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"KUBLA KHAN" BY S. T. COLERIDGE: A POEM IN THE MEDIEVAL DREAM VISION TRADITION

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"KUBLA KHAN" BY S.T. COLERIDGE: A POEM IN THE MEDIEVAL DREAM VISION TRADITION

by

J.E. WARNEMENT

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis places the 1816 published text of "Kubla Khan" within the medieval dream vision tradition. The structure and themes in "Kubla Khan" resemble the structure and themes in medieval dream vision poetry. The thesis further establishes "Kubla Khan" as a dream vision poem in the medieval dream vision tradition by citing Coleridgean primary source materials. These materials demonstrate Coleridge's cognizance of the medieval dream genre. The medieval dream genre, its sources, and its poetry, are discussed in order to examine their points of comparison with "Kubla Khan." This discussion of dreams becomes a psychoanalytical approach only insofar as the medieval dream vision poem involves psychology in its evolution from medieval dream theories. This interpretive approach centers on the structure of "Kubla Khan." The existence of a literary form, that of the medieval dream vision, is firmly asserted.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Dowden, under whom the beginnings of this thesis originated, for his careful aid and assistance. Dr. Doughtie and Dr. Clark have also been very helpful. My very special regards are extended to Carlos and Dina Solís for their unfailing support and encouragement. Many Thanks!
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis demonstrates the placement of the 1816 published text of "Kubla Khan" within the medieval dream vision tradition. The structure and themes within "Kubla Khan" resemble the structure and themes of medieval dream visions. Secondary sources and considerations, however, serve as points of interest and convey a more complete understanding of the depth and feasibility of such a connection. I, however, establish "Kubla Khan" as a dream vision poem in the medieval dream vision tradition by also citing Coleridgean primary source materials. These materials demonstrate Coleridge's cognizance of the medieval dream genre. I shall discuss the medieval dream genre, its sources, and its poetry, in order to examine their points of comparison with "Kubla Khan." This discussion of dreams becomes a psychoanalytical approach only insofar as the medieval dream vision poem involves psychology in its evolution from medieval dream theories. My interpretive approach centers on the structure of "Kubla Khan" as placing the poem within the medieval dream vision tradition. Content, however, is also a contributive factor. Previous critical appraisals deny a traditional literary form in the poem. I assert the existence of such a form, that of the medieval dream vision, in "Kubla Khan."
CHAPTER ONE

Attempting to determine the mind of the poet at the moment of a poem's composition is an interesting exercise in which worthwhile clues to the poet's purpose and persona are coalesced; this exercise, however, is primarily of a speculative nature. With this consideration in the forefront, this thesis intends to establish Coleridge's cognizance of medieval literature by means of references made in various contemporary sources, his personal papers, and in his conversations, as recorded by others. In establishing Coleridge's knowledge of medieval literature and medieval literary forms, the placing of "Kubla Khan" within one of these forms becomes possible. Nevertheless, the emphasis of this placement rests on the text of the poem itself as published in 1816; it is this text of "Kubla Khan" which places it in the medieval literary tradition of the dream vision and not merely those references which are found in Coleridge's papers. Those references are supplementary and supportive of the dream vision thesis, but by no means of essential significance. The sole object in citing those references is to demonstrate Coleridge's thorough familiarity with medieval literature, and therefore to provide a further basis for viewing "Kubla Khan" in the dream vision tradition.

In his personal papers, Coleridge refers to various medieval topics. These topics include that era's eminent poets, its verse, literary interpretation peculiar to that period, and its language. Most of these medieval references occur in and develop out of Coleridge's examination of larger literary and philosophical concepts. These concepts range from the Aristotelian theory of association to Chaucer's poetic genius. Coleridge's own power of association, of coalescing and expounding views from his vast
reading, is extensive and illuminative, though unfortunately, in instances, plagiaristic. Through this power of association, however, several references to eminent medieval poets occur. Preeminent among these medieval poets is, of course, Chaucer. These references to him are especially significant, in that Chaucer is one of the foremost authors of dream vision poetry in England during the fourteenth century. Coleridge's thorough grasp of and regard for Chaucer's poetry indicate at least an exposure to this literary form. And, just as Coleridge uses an accentual alliterative verse derived from Anglo-Saxon poets in "Christabel," which, interestingly enough, he claims to be "a new principle," so also does he use the medieval dream vision form, again without acknowledgement, in "Kubla Khan."

Coleridge mentions Chaucer several times, always with admiration. For instance, Coleridge discounts the necessity of connecting genius with irritability in the Biographia Literaria. Chaucer is used as both an example of genius, by his very mention, and of cheerfulness. Coleridge states: "Through all the works of Chaucer there reigns a cheerfulness, a manly hilarity, which makes it almost impossible to doubt a correspondent habit of feeling in the author himself." ¹ Coleridge's estimation of Chaucer's genius is discussed further: "In Pindar, Chaucer, Dante, Milton, &c., &c., we have instances of the close connection of poetic genius with the love of liberty and of genuine reformation." ²

Coleridge's assessment of Chaucer's genius may also be gleaned from a notebook entry from 1807–08 in which fame is discussed.

Not only Chaucer and Spenser; but even Shakespeare and Milton have as yet received only the earnest, and scanty first gatherings of their Fame—This indeed it is which gives its full
dignity and more than mental grandeur to Fame, this which at once distinguishes it from Reputation, and makes its attainment a fit object of pursuit to the good, and an absolute duty to the Great; that it grows with the growth of Virtue & Intellect, and co-operates in that growth; it becomes wider and deep, as their country and all mankind are the countrymen of the man of true and adequately exerted Genius/ becomes better and wiser. 3

A letter to William Godwin, dated 10 June 1803, also shows Coleridge's interest and knowledge of Chaucer. Coleridge agrees to peruse Godwin's biography of Chaucer, which is subsequently published in October 1803, due to a "reverential Love of Chaucer." 4 A promise to "FOROUGH write a series of Letters containing a critique on Chaucer, & on the Life of Chaucer by W. Godwin" 5 is also extended. However, since promises were always more forthcoming than action with Coleridge and since the next letter, dated 30 January 1804, makes no mention of either proposal, it is rather doubtful that either was carried through.

However, Coleridge's discussion of Chaucer in that initial correspondence of June, 1803, is worth examining. It reveals his thorough knowledge of Chaucerian Literature, of the literature of that poet's medieval contemporaries, and as ultimately leading to an assessment of that age.

