an arithmetic operation, they are the result of a combination between the *semic* levels of the

words connected. The operation here is that of a generalizing synecdoche; the metabole extends to the whole "self" features that determine only a small part of it.

This is what we obtain if we divide the word "cry" into some of its basic semes:

cry : . utter the voice loudly and with effort
 . shout
 . weep
 . shed tears
 . pray, entreat

The lexeme obviously determines that portion of a person that is situated between the mouth and the eyes:

person : . head : . forehead
 . eyes
 . cheeks
 . nose
 . mouth
 . chin

 . shoulders
 . arms
 . breast

But the physical constitution of a person is only a small part of the general self:

self : . ego
 . mind or soul (vs body)
 . character
 . physical constitution or appearance
 . personal welfare and interests as an object of concern

The image of the "crying self" is a generalizing synecdoche, which, by an addition of semes, extends features characterizing a portion of the whole person to the person in its entirety. Thus characteristics involving some elements of the head (eyes, nose, mouth)

come to involve the whole body (physical constitution) but also, owing to the inevitable influence of the associated image, the whole person, body and soul. The expressive effectiveness is therefore increased on account of the semic widening included in the passage from one lexeme, "crying", to another, "self", of additional semes, and in the presence of the associated image. Language here fulfils its role, since all semantic layers are implied in the process, providing both connections and an enriching of the meaning.

If Coleridge unquestionably viewed poetic language as a power connecting the content of words by means of their inter-isotopic virtualities, securing a mediation between the two fundamental aemic categories /cosmos/ and /anthropos/ but also relating to them the lexemes that fill the discourse, while some of them are tied together so as to form clusters of words endowed with an increased semantic charge (e.g. "crying self"), which marks off the text as a constellation of meaning, the indexing of the lexemes on one or the other of the two categories being justified by constant re-evaluations of their content, he did by no means disregard the function of the other levels of the language. Beyond the aemic content of words which, according to the isotopic development of the discourse - actually of the reading process -, entitles them to be connected with categories that, against its natural tendency, found the homogeneity of the discourse, there undoubtedly exists a motivation between the planes of content and expression, between the semantic, syntactic and prosodic levels.

Let it be clearly understood that if content is to lead the way, it can be neither argumentative nor informational. "A poem," Coleridge explains, "does not admit argumentation, though it does admit development of thought." (37) While he recognizes that a poem does not

derive its "poeticity" from the conventional structures (metre), for instance, nor from the specific arrangement of sentences alone, he is unequivocal as to the irreplaceable role these fulfil. It is content first, but along with the forms of expression that are primarily to support, enhance and embody it, which forms involve the prosodic and syntactic levels. The latter appear as a mould which is at the same time the final form that is the consequence of the moulding and the moulding force itself; it is content that conditions the moulding but content is part of expression; together they are the power which shapes the raw material into a significant structure and the structure as such, which implies the meaning and the meaning support. Against the intrinsic heterogeneity of units which, by reason of their polysemous nature, are prone to assemble as transitory patterns that fall apart as soon as the very reason which caused their gathering has vanished, the poetic power enforces on the units an isomorphism involving the planes and levels of language as a whole. This isomorphism can be justified and attained only through the capital process of desynonymization.

Dealing with the poetry of Donne, Coleridge, in an important passage, defines the relation that must exist between the plane of content and the conventional level. "In a poem," he says, "where the writer thinks, and expects the reader to do so, the sense must be understood in order to ascertain the metre." (38) This momentous statement confirms, if need be, the semantic ground which is the very raison d'être of a poem - a poet, after all, has something to communicate, a message to impart (like the Mariner, who cannot help telling his story to carefully selected listeners) - and also that if the poet has determined to use the structures afforded by versification, these must be formed by the meaning they convey and image. Coleridge sees metre as music; it is

the natural symbol of that union of passion with thought and pleasure, which constitutes the essence of all poetry, as contradistinguished from science, and distinguished from history civil or natural.

But in verse, there is no meaning other than the meaning verse is granted by the instilled content:

Verses are not logic; but they are, or ought to be, the envoys and representatives of that vital passion, which is the practical cement of logic; and without which logic must remain inert. (39)

How far we are here from the formalism displayed by Jakobson in his analysis of Baudelaire's Les chats. Gilbert Durand has exposed the delusion of the premises which eventually attribute to the structures of a poem "cette forme statique et vidée volontairement de sens qu'un certain structuralisme admet seule à la dignité de structure." (40) If a poem is above all a model of isomorphism and isochronism, it is also disposed hierarchically, and in this hierarchical organization, content is at the top.

Nowhere has Coleridge discussed in such precise term the mingling of time and space in the poem as in the Theory of Life. A poem, such as Spenser's Faerie Queene, is indeed a "mental space" - but it is not an inert space. It constitutes the locua where several forces meet and act under the guidance of reason. (41) Let us recall Coleridge's words: "Whence shall we take our beginning? From Space." (42) He shows the close interdependence of both space and time by saying that "a single act of self-inquiry will show the impossibility of distinctly conceiving the one without some involution of the other."

And he declares the "mathematical line" to be "time expressed in space" and the circle to be "space within time". To obtain duration and therefore a "real" thing, we must have "the oneness of space and time", which, finally, amounts to the well-known triad: identity, polarity and synthesis.

To a mind formed by whatever pertains to modern structuralism and post-structuralism, this is appealing, for he recognizes a set of principles and data although phrased in a way that to him is unfamiliar. Coleridge writes: "The line is Time + Space, under the predominance of Time" and this we interpret as: the textual line is the syntagmatic axis, i.e. the axis of successions, in which the units can only be read as being successive. "Surface is Space + Time, under the predominance of Space": the successive manifestations put together, having run to the end of their movement, give the impression of a bi-dimensional picture; but the process is not complete: "Line + Surface as the synthesis of units, is the circle in the first dignity; to the sphere in the second; and to the globe in the third." (43) The isomorphism of the poem now appears in its totality but also in its reality. The fugacity of the words that go by is halted for ever in the tabularity of the poem. The text, as it comes out of the reading, lives as an a-temporal object, as the punctum saliens of the forces at work in the discourse, and as such as "the power itself in its eminence". (44) The reader will detect and keep the dazzling memory of glorious tracks of meaning in the velvet-blue sky of the discourse; at the same moment, time and space will be abolished, annihilated in the oneness of the text. What he is considering then is a unity of meaning, a beautiful whole which says the same thing through a rich variety of appearances, an organism both alive, because opening out on an infinity of discourses, and one, because each constituent depends on all others for its existence and dignity.

It is organic, first, owing to the structural nature of language itself. "It is natural, therefore," Coleridge reminds us, thus anticipating Saussure's message, "that the consonants should be marked first, as being the framework of the word." (45) Language, Saussure said, is made up of oppositions. In their Dictionary of Language and Linguistics, Hartmann and Stork describe language as a structure organized into meaningful patterns. Supplying as an example the sentence "he may go", they show it to be a structure at various levels: syntactic (NP + VP: he + may go); morphological: "characterised by distinct free morphemes and the lack of inflexional endings (as compared to such forms as his, him or goes, going);" phonological: "made up of three 'syllables' consisting of the 'phonemes' /hi/, /mei/, /go/, accompanied by a declarative 'intonation pattern', and concluded by a 'terminal juncture';" lexical: "the lexical items he (as distinct from she or we), may (as distinct from can or should) and go (as distinct from stay or walk)." (46) Phonologically - and this reinforces Coleridge's assertion - the oppositive value of the system (consonants vs vowels) is not only manifest but fundamental to the achievement of a fully-experienced poetic effect. Thus in "Kubla Khan":

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree

the symmetrical arrangement of the sounds, as Elizabeth Schneider has demonstrated, confers upon the lines their "primary shape". But it is important to insist that while the consonantic succession [dɔkk] / [ɔdk] stands out, its effectiveness is increased by its contrast to the intercalary vowels: - dudɪkublə kæn/dəʊndɪkri. (47)

In order to understand adequately what goes on in a poem, it is necessary to realize how relevant Coleridge's distinction between the poem and the poetic is. When asserting that "whatever specific import we attach to the word poetry, there will be found involved in it, as a necessary consequence, that a poem of any length neither can be, nor ought to be, all poetry," (48) he certainly means that the basic operations that generate or actualize poetic language - the isotopic connections, the mediation of /cosmos/ and /anthropos/, the exchange of senses between words or clusters of words, or, to sum up the process as a whole, the metaphorical process which subsumes the operations and conditions the poetic transformation - need not be present throughout the discourse. But the poem cannot be regarded as an organic structure if the unpoetic in it is not in keeping with the comprehensive project. Let us contrast, for instance, the following lines by Wordsworth:

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

These two opening stanzas (of "Lines written in Early Spring" and of "To the Cuckoo") display different degrees of poeticity. One remembers, of course, Coleridge's division of language into three types: one which is specific to poetry, a second to prose and a third which is common to both. (49) In the first stanza, the language differs from that of prose or even from that of ordinary conversation only slightly in the first two lines (anteposition of the adverbial of place); the poetic

effect is obtained in the next couplet by the central articulation, the antithesis between "pleasant thoughts" and "sad thoughts" on either side of "bring". The rather familiar beginning, full of peaceful charm, is suddenly broken by a pattern which has an unsettling impact on an otherwise comforting description.

The process is of a higher intensity in the second stanza. Firstly, the poet apostrophises the bird and this apostrophe, as a figure of content (metalogism), establishes a rupture of the discursive expectancy by orientating the stanza in the direction of a personification of an element of nature (the bird), and subsequently it compels the reader to re-evaluate the lexeme "cuckoo" (retrospective) after it has been found in an allotopic position because the actant designated by "blithe", "New-comer" and "thee" had first been indexed on an isotopy /anthropoa/, an isotopy which was broken by the lexeme "cuckoo". The repetition of the basic structure (the apostrophe) in line 2 and the presence of a synecdoche in line 4 ("a wandering Voice") imply an intense exchange of semes and contribute to the impression of semantic complexity and enhancement which distinguishes this stanza from the former. Nowhere as in this poem do we find illustrated the most important finality of poetry: the production of pleasure by means of a mediation between the fundamentally opposed categories of "man" and "universe" and the textual flowing of specific things into the general and the universal. The cuckoo ceases to be a mere animal, it becomes a generic symbol of all birds and finally a mere voice overwhelming the earth like nature talking to man.

If it is practically impossible to summarize in rather terse propositions what, in Coleridge's opinion, poetic language is and does, or what a poem actually is, we can

nevertheless consider it as established that poetic language actualizes a power that the poet possesses - but Coleridge admits that he shares it with other men of genius, not necessarily writers of poetry - and that this power essentially connects linguistic units by means of isotopies. The connection mediates the antagonistic categories of man and the universe, cosmos and anthropos. The mediation creates a synthesis, a new whole made up of cosmos and anthropos, yet not really one or the other but consubstantial with both. The result is an organic structure, of which all the parts are interrelated. The procedure to approach a poem as a work of art consists in dividing it into articulations - the two planes of language and their inherent levels. Hierarchically, the plane of content comes first and generates all other levels: "All the parts of an organized whole must be assimilated to the more important and essential parts." (50) Consequently, the levels of the plane of expression (syntactic, morphological), although not enough in themselves to create poetry, must echo the plane of content: all elements must say the same thing, all units must contribute to the ultimate purpose.

In his short study on Coleridge, Richard Holmes, at the beginning of chapter two, pauses to consider why he describes truth as water-source. It is foremostly, he says, because poetic creation is dialectical:

Coleridge shows one principle or fact of nature (the spring water) in contention with an opposed one (the freezing snow). The water and the snow are in dynamic opposition, working against each other's nature and tendency: the water trying to flow, the snow trying to freeze. This process of dynamic opposition is a dialectical one; and truth, says Coleridge, works like nature - dialectically. Moreover the result of this opposition is not a victory for one side or the other, but a kind of active reconciliation. The water changes into ice, and then the snow and ice change back into water: "it turns the obstacle into its own form." They

flow on together, combined and mutually increased - the flow of truth "increases its stream". So the dialectical process in things leads to a synthesis: a reconciliation in a more powerful state, or higher reality. (51)

This passage is particularly significant when viewed parallel to another passage we find in Biographia Literaria. Quoting from Burns's "Tam O'Shanter" (52) Coleridge comments: "Who has not a thousand times seen snow fall on water? Who has not watched it with a new feeling from the time that he has read Burns's comparison of aensual pleasure:

To snow that falls upon a river
A moment white - then gone for ever!" (53)

We need not wonder for long why Coleridge praises these lines, for they represent the very embodiment of poetic language according to his own criteria.

Snow falling on water is movement in space. The poet infuses into lexemes indexing on /cosmos/ - "snow" and "river" - semes indexing on /anthropos/: adverbials of time. The lexeme "white" can be regarded as central because it is at once the emblematic representation of snow and the receptacle that collects the semes indexing on /anthropos/:

movement		
space		time
"falls"	WHITE	"a moment" "then" "gone for ever"

The reconciliation of opposites (mediation) is effected by the synthesis in language of the cosmic dimension of space and the human category of time. The whiteness of the snow, which, at the outset, characterizes only its spatial dimension, expands to the whole couplet the joint ideas that snow might stand for life in the universe and that this life passes away in space as well as in time. The very ideas are given a shape and a visual quality since they can be seen flowing away. To all this is added the tragic idea that things on earth die and that as familiar a sight as the one presented here reminds us of this fate.

That content should be primary is obvious; but for Coleridge to be satisfied, the plane of expression ought to conform to the semantic level.

At the syntactic level, the opposition between time (indexing on /anthropos/) and space (indexing on /cosmos/) is iconised by a similar opposition between line one and line two. In either one a verb occupies a determinant position to indicate movement: "falls" vs "gone"; each, besides, indicates by its tense the type of movement it draws attention to: present simple (timelessness) vs past participle (action accomplished). In line one, the continuity of the line is uninterrupted (illusion of endless movement in space) but it is broken in the second line. In it, too, the temporal dimension is signalled by the division of the word number into parallel sections: three units before the central time indicator "then", three units after the indicator: a - moment - white //then// gone - for - ever. The effect is that all things in the universe have spatial existence for a while then vanish into nothingness.

At the morphological level, a similar iconisation is carried by the internal organization of units. The metaplasms can be described thus: a) the phonemic succession is made up of a regular alternation of more or less "hard" consonants with vowels: this reaches a climax in the first part of the second line ("a moment white") and ceases in the second part as if the sound wanted to imitate the smooth, swift flowing away of snow; b) the second rhyme "ever" comes as some kind of atrophied echo of "river", thus making present to the ear (and to the eye) the gradual waning of things.

One is inevitably led, now, to wonder whether what has been said so far about Coleridge's conception of poetic language, actually applies to his own poems and not only to odd lines. Did Coleridge write poems as he conceived of them theoretically? Are we likely to find in the chief examples of his own genius as a poet, as a writer of poems, some, all, or none at all of the structures and forms of language he deemed indispensable in order to be regarded as poetic? This is what I shall endeavour to examine in the second part of this dissertation.

PART TWO

LANGUAGE IN SOME OF COLERIDGE'S POEMS

CHAPTER ONE

ANALYSING COLERIDGE'S POEMS

In a recent study of Coleridge's early poetry, H.R. Rookmanker reaches the conclusion that many poems among the more famous have been subject so far to no consensus on the part of the critics from a hermenentic standpoint, and he mentions as an adequate example of this the case of "Kubla Khan". (1)

I think that the reason for this is to be found in the fact that the hermenentic process has been essentially based on what the poems say relatively to the philosophical background Coleridge was impregnated with, rather than on what they do as language. If there can be little doubt that the metaphysical disquisitions with which Coleridge pervaded his theories are sometimes obacure and confusing in meaning, there is even less doubt, as I have attempted to demonstrate, that his mind is "a mind which is trying to find a rational philosophic justification for an intuitive emotional belief" and that in this endeavour he succeeds. (2) Or, to be more precise, he contrived to build up a system, a poetics upon which today's methods of analysis confer even more coherence.

None todsy would seriously claim, of course, that Coleridge's notion of organic unity is realistically defensible in the way he presented it. None could

possibly describe the poetic power as equivalent to the power of life itself at work in plants or trees. Out of the rather chaotic disposition of his thoughts on poetry throughout his writings (chaotically disposed yet by no means unsystematic or incoherent), it is possible to point out the main outlines of principles that have all too often been deemed conventional or at least too obscure to be taken seriously. It is fairly strange, for instance, and quite refreshing too, to some extent, when reading Gordon McKenzie's essay on Organic Unity in Coleridge, (3) in spite of the old terminology, to observe that his own description of the poetic process as viewed by Coleridge corresponds most singularly to the isotopic process I have emphasized.

McKenzie shows the process leading to the building up of an organic unity to possess four characteristics: 1. Additional elements are attracted to the system and get organized according to the inner logic of the system. 2. The process is cumulative. 3. It is economical. 4. It is spontaneous.

In the Theory of Life, Coleridge establishes that the process of growing life (and of poetic growth as well) is based on two principles, the principle of "unity in multiplicity" and the principle of "individuation". Both involve connections between component parts which gather by necessity, what he calls "the internal copula of bodies", following the rule of extension inherent in the initial project (the seed), so as to form a whole of which all the parts are important, just like bricks in a wall. The greater the number of connections, the more complex they are, the more fully the growth and individuality of the whole can be achieved. (4) Thus, McKenzie writes, individuality arises not from a uniqueness that is due to a refusal of further connections but from an active power which makes new

connections and relations. The greatest individuality results from the greatest degree of organization and the largest quantity of relations. (5)

Applied to the poetic process, this makes it once again stand out as a dynamic system, itself a centre and set of connections, a force of attraction and cohesion showing a perpetual tendency to include what is identical and repel what is alien to its movement (it is economical). Language, Coleridge says, becomes poetic not because the nature of its units changes but because these units are used differently and organized in a specific manner. The organizing power in the poet's mind (what Coleridge terms "imagination") orders the words into a pattern which consists mainly in a mediation between antagonistic forces by means of connections that happen to be prompted by the inner logic of the projected whole. But, and here is the stumbling-block that has characterized Coleridgean studies so far, the set of connections must be established at a deeper level than merely that of global meaningfulness between words. For the connections to be possible, there must be infralinguistic similarities which index words or groups of words on isotopies while the elements that are not indexable on a given isotopy are either rejected or indexed on an allotopy and hence possibly on a new isotopy. Genius, according to Coleridge, consists therefore of the capability in the poet of seeing the whole in the part, of anticipating the necessary connections relatively to the whole; or, as McKenzie states it, quoting from The Friend, "originality in intellectual construction". (6)

It must be clear, actually, that although Coleridge's attention to poetry as a fact of language and to poems as structures relates him to Russian Formalism and its descendants, his conception of poetry is thoroughly foreign to any sort of formalism. Wherever the poetic can

be found it is due to a process involving the content of words above all. What I have called "motivation", i.e. the sustaining and echoing of semantic and referential isotopies by isotopies of the expression, although preferable is not the essential source of the poetic. The isotopies of the phonic substance, for example, as well as the conventional structures (rhymes, etc), are not sufficient to create poetry.

It is therefore at the level of content that the process really occurs. The degree of poeticity varies according to the quality and number of the isotopic connections and to the quality of the mediation. For, as Alice D. Snyder had already observed at the beginning of this century, the principle of reconciliation of opposites is everywhere in Coleridge's writings. Quite appropriately, she drew a distinction between antagonisms that originate in semantic oppositions and mere spatial and/or temporal symmetries, mere mechanical parallelisms. What she failed to distinguish, however, for obvious reasons, is, on the one hand, that apparent semantic oppositions have a function which is as deep as logical semantic oppositions. Here, perhaps unconsciously, she pointed out the difference that Coleridge emphasized in Kant between real and logical oppositions. The former, Coleridge writes in Biographia Literaria, are real oppositions but "without being contradictory".

The latter, such as "a body at one and the same time in motion and not in motion," produce incompatibility. Actually, the real antagonism between units corresponds to words being opposed by their nuclear semes but linked through their peripheral semic arrangement, while logical antagonisms result in allotopies, in other words in highly productive structures. (7)

On the other hand, mechanical oppositions, if, unlike what happens in Formalism and singularly in Jakobson's analyses, not the source of poeticity, are the sustainers of the patterns generated by the semic connections. The core of the process - and Miss Snyder was aware of it - lies in semantic oppositions. "In the process of being brought together in antithesis," she writes, "the terms are losing their old meanings, being rendered indifferent and in a sense identical." The identity alluded to here does not consist of rest or neutralization but of the "punctum saliens" (8) or synthesis which takes place in the poetic space. But the terms, she remarks, "are not simply losing their old meanings but are through the mediation of some new value being transformed and thus acquiring new meanings." (9) The transforming value of isotopic connections is perceptible behind the statement, the value of which, however, is marred by such assertions as this: "It would, I think, be fair to call Coleridge's interest in the principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites a constitutional malady." If indeed "his whole mental make-up is so permeated by the consciousness of opposition that even his sense experiences come to him in terms of the great elemental sense contrasts," it is precisely because his awareness of the eminent reconciliatory quality of things was overpowering. (10) Contrary to what her title announces, Miss Snyder's study does not tackle the problem of how Coleridge applies the principle of reconciliation of opposites to language but merely shows (though we must admit that it is important) how it pervades his thought and his global vision of reality. Yet she does not fail to designate what she, on the other hand, cannot fully appreciate as what it is, namely the fundamentally isotopic quality of verbal transformations which condition every single item in the literary works Coleridge analysed. Thus, she points out the basic oppositions between flesh and blood elements and the unsubstantial elements related to the ghost in

Hamlet, but seems to have difficulty in connecting them with what poetic discourse effects as a specific use of language. (11)

The degree of poeticity is proportioned to the quality and quantity of semantic isotopies but the degree of motivation (cf. Genette, Figures II) depends on how tightly the metaboles of expression echo the metaboles of content.

In this respect too, one must be cautious and not reverse positions. When Samuel R. Levin asserts that "a poem puts into combination, on the syntagmatic axis, elements which, on the basis of their natural equivalences, constitute equivalence classes or paradigms," (12) he conforms to Jakobson's well-known principle. Not that this would not suit Coleridge's conception of poetry, especially his conception of organic unity - a poetic piece, whether in a poem or elsewhere, is a structure - but that it needs adapting somehow. The isotopic character of the verbal combinations which generate poeticity do indeed constitute paradigmatic classes. Thus, the first line of "Frost at Midnight":

The Frost performs its secret ministry

"Performs" and "ministry" belong to the same paradigm on the basis of isotopies /activity/ and /sacred/ which, through a retrospective re-evaluation, justify a reinterpretation of the lexeme "Frost". Such paradigmatic equivalences, Levin says, are "carried out systematically in a poem." The equivalence, however, he goes on, "may derive from phonic and/or semantic elements." He seems to insist that semantic as well as phonic and positional equivalences are on the same footing; poeticity, therefore, may derive from one or the other equivalences indifferently. Here is precisely the point where

Coleridge would disagree. Positional and/or phonic equivalences in the absence of any semantic equivalences do not generate poeticity, only some kind of agreeable effect functioning like a signal drawing attention to the form of expression in a way typical of poetic discourse but of other types of discourses as well (publicity, children's puns, political speeches, etc). In the example Levin borrows from Browning:

Irks care the crop-full bird?
Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

poeticity does not arise from the fact that "Irks" and "Frets" occur in equivalent positions but from their being important parts of speech (verbs) semantically indexable on an identical isotopy. If "in the grammar of the ordinary language, however, irk and fret are not in the small subclass whose members occur in this position" it ensues that: 1) a poetic grammar accounts for something deeper than the surface structures "ordinary" grammar accounts for; 2) the two words are equivalent on the basis of an isotopic similarity, not of grammatical subclasses. Grammar here is irrelevant, at least in its usual acceptation. This is why "the grammar thus provides us with no means for saying that irk and fret in these two sentences are semantically equivalent." (13)

As a true follower of Jakobson's precepts, Levin endeavours to provide appropriate solutions to a spurious problem.

The only way to incorporate the Browning lines into the grammar and not at the same time generate non-sentences would be by including a rule restricting irk and fret in these positions to co-occurrence with the actually succeeding words in the two lines.

But the issue here is not to incorporate the line into the "ordinary" grammar but to assign the question of position to where it really belongs: to the expression, which is not the cause of poeticity but the result of what the hypostasis of the content creates. Phonic and/or positional (syntactic) similarities are not independent structures liable to generate poeticity but are subordinate structures dependent on the pattern induced by the semantic isotopies. These latter alone breed poetic structures even though, for Coleridge, in order to create a work as perfectly organic as possible, it is highly advisable to co-include content and expression in a tight set of relations. Unlike what Levin claims - "the forms occurring in corresponding positions are" not "related to each other also semantically or phonically" - they can occur semantically only but not phonically only.

(14)

The conventional matrix, as Levin terms it, i.e. rhymes and metre, is, in Coleridge's opinion, just one superadded reinforcement of the expression and one poetry can do without. But whenever used - and Coleridge thinks it is preferable to use it - it must abide by the rule of the organic necessity. In the example chosen by Levin, Emily Dickinson's quatrain, however subtle and intricate the alliterations, assonances and rhymes, they sustain the poeticity generated by the content and not the other way round. The contrast which reveals itself in the formal couplings reinforces and is subordinate to the structural opposition of the metaboles of content. Once again the question, in Coleridge's own conception, is: When does language depart from "ordinary" language? What, in this poem, makes it different from a non-poetic use of language? Part of the answer, of course, is contained in the formal couplings which act as a signal, but the void they would leave is filled by the semantic couplings. The

fundamental structure of the quatrain is antithetical: a thought is best seen when made less distinct by a film. The units on either side of "beneath" are members of an opposition further increased by the twofold simile: "laces" or "mists" [reveal] "the surge" or "the Apennine". The antithetical nature of the pattern is also sustained by the syntactic opposition between the couplets: first couplet: "The thought ... is ... seen" (passive); second couplet: "laces ... reveal" (active). Coleridge's judgement, undoubtedly, would be that the degree of poeticity, were the metaphors of expression missing, would probably remain the same but the degree of motivation would be weak and therefore render the quatrain much less perfect than it is now. (15)

If we are to base our analysis of Coleridge's poetic discourse on his poetics, it is necessary that we keep in mind its major principles but also that we set up a number of criteria which will found our approach to his poetry.

In Coleridge's opinion, poetry is language - there is no alteration of the units of language as regards their nature - but language organized in such a way as to differentiate it from the way it is used in conversation, philosophy, science and even prose. The question then is: what is it that language does in poetry that it does not do in any other type of language?

Although poetry does not manifest itself only in poems (16), the latter remain the privileged space where poeticity happens and it would indeed be a betrayal to Coleridge's conception if we were to analyse poetic discourse elsewhere first. Coleridge considers that a poem is mainly a structure, a space of mediation in which the poet synthesizes the oppositions inherent in words by dint of the eminent connectiveness which characterizes

them at the infralinguistic level and according to the double principle that subsumes poetic creation in its dynamic aspect, that of polarity or "unity in multieity", on the one hand, and that of individuation on the other. Individuation proves a fundamental force since it presides over the poet's will to tear words off the mass of indifferenciated language which is their lot in the paradigmatic space so as to transform them into something unique and specifically recognizable.

Polarity is also essential inasmuch as it imitates (not copies) the basic antagonism between man and the cosmos. The poet operates a real chaotization of language to give it a new form by organizing it into a new and richer whole. The poetic process involves an exchange between words representing either man or the cosmos; during the operation, the two categories of words influence each other in such a way that words indexable on an isotopy /anthropos/ are so to say "thingified": they are made palpable through the semic influence of words indexable on the isotopy /cosmos/, while words indexable on /cosmos/ are spiritualized through the reverse operation. This chiasmic figure is the combination which is the key to the poetic process wherever it takes place. Whatever goes on when poeticity arises, it assumes the shape of an antagonism and its mediation by verbal means. Dual and connective are the properties of language on which poets found their power. From a seminal idea in the depth of their consciousness, they depart in order to build up a structure of which the whole is contained potentially in the beginning. Whether logical through grammatical operators, semantic through semic isotopies or rhetorical through metaboles of content or expression, connections materialize the mediation without which the antagonism that fundamentally opposes the two sets of words would remain inexorable.

Two concepts are to be taken into account before we undertake to examine how poetic language actually functions in Coleridge's poems. The first concept is poeticity. We know what poeticity is supposed to be in Coleridge's opinion; we know that it does not start from the form of expression to move up to the form of content but that it is the other way round which is true. The question then is twofold: how does it manifest itself in Coleridge's poems and are there differences in degree? The second concept is that of motivation as elaborated by Mallarmé and Genette. (17) Coleridge does not sustain the idea that poetry should arise either from expression exclusively or from expression creating specific content; he thinks, on the contrary, that poeticity is generated by content, or operations on content, and that expression should support or echo what content does. This involves metables of syntax and metaplasm. No poeticity can possibly exist without the operations on content but they can exist in the absence of anything happening to expression. Thus in the line:

To be or not to be: that is the question

the poetic quality of the line is entirely generated by operations on content. The metahole that subsumes the whole is the antithesis which opposes in a verbal fulguration existence to non-existence. To this is added the epiphoneme that reinforces the rhetorical question; the succession of hard phonemes, separated by the nasal preceded by a vowel in the important operator "or not" which fixes the alternative, although effective in that they mirror and actualize auditorily what the content of the line does, are not indispensable and do not in themselves generate poeticity.

It is in the way poeticity and motivation overlap, therefore, in the various degrees of their presence in a

poem that the quality of the process itself resides. What I have been able to state about Coleridge's poetics entities us to postulate that although poeticity is likely to exist in all the poems written by Coleridge, there must be a difference in the achievement or the degree of poetic perfection in them according to whether the copresence of poeticity and motivation is closer to a minimum or to a maximum on an imaginary scale. In other words, there must be a variable drawing nearer to the perfect accomplishment symbolized by the image of the sphere in poems such as "Kubla Khan" or "The Ancient Mariner" in which Coleridge devoted as much care to the form of expression as he did to the form of content, while the same variable moves off the symbol in pieces which partake more of conversation than of "pure" poetry.

CHAPTER TWO

SOME CONVERSATION POEMS

"The Nightingale"

If we consider what I state above as the initial hypothesis of our analysis, we may feel on safe ground by beginning with the only poem Coleridge called "a Conversational Poem" (Lyrical Ballads, 1798) or "a Conversation Poem" (in all further editions): "The Nightingale".

Logically, there ought to be in the poem some part of verbal arrangement belonging to conversation and some other part belonging to poetry; these, we may expect, should be subtly intertwined and form a complex whole. I shall consider, as has been the case in poetics from Coleridge onward, two levels of analysis: content, expression, the latter comprehending the syntactic and prosodic sub-levels. The metaboles (1), which constitute the discourse into something poetic, will therefore be either metaboles of content (metasemes and metalogisms) or metaboles of expression, namely: metataxes (syntax) and metaplasms (prosody). (2) Metataxes and metaplasms, although they are meant to sustain and echo the metaboles of content, play no minor role but abide by Coleridge's rule that all the components in a work of poetry should enter a set of relations that keeps them as tightly connected as possible to one another relatively to the whole.

We have a clear confirmation of this in "The Nightingale".

If we admit that the language of conversation is not primarily poetic and if, on the other hand, we recall Coleridge's assertion that a poem need not be poetic throughout, we are led to suppose that a conversation poem might be essentially unpoetic in its parts while it is poetic as a whole; or we may assume that the poetic quality of the poem arises from an intricate blending of passages (syntagms, lines, stanzas) that alternate poeticity with non poeticity. Yet even though Coleridge characterized only this poem as being conversational, we realize when analyzing it that the alternation which is supposed to be the main feature of the genre is scarcely effected and that it is much more important in other poems such as "Fears in Solitude".

As a matter of fact, the opening verse paragraph of "The Nightingale" strikes one by the density of its metaboles. The absence of a rhyming scheme reduces the conventional structure to its metaplastic aspect which, although Coleridge deems it necessary to the poem, is not indispensable but acts as a signal. The metaplastic aspect consists mainly of metre and although "poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre" (3), metre is preferable for reasons I have already mentioned but which are worth recalling again. It first embodies the emotional stimulus and passion which prompt poetic writing and it actualizes, visually and auditorily, the inherent polarity of the poem. Then it stimulates the reader's attention and sustains the excitement he should feel while reading. "Metre in itself," Coleridge says, "is simply a stimulant of the attention" (4) but as such, whenever used, it has to be consistent with the general structure of the whole. How well the conventional

matrix (to use Levin's terminology) sustains and echoes the poetic effect created by metaboles of content in "The Nightingale" appears from the first line onward.

But let us concentrate on the opening sentence:

No cloud, no reiique of the sunken day
Distinguishes the West, no long thin siip
Of sullen light, no obscure trembling hues.

The effect here is far from that of an ordinary conversation, owing to the tight intermingling of the three levels of language (metaboles of content, metataxes, metaplasms). The sentence is striking at the superficial level of the syntax: through the anaphora "no...no...". But the metaboles of expression do not sustain those of content in that they merely copy either desultorily or with a strict formal regularity what the content says and does; they also do and thus take part in the semantic construction.

Here the anaphora generates an isotopy /absence/ or /negativity/ to be reinforced in the further lines so as to emphasize the basic antithetical structure which subsumes the organization of the poem. As John Spencer Hill has pointed out:

Imagery of sound and silence, for example, runs as a unifying leitmotiv throughout the poem and is subtly blended with the imagery of starlight and moonlight in such a way that the whole cluster of images gathers significance and deepens as the poem progresses. (5)

The opening lines of the poem destroy all idea of a concrete presence of auditory and visual elements and create instead a situation of which ideal elements can originate in oppositions. Nothing can be seen in the sky (ll. 1-3), nothing can be heard - they "see the glimmer

of the stream" but they cannot hear its flowing (ll. 5-7) - although the negativity here is introduced by means of a restriction rather than a suppression; restriction also characterizes the vision of the stars which appear "dim", and if they were only part of a natural process they would probably not bring pleasure to those who watch them.

The idea, therefore, is that from an antithesis between nature and the mind (the elements indexable on /cosmos/ are either absent or obscure) there arises a dream-state which is ideal to allow a mental activity which, in the poet, may lead to something that will replace what is missing in nature. Thus the phrase "let us think" suggests the opening of a mental process which is both a reflexion on the relationship between man and nature and a metadiscourse on poetic creation.

The connectiveness of language manifests itself at all levels.

1. At the more superficial level of metaplasms. The subtle succession of alliterations and assonances, for instance, we find at once a musical accompaniment to sustain the melody generated by the isotopy /negativity/ and auditory patches that reinforce the general antithesis: absence of natural sounds vs subjective sounds created by the poet (by means of natural sounds, of course: the poet uses the substance of expression - phonemes - and gives it a form). The succession can be represented as follows:

No cloud, no relique of the sunken day
 [kɪ] [ɪ][k] [s] [k]
 Distinguishes the West, no long thin slip
 [st][ɪn] [st] [l] [ɪn][sɪ]
 Of sullen light, no obscure trembling hue.
 [s][l] [ɪ] [t] [s][ju] [tr] [ɪ] [hju:]

Jean-Claude Coquet has analysed the function of sonorous parallelisms in lines from poems by Baudelaire, Hugo and Apollinaire, and established how symmetries or dissymmetries contribute to the semantic construction. (6) In the first three lines of "The Nightingale" the alliterative succession (systematic) as well as the assonantic scheme (unsystematic) sustain the iterative pattern but also provide variety, following the variety of absent things in the sky, while they substantiate the blending of tints and shapes by a refined grouping of sounds into clusters. A cluster [kl] or [lk] dominates in the first line; it passes on to a cluster [st] or [sl] in the second line, then gradually it dissolves into a cluster [hju] in the third line, at the same time projecting the meaning "hue" at the end of a sentence dealing with visual elements. The alliterative continuity is then broken in line four in which the "I" addresses persons who are external to the relationship between the poet and nature. It then leaves out the essentially dynamic function it assumed in the first lines to adopt a more mimetic function. (7)

The clustering remains extremely subtle, for the main fricative and liquid sounds not only imitate the flowing stream (still perpetuating the opposition: natural sounds in absentia vs poetic sounds in presentia) but serve as sonorous connectors sustaining the absence of visual elements in the opening sentence. Coleridge thus uses the phonemes of English in all their potentialities, whether mimetic, dynamic or symbolic, and makes them consistent with the structure of the poem which is above all generated at the other levels.

2. The antithetical structure, I have said, results from spatial oppositions which involve:

- a) the isotopy /negativity/ induced by the anaphora "no...no..." vs the high suggestiveness of language which actually conjures up what is said to be imperceptible and the verbs "see" and "hark" which stand out because they are initial and because they involve the conative function of language (important because it lays stress on the subjective elements as opposed to the objective characteristic of nature, and also because more weight is given to the idea that creativity is a privilege of the human mind);
- b) the paradox between the notion that visual elements are absent but at the same time the river is perceived through its "glimmering", and also between the fact that the dimness of the stars help create a mental situation which will ultimately give life to something richer than nature itself.

The level of metataxes, therefore, is important inasmuch as it sets up the antithetical pattern that prevails over the poem, first by means of an anaphora, secondly by means of restrictive clauses: "You see ... but ..." (ll. 5-6), "and though ... Yet ..." (ll. 8-9). Interestingly, metataxes are found to participate in the semantic dynamism of the poem, bearing evidence also that the antithesis is a mixed metabole which belongs to content as well as to expression.

3. The main level, however, which is at the basis of the poeticity of the text, is the level of content, which includes semantic and referential sub-levels.

It intervenes early in the poem since two words in the first line open the discourse on something beyond the merely conversational.

"traces" constitute the intersection which is indispensable for the metaphor to exist: what is missing in the sky is a trace of sunset, of which, therefore, there is no visual memory left. The semantemes "part of saint or martyr" and "religious objects" found a new isotopy /logos/ intermediary between nature, which is overwhelming at the beginning of the poem, and man, who affirms his subjective presence not only through the pronouns, nouns and constive elements which cover the text but even more through the creative power he manifests in the verbal syntheses effected and which create a new world. The isotopy /logos/ is further connoted by the virtuememes which either point to religious or to historic elements. The referential mediation we may take as the foundation of an isotopy /logos/ justifies an interpretation of the poem as opposing man and nature (anthropos and cosmos), man being able to mediate the gap that exists between him and the universe thanks to his creative power, here manifested as poetry.

This interpretation finds new elements that support it in the semic distribution of the participle "sunken":

SINK

1. Classeme: become submerged, descend, subside
2. Semantemes:
 - . become submerged in water
 - . subside, be swallowed up by the earth
 - . descend to a lower plane or level
 - . pass out of sight
 - . fall down to ruin

The general idea is that of a descending movement below the surface. A proversive re-evaluation of the lexeme "sunken" by means of the isotopy revealed by "relique" justifies a temporary indexation of "sunken" on the same isotopy. The metaphor finds its justification in the intersection between "fall down to ruin" and the isotopy

/negativity/ as well as in "pass out of sight", which suggests the sun vanishing below the horizon. But "pass out of sight" also reinforces one aspect of the isotopy /negativity/: the obliteration of visual elements. The hermeneutic re-assessment we feel entitled to perform now points to the antithetical relation established at the outset, which can be expressed as follows: the cosmos, when visually and auditorily absent or failing, can, through man's mental powers, be replaced or improved upon in its manifestations. The poem is thus indeed an illustration of what the synthetic power of the poet can do but at the same time it is a metadiscourse on the poetic discourse itself.

The very first lines of the poem actually illustrate the principle stated by Coleridge that the poetic process consists in uniting opposite elements into a coherent, balanced whole. All over the stanzas, nature unites to man's mental constructions: "sullen light", "trembling hues", the "murmuring" (in absentia) of the stream, its "bed of verdure", "gladden the green earth", etc.

From this analysis of the beginning of one poem, it is already possible to deduce a number of things:

1. A poem is a space in which language mediates the antagonism between man and nature.
2. The linguistic units or groups of units partake of the process and contribute, each at its level, to the general effect.
3. The metaboles of expression mainly construct the basic structure on which the more subtle patterns will be built. The basic structure here is antithetical and it is achieved by a mixed metabole (antithesis) and metataxes (anaphora).
4. The real opening of the discourse on types of relation other than the types immediately denoted arises from metaboles of content, here metaphora.

5. Metaplasms, which are mere signals in the process, are meant to sustain what the other metaboles create.

The poem, we may now assume, performs poetry while it discourses on poetry. It is both a process and a discourse on the process. Nothing can better illustrate this than the lines on the nightingale.

The opposition between man and nature is further expressed in a line which iterates the syntactic pattern pointed out at the beginning of the poem: the antagonistic relation between /negativity/ and /logos/ through operators connoting restriction. Lines 15-16 go: "In Nature there is nothing melancholy. / But some night-wandering man ...". In these lines, which aim at commenting on a line from Milton to which Coleridge finds dramatic strength, he affirms that nature does not generate meaning, only man does. The poetic process is here described accurately and thoroughly:

1. Nature is meaningless but provides the substance of expression (visual: the bird; auditory: the bird's song).
2. Man has stored up sensations, emotions, facts ("wrong", "distemper", "neglected love") which he keeps as substance of content in his memory ("whose heart was pierced with the remembrance of ...").
3. The poet's power enables him to instill this substance into the shapes and sounds supplied by nature ("filled all things with himself").
4. The result is a blending which fills in the gap between a meaningless, cold natural object and man's loneliness with his mental awareness and semantic substance; a new whole having a substance of content and expression but also a form of content and expression: he "made all gentle sounds tell back the tale/Of his own sorrow." The words connoting /logos/

culminate in the word tale which - we have Coleridge's own pun in his verse-letter to Wordsworth for support - itself generates the isotopy /cosmos/ (tail) and the isotopy /logos/ (tale)..(8)

Unlike what Max F. Schultz writes, it is not, I think, "this substantiation of the idea that 'in nature there is nothing melancholy' which gives oneness to the multiplicity of their experiences to the diverse episodes of the poem," (9) but the verbal construction throughout the poem, the repetition, of the idea that cosmos and anthropos are co-related and partake, each with a definite function, of the poetic creation.

How are we to assume, however, the apparent paradox contained in the treatment of the nightingale? Does Coleridge not blame would-be poets for their merely repeating "the conceit" while the latter seems to symbolize the synthetic nature of the poetic power? Yet the paradox is only superficial. Coleridge does not reprove the use of the image as representing a synthesizer but because unimaginative writers copy it and by doing so merely reiterate the result of a genuine poetic process which through its recurrence has become an empty form. What he calls "building up the rhyme" is an artificial imitation of an authentic process, in which one aspect is missing, namely the stimulating as well as shape-giving relationship with nature.

In this respect, John Beer, it seems to me, is right when stating that "the central theme of the poem, as in some of Wordsworth's at the same period, is exposure to nature." Indeed,

the poet rebukes that false, substituted artifice which causes "youths and maidens" who spend their time in "ball-rooms and hot theatres" to "heave their

sighs/O'er Philomela's pity-pleading strains" when, if they listened to actual nightingales, they might discover their song to be not melancholy but joyful. (10)

John Beer again describes what goes on in the three parts of the poem very accurately. All things considered, the poem is even more a metadiscourse on poetry than it is a poem. And yet, it is a poem because it behaves poetically, that is to say in the way the poetic process is actually described and acted out. The second half of the first part, for example, shows the synthesis of the two opposite powers of nature and the poet's mental sphere in the symbol of the nightingale; then, it shows how artificial poetic creation can be when there is a lack of communion between the mind and the cosmos. For, what "youths and maidens" fail to grasp when refusing to sit "Beside a brook in mossy forest-dell,/By sun or moon-light" is precisely one of the two indispensable elements in poetic composition. The relationship with nature is essential because whether through the influence of the sun or of the moon, shapes, sounds and shifting elements actually flow into the mind (Latin "influere" = flowing in) and supply it with substances the poet can then use to give them a form. What is here described is close to "the sudden charm which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape" are said to be capable of performing in Biographia Literaria. (11) The poetic process is doubly antithetical inasmuch as it combines obscurity and light but also nature and the mind of man.

The effect of nature is further developed in the second part, where it takes the aspect of the influence of moonlight on the bird, now a real symbol and not an empty conceit. The discourse, as usual, is poetic and a metadiscourse on poetry. The general structure is antithetical, for it opposes the luminosity of a scene

lit by the moon to the darkness of the place when the moon has departed for a moment. The absence of the moon, just like its hostility in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", generates silence and obscurity:

and oft, a moment's space,
What time the moon was lost behind a cloud,
Hath heard a pause of silence,

silence being for a poet the worst malediction and obscurity reminding one of the formless earth before primitive chaos was made into our world. When moonlight returns, the result is once more activity and light. The "glistening" eyes of the birds in lines 67-68 respond to the music which fills the air in lines 80-82:

and those wakeful birds
Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy,
As if some sudden gale had swept at once
A hundred airy harps!

The process is repeated in the third part, but this time the beneficiary of the stimulus is no longer a bird but a human being.

Even though Harold Bloom is not right when saying that "the nightingales are as passive as the aeolian harp" and that they merely "utter the moon's music of natural love" (for, in my opinion, they concentrate on themselves all the senses indexable on the isotopy /logos/, a characteristic they share with the child), he is justified in thinking that

the child's reaction is precisely opposite, because his Imagination is already an active principle, as active as the moon itself. He both reflects the moonlight in his eyes and sends forth a light of his own. As at the close of "Frost at Midnight," the interchange of light is a sign of the Imagination's potency, and prepares the reader for the natural magic of moonlight in "The Ancient Mariner". (12)

The metadiscourse on the poetic process is so important in these poems that the hermeneutic analysis is practically inseparable from the structural analysis. A poem, in Coleridge's conception, is a poem because it performs something which is above all a meaning happening, something which is given as a set of relations operating on, and at the same time producing, content. The poem becomes so because it occupies a definite space, or rather it provides readers with a locus which used to be an empty chaos and which has now been made into an individuated form. "The Nightingale" illustrates Coleridge's notion that a poem can be a poem without being poetic all over. In other words, a poem is a poem because it constructs from within a limited (though not utterly closed) space, something unique, by means of operations on language which do not need to occur all over; the whole, finally, incorporates spots of "ordinary" language, but it does so in such a way as to integrate them with the spots of genuinely poetic language, namely the language on which a specific type of operations has been effected.

