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MAGIC AND THE SPELL IN COLERIDGE AND HIS TRADITION

by

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Preface

By focusing this study on Coleridge, on Wordsworth's direct reaction to him, and on Shelley's revision of his theory and practice, I want to suggest that Coleridge was the most conscious and influential expositor of the view of the magical nature of poetry that was proliferating in the last third of the eighteenth century. While this view gained impetus from a reappraisal of Renaissance magical theories (a reappraisal which is the major concern of this work) it nevertheless derived its incantatory forms from a less sophisticated and more immediately available tradition: popular nonsense and nursery rhymes. While the folk tradition is too large to treat here, it is important to note that the Renaissance celebration of magic and the mind's power was thus embodied paradoxically in irrational and atavistic forms, so that neoplatonic and primitive notions combined on several levels at once. The new respect for this folk tradition arose out of the new understanding of the magical power of verse.

Although it is a commonplace to say "this poem is magical, or enchanting," the full way in which poems are magical has never been explored. A recognition of this may have some large application to poetry in general. But this study does not try to exhaust these possibilities in poetry, or even in Romantic poetry in particular; it tries instead to show that the area of magical conjuring was fundamental to a particular dispute between Coleridge and Wordsworth over what a poem can or should do. Despite the boundaries of my own study, the magical power of poetry are a major concern of other Romantics from Scott and Southey to Keats, Beddoes and Darley. Indeed, even William Blake's mighty role

as seer, and his glorification of imagination at the expense of visible nature, shade into these notions and threaten to overshadow them. It is hoped that out of this discussion of magic in the nucleus of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Shelley readers will be led to perceive the magical basis of other Romantic poetry, as magic became both an ideal of power and a mode of attaining it.

Behind whatever is of value in this study loom my teachers. To Professor John Hollander (in whose seminar in lyric poetry I first hit upon the hitherto unexplored genre of the spell) I want to extend my thanks for a careful reading of this manuscript which suggested new and better approaches to this material for the future. Professor Coleman O. Parsons, who initiated me into the wonders of Shelley, has himself written about magic in Glanvil, Shelley and particularly Scott, and has been a meticulous and gentle critic of these pages. The generosity and concern of Professor Allen Mandelbaum have done the hard work of sustaining my soul through graduate school. And my first guide at The City University, and continual source of support, Professor Helaine Newstead, has helped me immeasurably. To Professor Joseph Campbell, my friend and teacher as an undergraduate, I owe my introduction to the synthesis of literature, anthropology and religion, and to magic in particular. Professor Thomas McFarland has supervised this dissertation with tireless care, and fought a losing battle against my style. From his Coleridgean discourse I first began to fathom Coleridge; this essay could never be more than a footnote to his own work, and a testament to his patience. Finally, my husband and son, figures of sanity and

humor, who never objected to my months in the library or to the sound of typing in the night, must now learn to live with my gratitude.

Table of Contents

I.	Magic and Poetry: an Introduction	1
II.	Wordsworth and the Illusions of Magic	19
	A. <u>The Prelude</u>	
	B. "Peter Bell"	
III.	The Traditions	74
	A. The revival of magic in the eighteenth century	
	B. Renaissance and neoplatonic tradition	
	1. Black and natural magic	
	2. The sympathetic universe	
	3. The fall	
	4. The powerful magus	
	5. The potent voice	
IV.	Coleridge and the Magical Imagination	144
V.	Coleridge and the Potent Voice	172
	A. The minor poems	
	B. The great poems	
VI.	Shelley and the Enchantments of Reform	226
	A. Early poems	
	B. <u>Prometheus Unbound</u>	
	C. "The Witch of Atlas"	
VII.	Conclusion	283

CHAPTER I

Magic and Poetry: An Introduction

The word "magic" might seem, at first glance, to have little relevance to Romantic poetry. Magic is at worst a discredited prototype of more rational thinking, is commonly confined to children's stories, and at best is an element in anthropological analyses. But in the last third of the eighteenth century magic appears as a metaphor for the process of inventing poems and also for the persuasiveness of poems. The spontaneity of the poetic impulse suggested that poems are created by a process like magic: they arise by invisible means, like a rabbit out of a hat. Even the poet who seems to invent the poem is bewitched, for the poem comes upon him unawares. The effects of poetry seem magical, too: poems seemed to enchant the listener by rhythmically appealing to a secret depth, as the snake charmer by his music raises the snake. Men hearing poems are spellbound; they are caught in the charm of an incantation, somewhere between statement and song, gospel and canto.¹ Both intransitively and transitively, then, poems seemed

magical. No rational account could be given of either their source or their powers.

The mysteries that lay ultimately behind originality in art could, it was felt, be comprehended under the analogy to magic. The general mysteries (where does the poet get power? Where does he get material? Why does it effect men?) are supplemented by particular ones (What is metre? Why does it move us? What are words? Are they the names of things, or the names of our feelings about these things? Or are they things? How do words transform the quality of the things they name? How do they conjure up ideas that had previously not existed?) Many related questions could be harmonized by reference to the vast tradition of magic texts from the syncretic Middle East, and by their supposed validation in contemporary primitive tribes. Both traditions were available for the Romantics not only in libraries and anthropological reports, but also in the writings of the mystics, who provided analogies of religion to art as both partook of magic.

It is important to realize that "charming," "spell-binding," "enchanting," "incantatory," and "magical" became significant in our critical and poetic vocabulary at this time. Coleridge was the central figure in establishing the magical metaphor in English literature. His goal of magical power dominated Shelley. It haunted the Victorians, even Emerson and Emily Dickinson; and it inspired the Symbolists, French as well as English.²

Of the occult sciences, magic has perhaps the most natural analogies with poetry because it emphasizes language and power. While alchemy assumes the interchangeability of substances, it does not rely on words to initiate changes. But the magical potion is effectual only when the proper spell is muttered over it.³ Astrology differs from magic because it bypasses the central factor of the human will. Indeed, astrology has been defined as the very reverse of magic: "magic sought power over nature; astrology proclaimed nature's power over men."⁴ Through magic men controlled the stars that once controlled them.

Magic sought power over nature by relying on words to carry the burden of magical power. The interest in power meshed with Romantic Platonism and its titanic variations--Prometheanism, Satanism, Kantianism.⁵ Meanwhile the stress on language as the activator of this power coincided with eighteenth century research on the origin of speech. Lord Monboddo added his speculations to those of Vico, Rousseau and Herder.⁶ These speculations about the magical origin of words were encouraged by reports of the actual power of incantation in primitive cultures. Coleridge was reading such reports--Hearne's on the Copper Indians and Bryan Edwards's on Oby witchcraft--when he wrote "The Three Graves."⁷ Even Genesis provided examples of magical spells: God's "Let there be light" and Adam's naming of the animals. Both confirmed the power of language over things. Like the Cabbalists and neo-platonists, the Romantics puzzled over the first Biblical spells, stressing in

addition their analogies with human creation. Falling just short of divine creation (while aspiring to it) the artist's creation found its closest analogy in the spells of the potent magus.

In brief, all attitudes toward magic, whether primitive, neoplatonic or romantic, agree on the unity and vitality of the world. All agree on the omnipotence of mind operating in a state of supernatural power. All agree on the power of words to transform and even to originate things.

The magician's spells imply a magical system of the universe as the condition of their effectiveness. At certain moments Coleridge is the clearest exponent of this system, even though he came strongly to reject it. Such a system is in its essence a variety of pantheism.⁸ It sees the unity and reciprocity of all things, with spirit immanent in all and each. The harmonies of the universe correspond to the harmonies within man. When the poet attunes his own aeolian harp the universe is spontaneously attuned. Its frequencies correspond to those of language and feeling. The magical universe then (as it appears in neoplatonic and in primitive philosophies)⁹ facilitates the interchange between incantatory words and the things they work on. The magical spell can function because the universe is organized magically.

While relying on a universe of correspondences, spells are nevertheless independently complex structures. They comprise a catalogue of the techniques of poetry. First, their images are

precise. To designate an object, the magician must distinguish its shape and color from similar objects: otherwise, the spell would work on a related but peripheral one.¹⁰ When designating ingredients for potions, it is important to be precise. Even the order must never be confused. "It is very important," writes Yomo Kenyatta, "to acquire the correct use of magical words and their proper intonations, for the progress of applying magic effectively depends on uttering these words in their ritual order."¹¹ Also accentuating the specific quality of things is onomatopoeia, a technique universal in spells and poems; onomatopoeia specifies objects and feelings by approximating their natural sounds and thereby symbolically ~~duplicates~~ their presence. Then, too, verbs which indicate ritual movement are distinct and insistent: a wrong step would distort the intention of the command. These precise nouns and verbs, moreover, are often repeated to form a refrain. Refrains and repetition signify urgency, and work hypnotically to enforce exact action. Precision, then, is one of the major legacies the poem inherits from the spell.

The insistence of the precise commands is made all the more forceful by strongly accentuated metre. "It is probable," says one commentator, "that the rhythms themselves, quite apart from their verbal content, are felt to have magical potency."¹² The verses, because they are made up of commands and nouns are almost never

smooth, almost always jagged and pounding. Connectives are minimal. Names and actions come to the fore, heavily stressed. Spells force themselves on the consciousness as deliberately rhythmical speech, set off by their intensity from normal speech. Wayne Shumaker, commenting on the primitive nature of poetry in general, ventures:

Although it is difficult to be certain that rhyme and rhythm have intrinsic power, the regularity with which magical words are given rhythmical form may be taken to imply that verbal form contributes to the charm's effectiveness.¹³

Magical metre often affects one as fearful, and threatening. It is so primitive that it verges on nonsense, so concerned with its sound that it threatens to neglect sense. Meaning, however precise, is frequently submerged in a compelling metre.¹⁴

As a poem's precise diction and forceful metre are exaggerated in spells, so, too, the analogies common to poetic technique are emphasized in the spell. Rhyme, simile, metaphor, symbol and mythical allusion are analogies that reinforce the whole system of analogies in the magical universe outlined above. Rhymes unite things thought to be sympathetic and mutually influential; they specify this relationship and intensify it. While simile suggests the similarity of things, metaphor suggests their identity. Both encourage the transfer of qualities from one thing to another, and encourage the tenor to simulate the fate of the vehicle. Metaphor and simile not only unite one thing to its corresponding thing, but

they also unite human feelings to things, with the assumption (and intention) that when one changes the other will, too. The personification of nature recognizes and contributes to its animation: the universe at large is endowed with the same feelings that agitate men: trees, mountains, plants and rivers suffer and rejoice in a vast analogy to human emotion, and thus testify to the power of this emotion.

Symbols, too, (like rhyme, metaphor, simile and personification) work on this system of analogies. As fingernails stand for personalities and substitute for them in conjurings, so a symbol is always part of the reality it represents. Lévy-Bruhl has found symbolism in fact to be a unifying principle of primitive philosophy, for everywhere he sees prevailing the intuition of pars pro toto: the part of the object or being serves to call into being or reproduce in miniature the whole of which it is only a part.¹⁵ Symbolism sees the outer world mirrored in the inner world; a wish accomplished symbolically instructs the outer world on how it should act, and at the same time releases the passions which confuse the real event. Finally mythical allusions recall events that happened before, and indicate they could happen again. "Mythical allusions . . . when uttered, unchain the powers of the past and cast them into the present."¹⁶ Thus, precision of imagery, forcefulness of verbs and metre, and the suggestiveness of many kinds of analogy are common to spells and poems generally, and postulate the magical nature of all poetry.

But spells and romantic poems in particular have another aspect in common. They gain power not only from their content and form, but also, and perhaps most importantly, from the state of mind of the magician who utters them. In Primitive Song, C. M. Bowra explains that "the primitive song-man feels within himself an eruptive domineering force which he must release upon others."¹⁷ The cultivation of such a state of mind becomes central. So it is not only the naming of vital objects, the insistent commands and the refrains, that transform desire into fact, but the passion impelling the words. This unusual state of mind ("enthusiastic" for the Greeks) appeared to be supernatural; its cultivation required magic to perhaps an even greater degree than devising the spell. "To work magic, to put enchantments upon others, one has first to put enchantments on oneself."¹⁸ This is true in primitive cultures and in Neoplatonic theory. Anthropologists have found elaborate rituals of purification that induce in the shaman a frenzy at once receptive and self-engrossed.¹⁹ Similarly, the Neoplatonic magus from Jamblichus to Ficino prescribed intricate songs and ceremonies by which to draw down upon himself demonic or planetary power.²⁰

Three magical operations are now discernible in one: the first is the magical summoning of psychic power from an irrational and supernatural source; the second is the actual construction of the spell; and the third is the transmission of the spell onto the inert

matter without. Magic aims to draw power into the magician, and then to impose power on the world.

I want to suggest that spells (with their refrains, precision, rhyme, symmetry and accentuated metre) can be thought of as paradigms for poems. Not only are they the earliest kinds of poems, but they **compact** a barrage of poetic elements into a small space. They are poems in miniature. A linguistic anthropologist, observing the symmetries of alliteration, parallelism, and the particularity and concreteness of Cheremis spells, notes "as the entangled constituents of the verbal texture, however, they are inherently untranslatable; they are, in short, the ingredients of poetry."²¹ The density of spells calls attention to them as language.

More than that, spells are poems that are designed to work. Their function is to change existing phenomena, to transform the outward universe into something more nearly approximating the landscape of the mind. Bowra elaborates: "the primitive song-man wishes to exert an influence, to impose a special vision, to create in others a state of mind which is more than understanding or sympathy and implies some degree of subordination to his will."²² Spells do not merely reflect the outer world; if they did, there would be no point in summoning supernatural power to construct and impel them. Instead, spells work on the assumption that they will work. Along the continuum of the magical system of the universe, the words

of the spell (and the rhythmical sounds they make) reach the things of this world and wrench them.

Only a belief in an active universe could accommodate such an intention. A static neoclassical universe of watches and Watch-makers, mechanisms and Mechanics, cannot permit the possibility or likelihood of instantaneous change initiated from within the links of the great chain of being. But the Romantic flux allows the readjustment of things at the command of words. Magic is possible in a system which accepts the freedom of things to change their positions.²³ A dynamic universe such as the primitive, the neoplatonic and the Romantic, allows language its metamorphic powers. Specifically, as magical spells are constructed in order to work, so Romantic poems, too, are constructed to have immediate and palpable effects on the conception of reality and on individual freedoms within it. Poetry is important, the Romantics declare. It finds truths. It reforms society. It discovers new worlds. Indeed, as we shall see, many Romantic poets consciously used the notions of magic to explain the sudden and miraculous emergence of their poems and to anticipate the effects of these poems on the world.

The very power of poetry to invent fabulous world and change the existing one is a distinguishing faith of the Romantics. As early as 1788, Richard Hurd praised the Gothic for being magical, and explains poetry as a supernatural world that poets are free to

invent:

A poet, they say, must follow nature; and by nature we are to suppose can only be meant the known and experienced course of affairs in this world. Whereas the poet has a world of his own, where experience has less to do, than consistent imagination. He has, besides, a supernatural world to range in. He has Gods, and Fairies, and Witches, at his command. This is the poet's world, all is marvellous and extraordinary; yet not unnatural in one sense, as it agrees to the conceptions that are readily entertained of these magical and wonderworking natures.²⁴

A modern critic agrees:

To possess a mind open to the envisagement of the strange and different, to contemplate unknown modes of being, divine and otherwise, whether God or geni, or demons or angels or metamorphosed humanity, to refuse to be buckled down to the evidence of the senses, this is the essential Romanticism which is no mere phenomenon which appeared toward the end of the eighteenth century and died out after fifty years.²⁵

This liberation from "reality" (through language at once transforming and originative) continues to be a characteristic of what we call "modern." Indeed, Ortega y Gasset sees the options in exactly magical terms;

"Reality" constantly waylays the artist to prevent his flight. Much cunning is needed to effect the sublime escape. A reversed Odysseus, he must free himself from his daily Penelope and sail through reefs and rocks to Circe's Faery.²⁶

The Circean option represents the triumph of magical language over stolid things. Penelope has been a bore only since the period we are examining. Until then Circe and her brood were dangerous corruptors, who led men astray. Courting Circe, rather than Penelope,

Romantic language celebrates the metamorphoses. Magically the world is brought to life assuming Protean forms. A modern Romantic asserts categorically:

And so there comes a time--I believe we are in such a time--when civilization has to be renewed by the discovery of new mysteries, by the undemocratic but sovereign power of the imagination, by the undemocratic power which makes poets the unacknowledged legislators of mankind, the power which makes all things new.

The power which makes all things new is magic. What our time needs is mystery: what our time needs is magic.²⁷

Invention and transformation are appropriate, then, to a dynamic universe. New words incessantly create new worlds. At the center of these metamorphoses looms the Romantic magician-poet, directing the changes and conjuring the fables which seem to him entirely new. Along the strings of the world's harmonies he sends his spells, enchanting dormant things into motion like Prince Charming. In short, the poet is a magician and his poems are spells.

The Romantic metaphor of magic (as it applies to the poet, his words and his effect on the world) irradiates other important Romantic themes. When they ransacked the Middle Ages, late eighteenth century thinkers found Merlin. In his Letters of Chivalry and Romance Bishop Hurd acclaims the medieval wizard. Nordic studies likewise unearthed magical spells and frenzied wizards; Gray's Descent of Odin features them. Even Romantic Hellenism, as it departed from a view of the marbled chill to a Bacchic irrationality, discovers

the magical origin of Greek religion.²⁸ Euripides' Medea and Bacchae fortified the Odyssey. So, not only in Romantic Prome-
 theanism, Faustianism and primitivism, but even in Romantic
 Medievalism, Scandinavianism and Hellenism, those who were
 prepared to find elements of magic found them.

And the metaphor of magic illuminates specifically the rela-
 tionship between the two founders of English Romanticism. In the
 light of this metaphor and its assumptions about words and things
 Coleridge and Wordsworth are seen to strike postures of antagonism.
 The more Coleridge delved into magical tomes and the more his poems
 reproduced the forms of the spell, the more Wordsworth feared his
 friend's intellectual depravity. For on the whole Wordsworth opposed
 the transformations words enacted on things: Magical illusions (in-
 cluding the changes of metaphor) seemed to him only to obscure his
 view of reality, and to divert his fidelity to the inherent life of ob-
 jects. Here Coleridge profoundly disagreed. Coleridge linked his
 view of the mind's power with his notion of the mysteriousness of
 all origination. True origination was either divine (God's) or
 magical (man's), while objects were essentially fixed and dead.
 He concluded that imagination is magical and animates the world.
 Behind his theories he amasses his readings; he discovers in "ima-
 gination" the root "magic."

On the second generation of Romantics this strife between the
 elders had left its scars: Shelley, in particular, took sides. He,
 like Coleridge, joins his abstruse research to his belief in the power

of poetic words. But he uses these words for proselytizing ends. For him, language is Prometheus' invention. Its powers, too, are promethean and revolutionary. The imagination is a witch; verse is an incantation. It enchants mankind to beneficent action.

In brief, Wordsworth sees magical words as Circean and false; Coleridge sees them as an image of divine origination; Shelley sees them as Orphean, taming beasts. Magic is for Wordsworth distortion, for Coleridge creation, and for Shelley persuasion.

In this study, the second chapter will examine Wordsworth's hostility to magic. The third will collect some of the vast tradition of magic available to the late eighteenth century. Chapter four will investigate some of the ways in which Coleridge used this material to develop a theory of poetry. Chapter five will show how it energized his practice. Chapter six, postulating Coleridge's influence on Shelley, shows how Shelley adapted Coleridge's theories for political ends. There is unfortunately no room in this study to estimate the mighty influence of Coleridge's magical theories of poetry on Poe and Emerson; on Baudelaire through Poe; on Mallarmé and Valéry through Baudelaire; and finally on Yeats himself through the Symbolists and directly through Shelley. Yeats's concern, however, with the intimate connection between magic and poetry may serve to cast a backwards light on the period under consideration and a forward light on our study:

Have not poetry and music arisen, as it seems,
out of the sounds the enchanter made to help
their imagination to enchant, to charm, to bind
with a spell themselves and the passers-by?
These very words, a chief part of all praises of
music or poetry, still cry to us their origin.
And just as the musician or the poet enchants
and charms and binds with a spell his own mind
when he would enchant the mind of others, so
did the enchanter create or reveal for himself as
well as for others the supernatural artist or
genius . . . ²⁹

Footnotes to Introduction

¹The word charm has roots in carmen (song); spell adopts the Anglo-Saxon word spel (text), which relates it to gospel. Despite its musical origins, charm refers in most cases to talismen or magical objects, whereas the informational content of the incantation is contained in the spell. Spell, then, seems to have its appropriate analogy in the poem, while charm branches in one direction into music and in the other into substance, See O. E. D.

²For the influence of Coleridgean magic on these figures see the conclusion.

³Bronislaw Malinowski, in Magic, Science and Religion (Garden City, New York, 1943), p. 73, pronounces "To the natives knowledge of magic means knowledge of spell, and in an analysis of any act of witchcraft it will always be found that the ritual centers round the utterance of the spell. The formula is always the core of the magical performance." E. E. Evans-Pritchard disagrees, however, in "The Morphology and Function of Magic: A Comparative Study of Trobriand and Zande Ritual and Spells," in Magic Witchcraft and Curing, ed. John Middleton (Garden City, N. Y., 1967), 1-23. He says that Zande magic revolves around a magical object instead of a magical word.

⁴C. S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, excluding drama (New York, 1954), p. 9. Hiram Haydn, The Counter-Renaissance (New York, 1960), p. 186.

⁵On these trends see Oskar F. Walzel, Das Prometheus symbol von Shaftsbury zu Goethe: Studie (Leipzig, 1910), and Paul Hazard, European Thought in the Eighteenth Century from Montesquieu to Lessing, trans. J. Lewis May (London, 1954).

⁶In the vast subject of the history of language beginning at this time there were many quarrels. While James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, in Of the Origin and Progress of Language (Edinburgh, 1773), declares that language is not natural to man, Giambattista Vico, in The New Science, trans. Thomas G. Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Garden City, N. Y., 1961), discovers that language, and particularly metaphor, arise out of man's ignorance and passion, rather than out of his rationalism. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder now share a volume: On the Origin of Language, trans. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (New York, 1966). In Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York, 1956), pp. 49-66, Ernst Cassirer claims that magical words are central to most creation myths.

⁷Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Collected Poems, ed. E. H. Coleridge (London, 1960), p. 269.

⁸The pantheist tradition is decisively examined in its large philosophical context by Thomas McFarland in Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition (Oxford, 1969).

⁹Claude Lévy-Bruhl, Le surnaturel et la nature dans la mentalité primitive (Paris, 1931), p. 180.

¹⁰Malinowski stresses the repetition of verbs in spells, p. 74.

¹¹Yomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu (London, 1959), p. 287.

¹²Wayne Shumaker, Literature and the Irrational, 2nd ed. (New York, 1966), p. 102.

¹³Shumaker, p. 104.

¹⁴Roman Jakobson, Child language, aphasia and phonological universals, trans. Allan R. Keller (The Hague, 1968).

¹⁵Lévy-Bruhl's formulation of pars pro toto in primitive thought ("les symboles sont l'expression de participations rendues sensibles, objectivées, représenter des êtres ou des objets invisibles") corresponds to Coleridge's famous definition of the symbol: The symbol "always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative."

¹⁶See Malinowski, pp. 80-82, for his notion of symbolic action. Richard Chase, in Quest for Myth (Baton Rouge, 1949), p. 144, speculates: "Magic must have been a powerful influence in conditioning the aesthetic psychology to metaphor and simile. This is because of the endless analogies the magician makes between his own mental and emotive processes and the external activities of the world."

¹⁷C. M. Bowra, Primitive Song (New York, 1963), p. 255.

¹⁸Heinrich Zimmer, "Myth and Symbol," Indian Art and Civilization (New York, 1961), p. 151.

¹⁹Mircea Eliade, Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase (Paris, 1951).

²⁰See chapter III.

²¹Thomas A. Sebeok, "Structure and Content of Cheremis Charms," in Language in Culture and Society, ed. Dell Hymes (New York, 1964), 364.

²²Bowra, p. 255. In the Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism (Bloomington, 1964), Wheelwright sees that the action of both poetry and magic is "intended to work coercively upon nature and bring about specific desired effects by exploiting the sympathetic connection that subsists between things that have once been joined or that are significantly similar," pp. 175-6. Kenneth Burke sees persuasion in general as a magical power. His chapter "Rhetoric and Primitive Magic," in The Grammar of Motives (New York, 1945), pp. 564-70, is enlightening here.

²³The last chapter of A. O. Lovejoy's Great Chain of Being (New York, 1965); Morse Peckham's central article "Toward a Theory of Romanticism: II: Reconsiderations," SIR, I (1961), 1-8; and William Empson's "The Active Universe," CritIQ, V (1963), 267-271, explain this new conception of change and flux in the Romantic world-view.

²⁴Richard Hurd, Moral and Political Dialogues; with the Letters on Chivalry and Romance, vol. III (London, 1788), 303-304.

²⁵D. G. James, The Romantic Comedy (London, 1949), p. 168.

²⁶José Ortega y Gasset, The Dehumanization of Art (Garden City, New York, 1956), p. 22.

²⁷Norman O. Brown, "Apocalypse: The Place of Mystery in the Life of the Mind," in Interpretation: The Poetry of Meaning, ed. Stanley Romaine Hopper and David L. Miller (New York, 1967), p. 10.

²⁸The importance of Greek irrationality to the Romantics is something Harry Levin, in his graceful volume The Broken Column: A Study in Romantic Hellenism (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), did not consider. Gilbert Highet in The Classical Tradition (New York and London, 1949), pp. 355-436, suggests that the exuberant Romantic Ode in fact came closer to the classical spirit than did the neo-classical one. The irrationality of the Greeks is the subject of Jane Harrison's Themis: Prolegomena to a Study of Greek Religion (Cambridge, 1927) and of E. R. Dodds's The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley, 1968).

²⁹William Butler Yeats, "Magic," Essays and Introductions (New York, 1961), p. 43.

CHAPTER II

Wordsworth and the Illusion of Magic

Where when all drownd in deadly sleepe he findes,
He to his studie goes, and there amidde
His magick bookes and artes of sundrie kindes,
He seekes out mighty charmes, to trouble sleepey minds.

Then choosing out few words most horrible,
(Let none them read) thereof did verses frame;
With which and other spelles like terrible,
He bad awake blacke Mutoes griesley dame.

He then devisde himselfe how to disguise;
For by his mighty science he could take
As many forms and shapes in seeming wise,
As ever Proteus to himself could make.
Sometime a fowle, sometime a fish in lake,
Now like a foxe, now like a dragon fell,
That of himselfe he ofte for feare would quake,
And oft would fly away. O who can tell
The hidden power of herbs, and might of magick spel?

(The Faerie Queene: I:i: XXXVI, XXXVII.
I; ii: X.)

Herbert Read and John Jones show the path into the dark woods of Wordsworth criticism. First shared by Beatty, that path approaches Wordsworth through Hartleyan associationism.¹ Read declares that in Wordsworth's development

Hartley was superseded as time went on, but he is present in the background of Wordsworth's thought right up to the completion of the first version of the Prelude in 1805; that is to say, his psychology dominates the Wordsworth of the great and poetically decisive period.²

Jones, agreeing on the whole that Wordsworth is not the idealist that Stallknecht, Rader and Woodring see,³ opens the way further:

For Wordsworth, Poet meant Observer. His theory, and as he at least believed, his practice, were founded on an assumption inherited by the eighteenth century from Dryden, Ben Jonson, and from classical French criticism to the effect that poetry is in some sense an imitation of nature.⁴

Jones is yet more decisive when he writes of Wordsworth's concern with things:

In The Prelude Wordsworth uses the word "things" with astonishing frequency . . . His search for universal things is on the one side a search for particularity; in his insistence upon constancy, boundedness, irreducibility, he betrays the imaginative impression of a traditional English materialism.⁵

The tangle of critical argument as to whether Wordsworth was an idealist or an associationist seems cut through by these sentences. For want of a straighter way, we can follow in their track. For in his attitude toward magic, too, Wordsworth is a reactionary, fearing lest magic compromise the irreducibility and boundedness of things--the things that give visible evidence of reality. His quarrel with Coleridge over the relative merit of things and words, associationism and idealism, finds its nexus in the question of magic.

Now, Wordsworth's trust in the autonomy of things led him

frequently to a mistrust of words. Things, particularly the immutable Forms of Nature, are reality. Words, on the other hand, seem in general to counterfeit these things. And metaphor moves even further away from the truth. Both words and metaphors result from the mind's arrogance: the mind presumes to think that by changing the names of a thing it can change the thing's nature. As in all magical theory, to know the name of a thing is to control it. Metaphors, ranging among discrete things with their indiscriminate "likes" and "as's" yoke unlikes together. They assume that the things of this world are interchangeable not only with one another, but also with mental events such as abstractions, fancies and dreams. The world is all one to the mind. Metaphors merge with their objects in a system of "correspondences." A modern commentator perceives the connections among metaphor, disrespect for things, and magic:

All our other faculties keep us within the realm of the real, of what is already there. The most we can do is to combine things or to break them up. The metaphor alone furnishes an escape; between the real things, it lets emerge imaginary reefs, a crop of floating islands . . . Its efficacy verges on magic.⁶

It is by a process like magic, then, that words and metaphors cross physical boundaries. Scoffing at immutable reality, words lose their identities and claim new ones. And metaphors not only merge one thing with another, but they also change the very nature of things. As Circe changed men into pigs, the changes of metaphor are really those of metamorphosis. They work by magic to release a hitherto

invisible nature. The center of these metamorphoses is man's mind, "the very focus of all the rays of intellect which are scattered throughout the universe."⁷ Not content with correspondences and transformations, words imitate magic by conjuring up forms that do not exist. Once more, here is a fearful arrogance: the mind imagines a world, and equates this shadow to the substance without.

To Wordsworth this promiscuity falsifies "the truth that cherishes our daily life."⁸ In the illusory realm of words, metaphors and dreams, the mind aspires to a false power, false both morally and esthetically. Like Spenser's Archimage, it manipulates images rather than truths. Wordsworth's fidelity to sensible nature led him to believe the mind could not derive real power at the expense of outward impressions. Such impressions meant the difference between a mind grounded solidly in verifiable truth, and one wandering among "barren intermeddling subtleties" (XI:204). For him, things were more permanent than the words with which we speak of them.

Here, then, the subjects of this chapter emerge. Wordsworth's thought is not, after all, inseparable from Coleridge's. Quite the reverse. Throughout The Prelude of 1805, Wordsworth reveals his opposition to Coleridge's thought; his tone modulates from pity to indignation. Wordsworth dedicates to Coleridge his poem on The Growth of the Mind because he wants to argue with him on a number of related grounds. Fortifying his attacks on words with criticism of Coleridge's wordiness, he establishes a chain of circum-

stances that explain Coleridge's "failure": as we shall see, the isolation of the city, the solace of books, and thence the poverty of real images lead to the insubstantiality of language and from there to the instability of character. In Wordsworth's view, Coleridge's life as well as his poetry betray the spell that binds him. Wordsworth warns Coleridge that the life of the mind is an illusion. And this illusion has been produced by verbal magic.

Wordsworth had substantial reasons for his association of words, Magic and Coleridge. Coleridge's interest in magic prompted Charles Lamb to call him the young *Mirandula*.⁹ Even such a remote acquaintance as Leigh Hunt satirized him as "Dr. Paracelsus Broadhum Coleridge," combining in this name a recognition of Coleridge's magical pursuits and scorn for his verbosity.¹⁰ It was thus well known that Coleridge was interested in magic. And from this knowledge it was an easy step to combine with magic Coleridge's belief in the supernaturalism of the will and the power of living words over dead things. Coleridge's reading of the magicians affirmed for him that mental changes are as valid as visible ones, even if they seem to be phantoms. Believing that the will exercises its powers of metamorphosis on nature, Coleridge early developed a theory of poems as spells and poets as magicians. And this theory suggested that poetic origination did not derive from mimesis--the imitation of things--but rather from supernatural power. Coleridge is a kind of Bacchus, invading with language

the areas of fact, bringing news of a radical freedom. He enchants his listeners with the idea that the mind is free because it is mysterious; that imagination, like a god, can create something where there was nothing before. He suggests that words are as real as things, and that the universe and the mind exchange analogies. "The moaning singsong of that theosophic-metaphysical monotony," snarls Carlyle, "had a charm much more than literary, a charm almost religious and prophetic." "Drowning in the tide of ingenious vocables, the rising spirits of the young generation" listened. For them Coleridge "had this dusky sublime character; and sat there as a kind of Magus, girt in mystery and enigma; his Dodona oak-grove (Mr. Gillman's house at Highgate) whispering strange things, uncertain whether oracles or jargon." Carlyle emphasized the magical power of Coleridge's words: "He had, especially among young inquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician quality."¹¹ But long before Carlyle made these observations, Coleridge's exotic verbiage impressed Wordsworth as a betrayal of the austere validity of things.

The Prelude, then, is argumentative. In it Wordsworth shapes his poetic credo in response to Coleridge's theories. As he does so, the struggle acquires wide implications: it turns out to be a struggle between eighteenth century respect for the existence of an outwardly verifiable truth and the re-emergence of what Socrates called "divine madness," magically induced. In theology the arrogance of the human

mind sets itself against the divinely established and hence perfect order; in the epistemological dispute of the late eighteenth century, Kantians and Hartleyans also square off on this ground.

Accordingly, Coleridge's affirmation of the mind's freedom ("O Lady we receive but what we give") comes face to face with Wordsworth's "wise passiveness." The objects which were for Coleridge "as objects . . . essentially fixed and dead" were for Wordsworth the touchstones of reality. While Wordsworth succumbed to the "absolute dominion" of the eye (IX:176), Coleridge attended to invisible voices, literary as well as theological. The credit he gave to the invisible led him to accommodate the supernatural. Their different attitudes toward the worth of words and things are closely connected with their different attitudes toward the supernatural.

While language for Coleridge had power to conjure up living mental forms, for Wordsworth it only seems to intervene between his experience of things and the things themselves. He seeks for an alliance "both of the object seen and eye that sees" (XII:379), with no third party. "I conversed with things that really are" (II:412-413), and it is a wordless conversation. Objects must shine through language as through clear glass:

It is not, then, to be supposed that any one,
 who holds that sublime notion of Poetry which
 I have attempted to convey, will break in upon
 the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory

and accidental ornaments, and endeavor to excite admiration of himself by arts, the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.¹²

Language, he writes in The Essay on Epitaphs,

If it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit unremittingly and noiselessly at work, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate and to dissolve.¹³

David Perkins explains this anti-verbal side of Wordsworth's thinking:

Wordsworth insists again and again that thought--especially what he called insight or vision--can be non-verbal and hence far more subtle, profound, and comprehensive than the words found to represent it.¹⁴

Wordsworth's "sincerity" is a deep distrust of language. The experience that counts for him is "far hidden from the reach of words."

Shelley attributes this passivity to things to lack of imagination.

Wordsworth, sneers Shelley,

had as much imagination
As a pint-pot;--he never could
Fancy another situation,
From which to dart his contemplation
Than that wherein he stood.¹⁵

But in Wordsworth's opinion, to dart his contemplation away from the spot where he stood would be to falsify that spot at the very moment when he wanted to render it whole. To impose the mind on nature ("To bend the Sabbath to his use") is heresy for Wordsworth, whereas the refusal to impose the mind is for Coleridge an abdication of responsibility. Wordsworth's distrust of the mind's manipulation of things, limits his experience to "what the eye cannot choose

but see." He holds "communion with the invisible" only when the invisible is grounded in "sensible impressions" (XIII:103-105).

Things and words, eye and ear, passive mind and active, visible and invisible, diverge into natural and supernatural. For Wordsworth, the mighty forms of Nature are all men can know of permanence. To require supernatural inspiration is to neglect the only reliable source of inspiration--the visible world men see and "feed" on. Coleridge, on the other hand, is curious not only about innate Forms (nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu, praeter ipsum intellectum) but even about "enthusiasm."¹⁶ A supernatural authority may supply ideas that the impressions of nature cannot. The Will (in Coleridge's view a supernatural power) is linked not with the matter of things but with the spirit. Its inventions thus defy sensuous proof. Against this belief in the supernatural (which, by its very existence, suggests the insufficiency of the natural), Wordsworth asserts, "There is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature."¹⁷ The question whether the mind is passive or active--respectively the Hartleyan and Kantian positions--has its corollary in the alternatives of "natural supernaturalized" and "supernatural naturalized" as subjects for poetry.

In so dividing their work, the two poets seem to have been conscious of their differences as early as 1797: Wordsworth was to start with the visible and expand on it; Coleridge was to start with the invisible and conjure it up. Although in the Preface

Wordsworth insists all poets must deal with the natural, his insistence is "an Act of Uniformity" that he must have known even at that time did not apply to his collaborator.¹⁸ When the formula was adopted for The Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth must already then have associated Coleridge with the supernatural, the inventions of the mind, words, metaphors and magic. His intense struggle (in The Prelude and "Peter Bell") to root out the supernatural, becomes yet another measure of his misunderstanding of Coleridge's revolutionary pursuits.

Now it is important to see that Wordsworth attributes Coleridge's interest in magic to the urban environment of his youth. For Wordsworth seems to believe that environment is formative, and that Coleridge's upbringing is an explanation of his perverse interests.

When in Book VI of The Prelude Wordsworth narrates his Alpine wanderings, he thinks of Coleridge's Maltese exile. Coleridge had gone off almost a year before the writing of this book to relocate his sorrows. His multiple failures (marriage, health, will, The Watchman) had worried his friends at his departure, and now his long absence (and comparative silence) in an outpost at once exotic and dreary, worried them still more;

Far art thou wander'd now in search of health,
And milder breezes, melancholy lot! (VI:249-50)

Although Wordsworth's own days adrift were only memories, Coleridge's were an ever-present reality, strange for a grown man. In an effort to understand the differences between their exiles (one acute and past, the other chronic), Wordsworth tries to explore the differences between their respective "elements":

I, too, have been a wanderer; but alas!
 How different is the fate of different men
 Though Twins almost in genius and in mind,
 Unknown unto each other, yea, and breathing
 As if in different elements, we were framed
 To bend at last to the same discipline,
 Predestin'd, if two Beings ever were,
 To seek the same delights, and have one health,
 One happiness. (VI:261-269.)

But Coleridge has failed to bend to the discipline. Their delights, perhaps momentarily similar, had not continued to be the same; health and happiness, likewise, (and most evidently) diverged. Whereas their capacities were twin, it was the different elements they breathed that divorced their fates. And Coleridge's unhealthy "element" (since age nine) was the city.¹⁹ Thus, the intention of the first five books has been to "record" for Coleridge what it was like to grow up in a favorable element--Nature.

Throughout this narrative,
 Else sooner ended, I have known full well
 For whom I thus record the birth and growth
 Of gentleness, simplicity, and truth,
 And joyous loves that hallow innocent days
 Of peace and self-command. (VI:269-74.)

This element favored the development of inner peace and self-command--qualities that Coleridge notably lacked. With them, he might have

been able to "bend at last to the same discipline" that now drives Wordsworth on to write his long poem.

So, the major contrast that Wordsworth establishes between Coleridge and himself is that between their urban and rural youths:

Of Rivers, Fields
And Groves, I speak to thee, my Friend; to Thee
Who, yet a liveried School-Boy, in the depths
Of the huge City, on the leaded Roof
Of that wide Edifice, thy Home and School,
Wast used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
Moving in Heaven; or haply, tired of this,
To shut thine eyes, and by internal light
See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream
Far distant, thus beheld from year to year
Of thy long exile. (VI;274-284.)

Clause after clause and modifier within modifier separates young Coleridge from nature. He is buried deeply in the center of the metropolis, imprisoned in school, even in the school's clothes. What he can see with his outer eye are the urban clouds above the buildings; but he tires of these, either because of his dreary circumstances or because he has forgotten how to understand them. He escapes into his own mind. He shuts his eyes and looks within, where he harbors old and worn-out images of nature (Wordsworth supposes) that he fingers year after year to sustain him in his exile.

Such inward sight can be best understood by comparing it with a later passage of this same portrait. Coleridge is seen as older now, and has just missed Wordsworth at Cambridge:

I have thought
 Of Thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence
 And all the strength and plumage of thy Youth,
 Thy subtle speculations, toils abstruse
 Among the Schoolmen, and platonic forms
 of wild ideal pageantry, shap'd out
 From things well-matched, or ill, and words for things,
 The self-created sustenance of a mind
 Debarr'd from Nature's living images,
 Compell'd to be a life unto itself. (VI:305-314)

The profusion of Wordsworth's praise in the first four and a half lines suggests an undertone of regret, as if Coleridge's learning had come to nothing. Even before we discover that Coleridge's early splendor was only a pageantry (a showy exhibition of ideas without substance) "Youth" sets the note of elegy, and "plumage" suggests that his learning (and learning is itself suspect for Wordsworth) is seasonal and external. "Gorgeous" adds an impression of something overdone and gaudy, particularly in the neighborhood of "plumage," and when connected with "eloquence" (since Wordsworth thinks of words as "vitiating and dissolving"), the notion of display is hard to avoid. So, the learning and eloquence of Coleridge's youth was a show, disconnected from essential truths. Along with these insinuations, the adjectives "subtle" and "abstruse" add a glint of evil. When Coleridge then lumps "platonic forms" together out of unrelated things, and confuses these things with words, he commits a central Wordsworthian sin. He has tried to set up the mind as a power independent of Nature. An exile from "the huge and mighty forms of nature" since age nine,

he presumes to think he can devise his own images in place of natural ones. But Wordsworth does not think this can be done at all. "Debarr'd from Nature's living images," there are no other vital sources of images. Wordsworth thinks of Coleridge still turning over the few infant memories from Ottery St. Mary as if treading water. For in the city the mind gropes to sustain itself. Separated from nature's living images (other images being dead) it must be its own source of life. Even for a great spirit, this self-sustenance is impossible.

Wordsworth adopts this contrast later (in Book VIII): the solid world of natural images makes urban dreams seem like shadows, as the mind attempts vainly to sustain itself on exhausted memories. He speaks in Book VIII of the adolescent who distorts truth, and he explains how he escapes what was another form of "wild ideal pageantry."

Yet in the midst
 Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich
 As mine was, through the chance, on me not wasted
 Of having been brought up in such a grand
 And lovely region, I had forms distinct
 To steady me; these thoughts did oft revolve
 About some centre palpable, which at once
 Incited them to motion, and control'd,
 And whatsoever shape the fit might take,
 And whencesoever it might come, I still
 At all times had a real solid world
 Of images about me; did not pine
 As one in cities bred might do; as Thou,
 Beloved Friend! hast told me that thou didst,
 Great Spirit as thou art, in endless dreams
 Of sickness, disjoining, joining things
 Without the light of knowledge. (VIII:593-609)

Wordsworth made the most of his happy chance. The forms that impressed his young mind were "distinct," "steady," "palable," "real" and "solid." They ordered and at the same time energized his mind. His eye was at all times watching them, even when it momentarily altered them (under the influence of reading romances). But Coleridge was not so lucky. Bred in the city without these distinct and solid images (separated from what Wordsworth thinks of as the only reality) Coleridge pines hopelessly for some center to steady him in his groundless speculations. The "internal light" by which he saw into his mind at Christ's Hospital seems to have gone out. For now he is "without the light of knowledge." He is left in a dark, dreamlike half-life in which he arbitrarily changes counters around. He assumes these counters to be things while in reality they are only empty words.

We begin to understand that Coleridge's interest in magic was already being determined by imaginary and insubstantial words and dreams. With his whole environment an illusion, Coleridge could hardly help being separated from truth--the Nature that "fed" Wordsworth's lofty speculation. No wonder Coleridge did not respect the solidity of real things; since nine years old he had been surrounded by falsity.

When Wordsworth himself came to London, however, he was too old for the city to have any formative effect:

By influence habitual to the mind
 The mountain's outline and its steady form
 Gives a pure grandeur, and its presence shapes
 The measure and the prospect of the soul
 To majesty. (VII:721-725)

"The encreasing accumulation of men in cities" is one of the causes that are "now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor."²⁰ Coleridge's dreams of sickness are examples for Wordsworth of the torpor the city breeds. Without the mountain's steady form, men cannot learn to discriminate. For Wordsworth, the Spirit of Nature was upon him even in London. It "diffused,"

Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
 Of self-destroying, transitory things
 Composure and ennobling Harmony. (VII:738-40)

Because Wordsworth communed

Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,
But with high objects, with enduring things,
 With life and nature (I:435-437)

His feelings are pure. He can see the world in the perspective of wholeness:

Living amid the same perpetual flow
 Of trivial objects
 Oppression under which even highest minds
 Must labour, whence the strongest are not free;
 But though the picture weary out the eye,
 By nature an unmanageable sight,
It is not wholly so to him who looks
In steadiness, who hath among least things
An undersense of greatest; sees the parts
 As parts, but with a feeling of the whole. (VII:701-2;
 705-12)

The eye and the great things of Nature conspire to save Wordsworth from the trivial things of men.

The conditioning has worked inexorably. The attitudes of the two friends, one troubled, the other pleased with himself, are in Wordsworth's view the inevitable results of their different environments. It is too late to change them.

A city upbringing has inescapable consequences. Offering no abiding forms to impress the mind with majesty, the city turns the mind inward on its own devices. Reading, talking, and dreaming are the poor substitutes for truth the urban mind may gnaw on. Though many critics have tried to modify the impression of Wordsworth's hostility to books, it is hard to deny that in general he was in "revolt against literature."²¹

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife.²²

They indeed convey "the spirit breathed from dead men to their kind," from dead men to other dead men. While the works of Homer, Shakespeare and Milton are "powers only less than nature's self," Wordsworth's mind "hath look'd Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven As her prime Teacher" (V:11-13).

Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature by your Teacher.

It is hard not to suppose that the "good friend Matthew" of "Expostulation and Reply" and "Tables Turned" is indeed Coleridge. With whom else would Wordsworth be resting by the side of Esthwaite lake, in a mood of easy jocularly, bringing up as if

for the hundredth time their habitual quarrel over the relative merit of books and Nature?

Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:--
We murder to dissect.

We cannot fail to connect the lines

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves

with the passages in The Prelude which criticize Coleridge's dependence on books.

Moreover, books of any rank lower than Shakespeare and Milton--particularly from "the hemisphere of magic fiction" (VI:102-3)--only "defraud the day." They are dreams of sickness, manipulated and switched around without reference to a steady whole. For example, Wordsworth reads The Arabian Nights while fishing on the Derwent, and feels he must apologize to the river:

For a whole day together, I have lain
Down by thy side, O Derwent, murmuring Stream,
On the hot stones and in the glaring sun,
And there have read, devouring as I read,
Defrauding the day's glory, desperate!
Till, with a sudden bound of smart reproach,
Such as an Idler deals with in his shame,
I to the sport betook myself again. (V:508-515)

He castigates the fanciful Ossian for not accurately reproducing nature, for substituting dead words for living things:

From my very childhood I have felt the falsehood that pervades the volumes imposed upon the World under the name of Ossian. From what I saw with my own eyes, I knew that the imagery was spurious. In

nature every thing is distinct, yet nothing defined into absolute independent singleness. In Macpherson's work it is exactly the reverse; every thing (that is not stolen) is in this manner defined, insulated, dislocated, deadened--yet nothing distinct. It will always be so when words are substituted for things.²³

Magic fiction, by exaggerating, suppresses natural feelings. A dead man is fished up, but Wordsworth (an adolescent now dallying with The Arabian Nights) cannot respond to this real "spectre shape":

for my inner eye had seen
Such sights before, among the shining streams
Of Fair land, the Forests of Romance.

The writers of Romances ("Who care not, know not, think not what they do") gratify bizarre needs:

A gracious Spirit o'er this earth presides,
And o'er the heart of man: invisibly
It comes, directing those to works of love
Who care not, know not, think not what they do:
The Tales that charm away the wakeful night
In Araby, Romances, Legends, penn'd
For solace, by the light of monkish Lamps;
Fictions for Ladies. (V:516-523)

When men feel "uneasy, unsettled," they have "cravings for the marvellous," then they praise the "dreamers, Forgers of lawless tales":

we bless you then,
Imposters, drivellers, dotards, as the ape
Philosophy will call you: then we feel
With what, and how great might we are in league,
Who make our wish our power, our thought a deed,
An empire, a possession; Ye whom Time
And Seasons serve; all Faculties; to whom
Earth crouches, th'elements are potter's clay.

(V:547-555)

The ironies of this passage must be read in the context of Wordsworth's views about words and things: here romances are wish-fulfilling mechanisms that give men the sense of being powerful just when they are really impotent. The illusion of power is what men want; wishes accomplished; thoughts automatically enacted; great countries within grasp; time, change, the mighty elements subservient to the merest whimsy. This is the false illusion that literature gives, by presuming that words can be substituted for things and get the same results.

The point is central: literature presumes that the earth is crouching before it, waiting to be transformed. It presumes that earth is passive material which language brings to life. This presumption to Wordsworth seems the most fearful distortion of reality. Instead of crouching before men, the earth is immutable and awe-inspiring. The human urge to transform what is permanently true is to him madness. Men impose the laws of dream onto reality. Although at thirteen Wordsworth became momentarily interested in "words for their own sakes, a passion and a power," and was "lifted above the ground by airy fancies" (V:590), these attitudes were for him transitional. After this brief flurry of interest in the power of words, he devoted himself to affirming the greater power of "things forever speaking."

Words and airy fancies cannot approximate the truth. The

work of earth is magical enough:

A single Tree

There was, no doubt yet standing there, an Ash
 With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreath'd:
 Up from the ground and almost to the top
 The trunk and master branches everywhere
 Were green with ivy; and the lightsome twigs
 And outer spray profusely tipp'd with seeds
 That hung in yellow tassels and festoons,
 Moving or still, a Favourite trimm'd out
 By Winter for himself, as if in pride,
 And with outlandish grace. Oft have I stood
 Foot-bound, uplooking at this lovely Tree
 Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere
 Of magic fiction, verse of mine perhaps
 May never tread; but scarcely Spenser's self
 Could have more tranquil visions in his youth,
 More bright appearances could scarcely see
 Of human Forms with superhuman powers,
 Than I beheld, standing on winter nights
 Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth. (VI:90-109)

This "single tree" is a Ding an Sich: Wordsworth presents it carefully and respects its identity. He uses only the copula, until the one stark metaphor that suggests the Ash is a mistress to Winter. Looking at this immutable Thing is wonder enough for him. All the romances and extravagant fantasies of supernatural beings merely avoid truths which can be stranger than fiction. Fiction, because it transforms reality, is magical. The mind's extravagant inventions hide the thing itself, and disguise its natural growth with words. Beings from other worlds are not better than beings from our own. For no human imagination has ever devised by its mental magic a supernatural world than can rival the truths of nature.

A single real image outshines all imaginary paradises:

Beauteous the domain
 Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
 Was open'd, tract more exquisitely fair
 Than is that Paradise of ten thousand Trees,
 Or Gehol's famous Gardens, in a Clime
 Chosen from widest empire, for delight
 Of the Tartarian Dynasty composed;
 Scene link'd to scene, an ever growing change,
 Soft, grand, or gay! with Palaces and Domes
 Of Pleasure spangled over, shady Dells
 For Eastern Monasteries, sunny Mounds
 With Temples crested, Bridges, Gondolas,
 Rocks, Dens, and Groves of foliage taught to melt
 Into each other their obsequious hues
 Going and gone again, in subtile chace,
 Too fine to be pursued; or standing forth
 In no discordant opposition, strong
 And gorgeous as the colours side by side
 Bedded among rich plumes of Tropic Birds;
 And mountains over all embracing all;
 And all the landscape endlessly enrich'd
 With waters running, falling, or asleep.

But lovelier far than this the Paradise
 Where I was rear'd; in Nature's primitive gifts
 Favor'd no less. (VIII:119-125; 129-146)

These unearthly paradises, these Pleasure Domes and Shady
 dells, so reminiscent of "Kubla Khan," are the products of dream,
 not "things oracular." The questing after the strange and artificial,
 is once more an escape from the real abiding paradise here on
 earth.²⁴ As with the Coleridgean eloquence of Book V, the gorgeous-
 ness of these Coleridgean paradises is suspicious; it is "subtile,"
 "obsequious," and replete with "plumage." The images melt into
 one another, "going and gone again" like illusions or like the
 fabrications of magic. They show a "dream-like inconsequence,"
 as Wordsworth said of the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"; they do not

follow each other consecutively, and they are inconsequential.²⁵

Wordsworth follows his attack on magical paradises with a defense of the dramatis personæ of the Lyrical Ballads. He uses the arguments of the Prefaces, and contrasts his own true shepherds with the artificial ones of Shakespearian and Spenserian pastoral. Once more, reality and romance are opposed. He describes the shepherds he has seen and then defies his major critics: Coleridge and Hazlitt.²⁶ Wordsworth's rage against these disloyal friends is almost Mosaic. He is the spokesman of God, they are idolators:

Call ye these appearances
Which I beheld of Shepherds in my youth,
This sanctity of Nature given to Man
A shadow, a delusion, ye who are fed
By the dead letter, miss the spirit of things,
Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
Instinct with vital functions, but a Block
Of waxen Image which yourselves have made
And ye adore. (VIII:427-435)

Coleridge and Hazlitt criticised his humble characters for bypassing truths of the intelligence. In turn, Wordsworth claims that their notion of truth is inert and dead. He accuses them of idolatry, worshipping of false gods or golden calves. They call the spirit of things a shadow or delusion, because they themselves (city boys) had been fed only on surrogates.

In his attacks on the hemisphere of magic fiction, on imaginary changeful paradises, on pastorals and on the literary tradition in general--the "dead letter," "the waxen Image which yourselves have made And ye adore,"--Wordsworth seems to be carrying on a long

discussion with Coleridge about the relative powers of things and words, and about the exact location of truth. He is arguing with Coleridge about the power of the mind to invent its own truths to replace outer ones; he is arguing about the metamorphosis of things by words trying to equal them. In disparaging works of "magic fiction" such as The Arabian Nights he is quarrelling directly with Coleridge, who often averred the importance of The Arabian Nights for "accustoming him to the vast."²⁷ Wordsworth was even, as we saw, directly ridiculing the extravagance of "Kubla Khan." Men like Coleridge imagine supernatural paradises and then set them up as goals. The mind produces words and then seeks its own productions. This is true sickliness, disjoining, joining things, without the light of knowledge. For true knowledge is to be found without. It is not to be found in man-made solipsisms and self-reference.

Wordsworth is led to examine the dangers of fictional extravagance to the formation of a child's mind, and he sees the excesses of metaphor as one of the many willful indulgences of adolescence. He eventually uses this theory of education to explain what he thinks of as Coleridge's failure to move out of adolescence. Reading of supernatural scenes leaves the mind torpid, seeking ever more extravagance:

Yea, doubtless, at an age when but a glimpse
Of these resplendent Gardens, with their frame
Imperial, and elaborate ornaments,

Would to a child be transport over-great,
 When but a half-hour's roam through such a place
 Would leave behind a dance of images
 That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks;
 Even then the common haunts of the green earth,
 With the ordinary human interests
 Which they embosom, all without regard
 As both may seem, are fastening on the heart
 Insensibly. (VII:159-170)

Wordsworth sees no need to indulge in exotic stimuli. They only exhaust the mind and make it unfit for true feeling. Instead, the "common earth" will form the soul without human intervention: the dance of images will work insensibly, below the level of conscious choice.

Indeed, the entire ascription of metaphor appears to Wordsworth to be perverse. It is one of the excesses of adolescence and understandable at that changeful time of life; but at "a time of greater dignity" the poet must cast off foolish things. Wordsworth is proud to have done so himself. Enchanted by books, his adolescent imagination had been "enflamed":

There came among those shapes of human life
A willfulness of fancy and conceit
 Which gave them new importance to the mind;
 And Nature and her objects beautified
 These fictions, as in some sort in their turn
 They burnish'd her. From touch of this new power
 Nothing was safe: the Elder-tree that grew
 Beside the well-known Chamel-house had then
 A dismal look; the Yew-tree had its Ghost,
 That took its station there for ornament:
 Then common death was none, common mishap,
 But matter for this humour everywhere,
 The tragic super-tragic, else left short. (VIII:519-31)

The touch of this new power is metamorphic and magical, instantaneous and distorting. Its effect may be compared with what Coleridge praises as "the Midas touch of life and joy." Willfulness, fancy and conceit try to force nature into the mind's categories, either ornamenting common things or using common things as mere matter for exaggerations. Natural sorrow, unless transformed by literature, seems insignificant.

In transforming the real world, the adolescent Wordsworth wrote in the manner of Coleridge's romance, "Love":

Beside our Cottage hearth,
Sitting with open door, a hundred times
Upon this lustre have I gaz'd that seemed
To have some meaning which I could not find;
And now it was a burnish'd shield, I fancied,
Suspended over a Knight's Tomb, who lay
Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood;
And entrance now into some magic cave
Or palace for a Fairy of the rock. (VIII:568-576)

Wordsworth mocks this style, that Coleridge in his maturity still adopts. But Wordsworth has come in his wisdom to a surer understanding of the location of reality. Any adult poet who still transforms a rock into a shield or magic cave must be an extravagant adolescent at heart, still enchanted with "words for their own sakes," still victimizing nature with "the touch of this new power." Imagination perceives truths and feelings, whereas this adulterate power is the faculty of Fancy. Fancy is metamorphosis effective only in words and mind, never effective on the permanent truths of nature beneath these illusory changes. It seems possible that Wordsworth

believes Coleridge's main poetic failure was in using Fancy instead of Imagination, as Wordsworth saw these terms.²⁸

Incapable of moving on to "a time of greater dignity," such a poet would be stunted in adolescent verbosity. He is a prodigy. In Book V the prodigy accumulates book-learning, without the light of knowledge:

His discourse moves slow,
 Massy and ponderous as a prison door,
 Tremendously emboss'd with terms of art;
 Rank growth of propositions overruns
 The Stripling's brain; the path in which he treads
 Is chok'd with grammars; cushion of Divine
 Was never such a type of thought profound
 As is the pillow where he rests his head.
 The Ensigns of the Empire which he holds,
 The globe and sceptre of his royalties
 Are telescopes, and crucibles, and maps,
 Ships he can guide across the pathless sea,
 And tell you all their cunning; he can read
 The inside of the earth, and spell the stars;
 He knows the policies of foreign Lands;
 Can string you names of districts, cities, towns,
 The whole world over, tight as beads of dew
 Upon a gossamer thread; he sifts, he weighs;
 Takes nothing upon trust. His Teachers stare,
 The Country People pray for God's good grace,
 And tremble at his deep experiments.
 All things are put to question; he must live
 Knowing that he grows wiser every day,
 Or else not live at all; and seeing, too,
 Each little drop of wisdom as it falls
 Into the dimpling cistern of his heart. (V:320-345)

The qualities of the prodigy (and the bitterness behind them) arise from exaggerating the flaws Wordsworth sees in his friend Coleridge. Eloquence; variety of learning (divinity, grammar, politics, astronomy, travel); the continual accumulation of wisdom; the staring

teachers; [the exposure of traditionally inviolable secrets] these are all attributes of the prematurely learned man, bred in the city, nurtured on books, and separated from a vision of the whole. Wordsworth ends his portrait of the prodigy with a call back to earth; this corresponds to the message of "Peter Bell," also aimed at correcting Coleridge's deviations from Nature:²⁹

Meanwhile old Grandame Earth is grieved to find
The playthings, which her love designed for him,
Unthought of; in their woodland beds the flowers
Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn.

As books and cities detach themselves from the abiding continuum of nature, the prodigy dissociates himself from the larger view that Nature gives. The world is merely an object on which he exercises his mind.

Any attempt to intellectualize experience is Coleridgean. Describing the race on the beach in Book II, Wordsworth reminds himself that it is impossible to divide the stages of the mind into categories:

But who shall parcel out
His intellect, by geometric rules,
Split like a province, into round and square?
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown, even as a seed,
Who that shall point, as with a wand, and say,
'This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain?' (II:208-215)

Wordsworth uses the image of the magic wand to describe the working of the intellect. The wand has the effect of stopping process or natural growth--the river or the seed. It violates the inner laws of nature. The analytic mind is like magic because

it invents its own laws; the wand "murders to dissect." Like magic fiction and transforming metaphor, it describes obliquities and vagaries that stand obliquely to the right angles of truth, are vagrants from reality.³⁰

In fact, Wordsworth answers his own question, "Who shall point, as with a wand, and say, "This portion of the river of my mind Came from yon fountain?" The answer is "Thou, my Friend, art one." Having thought of the magically powerful mind, Wordsworth thinks of Coleridge. He begins a strangely backhanded explanation of why the image does not apply to Coleridge. He wants to explain that Coleridge is not a slave--or at least not exactly a slave--of that "false secondary power, by which,"

In weakness we create distinctions, then
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
Which we perceive, and not which we have made.
(II:220-224)

In a passage remarkable in Wordsworth for its ambiguities of syntax, Wordsworth cannot bring himself to understand how Coleridge escapes this charge. He calls Coleridge into his own camp, and yet knows he does not belong there:

And thou wilt doubt with me, less aptly skill'd
Than many are to class the cabinet
Of their sensations, and, in voluble phrase,
Run through the history and birth of each,
As of a single independent thing. (II:227-231)

For Wordsworth, too much talk is magic; it imposes its artifice on reality.

Wordsworth stops his own thought from straying into magical excesses, thinking as he does so of Coleridge's errors in this direction. Wordsworth compares his own adolescent obsession with metaphor and words and magical romances with Coleridge's mature interests. In Book XI he comes to compare his own years in France with Coleridge's years as "a rigorous student." He is struck by his own momentary resemblance to Coleridge. Wordsworth as Man of Reason is very much like Coleridge in his subtle speculations: both are caught up in "toils abstruse," unsteadied by the permanence of nature. Both are "debarr'd from nature's living images."

When Wordsworth himself returned from France after two years of "man's perverseness," he found himself "dead to deeper hope" (XI:23-5). His long sojourn in the realms of pure reason (Godwinian and Voltarian) was like Odysseus' enforced sail. Odysseus smelled "the fragrance which did ever Give notice of the Shore," and Wordsworth returns to rediscover "the breezes and soft airs that breathe/ The breath of Paradise and find a way/ To the recesses of the soul." The power that kept Odysseus out on the barren sea, unable to go to the harbours of "blessed sentiment and fearless love" was a magic power:

What avail'd,
When Spells forbade the Voyager to land? (XI:48-9)

As a magic power, it was an evil one, keeping the Voyager, (at once the legendary Odysseus and the real Wordsworth) apart from

true feelings and making true feelings appear to be "Perfidious."
 This magic power was Reason. It "promised to abstract the hopes
 of man/ Out of his feelings" (X:809-811) .

Wordsworth begins his long description of the effect of the
 exclusive life of the mind on the totality of life. Again Reason
 is a power that cuts men off from Paradise:

Thus strangely did I war against myself;
 A Bigot to a new Idolatry
 Did like a Monk who hath forsworn the world
 Zealously labour to cut my heart
 From all the sources of her former strength;
 And, as by simple waving of a wand
The wizard instantaneously dissolves
Palace or grove, even so did I unsoul
As readily by syllogistic words
Some charm of Logic, ever within reach,
 Those mysteries of passion which have made . . .
 One brotherhood of all the human race. (XI:74-88)

Reason, divided from the whole self, creates unnatural strife. In
 its devotion to an other-worldly life of ideas, it is ascetic and
 hence life-denying. Sickly, in being cut off from natural sources
 of strength, it is idolatrous as Coleridge and Hazlitt were, adoring
 the waxen image they themselves had made. Above all, this self-
 sufficient life of the mind is like a wizard, for whom the only reali-
 ties are words. The wizard's words seem to have power to change
 reality by the very redefinitions of their own self-reflexive terms.
 Whatever the wizard does, he does instantaneously, not gradually
 and steadily. He can never sustain his act because words can
 change though things are permanent; and the wizard's effect is

always to unsoul, as the prodigy was without feelings, and as the elaborations of metaphor kept the common earth from fastening on the heart of the child who reads romances. The "plumage" of Coleridge's youth (the "gorgeous eloquence" and "subtle speculations") was a wizard's "charm of Logic." His eloquence was a pageantry of ideas shap'd out

From things well-match'd, or ill, and words for things.

Those who believe in the self-created sustenance of the mind are in an eclipse where even the books with which they live lose their meaning. In this eclipse they forget that things defy words.

They forget

the laws of things which lie
Beyond the reach of human will or power. (XI:97-98)

The willful fancy, the adulterate power (as he calls the activities of the mind elsewhere) are transient pretensions (like the city itself) on the truth of nature. The wizard does not know that his words only seem to have power over things, and that his books only seem to have insights into reality.

Wordsworth began his portrait of Coleridge with the idea of wandering. Here, with the figure of the Wanderer Odysseus escaping the magic falsity of Circe's island, he sees his own life turn away from all wandering. He abandons man-made dilemmas and returns to Nature. Nature, like Penelope, has been faithfully waiting. Because he had been first molded by nature, Wordsworth

is able to resume his fructifying life with her. But Coleridge is not so fortunate. He had been forced to leave for the city before the huge and mighty Forms of Nature had enacted their "severe ministrations on him," giving him the stability to stand alone. Under the circumstances, it is no wonder that Coleridge should be sick, indolent and sad, his "ten thousand hopes For ever wither'd." The forms that impressed his young mind were mean and vulgar; he was doomed from the start.

For Wordsworth, words like ghosts and spirits are spectacles or pageants the wizard makes appear by trickery and illusion. They do not correspond to a substance. When Wordsworth wants to speak of superficial change (as when he got himself to look and act like a Cambridge scholar) he says

Strange transformation for a mountain Youth,
 A northern villager. As if by word
Of Magic or some fairy's power, at once.
Behold me rich in monies, and attir'd
 In splendid clothes, with hose of silk and hair
Glittering like rimy trees when frost is keen.
 (III:33-37)

Here a metamorphosis (like the literary metamorphoses of his fitful youth) is imposed by rules of human civilization which are extraneous to his own organic growth. Forced to partake of frivolous school society and defraud the time, he finds the interruption a sleight of magic, like the wand that interrupted the river to analyse the fountain. Money and dress are glittering surfaces of the true Wordsworth (steadied by the early impressions of Nature) who preserves himself below.

When Wordsworth writes in the same book of the "vague and loose indifference" of his days at Cambridge, he again attributes his changes to magic. He sees his separation from truth as the work of an outside power, not a choice he would have made from his own heart:

Rotted as by a charm, my life became
A floating island, an amphibious thing,
Unsound, of spongy texture, yet withal,
Not wanting a fair face of water-weeds
And pleasant flowers. (III:339-343)

Once more he is adrift, divided, sickly, superficial--merely a face, and that, weedy. Some insidious charm has bewitched him, loosed him from even an island's hidden connection to earth.

London, too, is just such a surface interruption. In describing the spectacle or pageant--here again are the words with which Wordsworth describes the play of ideas--he says

As when a Traveller hath from open day
With torches pass'd into some Vault of Earth,
The Grotto of Antiparos, or the Den
Of Yordas among Craven's mountain tracts;
He looks and sees the cavern spread and grow,
Widening itself on all sides, sees, or thinks
He sees, erelong, the roof above his head,
Which instantly unsettles and recedes
Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all
Commingled, making up a Canopy
Of Shapes and Forms and Tendencies to Shape
That shift and vanish, change and interchange
Like Spectres, ferment quiet and sublime. . .
The senseless mass,
In its projections, wrinkles, cavities,
Through all its surface, with all colours streaming,
Like a magician's airy pageant, parts,
Unites, embodying everywhere some pressure,
Or image, recognis'd or new, some type
Or picture of the world. (VIII:710-722; 730-736)

Here, then, in London, is a magician's airy pageant, with its elaborately shifting forms, shadows and mists, disembodied figures; they are merely pictures of the world, not substantial realities.

Thus, for Wordsworth, evanescent spectacles, fancies, elaborate metaphors, books, dreams, trivial forms that pass and dissolve, words that flow out volubly from a mind supercharged with thoughts—can all be ascribed to magic. For magic trades in appearances and artifice. It tries to change the facts by devious sleights-of-hand; it tries to trick the eye with illusions of the brain. Above all, it tries to impose verbal categories on an objective flux.

And Coleridge figures almost invariably in the context of Wordsworth's attacks on illusion, particularly as this illusion is magical. In failing to distinguish between true and false, Coleridge grafted the shapes of Fancy upon the feelings of Imagination. He is left joining and disjoining dreams, while Wordsworth "speaks no dreams, but things oracular." The notion of the wizard comes for Wordsworth as an important metaphor of man setting himself against wholeness, adrift in a mental world not ballasted by Nature. The wizard is a Wanderer. The wizard employs the mind to fragment the fundamental totality. He separates words from the things to which they ultimately refer. The products of the wizard mind (words, dreams, books, the city) are a constellation of falseness. This constellation ends by being a rebuke to Coleridge's whole system of thinking, and

to Coleridge's life as a liveried London schoolboy, Cambridge scholar, endless conversationalist, and opium dreamer. Although Coleridge began with a great spirit, he had no forms on which to exercise it. He is forced into a purely mental world of dreams, cut off from experience, to juggle the ideas of things without reference to a center. Wordsworth acknowledges the great spirit thwarted by circumstance, but his disapproval extends to Coleridge's moral as well as aesthetic sickness.

As Wordsworth's Preface avers that purifying language will purify the heart, he connects Coleridge's lack of center in language to his lack of center in life:³¹

Neither his talents nor his genius, might as they are, nor his vast information will avail him anything; they are all frustrated by a derangement in his intellectual and moral constitution. In fact, he has no voluntary power of mind whatsoever, nor is he capable of acting under any constraint of duty or moral obligation.³²

The overweening disdain evident in this letter to Poole culminated in the great quarrel of 1810. Already in the first drafts of The Prelude, however, these feelings emerge and seem to rankle in Wordsworth's heart.³³ The suspicion that Coleridge's ways were not his crops up in the passages we have seen. That their collaboration was without strain cannot be said, even at the beginning; for pity, rage and indignation mingle in Wordsworth's tone, as he links Coleridge to the heresies of language.

Wordsworth makes it clear he never forgot to whom he was addressing his poem. In the sections on London and on Literature, and also on childhood, he seems especially argumentative since it was in these aspects that the two men's formative lives had been most different. Why should Wordsworth have felt so strongly about the careful elaboration of his life, if he did not suddenly see his life as opposed to another life and its consequences? He may have felt his environment and the way it formed him to strength was timely since Coleridge's weakness showed itself more and more before his departure for Malta. As marriage, health and poetic powers were breaking down for his friend, Wordsworth saw more and more reason for investigating why sorrows were not also affecting his own strength.³⁴ His investigations led Wordsworth to discover a kind of determinism. Because of the importance of impressions on young sensibilities the city molds unstable minds; Nature molds stable ones. This determinism seems to be one of the strongest proofs that Wordsworth was an associationist. The youthful mind cannot transcend its environment.

For Coleridge was the shadow figure against whom Wordsworth defined himself. He was the Conradian "double." Knowing him intimately, Wordsworth can say "There, but for the grace of God, go I." Twin spirits, their minds had been nourished differently, and their fates diverged accordingly. Because Coleridge's mind was molded by man-made forms and man-made fantasies, he was conditioned

to think men could impose their metamorphic wills on immutable reality. Thus deluded, Coleridge could not help his aesthetic and moral decline. And no one should have expected him to do otherwise, given his early circumstances, and the introversion to which they inevitably led.

We have seen how pervasive in The Prelude is Wordsworth's "one-versation" with Coleridge about the validity of the mind's magical power. So, we should not be surprised to see shorter poems also developing this argument. "Lines Written in a pocket copy of Thomson's Castle of Indolence," "The Tables Turned," "Expostulation and Reply," "Eve with Cold Beads of Midnight Dew," and even "The Idiot Boy" take up the theme. But the poem that most exclusively examines their different views about reality and the supernatural is "Peter Bell." For "Peter Bell," a deliberately corrective parody of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, announces its purpose in its preface:

The Poem of Peter Bell, as the Prologue will show, was composed under a belief that the Imagination not only does not require for its exercise the intervention of supernatural agency, but that, though such agency be excluded, the faculty may be called forth as imperiously and for kindred results of pleasure, by incidents within the compass of poetic probability, in the humblest departments of daily life.³⁵

This purpose corresponds to Wordsworth's well-known condescension toward the Rime of the Ancient Mariner and his exclusion of it from later editions of The Lyrical Ballads. His judgment of its

"dream-like inconsequence" and lack of motivation expands into a theory in Peter Bell, and this theory--a closely argued brief against the magical transformations of the Coleridgean supernatural--depends for its sharpness on the connection of magic and the solipsism of mind extending over a large area of human concern in The Prelude. Where The Prelude decried magic in cities, books, fancy, metaphors, words for things and other falsities, Peter Bell has only one adversary: the magical Rime.

Peter Bell's prologue is a polemic on the true subject of poetry; the tale itself is an argument for the moral dangers of magic to men, not only poets, and an object lesson on the way to write about motivation in human acts.

The prologue to "Peter Bell" explains a number of things; first, that Wordsworth, too, was tempted by heresies against nature (as we saw in his remarks about adolescent metaphor) but spurned them in his maturity; that all the mysteries are for him either idle curiosity or artificial fancies by which the irresponsible mind populates the natural world; and that indulgence in these fancies is solipsism and a betrayal of the poet's function of enlarging the sympathies of men.

In the prologue a magic moon-shaped boat shanghai's the poet, deserts the earth and goes among the stars. There the poet sees melancholy spectres. The boat refuses to believe he can be homesick for the commonplace green earth. Returning from the stars,

the boat takes him to distant regions of the earth--to Siberia,
Africa and the realms of Faery--hoping to enchant him

Among the lovely shades of Things;
The shadowy forms of mountains bare,
The streams and bowers, and ladies fair,
The shades of palaces and kings! 9102-105)

The magic boat diverts the poet to places that are not only un-
common but also insubstantial, apart from real men. The poet,
however, refuses to countenance this falsity. While the boat
offers to "reveal

How earth and heaven are taught to feel
The might of magic lore!

(the feeling is artificially instilled), the poet dismisses it in
lines that are significant for the Coleridge quarrel:

Temptation lurks among your words,
But, while these pleasures you're pursuing
Without impediment or let,
No wonder if you quite forget
What on earth is doing. (116-120)

Pursuing these spectres was appropriate for a mythological
age ("when all mankind Did listen with a faith sincere To tuneful
tongues in mystery versed"). But now that these mysteries have
been discredited, there is no further need for supernatural fabrica-
tions. The poet should cultivate and heal "the humblest mirth
and tears":

The dragon's wing, the magic ring,
I shall not cover for my dower,
If I along that lowly way
With sympathetic heart may stray,
And with a soul of power.

These given, what more need I desire
 To stir, to soothe, or elevate?
 What nobler marvels than the mind
 May in life's daily prospect find,
 May find or there create? (136-145)

Believers in the supernatural invent out of their own minds what they pretend to find. They exist in a closed circuit of the mind without reference to the solid things of reality. All the magic that poetry needs is in the natural feelings the common earth has built up in the heart:

A potent wand doth Sorrow wield,
 What spell so strong as guilty Fear!
 Repentance is a tender Sprite;
 If aught on earth have heavenly might,
 'Tis lodged within her tear. (146-150)

The poet prefers his "two poor legs" to the indignant magic boat, and is set down in the homely atmosphere of his neighbors who are waiting to hear a story.³⁶ The poet is a social being, a man speaking to men about common concerns, not regaling them with private delusions about magic boats and magic lore. The problem for the poet of making the important transition from his supernatural dream life to the natural life of his audience is again pertinent to the satire on Coleridge's Rime. Rather than returning from supernatural experiences maddened and wild, the poet must proceed according to the "rules of common sense." Like the mariner with glittering eye, the poet of "Peter Bell" makes a false start by beginning in medias res without a natural history of the hero as a context. In this false start

I spake with faltering voice, like one
 Not wholly rescued from the pale
 Of a wild dream, or worse illusion;
 But straight, to cover my confusion,
 Began the promised Tale.

Unlike the Wedding Guest, these neighbors are not spell-bound; they force him to start over from the beginning.

The Tale, then, is to proceed in a natural way, placing Peter in his environment and explaining its effect on him, but the Tale and Coleridge's Rime have parallel plots. Each hero (victim) commits an offense against nature (shooting an albatross; whipping the mourning ass; each animal has Christian overtones); each sinner endures a kind of hell (one apparently, if only symbolically, outside; the other deliberately inside); one is saved by the grace of a saint (The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 286-287); the other by the grace of natural forms; each repents and does long and melancholy penance. Hell and grace--two pivotal subjects in any argument about the supernatural--are carefully established in "Peter Bell" as psychological, not magical, conditions.

Peter's character, too, is in its broadest outlines vaguely familiar. Like the magic boat (a "restless Wanderer" l. 129) Peter travels. But his travels in nature do not improve his heart. For his heart was already formed in the cruel city (l. 300). As the Prelude explained, the city leads to inwardness for want of outward forms:

He had a dark and sidelong walk,
 And long and slouching was his gait;
 Beneath his looks so bare and bold,
 You might perceive, his spirit cold
 Was playing with some inward bait.

Thus, city-bred and inward, Peter is also a believer in supernatural beings. His credulity arises from paranoia:

'There is some plot against me laid'
 Though Peter. 'What can mean all this?...
 'Some ugly witchcraft must be here!
 Suspicion ripened into dread.

His paranoia swells into a wild mixture of gothic elements (ll. 501-515) when Peter discerns the corpse of the ass's master. His guilt makes him see

The rocks that tower on either side
 Build up a wild fantastic scene;
 Temples like those among the Hindoos,
 And mosques, and spires, and abbey-windows,
 And castles all with ivy green (681-685).

Spinning these mirages, macabre as well as magical and exotic, Wordsworth illustrates the theory he explains in his note to "The Thorn":

Superstitious men are almost always men of slow faculties and deep feelings; their minds are not loose but adhesive; they have a reasonable share of imagination, by which word I mean the faculty which produces impressive effects out of simple elements; but they are utterly destitute of fancy, the power by which pleasure and surprise are excited by sudden varieties of situation and by accumulated imagery.

To his theory of superstitious men who project the supernatural out of their own fears and guilts, Wordsworth joins what seems to be another rebuke to Coleridge; this time, a reversal of the relative importance Coleridge assigned to the Imagination and Fancy. Un-

clear as this passage from "The Thorn" is, it seems that Imagination here (despite the elevation of it in the 1805 Preface) is the unhealthy faculty of making a mountain out of a mole hill, not as for Coleridge, the Esemplastic Power which creates, while Fancy only arranges.

Peter's paranoid imagination prevents him from judging the corpse for what it is; he believes it to be a fiend, ghost, or idol. So bizarre are his distortions it is as if he reads from a book--"a book that is enchanted":

He looks, he cannot choose but look;
Like some one reading in a book—
A book that is enchanted.

Here is the central theme once more: Only literature can approximate the paranoid's vision. Like the credulous paranoid, literature will not leave reality alone.³⁷

Suspicious of nature, fearful of universal vengeance, Peter's very paranoia is his own salvation. For it seems to him the world is animated against him. His guilty imagination enacts its own punishment.

Wordsworth in Part Third applies this analysis to a literary friend of his (perhaps Coleridge himself) whom a word on a page roused to obsessive penitence. This "gentle soul," struck, by a miracle of books (presumably invented in his mind), suffered more for sins he imagined at the bottom of his heart, than Peter did for his real sin. While the imagined spirits of vengeance in nature

are necessary to a hard-hearted Peter Bell, this "good man's gentle soul" need not be so "perplexed":

Dread Spirits! to confound the meek
 Why wander from your course so far,
 Disordering colour, form, and stature!
 --Let good men feel the soul of nature,
And see things as they really are, (761-765)

Wordsworth implores the spirits who metamorphose and distort to exempt gentle souls who read too much ("a book that is enchanted!") from their torments; Such men are sensitive enough to learn when they "see things as they are":

Yet, potent Spirits! well I know,
 How ye, that play with soul and sense,
 Are not unused to trouble friends
 Of goodness, for most gracious ends--
 And this I speak in reverence!

But might I give advice to you,
 Whom in my fear I love so well;
 From men of pensive virtue go,
 Dread Beings! and your empire show
 On hearts like that of Peter Bell.

As for Peter, when his evil rises up his superstition finds all of nature rumbling. Without reference to the "rights of visual sense," his mind is remaking a world of magical animate vengeance:

And now the Spirits of the Mind
 Are busy with poor Peter Bell;
 Up the rights of visual sense
 Usurping, with a prevalence
 More terrible than magic spell.

Men who respect "the rights of visual sense," "feel the soul of nature, And see things as they are," are not susceptible to "disordering colour, form and stature," to seeing ghosts and miracles under every bush. But other men, generally city-bred

and bookish, credulous and imaginative, are either real sinners like Peter (and therefore deserve what their imaginations fear) or gentle souls like Coleridge (who do not deserve the spectres they call up, but suffer from them nevertheless). Had they permitted their minds to receive the truthful and mighty impressions of nature in youth, their minds would not have been forced to rely on images of their own making or on images from books. Thus the Spirits of the Mind would not cast their magic spell on the Mind. And the mind would not distort nature with the touch of this transforming power.

What emerges in Peter Bell as distinctly as it ever would is Wordsworth's hostility to the supernatural, as it is imagined in the exotic and the magical. Related to this also is his hostility to what Warren first observed as the intentionally unmotivated act of the Ancient Mariner's mind.³⁸ An act which is not carefully founded on associative causation is for Wordsworth unreal; it must be grounded in the impression which formed it, and here he links himself, despite counterclaims for his transcendentalism, with the eighteenth century mechanists, and particularly with Godwin's Caleb Williams, villain by circumstance. An act or idea cannot arise out of nothing; it is to some degree at least always the product of an environment. But for Coleridge, as Warren explains, an unmotivated act is the proof of the mind's freedom from circum-

stance. This freedom is the basis for his faith in the soul, and proof also of the original sin he explains much later in Aids to Reflection as the power to originate evil, and hence, by insisting on an originating power, however negative, reinforcing the power of man's will.

What is important for Coleridge (in a phrase he picks up from Schelling because it corresponds to concerns which had long been vital to him) is "a translation of man into nature, a substitution of the visible for the audible." He goes on: "poetry also is purely human; for all its materials are from the mind, and all its products are for the mind. . . . Poetry can only act through the intervention of articulate speech, which is so peculiarly human, that in all languages it constitutes the ordinary phrase by which man and nature are contradistinguished."³⁹ In saying "not the thing presented, but that which is re-presented by the thing, shall be the source of the pleasure," Coleridge is as unlike Wordsworth as possible, for whom the written experience was always a pale reflection of an actual experience inexpressibly fundamental to it.

Coleridge's stress on the power of the mind and the symbols it creates to manipulate and weld into living wholes disparate aspects of a previously fragmented perceptual universe--"a universe of little things"--is anathema to Wordsworth, for whom the universe is already a coherent whole. Here is the source of the urgency just below the surface of The Prelude's magic passages. The notion of a heresy--setting up waxen images to adore in place of

true ones--informs Wordsworth's thrusts at Coleridgean magic in "Peter Bell" and The Prelude. This heresy undermines what Wordsworth had planned for the purification of all poetry; the revolt against eighteenth century artifice and the return to the contemplation of stark truth.⁴⁰

Wordsworth's horror of magic (of the mind transforming reality with its imagined powers) brings him curiously close to Godwin. Godwin's Lives of the Necromancers (1830), culminating forty years of influential skepticism, sees man imagining magic and then worshipping his own invention. Such solipsism leads men on to error and thence to violence and war. For the religions that have developed from magic have separated men from each other and from reference to truths visible to all: Man, Godwin says,

peoples all the elements from the world of his imagination. It is here that he is most extraordinarily wonderful. . . . If we would know man in all his subtleties, we must deviate into the world of miracles and sorcery. To know the things that are not, and cannot be, but have been imagined and believed, is the most curious chapter in the annals of man . . . But the work I have written is not a treatise of natural magic. It rather proposes to display the immense wealth of the faculty of imagination, and to shew the extravagances of which the man may be guilty who surrenders himself to its guidance.

So like Godwin, Wordsworth believes magic is dangerous for one's view of the world, and hence for one's possible actions in it. Therefore Wordsworth uses The Prelude in part to criticize

Coleridge's views about words and the power of the mind, and to pity Coleridge's personal failures, tracing these failures back to his unfortunate urban youth. Both Coleridge's intellectual opinions and private sorrows result from his heretical manipulations of natural things. Wordsworth applies his criticism specifically in The Prelude to the kind of supernatural literature that Coleridge preferred. Romances and extravagant paradises came in for his attacks. (Learned allusions, diffused the intensity of the thing in itself.) Fundamentally, the transfigurations of metaphor were the source of all distorted vision. Like the city, the manipulations of the mind squat blackly on the fields of truth. Disgusted by verbal excess, then, Wordsworth dismisses all this, seemingly sneering: "c'est de la literature."⁴²

Wordsworth then narrows his criticism in "Peter Bell" to a single adversary: the very "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" that established Coleridge's wizardly reputation. In a reversed plot, its supernaturalisms are turned to naturalisms, the poet avo~~ids~~ the realm of magic and shadow, and finally begs Coleridge directly to abandon his book--a book that is enchanted. Coleridge tries to be exotic (in Wordsworth's view) and ends up being superstitious and blind. By 1826 Wordsworth's attacks have become scorchingly ad hominem, as witnessed by his poem "Ere with cold beads of midnight dew":

Ere with cold beads of midnight dew
 Had mingled tears of thine,
 I grieved, fond Youth! that thou shouldst sue
 To haughty Geraldine.

Immoveable by generous sighs,
 She glories in a train
 Who drag, beneath our native skies,
 An Oriental chain.

Pine not like them with arms across,
 Forgetting in thy care
 How the fast-rooted trees can toss
 Their branches in mid air.

The humblest rivulet will take
 Its own wild liberties;
 And every day the imprisoned lake
 Is flowing in the breeze.

Then crouch no more on suppliant knee,
 But scorn with scorn outbrave;
 A Briton, even in love, should be
 A subject, not a slave!

The now-familiar argument that truth is stranger than fiction is supplemented by an appeal to patriotism. Stanzas three and four have parallels in The Prelude and in "Peter Bell," where Wordsworth urges Coleridge to see "what on earth is doing." But stanzas one, two and five suggest that in still striving to finish "Christabel" Coleridge is not only wasting his time but betraying his country as well. This attack on Coleridge for being exotic represents a decline of Wordsworth's important (if reactionary) view of the heresies implicit in the wand, the assertive mind, the showy words which transform the surface but not the substance of experience, and hide the truth of nature by imposing hyperbolic metaphors on it. Magic is Circean: It is false not because it is not English, but because it presumes to substitute words for things, and the power of the creative mind for a proper humility to the truth of nature. We will see in the next chapter that Wordsworth, still Hartleyan and mimetic, is resisting

a revival of the poet as magician that his subversive friend Coleridge was elaborating. Coleridge had extensive precedents, in English as well as Alexandrian and German. But then Wordsworth had precedents, too. And only against the background of their respective traditions with regard to magic can the full depth of the two friends' opposition be understood.

Footnotes to Chapter II

¹ Arthur Beatty's William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in their Historical Relations, 2nd ed. (Madison, 1927) is the seminal study of Wordsworth's associationism. Even though M. M. Rader in Wordsworth: A Philosophical Approach (Oxford, 1967), Carl Woodring in Wordsworth (Boston, 1965), and E. D. Hirsch Jr. in Wordsworth and Schelling: A Typological Study of Romanticism (New Haven, 1960), have discovered a transcendental Wordsworth, many recent critics have found new grounds for detecting in Wordsworth the influence of Hartley. For one, Geoffrey Hartman in Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814 (New Haven, 1965), pp. 209-10, perceives that nature is responsible for forming the man: "The forms of nature in all their variety then dictated the strength of his soul. His childhood and youth were visionary in the sense that nature drew him out, released the life in him, and gradually made him conscious."

² Herbert Read, The True Voice of Feeling (New York, 1953), p. 178.

³ N. P. Stallknecht, Strange Seas of Thought (Durham, 1945). For Woodring and Rader, see note one.

⁴ John Jones, The Egotistical Sublime: A History of Wordsworth's Imagination (London, 1964), p. 43.

⁵ Jones, p. 35. For the importance of visible things to Wordsworth see the well-known article by Frederick A. Pottle, "The Eye and the Object," in Wordsworth: Centenary Studies Presented at Cornell and Princeton Universities, ed. G. T. Dunklin (Princeton, 1951). He writes "Wordsworth believed that poetry must hold firm to the vision of the outward eye, and Blake . . . wanted to relinquish the control of common perception altogether" p. 38. See also Herbert Marshall McLuhan's provocative essay "Coleridge as Artist," in English Romantic Poets and Essayists, ed. C. W. and L. H. Houtchens (New York, 1957), in which he postulates Wordsworth as a poet of the eye and Coleridge as a poet of the ear.

⁶ José Ortega y Gasset, The Dehumanization of Art (Garden City, New York, 1956), pp. 30-31. On the subject of Wordsworth's metaphor Florence Marsh's Wordsworth's Imagery: A Study in Poetic Vision (New Haven, 1952) is illuminating.

⁷ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "On Poesy and Art" Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. T. M. Raysor (Cambridge, 1936), p. 204-14.

⁸ The Prelude, or The Growth of a Poet's Mind, text of 1805, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (London, 1956), Book I: 231. All subsequent references to The Prelude will be from this edition, with book and lines in the text.

⁹ "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago," The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb, ed. E. V. Lucas (London, 19-35), Vol. II, 21. Essays of Elia, ed. Homer Woodbridge (New York, 1929), pp. 34-5. Lamb recalls the spectre of young Coleridge: "Come back into Memory like as thou wert in the day-spring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee--the dark pillar not yet turned--Samuel Taylor Coleridge--logician, Meta-physician, Bard!--How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, intranced with the admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the speech and the garb of the young Mirandula), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or recited Homer in his Greek, or Pindar . . . "

¹⁰ "The Mock Death of Southey," Leigh Hunt's Literary Criticism, ed. L. H. and C. W. Houtchens (New York, 1956), p. 247.

¹¹ Thomas Carlyle, The Life of Sterling (London, 1885), pp. 44-48.

¹¹ "The Preface to The Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems" (1802), Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, ed. Paul M. Zall (Lindoln, Nebraska, 1966), p. 53.

¹³ "Essay on Epitaphs," Zall, p. 126.

¹⁴ The Quest for Permanence (Cambridge, 1959), p. 88.

¹⁵ "Peter Bell the Third," The Poetical Works of Shelley, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, 3rd ed. (London, 1956), IV, viii.

¹⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross (London, 1907), chapter IX.

¹⁷ Zall, p. 49.