The great thing to be done is to present Chaucer stripped of all his adventitious matter - his Translations & to analyse his own real productions - to
deduce his Province, & his Rank; then to compare
him with his Contemporaries, or immediate both
Prede-* and Successors, first as an Englishman, &
secondly as a European - then with Spencer, & with
Shakespeare, between whom he seems to stand mid-
way, with however a manner of his own which be-
longs to neither - both a manner of excellence -
lastly to compare Dante, & Chaucer, . . . with the
Ancients, to abstract the characteristic Differences,
& to develope the causes of such Differences. - (For
instance, in all the writings of the ancients I recol-
lect nothing that strictly examined can be called Hu-
mour - yet Chaucer abounds with it. . . .the passion
for Personifications - & . . .strong sharp practical
good Sense. . . ) . . .I could give you a critical
sketch of Poems, written by contemporaries of
Chaucer, in Germany - Epic, to compare with
his Palamon & Arcite - Tales with his Tales - des-
criptive & fanciful with those of the same kind in
our Poet - In short, a Life of Chaucer ought . . .
to make the Poet explain his Age, & to make the
Age both explain the Poet, & evince the superior-
ity of the Poet over his Age. 6

This passage demonstrates that Coleridge values universality in a poet and
believes that Chaucer possesses this quality which extends his poetry beyond his own age. The comparisons made to other eminent English and Ancient authors show Coleridge’s deep literary scope and the specific references to characteristics of Chaucer’s writing (Humour, sense, and personification) display Coleridge’s depth of knowledge of Chaucerian literature and, indeed, of European, specifically German, medieval literature. This familiarity with medieval literature is also presented in a list of projected works which Coleridge entered in his notebook, dated Nov. 1803. Of eight entries, the first two pertain to medieval topics: Romances; Chaucer.  

A final testament to Coleridge’s immense and continuing estimation of Chaucer may be observed in the recounting of one of his many literary conversations, dated 15 March 1834:

I take unceasing delight in Chaucer. His manly cheerfulness is especially delicious to me in my old age. How exquisite tender he is, & yet how perfectly free from the least touch of sickly melancholy or morbid drooping! The sympathy of the poet with the subjects of his poetry is particularly remarkable in . . . Chaucer . . . done without any effort, merely by the inborn kindly joyousness of his nature. How well we seem to know Chaucer!  

That Coleridge’s high regard for Chaucer persists up through the last year of his life portrays how significant that regard is.

Coleridge also displays a familiarity and knowledge of other medieval poets. This in part demonstrates his extensive reading and his ability to recollect and synthesize
that reading into his own patterns of organization. Such medieval personages include in a December 1801 notebook entry "Bede. - died 701 - began to flourish - ." One entry in a syllabus for the course of lectures dated in the winter of 1818 consists of "Chaucer and Spenser; of Petrarch; of Ariosto. . ."10 In his notebook of February 1818, Coleridge records a draft of such a lecture. A portion of it is as follows:

My object in adverting to the Italian Poets is not so much for their own sakes, in which point of view Ariosto alone would have required a separate Lecture, but for the elucidation of the merits of our Countrymen . . . to what extent we must consider them as fortunate Imitators of their Italian Predecessors.11

Coleridge proceeds to discuss Boccaccio as providing subjects for many English poems. Boccaccio, however, introduces a profaneness which Coleridge considers to have poisoned many subsequent poets. Chaucer included.12 Another Italian, Petrarch, is given higher appreciation as "the final blossom & perfection of the Troubadours".13

Each of these references serves in part to display Coleridge's depth of knowledge of the period and his ability to compare and reorganize that knowledge. His knowledge extends from what appears as a thorough grasp of individual poets to a comprehension of the poetry, the verse. Observe, for example, an account reported in The Times on 29 January 1818 of a Coleridge lecture:

...on the METRICAL ROMANCES, English, French.

German Characteristics of the Poetry, Chivalry.
and Customs of the 12th, 13th, and 14th Centuries... 14

The lecture draft found in Coleridge's January 1818 notebook consists of exactly this material.

Closely associated with any type of verse in an era is the language in which it is written and the interpretation which it receives. Coleridge thoroughly understands both subjects. Concerning language, Coleridge discusses poetic techniques and images. In the *Biographia Literaria* he explains his dislike for overtly artificial images, poetry that he calls "tricked up...*rag-fair finery,“ 15 and his preference for increased fluidity and naturalness which he finds in literature of other periods. Medieval literature is included among these other periods:

In my defence of the lines running into each other,
instead of closing at each couplet; and of natural
language, neither bookish, nor vulgar...I had con-
tinually to adduce the metre and diction of the
Greek Poets... and still more of our elder English
poets from Chaucer to Milton. 16

Coleridge's dislike of artificial "rag-fair finery" images is also seen in his treatment of Crashaw. The conventional illustrations and images of this lesser poet, Coleridge asserts, is never seen in Chaucer. 17

Other aspects of language which Coleridge discusses are its dialect and auditory effects. He shows something of a preference for the medieval over the modern (in his case the early nineteenth century) in his comments. For instance, Old German is
spoken of as a language in which:

the polished dialect...is analogous to...Chaucer,
and which leaves the philosophical student in
doubt, whether the language has not since then
lost more in sweetness and flexibility, than it has
gained in condensation and copiousness.\textsuperscript{18}

The sound effects of medieval language are favored over those of the nineteenth
century by Coleridge in the following passage:

In the days of Chaucer and Gower, our language
might...be compared to a wilderness of reeds,
from which the favorites only of Pan or Apollo
could construct even the rude Syrinx; and from
this the constructors alone could elicit strains
of music. But now, partly by the labours of suc-
cessive poets, and in part by the more artificial
state of society and social intercourse, language,
mechanized as it were into a barrel-organ, sup-
plies at once both instrument and tune.\textsuperscript{19}

Coleridge also discusses the poetic language of Chaucer in terms of its altered
quality from that of his own day. In a notebook entry dated January 1804, Coleridge
asserts their similarity:
if only out of Chaucer himself & his Contemporaries - taking in a space of 50 years - all the true glossary Synonyms were taken to explain the obscure words of Chaucer that might be found in those Books - I guess, we should be surprized at the close resemblance of that Language to our own.2\textsuperscript{20}

This idea of similitude between the languages of medieval and nineteenth century England inclines Coleridge to dismiss the assertion that poetry composed in Middle English is unreadable by moderns. He substantiates this claim through a discussion of pronunciation, meter, and word comprehension. The following passage is a recorded conversation dated from March 1834:

I can not in the least allow any necessity for Chaucer's poetry, especially the Canterbury Tales, being considered obsolete. Let a few plain rules be given for sounding the final e of syllables, and for expressing the termination of such words as ocean, and nation, etc. as dissyllables, - or let the syllables to be sounded in such cases be marked by a competent metrist. This simple expedient would, with a very few trifling exceptions, where the errors are inveterate, enable any reader to feel the perfect smoothness and harmony of Chaucer's verse. As to understanding
his language, if you read twenty pages with a good glossary, you surely can find no further difficulty, even as it is; but I should have no objection to see this done; - Strike out those words which are now obsolete, & I will venture to say that I will replace every one of them by words still in use out of Chaucer himself, or Gower his disciple. I don't want this myself: I rather like to see the significant terms which Chaucer unsuccessfully offered as candidates for admission into our language; but surely so slight a change of text may well be pardoned . . . for the purpose of restoring so great a poet to his ancient & most deserved popularity.\textsuperscript{21}

In regards to the pronunciation of Middle English poetry, Coleridge proposes a few rules in the \textit{Biographia Literaria}:

Let the reader then only adopt the pronunciation of the poet and of the court, at which he lived, both with respect to the final \textit{e} and to the accentuation of the last syllable.\textsuperscript{22}

Coleridge then cites approximately forty lines from one of Chaucer's best poems, \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, as having a more natural and seemingly unstudied style than any other examples to be drawn from poetic language.\textsuperscript{23}

Coleridge also displays an interest in the prevalent form of interpretation in the
The Middle Ages. The interpretation of the language in which medieval verse is written is, of course, allegory. Allegory, as a controlling trope, consists of four levels; these are the literal, the allegorical, the tropological, and the anagogical. In a notebook entry of 1807-08, Coleridge discusses allegory at some length.

