MOTIFS RELATED WITH UNCONSCIOUS MIND

Unconscious mind plays an important role in the poems of Coleridge. Sleep, dream and vision are associated with unconscious mind and these frequently appear in the poetic world of Coleridge. Sleep is the ‘god of half-shut eye’ (Coleridge, E.H 26) who can command many a dream from which his dominion to

Wave its various-painted pinions,

Till ere the splendid visions close. (Coleridge, E.H 27)

Sleep offers an experience rich with dreams of varied hues; and these dreams are the splendid visions. Coleridge’s poems abound in plenty of references to sleep, dream and vision; and from a study of these poems we can understand how these motifs appear recurrently in his poems but with a difference in meaning.

“Tears of doubt-mingled joy” (Coleridge, E.H 27) come to those that “Start from precipices of distemper’d sleep.” (Coleridge, E.H 29) Even such a sleep can beget the joy of the creative artist. But it is not a creative joy because it is jarred by doubts and these doubts owe their origin to the distempered character of sleep. When it is not distempered, sleep leads us to a world of shadows that bewitch the individual. There is ‘slumber’s shadowy vale.’(Coleridge, E.H 80) These shadows are not other than the ‘shadows of imagination’ which people the world of poetry. And yet the shadows are not lifeless, though they have the ‘silent poesy of form.’

The calm of peaceful slumber is an anathema since it is so calm, that it disturbs

And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. . . . .

. . . . . .Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams. (Coleridge, E.H 240)

The entire external world partakes of the character of a dream. The silence of a happy sleep is strange in itself since a passive sleep is taken to be self-contradictory. Even sleep has its own dynamism in that it is not only the awakener of dreams and visions but it has its specific sounds through which it gets articulated. Dream is that form of
sensibility which sleep assumes a comprehending sound and time. He gazes at the soothing things in a dream-like state till they lulled him to sleep; ‘and sleep prolonged my dreams.’ (Coleridge, E.H 241)

Freud has been telling us that in the dream-state the unconscious struggles for an escape. The individual has an experience and is aware of something during this state. This kind of awareness can best be described as the subconscious or the subliminal. A state similar to this is found in day-dreaming and in reverie. The fascinating “Fears in Solitude” presents the subliminal self looking at the world. The humble man ‘found religious meaning in the forms of Nature’ in his meditative joy.

And

his senses gradually wrapt
In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
And dreaming hears thee still, O singing lark’
That singest like an angel in the clouds! (25-28)

The meditative state lulls the sense to sleep, and the sights and sounds he experiences look like those occurring in the dreams. During the experience what is cognised is true and real, though the relative characteristics like reality and unreality are not applicable to the cognitions we then have. Yet what is experienced does transcend the limitations of time, space and personality; and the lark can appear as an angel in the clouds. The sleep that begets such dreams and visions is indeed blessed.

“The Ancient Mariner” came to realise at one stage that sleep is ‘a gentle thing’, and Mary queen

sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul. (295-96)

During the soothing sleep, he dreams of empty buckets filled with life sustaining dew. As he awakens from the trance-like state, it begins to rain. The source of the dreams is the collective unconscious, which is continually active, combining its material in ways which serve the future. In other words, dreams have the power of prediction:

A very large number of accidents of every description,
more than people would ever guess are of psychic
causation, ranging from trivial mishaps like stumbling banging oneself etc-all those may be psychically caused and may sometimes have been preparing for weeks or even months. I have examined cases of this kind, and often I could point to dreams which show signs of a tendency to self injury weeks beforehand. (Adair 88)

Sleep comes from heaven to the soul in travail; and though it becalms the senses by sliding into the soul, it does not render the soul passive. The soul is dynamic and is somehow conscious of the numberless goings-on in the universe around. It is in a trance-like state when the Mariner could hear the conversation of the two voices in the air. Nothing of significance can be lifeless or unconscious. We are even told:

Yet still the sails made on,
A pleasant noise till noon.
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune. (367-72)

The sleeping woods listen to a quiet tune made by a flowing but hidden brook. The association of music with sleep is pregnant with great implications. Music, for Coleridge, is a necessary source of poetic inspiration; and when the sleeping woods are bewitched by music we get something like the ‘silent poesy of form’ revealed by the garden of Boccaccio. When the Mariner sees his native country, in his ecstasy he cries:

O let me be awake, my God;
Or let me sleep always. (470-71)

He does not know which is real. He could not associate the joy of creation with the waking moments since he committed the crime in the so-called wakeful or conscious state. He would prefer to have a perpetual sleep if this ecstasy were to be found only in sleeping. Music, ecstasy and sleep are inseparably united; and poetry cannot be sought elsewhere. Coleridge associates sleep with the welling up of his creative activity. He gives an account of his views:
The sleep, which I have is made of ideas so connected, & so little different from the operations of the reason, that it does afford me the due refreshment for it seemed to me a suicide of my very soul to divert my attention from Truths so important, which came to me almost as a Revelation. (Jung The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious 123)

A sleep that is ecstatic is as valuable as the moment of inspiration to the poet. Christabel too

Hath drunk deep,

Of all the blessedness of sleep! (375-76)

This is a blessedness which Coleridge attributed to joy and imagination. It is usually associated with saints and seers. And one can then say that the ‘gentle sleep’ has ‘wings of healing.’ (128)

There is another poem “The Pains of Sleep” in which the motif of sleep acquires a different meaning. Sleep, in this poem is an outcry of agony. It is a vision of the sufferer who is afraid of sleep:

Sleep, the wide blessing, seemed to me
Distemper’s worst calamity. (35-36)

This is in strange contrast to the mariner’s invocation to sleep five years earlier. This contrast seems to have become more acute in the lines:

A low dead thunder mutter’d thro’ the night,
As ’twere a giant angry in his sleep. (502-503)

Frightened, he wants Nature to ‘lull me into sleep and leave me dreaming.’ It is ‘the dark spirits’ worst infirmity.’ (Coburn 198) In “The Pains” we read that the next night

When my own loud scream
Had waked me from the fiendish dream,
O’ercome with sufferings strange and wild,
I wept as I had been a child. (37-40)
Such dreams arise out of the distempered sleep, not from the blessed one. Yet the reaction is similar to that of a child who is a visionary, with all its innocence, freshness and spirit of wonder. This distemper again appears in another passage:

Though obscure pangs made cures of his dreams,
And dreaded sleep, each night repelled in vain,
Each night was scattered by its own loud screams. (42-44)

The creative process has nothing to do with such sleep and dreams because these are intensely personal and because they beget a state opposite to that of joy.

Sleep interested Coleridge primarily because it is the parent of dreams and dreams have a good deal to do with the origin and nature of the creative process. In the ‘sunny hour of sleep’, near his ‘dear native brook’ for the first time

Young Poesy

Star’d wildly-eager in her noon-tide dream. (Coleridge, E.H 54)

Day dreaming can give rise to poetry; and nature is a kind of creative artist, for in nature we are assured of the presence of a divine analogue to the artistic process. This is a variety of dreaming where the individual is asleep without closing the eyes in “Christabel:"

With open eyes (ah woe is me;)
Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
Fearfully dreaming, yet, I wis,
Dreaming that alone. . . (292-95)

This is what was elsewhere called ‘memory’s dream’ (87) It is an open-eyed dream and Christabel had one such. She dreamt and in dreaming she recollected the sweet vision and also looked to the future. Her dreams about her lover present the reality and represent the psychic activity of her unconscious. As Jung comments:

Dreams contain images and thought association which we do not create without conscious content. They arise spontaneously without assistance and are representations of a psychic activity withdrawn from our arbitrary will. Therefore, the dream properly speaking, is a highly objective, natural product of the
Where the vision appears in all its complexity and intricacy and where its significance seems to extend to unknown regions and frontiers, we have that perplexity of mind. As dreams too lively leave behind. (385-86)

It is a perplexity which is lively. The liveliness is due to the vision and the activity of the subconscious in imagination. But the perplexity is the result of shapelessness. Imagination has yet to reduce the liveliness of the vision into a proper form. Till the form emerges,

Though my slumber was gone by,
This dream it would not pass away-
It seems to live upon my eye! (557-59)

The visual activity remains till the organic form evolves itself out of the materials with which imagination works; and the dream might pass away when the organic form takes its proper place. In “Phantom,” Coleridge says that

This tale’s a fragment from the life of dreams;
But say, that years matur’d the silent strife,
And ’tis a record from the dream of life.