¹⁸ S. M. Parrish in "The Wordsworth-Coleridge Controversy," PMLA, LXIII (1958), 367-374, sees the approaches to the joint poem "The Three Graves" as indicative of a difference of dramatic method--Wordsworth believing in dramatizing his personae, Coleridge believing in the poet being his poetic and elevated self. But the

controversy goes much deeper than theory, as the letters reveal. Already in October 14, 1803, Coleridge felt personally neglected. Wordsworth's scorn for "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is famous. Parrish summarizes Wordsworth's view on it. Wordsworth objects that the principal person had no distinct character; that he does not act, but is only acted upon; Wordsworth "attempted to reduce 'the dream-like inconsequence of the poem'" and "subtitled it 'a poet's reverie.'" With the exceptions of Parrish and E. L. Griggs, most critics have minimized the differences between the two men. H. M. Margoliouth, in particular, gives an overly optimistic view of their friendship in Wordsworth and Coleridge, 1795-1834 (Oxford, 1953).

¹⁹See E. K. Chambers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Biographical Study (Oxford, 1938), pp. 6-12, for Coleridge's move to the city after the death of his father in October, 1781.

²⁰Zall, p. 21.

²¹See Roger Sharrock, "Wordsworth's Revolt Against Literature," EC, III (1953), 396-412. See also Rader, Stalknecht and Hirsch.

²²The Poetical Works of Wordsworth, ed. Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest de Selincourt (London, 1959), p. 377.

²³"Essay, Supplementary to the Preface: (1815)," Zall, 178-179.

²⁴John Jones gives Wordsworth's ideas on paradise concisely: "Paradise is here, or it is nowhere; and if it is here, there can have been no Fall: this imaginative monism at the heart of Wordsworth's poetry is more important than either optimism or pessimism," p. 39.

²⁵Wordsworth's demotion of "The Rime of The Ancient Mariner" in the second edition of The Lyrical Ballads (1800) was wittily denounced by Lamb in his letter to Wordsworth, Jan. 30, 1801. Lamb seems to realize that Wordsworth is responsible for this, and takes a malicious pleasure in praising the excellence of the poem, and then in contrasting "dead nature" with the life of the city and of the books. Lamb writes: "I am sorry that Coleridge has christened his Ancient Marinere 'a poet's Reverie'--it is as bad as Bottom the Weaver's declaration that he is not a Lion but only the scenical representation of a Lion. What new idea is gained by this Title, but one subversive of all credit, which the tale should force upon us, of its truth? For me, I was never so affected with any human Tale. After first reading it, I was totally possessed with it for many days . . . I totally differ from your idea that the Marinere should have had a character and profession . . . Your other observation

is I think as well a little unfounded: the Marinere from being conversant in supernatural events has acquired a supernatural and strange cast of phrase. . . . You will excuse my remarks, because I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that cannot see." The Letters of Charles Lamb, ed. E. V. Lucas (New Haven, 1935), I, 240.

²⁶ William Hazlitt's "The Spirit of the Age" castigate Wordsworth's savage diction, The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P. P. Howe (London and Toronto, 1930-34), IV, 270-279. Coleridge's criticisms are outspoken in The Biographia Literaria, chapters XVII to XXII, indicating disagreement since the start of the collaboration. See especially chapter XVIII, p. 218, chapter XVII, pp. 198-9.

²⁷ Cited by Chambers, p. 6. But it must be remembered that Coleridge was not always favorable to romance.

²⁸ The distinction between imagination and fancy is too large a subject to divert us here. In "The Imagination: Coleridge vs. Wordsworth," PQ, XVIII (1939), 1-18, C. D. Thorpe carefully analyses the deep differences between Coleridge's and Wordsworth's views. R. D. Havens explains the "matter-of-factness" of Wordsworth's idea of imagination in his The Mind of a Poet: A Study of Wordsworth's Thought with Particular Reference to The Prelude (Baltimore, 1941). His chapter "The Imagination" is still instructive.

²⁹ See pages 56-66 of this chapter for an examination of Wordsworth's hostility to magic in "Peter Bell."

³⁰ One observes the frequent use of words like "vagary," "fit," "dream," "adulterate Powers" and "wild obliquities" to describe human transitoriness. "Obliquities" appears in a letter to Coleridge (1799) from Nordhausen about Burger:

I do not so much desire characters in poems like Burger's as manners, not transitory manners reflecting wearisome unintelligible obliquities of city life, but manners connected with the permanent objects of nature and partaking of the simplicity of those objects.

The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, ed. Ernest deSelincourt (Oxford, 1967), p. 255.

³¹ In the Preface of 1800 Wordsworth says he cannot describe the depraved state of taste in the country without "pointing out in what manner language and the human mind act and react on each other, and

without retracing the revolutions not of literature alone but likewise of society itself" (Zall, p. 17). By using the "real language of men" poets can reach their real passions.

³²Wordsworth, letter to Thomas Poole, May 31 or June, 1808.

³³In The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Oxford, 1956 ff.) ff. E. L. Griggs devotes the second half of volume two almost entirely to the quarrel that began with Wordsworth's intervention between Coleridge and the Montagues. Pages 309-310 and 404-410 have notes of enraging relevance.

³⁴Wordsworth's own sorrows, in particular the deaths of his brother and daughter, seemed to strengthen, rather than weaken, him.

³⁵Poetical Works, p. 188.

³⁶The similarity between the visionary voyage of "Peter Bell" and that of Chaucer's "House of Fame" is noteworthy. Both poets, granted supernatural favors in the poems, spurn them for the real world. Wordsworth was reading Chaucer at the time of the writing of "Peter Bell," and he was also haphazardly "translating" his tales.

³⁷See Sigmund Freud's theories of omnipotence of mind, converging on the magical, the psychotic and the poetic sensibilities, below, page 23.

³⁸Robert Penn Warren, "A Poem of Pure Imagination," in Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (New York, 1946).

³⁹Coleridge, "On Poesy and Art," p. 205.

⁴⁰In Wordsworth (London, 1936) Peter Burra explains that Wordsworth's hostility in "Peter Bell" to the supernatural is part of his revolt against eighteenth century figures of speech, in particular, personifications.

⁴¹William Godwin, Lives of the Necromancers or An Account of the Most Eminent Persons in Successive Ages, Who Have Claimed for Themselves, or to Whom has been Imputed by Others, the Exercise of Magical Powers (London, 1834), pp. vii-xdi.

CHAPTER III

The Traditions

Wordsworth feared magic as Homer, Spenser, Milton and Pope did. He saw the deviations of Coleridge's career in classical and Christian terms: while Coleridge lolled on Circe's isle, Wordsworth kept his course so magic with its metamorphoses would not waylay him. The magical island was a place of exile; its music was illusory; its joys wasteful; its suggestions of power, impotent and heretical. Wordsworth associated magic with the promiscuous fancies of the mind, persisting in its verbal play at the expense of truth. In these associations of magic with moral as well as aesthetic indulgence, he was faithful to the past: his wizard stood in a line with Circe herself, Canidia, Medea, Comus, Dr. Faustus and the witches of Jonson's Masque of Queens. Such magical beings lured men to error--error that begins in mistaking the locus of reality and ends with the damnation of the soul and even the disintegration of society. Wordsworth, in short, participates in a venerable anti-magical tradition.

In spite of his moral indignation, however, many eighteenth century thinkers began to find reasons for elevating this once loathsome magic. With the discovery of a pro-magical tradition, magic began to emerge as a metaphor for creativity in general. In the course of the eighteenth century, it increasingly signified potent art and imaginative vision; the magical universe was projected (in England as well as in Germany) as a paradigm for aesthetic organicism. By means of the imagination--which more and more took on the connotations of its root magic--the human mind was empowered to recreate its world and discover its own truths.

This change in the legitimacy of magic and the magician may be ascribed to a number of possible factors. One was the influence of Shakespeare in general, and of his Tempest, Macbeth, and Midsummer Night's Dream in particular. In 1777 Maurice Morgann, for example, extolls Shakespeare's genius as magical:¹

This same genius pervades and is equally admirable in all. Or, is a character to be shewn in progressive change, and the events of years compried within the hour;--with what a Magic hand does he prepare and scatter his spells! The Understanding must, in the first place, be subdued; and lo! how the rooted prejudices of the child spring up to confound the man! The Weird sisters rise, and order is extinguished. The laws of nature give way, and leave nothing in our minds but wildness and horror. No pause is allowed us for reflection: Horrid sentiment, furious guilt and compunction, air-drawn daggers, murders, ghosts, and enchantment, shake and possess us wholly,

The instantaneous changes, the archetypal fears, and the speed of events enchant the audience to "a willing suspension of disbelief!"

The effect of a Shakespearean play is one of being possessed or bewitched. Shakespeare's devices are spells. For Shakespeare is a magician, working by rules of his own making:

On such an occasion, a fellow, like Rymer, waking from his trance, shall lift up his Constable's staff, and charge this great Magician, this daring practitioner of arts inhibited /Shakespeare is the world's seductive Othello/ in the name of Aristotle to surrender; whilst Aristotle, himself, disowning his wretched Officer, would fall prostrate at his feet and acknowledge his supremacy.

This magical power is Platonic and ideal. By means of his own magic, Shakespeare bypasses the regular cause and effect of observed nature. Indeed, Poetry in general escapes this predictability:

Poetry delights in surprise, conceals her steps, seizes at once upon the heart, and obtains the Sublime things without betraying the rounds of her ascent: True Poesy is magic, not nature; an effect from causes hidden or unknown. To the Magician I prescribe no laws; his law and his power is one; his power is his law. Him, who neither imitates, nor is within the reach of imitation, no precedent can or ought to bind, no limits to contain.

With the example of Shakespeare before him, Morgann finds that all of poetry is magic, and he emphasizes that magic does not partake of the realm of nature. Poetry derives from a power outside of nature. Shakespeare became the Prospero of his own works.² With this paragon in mind, artists came to imagine themselves in this enticing role: each was the Prospero of his own imaginary world.

Though Shakespeare is enormously important as a background figure in the Romantic consciousness, almost equally important is

a quite dissimilar figure: Plotinus. And however unlike one another Shakespeare and Plotinus may seem to be in most respects, in at least one respect--and that one crucial for Romantic practice--they were very much alike. That is to say, they were alike in their emphasis upon magic.

Through Shakespeare and the magical controversies of the Renaissance, the Preromantics were led to Plotinus, who inspired the reemergence of magic in the Renaissance, and who, along with Shakespeare, was a major impetus toward the Romantic interest in magic. Plotinus was one of the first to link magic and art in a complex theory of creativity and pantheism. Marlowe and Henry Vaughan took after Pico, Bruno and Ficino.³ And Romantics of a later century saw themselves as heirs to the magical tradition begun with Plotinus in second century Alexandria and first resurrected in fourteenth century Florence. A veritable "Rage for Plotinus" developed.⁴ This rage for Plotinus was fanned by Thomas Taylor, whose zeal in translating Alexandrian neoplatonists such as Jamblichus and Proclus made these writings available from 1797 on.⁵ Indeed, the Romantic interest in Alexandrian magic hints at latent similarities between the two eclectic eras: in the view of E. R. Dodds, the neoplatonic ferment in second century Alexandria finds its "closest historical analogue" in the "romantic reaction against rationalist 'natural theology.'"⁶ A suspicion that their own revolt against rationalism corresponded to the secret irrationality of the

Greeks may have helped inspire Romantic interest in this late and magical period. The search for the je ne sais quoi, the unpredictable element that would rescue disordered genius from their strictures of Gallic rule, led to an apotheosis of the irrational Odyssey; Medea and The Bacchae supported this claim.⁷

Plotinus and the Renaissance magicians--even (as they frequently remind us) Plato himself--looked to the half-mythical Persian Magi who later invaded Christianity as "the Three Wise Men." Both Christian and Greek thought attest to their reputation for power and vision. The Italian neoplatonists modelled themselves on these august figures, and the English Cambridge Platonists narrowed their search for the source of disparate creeds to the earliest and therefore seminal religion--that of the ancient Persian Magi. The religion of the Magi suggested that a sober and pantheistic magic was the universal religion of the ancient world. And the recognition of the universality of magic in antiquity could only have been reinforced by the travel books coming out of the explorations of Africa and the remote regions of the Americas. Here, too, it was discovered that a belief in vital sympathies current throughout nature prevailed. It seemed, then, from the evidence presented by both Romantic primitivism and orientalism, that magic was in several senses a "natural religion."

Out of the admiration for the complex language of the savage, arose speculations on the origins of language in general. Vico, Herder, Rousseau and Lord Monboddo saw language originating in

the magical naming of things for purposes of controlling them.⁸ So, as the first religions were magical, so too, the first language originated in the aspirations of the primitive magicians. In our day, this belief in the magical origin of language is still **considered**. Kenneth Burke asserts, for instance, that

The magical decree is implicit in all language; for the mere act of naming an object or situation decrees that it is to be singled out as such and such rather than as something other.⁹

Thus, the interest in the beginnings of culture that motivated the late eighteenth century founders of the disciplines of anthropology and mythology led inevitably back to the touchstone of magic, to which Shakespeare and Plotinus had first led them.

The influence of Germany in fostering these interests and relating them to magic cannot be dismissed.

In eighteenth century German duchies, the relations of paganism to Christian revelation; the nature of the ancient mysteries, above all the character of the early history of mankind--its primitive language and religion--were earnestly debated among small groups of intellectuals.¹⁰

(Frank E. Manuel, p. 284)

In this country where Plotinus and Shakespeare reigned supreme, Goethe had resurrected Faust from medieval traditions of magic. Wieland (starting from Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream) amassed magical materials for his long narrative Oberon.¹¹ Perhaps more decisive yet, however, for the development of theories of magic, were the works of Hamann and Novalis.

Manuel relates Hamann's thought to the eighteenth century German religious ferment he described above:

Sneering at current mechanistic solutions to problems of the origin of speech and writing and religious mystery, the Magus of the North [Hamman] reaffirmed divine creation. With bitter irony and consummate logic he demolished the whole slew of popular hypotheses of the Enlightenment which found the driving forces of mankind in sensation and utility.¹²

Acclaimed as "The Magus of the North," Hamann combines language with divine creation and magic, and opposes his recognition of their mystery to mechanistic and associationist theories. Contemporaneous with ^{'Hamann}Hamann, Novalis likewise protected himself from mechanism under the cloak of magic. Walzel explains that Novalis was strengthened

in his tendency to make ecstasy the measure of human strength and of the efficacy of the human will. He became a magician in the strict sense of the word and at the same time derived support from the idealistic philosophy of his time; hence he called his system 'magic idealism'.¹³

In believing that the poet possesses the secret of the universe and the route to its interior and exterior correspondences, Novalis (as Albert Béguin indicates) sees the poet as "mage ou magicien,"¹⁴ The manifestations of spirit invade things and control them. Béguin decisively elaborates Novalis' interest in the intimate connection of magic and poetry:

The poet is then a sorcerer who evokes interior shadows and summons them to a mysterious confrontation. Poetry, however, is the opposite of everything that is vague and imprecise. "The more a poem is personal, local and temporal and particular, the nearer it is to the center of all poetry. A poem must be absolutely inexhaustible." It is inexhaustible to the extent that it is precise. Such precision is part of every magical act. For nothing is more exact and minute than the rites of sorcery and of the evocation of spirits. The poet's words are like these rites: They are sanctified by a marvellous tradition like the reliques of saints, surrounded by presences.¹⁵

German theories of the incantatory poem, the analogous universe, and the magician poet (with their related notions of sorcery, evocation and ecstasy) were exemplified not only in Novalis, but also (as Béguin shows) in Troxler, Carus, Brentano, Hölderlin, Arnim and Tieck.¹⁶ The Germans, then, had discovered early the fruitful implications of the magical nature of poetry.

While their influence may have reached England already in the late eighteenth century, it did not penetrate France until the 1830's when Nodier and Nerval learned of it from Hoffman. Baudelaire softened the ground for the adaptation of these themes among the symbolists.¹⁷ It is noteworthy that in France the late eighteenth century vogue for magic and the occult first arose unrelated to the theory and practice of poetry. The fashion manifested itself less in the search for the origins of all knowledge (as in Germany) than in the cultivation of occult mannetisms. As Jacques Roos and Auguste Viatte have demonstrated in different ways, Cagliostro and

Eliphas Levi became cultural heroes who transformed the salons into seance parlors.¹⁸ They did not extend their meditations to the realm of art. Martinisme and Mesmerisme established sociétés mystiques, including "des sociétés des mages"; Martines de Pasqually, synthesized in his Traité de la réintégration the notions of Paracelsus, Agrippa, Reuchlin, Pico, and Fludd.¹⁹ While these figures were discussed in "la maison de la marquise d'Urfé," not until Baudelaire did readings of the magicians inform the practice of poetry. Only in the writings of Baudelaire (inspired, I believe, by Poe, as Poe was by Coleridge) did French poetry begin to assume its "magical powers." Béguin, too, points to Baudelaire's discovery in France of "la volonté magique"; proclaims Baudelaire: "Il faut vouloir rêver et savoir rêver. Evocation de l'inspiration. Art Magique."²⁰ Baudelaire, then, introduced into France as late as 1860 the connection between magic and poetry. Even though he despaired of accomplishing his "magie poétique," "il n'en reste pas moins l'initiateur de cette tentative magique qu'après lui d'autres reprendront."²¹ (381) Huysmans, Mallarmé, and Valéry followed him in their quest of incantation in verse.²²

In England, however, the union between magic and poetry had been establishing itself since 1747. A full sixty years before Baudelaire made his pronouncements, Coleridge was already elaborating and disseminating the complex magical theory that his English and German predecessors had first broached. The change in attitude

from dread of magic (as exemplified in Comus) to the glorification of it is clearly visible. The increasing tolerance toward the magician as the eighteenth century moves from Pope to Collins is a miniature index of those changes from neoclassicism to romanticism documented by Lovejoy, Peckham and Bate.²⁰ Magic may be seen as emblematic of the animation of the great chain of being (an animation on which the magical view of the universe depended). The flux and vitality of this new view, as Lovejoy and Peckham imply, allows for the interchange of magical potencies, and passage from nature to man and back of inspiration and animation, respectively. Concepts of metamorphosis and vitality underlie both the magical view of the universe (as it has always existed) and the novel ferment the romantic view of the world introduced. As the universe ceased to be a static order, the imitation of it, likewise, became problematic. An internal flux corresponded to the external one, and the outpourings of the mind flooded its environment. The Plotinian fountain was freed, on the inside and without. In short the philosophical change which allowed for Romanticism in England allowed likewise (on a lower level) for the invasion of magical theory.

Accordingly, mimesis transforms itself into expression by means of the magician-artist's "potent voice."²³ The unification of spirit and matter central to the magical doctrine serves likewise to accentuate the unity of head and heart. The exclusive emphasis on reason was supplanted by an acknowledgement of the need to integrate with it the

latent force of irrationality. The new entity became a dynamic whole, an associated sensibility in the same way that magic sees the invisible within the visible and captures essence in phenomena. The organic oneness of life, its dynamism and its wholeness, are beliefs, then, that underlie both the magical and the romantic view of the universe, and explain the attraction many romantics will be shown to have felt toward magic. Magic's own transformation, in line with these large historical shifts in emphasis, was to move from an initial fear of chaos to a belief that chaos is the material on which the imagination is free to work. The magician or artist becomes an originator, like God.

Four significant mid-century statements show how decisive these changes were. In the course of sixteen years (from 1743 to 1759) the basic assumptions have been entirely reversed.

First, in The Dunciad (Book IV) when the Magus offers the magic cup to the assembled Dunces, he ushers in the reign of chaos.

Then take them all, oh take them to thy breast!
Thy Magus, Goddess! shall perform the rest."

With that, a WIZARD OLD his Cup extends;
Which whoso tastes, forgets his former friends,
Sire, Ancestors, Himself. One casts his eyes
Up to a Star, and like Endymion dies:
A Feather, shooting from another's head,
Extracts his brain; and Principle is fled;
Lost is his God, his Country, everything;
And nothing left but Homage to a King!
The vulgar herd turn off to roll with Hogs,

To run with Horses, or to hunt with Dogs;
 But sad example! never to escape
 Their Infamy, still keep the human shape.²⁴

The Magus enchants men from a correct view of reality. He begins by manipulating the false powers of rhetoric. His rhetoric, unlike Comus', is hypnotically dull. Instead of ravishing his victims with art, he puts them to sleep with drivel. In destroying thus the order of words, he likewise destroys the order among things. Identified politically with Walpole, the Magus is the high-priest of Dulness. And in his campaign to disrupt the hierarchy of reality and language, he teaches men to imitate Endymion by attaching their hearts to stars. To the extent that words lose their places, the things of the universe forget where they belong. The mind is transformed while the body keeps its shape, reversing Milton's change; verbal disorder leads to social disorder, as all values are upturned by false and magical words:

Make God Man's Image, Man the final Cause,
 Find Virtue local, all Relation scorn,
 See all in Self, and but for self be born. (478-480)

Chaos and irrationality are the ingredients of Pope's magical cup. Virtue depends on Reason, and Reason demands the right use of words. In corrupting the use of words, Magic corrupts the nation.

Moral life and art are intimately related. The hypnosés of magic have wide ramifications:

the sable Throne behold
 Of Night Primeval, and of Chaos old!
 Before her Fancy's gilded clouds decay
 And all its varying Rainbows die away.
 Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
 The meteor drops, and in a flash expires.
 As one by one, at dread Medea's strain,
 The sick'ning stars fade off th'ethereal plain,
 As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand oppress,
 Clos'd one by one to everlasting rest,
 Thus at her felt approach, and secret might
 Art after Art goes out, and all is Night. (IV:629-640)

Image after image witnesses the end of light and clarity. Art is the very opposite of magic. The universe collapses before the "uncreating word" (654). Medea's potion and Hermes' wand officiate at the darkening of the neoclassical world: the fall of sense and the rise of mere language is signalled by the accession of magic to the corridors of power.

This image of the Magus that climaxes the Hermetic and Medean night of Chaos corresponds to Wordsworth's horror of magic that we examined in the last chapter. For Wordsworth the wizard represents too much concentration on ideas about truths, rather than on the wordless truths themselves. For Pope, the magic cup releases words without the support of a larger frame of reference. In each case, "to be enchanted" means to be under a wicked spell.

Nevertheless, in the decades between the publication of the last book of the Dunciad and the publication of the Lyrical Ballads, the reputation of magic was undergoing a metamorphosis of its own in the work of Thomson, Collins and Young. In the ferment surrounding the study of Shakespeare, the mystics, oriental and

primitive religion described above, these three writers were revising the aesthetic possibilities of the wizard, so that he was conceived no longer as a harbinger of Chaos and Disorder, but as an original creator out of disorder.

Thomson's "Castle of Indolence" (1749) displays an ambivalence toward magical enchantments. Pope's distrust and Young's praise mingle in one work. For Thomson appreciates the wizard's castle as a utopia conducive to poetry, and at the same time recognizes that this utopia is "soul-dissolving." On the one hand, his pilgrims are welcomed into a country of peace and tolerance, where the wizard "Indolence" plays the lute, composes songs, and asks "What, What is virtue but repose of mind?" The wizard's magical castle is paradise. On the other hand, the pilgrims are reproached for staying in paradise and missing the fortunate fall. Magic prevails before the fall, but produces neither permanent art nor war. The wizard warns men of "interest, envy, pride and strife," arguing (again like Comus) for a return to life and natural experience; but he adds to Comus' hedonism the recognition that the lust for gain often goes hand in hand with toil. In the Castle,

all is calm as would delight the heart 25
Of Sybarite of old, all nature and all art.

There is a "magic power in the deep vibrations of [The wizard's] witching song." Indeed, the dream of paradise enchants us all, but in this magical place where everything was instantaneously

granted, we would produce no lasting work. The wizard Indolence offers a life that is not only selfish and soul-dissolving, but ultimately despairing. Without the will to work, "their only labour was to kill the time." The victims become pleasantly bestial;

Their joints unknit, their sinews melt apace;
As lithe they grow as any willow-wand,
And of their vanished force remains no trace.

But the Castle of Indolence is a Palace of potential art. It is full of music and poetry, the walls covered with paintings. It is important that the castle houses an Aeolian Harp, passive like the wizard's victims, but for poets a generation later the perfect symbol of the universality of sound. Music rises in the Harp as the winds of nature touch it. Through it the outcast of nature can reattune himself; for human emotions correspond to the wind's sounds. In Thomson's Castle its music is "a certain music never known before," its sounds will become increasingly familiar in the magical age this poem heralds.

A certain music never known before,
Here lulled the pensive melancholy mind;
Full easily obtained. Behoves no more,
But sidelong to the gently-waving wind
To lay the well-tuned instrument reclined;
From which, with airy flying fingers light,
Beyond each mortal touch the most refined,
The gods of winds drew sounds of deep delight,
Whence with just cause, The Harp of Aeolus it hight.

Ah me! what hand can touch the strings so fine?
 Who up the lofty diapason roll
 Such sweet, such sad, such solemn airs divine,
 Then let them down again into the soul?
 Now rising love they fanned; now pleasing dole
 They breathed, in tender musings, through the heart;
 And now a graver sacred strain they stole,
 As when seraphic hands an hymn impart:
 Wild warbling nature all, above the reach of art.

This automatic, pervasive music shares the magic of the music of Prospero's island. It represents the harmonies of the universe, the music of the spheres made terrestrial. It testifies to the presence in nature of all the emotions of which the poet is only the mouthpiece. The sounds produce emotions and rise from emotions spontaneously, defiant of strategy: "above the reach of art." Much of Coleridge's understanding of the Eolian Harp seems to derive directly from these stanzas by Thomson. Coleridge's Eolian Harp is not only the coy maiden half yielding to her lover, the thoughts that traverse his own indolent and passive brain, but all of animated nature swept by one intellectual breeze. It is the instrument that permits the mute still air to become music. We will suggest in chapter four that other ideas on the nature of indolence, enchantment and creativity make up his further legacy from Thomson.

Effortlessly, heavenly music wafts through the Castle of Indolence; however, its enchanted denizens are so indolent that they cannot work out their visions in artistic form. They are graced with spontaneity, but they do not have the energy to record their moments of vision. Not having participated in the fortunate fall they do not recognize that art is work. For instance:

Of all the gentle tenants of the place,
There was a man of special grave remark:
A certain tender gloom o'erspread his face,
Pensive, not sad; in thought involved, not dark:
As soote this man could sing as morning-lark,
And teach the noblest morals of the heart;
But these his talents were yburied stark;
Of the fine stores he nothing would impart,
Which or boon Nature gave or Nature-painting Art.

All his projects are still-born in his mind:

Ten thousand glorious systems would he build,
Then thousand great ideas fill his mind,
But with the clouds they fled, and left no trace behind.

This would-be poet has a silent companion who often walked in pine groves:

There, inly thrilled, he wandered all alone,
And on himself his pensive fury wroke,
Ne ever uttered word.

A fat bard pours forth his unpremeditated strain, without bothering to write it down:

more fat than bard beseems,
Who, void of envy, guile and lust of gain,
On virtue still, and nature's pleasing themes,
Poured forth his unpremeditated strain,

The world forsaking with a calm disdain:
 Here laughed he careless in his easy seat;
 Here quaffed, encircled with the joyous train:
 Oft moralizing sage; his ditty sweet
He loathed much to write, ne cared to repeat,

These would-be poets have the inspiration but not the will to craft. They are not lascivious or ignorant like the wassailers of Comus; on the contrary, they are virtuous. But their poetry is unuttered, and thus doomed to impermanence. The implication is that while song in its spontaneity is magical, poetic fame (and permanence through form) requires toil and thereby partakes of "the sad sentence of an ancient date." The unpremeditated strain "needs further meditation: for poetic fame requires "interest, envy, pride and strife"; to the visions of repose it adds the drudgery of worldly vanity in order finally to transcend that vanity with permanence. The wizard who lures the poet with his "siren melody," "enfeebling lute," and "tempting verses," to stay in a land of dream is a false enchanter, because he makes them forget to work out their visions, not because the visions themselves are false. As the castle's tenants, for all their virtue, shrink from encountering vice in action, the poets among them refrain from struggling with their medium, and thereby embodying their dreams. Without this struggle their poetry is only "a mode of hedonism."²⁶

In 1749, a year after Thomson made his concession to magic in The Castle of Indolence, and six years after Pope added the fourth book of his Dunciad to the existent three, Collins addressed

to John Home his last poem, "The Ode on the Popular Superstitions of Scotland, considered as a subject for poetry." In this ode, he urges his Scottish friend to take up the native themes of his country. He suggests that the popular superstitions of Scotland, rather than being bizarre, extravagant and local, are fit subjects for poetry. Residence in Scotland should not discourage Home from writing, but instead, should inspire him with an abundance of new material. Collins contrasts the artificiality of his friend's life along the Thames with the opportunities for tragic song in Scotland "whose every vale shall prompt the poet."

Tis Fancy's land to which thou sett'st thy feet.²⁸

The superstitions of Scotland are not just embellishments, but matters of belief, "themes of simple, sure effect." They "add new conquests to [the Muse's] boundless reign." Scotland is a rugged tribal country where oral poetry has been passed from father to son; these "strange lays" of orgiastic death rites, internecine wars, struggles with sea monsters and ghostly visitations will supply subject matter:

At every pause before thy mind possessed,
 Old Runic Bards shall seem to rise around,
 With uncouth lyres, in many coloured vest,
 Their matted hair with boughs fantastic crowned;
 Whether thou biddest the well-taught hind repeat
 The choral dirge that mourns some chieftan brave,
 When every shrieking maid her bosom beat,
 And strewed with choicest herbs his scented grave.

"Decorum" does not worry Collins here; he is concerned with

savage passions that will move his friend to write tragic song with "mind possessed." These passions are roused by music as if by magic:

When music, heavenly maid, was young,
 While yet in early Greece she sung,
 The passions oft, to hear her shell,
 Thronged around her magic cell,
 Exalting, trembling, raging, fainting.
 ("The Passions, An Ode for Music.")

Scotland indeed became the locale of the primitive. Its archaic verse forms and violent superstitions suggested to the Romantics after Collins a new realm for poetry. Burns' fidelity to simple Ayrshire life led him perforce to fill his poems with popular beliefs on magic and witchcraft. Scott, the wizard of the North, made abundant use of magic rhymes and themes in the spells of *Meg Merilies* and in his longer lays. Wild Scotland was to Coleridge and Wordsworth what the Germanic past was to Grimm and other German folklorists: a source of atavistic truths. Providing both the themes of unreason and its forms (the ballad, the riddle, the rune, and the charm), Scotland was at once ancient and popular. As the eighteenth century tired of the Thames, it directed its sights toward the northern borders. The folktale, fairy tale, nursery rhyme, and romance of the popular chapbooks more and more made use of Scottish magical themes, and thus nourished a hidden desire for enthrallment. Popular taste was apparently seeking refuge from reason. For those who now believed that the function of poetry was not to organize but to heal the sensibility by unifying it, the material of childhood was available. So, too, were country folklore and the remains of the Anglo-Saxon tribal past. This popular

magical tradition must not be forgotten. Its significance increased in the light of contemporary studies of aboriginal magic, oriental and Greek magic, Renaissance and seventeenth century magic, and the discovery that magic and creative language were kin.

Amid this array of new subjects--passionate, violent and primitive--Collins proposed the gifted wizard seer. The wizard is a visionary who "commands the viewless forms of air." His wizard, less dangerous to human effort than Thomsor's, attained, by his immediate contact with life and death, an ideal "divine excess";

'Tis thine to sing how framing hideous spells,
 In Sky's lone isle, the gifted wizard seer,
 Lodged in the wintry cave with / /
 Or in the depth of Uist's dark forests dwells:
 How they whose sight such dreary dreams engross,
 With their own visions oft astonished droop,
 When, o'er the watery strath of quaggy moss
 They see the gliding ghosts unbodied troop;
 Or, if in sports, or on the festive green,
 Their destin'd glance some fated youth descry,
 Who now perhaps in lusty vigour seen,
 And rosy health, shall soon lamented die.
 For them the viewless forms of air obey,
 Their bidding heed, and at their beck repair;
 They know what spirit brews the stormful day,
 And heartless, oft like moody madness stare
 To see the phantom train their secret work prepare.

The wizards see fate and death; they see the supernatural center of storms. They understand that spirits are behind events, and they control these "viewless forms of air"; their visions and their powers

drive them almost mad. These passions and powers should be subjects for John Home's poetry. Nor should Home or critics "blush" at "such false themes." The emphasis is important for the change of eighteenth century sensibility. The themes of the seers and of Scottish oral tradition, like the themes of fairies and fiends, are no less true, says Collins, for being improbable and invisible: they are not just village themes, but historical ones that Shakespeare and Tasso used. The finest example of the use of popular Scottish themes is Macbeth; its forcefulness and bold colors should teach Home to reproduce the Macbethian terror. The native Scottish themes, "daring to depart from sober truth, are still to nature true." In this central way Collins makes a distinction between sober truth--visible, verifiable fact--and a new kind of nature, by which he seems to imply an inner nature that need not correspond to appearance, as the witches of Macbeth are fantastic emblems of an essential passion.

In the very words of Macbeth, then, Collins ends his plea for an expanded notion of what fit subjects for poetry are.

All hail, ye scenes that o'er my soul prevail!

Collins conjures the Scottish scenes he has been suggesting to his friend as possible subject matter. In suggesting them to Home he has already used them himself; and realized by his imagination, he has called them into being like magic forms. They parade before

him now that his imagination has made them. Thus, Collins' last Ode is one of the first Romantic meta-poems which is really talking about the creation of itself. The poem, while arguing for an acceptance of the invisible as nevertheless true, insists that the impassioned vision of the wizard, seeing into the heart of fate and death, is akin to the magic Shakespeare and Tasso depict. Collins himself "commands the viewless forms of air," and can by writing this poem prophesy the poetic career of his friend, even as he usurps this friend's potential topics.

Nor is Collins' proposal of magical subject matter unique among the poets of mid-century. Gray in his "Descent of Odin" summons mythical figures with Macbethian spells. And Bishop Hurd, in his Letters on Chivalry and Romance, judges the Gothic superior to the Greek by virtue of its superior use of magical themes.

For the more solemn fancies of witchcraft and incantation, the Gothic is above measure striking and terrible. . . . All the prodigies of Lucan's Thessalian Charms fall short of the Gothic.²⁹

His reason is that the Gothic magic synthesizes many magical traditions:

For to the frightful forms of ancient necromancy (which easily travelled down to us, when the fairer offspring of pagan intervention lost its way, or was swallowed up in the general darkness of the barbarous ages) were now joined the hideous phantasms which had terrified the northern nations; and, to complete the horrid group, with these were incorporated the still more tremendous spectres of Christian superstition. (p. 255)

Hurd's major example is Macbeth, which he sees as an aggregate of Danish, Northern, Greek and Roman and Christian magic. Trying to convince his friend of the superiority of medieval (i.e., "modern") over classical literature, he perorates:

We are upon enchanted ground, my friend; and you are to think yourself well used, that I detain you no longer in this fearful circle. The glimpse, you have had of it, will help your imagination to conceive the rest. And without more words, you will readily apprehend that the fancies of our modern bards are not only more gallant, but, on a change of the scene, more sublime, more terrible, more alarming than those of the classical fablers. (p. 260)

Without magic, The Faerie Queene, Jerusalem Delivered, and the epic as a whole would be impossible. Hurd laments that his own age has betrayed the "charmed spirit" (p. 325); it has lost a world of fine fabling by being rational and skeptical.

What Collins adds is not only the lofty subject of the wizard and his spells, but also the view of him as a visionary who sees into the center of reality. With Thomson (who suggested that the sources of poetic vision--though not of active creation--are magical), Collins prepares us for Edward Young's bold identification of originality with magic. Despite these two precedents, the Conjectures on Original Composition (1759) seems to arise full blown, replete with images of vegetable growth and the divinity of Genius. The metaphor of the magician is already firmly and assuredly accepted as a description of genius--a metaphor Maurice Morgann adopted later

to describe Shakespeare's genius:

Imitators only give us a sort of Duplicate of what we had, possibly much better before; increasing the mere drug of books while all that makes them valuable, knowledge and Genius, are at a stand. The pen of an Original writer, like Armida's wand, out of a barren waste calls a blooming spring.³⁰

Tasso's Armida is the deceitful analogue of Comus and the Dunciad's Magus. As the daughter of a Persian magician in Jerusalem Delivered she represents the lure of the exotic, magical and insidious east, a pagan danger to the Christian Knights. But, without flinching, Young turns these temptations into virtues. He sees her as an image of fecundity; she makes the desert bloom. Armida's wand creates where there were no visible materials to work with; her spring arises ex nihilo, by magical means.

The idea of the wand as pen emerges even more clearly a few pages later:

an original, by being as excellent as new, adds admiration to surprise; then are we at the writer's mercy; on the strong wind of his imagination, we are snatched from Britain to Italy, from climate to climate, from pleasure to pleasure, we have no home, no thought, of our own, till the magician drops his pen. And then falling down into ourselves, we awake to flat realities, lamenting the change, like the beggar who dreamt himself a prince.

The imagination not only transforms the material it works with, metamorphosing a desert into a spring, but it also transforms (and transports) the reader. It transports him out of himself, giving him a new life. The imagination is already

the strong wind that will blow so ceaselessly through Romantic poems; it is the wind that blew over the Harp of Aeolus in Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, but here, eleven years later, it is attached to a poet's own powers: his imagination itself is a wind; it is not passively attending to a wind outside. And then, too, the magician's imagination occupies or arises from a world of dream--the willing suspension of disbelief, not the flat waking realities of the beggar or the barren waste. Thus, the magician, the imagination, dream and original organic creativity are linked as if inevitably, as early as 1759.

Furthermore, Young goes on to oppose the work of the magician to merely mechanical and associative creation:

Genius is a Master workman, learning is but an Instrument. . . . Nor is it strange; for what, for the most part, mean we by genius, but the power of accomplishing great things without the means generally reputed necessary to that end? A genius differs from a good understanding as a magician from a good architect: that raises his structure by means invisible; this by the skillful uses of common tools. Thus genius has even been supposed to partake of something divine.

The power of the Genius is like a magician's in being instantaneous and whole; it does not juggle a mass of little things according to rules; it does not laboriously erect a structure. Rather, the means and methods of the Genius are invisible and magical; this magical power derives from God, who works in the same effortless fashion. Both magical and vegetable vitality are opposed to deliberate skill and in this opposition show themselves to be related. As the

magician of the last passage is contrasted to an architect, so the vital root of Genius is contrasted with Mechanics:

An Original may be said to be of a vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius; it grows; it is not made: Imitations are often a sort of Manufacture wrought up by those Mechanics, Art and Labour, out of pre-existent materials not their own.

Magical criticism of art follows the lines of organic criticism; both remark the transformation and origination of wholes, instead of the coordination of preexistent parts. The work of Genius is magical, and hence related to divine creation.

The magical genius is the god that overtakes the man; from magical comparisons, the search for understanding the work of the artist moves into a study of religion. Just how divine Young sees the Genius to be appears in a later section; the genius is a genie.

Contract full intimacy with the Stranger within thee--Let thy Genius rise (if a Genius thou hast) as the Sun from Chaos; and if I should then say, like an Indian, worship it, (though too bold) yet should I say little more than my second rule enjoins, (viz.) Reverence thyself.

The Genius within is the first result if not the cause of creation out of Chaos; as in Hinduism, this Genius is the God in each man on whom he must concentrate in order to divinize himself. Young has replaced orthodox Christianity with the worship of a human power which he has three times compared to a magician's. This human power--what is divine in each man--is capable of original creation ex nihilo, when it permits its own sun to shine on the chaos of the

world and by invisible means make it bloom.

The extent to which human originality (a word of paramount importance for Coleridge) has replaced God's originality even in God's own sphere is evident in a later, more strictly literary, religious comparison. Against 'the Divinely Inspired Enthusiast' who has learned to "Reverence Himself," stands "the well-accomplished scholar." This worthy,

up to the knees in Antiquity, is treading the sacred footsteps of great examples, with the blind veneration of a bigot saluting the papal toe; comfortably hoping full absolution for the sins of his own understanding, from the powerful charm of touching his idol's Infallibility.

Sunk in idolatry, he forgets to worship the true Divinity within himself, that works with a magician's invisible powers to lift a beggar into a prince.

Thus, the power to create original art by instantaneous and invisible means is already in 1759 compared to religions, and religions other than Christianity. We shall see that magical power and the magic view of the universe which these exotic religions offered could easily provide ways of looking at art, which were less heretical than Christian metaphors for creativity, though they were often combined with these. Chaos no longer trailed at the heels of magical transformations; magic no longer threatened loss of virtue and national collapse. In the place of indolence, magic conveyed a new power as of the sun out of Chaos, and opened up inner, darker and more vital

spheres of organization in which passion and imagination joined. It is important now to turn from an examination of the ferment surrounding the eighteenth century rediscovery of magic to the sources of this rediscovery.

A study of the correspondences between expressive organic art and magic must rest on an important distinction: that between black magic and natural magic. (As we shall see in the next chapter, it was one Coleridge was always careful to make.) Whereas primitive cultures distinguish the two by their constructive or destructive effects, Christianity introduced the criterion of intermediary powers. The magician who contracts with a demon is a black magician (even if he works for benevolent purposes); that magician who investigates the hidden wisdom of nature for the greater glory of God, is a natural magician--the highest form of philosopher. He tries to penetrate nature's truths without changing them in the process. In fifteenth century Italy the problem of definition became acute as the practice of magic proliferated. The philosophers vehemently denied any intercourse with demons, and proudly claimed to derive their powers from God himself. For example, Giovanni Batista Porta (who seemed to exercise his power for remarkably trivial ends) declared:

What is the Nature of Magick: There are two sorts of Magick: the one is infamous, and unhappie, because it hath to do with fowl spirits, and consists of Inchantments and wicked curiosity; and this is called

Sorcery, an art which all learned and good men detest, neither is it able to yield any truth of Reason or Nature, but stands merely upon fancies and imaginations, such as vanish presently away, and leave nothing behind them. . . . The other Magick is natural; which all excellent wise men do admit and embrace, and worship with great applause, nothing is there any thing more highly esteemed, or better thought of by men of learning. . . . the Aegyptians name Nature her self a magician, because she hath the alluring power to draw like things by their likes, and this power, say they, consists in love; and the things that were so drawn and brought together by the affinity of Nature, those (they said) were drawn by Magick. But I think Magick is nothing else than a survey of the whole course of Nature.³¹

Natural magic is nature herself; to study magic is to study nature.

Wherefore, as many of you as come to behold Magic, must be persuaded that the works of magick are nothing else but the works of Nature; whose dutiful hand-maid Magick is.³²

Now of many avowals of natural magic and disavowals of black, Pico della Mirandola's definition at the end of his Oration provides perhaps the clearest distinction. Pico composed his Oration to initiate what he hoped would be a dispute on his 900 theses. Twenty-six of these theses were conclusiones magicae which attempted to integrate into Christian theology a universal magical religion, thus universalizing Christianity itself to approximate the ideal eclectic region of second century Alexandrian.

So imbued with Pico's thinking was Coleridge by his seventeenth year, that Lamb conflated the two, calling Coleridge, "the young Mirandola." Pico's magical aspirations formed part of Coleridge's youth, and thus his distinctions between natural and black magic were certainly familiar to him. Here is how Pico separates the two kinds of magic:

I have also proposed certain theses concerning magic, in which I have indicated that magic has two forms. One consists wholly in the operations and powers of demons, and this consequently appears to me, as God is my witness, an execrable and monstrous thing. The other, when thoroughly investigated, to be nothing else but the highest realization of natural philosophy.³³

He cites Plato as having recognized that "the magic of Zoroaster is nothing else than that 'science of divine things,'" and that the magic of Zamolxis is "the medicine of the soul"; Pico then continues to contrast black and natural magic:

Just as that first form of magic makes man a slave and pawn of evil powers, the latter makes him their lord and master. That first form of magic cannot justify any claim to being either an art or a science while the latter, filled as it is with mysteries, embraces the most profound contemplation of the deepest secrets of things and finally the knowledge of the whole of nature.

That magic which is the highest realization of natural philosophy gives man power over evil. It is an art or a science. It penetrates to the deepest secrets of things. "This beneficent magic" Pico praises at length: Natural magic,

in calling forth, as it were, from their hiding places into the light the powers which the largess of God has sown and planted in the world, does not itself work miracles, so much as sedulously serve nature as she works her wonders. Scrutinizing, with greater penetration, that harmony of the universe which the Greeks with greater aptness of terms called *συμπάθεια* and grasping the mutual affinity of things, she applies to each thing those inducements (called the *εὐγγεῖα* of the magician), most suited to its nature. Thus it draws forth into public notice the miracles which

lie hidden in the recesses of the world, in the womb of nature, in the storehouses and secret vaults of God, as though she herself were their artificer. As the farmer weds his elms to the vines, so the magus unites earth to heaven, that is, the lower orders to the endowments and the powers of the higher.³⁴

By seeing deeply into the secret relations among things which God has hidden at the center of nature, beneficent magic is able to activate those harmonies. So intimate is this magic with the secret vaults of God that it seems as if magic itself may have been the originator of these secret affinities; in other words, as if God himself worked through magic. The magus, penetrating all these truths, "unites earth to heaven" by being the center of reconciliation and interpretation. In this function again the magus unleashes his power, not by working private miracles exactly, but by revealing Nature's natural ones. In word at least, the magus humbly serves God by bringing his miracles to light:

But the deepest reason for the difference between the two magics⁷ is the fact that the first magic, delivering man over to the enemies of God, alienates him from God, while the second, beneficent magic, excites in him an admiration for the works of God which flowers naturally into charity, faith and hope.³⁵

Because of the magus' potent services, man is all the more apt to worship God's works.

