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led forth to such pastures! "It shall even be as when the hungry dreameth, and behold, he eateth; but he waketh and his soul is empty; or as when the thirsty dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh and is faint!" (ISAIAH XXIX. 8.) O! that we would seek for the bread which was given from heaven, that we should eat thereof and be strengthened! O that we would draw at the well at which the flocks of our forefathers had living water, him to whom it is given, even that water which, instead of mocking the thirst of everlasting!<sup>9</sup>

\* \* \*  
From Appendix C  
\* \* \*

That, which we find in ourselves, is (*gradu mutato*)<sup>1</sup> the substance and the life of *all* our knowledge. Without this latent presence of the "I am,"<sup>2</sup> all modes of existence in the external world would flit before us as colored shadows, with no greater depth, root, or fixture, than the image of a roek hath in a gliding stream or the rain-bow on a fast-sailing rain-storm. The human mind is the compass, in which the laws and actuations of all outward essences are revealed as the dips and declinations. (The application of Geometry to the forces and movements of the material world is both proof and instance.) The fact therefore, that the mind of man in its own primary and constituent forms represents the laws of nature, is a mystery which God is the only solution: for it is a problem of which God is the only solution, God, the one before all, and of all, and through all!—True natural philosophy is comprized in the study of the science and language of *symbols*. The power delegated to nature is all in every part; and by a symbol I mean, not a metaphor or allegory or any other figure of speech or form of fancy, but an actual and essential part of that the whole of which it represents. Thus our Lord speaks symbolically when he says that "the eye is the light of the body."<sup>3</sup>

1816  
\* \* \*  
From Biographia Literaria!  
\* \* \*

From Part I  
FROM CHAPTER I  
\* \* \*

As the result of all my reading and meditation, I abstracted two critical aphorisms, deeming them to comprize the conditions and criteria of poetic style:

9. This sentence echoes and alludes to John 4. 14.  
1. On a different level (Latin).  
2. See Exodus 3. 14: "And God said unto Moses: I AM THAT I AM." Compare also Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817), chap. 12: "We begin with the I KNOW MYSELF, in order to end with the absolute I AM. We proceed from the SELF, in order to lose from this selection.

and find all self in God."

3. Matthew 6. 22: "The light of the body is the eye."

1. The full title is *Biographia Literaria: Or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*. Footnotes by Coleridge have been omitted from this selection.

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nasty; that not the poem which we have read, but that to which we return, with the greatest pleasure, possesses the genuine power, and claims the name of *essential poetry*. Second, that whatever lines can be translated into other words of the same language, without diminution of their significance, either in sense, or association, or in any worthy feeling, are so far vicious in their diction. Be it however observed, that I excluded from the list of worthy feelings, the pleasure derived from mere novelty, in the reader, and the desire of exciting wonderment at his powers in the author. Oftentimes since then, in perusing French tragedies, I have fancied two marks of admiration at the end of each line, as hieroglyphics of the author's own admiration at his own cleverness: Our genuine admiration of a great poet is a continuous *undercurrent of feeling*; it is every where present, but seldom any where as a separate excitement. I was wont boldly to affirm, that it would be scarcely more difficult to push a stone out from the pyramids with the bare hand, than to utter a word, or the position of a word, in Milton or Shakspeare, (in their most important works at least) without making the author say something else, or something worse, than he does say. One great distinction, I appeared to myself to see plainly, between, even the characteristic faults of our elder poets, and the false beauty of the moderns. In the former, from DONNE to COWLEY,<sup>3</sup> we find the most fantastic out-of-the-way thoughts, but in the most pure and genuine mother English; in the latter, the most obvious thoughts, in language the most fantastic and arbitrary. Our faulty elder poets sacrificed the passion, and passionate flow of poetry, to the subtleties of intellect; and to the starts of wit, the moderns to the glare and glitter of a perpetual, yet broken and heterogeneous imagery, or rather to an amphibious something, made up, half of image, and half of abstract meaning. The one sacrificed the heart to the head; the other both heart and head to point and dexterity.