If one observes tabularly what is performed in the space of the poem, one cannot but be convinced of the tight interdependence of the hermeneutic and structural analyses. At the same time, it becomes clear that a poem, at least as Coleridge conceives of one, is a structure and therefore establishes a set of relations between linguistic units having a connective basis common to them all, a set which mediates antagonistic elements. These elements ultimately constitute a triad which comprehends an isotopy /logos/ that synthesizes the opposite isotopies /cosmos/ and /anthropos/. In "The Nightingale", Coleridge does so and says so.

The poem divides into four parts: ll. 1-11; 12-49; 50-86; 87-110.

Part One

The units "cloud", "relique of the sunken dasy", "light", "hues", "mossy bridge", "stream", "stars" and "earth" induce an isotopy *il* /cosmos/ characterised by an subisotopy *il'* /absence/. The subisotopy is induced metataxically by the anaphora "no...no..." which is part of an antithesis. The antithesis is essential, for, through a retrospective re-evaluation, it points to an unexpressed restriction (the anaphora) which is then expressed: "though...yet...". This antithesis of a restrictive type (Ar) is central, for it imbues the other antitheses of the poem and ultimately constitutes its frame. Thus from the anaphora "no...no... (but)" we pass on to Ar "no...but..." and "no...yet...".

In lines 8-11, Ar occurs as follows: "stars" reads as a metonymy of /cosmos/, "dim" reads as a euphemism of /absence/ and "through...yet..." is an Ar which induces the notion of a compensation of *il'* through an isotopy *i3* /logos/ introduced by "let us think"; the latter provides a key to how *il* characterized negatively by *il'* could be transformed into something used as a substitute. The solution is found in the poet's mental powers ("let us think"), i.e. in an isotopy *i2* /anthropos/ which is both antagonistic to *il* and the necessary source of the production of the isotopy *i3*, of which the function is to mediate *il'* and *i2*.

But compensating *i3* is already connoted in lines 1-7 through metsememes: the metaphors "sunken", "relique" "sullen" and "bed of verdure" as well as the oxymoron "obscure hues" ("sullen light" also read as an oxymoron). The outcome of the interconnection *il*-*i2* through *i3* is exemplified by "vernal showers" and "gladden the green earth": these point to the poem itself. The result does

not obliterate the original Ar but on the contrary sublimates it in a beautiful antithetical tension: there will be "pleasure in the dimness of the stars".

Part Two

The second part, along with the rest of the poem, develops the action of 13 both hermeneutically (there is no way out of it) and structurally. The isotopy develops by means of the three types of mediation: referential (Mr), verbal (Mv) and rhetorical or metabological (Mrh).

This second part (ll. 12-49) mediates thus: "song" (Mv), "'Most musical, most melancholy' bird" (Mr: Milton), "melancholy bird" (Mrh: metaphor), "in Nature there is nothing melancholy" (Mrh: Ar), "remembrance" (Mrh: metonymy: poetry acts through memory), "wrong, distemper, neglected love" (Mrh: metonymy: poetry is prompted by emotions), "filled all things with himself" (Mrh: metonymy: designates the semic interchanges between 11 and 12) reinforced by another metonymy: "tell back the tale" (Mrh), "tale" (Mr: openly connotes literature) as well as "notes" and "strain". (Ll. 12.22)

In lines 23-39, Coleridge develops the process which characterizes 13 as follows: 1. In lines 23-24, he rejects the artificial poetic creation. The word "conceit" as well as the syntagm "building up the rhyme" connote the poetic diction he and Wordsworth had condemned in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads. "Building up" is the contrary of the organic growth from within and "rhyme" points to the conventional matrix which is merely accidental for him whereas it is the essential characteristic of poetry to bad poets.

2. In 25-27 the communion which establishes itself between the true poet and nature is described: "limbs" (12) "beside a brook ... mossy forest-dell ... sun or moon-light" (11).

3. In lines 27-29 the effect of the communion is depicted: "influxes", "share in Nature's immortality".

4. In lines 32-34, the effect of the communion is shown to produce a result: "his song/Should make all Nature lovelier" (13) which ought to bring him a reward: "and itself/Be loved like Nature". For the first time allusion is made to the fact that the mediation of 11 and 12 through 13 should produce something superior to 11 alone or to 11 added to 12.

5. Lines 34-39 reiterate the rejection of artificial poetry: "poetical" (possibly derisive), "lose" and "But 'twill not be so" (negativity), "Philomela's strains" (alludes to mythology; connotes literature but also a bookish rather than an inspired poetic creation).

Lines 40-49 develop the theme of nightingales further, making them an ambiguous symbol of poetry presented as a process started by a stimulus (the moon, the sun) and resulting in something new ("delicious notes", "love-chant", "music").

Coleridge introduces the notion that poetry can be compared to religion. It can be regarded as something sacred that "we may not thus profane", a cluster of substances the poet will have to form, in the circumstances noises or rather "Nature's sweet voices" the poet is supplied with to use them creatively. Thus does the image of the nightingale, unquestionably linked to those voices, come to personify the sacred character of the cosmos (a character that the mariner violates by his fatal gesture) as well as the boon which is bequeathed on whoever, like a priest, is receptive to its messages and devoted to stimulating action.

Part Three

The isotopy /logos/ is amplified through the themes of the nightingale and the priestess. In the preceding lines, one might have been tempted to consider the bird

Part Four

However worthy of being devoted to as a symbol of the poetic activity, the nightingale is only one stage in the process. A further stage is reached with the child. The bird, after all, responded to the stimulus of nature while it was part of nature; the child has nature as his "playmate" and is potentially endowed with what will be necessary for him to create. He has receptivity and authority (will): "bid us listen", "he knows well", "hushed at once"; joy in his communion with nature: "suspends his sobs, and laughs"; stimulus makes him responsive just like the bird: "his fair eyes ... did glitter in the yellow moon-beam".

A short tabular reading can be summed up like this: $i1$ /cosmos/ characterized by $i1'$ /absence/ is mediated and at the same time enriched ($i1'$ suppressed) through the poet's mental power ($i2$) by $i3$ /logos/. Besides its describing the poetic process in an implicit metadiscourse, the poem is a poem, for it induces a set of relations between the units, using their various common elements through desynonymization (semic distribution), uniting them into an organic whole which synthesizes the antagonistic entities of the universe and man. The process consists essentially of operations on content, which includes metaseemes and metalogisms but also, to some extent, metataxes (e.g. anaphora "no...no..."), the expression, especially in such a "conversation poem", partaking of the general scheme in that it serves content but does not make the language of the poem intrinsically poetic. Content and expression enter a set of consections and interrelations one might describe in the important notion of poetic intensity.

The latter must be distinguished from other notions I have used so far. The first notion to be taken into account is that of poeticity which designates the very fact that language (the linguistic units) is organized in such a way as to be different from all other types of language (conversation, science, prose) except poetic language, the latter being language on which the operations formerly described have been applied. In Johnson's, well-known example quoted by Coleridge in Biographia Literaria: "I put my hat upon my head" etc (14), poeticity is practically nil but for the slight arrangement of the conversational words according to some of the rules of the conventional matrix which acts as a signal. The potential reader, however, is quickly disappointed, for instead of essential poetry, he will only find here accidental poetry because the passage bears the expressive marks of poetry and not the semantic marks which alone are proper. One finds examples of weak poeticity in Coleridge's poems, not unlike the caricature he gave in the doggerel about the hat. Thus in "Fears in Solitude" where one can find long pieces having no poeticity at all. For this we have Coleridge's support: in an undated autograph manuscript initialled S.T.C., it is suggested that after all this "is perhaps not Poetry, - but rather a sort of middle thing between Poetry and Oratory - sermoni propria." (PW 257) Indeed, if the poem is poetic, it is due to its general metabolic structure interspersed with intensely poetic passages; but it is also traversed by spots of language whose poeticity is next to nil.

The general structure, which is poetic, and the passages charged with poeticity, enable us to analyse the concept of poetic intensity.

The concept comprehends two different notions: the notion of poeticity and that of motivation. When a certain number of operations on content are effected, there is poeticity - deep when related to content, superficial when related to expressions. When the operations on expressions echo the operations on content, there is motivation (Part one ch. I, p. 130 f.), which can be of any of the three sorts mentioned by Jean-Marie Schaeffer. (15) The scale of poetic intensity, therefore, extends from the lowest possible point (no motivation, a minimum number of operations on content or/and on expression) to the highest (high degree of motivation and a maximum number of operations on content and expression relatively to the seminal idea and its necessary development into an organic whole).

"Fears in Solitude"

In "Fears in Solitude", the poetic intensity of the whole is rather low owing to the passages in which it is next to nil. But those are counterbalanced by passages of a fairly high intensity such as, as often in Coleridge's conversation poems, at the beginning of the poem (cf. Smith, 135-6, about language as political power.)

Coleridge himself regarded the poem as being partly oratorical in its structure; indeed, beyond the opening lines of the poem, the metaphors become more and more oratorical, the poet's voice lapsing here and there into some kind of moral discourse. However severe most critics have been about this poem, it is not inconsistent and although the political exhortations may be less appealing to us today - they are so at least to me - they contain vigour and poeticity.

Let us call to mind at this point one of Coleridge's most important assertions: "An idea, in the highest sense of that word, cannot be conveyed but by a symbol," (16) the highest type of symbol being the work of art. What Coleridge purports to do here is to represent palpably the idea that the dangers and threats from outside to which one reacts indifferently or with selfish insensitivity can be sufficient to mar poetic tranquillity at home, either literally or figuratively. Hence, the triadic pattern: dell - exhortations - dell. As J.S. Hill has written, the poem is "an artful parabola from nature to politics and back to nature" and one in which "the realms of nature and politics are intimately related." (17) The contrast, therefore, must be striking between the representation of the poetic space and that of the world of fears and threats. That is the reason why the opening and ending scenes coincide with the maximum poetic intensity while the main body of political exhortations and representations is essentially oratorical in its structure.

Coleridge, let us not forget, considers metre and the conventional matrix, however important within the scheme of the motivation of poetic discourse, mainly as a signal pointing to the poem as a poem and aiming at drawing the potential reader's attention to the language used. In "Fears in Solitude", particularly, the poetic use of language is immediately signalled by the expression. A subtle use of metaphors and metonymies arrests the reader in his progress through the text, prompting him to look through the surface structure for the genuine poeticity which affects the deep structure. The degree of poetic intensity is at its highest in lines 1-28 and 203-232, for there language creates poetry while it discourses about it. The central lines of the poem are made up of a succession of striking poetic passages separated from one another by quasi-non-poetic passages.

If we analyse the opening lines (1-28), we observe that the verbal units are organized in such a way as to mime, syntactically and metaplasmically, a parallelism that the operations on content will emphasize as central (antagonism: dell vs outer world, and its corollaries: peace vs war, silence vs din, youth vs manhood, folly vs wisdom, etc). The poetic signal is as much the result of the intricate alliterative pattern: silent spot: s-s, t-t; small silent: s-s; stiller place: st-pl; singing sky-lark himself: s-s-s; hills are heathy save swelling slope: h-h, a-s-si; gay gorgeous; g-g; and the complex and subtle intermixture of [l-s-p-t-m-r] sounds - as of the various syntactic repetitions: pattern iteration: determiner + adjective + coordinator + adjective + noun (ll. 1-2); anaphora: A-A while from - and from - and from (18-20); place: silent - silent (1-2), bloom(less)-blooms (6-7); polyptoton: dresms-dreaming (26-27), singing-sings (18), singing-singest (27-28).

But the operations on the expression signal the deeper operations on the content. The iterative structure of the expression points out the semantic importance of space, which, as usual with Coleridge, connotes a specific place where something occurs. The first couple of lines emphasize the nouns "spot" and "place". "Dell" has similar roots to "dale" which, according to the OED, denotes "a portion of an undivided field indicated by landmarks only". A "dell" is indeed "a deep hole, a pit" (OED) and in the poem it is a spot of sensuous images; this, in Coleridge's conception of poetry, characterizes a definite space in which the combination of man's powers with nature's influence can result in a dynamic synthesis. We obtain once more the structure /cosmos/ vs /anthropos/ synthesized into /logos/. The part of nature and the characteristic of the space are clearly specified. The space has a surface and limits that

circumscribe it. Both the surface and the circumference are overwhelmed by nature and man's senses are strongly solicited:

- . surface : . mist (visual, tactile)
- . vernal cornfield, flax (visual,
 olfactive)
- . stalks (visual)
- . sunshine (visual, tactile)

- . circumf.: . heathy (visual, olfactive)
- . furze (visual, olfactive,
 tactile)

Logically, the space thus delimited should stage /cosmos/ (above) opposed to, or rather engaged in a fruitful contest with, /anthropos/. The latter is actually connoted at several levels: a) explicitly: "he/The humble man" and the deictic pronoun "he"; b) implicitly through man's actions: "vernal cornfield" and "flax" are the result of man's industry, or through man's communion with nature: "a quiet spirit-healing nook" (the "nook" symbolizing the poetic space where the synthesis of man's power with nature's influence produces a dream-state propitious for poetic meditation), the "singing sky-lark" (another symbol of poetry, justified by an intertextual reference to "The Nightingale", attended by the elements indispensable to poetic creation: natural sensations, natural stimuli, and producing "the minstrelsy that solitude loves best", i.e. harmony or an organic whole). The distance from /anthropos/ to /logos/ is actually slight. It can be said to be already connoted by such elements as the lark and the minstrelsy or the result of the communion: the quietness that promotes the dream-state and the synthesis. It is clearly manifested through the following:

- 1) the restricted space (a dell surrounded by hills); 2) the stillness and solitude of the place which generate a dream-state (receptivity to nature's influence); 3) the

elements traditionally characteristic of poetic discourse: the bird songs (minstrelsy: metonymy connoting poetry), the dynamic antagonism between man and nature (forms of nature vs feelings, thoughts); 4) the dream-state itself: attentiveness to the voices of nature ("swimmuietennses"), dreams (hope of "better worlds" - poetry betters nature). The main structure, although delicately suggested, is antithetical. The close cooperation between nature and man involves at once an essential opposition and a mediation. The notion is connoted a first time in a lower key: "never bloomless" (double negation) vs "blooms profusely" (positive) at the level of the cosmos, then it is firmly asserted at the level of man himself:

The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
Knew just so much of folly, as had made
His early manhood more securely wise!

The antithesis is here double: "youthful" is opposed to "manhood" and "folly" to "wise". Such a man it is who in such a place, a privileged space for initiates, is likely to benefit from the communicative and productive antagonism between man and nature. He has the humbleness that is necessary in the circumstance but also enough of the contradictory to be receptive.

An analysis of the closing lines of the poem (203-232), unnecessary though, would reveal a similar intensity of poeticity paralleled by a fairly high degree of motivation. The latter is especially sustained by a subtle play of metaphors, mainly alliterations. That in the opening and closing parts, both the poetic signal and poeticity proper (the operations on content) should be fairly conspicuous serves the purpose of contrasting the poetic space, "a quiet and surrounded nook" and an "amphitheatre of rich/And elmy fields", with the world of

noises, fears and threats described in between. The closing lines synthesize the whole, for now the poet is

grateful, that by nature's quiteness
 And solitary musings, all my heart
 Is softened, and made worthy to indulge
 Love, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind.
 (229-232)

The indifference and callousness of his countrymen to the cruelties of war abroad is compensated by the poet's sympathy for suffering people in poetry. As compared with the perhaps deliberate dryness of some lines in the middle part of the poem, the two poetic passages dealing with poetry and the communion between man and the cosmos appear like oases in a desert of pains and cruelties. Even if, as John Spencer Hill writes, some lines such as lines 54-58, added in the Sibylline Leaves version (1817) "are perhaps the worst lines in the poem" (18), they help Coleridge express feelings and considerations which are rather down-to-earth for a poet to impart. Some passages are indeed deprived of poeticity. Thus:

Meanwhile, at home,
 All individual dignity and power
 Engulfed in Courts, Committees, Institutions,
 Associations and Societies,
 A vain, speech-mouthing, speech-reporting Guild,
 One Benefit-Club for mutual flattery

already commented on by Hill. Other passages, on the other hand, are characterized mostly by oratorical metalepsis, which is consistent with the goal aimed at. The proportion is particularly vivid in lines 29-39:

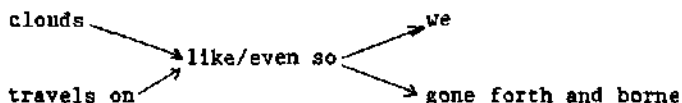
My God: it is a melancholy thing
 For such a man, who would full fain preserve
 His soul in calmness, yet perforce must feel
 For all his human brethren - O my God!
 It weighs upon the heart, that he must think
 What uproar and what strife may now be stirring

This way or that way o'er these silent hills -
 Invasion, and the thunder and the shout,
 And all the crash of onset; fear and rage,
 And undetermined conflict - even now,
 Even now, perchance, and in his native isle

The majority of metaboles are of the oratorical type. Pure poeticity makes room for devices which enhance the quality and effectiveness of the signal: anaphora and polysyndeton make up the frame of the passage; they are sustained by the anadiplosis "even now, / Even now" (ll. 38-39) and the exclamations. But the whole escapes the banality of a political speech, however effective some of them can be sometimes, thanks to the subtle use of metaseemes: hyperbolic metaphor in ("a groan of accusation) pierces (Heaven)"; simile in ("Yet bartering freedom and the poor man's life/For gold,) as at a market"; metaphor in ("We have drunk up, demure as at a grace,/Pollutions from) the brimming cup of wealth"; metaphors again in the "Book of Life" or "the owl Atheism", although somewhat trite ones. Perhaps the best poetic construction is the following simile:

Like a cloud that travels on,
 Steamed up from Cairo's swamps of pestilence,
 Even so, my countrymen! have we gone forth
 And borne to distant tribes slavery and pangs,
 And, deadlier far, our vices, whose deep taint
 With slow perdition murders the whole man,
 His body and his soul!

The extreme richness of the image becomes obvious only when analysed thoroughly. The comparison is of the metaphoric type (cf. Group Mu, A General Rhetoric (19)) and comprehends the terms compared and the copulas. On either side of the copulas ("like" reinforced by "even so") the terms and their attributes form a set of parallelisms:



But the metasequence is not complete without a semic analysis of "swamp" and "distant tribes". In order to apprehend the implications of the image, it is necessary that we represent the whole mechanism of the formation of clouds and rains. The very source of the cloud is the swamp from which water "steamed up"; the cloud then moves onward, propelled by the winds, and finally spreads its rains over distant countries. The semic distribution for "swamp" provides the following result:

"swamp" : . C : area
 . S1 : soft land
 . S2 : wet land

But "swamp" is determined by the noun "pestilence":

"pestilence" : . C : disease
 . S1 : epidemic
 . S2 : fatal

The consequence is that the water which swells the cloud is both fatal and loaded with a disease of the epidemic type. These will have an impact on those who will be the victims of the rains. The parallel between the two terms of the comparison, therefore, goes on:

cloud travels on disease and fatal

we gone forth and borne slavery, pangs and vices

The adjective "fatal" is important, for it has as its counterpart "deadlier"; the result of the action of the cloud will be "murder" both of the "body" and of the "soul". The image is therefore of overwhelming power in that it implies, in Coleridge's opinion, a fatal responsibility on the part of the English as to the consequences of what at that time constituted one of the

first stages in the colonization process. The image is even forceful from a poetic point of view, or rather from the standpoint of the usual metadiscourse on poetry. Indeed, if we consider the semic distribution of the word "tribes", this is what we obtain:

"tribe" : . C : racial group
 . S1 : united by language and customs
 . S2 : living as a community
 . S3 : under one or more chiefs

The total of the sementemea forms the definition of an organic whole. What the cloud (i.e. "we") destroys then is a living structure, at the level of its expression ("body") and at the level of its content ("soul"). Who the "swamp of pestilence" actually designates and where it really comes from is a matter for a political discussion which would be irrelevant here. As an occasional poem, however, "Fears in Solitude" must indeed have appeared as "a private and public declaration of his own political sentiments in which he expressed his patriotic feeling but, at the same time, made plain his opposition to Pitt's administration." (20) If poetry can enrich language, it can also enhance the effectiveness of political condemnations.

"The Eolian Harp"

If the poetic intensity of the opening and closing parts of "Fears in Solitude" as well as the deliberate contrast between these parts and the main body of the poem make it a good poem, however severe most judgements of it have generally been, there are others among the Conversation Poems which deserve more interest. Something of the tone and theme of "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" and of "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement", some of their poetic qualities too, are found in "The Eolian Harp". But the latter, I think, takes precedence over the former two, owing to the density of its poetic language, a density which, unlike the other two, brings it closer to poetry than to conversation.

"The Eolian Harp" is undoubtedly an outstanding poem; not only because it is one of the more complex - there were no less than five versions of it - but above all because in the various forms it assumed, it was not merely successively "a love-poem", "a marriage poem" and "a cosmic love-poem" (21) but a highly intricate poetic construction. As John Beer remarks, the central interrogations on the organic harps and the intellectual breeze are not merely a "speculative inquiry":

There is something other than speculative inquiry in such questions; something more like delight in a magical view of the universe - a Blakean sense that we may understand the universe better in a moment of wonder than we do in the process of atomisation and dissection. (22)

I shall therefore begin by analysing the textus receptus and then proceed to examine the various changes Coleridge brought to the poem, the causes of these changes and their implications from a strictly structural standpoint. In my opinion, the successive alterations of the text did not greatly influence the main pattern of the poem which derives its quality first from the oxymoronic title it has always had.

As has appeared in the poems I have analysed so far, Coleridge's poetry is centred upon the double activity of commenting on poetic language while creating it. Coleridge's obsession in his poems seems to have been the necessity he felt to make it known to readers how creation, artistic as well as natural, is effected and what goes on while the artistic mind is at work. The poetic process is oxymoronic and in the case of "The Eolian Harp" consciousness of this is revealed at once in the title. Poetry, we have seen, consists essentially of operations on content. In the title of the poem, the

interfusion of senses opposing /cosmos/ to /anthropos/ takes place in a way which is already a complex one. The three isotopies which make up a poem are present from the start but instead of forming a set of obvious relations, one element pertaining to /cosmos/, another one to /anthropos/ and a third to /logos/, they sketch the complex pattern of exchanges the whole poem will be found to trace. None of the two main words of the title is simple. "Eolian" connotes as well i1 /cosmos/ (= wind) as i3 /logos/ (=mythology, i.e. referential mediation + literary tradition); the adjective, besides, points to the wind of inspiration, a permanent element, as M.E. Abrams has reminded us (23), in the Romantic tradition. "Harp", on the other hand, connotes i2 /anthropos/ (=artifact) but also i3 /logos/ (harp = music, i.e. poetic creation connoted metonymically). Already we perceive that the common space between i1 and i2 which founds i3 is sounds. The wind, at its literal level, originates in nature and animates an artifact for which man is responsible; or, at the metaphorical level, the sounds of nature (substance) are channelled into a structure (form) by man. Yet here it has escaped no one's attention - and especially not Coleridge's - that the channelling is still in a rather passive state, man having merely made the instrument on which nature then works.

It is, however, the oxymoronic nature of the title that matters. The oxymoron is in itself a metabole of considerable pregnancy, for, as Geoffrey N. Leech has remarked, it has "not conceivable reference to reality" and hence lifts up language from its down-to-earth relation to reference. (24) By its very nature, it separates language from its literal use or surface structure, plunging it into its deeper structure. Moreover, Leech goes on, the metabole provides both the puzzle and the solution or, in Coleridge's terms, the

opposition and the reconciliation; the apparently irreconcilable antagonism between /cosmos/ and /anthropos/ is first stated and then the possibility of its being mediated is posed. (25) The oxymoron is thus enough to symbolize the poetic process, for it figures the intermediary position between the fundamental antagonists (man and the universe) which it reduces without suppressing it, but rather letting it subsist as a fragile equilibrium.

It expresses the ambiguity and contradiction of poetry, its two-sided aspect, the delicate balance between this world's opposite forces. As such, it has unquestionably an aesthetic and an expressive force. (26) Unlike the antithesis, in which the "tragic" claiming of a contradiction is expressed, the oxymoron assumes the contradiction. (27) If a nuclear seme in one of the antagonistic words is negated by a nuclear seme in the other (here: "inanimate" vs "animate" or "object" vs "subject"), the negation is sublimated into a richer whole. In order to fully understand what happens, we must remember Coleridge's definition of oppositions in Biographia Literaria. (28) The oxymoronic relation does not represent the logical opposition described by Kant, which leads to nonsense, but the real opposition which is made up of two forces (here: two meanings) acting in opposite directions and contradistinguished "by their essential nature" (here: by their nuclear semes). The apparent rest which results from their interrelation is actually a dynamic yet delicate balance between two primary antagonistic powers.

The basic idea (a poem, let us not forget it, is the organic growth of a seminal idea) stated by the title is therefore the opposition between nature and man, or man and the universe, as it can be mediated and ultimately synthesized by poetry. The poem should then perform both the opposition, a constant one, and the synthesis, an endless one too.

We are entitled to expect the manifestation of the three isotopies throughout the poem. The first to manifest itself is i2 /anthropos/. It is overwhelmingly present and asserted as such from the beginning onward: orthosemically ("my pensive Sara", "cheek", "arm", "sit", possessive adjectives) and rhetorically with a special emphasis on "Cot". Why is "cot" given special emphasis? The word is given a particular stress through the anadiplosis (an operation on expression):

most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o'ergrown

which points out the character of the cot as an artifact. This establishes the word on the same footing as "harp". The position is confirmed by its particular relationship to nature:

our Cot o'ergrown
With white-flower'd Jasmin and the broad-leav'd Myrtle

The emphasis on "cot" is echoed by a like emphasis on natural elements (flowers). The metabole (anadiplosis) is important in that it expresses, like most verbal parallelisms, somewhat superabundantly, man's need to emphasize "matters which affect (man) deeply". (29) The main function of the anadiplosis is to be emphatic and make things physically palpable: the surface structure (syntax) mimes the deep structure inasmuch as the same thing is said twice: once by content and a second time by expression.

Thus the oxymoronic relation (cosmos-anthropos) mediated by an artifact (logos), already introduced in the title, is repeated and emphasized through rhetorical means. The stress in i3 /logos/ is developed through rhetorical

means. The stress in i3 /logos/ is developed through the "emblems": "Jasmin" and "Myrtle". The words serve as intermediary between /cosmos/ and /anthropos/, for they index on i1 (flowers) and i3 (mythology, i.e. referential mediation: "Myrtle" = Venus; besides, J.S. Hill points out, the cottage overgrown with flowers "recalls the prelapsarian bower of Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost, IV 690-703 - an echo reinforced both by the references to jasmine and myrtle (plants mentioned by Milton) and by Coleridge's effort to allegorise these flowers as Edenic emblems of Innocence and Love (line 5)". (30)

The flowers, Coleridge insists, are "emblems", i.e. symbols or representations of something else. Here, they fulfil their literary or creative function of physical representation of an abstract concept. They also point to a mediation. Innocence and love, which are part of marriage, are oxymoronic in that they connote emblematically the coexistence of sexuality (union, fusion) and purity (whiteness, virginity), the former, in a Christian context, being antithetical to the latter. They also refer implicitly to i3. Coleridge sees the poetic process as a co-instillation of semes (anthropos-cosmos) and the word "emblem" etymologically suggests an instillation. It is also a pictorial expression and a symbol. The pictorial expression (cf. OED) reinforces the notion of "palpability" effected by the motivation of the discourse (expression echoing content); the symbol, Leech shows, works through metabolization (operations of transformation). In a symbol, the signified of a word functions as signifier for a second signified which is the symbolized object. (31) Here, the signified of "innocence" and "love", essentially abstract, are offered palpability by being given concrete signifiers, the signified of "myrtle" and "jasmin". In the case of "myrtle", for instance, this is what is obtained:

"myrtle" : sa [m :t1]

- se - C1 : plant
- C2 : shrub
- S1 : with shiny, evergreen leaves
- S2 : with white, sweet-scented
flowers
- V1 : sacred to Venus
- V2 : love

sa

"love"

- se - C1 : feeling
- C2 : affection
- C3 : attachment
- S1 : with regard to a person
- S2 : arises from recognition of
attractive qualities, sympathy
or natural ties
- S3 : warm
- V1 : charm
- Vn : ...

As Rookmaaker aptly remarks, Coleridge's use of nature does not arise from an interest in nature as such but he "merely uses nature to make or clarify a statement about something else" (32); in other words, nature serves as a physical, sensuous support for mental or abstract consideration. Or, as Paul Hamilton puts it, "the poetic function transforms the temporal and spatial categories employed from distortions into symbols valuable as the sole means of access we have to the experience described." (33)

The process thus engaged establishes the basis for poetic creation: the opposition between nature and man is gradually transformed through linguistic means into a fragile but dynamic instability. The relation cosmos-anthropos becomes a cooperation: the cosmos assists man by lending him perceptible substances without content (flowers, perfumes, forms), and from man

issue concepts having no sensuous or perceptible existence. From the cooperation between them are born sensuous concepts (an oxymoronic structure) or ideas to which physical existence is given.

The notion of oxymoronic cooperation is connoted throughout the first verse paragraph (lines 1-12). The discourse weaves all over the dual assertion of the poet struggling positively with the universe (11-12) and of the synthesis being effected (13).

The syntactic structure can be described as follows: lines 2 to 12 present a double assertion about the poet's happy feeling in his relation to nature: it is sweet + infinitive (ll. 2-9); "How exquisite" + nouns (ll. 9-12). The poet is engaged in a contemplation of nature, a deep communion with it through his senses. The senses are indeed emphatically concerned here:

It is sweet . to sit

. and watch the clouds (visual)
 . and mark the star of eve (visual)

How exquisite . the scents (olfactive)
 . the world so hushed (auditory)

The central syntactic pattern is sustained by the polysyndeton, of which Gordon says that it confers on the discourse an impression of vehemence and vigour as well as a rhythmic unity. (34) In the first verse paragraph, it reinforces the unity of the whole, the impression of a communion between the poet and nature, of harmony in their cooperation. Nature and the poet, it seems, are united to exchange and create. They do so, or rather the poet, with nature's complicity, does so through language. The latter aspect is connoted rhetorically:

the clouds: "late were rich with light" (metaphor)
 the star: "serenely brilliant" - "such should Wisdom be" (personification + comparison)

To these metaememes must be added:

the antitheses "that late were rich with light" vs "alow saddening round": past vs present, positive vs negative, light vs darkening; "serenely brilliant" vs "such should Wisdom be": actual vs problematic.

The metaphor "saddening round" used about the clouds connotes as well the exchange of senses between /cosmos/ and /anthropos/ as the mediation between them through language or the creation through language of something new. At the same time, the metaememe is included in the antithesis which, along with the oxymoron that conditions the poem, marks the type of relation which presides over the poetic process. What authorizes the figure is the common element "plenty" vs "loss" which explains the passage from happiness ("rich with light") to sadness.

Likewise with "the star of eve", a periphrasis for a specific celestial body which points to something that does not exist: either wisdom does not exist or at least it is never as brilliant as the star. The hypothetical comparison gives palpability to a human quality which belongs more to the province of what human beings may wish to have than of what they actually possess. But the purpose of the metaphors, comparisons and antitheses is also to amplify the relation between man and nature, the sensuousness of it, the lapsing from a past richness to a deeply felt absence of it. The metaphors emphasize the notion of the transience of beautiful things. They render the idea physically apprehensible through cooperation with nature: the passing of everything (clouds lit then dark), the defeated hopes (wisdom). They also perform the linguistic possibility, thanks to the poet's synthetic power, of animating nature and enabling mental constructions to act and live. They also actualize, Hill says, "a subtle balancing of inertia and activity", an "alternation of activity and passivity [that] fosters a mood of hushed expectancy, brought brilliantly to a climax in lines 11-12". (35)

If visual impressions are stressed first, there is a gradual progress from them to auditory images. The last lines of the paragraph complete the notion of decreasing of sensuous elements, of the presence of nature in its sensuous manifestations, giving place to a new presence, to new manifestations.

The last two lines are entirely antithetical in their construction:

"stilly murmur" : oxymoron
 "tells us of silence" : paradox

The oxymoron manifests the opposition of two essential senses in each of the opposed terms; here: absence of noise vs presence of noise. The paradox (unlike the antithesis, it acts on the referent: say something about the opposite of language vs say something without saying anything) sustains the oxymoronic structure of the poem and connotes language, or rather the opposite of "ordinary" language. It introduces the notion of powerful language (poetic) as opposed to a more limited, less pregnant language. Only silence (antagonistic to "ordinary" language) allows music (poetry connoted metonymically) to be heard. K.M. Wheeler is right when assuming that

the nature of communication is problematic and possibly indirect, so that what appears to be passivity, silence, and solitude, may actually be generative conditions of creative activity, while the apparently active may be a distraction to imagination.
 (36)

As in most poems, Coleridge performs both the communion of the poet with nature and the gradual effacement of nature. He creates a space where poetry can emerge, where

language, reorganized, becomes something different from what it usually is, does something that does not exist otherwise.

The first paragraph mediates as early as the title /anthropos/ and /cosmos/ through /logos/ (12 - 11 13). In the second paragraph, Coleridge introduces a symbol of the mediation.

The structure of lines 12-25 is extremely intricate. It consists of an intermixture of metaphor and comparison.

The first metaphor has sexual connotations in that it identifies the wind (breeze) with the lover. This is how it functions:

"breeze" : - desultory:
 . skipping about, jumping from one thing to another, devious, wavering (animal, man): frivolity
 . reel, stagger, totter, swing or wave in the air (man, animal): hesitation
 . exhibit doubt or indecision (man): indecision

The adjective infuses the semes "animate" + "frivolity" + "hesitation", suggesting that the wind, like a lover, is subject to changes of mood, hesitations (due to timidity and respect) and indecisions.

- caresaes:
 . affectionate touch: instills "feeling" + "touch" and gives a physical consistence to the image.

The metaphor contains a comparison which completes it:

"coy maid": - half yielding:
 . give
 . cease opposition, surrender
 . die (cf. love = the little death)

The semes are "gift" + "absence of opposition" and "death".

- upbraids:
 . scold, reproach

- tempt to repeat the wrong;
 - . suggesting
 - . to do ath wrong or foolish
 - . offer

The semes are "induce" + "guilt" + "gift"

Assembled, the two elements of the metabole (lover + bride) form an ambiguous image (suggesting the polarity of poetry) which implies positive characters (gift, feeling), negative ones (frivolity, death, reproaches, wrongness, guilt) and characters of an intermediary type (indecision, suspension of opposition, uncertain prompting). We find in the metabole the triad which constitutes the poetic process: i1 - i2 : i3. Unlike what Coleridge came to assert later, however, the poetic discourse here, as symbolized by the lute, is not of a kind to allow man full range in the use of his power as a creator. Man, who built the lute, is apparently in no position to influence the result of nature's action. The wind acts upon an artifact man put at its disposal but which it alone can mould. The only manifestation of man's active presence - but by no means a negligible one - is that by its very structure, made and willed by men, the lute compels a specific pattern on nature's performance. Organically, the outcome of the cosmic action upon the anthropomorphic artifact cannot be otherwise than what it is.

The second metaphor concerns the result of the interaction between the lover and his bride, on the one hand, and between the breeze and the lute, on the other hand. The metaphor identifies the resulting music (i3) with the movement of the sea and the latter, in a comparison, with elfins' sounds; these in turn are compared to birds. The structure goes:

- "notae":
- sequactions:
 - . following one another
 - . unvarying regularity of order
 The semes are "succession" and "organization"
 - surges:
 - . movement, rolling on
 - . like waves
 The semes are "motion" + "liquidity"
 - sink and raise:
 - . movement up and down
 - . sink : sea
 - . polarity
 The semes are "duality" + "liquidity"
 - floating:
 - . fluctuating, variable
 - . being held up on the surface of liquid
 The semes are "hesitation" + "uncertainty"
 (cf. "desultory" + "liquidity").

The metaphor is synaesthetic; it produces, from a sense-impression of one kind, an associated mental image of a sense-impression of another kind (OED), or, in other words, the merely musical production of the lute is swollen to a visual as well as to an auditory palpability through the mutual exchange of semes between the music and the sea. The work on content, besides, is completed by a similar operation on expression. The alliterative pattern with its supply of sibilant and liquid phonemes ([s], [ʃ], [z] + [ft], [fl], [l], [r]) reinforces the onomatopoeic imitation of the sea murmur.

The metaphor, offering a surplus to the semantic charge, is enhanced by the two comparisons embedded in it. The first comparison adds semes borrowed from the world of magic while the second rounds off the image by means of allusions to birds, an image which is generally associated with poetry in Coleridge's conception.

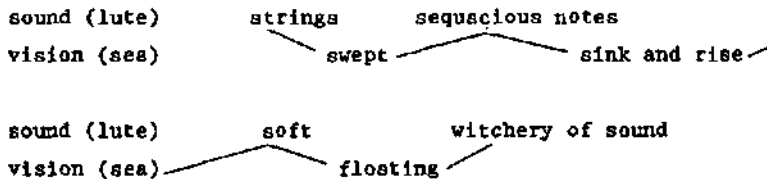
The initial opposition between i1 /cosmos/ and i2 /anthropos/ is now decidedly mediated by the overwhelming presence of i3 /logos/ which is connoted as follows:

1. The practice of witchcraft, connoted by "witchery", "Elfins" (used by Spenser and possibly suggested by Elphin), and "Fairy-Land" (another reminiscence of Spenser) partakes of religion (= referential mediation).
2. What the co-operation between the wind (11) and the lute (12) produces is art (13), and art is often described by Coleridge as a flow of musical sounds as produced by instruments or birds. (37)
3. The witchery mentioned here, especially as related to Elfins and Fairies, recalls the fairyland of poetry which is described in many poems: e.g. "Songs of the Pixies" and of course the magic circle which to a common observer leads the poet on the verge of madness in "Kubla Khan" (48-54).

The eight lines about "the one Life" must logically follow. The "one Life" or the metonymic designation of the principle which animates both nature and the poet's mind (through one common sense "motion") is at once a metadiscursive description of what happens when the poetic process is at work and a new deep occurrence of the process itself. The principle of animation, the wind, is indeed "air-in-motion" seen as "a property of the landscape", a property nature lends man for him to make it into something artistic. (38) In lines 26-29, the advent of the mediation process is once again described: the substance of expression (the breeze) blowing through the substance of content (the strings and body of the lute, i.e. the frames of the mind) and coming out as a double form: a form of content and a form of expression. The principle occurs both "within us" (12) and "abroad" (11), it "meets all motion" (gets hold of every shape or substance) "and becomes its soul" (its form). The mind or its symbol, the lute, is "the figurative mediator between outer motion and inner emotion" (39) and one which transforms the substance that is given it into an organic form, a perfect whole which is practically "iconized" by the chiasmus:

A light in sound, a sound-like power in light.

The chiasmus is a cross symmetry, the image favoured by Heraclitus who saw in it the sphere and the illustration of a constantly renewed movement, an image of eternity. The chiasmus here is synaesthetic: it is metaphorical in its principle because it is based on a similar exchange of senses between two elements. It completes the long metaphor in lines 17-20 and endows sounds with a completeness by associating them with visual elements. The lines form a sequence, a continuous progress from the auditory to the visual and vice-versa:



The power of sound is thus united to the power of light and given a thickness through the addition of another dimension, an ampler depth and at the same time a greater plenitude. The chiasmus being a metataxis, i.e. an ambivalent metabole because although it belongs to expression it is not without some incidence on content, and the synaesthetic metaphor a metaseme, the concomitance of the two metaboles performs what they say, namely the sphericity of poetic language, the perfection of substance and form united in an organic whole. It illustrates the "rhythm in thought": the concept or seminal idea physically organized and it makes of the universe, newly created by the poet, a world "Where the breeze warbles", that is to say a humanized cosmos. The latter phrase is as characteristic of poetry as the couplet on the snow falling on a river that Coleridge mentions in chapter four of Biographia Literaria. Here

also, the exchange of *semes* is minimum but perfect in the restricted limits of the space where it takes place: it is the perfect short metaphor which confers upon language its grandeur.

The mechanism is simple:

"breeze" : . C1 : wind
 C2 : motion of the air
 . S1 : soft
 S2 : gentle
 S3 : blowing from the land or sea
 at certain hours

"warble": . C : sing
 S1 : of birds
 S2 : with a gentle trilling note

The intersective space which legitimates the metaphor actually founds the poetic quality of the language by, on the one hand, synthesizing the two terms into one through *semes* common to both, and, on the other hand, extending to both terms the qualities of their intersection, thus creating a new, enriched semantic space. This can be described as follows:

"breeze" (i1 /cosmos/)

"warble" (i2 /anthropos/ :
 a. only men and birds sing
 b. "sing" implies music,
 a quality that men attribute
 to birds -

and i3 /logos/

a. birds in Coleridge's poetry
 symbolize the poetic discourse
 b. "sing" as attributed to birds
 is metaphorical)

intersection:

1. air-in-motion (i1 - i2)
2. softness (i1 - i2)
3. musical (i2, i3)
4. animate (i2)
5. synaesthetic metaphor: sea (i1 - breeze) -
 notes (i2 - birds) sound/light - light/
 sound (i3)

Interestingly, the synaesthetic, chiasmic image obtained is repeated in lines 32-33. It is not only possible to describe the phrase "the mute still air/Is Music slumbering on her instrument" in the same way (although this time the metaphor is more extensive, for it includes "her" and "instrument") but it is further developed through the chiasmic antithesis "mute still air" = "Music" (antithesis 1) vs "Music" (sounds) is "slumbering" (absence of sounds) (antithesis 2): antithesis one - antithesis two: chiasmus; or: air is mute cosmically (i1) but through the poet's intervention (i2) becomes music (i3) vs music (audible) slumbering (inaudible, except for receptive people, i.e. in a dream-state).

The remaining two sequences of the poem - lines 34-48 and the palinode (49-64) - effect an iteration of the synthesis performed so far and eventually a recantation which, structurally, is much closer to the poetic diction of the eighteenth-century tradition, and one Coleridge later came to despise with its rather mawkish hyperbole - "walk humbly with my God" - periphrases - "Meek Daughter in the family of Christ", "heart-honour'd Maid" - and its over-refined metaphor about the "bubbles" breaking "On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring".

Although lines 34-48 begin by an overwhelming affirmation of i2 through the re-asserted presence of the poet and his beloved ("I" stretch "my" limbs, "my" eye-lids, "I" behold, "I" muse, "my" brain, "my" love), the active cosmos is still at work through the poet's mental powers. This is effected in the antithetical metaphor about the "sunbeams" (inanimate) which "dance, like diamonds, on the main", antithetical because something inanimate ("sunbeams") is compared to another inanimate thing

("diamonds") which is said to be dancing (a quality possessed by animate beings). As to the complex metabole constituted by the lines:

And what if all of animated nature
 Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,
 That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
 Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
 At once the Soul of each, and God of all?

it repeats and performs again, although differently, the semantic content of lines 26-33. The meaning is here enriched by a double oxymoron: "animated nature" and "intellectual breeze" which once again includes the metaphor "animated nature = organic harps" in a general antithetical movement, characteristic of the poetic synthesis.

It might be interesting to determine the degree of poeticity of the poem, it being clear that to Coleridge poeticity arises from the operations effected on content, however important the sustaining movement of expression (metataxes and metaplasms) can be. Even though no arithmetic numbering can do here, let us mention, however, that out of 64 lines in the poem metasemes and metalogisms amount to a total of 54 lines of extension, which means that the poetic intensity totals 100 %. As to the degree of motivation, much more difficult to estimate, we can say that it is near perfection since apart from the alliterations, which form the main underlying expressive frame of the poem, each crucial operation on content is mirrored, sustained or even introduced by similar operations on expression. Thus the first capital operation, the metonymy about "our Cot", is introduced and sustained by the anadiplosis. The metaphorical succession in lines 2-12 is likewise supported and given its unity by the polysyndeton.

Much more than other Conversation poems such as "Fears in Solitude", "Reflections on Having Left A Place of Retirement" or "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison", more evenly at least, "The Eolian Harp" is an example of a poetic whole of which the language makes one unified organism, regularly poetic. Its expression, felt as a unity through the alliterative buzz which subsumes it as well as through the gradual growth of its basic or seminal idea effected by the necessary operations on content, contributes to the uniqueness of the poem. In its first version, the poem was already complete; it already demonstrated the synthetic quality of poetic creation in the seventeen lines it then had. The changes that intervened in 1803, the suppression of the metaboles enriching the images of the myrtle and jasmine, and of the star (5, 8), merely emphasized the overpowering influence of nature while they weakened its cooperation with the poet. Line 13 gives more concreteness to the image of the lute but could be deleted, whereas lines 21-25 impoverished the complex metabole related to the communion between the universe and man. Coleridge soon realized what was missing and returned them to their former position. Finally, the octet about the "one Life", present in the final version of 1817, provides a much better complement to lines 12-25, completing the idea contained in the extended metabole in an image which both comments on it and amplifies it.