(Coleridge, E.H 485)

There is a life of dreams along with dream of life. Ordinary human beings have dreams in their lives, but the poet has a dream of life. All our values emanate from the dream of life. There is a fragment illuminating this idea:

I know ’tis but a dream, yet feel more anguish
Than if ’twere truth, it has been often so. (495-96)

Even when he knows that it is only a dream, he feels more anguish because it is more than the truth with which we are acquainted in our ordinary life. It has a higher truth, a greater reality, and he does not want to be exiled from dream. We are also told that Imagination is the ‘lovely sorceress’ who must ‘aid the Poet’s dream.’ (49) This abiding is necessary because it is only imagination that can give a shape or form to the dream. Once the dream acquires a form under the influence of the shaping spirit it
becomes a work of pure art. Coleridge at times felt that he was one with his dream. Speaking about the joys evoked by love, he says:

\begin{quote}
Such joys with sleep did 'bide,
That I the living Image of my Dream
Fondly forgot. (Coleridge, E.H 95)
\end{quote}

When a poet tells us that he was the living image of his dream and that his poem is a ‘record from the dream of life,’ we get Coleridge’s equation of the poet with the poem. He admits that he was given to ‘dream away’ the tame ‘pampering coward heart with feeling too delicate for use. (107) The dream has no practical utility. On the other hand, it has an intrinsic value, it is valuable for its own sake. He would not give up such a value for the sake of some utility. And he therefore observes:

\begin{quote}
My heart has need with dreams like these to survive. (348)
\end{quote}

He would strive with dreams which alone have a value and which are consequently real.

The dream has an intellectual content which can at times appear perfectly logical. He says that

\begin{quote}
the murmuring tide
Lull’d her, and many a pensive pleasing dream
Rose in sad shadowy trains at Memory’s call. (Coleridge, E.H 527)
\end{quote}

The witchery of sounds induces a sleep-like state in which one has pensive dreams. They are full of thoughts. And yet because memory intervenes, there are only series of shadows. We find him saying ‘light as a dream’ (336) Besides this we also hear of ‘dark as a dream’ (475) and ‘swift as a dream.’ (554)

\begin{quote}
But swift as dreams myself I found
Within the Pilot’s boat. (555-56)
\end{quote}

The dreams are fleeting, inscrutable and mysterious, since they are like moments of inspiration. And he has a ‘sweet dream where Susquehannah pours his untamed stream.’ (135) The pleasantness of dreams needs no comment. When an exclusively personal feeling is evoked, the dream can be sweet and pleasant in a very narrow sense. Thus we read that Christabel ‘had dreams all yesternight of her own betrothed knight.’ (29-30) But then the dreams of love ‘prove seldom true.’ (426) Such personal
emotions bring the dreamer into direct contact with the hard facts of life; and this contact rings the death-knell of dreams. Christabel, when she is under the infectious influence of Geraldine, dreams fearfully of “jagged shadows and mossy leafless boughs.” (281) Dreams are the product of the unconscious. As Jung comments:

The dream, we would say, originates in the unknown part of the psyche and prepares dreamer for the events of the following day. (Jung *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* 82)

Christabel’s thoughts are moving to and fro in a maze. According to Jung, as dreams originate from the collective unconscious, they appear in riddle a series of images which are apparently contradictory and meaningless. The dream images are expressions of erotic conflicts. For example, the motif of assault can appear in numerous variations of the burglars, thieves and sexual maniacs, the motif of danger may be represented by tigers, elephants, snakes etc. Christabel witnesses Geraldine’s sexual degradation and the fear is projected in the unconscious in the form of a snake dream.

Coleridge says in “Dejection: an Ode” ‘viper thoughts that coil around my mind’ are ‘Reality’s dark dream’ (94-5) and so he turns to listen to the ‘mad Lutanist.’ Or he would tell Asra,

You stood before me like a thought,
A dream remembered in a dream. (Coleridge, E.H 410)

This dream within a dream is more fascinating than the normal dream. But sometimes there start

Sad recollections of Hope’s garish dream,
That shaped a seraph form, and named it Love. (Coleridge, E.H 152)

In the true dream there is no awareness of a recollection. Where one is conscious of remembering, he is having only fancy, not imagination.

But there is also the nightmare-variety of dream. In the epode of the “Ode to the Departing Year”, in the epode Lamb wished to ‘commend to annihilation’, Coleridge observes:
And ever, when the dream of night
Renews the phantom to my sight,
Cold sweat-drops gather on my limbs;
My ears throb hot; my eye-balls start;
My brain with horrid tumult swims;
Wild is the tempest of my heart;
And my thick and struggling breath
Imitates the toil of death! (105-12)

Restless, uneasy and frightened, he shudders at this kind of dream which is a kind of death-in-life and which therefore is the antithesis of the aesthetic. This anti-aesthetic dream is that which has engulfed man who is busy wrecking the hard-won values and ideals of life. The present activities of men look like

A wild and dream-like trade of blood and guile,
Too foolish for tear, too wicked for a smile. (Coleridge, E.H 361)

The wild and foolish dream and wicked dream is to be compared with the dream of life that made ‘the Wedding Guest a sadder and wiser man.’ And

all the fierce and drunken passions wove

A dance more wild than e’ver was maniac’s dream.

(Coleridge, E.H 245)

These maniacal dreams of desolation and destruction are busily engaged in a struggle with the physical and material problems. They are the dreams which can trace their genesis to the first murder or crime committed by man who did not know what it is to love and to dream. “Cain stood like one who struggles in his sleep because of the exceeding terribleness of a dream.”(290) And Coleridge asks us to overcome this kind of dream if we are to cherish or create poetry, if we are to struggle to realise the enduring human values embodied in great art and literature.

In his “Dark Ladie” he speaks of the ‘waking dream’; as he narrates his love to Genevieve,

Like the murmur of a dream
I heard her breathe my name.
And yet Earl Henry could say
I am too full of dreams to meet her now.

(Coleridge, E.H 555)

The ‘waking dream’ has been his enviable lot. (32) Since the dream is more real and valuable and since it is complete, independent and autonomous, he cannot give it up. There is “A Day-Dream” addressed to Asra. He opens the reverie by admitting that his ‘eyes make pictures when they are shut’; and he proceeds to say:

I dream with mine eyes, and at my heart I feel thee! (285)

A dream where the eyes and the the heart are together active reminds us of the saying that the poet’s heart and intellect must be combined, intimately combined. But there is ‘passion’s feverish dream’ (588) too; it is the ‘unholy Pleasure’s frail and feverish dream’ (55) is the product of simple passion. Then we have

Alas, vain Phantasies! The fleeting brood
Of woe self-solaced in her dreamy mood. (Coleridge, E.H 130)

Thus the heart divorced from the intellect can give us only the feverish excitement of a dream.

The true dream, on the other hand, has a music. Bard Bracy had ‘so strange a dream’ that he

Vowed with music loud
To clear you wood from thing unblest,
Warned by a vision in my rest! (528-30)

The vision can indicate the things to come; and if they are the unblest, the vision demands that they be suppressed or destroyed with the help of music. The harmony is music, the rhythm in thought, and the shaping spirit operating on the dream-material, are all alike. In all these the common controlling principle is that of music. Vision and music are inseparable. That an organic form is evolved from within is one of Coleridge’s tenets. Such a form can emerge from the dreams too. In the “Songs of the Pixies”, he says:

Weaving gay dreams of sunny-tinted hue,
We glance before his view. (43-44)
The shaping spirit can operate successfully as the dream because the dream has colour, and colour is the first affirmation of form. The gay dreams have a sunny-tinctured hue; they are bright and variegated. He speaks of the ‘day-dreams whose tincts with sportive brightness glow’. (47) These are the dreams of the lover; and yet as far as the immanence of colour is concerned, they do not differ from those dreams that give birth to poetry. Besides colour, the dream has a movement:

On Seraph wing I'd float a Dream by night,
To soothe my love with shadows of delight. (Coleridge, E.H 53)

Colour and motion together give us a form that is dynamic, growing and evolving. In this light we can have

the love-lorn Serenade

That wafts soft dreams to slumber’s listening ears. (Coleridge, E.H 88)

Now the dream is made to acquire a sound too. An entity that has colour, motion and sound is the dream. And in the “Destiny of Nations” we find

a Dream arose,

Shaped like a black cloud marked with streaks of fire.