That this crucial distinction between natural and black magic was still being made two hundred years later witnesses to the continuity of the magical tradition. In 1678, Ralph Cudworth's True Intellectual System of the Universe uses many of the same argu-

ments to similar purposes.

The importance of this tome for the Romantics should not be underestimated. Coleridge's interest in the Cambridge Platonists focussed as much on Cudworth to judge from his Notes, as on Henry More (whose magical faith he later derided).³⁶ Cudworth attempts to prove that ancient religions worshipped one god beneath the many and therefore contemporary atheists who claim the various gods to be imaginary are freaks in the history of the world's religions. He explains that "pagan theologers . . . supposed the whole world to be an animal," and believed that "all created things were in the deity before they were made." To these pantheistic premises he assimilates natural magic. Like Pico, he too learns about magic from Plato's Alcibiades:

Whence by the way we learn also, that the word *Mayeia*, or *Magick*, was first taken in a good sense, which is confirmed by Porphyrius (*De. Abst.* l. 4, p. 165). Among the Persians, those who were skillful in the knowledge of the Deity, and religious worshippers of the same, were called "Magi." And as magick is commonly conceived to be founded in a certain vital sympathy that is in the universe, so did these ancient Persian Magi and Chaldeans (as Psellus tells us) . . . suppose "that there was a sympathy betwixt the superior and inferior beings."³⁷

Magic, once more, is the knowledge of the inner workings of nature; it is (as Jane Harrison insists) "no hole and corner affair," but a realization of the highest earthly wisdom.³⁸ Cudworth immediately contrasts this natural magic with black:

but this divine magick of Zoroaster, shortly after degenerated in many of his followers into the theurgical magick, and at length into yonleia, downright sorcery and witchcraft, the only thing which is now vulgarly called magick.

The idealization of the Magi, as representative of this profound magical wisdom and of a universal magical religion, continues into the Romantic era. For in 1781 Kleuker writes in the Zend-Avesta that all religions are magical, and the Persian religion, presided over by Magi, is the culmination of them all:

In the true sense, all religions have had a Magic. But men have considered the Persian religion to be the best and the wisest.³⁹

It is therefore central to see that natural magic was a way of looking at the universe. It was not, at its highest point, a corrupt body of practical techniques and formulae for perverting the existing natural order. Nor did natural magic in general communicate with demons, since every part of nature was responsively alive. Natural magic was a vision of a universe of animated sympathies which the knowing magus could reconcile and attune.

Behind this Renaissance and Romantic acceptance of natural magic lay the influential philosophy of Plotinus. The importance of Plotinus for Shaftsbury and Spinoza, and his consequent importance for Coleridge and Romanticism in general can only be glimpsed above the surface of late eighteenth century intellectual trends. Pico is conscientious in citing Plotinus as an authority for his approval of natural over black magic:

Plotinus also gives signs that he was aware of ~~the difference~~ in the passage in which he shows that the magician is the minister of nature and not merely its artful imitator. This very wise man approves and maintains this magic, while . . . abhorring that other.

According to Pico, Plotinus scorns active theurgy, in which men attempt to coerce deities and things, but sees that natural magic is divine.

However, Plotinus' section on magic presents certain problems which complicate Pico's use of him as a support. Plotinus leads away from the contemplation of the deepest secrets of things into a clear recognition of the limitations of magic. Many problems he introduced his followers ignored. For this reason, and not only because he is the authority for Florentine neoplatonic interest in magic, his remarks must be examined in detail.

In Enneads IV: 3-4, Plotinus analyses the problems of the soul, including what it remembers, what it feels, how it links to the body in which it finds itself, whether there are souls in stars, and whether these can be controlled. These questions devolve for him on one central inquiry which leads him from the relation of the living All and its members to the problem of magical spells: Plotinus determines "to see, as far as discussion can exhibit it, the method by which action takes place."⁴¹

Plotinus first establishes his vision of the universe as a living organic whole, an animal whose members contribute to the unity,

while they are at the same time variously imbued with life:

This All is one universally comprehensive living being, encircling all the living beings within it and having a soul, one soul, which extends to all its members in the degree of participant membership held by each.⁴²

Each part reacts to the changes in other parts as the members of a body do:

as things change their relations, and as any one thing changes place, there is a change of power.⁴³

As these transfers of power and place form patterns within patterns, Plotinus compares the sensitive motions of the vital universe to a dance⁴⁴ and then, significantly, to the interacting strings of a lute--

The prayer is answered by the mere fact that part and other part are wrought to one tone like a musical string which plucked at one end, vibrates at the other also. Often, too, the sounding of one string awakens what might pass for a perception in another, the result of their being in harmony and tuned to one musical scale; now if the vibration in a lyre alters another by virtue of the sympathy existing between them, then certainly the All--even though it is constituted in contraries--there must be one melodic system.⁴⁵

As Plotinus' use of metaphors of art indicates the natural and the artificial often affect each other in the same way that natural parts affect each other. Thus human art participates in nature's sympathies and can change them:

Our problem embraces all act and all experience throughout the entire kosmos--whether due to nature, in the current phrase, or effected by art. The natural proceeds, we must hold, from the All towards its members and from the members to the All, or from

member to other member: the artificial either remains, as it began, within the limit of the art--attaining finality in the artificial product alone--or is the expression of an art which calls to its aid natural forces and agencies, and so sets up act and experience within the sphere of the natural,⁴⁶

Thus, Plotinus established a universe of corresponding parts, some natural and some artificial; each thing has sympathies or antipathies to those other things to which it inclines. For there are passions in this living universe. These inherent sympathies and inclinations Plotinus calls magic. He explains (IV: 4:40) that when men enchant the stars (and he implies they do) they do so not because of their songs or words but because they are momentarily in accord with these stars. Their influence causes the patterns of power in the animate universe to shift:

The charm which takes place by touch and the word which he speaks is a trick of his so that the beholder may imagine that that action is his action, whereas it is not his action, but is the action of those things which he uses. Things have natures that join some things to other things and attract some things to other things.⁴⁷

The point is important: the magician affects the stars because of the inherent sympathy of thing to thing, not because of the tricks of his words. He works by attuning his understanding to the natural harmony; he does not on his own account actually create this harmony. The good magician, Plotinus says, will affect the universe by knowing its secret ways and putting himself in accord with them:

The wise magician is the one who assimilates himself to the universe and practices his works in accordance with his capability, for he makes use of love in one place and makes use of mastery in another place.⁴⁸

Because natural things possess wonderful powers and because the magician knows what they are and which things obey other things, he can sometimes influence the stars:

It is no wonder that he who prays should sometimes be hearkened to, for he is no stranger in this world.⁴⁹

The stars obey him because he, too, is part of the life of the world. In this Plotinian system, love is the principle of accord; it is the "first wizard and enchanter"; and the magician influences things by loving them. These sympathies and inclinations proclaim him part of the universe. This is not artificial magic, but "the magic of the universe, which is love and mastery." As Dean Inge explains:

All the attractions and repulsions that pervade Nature are for Plotinus a kind of magic; the true magic is the friendship and strife that exist in the great All.⁵⁰

Plotinus' insight into the deep secrets of the universe resembles Pico's natural magic, "the most profound contemplation of the deepest secrets of things and finally the knowledge of the whole of nature." The only difference is Love: the magician harmonizes his own love with the love running throughout the world.

A disturbing question arises, however; and Plotinus is forced to change the entire drift of his argument and turn from nature to a transcendent power. "What if an evil man exploits the magic in

things for evil effect? How is the virtuous man to defend himself?"

(IV: 4:44). The answer lies in transcendence:

The man who is not led by earthly things and does not yearn toward them and says that the beautiful and the good are not in them, he alone is the one who is not enchanted and on whom sorcery and tricks have no effect because he knows the lasting thing and ⁵¹it is that that he inclines towards and longs for.

Whereas he had previously observed that "existence carries with it either acting or answering to action, some beings have action alone, others both," and that the nature of the universe is love, Plotinus now proposes that the man of contemplation, to free himself from the universal animal, must live as if he were in the world alone and there were no thing else beside him. "Every man inclining towards something other than himself receives the affections of magic." The only escape is not to incline toward natural things. "To escape from the magic that belongs to nature," a man must refrain from seeing "the outside of the earthly natural things to be beautiful and splendid."⁵¹

Since nature is entirely magical, to escape it the contemplative man must see it as "transient" and "specious." Otherwise, nature will "enchant him by reason of the outward beauty of it," and thereby lead him to believe it is also the highest good. Only by keeping the highest good constantly in mind can this exceptional man escape from the sympathies and passions which are the temptations of any action he might take up. The life of this sphere is a

"bewitchment." It bewitches us below the level of Reason. Its spell works not through Reason, but through "the brute soul," as music does. Magic only operates in nature, and it only operates on the brute soul by virtue of which men are part of nature, responding with sympathy to its beauty and music. When Reason rules, this music can no longer affect men, so they are free to contemplate a higher reality. Plotinus thus suggests that an entirely rational man is not susceptible to art, as he is not susceptible to nature.

Nevertheless, as long as men are part of the living whole they are susceptible, like the snake to the snake charmer, to a music that reaches their brute soul regardless of their Reason. This is because the brute soul responds to natural magical sympathies like any other part of nature.

Music, the dance, beauty, loving and acting are all in the province of magic. This magic works by itself, and can also be activated by the wise magician who knows how to "assimilate himself to the universe." All part of irrational nature, they work through the passions and do not affect the man who is ruled by reason. Hence, for Plotinus, magic is not "the science of divine things" as Pico claims. Rather, it is the sum of the sympathetic interrelationships of fallen nature that tempt men away from higher truths. Plotinus' view of the place of magic in nature is in its essence different from Pico's later view, and critical in a way that permits a reconciliation with Christianity. For Plotinus praises

the magic of things and passions, but he insists that natural magic functions for men only in the realm of the senses. Consequently, while Plotinus fully defines for the first time sympathies in the "great chain of being" (and does so here in magical terms), he himself introduces in speaking of it the dualism whereby magic is applicable only to irrational men.

Magic then develops out of the separation of nature from God and out of the subsequent need to retrieve a paradisaical immediacy. It is therefore not so much an affirmation of pantheistic unity as of the Fall. Because of the Fall magic is necessary. It is man's effort to recreate out of strife that harmony which no longer exists. The separation of the Absolute from the non-absolute that Coleridge declared was the greatest event in moral history was incidentally the occasion for the development of magic.⁵⁴

Plotinus' idea that magic operates not in ultimate unity but only in fallen nature, has appealed to later theorists, including Coleridge. In 1689, Balthazar Bekker (one of many theological opponents of magic) explains that magic is an example not only of the way human beliefs arise without evidence but also of idolatry. For men, following their imaginations, propitiated inferior powers and in this way concurred in manicheanism.⁵⁵ The tradition is again consistent. In 1830 Joseph Görres (in his five volume Der Christlicher Mystik) traces the development of magic out of Manicheanism:

Observing that manicheanism is the source of magic, Görres sees magic as the survival of pagan nature worship within Christianity. He sees it in Judaism as well as in the perennial obsession with the sun and moon:

Evil is by no means accident, but rather coequal with good in its substantiality; for good and evil, while opposites are yet equally real. Their opposition reaches to the innermost core of all Being, to the eternal substance; indeed, ultimately even God Himself is divided . . . Just as in early heathenism all belief was naturalistic, so also was mysticism bound to nature and magic. Just as one did not know how to sever the concrete yet universal Divinity from the matter that was its work, so did one not know how to separate Nature's Evil from ethical evil in clear and precise ways. They both were accepted equally as products of nature.⁵⁶

Görres' concern with the separation of God from nature was paralleled by Sir Walter Scott, whose Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft (1830) categorized the magic so prevalent in his novels. The second letter to Lockhardt proposes to discuss the "consequences of the Fall on the Communication between men and the Spiritual World." This letter begins:

What degree of communications might have existed between the human race and the inhabitants of the other world, had our first parents kept the commands of the creator, can only be the subject of unavailing speculation. We do not, perhaps, presume too much when we suppose, with Milton, that one necessary consequence of eating the "fruit of that forbidden tree," was removing to a wider distance from celestial essences the beings, who, although originally but a little lower than the angels, had, by their own crime, forfeited the gift of immortality, and degraded themselves into an inferior rank of creation.⁵⁷

The Fall, then, is the premise on which the development of magic depends.

For Paracelsus, after the Fall "then only did the inner man, the man of the second creation come into being."⁵⁸ This man "born to be awake," is "so created that through him the miracles of nature are made visible and given form." To praise God, man must reveal god's secrets; "magic is the most secret of the arts and the highest wisdom concerning the supernatural on earth." Fallen man, under the divine commandment of toil, is obliged to seek out the mysteries hidden in his world:

As God awakens the dead to new life, so the 'natural saints,' who are called magi, are given power over the energies and faculties of nature. For there are holy men in God who serve the beatific life, they are called saints. But there are also holy men in God who serve the forces of nature, and they are called magi.⁵⁹

The view that magic pervades fallen nature only and is its organizing and creating principle is purged of its demonic aspects in the "vorticism" of Jakob Boehme. Separation ceases to be damnation. It is, rather, a requirement of motion. This creative strife of opposites Boehme calls Magia. In his Six Theosophical Points he concludes that there is both magic that connects the mind with nature as mysticism connects the soul with God, and a higher magic that is God's imaginative creation of the world:

Magic is the mother of eternity, of the being of all beings; for it creates itself, and is understood in desire.⁵⁹

Here Boehme connects magic with the dark fiery vortex which is his understanding of God's external, desiring being, but not of His internal, still being. God creates out of desire and imagination,

not out of need, and when he does so he creates by magic.

Magic is thus creative, as Boehme obscurely explains:

[Magic] is itself nothing but a will, and this will is the great mystery of all wonders and secrets, but brings itself by the imagination of the desireful hunger into being.⁶⁰

Magic is the power that works imaginatively on nothingness:

It is the original state of Nature. Its desire makes an imagination (Einbildung) and imagination of figuration is only the will of desire. But desire makes in the will such a being as the will itself is.

True magic, he goes on,

is not a being, but the desiring spirit of the being. It is a matrix without substance, but manifests itself in the substantial being.⁶¹

Like Imagination, divine Magia creates out of nothing. As

Coleridge observes "the eternal act of creation [occurs] in the infinite I AM." Boehme becomes momentarily lucid:

Magic is spirit, and being is its body, and yet the two are but one, as body and soul is but one person.⁶²

Magic is then the soul of its own form that creates and pervades with itself. That magic is akin to grace in Boehme's system can be glimpsed in the following complicated statements:

Magic is the greatest secrecy, for it is above nature, and makes nature after the form of its will . . . It is the formative power in the eternal wisdom, as a desire in the Ternary, in which the eternal wonder of the Ternary desires to manifest itself in cooperation with Nature. It is the desire which introduces itself into the dark Nature, and through Nature into fire, and through fire through death or fierceness, into the light of Majesty. . . .

It is not God's Almightyness, but the directrix in God's power and might. The heart of God is the power, and the Holy Spirit is the revelation of power.⁶³

Not only is magic the soul, the spirit, a matrix, the imagination, desire and grace, but it is also love. In the Dialogues on the Supersensual Life, Boehme adds this postulate to the others:

The virtue of Love is Nothing and All, or that Nothing visible out of which all things proceed. . . . Love, being the greatest Majesty is the Power of all Powers, from whence they severally operate. And it is the Holy Magical Root, a Ghostly Power from whence all the wonders of God have been wrought,

Bishop Martensen, a Danish commentator on Boehme,, paraphrases Boehme's impressions of the magical way God creates:

The generation of the eternal nature depends upon the magic of the desire, and is the power of summoning non-existence into existence, without the use of material means. All effective magic depends upon desire and imagination; and whatever is born and comes into being arises⁶⁵ in the last resort, from desire and imagination.

And yet, even while God Himself works by this divine imaginative magic, magic is also (as for Plotinus) the principle of nature, and thus a subsidiary power. Martensen clarifies it in this way:

Magic is a Nature-Mysticism in which man places himself in immediate relation with the spirit in Nature.

And most pertinently:

By magic man is enabled partially to regain that dominion over nature which was lost at the Fall.⁶⁶

God works by magic in continuously creating the world; natural

magic is man's attempt to approximate divine power in the fallen world. Martensen continues his paraphrase:

a universal subjective life is diffused throughout nature. Will and Imagination are everywhere at work . . . The whole of Nature is pervaded by Magic. The higher seeks the lower, in order to impart itself to it. . . Theosophical Natural Philosophy recognizes that a disturbance has entered Nature, in consequence of the revolt of the creation against God.⁶⁷

In this system of Plotinian sympathies and correspondences, Will, Imagination and Magic appear as one and the same power, responsible for the animation of nature.

The power which God gave magic in creating by means of it, does not seem to apply to the magic that runs through nature. Rather, this magic of nature is quite opposite to God's. In the Dialogues of the Supersensual Life, the novice realizes he is in nature "and thus bound as with my own chains." He wishes to learn how he may "come through nature into the Supersensual Ground, without the destroying of nature."⁶⁸ And yet, even with this realization of the "torments of plurality" in fallen nature, "by magic everything is accomplished"; it "is the best theology." "He is a fool that reviles it."

So Boehme recognizes not only a divine formative magic, but also a magic in nature which is part of the trammels of natural, fallen existence but is, paradoxically, the only way of getting beyond these trammels.

There is one further distinction, which Alexandre Koyré has

discovered in his discussions of creativity in La Philosophie de Jakob Boehme. Koyré explains that in God's mind magic is the conception of what He wants to create, not the actual enactment of creation. As unrealized conception, magic is dreamlike and shadowy, though it is a source of origination:

This, however, is not the realized world; God has not yet created. Besides, is it not necessary for God to imagine the world to himself before he creates it, as the artisan or artist forms first of all in his spirit and imagination an idea and an image of the work he wants to realise? This magical world is not yet the finished reality. In itself, it does not exist.⁶⁹

But God (Koyré says) in expressing himself first in an imaginary world, begins to know himself, because he resembles what he imagines and also because he differs from it. In imagining, God becomes self-conscious. Thus, while on a natural plane magic is the one way of human knowing, on the divine plan God is enabled by magic to know Himself:

Now within God arises a new act: God imagines in his wisdom, and his imagination, by an act eminently magical and mysterious, accomplishes the mystery of expressing and translating into finite images the infinite idea of God.⁷⁰

Finally, we may see how Koyré formulates the central intuition of Boehme's view of magical creation. In Boehme he finds

The world is God's opposite, and at the same time, it is magically and organically the expression of God.⁷¹

By magic God makes something else, that is nevertheless still part of Himself.

Boehme's most important expositor, Franz von Baader (whom Coleridge mentions in a letter of 1818) is seen to move from a view of magic as midway between idea and realization, to one in which magic is immediate ecstatic apprehension. In Baader's Three Treatises on Ecstasy (writes Eugene Susini)

magic is thus that which is opposed to the concrete, that which has only a virtual and spiritual existence, detached from external modalities.⁷²

Connecting the terms magic, magnet and image, Baader approaches Boehme's view of magic as a matrix and of magical words as a birth:

The idea moves out of its magical and symbolic being in order to become corporeal and lifting.

"Magique et organique" and "Magique et symbolique": these pairs suggest how closely magic played in with other terms congenial to Romantic theories of the imagination. As symbols, magical ideas have existed whole in the mind before gaining a temporal life. The magical state of an idea is the state before the actual existence, when presumably, it is only being imagined:

Le magique ne représente pas le contraire de la réalité. . . Le magique est l'état de l'Idée qui n'a pas encore passé à l'acte, qui ne s'est pas encore réalisée.⁷⁴

Magic is not unreal. But it is potential reality, as yet unrealized. To exist in this essentially imaginative, symbolic way, the idea does not need the mediation of the senses or of form, but flashes instantaneously on the mind:

Magic is that which, to be realized, does not need help from the senses.⁷⁵

Baader, in Susini's words, extends this understanding of magical perception to ecstatic vision that bypasses customary bodily sight:

The man who knows magically is "outside of himself." Ecstasy is a state of magical knowing, a state in which the subject is "outside of his bodily mode of knowing."⁷⁶

This ecstatic vision--la vision magique--is organic and total as symbolic. It sees things whole, as in an original state of unity, thus recreating the state of perception before the separation of the corporeal and spritual modes at the Fall:

Magical correspondence is to corporality what organic unity is to a simple aggregate.⁷⁷

In sum, we have so far seen the careful separation between black magic and natural magic--the understanding of the deepest forces in nature--and the way in which the beneficent magic only appears to arise from the unity of the world, but in fact arises in the separation of the world from God, as an effort of fallen nature to approximate the unity it lost, or of the artist-god to express himself in his opposite.

While beginning with a vision of the world's unity, magic asks itself why magic should be necessary. It is necessary because there has been a Fall--a separation between matter and spirit--and men skilled in magic alone can simulate the original unity. Automatically, then, man arrogates power. And he derives

this power, in particular, from his unique mastery of things by means of words. Unity, the Fall, the centrality of man, and the importance of language are the four central points around which a theory of magic revolves.

The Plotinian magician is a wise man who attunes himself to existing harmonies in nature, and sometimes influences them by his power. The Paracelsan magician pries into the secrets of nature, thereby glorifying God. The Boehmean magician imitates God Himself, for God is a magician. By any definition, the magician aspires to a certain power over the processes of nature, if not by his actions, at least by his understandings. Indeed, the proliferation of magic has been seen as both cause and effect of Renaissance humanism, as well as the immediate reason for new definitions of heresy. In commenting on the Renaissance, F. A. Yates postulates that "the real function of the Renaissance magus in relation to the modern period is that it changed the will."⁷⁸ C. S. Lewis and Hiram Haydn likewise see the importance of magic as a spur to human initiative. "The magicians," says Haydn, "believing nature to be full of miracles and mysteries, hope to be able to learn how to control these by a proper manipulation of natural sympathies and antipathies, and thus to exercise an almost godlike individualistic power."⁷⁹

That magic is a human power paralleling divine power is a corollary of the idea that magic began with the Fall. Magic works

in the human (and thus partially irrational) sphere, separated from the divine since the Fall. In this sphere, man sees himself as central in nature, and as midpoint, reconciler and interpreter of heaven to earth. In nature he can function as God does on the world, because nature and God are separate.

A modern analyst of the perennial phenomenon of magic locates the essential nature of magic in "the excessive valuation of thought." In Totem and Taboo, Freud declares:

We may now say that the principle which controls magic, and the techniques of the animistic method of thought, is "Omnipotence of Thought."⁸⁰

Assuming falsely that the connections of the outer world resemble the connections within the mind, the man who believes in magic "believes he can change the outer world by a mere thought of his." Freud describes the magical application of the rules of the mind to the workings of the world:

Objects as such are overshadowed by the ideas representing them; what takes place in the latter must also happen to the former, and the relations which exist between ideas are also postulated as to things. As thought does not recognize distances and easily brings together in one act of consciousness things spatially and temporally far removed, the magic world also puts itself above spatial distance by telepathy, and treats a past association as if it were a present one.⁸¹

Simultaneity, instantaneous perception, the immediate transference of the idea of a thing into the realization of the thing without visible means and without the need of toil, the recovery of lost

time by memory and of lost space by vision--these are the work of magic and of the imagination. Freud climaxes his analysis of magic by applying it to art:

Only in one field has the omnipotence of thought been retained in our own civilization, namely in art. In art alone it still happens that man, consumed by his wishes, produces something similar to the gratification of these wishes, and this playing, thanks to artistic illusion, calls for the effects as if it were something real. We rightly speak of the magic of art and compare the artist with the magician.⁸²

Only since the Romantic era has this comparison of art and magic been commonplace. Two modern commentators become rapturous when they consider it. In Sacred and Profane: The Holy in Art Gerardus van der Leeuw deems artistic expression to be "a holy act of a magico-religious nature."⁸³ And Denis Saurat is extravagant in proclaiming that "the poets' minds work like that of the savage: they are looking beyond the physical fact for the spirit which has caused it." Saurat continues: "The poet then feels nature in the same way as did the primitive: he lets it, so to speak, express itself in him."⁸⁴

The Renaissance magicians formulated specific ways in which the Omnipotence of Thought imposed power on the world. Not only does it contract space and time and find mental analogies for physical things, but magic also mediates between heaven and earth. The magician sees himself as the central figure in a landscape, holding up the sky. Ficino and Bruno, Agrippa and

Reuchlin, for instance, interpret their important roles variously, but always assume for themselves a sublime importance. Ficino and Bruno strengthen human powers through Orphic song; Agrippa and Reuchlin stress the importance of human language--understood as incantatory--for reconciling fallen with paradisaical nature.

In Spiritual and Demonic Magic From Ficino to Campanella, D. P. Walker links Ficino's translation of the Hermetic Books (The Pimander and The Asclepius) and his secret practice of Orphic singing. This orphic singing is a device to ready the singer's soul to receive astral influences. "The main emphasis of the De Vita Coelii Comparandi is on the conditioning of the operator's body, spirit and imagination, so that they are in a state peculiarly receptive to celestial influxes."⁸⁵ Ficino's magic singing was not directed at operating on the world outside, (or, he says, on spirits) but rather was "subjective." The "invocations were directed to the operator's intelligence and imagination, not to an intelligentia separata," By magical invocations the Ficinian magus calls down upon himself not knowledge itself but a readiness to know and perceive, and this readied spirit (by virtue of subjective magic) is more capable of perceiving the underlying unities of the universe than the average man:

Thus the priestly Magus plays a semi-divine role, maintaining by his understanding of the use of images the circuit which unites the highest divine world with the soul of the world and the world of sense.⁸⁶

In "marrying higher things to lower things," the magus enters into "an erotic relation to nature [which] is fundamental for sympathetic magic," writes Frances Yates in Girodano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition. In this erotic relation, "the Magus enters with loving sympathy into the sympathies which bind earth to heaven, and the emotional relationship is one of the chief sources of his power."⁸⁷ Yates goes on to translate a decisively relevant section of Ficino's commentary on the Symposium:

Why is Love called a Magus? Because all the force of Magic consists in Love. The work of Magic is a certain drawing of one thing to another by similitude. The parts of this world, like members of one animal, depend all on one Love, and are connected together by natural communion . . . From this community of relationship is born the communal Love: from which Love is born the common drawing-together: and this is the true Magic.⁸⁸

When Ficino calls for this readied state of mind, this heightened feeling of Love, he seems to derive his stress on the passions from Jamblichus. For Jamblichus, a frenzied state is the only way of appealing to demons and then commanding them.⁸⁹ The passions of the Magus were already important to Plotinus with his interest on universal love, and to Boehme, who connected God's creative Magia with imaginative desire.

Yates sees Bruno insisting not only on love, but also on knowledge. Seeing the "universe as vitalistic and magical," Bruno envisions it as "a new revelation of God the magician, informing innumerable worlds with magical animation, a vision to receive which

that great miracle, the Magus man, must expand himself to an infinite extent so that he may reflect it within."⁹⁰ Bruno proposes a method for this expansion in his Art of Memory. The method uses, Yates explains, magic talismans or memory-images that produce "a magical organization of the imagination and a magically-powerful personality, tuned-in as it were, to the powers of the cosmos."

In sum, then, two important Renaissance magicians, Ficino and Bruno, were concerned with expanding their minds and hearts to receive universal power, which they, in turn, could exercise.

The sensitized imagination is capable, finally of a new and powerful use of language. Hermes, the legendary magician, is supposed to have invented Language. (The honor is elsewhere given to Prometheus, who, as we shall suggest, was also a magical figure.) In the Hermès Trismegistus he is addressed in a chant:

Hermès, Souverain maître du monde, toi qui est dans le cœur, cercle de la Lune, toi qui est rond et carré, archegète de la parole articulée, plaidant la cause de la justice, toi qui portes la Chlamyde, dieux aux sandales ailées, veillant sur la parole qui peut tout exprimer.⁹¹

(Hermès Trismegistus, I)

Magic and language are intimately connected from the first. The belief in the magical power of language, indeed, has an ancient history. While some felt the Hebrew language was magical because Adam had first named the creatures in Hebrew, others felt that the Egyptian hieroglyphs were "the language of the Gods."⁹²

Both the Hebrew and Egyptian languages were inherently magical because they were close to the divine source. Even Ficino calls the "si fas est," the formula of consecration, as an example of the magical power of words. And among Renaissance magicians, again, Lazarelli (says Walker)

holds a magical theory of language, that he believes that words have a real, not conventional connexion with things and can exert power over them. . . . Moreover, the word is not merely like a quality of the thing it designates, such as its colour or weight; it is, or exactly represents, its essence or substance. A formula of words, therefore, may not only be an adequate substitute for the things denoted, but may even be more powerful.⁹³

"That the potency of the real thing is contained in the name--this is one of the fundamental assumptions of the mythmaking consciousness itself," says Cassirer.⁹⁴

Unlike the original languages, Hebrew and Egyptian, secondary languages were obliged to attract magical power either by their arrangement or by the psychic power of their user. Nevertheless, words in all languages have power, independently of their meaning. This is the well-known view of Origen: "not what is signified by the words, but the qualities and peculiarities of the words themselves, are potent for this or that effect." "Some of the barbarians," Origen tells us, "are admired for their marvelous powers of incantation."⁹⁵ It is by means of language, that the magus can ultimately "marry" heaven and earth. The parallel of human words with the Divine Word suggested to Reuchlin a notion of the unifying function

of all language. In the Liber Secundus of De Verbo Mirifico he writes of grammatical forms as magical forces:

Aptissime igitur notula fit coeli & terrae, id est omnium ex materia & forma coniunctorum copulat enim vau & partes orationis coniungit, unde coniunctio dicta est. Deinde verbis etiam tempora transmutat, ut natura rebus. Quid est quo fuit (inquit Ecclesiastes) ipsun quod futuram est. Quid est quod factum est, ipsun quod faciendum est. Temporis ergo mutationi succedent quaecumque corporalia tam in colla quam in terra, horumque mediis sita sunt.

By far the most persistent commentator on the subject of language as magic was Henry Cornelius Agrippa, who devotes a great deal of his first of Three Books of Occult Philosophy to the relation of language to the passions. He declares that words themselves have power, particularly in sentences, and that they derive power also from the emotional state of their speaker.

It being shown that there is a great power in the affections of the soul, you must know, moreover, that there is no less virtue in words and the names of things, and greatest of all in speeches and motion.⁹⁷

Words uttered "couple the corporeal voice and speech to the mind and understanding." But they operate not only on the impetus of mind but also of the heightened sensitivity:

Words carry with them not only the conception of the mind but also the virtue of the speaker . . . and this oftentimes with so great a power, that often they change not only the hearers but also other bodies and things that have no life. Now those words are of greater efficacy than others which represent greater things--as intellectual, celestial and supernatural; as more expressly, so more mysteriously. Also those that come from a more worthy tongue.⁹⁸

Agrippa traces the magical power of language back to God:

for hence voice and words have efficacy in magical works, because that in which nature first exerciseth magical efficacy is the voice of God.⁹⁹

Because God created with language, the words for things occur in the mind through a sort of birth:

The Platonists therefore say that in this very voice, or word, or name framed, with its article, that the power of the thing, as it were some kind of life, lies under the form of the signification. First, conceived in the mind, as it were through certain seeds of things, then by voices or words, as a birth brought forth; and lastly, kept in writings.¹⁰⁰

Sentences have more power than single words, says Agrippa, because they are capable of conveying truths. Examples of powerful sentences are "verses, enchantments, imprecations, deprecations, orations, invocations, obtestations, adjurations, conjurations and such like." The verses he particularly has in mind are the Orphic hymns, and these get power not merely from being sentences that convey high truths but also from being impelled by passion and imagination. Of these hymns he says:

such like verses made according to the Rule of the Stars, full of signification and meaning, and opportunely pronounced with vehement affection and by the violence of imagination, do confer a great power in the enchanter, and sometimes transfers it upon the thing enchanted.¹⁰¹

Thus, along with the inherent power of words, "the instrument of the enchanter is a most pure harmonical spirit--warm, breathing, living, bringing with it motion, affection and signification." To

To be powerful, the enchanter's verses must be imbued with this spirit:

And, therefore, magicians enchanting things are wont to blow and breathe upon them the words of the verse, or to breathe in the virtue with the spirit, that so the whole virtue of the soul be directed to the thing enchanted, being disposed for the receiving of said virtue.¹⁰²

Agrippa's understanding of the spirit behind words and the words themselves is later nearly paraphrased in the writing of a curious London occultist, Francis Barrett, whose The Magus or The Celestial Intelligencer of 1803 is a compendium of theories of natural magic and of recipes for black magic. It is hence an index of the availability of these theories for Coleridge and his contemporaries. Here is how Barrett adapts Agrippa's theories of magical language:

The instrument of enchanters is a pure, living, breathing spirit of the blood, whereby we bind, or attract those things which we desire or delight in . . . Indeed the virtue of man's words are so great, that when pronounced with a fervent constancy of the mind, they are able to subvert Nature. . . . Almost all charms are impotent without words, because words are the speech of the speaker and the image of the thing signified or spoken of; therefore, whatever wonderful effect is intended, let the same be performed with the addition of the operator; for words are a kind of occult vehicle of the soul; therefore, all the forcible power of the spirit ought to be breathed out with vehemency, and an arduous and intense desire.¹⁰³

Barrett is frequently garbled, often even perverse, but he summarizes centuries of thought about magic in a popular mode of 1803. He

stressed that in order to enchant, an enchanter requires vitality of spirit. Impelled by this spirit, his words take on power. But at the same time these words carry power with them because they are the image of the thing they name. Words therefore partake of the enchanter's own ardor, are conceived and begotten in his soul, but are symbols, too, of the concrete thing. Language is, then, essentially magical, and also magical in being imbued with the emotions of a magically readied personality. And this personality is readied because invocations have put the magician in touch with the sympathies--themselves magical of the universe. The process is circular.

Barrett not only learns from Agrippa but also from other magicians and theorists whose biographies he appends to his book. Thus, The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer suggests that many theories of magic were available in London in the 1790's when Barrett was writing, and that therefore Coleridge's later lectures, and the possible intentions of his art, were not unique in their use of what now seem to us to be arcane and heretical sources. Indeed, Hamann and Novalis (as we suggested at the beginning of this chapter) had anticipated the English revival of magical traditions. Furthermore, it is not clear whether Collins and Young had read the mass of material on magic. But it is clear that in some way by 1749 and 1759 respectively, they had both come upon a notion of

magic as a way of explaining the passion and originality of artistic genius. Barrett's work may thus have popularized what was already current among the elite.

To sum up: we have seen that the theory of magic from Plotinus to Baader offers speculation on nature, human emotion, human imagination and language. Much of this speculation is remarkably congruent with what we now think of as the Romantic theory of the poet and his imagination. Plotinus, some of whose work Thomas Taylor made available in 1797, offers us a theory of nature as the realm of magical sympathies. All but the totally rational man are susceptible to it. The love of the magician and the love that runs through nature enchant and bewitch. Magic is the temptation of the natural world; and music and other arts, like emotion, are partly irrational since they are part of irrational nature. Plotinus suggests to us that the brute soul is to some extent responsible for man's creative impulses; he leads us to appreciate a positive irrationality (unlike Pope's view that irrationality leads only to chaos) by which men are susceptible to emotion, beauty and art. However much this susceptibility deflects him from contemplation, it nevertheless affirms man's participation in the universal system of love and strife.

Boehme extends these magical sympathies to God himself. Postulating God as a creator who works by magic through desire and will, he gives the magician not just Plotinus' natural realm to

work in, but the supernatural realm as well. The magician is not just natural man working with the irrational susceptibilities of fallen nature, but the magician is also (as Young suggests) God Himself. God's magical creation of the world is imaginative. By means of magic, God imagines existence in a dream before He actually gives it life; and here Thomson's perceptions about creative indolence concur. Imagination is not form, but the desire and will to form; hence even God is not above emotion in working his magic. Magic is then irrational and emotional, but exactly from this irrationality and emotion arises imagination and thus origination.

Part of the meaning of the irrationality of magic goes beyond mere susceptibility to natural sympathies. Baader suggests another meaning of "irrational": "not explicable by Reason." "La vision magique" is immediate, instantaneous, organic and whole; it does not operate in rational stages. It does not follow corporeal proofs or visible means (as Young also perceives). La vision magique is the vision of the ecstatic (and here we use Collins' term) who has transcended his own bodily form through the cultivation of feeling. This is the ardor which then for Ficino and Agrippa gives power to the magician's words and allows him, "reconciling heaven and earth," to influence the stars, as language reconciles mind and things. The new powerful language expresses the inner magician, harmonizes with the magical connections of the outer world, and is in itself an approximation of the first act of divine imagination.

We find the words "symbol," "image," "organicism," "imagination," "emotion" and "nature" recurring in these passages on magic, as they recur, too, in Young and later in Coleridge. In all magic theory the mind is permitted to impose itself on nature, not because it is arrogant, but because it possesses the language which sets in motion the inherent sympathies in nature. As Paracelsus insists, natural magic serves God by revealing His mysteries. The mind and its forms--language, art, sympathy--have been obliged to be the link between heaven and earth since the two split apart. And we shall see in the next chapter that the meaning of the Fall was connected in Coleridge's thought, too, with magic, the imagination and the power to originate.

Footnotes to Chapter III

¹ Maurice Morgann, An essay on the dramatic character of Sir John Falstaff (London, 1777), pp. 68-73.

² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Shakespearean Criticism, ed. T. M. Raysor (London and New York, 1964), vol. I, p. 119. Here Coleridge, too, thinks of the parallels between Prospero and Prospero's creator: "Prospero (the very Shakespeare himself, as it were, of the tempest)."

³ For the "School of Night" see Muriel C. Bradbrook, The School of Night: A Study in the Literary Relationships of Sir Walter Raleigh (Cambridge, 1936) and Hiram Haydn, The Counter-Renaissance (New York, 1960), pp. 106ff. For Henry Vaughan's interest in magic, see Ross Garner's Henry Vaughan: Experience and the Tradition (Chicago, 1959).

⁴ See Lycyle Werkmeister, "The Early Coleridge: His Rage for Metaphysics," The Harvard Theological Review, LIV (1961), 108-9. Raymond Klibansky, The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages (London, 1939).

⁵ Thomas Taylor, Selected Writings, ed. Kathleen Raine and George Mills Harper (Princeton, New Jersey, 1969). Raine's introductory essay assesses the importance of Taylor not only for Romanticism but for the continuity of the Platonic tradition.

⁶ See note 28 of the introduction.

⁷ On the je ne sais quoi, see Walter Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic (New York, 1961), pp. 44, 130 and passim. In Style (New York, 1962) F. L. Lucas connects magic and the je ne sais quoi in a rebuke of Swinburne. Lucas writes: "in fact/Swinburne/ is simply saying that some passages of literature move us inexplicably; they have a magic we cannot explain, and if we could explain it, they would cease to be magic. There is, of course, a similar mystery of charm about some people. It much impressed the all-explaining minds of the eighteenth century; they called it the 'je ne sais quoi.'" p.83.

⁸ See note 6, chapter one.

⁹ Kenneth Burke, "Magic and Religion," in Perspectives by Incongruity, ed. Stanley Edgar Hyman (Bloomington, 1964), p. 119.

¹⁰ Frank E. Manuel, The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods (Cambridge, 1959), p. 284.

¹¹ Goethe read massively in the magical texts when he was home from the university. See George Henry Lewes, The Life and Works of Goethe (London, 1855), pp. 220. In the Enchanted Forest (New York, 1963) and in Keats and the Daemon King (New York, 1947), Werner William Beyer has documented the direct influence of Wieland's Oberon on Coleridge and Keats.

¹² Manuel, p. 285.

¹³ Oskar Franz Walzel, German Romanticism, trans. Alma Elise Lussy (New York, 1932), p. 194. Henry C. Birven, In Novalis, Magus der Romantiker (Budingon, 1959), p. 19, is concerned with the importance of the idea of magic for Novalis' view of himself: "Novalis war ein Magus von hohen Graden dessen Bewusstseinslage über die menschlichpsychologische in erhöhte Zustände, in eine magische Vitalestase zu transzendieren vermag." (Novalis was a magus in the highest degree whose state of consciousness in regard to the human psychology could transcend into a magical vital phase.) ". . . dieses Erglauben des Könnens ist bereits ein magischer Akt, der allem Können notwendig vorhergeht." (This awareness of what is possible is already a magical act, which precedes the actual by necessity) p. 22. "Ernennt das 'magischen Idealismus' den er ausdrücklich von einfacher Magie oder magischem Realismus scheidet von der Einwirkung magischer Kräfte auf die reale Welt, etwa mit den Mitteln Okkultismus," p. 42. (He distinguishes this expressly from simple magic or magical realism, by the impact of magical power on the real world.) In general, the subject of magic appears often in commentaries on German Romanticism, but hardly ever in commentaries on the English.

¹⁴ Albert Béguin, L'âme romantique et le rêve (Paris, 1956), p. 206.

¹⁵ Béguin, p. 207. "Le poète est donc un sorcier, qui évoque les ombres intérieures et les appelle à une confrontation, mais sans savoir ce qu'elle signifie . . . La poésie pourtant est le contraire de tout ce qui est vague et imprécis: 'Plus un poème est personnel, local, temporel, particulier, plus il est proche du centre de toute poésie. Un poème doit être absolument inépuisable.' Mais il l'est dans la mesure justement où il est fait de précision: précision qui est celle de tout geste magique. Rien de plus exact, de plus minutieux, que les rites de l'ensorcellement et de l'évocation des esprits. Les mots qu'emploie le poète sont analogues à ces rites: ils sont 'sanctifiés par quelque merveilleuse reminiscence, comparables aux reliques des saints, environnés de présences.'"

¹⁶ Béguin, p. 209.

¹⁷ Béguin, 380-387. See particularly Marcel Raymond, From Baudelaire to Surrealism (New York, 1950). And Baudelaire's interest in the occult, see Jean Pommier, La mystique de Baudelaire (Paris, 1932). In his Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe, "Baudelaire y fait l'éloge de l'imagination. Cette faculté 'quasi-divine,' selon lui, 'perçoit tout d'abord,' et 'seule comprend, les rapports intimes et secrets des chose.'" p. 28. See pages 143, 144, and 143.

¹⁸ Jacques Roos, Aspecte littéraires du mysticisme-philosophique et l'influence de Boehme et de Swedenborg au début du romantisme (Strasbourg, 1951). Auguste Viatte, Les sources occultes du romantisme (Paris, 1965).

¹⁹ Viatte, I, 29.

²⁰ Béguin, p. 376-81.

²¹ Béguin, p. 381.

²² Marcel Raymond, p. 97.

²³ M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and The Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York, 1953), chapters III, IV and VIII.

²⁴ Alexander Pope, The Dunciad, ed. James Sutherland (London, 1963), Vol. IV, lines 515-528.

²⁵ James Thomson, "The Castle of Indolence," Collected Works, ed J. Logie Robertson (London, 1908), pp. 251-306.

²⁶ Patricia Meyer Spacks, The Poetry of Vision: Five Eighteenth Century Poets (Cambridge, 1967), p. 87.

²⁷ William Collins, "Ode on the Popular Superstitions of Scotland, considered as a subject for poetry," The Poems of William Collins, ed. Christopher Stone (London, 1907), pp. 66-74.

²⁸ Collins, "The Passions, An Ode for Music," Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects (London, 1747), p. 46.

²⁹ Richard Hurd, Moral and Political Dialogues, with The Letters on Chivalry and Romance (London, 1788), pp. 250, 252.

³⁰ Edward Young, Conjectures on Original Composition, ed. Edith J. Morley (Manchester, 1918).

³¹ Giovanni Batista Porta, Natural Magick (London, 1658), Sig. A2^v.

³² Ibid.

³³ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Oration on the Dignity of Man, trans. A. Robert Capronegri (Chicago, 1959), pp. 53-58.

³⁴ Pico, p. 57.

³⁵ Pico, p. 58.

³⁶ The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn (New York, 1957), vol. I. See particularly entries 122, 174, 200, 201, 203, 204, 205, 208, 244, 246, 247, 679, 851, 946 and notes.

³⁷ Ralph Cudworth, True Intellectual System of the Universe, ed. Thomas Birch (London, 1820), pp. 286. See also pp. 292-4 for Jamblichus, pp. 345 ff for Paracelsus and Plotinus.

³⁸ Jane Harrison, Themis and Prolegomena to a Study of Greek Religion (Cambridge, 1927). She writes "yet in primitive days in Greece, as in Persia, magic had to do, if not with divinities . . . yet at least with things divine, with sanctities . . . and not less certainly a knowledge of magic was assuredly part of the necessary equipment of a king." p. 76. Novalis made this clear also, as Birven (op. cit.) explains: "Diese Magie nichts zu tun hat mit vulgaren Zauberei, die ein Missverständnis und ein Degenerationserscheinung der uralten genuinen Magie ist. Magie, so verstanden, will also Wissenschaft des 'Ich sein,' " (Novalis' magic had nothing to do with vulgar sorcery which is a misunderstanding and degeneration of ancient magic. This magic is a knowledge of being.) p. 24-25. Even skeptical Daniel Defoe realized in his Compleat System of Magick: or, The History of the Black Art (London, 1727) that magic was once respectable: "Let no Man be disgusted at the good Account we give of the Origin and Wisdom of the Magi, and then call them Magicians; if we will debauch the Word with a degeneracy of Practice, the Fault is our own. Their Magick was truly Science, whereas ours is neither Magick or Science, but a kind of Devilism, a Practice carried on, by Men that would be wicked if they did not want Wit, and are no otherwise Harmless, than as they happen to be Fools . . . In the first Ages of the World, the knowledge of Magick was the Wisdom of Nature," p. 35-6.