\* \* \*  
FROM CHAPTER 4  
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This excellence,<sup>4</sup> which in all Mr. Wordsworth's writings is more or less predominant, and which constitutes the character of his mind, I no sooner felt, than I sought to understand. Repeated meditations led me first to suspect, (and a more intimate analysis of the human faculties, their appropriate marks, functions, and effects matured my conjecture into full conviction) that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same power. It is not, I own, easy to conceive a more apposite translation of the Greek *Phantasia*, than the Latin *Imaginatio*; but it is equally true that in all societies there exists an instinct of growth, a certain collective, unconscious good sense working progressively to desynonymize<sup>5</sup> those words originally of

Defective.

Abraham Cowley (1618-1667), English satirist, poet, and essayist. John Donne (1572-1631), English poet. Both wrote so-called metaphysical poetry, reliant on complex metaphors and images. Coleridge has just claimed that it is the mark of

awaken in the minds of others a kindred feeling concerning them." A considerable portion of the *Biographia Literaria* is devoted to a critical analysis of the English poet WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850), Coleridge's friend and collaborator.  
5. To differentiate in meaning words previously

the same meaning, which the conflux of dialects had supplied to the more homogeneous languages, as the Greek and German: and which the same cause, joined with accidents of translation from original works of different countries, occasion in mixt languages like our own. The first and most important point to be proved is, that two conceptions perfectly distinct are confused under one and the same word, and (this done) to appropriate that word exclusively to one meaning, and the synonyme (should there be one) to the other. But if (as will be often the case in the arts and sciences) no synonyme exists, we must either invent or borrow a word. In the present instance the appropriation had already begun, and been legitimated in the derivative adjective: Milton<sup>6</sup> had a highly *imaginative*, Cowley a very *fanciful* mind. If therefore I should succeed in establishing the actual existences of two faculties generally different, the nomenclature would be at once determined. To the faculty by which I had characterized Milton, we should confine the term *imagination*; while the other would be contra-distinguished as *fancy*. Now were it once fully ascertained, that this division is no less grounded in nature, than that of delirium from mania, or Otway's

Lutes, lobsters, seas of milk, and ships of amber,<sup>7</sup>

from Shakespear's

What! have his daughters brought him to this pass?<sup>8</sup>

or from the preceding apostrophe to the elements;<sup>9</sup> the theory of the fine arts, and of poetry in particular, could not, I thought, but derive some additional and important light. It would in its immediate effects furnish a torch of guidance to the philosophical critic; and ultimately to the poet himself. In energetic minds, truth soon changes by domestication into power, and from directing in the discrimination and appraisal of the product, becomes influence in the production. To admire on principle, is the only way to imitate without loss of originality.

#### FROM CHAPTER 13

\* \* \*

The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.<sup>1</sup> The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as objects*) are essentially fixed and dead.

Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary*, which gives this as the first use of the word).

<sup>6</sup> John Milton (1608-1674) was a contemporary of but far greater poet than Cowley.

<sup>7</sup> *Venice Preserved* (1682), 5.2.151, by Thomas Otway (1652-1685). Coleridge uses the word "lobsters" where Otway had written "laurels."

<sup>8</sup> *King Lear* (ca. 1604-05), 3.4.61 (Shakespeare begins the line "What, has").

<sup>9</sup> That is, Lear's address to the storm, 3.2.145-13-23.

<sup>1</sup> See Exodus 3.14: "And God said unto Moses: I AM THAT I AM."

definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.

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#### From Part II

#### CHAPTER 14

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours,<sup>2</sup> our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moon-light or sun-set diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in *this* sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such, as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the "Lyrical Ballads," in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.<sup>3</sup>

With this view I wrote the "Ancient Mariner," and was preparing among other poems, the "Dark Ladie," and the "Christabel," in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater,<sup>4</sup> that my compositions, instead of forming a

In 1797-98 Coleridge was living at Nether Stowey and Wordsworth was nearby at Alfoxden, in southwest England.

<sup>2</sup> See Isaiah 6.9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Wordsworth wrote 19 of the 23 poems in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).