'When I can, & if I can, to trace the origin, historical and metaphysical, of Allegory — its slight traces in the ancients, & the causes of that slightness from the nature of a philosophical Idolatry, which conjoined with actual worship too much realized their personification, so that even in Ovid the most allegorical they only verge towards or partake of allegory, Cebes &c./ As the belief of reality, & as the action of corporeal forms to which a reality by faith had been attached, weakened, allegory grew — the causes that prepared the world for a mundane, as opposed to a natural religion, a religion of man, as opposed to the religion of Greece with its Olympus, Delos, Delphi, &c., likewise increased the feeling for allegory — with the full establishment of the mundane or Christian Religion it became Compleat — Prudentius — &c/ Platonism favorable to it; therefore Apuleius &c — Then thro' this dark Ages — at the dawn of modern Literature read Dante's prose intermixed with Poetry. Il convito, Vita nuova, &c, &c all the works of the old
Italians prior to, contemporary with, or the immediate successors of Dante then go to Bellay, & in France then to Chaucer &tc &tc - to Spencer, in English -& then trace the decline of Allegory & its Causes.24

The depth of knowledge in this passage in which Coleridge traces the historical development, causes, geographic extension, and decline of allegory lends support to John Stuart Mill's appraisal of Coleridge as one of "the two great seminal minds of England."25

Coleridge is certainly cognizant of and fluent in literary subjects of the medieval period. His most significant medieval references, however, are those which refer to the dream vision. Coleridge cites ancient and medieval scholars and authors who exert a dominant and founding influence on the development of the medieval dream vision literary form.

In Coleridge's discussion of the associative theory in the Biographia Literaria, he mentions "the fullest & most perfect enunciation of the associative principle, viz. to the writings of Aristotle; . . . principally . . . De Anima, De Memoria, and . . . Parva Naturalia."26 Interesting as the theory of association is, the main point of reference here is Coleridge's knowledge and reading of Aristotle's Parva Naturalia. This work is a series of treatises which are grouped together under a title bestowed in the late Middle Ages. One of these treatises, De Insomniis, contains tenets of dream theory which is drawn upon later by medieval scholars and authors in their own dream theories and from which dream forms in literature eventually evolve. As Coleridge is familiar with the Parva Naturalia in discussing associative theories and as De Insomniis is one of several treatises comprising that volume and as it is one of
the foundations of medieval dream theory from which the literary form develops, it is 
not therefore impossible to suggest that Coleridge may possess some idea of this dream 
literary tradition. If this is supposed, it is only one step further to suggest that he quite 
possibly applies this concept in "Kubla Khan."

Besides Aristotle's De Iasomaiis, two other authors of material forming a basis 
of medieval dream vision literary theory are mentioned by Coleridge. These are 
Apuleius and Boethius. As already cited from Coleridge's discussion of allegory, 
Apuleius must be known to him. No specific work of this ancient author is mentioned, 
yet in view of Coleridge's voracious reading habits, it is not impossible to suppose that 
De Deo Socratis is also familiar to him. This particular work also forms a part of the 
basis of the literary dream vision tradition.

Boethius and his work of great significance to many facets of the Middle Ages, 
The Consolation of Philosophy, is another cited reference of medieval import in 
Coleridgean primary source material. Coleridge is certainly familiar with him. In the 
Biographia Literaria, he speaks of the poetry of "Boetius" as receiving greater 
estimation than the poetry of Boethius' contemporaries, specifically a certain Sidonius 
Apollinaris. This reference occurs in a chapter discussing the beauties of 
Wordsworth's poetry. That Coleridge can draw upon a medieval scholar and author 
thirteen hundred years prior to his own subject matter and also have the scope and 
knowledge to compare this referent to an even more obscure personage, Apollinaris, 
one again demonstrates his prodigious reading, retention, and abilities of 
assimilation. Tangential suppositions become less and less stretched, although still and 
always admittedly of a speculative nature.

A direct mention of Boethius' The Consolation of Philosophy does occur in 
Coleridge's Biographia Literaria. This reference, however, comes from a discussion 
concerning the defects of Wordsworth's poetry. Coleridge criticizes the oscillation of
Wordsworth and other poets between different styles of writing in one composition. Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, however, successfully combines these different styles. Coleridge describes it as a prose work in which the insertion of poems is not aimless fluctuation between styles. Whatever the case, Coleridge certainly knows this piece of literature so crucial to medieval philosophical thought and so fundamental to the literary dream vision form.

Coleridge, finally, does cite a literary work in the dream vision tradition. This indicates Coleridge's direct contact with the actual dream vision form of medieval poetry and not just with its sources. A notebook entry quotes over forty lines of the opening of one of Chaucer's dream vision poems. The passage from the poem, *The Legende of Good Women*, describes the daisy, yet also, significantly, includes the opening dream frame of the vision.

\[ And Zephyrus and Flora gentilly \]
\[ Gave the* to the Flowrets soft and tenderly \]
\[ Their sote breath, & made them for to sprede \]
\[ As God & Goddess of the flowry made: \]
\[ In which methoughten, I might daye by daye \]
\[ Dwellen always the jolly month of May \]
\[ Withouten sleepe, withouten mete or drink! \]
\[ Adown full softily I gan to sink \]
\[ And leaning on my elbow and my side \]
\[ The longe day I shape me to abide \]
\[ For nothing ellis (and I shall not lie) \]
\[ But for to lokin upon the Daisie \]
\[ The Daisie, or else the eye of the Day, \]
The empress and the flower of flowery is all
I pray to God, that faire mote she fall,
And all that lovin flouris for her sake/

When that the Sun out of the South gan west,
And that this floure gan close & gon to rest,
For darkness of the night the which she drede,*
Home to mine House full swiftly I me sped
To gone to rest, and early for to rise
To see this flower to spread, as I devise/
And in a little herbir that I have
That benched was of turvis fresh i grave.
I bade men should in one my couche make:
For dainty of the newe summer's sake
I bade 'em strewn flouris on my bed-
When I was layed & had my eyen hedde (hidden)
I fell asleep, & slept an hour or two-
Me dreamt, how I laye in the meadow tho' 29

This is the opening dream frame; the account of the dream itself follows:

To see this flower that I so love & drede-
And from afar came walking in the mede
The God of Love, and in his hand a Queen:
And she was clad in royal habit green.
A fret of gold L* she hadden next her hair-
And upon that a white coroune she bare
With small flourounis and (I shall not lie)
For all the worlds right as a Daisie
Icrouned is, with white levis lite/
So were the florouns of her crowne white
For of so of perle fine oriental
Her white coroun was ymaked all
For which the white coroune above the grene
Ymade her like a Daisie for to sene/30

Coleridge transcribes this preceding passage line by line into his notebook. This
literary form which passes through his pen comes from a mind which almost certainly
has the entire passage in memory. Quite probably, Coleridge knows and, subsequently,
uses this dream form in "Kubla Khan."
CHAPTER TWO

In order to understand the possible use of the dream vision literary form in "Kubla Khan," I shall first examine preceding English literature in the dream vision tradition, in this case predominantly medieval, and secondly examine the medieval dream theories from which this tradition develops. I do not attempt an exhaustive and thorough treatment of medieval dream theories. I shall discuss only scholars and authors who illuminate the main tenets of dream theories in the Middle Ages and who, to return briefly to supplementary support from Coleridgean primary source material, appear in Coleridge's writings. This discussion attempts to canvass the main precepts of medieval dream theories and to suggest Coleridge's cognizance of such material. I do not propose this discussion to be in any way an entire or complete authority of all that is written on dreams by medieval scholars.