"Frost at Midnight"

Resembling "The Eolian Harp", to some extent, is "Frost at Midnight". In this case again the general structure is antithetical, emphasizing the contrast between the unruffled surface of things and intense activity deep down below the surface. In this case too the discourse lays clear stress on the cooperation between the poet and the universe, and compares the active mind not to a harp but to the film fluttering up from a fire. What is different, however, is that the text shows poeticity

extending isotopically throughout the discursive space, at once describing the process and performing it. The poem demonstrates how metaphors and comparisons transform the linguistic units into poetry, at the same time granting the discourse its unity.

Like the phrase "the breeze warbles" in "The Eolian Harp", the first sentence of the poem is in its simplicity charged with poetic intensity. Although the word "frost" can only be semantically determined by other words like "secret", "ministry" or "abstruser", it is nevertheless one of the key-words of the poem and one which has rather been left in the dark by analysts. The poem can in fact not be fully apprehended unless "frost" is allotted its true value. Hence, we must proceed to an examination of the semic distribution of the sentence, according to Coleridge's own rule of desynonymization. This is what we obtain:

"frost" : . C : act or state
 . S1 : freezing or becoming frozen
 S2 : frozen dew or vapour
 S3 : silver-grey
 S4 : crystallization
 adding shape to apparently formless
 material

Nothing can give us a clue as to how the poem functions if we leave the word at the literal content established here. John Beer, for instance, deals briefly with "secret" and "ministry" but without linking them to "frost", which amounts to overlooking the first major operation that constructs the poem. (40) "Frost" can only be given its real value through a retrospective re-evaluation of its content by means of a semic interchange between "secret", "ministry" and "frost":

"ministry" : . rendering of service
 . functions (minister of religion)
 . agency, instrumentality
 . virtume : religion, sacred

"secret" : . not visible
 . hidden
 . kept from the knowledge of others

A first re-evaluation leads to the building up of the semantic space:

"frost" = . process
 . referential mediation (religion, sacred)
 . deep (vs surface)

The re-evaluation is not complete without the capital contribution of "performs":

"performs" : . C : action, process
 . S1 : carry through completion
 S2 : make, construct
 S3 : bring about, produce

A further re-evaluation gives:

"frost" = . process, construction
 . thorough (from one limit to another, from beginning to end)
 . deep
 . of a sacred, quasi-religious type
 . producing a result (a constructed whole)

"Frost" is now sufficiently re-evaluated to entitle a hypothesis: frost = poetic process. Once again, through the interaction of the sensuous semes inherent in "frost" with the conceptual semes contained in "performs", "secret" and "ministry", the poetic process is embodied in something palpable, having physical consistency.

The isotopy /logos/ is especially connoted by the semes concerning deep (vs surface). The poetic process is indeed an activity which is effected at a deeper level, invisible while taking place and only perceptible to receptive individuals.

This introduces another dimension of the process, the synthesis of antagonistic elements. Unlike what many critics have asserted, the atmosphere of mystery which

impregnates the poem is not of a type to delude the reader's attempted interpretation but an element which is widely connoted and that contributes to the emphasis of the general atmosphere presiding over the poetic process. Nothing can happen unless whatever is alien to the process is muffled. The allusion to "owlets" functions as in "Christabel": it points out the same "out-of-the-ordinary" which announces a process at once "strange" to nature and ordinary life and also partaking of the sacred, of the ritualistic.

The antithetical frame of the first verse paragraph provides the background necessary for poetic construction to occur. Whether in the outer world (isotopy /cosmos/) or in the world of poetic construction which is typically mental (isotopy /anthropos/), nothing seems to happen on the surface of things; whatever takes place is below the surface:

il /cosmos/	vs	i2 /anthropos/
"unhelped by wind"		"solitude"
"calm"		"abstruser (cf. "secret") musings"
"strange silentness"		"flame ... quivera not"
"hush of nature"		
goings on of life		
unheard		

The result is the performance of the frost paralleled with the "abstruser musings" of the poet and the fluttering of the film on the grate. Yet these actions occur either invisibly (frost, musings) or in a lower key, like mere shadows of something stronger and more important but not visible (film).

The whole verse paragraph, therefore, is based on the thorough extension of the semes "process", on the one hand, and "visible" vs "invisible", "active" vs "passive",

"extraordinary" vs "ordinary", "dark" vs "clear" (cf. "midnight" as oxymoronic to "process": inactive vs active), "sleep" (child) vs "awake" (poet), on the other hand, the latter being contained in the general oppositions deep vs surface.

The latter opposition is of course fundamental. Coleridge confirms it to us once again in the corrections that intervened between the first publication of the poem and the final version in Sibylline Leaves (1798/1817). The central passage between lines 19-25 in the 1798 version goes:

But still the living spirit in our frame,
That loves not to behold a lifeless thing,
Transfuses into all its own delights,
Its own volition, sometimes with deep faith
And sometimes with fantastic playfulness.
Ah me! amus'd by no such curious toys
Of the self-watching subtilizing mind,
How often ...

If the poem gained from Coleridge's ultimate revision, especially as regards the delicate balancing between expression and content, it certainly lost a great portion of its conceptual clarity. The semic exchanges which characterize the poetic process are conspicuously described in the activity of the mind, a mind which subtilizes ("steals" one sense and replaces it by another) or, as Hill puts it, "anthropomorphises lifeless external things by transfusing into them the mind's 'own delights'". (41) Consciously or not, Coleridge here echoes Cowper's "myself creating what I saw" in "The Task", by which phrase both mean what the poetic process always does (or at least should do), namely use the external forms, instill them with elements contained in the poet's mind and make them into a new whole, into something which has no existence otherwise.

Though invisible, for the "musings" of the poet are "subtruser" (i.e. whose meaning is hidden or difficult to understand; profound) because they are taking place at a deeper level, the process manifests itself throughout the poem. There are three moments in the manifestation: when it signals itself as poetic process (verse paragraph 1), when it characterizes its result (verse paragraph 2, 24-43), when it opens out on a future perspective through the child's priest-like attitude, an event that is also present in "The Nightingale" (verse paragraph 3, 44-74).

The process is manifested in lines 13-23. The antithesis "deep" vs "surface" extended over lines 1-13 is pursued through the image of fire:

fire ← flame (surface)
 \ film (deep)

The fire, source of activity, is not active on the surface, for the flame which is its visible part "quivers not", but at a deeper level, that of the film. The opposition here is between poetry marked by superficiality, manifested essentially and thus not lastingly through expression, and poetry more truly genuine:

"film" : . C : pellicle or lamina of any material
 . S1 : thin and fine
 . S2 : thread or filament

The word points both to something covering something deeper (the minimum manifested of a deeper activity) as well as to a surface to write on (13 connoted metonymically). The antagonism is indeed between flame and film or surface and deep or else expression and content. The essential of the poetic activity evolves in the poet's mind (12) and then in the text, but not on the

surface of the text (rejection of poetic diction and conventional devices). The first part of the covered activity is manifested through a comparison which is introduced in an unusual way:

"film" :	<u>motion</u> "flutters" "unquiet"	* "dim sympathies" "companionable" "echo" "mirror"	<u>motion</u> "live"	"spirit"
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Instead of being introduced by "like" or anything similar, the comparison is preceded by expressions suggesting similarity, a means, once again, of manifesting an essential element of the poetic discourse in an unfamiliar or "strange" way. The common motion of the creating mind and of its symbol (the film) produces "flaps" and "freaks":

"flap"	:	. C1	:	sound
		C2	:	piece of material
		. S1	:	flapping blow or movement (movement up and down or from side to side)
		S2	:	hangs down or covers an opening
"freak"	:	. C1	:	idea, act or occurrence
		C2	:	person, animal or plant
		. S1	:	abnormal or unusual
		S2	:	abnormal in form

The link between "sound", "idea" and "surface" (piece of material) is enough to justify the poetic discourse; this is confirmed by the dual movement (polarity) and the abnormality. The latter point is further developed in the image of the "stranger". The result of the "motion" below the surface is the generating of something. The word "stranger" can be analysed thus:

- "stranger" : . alien to the ordinary, the familiar,
the usual, the surface of things
deep linguistic level →
(cf. "abstruser", "secret")
- . portends the arrival of some absent
friend → generates images both of
the past and of the future

Here again, the connoting of the poetic discourse is obvious. The generating is first "presageful" (it opens out on the future) and secondly dream-like, a situation which is inseparable from poetic creation. The dream-like state conjures up images of the past which, in Coleridge's conception, is necessarily related to poetic creation. Besides, it is tied to music, which metonymically designates poetry: the bells "like articulate sounds" (= language) connect the past with the future ("things to come") and make precise the "presageful" character of the generating.

The child, as was the case in "The Nightingale", represents the priest-like relation with poetry. His "breathings" are like the "breeze" that will blow over natural settings; in other words, the close relation with nature which the poet himself did not thoroughly enjoy, for he was imprisoned in a restricted space too much deprived of the contact with /cosmos/, he hopes his son will enjoy fully. Only thus will the poetic performance be complete, through a deep communion between the "shapes" provided by nature for the poet to-be to use ("lakes and sandy shores" and "crags") and transform into a perfect new whole. Inevitably, the completion of the process is manifested by a chiasmus:

Himself in all, and all things in himself.

While nature, the "Great universal Teacher", moulded the poet's spirit and was being moulded, the result being an

organic structure, the metaphor which conditioned the poem from the beginning is also complete: the frost having performed its ministry has created "silent icicles, / Quietly shining to the quiet moon".

"Frost at Midnight" is a poetic paradox, for it manages to create poetry while manifesting it almost only at the infralinguistic level. Apart from alliterations and occasional polysyndetons, the expression is largely untouched; everything happens deep below the surface, at the level of content, through subtle metaphors, comparisons and antitheses. This is why the poem has always puzzled critics and left them with a rather disquieting taste of unsolved mystery which, at times, can prove quite irritating. The "frost" is the "eternal language" of poetry and this language is not easy to perceive, let alone to grasp fully.

CHAPTER THREE

"DEJECTION"

The main problem about the Conversation Poems has been to determine how their use of language departed from the "ordinary" language of conversation and became poetic. Poeticity there has been found diffuse, subtle, weakly-motivated but often intense at the deep, connective level of language - that of senses - but also delicate to delimit and define. The Conversation Poems are poems, no doubt, but the loose relation between content and expression, the slight degree of motivation between them, the discreet subterranean flow of purely poetic operations, gently sustained by the alliterative thread that gives them delicate unity, do not entitle the poems to be recognized as fully part of the realm of unalloyed poetry. For, to Coleridge, poetry is first and foremost the refined but tight combination of content and expression which involves the conventional matrix, the syntactic patterns, the orthosememic, metasememic and metalogical operations.

Among Coleridge's poems which are not conversational, two are especially worth examining for their meeting the criteria of completeness stated above. One, "Dejection: An Ode", is still tied by very few links to the Conversation Poems; the second, "Kubla Khan", is, I think, one of the most perfect poems ever written.

A thorough study of "Dejection" would normally involve an examination of the love-letter sent to Sara Hutchinson (4 April 1802) as well as of the textus receptus printed in Sibylline Leaves (1817). But although some critics deem the former more spontaneous, the majority of them prefer the latter. So do I, for reasons I am going to state. On the one hand, I do not share Humphry House's view that the ode is a beautiful achievement in parts but that it lacks real unity, (1) the more so because the love theme proves indispensable. On the contrary, however moving some of the confessions may sound, the verse-letter is too laden with sentiment to make the poem a united work of art. The ode, on the other hand, presents outstanding advantages as far as an examination of Coleridge's poetic theories and his application of them in his own poetry goes. Somehow, however slightly, it is still connected to the Conversation Poems, which means that the metadiscursive part (the discourse on the poetic process) is important. Furthermore, it is undoubtedly a much-revised poem and therefore much more perfected as a whole. Finally, the two themes which subsume it - that of foreboding and that of fading communion with nature - constitute a frame within which the linguistic units suit each other perfectly, leaving the reader in no doubt as to the basic purpose of the whole.

What I purport to demonstrate in the first half of the present chapter is: 1) that unlike what happens in the Conversation Poems, motivation, in "Dejection", is fundamental and an undetachable part of the whole; 2) that the poem develops two seminal ideas: that of foreboding and that of communion with nature, a communion which fades and ultimately fails; 3) that, as a corollary to the first point, expression is found to mirror content exactly, that metre is imbued with an internal coherence

as strict as the internal coherence of the metaboles of content which, as we already know, found the discourse as truly poetic: nowhere else, so far, has it been as obvious as it is here that the poetic process is based on a drastic adherence to logical connection and that in this respect Coleridge is a master.

"Dejection" is an ode. Traditionally, the ode derives from a twofold origin, either Pindaric, descending from the choral ode of Ancient Greece to the musical ode of Milton and Dryden in seventeenth-century England, to the personal, visionary poem of Wordsworth and Coleridge which opened the Romantic tradition; or Horatian, going from Horace in Rome to Ben Jonson, Andrew Marvell, Pope and Collins in England. "Dejection" is generally described as an irregular English Pindaric ode and far from conversational, owing to the fact that "its tone, for one thing, while genial and (at least superficially) familiar, is not intimate and is exalted and dignified to a degree that has no parallel in the Conversation Poems of 1795-8." (2) In Ancient Greece, the ode was structurally triadic, comprehending a strophe, an antistrophe and an epode. To some extent - but it is as dangerous as it is tempting to make it fit such a scheme - "Dejection" can be said to be triadic, if only because the first strophe the most important since it conditions what follows, is triadic, and the eight strophes can be divided into three groups: strophes one and seven; strophes two, three, four, five, six; strophe eight.

As heretofore, I shall consider the poem under the following aspects: 1) content: the operations on content; the isotopic structure; the development of the seminal ideas; the connections between the isotopies; 2) expression: the conventional matrix; the particular quality of metre; the function of rhymes (a very important one); 3) the relation between content and

expression, it being clear that poeticity derives from content and is sustained, however tightly (and it is the case here), by expression; to induce poeticity from a mere observation of the structures of expression would amount to suspecting Coleridge of being a formalist, which he was not.

The ode develops two seminal ideas. The first idea is double: Poetic inspiration, and hence the mere ability to engage in the poetic process, may come to fade and perhaps disappear. This foreboding issues from the wind and the moon (strophes one and seven). The second idea is that communion with nature is genuine only when the shapes of nature reach through our senses something within us which is the source of poetic creation; if this something fails, nothing is possible.

The idea, under its two aspects, is announced and developed first in the opening strophe. That the poem should deal essentially with the poetic process is hinted at unequivocally in the opening lines. The isotopy /logos/ is connoted immediately and forcefully:

"Eard" → creator, poet, artist

"made" → creation, process

"ballad" → referential meditation (literature alluded to)

"winds" → inspiration (metaphor)

"weather-

wise" → inspiration + poet as a seer, a prophet
("wise": cf. tradition from Sidney onwards)

This isotopy, which I shall call i3, is reinforced by the verbs "ply" and "mould" related to the wind (inspiration) and essential in Coleridge's conception of poetry (= shape into); eventually, the presence of the Aedlian Lute is not fortuitous. Other elements - winds (double isotopy), clouds, flakes, draft, moon, winter, light,

rain, blast, gust, swelling, night-shower - index on an isotopy 11 /cosmos/. The "wind", which provides a connection between 11 and 13, is the first of the two metaphors related to the foreboding.

Let us dwell a little longer at the beginning of the strophe. The isotopy /logos/ is overwhelming: besides the elements mentioned above, it is connoted by the epigraph (referential mediation), the allusion to "Sir Patrick Spence" (another referential mediation) and the formal structure of the lines.

The rhyme-scheme is abba, i.e. a chiasmus; knowing the high degree of significance Coleridge grants the metable, we may assume that the completeness and quasi-perfection of poetry are implied in the figure. This is confirmed by the rhyming-words themselves: "made" and "trade" englobe "Spence" and "hence". The former two connote poetic construction ("made") and the poetic substance ("trade"), while the latter two designate a literary work ("Spence") and the spatial and temporal source of poetry as well as the various directions of the traces on the page ("hence"). Substance and process englobe, therefore, the achieved whole and the signs. Besides, the line-scheme of the first strophe is: 11 lines out of 20 are pentameters and 5 are tetrameters, 11 of these are iambic; 2 out of 20, on the other hand, are trimeters and 2 are hexameters. When the chaotic state foreboded by the wind and the moon becomes preponderant (strophe seven), so do hexameters, one of the two extremes present in the first strophe. Pentameters and tetrameters, especially iambic, signal, therefore, poetry in its solid and constructive aspect. In the first four lines, they predominate: line one: pentameter, line two: pentameter, line three: iambic pentameter, line four: iambic pentameter. The initial chiasmus can be said to be determinant: the overwhelming 13 /logos/, in the first

two lines and a half described under happy auspices, is given a more ominous turn in the last one and a half lines. The syntagm "so tranquil now" is opposed to "will not go hence/Unroused by winds, that play a busier trade": while the enjambment between line one and line two merely connected two lines that end in a normal way - the "if clause" is normally continued by the main clause beginning "This night" - the enjambment between line three and line four is followed by another enjambment between lines four and five, separating, at the same time, the comparison "ply a busier trade/Than" into two parts that break it, leaving the second part for us to expect at the beginning of line five - without our being sure of what it will imply, whether fortune or misfortune. The opposition, moreover, between tranquillity and the rousing of ominous winds, between the relative peacefulness of the first lines and the growing agitation of the next lines, are echoed by the differences in the prosodic pattern. The quiet succession of alliterations in [w], muffled [d], [b] and [p], [n] (ll. 1-2) changes to a more chaotic and rough succession: [g], [d], [p], [b], [tr], [d], sustained by sonorous diphthongs: [au] ("Unroused"), [ai] ("ply"), [ei] ("trade"). Let us mention too that each of the three sections of the first strophe - lines 1 to 8, 9 to 14, 15 to 20 - begins with a strong exclamation: "Well!" (l. 1), "For lo!" (l. 9), "And oh!" (l. 15). The vehemence of the tone is connoted by the vehemence of the construction: we are far from the generally quiet tone of the Conversation Poems (with the one exception of the oratorical part of "Fears in Solitude").

The second section develops the metaphor of the wind, already introduced in the last line of the first section of this first part. The word "wind" provides the junction between il /cosmos/ and i3 /logos/ metaphorically (wind = inspiration, besides being related to /cosmos/ for

obvious reasons) as well as through its action. The wind acts on a "cloud" and on the "Aeolian lute"; each action is characterized by depreciatory elements:

- 1) winds vs cloud: mould + flakes
- 2) draft vs lute : moans and rakes

The connotations pointing to 13 are:

- 1) "winds" = inspiration (metaphor); "mould" = shape (action of synthesis characteristic of the poetic process); "flakes" = leaf-like pieces, i.e. metaphor for "pages" and metonymy for "poetry";
- 2) "draft" = draft/draught/drought; "draft" = sth written (outline), rough note; "draught" = current of air; "drought" = continuous dry weather causing distress. I shall retain a double connotation "literature" ("writing" + "air" meaning "inspiration") and a succession of negative features: "roughness" + "unfinished" + "dryness" + "distress".

The negative or depreciatory quality of both actions shows through:

- 1) the adjective "lazy" = unwilling to work; doing little work; suitable for, causing, inducing, inactivity: the moulding of "flakes" or "shaping" action (poetic process) is reluctant and ineffective;
- 2) the negative aspect does not bear on the result only as in 1 but on all the stages of the process: the quality of the inspiration, of the action and of the result ("rakes" implies a minute nerve-trying search and also "dissolution"; "moans", like "dull" and "sobbing", is self-evident).

Here also, the mirroring and sustaining effects of expression are conspicuous. The chiasmic figure of the first four lines has changed to a double couplet which supports the parallel negativity of the poetic process seen as a failure. The first two lines (cc) show the winds (l. 5) and the draft (l. 6) at work and connoted depreciatively; the second two lines (dd) insist on the utterly pointless action of the draft on the lute, since the words in line 7 are so to say destroyed by the words in line 8 (the adjective "mute" thoroughly negates the essential semas related to language and poetic composition). The type of metre, moreover, which is still identical to the one used in the opening quartet in the first three lines (5, 6, 7) - pentameter - changes to a trimeter:

Which better far were mute.

The fact is important for many reasons: 1) the trimeter is only used twice in the strophe, which shows that it is meant to underline something important and particularly pregnant; 2) the series of stresses on "better", "far" and "mute" sounds like a toll, condemning the poetic process to a most unfortunate fate; 3) the position of the line at the end of the first part of the strophe and at the close of the eight lines dealing with poetic creation is especially ominous. Finally, the rhymes contribute to the effect of depreciation: "flakes", which connotes the poetic process and is negative, rhymes with "rakes" (hopelessness + dissolution) (ll. 5-6) while "lute" is practically ruined by "mute". (ll. 7-8).

The second part of the strophe introduces the second metaphor which suggests the foreboding: the moon. As in the Greek schema, this part can be said to constitute an antistrophe or, in Coleridge's more appropriate language, the antithesis to the thesis of the first part, the synthesis being in the last part (ll. 15-20).

The regular rhyming-scheme from line 5 onward is the couplet, except for the enjambment of lines 13-14/15-16. The scheme, therefore, projects ahead the breaking impact of the couplet on the chiasmus, of the lines which follow the first four lines and which are the consequence of the foreboding hint in lines 3-4.

One important element still given little emphasis: *l'anthropos*/. It can be said to be suggested by the words "Bard" and "I", yet it is obvious that the third indispensable element of the triadic model of poetic composition is rather weakly pointed at. If we assume that the foreboding is about a fading of the faculty of creation, the main actor of the process must indeed be presented in a diminutive way.

The second part is once again introduced by an exclamatory phrase; this fact, as I have already noted, shows how strict the logical organization of Coleridge's poetic discourse is and enhances the intensity of the message to be imparted.

The first four lines of this part (ll. 9-12) connote the poetic process negatively in several ways. The structure is again chiasmic and thus responds to the structure of lines 1-4; but here again the structure is ruined. The passage goes:

And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread

The positive quality one is entitled to expect from such a metabole is marred by the line that follows and which parallels the line preceding it. The chiasmus, actually, is embedded in four lines of which the first is positive:

For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!

and the last negative:

But rimmed and circled by a silver thread).

As in "The Nightingale", an important role is played by a restrictive connector, yet instead of foretelling bright compensations (in "The Nightingale" the restrictions characterizing /cosmos/ were the herald announcing a luminous and fair /logos/) it is an echo to the depreciatory attributes connoted in the previous lines. Thus the poetic process is hinted at by a usually beneficial metabole, the chiasmus, but it is a restricted chiasmus, imprisoned before its time in the fetters of sterility.

From the standpoint of expression (the chiasmus is a mixed figure), the first two lines (ee), eminently positive, are antithetical to the second two lines (ff), which are negative. The rhymes, from entirely positive ("bright", "light") shift to something less markedly definite ("o'erspread", i.e. generating at large, becomes "thread": the general is restricted to just one line) until they become increasingly negative: "foretelling", "blast". One is led by the very construction of the poem to bridge the second and the third parts, the couplet-structure now being interrupted and replaced by a series ghgh; the rhymes, on the other hand, are significant: the negative fate of the poetic faculty which is foreboded ("foretelling" is succeeded by "blast") is likely to soon become important and devastating ("swelling" and "fast").

The image of the moon is worth examining. In all of Coleridge's work, it is used to connote activity and

influence. Nothing good, it seems, can happen if the moon is hostile. It is found to connote both creative energy and femininity. The latter trait is traditional in Western poetry of all times. Whether linked to Venus or Diana, or viewed as a maternal symbol - and in the poems of Coleridge both aspects coincide - the moon is a source of creativity. In "The Ancient Mariner", for example, nothing is possible without the predominantly positive influence of the moon.

The long hoped-for rain comes only because the moon is at the side of the cloud; the manoeuvres of the dead crew can take place because the moon is over them, etc. In "Frost at Midnight", the ministry of frost creates icicles "quietly shining to the quiet Moon" and in "Christabel" the apparently somewhat oxymoronic relation between Christabel and Geraldine is activated by the moonlight, whereas the presence or absence of Christabel's mother is linked to the presence or absence of the moon.

The new moon is opposed to the old moon. Although my analysis is not strictly hermenetic, it is however interesting to answer the question: what do the old and new aspects of the moon stand for? James Spencer Hill wonders whether they may not be symbols of "rebirth" and "death". (3) The answer should come from the text itself. The old moon is said to be in the new moon's lap, it is then contained in the new moon. Now if the old moon can be seen in a negative light because it is "foretelling/The coming-on of rain and blast" (let us suppose these are rather malevolent elements), the new moon, on the other hand, being characterized by the marred chiasmus, is negative too. It seems that, in whatever direction the poet sends a prospective look, whether to the past or to the future, whether towards rebirth or towards death, it is bound to be disappointed.

Whether new or old, the moons have one common aspect we can base our reasoning on: they connote poetic creation as linked to the influence of femininity. In this respect, if we keep in mind that Coleridge's unhappiness, as stated in the love-letter, arose in his hopeless feeling for Sara Hutchinson, we are right to suppose that poetic creation seen as a power of the mind but related to the heart (and Coleridge has always described the poet's creative power as being made of emotions as well as of intellectual faculties) is now impaired because love for him is a dead-end road.

What is going to happen now is contained in the first metaphor that images the foreboding: the wind. The wind is going to be rain and blast. So far we know little more, except that these can predict positive or negative things. From what we have seen, they might well be negative rather than positive; the poet, however, retains hopes. Once again, 13 is connoted through images of sonority:

"sound" : sobbing, moans, rakes, strings, lute, squally,
blast.

The sonorous aspect of poetic creation is amply manifested in the first two parts; the third part of the poem confirms it:

"sound" : "gust" (the wind blowing violently is rarely silent),
"swelling" (cf. "the random gales/That swell and flutter"), "loud", "sounds".

/logos/ seen as essentially sonorous, as usual, vehemently called back by a third exclamation (l. 15), is projected in the future in a dual movement of uncertainty. The uncertainty is signified semantically:

"that even now ...!" (conditional expressing hope), "Those sounds ... Might ... Might ...!" (conditional expressing wish and hope); rhetorically: "whilst they awed" (hyperbole suggesting a state of heavenly concentration and inspiration), "sent my soul abroad" (periphrasis connoting the state of tight communion between the mind and the universe); metataxically: "And oh! ... And ... !", "Might ... Might ...!" (anaphora); metaplaamically: the progress from pentameter (ll. 16-17) to trimeter (l. 18) then to iambic pentameter (l. 19) and hexameter (l. 20) might picture the shift from certainty to uncertainty and back to certainty again or, on the other hand, the delicate balance between the two states; the rhymes also represent two conditions of the fate of the poetic power: "awed" and "abroad" (fear + fading) vs "give" and "live" (gift + life and energy).

If we follow up the wind metaphor, which, after all, is the potential bearer of the fate of the creative power, we find it developed to its ultimate state in the seventh strophe. The isotopy 12 /anthropos/ which was only slightly marked in the first part of strophe one but had been more clearly denoted in the end, notably through personal pronouns ("I", "me") and possessive adjectives ("my"), and which is emphasized in the same way in strophe seven, is now confronted with the problem of the evolution of the poetic power. The fragile balance between the two aspects of the foreboding, whether pointing to "death" or "rebirth" or, to state it more generally, to a "negative" or "positive" fate (the hand of the dial being more inclined towards "negative" than "positive"), is going to be broken.

Both content and expression are going to manifest unambiguously the "busier trade" which is to be plied. The action of the winds was, in strophe one, of two kinds. One applied to the lute and was of a gently moaning type.

It now changes to something decidedly worse. By a slight glide, phonetic and semantic, "rake" can sound like "rack" and produce the metaphor: sound of lute = "scream/Of agony by torture" (ll. 97-98). The other applied to clouds seen as flakes (= poetry). Here also things worsen, the process transforming a lazy moulding into chaos ("raved", "raviest", "blasted", "mad", "frenzy", "shudder"), noise ("scream", "blasted", "rout", "groans", "groan"), suffering ("agony", "torture", "worse", "groans", "trampled", "groan", "pain") and loneliness ("bare", "never", "lonely"). The dominating senses are those connoting madness and chaos, in other words "disorganization", and suffering or "pain". Apart from the initial abab rhyme-scheme of which the first two lines do not concern the wind, the prevalent scheme is either the couplet - cc (ll. 98-99), ff (104-105), gg (106-107) - or the chiasmus - deed (100-103), hijhi (108-113), this latter being imperfect -. If couplets in the first atrophe usually manifested a state of uncertainty, of opposition between two aspects of fate, they show here either an opposition between one couplet and another (e.g. 98-99 vs 104-105: "disorganization" + "pain" vs "rebirth" + "organization" contained in "showers" and "flowers", the rhymes, and "gardens" and "peeping"), or an opposition internal to the couplet itself (e.g. 106-107: words connoting "negativity" - "Devil's yule", "worse", "wintry" - in l. 106 vs words connoting "rebirth" in line 107: "blossoms", "buds", "timorous leaves").

Further and possibly more important indications are provided by the chiasm owing to the central function of the metabole in Coleridge's poetry. The first chiasmus is complete and not distorted:

Bare crag, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grova whithar woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
Methinks were fitter instruments for thee.

The four lines that constitute this chiasmus, from the standpoint of the rhyming-scheme, are preceded and followed by lines connoting "disorganization": "Thou Wind, that rav'st without" (l. 99) and "Mad Lutanist" (l. 104). Besides, the natural shapes (il /cosmos/) that the wind (= inspiration) is asked to visit are blurred, in a perspective of poetic composition, one way or another: ideas of non-protection and loss ("bare"), of destruction and violent anarchic noise ("blasted"), of seclusion, solitude and rejection ("pinegrove whither woodman never clomb" and "lonely house, long held the witches' home").

The disorganized and painful impression (thoroughly antagonistic to poetic creation) that arises from the passage extends to the whole section comprising lines 96 to 113 both semantically and expressively.

From the semantic point of view, there is a succession of antitheses which definitely incline il /anthropos/ towards the negation of a genuine poetic power. Firstly, it is not the actual writer who is defined here, but a wind which is addressed as "Mad Lutanist". The opposition, a drastic one, is between the normal poet, usually and by definition a master of organization, and the mad poet who rejoices in disorganization. To crown it all, it is no longer the real poet who acts (poetic process) but the disorganizer who is called "Thou Actor"; it is no longer the real poet who deserves this title but the master of disorganization who is greeted as "Thou mighty Poet". Secondly, while "rebirth" is denied, at least as the real poet would like it to occur, the disorganizer is said to make "Devil's yule": the nativity or rebirth is that of the absolute antithesis to creativity for a Christian like Coleridge: that of the anti-Christ.

From the expressive point of view, metataxic and metaplastic, the idea of disorganization is prompted vividly. Thus, the chiasmic figure in lines 108-113, usually a bright metabole indicating poetic perfection, is structurally distorted. Instead of manifesting the proper pattern hijjih, it shows hijjhi, the last two lines mocking the convenient organization of the figure. The first rhyming-word, "sounds", connoting, for reasons that have often been pointed out, the poetic discourse, rhymes successively with "bold" (it is the boldness of disorganization), "about" (= poetic space), "reut" (an important word because it contains the same "negativity" - defeat, retreat, noisy crowd - and "disorganization" - disorderly), "wounds" (obvious) and "cold" (the coldness of frozen creation, the paralysis of the real creative power).

The metataxes as well as the prosodic elements point to "disorganization". If the exclamatory character of the text has not increased (six exclamations in atrophe one, six in atrophe seven, lines 96-113), it is made more emphatic by means of repeated interpellations of the disorganizer: "Hence!" (l. 94), "Thou Wind ... Mad Lutanist!" (99-104), "Thou Actor ...! Thou mighty Poet ...!" (108-109), to which can be added the rhetorical question in line 110.

The chaotic impression is also sustained by the combination of polysyndeton and anaphora from line 99 to 105: "Thou Wind! that ... without ... or ... or .../Or .../Or" and "Mad Lutanist! ... of .../Of ... and of"

The line-pattern between lines 96-113 is also chaotic, shifting from iambic pentameter to tetrameter and hexameter and back to pentameter and tetrameter. The

impression is sustained by the alliterative pattern, a tumultuous, stumbling one. If one examines the pattern in lines 9-12 of the first strophe, the passage dealing with the moon and which symbolizes poetic creation still in an ideal situation, one realizes that out of 94 phonemes, including vowels, diphthongs and consonants, 51 phonemes are "soft", namely [m], [n], [f], [v], [s], [l], [ð], [θ], [p], [w], [ju], respectively: 5 times, 6, 3, 3, 5, 5, 3, 1, 1, 3, 1; [r], moreover, appears 5 times in a muffled environment: [br], [sprɛ], [rim], [θre],. Many syllables are also muffled, such as [m], [in], [im], [ɹn], [u:n], [ɹn]. In addition to the 51 "soft" phonemes (54 %), the rather "hard" phonemes are also found framed by muffling sounds. Thus, [t], : [intə], [ɹnt]; [b] : [br] ; [d] : [ɔnd], [sprɛd], [imd], [θred]; [k] : preceded by [sə] and followed by [ɔld]. The unquestionable predominance of "soft" and "softened" phonemes in a chiasmus which, although semantically already somehow doomed by a negative foreboding, still suggests poetry viewed as an organizing power then changes to a clear predominance of "hard" phonemes in strophe seven (lines 96-113) where disorganization prevails. The predominance is not so much quantitative as qualitative. In lines 97-104, for instance, which illustrate the raving action of the wind (disorganization) over nature (which is supposed to provide the shapes on which the poet will then work), if there are found to be 19 [t] phonemes but only 3 [k], 3 [g], 2 [b], 5 [d] and 1 [p], their configuration gives them a high suggestive force. In line 97, the consonant cluster [skr] followed by the long open vowel [i:] has an intensity which the subtle grouping of hard phonemes in the next line, enhanced by the enjambment of the line, reinforces. Each hard sound, in line 98, appears in an environment of vowel sound which increases their evocative power: the [æ] at the beginning of "agony" grants [g] a sounding force which is hardly swallowed by the succeeding [ni], which in turn

prepares the way for the hard sound [b] prolonged by the diphthong [ai]; the sound is then interrupted by the harsh [t] of "torture", prolonged and wrenched by [tʃ]; it has barely time to subside in the [l], [ʃ] and [n] of "lengthened" when it is mercilessly taken over by "out" and the succession "That lute sent fourth" in line 99.

The wind and the moon, in strophe one, foreboded something negative which, in strophe seven, through the metaphor of the wind, proved to be the opposite of what the shaping power of the poet usually performs. Instead of an organizing power, the poetic power is likely to become a disorganizing power.

Through what influence this is bound to happen is made explicit in the second section of the poem (strophes two, three, four, five, six). In the first section, the triadic model (the three basic isotopies) was out of balance, which resulted in an overwhelming manifestation of 11 /cosmos/ unbecked by 12 /anthropos/ producing 13 /logos/ but 13 pervaded by the same "disorganization". What prevents 12 from exerting a proper influence is what I am going to examine now.

The second strophe establishes a central antagonism which the third strophe amplifies in a quiet, almost resigned tone; the fourth strophe amplifies it further, bringing it to a climax in the fifth; the sixth completes the rondo movement of the section by returning to the logical simplicity of strophe two.

With the single exception of strophe three, the two leading metaboles in the section which found its poeticity, a metaphor and a comparison, are counterbalanced by a strong motivating activity by means of oratorical metaboles. Content, therefore, is vividly sustained by expression, but the action of the metaboles

of expression is of a kind that emphasizes particularly the ample emotional aspect of the poet's message, an aspect which, a contrario, he manifests as lacking tragically.

The tragic is precisely the basic meaning manifested by the text in strophe six; the latter is striking, at a more superficial level, in the expression structures. The 18 lines are divided as follows: 4 lines are chiasmic (abba), the next two are a couplet, they are followed by a scheme dede, then by a triple couplet (ffddgg); the strophe ends with an opposition h1 which mirrors the central semantic opposition both in the strophe and in the section.

The chiasmus, as usual, is essential in that it manifests a relation which is at the heart of the content of the text. The rhyming words in the middle of the metabole are antithetical: "grief" (l. 2) vs "relief" (l. 3). The words show the tragic circumstances of l2, overwhelmingly present throughout the section, in many ways: 1) "grief" suggests sorrow which ultimately leads to "hopelessness" - a state of mind dramatically described in strophe six; 2) "relief" denotes a removal of the hopelessness connoted by "grief"; the two words being in an equivalent position, their relation is of the sort that suggests equilibrium or at least doubt; 3) the words which surround them entirely in the metabole act as a continuation of the foreboding, and it is a negative one: "drear" (dull, gloom, low spirits) and "tear" press the balanced antagonism as though to crush whatever hope there might be that "relief" might win out instead of "grief". The general pattern of the quatrain, on the other hand, sustains the idea of doomed equilibrium and of denial of hope by an iteration of doublets: anaphora "A .../A ..." (ll. 21-22), anaphora "no ..., no ..." (l. 23), polysyndeton "or ..., or ..." (l. 24); besides,

lines 21 and 22 present an identical pattern of adjective + adjective + adjective, the first succession ("void, dark, and drear" echoing the second ("stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned"). No wonder that the four lines of the chiasmus should be dominated by four repetitive figures belonging more to the oratorical than to any other kind: they express both the vehemence of despair and that of the will to convince the reader of the tragic aspect of the situation.

The oratorical structure, forcibly traced in the initial chiasmus, is everywhere present in the strophe and marks it pervasively. It assumes the double function of marking the tragic insistence (a quasi-emotional status) and of underlining the dual character of the discourse. The dual pattern in lines 21-22 (adjectival) is repeated in lines 25-27: "wan and heartless" vs "balmy and serene". This opposition is between the poet's mood (12) and the mockingly enviable appearance of nature. The repetitive character of the discourse is also strongly illustrated in lines 29-31 by a long anaphora "And .../And ... and ..., etc" which points out the lasting look applied to nature, especially to clouds (cf. strophe one), a look bemocked by the inner sterility which is its ultimate result. But it is eventually the duality of the situation which is insistently sketched by the discourse itself which manifests it in the anadiplosis of lines 32-33 ("That give away their motion to the stars;/Those stars ..."), the anaphora of line 34 ("Now sparkling, now bedimmed") doubly emphasized by the antithesis "sparkling" vs "bedimmed", and the anaphora of the last two lines: "I see .../ I see, not feel". The metabole iterates the assertion that one of the component elements of the poetic process, namely the sensuous apprehension of natural substances, is definitely available but that its effectiveness is unfortunately alienated by the absence of another essential element: feeling. Hence, the

initial chiasmus and the final broken couplet (h vs i) respond to each other: the tragic movement implied by the former is now qualified; there is a manifestation of the tragic because of the absence or denial connoted by the restrictive pattern of the latter.

However important in the poetic process, the apprehension of the real through the senses is pointless without the part played by the poet's mental structures, what Coleridge called Primary Imagination and which is now clearly marked as the intellectual and emotional structures of the mind. Even if the poet devotes himself to the exertions of the intellectual part, as seems to be indicated by his confession that he might be tempted to yield to "abstruse research" (l. 89), something indispensable will be missing. The senses are ready to help, but not his mind. The appeal from the "outward forms" will remain unanswered because the "fountains are within" and they are dry. Strophe three states the poet's conviction very quietly, as if he admitted his failure. Only, strophe four resumes the tragic vehemence of strophe two. The predominance of oratorical structures in strophe two, so overpowering as to stifle the metaboles of content (content is manifested almost only through a semantic pattern devoid of metaboles), is now toned down and superseded by a metaphor.

Strophe four sets up the antagonism between man and nature. The structure is oppositive: "give" vs "receive" (l. 47), "our life" vs nature's life (l. 48). The metaphor goes:

"communion poet - nature" = "wedding man - woman"

Nature is therefore represented as a feminine figure as long as the communion is performed while it is an "inanimate cold world" when it is not performed. From the

poet's soul alone does the power come, the power to instill into nature, a mass of meaningless substances, potential signs. The metaphor has several implications. First, it shows a "wedding", which involves two persons willing to unite to each other (bride and bridegroom), a ceremony (allusion to the ritual aspect of poetic creation), a meal (there is mutual feeding: the exchange of aemes), a sacredness (referential mediation). Second, there is a "clothing" ("garment"), i.e. a covering, usually attractive, on the surface (expression), which is tied to the deeper level (moral significance of a wedding: content). Third, the wedding (and the poetic creation as well) is inseparable from the opposite notion of death; the "shroud" connotes death as well as covering (surface level) and tragic (one aspect of poetic creation).

The mutual exchange involved in a wedding (and in the poetic process) is made obvious in the image of the "suffusion". The relation 12 - 11 involves the "soul" or the poet's mental (i.e. intellectual + emotional) power (12) and "the Earth" (11). The process between them issues from the former and touches the second in the form of a spreading, instilling act, a penetration equivalent to the aemic penetration in the poetic process. The wedding metaphor is completed by a cloud metaphor and a mist metaphor, both images implying a vapoury consistence, one that penetrates easily any sort of matter because it is barely visible and ungraspable (it connotes the deep level of discourse). The action, as in the poetic process, is an "enveloping" one, one that concerns the triad as a whole, /cosmos/ and /anthropos/ and /logos/, exactly as in the metaphor the interactive part of the figure invades the space in its totality.

The insistent vehemence abated for a while in strophe three is resumed here, the wedding metaphor being forced

out by exclamations and a double anaphora: "And .../ And ..." (ll. 48-50, "Ours ..., ours ..." (l. 49); the same idea is repeated in line 56 and it is sustained by repeated "and", as though the poet were not sure the effect is actually perceived as it should. Likewise, the idea of diffusive penetration, of total spreading is supported by the emphatic asyndeton of line 54, the line which introduces the cloud metaphor.

The strophe, it is not surprising, ends with the poetic discourse once more connoted as musical and sonorous. The birth alluded to here, which contradicts and even prepares the way to the desecrating nativity of strophe seven, expresses itself loudly; it is a voice and sounds and they are "potent" (= powerful).

Strophe five develops the image. The poetic process is really seen and described as a power and this power is sonorous. The mist metaphor is another "enveloping" image with its subsequent (and consequent) elements of "shower" and cloud again that reach both ear and eyes and colour the earth with its own hues.

What we need now is the actual characteristic of the emotional part of the poet's mind which is missing. The oratorical effervescence that pervades strophe two is recurrent here but amplified and resonant. The general frame is anaphoric the main anaphora repeats the central word "Joy" five times, from line 64 to line 71. The structure is horizontal and vertical and, besides, symmetrical: "Joy" repeated in line 64 then used once in line 67 and again twice in line 71. This central anaphora is preceded by a vertical anaphora "What .../ What ..." in lines 60-61 and a vertical anaphora in lines 74-75 which envelop it. The impression of emotional surging, which sounds like some ultimate attempts on the part of the poet to interrupt a tragic process by multiplying

verbally what is going to disappear, is elsewhere emphasized: anaphora in lines 62-63 amplified because the word iterated is a demonstrative and because it is sustained by an asyndeton; polysyndeton in line 73 pointing out the two types of senses concerned by the poetic effect, hearing and sight ("or ..., or ..."); ploue in line 66 ("Life, and Life's effluence ..."), polyptoton in line 65 ("... pure, ... purest ...").

The emotional element which is going to fade and fail is really "Joy", an essential part of the poetic process since it is the "beauty-making power", which, as "grief" led to despair, is inevitably tied to "hope", celebrated by a comparison in strophe six.

The last strophe of the second section is characterized by the antithetical relation between the comparison and the syntactic element which appears as essential. The comparison between "hope" and "vine" is self-evident:

"hope"	:	. C	:	feeling
		. S1	:	expectation
		. S2	:	trust
		. S3	:	confidence
		. V1	:	pervading
		V2	:	overwhelming
"vine"	:	. C	:	plant
		. S1	:	climbing
		S2	:	with fruit
		S3	:	with slender stems
		S4	:	that trails or climbs
		V1	:	regeneration (cf. Bacchus)
		V2	:	energy
		V3	:	life
		Vn	:	...

The intersective space which legitimizes the comparison is made of V1 (pervading), V2 (overwhelming) belonging to "hope" and S1 (climbing), S4 (that trails or climbs) semantemes of "vine". "Hope", moreover, is the perfect symbol of the organic whole as soon as it is taken over by "vine"; along with the comparison, "fruits" and "foliage" suggest that "hope" like a living and overwhelming power of regeneration might be the very source of poetic creation.

Antitetical to this notion, beautifully illustrated, comes the syntactic structure itself. The oratorical upsurge of the previous strophe has now subsided for good; there only remains the tragic to be faced up to. The manifestation of the tragic is at first deceitful as was the foreboding in the opening strophe. The first two lines go:

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress

The negative aspect introduced by "though" is inserted in the main clause and its subordinate, suggesting that it might be eradicated; unfortunately, it is entirely related to the past. Soon it will be repeated, but this time regarding the present; instead of being in a rather subsidiary light, it will come first without anything to colour it with hope. Its advent can be represented like this:

"But now	afflictions bow me down to earth" (1.82
"But oh	each visitation suspends ...
	My shaping spirit of Imagination"
	(84-86)
"For	not to think of what I needs must feel,
But	to be still and patient, all I can"
	(11. 87-88)

Each sentence is introduced by a restrictive element which, almost ironically or cynically, contradicts the comparison between "hope" and the "vine"; each image is one of negation, suspension, resignation and loss. The anaphora "my sole resource, my only plan" (l. 91) reinforces the conviction that "hope" has been and still is "infected", just as nature was "enveloped" when the poetic power was still a power of organization and not, as it is going to be described in strophe seven, a power of disorganization.