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balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction, which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the "Lyrical Ballads" were published; and were presented by him, as an *experiment*,<sup>5</sup> whether subjects, which from their nature rejected the usual ornaments and extra-colloquial style of poems in general, might not be so managed in the language of ordinary life as to produce the pleasurable interest, which it is the peculiar business of poetry to impart. To the second edition he added a preface of considerable length; in which notwithstanding some passages of apparently a contrary import, he was understood to contend for the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject as vicious and indefensible all phrases and forms of style that were not included in what he (unfortunately, I think, adopting an equivocal expression) called the language of *real* life. From this preface, prefixed to poems in which it was impossible to deny the presence of original genius, however mistaken its direction might be deemed, arose the whole long continued controversy.<sup>6</sup> For from the conjunction of perceived power with supposed heresy I explain the inveteracy and in some instances, I grieve to say, the acrimonious passions, with which the controversy has been conducted by the assailants.

Had Mr. Wordsworth's poems been the silly, the childish things, which they were for a long time described as being; had they been really distinguished from the compositions of other poets merely by meanness of language and inanity of thought; had they indeed contained nothing more than what is found in the parodies and pretended imitations of them, they must have sunk at once, a dead weight, into the slough of oblivion, and have dragged the preface along with them. But year after year increased the number of Mr. Wordsworth's admirers. They were found too not in the lower classes of the reading public, but chiefly among young men of strong sensibility and meditative minds; and their admiration (inflamed perhaps in some degree by opposition) was distinguished by its intensity, I might almost say by its *religious* fervour. These facts, and the intellectual energy of the author which was more or less consciously felt, where it was outwardly and even boisterously denied, meeting with sentiments of aversion to his opinions, and of alarm at their consequences, produced an eddy of criticism, which would of itself have borne up the poems by the violence, with which it whirled them round and round. With many parts of this preface in the sense attributed to them and which the words undoubtedly seem to authorise, never concurred; but on the contrary objected to them as erroneous in principle, and as contradictory (in appearance at least) both to other parts of the same preface, and to the author's own practice in the greater number of the poems themselves. Mr. Wordsworth in his recent collection has, I find, degraded this prefatory disquisition to the end of his second volume, to be

5. See the brief advertisement to the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*: "The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure."

6. That is, the controversy that arose over Wordsworth's theory and practice of poetry, especially in hostile essays by the critic Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*. See Wordsworth, preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800; above).  
7. Soft, muddy ground.

read or not at the reader's choice.<sup>8</sup> But he has not, as far as I can discover, announced any change in his poetic creed. At all events, considering it as the source of a controversy, in which I have been honored more, than I deserve, by the frequent conjunction of my name with his, I think it expedient to declare once for all, in what points I coincide with his opinions, and in what points I altogether differ. But in order to render myself intelligible I must previously, in as few words as possible, explain my ideas, first, of a poem; and secondly, of POETRY itself, in *kind*, and in *essence*.

The office of philosophical *disquisition* consists in just *distinction*; while it is the privilege of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware, that distinction is not division. In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts; and this is the technical *process* of philosophy. But having so done, we must then restore them to our conceptions to the unity, in which they actually co-exist; and this is the *result* of philosophy. A poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object proposed. According to the difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. It is possible, that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observations by artificial arrangement; and the composition will be a poem, merely because it is distinguished from prose by metre, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly. In this, the lowest sense, a man might attribute the name of a poem to the well known enumeration of the days in the several months;

Thirty days hath September,

April, June, and November, &c.

and others of the same class and purpose. And as a particular pleasure is found in anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities, all compositions that have this charm superadded, whatever be their contents, *may* be entitled poems.

So much for the superficial *form*. A difference of object and contents supplies an additional ground of distinction. The immediate purpose may be the communication of truths; either of truth absolute and demonstrable, as in works of science; or of facts experienced and recorded, as in history. Pleasure; and that of the highest and most permanent kind, may *result* from the attainment of the end; but it is not itself the immediate end. In other works the communication of pleasure may be the immediate purpose; and though truth, either moral or intellectual, ought to be the *ultimate* end, yet this will distinguish the character of the author, not the class to which the work belongs. Blest indeed is that state of society, in which the immediate purpose would be baffled by the perversion of the proper ultimate end; in which no charm of diction or imagery could exempt the Bathyllus even of an Anacreon, or the Alexis of Virgil,<sup>9</sup> from disgust and aversion!