Constance Hieatt remarks that there are three major categories of medieval dream interpretation. Differences in origin distinguish one from another. One category suggests that dreams originate from natural, physical or psychological, causes. This type of dream has no significance. In a second grouping, dreams originate from supernatural, divine or satanic, sources. These dreams portend future events or convey knowledge of some importance. In the third category, primarily of the fourteenth century, both the natural and the supernatural cause dreams. This grouping, in turn, breaks down into five further divisions. From these final delineations, the literary dream form evolves.

The medieval opinion of dreams of natural origin derives, in part, from their ancient and major proponent, Aristotle. In the treatise De Insomniis, Aristotle
attributes dreams to physical and mental causes. Demonic possession, or other divine origins, does not cause dreams; they result from the physical causes of the temporal world. Aristotle asserts this surprisingly scientific, earth-bound attitude at a time when divine explanations predominate. The treatise utilizes scientific ideas in describing dreams. They are termed mechanical impulses which create a continuing effect after the original impulse ceases, a persistence of the object of sense, and residual images in the sense organs. Aristotle's definition exemplifies this attitude: "The mental picture which arises from the movement of the senses when one is asleep, in so far as this condition exists is a dream."^2

The second category, in which dreams are attributed to supernatural origins, is an opinion which the second century scholar and author Apuleius supports. Apuleius asserts that dreams are one way in which divine powers of a middle nature, daemons, intermediate between god and man. Dreams are brought "through the obedience, aid and service of demons" under "the will, the power, and the authority of the celestial Gods."^3 Apuleius continues by stating the portentous purpose of dreams, which may reveal either the wrath of gods or the futures of human beings. For instance, Apuleius tells how "dreams forewarned Hannibal of the loss of one of his eyes".^4

The third category of dream theory, that of both supernatural and natural causes, finds its chief advocate in the Middle Ages in Macrobius (ca. 400). In his work *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, Macrobius classifies dreams into five main types. These include the *somaion, visio, oraculum, insomnium*, and *visum*. The *insomnium* and *visum* have no prophetic import. The *insomnium*, nightmare, results from physical or mental problems and the *visum*, apparition, depicts the half-awake individual imagining specters. The remaining three types, however, possess "the power of divination."^5 An *oraculum* reveals, through an individual agent, what will or will not occur to the dreamer. A *visio* describes a prophecy that
actually comes to pass. Finally, a *somnium* portrays enigmatic and veiled messages through strange shapes.

Macrobius' *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* becomes the primary point of reference on dreams for the Middle Ages. Its influence seems enormous. Besides classifying the varying types of dreams, it also justifies the use of dream forms of veiling truth, in fiction. Macrobius calls this type of fiction the "fabulous narrative" which purposes to "draw the reader's attention to certain kinds of virtue". This method presents philosophical tenets in a fictive mode. This inspiring to virtue through fiction based on philosophy later appears in Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* (1595). To instruct and to delight becomes the dual purpose attempted in many works. Dream vision poetry of the Middle Ages, especially those poems concerning religious themes, often attempts to do just that.

The use of the dream vision form in the literature of the Middle Ages rests a good deal on Macrobius, yet also on many other commentators of dream theory. Boethius (c. 480-524) writes *The Consolation of Philosophy*. This philosophical work of great importance to the Middle Ages becomes a prototype for later dream vision poetry. The structure of the poetic dream vision literary form does not appear in this work; however, Boethius does portray a fiction of visionary import. A narrator in a job-like situation achieves consolation after a dialogue with a figure who appears before him in his sorrows. This figure, Lady Philosophy, brings the narrator to a certain reconciliation with his condition. She represents, of course, the highest wisdom of human beings; the message of the fiction being that any man, by using such wisdom as is available to him, may achieve a similar consolation, an understanding and acceptance of the human condition. Opposed to Lady Philosophy is the personification of temporal, transitory accoutrements such as fame and wealth. This figure is called Fortune. As Richard Green asserts, the dual influences of these conflicting figures
have literary descendents in later medieval dream vision poetry. Examples of such figures include Chaucer’s Nature and Lady Fame, and Langland’s Lady Holy Church and Lady Meed. I suggest that a similar dualism of such personified figures may be found in “Kubla Khan.”

In the brief preceding discussion of medieval dream theories and other prototypes of the dream literary form, ideas regarding thematic import have also appeared. Both Macrobius, in his fabulous narrative, and Boethius, in his use of personified virtue and vice, propose that philosophical or enlightening truths may be conveyed through fictive modes. In his fiction, Boethius utilizes a visionary structure and his underlying theme attempts to inspire readers to the same virtuous conclusions as the narrator reaches. Dream vision literature of the Middle Ages often includes this theme and also many others. An examination of these varying themes in concurrence with the medieval poetry which illuminates and possesses them will be attempted here. I do not, however, attempt an exhaustive treatment of all medieval dream vision literature or of all possible themes which this literature may possess or expound. Only those poems which illustrate or parallel interesting points in “Kubla Khan” will be discussed.

A dream vision poem coming from an early period in English Literature is recorded in the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* by Bede, an eighth century monk at Jarrow. This Anglo-Saxon verse, called “Cædmon’s Hymn,” results from a dream which attributes its origin to divine inspiration. Macrobius’ terminology categorizes it as both an *oraculum* and a *visio*. The miraculous origin of Cædmon’s poetic gift is described by Bede:

And so it was that at the table, when the company was set to be merry and had agreed that
each man should sing in his course, he, when
he saw the harp to be coming near him, would
rise up at midst of supper and going out get
him back to his own house.

And as he did so on a certain time, and
leaving the house of feasting had gone out to
the stable of the beasts which had been appointed
him to look to that night, and there at the fit-
ting hour had bestowed his limbs to rest, there
stood by him a certain man in a dream and bade
him God speed, and calling him by his name said to
him: "Caedmon, sing me something!" Whereupon he
answering said: "I know not how to sing; for that
too is the matter why I came out from the table
to this place apart, because I could not sing."

"But yet," quoth he again that spake with him,
"thou hast to sing to me." "What," quoth he,
"should I sing?" Whereupon the other said: "Sing
the beginning of the creatures!" At which answer
he began forthwith to sing in praise of God the
Creator verses which he had never heard before.