³⁹ Johann Friedrich Kleuker, Umfang zum Zend-Avesta (Leipzig and Riga, 1781), p. 109. "In diesem Verstande haben alle Religionen eine Magic gehabt. Man hielt aber die Persische für die beste und kräftigste."

⁴⁰ Pico, p. 56.

⁴¹ Plotinus, The Enneads, trans. Stephen McKenna, 3rd ed., reprint (London, 1966), IV:iv, p. 84.

⁴² Ibid., p. 85.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 88.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 87.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 83.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 84.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

⁴⁹ Plotini Opera Enneades IV-V, ed. Paul Henry et Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer (Paris and Brussels, 1959), pp. 139-141.

⁵⁰ William Ralph Inge, The Philosophy of Plotinus (London, 1923) p. 200.

⁵¹ Plotini Opera, p. 143.

⁵² Ibid., p. 145.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 147-9.

⁵⁴ In The Table Talk and Omnia of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Coventry Patmore (London, 1917), p. 88, Coleridge says "A Fall of some sort or other--the creation, as it were, of the non-absolute--is the fundamental postulate of the moral history of man. Without this hypothesis man is unintelligible; with it, every phenomenon is explicable. The mystery itself is too profound for human insight."

⁵⁵ Balthazar Bekker, Le Monde Enchanté, ou Examen des communs sentimens touchant les Esprits, leurs Natures, leur Pouvoir, leurs administrations, et leurs operations, et touchant les effets que les hommes sont capable de produire par leur communication et leur vertue, traduit du Hollandais (Amsterdam, 1694), III, 428ff.

⁵⁶ Joseph Görres, Der Christlicher Mystick (Regensburg, 1842), VI, 16-17.

- 57 Sir Walter Scott, Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft (London, 1830), pp. 53-5.
- 58 Selected Writings of Paracelsus, ed. Jolande Jacobi, trans. Norbert Guterman, 2nd ed. (New York, 1959), p. 102-110, 139.
- 59 Jakob Boehme, Six Theosophical Points, trans. John R. Earle (Ann Arbor, 1959), p. 130.
- 60 Idem.
- 61 Idem.
- 62 Idem.
- 63 Ibid., p. 131 .
- 64 Jakob Boehme, Dialogues on the Supersensual Life, trans. William Law and others, ed. Bernard Holland (New York, 1952), p. 43.
- 65 Hans L. Martenson and Stephen Hobhouse, Jacob Boehme (London, 1949), p. 43.
- 66 Ibid., p. 22.
- 67 Ibid., p. 24.
- 68 Boehme, Dialogues, p. 16.
- 69 Alexandre Koyré, La Philosophie de Jakob Boehme (Paris, 1929), p. 348.
- 70 Ibid., p. 347.
- 71 Ibid., p. 447.
- 72 Eugene Susini, Franz von Baader et le romantisme (Paris, 1942), II, chapters IV, V, VI, p. 368. In Das Ideengut der Deutschen Romantik (Tübingen, 1961), Paul Kluckhohn links Baader and Boehme as founders of Romantic Thought, pp. 26-7.
- 73 Ibid., p. 371.
- 74 Ibid., p. 371-2.
- 75 Ibid., p. 373.
- 76 Idem.

- ⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 375.
- ⁷⁸ Frances Amelia Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (London, 1964), p. 156.
- ⁷⁹ C. S. Lewis, The Sixteenth Century, pp. 5-13. Hiram Haydn, The Counter-Renaissance (New York, 1950), p. 177.
- ⁸⁰ Sigmund Freud, "Magic, Animism and Omnipotence of Mind," Totem and Taboo, in Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, ed. A. Brill (New York, 1938), p. 872. For further speculations on the relations between magic and the telescoping of time, see Waldemar Bogaras "Ideas of Space and Time in the Conception of Primitive Religion," AA (April, 1925), 205-236.
- ⁸¹ Freud, p. 873.
- ⁸² Freud, p. 876.
- ⁸³ Gerardus van der Leeuw, Sacred and Profane: The Holy in Art (New York, 1963), p. 9.
- ⁸⁴ Denis Saurat, Literature and the Occult Tradition, trans. Dorothy Bolton (Port Washington, N. Y., 1966), pp. 45, 54.
- ⁸⁵ D. P. Walker, Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella (London, 1958), pp. 43-4.
- ⁸⁶ Yates, p. 66.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 125.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 127. Kluckhohn cites Novalis' emphasis on love as a magical power: "Liebe ist grund der Möglichkeit der Magie. Liebe wirkt magisch," p. 73.
- ⁸⁹ Jamblichus, in Les Mystères de l'Égypte, trans. Edouard des Places (Paris, 1966), declares on p. 90: "Finalement, donc, les dispositions de l'âme chez les évocateurs des dieux reçoivent au moment de leur épiphanie une perfection affranchi des passions et éminente, ainsi qu'une activité entièrement meilleure, et elles participent à l'amour divin et à une allégresse infinie."
- ⁹⁰ Yates, p. 244, 246.
- ⁹¹ André Marie Jean Festugière, La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste (Paris, 1949-54), I, 289.
- ⁹² Yates, p. 263.
- ⁹³ Walker, p. 69, 80.

- ⁹⁴ Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, p. 84.
- ⁹⁵ Lynn Thorndike, History of Magic and Experimental Science (New York, 1958), I, pp. 449-450.
- ⁹⁶ Johannes Reuchlin, De Verbo Mirifico (Tubingen, 1514),
 "Heaven and earth are held together by matter and form having been united, as words and the parts of speech unite, from which union it has been said: Hence the times change words, even as nature does things, says Ecclesiastes . . . Therefore the changes of time overthrow all which is corporeal in heaven and earth."
- ⁹⁷ Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, The Philosophy of Natural Magic, trans. Henry Morley (Chicago, 1913), p. 210.
- ⁹⁸ Agrippa, p. 211.
- ⁹⁹ Agrippa, p. 221.
- ¹⁰⁰ Agrippa, p. 212.
- ¹⁰¹ Agrippa, p. 214-15.
- ¹⁰² Agrippa, p. 216.
- ¹⁰³ Frances Barrett, The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer, intro. Timothy d'Arch Smith (New Hyde Park, N. Y., 1967), p. 26.

CHAPTER IV

Coleridge and the Magical Imagination

Coleridge gives evidence of knowing directly or indirectly most or all of the commentators on the tradition of magic discussed in the last chapter. In deciding against Locke that "human nature itself fought up against the resignation of intellect," Coleridge was supported by

the early study of Plato and Plotinus, with the commentaries and the *Theologia Platonia* of the illustrious Florentine *[Ficino]*; of Proclus, and Gemisthus Pletho; and at a later period of the "De Immenso et Innumerabili" and the "De la causa, principio ed uno," of the philosopher of Nola *[Bruno]*.¹

These "had all contributed to prepare my mind for the reception and welcoming of the 'Cogita quia sum, et sum quia cogito.'"²

Jakob Boehme could not be considered a magician to the extent that Bruno was, but his works (as we saw) abound with magical commentary of an extremely original kind. Coleridge is perhaps more grateful to Boehme than to any other magicians,

mystics or neoplatonists, as chapter nine of the Biographia Literaria attests. In Coleridge's view (adopted from Schelling), Boehme in his simple way took over where the scientists left off:

Therefore the true depth of science, and the penetration to the inmost centre, from which all the lines of knowledge diverge to their ever distant circumference, was abandoned to the illiterate and the simple, whom unstilled yearning and an original ebullieny of spirit had urged to the investigation of the indwelling and living ground of all things.

Boehme, "an enthusiast in the strictest sense," had come upon "a new and vital truth." He had seen the connection of the imagination and the will with magic and creativity; and Coleridge feels a debt not only to Boehme's ideas but also to the spirit with which he undertook them: a spirit which "acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within the outline of any single dogmatic system."³

Although Coleridge had many plans for works about Bruno and Boehme in particular, he waited until the Philosophical Lectures of 1817 to divulge in print his knowledge of all the magical traditions. Long after the flowering of his poetic life, he devotes much of these lectures to a refutation of magic as a viable religion. In these lectures he demonstrates a striking familiarity with the magician. A statistical view would reveal that one third deal in whole or in part with Bruno, Paracelsus, Boehme and their like; their theological errors, sometimes attractive and minor, seem to Coleridge central enough to justify his

own and his audience's time. To the reader's surprise, magical interpretations of the universe are not cast aside as trivial and pointless, but are exhaustively explained and finally refuted. These, his "darling studies," had occupied his mind during his poetic period; now, in his theological period, we infer he had somehow to work them out of his thinking. But this intensive refutation of magic as a religion only affirms its value for a theory of art. For in his poetic period he had used magical theories and forms to enhance his criticism and invigorate his poems. Indeed, Coleridge's theory of poetry seems virtually synonymous with a theory of magic. Scattered as his prose definitions of poetry are, his acknowledgement of "the magical power . . . of the imagination" in The Biographia XIV informs his early verse, while in his major poems lavish use of magical techniques justify the critics in calling the effects of these poems "magical."

Coleridge's intuitions about the relation between magic and poetry are bound up with his thoughts about the power of the mind to make true beginnings, and about the power of words to transform things. In his Aids to Reflection (as we shall see) he asserts that on earth only human beings make true beginnings. The mind is above nature--that is, supernatural. In poetry, particularly, it exercises its supernatural power, because "poetry is purely human," not drawing its effects from nature but imposing its language on

nature.⁴ For poems to command nature, Coleridge would "endeavor to destroy the old antithesis of Words and Things, elevating, as it were, words into Things, & living Things, too."⁵ Overtuming Wordsworth's hierarchy, Coleridge declares "Words are Things. They are the great and mighty instruments by which thoughts are excited and by which alone they can be expressed in a rememberable form."⁶ Introducing the vision of Kubla Khan, he says the spontaneous "images rose up before him as things."⁷ The supernatural action of the imagination Coleridge opposes to the imitation of the things of nature: "a poet ought not to pick Nature's pocket . . . trust more to your imagination than to your memory."⁸

Words become powerful through a process that seems to have been clear to Coleridge in his very earliest poems. The process depends upon the theories of Plotinus, Jamblichus, Ficino, Agrippa, Bruno, Paracelsus and Boehme described in the preceding chapter. It can be summarized as follows: In a Plotinian universe of magical sympathies and antipathies, the poet submits to indolence. The indolence is a state of "somnial magic superinduced on, without suspending, the active powers of the mind."⁹ In his "somnial magic," he is attuned to the interrelationships around him. He is invaded by a passionate receptivity--the "divine madness" of both the Greek and primitive wizard. In his mind words rise up spontaneously, suddenly, without cause. These words are original, and prove the mind's independence. Arising by magic, words in turn

conjure forms that do not exist in nature. Thus the innate uprising of language and visions in a state of indolence is proof of the originality of the supernatural mind. The magician not only focusses the magical sympathies of the universe, but he also calls things to life. Like God, he creates by a Boehmean magia.

The power of words to create or transform things is one of the major triumphs of the supernatural will as Coleridge defines it. Ever since he was a small boy reciting a charm against the cramp (Table Talk, June 10, 1834) he seems to have anxiously investigated the influence of "the potent voice" on actual experience.¹⁰ And this influence he often connects with the creativeness of man and its approximation to divinity in the imaginative use of words:

In youth and early manhood the mind and nature are, as it were, two rival artists, both potent magicians, and engaged, like the King's daughter in a sharp conflict of conjuration. . . For a while the mind seems to have the better in the contest, and makes of Nature what it likes, takes her lichens and weather-stains for types and printer's ink, and prints maps and forms her summer gales in harps and harpers, lover's sighs and sighing lovers, and her winter blasts into Pindaric odes, Christabels, and Ancient Mariners set to music by Beethoven . . .

The mind is the potent magician that makes of nature what it likes. Its transformations (as Coleridge explains them here) are exactly pertinent to the magical theories of the wind as music and poetic breath, the voice as Plotinian Harper, and poems as the compellers of nature. Coleridge suggests he conjured "Christabel" and "The Ancient Mariner" out of the wind, that the first poetic magician

wins the contest in the early years by writing poems. For poems are written by the mind's conjurings.

Nethercote suggests that by 1825 Coleridge "was forced to make an admission that he would never have considered in 1797; that in the long run Nature gets the better of Mind."¹² Mind, however, prevailed until late in Coleridge's life when the immutability of nature seemed to assert itself. Then the separation of God from his creation seemed doctrinally necessary as a way of avoiding heretical pantheism. But the human will appeared to him throughout his thinking as a principle of origination, free from the determinism of natural cause and effect:

Whatever has its principle in itself, so far as to originate its actions, cannot be contemplated in any of the forms of space and time . . . it must be considered as Spirit. Will is not nature. The will is supernatural.¹³

The supernatural will is responsible for origination. The words origin, original or originant do not apply to nature. Each event in nature is "a mere link in a chain of effects, where each, indeed, stands in the relation of a cause to those that follow, but is at the same time the effect of all that precede."

But this is Nature: and no natural thing or act can be called originant, or be truly said to have an origin in any other. Nature is a power subject to the law of continuity. The moment we assume an Origin in Nature, a true Beginning, an actual First--that moment we rise above Nature, and are compelled to assume a supernatural Power. . . Every appearance of origination in Nature is but a shadow of our own casting. It is a reflection from our own Will or Spirit.¹⁴

By a higher sense, the human being knows he is not subject to the laws of nature, being himself supernatural:

I feel myself not the slave of nature. Not only do my powers extend vastly beyond all those which I could have derived from the instruments and organs, with which nature has furnished me; but I can do what nature per se can not. Ergo, there is in me, or rather, I am, a praeternatural, that is, a super-sensuous thing, but what is not nature, why should it perish with nature? Why lose the faculty of vision, because my spectacles are broken?¹⁵

Coleridge thus disagrees profoundly with Wordsworth, inasmuch as Wordsworth attaches human motivation to the determinism of nature, and submerges men's acts in the continuum of natural cause and effect. Coleridge's interest in original sin is an adjunct of his interest in origination in general. As original sin is unmotivated, it is a mysterious act. It proves that the spirit that originates this act is out of nature, and, therefore, is a supernatural power. Reasoning from the possibility of acting originally, of making a true beginning, Coleridge extends unaccountable acts from sin to art: as we can act originally, so too, can we create originally, whether or not nature provides a model or an impetus. Genius is "the power of acting creatively under laws of its own origination."¹⁶ Original sin is paradoxically ~~not~~ a sign of our bondage, but rather of our freedom. Art and evil thus arise from the same freedom of will and separation from the chains of nature. By this reasoning, when in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner "The Mariner hath his

will," he is supernaturally empowered to determine change in the passive natural world around him.

As a supernatural power, then, the will, and in particular the agent of higher Reason, the Imagination, was "involved with the perception of supernatural life."¹⁷ Shakespeare, supreme earthly example of the power of imagination, Coleridge sees as particularly tolerant of supernatural beings. In lavishing attention on the ghost in Hamlet, Coleridge notes "Shakespeare's tenderness with regard to all innocent superstition: no Tom Paine declamations and pompous philosophy."¹⁸ Comparing the supernatural appearances in Hamlet with those in Macbeth he says

In Hamlet superstition is connected with the best and holiest feelings; in the second with the shadowy turbulent cravings of the individual will.¹⁹

Coleridge devotes a disproportionate amount of his Shakespeare criticism to a justification of those supernatural beings in Macbeth, The Tempest and Hamlet that the eighteenth century most abhorred. Even when addressing Mrs. Siddons in his early sonnet, he singles out her role in Macbeth:

As when a child on some long Winter's night
Affrighted clinging to its Grandam's knees
With eager wondering and perturb'd delight
Listens strange tales of fearful dark decrees
Mutter'd to wretch by necromantic spell;
Or of those hags, who at the witching time
Of murky Midnight ride the air sublime,
And mingle foul embrace with friends of Hell²⁰

In using The Tempest as an example of "the imagination . . . which owns no allegiance to time and place,"²¹ he is careful to draw the parallel between Prospero the magician and Shakespeare the magical poet: "Prosper (the very Shakespeare himself, as it were, of The Tempest)."²² Coleridge seems to inherit this interest from Wilhelm Schlegel. Schlegel, too, exalts Shakespeare as the "portrayer and philosopher of superstition" "who distinctly exhibits its origin in apparently irrational and yet natural opinions." Schlegel, says Shakespeare, "calls up from their hidden abysses that dread of the unknown, that presage of the dark side of nature, and a world of spirits, which philosophy now imagines it has altogether exploded." Schlegel continues:

In general we find in The Midsummer Night's Dream, in The Tempest, in the magical parts of Macbeth, and wherever Shakespeare avails himself of the popular belief in the invisible presence of spirits, and the possibility of coming into contact with them, a profound view of the inward life of nature and her mysterious springs, which it is true, can never be altogether unknown to the genuine poet, as poetry is altogether incompatible with mechanical physics, but which few have possessed in equal degree with Dante and himself.²³

Hazlitt, on the other hand, did not adopt from Coleridge this tolerance for the unusual. The magical changes of The Midsummer Night's Dream Hazlitt finds ridiculous. He ignores Hamlet's ghost and personifies Ariel and Caliban in his empirical search for "character."²⁴ Thus what most distinguishes Coleridge's Shakespeare criticism from the English empirical tradition and unites

him with the German is this very interest in supernatural life. The "land of Faery" he defines in his 1818 lecture on Spenser, is in fact "the realm of mental space."²⁵

Coleridge's concern with the supernatural is reflected in his proposed essay on the supernatural to be affixed to The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.²⁶ This essay might conceivably have synthesized his thoughts on the imposition of mind's forms in poetry with his thoughts on the will as supernatural. The essay might well have been a fusion of the "Essay on Art and Poesy" and Aphorism X of Aids to Reflection. It might have postulated that as the supernatural will alone has power to originate, it alone imbues matter with spirit, thus bringing matter to life. Mind exercises "the Midas Touch of life and Joy."²⁷ On March 3 and 6, 1818, he was once again delivering lectures on this now familiar subject. The lecture of March 3 was

On the Arabian Nights Entertainments, and on the romantic use of the supernatural in poetry, and in works of fiction not poetical. On the conditions and regulations on which such books may be employed advantageously in the earlier periods of education.

March 6 elaborates:

On tales of witches, apparitions, &, as distinguished from the magic and magicians of Asiatic origin. The probable sources of the former.²⁸

Supernaturalism, magic and the divinity of the will were linked together in Coleridge's thought.

"Man, a vicious and discontented animal," he asserts with a suggestion of humor in The Watchman, no. 4, Friday, March 25, 1796,

by his vices and his discontent is urged to develop the powers of the Creator, and by new combinations of those powers to imitate his creativeness. And from such enlargement of mind benevolence will necessarily follow, benevolence which may be defined . . . as "natural sympathy made permanent by enlightened selfishness."

In this connection he relates the story of Sigge, part of a historical sketch of the manners and religion of the Ancient Germans:

Sigge, the son of Fridulf, commanded the Ases, a Scythian people situated between the Euxine and Caspian seas, when Pompey conducted the Mithridatic war. As the priest of Odin he assumed the name of Deity. This extraordinary man was the inventor of the Runic characters; and by his persuasive eloquence, his skill in extempore poetry, and his impostures made himself respected as a deity. The Runic chapter, or the Magic of Odin, is still preserved as his composition: he enumerates in it the wonders he could perform by his songs, mingling the operations of magic with those powerful effects which poetry has long been known to produce.²⁹

Thus the Promethean invention of language is once again related to Divine powers of origination, the potent voice with the recreation of the Divine I Am.

In most cases Coleridge is careful to separate this holy magic from necromantic spells. "Natural magic is the force above human reason which is the active principle in nature." He explains that Agrippa, in his recantation

declares that he had found magic in the ordinary sense of the word to be but delusion, that though he had made a great deal of money by gold-making, by cheating, still he contends there is a natural magic--he seems to have entertained the notion as if from earliest time experimental sciences were divided into two parts: the one common and communicable to the whole, the other esoteric (reserved, theurgic) to the prepared student. The former was mechanics . . . But he contends, besides this, there is an art by which power is communicated directly immediately . . . It seems probably he would consider electricity as one of those magical arts.³⁰

Natural magic is higher than this degrading magic. Plotinus himself speaks of magic with detestation, confining himself to natural magic, which appears to be nothing more than a want of experimental philosophy.³¹

Explaining the philosophy of Reuchlin in De Verbo Mirifico, Coleridge defines natural magic:

Natural Magic is the force above human reason which is the active principle in Nature.³²

But the desire for gain has intruded on the basic truths of magic and corrupted it:

There must be a common law, upon which all can become each and each all; but then the idea was turned to the coining of gold and silver.³³

As it stands, then, this corrupted philosophy is to be spurned when it pretends to religion. In Literary Remains Coleridge attacks his old idol Henry More for his credulity: More's is a "false and fantastic philosophy--"

yet shot through with refracted light from the not risen but rising truth,--a scheme of physics

and physiology compounded of Cartesian mechanics and empiricism (for it was the credulous childhood of experimentalism), and a corrupt, mystical, theurgical, pseudo-Platonism, which infected the rarest minds under the Stuart dynasty, the only not universal belief in witchcraft and apparitions, and the vindication of such monster follies by such men as Sir M. Hale, Glanville, Baxter, Henry More, and a host of others, are melancholy proofs of my position.³⁴

The failure of magic for religion lies in its potential for degeneration: Coleridge recognizes a lofty conception turned to the pursuit of gain. As Agrippa was deluded from natural magic into gold-making, the desire to make use of philosophy caused the degeneration of Roman religion:

The third period, that of the Romans, was devoted to the preparations for preserving, propagating, and realizing the labors of the preceding; to war, empire, law. To this we may refer the defect of all originality in the Latin poets and philosophers, on the one hand, and on the other, the predilection of the Romans for astrology, magic, divination in all its forms. It was the Roman instinct to appropriate by conquest and then give fixture by legislation. And it was the bewilderment and prematurity of the same instinct which restlessly impelled them to materialize the idea of the Greek philosophers, and to render them practical by superstitious uses.³⁵

After discoursing on the Romans in his Philosophical Lectures ("whatever was strange and magical they were all gone to worship, and the best purpose of their own polytheism of gods was to furnish jokes for their comic poets"), he turns to "that dangerous sect of Neoplatonism." In its belief that all religions are one,

we have to contemplate the strange and unnatural union of the abstrusest philosophy with the basest superstition.³⁶

Yet, without the practical designs of greed, natural magic contains truths that even the late Coleridge is willing to consider.

In The Statesman's Manual he speculates:

Who shall determine to what extent this reproductive imagination, unsophisticated by the will, and undistracted by intrusions from the senses, may or may not be concentrated and sublimed into foresight and presentiment? . . . Incredulity is but Credulity seen from behind, bowing and nodding assent to the Habitual and the fashionable.³⁷

In Table Talk Coleridge asserts

it is impossible to say whether an inner sense does not really exist in the mind, seldom developed, indeed, but which may have a power of presentiment . . . All the external senses have their correspondents in the mind; the eyes can see an object before it is distinctly apprehended; why may there not be a corresponding power in the soul? The power of prophecy might have been merely a spiritual excitation of the dormant faculty. Here you will observe that the Hebrew seers sometimes seem to have required music.³⁸

Somehow the facts of magic and its sympathies must be explained.

Coleridge finds these facts in themselves indisputable; by ascribing them to science he is able to keep them from mimicking

Christianity:

In the writings of Philo Judaeus not to mention some striking passages in Plato himself, I find references to secret arts in their mysteries which correspond so strangely and minutely to the facts which have been lately brought forward on the

continent [Mesmer and Franklin's Report] that means exist by which a mutual action of the imagination upon the nervous system and the nervous system upon the imagination will produce most extraordinary phenomena. For these phenomena have never been denied. The facts themselves cannot be disputed. The only question has been whether what we know of the human frame and the power of imagination is sufficient to explain the fact, the facts being the same.³⁹

Coleridge concludes that:

those arts which may be practiced among the meanest of men were among the main secrets of the Eclectics and constituted those pretenses to magic and to a divine communion which appear everywhere in their writings.⁴⁰

Not only does Coleridge insist on the difference between holy and base magic, but he forbids in religion elements of syncretism which are all-important for art. The confusion of thought and thing, spirit and matter--the One life within us and abroad--of his poetic years, he refutes in his late Philosophical Lectures. The materializing of philosophy results only in idolatry and folly. True though the intuitions of magic may be, the belief in them does not create permanent institutions conducive to virtue:

I am inclined to think that mere fancy, mere delusion, [theurgy] was not, but whatever it was, that it was worthless and in its nature of no true value or capable of originating any serviceable laws to mankind seems evident from its impermanence.⁴¹

Furthermore, there are two other (related) results of this confusion.

The neo-Platonic confounding of matter and spirit ends in a belief in instantaneous blessing and in a belief that the kingdom of heaven is attainable on earth.

Yet let me not say this without acknowledging that truths are to be found in those writers, and in my mind, awful truths . . . but I contend this is not the mode of beginning a truth nor the means of arriving at the very state it pretends to.⁴²

Theurgy deluded men into thinking knowledge was attainable. Plato and Christianity, however,

taught men to exert faculties that yet still there was a ground wanting, a something that could not be found within the sphere of their knowledge. Yet knowledge led men to ask for that ground, and this he placed in the supreme Being as the final result of all human effort and human reasoning.⁴³

Plotinus seems to deny this transcendence. He expects this supreme being "to appear in a blessed vision at once."⁴⁴ Asserting a magical, instantaneous knowledge, Plotinus assumes

There is a power which we may arrive at, of seeing certain things as facts, which neither our senses, nor our understanding, nor our reason, could give us the least conception of.⁴⁵

The achievement of heaven on earth, while the potential achievement of art, should not be the aim of religion:

The great object of the Eclectic philosophy was to persuade men Heaven was already practicable on earth; not to raise men up to God, but by pernicious practices and contrivances of rites to bring God down to man.⁴⁶

The attempt to become God-like (which again is one of the aims of the artist-creator as Coleridge sees him) is a "fearful superstition" when applied to the realm of religion:

The voice both of philosophy and religion teaches us man can become like his Maker only by imitating his goodness, only morally, but these men taught that there were modes by which physically man could be taken into the Godhead.⁴⁷

Exactly to the extent that these beliefs become incompatible with religion they are the aspiration of art. As Kubla Khan creates the Paradise it invokes in the instant that it speaks, it closes the gap between fallen nature and Paradise. "The character of superstition in all ages: the confounding of the spiritual with the bodily,"⁴⁸ is what Coleridge urges in his doctrine of the reconciliation of opposites.⁴⁹ Therefore, the instantaneousness of magic is appropriate to art insofar as it is inappropriate to religion.

Coleridge's unusual concern with the magicians in his Philosophical Lectures suggest the extent to which he had tried to come to terms with their instinctively sympathetic views, and certainly the extent to which he had studied them. His heroes--Plotinus, Bruno, Agrippa, Paracelsus and Boehme--faulty as their religious conclusions were, nevertheless had perceptions about the nature of reality that Coleridge found at least temporarily congenial. He translates Bruno's Hymn, and projected a biography of him.⁵⁰ He sees Paracelsus and Boehme as the inheritors of the Samothracian Mysteries.

The Samothracian mysteries continued in celebrity till some time after the commencement of the Christian era. But they gradually sank with the rest of the ancient system of mythology, to which in fact they did not properly belong. The peculiar

doctrines, however, were preserved in the memories of the initiated, and handed down by individuals. No doubt they were propagated in Europe, and it is not improbable that Paracelsus received many of his opinions from such persons, and I think a connection may be traced between him and Jacob Boehmen.⁵¹

This long tradition began with the fall of the Titans:

The lower or Titanic powers being subdued, chaos ceased, and creation began in the reign of the divinities of mind and love; but the chaotic gods still existed in the abyss, and the notion of evoking them was the origin, the idea, of the Greek necromancy.⁵²

The tradition persists in reaction to the prevalence of Aristotelianism:

Extremes are produced by extremes. The tyranny of Aristotle and the Aristotelian philosophy called forth the visionaries and the mystics. They abandoned all ideas, and their principle was that there was an universal life, that this life was distinguished by sympathies and antipathies, that this existed through all nature and that the proper mode of invoking nature was by attaining nature by means of simple substances. Out of this arose the fancy of the transmutation of metals. They held a hope of discovering a universal remedy, a power of keeping life in the highest state conceivable of energy; and on the same principle, carrying on the notion of life everywhere, and animating the universe, they presented all parts of the world as having symbolic meanings, that there was no shape in nature but had its correspondent in the heavens or under the earth, that it was merely a likeness to something else and capable of acting on some superior being; and in this manner they introduced, indeed, all that was most absurd in fancy, or imagination, but at the same time, still in direct opposition to the scholastic philosophy which drew man wholly back from his senses and from the outward world into the distinctions of his own thoughts.⁵³

The belief in the universal life, the hope of finding a power of keeping life in the highest state conceivable of energy, the search for

symbols and correspondences by means of which the inherent sympathies could be actuated: all these elements common to his definitions of magic and of art Coleridge notes with approval. The need to refute Aristotelianism explains to some degree at least, the prominence of the magicians in his lectures.

The heretical embodiment of spirit in matter, the materializing of philosophy, corresponds to the beneficent synthesis of thought and thing in his well-known vision of art as the reconciliation of opposites. Art as the mediator between thing and thought--comparable on the one hand to the Christian incarnation in The Word--is also comparable to the confusions of late Alexandrian and Renaissance magic, holy as its intentions may have been. In his "Essay of Art and Poesy" Coleridge's analyses are reminiscent of Reuchlin and Agrippa postulating language as the midpoint between heaven and earth:

art itself might be defined as of a middle quality between a thought and a thing, the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human. It is the figured language of thought.⁵⁴

In the "Essay on the principles of Genial Criticism," the assertions of mind which in his view poetry embodies, anticipate the omnipotence of mind Freud says is characteristic of magic:

The mystics meant the same, when they define beauty as the subjection of matter to spirit so as to be transformed into a symbol, in and through which the spirit reveals itself.⁵⁵

As magic arises in Coleridge's view from an assertion of power, so too does poetry. Behmen and Law suffered under "a peculiar species of madness" in which an "intense desire for power" seized hold of the mind;⁵⁶ Reuchlin exploited the "sound, figures and numbers by which external nature was to be controlled and governed";⁵⁷ "it was in the north, in Germany and in England, that the magic, the alchemistic want and desire to exercise power by obscure means, were principally noticed."⁵⁸ Art works in a similar fashion:

Art is the mediatrix between, and reconciler of, nature and man. It is, therefore, the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into everything which is the object of his contemplation.⁵⁹

Man's supernatural will is exercised in poetry more than in other arts:

In writing (visible signs and symbols) man tries to take his own thoughts and feelings and translate them into forms that are visible. He is creating symbols, like the forms we see in nature, and through them we learn about nature, but which are now being used to represent human thoughts and feelings.⁶⁰

Because language is an entirely human (therefore non-natural or supernatural) invention, "Poetry of all the arts, represents more of a reaching out on the part of the human mind, because color and sound are taken over from nature." Coleridge expands:

Poetry also is purely human; for all its materials are from the mind, and all its products are for the mind. But it is the apotheosis of the former state, in which by excitement of the associative

power passion itself imitates order, and the order resulting produces a pleasureable passion, and thus it elevates the mind by making its feelings the object of its reflexion.⁶¹

The self-reflexiveness of poetry--by, from and for the mind--calls on itself to elevate itself. Like spells, poems are self-fulfilling. Men invent language in order to call up power and then tell about this power. Coleridge makes this self-reflexiveness clear when he discusses (as we saw above) Sigge "the inventor of the Runic characters." In his "Magic of Odin [*Sigge*]" enumerates . . . the wonders he could perform by his songs, mingling the operations of magic with those powerful effects which poetry has long been known to produce." Sigge sings songs about the magical powers of his songs. Words celebrate other words.

Poetry is purely human. The supernatural will exerts itself over nature. Words impose their meanings and metamorphoses on things. "In our life alone does nature live."

Even in science where facts seemed to Coleridge particularly indisputable and awesome, the magicians imaginatively conceived the truths that science would later demonstrate. When Coleridge claimed even for scientific (and hence presumably inductive) discovery the pre-existence of an idea, he gives the example of alchemy:

Magicians and alchemists indulged themselves with these imaginings [*sq*] that certain indulgences became so vivid from hope that they

declared they were so, and afterwards many of them, I believe really believed it. But yet where the whole human faculties were called forth, and with amazing industry, something must come of it; and to the Alchemists we are indebted for chemistry as it now exists, a wonderful science I may call it, for it has transmuted into reality all the dreams of polytheism . . . So that which began in imagination (proceeding and wedding with common sense, and finally with science) has ended in the gratification of it.⁶²

Indeed, his lecture on Bacon follows naturally those on Bruno and Boehme because these two and the alchemists had prepared for science by looking to the outer world for symbols of the inner one, refusing to be bound by scholastic a priorisms. Imagination intuits truths instantly. "In the imagination of man exist the seeds of all moral and scientific improvement," Coleridge explains in his Course of Lectures, Lecture XI:

Chemistry was first alchemy, and out of astrology sprang astronomy. In the childhood of those sciences the imagination opened a way, and furnished materials, on which the ratiocinative powers in a maturer state operated with success.⁶³

Alchemy imagined the truths that chemistry later laboriously proved. Again, instantaneous vision arises in the sphere of the imagination, as if by magic. It works by "Intuition, a direct and immediate beholding."⁶⁴

Coleridge's hostility to magic in religion, therefore, is a function of its conferring of instantaneous un-earned blessing, a conferring which is the way of the imagination. In science, magic

intuits truths. It imagines them whole without testing them against facts. These intuitions of magic may eventually prove to be a correct vision of the universe. When science was limited only to the truly inspired, Behmen and Bruno investigated where conventional scientists did not have the imagination to go:

Therefore the true depth of science, and the penetration to the inmost centre, from which all the lines of knowledge diverge to their ever distant circumference, was abandoned to the illiterate and the simple, whom unstilled yearning and an original ebullieny of spirit had urged to the investigation of the indwelling and living ground of all things.⁶⁵

When Coleridge speaks of the magical power of the imagination in Biographia Literaria XIV, he does so intentionally, with the tradition of magical thought from Plotinus to Boehme at his back, and the echoes of the spells of his own magic poems filling his ears. He meant quite precisely that the imagination had magical power. The imagination synthesizes and reconciles, it is vital whereas objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead: "The original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms incidents and situations . . ." was itself an imposing of mind on nature, of the ideal world on actuality.⁶⁶ This imposing depends on the state of mind of the poet--passionate and indolent, ecstatic and originative--which allows Coleridge to say that to ask what a poem is is the same as asking the nature of a poet.⁶⁷ The magical power of the

imagination (with its implications of poet as magician and poems as spells) was present in his mind from early reading of Plotinus and Ficino, Bruno and Behmen, from the insights of Collins, Gray, Thomson and Young, and from his own intuitions of the transforming power of language over the world. Origination was supernatural, as Coleridge saw it. Despite his life-time investigation of imaginative power, he never failed to acknowledge that its exercise was a mystery. So mysterious was it, that it was almost a gift. It depended on a state of mind that the Greeks had already recognized as irrational, and perhaps divine. The Greek poetic frenzy was confirmed for Coleridge by his readings about primitive magicians. Powerful language arises only supernaturally when the mind of the magician poet gives evidence of its spontaneous freedom in a state of indolence. It then calls up forms and animates them with the "Midas touch of life and joy." The mind empowers the wind, and speaks to reorganize the world. Language in its most potent form gives life. Utterance, then, is the central event in Coleridge's magical poems, reproduced in the metre of the poems that are the utterance they describe. They assert the power over nature of the supernatural will.

Footnotes to Chapter IV

- ¹ Biographia Literaria, ed. George Watson (London and New York, 1965) chapter IX, pp. 79-80.
- ² Ibid., p. 81.
- ³ Ibid., p. 83.
- ⁴ "Lectures on Poesy or Art," Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, p. 210.
- ⁵ Letter to Godwin, September 22, 1800. Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. E. L. Griggs (Oxford, 1956), I, p. 626.
- ⁶ The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London, 1949), p. 201.
- ⁷ The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. E. H. Coleridge (London, 1960), p. 296.
- ⁸ The Table Talk and Opinions of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Coventry Patmore (London, 1917), Sept. 22, 1830, p. 131.
- ⁹ Cited in Selected Poetry and Prose of Coleridge, ed. Donald A. Stauffer (New York, 1951), p. xod.
- ¹⁰ Table Talk, p. 32.
- ¹¹ Letter to Gillman, October, 1825.
- ¹² A. H. Nethercot, The Road to Tryermaine (Chicago, 1939), p. 182.
- ¹³ Aids to Reflection in the Formation of a Manly Character, ed. James Marsh (Burlington, 1829), Aphorism VI, p. 59.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 84.
- ¹⁵ "Death and the Grounds of Belief in a Future State," Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. W. G. T. Shedd (New York, 1884), V, p. 441.
- ¹⁶ Shakespearean Criticism, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor (London, 1964), I, . . . 198. See also Biographia Literaria, Chapter XII.

- ¹⁷Shakespearean Criticism, p. 184.
- ¹⁸Shakespearean Criticism, p. 35.
- ¹⁹Shakespearean Criticism, p. 72.
- ²⁰The Poems, pp. 85-6.
- ²¹Shakespearean Criticism, p. 118.
- ²²Shakespearean Criticism, p. 119.
- ²³A. W. Schlegel, Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, trans. J. Black (London, 1846), p. 396.
- ²⁴William Hazlitt, "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays," The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P. P. Howe (London and Toronto, 1930-34), vol. I,
- ²⁵Lecture III, of the Course of Lectures of 1818, in The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. W. G. T. Shedd, (New York, 1884) IV, 250.
- ²⁶Coleridge anticipates this essay in The Biographia Literaria, chapter XIII. He writes: "Whatever more than this I shall think it fit to declare concerning the powers and privileges of the imagination in the present work will be found in the critical essay on the uses of the supernatural in poetry and the principles that regulate its introduction: which the reader will find prefixed to the poem of The Ancient Mariner," p. 167.
- ²⁸Complete Works, ed. Shedd, vol. IV, p. 232.
- ²⁹"On the Slave Trade," The Watchman, no. 4, Friday, March 25, 1796, Collected Works, ed. Shedd, pp. 134-139.
- ³⁰The Philosophical Lectures, p. 304 ff.
- ³¹Ibid., p. 296.
- ³²Ibid., p. 445.
- ³³Table Talk, March 18, 1832.
- ³⁴The Literary Remains, Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Henry Nelson Coleridge (London, 1832), Vol. III, p. 159.

- ³⁵ Philosophical Lectures, p. 222.
- ³⁷ Statesman's Manual, quotes in Philosophical Lectures, p. 50 note.
- ³⁸ Table Talk.
- ³⁹ Philosophical Lectures, p. 239.
- ⁴⁰ Idem.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 250.
- ⁴² Ibid., p. 244.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 241.
- ⁴⁴ Philosophical Lectures, p. 241.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 242.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 243.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 256.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 268.
- ⁴⁹ Biographia Literaria, XIV, p. 174. Shakespearean Criticism, p. 818.
- ⁵⁰ Philosophical Lectures, p. 325.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., p. 187-88.
- ⁵² Ibid., p. 186.
- ⁵³ Ibid., pp. 282-3.
- ⁵⁴ "On Poesy and Art," p. 212.
- ⁵⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "On the Principles of Genial Criticism" in Criticism: The Major Texts, ed. W. J. Bate (Cambridge, Mass., 1952) p. 371.
- ⁵⁶ Philosophical Lectures, p. 331.

- 57 Philosophical Lectures, p. 331.
- 58 Ibid., p. 300.
- 59 Ibid., p. 298.
- 60 "On Poesy or Art," p. 208.
- 61 Ibid., p. 209.
- 62 Ibid., p. 207.
- 63 Philosophical Lectures, pp. 283-4.
- 64 Course of Lectures, Lecture XII, .
- 65 "Principles of Genial Criticism," p. 373.
- 66 Biographia Literaria, IX, p. 87.
- 67 Ibid., p. 48-9.

CHAPTER V

Coleridge and The Potent Voice

In his philosophical theory, then, Coleridge saw the mind operating like a magician by imposing its power on the world; the poet attaining magical possession in order to create ex nihilo; and language itself approximating "the hot magic" of music. But we must return to the poems of his early years to see how his theories had been preceded by his practice. In the poems from 1790-1796 magic and all its variations are topoi for Coleridge. So congenial are these topoi to him that in moments of inactivity he often recurs to them almost unthinkingly, as if he were hoping that the mere mention of magic would strengthen his creative powers. Magical places conducive to poetry, Enchantress Muses, the Witch Imagination, Spells, and charms abound. They suggest not only that Coleridge was thinking of these notions (or depending on them) but also, to the extent that they progress, that Coleridge was developing magical techniques of verse which would culminate in his major poems, themselves decidedly magical.

Influenced by Comus and Il Penseroso, Gray's Descent of Odin, Thomson's Castle of Indolence, and Collins' Ode on the

Popular Superstitions, 32 out of 88 original (not translated) poems between 1791-6 at least mention the subject of magic. More often than not it occupies a central position in the development of the poem, usually as the poet grapples with the possibility for him of writing poetry at all. Coleridge discovers that his own readiness to write appears magically out of a state of apparent indolence: his words rise on their own when he does not strain after them.

We find in these poems the consistent connection of the ability to write with a condition of suspended energy: "the correspondent breeze" (directly from Plotinus or indirectly from Thomson) blows on and through the indolent poet. Although he observes the Circean magic of Luxury ("an Enchantress vile") in a poem of 1791 ("Happiness"), he has discovered by the following year the notions of creative magic that Collins, Morgann, and Young made available. Here the winds are asked to inspire a particular state of mind: "The Cloudless Azure of the Mind." The winds play on the inherent sympathies of the Plotinian Lyre, calm the soul and enchant the passion:

There let the lonely Cares respire
As small airs thrill the mourning Lyre
And teach the Soul her native Calm;
While Passion with a languid Eye
Hangs o'er the fall of Harmony
And drinks the sacred Balm.

He invokes the winds and their breezy Influence and declares that reason has its own high magic:

And oh! that Reason's voice might swell
 With whisper'd Airs and Holy Spell
 To rouse thy gentler Sense,
 As bending o'er the chilly bloom
 The morning wakes its soft Perfume
 With breezy Influence.

Magic here does not seduce, but gives gentle life; it rouses and wakes. Somehow, in less than a year, Coleridge has discovered a benevolent magic that operates in a magically attuned universe, calms the soul, and orders chaos.

The poet of the Spenserian "Song of the Pixies" (Summer, 1793), surrounded by Fancy's children, cultivates a receptive indolence. "Soothing witcheries" enchant him to write. Indolence, as for Thomson, is the progenitor of visions; Imagination thrives when left free in a Keatsian half-sleep; and while indolence does not permit the toil of form, it provides the dreams that will become poems by later witcheries. The young celebrants dance around the spirit of the wind and sing a hymn to the sun in a magical rite reminiscent of Ficino's hymns:

VI

Or through the mystic ringlets of the vale
 We flash our faery feet in gamesome prank;
 Or, silent-sandal'd pay our defter court,
 Circling the Spirit of the Western Gale,
 Where wearied with his flower-caressing sport,
 Supine he slumbers on a violet bank;
 Then with quaint music hymn the parting gleam.

Night is the "Sorceress of the Ebon Throne," "Mother of wildly working dreams." Dreams, Sorcery, and potential poetic power interweave.

In the "Effusion at Evening" (summer 1794) Coleridge's theory of Imagination as a magic power emerges. The first draft of the poem begins

Imagination, Mistress of my Love!
Where shall mine Eye thy Elfin haunt explore.

The haunt of imagination is elfin; for "imagination is always involved with the perception of supernatural life," as Coleridge observes in his criticism of Macbeth. The imagination takes on yet more august supernatural power in stanza two:

Aid, lovely Sorc'ress! aid the Poet's dream,
With faery wand O bid my Love arise,
The dewy brilliance dancing in her Eyes;
As erst she woke with soul-entrancing Mien
The thrill of Joy ecstatic yet serene.

The Imagination is a sorceress. Her wand conjures the beloved figure up; this vision in turn entrances the watching soul to a joy at once ecstatic and calm. Magical power fosters the poet's dream. In the second draft of the poem the magical elements are intensified. A new fourth stanza reads:

Spirits of Love! ye heard her name! Obey
The powerful spell, and to my haunt repair.
Whether on clust'ring pinions ye are there,
Where rich snows blossom on the Myrtle-trees,
Or with fond languishment around my fair,
Sigh in the loose luxuriance of her hair;
O heed the spell, and hither wing your way,
Like far-off music, voyaging the breeze!

The spirits inhabit flowering trees like birds, or sigh in the imagined girl's hair. They are compelled by the poet's spells. Coleridge, like the magician in Collins' poem, commands "the viewless forms

of air." The spirits are empowered by wind, they are heard as music, reviving once more the image of the Plotinian lyre as the embodiment of the magical universe.

Magic is not just a power without. It moves within.

O (have I sigh'd) were mine the wizard's rod,
Or mine the power of Proteus, changeful God!

Instead of commanding a sorceress to do his bidding at second hand, the poet would himself act the wizard's part. In an extended metamorphosis he would become a changeful God, and finally the wind itself. Possessed and indolent at once, "Poetry stares wildly eager in a noon-time dream." It rises unpredictably, like magic.