In vain are the sleep metaphor, in the last section (strophe eight), and all the other wishes, sustained by other oratorical structures, sent to the friend(s) who, better off than the betrayed poet, may experience creative joy. Something has now gone, as Wordsworth said:

But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth. (4)

Whether it be a love-letter, and therefore linked to the lost hope, or an answer to Wordsworth and hence related to the theme of the lost poetic power (a loss prematurely predicted, as far as we can judge), the ode is indeed the organic whole by which we can really determine why Coleridge came to be unhappy and what his last poetic metadiscourse was like. The slight link to the Conversation Poems is also here: "Dejection: An Ode", like all the Conversation pieces, is a discourse on poetry. The wager, of course, is that speaking about the decay of the creative power, he should have manifested it in such a luminous way. The ode is not only a masterpiece of poeticity but also an example of motivated language; for content and expression make up a remarkable whole, an organic structure Coleridge did not achieve - possibly did not want to achieve - in the Conversation Poems. Unlike M.H. Abrams, I do not consider it "ambivalent".

(5) I think he genuinely believed that an essential part of his emotional self (one half of the constructive mind) was going to leave him - had already left him - and that the consequence would be the impossibility to write poetry in future. As usual, the hermeneutic part of the work is volens nolens inseparable from the analytical part: probably, nay certainly, because for Coleridge poetry was language organized into something that purported to mean.

CHAPTER FOUR

"KUBLA KHAN"

If the Conversation Poems illustrate Coleridge's conception of poeticity viewed as a set of operations on content echoed by a minimum amount of operations on expression, "Dejection: An Ode", we have seen, is closer to his more complete definition of poetry as comprehending both poeticity and motivation.

As an example of motivated and poetic language, "Kubla Khan" is unique in that it cumulates the double function of building up the poetic discourse and the metadiscourse on poetry and of intertwining content and expression so as to make each of them indistinguishable from the other. In this puzzling and, some would say, "exasperating" poem, (1) to the complexity of which are added the intricacies and somehow unacknowledged implications of the baffling Preface and the bewildering concluding lines, the part that seems to me to be most certainly about poetry (ii. 1-36) provides an unequivocal symbol of what language does when it means to be poetic.

Poetic language as a whole, although complete when content is dealt with in the appropriate way but more perfect when motivation accompanies poeticity, manifests itself in "Kubla Khan" in a manner unprecedented in Coleridge, except perhaps in "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel"; but these are long poems while "Kubla Khan" is a short poetic jewel. But let us not misunderstand what motivated poetry means to Coleridge. There is no question of isomorphism of the two planes (content and expression) as Greimas defines it. There is no disjunction of the two planes to be operated, when each plane is submitted to a segmentation and a systematization of their figures, (2) but there is a set of operations on content to be strictly echoed or sustained by similar operations on expression; the latter, on the other hand, function not mimetically - otherwise one would get an absurdly systematic mirroring - but as a kind of once-removed, remote and loosely repetitive, voiced accompaniment of the main structure.

Here more than anywhere else the structural analysis of how the poem uses the units of language is not distinguishable from an interpretation of what the poem says. The how and the what are fused; this, to say the least, demonstrates that if poetry consists of operating in a certain manner on language, the process in the case of Coleridge regards first and foremost content. Any analysis which considered the process and structure as a set of relations, a network of positions involving the linguistic units, regardless of what the units intrinsically, positionally and relationally actually mean, stand for and designate would ultimately be an analytical vacuum. So tight is the link between expression and content, moreover, that critics so far have often been tempted either to play exclusive attention to the hermeneutics of the poem, failing to take into account the infralinguistic level of its

content or/and its expression, or overrate expression, thus overlooking the fact that in Coleridge's opinion expression is entirely subordinate to content, and consequently building up an analysis which is tantamount to an utter formalism Coleridge would beyond doubt have rejected.

Content, as we know, essentially covers the semantic space, while expression functions as an echo to content, the unity of both content and expression constituting motivation. Yet if expression is dependent on content, it does not follow, at least in Coleridge's conception, that its role does not involve something specific, something that content can hardly fulfil.

Expression, or what Coleridge means by "metre" and Greimas by "prosodic level" which covers "conventional matrixes" and "suprasegmental modulations" (3), is often a merely superficial aspect of poetry. In purely mnemonic forms, the use of alliterations and rhymes, for instance, proceeds from the fact that "a particular pleasure is found in anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities". (4) They can be called "poems" by mere convention or through accidental resemblance with "real" poems. In the latter, however, the prosodic level is related to content through an essential motivation, having its origin in the duality which founds the poetic inspiration and movement: "the balance in the mind effected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion." It is the "balance of antagonists" which becomes "organized into metre" provided it actually originates in a genuine urge to "express something thought and felt. Everywhere in the poem, the original "volition" blended with "the design and [...] purpose" should be perceptible as "the natural language of excitement" of which the source is in the mind and the heart. (5)

However outstanding the quality of the "blending", of the motivation, the prosodic level is above all a signal. As far as its effects go, the purpose of metre is to "increase the vivacity and susceptibility both of the general feelings and of the attention." The effectiveness of metre is due to its "aggregate influence", to the fact that it acts "as wine during animated conversation." (6)

Being "simply a stimulant of the attention" it is there to give pleasure and "because I am about to use a language different from that of prose." Concomitant to this is the fact that for the motivation to be complete, for metre to be otherwise than a superficial, superadded and accidental element it must "be conditional and dependent on the appropriateness of the thoughts and expressions to which" it is superadded. (7)

I shall follow Greimas's schema and divide expression into:

1. Syntactic level: syntactic elements and matataxes.
 2. Prosodic level :
 - 2.1 suprasegmental modulations
(word stress, musicality)
 - 2.2 conventional matrix:
 - . metre
 - . rhyme
 - . lines
 - . strophes
- } rhyme, assonance etc.

If we stick to our notion that the levels constitute a hierarchical series which begins with prosody (e.g. metaplasms), then goes up through syntax to the semantic level (essentially the isotopes of content, of which metasemes and metalogisms are the main part); and if we retain the idea that content governs expression, we shall

examine "Kubla Khan" in a double light: 1) The reader is first attracted to the poem as poem through expression functioning as signal 2) Nothing expression produces will be deemed "innocent" but will be seen as part of a whole, as specific elements among other constituents of an organic structure.

The key elements of the prosodic level are almost entirely contained in the conventional matrix. The signal is produced at the same time by the lines and strophes organization and the metrical pattern.

As Elizabeth Schneider has observed, "the rhyme scheme of the opening seven lines, for example, is exactly repeated in the first seven lines of the second paragraph." (8) This scheme goes:

<u>1st paragraph</u>	<u>2nd paragraph</u>
a	e
b	f
a	e
a	e
b	f
c	g
c	g

Faithful to the concept that expression echoes content, we shall immediately compare the rhyming words of each strophe:

Khan	slanted
decree	cover
ran	enchanted
man	haunted
sea	demon-lover
ground	seething
round	breathing

The rhyming arrangement is on a par with the semantic organization. If we admit that the operations on content lead the way, and if we consider that the parallelism between the two series of opening lines is significant, we feel entitled to compare the two rhyming schemes from a semantic standpoint. The comparison must be both vertical and horizontal:

1. Vertical comparison: We can first distribute the semantic space of each opening into sub-spaces, each partaking of a general semantic category. This is what we find:

- 1) Actant (subject) : Khan, man
- 2) Performance (action) : decree (actant + action)
- 3) Space (surface) : ground, round
- 4) Moving fluid (instilling "object", penetrating entity): sea, ran.

What we have here at least illustrates Coleridge's notion of seminal idea since he says in the Preface that he fell asleep while reading in Purchas's Pilgrimage:

Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built,
and a stately garden thereunto. And thua ten miles of
fertile ground were inclosed with a wall.

The parallel is obvious between the rhyming scheme and the seminal idea:

<u>sem. idea</u>	<u>rh. scheme</u>
1) <u>Actant</u> : Khan Kubla	Khan (man = general category, prince, lord [idea of hierarchy and power])
2) <u>Space</u> : Here, garden ten miles of ground (+ enclosure)	ground (+ round = enclosure)
3) <u>Performance</u> : commanded	decree

1. "alanted" : slope (of a hill→/cosmos/
handwriting→/13/ atandpoint,
opinion→view of the world→culture→
/13/
surface, position→/13/
direction, travel, move, sail (metonymy)
—13: movement of pen over whit page
(cf. the Mariner's metaphoric voyage)
2. "cover" : surface, place, area →/13/
book →/13/
3. "enchanted" : charm, magic, spell, power → fairy
tale, "witchery"→/13/ delight →
pleasure→/13/ (poetry gives immediate
pleasure, joy).
4. "haunted" : repetition (visits, appearances, returns)
→ iterations of poetry through
parallelisms and isotopies →/13/
place where things are repeated→page
→/13/
5. "lover" : emotional aspect of poetry→/13/
love = action (actant)→/11/ actant
as poet related to "demon": divinity +
intermediate between gods and men +
supernature + malignancy →/11/ +
/13/
6. "seething" : boil, bubble over; agitated: "energy"
+ "motion"
7. "breathing" : air-in-motion, inspiration (energy +
spirit)

The second rhyme scheme is obviously more complex than the first one, yet at the same time it opens more perspectives and reinforces the isotopies in the first rhyme scheme.

2. Horizontal comparison: To the notion of actant in the first opening can be added the ideas of "vitality", of "supplying" and "furnishing", of "exertion of force" and of "taming" connoted by "man". The concept of actant seen as doing something, as performing because full of energy and will, is completed by:

- 1) the semas connoted by "demon-lover" a simile, introduced in the form of which enable us to connect actant with poet. The actant is now the depository of a quasi-divine energy, of particularly strong, superhuman emotions, but energy and emotions are "savage", i.e. disorganized and unpredictable; he occupies an intermediary position between the human and the divine, which is how the Romantics represented the poet;
- 2) the semas coming from "seething" and "breathing" which point to energy, motion and spirit: the concept of air-in-motion is, as I have already emphasized, a staple of the Romantic idea of poetry.

The idea that the actant is a kind of poet is also reinforced by what we know about his action. The word "decree" connotes the power of discourse. It is further supported by "slanted" and "cover", on the one hand, which connote surfaces, areas, spaces but also movement, direction and possibly writing; at the same time, the elements signalled by the first rhyme scheme have been amplified so as to enter a far more complex type of relation. Poetic discourse, seen as the relationship between an actant and his performance, expressed simply and in a primary way, is now signalled in a more intricate network which implies a profusion of semas indexing on /logos/ but also sketches /cosmos/. The addition of "enchanted" and "haunted" provides an even more complete image of /logos/ and its connection with

/anthropos/ considered as poet, since there are juxtaposed the notions: 1) of iterativeness, regularity, parallelism, isotopic repetition specific of Coleridge's conception of poetic discourse, 2) of charm, spell, magic, typical of Coleridge's poetry (the "witchery" of sounds), 3) of pleasure which, according to Coleridge, is the aim of poetry. The "haunting", "enchanted" quality of discourse is of course developed in the concluding lines (37-54), in which the demoniacal, malignant aspect of the poet (at least to other people, who do not understand him) is mentioned.

The relationship between the first and the second openings is thus one of growth and development; from a simpler structure, one moves on to another, more complex one. The process symbolizes the poetic process as a whole and exemplifies the dual characteristic of poetry: poeticity based on meaning (operations on content) and motivation (the blending of content and expression).

Our first approach of expression through rhyme schemes shows that when the principle of motivation is respected, the result is necessarily that the semantic space of discourse is uncovered in its amplitude precisely because the structures of expression support and partake of the semantic structures.

Motivation is not only another side of poeticity, it takes part in the construction of meaning. The rhyme scheme, which is only one aspect of the process, already introduces the protagonists of discourse. The isotopy /anthropos/ and the isotopy /logos/ are preponderant, while the isotopy /cosmos/ is barely announced. From this, we could infer either that the latter isotopy will be amplified in some other part of the poetic space or

that the poet and his action (his discourse) are overwhelming and succeed in drowning nature in the poet's own creation: language.

The rhyme scheme is obviously not sufficient for us to draw more than the first premisses of what language performs in "Kubla Khan". Levin points out other important "couplings": those "occurring along the metrical axis". Those are traditionally and admittedly alliterations which, together with rhymes and atrophes, constitute the systematic portion of versification, while assonances, consonances, reverse rhymes and pararhymes constitute its unsystematic portion. Levin, on the other hand, insists that there is a difference of degree between couplings occurring under stress (systemic) and those occurring off-beat or mixing both (unsystemic). (9)

According to Coleridge, in a "perfect" or "ideal" poem, poeticity and motivation should be at their highest. The rhyme scheme in "Kubla Khan" tends to demonstrate that this is what we may expect here. The metrical part should then follow and contribute to the harmony of the whole. Let us therefore investigate it in the two openings, to make sure they evolve along the same line as the rhyme scheme.

Let us examine first the horizontal phonic symmetries, especially alliterations but also assonances, as they occur in the two openings.

About the first lines of the first opening, much has already been said by Elizabeth Schneider. (10) If we amplify what she has said and consider the first seven lines, this is what results:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran

Through caverns measureless to man
 Down to a sunless sea.
 So twice five miles of fertile ground
 With walls and towers were girdled round

The couplings from mainly sonorous pairs:

- 1) serve as signals. Coleridge has even been reproached for it and, as John Spencer Hill has noted:

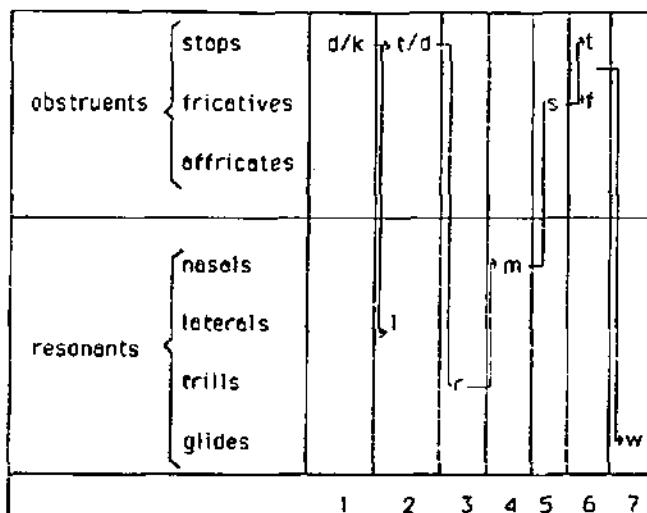
throughout the nineteenth century and during the first quarter of the twentieth century "Kubla Khan" was considered, almost universally, to be a poem in which sound overwhelms sense. With a few exceptions (such as Lamb and Leigh Hunt), Romantic critics - accustomed to poetry of statement and antipathetic to any notion of arte gratia artis - summarily dismissed "Kubla Khan" as a meaningless farrago of sonorous phrases beneath the notice of serious criticism. (11)

- 2) Yet their purpose is also to echo, and by doing so, contribute to the meaning; as such they are auxiliaries to the operations on content.

How the second function, that of contributing to the meaning, is fulfilled can be described as follows:

1. As Jean-Claude Coquet has shown, phonic equivalences at a same linguistic level hold the line and give it homogeneity and unity. (12) Here, the succession is practically constantly dual: this may symbolize: a) the dual nature of poetry (anthropos vs cosmos), the dual aspect of the structures of discourse (surface vs deep structures, content vs expression), the dual side of the process as constructed in the poem itself (the subterranean voyage of the river vs the fountain, past, i.e. "Ancestral voices" vs future, i.e. forthcoming war, the dome vs the shadow of the dome, the poem as dream, i.e. lines 1-36, vs the poem as wish, i.e. lines 37-54, etc).

2. If we classify the alliterative couplings according to the manner of their articulation (13), we observe that they move in a way that echoes the river in the poem. The river is first seen underground, then springs out of the earth in the fountain, then sinks again down to the ocean and is ultimately mentioned again as the waves on which "The shadow of the dome of pleasure/Floated midway". The alliterative pairs follow an identical path, moving from obstruents to resonants, then back to obstruents and finally to resonants again:



3. Another observation can be attempted. The progress of the lines mirrors the progress of the river by a succession of sounds which being hard stops at the outset (d/k) subside to the more harmonious, soft laterals, trills and nasals of the next lines down to the soothing, joltless, perhaps inert, serpent-like suggestiveness of the /s/-fricative - the river now is the lifeless ocean or sunless sea; then back to the hardness of the opening stops but mingled with the

ambiguous softness of the /f/-fricative (ambiguous because like /s/ it is both soft and an obstruent) up to the suggested harmonious flowing of the glide (/w/).

The angle from which we consider assonances must be different since assonances are not systematic. But I agree with Elizabeth Schneider that the prevailing e-sounds of the poem give it its specificity but that the mingling of alliterations and assonances is so intricate that "it would be both useless and impertinent (...) to point out in detail the almost innumerable linkings of sounds in 'Kubla Khan'." (14) It is nonetheless true that alliterations and assonances, consonants and vowels emphasize one another in a subtle interplay but that assonances being unsystematic play the same role as expression to content: they serve as catalysts to the alliterations, which alone are really thoroughly systematic and as such partake of poeticity as a building up of meaning.

The second opening, when analyzed according to identical principles, reinforces our conclusions about the first opening but at the same time it amplifies the idea of complex development and variety: as if the river were fertilizing the ground and the ground were producing more and more fruits and flowers.

The systematic alliterations, signalled by an even more intricate interlacing of assonances (u, ei, au, i:, i), again echo poetic duality and the duality of the specific poem itself:

savage place/place holy
 beneath waning moon haunted
 woman demon/woman demon/wailing lover
 ceaseless seething/chasm turmoil/ceaseless turmoil
 earth thick

Although systemic, the couplings I have taken into account are usually part of a wider space involving systemic and unsystemic alliterations. The horizontal analysis shows a predominance of nasals (m, n, n), of laterals (l) and of the /s/-fricative. From this we can infer that: a) the blending of obstruents and resonants is now regular (another symbol of the dual character of poetry and of this poem), b) the predominance of softer, more harmonious sounds, which was how the first seven line ended, suggests that the second opening reinforces the description of Kubia's garden (anthropos as poet) as a space where something ideal (a perfect poetic creation) takes place.

The central elements, as we shall see in our examination of the isotopies of content, are: the romantic chasm (line 12) and lines 15-16 which correspond to lines 4-5 in the first opening:

Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

I feel entitled to examine them together from the standpoint of expression for the same reasons that I have examined the two openings: the identity of their rhyme pattern. What we observe, as far as their alliterative scheme is concerned, is this: the alliterations in lines 4-5 and lines 15-16 involve essentially nasals (m, n), fricatives (s, z) and the liquid (l). The pattern they form is a series of mutually embedding sounds like the pieces of a mosaic:

lines 4-5: Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea

lines 15-16: As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon-lover

The pattern of the lines of the second opening conforms to what it has been observed to do so far, namely amplify the movement of the first opening.

Of course, Levin reminds us, "it would be a mistake to conclude that the more couplings one finds or puts in a poem, the better is that poem. Among other things, the poet's task is to achieve a unity out of complex factors". (15) The danger, he says, when one merely repeats sounds in a kind of incessant jingling is uniformity and banality. Coleridge, however, achieves something quite different in that, as we have seen, neither the nature of the sounds nor their pattern and individual position in the patterns nor their number are casual or chosen according to an aimless aesthetic criterion. Besides their function as a signal, a function that must not be overlooked, they are endowed with a specific value as regards their participation in the building up of the poem as motivated language.

Let us leave the two openings temporarily and examine the alliterative play throughout the poem. Fastidious though it may seem, the precise enumeration of the units, whether systemic or unsystemic, in which the alliterations play a significant part, is by no means pointless. Quantitatively, this is what we obtain:

1. The following groups prevail over the rest: 82 stops (t, d, k), 79 fricatives (z, s, f), 79 nasals (n, m), 43 glides (w, v), the /l/-lateral (37), the /r/-trill (21).

2. The group of obstruents (stops and fricatives) and the group of resonants (nasals, lateral, trill, glides) balance each other (161/180). This tends to demonstrate that the maximum effectiveness is reached through a perfect equilibrium between the two categories of sounds.
3. Of the 12 alliterations, the most important are: the nasal /n/, 48 words; the fricative /s/, 41; then come the lateral /l/, 37, the stop /t/, 33, the nasal /m/, 31, the glide /w/, 26, the fricative /f/, 25, the fricative /z/, 23, the trill /r/, 21, the stop /k/, 18 and the glide /v/, 17. (NB the stop /d/, 31).

The quantitative aspect, however, does not mean much; it must be compared with qualitative observations:

1. The alliterations mentioned above are manifested by words in the entire discourse which cover most of the 36 lines of the first part of the poem. The occupation rate establishes between 83 % of the surface of the discourse in the case of /n/ and 47 % in the case of /v/ and /r/. In between, the rates number: 78 % (/l/), 75 % (/s/), 67 % (/d/), 61 % (/t/), 58 % (/z/, /w/), 56 % (/m/), 50 % (/f/).
2. Jean-Claude Coquet (16) provides an example, from Baudelaire's poem "Les chats", of the way phonic equivalences are scattered over the text so as to spread over its surface the phonemes of its emblematic words. We pass on here to a vertical analysis and find that the main alliterations (/s/, /t/, /n/, etc) which already function at a horizontal level fulfil the same role when considered tabularly. The alliterations producing the main isotopies (anthropos, cosmos, logos) and their sub-isotopies (e.g. /anthropos/

/poet/) fertilize" the poem while they mark its space as belonging to the meaning or content. To give but a single example of this, let us consider the alliteration /l/ in the first seven lines:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
 A stately pleasure-dome decree:
 Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
 Through caverns measureless to man
 Down to a sunless sea.
 So twice five miles of fertile ground
 With walls and towers were girdled round

If we add only the other two outstanding alliterations /n/ and /s/, we have a clear image of how isoplasma function.

If we consider the distribution of the alliterations relatively to a) the stressed words of which they are components, b) their own position in the words (stressed/unstressed), we can observe that they cover all the key words which, once they have been distributed among the three isotopies (anthropos, cosmos, logos) that constitute the poetic discourse, denote and/or connote either the poet, or the space where the discourse occurs, or the fundamental opponents of the discourse (man and nature), etc.

An analysis of these words is of course necessarily dependent on their semantic content; having developed the major aspects of expression and shown that they act as signals but also, and even above all, that they take part in the poetic process inasmuch as it consists in operations on content, it has become impossible to carry on without taking into account the latter, namely the operations on content. Yet to provide but one instance of the function of expression - here: of alliterations - in the construction of content, let us list the main word foregrounded (basically because they are repeated):

Kubla Khan (ll. 1, 29): /k/, /l/, /n/
 dome (ll. 2, 31, 36): /d/, /m/
 river (ll. 3, 24, 26): /r/, /v/
 caverns (ll. 4, 27), caves (ll. 34, 36): /k/,
 /v/, /n/, /z/
 measure(less) (ll. 4, 27, 33): /m/, /l/, /s/
 chasm (ll. 12,17): /k/, /z/, /m/
 fountain (ll. 19, 34): /f/, /t/, /n/

The seven words above can already be distributed among the three isotopies of the discourse: i1 /anthropos/: Kubla Khan; i2 /cosmos/: river, caverns, chasm, fountain; i3 /logos/: dome, measure(less). Three can safely be indexed on two isotopies, i2 and i3, and hence be seen as intermediary and connective between them: river, chasm, fountain.

I shall tackle the problem of content as I did the problem of expression: assuming that since the first two openings have overt similarities from the standpoint of expression (rhyme scheme and alliterative scheme), they must likewise have similarities from the point of view of their content.

Expression, we have said, sustains content; in other words, all the elements in the poem say the same thing. In the seventh Lecture on Shakespeare (1811-12), Coleridge says about Mercutio that he

is a man possessing all the elements of a poet: the whole world was, as it were, subject to his law of association. Whenever he wishes to impress anything, all things become his servants for the purpose: all things tell the same tale, and sound in unison. (17)

The "law of association" is the rule of necessity which considering a seminal idea organizes the discourse in

such a way that the units of the language converge upon the same structure and the same purpose. And "all things become his servants for the purpose" or all the levels and units close in upon the final result, content and expression "tell the same tale", meaning and sound, the latter being of course subordinate to the former.

Most commentators on Coleridge up to this day have failed to uncover more than a mere verbal music in "Kubla Khan": a beautiful one, yet semantically empty or at least confusing and rebellious to interpretation. When they have cared about its meaning and decided that it was a poem about poetic discourse, they have approached it from the worst side. They have often dismissed such elements as "Alph" the "pleasure-dome" and Kubla's "ancestral voices" as leading nowhere, whereas they are precisely among the elements to be taken into account primarily, and based their analyses on notions like fancy and imagination, primary and secondary imagination, genius and the like which, however interesting from an intellectual standpoint, are of no avail as regards the hermeneutics and structure of the poem. It is essentially the approach chosen by George Watson (18), Alan Purves (19), Irene Chayes (20). I agree with John Spencer Hill that "each of these interpretations, while compelling in its way, is ultimately unsatisfactory," (21) but not for the reasons he states.

We have Coleridge's own word to support an approach based on language and subsidiarily on motivation as an important part of poeticity. The analysis of expression in "Kubla Khan" shows that the conventional level of the poem leads to a meaning, this not haphazardly but

according to the organic rules decreed by Coleridge himself. The Conformities between lines 1-7 and 12-18 cannot be mere coincidences, all their components point to a purpose and show that the second part is an extension of the first part which it amplifies.

If we follow the idea that Mercutio is a poet and therefore that all the elements of a poem "tell the same tale", it might be interesting - and indeed necessary - to compare the initial words of each line in the two openings. What prompts me to suggest this is the fact that in the first opening, the first words of the lines form a pattern which again cannot be casual; it ensues that the second opening should manifest a similar pattern.

The initial words of the first opening are:

In
Where
Through
Down to
So

The initial words in line 2 ("A") and in line 7 ("With") are the continuation of enjambments.

The movement they outline goes from a surface to a deep level and back to surface. "In" and "Where" indicate a surface, "Through" and "Down to" a process of descent into the underground, and "So" presents a return to the surface even though the surface is no longer what it was initially. Developing the notions, we obtain:

In	}	surface/general/static/position ("Xenadu")
Where		
Through	}	deep/particular/dynamic ("caverns", "sea")

Down to|

So: consequence of descent: surface again but fertilized ("twice five miles": notion of surface and location amplified; "With walls and towers were girdled round": further amplified to the idea of circumscribed space).

If we consider the second opening, we realize that the amplifying effected by expression relatively to the first opening is also carried out by the initial words. The initial words here amplify the semantic field manifested in the first opening but also make it much more complex. This is what is obtained:

But —→ rupture
Down —→ deep level

A savage place —→
space + primitive, uncivilized (a), fierce, cruel (b), very angry (c), in a state of nature (d), undomesticated, untamed (e), uncultivated (f), ungoverned, rude, unpolished (g), attack (h)

As e'er beneath —→
new (i.e. never before?) + subordinate, inferior as related to the moon

By woman —→ femininity + poetry (always ambiguously related in Coleridge)

And from —→ origin + deep (source)

As if —→ simile (—→ /logos/)

The simple manifestations of the basic isotopies, on the one hand, and the manifestation of space as positional as well as dynamic (flowing river) on the other hand, develop into something much more complex. While in the first opening, the notion of space implied both a static location (the place where Kubla had built his dome and then a fertilized garden) and movement (the river flowing into the underground) yet also something monosemous (there was no equivocation as to the nature of the space), in the second opening, there is first a rupture and then a polysemous expanding of the notion of space.

Amplifications are capital to the hermeneutics of the poem. I stated above that I did not agree with John Spencer Hill as to the reasons he gave to find most interpretations of the poem unsuitable. The reason I have to reject his statement that each interpretation is unsatisfactory "because it imposes too rigorously schematic a meaning on the poem and presupposes a theoretical precision beyond Coleridge's grasp in 1797," (22) is twofold. On the one hand, we have now had ample evidence that if Coleridge's formulation of his main ideas and principles about poetry was not yet satisfactory and linguistically accurate at the time of the composition of the poem, they were already present in his mind. Furthermore, we get confirmation that his conception of what poetic discourse consisted of was already more or less complete from another poem he had written a few years before "Kubla Khan": "Melancholy".

The poem appeared in the very year "Kubla" was written, in the Morning Post (12 December) and was published in Sibylline Leaves (1817) with the addition of three and a half lines. The additional lines are indispensable to a thorough comprehension of the meaning. However different in their respective conceptions, "Melancholy" and "Kubla Khan" present striking similarities.

If we assume that the lexeme "melancholy" stands metonymically for "poetry" and can therefore be indexed on /logos/, we can consequently infer that the poem is also a metadiscourse on poetry. Evidence of this is found in the high proportion of words indexable on /logos/:

- "Abbey's wall" → surface + artifact + metonymy
(page of a book)
- "mus'd" → the nine muses
- "press'd" → printing press
- "eloquent" → oratory + language
- "imperfect sounds" → language + incomplete
- "dream, sleep, slumber" → dream-state of poetic composition

The dual movement, or rather triple, we find in "Kubla", namely surface - deep - surface, is present here too. "Melancholy" is seen lying on a wall, then she is seen asleep and passively offered to the decaying activity of nature, eventually she is described slumbering but having disturbing dreams portending outbursts of some sort. This threefold pattern is even more obtrusive if we add the 1817 lines. In this case we have "melancholy" slumbering, then having ominous dreams and finally tumultuous portents of "wild shapings of the unborn time".

In a letter to Robert Southey, dated 29 July 1802, Coleridge wrote, referring to his divergencies of opinion with Wordsworth:

On the contrary, I rather suspect that some where or other there is a radical Difference in our theoretical opinions respecting Poetry -/this I shall endeavor to go to the Bottom of - and acting the arbitrator between the old School & the New School hope to lay down some plain, & perapicuous, tho' not superficial, Canons of Criticism respecting Poetry.

Coleridge was perfectly aware of his position between eighteenth-century poetry and the forthcoming Romantic School. The old and new Schools may be represented in the poem in the contrast between decay and gestation. The former is connoted by: "a moulder'd Abbey's broadest wall", "Tatter'd pall", "The Adder's Tongue", "The long lank leaf still as pass'd the flagging sea-gale weak"; all connote decay but also /logos/: the "wall" is a surface but it is "moulder'd"; a "pall" is a white limited surface (and an artifact) but it envelops corpses; besides, it is "tatter'd"; the "tongue" connotes language but it is that of a snake and of a poisonous plant; as to "leaf", it is connected to "sea-gale", or

air-in-motion, "flagging" implies both decay (=getting weak) and poetry (=giving a signal), "pass'd ...weak" suggests the past as well as decadence.

Decay, which characterizes the "Old School", is counterbalanced by gestation: "flush'd", "esger", "beam'd eloquent", "wrought" (= wrote + worked), "moving", "work'd" and "thought" suggest a shift from a static to a dynamic state. More generally, the meaning is one of a brooding dream on the point of producing something great and intense.

This is confirmed by the additional lines which go:

Strange was the dream that filled her soul,
Nor did not whispering spirits roll
A mystic tumult, and a fateful rhyme,
Mix'd with wild shapings of the unborn time.

A comparison between these lines and "Kubla Khan" is fruitful. The contrast between the poetic conceptions of a recent past and those to come is paralleled by the opposition between the poeticity of the surface, both in "Melancholy" and in "Kubla Khan", and the poeticity of the deep level; or again, between the surface structures of language and its deep or infralinguistic level, the level of senses. In the first opening of "Kubla", the surface level is connoted first, then the descent into the underground of the deep level (a movement Coleridge did not recognize in the poetry of the eighteenth century, that of "poetic diction") and finally, as a result of this dual movement, a fertilized surface, which can be understood as a tabularity, that is to say surface and deep level together, content and expression at the same time, each supporting the other with, of course, a relationship of subordination to content on the part of expression.

In the second opening, the first idea is that of a rupture ("&ut"). The break intervenes between the old and the forthcoming practices, the latter being represented by Wordsworth and Coleridge himself. This is further confirmed by "and from", pointing to a new source (the romantic chasm), by "Down" (deep) and "As if", which is a purely "verbal" way of connoting language as such. The other three beginnings, "A savage place", "As e'er beneath" and "By woman", are particularly rich in their suggestiveness.

"A savage place" connotes: 1) a space, 2) the primitive, as yet untamed, unpolished state of energy before the poet has shaped it, but also as a contrast to the unnerved, polished poetry Coleridge attacks, 3) the violence and anger of the new poets. Likewise, "melancholy" while slumbering is "eloquent"; inside her, she produces "sounds" that are "wrought" and her thought is "troubled"; the fury she is agitated by supplies sounds which are not yet perfect but are highly promising.

"As e'er beneath" and "By woman" are more complex.

The lines:

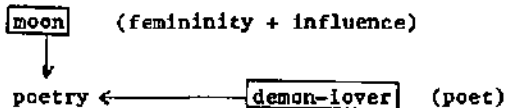
as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover

have always puzzled the commentators of the poem. Yet "holy" and "enchanted" connote both the sacred nature of poetry and the "spell" which holds the poet and his listeners (cf. the wedding-guest in "The Ancient Mariner"). The moon, on the other hand, is a constant in Coleridge's poetic universe. It is fundamental in "The

Ancient Msriner" and in "Christabel", to mention but two major works, and always linked to femininity. Now, "melancholy", in the poem, is feminine:

Her folded arms wrapping her tatter'd pall,
Mad Melancholy mus'd herself to sleep.

Seen at once as feminine and as dependent on feminine influence (not a surprising element with Coleridge), poetry is here set in a pattern that involves poetry as a space, a feminine element subordinate to feminine presence and love and the demoniscal (i.e. the wildly powerful). If we draw together the notion of poetry and, on the one hand, femininity (to be found in the image of the moon and the image of melancholy) vehicled by a wailing woman, and melancholy or sadness, on the other hand, we obtain the following diagram:



Poetry is dependent on the poet, which the simile connotes as a lover but also as a being intermediary between the earth and heaven, and on the moon, that is to say femininity and an influential power (Lat. in-fluere: flowing in). The components of the poetic discourse are now complete: 1) the space (here: romantic, i.e. wild, violent, close to the forces of nature), 2) the poetic power, dependent on femininity and on the giver of shape (the poet or demiurge), 3) the poetic effect, namely the "spell" and "haunting charm". As to the fourth element, the poetic discourse itself, it is contained in the next lines.

We now have, it seem to me, enough evidence that "Kubla Khan", more thoroughly and perfectly than other poems by

ground gardens spots. The ground is merely a place though already fertilized, the gardens are "bright" and full of blossoming trees, the spots are "spots of greenery" and "sunny". The ground, besides, is "girdled round" "with walls and towers", while the spots are encircled by forests.

The positional space can be divided into two parts: surface and underground. On the surface, one passes from a generalized to a specific space, each new notion being embedded in the old one: Xanadu - ground - gardens - spots - chasm. In the underground are caverns and caves, and the sea.

The movement on and below the space is clearly connected to /logos/:

- "Alph" → language (metonymy: alpha, alphabet (a), Alpheus or Tartar → referential mediation: mythology (b))
- "river" → metaphor (flowing in → instillation of semes; descent to the unconscious)
- "scared" → poetic language as referential mediation (religious)
- "ran" → movement + metonymy (writing movement)

To these words immediately indexable on /logos/ must be added "Through" and "Down to" which complete the movement.

It is now possible to describe the first section of the poem (lines 1-11) fully. What is it exactly that language does which makes it poetic?

The poeticity of the text manifests itself through operations on content and through motivation. The former actualize the principle of chaotization which corresponds to what Coleridge means when he writes that "a poem

contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object proposed" (24), i.e. a redistribution of the words on the scale of language followed by a reorganization of their order and of the form of their content and expression. The result of this is an organic whole in which all the components sustain one another. The words serve as signifiers to a signified which is no longer only denotative but also, and even first and foremost, connotative. Thus, the "river" is a stream but its infralinguistic meaning of "flowing liquid or substance" leads to the more important meaning of "poetic flow". The general framework of the poem is binary, emphasizing the general opposition /anthropos/ vs /cosmos/, represented by the textual opposition between Kubla Khan and such natural elements as caverns, river, sea (deep) ground, forests, hills, tree and hills (surface). As the poem, furthermore, is highly motivated, all things "tell the same tale", in other words, the binary structure conditions the organization of the whole text. The opposition at content level is expanded and at the same time sustained, echoed, symbolized by oppositions at expression level. Both, in fact, become indistinguishable.

The first section of the first eleven lines is articulated around the connector "So" (l. 6). The first five lines, which precede "So" have their counterpart in the next six lines (6-11). Each section in turn is made up of binary oppositions from the level of content down to the level of expression:

Section One:

1. Content: 1.1 space vs movement: In Xanadu, where
vs river, ran, through, down to

- 1.2 anthropos vs cosmos: Kubla Khan vs
river, caverns, sea, ground, rills,
tree, forests, hills
- 1.3 anthropos-poet vs anthropos-man
(ordinary): Kubla vs man
- 1.4 surface/linguistic level/consciousness
vs underground/deep, infralinguistic
level/unconsciousness: In Xanadu,
where vs caverns, sea
2. Expression:
- 2.1 syntactic oppositions:
- a. preposition + N (space) vs
preposition + N (movement):
In Xanadu vs Where Alph
- b. preposition of place vs prepo-
sition of movement: In, where
vs through, down to
- 2.2 conventional matrix:
- a. alliterative binarism: Kubla
Khan, dome decree, river ran,
sunless sea: k-k, d-d, r-r, s-s
(hard soft, stop (velar dental)
- trill - fricative): symbolizes
descent to underground)
- b. rhyme scheme: a vs b: Khan, ran,
man vs decree, sea

Section Two:

1. Content:
- 1.1 space vs movement: twice five
miles, ground and there, where,
and here vs rills
- 1.2 potential vs actual: lines 1-5
vs fertile, gardens, blossomed,
incense-bearing, forests, sunny
spots of greenery

- 1.3 space vs production: ground vs fertile, and there vs gardens, and here vs spots of greenery
- 1.4 space vs circumscribed: ground vs girdled, and here vs enfolding

2. Expression:

2.1 syntactic binarism:

- a. So + anaphora: "and there ... and there ..."
- b. three couplets: "So ... With" (6-7)/"And there ... Where (8-9)/"And here ... Enfolding (10-11)
- c. syntactic couplings:
1. 6 : twice five miles (five miles/five miles)
1. 7 : N + and +N: walls + and + towers
1. 8 : N + adj. + with + adj. + N : gardens + bright + with + sinuous + rills (chiasmus)
1. 11: N + prep. + N: spots + of + greenery

2.2 conventional matrix:

- a. metrical pairs:
- . tetrameters + trimeter + tetrameters + pentameters + tetrameters
- ll. 1-4 + 5 + 6 - 7 + 8 - 9 + 10 - 11)
- . tetrameters : 2 x 2 stresses
- b. rhyme scheme:
- cc (ll. 6-7) : "ground", "round": space + circumscribed
- dbdb (8-11): the scheme becomes more complex (ampli-

fied) = fertil-
 zation ("rills,
 tree, hills, gree-
 nery")

The first section, however, ends with a rupture. Instead of containing six couplets, it ends in the eleventh line, that is to say with an odd number. This portends the explicit rupture manifested by 'But' at the beginning of the next section. Besides, from an even number of stresses (tetrameters), one shifts to an uneven number, the pentameter. From the smooth regularity of the more artificial eighteenth-century poetry, one passes to a more uneven yet a more powerful, suggestive, effective poetry, that of the as yet "unborn time". The section contains twenty-five lines; it also ends with an odd number. The whole stands as a challenge, a provocation to the poetic conventions of the recent past.

The opening lines of the second section is quite clear in this respect. Each item is brimming with meaning:

- "But" → break; separates past/present (and future)
 "oh!" → / u/ = vowel of "dome" + exclamation
 (= violence)
 "that" → demonstrative: emphasizes "deep romantic chasm"
 "deep" → vs surface: the romantic revolution: 1) is serious and long-lasting, 2) involves the deeper level of language (vs the superficial level of eighteenth-century poetry)
 "romantic" → key-word (as well as "chasm")
 "chasm" → let us decompose the word into its senses:
classemes: C1 : opening, C2 : crack,
 C3 : abyss
semantemes: S1 : deep, S2 : in the ground,
 S3 : difference

- "which" → /wɪtʃ / = witch (spell, charm: cf. "haunted", "enchanted", "demon")
- "slanted" → 1) position (slope), 2) viewpoint (= view of the world, i.e. what poetry is alleged to be); implies prejudice or bias, i.e. reality transformed through power + will
- "down" → reinforces "deep"
- "green" → cosmos + freshness + energy and vitality
- "hill" → reinforces "slanted"
- "sthwart" → penetration + surface ("from one side to another")
- "cedarn" → reinforces "green"
- "cover" → surface

The prevailing notions are "violence", "difference", "break" and "depth" understood as "long-lasting" and "penetration beneath the surface". The first two lines (12-13) are summed up in the syntagm: "A savage place" (space + violent break).

Relying on what we know about the importance Coleridge attributes to connectors and logical markers, let us examine the function of the two connectors: "So" (l. 6) and "But" (l. 12).

Both, to begin with, are transitory between two states of the creative activity. "So" opposes simplicity (ll. 1-5) and complexity (6-11). The second section (6-11) is an amplification of the first (1-5). "But" contrasts a luminous poetic state (6-11) with a more chaotic, violent one (12 f.). Both also introduce something new. "So" is a consequential connector which connects a blending of space and movement (1-5) with its result: a fertilized space of beauty and vitality, enclosed and protected from the outside (6-11). "But" breaks the peace of the previous state to introduce an idea of rupture.

The notion of /logos/ being now comfortably perceived, it is necessary to examine its manifestation through the poet, the poet's action and the result of this action. Let us retain the basic senses of the romantic rupture announced in lines 11-12: 1) "violence", 2) "difference", 3) "depth".

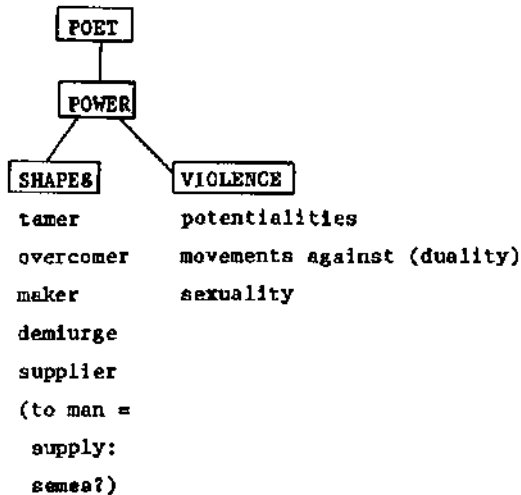
The image of the poet as actant-subject inscribes at first inside the triad KHAN-RAN-MAN, which leads to the constitution of a semic space comprehending the items "power" (O.E.D.: Khan = [kæ n] "can" and "lord", [Ka:n] prince; man = shape, make tame or tractable; ran manage, organize). The poet is seen as a man having special powers and these powers are "violent" and "shaping". He is someone who can deal with the violence issued from the universe (being antagonistic to man, the universe is always perceived as aggressive towards him) as well as with a violence of his own: his energies, intellectual and physical, and emotions. He is endowed with the ability to canalize them so as to make them into something new.

The concept of "power" and those connected with it, "violence" and "shaping" are found in three other items bearing a semantic relation with the concept of "poet": "thresher", "demon" and "lover".

The three of them contain the isotopy /power/: "thresher" because of the ability to overcome opposing elements (wind, tide, etc), "demon" because of his intermediary position between man and angels, "lover" because of the sexual power (which generates other beings). But each also illustrates one of the concepts which accompany the idea of "power"; "thresher" suggests "violence" because a thresher "beats"; besides, it connotes /logos/ for it points to wild binary movements like those of a flail or whip, beating and withdrawing alternatively, or throwing

oneself to and fro with violence (duality); "demon" suggests "divinity", hence a demiurge, capable of shaping matter anew; "lover" points to the "violence" of emotions and the "shaping power" of sexual activity.

The function of the poet can therefore be represented as follows:



If we consider a new triad: the actant (the poet) - the action - the outcome of the action, we obtain: "the violent shaper" (actant) - decrees (action: in the Indo-European tradition, words perform) - dome; gardens, spots (outcome).

But the outcome of the poet's action is submitted to two constraints: the oppositional series: "river ran" - "caverns, sea" - "fountain" - "caves" and the rupture introduced by the logical connector "But" and represented by "the romantic chasm".

If we compare the elements pertaining to the underground voyage of the river (deep level) with those belonging to its surface voyage (surface level and also level of actualization of the potentialities), we obtain a set of potentialities faced with a set of violent shapings:

Because of the rupture, which, as a consequence of the synthesis of the deep and surface levels, is fertile but violent, unlike the serenity that precedes the rupture, reactions are as fierce as the synthesis itself: they are the "Ancestral voices prophesying war" which to me seem obvious: they must be the angry reaction of the traditionalists to the violence and unorthodoxy of the romantic revolution. (cf. pp. 353-55).

The first movement, coupled with the third, comprehends the diads: measureless (repeated twice) and sunless/lifeless (sea, ocean), which index on the three concepts "negativity", "energy", "shaping":

"negativity"	:	-less
"energy"	:	life, sun (→ "power")
"shaping"	:	measure

The latter word is made up of the following semes:

1. slow and regular rhythm
2. standard or system
3. quantity (amount, number)
4. law
5. time

The underground, or deep level, appears as a space where "energy" (the poet's power) and "shaping" (which consists in rhythmic systematization) are still potential: "negativity" is the concept that subsumes them.