Now, on rising from slumber he remembered still all
the things that he had sung in his sleep, and did by
and by join thereto in the same measure more words
of the song worthy of God. . . (later) he was com-
manded in the presence of many learned men to tell
his dream and rehearse the song, that it might
by the judgment of them all be tried what or
whence the thing was which he reported. And it
seemed to them all, that a heavenly grace was
granted him of the Lord. And they recited unto
him the process of a holy story or lesson, bidding
him, if he could, to turn the same into meter and
verse. Whereupon he undertaking so to do went his
way, and on the morrow came again and brought the
same which they had required of him, made in very
good verse. Whereupon by and by the abbess em-
bracing the grace of God in the man... gave com-
mandment for him to be instructed in the regular
course of holy history. But he by thinking again
with himself upon all that he could hear and learn,
and chewing thereon as a clean beast cheweth the
cud, would turn it into very sweet song; and by
melodiously singing the same again would make his
teachers to become in their turn his hearers. 9

This dream vision is an oraculum in that a divine agent. “a certain man in a dream.”
comes to Cædmon; it is also a visio in that the future is foretold, after awakening
Cædmon can and does sing.

Bede narrates the account of Cædmon’s story in prose and only “Cædmon’s Hymn”
is written in verse form. However, like Boethius' Consolation, "Cædmon's Hymn" in theme, if not in form, fits into the dream vision genre of literature. The form of dream vision poetry basically involves a narrator who relates circumstances in which he falls asleep, describes a dream, and awakens to circumstances usually altered in some way. The first and third step of this process is called the dream envelope or the dream frame. Most medieval dream vision poetry follows this pattern.

Medieval dream visions also fall under many other themes which pervade the entire poem. One of these themes is the attempt to convey a religious or spiritual message. This appears in The Dream of the Rood, The Debate of the Body and Soul, Pearl, and William Langland's Piers Plowman. These poems also display another thematic pattern typical of the dream vision genre. This pattern is one in which a troubled narrator falls asleep, dreams, and awakens a more enlightened individual. It is an educative process. Both of these preceding themes are evident in an early dream vision poem also from the Anglo-Saxon period. This is The Dream of the Rood (c. 750):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hwæt, ic swefna cyst} & \quad \text{seccgan wille} \\
\text{hwæt me gemæstle} & \quad \text{to midre nihte,} \\
\text{sippan reord-berend} & \quad \text{reste wunodon}. \\
\text{Puhte me pæt ic gesawe...} & \quad (OE 1-4)\text{11}
\end{align*}
\]

The aloneness and late hour signify the troubled state of the poet and bring on the dream. The poem ends with the dreamer awakening, renewed in faith, eager to seek God through the example of obedience and strength which the rood personifies. The rood exhorts the dreamer:
The dreamer is educated and relieved of his anxiety.

These two controlling tropes, religious message and educative process, are used in the *Debate of the Body and Soul* (c. 1400). This debate poem also uses the traditional dream vision form, the so-called dream envelope. The poem begins:

As I lay in a wynteres nyȝt. 
In a droupayng to-fore pe day. 
Me pouȝt I seye a selye syȝt. 13

The dreamer's troubled condition is indicated by the time of day and season, the winter's night. This opening envelope is followed by a graphic and grotesque dream in which a soul is condemned to hell due to its sinful life. The dreamer then awakens:

Faste can hit nyȝhe pe day. 
On euery here a drope stode, 
For sore aferde per I lay. (BS 474-76) 14

The dreamer, terrorized by the vision, earnestly repents his own sins, praise God, and beseeches the bestowal of grace: "Groant vs. God, for pine holy grace" (BS 496). The religious message of the poem is apparent in that, in the closing dream frame, the dreamer is very eager to do so.
William Langland's poem *Piers Plowman* is another example of medieval verse which is religious in its import and displays an educative process for the dreamer-narrator. This is an immensely complex and involved poem, consisting of three varying texts and an immense divergence in interpretations. For purposes here, I shall use the A text and, for the later Passus, the C text.

The poem's opening dream frame signifies a troubled narrator weary from his wanderings who rests by a brook, falls asleep, and has a dream:

I was very for-wandrit and wente me to reste
Undir a brood bank be a bourne side;
And as I lay and lenide and loxide on the wairis,
I slomeride in a slepyng, it swighe de so merye.

*Thanne gan I met a merweillous swevene.*

A dream follows which, through personifications and brilliant uses of medieval allegory, depicts how and how not to live in a Christian manner, that is to "do well."

The dreamer then awakens:

And thourgh here wordis I wok, and waitide aboute,
And saugh the sonne sitte that tyme;
Meteles and moneylies on Malverne hillies,
*Musynge on this metelis, a myle wey I yede.*

The pensive mood of the dreamer "*musynge on this metelis*" signifies his receiving of some sort of education.
The poem continues to varying lengths, depending upon which manuscript is read, with the dreamer undergoing the process of sleeping, dreaming, and waking. The interesting aspect of this poem is the manner in which the physical form of the dream vision is also used thematically to signify progress in the dreamer’s spiritual state. Dreaming becomes a deliberate device to show a deeper, more profound state of understanding. In his search to understand how to “do well,” in which, among other devices, he is assisted by the dual figures of Lady Holy Church and Lady Meed, the dreamer-narrator says:

And awakede þerwith; wo was me thenne
That y ne hadde met more, so murye as y slept,
And saide ancon to mysulue, ‘Sleepynge hadde y grace
To wyte what Dowel is, ac wakynge neuer!"
dream. This character, an aged man, dreams of a debate between two birds. The cuckoo, adversary of courtly love, and the nightingale, proponent of courtly love, argue their respective positions until the dreamer breaks into his vision and throws stones at the cuckoo, thereby demonstrating his preference. All of the evidence, however, tends to favor the argument of the cuckoo, and it is as if the dreamer wishes to delude himself.

This playing with the conventions of a literary form, for both Pearl and Clanvowe's poem have the traditional dream frame, displays the dynamic use to which poets put the dream vision genre. The poet who was of all others always original and fresh, even in renditions of the oldest and most used forms, is Chaucer. Chaucer wrote four dream vision poems, The Boke of the Duchesse, The Houe of Fame, The Parlement of Foules and the prologue to The Legende of Good Women. All of these poems are referred to as love-visions.