The connection of waking dream and a state of possession with magic and sorcery will return over and over as Coleridge continues to invoke powers he always feels have just abandoned him. The "Effusion at Evening," like so many others, summons the powers of wind or planet into the magician. The pattern of calling a power, then becoming himself the power, and granting his own wish, is already foreshadowed here. Coleridge, in begging to be the wizard, has been the wizard throughout, and the vision the poem represents is the response to the spell: the existence of the vision sent by wind proves the spell has worked.

Coleridge prizes four lines on magic so much that he used them twice. They appear in "Pantisocracy" (1794) and in his "Monody on the Death of Chatterton":

I seek a cottag'd dell
 Where Virtue calm with careless step may stray,
 And dancing to the moonlight roundelay,
 The wizard Passions weave an holy spell.¹

These lines are part of Coleridge's search for an enchanted ground ("tell me on what holy ground . . . " ²) which will be conducive to imagination. He foresees the banks of the Susquehanna as a paradise safe from "the shame and anguish of an evil day." The place, like Thomson's Castle of Indolence (we recall the Pantisocrats expected to farm the land for only two hours a day) will allow "Virtue Calm with careless step [to] stray." This calm is a prerequisite for poetic inspiration. And the magic dances in the following lines do not contradict the calm. For indolence and ecstasy have gone hand and hand in the preceding poems. The magical dances are intended to rouse the poetic powers of at least three poets in the community (Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey). Like Bacchantes, the three will dance in a circle and sing a song inspired by the moon. Spirits of Love will impel the intricately woven invocations--the Holy Spells--which are the poems. These self-fulfilling poems summon power and also witness to its presence. Poems are spells, the poets are themselves wizards and their magical dancing invokes wizardly passions.

The constellation of passion, peace and song and magical spells rules "To the Reverend W. J. Hort, while teaching a young Lady some song tunes on his Flute" (1796). This poem is a

maze of cross-conjurings and communications of power: Hort's music enchants Sara, Sara's music summons forms in Coleridge's mind; Coleridge's poems summon memories of Hort.

Hush! ye clamorous Cares! be mute!
 Again, dear Harmonist! again
 Thro' the hollow of thy flute
 Breathe that passion-warbled strain:
 Till Memory each form shall bring
 The loveliest of her shadowy throng;
 And Hope, that soars on sky-lark wing,
 Carol wild her gladdest song!

The Harmonist makes musical harmonies and also organizes a more universal harmony by blowing through his flute. He thereby rouses remembered forms. In stanza II Hort actually becomes a magician, and harmonist and magician are seen to be the same figure:

O skill'd with magic spell to roll
 The thrill tones, that concentrate the soul!
 While near thee sits the chaste-eyes Maiden mild;
 And bid her raise the Poet's kindred strain
 In soft impassion'd voice, correctly wild.

Here the music concentrates the soul as well as bringing envisioned forms to life. In concentrating the soul, magical music purifies it, centers it, and intensifies it. The listening soul is thus empowered to make its own similar magic, using words instead of musical notes. One magician can pass on his power to another. In stanza III Sara herself becomes the Harmonist, and Coleridge the lyre on which the winds of her flute notes play.

The Lyre becomes, of course, the subject lute of "The Eolian Harp." With the aeolian harp the poem introduces many other

magical notions: the Harp is the Protean vehicle that allows for a number of shifting tenors, ever expanding in their significance. Developed in this poem is not only the theory of the Plotinian and magical universe, but also the notion that magical sound transforms itself independently into poetry. This transformation takes place in a condition of indolence:

I have listen'd, til my working soul
Waked by those strains to thousand phantasies,
Absorb'd, hath ceas'd to listen!

The poet's emotional peace corresponds to the peace of the bean-field; as lover, he marries earth and heaven, and focusses in himself the love in the universe. Sympathies awaken spontaneously in his tranquil mind. "Wild and Various," his thoughts rise as if on their own power; the "witchery of sound" is "footless and wild." These melodies are "untam'd." The poet prepares himself to receive the influxes from the wind by attuning himself to the tranquillity of the universe around him. Like Hort, the poet is the universal Harmonist, and his mind is a magical Faery-land where anything can happen and music is everywhere potential. Because these magical sympathies and the view of the poet as the center of them are heretical, Sarah bids Coleridge "walk humbly with his God." These are "shapings of the unregenerate mind" because they are outcroppings of arrogant Renaissance theories about the central function of man the magician harmonizing nature. Manipulating the

world with words, magic attempts to make the "Incomprehensible" comprehensible, and yielding to these aspirations, Coleridge is wildered and sinful.

Coleridge cannot resist intruding magical themes into the most trivial poems. His friend Cottle is pictured plucking magical herbs, mild charms, to help him rise from his poetic mediocrity. As a friend, however, Cottle is "The Arch-Magician."

There's still some peril in free wishing--
Politeness is a licensed spell,
And you, dear Sir! the Arch-magician.

Free wishing becomes an important element in the Imagination's magical power: freedom is the gift it confers. In another trivial poem, Charles Lloyd and Coleridge climb a mountain, hoping to be waylaid by a witch-like muse. Her "witching charm" will capture one of them and enchant him. The very mountain has "holy sod"

Where Inspiration, his diviner strains
Low-murmuring, lay.

Lamb's interest in poetry, too, was magically inspired: as a babe Lamb was plunged into a magical fount:

Dear Charles! whilst yet thou wert a babe, I ween
That Genius plung'd thee in that wizard fount
Hight Castalie . . . Wash'd and sanctified to Poesy.

Coleridge recaptures Lamb with magic arrows of poetry ("Was there some magic in the Elfin's dart?/ Or did he strike my couch with wizard lance?") Lamb forages for magic herbs and weaves them

into a holy spell. He is advised to stand under a magic tree that makes music out of the wind.

Mrs. Robinson, too, is the recipient of magical poems, Coleridge's peculiar homage. In these she is praised for her magical skill. In "A Stranger Minstrel" the indolence that leads the soul to center itself, the summoning of forms, the spell and the magic song combine.

As Late on Skiddaw's mount I lay supine,
Midway th'ascent, in that repose divine
When the soul centred in the heart's recess
Hath quaff'd its fill of Nature's loveliness,

Coleridge, receptive to the free workings of his imagination, has a vision: "A Form within me rose, within me wrought/ With such strong magic that I cried aloud." The poet intones a spell to the mountain to make that form a reality:

'Thou ancient Skiddaw by thy helm of cloud,
And by thy many-colour'd chasms deep,
And by their shadows that for ever sleep,
By yon small flaky mists that love to creep
Along the edges of those spots of light,
Those sunny islands on thy smooth green height,
And by yon shepherds with their sheep,
And dogs and boys, a gladsome crowd,
That rush e'en now with clamour loud
Sudden from forth thy topmost cloud,
And by this laugh, and by this tear,
I would, old Skiddaw, she were here!
A lady of sweet song is she,
Here soft blue eye was made for thee!
O ancient Skiddaw, by this tear,
I would, I would that she were here!

The poet conjures up the form of Mrs. Robinson. Invoking by all that he can see (and thus summoning their forms for us), repeating

his wish, he receives an answer immediately. The spell works. The mountain answers by describing the grandeur of Mrs. Robinson's own "magic song":

But many a stranger in my height
 Hath sung to me her magic song,
 Sending forth his ecstasy
 In her divinest melody,
 And hence I know her soul is free,
 She is where'er she wills to be,
 Unfetter'd by mortality!

Mrs. Robinson's song witnesses to her freedom. Her imagination transports her anywhere she wishes. In another poem to her, "The Snowdrop," she is portrayed not only as free, but as life-giving. By writing about a snowdrop she saves it from winter:

Since Laura murmur'd o'er thy leaves
The potent sorceries of song,
 To thee, meek Flowret! gentler gales
 And cloudless skies belong.

Mrs. Robinson is a "mild Enchantress," in "eager Sympathy" with the snowdrop. "She whisper'd low her witching rhymes." She gains power from a "magic Slumber," and is a Harper whose music conjures memories and "hovers half-perceived." The poetess is a magician who gives life to nature. She attunes its sympathies. Her songs are potent sorceries, spells, and witching rhymes. The methods of poetry are those of magic.

Moreover, as many poems have testified, they operate best in magical areas; in holy mounts and Helicons the imagination thrives. Coleridge makes his theory of magically inspired places

explicit in his note to "Lewti, or the Circassian Love Chant"

(April, 1798):

Amidst images of war and woe, amidst scenes of carnage and horror of devastation and dismay, it may afford the mind a temporary relief to wander to the magic haunts of the Muses, to bowers and fountains which the despoiling powers of war have never visited, and where the lover pours forth his complaint, or receives the recompense of his constancy. The whole of the subsequent Love Chant is in a warm and impassioned strain.

Hence there is holy ground from which the potential magician starts radiating his sympathies. Like the cottaged dell in Pantisocracy, these are removed from war and woe and thus permit a visionary indolence. Out of the indolence possible in the magic haunts of the Muses rise forms and visions spontaneously.

Although he begged to be himself the wizard or Protean God, Coleridge up to this time habitually speaks of the magical Enchantress as a huge figure outside of him: the Muse is a witch, the Imagination an Enchantress. He begins to see it less as an allegorical figure outside the mind, and more as a faculty of the mind: one part of the mind is essentially magic. In "The Destiny of Nations" he discusses his rudimentary ideas of Imagination which he here calls Fancy. He declares it is the power to people air with invisible beings. It creates; it does not imitate the reports of the senses:

For Fancy is the power
That first unsensualises the dark mind,
Giving it new delights; and bids it swell

With wild activity; and peopling air,
 By wild obscure fears of Beings invisible,
 Emancipates it from the grosser thrall
 Of present impulse, teaching Self-control,
 Till Superstition with unconscious hand
 Seat Reason on her throne.

Like Hazlitt's sympathetic imagination, Fancy allows the mind to escape the thralls of present impulse and create something new. It ceases to be passive to circumstances; liberated from the "tyranny of the eye," it originates.

It is important that with this idea of imagination's freedom, Coleridge should turn to the Lapland wizard, whose descent into the ocean allows him to envision otherwise invisible supernatural forms. Lines 98-121 (and note) suggest Coleridge's close knowledge of the wizard's power to fathom the "penetralium of the mystery" and the power of language to release the danger and majesty of the elements:

Or if the Greenland Wizard in strange trance
 Pierces the untravelled realms of Ocean's bed
 Over the abysm, even to that utermost cave
 By mis-shaped prodigies beleaguere'd, such
 As Earth n'er bred, nor Air, nor the upper Sea:
 Where dwells the Fury Form, whose unheard name
 With eager eye, pale cheek, suspended breath,
 And lips half-opening with the dread of sound,
 Unsleeping silence guards worn out with fear
 Lest haply 'scaping on some treacherous blast
 The fateful word let slip the Elements
 And frenzy Nature. Yet the wizard her,
 Arm'd with Tomgarsuck's power, the Spirit of Good,
 Forces to unchain the foodful progeny
 Of the Ocean stream;--thence thro' the realm of Souls.

The wizard is at once a Promethean culture-hero and a visionary, giving himself over to ecstasy, risking his bodily life to discover

hidden truths. The release is accomplished through the enchantments of the dread name. Voicing the word would "frenzy Nature." The beneficent magic of the magician overcomes the malicious magic of the Fury Form. The opposition of Holy Orphean Spell and evil Circean spell can be explained by reference to a comic poem written the same year (1796):

And ah! that Truth some holy spell might lend
To lure thy Wanderer from the Syren's power. (p. 152)

From a stately allegorical figure in the Effusion (the Sorceress Imagination), the magical power of the Imagination has taken on savage and mythical dimensions: the wizard fathoms the "abysm" in order to redeem nature by the "fateful word" that can "let slip the Elements." This enrichment of the notion of the Enchantress Muse with an understanding of the primitive wizard-redeemer is the result of romantic synthesis: the Greek irrational joins with the new study of anthropology.

Enchantress Muse and wizard-redeemer become one in the romantic magus. He acts in a magical place and exercises freedom in bringing the universe to harmony through love. He has this power by virtue of the fateful word. The magus, then, has his origin in Alexandrian and Renaissance tradition (examined in chapter III) deepened and made universal by studies of primitive culture. Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," "Kubla Khan" and "Dejection" draw on these traditions for their peculiar force.

Just how intensely Coleridge pursued the theme of the magician (not to speak yet of magical form) is apparent in his plans for a long poem on the magician Michael Scott. He revealed these plans at great length in The Table Talk of July 25, 1832. His long-standing jealousy of Goethe is painfully obvious; whether we should believe Coleridge was originating or plagiarizing here is a difficult question:

Before I had ever seen any part of Goethe's Faust, though, of course, when I was familiar enough with Marlowe's, I conceived and drew up the plan of a work, a drama, which was to be, to my mind, what the Faust was to Goethe's. My Faust was old Michael Scott; a much better and more likely original than Faust. He appeared in the midst of his college of devoted disciples, enthusiastic, ebullient, shedding around him bright surmises of discoveries fully perfected in after times, and inculcating the study of nature and its secrets as the pathway to the acquisition of power. He did not love knowledge for itself--for its own exceeding great reward--but in order to be powerful. This poison-speech infected his mind from the beginning.³

Coleridge's Michael is imprisoned and grows gloomy and desperate, until Coleridge begins to tempt him: "accordingly to witchcraft Michael turns with all his soul." Michael raises the devil, and in a torment realizes that it is he who is being commanded, not he who commands. Although the elements of plot are similar (even to an Agatha--Margaret--whom Michael tries to "ruin") Coleridge criticizes the motivation of Faust, which his own Michael would have corrected:

The intended theme of the Faust is the consequences of a misology, or hatred and depreciation of knowledge, caused by an originally intense thirst for knowledge

baffled. But a love of knowledge for itself, and for pure ends, would never produce such a misology; but only a love of it for base and unworthy purposes. There is neither causation nor progression in the Faust; he is a readymade conjurer from the very beginning; the incredulous odi is felt from the first line.⁴

From this long passage in Table Talk, then, it is evident that one of Coleridge's major projected works was to have been a narrative poem on the life of the great magician, Michael Scott. The long poem on magic was to hold the central place in Coleridge's literary career that Faust held in Goethe's. Along with the projected Hymns to the Elements and projected analysis of ~~B~~ohme's system, he planned a biography of Giordano Bruno, too.⁵ Thus the appearances of the theme of magic in Coleridge's minor poems up to 1796 are not random. They not only form, together, a cogent theory of the relation of Plotinian harmony, indolence and the instantaneous summoning of vision. But they also warn the reader of the many thoughts about magic that lie beneath the surface of the minor poems.

Turning now from the thematic appearances of magic as a metaphor for poetic power, we find Coleridge adopting the very forms of the magical spell. For him the magical spell is a prototype for poetic form. The words of the poem as a whole create as they unwind: in form and proposed effect the spell becomes an analogy for the poem. And the poet who utters the spell not only communicates with a magical universe as we have seen, but becomes in-

deed its transforming magician. Already in the poems we have seen "The Effusion" suggested that the poem itself was a spell that called up the forms that then populated the poem. But in writing "Ode to the Departing Year," Coleridge's thoughts about the poem as spell become more deliberate. Bombastic as its spells are, this Ode reveals how persistently Coleridge was elaborating his thoughts about magic and how his experiments in spell form prepare for the multiple spells of the poems of the following year.

The magical themes of earlier poems are all here, forecasting the later ones. First, indolence allows the poet to participate in universal harmonies, and thereby to have visions:

Spirit who sweepest the wild Harp of Time!
 It is most hard, with an untroubled ear
 Thy dark inwoven harmonies, to hear!
 Yet mine eye fix'd on Heaven's unchanging clime
 Long had I listen'd, free from mortal fear,
 With inward stillness, and a bowed mind;
 When lo! its folds far waving on the wind,
 I saw the train of the Departing Year!
 Starting from my silent sadness
 Then with no unholy madness,
 Ere yet the enter'd cloud foreclos'd my sight,
 I raised the impetuous song, and solemniz'd its flight.

The poet's inward stillness has permitted him to hear the Harp of Time and to follow its dark inwoven harmonies. Second, this indolence leads to enthusiasm. In a state of "silent sadness" he is overcome with a Platonic "holy madness," which rises in his freed mind like a divine cloud. It engulfs him. Finally, the poet

begins to sing a song--sudden, impulsive and passionate; the song (stanza II) conjures up the forms of the year:

Hither, in perplexed dance,
 Ye Woes! ye young-eyed Joys! advance!
 By Time's wild harp, and by the hand
 Whose indefatigable sweep
 Raises its fateful strings from sleep,
 I bid you haste, a mix'd tumultuous band!
 From every private bower,
 And each domestic hearth,
 Haste for one solemn hour;
 And with a loud and yet a louder voice,
 O'er Nature struggling in portentous birth,
 Weep and rejoice!
 Still echoes the dread Name that o'er the earth
 Let slip the storm, and woke the brood of Hell:
 And now advance in saintly Jubilee
 Justice and Truth! They too have heard the spell
 They too obey thy name, divinest Liberty!

By the harp and by the divine hand that move over it, the poet commands the viewless forms of air. Here, of course, is the familiar conjunction of Plotinian lute with a magician's power. "By" typically begins conjurations; repetitions (Haste, Haste) and double attributes are also typical. Noteworthy, too, is the recurrence of trochaic tetrameter, heavily accented, mixed with iambic pentameter. For trochaic tetrameter is the metre of Macbeth's and The Tempest's spells.

With an increasingly frenzied voice, the poet celebrates the struggles of nature. Here the dread name Liberty serves the same function as the wizard's "fated word" in "Destiny of Nations": as the Greenland wizard's "dread word" let "slip the Elements," this

"dread name" liberty "let slip the storm and woke the brood of hell."
 Casting both a holy and a siren spell, it releases the powers of
 the abyss, but also summons a saintly jubilee. The word "liberty"
 is a spell in its own right, and at the same time the whole stanza
 is the poet's spell to the subjects of his own poem. Hags and
 Daemon Queens respond to it, and dance fiendishly about.

A second spell is voiced by the Spirit of the Earth.

'Thou in stormy blackness throning
 Love and uncreated Light,
 By the Earth's unsoled groaning,
 Seize thy terrors, Arm of might!
 By Peace with proffer'd insult scared,
 Masked Hate and envying Scorn!
 By years of Havoc yet unborn!
 And Hunger's bosom to the frost-winds bared!
 But chief by Afric's wrongs,
 Strange, horrible, and foul!
 By what deep guilt belongs
 To the deaf Synod, 'full of gifts and lies!'
 By Wealth's insensate laugh! by Torture's howl!
 Avenger, rise!
 For ever shall the thankless Island scowl,
 Her quiver full, and with unbroken bow?
 Speak! from thy storm-black Heaven O speak aloud!
 And on the darkling foe
 Open thine eye of fire from some uncertain cloud!
 O dart the flash! O rise and deal the blow!
 The Past to thee, to thee the Future cries!
 Hark! how wide Nature joins her groans below!
 Rise, God of Nature! rise.'

Once again, strongly accented trochaic tetrameter emphasizes the
 act of conjuring. The construction (By . . . By . . . By) indicates
 that the poet is calling on all his powers. At the poet's command,
 nature struggles in portentous birth. The spell "liberty" is causing
 nature to take on a new form. Magical words originate new ways

of being. Here the poet-wizard (like the Greenland wizard of "Destiny of Nations") has the power to transform nations and Nature, too. Thus, Coleridge writes "The Ode to the Departing Year" in a state of holy madness. In the poem he summons the vicious forms of the past and conjures up a renovated future. His language can remake the world. "Hark!" he exclaims,

how wide nature joins her groan below!

Instantly, the god of nature is seen to rise. In this process of free wishing, the spell has accomplished itself:

'twas on no earthly shore
My soul beheld thy Vision! (62-3)

The poet, having worked this magic, returns to the real world, as the Greenland wizard returned from the abysm.

The vision the poet has summoned magically at such risk to himself haunts him as the Ancient Mariner's vision haunts him:

The voice had ceas'd, the Vision fled:
Yet still I gasp'd 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'
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!

Like the Ancient Mariner, the poet of this Ode must speak of what he has seen in order to break its spell. Speaking relieves the physiological effect on him. He must struggle out of the vision of the past, urge England to a new future by cursing her failures. Not

only does he conjure visions, but the visions in turn bewitch him and compel him to speak.

Now the magical techniques of Coleridge's "Ode to the Departing Year" point directly forward toward the techniques of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The circularity of the tale ever obsessively to be told (its end always anticipating its beginning), the physical disabilities of vision, the use of the vision of terror to remake the existing world--all these motifs in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" recall the passage on the Greenland Wizard and "Ode to the Departing Year." For these poems are poems about the magical origination of things out of words and the holy madness that invades the magician who thus uses his magical words.

As we approach "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" it should not be forgotten that two months after the December 31, 1796 publication of his magical "Ode to the Departing Year," Coleridge had begun work on a magical play. Between March and June 1797, he had written two and a half acts of Osorio. Here again, encouraged by the Elizabethan and Jacobean tradition, he relied on magical materials. Alvar is disguised as a magician; magic potions, magic herbs and a magic picture dominate the metamorphoses of the plot. The hero not only mutters spells, but also disenchants his corrupt brother by his Protean disguise. The heroine is sensitive, and therefore susceptible to magic:

She is a lone enthusiast, sensitive,
 Shivers, and cannot keep the tears in her eye.
 Such ones do love the marvellous too well
 Not to believe it. We will wind her up
 With a strange music.

Alvar too is a lone enthusiast, as the wizard in the mountains he is "he that can bring the dead to life again." Significantly, the link between his magical power to bring the dead to life and the magical power of the artist is not overlooked:

You are a painter--one of many fancies--
 You can call up past deeds and make them live
 On the blank canvas, and each little herb,
 That grows on mountain bleak, or tangled forest,
 You've learned to name.

As the enthusiastic poet of "The Ode to the Departing Year" called up past deeds and made them live by his magical spells, this magician gives inanimate things life by naming them.

There's a strange power in weeds
 When a few odd prayers have been muttered o'er them
 Then they work miracles!

Alvar uses magic to rouse himself to action. He conjures his own spirit:

Hear, sweet spirit! hear the spell
 Lest a blacker charm compel!
 So shall the midnight breezes swell
 With thy deep long-lingering knell.
 And at evening evermore
 In a chapel on the shore
 Shall the chanters sad and saintly,
 Doleful masses chant for thee,
 Miserere, Domine!

Mixed with elements of Christian chant, this spell invokes power from the breezes. Magic confers instantaneous strength, whereas

Hamlet (Alvar's model) had to wait the length of a play. Magic likewise takes the place of the play within a play; Alvar catches the conscience of his brother by a magic picture. "I will uncover all concealed things," he proclaims, as he probes the secret crimes of the moonlit chasm.

I dare no longer
Be present at these lawless mysteries,
This dark provoking of the hidden powers.

the loved Maria is made to say in the revised Remorse, but Alvar is consistently interested in his own magical role and in his power over nature.

Ye too split
The ice-mount, and with fragments many and huge,
Tempest ~~the~~ new-thaw'd sea, whose sudden gulphs
Suck in, perchance, some Lapland wizard's skiff.

The hero is outcast, artist and wizard. He brings those who are supposed dead to life, and reasserts his rightful claims by magical disguise. The play's reliance on magical changes may indeed be the cause of its failure. The instantaneous transformations of dramatic situations by magical words is difficult on stage. For there the means of transformation must be visible, the changes, credible. However, it is important to note that magic as a way of transforming dramatic character became a central extravagance in Byron's supernatural dramas. Coleridge's discovery was, once again, influential. His own genius, and his theory of magic, were not for the stage, but for the great poems that followed Osorio by only a

few months. Moreover, many preoccupations of that play (as Coleman O. Parsons perceived in 1950) anticipate the preoccupation of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner:⁷ the violent crime, remorse, alternate forms of penance and prayer; the interest in the matter of magic and the use of the spell form.

No one can be unprepared for seeing the Rime as magical. The adjective "magical" has been used innumerable times to describe the uncanny effect of the poem on readers. Sir Maurice Bowra, for one, speaks repeatedly of the "magic of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "the enchantment of his poem," "the magical associations of sound," "the magical combinations," "the uncharted spell-bound world," its "magical surprise."⁸ J. L. Lowes' chapter on the artistry of the poem is entitled "The Magical Synthesis."⁹ I am suggesting here that in his many poems about magic Coleridge was purposely developing a magical theory of language. This theory of language went hand in hand with an august notion of the poet as magician. The poet's work could change the existing state of things. Thus, the Rime combines many of the discoveries about magic that Coleridge made in his magical poems and his magical play. Although the poem has been exhaustively interpreted (most notably by Warren in 1946, by Tillyard in 1948, by House in 1953 and by Beer in 1959)¹⁰ its continuing interest for commentators is apparent in the controversy surrounding it. Here I want merely to indicate the presence of deliberate theories of magic in the poem as a way of

accounting for the nature of its power.

There are two major spells in The Rime, and many subsidiary ones. The first is of course the spell the Mariner casts on the Wedding Guest by his mesmeric eye and powerful tale; the second is the spell the Mariner undergoes on his voyage, the spell that begins to break at the end of Part IV as he moves under the aegis of grace and angelic power, and that finally does snap in Part V line 442. Nevertheless, the spell, like the visionary madness that came over the Harmonist of "The Ode to the Departing Year," recurs. It suddenly overtakes him in all its anguish. To break it he must enchant yet another listener till that one, too, becomes like the Wedding Guest, sadder and wiser.

In Part I the words and eye of the Mariner capture the Wedding Guest, causing him to forget the world of getting and begetting and "Be present at these lawless mysteries, This dark provoking of the hidden powers":

The Wedding-Guest is spell-bound by the eye
of the old seafaring man, and constrained to
hear his tale.

The Mariner holds him first with his skinny hand and then, the Wedding Guest in his power, with his glittering eye alone. The Wedding Guest is powerless as a three year's child, bereft of will, as susceptible to supernatural influx as he was before he joined the business of society:

The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

Not yet entirely enthralled, the Wedding Guest hears the bassoon,
but finally is subdued; he is magically compelled to listen:

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear.

The meter races, the rhyme begins massing (45-62), and the
Albatross flies into the tale.

Whatever its dense symbolism, it is a magic bird, with un-
natural powers. Natal daemon or Christian soul, the albatross
moves the winds or stills them, and the Mariner's boat responds
on its own. The killing of the Albatross is a signal for the Elements
to rise up in an independent dance, metrically reconstructed like the
magical dance of Macbeth's hags:

About, about, in real and rout
The death-fires danced at night:
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

Part III introduces yet another magically impelled boat that moves
"Without a breeze, without a tide," As the Nightmare Life-in-
Death wins, she exults in another witch-like chant:

The game is done, I've won, I've won!
Quoth she and whistles thrice.

The whole visible universe darkens at her words:

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out,
At one stride comes the dark.

Under her power the men inexplicably "drop down dead."

The Mariner relates "his horrible penance," his soul "in agony." Disembodied whispers visit him; "the curse in a dead man's eye" has power over him;

The charmed water burnt away
A still and awful red.

Then, because of his agony in this magical hell, a higher and holier miracle intervenes. Coleridge was "deeply aware of the sin from which we are rescued, by a mystery which matches the mystery of evil, by a supernatural grace."¹¹ The grace of love brings sleep and dreams. "The spell begins to break," and "the upper air bursts into life" because the mariner unconsciously blesses the "happy living things." "The Ancient Mariner is both a Love-poem, in the profoundest sense of love, and a vindication of the mystery (and the richness of the mystery) of a universe beyond the reach of human understanding."¹²

Now again Coleridge presents the opposition between fearful and holy magic, and suggests the first is necessary to the second. Within the mariner's tale the magical bird casts a spell on the water, the mariner breaks it and an opposite power--Death-in-Life--casts her spell and darkens the universe. The Mariner himself is miraculously lifted out of the anguish of this power by the grace of his own heart. By love he confers life.

In Part V the ship begins to move "by the invocation of the guardian saint," and how from magical spell the sounds of the poem

become sweet (352-372); the angel's song replaces the "reel and rout." The sun sways strangely; angelic voices speak; "the Mariner hath been cast into a trance" as his boat again defies the laws of ordinary motion.

His penance has been not only the death of his soul and the consequent disruption of nature, but the power over him of the dead men's eyes, so similar to the Mariner's own power over the Wedding-Guest.

All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was ~~sapt~~; once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen--

As the spell of the Spectral Woman had bewitched the elements, the spell of these dead men's eyes had distorted the Mariner's powers of perception. He saw as they made him see, as the Wedding-Guest, in turn, sees and hears what the Mariner commands.

The universe is animate; it responds to the state of the human soul. Filled with magical Plotinian sympathies, the universe dies with the sin of the heart and comes to life by means of the love of the Harmonist, who (like the Lapland Wizard) plunges into the abyss of Nightmare Life-in-Death and returns to tell his story. He returns to society after his private discovery of sorrow and

wisdom. Part VI, silent and seraphic, leads into Part VII, the community of the church, but only because the private agonies of wizard enrich the social complacency of the priest. Spell is transformed into prayer because there was horrible private penance. "Religion is social, magic is or may be individual."¹³ A social religion can be meaningful only if it preserves the knowledge of horror. The mariner who has privately experienced the magical power of suffering is under its spell for ever, and must tell his tale in order to break the spell on him. This is true, too, of the poet of "The Ode to the Departing Year," who, having magically summoned the dread vision, is forced magically by its effect on him to speak out. The Mariner is "wrenched" until he speaks:

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

Since then at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me;
To him my tale I teach.

Having been granted holy madness the Mariner has seen the vision, and it has enthralled him. To escape its thrall he in turn must enthrall another. For this purpose he has strange power of speech, brought on by the recurrent agony. The transmission of these powers is based on magical Plotinian sympathies. These sympathies are

animated by the love of the human heart; the spell of outer powers and human powers is reciprocal. Everything is connected. The magic, active in a state of near possession, has its effect through language (here the tale) or directly through the mesmeric eye. The mariner's own act sets the spell in motion, and nature turns dark through his eyes; his own unconscious act of blessing releases the spell and sanctifies nature. "The burden of breathing life into external nature falls wholly upon the creative imagination."¹⁴

Here to the Plotinian notion of interdependent sympathies, we must add the Boehmean concept of origination. For Coleridge was concerned with acts that are true beginnings, in that they are not consequences of other acts. The power of origination is exclusively human and not an attribute of nature which depends on cause and effect. Here the man with "strange power of speech" acts instantaneously, miraculously: his acts are not explained by his environment. His crime and his sudden love are mysterious. "The Ancient Mariner is a poem on the mystery and the richness of the mystery." What is unique about human beings is exactly this supernatural will which originates mysterious acts or thoughts quite outside a chain of natural cause and effect. The instantaneousness of these unmotivated acts is magic, without visible means.

Even Coleridge's refutation of Mrs. Barbauld emphasizes the magical quality of this origination: condemning the overtness of the moral, Coleridge would have preferred his Rime to resemble a tale in the Arabian Nights.

It ought to have had no more moral than the Arabian Nights' tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well and throwing the shells aside, and lo! a genie starts up and says he must kill the aforesaid merchant because one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son.¹⁵

His description of the Arab tossing his date pits centers on its inexplicable magic: action as miracle. The Arabian Nights (which Wordsworth said "defrauds the day") appears again and again in Coleridge's writings, often in connection with Don Quixote. Although he sometimes derides The Arabian Nights, in general he seems to see its metamorphoses as important analogues to the ways of the imagination, very unlike the ways of overt moralization.

To the mariner's sudden crime and sudden love we must add two more unmotivated acts: first, his biting his arm and crying out after drinking his blood; and second, the analogous physical agony which grips him until he finds (by an inexplicable sense) his listener, again finding strange power of speech, as before from his own blood. Both times his own sudden speech, rising out of physical possession, releases the spell. The power of speech, tuned then to the changes of the heart, determines the malevolence or benevolence of the world. Language makes it live, as God's Word gave life. "There is a God and the creativity of the human mind is an analogue of divine creation."¹⁶ God works by magic and so does man. Coleridge combines the ideas of Boehme, Bruno and Plotinus in the mechanisms of the poem.

Two sudden, unmotivated acts in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

result in utterances that revive the world. "Kubla Khan," too, concerns ecstasies that result in origination through language.

Humphrey House and, following him, Patricia Adair, have analysed "Kubla Khan" as a poem "not of frustration and failure" (lamented by Schneider, Suther and Bostetter) but of "ecstasy in imaginative fulfillment."¹⁷ House remarks the parallel between Kubla's power to create out of a desert, and the power of the poet (of the third stanza) to build the dome by means of music. Indeed, the poet has created Kubla and the dome; his wish to build has been granted retroactively. House, discerning the wildness of the poet and the fear he inspires, declares him to be in a state of "poetic frenzy":

in Part Two the poet who has been able to realize the fusion of pleasure and sacredness is himself regarded as a holy or sacred person, a seer, acquainted with the undivided life. And the part is clinched by the emphatic and final word Paradise.¹⁸

This important conception Adair expands. She links this poetic frenzy to Coleridge's interest in Bacchus and explores the Dionysian divine madness in relation to the Platonic. Bacchus, an image for the "energies of nature,"

was for Coleridge an image of the power of the unconscious, the ideas and impulses which rise unbidden from the depths and can be both a terror and an inspiration.¹⁹

From Thomas Taylor's Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries (1791) as well as from the Ion itself Coleridge might have adapted the floating

hair, and the milk and honey which accompany divine madness.

House summarises the essential similarity between Kubla and the poet: both impose their power over inert matter:

It is Kubla's decree that matters, for it images the power of man over his environment and the fact that man makes his Paradise for himself. Just as the whole poem is about poetic creation at the imaginative level, so, within the work of the imagination, occurs the creativeness of man at the ethical and practical levels.²⁰

House sees the links between the poet's retroactive creation of Paradise and Kubla's own. For "Kubla Khan" witnesses to the power of mind over world, and particularly to the power of speech. Kubla's decree (instantaneously obeyed) and the poet's music (the symphony and song elaborately retrieved from art, transposed into the words of the foregoing poem) have the same magical effect: words make words.

Moreover, the notion of magical language making the desert bloom appears prominently in Young's Conjectures on Original Composition, as we have seen in the last chapter. There the poet's pen is the wizard's wand which brings to life. The wand-pen makes a paradise where there was only a desert. Young picks up the metaphor later, describing the writer-wizard who transports men to exotic paradises and keeps them under his power.

This magical power of language to conjure into life is part of a continuum of Coleridge's thoughts about poetry. The system of ecstasy and creative language that Coleridge constructs in "Kubla Khan" he has developed in early poems and in his Rime. The poet

is magically entranced until he speaks out his "wild and whirling words." House and Adair see this possession in its Greek form--the Platonic enthusiasm. (Just how magical this possession is Jane Harrison explains in her chapter on Kouretes.²¹ Plotinus sees that the Platonic enthusiasm that leads to art is magically induced. To the Greek, we must add primitive magical trances that Collins and Gray investigated, and that Coleridge himself embodied in the Lapland Wizard. The Poet as originator, universal Harmonist and spell-binder has led naturally to the notion of poem as spell.

In "Christabel," too, prevails an interlocking system of differing magical sympathies and the psychic powers activated by them. Here, within the framework of a Gothic tale of horror, is again the recognition of Plotinian interrelations throughout the universe and the magical power over them of changes in the human heart. Here, too, the man with strange power of speech attempts to speak out and magically reattune his world. Bard Bracy, by his words and music, is a late development of Coleridge's Lapland Wizard. With his harp he recreates Ficino, Bruno or Agrippa calling down powers and activating them by his powerful love. He retrieves the truth from dream. Bard Bracy's role might conceivably have been a large one as the poem unfolded. By summoning the dream-like forms and readjusting the jangled strings of his universe, he might indeed have become an unacknowledged legislator of the world. His words might have created order out of the chaos Geraldine brought.

First, however, it is essential to observe how the various levels of consciousness in the animated world of the poem respond one to the other spontaneously. And to see, further, that these responses are inexplicable. It is a Blotinian world of magic sympathies. There is no way of rationalizing these responses; they work by magic. The mastif bitch, the owls, and the fire sense changes in this system of sympathies; dreams are more truthful than waking. The transfer of psychic strength is all below the level of rational consciousness, accompanied by dark questions only half-answered:

What makes her in the wood so late?
 Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
 What sees she there?
 How camst thou here?
 Whither they went I cannot tell.

In this murky atmosphere Geraldine and the hovering spirit of Christabel's mother fight for magical influence over Christabel. One activation of power follows another. The first spell is Christabel's own. She calls on the spirit of her mother:

O mother dear that thou were here!

The spirit immediately rises. But Geraldine's words are more potent, and banish her:

Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!
 I have power to bid thee flee.

Staring at the bodiless dead, Geraldine cries with "Hollow voice":

Off woman, Off! This hour is mine . . .
 Though thou her guardian spirit be,
 Off, woman off! 'tis given to me.

The appearance and disappearance of the spirit correspond to the commands, and witness to their instantaneous power. Between "I have power to bid thee flee" and "'tis given to me" lies the accomplishment of the spell.

This transfer of magical power has visited Geraldine with the madness familiar from the poet of "Ode to the Departing Year" and from the Mariner and the Kubla poet. Christabel sees the frenzy departing:

Dear lady! it has wildered you!
 The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
 And faintly said 'tis over now!

Again the wild-flower wine she drank.
 Her fair large eye 'gan glitter bright.

Geraldine's diabolism continues as she responds perversely to the reciprocal love between Christabel and the upper sky: she will sap Christabel of her power to activate harmonies by cancelling this love. Touching Christabel with her eery bosom, she pronounces her spell:

'In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
 Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
 Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,
 This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow;
 But vainly thou warrest,
 For this is alone in
 Thy power to declare,
 That in the dim forest
 Thou hearst a low moaning,
 And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair;
 And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
 To shield her and shelter her from the damp air.'

Geraldine's unholy power insinuates itself to keep Christabel from speaking. Her spell imposes silence. Christabel, lover and harmonizer of the upper air, is cancelled as potential wizard, and from now on her powers abate. Like the strong oak, she is sapped by the parasitical mistletoe. Invaded by evil, she can no longer reconcile her world by speaking and loving: "A star has set, a star hath risen." Charles Tomlinson observes here "the mind's failure to guide the will."

For Christabel, bewitched, suffers simultaneously with the disintegration of personality the disintegration of will . . . Evil works upon her and by the time she feels possessed by it and 'with forced unconscious sympathy' perhaps even becoming evil herself, she has lost her own free will.

The loss of the free will that distinguishes men from nature is for Coleridge an abdication of rightful power. Christabel is silenced by the spell upon her, whereas the Ancient Mariner, subdued by the spell of Death-in-Life, rises from his trance and asserts his human power of speech. Bard Bracy is thus the closest parallel to the Mariner speaking and revitalizing his world, while Christabel (without the supernatural will), parallels the Wedding Guest. Both have failed to partake of the supernatural. As the Wedding-Guest is forced to listen like a three year's child, Christabel, too, is powerless and without the distinctly supernatural will:

And see! the lady Christabel,
Gathers herself from out her trance;
Her limbs relax, her countenance

Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids
 Close o'er her eyes' and tears she sheds--
 Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
 And oft the while she seems to smile
 As infants at a sudden light!

Part II discloses that this evil magic has the power to distort Sir Leoline's perception also. Spell-bound, he misreads evil for good and good for evil; he sees reptiles in one form which he should recognize in another. Unable to speak out, Christabel only adds to his distorted perception by making snake-like sounds. She may know

The saints will aid if men will call. . .
 For the blue sky bends over all,

but enchanted to silence she does not make the Mariner's prodigious effort of drinking his own blood to speak and break the spell.

Passively she sighs

'All will yet be well.'
 I ween, she had no power to tell
 Aught else, so mighty was the spell.

For release, she must depend on the bard's Orphic song. His "music sweet" will clear the wood of "aught unholy." Christabel falls; Bard Bracy must **reanimate the world**.

Geraldine's mesmeric eye passes her own snake like form to Christabel and throws her into a trance:

But Christabel in dizzy trance
 Stumbling on the unsteady ground
 Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound

And thus she stood, in dizzy trance,
 Still picturing that look askance
 With forced unconscious sympathy

Christabel speaks her last words without power and is spurned, the father choosing to "dally with wrong":

And when the trance was o'er the mad
 Paused awhile, and inly prayed:
 Then falling at the Baron's feet
 'By my mother's soul do I entreat
 That thou this woman send away!
 She said; and more she could not say:
 For what she knew she could not tell,
 O'er mastered by the mighty spell.

Language has failed her, and love too. She is transformed into what she abhors. And the strange power of speech must be passed to the Bard, who senses in dream the universal exchanges of potency. He can transform nature to harmony by his "saintly song."

Thus the world of "Christabel" is a world of Plotinian sympathies. Love and the power of speech are central to its harmony. "Love is the prime magician," "the magician weds Heaven and Earth" through the mediation of language; "the word is half-way between a thought and a thing."²³ Christabel (who has loved the world) is sapped of her powers by an evil spell, and the Harmonist must take over where she has failed.

Fogle has suggested ways in which Coleridge's whole poem is an act of magical conjuring. Noting that "Reality is the imagination of God, whereas poetry and art are the imagination of man," he comments on the vividness of the scenes in Christabel: We see the scenes, but, he says,

It would be better to say that they appear before us suddenly as if by magic, with the magician sometimes visibly directing our attention from close by, and sometimes orally expressing them in broken exclamations or lulling musical cadences.

The poem, Fogle goes on, has the effect of "immediacy," of "hypnotism":

This hypnotic quality is partly suggested by the subject matter. To talk of trances, dreams, spells, and of the hypnotic power of the eye, is a step toward inducing their effects.²⁴

Suddenness, immediacy, spontaneity and also material speed, account, then, for our "willing suspension of disbelief" in all Coleridge's magical poems. Our heard knowledge of transformations and mysterious transfers of power suggests processes no one could ever see or prove, unless the metre itself were racing to frighten the reader with suggestions of these hidden potencies. The invasion of spell metre into all Coleridge's great ballad verse draws on reminiscences of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, Dr. Faustus, Macbeth, The Tempest, Midsummer Night's Dream, Comus, Jonson's Masque of Queens. The metrical conventions of the spell developed in Renaissance drama and after help to explain the fiendish urgency of the Great Poems. For Coleridge combined his abstruse research into Neo-Platonic magic, into primitive wizards and into the transfers of psychic power by mesmerism with his knowledge of Shakespearian metre and his resentful half-recognition that Goethe, too, had adapted this magical metre for use in Faust. In addition, Coleridge's

criticisms of Scott's metre and reliance on catalogues of mysterious names, explain that Coleridge had indeed worked hard to understand the true elements of magical poems.²⁵ He knew that his skill in them was unique.

Coleridge's remarks on metre in Biographia Literaria (chapter XVIII, pp. 206-207) reflect his faith in the balance of the voluntary and the involuntary, of sense and nonsense, so evident in the rhythm of the magical spell. At once lulling and rousing, metre in general (and particularly that metre which aims to enchant the listener) combines two countervailing elements: "that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion" and the effect of metre "to increase the vivacity and susceptibility both of the general feelings and of the attention." Metre balances the compulsion to move with the check to motion. "There must be not only a partnership, but a union; an interpenetration of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose."

But the assertion of will toward which the spell is directed is couched paradoxically in visceral rhythms. The heavily-accented trochaic tetrameter of the spell is most nearly akin to those mindless forms: the nonsense rhyme, the nursery rhyme, the counting-out rhyme of popular Germanic tradition. Syntax is frequently pulverized for metre's sake. "The supervening act of the will and judgement" is folled by the insistence and speed of the sound. And thus in this union of head and heart, the involuntary rhythm (the heart-beat) rules.

Sound overwhelms sense, and enthralls it as if by a spell. The most voluntary act of the mind--the bewitchment of another--is enacted through an involuntary and primitive medium.

Essential to this spell-metre are trochaic tetrameter, end-stopped lines, dense, often internal rhymes, alliteration, repetition, abrupt syntactical units of thought, and frequent parataxis suggesting a primitive mysteriousness about the connections among phenomena. This heavily accented metre (often initiated in imperative verbs) moves vigorously, discouraging the listener from contemplative pause. Thus, when transformations are invoked, the listener does not question them. He recognizes the invocations as instantaneously granted.

Metrical elements from the conventional spells should be paralleled with their recurrence in Coleridge to see how these elements favor speed, mystery and credible transformations:

Be not afraid of every stranger,
 Start not aside at every danger,
 Things that seem are not the same;
 Blow a blast at every fame,
 For when one flame of fire goes out,
 Then comes your wishes well about.

(George Peele, Old Wive's Tale)

What thou seest when thou dost wake,
 Do it for thy true-love take,
 Love and languish for his sake.
 Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
 Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
 In thy eye that shall appear
 When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.
 Wake when some vile thing is near.

(Midsummer Night's Dream II:ii)

Round about the cauldron go;
 In the poison'd entrails throw.
 Toad, that under cold stone
 Days and nights has thirty-one
 Sweltered venom sleeping got
 Boil thou first in th' charmed pot.

(Macbeth IV:1)

Thrice toss these oaken ashes in the air,
 Thrice sit thou mute in this enchanted chair,
 Then thrice three times tie up this true love's knot,
 And murmur soft, She will, or she will not.

(Campion, from The Third and Fourth
 Book of Airs, c. 1677)

Listen and appear to us
 In name of great Oceanus,
 By the earth-~~shaking~~ Neptune's mace,
 And Tethys' grave majestic pace,
 By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
 And the Carpathian wizard's hook,
 By scaly Triton's winding shell,
 And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell

.
 By all the nymphs that nightly dance
 Upon the streams with wily glance,
 Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head.