The second movement is double: it is characterized by quietness at a first stage and violence at a later stage. The first stage manifests the movement as a "space of positiveness":

ground, gardens, spots → "space"
 fertile, bright, sunny, greenery → "positiveness"

But the second concept, "positiveness", is in turn characterized by the series of adjectives "fertile", "bright", "sunny" and the noun "greenery"; their order of succession is intentional: the poetic potential ("fertile") is put to light ("bright", "sunny") in its actualization as "greenery", which is both foliage, verdure and green; its main feature, therefore, is its beauty but also uniformity and monotony.

The question now is: are we justified in thinking that this first part of the second movement, which witnesses the actualization of the poetic potential supplied by the deep level (underground), manifests the poetry of the past, particularly the poetry of the eighteenth century?

In the first chapter of Biographia Literaria, Coleridge is specific about the major differences between pre-eighteenth-century poetry and the poetry of Gray and his contemporaries. He traced an evolution, though, up to Bowles's sonnets which he read with pleasure, feeling "so enthusiastically delighted and inspired" (25) because they were "so tender and yet so manly, so natural and real, and yet so dignified and harmonious". (26)

His opinion about "the writings of Mr Pope and his followers" or "that school of French poetry condensed and invigorated by English understanding which had predominated from the last century" was that it had its merits but the merits were counterbalanced by such defects as to lead him ultimately to deny "its masters the legitimate name of poets." What it had succeeded in achieving was "thoughts translated into the language of poetry", which, in Coleridge's terminology, means very much that the language used is superficially poetic in that it borrows its external attributes but does not come from within. What it amounts to is "just and acute

observations of men and manners in an artificial state of society as its matter and substances" and we know that Coleridge regarded observation as a relatively unimportant element in the poetic process; on the other hand, it also implies "the logic of wit conveyed in smooth and strong epigrammatic couplets as its form", which keeps the eighteenth-century poetic discourse on mechanical lines. (27)

Finally, the main feature of this poetic school is that it is pleasant but that it often involves "the pleasure derived from mere novelty in the reader", a pleasure often felt about parts, whereas "our genuine admiration of a great poet is a continuous undercurrent of feeling; it is everywhere present, but seldom anywhere as a separate excitement." Just compare the artificial effect conveyed by the abstract, allegorical personifications in Gray's "The Bard" ("Morn", "Zephyr", "Vessel", "Youth", "Pleasure", Whirlwind") (28) with the deep metaphorical language of Shakespeare in The Merchant of Venice ("strumpet wind", "lean, rent and beggar'd bark"). (29) Gray, after all, is the symbol of a general tendency: that of poetry that collocates pleasant parts, "sunny spots of greenery" and "gardens bright" but fails to achieve any impression of wholeness and inner transformation. (30)

That is not to say that pre-eighteenth-century poetry was flawless: the difference was that "in the former, from Donne to Cowley, we find the most fantastic out-of-the-way thoughts, but in the most pure and genuine mother English"; on the other hand, in

the false beauties of the moderns [...] the most obvious thoughts, in language the most fantastic and arbitrary. Our faulty elder poets sacrificed the passion and passionate flow of poetry to the subtleties of intellect and to the starts of wit; the

modern to the glare and glitter of a perpetual yet broken and heterogeneous imagery, or rather to an amphibious something, made up half of image and half of abstract meaning. The one sacrificed the heart to the head, the other both heart and head to point and drapery. (31)

The very language used by Coleridge to describe this kind of poetry suggests light but also something inorganic and ultimately coldly attractive. "Bowles and Cowper were, to the best of my knowledge, the first who combined natural thoughts with natural diction; the first who reconciled the heart with the head." (32)

Whether this poetic discourse should be considered as a glaring emptiness or an intellectual pleasantness, it is aptly depicted as above all "quiet", as a "ground" of "gardens" and peaceful "spots", a space of "fertility" but where what is fertilized does not exactly distort feelings and thoughts. Quite different, in this respect, is the world of "the romantic chasm". We are justified, I think, in assuming that it announces the "unborn time" alluded to in "Melancholy" and takes on the dual aspect of a fracture, that is to say an obvious separation between two things, and a difference. If the former points to the rupture already contained in the structure of the first opening (ll. 1-11), the latter shows that the conception of the poetic discourse, its acting as a shaping power which forms things from within, is going to differ from former practices. The potentialities which were already existent before the romantic revolution are going to be used differently.

If we examine the second part of the main body of the poem (ii, 12-36), it is clearly seen to be built as follows:

I. The "chasm" as space (12-16). II. The "chasm" as shaping violence (17-24). III. The fertilizing cycle

recalled: river - caverns - fountain, and its consequences, i.e. "war" (25-30). IV. The poetic synthesis.

If we consider the first two parts (I and II), we are aware that the "romantic chasm" functions as a space of activity. Four types of words stand out: the first type is denoted once and then amplified implicitly ("space"), the second is quantitatively and qualitatively important ("violence"), the third is dual (time/power), the last manifests results ("spheres").

The first type, "space", manifests itself through the word "place"; it is developed in the forms of "violence":

savage
 turmoil
 seething
 pants
 burst
 vaulted
 rebounding
 thresher's flail
 dancing
 flung up
 tumult

and "rhythmic power":

mighty
 momentarily
 forced
 momentarily

and its finality is shown as producing "spheres":

fragments
 grain
 hail
 rocks

A semic distribution of the words of the second type reveals the following semes:

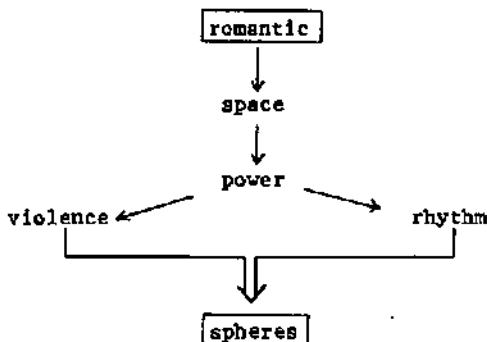
"savage" : 1. wild, violent 2. disorganized
 "turmoil" : 1. disturbance 2. agitation
 "seething" : 1. boil, bubble over 2. agitated
 3. anger, discontent
 "pants" : 1. breaths, gasps, throbs 2. rapidity
 3. strong desire
 "burst" : 1. explode (internal pressure) 2. full
 to overflowing 3. sudden forceful energy
 "vault" : 1. jump 2. religion, sacred (referential
 mediation)
 "dancing" : 1. movement 2. time, regularity
 "flung up" : 1. throw 2. violence 3. move 4. impul-
 sively 5. rapidity 6. anger
 "tumult" : 1. uproar 2. disturbance 3. confusion
 4. excitement

If we organize the semes progressively, i.e. from a lower degree of manifestation to a higher degree, this is what we obtain:

1. disorganized ("savage")
2. anger, discontent ("seething", "flung up"),
 disturbance ("turmoil", "tumult"),
 agitation ("turmoil", "seething")
3. rhythm ("momently", "dancing", "pants"),
 violence ("savage", "burst", "flung up")

The resulting movement is again threefold: 1) disorganization; this may point to the poetic "manner" of the former school of poetry being disturbed by the romantic way (a) as well as to the chaotization of language, especially through the infralinguistic level (what Coleridge, lest we should forget, means by 'desynonymization') (b), 2) potential violence; poetic creation manifests itself and at the same time provokes the former school through anger (its own and that of the "ancestors"), disturbance and agitation, 3) rhythmical violence or violence controlled; this is the expression of the duality of the poetic discourse, the synthesis of the two antagonistic forces that produce the "tertium sliquid".

The movement is confirmed by the crossed scheme: mighty, momentarily, forced, momentarily, which interlace the concepts of power (mighty, forced) and rhythmical control (momentarily). The general idea is that of a space in which a power is at work through an oxymoronic pattern of violence and rhythm (romanticism), producing spheres (i.e. symbols of totalities and quasi-perfection):



The result, namely the spheres, is a capital one. It is both denoted and connoted through the word "fragment" described metasememically: "like rebounding hail" (simile), "Or chaffy grain" (simile), "dancing rocks" (metaphor).

The initial word, "fragments", is particularly pregnant, as K.M. Wheeler has demonstrated. If we abide by Coleridge's principle that a poem starts from a seminal idea which it develops organically, then we are right in assuming that the seminal idea expressed in the Preface: "Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall" taken from Purchas's Pilgrimage, is only developed in the first thirty-six lines. Although in some way connected with the main body of the poem, the Preface and the "Epilogue" are not really part of it, for "neither the preface nor the epilogue contributes to the landscape description of the three sections." If we consider then that the "real" poem is lines 1 to 36, and that as such it is completed, it is nevertheless not indifferent that Coleridge should have used the word "fragment" to characterize it. After all, despite what the poetic power achieves in blending deep and surface levels, the "device" ordered by Kubla Khan is the dome and it appears complete only as a "shadow". Thus Wheeler, in my opinion, is right in thinking that

both the dream allegory and the persona of the damsel act to split the self of the visionary or poet into an imaginative, inspired self, and a self that merely recollects the former self. Indeed a further, more removed stage is indicated, where the poet is neither visionary, nor textmaker (where the memory and imagination seem to act together) but merely a reader, a passive self in comparison with the other two stages. The third person narrative of the preface expresses precisely this latter distinction: the persona who wrote down "the lines preserved" is not only distinct from the visionary self beyond the conscious control, in the persona of the Abyssinian maid; he is also distinct from the merely recuperative self who writes the preface. The aesthetic distance between the two would seem chasmic to the "fallen" poet, and he would seek to represent the distance by the distancing devices of personas and allegories of states. Thus the poem is not only about inspired experience, but also about the fall back into ordinary experience, and the relation between the two. (33)

Here I have quoted Wheeler in full because I think it is preferable to consider her argumentation without running the risk of distorting it. What he succeeds in doing, I think, is to point out the importance of the word "fragment" in that it does not allude to any organic failure in the poem but to the fact that

the poet cannot remain contented with this relatively passive state, and seeks to become a masker again, or even a visionary. The present is always only a portion or fragment of experience as long as it is uninspired by imagination. Without the imagination to perceive connections the mind sees not totality, but parts. Hence in "unawakened" consciousness, in ordinary, "third remove" perception, all of the productions of imagination seem only portions and fragments in comparison with what the mind is able to remember vaguely that it once knew: something whole and entire, a vision of eternity. The text is only a portion of that eternity. It is in this metaphorical sense that "Kubla Khan" should be understood as a fragment: as an organic whole it is complete in itself. (34)

That "huge fragments" should therefore have "vaulted like rebounding hail" is just one more piece of evidence showing that "Kubla Khan" is indeed about a poet who "can" perform poetry. The spherical character of the results of the controlled violence links the "fragments" to the dome. Both have "something to do" with the cycle (potentialities - fertility - potentialities) and are supported by semic or intertextual elements. "Hail" reminds us of the frost performing silently in "Frost at Midnight" and the "grain" mentioned here is "chaffy", that is to say covered with an envelope to be removed before it can be used as human food; this goes back to the opposition between deep and surface levels and clearly points to the internal part of the poetic process. As for the metaphor "dancing rocks", it partakes even more of an oxymoronic movement, "dancing" being characterized by a seme "dynamic" which is denied in the

word "rock". Here too the allusion is obvious: "rocks" like poems are inert if not brought to life from within, by a principle which endows them with a movement that proceeds from their very heart. But not just any movement, a "dancing" movement, that is to say "organized" and "controlled".

Now our vision of the way the second part of the poem (ll. 12-36) functions is almost complete. The poet (i.e. the man who "can") uses his power and exerts it over the poetic space, interspersing it with the semes which give life to an otherwise inert surface. From line 12 to line 24, the semes that connote "violence" and "rhythm", "power" and "sphericity" are distributed so as to form a network sustained by the form of expression.

It is interesting to observe how the alliterative scheme is distributed. Each of the important phonemes that build up the initial image of the descent from surface to the deep level, i.e. /d/, /k/, /r/, /m/, /s/, is scattered over the space of the poem either in a diffuse way or in groups having a special function. Even when merely scattered, the phonemes constitute the core of words which stand out as the potent words of the text. Thus, /k/ marks the poet (Kubla Khan) and what he does (decree) but also two opposites: the deep level (caverns, caves) and the outcome of descent (chasm). The phoneme /d/ is characteristic of the poet's action (decree), of the space in which the action takes place (Xanadu, ground) but also of the deep level (down, deep), of the poet as demiurge (demon) and of the result of the creative process (dome). The phoneme /r/ characterizes the more dynamic aspect (river, ran, rocks, breathing, grain), while /s/ indicates the qualities of what belongs to the discourse (stately, sacred, savage, ceaseless, slanted) and characterizes the potentialities (sunless, lifeless) and their surface actualizations (sinuous, sunny spots).

Eventually, /m/ is specific of the poetic activity: power (mighty, mazy motion), rhythm (measure), synthesis (amid, 'mid, midway, mingled, miracle).

But most of them also assemble in meaningful clusters such as: /r/: river rsn/sacred river/river rsn/miracle rsre, which we can analyse like this: "river" → flowing asp; "rsn" → movement, flowing; "miracle" → creation, synthesis; "rare" → reinforces "miracle";

/s/: savage place/sunless sea/sunny spots/sunny ice: "ssavage" → violence; "place" → space; "sunless", "sunny" → energy, power; "ice" → antagonistic power (sun vs ice); also: blossomed incense/cesseless seething/swift burst/dancing rocks/ssnk lifeless/ancestral voices prophesying: suggest either movement and rapidity or unite words as in the latter case.

/l/: walls girdled/place holy/wailing lover/ceaseless turmoil/vaulted like hall/flung up momentarily/tumult lifeless/tumult Kubla: express especially torment and tumult.

Some lines are particularly marked by a subtle alliterative interplay. Thus in the line:

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething

the clause: "with ceaseless turmoil seething" produces a double effect of uninterruptedness (alliteration /s/) and of torment on account of the internal oppositions of the word "turmoil" (/t/ vs /m/ vs /l/ and the complex diphthong /oi/) as well as of its position (it breaks the harmony of the /s/alliteration in the word preceding and the word following it).

Another line which is markedly determined by the alliterative pattern is line 19:

A mighty fountain momentarily was forced

in which the intermixed oppositions /m/ vs /t/ vs /f/ are emphasized by the muffling function of /n/ and /s/, which produces the following structure:

A mighty fountsin momentarily was forced.

A similar effect is achieved in lines 23-24:

And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.

The oppositional interplay here is even more complex, for it involves a subtle interchange between consonants and vowels, alliterations and assonances: the beginning of line 23 is attenuated by the phonemes /n/ and /m/ followed by the vowel /i/ but it is to give more expressive power to the opposite succession /d/ + /ɪ/ vs /i:/ vs /z/ vs /d/ vs /sn/ vs /s/ vs /iɹ/ + /ro/ vs /ks/ vs /æt/ vs /wansən/ vs /devə/ forcefully taken over in line 24 where the series /t/ vs /ɛ/ (/tɪ/, /ɛɪ/), /kr/ is reinforced by the intermediary vowels and consonants and further supported by the rhyme scheme (almost a paronomasia).

Coleridge obviously exploits the expressive force of such clusters as /s/ + /t/ or /s/ + /l/ in "stately", "forests", "fast", "pants", "burst", "fragments", "ancestral", "spots", "slanted", "forced", "swift", etc. or /p/ + /l/ in "pleasure", "place"; but the most suggestive is the pair /f/ + /l/ in words expressing power and violence: "flail" and "flung up", sustained by /ɛ/ + /t/ as in "fast", "fountain", "forced" and "fragments".

The rhyme scheme, from line 19 to line 36, also partakes of the general content. It loses of its complexity, for the overlapping of intentions which conditioned the first two openings - past vs present/future, deep vs surface, quietness vs rupture/violence, static vs dynamic, position vs movement, etc - has now been succeeded by the unambiguous expression of the new romantic school. The scheme goes: hh ("forced", "burst" → power + violence), ii ("hail", "fissil" → result, i.e. poetic text or sphere + shaping violence), ff ("ever", "river" → continuity + motion), jaaj ("motion", "ran", "man", "ocean" → movement + poet + deep level; besides the scheme forms a chiasmus and therefore what it contains is momentous), kk ("far", "war" → past + anger).

Lines 25 to 30 constitute the third section of the second part of the main body of "Kubla Khan". This third section can in turn be subdivided into two parts: movement (second part of the recurrent cycle "potentialities" - "fertilization" - "potentialities"), ll. 25-28, and consequence (the ancestors' or traditionalists' rebellion), ll. 29-30.

The alliterative scheme, as is its function, reinforces the meaning connoted by the rhyme scheme. Lines 25-26 express the same motion and as such are borne by /m/ alliterations (25) - "miles", "meandering", "mazy", "motion", - used by Coleridge to express movement and force and /r/ + /v/ + /n/ in the recurrent syntagm "sacred river ran" (26). Line 27 deals with the return to the deep level but also with the poet; the latter cannot be determined by only one alliterative combination (although here /m/ connotes him as an individual with dynamic power: "measureless to man"), so the phonemic pattern of the line is made up of a variety of sounds (/ʒ /, /r/, /t/, /ʃ/, /k/, /v/, /n/, /z/, /l/, /s/)(which points to the substance of expression at the poet's

disposal for him to fuse into a meaningful whole. Line 28 is clearly oppositive in its construction and is determined by the lexeme "mid" (= separation but also synthesis). The alliterative pattern is first dominated by /l/ which belongs to "tumult" (dynamic, surface), on the other hand. It is then contrasted by the sounds it is opposed to: /m/ and /t/ (the former is a muffling sound but at the same time it expresses power and motion, the latter is sonorous and powerful); /f/ and /s/ (the former is highly suggestive of power and pressure, as in "fertile", "fast", "fountain", "forced", "fragments", "flail", "flung", and the latter, though it connotes softness, often transmits a notion of continuity and fluidity).

As a consequence of what precedes (the romantic conception of poetry, the rupture and difference highly proclaimed), an uproar is heard. This is why the lexeme "tumult" is used at the end of the first subdivision (l. 28), as the last stage of the cycle (i.e. the return to the space of potentialities) and at the beginning of the second (l. 29). The sonorous environment of the lexeme is indeed tumultuous and acutely oppositive: the knot /t/ + /m/ + /l/ + /t/ is surrounded and therefore emphasized by forceful consonants such as /m/, /d/, /k/, /bl/, /f/ which stand out against vowels:

And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far

The effect is even stronger in the next line where fricatives are prevalent: /s/, /z/, and match the deliberate uninterruptedness of the romantic current in a threateningly insistent and ominous way: /s/ + /z/ vs /t/, /l/, /f/. The last word of the line, "war", is of course particularly impressive owing to the opposition /w/ vs /o:/, the semi-vowel opening the door to a sound that can last as long as the speaker's breath (echoing effect).

The fourth section of the second part of the poem consists in six lines (31-36), of which the rhyme scheme is: lmlmn. This section is the outcome of the four movements: space, rhythmic violence, cycle, synthesis. It is the structural counterpart of the third section since it consists of six lines, the first four lines having as their consequence the last two lines.

The first four lines "tell" a tale that has been the tale of the whole poem from the outset but this time it points out the result of the operations on language as a synthesis. Each line has a specific function. Line 31 names the dome for the second time. About this lexeme, two things must be said. It is first characterized by its being spherical, and is therefore the symbol or paragon of the different spheres already mentioned as a result of the rhythmic violence ("hall", "fragments", "grain", "rocks"); borrowing from Plato (something Coleridge might heartily approve), I shall say that the various spheres distributed over the poetic space are specific poetic pieces (poems), whereas the dome represents the ideal poem or poetry as an essence. To confirm this idea, we have the chiasmic pattern formed by the addition of the first occurrence of the lexeme "dome" (l. 2) and the second (l. 31): "pleasure dome" vs "dome of pleasure"; we know that the chiasmus connotes perfection in Coleridge's conception.

Secondly, the line emphasizes the dome not as such but as a mere "shadow". The two concepts are one, as is confirmed by the expressive structure: the core of both words is /dou/, the second occurrence, in "dome", echoing the first, in "shadow":

∫ adou doum

The second line (32) confirms the notion of a synthesis through the lexeme "midway" but also through "waves" (= surface but also the synthesis of the deep and surface operations on language).

The meaning, which, I shall never tire of insisting, is inseparable from the analysis, is probably that the ideal poetic power, impossible to achieve, is only a once-removed force on this earth and that it produces a synthesis of two antagonistic powers. This is expressed again in line 33. Poetry here is described as a space of sonorities, of controlled elements blended in a synthesis:

"Where" → space

"heard" → sonorous substance (expression)

"mingled" → synthesis; duality

"measure" → rhythm, control (it is no longer
"measureless")

Line 34 specifies the origin of the dual elements to be synthesized:

"from" : 1) "fountain" → surface
 2) "caves" → deep

This general pattern of "a space of sonorities blended in a synthesis" is contained also in the rhyme scheme: the two l rhymes, "pleasure" and "measure", connote the effect of the discourse and its controlled aspect, the former being an effect of the latter; the two m rhymes, "waves" and "caves", are antagonistic and at the same time complementary: "waves" belongs to the surface level but also to the level of actualization, yet it also opposes itself to "caves", the deep level, the level of potentialities.

The dual aspect of the discourse is also mirrored in the alliterative pattern of the lines: in each line one pattern is predominant and sustains the content. In line 31, /d/ ("shadow", "dome"); in line 32, /w/ ("midway on the waves"); in line 33, /m/ ("mingled measure") and subsidiarily /w/ again ("Where was"); in line 34, /f/ ("from the fountain") while the two antagonistic elements, "fountain" and "caves", share a similar construction: C - D - C - V - C. (35) But the second consonant of the word "fountain", a surface element, is more sonorous than the consonant occupying a similar position in the word "caves".

The last two lines of this section provide a conclusion which is the consequence of the operations connoted in the first four lines. The main components of the couplet have the following semic distribution:

- "miracle" → 1) wonder (Lat. miraculum)
 → 2) "a marvellous event exceeding the known powers of nature, and therefore supposed to be due to the special intervention of the Deity or of some supernatural agency" (OED)
 → 3) "exhibiting control over the laws of nature" (OED)
- "device" → 1) make several parts into a whole (Lat. divide)
 → 2) split a whole into smaller parts

The lexemes express the notions of : 1) power ("powers of nature", "control", making and splitting, 2) supernaturalness (cf. poet as "demon", i.e. an intermediary being between earth and heaven). The verb "devise", actually, is understood to refer to ordering and planning, thinking out and framing, inventing. The poet as a giver of shape is clearly connoted here.

The lines are dual at the content level but also at the expression level, and they complement each other. At the content level, they are dual inasmuch as line 35, connoting the synthesis, has as its counterpart line 36 which contains the antagonistic elements to be synthesized ("sunny dome" vs "caves of ice"). The latter, especially, amplifies the meaning produced by the whole structure, for it builds up a double antagonistic pattern:

sunny dome vs caves of ice

"sunny" is opposed to "ice" and "dome" to "caves" just as "sunny dome" is opposed to "caves of ice". The structure obtained constitutes a model of what the word "device" denotes: 1) parts blended into a whole: "sunny" + "dome" "sunny dome"; "caves" + "ice" "caves of ice"; "sunny" vs "ice" + "dome" vs "caves" "device", etc. 2) a whole split into its component parts: "a sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice" "sunny dome" vs "caves of ice", etc.

Finally, if we consider the double opposition represented above, we realize that the alliterative pattern contributes to the duality of the whole and to the general content. The two central elements, "pleasure-dome" and "caves", oppose "hard" and "soft" consonants (/k/, /p/, /d/ vs /z/, /m/, /v/, /z/) while the elements at the extremities share the same alliterative element /s/ ("sunny", "ice").

As to the rhyme scheme, it sustains the meaning of "device" since "ice", one of the antagonistic elements, constitutes a paronomasia with "device", the latter containing the former completely.

The metrical pattern, tormented and violent in the third section (pentameter), has changed into a tetrameter again, expressing harmony and quasi-perfection. It ends with pentameter again, a more majestic and impressive pattern.

Lines 37 to 54 are far from appearing irrelevant to the first part of the poem. Once again, it is through desynonymization that we are likely to find a clue to the interpretation of the last part; even though, however, our analysis of the final lines does not depend on their status within the whole.

The major senses of the word "vision" - an important word since it determines what sort of medium enabled the "I" (the speaker) to become acquainted with the "damsel" - are:

- . something which is apparently seen otherwise than by ordinary sight; esp. an appearance of a prophetic or mystical character, or having the nature of a revelation, supernaturally presented to the mind in sleep or in an abnormal state
- . a mental concept of a distinct or vivid kind; a highly imaginative scheme or anticipation

These two definitions from the Shorter OED were already in use at the end of the sixteenth century. As they are, they cannot but prove enlightening. The lady's "symphony and song," which either contained lines 1 to 36, or would allow the speaker to "build that dome in air" which epitomizes the poetic ideal, was seen in a "vision". The first senses point to a medium which is not familiar or "ordinary" and involves the kind of state evoked in the introductory fragment: the peculiar sort of sleep that might result from drug taking. The senses "prophetic" or "mystical" or "supernatural" connote /logos/, and if the speaker "still retained some vague recollection of the general purport of the vision," the Khan's gardens and

the dome that were conjured up in it might well have been brought to life by "a damsel with a dulcimer". This is confirmed by the senses of the second definition: "mental concept" and "imaginative scheme".

Here again, as in the main part of the poem, it is worthwhile to approach the lines through expression. The rhyme scheme divides the passage into three sections. The opening lines echo those in lines 1 to 5 and 12 to 16: abaab (1-5), efeef (12-16), and abcca (37-41). Even though the third and fourth lines do not repeat the first, they are alike; the last line repeats the first and not the second, while the second is not repeated. The structure is nevertheless identical.

The second section goes from line 42 to line 47. The rhyme scheme - dedefg - is new to the poem, and so is the rhyme scheme of the third section: fffghhg. Shall we assume that these new schemes are entailed by new situations?

Let us examine the plane of content in each case. From the standpoint of meaning, there is a clear distinction between section one and the last two sections. The time sequence opposes the past to a modalization of the discourse through the conditional. Clearly the first section refers to what has actually taken place, whereas the last two sections express a wish. Lines 37 to 42 oppose the past simple ("I saw", "It was", "she played") to the wishfulness of section two ("Could I", "'twould", "I would") and the assumption of an effect upon hearers in section three ("and all [...] should see", "And all should cry"), an impression reinforced by the anaphora and by the imperative ("Beware! Beware!", "Weave", "close").

If we pay attention to the rhyming words themselves, we can say that one passes on from a unified sequence (section one) to one which leaves an impression of hopelessness and beseeching (section two) to one in which antagonistic forces are at war (section three). The sequence: "dulcimer", "saw", "maid", "played", "Abora", can be read on the isotopy /logos/:

"dulcimer"	→ .	musical instrument
	.	with strings of graduated lengths stretched over a sounding board
"saw"	→ .	vision
"maid"	→ .	femininity
	.	past simple of "make"
		([maid]→artifact (/logos/))
"played"	→ .	/logos/
"Abora"	→ .	mountain, mount
	.	sacred

About the latter word, it is, according to Geoffrey Yarlott (36), like the river Alph, part of the Gothic or the Romantic landscape. Lowes, on the other hand, whose ambition is to tell about "that thronging and shadowy mid-region of consciousness which is the womb of the creative energy" (37), reminds us that "Coleridge's memory was tenanted by throngs of visual images derived from books" (38); such images, though, were not merely visual but also auditory. Among the many books that impressed Coleridge's memory, Bruce's Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile seems to have been read by him as early as 1794 (it was used in "Religious Musings"). There often recurs in it the name of a river, valley or plain: "Abols". So, Lowes writes, "'Abola' was itself amply sufficient to suggest the dream-word 'Abors', as 'Xamdu' or 'Xaindu' suggested 'Xansdu'." (39) "Abora" may also have been suggested by another name, "Astaboras", found in a passage about the island of Meroë which is "placed between the Nile and Astaboras" and mixed with it.

"Abora" became a mountain owing to Milton's "Mount Amara" with its connotations of pseudo-paradises. (40) As to the "msid", she may be the woman inspirer. She is sufficiently remote to induce a universal vision of inspiration, like Stella, Beatrice and others.

The crucial word is "vision" and it is through music that the vision is made available to the speaker, in the sequence: "dulcimer", "played", "singing", "symphony and song", "music". And the speaker would like to build the dome "in air" ("air" reads as well "the air one breathes" as "musical air" or tune). The rhyming words of the first section, therefore, could be rephrased: creativity, symbolized as a feminine figure, took shape in a past vision and became materialized as eminently verbal music.

The second section expresses the disarray of the speaker, who craves to rebuild the perfect poem embodied in the vision. "Song" is embedded in "me", as though he were struggling to prevent the creative power from escaping. The succession "long", "air", "ice", expresses the speaker's craving to compose the verbal message which sounds like music but, as far as he is concerned, ends in iciness or failure.

The third section goes:

- "there" → space: poetic discourse is definitely a locus where something is being performed
- "Beware" → the poet arouses suspicion and dread
- "hair" → completes the set of three rhymes ending in the same way, which suggests the potential readers' bewilderment and emphasis on the poet's weirdness
- "thrice" → a sacred number (→ /logos/); rhymes with:
- "Paradise" → connotes the perfection of the ideal poem as an exemplification of the perfection of the lost paradise

"dread" } → the awe inspired by poetry, especially
 "fed" } → to non-initiated people vs the spiritual
 food it is to the poet

The whole passage is based on a general structure which involves both a triad and an antagonism that symbolizes poetic discourse. The passage comprehends three parts, it focuses at first on the maid, then on the poet, finally on the potential hearers. The time sequence begins with a past, proceeds to a conditional and reverts to the past. The poem ends with a chiasmus: ghhg, and a note of hope because if it starts with "thrice" and "dread", it ends with "fed" and "Paradise". Another fortunate prospect arises from the number of lines in each section: 5, 6, 7. The progression as well as the portentous character of the sacred number 7 convey a message of hope.

Let us turn now to the opposite of rhymes: the initial words of each line. This is what we get:

"A damsel" → femininity of poetic power

"In a vision" → supernatural medium

"It was" → past experience

"And on" → locus

"Singing" → verbal music

"Could I" → hope; impotence; frustrated fulfilment

"Her symphony

and song" → opposition: verbal music originating
 with "her" vs impotence expressed by "I"

"To such" }
 "That" } → intensiveness (aroused by conditional
 success)

"I would build" → conditional prospect

"That" → designation of synthetic process ("dome"
 vs "caves")

"And all" }
 "And all" } anaphora emphasizing hearers' reaction

"His flashing
 eyes" }
 "Weave a circle" } emphasis on awe inspired by poet and
 "And close" } warning of danger (reinforced by impe-
 rative)

"For he" }
 "And drunk" } → poet related to "drinking", the drinking
 of "milk"; poetry nourishes the poet

The only important word which has been left out of our analysis so far is "Abyssinian". It is possible to link Kubla Khan and Abyssinia, for both are part of the Eastern dream that haunted European minds, especially in the eighteenth century as Johnson's Rasselas illustrates. Lowes says that the connection between the "damsel with a dulcimer" and Abyssinia is obvious; in Abyssinia are found the fountains of the sacred river; besides, Abyssinia "hovered in the background of the vision, to become suddenly explicit in this seemingly unaccountable detail." (41)

The first part of "Kubla Khan" comprehends 36 lines, the second part 18. As a structural mass, the poem embodies what it says: 36 lines represent the perfect work of which the poet had a glimpse in a dream, while the 18 other lines represent the poet's lament for the lost vision and his own creative impotence.

CHAPTER FIVE

"THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER"

There are similarities between "The Ancient Mariner" and the other poems by Coleridge as poetic discourses. Many, for example, contain several layers of language, among which only one purports to be quintessentially poetic. This is particularly clear in "Kubla Khan". In both different voices are heard which still puzzle commentators; there is some mystery as to whether the lines about the lady with the dulcimer actually belong to the same poetic "flight" as the first thirty-six lines in "Kubla Khan" but there is also some sort of an enigma as to the function and origin of the gloss in "The Ancient Mariner" or as to the chronological differences between the balladeer's voice, the wedding-guest's and that of the author of the gloss, supposedly an imaginary editor.

One layer at least claims to be fundamentally poetic: the Mariner's discourse. The other layers, whether the minstrel's part (which includes the wedding-guest's) or the gloss, are quite different. The poetic discourse proper is the Mariner's part, which is allegedly acknowledged as such, though implicitly, in lines 577 to 625 of the poem. First and foremost, the Mariner is compelled to speak and his speech is a tale; inherent in such a situation is the relationship between a speaker

and a listener, the matrix which covers the relationship between a poet and a reader. Secondly, the stimulus which prompts the Mariner to begin his tale is painful to him; this establishes a link between a poet's work and any other birth giver's, along with the tragic idea that the poet is doomed. Thirdly, his speech is powerful and cannot be resisted. As a succession of operations on language, poetic discourse is seen as endowed with a specific power with a specific effect on the listener or the reader. Potency appears clearly in the emphasis on the Mariner's "eye", which reads "eye" and sounds like the first person singular: the poet's personality is "bright" and "glittering" and strange; besides, the poet selects one individual out of three to become some kind of privileged listener and viewer of a sacred performance. Linked to the idea of suffering is the notion of the poet seen as a wanderer, as someone who no longer belongs to the ordinary portion of men and as such is doomed to some everlasting roaming on the surface (of the earth but also of the "white page"). As to the poet's message, which, after all, in Coleridge's opinion, is the finality of the poetic act, it is one of respect for whatever is organic, including the poem itself; this involves the whole of living creation. Eventually, there remains the effect of the speech as a message and message-bearer; it is not merely that of the poem as unrolling of speech but also that of what is being said as well. In this respect, the result is paradoxical: having been chosen from among many to become a privileged hearer, the wedding-guest-reader-listener gains the paradoxical harvest of the discourse-message: he becomes wiser because he knows more about the true nature of the universe but at the same time he becomes sadder because knowledge implies awareness: awareness that the universe of which men are a part is essentially tragic.

I shall explore the hypothesis that the various layers follow an ascending order from a state in which poetic concentration is negligible (the prose gloss) up to another state in which it is optimum; this should correspond to the discourse of the balladeer and the wedding-guest, on the one hand, and to the discourse of the Mariner, on the other hand.

The Mariner's discourse is eminently poetic, not only on account of the arguments embodied in the last lines of the poem but also because it is quantitatively the most important part of the whole; it occupies 578 lines out of a total of 625, whereas the balladeer's speech takes up 30 and the wedding-guest's 17. That of the former, besides, takes place in part I and part VII, and the latter's in part I (10 lines), in part IV (6 lines), and in part V (1 line). Both speeches decrease, from a quantitative point, as the Mariner's discourse gains in dramatic and semantic importance. In parts V and VI, for instance, which are semantically the core of the poem, the minstrel does not say anything while the wedding-guest's speech extends over respectively one line and no line at all.

Let us now examine the minstrel's and the wedding-guest's discourses. If our hypothesis should be correct, that is to say if the minstrel's and the wedding-guest's discourses are less "poetic" than the Mariner's, the opposition between them might be that of a more descriptive language versus a more creative or operative one. If both languages, on the other hand, can be motivated to a high degree, the kind of motivation achieved in either case should not be the same.

In part I, the balladeer's discourse extends over lines 1 and 2, line 9, lines 12 to 20 and 31 to 40; the wedding-guest's extends over lines 3 to 8, line 11 and

lines 79 to 81; the total is 32 lines against 51 for the Mariner's discourse. Out of a total of 82 lines, the part of the balladeer and of the wedding-guest is still a balanced one.

The main function of the balladeer's discourse is indeed introductory and descriptive. It is incumbent on him to present the protagonists and he does so at once, as is customary in the ballad:

It is an ancien Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.

The language emphasizes the abruptness of the poetic waylaying: the Mariner appears all of a sudden and he selects his listener at one stroke. It is then the function of the wedding-guest to point out the contrast between the Mariner's (the poet's) personality, which makes of the poet an irresistible speaker, and the so far unspoken words he is soon bound to utter. The guest's language creates the dramatic atmosphere which accompanies poetic creation. Characteristically, the language is essentially descriptive and exclamative. It is descriptive and as such it emphasizes the Mariner's personality (he seems to be a "loon") and physical appearance (his beard and his eye), both laying a strong stress on the strangeness of the Mariner (he is apart from the other men) and the power which emanates from his personality (/ai/ = "eye" and "I"). The strangeness and power of the man are contrasted with the situation the guest finds himself in: one of merriment ("feast", "din", "merry"), of relationship with his fellow human beings ("next of kin", the widely-open doors) and of gleeful earthliness ("The guests are met, the feast is set"). Along with the descriptive function of the wedding-guest's language goes its exclamative part, whose purpose is to show how frightening the Mariner's

personality and the quality and characteristic of his approach can be and also how deep the feeling of pity aroused in the chosen spectator is likely to appear. The language, therefore, is mainly interrogative (why me and why such a look?), authoritarian ("Hold off! unhand me!") and optative ("God save thee!").

The degree of motivation is fairly high. The expression echoes the content by verbally creating the atmosphere of vehemence and apprehension which surrounds the guest and his interlocutor. The metataxes are mainly of the repetitive type. The asyndeton in:

The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.

produces an impression of panting anxiety; the latter also arises from the basic repetitive pattern: N + V + V-ed2:

The Bridegroom's doors/are/opened
The guests/are/met
The feast/is/set

The metaphrasms sustain the same movement; thus, the alliterations in line 5:

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide

and in line 6:

And I am next of kin

and also in the subtle pattern of lines 7-8:

The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.

In the two lines above, actually, the assonances (/e/ in guests, met, set, merry, /i:/ in feast, hear) intertwine with the consonances (/st/ in guests, feast, may'st) and the internal rhymes (met - set) to produce both a sustained jingling sound that suggests the would-be merriment of the forthcoming celebration and the hurried panting rhythm which already foretells its impending doom.

One question that one might ask and which may seem of minor importance is: why was the wedding-guest chosen? It is obvious that all over the poem, his attitude is one of awe and intense compassion, as is expressed through his exclamatory language. Could we consider that the balladeer might be some unknown minstrel of the late sixteenth century reporting the tale he himself heard from a Mariner while about to attend the wedding of a relative? Some evidence, I think, can be drawn from the similarities between the verbal patterns of the guest and of the balladeer. The former is said to have become "wiser" in the end: is it not because the Mariner, being compelled to tell his tale, selected one among many whom, he felt, would understand him and might have in him the virtual power to turn his own tale into a poem? The narrator's part of the poem, both as wedding-guest and as balladeer, is there to emphasize the general effect that the Mariner's narrative (the poem) produced on the listener. Although apparently simple, the eminently expressive language used by the minstrel (a language based on expression as the best servant to content), functions as a counterweight to point out even more clearly the poetic power and effectiveness of the Mariner's part.

The wedding-guest appears again in parts IV and V, and the general scheme of his verbal intervention is the same: exclamatory and descriptive. Yet the way he uses the resources of expression to serve his purpose shows that he has a full command of the technique of the legendary

minstrels as imagined in the late 18th century and which enabled them to attract noblemen's attention to their peregrinations from one castle to another. The metataxes, for instance, are cleverly used. He skilfully combines the anaphora "I fear" (ll. 224, 225, 228), which emphasizes the Mariner's awe-inspiring personality ("thee") as well as the most striking elements of his appearance (the hand and the eye), with the polysyndeton (ll. 226, 228-29):

And thou art long, and lank, and brown,

 I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
 And thy skinny hand, so brown.

The very handling of the enumeration of the Mariner's physical attributes makes it impressive: thee/thy hand/thee/thy eye/thy hand. The description is centred upon the Mariner as a whole personality (thee, thy /s/) and the two organs that draw an observer's attention (hand and eye). Emphasis, at the same time, is strong on the adjectives: skinny, long, lank, brown, glittering.

But the guest, if he is also the balladeer, is a poet, though a less "imaginative" one (relying more on "fancy" than on "imagination", as is the case with the Mariner-poet); his being able to work out a simile is enough evidence:

And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
 As is the ribbed sea-sand.

The metasequence of comprising the Mariner's lean appearance to a skeleton suggests death (the actual physical death of the crew but also the spiritual death of the Mariner, temporary, of course, but soon to be followed by his social death and estrangement from the joys of life and companionship); the whole, however, is strengthened by

its origin in the vision conjured up by the rippling movement of the sand on the beach, which proves that the wedding-guest has not been chosen by mere chance but that the Mariner found in him potentialities for poetic creation. The only word uttered by the wedding-guest after this is found in line 345 (part V) and it is again one expressive of fear. In the next parts, VI and VII, extra voices will have vanished; except, that is, for the balladeer's ultimate recognition that the Mariner's discourse achieved the expected effect (ll. 618-25).

The balladeer, relating what he had heard some time before, must now ensure that the narrative he wants to make into a symbol is given the appropriate form, the only form he is capable of expressing it in by sheer habit: the ballad. Not being as considerable a poet as the Mariner, the minstrel, remembering perhaps the Mariner's forcefully metaphorical language, might have decided to turn what he said, and which had overwhelmed him, into one unified (and unifying) expressive pattern.

The ballad scheme is introduced from the start and will keep close to the traditional frame, except, and this is significant, for some of the most pregnant passages of the Mariner's speech; otherwise the conventional four-line stanza is maintained as well as the iambic structure of tetrameter - trimeter - tetrameter - trimeter, with the trimeters rhyming. The other elements typical of the ballad-structure are also present. In part I, besides the alliterative network inherent in such a scheme, the iterative pattern characteristic of the ballad grants the balladeer's discourse effectiveness: repetition of the anaphoric type:

He holds him with his skinny hand

...

He holds him with his glittering eye

repetitions:

The Wedding-Guest stood still
 The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone
 The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast
 The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast
 He cannot choose but hear
 Yet he cannot choose but hear.

The balladeer, still influenced, probably, by what he heard, uses the same sort of language to describe the most outstanding aspects of the Mariner: he also points out the "skinny hand", the "glittering eye" and the "bright-eyed" man.

As a poet (almost all minstrels were bound to have some poetic talent), he is accustomed to similes of the plainest type:

And listens like a three years' child

The impact upon a listener is meant to be straightforward and the images appealing, so everyone would perceive at once the dumbfoundedness of the swestruck guest forced to listen, like a little child, to the weird, peremptory old man who addressed him. The balladeer's function is not to develop elaborate images (and most likely he could not do it) but rather to create as adequate a medium as he can for the real poem, the Mariner's discourse.

This is clear in the next, and last, of the balladeer's interventions, in part VII. Here he unambiguously emphasizes the importance of the poetic effect; it is for

him to drive home to the reader (or listener) what the Mariner as poet has achieved. This first effect of the speech on the guest is that even though the speaker is now gone, the magic of his words still lingers and will bring the guest to turn his back on the celebration he looked forward to taking part in and renounce its frivolity and do so as rather to adopt seclusion and silence. Secondly, the shock he endures is physical as well as mental; the guest is "stunned" and "of sense forlorn" and the link between him and the usual earthly things is broken; he is now another man, different from the man he used to be before the Mariner's speech. Eventually, the effectiveness of the discourse shows in the cognitive paradox: the poetic discourse conveys knowledge to the guest but knowledge of the way of the world carries awareness of its eminently tragic dimension and this plunges him into sadness.

As a poet of the more popular type, the minstrel is skilful at using the appropriate structures of expression. Thus his arrangement of the syntactic patterns consists of repetitions which enforce the reader's attention to the Mariner's striking physical features:

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar.

Besides, the relative clause in lines 618-19 serves to emphasize the semantic value of "Is gone", for the latter intervenes after the main clause has had its end delayed; it is also given special stress owing to its position at the beginning of the next line. The whole stanza is effective because of the clever disposition of the names of the two protagonists: "The Mariner" is at the beginning of the first line of the stanza and opposed to "the Wedding-Guest" at the end of the third line; in

addition, the short phrase related to the attitude of the Mariner, "Is gone", at the beginning of the penultimate line stands in direct opposition to the verb which qualifies the guest's own attitude: "Turned", at the beginning of the very next line. The stanza calls attention to the fact that although at a distance one from the other, the poet and the guest-minstrel are now linked for ever by a power which is superior to time and distance. Now that the Mariner has departed from the space where they met, the impact of his speech is still vivid, for the guest has decided to turn away from unknowing merriment and perhaps to communicate his new wisdom.

Among the various alterations the poem underwent between 1798 and 1817, the change in the title from "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere" to "The Ancient Mariner. A Poet's Reverie" introduced in 1800, is a most significant one. If "Kubla Khan", subtitled "A Vision in a Dream", has practically always been regarded as a poem about poetic creation, "The Rime" lays down one isotopy out of the several traceable which undoubtedly establishes the poem as a discourse about the poetic process. Yet whereas in "Kubla Khan" the poet's dream was expressed as more or less one voice, in "The Rime" it splits into as many voices as the minstrel's, the wedding-guest's (although in my opinion they might be the same voice), the scholar's who wrote the gloss and the Mariner's.

The idea one might get, of course, is that the poem is actually a broken discourse containing various levels that eventually preclude the whole from being a unified work. Jerome J. McGann has demonstrated that when read with Coleridge's own hermeneutic system in mind the poem retains as much semantic continuity and consistence as does the Bible through its many interpretations, reinterpretations and commentaries, or, as McGann phrases it:

Given a coherent cultural tradition, the text which exhibits marks of its historical passage (in the form of later interpolations, glosses, and other textual additions and "impurities") retains its ideological coherence despite the process of apparent fragmentation. Such a text is, in truth, a Book of Revelation by itself, an apocalypse of its evolved and interconnected poetic/religious coherences. (1)

Semantically then, the poem "is structured around three fundamental ideologies: pagan superstition and philosophy, Catholic legend and theology, and Broad Church Protestantism" (2) and each adds to the whole its own level of interpretation which does not alter fundamentally the general meaning of the text.