(Coleridge, E.H 141)

The dream has a shape, form and the poet seeks to express it another form through significant sounds. Jung says:

A dream should be regarded with due seriousness as an actuality that has to be fitted into the conscious attitude as a co-determining factor and it is also an involuntary and spontaneous psychic product, a voice of nature; and is usually obscure and difficult to understand because it expresses itself in symbols and pictures, like the most ancient writing or the complicated letters which children sometimes enjoy producing with drawings replacing the important words. (Fordham 97)

The semi-conscious state is closer to that of the trance arising out of an intense concentration and contemplation. When we speak of a vision that transcends human limitations, we are actually referring to a trance. Sometimes it is difficult to say
whether a trance is a day-dream or a reverie. At any rate it is a state that where one is not aware of his environment. Not only can he be ‘entranced in prayer’, but he could have a ‘brief trance of abstraction’. That is, the trance can be an emotional experience or a purely intellectual one. Great poetry presents a synthesis of these two varieties; and the poetic trance does not appear to be different from a dream or sleep where consciousness is active without having the interference of the will. One such was the Mariner’s trance wherein he heard two voices of justice and mercy. Even Geraldine says that she had ‘lain entranced’ when the five warriors seized her. This would imply that there are only certain trances which can give birth to poetry. While Geraldine seems to slumber still and mild,

Christabel

Gathers herself from out her trance,
Her limbs relax, her countenance
Grows sad and soft. (311-14)

This is a trance that begets sadness; but the softness that is present is not the wisdom which dawned on the Mariner and on the wedding guest. To be artistically creative the trance must leave one sadder and wiser. But Christabel smiles and weeps

Like a youthful hermitess,
Beauteous in a wilderness,
Who, praying always, prays in sleep. (320-22)

This trance disturbs and yet pacifies because it works merely on the emotions; and such an experience has its aching joys and dizzy raptures. This is however, another which gives rise to a blessed visionary experience. Christabel had ‘a vision sweet’; and there was another vision that fell upon her soul. The earlier one was the ‘vision blest’, which ‘put a rapture in her breast’. The second one was ‘a dizzy trance’. The poet is inspired by the former to express.

In a vacant mood, one sultry hour, he had an experience which may have come to him in ‘a transient sleep’ when he ‘watched the sickly calm with aimless scope’; or it may be ‘a trance ‘wherein he ‘turned his eyes inward.’ But then

Some hoary-headed friend, perchance,
May gaze with stifled breath;
And oft, in momentary trance,
Forget the waste of death. (Coleridge, E.H 176)

Forgetting the waste of death is to have the dream of life. In such a dream everything is charged with a new light. We hear of the ‘row of bleak and visionary pines’; and we find that the moon is ‘the mother of wildly-working visions’ and dreams. He told Mary Morgan and Charlotte Brent,

You have been to me,
At once a vision and reality. (Coleridge, E.H 411)

He would ‘dream’ of them,
Only dream of you (ah! Dream and pine!). (Coleridge, E.H 412)

The vision must be felt to be real. And the pixies say that
at the visionary hour,
Along our wildly-bowered sequestered walk,
We listen to the enamoured rustic’s talk. (53-55)

That makes them happy. But the blessedness of the muse of poetry implies music:

The music hovers half-perceiv’d,
And only moulds the slumberer’s dreams. (Coleridge, E.H 358)

It is music that moulds the dream; and the dream is moulded into the poetic form by the joy which is at the heart of secondary imagination. Thus the eave-drops fall is ‘heard only in the trances of blast’; but the silent Mount of poetry makes

The dilating soul, enrapt, transfused,
Into the mighty vision passing-there
As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven!

(Coleridge, E.H 378)

In its higher reaches, the dream stimulated by music and regulated by imagination gives us poetry that constantly aspires to the heavenly state of experience.

The poet is a visionary who feels truth. But Coleridge speaks of the ‘vision veiling truth’ and goes beyond it when we read:

Life is a vision shadowy of Truth;
And vice, and anguish and the wormy grave,
Shapes of a dream! (Coleridge, E.H 124)
This idea is based on Berkley’s thought. Life refers to what we have in our normal experiences. And the dream partakes of reality. After the shooting of albatross

Some in dreams assured were
Of the spirit that plagued us so. (131-32)

The waking moments never gave them any idea of the spirit. It was a dream that made them conscious of it; and what they dreamt was true as the mariner came to realise.

The mariner dreamt that the buckets
were filled with dew;
And when I awoke it rained. (299-300)

This is another instance of dream revealing the facts of life. The mariner continues:

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank. (301-4)

He drank in his dreams. Not only did his soul drink, but his body. His purgation began in the dream and it is futile to disbelieve it. Strange things happen in a dream; but there are strange events even in our waking moments:

It had been strange, even in a dream
To have seen those dead men rise. (333-34)

It is not strangeness that makes a dream unreal or false. It is the influence it wields that makes a dream real and true. It is not for us to question what was a fact of actual experience. When the mariner beholds his native country, he cries in a neo-platonic ecstasy: ‘O! dream of joy!’ Even the ‘ag’d Hermit’ has ‘his holy dream.’

But the greatest vision comes to us in “Kubla Khan” which is a fragment of fifty four lines. The Crew script of the poem says that it was composed in sort of reverie brought on by two grains of opium. Hence “Kubla Khan” has been subtitled “A Vision in a Dream.” The evidence of its mysterious dream origin is available from Coleridge himself, who

continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, atleast of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have
composed less than two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. (Adair 108)

A product of dream as “Kubla Khan” is, the mystery of its creation and profundity of its dream vision become obvious, if it is studied from the perspective of depth psychology particularly that of Freud and Jung. In depth psychology, dream is one of the most significant factors that laid particular stress on the repressed desires in the unconscious part of the mind. Freud’s theory of the dream brings into focus the desires and urges which might have occasioned Coleridge’s mental state at the time he came to write “Kubla Khan.” Jung’s observation has more in common with Coleridge’s assertion that in dreams memories well up from the depths of mind through the unconscious processes. The poem can be referred to in the Jungian terms as the meaningful dream. Jung asserts that rather than from the personal, the meaningful dreams arise from a deeper level:

They reveal their significance quite apart from the subjective impression they make-by their plastic form, which often has a poetic force and beauty. Such dreams occur during the critical phases of life, in early youth, puberty... (Jung The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious 7)

In the light of this dream in “Kubla Khan” has only a manifest relation with the personal unconscious. Its relation is with the collective unconscious.

The poet starts with a pleasure dome with its earthly environment and human fears and struggles. It is slowly washed away. This dome is transformed in the vision:

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw. (37-38)

The dome becomes a damsel singing on her dulcimer; and the music which has replaced the earlier dome gives place in its turn to the dome of poetry. The poet relates this vision of damsel chiefly with the awesome and mysterious power of poetic
creation. In the process, he loses all conscious control and becomes intoxicated with divine madness. Jung’s views would be valid here, who says that no sooner the unconscious touches a person, he becomes unconscious of himself. In the next stanza, Coleridge draws the picture of a poet under the spell of poetic frenzy:

. . . Beware Beware

His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle around him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of paradise. (49-54)

The poet dreams ‘of blissful worlds’ and he would

Then wake in Heaven, and find the dream all true. (350)

With the power of imagination, Coleridge will build that dome in air, the sunny dome with caves of ice, for that is the inventive power of his poetry. He will be regarded with awe like Kubla Khan who is the figure of power, mystery and enchantment. He will be synonymous with the youth who has eaten the fruit and drunk the milk of paradise, forbidden but in the poet’s vision possible only through the participation mystique which involves what Jung has called the release from compulsion and impossible responsibility. As a result the psychic energy is released on to an invisible centre, which is also the circumference that enclosed the conscious and the unconscious as in erotic union. G.Wilson Knight has pointed out the sexual symbolism:

The pleasure dome, we may regard as the pleasure of a sexual union, in which birth and death are the great contesting partners. (Knight 95)

“Freud and Jung both have contended that libido is the motive power through which men maintain their interests and direct their energies. When they are pleased with their mirror reflections, libido is directed from eros to the ego. Such transference in the mature expressions of the libido involves some measure of sublimation. Poetry, drama, romance are sublimated products of the libido.” (Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. 32) Sees in this context, “Kubla Khan” is a product of libido.
There is a superadded, even ‘magical’ quality about the writings of Coleridge in the year 1797-98. He introduced an element of supernaturalism in many of his poems like “Kubla Khan,” “Christabel,” “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” “The Garden of Boccacio,” “The Wanderings of Cain” and “The Destiny of Nations.” But the motif of supernaturalism also acquires different meaning in these poems. Coleridge was a man who had found himself on a green island which had been raised above the sea by some hidden volcanic action and which would be removed again, shortly afterwards, by the same mysterious agency. (Beer 45)