(Comus, 867-885)

Return, my Lubberkin, these ditties hear;
 Spells, will I try, and spells shall ease my care:
 With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
 And turn me thrice around, around, around, around.

(John Gay, Shepherd's Week: Thursday;
 The Spell)

Facing to the northern clime
 Thrice he traced the runic rhyme;
 Thrice pronounced in accents dread
 The thrilling verse that wakes the dead.
 Till from out the hollow ground
 Prophetess my spell . . .

(Gray, The Descent of Odin)

Hither, from the recent tomb,
 From the prison's direr gloom,
 From Distempler's midnight anguish;
 Hither in perplexed dance,
 Ye Woes, ye young-eyed Joys, advance:

(Coleridge, "Ode to the Departing Year")

Thou in stormy blackness throning
 Love and uncreated Light,
 By the Earth's unsolaced groaning
 Seize thy terrors, Arm of might!

(Ibid.)

Spirits hear what spirits tell:
 'Twill make a holiday in Hell.

No! no! no!

Myself, I named him once below,
 And all the souls, that damned be,
 Leaped up at once in anarchy . . .

(Coleridge, "Fire, Famine, Slaughter")

About, about, in reel and rout,
 The death-fires danced at night;
 The water like a witch's oils,
 Burnt green and blue and white.

(The Rime of the Ancient Mariner)

Off, wandering mother, peak and pine!
 Off, woman, off! this hour is mine!

("Christabel")

And all who heard should see them there,
 And all should cry Beware! Beware!
 His flashing eyes! his floating hair!
 Weave a circle round him thrice,
 And close your eyes with holy dread,
 For he on honey-dew hath fed,
 And drunk the milk of Paradise.

("Kubla Khan")

Usually Coleridge modifies trochaic tetrameter with other metre. Anapestic tetrameter varies the scheme in Geraldine's spell ("In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell"). And the narrative passages of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner often relax into ballad metre until the next intensification of spell elements. In his later self-parody, "The Rash-Conjurer," Coleridge adapts the latin spell metre, the abracadabra of Dr. Faustus' latin invocations. Dr. Faustus, trying

"the uttermost magic can perform," begins to invoke Mephistopheles with the words

Sint mihi Dei Acherontis propitii!
 Valest numen triplex Iehovae!
 Ignei, aerii, aquataui, spiritus, saceta! (I:iii)

The Rash Conjuror opens "with a cabbalistic invocation of Jehova, obscure in the original Hebrew" as the notes tell us:

Strong spirit-bidding sounds!
 With deep and hollow voice,
 Twixt Hope and Dread,
 Seven Time I said
 Tohva Mitzoveh
 Vohoen!
 And up came an imp. in the shape of a
 Pea-hen!²⁶

These are variations.

But in general Coleridge is drawing on the conventions of a long and consistent "metrical ~~contact~~."²⁷ The conventions of the spell announce themselves. They proclaim their heritage and alert the reader to its peculiar atmosphere. Ingredients in brews and descriptions of ritual dances form alternately noun or verb clusters. These combine to create an emphatic rhyme whose metrical urgency is characterized by a predominance of trochaic tetrameter. To the regular ballad Coleridge adds the typical spell elements: internal rhyme; endstopped lines; and a corrosive-sounding diction, full of fricatives, plosives and spirants. The effect is dual: on the one hand the reader is rushed along, suspending his disbelief. On the other hand, the packed texture of the spell forces the reader or listener to hear the spell as a powerful unit. The reader is forced

to focus on the palpable existence of the spell and recognize the power of individual words to generate energy. On the other hand, the spell asserts itself on the memory as a thing. It has in its very solidity escaped the bounds of mere transitory language. It is no longer a description of an external thing, but becomes a memorable talisman, fearful to repeat. Words have become things, and living things, too. We should also remember that parataxis is a primitive element. For all Coleridge's emphasis on articulation, he often uses the lack of articulation as a way of pointing out the inadequacy of a civilized logical view of the sources of poetic power. Again, the heavy accentualism (part of his programme in "Christabel") counteracts his interest in subtleties of metre, by recalling the primitive origins of poetic inspiration. He even turns his classical periodic sentences into spells (as in "The Ode to the Departing Year": By . . . By . . . By . . . I) and converts a technique that is normally a guarantee of order to a technique promoting suspense and menace. The reader awaits the resolution of this periodic sentence not so much with delight at mastered anticipation as with dread.

Coleridge emphasizes the elements of poetry. A spell is almost a paradigm of poetic technique, if not, at its worst (as in Scott), a parody. In a spell can be found in dense form examples of alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia. Nor is there anything disguised about the metre. All the resources--the big guns--are being concentrated in an effort to force language to one's attention. Natural,

easy, sliding speech it is not. One is forced to the conclusion that the intricate dense clump of words is autonomous. It has a life of its own. It steps out from the more relaxed narration surrounding it, and (so to speak) beats its chest in verbal assertiveness: "I am language; I have power."

The sense of urgency rises in the prevalence of commands. The imperative verb begins the line on a strong accent. With little room for hesitation and introspection, these commands indicate the authority of the spell, and suggest that its power is unquestionable. Strong opening accent, coupled with the corrosiveness of diction mentioned above, create, then, an aura of compulsion--compulsion to believe in the powers invoked; compulsion to believe that what is invoked will come to pass, in spite of the skepticism of one's daily, visible world. Confronted with this urgent, corrosive authoritative language--compressed into a unit--the reader must begin to believe there is more to the universe than what the eye can see. He begins to succumb to implications of an invisible world of hidden sympathies and antipathies. With all the aural resources of language aimed at him, he begins to listen with fear to the animate powers.

This is the effect of the spell. Its method, as we have seen, is paradoxical. While it focusses attention on the words as a living potent unit, it nevertheless manages to achieve speed. Impeded by end-stopped lines, heavy accents, and corrosive diction, it still races in its representation of a frenzied conjuring dance. Accelerated

by alliteration, internal rhyme, and the short line, the spell picks up speed at the repetitions. These repetitions are particularly ominous refrains. Unlike the refrains of the ballad, the refrain of the spell gains its force in the context of magic: the formula, reiterated, becomes more certain to succeed. The repetition of words, inherently powerful, gives yet more power over the victim. The refrain suggest that a magical operation is indeed being performed, and the more it is repeated, the more inexorable it seems. Thus, diction, metre, alliteration, assonance, rhyme, repetition, and trochaic tetrameter join to form a dense spell, a paradigm of the power of poetry. Much more, therefore, is at work in the spell convention than the mere mention of magic and trance. The spell convention-- a metrical emblem--enlists our credulity. This credulity is carried on into supernatural realms by the rapid accentual metre.

Coleridge even extends his theory of poetic magic to music: Metre in Coleridge's theories claims a visceral effect: the very rhythm of the metre causes the excitement that makes poets write. The effect of metre is irrational, and at the same time strangely calming.²⁸ Music, too, mysterious and mesmeric, affected Coleridge physically as a "hot magic."²⁹ One of the few English Romantics who thought about music at all, Coleridge found its effect, like that of magical metre, to be mesmeric and vitalizing. Thus it should not be surprising that in The Notebooks he plans an Ode to Music featuring a Magician:

The Ode on Music/Magician calling back the
Spirits of the Departed--their voices the music/
& the other moral turns to this Thought--³⁰

We conclude, therefore, that without at all times proposing a spell, Coleridge adapts the principles of the spell metre to impel his supernatural poems. Furthermore, he adapts it to suggest that his act of creating imaginative visions out of nothing but the mystery of speech is itself a form of wizardly conjuration.

It is possible, moreover, to suggest that in other poems beside the dream poems Coleridge was deliberately exploiting the spell tradition, even without using its peculiar metre. In the light of Ficino's magical hymns and Coleridge's own projected Hymns to the Elements, the Dejection Ode can be seen as a Hymn to the wind. It magically summons the wind's power to become the poetic breath. It calls the wind to transfer its power onto the poet. As "The Song of the Pixies," too, had embodied a mystic dance to the Spirits of the Gale, The Dejection Ode accomplishes itself in the very act of calling for help. The form of The Dejection Ode is thus the paradigm for Shelley's Ode to the West Wind.

Appealing once again in the first stanza to the complex traditional associations of The Aeolian Lute (so familiar in Coleridge's magical poems), the poet of Dejection establishes an atmosphere of phantoms and prophecies. The first two sentences (Donald Davie has remarked the emotional complexity of the first)³¹ foretell the power of winds to rouse the night, and also to rouse the music of the Aeolian Lute.

"This Aeolian Lute" is the self-deprecating poet himself who sees his poem as so far only a dull, sobbing draft. "For lo!" reveals that a change in perception is taking place as he speaks. By the third sentence Coleridge is not only foretelling, but is himself invoking a change, thereby transforming his own lines from "moans" to "gusts" as the lines approximate the winds he calls for:

And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
 And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
 Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
 And sent my soul abroad,
 Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
 Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

Once more, "even now" indicates the process that is going on as the poem calls for what it becomes. The sounds of the night shower driving loud and fast, raise (and rouse). They empower his soul. They confer life and motion.

Stanza II depicts the sympathies and apparent interactions of the Plotinian universe. From this universe the poet feels himself separate:

And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
 That give away their motion to the stars;
 Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
 Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
 Yon crescent moon, as fixed as if it grew
 In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
 I see them all so excellently fair,
 I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

Motion intermingles: the sea and the sky become one another; the stars and clouds share their changes: they participate in a magical system of universal analogies (a system that recurs in the first

sonnet of Shelley's Ode, too).

The poet, however, does not participate in these analogies. His genial spirits which should confer life and passion to the world have failed. The human spirit should animate. Inner forms are fountains that flow over outer ones. "In our life alone does nature live." The analogies of stanza II then were only appearances and optical illusions; they were not vital because the imaginative eye had not yet conferred life. Human love, when active, encourages the marriage of heaven and earth in Nature; human hate means the disintegration of nature. As in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, man is the Brunoesque magician who confers unity on outer forms by means of love and speech. "Things fall apart" when the center, man, does not hold. The universe is dark without the soul's enveloping light. And without either love or light, the power of human speech (which by naming things gave things existence) ceases. Passion and life revive nature through the medium of language:

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!

The purpose of The Dejection Ode as a whole is to summon this potent voice. The potent voice (inspired by the rising wind) will bring the universe to life. It represents the Divine act of creation accomplished at every moment. As the agency of the Primary Imagination--the Divine I Am--it is both being and the manifestations of being, *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*:

Life and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower.

The potent voice, the strong music in the soul, is itself beautiful and at the same time makes beauty "a beautiful and beauty-making power." It weds man to Nature and brings nature to a new birth.

Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud--
We in ourselves rejoice!

From this potent voice comes all the coherence of the revived world:

And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echo of that voice,
All colors a suffusion of that light.

Moreover, in the same way that the Ancient Mariner's animating actions and words were signs of entirely originaive power, this sweet and potent voice is of the soul's "own birth." It rises out of nowhere. It is new. It creates by magic. Imagination is a spirit that has power to shape the world. It is the expression of the supernaturalism of the will: autonomous, unmotivated creativity. What it decrees, is.

Having examined in stanzas II-V the theoretical relationship of the potent voice and the world it brings to life, Coleridge returns in stanza VII to the immediate situation of stanza I. He applies his complex meditation to the relation of the rousing wind to the words of his poem. He discovers that while he has been spurring his spirit on to a recognition of its power and responsibility, the wind he called for in line 15 has risen. In fact, it "long has raved unnoticed." The "coming on of rain and squally blast" has coincided with the sending of his soul abroad. The intervening stanzas have not only extended the meditation to a view of the soul's divine

originating power, but has urged the soul to move out from itself and exercise this power, giving life through language, here the poem.

The coincidence of the rising of the wind and the rising of his own poem suggests a puzzle. Does the wind the poet called up in line 15 impel the poem, or does the poem conjure the wind? Do the magic words--the potent voice--command the modulations of the wind or has the wind dictated the modulations of the poem? Does the wind account for the varieties of poetic genre and mood, or do the various perceptions that occasion the various poems interpret the winds as well?

Stanzas II, III, IV, V declare that it is language that gives life (as well as light) to the world. Thus, not only did the poet-magician invoke the wind to begin with (line 15), but his epics or tender lays (his poems' potent voices) command the subsequent changes in the wind also. The wind is a "might Poet, e'en to frenzy bold" because a real poet's voice is "of all sweet sounds the life and element." The magic language of the poet creates the universe and harmonizes it. The poet is (like Rev. Hort on the Flute) the Harmonist.

The potent voice of "The Dejection Ode," the "strange power of speech" of "The Ancient Mariner," the "saintly song" of "Christabel," the "decree" and "the symphony and song" of "Kubla Khan," are all assertions of the magical power of language to create

out of nothing, to make the desert bloom. The poet is a magician who brings the dead to life. It is necessary to support this claim with a reminder of Agrippa's' clear notion of powerful words and to remember the revival of this notion in Francis Barrett's 1803 The Magus.

Coleridge exploits the oriental and primitive tradition which equated intense language with magic. The language which originated things and forced a belief in its vitality on the listener was the language of spells, partaking of their technique. Coleridge's use of this technique to conjure and summon supports his interest in origination through magical imagination--an origination at once spontaneous and total, that applied in religion to the desire for attainable earthly paradises, and in science to intuitions of yet unproven truths. In poetry alone was the origination valid.

Footnotes to Chapter V

¹ All quotations from The Collected Poems of Coleridge, ed. E. H. Coleridge (London, 1960), p. 31.

² Ibid., p. 71.

³ Table Talk, p. 58.

⁴ Ibid., p. 60.

⁶ "Osorio," Complete Poetical Works, ed. E. H. Coleridge. (Oxford, 1962), Vol. II, pp. 518-598.

⁷ Coleman O. Parsons, "The Mariner and the Albatross," VQR, XXVI (1959), 102-123.

⁸ C. M. Bowra, The Romantic Imagination (Cambridge, 1949), p. 49.

⁹ John Livingston Lowes, The Road to Xanadu (Boston, 1927), p. 68.

¹⁰ Robert Penn Warren, "A Poem of Pure Imagination," in Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (New York, 1946). E. M. Tillyard, "Coleridge: 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' 1798," Five Poems, 1470-1870 (London, 1948), Humphry House, "The Ancient Mariner," Coleridge (London, 1953), and J. B. Beer, Coleridge the Visionary (New York, 1952).

¹¹ D. G. James, The Romantic Comedy (New York, 1948), p. 171.

¹² Geoffrey Yarlott, Coleridge and the Abyssinian Maid (London, 1962), p. 155.

¹³ Jane Harrison, see note 38 of chapter III, p. xdi.

¹⁴ Patricia M. Adair, The Waking Dream: A Study of Coleridge's Poetry (New York, 1968), p. 78. See also James Volant Baker, The Sacred River (Louisiana, 1957), p. 68. "The fons et origo of Coleridge's vitalistic and dynamic theory of imagination is to be sought in Plato's Ion, The theory of inspiration as divine drunkenness, coupled with Plotinus."

¹⁵ Table Talk, p. 116.

¹⁶Warren, p. 84.

¹⁷House, p. 115. See also Elizabeth Schneider, Coleridge, Opium, and Kubla Khan (Chicago, 1953), Marshall Suther, Visions of Xanadu (New York, 1956), and E. E. Bostetter, The Romantic Ventriloquists: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron (Seattle, 1963).

¹⁸House, p. 119.

¹⁹Mair, p. 127.

²⁰House, p. 121.

²¹Jane Harrison, pp. 76-78.

²²Charles Tomlinson, "Christabel,"

²³We have seen Plotinus, Bruno and Coleridge, respectively, making these pronouncements.

²⁴R. H. Fogle, The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), pp. 138-9.

²⁵Coleridge wrote Wordsworth a comical letter on Scott's magical hocus pocus, Collected Letters, ed. Griggs, vol. III, pp. 290-6.

²⁶The poem is part of Coleridge's thoughts on the dangers of magic in religion. It is preceded in The Notebooks by a note ending an essay "Self-Love in Religion":

O magical sympathetic anima, principum hylarchichum!
rationes spermaticae!
O formidable words! and O Man! thou marvellous beast-angel!
thou ambitious beggar! How pompously dost thou trick out
thy very ignorance with such glorious disguises, that
thou mayest seem to hide in order to worship it.

The reminiscences of Pico's Oration and Hamlet's adaptation of it are obvious.

²⁷John Hollander formulated the notion of the "metrical contract" in his essay "Blake and the Metrical Contract," From Sensibility to Romanticism, ed. Frederick A. Hilles and Harold Bloom (New York, 1965), 293-311.

²⁸For Coleridge's very interesting theories of metre, see particularly Biographia Literaria, chapters XVII and XVIII.

29 Quoted in Albert Gérard, L'Idée romantique de la Poesie en Angleterre: Etudes sur la théorie de la Poesie chez Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats et Shelley (Paris, 1955), p. 214.

30 The Notebooks, entry 1346, 8-81.

31 Donald Davie, Articulate Energy (London, 1955), p. 69.

CHAPTER VI

Shelley and the Enchantments of Reform

In the second generation of Romantics, it is Shelley who best embodies the main tradition of Coleridgean magic. Although Keats gives La Belle Dame, Glaucos and Apollonius magical power, magic seems for him to embellish atmosphere rather than dictate practice.¹ It does not arise from a concern with the power of language over things; indeed, Keats' reverence for sensuous things approaches Wordsworth's own. But Shelley thinks consistently and deliberately in magical terms. Five years old at the first publication of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, he seems to rise drenched out of its waters. Its magically propelled boat speeds through "Queen Mab," "Prince Athanase," "Alastor," "Revolt of Islam," "The Daemon of the World," "Prometheus Unbound," "The Witch of Atlas," and "Epipsychidion." Its ice, its wind, and above all, its "strange power of speech" drift through Shelley's poems. In 1814, he, Claire Claremont, and Mary read the poem sleeplessly as they prepared for their own exile. In addition, "Christabel's" imagery of parasites and serpents, and "Kubla Khan's" domes and

and caverns join the ubiquitous influence of The Ancient Mariner to support Neville Rogers' claim that "Coleridge, as far as sheer imagination was concerned, may have influenced [Shelley] more subtly and powerfully than could ever effectively be demonstrated in the cold light of critical research."² It is the contention of this chapter that the subtlety and power of Coleridge's influence came in part from his identification of magical techniques with poetry. Not only a reading of The Ancient Mariner, but also a reading of Coleridge's early poems might have demonstrated for him the thesis that language was a spell, especially to a reader who was independently a devotee of the occult.

It is unlikely that reading Coleridge had originally sparked Shelley's interest in the Neoplatonists and the magicians, even though Coleridge's poems may have suggested the application of these readings to a theory and practice of poetry. There is every evidence to suggest that Shelley was enthralled by this reading in his early adolescence, much as Coleridge himself had been. The similarities between their early educations are indeed striking. Newman Ivy White describes Shelley at Syon House, aged twelve, at a period of life when Coleridge also read in occult lore:

Ranging from the physical to the metaphysical, he absorbed the scientific reveries of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus with eager enthusiasm for new sensation. He sought out the lore of magic and witchcraft, and learned incantations for raising ghosts and devils . . . Once at Eton he stole forth at midnight fearfully intent on raising

a ghost; he repeated his incantation, drinking three times from a skull, and when no ghost appeared he concluded that the fault lay in his magic formula.³

Andre Maurois tells two anecdotes of Shelley's fascination with magicians and their ritual of incantation:

Percy delighted in clothing with mystery the everyday objects of life. There was no hole in the old walls into which he did not thrust a stick in search for secret passages. In the attics he had discovered a locked room. Here, said he, lived an old alchemist with a long beard, the terrible Cornelius Agrippa. When a noise was heard in the attic, it was Cornelius upsetting his lamp. During a whole week the Shelley family worked in the garden, digging out a summer shelter for Cornelius.⁴

Maurois shows that these interests did not cease at Eton:

At Eton, having drawn a circle on the ground, and set fire to some alcohol in a saucer, which enveloped him in its bluish flame, he began his incantations: "Demons of the air, and of the fire . . ." "What on earth are you doing, Shelley?" said his master, the solemn and magnificent Bethel, interrupting him one day: "Please sir, I'm raising the devil."⁵

Thus Shelley at Eton, as at Syon House, had firmly in his imagination the formulae and intention of the magical spell and used them to call up imagined and fabulous beings. He seemed even then to trust in the powers of words to compel things.

A. M. D. Hughes, in The Nascent Mind of Shelley, sees the shadow of Dr. Lind behind these incantations. Lind was Shelley's tutor. As Hughes says,

Dr. James Lind frightened the good folk of Windsor, who were shy of calling him in and 'thought him a better conjurer than physician.' We learn from

Hogg that he was interested in demonology; and that may explain Hogg's extraordinary tale that in Shelley's time Lind had come to bear a grudge against George the Third, and used to curse the King with a comminatory ritual; and this was the ritual used by Shelley to curse his father . . . Possibly the old scholar had a relish for maledictory formulas, as his pupil had for all sorts of cabalistic words.⁶

Finally Shelley himself explains his early preoccupation with magic at the same time as he adjures it, proclaiming new allegiance to Godwin:

I was haunted with a passion for the wildest and most extravagant romances. Ancient books of Chemistry and Magic were perused with an enthusiasm of wonder, almost amounting to belief . . . It is now a period of more than two years since first I saw your inestimable book on "Political Justice"; it opened to my mind fresh and more extensive views; it materially influenced my character, and I rose from its perusal a wiser and a better man. I was no longer the votary of romance; till then I had existed in an ideal world. . . .⁷

But this whole-hearted allegiance to Godwin was momentary. Shelley returned to his interest in magic as Ross Woodman explains in his Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley. Woodman sees always behind Shelley the reformer, Shelley the mythographer. He notices the importance of magic for Shelley not only in the period before the first enthusiasm for Godwin, but in the period after Godwin as well:

The occult tradition to which he had been introduced by Taylor, Newton, and Peacock had supplanted Shelley's earlier rationalism. Under their influence, Shelley, as early as 1813, had returned to his study of 'ancient books of chemistry and magic' which even at Oxford he had 'perused with an enthusiasm of wonder almost amounting to belief.'⁸

Moreover, it is interesting to wonder if even Godwin was as alien to magic as Political Justice might suggest. Godwin's romance St. Leon inspired the Rosicrucianism of Shelley's gothic St. Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian. Godwin's own book on The Lives of the Necromancers appeared in 1830.⁹ While this volume shares its hostility to magic with The Prelude and "Peter Bell" (as we saw in Chapter I), it at least bears witness to a curiosity about magic which might have made that lore a subject of conversation or debate in the genial years before the elopement. So the subject of magic was current not only in the circles of John Frank Newton and Francis Barrett, but also perhaps in the curious menage of Godwin.

In short, whether at home with his sisters, at Syon House, at Eton, or with Dr. Lind--even perhaps with Godwin--Shelley manifested his concern with magic. And it is accordingly not surprising to find his early literary attempts replete with mutterings and incantations and the magical transfers of psychic power.

It may be interesting to note a few examples. The Wandering Jew (written with his cousin and school friend Tom Medwin in 1810, while they were still at Eton) sports no fewer than three scenes of magical conjuration. Victorio, on the verge of marrying Rosa, confesses to her that he is actually three thousand years old, that he is Ahasuerus, that he is gifted with potent arts by means of which he can penetrate the secrets of being.

I pierce with Intellectual eye
 Into each hidden mystery,
 I penetrate the fertile wound
 Of nature; I produce to light
 The secrets of the teeming earth,
 And give unseen embryos birth:
 The past, the present, and to come,
 Float in review before my sight;
 To me is known the magic spell
 To summon e'en the prince of Hell,
 Awed by the cross upon my head,
 His friends would obey my mandate dread
 To twilight change the blaze of noon,
 And stain with spots of blood the moon.
 But that an interposing hand
 Restrain my potent arts, my else supreme command.¹⁰

Anasuerus narrates his magical activities at length:

Oft I invoke the fiends of Hell,
 And summeach in dire array--
 I know they dare not disobey
 My stern, my powerful spell

 I marked a circle round my form;
 About me sacred relics spread,
 The reliques of magicians dead,
 And potent incantations read . . .
 I waited their event.

Twas then I seized a magic wand,
 The wand by an enchanter given,
 And deep dyed in his heart's red blood.
 I raised the wand in my trembling hand,
 And pointed Hell's mark at the zenith of heaven.

A superhuman sound
 Broke faintly on the listening ear
 In wildest accents I summoned the dead.

Prefaced by epigraphs from Macbeth and The Eumenides,
 chapter two begins as the Wandering Jew, dejected because Rosa
 cannot now marry him, tries to die.

A giant witch (left over from Shelley's and Medwin's earlier, lost, romance Nightmare) appears. She offers him the "secret power to make Rosa his."

The charm begins.

An ancient book
Of mystic characters she took;
Her loose locks floating on the air;
Her eyes were fixed in lifeless stare,
She traced a circle on the floor,
. . .
She utters then, in accents dread,
Some maddening rhyme that wakes the dead,
And forces every shivering fiend
To her their demon-forms to bend.
As with a loud and piercing cry
A mystic, harrowing lay she sang.

With "soul-appalling verse" this witch summons Satan himself, and a third and climactic spell sounds through the deep

A wilder, a more awful spell
Now echoed through the long drawn cell.

The fatal word was borne.

The first spell, Ahasuerus' own, summons the dead. The second, the witch's, summoned Satan. The powers of the universe then invoke Death itself. This final spell foreshadows the action of Prometheus Unbound Act I. All these spells link their own power with the power of poetry. The witch's spell is a harrowing "lay," "a soul appalling verse," "a maddening rhyme with accents dread"; Ahasuerus summons the dead "in wildest accents." Satan speaks "the fatal word," as Prometheus will utter "the dread name." The possession of "magic arts," "strange words," "potent incantations," and "secret power" is associated in each case with vision

into the depths of nature--into "the hidden mystery," "the secrets of the teeming earth." The power is exercised in a state of trance similar to the poet's at the end of Kubla Khan--"her loose locks floating on the air, Her eyes were fixed in lifeless stare." And its exercise is surrounded with the trappings of tradition--that is, the art is a learned one. The poet is an adept of ancient lore: in invoking, he marks "a circle round my form, About me sacred relics spread, The reliques of magicians dead." Ahasuerus inherits his wand from magicians before him--"the wand by an enchanter given And deep-dyed in his heart's red blood." The witch takes up "an ancient book/ of mystic character."

Thus, arcane lore, enthusiastic trance, and the connection of magical spell with poetry, are already deliberately present in this racy work of Shelley's eighteenth year and these themes will reappear in many of his mature works.

Another example of Shelley's early interest in magic is St. Irvyne: or The Rosicrucian. This narrative features a Frankenstein figure (himself the modern Prometheus). Ginotti casts his spell on Wolfstein. Holding Wolfstein in his power with his somewhat ludicrous "fearfully glittering eyeball" (a reminiscence of the Mariner's glittering eye) Ginotti invents his victim's life just as Frankenstein invents that of his own creature. Thus, the Rosicrucian, passing on his secret of eternal life in order to escape it, takes on

the characteristics of a magus. "Ginotti," writes Shelley in a letter to Stockdale (November 14, 1810), "did not die by Wolfstein's hand, but by the influence of that natural magic which when the secret was imparted to the latter, destroyed him."¹¹

After such vivid introductions Queen Mab's "magic car," her triumphal entry into the "Hall of Spells," and her inevitable incantation are no surprise. In devising this incantation, Shelley seems to have ignored the metrical lessons of Coleridge, Goethe, Gray, Gay, and even Shakespeare, whose Macbeth had already provided epigraphs for both St. Irvyne and The Wandering Jew. The incantation of Queen Mab, though set off from the poem typographically, is not a metrically separate unit, but instead merges with the awkward blank verse which surrounds it. All that distinguishes this spell as a spell is its title, its commands, and its provenance in the Hall of spells. Thrice waving her wand, she intones:

'Stars! your balmiest influence shed!
 Elements! your wrath suspend!
 Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds
 That circle thy domain!
 Let not a breath be seen to stir
 Around yon grass-grown ruin's height,
 Let even the restless gossamer
 Sleep on the moveless air!
 Soul of Ianthe! thou
 Judged alone worthy of the envied boon,
 That waits the good and the sincere; that waits
 Those who have struggled, and with resolute will
 Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, burst the chains,
 The icy chains of custom, and have shone
 The day-stars of their age;--Soul of Ianthe!
 Awake! arise!¹²

Here the spell operates for much the same purpose as do the spells in Coleridge's Ode to the Departing Year. It serves the cause of political exhortation. The commands of the spell are hopefully more persuasive than political rhetoric on its own. By adding the compulsions of magic, persuasion takes on a new dimension. The spell changes men's minds by the secret powers of the words themselves. Political change need not rely merely on the devious appeals of syllogisms, but is conjured into existence directly by the reformer, who is a poet-wizard.

In the visions of Queen Mab granted by the "Queen of Spells" the soul of the poet is able to rend the veil. The exercise of magical words is therefore again associated with visions into the deep truths of being. The spell "rouses the soul" and allows it to participate in a truth more essential than the surface truths on the veil of appearance. Seeing this truth the poet can magically compel men to accept it. For words work on the imagination and change the mind.

Because magic words get down to the deep truth, the poet of Alastor, (like the visionary of Queen Mab) cultivates the ancient lore that will grant him power. He invokes the earth: "favor my solemn song" (l. 19). The poet has shown his devotion by seeking nature's mysteries: "My heart ever gazes on the depth/ Of thy deep mysteries." Braving charnel houses and questioning ghosts, he has cultivated the magical arts:

In lone and silent hours,
 When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
 Like an inspired and desperate alchemist
 Staking his very life on some dark hope,
 Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
 With my most innocent love, until strange tears
 United with those breathless kisses, made
 Such magic as compels the charmed night
 To render up thy [Earth's] charge . . .

He is now in tune with the universe, even if he has not yet "unveiled [the] inmost sanctuary." He is the Plotinian lyre, focussing the magical sympathies of the universe:

serenely now
 And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
 . . .
 I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
 May modulate with murmurs of the air,
 And motions of the forests and the sea,
 And voice of living beings and woven hymns,
 Of night and day and the deep heart of man.

Combined with the echoes of Wordsworth is the Coleridgean call to power of "The Dejection Ode"--O Elements give me voice; my sympathies have prepared me to receive it. This first invocation of Alastor (lines 1-49) is itself a magic song.

The poet chooses the Coleridgean route "to seek strange truths in undiscovered lands (l. 77)." History, mythology, "wild images of more than man" (lines 117-18) and dreams are the sources and substance of the poem that will arise from the search. An envisioned succubus saps his strength (as Geraldine sapped Christabel's); a magic boat descends into caves and abysses. Finally in his exhausted quest the poet loses the wind that should impel his poem.

"The Poet's blood, That ever beat in mystic sympathy With Nature's ebb and flow, grew feeble still." He sees the readied lyre losing sense, motion and divinity:

A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander--

As his inspiration vanishes like a dream of youth, he calls in his despair for Medea's alchemy to prop up the failing energies of his poem, as she brought Jason's father Aegeus back to life:

O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance!

He would resurrect his own powers. Therefore he calls on the dreams of magicians.

O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world!

Alastor opens and closes, then, with magical allusions, revealing again the vital importance of magical knowledge and technique for capturing the inspirations that lead to the writing of poetry.

In The Revolt of Islam the Aeolian motif is mingled with the political spell of Queen Mab, whereby language is made persuasive by arcane means. Cytherea's exhortations make men free:

There with the music of thine own sweet spells
Will disenchant the captives.

(p. 63)

Tyrants "bend beneath the spell Of that young maiden's speech."
 (p. 73) The hermit (a shadow of Dr. Lind) is an adept in magic
 arts. He claims "doctrine of human power my words have told."
 He can "dye . . . the woof of wisdom in hues of language."
 "Solitude is a wizard," "the wind is spellbound." The free-wishing
 of language should change the hearts of men and transform the poli-
 tical institutions that oppress them: "Thy songs were winds whereon
 I fled at will." (114) In "Athanasie" Zonoras (again a Dr. Lind
 figure) assures the young reformers of the powers of "The charmed
 voice": (p. 78)

With soul-sustaining songs
 The mind becomes that which it contemplates. (p. 162)

Language, both for purposes of discovering truth and for purposes
 of disclosing it, must be empowered by magic. This magic is at-
 tained by penetrating the depths of nature's mysteries and by studying
 the ancient traditions of magic. Such efforts (rather than passive
 observance of the appearances on nature's veil) prepare the poet to
 capture the winds and yoke them to his purposes. In Shelley's con-
 ception these purposes are often indirectly political; magical poems
 will conjure men's hearts to be free, and political change will
 follow internal change instantaneously and self-evidently. In this
 way he extends Coleridge's theory from an examination of the magical
 aspects of poetic creation to an examination of its persuasiveness.
 Coleridge sees invention as itself magical; Shelley sees as magical
 the power of these inventions to sway men.

His early reading of the neo-Platonists and magicians made him sense the value of Coleridge's magical approach. The Gothic novel, moreover, contributed morbid plots into which Shelley could weave his magical themes. He begins to employ magic less for sensational purposes and more for his quickly developing theory of art's power. He begins to adopt the spell as a paradigm for his own potent words. More than that, he seems to be fully aware of the philosophical views that dictated the importance of magic for Coleridge: the supernaturalism of the will; the transforming power of words over things; the importance to poetry of inventing invisible forms. In the preface to "Prometheus Unbound," in "To Mary" of "The Witch of Atlas," and most notably in "Peter Bell the Third," Shelley seems to understand that these notions, summarized in the idea of magical poetry, form a ground of controversy between the two founders of the Romantic Movement, Coleridge and his friend Wordsworth. Shelley seems to side with Coleridge in asserting that poetry should not pick the pocket of nature. Rather than represent things as they exist outside the mind, he prefers the internally fabricated "visionary rhyme." The products of the imagination are not to be judged by the criteria of error and truth exclusively. These opposites are figured on the veil, and do not correspond to the mysteries below. Poets should not study nature exclusively, but should also read books. There can be no act of uniformity against poets, because there is no way of knowing for sure

"men as they really are." Indeed, the imitation of nature keeps the poet from "lifting the hem of Nature's shift," ("Peter Bell the Third" IV:XI: 315), lifting the veil of appearance, and penetrating its inmost mystery--the natura naturans as opposed to the natura naturata.

Wordsworth shies from this task out of a conviction that what he sees is all he needs to see. But the Coleridgean and Shelleyan poet penetrates this mystery by learning ancient lore. The Near East where civilization began is the goal of Alastor's search for truths--a search which had opened among charnel-houses and ghosts, death and the otherworld. In the Near East, among the arcane tomes, arose the only religion that Shelley thought did relatively little harm--that of the Magi.¹³

The Faustian effort to penetrate hidden mysteries and to master near-eastern lore distorts what Wordsworth would deem the truths of nature. For Coleridge and Shelley resemble each other in their faith in the exertions of mind, and in their participation in the continuum of learning. In his chapter on "Poetry and the Power of the Mind," Neville Rogers notes Shelley's resemblance to Victor Hugo; both believed "a poet must function not only passively, but actively, as a magus."¹⁴ On the subject of language, too, Shelley eventually dismisses Wordsworth's fear that words are false categories. He suggests that we cannot know nature except what language discovers about it for us. Wordsworth's own claim to know nature is

The Essay on Love ends impatiently with a note "These words are metaphors; No help!"¹⁸ Nevertheless, Shelley does not seem to adhere to this mistrust of language entirely. His aim seems to be first to escape from the insufficiency of normal babbling words and then to discover a powerful language of poetry that will eventually be capable of transforming the world. By going to its center this language of spells will finally make poets the unacknowledged legislators of the world, as the Magi were in the past.

Whereas for Wordsworth magic disguises the non-verbal truths poetry should find, and for Coleridge magic actually finds (and is also the matter of) this truth, for Shelley magic is the rightful transforming power of human vision which is all we can know of Truth. Shelley recognizes Wordsworth's view of the insufficiency of human invention. But at the same time, he follows Coleridge in believing language to be all we have, and he goes on to find not only (as Coleridge does) that man's will makes him supernatural, but also that men are heroic in their attempt to revitalize the earth, by harnessing its secret power. Incantations, directed at summoning powers and at renovating hearts abound in his poems; and as the Witch is the incarnation of poetry, Prometheus comes to be the magician who originates life out of the chaos occasioned by tyranny, and who, through magic words, brings the universe to harmony.

Three major works lie behind the magical system of Prometheus Unbound (in which Prometheus is the magician who casts off destructive

in favor of constructive magic and creates with a treasured spell a universe of magically correspondent harmonies). Calderon's Magico Prodigoso, Goethe's Faust and Byron's Manfred reflect Shelley's interest in magical form and philosophy. Four years after the writing of Prometheus Unbound he is still interested in magical spells and translates the magical passages from the Spanish and German plays that he probably knew before. Manfred's invocations (three years before Prometheus Unbound) cannot fail to have influenced to some extent at least the heroism of Prometheus' words. In translating Faust, the choruses of wizards resemble his own choruses of Furies: the rhythms of their spells derive from the spells of Macbeth: For instance, Faust's wizard's intone

The stubble is yellow, the corn is green,
 Now to the Brocken the witches go;
 The mighty multitude here may be seen
 Gathering, wizard and witch, below.
 Sir Urian is sitting aloft in the air;
 Hey over stock! and hey over stone!
 Twixt witches and incubi, what shall be done?
 Tell it who dare! tell it who dare! (p. 755)

And again:

The wind is still, the stars are fled,
 The melancholy moon is dead;
 The magic notes, like spark on spark,
 Drizzle, whistling through the dark.
 Come away! (p. 756)

In Prometheus Unbound a chorus of Furies sings;

Leave the self-contempt implanted
 In young, spirits, sense-enchanted,
 Misery's yet unkindled fuel:

Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted
 To the maniac dreamer; cruel
 More than ye can be with hate
 Is he with fear.
 Come, come come!

And:

Speak not; whisper not:
 I know all that ye would tell,
 But to speak might break the spell
 Which must bend the Invincible,
 The stern of thought;
 He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

The lyric delivered by the Daemon of Magico Prodigioso has echoes
 of many in Prometheus Unbound: It begins

Abyss of Hell! I call on thee,
 Thou wild misrule of thine own anarchy!
 From thy prison-house set free
 The spirits of voluptuous death . . .

It ends:

Let nothing meet her ear
 But sounds of Love's sweet sorrow,
 So, that from faith no succour she may borrow,
 But, guided by my spirit blind
 And in a magic snare entwined,
 She may now seek Cyprian.
 Begin, while I in silence bind
 My voice, when thy sweet song thou hast began.
 (p. 743)

Shelley's interest in magic continues in his Fragments of an Unfinished
 Drama (1822).¹⁹ In these fragments an Enchantress presides, makes
 her spell, and is answered by a spirit. It is certain then, that
 Shelley was working for a period of several years with the idea of
 a magical drama which embody his belief in the magical powers of
 language. As I see it, Prometheus Unbound is the first of his
 magical dramas which his readings had fostered. Manfred was

They come not yet.--Now by the voice of him
 Who is the first among you--by this sign,
 Which makes you tremble--by the claims of him
 Who is undying,--Rise! Appear!--Appear!

(I: 1: ll. 37-40)

Finally, he intensifies his spells and indeed succeeds in imposing his will on the elements:

If it be so--Spirits of earth and air,
 Ye shall not thus elude me: by a power
 Deeper than all yet urged, a tyrant-spell,
 Which had its birthplace in a star condemn'd,
 The burning wreck of a demolished world,
 A wandering hell in the eternal space;
 By the strong curse which is upon my soul,
 The thought which is within me and around me,
 I do compel ye to my will--Appear!

(I: 1: ll .41-49)

Manfred's invocation of the spirits looks forward to Prometheus' in Prometheus Unbound Act I. He, too, summons them to rise from the center of the earth and speak. Like Prometheus, Manfred disturbs their retreat, forcing them by his magical words to rise and confront reality. They instantly obey:

FIRST SPIRIT

Mortal! to thy bidding bow'd,
 From my mansion in the cloud,
 Which the breath of twilight builds,
 And the summer's sunset gilds
 With the azure and vermillion,
 Which is mix'd for my pavilion;
 Though thy quest may beforbidden,
 On a star-beam I have ridden:
 To thine adoration bow'd,
 Mortal--be thy wish avow'd!(L:50-59)

The spirits acknowledge his power and reproach him for intruding:

Like the storm on the surface
Came the sound of thy spells.

Thy spell hath subdued me,
Thy will be my guide!

My dwelling is the shadow of the night,
Why doth thy magic torture me with light?

Manfred commands them to assume forms. Alien spells act upon

Manfred. "(A voice is heard in the Incantation which follows.)"

There are shades which will not vanish,
There are thoughts thou canst not banish;
By a power to thee unknown,
Thou canst never be alone;
Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,
Thou art gather'd in a cloud;
And for ever shalt thou dwell
In the spirit of this spell. (204-211)

This incantatory voice is his other self; it exercises its magic upon him continuously: "and forever shalt thou dwell In the spirit of this spell." The power is inescapable. His own fate works private compulsions:

And the power which thou dost feel
Shall be what thou must conceal. (220-221)

And a magic voice and verse
Hath baptised thee with a curse. (222-223)

The magical voice derives its power by turning Manfred's own powers onto himself.

I call upon thee! and compel
Thyself to be thy proper Hell! (250-251)

In the speaking of the spell, the intentions of the spell are fulfilled.

The words cause their content to come to pass:

Lo! the spell now works around thee,
 And the clankless chain hath bound thee
 O'er thy heart and brain together
 Hath the word been pass'd--now wither! (I:i:258-261)

The words of this fatal spirit breaks Manfred's own powers; Manfred reveals:

The spirits I have raised abandon me,
 The spells which I have studied baffle me
 The remedy I reck'd of tortured me;
 I lean no more on superhuman aid. (I:ii:1-4)

Dissatisfied with supernatural power, Manfred is thrown back on the weight of a meaningless and protracted existence. The Witch of the Alps--the spirit of place--responds to his magical adjuration and hears Manfred admit that magical powers have not compensated for the sorrows of existence.

The face of the earth hath madden'd me, and I
 Take refuge in her mysteries, and pierce
 To the abodes of those who govern her--
 But they can nothing aid me, I have sought
 From them what they could not bestow, and now
 I search no further. (I:i:39-44)

Like Shelley's Alastor, he sought the deep truth in charnel houses and occult studies:

And then I dived,
 In my lone wanderings, to the caves of death,
 Searching its cause in its effect; and drew
 From wither'd bones, and skulls, and heap'd up dust,
 Conclusions most forbidden. Then I pass'd
 To nights of years in sciences untaught,
 Save in the old time; and with time and toil,
 And terrible ordeal, and such penance
 As in itself hath power upon the air,
 And spirits that do compass air and earth,
 Space and the peopled infinite, I made
 Mine eyes familiar with Eternity,
 Such as, before me, did the Magi, and
 He who from out their fountain dwellings raised
 Eros and Anteros, at Gadara,
 As I do thee. (I:i:79-94)

Manfred renounces the magician's claim to command for himself eternal life by vanquishing death with his spells. The magical powers which had conquered death have not been able to conquer despair; the more potent magic of his own continuing existence enthralls him. To pass freely and magically across the boundary between death and life, Manfred must submit to the Witch's power, and this he refuses to do. As a Magician, he prefers to dissolve his own nature. A spirit asks

Is this the Magician who would so pervade
The world invisible, and make himself
Almost our equal? can it be that thou
Art thus in love with life?

In making and unmaking himself, Manfred validates the magical omnipotence of mind:

The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts,--
Is its own origin of ill and end--
And its own place and time.

Quite apart from secret arts and mysteries the mind is its own maker, and performs a vanishing act upon itself:

I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey--
But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own hereafter.

Manfred's thoughts are so magical they not only accomplish immortality, but they can revoke it as well. The human will is a supernatural power and operates magically on both inner and outer worlds. Thus the control over spirits that Manfred exercises in the spells of act one, only anticipates the larger magical power by means

of which this superhuman Magian willfully conjures away his life. Thus the Faustianism of Manfred pertains not only to the summoning of spirits and the acquisition of knowledge, but even more important, to the radical origination of his own states of being.²¹

Byron extends to titanism Coleridge's notion of the artists' power magically to invent and transform. From Coleridge's idea of the magical originality of the mind, Byron passes to its heroic power to make or unmake itself out of nothing and back into nothing. Byron and Shelley both use the techniques of magical incantations to allow their Promethean heroes to penetrate the spiritual center of the universe and communicate with spirits. While Shelley declares that poetic language itself is a motivating force for universal change, the image of the magician is for Byron another facet of his defiant mortal inventing his own fate and hurling himself against death and sorrow. By magic, man aspires to the superhuman; by magic, he voluntarily abolishes his claim to it. Both these interpretations of power and language stem, I believe, from Coleridge, and send out branches in American, English and French poetry of the mid-century.

Now the recharging of words is one of the major struggles of Prometheus Unbound. In order radically to change his thrice three thousand year-old spell--the curse--Prometheus must penetrate the secret strength of Demogorgon, and return with a new spell, a holy spell of Love and Justice. The change from dread words of vengeance to a holy spell of love accounts for the release of nature and society

from their bondage. "All nature, earth as well as light, air, and water, becomes mind-impregnated."²² By changing the heart, language can reform the world. This is the work of poetry: it compels the imagination through the use of powerful words.