The ideological coherence is matched by a similar coherence on the linguistic side. McGann explains the mechanism by means of the continuity of Coleridge's thought as seen in such poems as "The Destiny of Nations", written in 1796, and his later prose works. Just as in the Bible, Coleridge's writings show an unmistakable isotopic continuity as the following lines from "The Destiny of Nations" manifest:

But chiefly this, him First, him Last to view
Through meaner powers and secondary things
Effulgent, as through clouds that veil his blaze. (3)

The Basic Power described here that expresses itself through "meaner powers and secondary things" is akin to the isotopic force subsuming words denotatively different yet alike through their semic organization. What McGann terms "symbolism" belongs to the field of isotopic distributions that transfix a poetic discourse so as to give it its unity. They constitute the "dim similitude" by which "Infinite myriads of self-conscious minds/ Are one all-conscious Spirit, which informs/With absolute ubiquity of thought [...] All his involved Monads." (4)

"The Rime" illustrates beautifully Coleridge's poetic theories; it exhibits particularly how poetic discourse is the synthesis of opposite forces, both antagonistic and held together by a unifying power rooted in language itself. It actualizes language in its own making through the underlying isotopic coherence and the motivating process which makes of expression the complement of content, even though the latter at once predominates and founds the former. For it is first expression which confers upon the whole poem the unity of its apprehension, it is through the structures of expression that the minstrel's construction and the Mariner's tale are perceived as one; but it is through the Mariner's higher gift of subliming content that the tale he is forced to tell at intervals assumes the might of a complete and tremendously effective poetic piece. If the tale is "a poet's reverie", just as "Kubla Khan", at least the first 36 lines, is a poet's dream, then we are entitled to see the minstrel's contribution as a mere preparation for the higher poet's main piece. The minstrel's merit, therefore, lies in his having embodied a forceful recollection into the pattern of minstrel (not exactly traditional) balladry, in which Coleridge felt justified to attenuate the most sensational elements. He must have felt, ultimately, that the Gothic armoury with its train of gaudy archaisms and hair-raising descriptions was superfluous and would more and more be perceived as such as time elapsed. The poem, if it was to endure, had to return gradually and decidedly to the core of what constitutes the poetic force: not so much the sing-song repetition of horrific patterns as the insidious iteration of a seminal idea. The world of the Mariner's tale is uniquely and formidably the world of language building itself into a peerless, indestructible universe of its own.

Excepting the author of the gloss, we may consider the voices heard in the poem to be two: the minstrel, who, I think, is one and the same with the wedding-guest, and the Mariner. If both can be regarded as poets, only one is said to have "strange power of speech." By desynonymizing the word "strange" we obtain the notions "from the outside", "exterior" and "alien to the family, country, etc." (Latin "extraneus"). Besides, the OED entry points to the "alien", the "unknown", the "unfamiliar", "unusual", "abnormal", etc. We are therefore justified in interpreting the phrase "strange power" as at least meaning: a) a power which is not normally inherent in people but present in some of them; b) among those who have "power of speech", the Mariner's is exceptional, unusual, beyond the norm; c) from a twentieth-century standpoint, this power would be related not to the nuclear part of linguistic units (the denotative, semantemic area of lexemes) but to their peripheral part (the connotative, virtuenic area).

The minstrel is clearly a poet of the more "usual" type; this involves on his part the ability to perform poetic discourse of a conventional type. It enables him, for instance, to provide the Mariner's speech and his own connective passages with a unity which is mainly achieved by the structure of the expression plane. Above all, the minstrel embodies the Mariner's highly poetic discourse in a general form, the ballad, which is liable to impress the potential reader. The traditional popular ballad, with its refrains and repetitions, was an oral form; the iterative patterns - alliterations, assonances, rhymes, internal rhymes, anaphora - bring about a rhythmical assertiveness which soon becomes hauntingly pervasive. To produce the utmost impact, the Mariner's message must be set in in a most emphatic structure and that of the ballad is perfectly suitable. The expression selected by the minstrel acts as a very effective signal but his own

talent or perhaps the Mariner's power is such that in the echo we get the expression matches the content.

An example of the union of content and expression is afforded by the following passages:

The Wedding-Guest here heast his bresst,
For he heard the loud bassoon

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
...

The minstrel is aware of the sound-symbolism at his disposal; he realizes that the back vowels and diphthongs tend to suggest portentous events, as is the case with ['fo:hihə:dəlaudbæsu:n'], while front vowels rather suggest serenity, joyfulness and good omens, as in [ʃipwəztfiðdɒns: bəkliəd merilididwidrop'].

If the minstrel is a poet, and a good one at that, what then distinguishes the poet with "strange power of speech" from the more "ordinarily" gifted one? The answer is obvious: their handling of imagery, or rather its almost complete absence in one case and its flourishing in the other.

The definitions of the very concept of imagery in Coleridge's time were hardly less accurate and comprehensive than those of today. A.J. Greimas and J. Courtès in their dictionary of semiotics describe an image as "une unité de manifestation autosuffisante, comme un tout de signification, susceptible d'être soumis à l'analyse." (5) The idea that it is a unit and self-sufficient is important, for it completes Coleridge's description of the poetic discourse as a succession of wholes organic in themselves but also fitting in a larger whole that contains them. It is a

meaningful whole, in addition, and liable to interpretations, which involves content to a large extent.

The word image, however, implies volens nolens the notion that such units might be essentially visual or at least fundamentally related to the senses. Yet most specialists insist on the extrasensory as well as sensory nature of literary images. Coleridge himself, one ought to remember,

develops the eighteenth-century attempt to emancipate theories of imagination from the "despotism of the eye". This attempt claims that the language of poetry is philosophically significant in exemplifying an exception to the empiricist model of knowledge. (6)

Actually, even though imagery can be said to represent things, it does not ensue that it necessarily concerns the eye or any other sense. As René Wellek and Austin Warren put it:

In psychology, the word "image" means a mental reproduction, a memory, of a past sensational or perceptual experience, not necessarily visual. (7)

If indeed many images are visual or gustatory or olfactory or even thermal or pressure images, others are "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time", a "unification of disparate ideas". (8) The latter definition would suit Coleridge perfectly, for it emphasizes his conception of poetry as a synthetic force, an "esemplastic" power.

Imagery, as a matter of fact, can be divided into two categories, according to whether they involve metabolites or not. Metabolic imagery corresponds to what J.A. Cuddon in his A Dictionary of Literary Terms calls "literal" images while non-metabolic imagery covers his "perceptual" and "conceptual" categories, the distinction

between them being difficult to establish. Thus, the first couple of lines of "The Rime":

It is an ancient Mariner
And he stoppeth one of three

is a non-metabolic image because it involves no operation on the language: the image here, clearly visual, is a mere statement of fact.

Metabolic imagery, which, like non-metabolic imagery, can be sensory or extra-sensory, involves the operations on content Group Mu name metaboles (9) and covers the field usually ascribed to figurative language. This explains why imagery is often confused with such notions as symbols, allegory or even metaphor.

In the circumstances, etymology does not help much. Allegory comes from Greek "allegoria", meaning "speaking otherwise", and symbol derives from Greek "symballein", "to throw together", whereas the noun "symbolon" means "mark", "emblem", "token", "sign".

As for imagery, it comes from Latin and means "making of likenesses". J.A. Cuddon does not alleviate our perplexity by saying that "a literary symbol combines an image with a concept" (10) and that allegory has a double meaning: "a primary or surface meaning; and a secondary or under-the-surface meaning". (11) One way out of the predicament is convincingly offered by Wellek and Warren:

Is there any important sense in which "symbol" differs from "image" and "metaphor"? Primarily, we think, in the recurrence and persistence of the "symbol". An "image" may be invoked once as a metaphor, but if it persistently recurs, both as presentation and representation, it becomes a symbol, may even become part of a symbolic (or mythic) system. (12)

Coleridge, after all, has always made a distinction between allegory, which he sees as an abstract notion translated into a picture language, hence something fixed and rather inert, and metaphoric language, which is the foundation of poetic language, what corresponds to metabolic imagery and thus involves the fusion of opposites through their elements liable to constitute an isotopic unity. The Mariner's discourse is more emphatically poetic because it creates, out of individual metaboles which are both complete unities but also organically part of a whole, a tremendous unified entity, the poem, which becomes a palpable symbol; a representation and a part of what it represents.

The minstrel, I have stated, is a poet, a good one even if a more "usual" one than the Mariner. The "strange power of speech" he does not possess nevertheless enables him to embody the Mariner's recollected discourse and build up a unified whole by means of a plane of expression organically suited to the plane of content. But the minstrel's poetic power is a limited one, as appears from an examination of his imagery.

The minstrel's imagery is essentially non-metabolic. His function, as a poet, consists mainly in providing a unity of expression for the Mariner's speech to exist as an effective poem. With the abrupt opening, the recurrence of the numbers 3, 7 and 9, (13) the structure of the first stanza, which is similar to the first stanza of the ballad of Sir Patrick Spence that Coleridge mentions in "Dejection", the other elements inherent in a popular form, the expression plane of the poem is one which is particularly suited for oral expression and thus easy to remember and efficient as a signal. Likewise, the imagery is both traditional and simple. What is supposed to

strike and leave a mark in the reader's memory is the Mariner's discourse, it is his imagery that must impress the reader and make him "sadder" and "wiser".

The minstrel's imagery, therefore, is above all descriptive and visual: the reader is immediately made aware of the situation (first stanza), of the Mariner's appearance, of his odd fascinating power of attraction (his "glittering eye") that the guest cannot possibly resist. In order to emphasize the latter, the minstrel uses a simple, popular simile:

And listens like a three years' child.

When it comes to describing one of the only happy moments in the poem, the bride's appearance, the minstrel makes use of another old ballad cliché:

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she

one that Robert Burns had revived before him. The image is appropriate, however, for several reasons. First of all, the simile being almost conventional, it is also perceived by the reader wholly and unambiguously. The interjective area of the metasememe presents itself at once with all its content: what the bride and the rose have in common is beauty, freshness, purity and a blushing shyness. Secondly, the simplicity and serenity of the image is later contrasted with the harlot's leprous whiteness in part III.

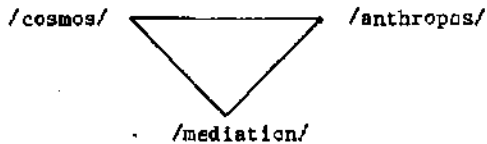
Thirdly, the unimpeded happiness of the stanza is opposed to the ominous meaning of the previous lines. It is here precisely that the minstrel shows he can also make proper use of the polysemous quality of language. He can first of all, very skilfully, force upon the reader portentous

connotations by breaking off the Mariner's ascending enthusiasm with comparable lines which are loaded with foreboding:

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon -'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

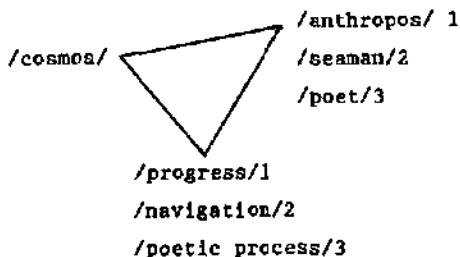
Seen in its syntagmatic context, the anachronistic "bassoon" (according to the OED, no such word can be found in English before 1727) is felt to read on more than one isotopy. Yet even the basic isotopy /music/ is important, considering how momentous sounds in general and musical sounds in particular are to Coleridge: poetic discourse, we already know it, is, in his mind, inseparable from sonorities and music. We can thus feel justified in reading "bassoon" on a second isotopy /logos/. This second isotopy receives specific attributes from the context. There is, to begin with, the fundamental notion that an apparently perfect process is being interrupted. The circular movement of the sun rising and setting connotes happy circumstances and a foreseeable completion of the process under way. Then the comparative shows a happy progression up to a climax while the main words - "shone bright", "higher and higher", "over the mast", "noon" - point to the fulfilment of promises and a full store of energy, power and beauty.

The next two lines, 31-32, are forcefully negative in that they interrupt the process, they point out the wedding-guest's desperate gesture, they designate the bassoon as the cause of the latter ("For" is an important logical connector and we know what consideration Coleridge used to give logical connectors), the role of the bassoon being reinforced by the fact that it comes at



one has now legitimate reasons to read the third isotopy /mediation/ as: 1) progress through life, during which man, seen as the traditional Everyman, endeavours to bridge the opposition between the universe and himself by means of referential elements, as e.g. woman (sexual intercourse, love), work (his direct action on whatever is not himself, in other words on the substance of the universe), religion (a mystic attempt at joining the antagonists), etc. 2) navigation; the opposites, here, are, more specifically, man's intellect, emotions and skill, on the one hand, and the natural elements (sea, air, fish), on the other hand.

It is here, however, that the unifying function of the minstrel intervenes, for it is by adding the episode of the bassoon that he changes the ordinary course of reading. Instead of a fundamental isotopy /mediation/ reading on the sub-isotopies /navigation/ and /progress/, eventually rather trite, we are led to open it on a third sub-isotopy /logos/ owing to the association: bassoon music referential mediation literature poetic discourse. The triadic pattern now reads:



In other words, our third fundamental isotopy, /mediation/, reads on three sub-isotopies:

13 /mediation/ : si1 /progress/
 si2 /navigation/
 si3 /logos/ or /poetic process/ or
 /process/

In si3, i1 /cosmos/ involves sensuous impressions (visual, auditory, etc) and, more particularly, sounds (phonemes), while i2 /anthropos/ involves the poet's conceptual and emotional faculties. In si1, Everyman, as a consequence of his wrong doing, will become a pilgrim, a wanderer, whereas in both si2 and si3, the seaman and the poet will be doomed, which, in the former case, is expressed by the Mariner's odd, disquieting way of detaining unknown (but by no means haphazardly chosen) people to tell them his tale, and, in the latter, by the poet's urge to create so as to compensate for his criminal gesture but also to deliver an important message to the world.

The sound of the bassoon, which interrupts the Mariner's tale, portends failure through impotence as well as joylessness. The association, I have said, between bassoon, music, musician (or composer), poetry and poet, allows us to privilege si3 as the main sub-isotopic level of reading. We shall follow the chief areas through which, in the poem, si3 builds itself (I have determined 7 such areas) through Coleridge's use of the language.

Area One: Preliminaries (ll. 21-30)

The isotopy, or sub-isotopy, that poetic discourse values most is the deepest one. If si2 here is unambiguous, for

"ship", "harbour", "lighthouse", "sea" and "mast" read obviously on /navigation/, and if we admit *sil* as taken for granted, *si3* has yet to be built. The first word, "ship", denotes an object of considerable size, a human artifact, made to move over a surface and by doing so to artificially join man, who is normally unable to cross the sea, and the universe (the sea ceases to be a hostile surface, although it remains a treacherous one). In the perspective I have put emphasis on, that of *si3*, the word "ship" provides the notion of a long artifact whose function is to move on a surface so as to produce something that is usually regarded as a mediatory construction. The "ship", in other words, can connote the instrument indispensable to poetic creation: the pen. The word is of course liable to become fundamental in the poem; as such, it is necessary to reinforce its specific content as a basic component of *si3*. This is effected by a number of primary elements but also by a number of subsidiary elements which are nevertheless of importance. The primary elements are:

"drop" → fall drop by drop, which, in the circumstances, can be read: fall sign by sign or phoneme by phoneme; besides, the word is both positive (dropping water amounts to a quantity of liquid which quenches thirst) and negative (fall is often inherently negative; see also the senses "weaken", "fall", etc. which all can qualify "drop") and hence characterizes the antithetical aspect of the poetic discourse

"cleared" → the word is related to "harbour", both a departure place and a place of safety; writing is here connoted as an operation which is not safe, a movement towards the unpredictable, the unsteadiness of the world; the word also points to the white page: the space, void of signs and prepared for signs to drop on it

"cheered" → the word refers to "high spirits" which means the spiritual at the basis of the poetic process as much as hope and joy, reinforced by "merry", the necessary emotional stimulus Coleridge has always needed to create

As to the subsidiary elements, they serve to strengthen s13 as hinted by the primary ones:

- "kirk" → religion, hence referential mediation
 "hill" → may refer to Mount Parnassus
 "lighthouse" → traditionally, the main authors in literature are looked upon as people who light the way for mankind

The general content of this first area is double. It points to the poetic process but also to the favourable auspices under which the movement is launched. The idea that prevails is that there are hopes for an unimpeded journey, metaphoric or otherwise.

2. Area Two: The Prospective Doom (ll. 31-38)

The interruption of the discourse by the bassoon has already been analysed; there is no need, therefore, to elaborate on it. I shall just emphasize how, retrospectively, it helps to re-evaluate the discourse by way of confirmation of the reading of the poem on s13. Whatever the sub-isotopy, after all, the movement that has just started is doomed to fail. As progress through life, it is likely to come upon tragic circumstances; as a sea journey, it will probably not often meet with fair winds; as a creative process, it is bound to come to grips with uncertainty, unhappiness and impotence.

3. Area Three: Thesis (ll. 41-62)

This area witnesses the assertiveness of the universe but also, somewhat paradoxically, the reinforcement of s13.

The first two isotopies, /cosmos/ and /anthropos/, are antagonistic forces which, in the triad, can be considered the thesis and antithesis fundamentally opposed but to be unified in a synthesis. The emphatic assertiveness of /cosmos/ here is the affirmation of the thesis in the form of natural elements. The universe manifests itself as wind, ice, mist and snow. They have in common their character of impediment. The wind is "strong" and "tyrannous", mist and snow impress uniformity on the landscape while the ice pervades the whole scene. As a first counterpart to the assertiveness of the universe, /anthropos/ is rather inconsistent and therefore s13 occurs in an atmosphere of dread and indecision.

The sub-isotopy is connoted especially in two places: inside the storm-metaphor (41-50) and in the lines about the snowy clifts.

The chief element of s13, so far, has been the ship which we described as an artifact with the function to move over a surface so as to produce something. It is here reinforced as follows:

"chased", "pursued", "fled", "drove" → energy: connotes the dynamism of poetic creation

"loud roared the blast" → to the notion of energy is added that of sound (nature's chief contribution to the poetic process)

"masts", "prow" → both are long, somewhat pointed elements that might just as well connote the phallus, on s11, as an emblematic pen on s13

"dipping" → the basic meaning of "putting into a liquid" sustains the image of the pen to be dipped into ink

"sloping", "bends" → connote the graphic symbols, the tracing of linguistic signs

But instead of an image of serenity, what prevails here is a notion of painful proceeding dominated by fear and apprehension. This is obvious with the natural elements that can be read on two isotopies. One of them is "wind", to which we shall return later; the other is "ice". It reads on i1 /cosmos/ but also on si3 owing to the importance it is given in Coleridge's writings, especially in "Frost at Midnight" where it symbolizes the poetic process. Seen both as the natural process of creation at work in nature (i1) and the similar force in the poet's mind, it is overwhelmingly present. The idea that it belongs to si3 is further asserted by its position and function in the passage.

In the following lines:

And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald

it is seen as a pervading force that tends to overpower the mast, which, synecdochically, reads like "ship" and hence connotes si3. Besides, the lines end with a simile and metaemes traditionally index on an isotopy /logos/.

The word next appears in another couplet:

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen

"Drifts" are floating or drifting ice and "snowy clifts" are huge fissures filled with snow. Here too the lines end with a metabole, in this case an oxymoron ("dismal" = gloomy vs "sheen" = bright). The figure is capital since we know that to Coleridge, poetry is an oxymoronic process; "dismal", which connotes negative elements,

opposes to "sheen", of which the semic distribution is "brightness", "shiny quality". The oxymoron symbolizes once more the opposites the poetic process is to synthesize into a beautiful whole.

The word "ice" then occurs in the following stanza:

The ice was here, the ice was there,
 The ice was all around:
 It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
 Like noises in a swound!

The laying out of the word "ice" has been progressive. It has first appeared in a couplet ending with a simile, then in a couplet ending with an oxymoron, a metabole which, in Coleridge's conception, is more important than a simile; it is then in a four-line stanza which, at the same time, forms a more complete and highly motivated whole.

The first two lines are built into a structure which is basically anaphoric; the insistence on the over-all presence of the ice is forwarded by the triad "here", "there", "all around", the first two elements figuring the antagonists synthesized into the third. The triad here symbolizes the fundamental triad of the poetic process. The last two lines illustrate one of the three degrees of onomatopoeia as described by Wellek and Warren. One is "the actual imitation of physical sounds" as in "cuckoo"; a second degree consists in devising some "elaborate sound-painting" while a last one is constituted by "sound-symbolism or sound-metaphor". The second type is "the reproduction of natural sounds through speech-sounds in a context where words, in themselves devoid of onomatopoeic effects, will be drawn into a sound pattern" as in the example: "the murmuring of innumerable bees". The effect "is really dependent on the meaning." (14) The noises alluded to in the poem

partake of this second degree, although they are not totally independent of the first degree. But if each word in line 61 has an onomatopoeic quality it owes to the opposition between its consonants and vowels or diphthongs, the quality is considerably increased by their being laid in succession. The triad in the first two lines, in addition, is reproduced here with the interconsonantic vowels of the first and third words opposed to the interconsonantic diphthongs of the second and fourth words. What is more, the vowels are between consonants that are twice alike: /k/ before and after the vowel in "cracked", /r/ before and after the vowel in "roared". In the second and third words, on the other hand, the diphthongs and the phonemic distributions that follow are identical, only the beginning of the words being different: "growled", "howled". The triad is made up of the sounds of the first and third words opposed to the sounds of the second and fourth synthesized into the word "noises" in line 62. The stanza, in addition, ends once again with a metabole, a simile which is enough to connote a13.

The word "ice", finally, appears in a last context which is capital to a correct apprehension of what the language does in the poem:

The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

Here again, the basic pattern is the same. The structure is the couplet, in the first three passages as well as in the fourth, only it is extended over twice two lines in the essential stanza about the omnipresence of the noisy ice. And here again the sonorous quality of the process is pointed out. The assonance in "the", "did", "split", "with", "fit" sounds like a sharp cut reinforced by a similar sound in "steered". And here also the last two lines end with a simile.

The reading on s13 is now unambiguous. The metaphor of the storm was the first intimation that the poetic process, just like progress through life and sea-crossing, is not easy, cristal-clear and unimpeded but hard, rough, confusing and above all painful. If the "ice" symbolizes the poetic process, here as in "Frost at Midnight", it clearly connotes something oxymoronic, for it is at once "cold" and "dismal" but also "wondrous", "green as emerald", and has a "sheen". The positive prevails since it is emphasized by a simile, yet it remains oxymoronic as is obvious in the two oxymora: "wondrous cold" and "dismal sheen".

Actually, the literary world, the world of poetic creation is not reassuring. It is a world of unknown forms, including the signs at the writer's disposal which it is his duty to transform into something definite, to shape into something as yet unseen and unheard of. When the ship comes to a place where

Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken

the intimation is clear that it behoves the poet to create shapes of men and beasts that are recognizable, having meanings. The only way, however, out of a world of too many doubts and a tortured soul is entirely contained in a solution the poet possesses in himself. The guiding, spiritual principle connoted by the albatross is the only help the poet can expect to be steered by or rather to steer himself through a universe at once meaningless and cruelly self-assertive. For the cosmos resists the attempts of man as well as of the seaman or the poet; it is up to him to find in his own mind the principle of resistance without which he is impotent and unhappy.

4. Area Four: Antithesis (ll. 63-82)

In this passage, after more than sixty lines, the second fundamental isotopy, /anthropos/, really occurs, practically for the first time. Inconsistent until the arrival of the bird, the men - mankind, seamen, poets - actually come to life. The isotopy is first indicated by the personal pronoun "we" which includes the Mariner and the crew. On 63, the Mariner reads as a poet among others, one particularly gifted but co-responsible with the others for whatever action he commits.

The Mariner and the crew are the manifestation of the antithesis, the counterpart of nature's assertiveness, now the poet's assertiveness which might have taken a right turn if the apparition of the albatross had been interpreted correctly. The bird pierces through the fog, which might be a sign that the hard, cold assertiveness of the cosmos is alleviated by a living principle liable to serve the poet as a guide.

The word "albatross" (end of line 63) faces up to the pronoun "we" (beginning of line 66) diagonally; together with their leading characteristic, they constitute an interesting pattern which is again dual: "Albatross" and "Christian soul" vs "we" and "in God's name". The interaction that takes place between them is reciprocal: an exchange from one to the other. From the latter to the former, food; from the former to the latter, a symbol of fertility and energy: the circle ("And round and round it flew"). It is as a result of this second part of the exchange that the steersman is capable of leading the ship out of the prison of ice.

Since the purpose of this essay is not mainly an interpretation of "The Rime", I shall leave aside the problem of exactly what the albatross stands for, of what all its implications might amount to. I shall content

myself with what the text actually provides: namely that it is related to the soul and to the Christian God. It is enough, I think, to assume that the albatross represents a spiritual guide, a spiritual principle without which no poetic creation can reach its goal. If the movement of thesis characteristic of nature is to be counteracted by an antithetical movement on the part of the poet, it cannot be carried out successfully unless the poet is led by a principle connected both to a Christian background and to moral and transcendental elements.

At the beginning, the Mariner and his crew do not reject the spiritual principle and as a consequence a "good south wind" is "sprung up" from behind, connoting energy and dynamism. Mist, cloud, on the one hand, mast, shroud, on the other, are on equal terms; thanks to the bird, as a matter of fact the spiritual principle, the assertiveness of the universe is counterbalanced by a similar assertiveness of man. The journey, poetic creation on sl3, is consequently successful. The rupture intervenes with the Mariner's gesture, inexplicable unless one regards it as a foolish or inconsequent or lofty refusal to be guided, to accept a spiritual principle of whatever sort. The gesture does not only precipitate the Mariner's doom but also reveals the function of the moon. The latter acts as a kind of watchman whose function it is to safeguard the organic principle. If the poetic process consists of synthesizing the fundamental antagonists, man and the universe, into an organic whole, nothing worthwhile can possibly be achieved if the organic principle is disregarded. If poetic creation is parallel to natural creation, the organic principle must be respected. By shooting the albatross, a symbol of purity (slbs = white) and spiritual benevolence, the Mariner has deprived the universe of whatever amenity it might have felt for man:

as a poet, he has provoked the cosmos, and by doing so he has brought upon himself the cold, ruthless, meaningless assertiveness of an empty sky.

5. Area Five: The Miscarried Synthesis (ll. 103-26/135-38)

Owing to the portentous signal we have examined in the second area, we already gather that the poet's doom should involve failure in the form of impotence as well as joylessness. There remain two notions to clarify, which amount to answering the following questions: 1) What is the poetic process going to be like now that the rejection of the spiritual principle has been effected? 2) What will the poet's gesture bring him as a punishment?

The first question can already be partially answered: the poetic process should fail by reason of the poet's impotence. As for the second question, it should be possible to say that the poet's gesture is one of un-love and as such it should prompt a reaction of hostility on the part of the universe because of the rupture of the necessary organic solidarity.

Read on s13 the consequence of the gesture for the poetic process is entirely contained in lines 105-106:

We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

The passage opens on a antithesis: "burst" vs "silent". The metable is no longer an oxymoron but an antithesis or a contradiction that cannot be solved: it is amplified a few lines further on:

And we did speak only to break
The allence of the sea!

Here "speak" is semantically (owing to common senses) equivalent to "burst" and opposed to "silence". In either case, the common term is "sea" we have determined to read metaphorically as "page", thus connoting the poetic process. The sea is a stretch of water just as the written page is a stretch of words, but both are negated by "silent" and "silence". The doomed poet may have words at his disposal but the result is nil; likewise the doomed seamen may have plenty of water under the keel but he will remain thirsty:

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

Here again the word "drop" is used but negatively, as if to indicate that the dynamic side of the discourse has been eradicated to be superseded by its static side. There is no "drop" to drink, just as the wind "dropt" and the sails "dropt down". The poet's failure is now accomplished: his impotence consists of his producing the negation of a discourse: an anti-discourse.

Let us name the components of the discourse: the sea (page), water (words), energy that can prompt movement (air-in-motion), antagonistic forces (/cosmos/ - /anthropos/, sun - moon).

Air-in-motion, in the poem, manifests itself as: a. the south wind, b. the blast or, more precisely, a gentle element (the good south wind, the breeze) and a forceful, strongly felt element (the noisy, "roaring" wind). Together they manifest the principle of duality indispensable to poetic creation; when one of the two is missing, the process fails. At the outset of the passage, the breeze slackens and vanishes; as a result, the motion

of the ship collapses. Metaphorically also, air-in-motion is the air we breathe and as such indispensable to the poet. The movement that accompanies language here is empty and devoid of effect: what prevails is silence and when the men speak it amounts to nothing significant, just language for the sake of language.

The sea is silent, or, on s13, the written page is devoid of meaning. Even before the final doom takes place, "the furrow followed free", in other words there is no more constraint, just emptiness, weakness, words without weight. As to the water, it is useless as the words on the page are useless because they are unreadable.

The sun, without the counterbalancing influence of the moon, is sheer energy, one that burns and destroys; in the absence of one of the antagonistic forces, the power the poet is left with has become dangerous, liable to ruin its user.

The anti-discourse is now complete: the ship or the poet's action is "stuck":

As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

The main elements: "ship" and "ocean", or the pen and the page, are "idle", which can read: /aidl/ = a) idle: inactive, useless, worthless, b) idol: the spiritual principle has been replaced by a spurious guide; the notion is reinforced by the lines on the "death-fires" and the "witch's oils". The Christian principle has become a heathen one.

Above all, the organic principle that should direct the poet's hand has become a mechanical principle which enables him merely to produce "painted" objects; an illusory power producing illusory products.

The principal consequences of the gesture, foretold in the first part, have now become effective. The poet's action is a failure, he has become impotent, a simulacrum of a poet, but also he is unhappy and sad. What the poet feels is what Coleridge will later develop in "Dejection" and "Work Without Hope": his being unhappy precludes his power to create and therefore he will remain almost silent. The key-stanza here is:

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Doom is a fact, the poet is now a nonentity, a non-poet. His creative power has turned to impotence and sterility. What the lines about Death and Life-in-Death actually demonstrate is that whatever is attempted by the poet from now on is a fake, a wretched illusion. And the crew is irretrievably linked to the poet, they are co-responsible for what has happened. Doom is on them as well, and even more tragically severe on them because they do not even have the compensation that their creative power is to become exceptional.

The impotence leading to sterility continues in the third part, for here again the throats and lips and tongues are dry and useless. The fake is obvious: smiles are mere grins and when they open their mouths all they obtain is the illusion that they are drinking. They do not even have the consolation of death, which might at least prove the denial of suffering and of the sharp pain that goes along with impotence, with the awful recognition that one has lost a power that seemed granted for good. The utmost sterility, after all, is Life-in-Death, the certainty that the state of creative sterility is to last for ever. Everything that goes with creation assumes an artificial

appearance (red lips, yellow locks) or takes on the skeleton-like aspect which suggests the impossibility to produce anything valuable. The image of the ship is reversed; the sails are restless, it suggests anti-writing. The poet's artistic life is now in the hands of chance and whatever he may try to do will fail through the lack of a proper guiding principle.

6. Area Six: Energy Restored (ll. 263-91/301-72)

The turning point of the poem, and its centre, is found in the fourth part. Spatially, it occurs in the middle; qualitatively, it outbalances the triple movement of creation, miscarriage and failure. Boom is at its utmost but the elements of the recovery are already available. It is organically justified that the fourth part should open with a reference to the poet and his connection with a skeleton:

And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

There is confirmation of a distorted image of the triadic pattern. The simile about the poet who looks like a corpse is amplified by the image of the skeleton ship steered by Death and Life-in-Death. Only the cosmos is authentically itself, if coldly and ruthlessly so, mercilessly self-assertive; the other two components of the triad are reversed: the first isotopy, /cosmos/, is thus opposed to /anthropos/ and /logos/ in an unnatural way; anthropos, because of the poet's betrayal, has become anti-anthropos, and logos is now anti-logos, an anti-discourse.

Owing to his crime against the organic nature of the universe, the poet has been rejected from the circle of living creatures. His loneliness, because of his loss of a guiding principle, runs parallel to the sterility of his actions:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
 Alone on a wide wide sea!
 And never a saint took pity on
 My soul in agony.

The fundamental isotopies /anthropos/ and /cosmos/ function here as a model in reduction of the whole poem; /anthropos/ is wholly characterized by loneliness and the agony of the soul; /cosmos/, on the other hand, is marked by the sea and the adjective "wide". Rejection is entirely on the side of /anthropos/ while emptiness (an empty, sterile, useless width) is the only attribute of the sea, of the white or written page.

The representation is extended in the fourth stanza:

I looked upon the rotting sea,
 And drew my eyes away;
 I looked upon the rotting deck,
 And there the dead men lay.

The two basic elements of the poetic process, the sea-page and the ship (deck = ship by synecdoche)-pen, are rotten, another word semantically marked with sterility. To this sterility which characterizes the discourse, the author of the discourse likewise belongs; his heart is "as dry as dust". The doom reaches a peak with the metaphor which traditionally designates Coleridge's representation of a totality: the chiasmus:

For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
 Lay like a load on my weary eye,
 And the dead were at my feet.

The poet is condemned by the opposite faces of the universe, the sea and the sky, and the heaviness of impotence weighs on him like a final impediment, a fatal hindrance that no attempt on the poet's part is likely to overcome.

Everything, however, is ready for the reversal of the movement to take place. The central stanzas are these:

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes;
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

The poem opens two complementary spaces in which parallel occurrences take place: a) the Mariner's attitude: "I watched the water-snakes" (stanza 1) - "I watched their rich attire" (stanza 2) b) the movements of the snakes: "They moved in tracks of shining white" (stanza 1) - "They coiled and swam" (stanza 2) c) the spectacle thus created: "the elfish light/Fell off in hoary flakes" (stanza 1) - "and every track/Was a flash of golden fire" (stanza 2). The poet is led to understand that fertile dynamism is made up of both spaces, inside as well as outside the shadow, that there is no creation outside a communion with the organic universe, that beauty of attire is as much characteristic of dynamic movements in the shadowy as in the lighted spaces of the cosmos. When he has understood this, he feels the doom partially lifted up from his heart and sterility taken away.

The reversal of the movement occurs when all the components of poetic creation recover their function. Sterility becomes fertility again: dryness gives way to water: it "rained", clothes were "damp", the Mariner's body "drank", his lips were "wet". Motionlessness becomes motion: "I moved", the sound of the wind "shook the sails" of the ship, the ship "moved on" and air "burst into life", fire-flags and stars "were hurried about" and "danced". Silence changes to sonority: a "roaring" wind was heard. The moon changes her contemptuous attitude into benevolence again: water flows from a cloud and "The Moon is at its edge".

The movement, however, is still artificial, mechanical rather than organic. The crew are speechless, yet they "groaned, they stirred, they all uprose"; although there was no breeze, "The helmsman steered, the ship moved on"; the crew start working but it is through sheer habit:

The Mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do

and their limbs moved but "like lifeless tools".

A reminiscence of what the poetic process can be reaches the poet; it manifests itself through two essential components: sound and air-in-motion. Birds "sing" and one can hear their "jargoning"; instruments as of an orchestra are heard, a "flute" and a "song", which reminds us of the minstrelsy; the sails shake and produce a noise "like of a hidden brook", an image linked, in Coleridge's memory, to childhood as is obvious from some of his youth poems. Yet the air-in-motion is still distant, it does not touch the poet; the poetic power is still mechanical, superficial, only a surface level of language is set in movement.

7. Area Seven: The Poetic Power (ll. 442-467)

The turning point that allows the poetic power to shift from purely mechanical qualities to organic ones intervenes without further explanations than "this spell was snapt", which the gloss parallels by "the curse is finally exiated".

The power is back upon the poet, and first upon the poet alone, for he alone is responsible for the discourse:

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring -

...
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze -
On me alone it blew.

The poet is now going to have his power fully restored but he remains nevertheless a doomed poet. His country is returned to him but things are going to be different. The deep level of language will be joined to the surface level, he will then again be able, even more forcefully than before, to build up poetic discourses but for such power there is a high price to pay.

For the power he is to acquire now is "strange" and this has implications. First the incomprehension of the non-elected, such, for instance, as the Pilot's boy:

Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

His reaction is too much akin to that of the people who watch the poet in "Kubla Khan" for it to be only a coincidence; rather it shows the usual reaction of those who do not understand poetry, who will always remain alien to its discourse. Secondly, there is some incomprehension even on the part of the Hermit:

"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say -
What manner of man art thou?"

Finally, there is his rejection by his fellow-countrymen:

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company! -

But with this company of "Old man, and babes, and loving friends" he will not walk, nor with "youths and maidens gay".

The poet will be set on the way to poetic mediation by another mediator, the Hermit. The latter is linked to religion and mysticism and thus a priest of mediation between heaven and earth, between God and man, the universe and the human being. The agony which beckons to the poet that his time has come originates with the Hermit's question: "What manner of man art thou?" which forces him to tell his tale for the first time.

From now on, the poet's life will be one of paradoxes, a blending of suffering and creative force. His space will be one occupied by death and life, darkness and light. The metaphor used by the Hermit to describe the ship suits the content of the passage perfectly:

I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
 My forest-brook along;
 When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
 And the owl whoops to the wolf below,
 That eats the she-wolf's young.'

The image of the skeleton and that of the wolf are pregnant: 1) the skeleton image connotes death which will never leave the poet's mind and will pursue him as an idea like a curse; his creative life will never be one of complete life but one of Life-in-Death and hence of intense pain; 2) the brook, as often with Coleridge, suggests the poet's childhood but at the same time a childhood marred by the curse that is on him; 3) the Mariner's gesture has for ever led him astray from the world of men: now he is a living being who, by his crime against the organic system of the universe, has jeopardised, for a time, the survival of his own race. The allusion to a "wolf" is certainly not fortuitous. The "warped" boards and "aere" sails of the ship are compared to the "brown skeletons of leaves" along the brook in the Hermit's forest at the time of a crisis. This is when a member of the animal community turns against it: a wolf "eats the she-wolf's young" and the owl, nature herald, sends at once a warning and a blame. Jean Haudry reminds us that in the Indo-European tradition society was considered as an organic whole. When a member of the community acted against its interests, he became excluded and therefore a "wolf". (15)

The poet, henceforth, is in full possession of a peerless poetic power and this power is to serve a high purpose. It is his duty, an imperative one, to impart to the world of men the truth of the world, namely that the fundamental structure of the universe, which covers both the cosmos and man, is organic. The spiritual principle compels him to call this Love; whatever the name for it, it is undoubtedly a commanding law. Respect for even the

tinest component of an organic whole is the only way for the whole to exist and to survive. In order to express this forcefully, the poet is granted a special power; so as to impress the importance of the message on people, he is given the ability to build up a similar whole. Once more, the message becomes symbol, the content becomes a palpable whole, both substance and form, content and expression, living matter but perceptible only to a chosen party.

What I have attempted in the previous section might be looked upon merely as an interpretation of the poem, one more interpretation, one might feel prompted to say. Yet I shall retort that I hope I have demonstrated convincingly enough how inseparable, in Coleridge's opinion, the content and expression of the poem are, and that therefore the language of the poem is not conceivable apart from the content it manifests. In addition, what I have purported to do is not so much the presentation of another interpretation of "The Rime" as the description of its isotopic distribution, failing which no serious analysis can be effected. If the language of the poem, as manifested in the Mariner's speech, is inherently strange and inherently powerful, it is so because it builds itself up as content and expression at the same time. To consider the linguistic structure of the poem as a verbal pattern detached from the content it evinces is no more possible than to examine lightning after one has got rid of the energy it contains under the pretext that one wants to avoid being killed by it. The poem is essentially a language with two faces that are fundamentally unified; the cursed poet's message gives itself to be read and apprehended as language and as such it produces meaning as well as it renders this meaning palpable to the eyes and the ears. Now that we know what it says, we may endeavour to explain how it says and how it is that the what and the how are so powerful.

As a preliminary, it seems to me that it is necessary to restate what to Coleridge is a powerful language, or rather - for this is a matter I have developed in the first part of this dissertation - it is necessary to sum it up here. If poetic language at its best is inherently powerful, its power issues from the poet's greatest mental energy, that contained in the imagination. The next question will be: how does imagination work? Coleridge has established in The Theory of Life that what imagination really consists of cannot be known but it is possible to determine what it does. Imagination works by connecting, blending and, ultimately, fusing into a whole. The imaginative process is definitely a dynamic one and a transformation. But what does it involve at the level of language? As Terence Hawkes reminds us Coleridge and the Romantics shared the opinion that the characteristic of poetic language is "a unity that lies underneath surface distinctions, and which ignores clear-cut boundaries." (16) In other words, the connection operates at the infralinguistic level, at the level of semes.

From Coleridge's own description of the process, especially in his Shakespeare criticism, we can distinguish between two processes and hence two degrees of the same power, one greater, which he calls imagination, and one more limited, functionally more specific, and yet complementary, which he calls fancy. Here again, no matter what fancy actually is, we know how it works, what it does. These are the defining elements to be gathered from Coleridge:

1. Imagination:

- a. it brings together images and feelings (17); it links nature and man, it is nature "invested and

merged with humanity"; poetic language, therefore, "utters (or 'outers') the inner reality and, by imagination, imposes this on the world beyond." (18)

- b. the components of the whole thus constructed connectively interact with one another and with the whole, they stand in an organic relationship which makes them be where they are and what they are by necessity;
- c. the connecting process leads to the construction of a whole and for this construction the writer and the reader are co-responsible; the construction is dynamic on both sides, it requires an effort on the reader's part as well. (19)
- d. the whole is a concrete construction, present at once "without any anatomy of description"; (20) the result of the process, let us call it the image, for the sake of convenience, can, and must, be apprehended as a powerful but vague totality, powerful because it is vague;
- e. the connection thus effected builds up "a highly complex meaning with more than one level". (21)
- f. in the process, one element (image or feeling) modifies many, forces many into one. (22)

If we enumerate these points into a set of fundamental rules regarding the way the poetic process functions at its highest, this is what we obtain: 1) it is a connective force which links and ultimately unifies concepts and emotions, the interoceptive elements of the real and the exteroceptive ones, or, as we have chosen to term them, the elements indexing on /anthropos/ and those

indexing on /cosmos/; 2) the result, which we call /logos/, is an organic whole, which implies its partaking of the two antagonistic forces of which it is made, all the while being perfectly original; 3) the organic whole is perceptible at one stroke, as a vague whole in the construction of which the reader participates actively; the whole should not be divided into its component parts to be apprehended (it will have to, however, for the necessity of the analysis); 4) the whole thus obtained, the image, is characterized by a specific, powerful semantic charge and by its polysemy.

The four points or rules obtained properly build up the definition of METAPHOR.

2) Fancy

- a. it is an "assembly", "collocation", "mechanical noting of resemblances", construction "on the basis of 'some accidental coincidence'", "mere aggregation"; (23)
- b. unlike in the imaginative process, the isolated components are perceived in their isolation, each with a specific semantic mark, merely linked but not really fused. (24)

The process of fancy, that is, connects discrete elements, or semes, of which the isolation or specificity is perceptible and, actually, is meant to be so. The definition, here, is rather that of SIMILE but also that of certain types of METAPHOR. Metaphors and similes, therefore, go together, are co-inclusive in the discourse and complementary.

We shall see if metaphor and simile are the main metaboles in a poem like "The Rime of the Ancient

Mariner", but we are already aware of this: that the connective power of imagination and fancy involves all connections, all operations on language and therefore all metaboles. This is why I consider it advisable to enumerate the metabolic categories along with their chief components:

1. Metaboles affecting the CODE:

- 1.1 Metaplasms: a. alliteration, b. assonance, c. consonance, d. pararhyme, e. archaism, etc
- 1.2 Metataxes: a. conventional matrix: 1. rhyme (internal/"real"), 2. rhythm, metre, 3. stanza, b. repetitions: 1. anaphora, 2. polysyndeton, 3. asyndeton, 4. epanalepsis, etc
- 1.3 Metasemes: a. metaphor, b. simile, c. synecdoche, d. metonymy, e. oxymoron, etc.

2. Metaboles affecting the REFERENT:

- 1.4 Metalogisms: a. antithesis, b. hyperbole, c. irony, etc.

Metaplasms, metataxes are metaboles of expression, although in a poem they partake of the content, while metasemes and metalogisms are metaboles of content.

The connections, however, occur at two levels: a horizontal level, that of METABOLES, a vertical one which involves MOTIVATION or the connections between the four levels of metaboles. Let us state, finally, that when some critics assert that for Coleridge the work of imagination is effected essentially through metaphor, "that the ultimate realization of the imagination will take linguistic form, and that that form is most obviously manifested in the sort of association of ideas which generate metaphor", (25) the word "metaphor" is to be taken in the sense of generalized metaphor, the word meaning "substitution of senses" in general, which

involves, as Jacques Sojcher remarks, analogy (metaphor stricto sensu), inclusion (synecdoche) or contiguity (metonymy). (26) It is in fact not far from including all metaboles since all more or less involve semic connections of some sort.

If the Mariner has been given "strange power of speech" it is for some purpose: to deliver a capital message to the world. The whole message builds itself up as language around units of content and expression which, we have seen, number seven. Each is particularly powerful and power, we have said, consists of connections: poetic language at its highest is a highly connective structure; the more numerous the connections, the more complex the structure, the more powerful the language.

I now intend to examine some of the units so as to establish how the connections occur and what makes them especially effective as units of language. I shall restrict myself to two units.