In each of these poems, Chaucer deals with the theme of love in varying forms and modes. However, each poem includes the dream frame form of the genre, and involves, in the three complete poems, the educative process. The Boke of the Duchesse is a eulogy. The Houe of Fame is a marriage poem, yet also a metafictive discussion of the role of poets and the nature of poetry, and The Parlement of Foules is a debate and also very likely a marriage poem. The Legende of Good Women discusses the political topics of the era.18 It is evident, then, that Chaucer uses the dream vision convention under a predominant love-vision theme in which he also incorporates the forms of eulogy, debate, and marriage poetry. And, over and above all of this multitudinous use of literary forms, is the conveyance of internal themes of medieval and universal import. With Chaucer's dream vision poetry, the possibilities of fully utilizing, extending, and going beyond the dream vision convention are displayed.
What medieval dream vision poetry actually entails and what can be and is done with it are the subject of many discussions. There are three points which are especially relevant in this respect. The first of these points deals with the poet's cognizance of his own act of creation. As A.C. Spearing says, "the dream vision becomes a device for expressing the poet's consciousness of himself as poet." Spearing also concludes, therefore, that Chaucer utilizes dream vision poems in order to examine his own position as a poet of love. Langland, too, is said to use the genre to explore his own motives as a religious poet. Spearing sees dream poetry as a metafiction which is conscious of itself as a work of art and not of nature. Therefore, this poetry fully realized its existence as written art and the writer of this art becomes involved in his fiction as the narrator-dreamer. Thus Chaucer and Langland are seen as using this dream genre of art as an exercise in self-examination. James Winny supports this view. The dream vision poem in relation to the poet "gives form to his awareness of himself and his private world of ideas."

The second point to be considered is a psychological discussion of how dreamlike medieval dream visions actually are. Earlier, Macrobius classifies dreams, and poets draw upon those classifications as justifying the credibility and significance of dreams. Thus a dream vision form is derived from feasible dream vision theories. Hieatt explores the question of whether the form of these poems resembles real dreams. Medieval dream poems are said to use "blending, fusion, double-meaning", which is very like dreams themselves. Winny also forwards this connection; the poem "resembles a dream in being made up of incidents and figures taken from the poet's imaginative stock, and shaped into a complex occurrence."

The last point is the question of authority which the dream vision poem raises. From Macrobius, divine inspiration is credited and is later alluded to by Cædmon. As Hieatt notes, this divine authority is both a support and an excuse. By claiming a divine
source, the poet demands credibility. However, this supernatural source also releases the poet from responsibility for the poem. After all, it is just divine dictation.24

Each of these points, when applied to "Kubla Khan," will place that poem more firmly in the dream vision tradition. This tradition, which enjoys its greatest popularity in the Middle Ages, extends to include the nineteenth century poem by Coleridge. This poem, "Kubla Khan," possesses many of the characteristics of the dream genre. Although the dream vision tradition of the Middle Ages consists of a static form, this form is enlivened and enlarged by the poets using it. I shall now consider "Kubla Khan" in view of these conventions, yet also in view of how they are altered and reshaped.
CHAPTER THREE

The structure and themes of the 1816 published text of "Kubla Khan" place the poem in the medieval dream vision tradition. Three elements place the structure of "Kubla Khan" within this literary tradition. These are the dream vision form, the claimed source of inspiration, and classification within Macrobius' dream categories. The various controversies concerning the poem's author in relation to his personal medical realities and how or to what extent these bear upon the poem will not be discussed. Likewise, other critical issues of the physical genesis of the poem, such as date and location, will not be treated. A critique of the poem, not the poet, is here advanced. However, the supplementary concurrence of details concerning the author himself, as Chapter One demonstrates, can only assist in strengthening the thesis' premises. For this reason, details concerning Coleridge will be discussed later insofar as they do bear upon this particular interpretation of "Kubla Khan," as adherent to and descendant of the medieval dream vision genre.

The structure of "Kubla Khan" follows the format of the medieval dream vision poem. The opening dream frame, the dream or vision, and the closing frame are each present in the published text of 1816. The entire published text, including the headnote, is considered in this appraisal. Because this opening frame of the dream is not in verse does not diminish its significance. Within the context of the dream vision tradition, it becomes a novel use of the convention. The Legend of Good Women, for instance, is related as a poem inspired by a dream in the prologue and not within the poem itself. Within the context of other critical studies, the headnote of "Kubla Khan" is at times emphasized more in speculations concerning its author than can ever
be dared here. Therefore, I designate the headnote as the opening dream frame of the poem. "Kubla Khan" divides according to these criteria as follows; the opening frame:

In the summer of the year 1797, the Author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farm-house. . .

In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in "Purchas's Pilgrimage":

"Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall." The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that . . . the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and . . . eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately . . . detained. . . and on his return. . .
found, to his no small surprise and mortification that. . . the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter! . . .

Yet from the still surviving recollections in his mind, the Author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him. . . but that to-morrow is yet to come.1

The dream portion of the poem is then related:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girded round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills.
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree:
And here were forests ancient as the hills,

Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.
But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice! (STC 1-36)
The closing frame of the dream vision structure follows:

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
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. (StC 37-34)

To begin then, the headnote resembles previous poems in the dream vision tradition in several ways. An initial comparison involves the matter of inspiration. Heacock discusses the continuity of the dream as poetic inspiration: "As witness to its
persistence into more recent times, one need only cite the case of Coleridge and 'Kubla Khan'. However, the matter really to be considered in examining the text of the poem is the inspiration of the dream, from which the poem evolves. There are two aspects of this inspiration. The first is that the dream is inspired by an entity beyond the conscious control of the narrator. Whether this entity is external, such as Caedmon's "certain man" bidding him "God speed," and such as Macrobius delineates in his dream categories as being of divine origin; or internal, such as is the case of the narrator's "anodyne" which brings on "a profound sleep, at least of the external senses" in which a vision "had been originally, as it were, given to him" does not really make a difference. Each, external or internal, signifies a source beyond the narrator's conscious control. Whether this source is a divinity or the deepest level of one's subconscious does not signify: the result is the same.

The main difference is their respective time frames. Caedmon's "gift" is attributed to God because in the seventh century divine intervention and revelation is a plausible and accepted occurrence. For instance, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, begun by Alfred the Great in the ninth century, records miraculous incidents as a matter of historical fact. Likewise, in the headnote of "Kubla Khan," the narrator deliberately creates the same dream state by a plausible element in his era, the nineteenth century. This is his "anodyne" which results in his "profound sleep...of the external senses." This drugged reverie and Caedmon's divine gift each demonstrate the poetic imagination as originating from beyond mere human conscious capacity. Each, in his respective era, shows a talent emerging from the incomprehensible. This unknown quantity may be expressed as God or as the deepest subconscious depth of the human mind. The narrator of "Kubla Khan" expresses this depth as being accessible through the extra-ordinary, an anodyne.
The second aspect of the inspiration of the dream from which "Kubla Khan" evolves is the narrator's claim that "he fell asleep . . . at the moment that he was reading . . . 'Purchas's Pilgrimage'". This occurrence of reading a book before sleeping and dreaming is one which is also utilized in medieval dream vision poetry. In The Boke of the Duchesse, for instance, the narrator who is unable to sleep takes up a book of romantic tales. He reads of how Morpheus, the god of sleep, can bring on slumber and decides to try it himself. He sleeps and the dream vision commences. Also in the prologue to The Legende of Good Women, the narrator sleeps after reading old legends and is inspired by the god of love to write a book of stories about good and true women. The dreamer awakens and a series of stories concerning ancient and classical women follow. The narrator of "Kubla Khan," by also using this device of the book before sleeping, places the poem more firmly within the medieval dream vision tradition.