The Eastern tales had a strong impact on the mind of Coleridge even during the period when he was largely devoting himself to more mundane writing. Their description of scenes conjured up by spirits were a stimulus for new departures in landscape poetry; and their sensuous scenes provided a medium for discreet exploration of the erotic. Thus James Ridley’s *Tales of the Genii*, though always finally directed towards the inculcation of virtue under the guise of Allah, were full of arresting description of pleasure. When Coleridge wrote of the “Aeloian Harp” that

Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,

It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs

Tempt to repeat the wrong! (Coleridge, E.H. 101)

he was probably drawing on Ridley’s description of the carvings in the mansion at Shadaski, which included, among other scenes, ‘coyly willing virgins; who seamed, even in the ivory in which they were carved, to show a soft reluctance’ (Ridley 70) indeed, the whole poem, showing Coleridge and Sara at Clevedon, may contain some reminiscences of the main delight depicted in the carvings; that of ‘the joy of sweet retirement with the favourite nymph’ (Ridley 71).

Coleridge had a strong fascination about romance and it marked an attempt to give philosophical respectability to the effects of that enjoyment by proving that the strange effect of reality which the romance conveyed to the mind was not after all an illusion but did in fact tell us about the nature of ‘reality’. For Coleridge, the full experience of reading romance is like that of passing into a different world; what he wanted to investigate was the psychological truth within that commonplace. (Beer 47)
Coleridge was drawn towards the conception of a hidden tradition of wisdom, emerging from time to time under various guises in the religions and mythologies of mankind. In particular he was struck by the fact that all religions, however wide their divergences, seemed to contain two stable elements: a belief in God and a belief in immortality. He was also interested in the association made by many mystical thinkers between the sun and the ultimate nature of God, and in the devotion paid to the sun in many ancient religions. One form of this devotion, found in Egyptian hieroglyphics and other emblems all over the world, showed itself in the recurring emblem of the sun, the serpent the energy which goes out from it and the wings of love that returns to it. This esoteric form of the Trinity seems to have appealed particularly to Coleridge both as an image of the creative process and as a paradigm for the explanation of human nature. According to it, human evil would be seen as the result of energy being separated from its source and becoming consequently corrupt. If it is not renewed by the return of its source, as imagined in the wings in the emblem, the state of corruption must continue. But when there is a flow of love between the source of all love and the individual organism the broken cycle is restored and human energies flourish again in their beauty. (Beer 50) A fragment for the poem “The Destiny of Nations” uses this pattern of ideas. Coleridge describes how night is always striving to

regain the losses of that hour
When Love rose glittering and his gorgeous wings
Over the abyss fluttered with such glad noise,
As what time after long and pestful calms,
With slimy shapes and miscreated life
Poisoning the vast Pacific, the fresh breeze,
Wakens the merchant-sail uprising. (Coleridge, E.H 140)

But if some such esoteric explanation of human evil were true it also followed that knowledge of it could not be left to reason alone; it would be better grasped in the sphere of the imagination. And it was therefore important that the human imagination should be nourished not starved. In the same poem, Coleridge uses the image of the Northern Lights which both guide the Laplander through the winter darkness and
remind him of the sun that will return. He explained how some of the Laplander’s own superstitions teach important forms of the wisdom-as in the legends with which

The polar ancient thrills his uncouth throng;
Whether of pitying Spirits that make their moan,
O’er slaughtered infants, or that Giant Bird
Vuokho, of whose rushing wings the noise
Is Tempest, when the unutterable Shape
Speeds from the mother of Death, and utters once,
That shriek, which never murderer heard, and lived.

(Coleridge, E.H.134)

Such superstitions keep alive pathos and the sublime: they teach, through tenderness and fear, the ways of a universe in which those emotions are centrally significant.

In Coleridge’s view the romance is not simply an aid to the transmission of moral truth; it conveys a truth of its own which cannot easily be transmitted in any other way. Coleridge wrote about the ‘littleness’ of most human knowledge and emotions: ‘the universe itself-what but an immense heap of little things?’ Something more was needed to induce in him the sense of sublime:

My mind feels as if it ached to behold and know something
great-something one and indivisible-and it is only in the
faith of this rocks or waterfalls, mountains or caverns give
me the sense of sublimity or majesty!-But in this faith all things
counterfeit infinity! (Coleridge, E.H. 349)

The motif of supernaturalism appears recurrently in the poetry of Coleridge. The poem “Christabel,” an unfinished fragment consisting of two parts is a fine specimen of conflict between good and evil. The images in “Christabel” are those conventionally associated with mystery and the supernatural; for example, the sounds mentioned in the first lines: the chiming of the midnight hour, the hoot of the owls and the howling of the mastiff. The poet stresses the fact that the cock is crowing at the wrong time; clearly, this is a hint of disorder in the natural environment. The full
moon is significant too; although it brightens the dark woods, it is partially covered by a grey cloud symbolising the struggle between light and dark.

The very opening of the poem indicates the gloomy atmosphere of the poem. In such an atmosphere, the lovely lady Christabel ventures out of the castle and makes her way to the woods, because

She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her love that’s far away. (27-30)

The benevolent energies of nature are at their lowest ebb-so that, if Christabel’s discovery of Geraldine in the wood is another encounter between the child of nature and the world of romance, it is encounter fraught with peril.

The shadowy light of the moon, the eclipsing of the whole existence under a dark light, bring to light the archetype of the “shadow.” Christabel is in complete control of herself, as she comes to the wood to pray under the shadow of the huge oak tree; later she is transported from the conscious world into the realm of the unknown. Afterwards she experiences strange sensations. In Jungian psychology:

In the realm of consciousness we are our own masters;
we seem to be factors ourselves; but if we step through
the door of the shadow, we discover with terror that we
are objects of unseen factors. (Jung The Archetypes and
the Collective Unconscious 23)

On crossing the realm of the shadow, Christabel hears moans in the vicinity of the oak tree, but “what it is she cannot tell” (40). She thinks that it is wind moaning, but again she hears the moans clearly. Her heart starts beating and she prays to Jesus, Maria, who “shield her well” (54). The poem abounds in frequent references to God, the Creator. With reference to Jung’s point of view about God, it can be inferred that the figure embodies superhuman strength and He is the saviour of man in difficulties. As Jung opines:

The psychic fact ‘God’ is a typical autonism, a
collective archetype, as I later called it. It is therefore
characteristic not only of all higher forms of religion, but appears spontaneously in the dreams of individuals. The archetype is, as such, an unconscious psychic image. (Jung *Symbols of Transformation* 61)

Christabel’s invocation of God in times of distress is significant when viewed from this angle. Christabel steals to the other side of the oak tree and sees “a damsel bright,”

\[
\text{Drest a damsel bright,} \\
\text{in a silken robe of white,} \\
\text{that shadowy in the moonlight shone. (58-60)}
\]

Though Geraldine is wearing a white dress, regarded as the emblem of purity, yet it appears shadowy. It signifies that she is involved in a carefully planned deception. Here is an illusion to the archetype of shadow. As Christabel steps into the shadow, she experiences vague and grave consequences highlighting the danger of shadow. Jung writes:

\[
\text{The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well. For what comes after the door is surprisingly enough, a boundless expanse full of unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently no inside and no outside, no above and no below, no here and no there, no mine and no thine. (Jung *Symbols of Transformation* 37)}
\]

The shadow is a bad omen of the strange experiences, through which Christabel passes. The lady is richly clad and is exceedingly beautiful. Christabel invokes Mother Mary to “save me now” (69). There is again reference to the God image. The divine presence is called in all difficulties and dangerous situations, for the purpose of relieving the unbearable difficulties. All the complexes are transferred to the God image.

On enquiry, the beautiful lady narrates the story of her abduction by five warriors, who later abandon her in the forest. Christabel helps the lady to the castle.
When Geraldine enters the castle, the cold brands flare up so that Christabel can see Geraldine’s snakelike eyes. Later, it is Christabel who lights the lamps. Geraldine seems to shrink from the light because it is the light that reveals the truth.