Unit One: Thesis or the Assertiveness of the Universe
(41-62)

After leaving the harbour in most fortunate conditions, the ship experiences nature's self-assertiveness, particularly arduous in the absence of a spiritual principle.

The way in which the forcefulness of the impact falls on the reader is an excellent demonstration of the fact that content and expression are in fact inseparable in the process. The effect drives home through a general apprehension of metaplasms and lexematic units perceived as well for their phonic pattern as for their meaning. At the level of metaplasms, the effect is first produced by

the alliterations derived from the key-words "storm" and "blast", the four phonemes /s/, /t/, /b/, /l/, the first two being particularly recurrent: /s/ 14 occurrences, /t/ 12. As Jean-Claude Coquet has remarked, no systematic study of the way alliterations and other prosodic elements function in a poem has as yet been effected, and actually no systematic laying out of such elements can be proved to have happened, in Coleridge or other poets. (27) The genius of a great poet, however, enables him to use words which are organically suited to the content they are expected to impart on the plane of content as well as on the plane of expression. The striking words here have a phonetic structure developing around a nucleus of which the components are one or several of the alliterative phonemes mentioned above or at least derived from them. The pattern then goes: /st/ - /sts/, /str/, /sl/, /fl/, /t / , /tr/, /dr/, /dz/, /pr/ - /bl/. The main components of the clusters other than the four basic phonemes, namely /p/, /d/, /t/ and /f/, to which we may add /k/, occur also separately as contrastive consonants. Most of the words in which they occur are semantically striking. Some are striking singly; they may be grouped thus: "storm" and "blast", the basic units, "came", "struck", "pursued" (actions); "tyrannous", "strong", "o'ertaking" (power, violence, superiority); "blow", "shadow", "ship"; "fast", "masts". Others are striking when grouped: "chased us", "dipping prow", "foe forward", "loud roared the blast". The latter involves assonances, complementary to the alliterations. The most impressive of them also occur in semantically important words: /s/: "blast", "masts", "fast"; /ei/: "came", "o'ertaking", "chased", "eye"; the succession /au/ - /ɔə/ - /a:/ in "loud roared the blast" where the semantic power is reinforced by the assonantic pattern.

At a surface level, metaphors (the alliterative and assonantic distribution) and semantic units prove

effective and are apprehended as such. The reader already forms a general notion of "violence", "hurry" and "dread". At a less apparent level, that of metataxes, the isotopies "violence", "hurry" and "dread" are confirmed and amplified by others. The syntactic distribution goes:

N/Pron.	V	Adj.
Storm-Blast	came	
he	was	tyrannous, strong
He	struck	
	chased	

In the first stanza, out of four lines, the general syntactic pattern N/Pron. + V (+ adj.) is repeated 4 times. Three verbs out of four are active and point to a process while one establishes some kind of ontological status of the noun and pronoun. It is therefore possible to know two things about the entity "storm blast": 1) it is, by nature, characterized by the isotopies "power" and "violence"; 2) it is capable of acting and as such it is characterized by the isotopies "motion", "power" and "violence".

In the second stanza, the complexity of the image increases. The impact issues at a first level from the modification of the basic ballad-rhyme-scheme abcb which changes to a six-line stanza rhyming aabcb. The triple a-rhyme at the beginning amplifies the tension which releases itself in the violence of the final tercet.

The reader's attention is thus doubly attracted: first because of the altered rhyme-scheme and secondly because

the alliterative and assonantic pattern continued from the previous stanzas provides a link between the storm-blast, emphatically present so far, and the ship. The relationship between the two protagonists becomes intertwined in the second stanza and gains in complexity.

Lines 45-48 present a syntactic mass in which elements pertaining to the ship and to the blast are mixed and somewhat press on line 49 where the ship is opposed, in a hopeless promiscuity, to the forces of nature let loose. The lexical distribution of the stanza provides a first outlook of the relationship:

With sloping masts and dipping 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 eye we fled.

The distribution here, from a syntactic standpoint, is different from the one exhibited in the previous stanza. The noun "Storm-Blast" appears in the first line as an affirmation of power and is then confirmed by the repetition of the pronoun "he" and the four verbs asserting a process and an ontological status characterized by "power", "violence" and "motion". In the second stanza, on the other hand, the noun "ship" is held back until the fifth line while the four lines that precede show the test of strength between nature and the vessel, a game the latter is unable to master or even to contain. If we reverse the position of the noun "ship" and try to build up a syntactic pattern, this is what we get:

N/Pron.	V	Attributive
The ship	(is)	with sloping masts and dipping prow
We	pursued treads bends drove fled	

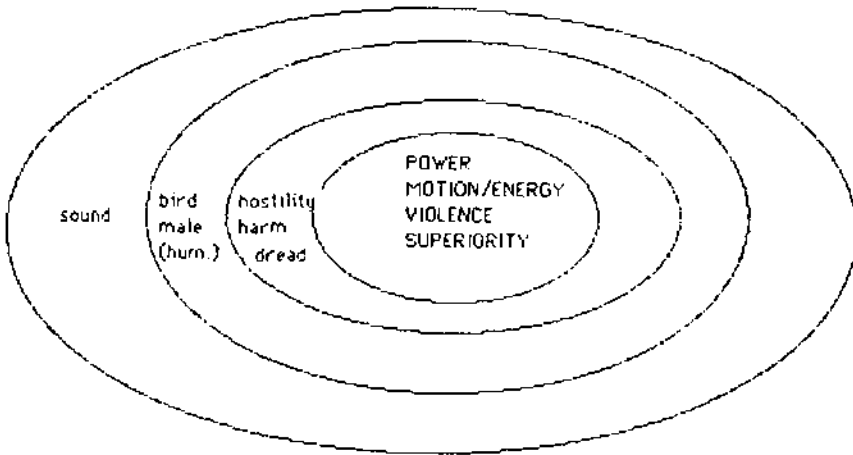
Unlike "Storm-Blast" in the first stanza, "ship" is given only once after four lines have consigned it at the very limit of the sentence; it is not repeated as a pronoun and , determined by five verbs, does not appear under positive auspices. The stative verb "be" is understood and the sequence which tentatively builds up an ontological status is deprecativ. The sequence goes:

V-ing + N - and - V-ing + N

The gerund indicates an action in progress; in the circumstances, the action is detrimental to the noun "ship". Here, as in the case of the other verbs, the noun is acted upon rather than the one that acts upon things. The verb "pursued" is passive and is connected to "treads" and "drove" in that the isotopy /motion/ is disparaged by the context which points to the isotopy /dread/. As for "bends", it connotes exhaustion due to exertions effected under a threat. If we retain the s13 /logos/ characteristic of "ship" and whatever relates to the sea-journey, then "sloping masts" and "dipping prow" as well as "bend" assume an obvious meaning; yet here the

originating in the words related to it but "ship" is seen in an even weaker light since the isotopies that could compensate for its weakness increase it by adding to the violence of the storm.

The metaphor or image can now be described as a semic constellation, a very intricate one:



The nucleus of the figure is made up of pure, untamed energy, like the centre of the sun; this energy might be benevolent to man, yet it is basically hostile and harmful. At the same time, the image is in part visual (the bird) and in part auditory. It fulfils the function Coleridge attributes to metaphor: it is one tremendously striking whole, yet vague, indefinite, not really limited or delimited, an amazing explosion through thick mist.

It is interesting to compare it with the passage, in the 1798 version, describing the same storm:

Listen, Stranger! Storm and Wind,
 A Wind and Tempest strong!
 For days and weeks it play'd us fresks -
 Like Chaff we drove along.

It is shorter, but the forcefulness of the situation is conveyed mainly through structures of expression: exclamations, anadiplosis which is also a chiasmus; the simile that ends the stanza lacks strength because one fails to see what in the interactive section might justify its use; and the capital letters in "Storm", "Wind" and "Tempest" suggest some personification that was part of the poetic diction inherited from the eighteenth century.

In the final version, the metaphor opens many doors, notably the fact that there may be a connection between the force of the universe and the forthcoming albatross. The words indexing on /logos/, on the other hand, also suggest that this apparently destructive power might well become constructive and that the formidable energy contained in the wind instead of acting against the poet might serve him and add to his own power which, so far, is an anti-power, one that fosters the power of hostile nature.

Such suggestions are amplified in the second part of the passage about the assertiveness of the cosmos. The formal link between the first two stanzas and the remaining three is supplied by an anaphora which quantitatively gains in importance: the logical connector "and" occurs 8 times in the first two stanzas, 4 times at the beginning of a line, it is repeated 8 times too in the next stanzas but 4 times at the beginning of lines in almost exact succession:

And now there came both mist and snow
 And it grew wondrous cold:
 And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
 As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
 ...

To "and" must be added the connector "nor" in line 57.

Another link is afforded by the duality of syntactic patterns such as "tyraunous and strong", "sloping masts and dipping prow", "with yell and blow", "the shadow of his foe", "the ship drove fast, loud roared the blast", where such connectors as "and", "of" or a comma separate the same number of elements with the same function: adjective/adjective, gerund + noun/gerund + noun, noun/noun, determiner + noun/determiner + noun, noun + verb + adverb/adverb + verb + noun.

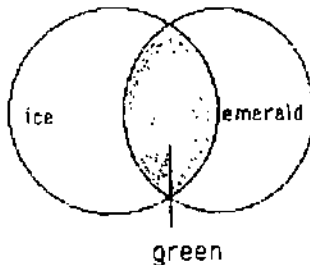
The second is particularly powerful although for reasons different from the first part. The structures of the expression plane sustain and emphasize the structures of the content plane in a very forceful way. The former create a growing impression of strain, of increasing gasping, by means of oratorical metaboles (metataxes). From an expressive standpoint, the three stanzas are embodied in the effectiveness of the anaphora: "And now .../ And it grew .../ And ice .../ And through ...". The general impression communicated further through the internal rhymes that occur alternately in lines 53, 55, 57 and 61: "... mast-high ... floating by/ ... drifts ... clifts/ ... men ken/ ... growled ... howled".

Both Fontanier (28) and Geoffrey N. Leech (29) agree that repetitions in the discourse enhance its rhythmical and energetic value. The metataxes which form the formal structure of the stanzas thus already provide the

discourse with the isotopy /energy/ and also with the notion of "power or energy organized and mastered". Once again, it seems, nature is represented as a force that can be tamed and benevolent to man.

But the power of the stanzas arises from the semantic structure which completes - and actually generates - the formal structure. So far the idea of nature, or the isotopy /cosmos/ along with all the semes that go along with it, has been actualized as "Storm-Blast". The anaphoric pattern connects it to the other elements enumerated in a progressive succession: the "mist", the "snow" and eventually the "ice". The ice is the word which contains the highest semic concentration, a concentration we can describe as follows:

1) it is first characterized by a simile: "as green as emerald". Unlike metaphor, simile points out the interjective elements of the figure while each of the two terms remains independent and is perceived as such. Thus here:



The interjective area comprehends only one seme, one that opens the figure on oxymoronic elements. The adjective "green" connotes one rather negative seme, "coldness", but also fairly positive ones: "purity", "value", "youth", "freshness", "mildness", "vigour", "unripeness", "beauty". The basic idea is that of "cold beauty". Once again the universe is seen as a hostile power that can lead to highly positive values;

2) "the snowy cliffs" are said to send "a dismal sheen". Again we have an oxymoron, and to Coleridge the poetic process has always been oxymoronic.

- 3) If one adds "wondrous cold" in line 52, the atmosphere is decidedly oxymoronic and again the opening is on nature that can be cooperative instead of hostile;
- 4) the position of the ice, "mast-high", suggests /power/, just like lines 59-60, where, as I have explained, the ice enters a triadic pattern: "here" - "there": "all around", which symbolizes the triad "thesis" - "antithesis": "synthesis". This overwhelming presence of the ice connotes its power and therefore the power of the universe;
- 5) the final emphasis is on noises.

The image is now complete, together with the storm-metaphor. The universe is confirmed in its image of a tremendous power that can be violent, harmful and hostile to man, especially to the poet, if the latter rejects a spiritual principle to guide his action. It is up to him, as a matter of fact, to make proper use of what the universe is and can give him. Correctly understood, the oxymoronic nature of the cosmos can lead to marvels. For it is of course "cold", "dismal", frightening and noisy but it can also be "wondrous", beautiful, pure, highly valuable and virginal. We know that for Coleridge only a minority of people are able to reach the state of receptivity he describes in such poems as "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" and to respond to nature's call.

The way the first two stanzas function compared to the way the last three function is interesting to describe. In the former, the metaphor shows the cosmos as one vaguely yet forcefully perceived power; in the latter, it becomes more precise, owing to a different type of metabole: simile and oxymoron. We have here a perfect example of how metales of the imagination and metales of the fancy work as a complement to one another. The second part did not need any alteration from Coleridge:

as it stands it perfectly suits both the general purpose and the "storm-metaphor". Actually, except for the first stanza of this part, which went:

Listen, Stranger! Mist and Snow,
And it grew wond'rous cauld:
And Ice mast-high came floating by
As green as Emerald

and "of" instead of "in" in line 60, there is no change. The tormented poet's "strange power of speech" is indeed powerfully manifested and his message, the tremendous assertiveness of the universe, is embodied in language which is itself a real symbol of that which it purports to communicate.

Unit Two: Sterility as a punishment

(103-40/143-66/177-202/226-31/529-37)

The second message I shall examine is perhaps the most important one it behoves the poet to deliver: as a result of his rejection of the spiritual principle, the poet is doomed to impotence and creative sterility.

The discourse here is above all marked by a paradox: the message of sterility manifests itself through a superabundance of poetic signals. Basically, from the standpoint of the expression plane, the structure is vehemently repetitive. At the level of metaplasm, it is alliterative. At the level of metataxes, it is marked by epizeuxis: "Day after day, day after day" (l. 115), "Water, water, every where" (119, 121), "About, about" (127), "A weary time! A weary time!" (145), "It moved and moved" (150), "it neared and neared" (154), "A sail! A sail!" (161). Sometimes, the epizeuxis is sustained by anaphora: "Water, water every where" (119, 121), "With throats unslaked, with black lips baked" (157, 162). The insistence is further marked by internal rhymes: "...

blew ... flew/ ... first ... burst/ ... speak ... break/
 ... about ... rout/ ... cross ... Albatross/ ... unslaked
 ... baked".

The content, of course, generates its own structures. Thus, not only does it generate the patterns I have mentioned but also a subtle network of alliterations. All the metaboles of expression contribute to emphasize the basic semantic structure which is antithetical. The antitheses here function as semantic markers of sterility: practically all positive elements are ruined by negative ones. Let us take the case of the famous passage:

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
 The furrow followed free;
 We were the first that ever burst
 Into that silent sea.

The alliterative pattern in this stanza is not merely an example of Coleridge's exertion to construct an empty though impressive auditory image; in its content and expression are closely blended. If one assumes that the breeze is characterized by the phonemes /b/, /r/, /l/, often combined as /br/ and /bl/, and the foam by /f/, one realizes that the pattern forms an intricate intertwining between the breeze and the foam. The words "breeze", "blew" connote the breeze, while "fair", "foam", "furrow", "followed" and "free" connote both the breeze and the foam. The stanza, moreover, can clearly be articulated around two couplets. The first two lines embody the idea of a language which is still powerful, like the free-wheeling course of a ship until it emerges into a space devoid of energy and motion. The next two lines complete the image. The words "first" and "burst" are intermediary between sounds that connote a loss of power; they themselves actualize the two explosions that precipitate the vessel into the empty space. The phonemes

/f/ and /b/ at the beginning and /t/ at the end of the words are produced by the opening of the mouth and the drawing apart of the lower lip and the teeth. After /f/ and /b/ the air runs along the vowel /ə:/ and the sibilant /s/ and is caught again by /t/ until it finally explodes and issues forth into a space the flatness and impotence of which are manifested by the alliteration /s/ of "silent sea". The second /s/ sound is itself followed by a long vowel, /i:/, through which the air escapes and loses itself into nothingness.

The plane of expression sustains the plane of content by materializing the message (the poetic discourse ending in an anti-discourse as a consequence of the Mariner's crime) and the effectiveness of the Mariner's power of speech. The plane of content functions on the basis of expression through two metaboles which are close to each other: a metalogism and a metasememe. The metalogism is an antithesis, a figure that generates its own duplication at the level of expression. The metalogism is obvious in the couplet:

We were the first that ever burst
 Into that silent sea.

The words "first" and "burst" are opposed to "silent sea". Both enforce the notion of verbal explosion or forceful utterance which finds itself negated by "silent sea". The word "sea" has been said to represent the white page or the space of discourse and it is here negated by "silent" which contains a nuclear seme that nullifies the essential nuclear seme of "burst":

The conventional level itself supports the antithetical pattern manifested in content: 6 out of 10 rhyming words set up oppositions because they contain, intrinsically or

in context, senses that contradict each other: "noon vs moon", "motion vs ocean" (inasmuch as this ocean is a place of immobility), "shrink vs drink", "night vs white", "root vs soot" (the former connotes the beginning of an energetic process denied in the latter), "young vs hung".

The second stanza shows an identical pattern:

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down;
 'Twas sad as sad could be;
 And we did speak only to break
 The silence of the sea!

The disappearance of energy, motion and power is also marked at the level of expression, yet in a more complex way. The initial chiasmus, "Down dropt - dropt down", emphasizes the collapse of all energy. The alliterative pattern sustains it: /d/ - /dr/ = /dr/ - /d/. The central notion is spread over the lines by the subtle use of /s/ and /z/ which extend the idea of motionlessness. In the first line, they are surrounded by the sounds /d/ and /dr/ which seem to crush them down; in the second line, they accompany the idea of sadness and powerlessness contained in the phrase "sad as sad could be".

Yet again, it is in the pair of lines 109-110 that the idea introduced in the preceding stanza is given further weight. The internal eye rhyme (because actual sound rhymes vanish in silence) "... speak ... break" shows a gradation of the idea of utterance, for "break" echoes the idea of "violent utterance" already introduced by "burst", but the idea is destroyed by the next syntagm: "the silence of the sea". The latter is also an antithesis, "silence" being contradicted by "sea".

Thus a whole space of sterility is connoted, in a most impressive way, as soon as the ship glides beyond the

threshold of the new sea. It is reinforced in the next stanzas by means of the connective language Coleridge considers the essence of poetic language. Two images stand out:

1) The simile: "As idle as a painted ship/Upon a painted ocean."

The poet's gift, we remember, is a special power he has in order to impart an important message through the medium of a powerful language. The message unit here is failure by means of impotence. Let us see how by means of two similes the concept of impotence takes shape.

The two terms of a simile are connected by means of an intersective area comprehending one or several senses which found the comparison. The simile we are examining is a complex one, for each term is double: term one: "we" (i.e. the Mariner and the crew or, through α_3 , the poet and his fellow-writers); term two: "ship" and "ocean" which have in common "painted". Each of the component words is semantically rich. The pronoun "we" covers not only the guilty poet but all the poets who, like him, refuse to be guided by a spiritual principle while they are composing. In this case, it includes the very discourse the poet has started writing. The participle "painted" is made up of the senses "surface" (veneer, coat) and "superficial" as well as "showy", "glaring", etc. Related to "ship", taken metaphorically for the poetic discourse and metonymically for the same thing ("ship" = pen, pen = discourse), and to "ocean" (= "sea", connoting metaphorically the poetic discourse), it designates the poetic process as a failure by reason of its unidimensionality: only the "surface" level is present, the "deep" level is missing.

The reason for this is found in the intersective area. Both terms are found to be "idle", a word we have

decomposed as follows on the basis of its phonetic structure (/aidl/) : 1) "idol" → "spurious" vs the "genuine" nature of the Christian belief; the word is taken in its Biblical sense; 2) "idle" → "inactive", "motionless" → "without energy"; here it designates the absence of wind ("breathless"), otherwise the very principle of inspiration and action, and motion or the movement of the poetic process itself.

The simile then charges the basic message "impotence" with the senses "surface", "without energy", "without inspiration", "spurious". From merely denoting "impotence" and "sterility", the basic message has now come to mean something richer: read as /logos/, this part of the poem can be said to mean that as a result of his rejection of a spiritual principle, the poet and his fellows have been sentenced to a reduced power which only enables them to build up a superficial discourse, one which exists through its most mechanical elements but which is actually inert and bound to disappear quickly from memories and intellects.

2) The simile:

And every tongue, through utter drought,
 Was withered at the root;
 We could not speak, no more than if
 We had been choked with soot.

The image is even richer and semantically enhances the message as established so far. The simile itself is, if I may say so, only the peak of the iceberg. Synecdochically, "tongue" is part of "we", the first term of the simile. Again, "we" stands for the doomed poet and those who followed him, or at least who did not react against him, but also for "language" and hence "discourse". The words that have a link with the poet are: "withered", "root" and "could not", if we leave the

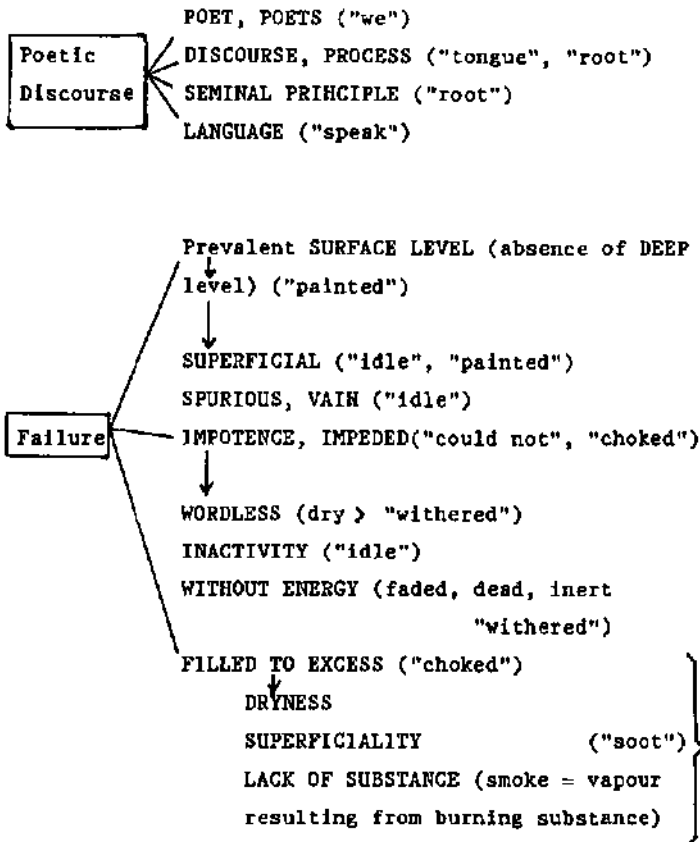
simile proper aside for a while. Their semic distribution goes: "withered" → a) dry (= without water), b) faded (= without energy and vigour; disappearing from view, hearing, memory), c) dead; d) shame, e) confusion; "root" → a) metonymically connotes the poetic discourse, b) seminal principle (part of a plant which is in the soil and takes water and food; essential substance from which the plant grows); "could not" → impotence, inability.

The poetic diacourse is seen as lacking words ("dry"), as not existing through a lack of energy and because it cannot impress brains and memories, but also because its seminal principle is rotten and cannot grow. The image of the plant as a symbol of the organic process and the result that poetry constitutes is clear. The simile completes the first part of the message.

The introductory pattern, "no more than if", designates a simile of the "gradual" type. (30) The terms on either side of it are: Term one: "we", already marked as mentioned in the above paragraph; term two: "choked with soot". The figure is complex, for the first term is connoted logically by "choked" while the manner of choking is specified by "soot". Semically, the words can be decomposed thus: "choked" → a) impeded, b) filled to excess; "soot" → a) powder, b) black, c) in smoke or left by smoke, d) on surfaces.

To the message "poetic discourse = 'without energy', 'without words', 'incapable of growing'" is added: "poetic diacourse = 'impeded', 'atified by its own residue which results from its dryness and superficiality'". It gains even further semea in the lines about "throats unslaked" and "black lips baked".

We can now form a fairly complete idea of what Coleridge's language powerfully imparts and builds up. It can be shown as follows:



A further dimension of the message is reached with the skeleton-image. It is scattered over the space of the poem, for it appears in three places, and thus maintains the isotopic field of failure along with the semic distribution related to it throughout the discourse.

The first occurrence of the image is in Part III, from line 171 to line 202. It is fairly complex, for it involves the sun, the skeleton-ship and the allegories of Death and the Spectre-woman.

The sun is represented as one whole of cosmic energy unmediated by man's mental powers:

sun and the Mariner and are compared to the bars of a dungeon-grate. The notion of "death" which, so far, had been a small part of the failure-image, becomes more insistent. The inactivity and lack of energy that had already marked the general image are now spotted with death and a faint notion of hell, punishment and rejection. As besides, Death and a Spectre-woman (cf. the gloss) are on the ship, it is obvious that the Mariner's (and poet's) doom have something to do with death. Yet it is not even his privilege to know peace in death: we know that Life-in-Death is going to win him and this means a life of impotence and torment.

The effectiveness of the image does not come from the complexity of the intersective area; we know that in similes the only things perceived, or almost only, are the similarities which found the figure: the bareness of the ship's masts and rigging which makes them look like a fleshless body, on the one hand, and the physical dimensions of the former against the sun, on the other hand, resembling the frame of a prison window. The image is effective because Coleridge merges metaphors of the fancy and of the imagination, metaphors and similes, into one impressive whole; and although each image considered separately is made up of one or two intersective points, the total is powerful and vague: one forceful nebula.

The second skeleton-image opens the fourth part of the poem:

And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

Here also, the intersective area of the simile is easy to determine and yet the image is slightly more complex than it looks. Instead of the simple simile: Mariner = sea-sand, we have: 1) the Mariner's body has the length,

lankness and brownness of the sand (the latter, and the action of the wind, sketches a specific motif which is long, lank and brown) (simile); 2) the sand, owing to its motif, looks like a skeleton (the ribbed-form becomes synecdochically the whole skeleton) and this skeleton (a metaphor, since "sea-sand = skeleton") is imaged in the Mariner's skinny body (simile).

Semantically, the image of failure amplifies so as to mark not only the poetic discourse with all the semes we have mentioned but also the poet himself. The poet and his discourse are definitely bound under the seal of creative sterility and the malediction of death and punishment.

The third occurrence of the skeleton-image is also the most complex of them all. It is found at the beginning of Part VII:

The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owl whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

The two terms of the simile are: term one: ship; term two: skeletons of leaves. Here again, the image is more complex than the parts it is composed of.

The ship is described as having "warped" planks and "thin" and "sere" sails. If we decompose the participle semically, this is what we obtain:

"warped" → . bent or twisted from the usual or natural shape (caused by uneven shrinking or expansion)

"sere" → . dried up
 . withered

The ship, taken as the poetic discourse, keeps its isotopies 'without energy', 'wordless' (dried up and withered) but adds "out of shape", "shaped unusually and unnaturally". It confirms, of course, the sense that the Mariner's gesture has been one of rejection of the "natural" way, a crime against the organic rules of the universe. It is no wonder that the Hermit should then use as a term of comparison an image related to nature. The simile connects two terms, of which the second is a metaphor: "skeletons of leaves". It is necessary, in order to understand the implications of the figure to establish the semic distribution of the second part of the metabole.

The main words are:

"lag" → . slowness
 . choke

"whoops" → . loud cry
 . joy, hilarity
 . pain (gasping during fits of coughing)

The "ivy" is an evergreen plant with dark, shiny and often five-pointed leaves. The outline of the leaves, which are strongly striated, easily suggests a ribbed body; it can also stand for the eternity of nature. The interjective area of the metaphor is then obvious as to its components. It adds another aspect to what we have already established about the failure of the discourse. In addition to the rest, it evokes the idea that if a spiritual principle came to be rejected by a majority of poets, the path to creation would just choke and lead to

symbolism." (31) From a purely poetic standpoint and as far as the poetic power of the text is concerned, I think it is easy to demonstrate, on the contrary, that Coleridge's textus receptus is far more powerfully effective than the first poem.

If we consider the message units I have examined and the power which I hope I have managed to make evident, they have undergone practically no alteration between 1798 and 1817: a proof that Coleridge found them effective enough. The only exception is the storm-blast metaphor; here Coleridge has added several lines and, as a result, the passage is an unquestioned improvement. In the lines about the skeleton-ship, in part III, a few lines have been suppressed and, John Spencer Hill has written,

by dropping the detailed yet conventionally horrific description of Death ... Coleridge shifted the emphasis in the 1817 version to the figure of Life-in-Death, which is appropriate and desirable since it is she, not Death, who wins the Ancient Mariner in the dice-game. (32)

By suppressing the archaic pattern of the original version, Coleridge actually rid the poem of a metabole of expression thoroughly independent of the organic necessity of the discourse. For the sense of weirdness is soon overcome and what impresses most deeply is that which partakes of the organic construction and semantic blending. As a further instance of this, let us examine the following stanza, first in the 1798 version:

Since then at an uncertain hour,
Now oftimes and now fewer,
That anguish comes and makes me tell
My ghastly aventure.

Let us compare it with the final version:

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

The alterations Coleridge brought to the text are excellent, for the received version is far more effective.

To begin with, the anaphora that interrupts the opening line in the 1798 version breaks the natural movement which links the adverbial to the beginning of the nuclear sentence: NP ("That agony") + VP ("returns"); the nucleus is held back till the second line, thus creating an effect of expectation which, in the first stanza, is marred. The same occurs in the second part of the stanza where the subordinate, coming first, produces a tension which is only released when the main clause intervenes. On the other hand, the verb "comes" is rather flat and is happily replaced by "returns" for semantic and expressive reasons but also for the way the metaphors sustain the effect. In the third line of the first stanza, the alliteration /k/ loses most of its impact just because it emphasizes commonplace verbs ("comes" and "makes"), while in the second stanza, line 2, the alliteration /n/ along with the vowels serves to enhance the impressiveness of the consonants /t/, /g/ and /z/:

That agony returns.

Besides, the line is shorter and hence occurs as the image of the sharp pain the Mariner experiences.

The same thing happens with the lines:

And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

The alliteration /t/ in the first line combined with /l/, added to the monosyllabic character of the words, produce a considerable effect. The last word of the stanza,

moreover, ends it with a powerful semantic and affective charge. Even the rhymes are superior in the second stanza. "Fewer" and "aventure" not only rhymed poorly but were semantically indifferent. "Returns" and "burns" are phonetically more powerful and are semantically connected: what "returns" is that which "burns" the Mariner inside his body and soul.

A long acquaintance with Coleridge has taught me that nothing he ever said or did was left to chance. "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere" became "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" because Coleridge considered that the former was not yet the great, perfect whole he wanted it to be and which it has come to be. In the 1817 version, the Mariner's "strange power of speech" has become outstandingly, unquestionably effective.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this work I have attempted to organise Coleridge's ideas about language and poetry into a theoretical unity and then to interpret those ideas in the light of my own vision of literary language, a vision that most structuralist and post-structuralist criticism has contributed to form. In the first part, I dealt with Coleridge's theories in the field of language and poetry. I tried to show that as a critic, he is in the direct line of Saussure and his followers, and as such he announced some of the major assumptions on which today's literary criticism rests. In some essential areas, he can even be given credit for avoiding important misconceptions of which twentieth-century critics became aware only later in their careers. Actually the most central portion of his poetics, namely the triadic model and the theory of motivation, was not seriously considered until the 1960s, by Greimas and Genette, and the 1970s, when group Mu's "A General Rhetoric" appeared. As a precursor of a great deal of modern criticism, Coleridge reflected on the problem of language and then applied the results of this reflection to his examination of poetic discourse.

The first chapter of the first part of this dissertation seeks to demonstrate that Coleridge saw the problematics

of language as part of the antagonism between man and the universe. For him language is inherent in man and as such differentiates him from the brute, yet the sounds of language find both their source and concreteness in the power to transform them into artifacts bearing concrete meanings. If nature provides the sensuous impressions that are indispensable for sounds to be more than empty noises, man has the faculty to make them into significant wholes. The individual units of language (words) are stores of significant items (semes). The higher the concentration of semes, the more powerfully evocative the units. English, in this respect, stands out as especially endowed with a capacity for such a semic concentration which results in English words being highly suggestive semantic nebulas.

The second chapter outlines Coleridge's cosmogony, in which he pushes the parallel between language and the universe still further. Like the creative power at work in nature, that used by artists abides by two forces, the "force of individuation", which prompts all organisms to struggle to tear themselves away from the indifferenciated flux of things in order to become unique bodies, and the "force of synthesis", which tends to connect and fuse. Everything in the universe is therefore subjected to the law of polarity, whose dialectical aspect is characterised by "conflict" (between contraries) and "connection" (opposites are bound into new wholes), and whose structural aspect is "synthesis", i.e. the creation of new organisms (*tertium aliquid*) that are both different from, yet partaking of, the antagonistic elements of which they are the product. The blending of the elements is made possible by their consubstantiality, the fact that they have something in common that renders the synthesis feasible. So according to Coleridge, the triad IDENTITY - POLARITY - RECONCILIATION is the fundamental pattern at work in nature.

In the third chapter, this triad is shown to have its counterpart in the creative process of art. The gap that exists between man and the universe can be mediated through artistic creation. Language, however, because it is essentially referential in its everyday use, is a rather crude mediator. In ordinary conditions, it is found to convey the idea of something, not the thing itself. The function of the artist is to change language to a symbol so as to make concretely available to the senses and to the mind that which it points to. To make the difference between poetic and nonpoetic languages clear, Coleridge opposes scientific language, with its transparent, denotative texture (basically informational), and poetic language, essentially characterized by its connotative texture. In poetic language meaning can be seen and heard and felt as well as understood.

If poetic creation consists in bridging the gap between man and the universe by synthesizing verbal units into a whole which is at the same time a symbol of what it says, it remains to be considered how this happens. Like nature, the poet proceeds organically. Just as nature starts with chaos and ends with organised structures, the poet starts with semes and ends with structured wholes. In nature, a seminal principle grows into a whole through various forms thanks to the permanence of its substance; in poetry, a seminal idea spreads and expands through language by means of an isotopic distribution. The fundamental opposition between man and nature occurs here too. The synthesis in nature can be plants or humans, in human creation it can be poems. Language which at the start was only a medium is now a part of what it conveys. Just as the force of individuation has torn particles from the mass of things flowing on in nature to make them into definite objects, desynonymization has torn verbal

units (semes) from the flux of words to make them into definite bodies having their own unique shape and their own unique meaning.

Chapter four insists that poetic creation is above all a power, because it first "chaotizes" (through desynonymization) language, separates semes from sets of words to fuse them together into new sets. It is also a power because it motivates the two sides of language, content and expression. Originally they have no necessary link between each other, but poetic language provides one. Through the connectiveness of words, language can become poetic because it pervades a whole verbal unity with semes which scatter a specific content not only throughout the semantic elements of its words but throughout its expressive elements as well. Not only do semes participate in the process but also sounds, rhythms and metrical patterns. The result is a palpable whole, one which conveys meaning while it is at the same time meaning itself. If power is in the process, it is also in the final product since the final whole is additional expressive and semantic power. Through the power of imagination, the poet - to use Coleridge's own Terminology - "modifies", "dissolves", "dissipates" words into semes which he then "combines", "connects", "blends", "brings together", "fuses" into organic unities. He mixes nature and man by infusing humanity into nature.

That Coleridge should be considered as a precursor of post-saussurean criticism clearly appears when one compares his main conceptions with the categories set up by Todorov. (1) They examine the theories about poetry with regard less to philosophical or ideological preconceptions than to the very nature of poetic

language. The first one, which he terms verbal, is characteristic of poetry seen above all as versification; this Coleridge always denied to be the essential feature of poetic language. The second is pragmatic; it defines poetic language as relative to the state of mind of the writer or of the reader. The status of metre as signal, Todorov says, is part of what poetic language does, it produces a certain effect on the reader, rouses his emotions, "introducing a contract between addresser and addressee, a contract which specifies that poetic reading is to abide by rules that differ from those applied in the case of other speech acts". (2) When Coleridge insists that "metre in itself is simply a stimulant of the attention" and that "I write in metre because I am about to use a language different from that of prose" (3) he points to an aspect of versification and prosody which is important but, he also emphasizes, not indispensable to the construction of poetic language: "Poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre". (4)

According to Todorov's system of classification, Coleridge is neither a verbalist nor a pragmatist. The next two categories are termed semantic and syntactic. These, Todorov writes, are the categories to which most contemporary studies have been devoted, and these, I contend, are the categories to which Coleridge's set of definitions belongs.

Todorov distinguishes three subcategories in the semantic theories: ornamental, affective and symbolist. The first one designates a poetic reality considered as rhetorical, without semantic specificity other than a use of language in order to please. Out of two expressions, one is more "ornate" than the other but does not mean more or more effectively. When Coleridge says that "a poem is that species of composition which is opposed to works of science by proposing for its immediate object pleasure,

not truth" (5), he does not say anything about the nature of poetic language; he merely states that poetry aims to supply pleasure, though not through any ornate quality of its language. He immediately adds: "and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part" (6), thus laying a special emphasis on the way poetic language functions, that is to say organically.

Is Coleridge's conception more of the affective type? In other words, does he see poetic language as having a content specifically devoted to communicating sentiments rather than ideas? We know that he used to praise English because of the semantic wealth of its words, not because they can only connote feelings and emotions but because each unit contains a whole potential of significance capable of communicating purely intellectual notions as well as emotional images. There is no question of ridding poetic language of its intellectual notions since its strength rests upon the rich, complex semantic whole that words come to form when gathered and placed in a particular context. Even if the affective aspect of its connotations is an important part of the poetic process, it has never been assigned by Coleridge a dominant function.

What remains is the symbolist subcategory and the syntactic category. In his description of how they work, Todorov reminds us of their romantic origin. Both derive from the theories of the Jena school (the Schlegels, Novalis, Schelling) but also Goethe, Solger and Kant. A fundamental idea to which they gave special emphasis is that the work of art is a symbol. They showed that symbol creates meaning while meaning is actually constantly becoming, not a final product but something being made.

From them Coleridge got a confirmation of his notion that poetic language is natura naturans, not natura naturata (a notion already found in Dryden's statement about "wit writing"), that it is a process, not a final result. He made it clear that if poetic composition is imitation, it is not copying. By reproducing the image of a tree or a cloud, one simply copies nature; the result is a lifeless object. Whereas when engaging in an analogy of the very process by which nature makes a tree or a cloud, one imitates nature, one acts dynamically, just as nature itself does.

Another characteristic of the romantic conception of art as symbol, as described by Todorov, is that it is intransitive. It does not purport to transmit something but to transmit itself as consubstantial with what it conveys. As such it also has another characteristic: "it is intrinsically coherent", i.e. motivated. The link between signified and signifier, content and expression, is no longer arbitrary but necessary. In the first part of this dissertation, I tried to demonstrate how Coleridge transforms a poor example of poetic language into a better one. (7) Among the operations he performs, he actually shifts the relation between the content and expression of the lines by making them the mirror of each other. Content and expression get to some extent fused into a whole. What actually represents Coleridge's most original contribution to poetics - and slightly modifies the conception of the symbol - is his emphasizing that content and expression are one whole because content generates and conditions expression. He establishes a relationship of subordination between them, the former being more important than the latter. This provides a connection with the fourth quality of the romantic conception, the fusion of contraries. The consequence (the fifth characteristic in Todorov's description) is that being a symbol the poem cannot be translated into another language:

In poetry, in which every line, every phrase, may pass the ordeal of deliberation and deliberate choice, it is possible, and barely possible, to attain that ultimatum which I have ventured to propose as the infallible test of a blameless style, namely its untranslatableness in words of the same language without injury to the meaning. Be it observed, however, that I include in the meaning of a word not only its correspondent object, but likewise all the associations which it recalls. (8)

The idea that poetry is the creation of a symbol (9) was supplemented by the conception that poetic language also involved a strict relation between all the parts of a text. The central idea of "connection", obsessively pointed out by Coleridge in Biographia Literaria, his notebooks or the Theory of Life, as being a key word to poetic construction, originated, Todorov says, in the works of August Wilhelm Schlegel and Novalis, and was expressed in our own time by Jakobson as the "principle of resemblance". The "hypothesis", Todorov writes, "will then consist in a simple affirmation of coherence and unity between the different planes of the text: the metrical resemblances are seconded by phonic resemblances (paronomases, alliterations, paragrams), grammatical (parallelism) and semantic (metaphor)." (10) Where Coleridge differs, however, is in that he would reverse the affirmation. It is not the "metrical resemblances" that are supported by the others (including the semantic ones) but, on the contrary, the semantic structure which is confirmed and supported in its unity by the metrical, phonic and grammatical resemblances.

The distinction is a capital one. If one considers the way Coleridge's major assertions evolved, particularly in the literary criticism that came as a consequence of Saussure's linguistic "revolution", one realises that while digesting the contributions of preromantic and romantic criticism (especially German) and foretelling the coming of most modern movements, he also keeps an originality of his own.

Among the ideas that Coleridge expressed about poetic language which are now used by modern poetics is the idea that a thorough understanding of how poetry works requires a close examination of how language works. He was particularly aware of the effectiveness of the English language, owing to the semantic and morphological potential of its words. He understood that by going beyond the familiar semantic charge of words one opens a large space to unforeseen combinations and constructions. At a deeper level than the more usual field of significance lies the core of the semantic power of individual units: semes. Poetic abilities come to be made of a clear consciousness of the infralinguistic level of language, a level where connections of the subtler kind required by poetic composition become possible. Raymond Chapman has admitted that "to take connection first, we have the opinion of Coleridge that 'a close reasoner and a good writer in general may be known by his connectives'. Without going so far, it is apparent that connectives are among the essential features of discourse". (11) Essential they are, because only through semes does an author contrive to send the pervading substance which is to unite words into an organic structure. The concept of "desynonymization" is an epoch-making contribution to our comprehension of how poetic discourse functions. Later critics also developed the idea that a poem builds itself up through connections, but they came to consider such connections as purely formal.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Russian Formalists were of the opinion that an important feature of poetic discourse is the relations the individual units entertain with one another, but they meant these as essentially deriving from the parallelism of their respective positions in the syntactic

succession. Having eliminated content as only a pretext for the use of formal devices, they saw discourse as an organisation of the entire texture of language, but an organisation which concerned the phonic and syntactic levels. The formalist practice is exemplified in Roman Jakobson and his dominant. In the 1930s, he defined the dominant as "the focal element of a work of art: it rules, determines and transforms the other elements. It is the element that guarantees the cohesion of the structure". (12) This, however, he saw as merely formal; it could be the rime system, rhythm or intonation, it could also be exterior to language itself: devices borrowed from the visual arts or music, each of these having characterised a particular literary period.

In a poem like "The Rime of the Ancien Mariner", for instance, Jakobson would regard the archaisms as the dominant, as that which gives the work its internal cohesion. For Coleridge, who determined that content rules expression, that what poetic language says presides over the devices it uses to construct its meaning, this would have sounded preposterous. First of all because Jakobson would have pointed out the fact that many words used in the poem are archaic, but in the main he would have ignored what such words express: their contents. Secondly, we know that Coleridge ceased valuing them as archaisms because between the first version of the poem and the last, he replaced a fair number of them. That Jakobson should have been led by excessive devotion to form is apparent in his analysis, in cooperation with Lévi-Strauss, of Baudelaire's "Les chats". The analysis consists of a lengthy dissection of the syntax, phonic structure and versification of the poem; only in passing do the analysts concede that the semantic aspect comes as a reinforcement of the formal parallelism. (13) This is a reversed version of Coleridge's conception: for him it is the function of formal connections and parallelisms to reinforce and confirm the semantic connections.

Some of the theoreticians who were influenced by Jakobson mitigated his formalism but did not openly do away with it. In his attempt at establishing the rules of a literary grammar, Tzvetan Todorov admits that by analogy "syntax (the rules of sentence construction) is the basic model of narrative rules." (14) It follows that words can be connected by reason of their syntactic positions in a text, not of their semic relations. The only contemporary researchers to have followed in Coleridge's steps are group Mu of Liège. From Greimas, they borrow the notion of isotopy, defining the poetic text as a unified whole, constituted as such by the homogeneity of its semantic structure, a homogeneity it owes to its isotopic unity. Unlike the Formalists, they do not place expression first but content. Like Coleridge, they see poetic discourse as a synthesis of opposite elements, and like Coleridge they put the set of oppositions and their synthesis in a cosmological vision justified by the whole western metaphysical tradition and its being present in most of its cultural codes.

According to Coleridge, poetic language builds itself as such through a seminal idea which pervades words through their connections. Like the creative process at work in nature, the poetic process blends units indexing on two categories inherent in the universe: subject and object, man and nature. Group Mu rephrase this by saying that poetic discourse is a space of semic redundances (isotopies) indexing on anthropos or/and cosmos which get mediated and fused into another category "logos" (Coleridge's "tertium aliquid"). As in the universe, Coleridge says, the creative power in man exerts itself on opposites which it "chaotizes" by breaking up whatever former unity they may have been endowed with and moulding them into a new unity which partakes of the poet's mind and of nature. Poetic construction is a "humanizing of

nature", an instilling of semes indexing on /anthropos/ into semes indexing on /cosmos/, which then get fused in a verbal space, /logos/.