The static structure of the play allows it to be a search for new words. Comparing Prometheus Unbound to The Tempest, Milton Wilson says "the dramatic center of the plot is Prospero's conversion, his discovery that 'virtue' is preferable to 'vengeance'."²³ I want to suggest that this conversion is accomplished in Prometheus Unbound not only through a change of mind (which, Carlos Baker explains, occurs in Act I)²⁷ but through a quest for words which will finally embody this change of mind. A new spell is found only at the end of Act II with the descent to Demogorgon's cave, and Act IV is therefore a record of the new unification of the world accomplished by this "potent voice."

As the spell changes from curse to blessing, Prometheus re-creates the magical structure of The Ancient Mariner: the spell initiated by shooting down the Albatross is reversed by blessing the water snakes. The submission of the mountains to the curse is reversed by loving the whole of nature, so that the moon and the earth can dance, drawn to each other. Once again the Brunoesque magician marries Heaven and Earth. The play is about the search for creative as opposed to destructive language.

Not only is the action static (permitting a concentration on words as theme and goal), but the play is also the "biography of an hour"; it attempts to abolish time.²⁵ Adopting Coleridge's interest in the Egyptian personification of Hours--the Decans--Shelley is trying to create in time a total simultaneity. "Time," says G. W. Knight, "is all but rendered subordinate to instantaneity."²⁶ Thus, Prometheus' decision to revise his words is simultaneous with Asia's descent to the cave of Demogorgon. These two events necessitate the contemporaneous fall of Jupiter and also the liberation of the planets. Four events happen at once, because the revision of language releases them at the predestined Hour. Ideally, then, the drama should be seen as a film with music or heard as a symphony. For with the discovery of the Holy Spell in Demogorgon's cave the universe dissolves into sound. And the Shelleyan drama, as Perkins perceives, "approaches the condition of music."²⁷

Act One is concerned with reproducing the curse, also called dread name and spell. The curse, pronounced by Prometheus at the beginning of his exile, arose out of his anger. Its effect has been to silence nature. Prometheus asks to hear "the thunder of that spell" because he has changed his mind about it. He no longer hates Jupiter.

The curse

Once breathed on thee I would recall, Ye Mountains,
Whose many voiced Echoes through the mist
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!

The scene recreates the past, remembers the damage done by the powerful and violent words. At their sound the springs crept away. The whirlwinds "hung mute and moveless," as Thunder, louder than your own, made rock The orb'd world!" The supernatural language Prometheus intoned was thunder. Even without the rage behind it, the spell is still (after thrice three hundred years) powerful:

If then my words had power,
 Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
 Is dead within; although no memory be
 Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!

So inherently powerful were these words that the mountains, spring, air and whirlwinds do not dare to repeat them, but only describe their effect:

But never bowed our snowy crest
 As at the voice of thine unrest

cry the mountains and the air confesses

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
 My still realm was never riven.

The springs sing:

Never such a sound before
 To the Indian waves we bore
 A pilot asleep on the howling sea
 Leaped up from the deck in agony,
 And heard, and cried, 'Ah, woe is me!
 And died as mad as the wild waves be.

The spell silenced nature and drove men mad.

The only language which would serve to repeat the spell is the language of the dead. For the spell burdened the world with

death. The original words (Prometheus' immortal ones) must be translated into the shadow words of fallen nature (ll. 131-52). What language approximates the language of a God? Just as the Cabbala worried about the question for interpreting Genesis, so in this drama, nature worries about reproducing Titanic language in the language of mortals.

Although the spell brought death, it carries in it the promise of redemption. "I heard thy curse," cries Earth,

Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
 Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
 Mountains, and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,
 And the inarticulate people of the sea,
 Preserve, a treasured spell.

"We meditate in secret joy and hope those dreadful words, Earth claims, "But dare not speak them." The "treasured spell" is a formula or talisman that confirms an apocalyptic future. The earth has hoarded these words in their exact order, muttering over them like a savage so that the powerful utterance will never be altered and thus its power snapped. Prometheus has given this spell.

Having silenced, and then summoned Nature, Prometheus conjures the spirits from the shadow world. Once more, he is the magician; his thundrous language commands the Phantasm of Jupiter to speak the spell. The Phantasm acknowledges Prometheus' wizardly power:

Why have the secret powers of this strange world
 Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither,
 On direst storms? (240-2)

For the magician, the phantasm is a mouthpiece for the spell.

The words invade his empty form like a spirit and possess it.

What unaccustomed sounds
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice
With which our pallid race holds ghastly talk
In darkness?

A spirit seizes me and speaks within:
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

The phantasm is enthusiastic, but ignorant of meaning ("Speak the words which I would hear/ Although no thought inform thine empty voice" 248-9). The words are inherently potent and awesome:

He speaks! O shelter me!

Having prepared the audience for thundrous and fatal words, Shelley assaults us with the spell. It cannot help but be a disappointment:

Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.
Rain then thy plagues upon me here;
Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.

. . . .
But thou, who art the God and Lord: O, thou,
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
In fear and worship: all prevailing foe!
I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse;
Till thine Infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony;
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.
(Act I: 262-271; 282-291)

For Shelley, a flood of nouns and clauses, a volume of language, suggests power. Shelley encounters at first hand the difficulty of actually creating a spell that should have the effects he describes. He discovers that while having an ideal of potent language as magical, the reality often falls short of magic. Although its effects are said to have lasted thrice three thousand years, the spell of anger does not bewitch us. But the second spell of the play may well come near to doing so. Magical words are not "quick and vain" as Prometheus claims when the recitation is over; even pompous spells silence the elements.

The first angry spell has been repeated so that it can be revoked. The play moves toward the discovery of a new and benevolent spell. When Prometheus changes his feelings from rage to pity, he requires new words to convey that pity; as he once silenced nature with rage, now he must find words that will bring it to life again.

This new spell is hidden with Demogorgon, and Asia will retrieve it for Prometheus. Variouslly interpreted as Love, Compassion and Charity, Asia is the virtuous aspect of Prometheus.²⁸ As the fated hour arrives and the voices of spirits inspire Prometheus with music, Asia comes to prevail over the vengeful aspect (represented by the Phantasm of Jupiter speaking Prometheus' words). Act Two discloses Asia seeking the spell which will enchant the world to virtue.

The cave of Demogorgon (where all power originates) is

surrounded by magical songs. It is accessible through the East, source of magical lore. The choruses of spirits sing about "the enchanted eddies" and "the enchantment of the sun." The songs enthrall Asia and Panthea. They are borne magically "to the realm of Demogorgon" on waves of sound. There

In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken.

Words, colors and forms correspond in an extreme synesthesia.

Words make shapes, says Asia, for

As you speak, your words
Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes.

In this realm, words and music are as real as forms. Not only the belief in the creative power of language, but also the magical traditions of the Neoplatonists and the Magi lie behind the metamorphoses of the drama.

We must try to imagine the production of this play as a cacophony of sound that moves toward harmony. Voices and echoes issue from the elements. Air and streams speak. Hours cry. Even a mighty darkness finds voice. Instead of forms, there are sounds that move about the stage. With their variety of metre, their possible modulations of pitch (the voice of the stream should differ from the voice of Demogorgon) the voices proclaim that words are as real as substance. Certain words in particular are supernatural and originative. Much of Prometheus Unbound tries to recreate a language that changed the world. The drama's flurry of impatient

have penetrated the depth of the deep and found there the spell which is like lightning, like a spark, like "the last look Love remembers," like a diamond. This is what the descent has been waiting for. The simile of lightning recalls the "thunder of that spell" of Act I, line 61. "The spark nursed in embers" points to the fading embers of language in the Defense; the spell treasured for thee alone recalls Earth's confession that her seas and caves and airs preserve the curse as "A treasured spell." (I:184)

Stanza five proceeds to explain the function of this spell which hides at the center of the world. The spirits have led Asia (with Panthea the bright form beside her) to the source of Demogorgon's power. And yet strangely they talk of weakness and meekness as the source of strength.

Resist not the weakness,
Such strength is in meekness
That the Eternal, the Immortal
Must unloose through Life's portal
The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne
By that alone.

By what alone? we ask. By the spell discovered in the last stanza. Language, not Jovian violence, will direct the snake-like doom to its positive rather than negative potential. This language is meek because the spell to which the spirits refer is in fact the spell Demogorgon reveals at the end of the play:

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance (562)

• • •

if with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should dree
The serpent that would clasp her with his length;
These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom. (IV:565-9)

The meek spells of Gentleness and Virtue, Wisdom and Endurance will free the serpent now coiled and tangled out by the force of the spell alone, loosed and turned to good. The spell treasured like a diamond in "the dark wealth of mines" has power to redirect the quality of life: it can lift out of eternity the possibility of a just world.

Not only is Prometheus cast as a magician by virtue of bewitching nature and summoning spirits, but more important he is (in his benevolent aspect Asia) able to discover the magic that underlies all power. Moreover, as a culture hero, Prometheus gave specifically magical gifts to man. Most notably, "he gave man speech, and speech created thought,/Which is the measure of the universe." Because of this, "the harmonious mind/ Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;/And music lifted up the listening spirit/ Until it walked, exempt from mortal care." Prometheus also gave the use of secret magical herbs. He "told the hidden power of herbs and springs . . . and by what secret spell/ the pale moon is transformed." His discovery of the benevolent spell to replace his malevolent curse is yet another part of his magical act: he depresses or elevates the world with the words he invents. And as Prometheus confirms the right of men to challenge gods, he insists upon the magical (not the religious) attitude. Magic does not propitiate greater powers; it exerts its own.

The notion of this drama as a search for a new and better spell to uncoil the snake-like Doom casts new light, too, on Demogorgon's phrase "the deep truth is imageless." The phrase has been widely quoted to prove Shelley's belief that at the center of reality there are no categories. It seems that Demogorgon may actually be saying something else. To Asia's question "Who is the master of the slave?" Demogorgon replies

If the abysm
 Could vomit forth its secrets . . . But a voice
 Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless. (II:114-16)

But we recall that Asia and Panthea (as Love) have just penetrated the abysm and found its secret treasure. The abysm is now in the process of vomiting its secrets. It could communicate these if it could find a medium by which to transmit them. A voice is, so far, wanting; and the deep truth is therefore without words that could either define or animate it. Were this voice to be found, the deep truth would no longer be imageless. Thus the quest of the drama for powerful and yet benevolent magical words aims to give the deep its image. A "potent voice," in touch with the secrets of the abysm, is in the process of being found. It will make the universe dance with joy in the last act.

New magical words will free the world:

Some good change
 Is working in the elements, which suffer
 Thy presence thus unveiled. (I:v: 18-20)

Hearest thou not sounds in the air which speak the love
 Of all articulate beings? (35-6)

Voices in the air sing "Life of Life! thy lips enkindle With their love the breath between them." Speech is coming to life. And Asia exults that she is indeed under the influence of a new magic. "My soul is an enchanted boat." The ocean on which she sails is music; winds are melodies; the boat is driven "by the instinct of sweet music." Her song is a "chant" of celebration as harmony frees the music of the spheres.

The results are political, perceptual and creative. The immediate result of Asia's discovery of the holy Spell is the otherwise unmotivated fall of Jupiter in the first scene of Act III. This sudden fall testifies to the power of magical language to transform instantly the political institutions of the world. Ocean and Apollo rejoice in their renovated powers of hearing "sweet music" and "the small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit" (III:i: 34, 38) And Asia and Prometheus united become the universal Aeolian lute, as they sit in their cave of the mind, its fountains now suddenly leaping:

And we search with looks and words of Love
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be;
And hither come, sped on the charmed winds,
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed pities murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart. (ACT III:iii: 34-47)

This cave, with its winds and its weaving, is the embryo for the cave of the Witch of Atlas. For both caves are the sources of

of art and poetry.

Awakened by the music of the Protean shell ("breathing within it a voice to be accomplished") the spirit of Earth "blesses the water snakes" "unawares":

and when the dawn
Came, w'ouldst thou think that toads, and snakes, and efts,
Could e'en be beautiful? yet so they were,
And that with little change of shape of hue:
All things had put their evil nature off. (III:iv:73-77.)

The shell, trumpeting the message to the earth, amazes the spirit of the Hour with the clarity of the new magical vision:

There was a change: the impalpable thin air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had fold^d itself round the sphered world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe. (III:iv: 100-105.)

In the renovated epoch magical speech and magical insight are granted even to subsidiary powers.

Simultaneity, magnetism, mesmerism, oneness and universal sympathy become preeminent in Act IV as the ancient evil Hours are banished. The word "enchantment" proliferates. The spirits dance an incantatory dance.

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze
Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees . . . (69-71.)
But now, oh weave the mystic measure
Of music and dance, and shapes of light (77-78.)

Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run (135-137.)

Break the dance and scatter the song
 Let some depart and some remain
 We, beyond heaven, are driven along

Us the enchantments of earth retain. (159-162).

Words become ubiquitous. The Earth proclaims

Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
 Which rules with Daedal harmony a throng
 Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless
 were. (415-417).

The spirits rejoice

And our singing shall build
 In the void's loose field
 A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield. (153-155).

As in all magical acts, wishes are immediately accomplished. A word instantly summons a thing.

Speak: thy strong words may never pass away.

Unlike the everyday words which teach us only to look into the abyss of what we do not know, the magical words, first of Prometheus' age-old curse, and now of Demogorgon's "meek" spells, are permanent. They do not pass away. They are part of the essential creative power of the earth's center. Somehow poetry--strong words--does have power to change the world, as evidenced in the action of the drama. The spell frees nature and man because it lifts the veil of appearance. Magic goes to the essence; at the center of religious truth is language. Therefore, Shelley's interest in magic is an important part of his conviction that poetry is the only medium of profound reform: the magician who can transform the world with his "potent voice" will be the world's savior.

Prometheus is the inventor of language, poetry and art, and the animator of the universe through his new and holy spells. He has succeeded in recharging the empty words of vengeance by penetrating (in his loving aspect) the secret strength of things accessible through "Asia." "The Earth-born's spell" Demogorgon declares to be "Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance": "These are the spells by which to reassume An empire o'er the disentangled doom " (568-9). Prometheus is a magician. He revives language and men's hearts, as poet in his Aeolian cave, harmonizes the world, and is its unacknowledged legislator.

Everything Shelley reads seems to support his belief in the magical nature of poetry. Not only the Ion and The Symposium with their analyses of the poet's divine madness, not only Faust and The Magico Prodigioso (as we show) but even the Cyclops contribute to this belief:

Let us with some comic spell
Teach the yet unteachable

Shelley's translation of the satire begins. In his translation of the Homeric Hymn to Mercury, the divine poet is asked:

I would gladly know
Whether the glorious power ye now shew forth
Was folded up within you at your birth

Or whether mortal taught or God inspired
The power of unpremeditated song?

Speaking again of "soul-awakening music" he questions further:

What Muse, what skill, what unimagined use,
 What exercise of subtlest art, has given
 Thy songs such power?

The infant Mercury wills his wand to Apollo, implying even the God of poetry requires magic to work his subtlest art:

And I will give thee as a good-will token
 The beautiful wand of wealth and happiness,
 A perfect three-leaved rod of gold unbroken,
 Whose magic will thy footsteps ever bless,
 And whatsoever by Jove's voice is spoken
 Of earthly or divine from its recess,
 It like a loving soul to thee will speak.

A year after the final composition of Prometheus Unbound and contemporaneous with the translations, The Witch of Atlas expands into an intricate theory the notion of the magical powers and origins of poetry. It does so by first appealing to the Wordsworth-Coleridge quarrel which Shelley had carefully investigated while writing Peter Bell the Third a month before. Magical invention (the Coleridgean option) not truth (the Wordsworthian) is what he determines to choose. This is a natural choice for him. Five years earlier, as we saw in Alastor, he expanded the visionary voyages of the poetic soul in Queen Mab's magic car to the poet's frenzied search for hidden invisible truths. In Alastor this frenzied search began and ended with the poet imploring magical powers. He sought these powers in ancient lore, in magical invocations, in travels to eastern lands where magical lore was still available. After the revelations of Prometheus Unbound, Shelley is brave enough in the Letter to Maria Gisborne to declare himself in fact a magician:

Whoever should behold me now, I wist,
 Would think I were a mighty mechanist,
 Bent with sublime Archimedean art
 To breathe a soul into the iron heart
 Of some machine portentous, or strange gin,
 Which by the force of figured spells might win
 Its way over the sea.

He sees himself as inventing in his multitudinous verses "strange and dread Magical forms." (43-44). "Proteus transformed to metal did not make More figures, or more strange." (45-6) And more elaborately:

And here like some weird Archimage sit I,
 Plotting dark spells, and devilish enginery,
 The self-impelling steam-wheels of the mind.

Memory becomes a Witch (132), himself again "an old diviner," Hope, a "sad enchantress."

Hence we come in The Witch of Atlas to an intricate resolution of Shelley's theory of words. The Witch of Atlas is a fulfillment of the Coleridgean approach to poetic origination. Following Prometheus Unbound closely, it can be read in the light of it, and of the other poems about poetic magic: Queen Mab, Alastor, their variants, and The Letter to Maria Gisborne.

When G. Wilson Knight claimed that "The Witch is the incarnation of poetry itself."²⁹ he did not feel it necessary to show how central this idea was to Shelley's work, and he did not expand it to demonstrate Shelley's thoroughly magical notion of poetic language. Harold Bloom modifies Knight's statement. He sees the witch as an "incarnation of the mythopoetic faculty."³⁰ He sees Shelley's debt

to Spenser's Mulipotomos in the "To Mary" stanza, showing Shelley's respect for visionary fable as opposed to the facts demanded by the cruel twins Error and Truth. In his opposition of fable and plain truth, Shelley sides with Coleridge against Wordsworth's matter-of-fact Peter Bell. There is more to truth than what a dutiful fidelity to appearance reveals; a sudden and miraculous visionary rhyme can get more profoundly to the "truth." Shelley scourges Mary for accepting mimetic standards that rely on the truth of things. His tale is "more fit for the weird winter nights" (when men are thrown back on the regions of their own imaginations)

Than for these garish summer days, when we
Scarcely believe much more than we can see. (670-2)

He thus ends his rhyme with a last thrust at Wordsworth's (and Mary's) "tyranny of the eye," and recommends instead the vision of the inner inspired eye. While Bloom points to the Spenserian analogues in the beginning, the plea for a temporary celebration of the lower paradise, he admonishes the Witch for her isolation (her lack of Buberian relationship) and for her pranks. Thus Bloom, too, fails (I think) to see that the poem is a serious exposition of a theory of poetry that has governed Shelley's writings up to this time.

The opening in the cave evolves from the cave where Prometheus and Asia unite. Child of a union between the Sun and a Titan, the witch may actually continue the mingling of the elements and the Titanic powers that began in Prometheus Unbound Act III, scene iii.

She is "an Embodied Power," (80) power given body in elements. Her birth is a process of Protean changes (65-72); as her warmth warms the rocks, she animates and illuminates her surroundings. (79-84) We learn that her voice and eyes have the power to tame wild animals (93). She compels nature as Orpheus does with music:

The magic circle of her voice and eyes
All savage natures did imparadise. (103-4)

Even the gods flock around her, magnetized by her beauty, until she is forced to weave for herself a subtle veil so as not to bind them all. Lesser beings cannot endure her essence; they must encounter the Witch only through a woven medium, a form.

Her cave is filled with sounds, visions, smells and tastes--senses that carry deep truths to the mind (153ff); sounds, in particular have power:

The deep recesses of her odorous dwelling
Were stored with magic treasures--sounds of air,
Which had the power all spirits of compelling.

The senses are not the only enchantments she hoards. Arcane learning, too, is (as we saw in Alastor and Prometheus Unbound) a means to reach earth's core.

Her cave was stored with scrolls of rare device,
The work of some Saturnian Archimage,
Which taught the expiations of whose price
Men from the Gods might win the happy age.

Her abstruse research teaches formulae for redeeming the earth, as do the spells Asia retrieves from Demogorgon. Lore will teach secret words for curing men of greed and violence. Like the Witch's Orphean

power over wild beasts, the ancient spells compel all things. The scrolls teach how

all things that seem untameable,
Not to be checked and not to be confined,
Obey the spells of Wisdom's wizard skill;
Time, earth, and fire--the ocean and the wind,
And all their shapes--and man's imperial will;
And other scrolls whose writings did unbind
The inmost lore of Love--let the profane
Tremble to ask what secrets they contain.

Again, the profoundest visions are only for the adept, the magicians trained in the magical tradition. Others must veil their eyes in form.

The Witch combines learning and creation. She reads to delve the secrets not visible to the eye; when she is not reading, she practices her art:

All day the wizard lady sate aloof,
Spelling out scrolls of dread antiquity,
Under the cavern's fountain-lighted roof,
Or brooding the pictured poesy--
Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
Which the sweet splendour of her smiles could dye
In hues outshining heaven--and ever she
Added some grace to the wrought poesy.

As she wove for herself a veil to shield the eyes of others, she weaves her poesy." The poem is "a growing woof." The Witch is the Imagination, as the Witch Poesy of Mont Blanc is the wizard of making. She involves herself in form.

Weaving becomes an image of intricate creation for several reasons. For one, cloth develops out of the insignificance of thread. Almost out of nothing, then, "pictured poesy" can arise. Line by line, as in verse, the shuttle crosses to make a growing

woof. The image of weaving may even approximate the in and out of rhymes, the up and down of metre, and the intricate pattern of sounds that crosses through the texture of a stanza. Weaving has yet another extension as an image of the creation of poetry: that is the web the spider weaves to catch his victims. Shelley makes the comparison with his own craft explicit in the first lines of the Letter to Maria Gisborne:

The spider spreads her webs, whether she be
In poet's tower, cellar, or barn, or tree;

So I, a thing whom moralists call worm,
Sit spinning still round this decaying form,
From the fine threads of rare and subtle thought--
No net of words in garish colours wrought
To catch the idle buzzers of the day . . .

Here the weavings of poetry exercise the poet's power over things (he catches and holds things in his verse) but especially over men. His web of language compels them to do his bidding. Like the view of poetic language as magical spell, the view of language as a woven spider web asserts the function of language to direct men's minds and hearts and thereby reform men's institutions. Magical persuasion, once again, prevails.

Her "wrought poesy" is also fiery. "She held a woof that dimmed the burning brand." This is the heritage of her father, the Sun, who also has magical power to transform things. "His power," too, "is an enchantment," for he changes things with heat and light.

And wondrous works of substances unknown,
 To which the enchantment of her father's power
 Had changed those ragged blocks of savage stone,
 Were heaped in the recesses of her bower;
 Carved lamps and chalices, and vials which shone
 In their own golden beams--each like a flower,
 Out of whose depth a fire-fly shakes his light
 Under a cypress in a starless night. (201-208)

As Apollo, too, of course, he is patron of poetry, and thus of his own daughter.

Taming beasts, seeking ancient lore, weaving form to hide her essence, the Witch works in a trance--the kind of waking dream in which Keats, too (like Coleridge before him) claimed to have had his visions. Imagination operates half in half-dream, and half in the burning fire.

Amid a wood of pines and cedars blended,
 There yawned an inextinguishable well
 Of crimson fire--full even to the brim,
 And overflowing all the margin trim.

Within the which she lay. (276-281)

Moreover, it is necessary to see that the unrestricted travels in the magic boat, the creation of the sexless Homunculus, the lifting of the veil of appearance, and the enchantment of man to the purposes of good, are as important to a definition of the Witch Imagination as are her origins, learning, and Orphean power.

The magic boat is an inheritance from Vulcan, Venus, and Apollo. The Witch therefore travels on the fusion of Love, craft and inspiration. "The pinnacle" is "bared by . . . enchanted wings." Her travels in it are the free-wishing of the Imagination--the power to invent far beyond

what the eye can see, and thus the power to transcend and escape the merely visible or the merely natural. "The lady-witch in visions could not chain Her Spirit." She travels through time and through space, from myth into history. There are no boundaries (such as the boundaries set up by the cruel twins Truth and Error) to impede her flight. She would often climb

And like Arion on the dolphin's back
Ride singing through the shoreless air (434-5).

Shelley even seems to refer this free travelling to his own Imagination in the jocular letter accompanying "Peter Bell the Third." To Thomas Brown he explains

the orb of my moonlike genius has made the
fourth part of its revolution round the dull
earth which you inhabit, driving you mad . . .

Indeed, the freedom of the Witch's flight does influence life on earth, but for sanity and goodness. "Mortals found" that on the days when the Witch travelled

the sky was calm and fair,
And mystic snatches of harmonious sound
Wandered upon the earth where'er she passed,
And happy thoughts of hope, too sweet to last.
(493-496)

Like Intellectual Beauty, Imagination graces our moments, though it cannot save us from mutability. The Witch's "light feet"

Passed through the peopled haunts of humankind,
Scattered sweet visions from her presence sweet.

Shelley is careful, however, not to allow the influence of his Witch to seem like an escape from life's evils. On the contrary, her main task--the task of Imagination--is first to see below the veil of

appearance into the inner form; then to charm the soul; and finally to magically compel evil-doers to reform. For poetry functions by going to the cause of change, not its effect. Since the magical Imagination sees into the depths, since it can enchant men through words--charms--it is the only power that can metamorphose all of life. Prometheus, inventing art and language, getting to the deep truth, and retrieving from it the right spell, has proved this magical power to us already. Poetry's magic power is the only route to political change.

For the Witch's imagination "the distortions" of religions and Customs are "the strife Which stirs the liquid surface of man's life." (544). Whereas everyday life struggles on the violent surface, imagination moves in the calm depths. She sees in princes, priests and peasants only the surfaces of rank and station: "all the forms in which those spirits lay Were to her sight like the diaphanous veils" Under the veil of appearance she discerns "the naked beauty of the soul," "the inner form." As Imagination, then, she knows the natura naturans, not merely the natura naturata.

Knowing "the secret strength of things" in this way, the Witch is able to conjure the inner form into the permanence of poetry. By a charm she links the inner form with her own spirit:

And then she had a charm of strange device
When, murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
Could make that spirit mingle with her own.

The charm gives life and permanence; it foregoes mutability:

Alas! Aurora, what wouldst thou have given
 For such a charm when Tithon became gray?
 Or how much, Venus, of thy silver heaven
 Wouldst thou have yielded, ere Proserpina
 Had half (oh! why not all? the debt forgiven)
 Which dear Adonis had been doomed to pay,
 To any witch who would have taught you it?

Beautiful men and women her charm preserves in all their perfection:

To those she saw most beautiful, she gave
 Strange panacea in a crystal bowl:--
 They drank in their deep sleep of that sweet wave,
 And lived thenceforward as if some control,
 Mightier than life, were in them.

Thus, the power of Imagination is magical, inasmuch as it knows the formulae for penetrating the deep truth. And its operations are likewise magical, inasmuch as they use charms to enchant spirits to a life of the spirit.

For those who are not beautiful in themselves, the works of Imagination are beauty-making, as well as beautiful. Seeing the deep truth in art, even evil men are forced to recognize the mockery of their corrupt positions. The king learns that an ape in his clothes would be as powerful. Soldiers, too, their imaginations and dreams enlivened by poetry, beat their swords into ploughshares. The dream of lovers are inspired to the fulfillments of love. Friends who have quarreled are brought by the sympathetic Imagination to see clearly and become friends again:

Friends who, by practice of some envious skill,
 Were torn apart--a wide wound, mind from mind!--
 She did unite again with visions clear
 Of deep affection and of truth sincere.

Poetry goes to the cause of evil; the Imagination transforms the mind by Sympathy.³² "These were the pranks she played among the cities Of mortal men." They were by no means frivolous for being metamorphic. Her transformations were profound. They aimed at nothing less than a reform of the entire heart of man. They were the same transformations that Prometheus accomplished by discovering the holy spell in the cave of Demogorgon. Act III of Prometheus Unbound accomplishes this same dropping of the masks and reaffirmation of the sympathetic heart:

The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless,
Exempt from awe . . .

As Prometheus' spell had power over the gods, too, so did the Witch's poems: "What she did to Sprites and Gods, entangling them in her sweet ditties To do her will . . . I will declare another time." Her poems are webs that catch men and control them. Men who read them are unable to resist doing good: their imaginations are enchanted. The poet of the "Ode to the West Wind" identifies with the wind "the enchanter," the "Spirit Fierce." The magician poet will disseminate his thoughts over the earth, blown by the wind of his Aeolian breath. His verse is an incantation; it awakens earth. It governs the cycles of nature.

Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth,
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

The magic of poetry consists, not so much in its power to originate totally new acts, as in its power to enchant men to virtue, to reach more imaginations more deeply than prose. The verse is an incantation; the poet, like the wind, is an enchanter; the imagination, like the witch, is a transforming power. The imagination does populate the world, but, more important, it mesmerizes the mind and thus works for political, not only aesthetic ends. Poetry becomes transitive (not intransitive and self-reflexive as for Coleridge); it changes men.

Shelley adopts Coleridge's use of magic to signify the effortless-ness and freedom of the Imagination. He accepts the notion of magically induced trance arising from indolence and leading to spontaneous and powerful voice. He agrees with Coleridge that words at their most powerful build worlds, and that in general the worlds they build are paradisaical, whole and instantaneous. They are better worlds than the visible one. Magical insight penetrates even the existing world more deeply than does mimetic sight. The poet who is adept at magic sees more deeply because he is arcanelly learned. He knows secrets. He lifts the veil. Because he sees thus, his visions are visions of unity and love.

But Shelley's magic is pragmatic. Coleridge is so astonished at the power of words to generate independent life that he ascribes to them magical power. He ascribes to the will whence they come supernatural strength. Shelley, however, is not so much concerned with the magical origins of the words as with their effects. Words

may be described as "magical" because they enthrall men; at their most urgent, they can compel men to good; they metamorphose life by the incantation of their verse." Coleridge's theory of poetic magic looks inward to the process of making poetry. Shelley's looks outward to the changes poetry will effect in the world. For Coleridge poetry confers life; for Shelley it improves it.

Footnotes to Chapter VI

- ¹ For magic in Keats' poems, see especially Endymion, Book I, 453, 553-557, 573; III: 194-216; 373-645, in Complete Poems and Selected Letters, ed. C. D. Thorpe (New York, 1935).
- ² Neville Rogers, Shelley at Work: A Critical Inquiry (Oxford, 1956), p. 110.
- ³ Newman Ivey White, Shelley (New York, 1940), vol I, p. 18.
- ⁴ André Maurois, Ariel, ou la vie de Shelley (Paris, 1952), p. 12.
- ⁵ Ibid , p. 13.
- ⁶ A. M. D. Hughes, The Nascent Mind of Shelley (Oxford, 1947) p. 27.
- ⁷ Letter to William Godwin, Jan. 10, 1812, The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. F. L. Jones (Oxford, 1964).
- ⁸ Ross G. Woodman, The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley (Toronto, 1964), p. 26.
- ⁹ William Godwin, see note 41 of Chapter II.
- ¹⁰ "The Wandering Jew," Complete Works, IV, pp. 353-396.
- ¹¹ "St. Irvyne: or the Rosicrucian," Complete Works, V, p. 109-205.
- ¹² "Queen Mab," The Poetical Works of Shelley, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London, 1956), pp. 762-833. All subsequent references to Shelley's poetry will be from this edition.
- ¹³ "Of the Devil and Devils," Complete Works, VII, p. 100.
- ¹⁴ Rogers, p. 314.
- ¹⁵ G. Wilson Knight, The Starlight Dome: Studies in the Poetry of Vision (London, 1959), p. 218.
- ¹⁶ David Perkins, The Quest for Permanence: The Symbolism of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats (Cambridge, 1959), p. 111.

17 "Essay on Life," Complete Works, VI, p. 196.

18 "Essay on Love," Complete Works, VI, p. 202 n.

19 The Poetical Works, pp. 482-3.

20 Manfred, The Poetical Works of Lord Byron (London, 1957), pp. 390-406.

21 "The Deformed 'Transformed'" features the magical metamorphosis of Arnold the hunchback into Arnold the prince. A "stranger magician conjures

Shadows of beauty!
Shadows of power!
Rise to your duty--
This is the hour! (I:1: 156-60)

"The stranger takes some earth and moulds it along the turf, and then addresses the phantom of Achilles":

Elements, near me,
Be mingled and stirr'd,
Know me, and hear me,
And leap to my work!
Sunbeams awaken
The earth's animation!
'Tis done! He hath taken
His stand in creation! (I:I: 413-420)

The magician is once more the God who conjures up the world with his words.

22 G. W. Knight, p. 212.

23 Milton Wilson, Shelley's Later Poetry: A Study of His Prophetic Imagination (New York, 1959), pp. 8, 47.

24 Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision, (New York, 1961), p. 96.

25 Ibid., p. 102.

26 Knight, p. 206.

27 Perkins, p. 12.

28 Baker, p. 104.

²⁹A modern "Romantic," Sir James Frazer, insists upon this distinction between bold magic and grovelling religion: the magician "supplicates no higher power; he sues the favor of no fickle and wayward being; he abases himself before no awful deity," The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion (New York, 1958), p. 56.

³⁰G. W. Knight, pp. 227-8.

³¹Harold Bloom, Shelley's Mythmaking (New Haven, 1959), pp. 173 ff; 191.

³²For the connection between Imagination and morality, see Shelley's "Defense," Complete Works VII, p. 109-43.

Conclusion

The Coleridgean tradition did not end with Shelley. Indeed Coleridge's theories of incantatory verse and magical origination seem to exercise a magic of their own over many major nineteenth century figures. Many of these aimed to be variously enchanting in their poetry. When Edgar Allen Poe rejoices in 1831 that in reading Coleridge's poetry

I tremble like one who stands upon a volcano,
conscious, from the very darkness bursting
from the crater, of the fire and the light that
are weltering below,

he speaks for a whole generation which stands on the same volcano.¹

Poe's own musical verse is designed to enchant us out of (rather than into) thought; it uses Coleridge's magical theories, but distorts them. Looking back on this whole nexus of magical verse, Aldous Huxley proclaims

All the poems of Edgar Allen Poe are spells.
A self-conscious and scientific sorcerer, he
was for ever experimentally combining in
varying proportions the different kinds of
poetical magic--magic of sound, magic of
remoteness and fanciful extravagance.²

Browning, too, comes under Coleridge's spell. In 1835 his Paracelsus uses a central magical hero to discuss the disjunction of reason and feeling. And in 1844, influenced both by Coleridge himself and by a Coleridgean reading of Plotinus, Jamblichus,

Paracelsus, Agrippa, Boehme and Swedenborg, Emerson describes the poet as a liberating God whose "metamorphosis excites in the beholder an emotion of joy."

The use of symbols has a certain power of emancipation and exhilaration for all men. We seem to be touched by a wand which makes us dance and run about happily, like children.³

In 1844 Emerson elaborates his theories of magical poetry in the three parts of his Merlin. The medieval wizard becomes the archetypal bard. Merlin operates in a sympathetic and vital universe that is compared to an Aeolian Harp. He reconciles heaven and earth by his magical language. Merlin's art originates and frees. His "Artful thunder" should "convey the secrets of the solar track." Out of enthusiasm comes an effortless verse:

Great is the art,
Great be the manners of the bard!
He shall not his brain encumber
With the coil of rhythm and number,
But, leaving rule and pale forethought,
He shall aye climb
For his rhyme:
Pass in, pass in, the angels say,
In to the upper doors;
Nor count compartments of the floors,
But mount to Paradise
By the stairway of surprise.⁴

Like Coleridge, Emerson sees the poem arise not through calculation, but spontaneously and miraculously. The poem brings nature to harmony. Allusions to Prometheus, Orpheus and Prospero fortify the notion of the magical powers of verse:

Merlin's mighty line,
 Extremes of nature reconciled,
 Bereaved a tyrant of his will,
 And made the lion mild.
 Songs can the tempest still,
 Scattered on the stormy air,
 Mould the year to fair increase,
 And bring in poetic peace.

Because the analogies of magical poetry correspond to the analogies within a magical universe, poetry and the world can act on one another.

Perfect paired as eagle's wings,
 Justice is the rhyme of things.

Words change things. Poetry and magic work on the same principle.

It is perhaps through Emerson, then, that Emily Dickinson learns to think of her power as magical, her poems as acts of sorcery. Her belief that "the living word has recreative power" led her to invent an extravagant language, explains Charles R. Anderson in his Emily Dickinson's Poetry, "Only so could she render her full belief in poetry's magical power."⁵ Anderson credits her with anticipating "the belief of twentieth-century poets in the magical transformation which the consciousness can make out of the world by a new union of word, thing, and thought."⁶ But Anderson forgets that she did not initiate this belief. Instead, she takes it over from Emerson and Poe, who in turn learned it from Shelley and Coleridge.

Nor should we omit Tennyson from the list of those whose use of magic can be traced to Coleridge. His Merlin, the exhausted enchanted of the 1859 Merlin and Vivien, had been a near and

creator, but is himself bewitched by passion and vanity. The very charm that had created the Round Table and its ephemeral utopia comes, with the decline of virtue, to enthrall the weak enthralled. Magical power cannot resist the uses of evil. Like Adam, Merlin the wizard had claimed a false divinity, and he falls to the serpentine Vivien. Art is corrupted along with society. Tennyson's moral speculation on Merlin's self-destroying charm deflects the aesthetic thrust of Coleridge's theories of magic.

This aesthetic direction continues in France, passing there via Poe to Baudelaire. The notion of poetry as magic infuses the symbolist movement. Marcel Raymond, in From Baudelaire to Surrealism, alerts us at every turn to the magical intentions of Baudelaire, Apollinaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine and Mallarmé.⁷ We remember that Valéry, author of Mon Faust, entitled his second volume of poems Charmes; that Rimbaud considered himself a sorcerer, particularly in his poem Voyelles; and that Villiers de l'Isle-Adam claimed for himself the epithet (after reading Eliphas Levi's Dogme et Rituel de Haute Magie) "l'enchanteur." While Huysmans was using magical motifs in La-Bas, Mallarmé revealed his ideal of the poet as magician in this paragraph which summarizes the themes of neoplatonic, primitive and romantic magic we have observed so far:

To evoke the mute object in a shadow by means of allusive words (never direct ones) that become themselves equally silent, comes very near to creation. Truly in the limits of the idea uniqueness

put in play by the literary enchanter,
scintillates and illusion equal to the
truth. Verse, incantation!

The poet is "a magician," a "dispensateur du charme."⁸ When Arthur Symonds introduces the symbolists to England and Ireland in 1899, he reintroduces with them, the metaphors of magic that Thomson, Collins, Young, Hurd, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron had used in profusion almost one hundred years before. Showing that in symbolist poetry "description is banished that beautiful things may be evoked, magically,"⁹ Symonds reinforced what Yeats had already learned from Shelley.¹⁰ In 1933, Aldous Huxley summarizes this long English tradition of magic and leads us to understand how the interpretation of magical verse has changed from an ideal of precision to one of vagueness:

Intrinsically magical, spells are loud with what is, for us, a compelling music. Their phrases are thrillingly obscure with shadowed meanings and mysterious allusions. Their strange words set the imagination working. Spells, in short, are poetry, and their authors, the magicians, poets.¹¹

It has been the purpose of this study to show that Coleridge was the synthesizer and disseminator of this tradition in England and America and eventually (with the help of the Germans) in France. In Coleridge's poetry and prose magic is a pervasive theme: **the** magician is a wise man who participates in a supernatural world partly of his own making. Because of his heightened perceptions **voices** possess him. He is learned in arcane lore. **With these**

unique powers he is able to penetrate the secrets of the universe. For both Coleridge and Shelley, words have magical power to conjure things and to enchant men. Like spells, their poems summon invisible forms and animate the universe. In such major Romantic documents as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," "Kubla Khan," "Peter Bell," "Manfred," "Prometheus Unbound," and "The Witch of Atlas," magic not only provides subject matter but also enjoins form. The view that poetry is magical seems to inform these works to such an extent that the magical spell is a frequent metrical invasion. The poet, in his frenzy, becomes a magician who finds "potent voice" as the mariner and Bard Bracy do, or who exchanges one potent voice for another, as Prometheus does. Speaking and charming are one. Both are means of revitalizing experience. It can have been no coincidence that the use of magical themes and forms occurs often in two poets who had since early youth been familiar with the neoplatonic and primitive magical traditions. As these traditions link the creative power of language with incantatory verse, they inspired a belief (sometimes arrogant) in the poet's power to act both in divine and political spheres. Where words transform the things they describe, poetry changes the world.

The importance of magic to the Romantic view of poetry has never before, to my knowledge, been observed. Although we intuitively speak of the magic of verse, we ignore the elaboration of this metaphor in the second half of the eighteenth century, and we

ignore the stress on the continuity of magical tradition from Renaissance to Symbolists, as Coleridge and Shelley sought to synthesize the past and ordain the future. Because it is a theme chosen deliberately, it becomes a method of writing poetry. Its importance is not so much for illuminating Romantic poetry and theory for us, as in dictating to the writers themselves how they thought about their own role and their poems' power, and accordingly how they actually constructed their verse. Magic amounts to a statement of the importance of originality, to a new way of structuring verse (along lines suggested by Shakespeare's Macbeth) and to a declaration of war against Aristotelian mimesis. Things are dead; the omnipotent and verbal mind revives them.

Coleridge, in knitting together strands of magic from nordic study, anthropology, Plotinian philosophy, mysticism, and science, and the images of those eighteenth century writers who first thought about magic in relation to art--founded the whole metaphor and the incantatory practices it evoked. By the sheer quantity of evidence in prose, minor poems and major poems, and by the consistency of his concern with magic in every aspect of these poems, we have seen the way magic touched for Coleridge on his many other concerns: spontaneous creativity, organicism, miracles, enthusiasm, the physical effects of rhythm, to name just a few. Magic is a theme, and because from Morgann and Young to Shelley and Byron it was such a prevalent one, it finally governs the pattern of actual lines of poetry, and the poet's expectations of their effects on readers.

Coleridge, in bringing to bear on the magical power of language the whole force of Renaissance theory, takes responsibility for uniting Romantic theories of language with a wealth of theories from the past. Following the Cambridge Platonists and Young, he brings England into the continuum of European neoplatonism, and, stressing the centrality of words, points England thenceforth into magical directions.

How much the underlying theories of magic account for the actual magnetism of the Romantic poems recently under consideration is difficult to say. The juxtaposition of their magical intentions with the magic terms that critics have used in praise of them leaves a gap. This gap is the actual power of the words of a poem over our feelings, and here, despite advances in psychology, we are still caught in an unaccountable (and hence magical) dilemma. Perhaps only a metrical analysis (and here the peculiar metre of the magical spell becomes relevant) can explain the feelings of fright, compulsion, credulity and power aroused by the supernatural poems of the Romantic era. In the real accentualism of their wild and whirling words lies the source of the magical power of the poems over us; the metre enchants us to believe we are being touched by a language distinct from normal speech, with power to summon supernatural forms. When Coleridge reveals that poets are inspired by the very excitement of writing, he suggests the poet (like the reader at a later stage) is compelled by the metre

of his own poem to proceed. He, too, is enchanted by its rhythm. And poets write in metre, says Coleridge, to announce that they are about to say something different. Since the metre in magical poems is more pronounced than in others, it is partly this self-consciousness that forces the reader to attend to the densely patterned structure. In spells the techniques of poetry are concentrated; their effect is thereby reinforced (at least in the short run); and to the extent that we are more than usually conscious of their texture as language, we are seduced into accommodating their content and obeying their seemingly supernatural commands. This sounds like deception, but it is rather the exercise of emotional, and hence metrical, power that evinces our credulity, and imprints our remembered sense of having been bound as with a spell. We are not tricked, but lured into an unusual state of consciousness in which the things of this world cease to seem the only reality.

But why it is, however, that the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" charms, while the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" bores us, is a question that must in the end be left in the realm of magic. It was a sort of magic that Coleridge's compelling speech exerted on his contemporary listeners; it was a sort of magic that enforced his theories on Shelley, Byron, Poe and Emerson; and a magic still emanates from those poems that rose suddenly and magically up to him out of his indolence and, in magical metres, described the search for "potent voice," for utterance

at once original and originating, that will guarantee the omnipotence of mind. As words make worlds, they guarantee the mind's origin in a supernatural world, and suggest its freedom from the impressions of nature.

Footnotes to Conclusion

¹ Edgar Allan Poe, Letter to Mr. _____ prefaced to Poems, 2nd ed. (New York, 1831), The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. R. Brimley Johnson (London, 1927), p. 146.

² "Magic," Texts and Pretexts (New York, 1960), p. 243.

³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, (Philadelphia, n. d.) I, 283.

⁴ Emerson, III, 174-182.

⁵ Charles R. Anderson, Emily Dickinson's Poetry (Garden City, N. Y., 1960), p. 47.

⁶ Ibid., p. 103.

⁷ Marcel Raymond, From Baudelaire to Surrealism (New York, 1959), . . . writes, for example, that "Rimbaud is a sorcerer rather than a mystic," p. 35; that Mallarme is "the pure poet, the Magician who cannot accept his limitations," p. 24.

⁸ Stephane Mallarmé, Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Henry Mondor et B. Jean-Aubry (Paris, 1965), p. 400.

⁹ The Symbolist Movement in Literature (New York, 1958), p. 5.

¹⁰ William Butler Yeats, "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry," Ideas of Good and Evil (New York, 1961), p. 78-87.

¹¹ Huxley, p. 228.

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Autobiographical Statement

Anya Bozeman Taylor was born December 2, 1941, in Moline, Illinois, to a family of lawyers. Her schooling was erratic: she attended the Bronxville School, the Northfield School, the Master's School, Swarthmore College, and The Sorbonne, getting a B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College in 1963 and an M.A. from Columbia in January, 1965. While trying to write verse, she started at The City University in September, 1965, and has taught at Hunter and the City College. She has traveled in Europe and Africa, and now lives with her son Andrew and her husband Mark in Manhattan.