But when the lady passed there came
A tough of light, a fit of flame. . . . (58-59)

The extinguished embers glow and flames leap out like the tongue of a snake. It is the premonition of the snake image in part I and part II as it is associated with poison of guile. As Jung asserts in one of the variations of Franz Stuck, the snake image signifies “vice,” “sin” or “lust.”

Christabel leads Geraldine to her chamber where the “moon shines dim in the open air” (75) but “not a moon beam enters here” (76). The moon is a dominant symbol of the mother archetype it brightens the dark woods, it is partially covered by a grey cloud that signifies the struggle between good and evil. Christabel trims the lamp, Geraldine swoons and collapses she offers her:

I pray you, drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of various powers,
My mother made it of wild flowers. (91-93)

The mother archetype stands out here. It lays the foundation of the so-called mother complex. Like any other archetype, it appears under infinite variety of aspects. The mother archetype can disguise itself in multifarious forms as remarked by Jung:

Many things arousing devotion or feeling of awe, as for instance the church, university, city or country, heaven, earth, the woods, the sea, or any still waters, matter even, the underworld and the moon be mother symbols. (Jung The Archetypes and Collective Unconscious 21)

Excessive affection from the mother is harmful and has dangerous consequences. It leads to both the negative and positive influences.

Then ensues the struggle between the effect of Christabel’s mother and Geraldine’s evil influence. At this point, the important theme of the relationship between parent and child is exhibited in the poem, to be taken up and reiterated,
Christabel longs for her dead mother’s presence and Geraldine echoes her wish, but the next moment cries with altered voice:

Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!

I have power to bid thee free. (205-6)

The lines recall the curse of the witch and the first part of the poem seems to be moving to a climax of struggle between the power of good and evil, Christabel’s mother and Geraldine, for Christabel’s soul. The witch, according to Jung, is a symbol of the unconscious. Jung explains the compensatory nature of the unconscious as:

The unconscious process stands in a compensatory relation to the conscious mind, I expressly use the word ‘compensatory’ and not the word ‘opposed’ because conscious and unconscious are not necessarily in opposition to one another, but complement one another to form a totality. (Jung Four Archetypes 15)

Jung’s delineation of this conflict is significant because it haunts and tortures the psyche of the individual many a time.

Before Geraldine goes to bed with Christabel, she undresses and reveals the ugly side of her body which is another hint of her evil machinations. As Christabel is watching the repulsive sight, she has many conflicting thoughts but still she is not aware of her evil intentions. Still her unconscious is apprehensive of the danger. As Jung opines:

The unconscious is continually active, combining its material in ways which serve the future. It produces, no less than the conscious mind, subliminal combinations that are prospective only they are markedly superior to the conscious combination both in refinement and scope. For these reasons the unconscious could serve man as a unique guide, provided that he can resist the lure of being misguided. (Jung Two Essays on Analytical Psychology 175)
After undressing, which was “a sight to dream of, not to tell” (253), Geraldine shares the couch and “in her arms the maid she took” (263), Coleridge makes a mockery of mother-child relation. Geraldine embodies the characteristic of a negative mother. In other words, she plays the part of “the terrible mother” who embodies all the negative aspects of mother archetype. Jung explains the negative aspect of the mother archetype as

> Anything secret, hidden, dark, the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces and poisons that is terrifying and miscapable like fate. (Jung *The Archetypes and Collective Unconscious* 82)

Unconsciously Christabel falls into the clutches of Geraldine and experiences the negative aspect of the mother archetype:

> In the touch of his bosom there worketh a spell, Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel! (267-268)

Geraldine seems to be a figure of beauty and pathos—even to represent goodness—until the moment of her undressing, when, having dismissed the presence of Christabel’s dead mother with a withering curse, she reveals the horror which her robe hides.

> Behold! Her bosom and half her side_ A sight to dream of, not to tell! O shield her! Shield sweet Christabel! (253-55)

The mystery of the horror is matched by the mystery of the spell which is cast by Geraldine when, having collected herself in ‘scorn and pride’ she lies down and takes Christabel in her arms.

> What takes place during the night is not clear, except that it is in some sense a struggle for power: Christabel emerges with an obscure sense of sin—but also, apparently, as innocent as before she went to sleep, having been guarded by benevolent spirits, including her mother.

> Part II of the poem opens with sombre utterance of death which is a symbol of the unconscious. The castle in which Christabel lives is a ‘world of death.’ Since the death of Christabel’s mother, Sir Leoline her father has been obsessed by the fact of death and this has coloured his whole existence. In such a world, according to
Coleridge’s theory, Sir Leoline will act like the death-obsessed Cain: he will still be strong and well-intentioned; but redemption from his obsession can take place only if the innocent child of nature undertakes a new encounter with energy (the descent of the wings leading to the elevation of the serpent). This is what in fact happens when Christabel brings Geraldine into the castle. But it is a dangerous meeting of forces, since innocence cannot encounter experience without receiving some stamp from it. The threat is made apparent when Christabel, at sight of Geraldine embracing her own father, remembers the revelation of the night before and responds with serpentine behaviour:

Again she saw that bosom old,
Again she felt that bosom cold,
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound. . . (456-58)

Later, when Geraldine looks at her ‘askance’, her look (which recalls Satan’s ‘scornful eye askance’ (149) and his ‘eying askance’ the innocent pleasures of Adam and Eve in paradise (504) is not only serpentine, but also reminds us directly of that clouded moon at the beginning of the poem which was both ‘small and dull’;

A snake’s small eye blinks dull and shy;
And the lady’s eyes they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent’s eye. . . (581-583)

Throughout the poem, evil has been represented in this way: it is the veiling and hiding of good. The minimal light of the clouded moon and the half-hidden eye of the snake both speak of a vision that has been obscured until it no longer controls human energies, which are left to the caprice of the passion of the moment. (Beer 81)

When Sir Leoline under the influence of Geraldine embraces her, Christabel is annoyed at the behaviour of her father and sees distorted image of her fantasies. While describing the origin of fantasy, Coleman writes:

Fantasy is stimulated by frustrated desire and grows essentially out of mental images associated with need gratification. In fantasy the person achieves the goal and gratifies, although in substitute. (Jung Two Essays on Analytical Psychology 178)
Christabel’s hissing sound is an indication of the fact that her innate desire is focussed on warning her father of Geraldine’s evil designs. The vision which she witnesses is warning her father of Geraldine’s corrupt influence. Under the spell, she cannot utter this vision to her father.

Sir Leoline summons his Bard, Bracy whom he commands to repair the castle of Lord Roland and inform him of the safety of his daughter. The clearest grasp of struggle is held by Bracy who, without knowing exactly what is happening, sees in a dream the struggle symbolised. He has been dreaming during the night:

> For in my sleep I saw that dove,
> That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,
> And call’s at by thy own daughter’s name
> Sir Leoline! I saw the same,
> Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,
> Among the green herbs in the forest alone. (535-540)

A gentle dove, who is named Christabel, was fluttering and uttering fearful moans in the forest alone. On closer scrutiny, it is revealed that a green snake had encircled the neck and body, thereby preventing its flight. Her father fancied that “something unblest” (529) had made an abode there and vowed to expel it from the vicinity by the charm of his music. Sir Leoline, however, mistakes the meaning of the dream and supposes that it is Geraldine who is in danger. For this situation, he has his own solution. Ignoring Bracy’s suggestion, he promises to crush ‘the snake’ by force.

The snake or serpent is the major symbol of evil in Part II of the poem. Sir Leoline applies this symbol to Geraldine’s supposed attackers, when he says that they have “reptile souls.” But Christabel now begins to see Geraldine as a snake or serpent. Charles Tomlinson writes:

> Just as the full moon that is dulled, holds in a frightful balance the image of health with image of disease, the latter overpowering the former, so now there is a further frightful balance. We are on the brink of the suggestion that the Christabel is coveted by Geraldine and that the
Christabel has unconsciously assumed something of the evil identify of the other. (Cleman 97)

Sir Leoline is imprisoned by his world of death. There is little evidence of life in the woods around his castle, where the spring comes late in the year and, within the castle itself, death is triumphant. There is even a curious correspondence with Milton’s hell, which was also a citadel of violence, and itself described as a ‘Universe of death’. (Beer 82) As Satan passes out of Hell in “Paradise Lost,”

\[
\text{The Gates wide op’n stood,} \\
\text{That with extended wings a Bannerd Host} \\
\text{Under spred Ensigns marching might pass through} \\
\text{With Horse and Chariots rankt in loose array. . . . (884-87)}
\]

Similarly, when Christabel and Geraldine enter the castle, they pass through

\[
\text{The gate that was ironed within and without,} \\
\text{Where an army in battle array had marched out. (126-27)}
\]

At the end of the poem, Christabel is desolate and lonely. This leaves Christabel in a condition of pathological isolation which the mariner also feels in his lonely vigil over the vast sea. Christabel is subjected to a series of shocks which crush her innocence. Generalising the situation, Charles Tomlinson writes:

\[
\text{One is compelled to see the characteristics of a symbol relating to everyman’s condition of inner psychological tension the evil preying on the good, the sick undermining the healthy-which brings one back to M. Breton’s statement of the symbolical conflict of the tale of terror and to the fact that Coleridge’s poem, limited though it is by its inability to resolve the conflict, presents an extremely individual variant on this basic return. (Tomlinson 242)}
\]

The whole poem is about the corruption of good, of love through sin and the suffering in supernatural atmosphere.

Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” opens with the mention of an imaginary land, Xanadu and the pleasure-dome:
In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decreed:
Where Alph the sacred river ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea. (1-5)
The pleasure dome is built on the banks of the river Alph which runs from the fountain and it runs to a sunless sea through dark caverns measureless to man. As Jung opines:

    Water is the commonest symbol for the unconscious.
The lake in the valley is the unconscious; which lies;
as it were, underneath unconsciousness, so that it is
often referred to as the ‘subconscious,’ usually with
the objective connotations of an inferior
consciousness. (Jung *The Archetypes and the
Collective Unconscious* 18)

The next lines trace the course of river during which the splendid architectural construction vanishes into caverns whose depth is immeasurable to man. The serene and calm atmosphere is replaced by one of awe and horror. The mysterious atmosphere is highlighted by the description of the chasm and the haunted source:

    A savage place; as holy and enchanted
    As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted
    By woman wailing for her demon lover. (14-16)

The mysterious aura of Coleridge’s woman in the poem (“A savage place as holy and enchanted . . . by woman wailing for her demon lover) can be explained through the following statement of Jung:

    With the help of the anima, we enter the realm of the
Gods, or rather the realm that metaphysics has reserved
for itself. Everything the anima touches becomes
numinous, unconditional, dangerous, taboo and magical. (Jung *The Archetypes and the Collective
Unconscious* 28)
Through the eruption of the fountain, the lines ahead enable the reader to watch a violent process:

Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hall,
Or chaffy grain beneath like thresher’s flail;
And mid these dancing rock at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river. (21-24)

With “swift half-intermitted burst” the fountain forces out its way. The phrases like “ceaseless turmoil” (17) and “fast thick pants” (18) show the turmoil that goes on in the poet’s subconscious.

In another context, the lines suggest that the river rises in the fountain with continuous pressure and flows through the ‘deep romantic chasm’ (12) called a ‘savage place... holy and enchanted’ (14) such as where a woman would wail for a demon lover, one superior to a mortal lover, suggesting thereby uninhibited reach of the demonic mind. The “savage” implies not the brutal, but the primordial, the time before man’s consciousness evolved the dualism of the good and evil. The course of the river is still not smooth. It is “meandering with a mazy motion” (25). After running through the dale, it again reaches the dark caves and sinks with “tumult into a lifeless ocean” (28). The word “tumult” suggests the agony, the chaos, the nothingness suggestive of the process of association and disassociation of the images in the subconscious of the poet. The tumult reminds Kubla Khan of war. The tumult denotes the message that war is yet to be fought against the power of darkness, the evil, which Kubla Khan thought has come to an end. The tumultuous sound heard on account of the falling of the river into a lifeless ocean, reminds the poet that his conscious effort would be rewarded and the meandering river would flow smoothly. The eclipse vanishes and the shadow that fell on the river disappears too.

The “shadow” is another archetype representing the evil latent in man. It comprises not just those undesirable traits which are repressed into the personal unconscious, but the whole ugly burden of the evil world. Similarly, the shadow that fell on the river stands for the dark influences, the evil which is an impediment in the way of consciousness. The sacred river that dominates the first thirty six lines of the poem, runs through dark caves, flows down to a sunless sea and sinks in tumult into a
lifeless ocean. This is an effective way of symbolising the glittering structures welling up from the subconscious and are recognised by the conscious. These structures again sink into the recesses of the subconscious, where they disintegrate and become lifeless. Untouched, they well up into the conscious again to acquire life. Thus the sacred river is symbolic of the poetic mind delineated in the poem. It strongly suggests the extent to which the subconscious is the producer of the strange beauty in “Kubla Khan” and the demon beset subconscious is both creator and destroyer.

It is Coleridge’s own conception of genius which is the ultimate ordering force in the poem; in these first two stanzas the immense weight of influence from earlier literature is all directed and channelled by that conception into a series of images which present the two sides of demonic in man: the creative indwelling power which enables him to construct mighty works of engineering or art on the one hand, and the driving, possessing energy which may urge him on to great works of destruction on the other. Even while Kubla Khan is constructing his ordered place of pleasure the caverns and sunless sea echo back to him the fear of death; in the second stanza the savageness and flawed grandeur of the landscape are eloquent of instincts which may in less propitious times take over and reduce the landscape to ruin. In terms of love this danger is represented by the woman wailing for her daemon lover-unable to regain him yet still longing for him. In terms of human power the dominant image is that of the fountain, not here the ordered sun-fountain of the paradisal garden, always returning to renew itself, but the mighty fountain of destruction, hurling great rocks into the air; and these portents point to a conclusion in which Kubla hears voices telling of an ultimate destruction –‘ancestral voices prophesying war’.

The next lines present a picture of the pleasure-dome achieved:

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice. (31-36)
The new feature which is introduced in these lines is the ‘caves of ice’, which can be traced, at least in part, to Maurice’s “History of Hindostan”. Coleridge had copied out of this book some lines describing a strange phenomenon:

In a cave in the mountain of Cashmere an Image of Ice,
which makes it’s appearance thus-two days before the new moon there appears a bubble of Ice: which increases in size every day till the 15th day, at which it is an ell or more in height: then, as the moon decreases, the Image does also till it vanishes. (Coleridge, E.H. 240)

The image had struck Coleridge as a fine one for the response of human nature when it responds to its own potentialities of enlightenment. Just as the image of ice, underground, responds perfectly to the phases of the moon, so nature, in moments of joy, harmonises with the inward forces of the universe. The ice in the cave becomes an emblem of the force which is needed to balance the outward energies of nature if destruction is not to ensue. In human terms it also images the mixture of sensuousness and purity which Coleridge, following Milton, held to be the key to human happiness. So the sunny pleasure-dome and caves of ice suggest a balance between reason and sense which Coleridge believes to be attainable in this life at least under certain conditions. (Beer 67)

Dreams are characterised by contraries. In “Kubla Khan,” according to Wilson Knight, the contraries are blended:

A miracle of rare device, sunny with caves of ice, which points the resolution of antimonies of light and heat.... these ice and sunfire are two elemental antithesis we may imagine a sexual union between, life and masculine, and death, the feminine. (Knight 95)

Jung illustrates the compensatory aspect of the dreams. He believes that with the persistence of the one-sided attitude in the psyche of people, the opposite comes to the fore to counter the effect and restore a balance. The contraries of dome and caves are not the only ones to be held in reconciliation in this stanza, which represents a moment of miraculous harmony between several contending forces; the sunny dome
and the caves of ice, the fountain and the caves, the dome and the waves are counterpoised into a pattern which includes all the great contraries of human experience: the ultimate physical contraries of heat and cold, light and darkness, pleasure and pain, in the sunny dome and the caves of ice; and the metaphysical contraries, both between the vital infinity of springing energy and the deathful infinity of the spatial universe (the fountain and the caves) and between eternity and the flux of time (the shadow of the dome and the flowing river).

The final movement of the poem begins with the vision of the Abyssinian damsel playing music:

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw. (37-38)

The second part is the logical extension of the first. The impression in the subconscious travel to the conscious and the state of inactivity is replaced by that of activity. The ceaseless turmoil, half intermittent bursts are overcome and the imagination soars, and he drifts into heaven, where he sees a damsel with a dulcimer singing on Mount Abora. Here the archetype of anima is brilliantly employed. With this vision the poet loses all conscious control and becomes intoxicated with the divine madness.