In an important passage from Logic, Coleridge writes:

The first effort of art will consist in directing the attention to the mental elements or factors of likeness (viz. the same and the different) to effect which, one of the two must be presented to the attention separately, and this will of course be the one first mentioned (the same), as being the radical element, as it were, or the positive factor of the conception "likeness", "like", and that too which corresponds to the faculty earliest developed in the mind, namely, the sense of a like that differs from the same only by a difference of degree, or even (in the first instances) only numerically. (15)

Whereas to the Formalists the "likeness" or parallelism consisted of the positional similarities of the words in the poetic text, to Coleridge they must be found first of all in their internal resemblances. The words are necessarily different but they are similar in their semic distribution. This is confirmed here:

Now the law that first discloses itself is, as we have seen, the law of connection or association of different objects by perception of likeness - a process that will be found to involve the exercise of an abstracting power. For the likeness of A.B.C. [...] consists of one or more marks common to all three: and the perception of the likeness supposes the act of attending to this common mark apart from the qualities and appearances with which in the real objects it is inseparably united. (16)

If we apply this to poetic language, we can say that the "different objects" to be associated are words, and that before they can be associated in a logical way one must look for some element of likeness in them. The "one or more marks common" to the words cannot but be semes in a condition of similarity. The common elements that connect the words in such lines as the beginning of the poem "Love" can only be semes indexing on similar isotopies:

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
 Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
 All are but ministers of Love,
 And feed his sacred flame.

Where the Formalists would first and foremost have detected similarities of form (e.g. the repetition of "all"), Coleridge would emphasize the semes /totality/ (or /wholeness/) and /emotion/ ("thoughts, passions, delights, stirs, love"). Where the Formalists would have seen structures of expression supported by semantic aspects, Coleridge would see formal structures supporting, actually contributing to, the making of the poetic object through its semantic structure.

All trace of formalism, in the sense of a rigid attachment to expression as well as a conception that the core of poetic discourse is dependent on and subjected to the form of expression, is in fact absent from Coleridge's delineations from beginning to end. Even in such a conception as that which became the formalist notion of defamiliarization, Coleridge considers primarily content. The two "cardinal points of poetry", he says in Biographia Literaria, must be "the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination." He goes on:

The sudden charm which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. (17)

The need Coleridge felt to show everyday language in a new light was also experienced by Wordsworth: "Mr Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself

as his object to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us". (18) The Russian Formalists came to consider the defamiliarizing character of poetic language as one of its fundamental aspects, but again with them the estrangement that art is said to prompt is practically only related to the structures of expression. The concept was Shklovsky's (from Russian "ostranenie": "making strange"); he argued that everyday life tends to render the use of words and verbal forms to a large extent automatic and that in order to break this it is necessary to use devices that distort language and make it felt as "deviated" from its usual norm. This principle - which, according to Eagleton, was to become Brecht's "alienation effect" - was praised by the Formalists in Sterne's Tristram Shandy. Shklovsky "draws attention to the ways in which familiar actions are defamiliarized by being slowed down, drawn out or interrupted. This technique of delaying and protracting actions makes us attend to them, so that familiar sights and movements cease to be perceived automatically and are thus 'defamiliarised'". (19) Here again estrangement derives from formal devices and not from a construction ruled by content. Among the successors to the Russian Formalists, only the semiotician of the school of Tartu, Yuri Lotman, regards defamiliarization as issuing from clashes and tensions between the levels of the text. Each level or "system" (lexical, graphic, phonological, etc), Terry Eagleton writes, "'defamiliarizes' the others, breaking up their regularity and throwing them into more vivid relief." (20) The result, for Lotman, is the production of "a richer set of messages than any other form of language. Poems are bad when they do not carry sufficient information, for, as Lotman remarks, 'information is beauty'". Emphasis is laid on the fact

that "the literary work continually enriches and transforms mere dictionary meaning, generating new significances by the clash and condensation of its various levels." (21)

If Coleridge's themes - novelty (defamiliarization), the blending of opposites, synthesis, the predominance of content in the poetic process - have all been taken over, though often reconsidered, in twentieth-century theories, so has the idea that poetic discourse is an organic whole. One must keep in mind the definition:

A legitimate poem [...] must be one the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement. (22)

It is the purpose of art to create unity, and unity "depends upon our power of combining a multiplicity of presentations in one and the same act of consciousness." (23) What Coleridge means by unity involves, we already know, a process which synthesises antagonistic elements into an organic whole. This organic whole, or astructure, Terry Eagleton asserts, becomes, in the conception of the Romantics, a symbol. "It is mainly from this era," he writes, "in the work of Kant, Hegel, Schiller, Coleridge and others, that we inherit our contemporary ideas of the 'symbol' and 'aesthetic experience', of 'aesthetic harmony' and the unique nature of the artefact." (24) To German Romanticism, and to Coleridge, we owe our conception of poetic discourse as a self-sufficient whole, an end in itself, "a solitary fetish", the result of "a set of conflicts which were felt to be insoluble in ordinary life - between subject and object, the universal and the particular, the sensuous and the conceptual, material und spiritual, order and spontaneity - [and which] could be magically resolved. (25) The work of art

became symbol, and "the symbol fused together motion and stillness, turbulent content and organic form, mind and world." (26)

The finality of such a conception of poetic discourse, as well as the way it has evolved till our own days, Eagleton contends, shows that literary theories, consciously or not, rest on ideological foundations. He explains that the break which intervened in the society the romanticists lived in and particularly in Britain, witnessed the opposition of two visions of society. One - prior to the Industrial Revolution - was organic, mixing tradition and identity, the other was characterized by class struggle and the forsaking of what then appeared to have been a harmonious social community. As a substitute for a social organization which had gone for ever, artists felt the need to create another, an antidote to the prevailing utilitarianism of the time. The organic work, Eagleton writes, "can be seen as considerably more than idle escapism. On the contrary, 'literature' now appears as one of the few enclaves in which the creative values expunged from the face of English society by industrial capitalism can be celebrated and affirmed." (27) Such nostalgia for a past community became also felt in the twentieth century, even if the more lucid believe that the organic society is a myth and that, whatever the political system, it is not satisfactory and therefore can be replaced, be it in imagination, by an organic whole which is made of words. Even for the American New Criticism, Eagleton considers, "the poem itself was as opaque to rational enquiry as mysteriously intact in its own unique being. The poem was that which could not be paraphrased, expressed in any language other than itself: each of its parts was folded in on the others in a complex organic unity which it would be a kind of blasphemy to violate." (28)

Are not Coleridge's major poems organic wholes which somehow intend to make up for lost happiness? In "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison", the frustration felt for the walk in which he could not join his friends is experienced as imprisonment, but the space in which he is caught soon becomes a new space, one in which poetic creation can take place. In "Fears in Solitude", the England of fear and apprehension has been replaced by "a green and silent spot"; the necessary quiet and peace of mind required for meditation on the future of his compatriots Coleridge finds in the physical limits of the poem. "Frost at Midnight" delineates the workings of the artistic power within a space of silent communion with nature, a space in which "sound and silence coexist symbiotically" (29), relegating another frustration, that of feeling excluded from the invisible world beyond the world of everyday existence. "Dejection" is perhaps the most striking effort to exorcise the pangs of misery at the prospect of losing not only love and joy but also the very power of creating organic wholes.

Having assigned Coleridge a specific position in the line of theoretical developments about poetic language, it is furthermore appropriate to pay tribute to his awareness of what was still largely unsuspected in criticism at the turn of the nineteenth century, namely that a close attention to how language works and to the new perspectives afforded by German thought was the inevitable solution towards organizing literary criticism into a reliable instrument. After all, if post-Saussurian critical theories can be said to have been marked by the application of linguistics to literature, and especially to poetry, one cannot deny Coleridge the merit of having done so himself, and seriously too: his examination of the foundations of language, particularly of words; his emphasis on desynonymization - a crucial notion and one which has led to the notion of semic distribution and put

the problem of the connectiveness of poetic language into an altogether new light. Hence his serious reflection on education.

In the first Introductory chapter of his Logic, Coleridge describes the process through which man's intellectual powers are acquired:

What [human schooling] should be, and what in the main it is and ever has been, among the cultivated portions of mankind, may be easily known from its aim and object: which can be no other than to render the mind of the scholar a fit organ for the continued reception and reproduction, for the elaboration, and finally for the application, of these notices supplied by sensation and perception, gradually superinducing those which the mind obtains, or may be taught and occasioned to obtain, by reflection on its own acts, and which, when formed and matured into distinct thoughts, constitute [...] the mind's "notions" - the word being taken in its best and most proper sense. (30)

Here the distinction which has served as a basis for the elaboration of Coleridge's poetic theories is clearly expressed. On the one hand, there is the human mind, with its power; on the other, there is nature, the provider of "notices" through "sensation and perception". What man must learn is to develop and apply his mental powers, for these will then have to be imposed on the marks supplied by the outer world. Coleridge makes it obvious that both nature and man have a determinant role to play. Through his mental powers, man receives the notices of nature, then reproduces them (the function of the primary imagination), then elaborates them into something new - a blending of his intellectual powers and of natural notions reshaped - then eventually applies them in such a way that they will ultimately replace, "superinduce" (31), the notions proper to the mind. He distinguishes between two kinds of notions. One kind is the result of the mind's self-sufficient reflection, a reflection on

the acts it generates independently of the outer world. The notices which result from such operations are then matured and formed into "distinct thoughts" that must gradually be imposed upon by the notions supplied by nature. Through education, the mind has become "a fit organ", one which can work on nature's notices.

An analysis of the words used by Coleridge again proves helpful. "Notice" comes from Latin "notitia", which means "being known, acquaintance, knowledge, notion, idea". Such notices are made of "impressions" and "influxes" supplied by nature; these impressions and influxes are nature's "material elements" and "stuff". The mind composes and informs them, having made them into objects that it can work on. (32) Both the notices that nature provides and the notions that the mind elaborates are the outcome of the intellectual process favoured by education. Through education

the intellectual powers [should] be called forth from their dormant state, so as to become the possible and probable objects or conscious reflection in and for themselves, apart from the particular and contingent subject matters, on which they are successively exerted - but, again, in order to this (at least as the best way of securing and facilitating this result) that the subjects themselves, on which the faculties are employed, should be in the first instance and as much as is possible the work and (if I may say so) the reflection of these faculties, such as owe their own existence to the functions of the human intelligence, and to the laws by which the exercise and application of these functions are governed and determined. (33)

The powers of intelligence are to work "in and for themselves", regardless of the stimuli from the outer world, but must also be prepared to apply to the stimuli so as to transform them into objects of knowledge. What Coleridge terms the "notions" of the mind are more than passively recorded signs. The Latin word "notio" implies that we are dealing here with ideas and conceptions. The

word comes from "(g)noscere" (= "know") and points to "a general concept under which a particular thing or person may be classed" (The Shorter OED), therefore of generating.

Capable of applying its powers to itself as well as to outer notices, the mind is equal to using the "stuff" or substance from the universe, of which "the far greater part has been furnished by the time that the child passes into the boy or even at a yet earlier period." (34) That stuff, once "composed" and "informed" by the mind, can be regarded as part of nature's "tracing": "The needful notices (notitae rerum) have been given; the tracing is finished, and she but goes on to refresh and deepen the etching." (35) "She" is of course "nature", the provider of ways or paths, of courses or tracks (these are the senses which "desynonymizing" the word "trace" makes available). With the signs provided by nature, man can make other signs and these he can mould into structures and wholes. His mental powers once set in motion, he is able to detect connections between ideas and words, and with these connections ("the law that first discloses itself" (36) is the law of "connection" or "association") he can build new world.

What strikes the student of Coleridge's works is the coherence that he maintained throughout his years. Of course the main elements of his theoretical corpus are strewn over his writings, but they never fail to repeat themselves most consistently. Although he adapted his critical discourse according to what he read and learned, Coleridge did not much change the essential tenor of what he thought and said. His view of poetry, of how language became poetic, did not change much over the years. Undeniably the major critical trends of the twentieth century owe something to Coleridge. His insistence that language, especially in youth, must be learned with

accuracy, and that only a serious examination of the nature of language can enlighten our conception of poetry, shows through the minute precision of formalist, structuralist and post-structuralist theories, even though things seriously began when Saussure's Course in General Linguistics appeared. Coleridge's idea that poetic language is everyday language used in a different way pervades twentieth-century theories, as does the idea that poetry builds itself up as a special type of language through connections between words and syntagms. Coleridge did not express that connectors were above all semes because the concept was not yet in existence, but the way he described the phenomenon indicates that he had already understood the idea.

But the most remarkable notion he helped to emphasize was probably that of isotopy and the triadic model. There is no other way the triad identity - polarity - reconciliation applies than that it defines the spreading of semes throughout the space of discourse, their indexing on the antagonistic categories /cosmos/ vs /anthropos/ and their being synthesized on the category /logos/, i.e. in poetic discourse. The notion of isotopy was established in modern criticism by Greimas and has been used by many critics since then, but it is group Mu who made of it an instrument of analysis and a framework for the description of poetic language and of poems.

One crucial question now is: Do we still need Coleridge now that group Mu has taken over some of his major conceptions? The answer is definitely yes. What we owe to group Mu is unquestionably considerable. To them we owe the continuation of the rehabilitation of rhetoric begun by Jakobson and pursued by Barthes, Genette and Todorov. In A General Rhetoric, published in 1970, they based their classification of rhetorical figures at the infralinguistic level of language (a level that Coleridge

implicitly valued in his dealing with desynonymization), and, following Hjelmslev, distinguished between figures of expression and figures of content. Figures then were described more accurately than they had ever been; it was evident that what intervened in the process was not merely displacements of significance or sound but actually semic exchange. Thus in their description of metaphor, they came to reject the traditional definition of that most important trope as the substitution of one meaning for another to define it rather as "a modification of the semantic content of a term. This modification is the result of the conjunction of two basic operations: addition and suppression of semes." (37) Rhetoric, therefore, was given a new status and its function in poetic discourse was both clarified and reinforced. Figures - classified as metaplasms and metataxes (expression), metasemes and metalogisms (content) - ceased to be teratological oddities to acquire a capital position in the poetic process. In their next work (as yet untranslated), published in 1977, Rhétorique de la poésie, they went beyond the notion of metabole (the prefix "meta" pointing a little too obtrusively to poetic discourse as being a deviation from a "degree zero") and considered another fundamental concept, that of isotopy. Metaholes then became "isoboles" (38), i.e. figures that support and magnify the isotopic construction. The iteration of semes which can be spotted in words that are not metaholes is offered a higher status when continued in an isoplasm or propped up by an isotaxis. Coleridge's desynonymization was clearly adapted as semic distribution just as his view of poetic language as mediator between man and the universe was brought to its logical conclusion in Mu's notion of triadic model, in which man becomes "anthropos", nature "cosmos" and poetic language "logos". What Mu developed was a real stylistics of isotopies. They did not only

determine isotopies but also allotopies. So far the polysemous character of poetic discourse had been defined in rather vague terms; far from pointing only to what did not index on a specific isotopy, allotopy was given a precise function, that of determining new isotopies. At the same time, polysemy, even as Coleridge understood it with its origin in semic concentration in individual English words, was no longer a pretext for an erratic conception of reading, it led into definite directions. The polysemy of texts peremptorily came to mean that a text could not be read the way the reader felt like reading it but the way the major isotopies of which it was made prompted.

In being responsible for a real epistemological foundation of isotopies as well as for a rehabilitation of metaboles group Mu opened a new space for poetic discourse. When Coleridge said that a poem was a symbol, what he meant was that a poetic text was no longer only characterized by its linearity but also by a tabularity of its own. What group Mu calls "plural reading" (39) covers Coleridge's conception of the poetic text as symbol, that is to say as an organic whole made up of various figures and elements that can be apprehended at once. The text is indeed a symbol, something vague and flexible but also outstandingly powerful and suggestive. It is at the same time content and expression, mediation and renewal, mirror of man and cosmos reshaped within the space of language, idea and that which conveys the idea and the thing itself. If the chronological succession of words is not eradicated by the tabular perception of their occurrence, it is nevertheless enhanced and added to as though by a fragile equilibrium of what the text says and of what it makes possible, of what it combines and fuses as well as of what it evokes which is not explicitly part of it.

There can be no doubt that Coleridge's poems apply what he says about the organic structure of poetic discourse, the isotopic distribution growing as a plant or tree, defamiliarisation and the blending of opposites. They also bear out that there is a difference in poetic intensity according to whether language is highly ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Kubla Khan") or slightly motivated (most Conversation poems). In poems with a high degree of motivation (i.e. in which content and expression are closely fused), the two planes of content and expression support each other most emphatically owing to the unity they build up. Each level - sounds, rhymes, syntactic patterns, figures of speech - contributes to the one central purpose: a unity of meaning. That content prevails is made even more evident in the poems with a lower degree of motivation. The first thing a reader does is to scan the text in search of something that the poem is supposed to do and to say. A reader is then struck by the structures of expression: sounds, then syntactic elements. At the beginning of a poem such as "Fears in Solitude", he will first notice the alliterations in "silent spot" and "small and silent dell" and the syntactic repetition of "A green and silent spot" and "A small and silent dell". In order to get to the semantic structure of the poem, it will be necessary to discern a communication intention behind the form of expression. By investigating further, the reader should understand that the metaplasm (alliteration) and metataxis (repetition of the syntactic pattern) prop up a semic iteration, that of /space/: "spot", "dell", and "hills", and that of /negativity/: "silent", "small", "silent". Expression is therefore the servant to content, and this becomes more obvious as reading goes on.

Coleridge also succeeded in applying in his poems his own theories to a larger extent than he had expressed. His idea that a poem is a symbol, an organic whole, is

practically iconized in the key figure of the chiasmus which he uses in crucial passages in many of his major poems. He did not devote lengthy theoretical considerations to the figure; he had nevertheless recourse to it whenever he wanted to convey the idea of completion, perfection or totality.

Another notion that Coleridge did not use in his poems but which, when applied to their reading, is quite revealing of the way he proceeded, is that of re-evaluation (or revaluation) Group Mu worked on the idea that while scanning the text in search of meaning, the reader identifies a specific isotopy. He then assimilates the words or groups of words he comes across to that first isotopy (proversive revaluation) until a word in allotopic position comes up. This will then either found a new isotopy or question the initial isotopy which will then have to be reevaluated retrospectively. The outcome is inevitably what Coleridge described: a network of significant tracks made into a coherent whole through the controlled repetition of semes and isotopies of expression.

The lesson that Coleridge may be said to teach us, in his critical prose as well as in his metapoetic criticism and, of course, in his poetic discourse, is that if one cannot really do without the quasi-scientific rigidity of modern theoretical works to describe the mechanism of poetry one can even less do without critical masterpieces such as Biographia Literaria. Even though, I think, whoever attempts to study Coleridge needs the abnegation, humility and courage of the explorer to seek through the brilliance of his connotative prose what all literary critics are after: the features and foundations of the eternal artifact, poetic language.

TERMINOLOGY

ALLOTPY: The occurrence of semes that break an isotopy. If the newly-appeared semes are not repeated, they are just left out of the isotopy; if repeated, they found a new isotopy.

CHAOTIZE: To break a whole into its components so that they can be used again to form a new, different whole.

ENUNCIATE (as translated in Greimas' Sémiotique) or ENOUNCED: A complete set of words in a given language, the closure being constituted by a period of silence after and before the set of words.

ENUNCIATION (or ENUNCIATED): The act that produces the enunciate (or enunciated) (process).

ISOTOPY: The iteration of semes throughout a text indexing on a specific category or semantic field. Thus "table", "chair" and "bed" index on the isotopy /furniture/. Such categories supply a unity of reading.

INFRALINGUISTIC: The semes belonging to a level of articulation of language which is not manifested. The sentence constitutes the supralinguistic level, the word and the morpheme constitute the linguistic level.

METABOLE: Any operation on language which might be said to constitute a deviation from its "ordinary" use. Figures of speech are typical of metaboles.

METALOGISM: "A term used by Group Mu to describe those figures in rhetoric which, in their non-literalness of reference, can be said to violate Price's maxim of quality of truthfulness rule: hyperbole ..., irony and litotea ...". (cf. Wales, K., A Dictionary of Stylistics (London: Longman, 1989), p. 294.)

METAPLASM: Any metabole of the sonorous or graphic aspect of words or of units smaller than the word (e.g. the alliteration).

METASEMEME: Any metabole of the semantic aspect of a word or of units larger than words (e.g. the metaphor).

METATAXIS: Any metabole of the syntactic aspect of the sentence or the clause (e.g. the anaphora).

MOTIVATION: used in this dissertation to refer to the adequation of expression to content, when the structures of expression echo or mirror the structures of content. "Motivation in the sense of a relationship deliberately suggested or actively perceived between sign and referent is particularly striking in literary language. ... poets such as the symbolists have sought to remedy what they considered to be a 'defect' of ordinary language, namely its arbitrariness; and seek instead a highly motivated language, with a close correspondence between words, sounds and meanings." (Wales, pp. 309-10)

ORGANIC: An organic unity is one the parts of which are related to one another so as to form a harmonious whole. The alteration of one part is enough to modify the whole.

POETICIAN: This is the name given, especially by many French critics, to theorists of poetic discourse. Among them such people as Jakobson, Todorov, Greimas deserve to be called poeticsians. The term, I think, is to be preferred to "critic" because it determines a specific area, as well as a specific attitude, in criticism.

POETICITY: The conditions, especially that of isotopy and that of motivation, which make a set of words poetic. Poeticity is not restricted to a poem or even to poetry but can be found in a prose passage as well as in a film or a symphony.

SEMANTIC SPACE: An area with some sort of semantic unity.

SEME: "A minimal distinctive feature of meaning ... semes define the essential denotations of different lexical items within a lexical field in terms of binary oppositions" (Wales, p. 415). Thus the lexeme "chair" is made of the semes "to sit on", "with four legs", "with a back".

SEMIC DISTRIBUTION: The operation which consists in determining the nature and the number of semes of which a word is made. The semic distribution of "chair" elicits three semes (cf. SEME).

SEMINAL (idea): A notion provided by Coleridge. It is the primeval idea that develops into poetic discourse, i.e. into an organic structure.

ABBREVIATIONS

- BL Biographia Literaria, J. Engell and W. Jackson Bate, eds, The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Princeton and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), vol. I and II.
- CL Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, E.L. Griggs, ed. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971).
- CW The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, R.A. Foakes, ed. (Princeton and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969-1981), 16 vol.
- LNS Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare, T. Ashe, ed. (London, George Bell, 1883).
- M Marginalia, George Whalley, ed. (Princeton and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).
- MAL Miscellanies Aesthetic and Literary to Which is Added The Theory of Life by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, T. Ashe, ed. (London, George Bell, 1885).
- MC Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, T.M. Raysor, ed. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1936).
- NB The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, K. Coburn, ed. (London 1957-73).
- TT The Table Talk and Ompania of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, T. Ashe, ed. (London, George Bell, 1886).

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Emerson R. Marks, Coleridge on the Language of Verse (1981).
2. Paul Hamilton, Coleridge's Poetics (1983).
3. Ibid., p.1.
4. James C. McKusick, Coleridge's Philosophy of Language (1986). Desynonymization is dealt with on p. 8
5. J. Dubois et al., A General Rhetoric, transl. by P.B. Burrell and Edgar Slotkin (1981).
J. Dubois et al., Rhétorique de la poésie (1977).
6. Jean-Claude Coquet and François Rastier, in Essais de sémiotique poétique, A.J. Greimas, ed. (1979).
7. Bernard Pottier, Recherches sur l'analyse sémantique en linguistique et en traduction mécanique (1963).
8. A.J. Greimas, Introduction to Essais de sémiotique poétique, pp.6-24.
9. J. Dubois et al., A General Rhetoric, p. 46ff.
10. Samuel R. Levin, Linguistic Structures in Poetry (1977).
11. A.C. Goodson, p. 56.
12. McKusick, op. cit., Chapter One.
13. GL, I, 625-26.
14. McKusick, Ibid., Chapter Three.
15. NB 1336.

16. McKusick, Ibid., Chapter Two.
17. H.J. Jackson, p. 78.
18. Ibid., p. 77.
19. Ibid., P. 78.
20. Ibid., p. 79.
21. Ibid., p. 81.
22. Ibid., p. 86.
23. Ibid., p. 86.
24. Ibid., p. 87.
25. Hans Aarsleff, p. 18.
26. Ibid., p. 19.
27. David Punter, Roger Fowler, ed., p. 193.
28. Ibid., pp. 192-96.
29. Ibid., p. 193.
30. M. Bradbury, R. Fowler, ed., pp. 235-36.
31. A.J. Greimas and J. Courtés, p. 334.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE:

1. McKusick, op. cit., p.1.
2. Ibid., p.1.
3. LNS, p. 71.
4. Ibid., p. 71
5. NB 4422.
6. NB 4397.
7. Simeon Potter, Our Language, p. 116.
8. Ibid., p. 114.
9. Ibid., p.37.
10. NB 2431.
11. Ibid.
12. W.F. Bolton, ed., The English Language (1966), p. 30.
13. Ibid., p. 30.
14. Lajos Csetri, pp. 287-308.
15. Ibid., p. 290ff.

16. Ibid., p. 291.
17. IT, p. 262.
18. NB 2431 f6.
19. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-96.
20. Ibid., p. 72,
21. MAL, p. 42.
22. Ibid., p. 44
23. NB 4397 f51.
24. Ibid. f53.
25. MAL, p. 43.
26. M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (1980),
pp. 241-44.
27. Ibid., pp. 242-43.
28. CL, VI, 876-77.
29. BL, I, pp. 254-55
30. Ibid.
31. NB 4186.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. BL, I, p. 252.
36. Ibid., p. 255.
37. Ibid., p. 273.
38. A.J. Greimas and J. Courtés, p. 35.
39. Developed by J. Dubois et al. in Rhétorique de la poésie, pp. 85-6. The fundamental opposition "cosmos" vs "anthropos" ("nature" vs "culture") corresponds to Coleridge's division between "nature" and "man" or "object" and "subject". "Cosmos" refers to "whatever exists outside of what is human, particularly of consciousness"; consequently, we can assume that "anthropos" covers the field of consciousness, which, according to Coleridge, is only inherent in man. The opposition between "cosmos" and "anthropos" finds its justification in that its primeval character "is sufficiently attested by all the metaphysical tradition". Group Mu prudently add that they "need not decide as to its theoretical or scientific validity. We find that it lays the foundations of innumerable cultural codes." This can also be said about Coleridge's own distinction between "subject" and "object", which he based on his personal scientific view of the

universe. Whether this view is now out of date or not is none of our concern, for it is pertinent from the standpoint of our analysis of poetic language.

40. TT, p. 75.
41. Gerald L. Bruns, Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language (1974), pp. 56-7; 94.
42. Marks, op. cit., p.22.
43. McKusick, op. cit., Chapter One.
44. Michael K. Havens, pp. 167-83.
45. BL, I, p. 9.
46. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
47. CL, I, 630.
48. F. de Saussure, Cours de linguistique générale, pp. 97-8.
49. André Martinet, Eléments de linguistique générale (1972), p. 12.
50. TT, p. 311.
51. NB 1842.
52. CL, VI, 597.
53. Ibid., VI, 517.
54. Ibid.
55. J.R. Barth, The Symbolic Imagination (1977), p. 6.
56. Ibid., pp. 5-6
57. CL, VI, 378.
58. MC, p. 151.
59. CL, III, 522.
60. TT, H.N. Coleridge's Preface, pp. 7-8.
61. Ibid.
62. BL, II, p. 143.
63. MAL, p. 183.
64. CL, IV, 689.
65. McKusick, op. cit., p. 119.
66. Ibid., p. 127.
67. Ibid., pp. 131-48.
68. CL, IV, p. 885.
69. Saussure, op. cit., p. 177: "As a rule we do not speak by means of isolated signs, but of groups of signs, of organized masses, which themselves are signs."

70. Ibid., p. 29.
71. Ibid., p. 32: "While being essentially psychic, linguistic signs are not abstractions; the associations that collective consent has ratified, and whose collection constitutes a specific language, are realities having their seat in the brain. Besides, the signs of language are practically tangible; writing can fix them as conventional images, while it would be impossible to photograph with all their details the acts of speech; the phonation of a word, however small it might be, represents an infinite number of muscular movements extremely difficult to know and figure. In language, on the contrary, there only remains the acoustic image, which can be translated into a steady visual image."
72. MAL, p. 42.
73. TT, p. 319.
74. Ibid., p. 253.
75. NB 4427.
76. Ibid., 4186.
77. Ibid., f35v.
78. Sanssure, op. cit., p. 155.
79. Ibid., p. 166.
80. GL, II, 1193.
81. Ibid.
82. M, p. 604. the first six spirits are: attraction and repulsion, contraction and dilation, love as sense and love as communication. The seventh, that of nature, is gravitation and centrality.
83. Maurice Bowra, The Romantic Imagination (1980), pp. 64-65.
84. Paul Rozenberg, Le romantisme anglais (1973), p. 251.
85. TT, p. 252.
86. Ibid., p. 25.
87. Ibid., p. 43.
88. NB 3023.
89. MAL, p. 37.
90. Ibid.
91. M, p. 682.
92. Ibid.
93. BL, II, p.53.

94. Ibid., p. 55.
95. Ibid., p. 54.
96. Ibid., pp. 52-53.
97. Ibid., p. 58.

CHAPTER TWO:

1. Timothy Corrigan, Coleridge, Language, and Criticism (1982), p. 142.
2. Wimsatt and Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (1959), p. 476.
3. Kathleen Coburn, "A Bridge Between Science and Poetry", in Coleridge's Variety (1974), p. 85.
4. EL, I, 557.
5. K. Coburn, op. cit., p. 88.
6. Ibid., p. 91.
7. Ibid., p. 92.
8. M.H. Abrams, "Coleridge and the Romantic Vision of the World", in Coleridge's Variety, pp. 101-33.
9. Paradise Lost, V, 479-85.
10. MAL, p. 407.
11. MAL, p. 384.
13. Ibid., pp. 378-82.
14. TT, p. 82.
15. MAL, pp. 384.-85.
16. Ibid., p. 385.
17. Ibid., p. 391.
18. TT, p. 52.
19. MAL, pp. 391-92.
20. Ibid., pp. 388-90.
21. Ibid., p. 392.
22. Ibid., p. 393.
23. Ibid., pp. 392-93.
24. Owen Barfield, What Coleridge Thought (1972).
25. MAL, p. 359.

26. Ibid., p. 389.
27. Ibid., p. 410.
28. Paul Hamilton, op. cit., Chapter One.
29. BL, I, p. 298.
30. Charles H. Kahn, The Art and Thought of Heraclitus (1979), p 201.
31. Ibid., p. 202.
32. The Friend, II, VII, p. 479.
33. Charles H. Kahn, op. cit., p. 145.
34. Ibid., p. 165.
35. Jerome Christensen has called the chiasmus "the blessed machine of Coleridge's language" (Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language, p. 27).
36. "The Eolian Harp", l. 28.
37. Kahn, op. cit., pp. 216-17.
38. BL, II, p. 300.
39. Coburn, op. cit., p. 91.
40. Ibid., p. 96.
41. The Friend, XV, p. 110.
42. NE 1725.
43. Ibid., 3405.
44. Ibid., 3726.
45. The Friend, I, XIII, p. 94.
46. MAL, pp. 392-93.
47. Ibid., p. 393.
48. NE 4333.
49. GL, IV, 688-90.
50. D.M. MacKinnon, "Coleridge and Kant", in Coleridge's Variety, pp. 183-85.
51. MAL, 429-30.
52. Ibid., p. 395.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 397.
56. Ibid., p. 396.
57. Ibid., p. 398.
58. Ibid., p. 404.

59. Ibid., p. 407.
60. Ibid., p. 407.
61. Kahn, op. cit., p. 284.
62. M, p. 565.
63. Ibid., p. 536.
64. Greimas and Courtés, op. cit., p. 361.
65. MAL, p. 387.
66. Ibid., pp. 386-87.
67. Ibid., p. 387.
68. CL, IV, 483-84.
69. Quoted by H.N. Coleridge, The Table Talk, Introduction, p. 8.
70. MAL, p. 389.
71. Ibid., p. 398.
72. CL, VI, 597-98.
73. M, p. 135.
74. The Statesman's Manual, LS89.

CHAPTER THREE:

1. "Significance" = the transmission of a semantic content not included in a particular context (vs "meaning": the significance of a word as actualized in a context).
2. Claude Lévi-Strauss, L'anthropologie structurale (1958).
3. MC, p. 151.
4. CL, II, 1193-98.
5. MAL, p. 42.
6. M, p. 565.
7. MAL, p. 44.
8. Ibid., p. 43, and NB 4397.
9. I have borrowed from Group Mu their terminology, especially as regards the triadic model: the fundamental opposition between man (anthropos) and

the universe (cosmos) which is mediated by the literary, or artistic, discourse (logos). Whatever the type of mediation (whether referential or discursive or rhetoric), the term "logos" serves as a generic word for the locus where the mediation takes place (cf. Rhétorique de la poésie, p. 85ff.).

10. MAL, pp. 6-7.
11. A General Rhetoric, p.7.
12. Greímas, Essais de sémiotique poétique, p. 6.
13. Tzvetan Todorov, Les genres du discours (1978).
14. MAL, p. 10.
15. Ibid., p. 44.
16. Ibid., p. 43.
17. Ibid.
18. NB 4397.
19. MAL, pp. 43-44, and NB, 4397.
20. Rhétorique de la poésie, p. 80.
21. The concept of organic form, as Anne Cluysenaar has remarked, "bequeathed to Modern Anglo-American criticism by Coleridge, who referred to it constantly", may be misleading in that one could take it at its face value and consider a work of art as a living organism and as such dissect rather than analyze it. She would personally prefer the term "structure" because "more neutral". (Modern Critical Terms, Roger Fowler, ed., pp. 168-69).
As far as I am concerned, I feel I have to use it because it is central to Coleridge's vision of poetry. The word "form", however, is here closer to Hjelmslev's notion of "structure", inasmuch as it lays a specific emphasis on the internal relations of a whole's parts as well as on the idea that such a form grows from a seminal concept and develops in a way that is conditioned by the concept which presides over its growth.
22. LNS, p. 47.
23. Ibid., p. 49.
24. Ibid., p. 184.
25. Ibid.
26. NB 2086.
27. NB 4397 f52.
28. Ibid. f 54. Also MAL, p. 52.
29. M, p. 583.
30. EL, I, pp. 136-37.

31. Group Mu, op.cit.
32. BL, II, p. 16.
33. GL, III, 480-85.
34. BL, II, p. 5.
35. Cf. NB 3247, TT, p. 291, and BL, Chapters XIII and XVIII.
36. NB 3247.
37. MAL, p. 42.
38. LNS, p. 253.
39. NB 3290.
40. Emerson R. Marks, op.cit., Chapter V.
41. MC, p. 155.
42. Ibid., p. 152.
43. M, p. 448.
44. Lines 37-43.
45. MAL, p. 52.
46. Ibid., p. 47.
47. TT, p. 171.
48. MAL, p. 43ff.
49. BL, I, pp. 86-87.
50. NB 4422.
51. BL, II, p. 19.
52. Ibid., p. 20.
53. Ibid., p. 176.
54. Greimas, Essais de sémiotique poétique, p. 11ff.
55. BL, II, p. 23.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Greimas and Courtés, op.cit., p. 339.
60. Geoffrey N. Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry (1969), p. 123.
61. These fields, as worked out by J. Trier ("Begriffsfeld"), are also sometimes called "notional" or "conceptual". They therefore constitute a sound departure basis, considering the importance Coleridge grants the notional or conceptual aspect of words in the poetic process. This aspect represents the foundations on which poetic discourse is to be erected.

62. As appears from a close study of Coleridge, the word is not to be taken in the sophisticated sense it has for Group Mu, but rather as defined by Greimas and Courtés (op.cit.), i.e. as "a network of categories common to the whole discourse."
63. The ambivalence is reinforced by the participle "streaming", which refers to "pine" and yet indexes on the paradigmatic class of "sea-blast".
64. LNS, p. 400.
65. Line 11.
66. W.H. Clemen, The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery (1959), p. 85.
70. Cf. Rhétorique de la poésie, p. 34.
71. T. Todorov, op.cit., pp. 99-104.
72. Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, p. 225.
73. Ibid., p. 246.
74. Pope, An Essay on Criticism, l. 365.
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96. Ibid., I.
97. BL, II, p. 65.
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123. TT, p. 237.
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128. Ibid., p. 44.
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130. CL, III, 922.
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135. M, p. 536.
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139. Rhétorique de la poésie, p. 80.
140. Cf. the description of metaphor in Rhétorique de la poésie, p. 65.
141. TT, p. 239.
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143. Ibid., p. 42.
144. MAL, p. 43.
145. CL, V, 143.
146. M, p. 110.
147. NB 3504.
148. In the 1802 version, Wordsworth changes "essential" to "obvious"; the initial adjective provides the starting-point of Coleridge's demonstration.
149. BL, II, pp. 62-63.
150. Ibid., p. 62.
151. Lalande, op.cit., pp. 301-2.
152. BL, II, p. 62.
153. Ibid., p. 11.
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168. Greimas, op.cit., pp. 6-24.
169. BL, II, p. 11 and Greimas, op.cit., p. 7.
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187. LNS, p. 459.
188. BL, II, pp. 90-91.
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192. Ibid., p. 122.
193. Marks, op. cit., p. 25.
194. M, pp. 536-37.
195. Cf. Lalande, op. cit., entry "cause", C; cf. also the footnote at the bottom of p. 129f.

196. M, p. 175; NB 4176; EL, I, p. 168, note 2.
197. CL, III, 500-1.
198. LNS, p. 511.
199. "Christabel", ll. 48-52.
200. NB 3247.
201. Ibid.
202. CL, I, 478-80.
203. CL, II, 1198.

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2. E.R. Marks, op. cit., pp. 12-19.
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4. Ibid., p. 121.
5. Ibid., pp. 141-42.
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7. "Dejection: An Ode", IV, ll. 54-58.
8. EL, I, p. 136.
9. Ibid., p. 168.
10. CL, I, 478-80.
11. NB 3247.
12. LNS, p. 220.
13. MAL, p. 20.
14. CL, III, 521-22.
15. MAL, p. 191.
16. Cf. Greimas, Sémantique structurale (1966), and B. Pottier, Recherches (1963).
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26. BL, II, p. 14.
27. NB 3247.
28. BL, II, p. 17.
29. NB 3290.
30. Le Guern, op. cit., p.42.
31. Venus and Adonis, ll. 811-14.
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 But pleasures are like poppies spread,
 You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;

Or like the snow falls in the river,
 A moment white – then melts for ever
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34. Ibid.
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30. Logic, pp. 12-13.
31. i.e. bring (a person) into some position in addition to, or so as to displace, one who already occupies it. [...] Bring in over and above, or 'on the top of' something already present. (OED)
32. Logic, p. 12, footnote.
33. Ibid., p. 13.
34. Ibid., p. 12.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 13.
37. A General Rhetoric, p. 106.
38. I have coined this concept that is meant to draw attention to the fact that metaboles participate in the creation of poetic discourse as partakers of the isotopic process.
39. Rhétorique de la poésie, p. 54.

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RESUME

Cette thèse comprend une introduction et deux parties.

L'introduction souligne l'intérêt manifesté depuis quelques années par un certain nombre de chercheurs pour Coleridge en tant que théoricien du langage et de la littérature. Se sont particulièrement signalés Emerson R. Marks, Paul Hamilton et James C. McKusick. Ils se sont attachés à mettre en évidence non seulement le rôle joué par Coleridge en tant que lien entre la philosophie allemande de la fin du dix-huitième siècle et le monde intellectuel anglais de la même époque, mais également combien ses principales théories sur le langage poétique trouvent leur prolongement dans la poétique post-saussurienne, des Formalistes russes à Greimas, Todorov, voire Barthes.

La première partie - qui compte quatre chapitres - traite des idées que Coleridge a développées à propos du langage poétique, idées que l'on trouve disséminées dans les oeuvres en prose: lettres, notes, conférences et, évidemment, Biographia Literaria.

Dans le premier chapitre, intitulé "La conception générale du langage chez Coleridge", l'accent est mis sur une notion capitale chez lui, celle de "désynonymisation". Cette dernière consiste à pénétrer le niveau infrainguistique des mots pour atteindre les sèmes (unités minimales de signification non manifestées) et par là leur redonner leur vigueur originelle. L'anglais, à cet égard,

apparaît à Coleridge comme éminemment favorisé puisque les mots d'origine germanique de cette langue concentrent, de par leur caractère monosyllabique, en un espace réduit une grande puissance expressive.

Apanage exclusif de l'homme, assure Coleridge, le langage articulé s'inscrit comme médiation entre la nature et l'être humain, et c'est de ce pouvoir de médiation que le poète use afin d'imiter le pouvoir créateur à l'oeuvre dans le cosmos. D'où l'insistance terminologique de Coleridge sur des notions telles que "sujet" vs "objet", "idée" vs "chose". Entre la subjectivité humaine et l'objectivité de la nature s'établissent des relations, des associations, des liens, mais c'est l'homme qui, grâce aux potentialités de son cerveau, relie et associe: penser, pour Coleridge, c'est incarner dans le langage une réalité qui existe partiellement à la fois dans la nature et dans l'homme. La nature impose un référent, cependant que l'homme impose un sens, un contenu.

Afin de comprendre par quel processus l'homme imite le pouvoir créateur à l'oeuvre dans la nature, il était nécessaire que dans un deuxième chapitre soit examinés les grands traits de la cosmologie coleridgienne. Le titre complet du chapitre est d'ailleurs: "La cosmologie de Coleridge: le pouvoir créateur".

Coleridge conçoit l'univers comme un tout organique, dont toutes les parties sont en harmonie. Il est soumis à deux forces fondamentales et opposées: la force "d'individuation" et la force de "synthèse". La première pousse tout organisme vers l'unicité en l'arrachant à la masse indifférenciée qu'est le flux des choses; la seconde rassemble, associe en un nouveau tout. Etant organique, l'univers

agit donc autour d'un principe d'organisation bipolaire, par lequel ce qui est positif rejoint ce qui est négatif dans une synthèse, un "troisième quelque chose" qui est consubstantiel à ce dont il vient tout en étant essentiellement différent. La loi de bipolarité constitue de ce fait la loi fondamentale de l'univers, loi qui fait pendant aux forces d'individuation et de synthèse. Par le fait de la consubstantialité, les deux pôles antagonistes fusionnent en un tout indivisible et organique. L'image la plus utilisée par Coleridge pour éclairer la manière dont agit le pouvoir créateur dans l'univers est celle de la plante. A partir d'une graine, qui est déjà au départ ce qu'elle va devenir, se développent un tronc, des branches, des tiges, des feuilles, des fleurs, tous éléments de formes différentes appartenant à la même unité organique et parcourus par une même sève. La plante est structure, donc développement ab intra et non ab extra comme le serait un développement de type mécanique.

Le troisième chapitre - "Le langage et la puissance poétique" - explique comment, pour Coleridge, le poète applique le principe d'imitation de la nature à la création poétique. Les mots, certes, tentent de représenter verbalement une réalité extérieure et un contenu affectif et intellectuel propres à l'esprit humain. Loin de copier la réalité extérieure, cependant, ils deviennent l'espace où l'humain (idées, émotions) et le cosmique se mélangent et deviennent synthèse organique. La création poétique est en quelque sorte la "subjectivisation de l'objet" ou "l'humanisation du cosmos". L'image de la graine qui grandit et devient plante se retrouve à l'échelle du langage: à partir d'une idée, que Coleridge nomme "séminal", se développe une structure organique dont toutes les parties sont en relation nécessaire les unes avec les autres et chacune avec l'ensemble. Le pouvoir créateur est celui qui modifie le langage, en dissout les éléments et les recombine en une nouvelle et unique unité.

Le chapitre quatre analyse plus précisément ce pouvoir. Intitulé: "Vers une définition du pouvoir poétique", il montre que dans deux ouvrages essentiels, le groupe Mu de l'Université de Liège prolonge Coleridge tout en réactualisant les conclusions de ce dernier à la lumière du structuralisme et du post-structuralisme. Le pouvoir de modifier le langage, d'en dissoudre les composants, Coleridge l'appelle "désynonymisation"; ceci correspond en fait à la décomposition sémique appliquée principalement par Bernard Pottier. Les sèmes une fois mis à nu, le pouvoir de synthèse de l'esprit les rassemble à travers des unités lexicales différentes par une opération que justifie le principe de "consubstantialité" (Coleridge) et que le groupe Mu - après Greimas - appelle principe "isotopique". Le pouvoir particulier du poète consiste précisément à avoir l'intuition des grandes catégories isotopiques "anthropos" et "cosmos" ("humain" et "cosmique") dans des mots spécifiques et à les souder dans la catégorie "logos", c'est-à-dire dans l'espace textuel ou discursif.

La deuxième partie est intitulée: "Le langage dans quelques poèmes de Coleridge". En cinq chapitres est examinée l'application que Coleridge a faite des principes théoriques qu'il énonce. Deux groupes de poèmes se dessinent nettement. Au premier groupe appartiennent les textes - tels que la plupart des "Conversation Poems" - dont la poéticité est essentiellement marquée par la distribution isotopique et le modèle triadique ("anthropos", "cosmos", logos), tandis que la motivation (au sens où l'entendait Mallarmé) demeure relativement faible. A mesure que l'analyse prend en compte "Dejection", "Kubla Khan" et "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", la motivation s'amplifie.

La conclusion, outre le résumé des arguments contenus dans les deux parties, s'attache à placer l'héritage théorique de Coleridge dans une perspective post-saussurienne. Elle met face à face Coleridge et son prolongement le plus évident au vingtième siècle: le groupe Mu. Si le second ne remplace par le premier - ne serait-ce que parce que Coleridge est de surcroît un des plus grands poètes de notre patrimoine européen - il apporte néanmoins une clarté terminologique ainsi qu'une netteté conceptuelle et technique qui résultent directement de l'apport linguistique que l'on doit à Saussure, aux Formalistes, aux structuralistes et à leurs successeurs.