The 1816 text of "Kubla Khan" may also be placed within the dream tradition if classified according to Macrobius' dream categories. Every medieval dream poem can also be classified in this way. Often, several categories are intermingled within one poem. This is the case in three instances with "Kubla Khan." First of all, the poem is certainly a somnium, the enigmatic dream in which the message is conveyed through veiled symbols and images. The vast critical output concerning the images in "Kubla Khan," their sources, and their import demonstrates this point. Secondly, the poem is an oraculum, so that the Abyssinian maid singing of Mount Abora in the vision provides the oracular voice in the poem, her divine origin implied in the associative references of Mount Abora. In the Crewe manuscript, a holograph of the poem, Mount Amara is used. In Milton's Paradise Lost, this location is the boundary of paradise which Abassin Kings guard. That the Abyssinian maid has a connotative
connection to heavenly entities seems at least implied.

The third dream category under which "Kubla Khan" can be structurally placed is the *visio*. This is the type of dream in which the prophecy of the dream comes to pass in later waking hours. This classification is primarily based upon an interpretive view of the poem. If one views "Kubla Khan" as a complete work of art that portrays the loss and reacquisition of the poetic imagination, as do many critics, then the dream may be also defined as a *visio*. It is only in the waking conclusion of the poem that acknowledgement of this reacquisition occurs. The last lines undoubtedly portray the regained poetic imagination by describing the poet so inspired by the divinities as to be almost mad:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{His flashing eyes, his floating hair!} \\
\text{Weave a circle round him thrice,} \\
\text{And close your eyes with holy dread,} \\
\text{For he on honeydew hath fed,} \\
\text{And drunk the milk of Paradise. (STC 50-54)}
\end{align*}
\]

This is a vivid description of the creative individual. This individual records the "dome in air" which he "would build" and which he sees in his vision. The poet accomplishes this in creating "Kubla Khan."

"Kubla Khan" may also be placed in the medieval dream vision tradition if various themes from that tradition are considered. Thematic components of the dream vision poem include the philosophical message expressed in a fictive mode which Macrobius terms the fabulous narrative, the indication of a deeper state of perception, the educational process, the mission to retell the dream, and the personified dual
figures of spiritual ideal and of temporal concerns. Each of these themes appears in "Kubla Khan."

A theme which exists in both the medieval dream vision and in "Kubla Khan" is Macrobius' fabulous narrative, the use of fiction to express an underlying philosophy or message. Medieval dream visions always have such an underlying message, be it religious, spiritual, love-related, political, or aesthetic. Any literature of value possesses this quality as "Kubla Khan" certainly does. Critics vary on precisely what the poem's underlying message depicts, but the amount of discussion which the poem incurs indicates the existence of that generative quality within the text. I believe this poem portrays the loss and reacquisition of the poetic imagination as being of aesthetic import.

The narrator of "Kubla Khan" describes this poetic imagination in the opening dream frame in terms of water imagery. The narrator, after describing sleeping, the dream vision, and reawakening (these three stages are described in the headnote and then later executed in the remainder of the poem), finds himself disturbed in his efforts to record the vision. His poetic imagination becomes blocked. Water imagery portrays this blockage:

the rest had passed away like the images on the
surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast,

but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter! (STC headnote)

Several lines from "The Picture; or the Lover's Resolution," also written by Coleridge and published in 1802 are then cited:
Then all the charm
Is broken—all that phantom-world so fair
Vanishes, and a thousand circlet spread,
And each mis-shap the other. Stay awhile,
Poor youth! who scarcely dar’st lift up thine eyes—
The stream will soon renew its smoothness, soon
The visions will return! And lo, he stays,
And soon the fragments dim of lovely forms
Come trembling back, unite, and now once more
The pool becomes a mirror. (11 91-100; STC headnote)

Later within the poetic recounting of the dream, the actual telling of the vision, this
same imagery of water will be used to describe the flow of the poetic imagination
through the subconscious realms of the human mind.

The theme from medieval dream vision poerty indicating deeper levels of
perception is also applicable to "Kubla Khan." This depth of perception in "Kubla
Khan" expresses itself as the poetic imagination which issues from some subconscious
level of the human mind. In medieval literature this theme, from Piers Plowman, is
one in which dreaming is deliberately used to indicate deeper levels of spiritual
comprehension in the dreamer. This dreamer first slumbers from mere physical
weariness, later he desires to fall asleep in order to view the vision, and he ultimately
reaches a point where he acknowledges the clarity of perception in dreaming which is
never achieved in waking moments. In "Kubla Khan" the water used metaphorically in
the opening dream frame to signify the poetic imagination represents in the dream
portion of the poem that same imagination as it issues from and through the sub-
conscious depth of the human mind, expressed poetically as "caverns measureless to
man."

The process of education which the dreamer-narrator undergoes is a prevalent
theme among medieval dream vision poetry, as has been shown earlier. The troubled
narrator falls asleep, dreams, and reawakens enlightened. "Kubla Khan" clearly
reveals this process. The "Author" in the opening dream frame, the headnote,
experiences "ill health" and retires "to a lonely farm-house." Because of an
"indisposition" he takes a prescribed anodyne which brings on his sleep. The situation
depicts troubled ill health. This illness proves to be of a psychological rather than a
physical disturbance due to the loss of the poetic imagination.

The dream itself, the second stage of the educational process, portrays the
narrator utilizing his poetic powers in the actual composition of the poem. The
symbolic language of the poem displays the use of this poetic imagination. "Alph, the
sacred river", running "through caverns measureless to man" metaphorically
expresses the imaginative powers and their existence - if not source - in the human
subconscious.

The final stage of the educational process of the dreamer appears in the
awakening and acknowledgement of the learning experience. The narrator, as already
stated, does this in describing the divinely inspired poet in the closing frame of the
poem. The actual working of the poetic imagination occurs in the dream; in the poem's
concluding dream frame, the narrator acknowledges this reacquisition of creative
authorial powers. What the opening dream envelope describes, the dream itself
possesses, and the closing dream envelope acknowledges and confirm. This is, of
course, the poetic imagination.

The acknowledgment and proclaimed intention regarding the rediscovered poetic
imagination in the closing frame of "Kubla Khan" recalls similar declarations at the end of medieval dream poems. The narrator proclaims "I would build that dome in air". He "would build" yet already has constructed "that dome," a creation of art, in the vision portion of the poem. This avowal of intention in the closing dream frame is seen in The Dream of the Rood where the dreamer is commanded to tell men of his vision, which he does in the writing of his poem. What the dreamer learns from his vision of the rood he now wishes to impart to others. This is also the case with, for instance, The Debate of the Body and Soul, and The Legende of Good Women.

An especially evocative comparison between medieval dream vision poems and "Kubla Khan" occurs in viewing the Abyssinian maid and Kubla Khan as literary descendants of the personified dual figures in visionary poetry. This line begins with Boethius' Lady Philosophy and Fortune, and includes Chaucer's Nature and Lady Fame, and Langland's Lady Holy Church and Lady Meed. These figures are polarized from their counterparts with one representing the divine, the spiritual, the interior and the other representing the baser externals such as transitory worldly fame and fortunes. The divine associations of the Abyssinian maid have already been noted. Kubla Khan's association with the earthly, more external and worldly aspects of the poem are seen in his role of ruler, in that he "decrees" deeds. Also, Kubla hears "ancestral voices prophesying war!" "Ancestral" denotes a vast previous history of earthly temporal connections; "war" represents the epitome of human temporal ambitions for fame and fortune. This interpretation of the maid and Kubla does not pretend to be the only significance of these two characters or to deny other possible meanings which they may suggest. It is only one potential connotation among the multitude of such connotations which "Kubla Khan" inspires.