With the power of imagination, Coleridge will build that dome in the air, the sunny dome with caves of ice, for that is the inventive power of poetry. He will be regarded with awe like Kubla Khan who is the figure of power, mystery and enchantment. He will be synonymous with youth who has eaten the fruit and drunk the milk of paradise, forbidden but in the poet’s vision possible only through the participation mystique which involves what Jung has called the release from compulsion and impossible responsibility.

As a total structure, “Kubla Khan” exhibits the paradoxes and contradictions of Coleridge’s own personality and art. There was behind all his activities a strenuous urge to make sense of the universe which would give full weight to human imagination.

A more striking use of the supernatural occurs in “The Wanderings of Cain,” where Cain encounters the ghost of his murdered brother, Abel:
But ere they had reached the rock they beheld a human shape; his back was towards them, and they were advancing unperceived, when they heard him smite his breast and cry aloud, ‘Woe is me! Woe is me! I must never die again, and yet I am perishing with thirst and hunger.’

Pallid, as the reflection of the sheeted lightning on the heavy-sailing night-cloud, became the face of Cain...

And the Shape shrieked and turned round, and Cain beheld him, that his limbs and his face were those of his brother Abel whom he had killed! And Cain stood like one who struggles in his sleep because of the exceeding terribleness. (Hill 128)

Although spectral encounters are the common fare of Gothic horror-ballads and romances, Cain’s confrontation with Abel’s ghost moves beyond such mere sensationalism, for the apparition functions as a symbolic projection of the guilt and despair in Cain’s own tormented soul. As in a nightmare, Cain, the fugitive and vagabond condemned to life by God’s command, comes face to face with the image of his own fears. Similarly in “The Ancient Mariner” the daemons and the phantoms whom the Mariner encounters are projections from the unconscious depths of his own troubled mind. Actually Coleridge wanted to produce a poem in which ‘the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural’ and in which a human interest was transferred from ‘our inward nature’ and in such a way as to ‘to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.’ (Beer 5-6) In other words, Coleridge was to employ the supernatural as an expressive medium, or symbol, for ‘romantic’ emotional states (fear, guilt, remorse) and to imitate these states with such psychological fidelity and dramatic force that the reader would momentarily recognise truths of his inner being in the fictional incidents or characters represented. With this object in view, he wrote “The Ancient Mariner,” transforming a Gothic horror-ballad into a direct emotional
evocation of a guilty man’s spiritual voyage of self-discovery through the unseen moral universe that lies within and above us all.

“The Ancient Mariner” is concerned with the existence of evil, the spiritual aridity which follows it, and the eternal wandering of the soul which is only partially redeemed. An important letter to his brother George in 1798, when he finished this poem, shows a continuing incongruity between his awareness of evil and the pantheistic belief that love of the calm beauty of Nature will lead to love of all created things:

-Of Guilt I say nothing; but I believe most steadfastly in original Sin; that from our mother’s wombs our understandings are darkened; and even where understandings are in the Light, that our organisation is depraved, & our volitions imperfect; and we sometimes see the good without wishing to attain it, and of times wish it without the energy that will & performs- And for this inherent depravity, I believe, that the Spirit of the Gospel is the sole cure.... (Griggs 396)

In Part III of the poem, the skeleton ship of Cruikshank’s dream, which had been in Coleridge’s mind from the beginning, takes possession of the poem with a nightmare strangeness. The very swiftness and dream like inconsequence with which the phantom ship appears has a powerful imaginative effect. The ‘strange shape’ drives suddenly between the mariners and the setting sun:

And strait the Sun was fleck’d with bars
(Heaven’s mother send us grace)
As if thro’ a dungeon grate he peer’d
With broad and burning face. (176-79)

The natural world is imprisoned by the supernatural and in the next verse, the beautiful natural image of ‘gossamers’ is used to convey the transparency of the skeleton ship’s sails:

Are those her Sails that glance in the Sun
Like restless gossamers? (183-84)
The figures in the skeleton-ship, also from Cruikshank’s dream, have all the trappings of Gothic horror. The description of Death is a little crude:

- His bones were black with many a crack,
- All black and bare, I ween;
- Jet-black and bare, save where with rust
- Of mouldy damps and charnel crust
- They’re patch’d with purple and green. (185-189)

His female companion is described with a more subtle terror which may have come from Coleridge’s own nightmares:

- Her lips are red, her looks are free,
- Her locks are yellow as gold:
- Her skin is as white as leprosy,
- And she is far like Death than he;
- Her flesh makes the still air cold. (190-94)

The image of leprosy creates a more creeping fear than the charnel-house description of Death.

With the departure of the Spectre-ship, the horned moon rises and by its light, the sailors drop dead one by one:

- One after one by the horned Moon,
  (Listen, O Stranger! To me)
- Each turn’d his face with a ghastly pang,
  And cursed me with his ee.
- Four times fifty living men,
  With never a sigh or groan,
  With heavy thump, a lifeless lump
  They dropp’d down one by one. (211-18)

The horror of his comrades’ deaths is brought out by the dead sounds, ‘with heavy thump, a lifeless lump.’ The Ancient Mariner’s agony of remorse is more vividly brought out in the image of the crossbow with which he had slain the albatross:

- And every soul it pass’d me by,
- Like the whiz of my Cross-bow. (222-23)
At the beginning of Part IV the wedding-guest recalls us from the nightmare to reality:

‘I fear thee, ancient Marinere!
‘I fear thy skinny hand;
‘And thou are long, and lank, and brown,
‘As is the ribb’d Sea-sand. (224-27)

The Mariner reassures him that he is not a ghost, though death might have been easier than the terrible isolation which he suffered:

Alone, alone all all alone,
Alone on the wide wide Sea
And Christ would take no pity on
My soul in agony. (232-35)

Where Coleridge had once seen God immanent in the natural world, the sea now becomes an image of a frightening infinity from which Christ has withdrawn, the loneliness of the forsaken and sinful soul in an empty universe. The Mariner suffers the doom of the undying among the dead:

The many men so beautiful,
And they all dead did lie!
And a million million slimy things
Liv’d on-and so did I. (236-39)

He tries to pray but cannot; he is conscious only of the vast spaces of sea and the curse in the eyes of the dead men:

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. (240-42)

The heavy reiteration of the rhythm and the repeated monosyllables give the effect of extreme weariness and desolation.

In Part V, wind and storm arise and under the lightning, the dead men begin to work the ship. Once again the poem assumes the quality of nightmare, as Coleridge himself daringly stresses:
It had been strange, even in a dream
To have seen those dead men rise. (333-334)

The ship begins to move but not by natural forces:

The helmsman steer’d, the ship mov’d on;
Yet never a breeze up-blew; (335-336)

It is sailed by the dead men, yet it would be travesty of Christianity to call this resurrection. It is a ghastly mockery of what life had been, another form of Life-in-Death:

The body of my brother’s son,
Stood by me knee to knee;
The body and I pull’d at one rope,
But he said nought to me- (341-44)

No nightmare could be more eerie and terrifying than this, yet, from the midst of the horror, with dream-like strangeness, beauty suddenly flowers.

The ship is taken over ‘by a blessed troop of angelic spirits’, as ‘sweet sounds’ rise from the mouths of the dead sailors. The control of the ship and of the poem has thus become completely supernatural; and the transcendental powers have assumed command. Yet the beauty of the angelic music, breathing through the dead bodies, is conveyed in some of the loveliest of Coleridge’s natural imagery:

Sometimes a dropping from the sky
I heard the Lavrock sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are
How they seem’d to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning. (358-62)

But the ship sails on and still by supernatural means:

Till the moon we silently sail’d on
Yet never a breeze did breathe: (373-74)

At this moment, the Polar spirit reappears in the poem and he is moving the ship:

Under the keel nine fathom deep
From the land of mist and snow
The spirit slid: and it was He
That made the Ship to go. (377-80)

Once again Coleridge emphasizes the supernatural agency:

‘But why drives on that ship so fast
‘Withouten wave or wind? (422-23)

As it is driven onwards by a supernatural power, something of the nightmare horror returns. The Mariner’s eyes are again riveted by the dead men’s gaze:

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter,
All fix’d on me their stony eyes
That in the moon did glitter. (433-36)

Then suddenly, the ship sails back to the Mariner’s native land. The bodies too advance, their right arms burning like torches ‘in the red and smoky light’. The crimson shadows and flame suggest the evil which has returned with the Mariner even to his native shore.

The Mariner turns to the Hermit with a desperate appeal for absolution. We are not told whether absolution is given or not; the emphasis is on the terrible confession:

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrench’d
With a woeful agony,
Which forc’d me to begin my tale,
And then it left me free. (578-81)

But Coleridge does not allow his Mariner to find peace; the anguish and guilt return and he is compelled to tell his terrible story to whoever will listen. If redemption means the freeing of soul from sin, the Mariner is not redeemed. He remains a haunted wanderer, unable to find rest:

I pass, like night, from land to land,
I have strange power of speech;
The moment that his face I see
I know the man that must hear me;
To him my tale I teach. (586-90)
In “The Ancient Mariner,” the material universe both masks and is the medium for apprehending the realms of spiritual and psychological reality. The supernatural is not separate from the natural, but the inner essence of it; and the Mariner’s experiences constitute an imaginative exploration of the links between the material and the spiritual, the natural and the supernatural. Hugh I’ Anson Fausset finds the poem to be an involuntary but inevitable projection into imagery of (Coleridge’s) own inner discord. The Mariner’s sin against Nature in shooting the Albatross imaged his own morbid divorce from the physical; and the poem was therefore moral in its essence, in its implicit recognition of creative values and of the spiritual death which dogs their frustration. (Fausset 166)

What Coleridge was trying to do was to objectivize the imaginative effect of the poem as much as possible and to present it as a ‘poetic romance’ which could be read as an exercise in the supernatural without too much inquiry into the seriousness or effectiveness of his assault on ultimate truth in the poem.

The romance-experience remained a powerful presence with him, so that it is not surprising to find it repeating itself in his later poetry. In “The Garden of Boccaccio,” he describes once again a scene of pleasure in romance and find romance mysteriously turning into ‘reality’. This ultimate experience of romance, when we pass into the scene which is described and find ourselves part of it, comes in this poem as a result of looking at a tapestry depicting scenes from Boccaccio:

I see no longer, I myself am there,
Sit on the ground-sward, and the banquet share,
’Tis I, that sweep that lute’s love-echoing strings,
And gaze upon the maid who gazing sings,
Or pause and listen to the tinkling bells,
From the high tower and think that there she dwells,
With old Boccaccio’s soul I stand possest,
And breathe on air like life, that sweels my chest. (65-72)
Although the feeling for romance is as strong as ever here, however, Coleridge is no longer willing to suggest any sure link with the supernatural in a literal sense. Like “The Ancient Mariner,” the whole sphere of romance is now assigned to a realm of its own; his former sense that the imagination reveals the eternal is neither affirmed nor denied.

Coleridge uses the metaphor of ‘phantom’ in many of his poems. A Phantom is a nightmare figure producing fear and dread. In his poem “Phantom,” Coleridge liberates the Being from its physical stage, leaving behind a dead body of confining form:

Phantom
All look and likeness caught from earth,
All accident of kin and birth,
Had pass’d away. There was no trace,
Of aught on that illumined face,
Uprais’d beneath the rifted stone,
But of one spirit all her own,
She, she herself, and only she,
Shone through her body visibly. (1-8)

Death is the only phantom in the poem, for the poet could never believe that “Death could come from the living Fountain of Life; Nothingness and Phantom from the Plenitude of Reality! The Absoluteness of Creative Will! (Coleridge, H.N 393) Coleridge’s frustrated love for Sara Hutchinson brought about a need to overpower the Phantom materiality of words and make them serve his spiritual ends. In the poem, Coleridge shows that metaphor and analogy are not essential to Being, which discovers its own life only after discarding worldly “accidents.” The apparition-like woman in the poem may be literally dead or simply beyond the world’s determining power, but she seems to have apprehended her Being only after outgrowing her dependence on time and space. Her transfiguration has been achieved the past tense is significant here, but the poet in his present state of consciousness shares in the “intense repose” he has created from his own inner conflicts: “herself & the Conscience of that self, beyond the bounds of that form which her eyes behold when
she looks up on herself? O there is a form which seems irrelative to imprisonment of Space!” (Coburn 314).

Near the end of his meditative “Aids to Refection,” Coleridge makes some remarks that serve aptly as a gloss for “Phantom” and “Phantom or Fact,” as well as for the poet’s use of “Phantom” in general. Words such as “translucence,” “facts,” “silent strife,” “spectres and apparitions,” and “dream,” indicate an obsessive area of concern:

The translucence, of the invisible Energy, which soon surrenders or abandons them to inferior Powers. And ... These are not fancies, conjectures, or even hypotheses, but facts; to deny which is impossible, not to reflect on which is ignominious. And we need only reflect on them with a calm and silent spirit to learn the utter emptiness and unmeaningness of the vaunted Mechanico-corpuscular Philosophy, with both its twins, Materialism on one hand And Idealism, rightly named Subjective Idolism, on the other: the one obtruding on us as a world of Spectres and Apparitions; the other a mazy dream. (Coleridge, E.H 391)

His twins, materialism and idealism, are phantoms because as fixed concepts they ignore the fact that knowledge is an alternating current running between two poles, and illuminating the life it cannot define. As long as Coleridge could participate in the life of dream, and avoid the Phantom life of nightmare, he could endure the “silent strife” necessary to keep him from losing consciousness and falling into non-Being. But a Phantom could become a more terrifying spectre, a diabolical force energised by a corrupted will. The same phantom figure becomes a beneficent agent of ultimate Being, as in “Apologia Pro Vita Sua”:

The poet in his lone yet genial hour
Gives to his eyes a magnifying power:
Or rather he emancipates his eyes
From the black shapeless accidents of size-
In unctuous cones of kindling coal,
Or smoke upwreathing from the pipe’s trim bole,
His gifted ken can see
Phantoms of sublimity. (1-8)

In “Ode to the Departing Year,” Coleridge says:
The voice had ceased, the Vision fled;
Yet still I gasped and reel’d with dread.
And ever, when the dream of night
Renews the phantom to my sight,
Cold sweat-drops gather on my limbs. (103-7)

Reeling with dread, the poet cannot free himself from his Phantom world where things are only things and poems are only image of things. However, because the spectre is not ultimately real, the poet must overpower it and move towards the synthesis of Being and Becoming that is shown in the poem “Phantom.” The phantom is what one struggles against, what one leaves behind. And for Coleridge this phantom was death or arrested development, death-in-life. As the poet wrote in “The Friend,” “What we have within, that only can we see without. I cannot see death: and he that hath not this freedom is a slave. He is in the arms of that, the phantom of which he beholdeth and seemeth to himself to flee from.” (Rooke 411) Coleridge knew that if he could keep his reason awake then he would not experience such terrifying dread. The phantom was not easily subdued as Coleridge thought and the struggle became in its most painful stage, an unending “war-embrace of wrestling life and death.” (Griggs 123)

During a nightmare, sensations would be mingled with forms created not by the conscious will, but by the imagination. Coleridge felt that reason should be the agent to rescue the emerging dream-life images from the sea of the unconscious: “the power of Reason being in good measure awake, most generally presents to us all the accompanying images very nearly as they existed the moment before, when we fell out of anxious wakefulness into this Reverie.” (Coburn 404)

For Coleridge the physical world was often an untrustworthy phantom and he felt obligated to expose the logic of the human “Understanding” by which men
attempt to deduce meaning and value from unsubstantial appearances. His poem “Human Life” is about his confrontation with despair: the poet lets his spectre speak and allows his own understanding to pursue its “phantom purposes” by beginning with a faulty premise and relentlessly and logically moving towards nihilism. Hope and “substantial” faith in immortality belong to the poet who controls the poem’s movement. Coleridge provides a fragment of form that is appropriate for a fragmented man, not one who has rebelled against God but one who has denied Him. Alone in a Phantom world, the man hears no opposing voice to name him, only a “blank” nature that can originate “nothing.” With reason separated from understanding and meaning separated from form, Coleridge’s man lacks the power to respond to his relentless inquisitor. The poet is, of course, both parties: he articulates despair but can picture it only as an “eddy without progression.” An awareness of Coleridge’s definitions of “Life” and “Phantom” helps us to detect the poet’s irony, which is his means of directing us toward his true subject: a belief in immortality that makes speculation absurd.

Thus the figure phantom appears recurrently in the poems of Coleridge but it acquires different meaning in different contexts. Sometimes it produces fear and dread and sometimes it becomes an agent of ultimate Being.
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