The various themes and the structure of medieval dream vision poetry as they
relate to the 1816 published text of "Kubla Khan" demonstrate that poem's placement within this genre. Whereas points of comparison within those elements are exhausted, further details concerning the poem's author contribute to the placing "Kubla Khan" within this dream genre.

A detail from Coleridge's personality which situates "Kubla Khan" as a dream vision poem is what his biographer, W. J. Bate, calls his preference for the role of the usher. This role, Bate asserts, is assumed by Coleridge because of his own uncertainty. By playing the usher, another must take the main force of attention. Bate suggests that this preference for a secondary role results in Coleridge's propensity for the Conversation poem. In these poems, insight is only given or thought possible if conferred upon another person. Thus in "The Eolian Harp" this other person is Sara Fricker; in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," Charles Lamb; and in "Frost at Midnight," his infant son Hartley.4

Coleridge's preference for a secondary position, such as the Conversation poems exhibit, recalls the question of authority raised by a poem's claiming divine inspiration. In both cases, the responsibility as sole creator of the verse is avoided. To suggest that Coleridge-the-usher chooses to write "Kubla Khan" in the medieval dream vision tradition because he is then able to act as Coleridge-the-divine-stenographer, maintaining his secondary role, would grotesquely reduce the scope of both the poem and its poet. However, Coleridge does write Conversation poems and the narrator of "Kubla Khan" does claim an unconscious source for his dream poem.

I shall now cite remarks made by Coleridge himself concerning dreams in order to conclude this discussion of "Kubla Khan," Coleridge, and the medieval tradition of dream vision poetry. His proclivity towards dreaming in general and day-dreaming in particular is evident in the following lines written in a letter of September 1803 to
Southey:

Here sleeps at length poor Col. & without screaming
Who died, as he had always lived, a dreaming:
Shot dead, while sleeping, by the gout within.
Alone, & all unknown, at E'nbros in an Inn.⁵

A letter to George Coleridge dated 23 February 1794 also shows this inclination to
dreaminess:

How many and how many hours have I stolen from
the bitterness of Truth in these soul - enervating
Reveries - in building magnificent Edifices of
Happiness on some fleeting Shadow of Reality.⁶

It is possible to read the preceding passage and to think of "Kubla Khan" and its dome in
the same thought. At least it is certain that the author of "Kubla Khan" expresses this
dreaminess in reality, as this letter demonstrates, which he, perhaps, carries through
in the fictive device of his dream vision poem.

Coleridge also mentions the dream as a form of poetry. In a notebook dated August
1802, he records his intention of writing such a poem: "The plan for one book the
Genius of some place appearing in a Dream & upbraiding me for omitting him."⁷

Coleridge, too, writes an interesting passage concerning the later dream vision by
Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress:
How often the pen becomes the tongue of a systematic dream, - a somniloquist! The sunshine, that is, the comparative power, the distinct contrasting judgement of realities as other than mere thoughts, is suspended. During this state of continuous, not singlemindedness, but one-side-mindedness, writing is manual somnambulism; the somnial magic super-induced on, without suspending, the active powers of the mind.  

These last dozen words express the inspiration of "Kubla Khan" more aptly than any previous assertion of an opium origination for the poem. Elisabeth Schneider acknowledges Coleridge's "manual somnambulism," but also gives credence to the drug theory:

Coleridge's . . . opium, had combined with his introspective habit of observing his own mental processes. . . to make him consciously capture and use in both his poetry and his prose the content and . . . "technique" of the daydream. . . even of this I am not sure.  

Schneider is quite correct, of this no one may be "sure." Coleridge's personal inclinations and medical realities may only ultimately be speculated upon by subsequent generations. It cannot be definitively stated what a man one hundred and
fifty years in his grave thought or felt. Coleridge's personal life is Coleridge's own; it should not be made to dictate the interpretation of his writings.

The life of "Kubla Khan," however, is another matter. The "technique of the daydream" which Schneider doubts is here asserted as the form of the medieval dream vision poem. This assertion is primarily based upon the discussion of the text. Any secondary considerations drawing upon details and other personal writings of the author, Coleridge, are for added support and as points of interest. The text of a piece of literature must be viewed first and foremost in any type of interpretation. This principle is held by the author and critic Umberto Eco. He describes poetic effect as "the capacity that a text displays for continuing to generate different readings, without ever being completely consumed". In this sense, "Kubla Khan" is effectively poetic and is assured of continuing to be so. The intention of this thesis is merely to add another trail to the many paths this poem has already taken and will continue to take.
ENDNOTES

Chapter One:


2. Coleridge, *Literaria*, Vol. I, p. 209. Coleridgean primary source materials are cited verbatim; mispelled or marked words are not edited, but are indicated by an *.


5. Griggs, *505*.


Chapter Two:


4. Apuleius, p. 357.


11. My translation: Lo, I the best of dreams desire to tell

   what I dreamt at midnight,

   after the speech-bearers remained in bed.

   Seemed to me that I saw...  

12. My translation: Now I command you...

   that you this vision tell to men;


   As I lay on a winter's night,

   In a drowsy sleep before the day,

   To me it seemed I saw a marvelous sight,

14. modern rendition:

   At once appeared the day
On every hair a drop stood,  
For sorely afraid there I lay.

15. William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, eds. Thomas Knott and David Fowler,  
(London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1952), A-text, prologue, ll. 7-11. A modern rendition:  
I was weary from wandering and went to rest  
At the bottom of a broad bank by the side of a brook;  
And as I lay and lazed and looked on the water,  
I slid into sleep, it sighed so merry.  
Then I began to have a marvelous dream.

16. Langland, A-text, passus VIII, ll. 122-26, modern rendition:  
And through their words I awoke, and looked about,  
And saw the sun sitting equally with the south at that time;  
Meatless and moneyless on Malvern Hills  
Musing on this dream, I went a mile.

And then awoke; I was then sad  
That I had not seen more, so pleasant as I slept,  
And said straightaway to myself, 'Sleeping has a grace  
To know what Dovel is, but waking never!'  


20. Spearing, pp. 4-6.


23. Winny, p. 43.

24. Hieatt, p. 103.

Chapter Three:


2. Hieatt, p. 14. Hieatt however contends that "Kubla Khan" is one among "other English poems, although not 'dream visions' in form... said by the poets to have been inspired by a dream, or written in a dream" (p. 14). The assertion and intent of this thesis is to demonstrate how "Kubla Khan" does fit within that dream vision form.

3. The Crewe manuscript consists of no headnote, the text of "Kubla Khan," and a brief endnote of one sentence's length. This circumstance indicates the contrived, deliberately fictive artistry of the entire published text of 1816 and therefore also places it more firmly within the medieval dream vision tradition.


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