But the communication of pleasure may be the immediate object of a work

8. For *Poems* (2 vols., 1815). Wordsworth moved the preface for *Lyrical Ballads* to an appendix and wrote a new preface and "supplementary" essay.  
9. The Roman poet (70-19 B.C.E.) whose *Eclogues* (ed. 37 B.C.E.) is the shepherd Corydon's love-

sick address to the male slave Alexis. Bathyllus: a beautiful boy of Samos to whom several odes of the Greek lyric poet Anacreon (b. ca. 570 B.C.E.) are addressed.

not metrically composed; and that object may have been in a high degree attained, as in novels and romances. Would then the mere superaddition of metre, with or without rhyme, entitle *these* to the name of poems? The answer is, that nothing can permanently please, which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise.<sup>1</sup> If metre be superadded, all other parts must be made consonant with it. They must be such, as to justify the perpetual and distinct attention to each part, which an exact correspondent recurrence of accent and sound are calculated to excite. The final definition then, so deduced, may be thus worded. A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having *this* object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component *part*.

Controversy is not seldom excited in consequence of the disputants attaching each a different meaning to the same word; and in few instances has this been more striking, than in disputes concerning the present subject. If a man chooses to call every composition a poem, which is rhyme, or measure, or both, I must leave his opinion uncontroverted. The distinction is at least competent to characterize the writer's intention. If it were subjoined, that the whole is likewise entertaining or affecting, as a tale, or as a series of interesting reflections, I of course admit this as another fit ingredient of a poem, and an additional merit. But if the definition sought for be that of a *legitimate* poem, I answer, it must be one, the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement. The philosophic critics of all ages coincide with the ultimate judgement of all countries, in equally denying the praises of a just poem, on the one hand, to a series of striking lines or distichs,<sup>2</sup> each of which absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself disjoins it from its context, and makes it a separate whole, instead of an harmonizing part; and on the other hand, to an unstained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result unattracted by the component parts. The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity; or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power; or like the path of sound through the air; at every step he pauses and half recedes, and from the retrogressive movement collects the force which again carries him onward. Precipitandus est *liber spiritus*,<sup>3</sup> says Petronius Arbiter most happily. The epithet, *liber*, here balances the preceding verb; and it is not easy to conceive more meaning condensed in fewer words.

But if this should be admitted as a satisfactory character of a poem, we have still to seek for a definition of poetry. The writings of PLATO, and Bishop TAYLOR, and the *Theoria Sacra* of BURNET,<sup>4</sup> furnish undeniable proofs that

poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre, and even without the contradicting objects of a poem. The first chapter of Isaiah (indeed a very large proportion of the whole book) is poetry in the most emphatic sense; yet it would be not less irrational than strange to assert, that pleasure, and not truth, was the immediate object of the prophet. In short, whatever *specific* import we attach to the word, poetry, there will be found involved in it, as a necessary consequence, that a poem of any length neither can be, or ought to be, all poetry. Yet if an harmonious whole is to be produced, the remaining parts must be preserved *in keeping* with the poetry; and this can be no otherwise effected than by such a studied selection and artificial arrangement, as will partake of *one*, though not a *peculiar*, property of poetry. And this again can be no other than the property of exciting a more continuous and equal attention, than the language of prose aims at, whether colloquial or written.

My own conclusions on the nature of poetry, in the strictest use of the word, have been in part anticipated in the preceding disquisition on the fancy and imagination.<sup>5</sup> What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind. The poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone, and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive,<sup>6</sup> though gentle and unnoticed, control (*axis effertur habentis*)<sup>7</sup> reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgement ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. "Doubtless," as Sir John Davies<sup>8</sup> observes of the soul (and his words may with slight alteration be applied, and even more appropriately to the poetic imagination.)

Doubtless this could not be, but that she turns  
Bodies to spirit by sublimation strange,  
As fire converts to fire the things it burns,  
As we our food into our nature change.

1. Coleridge's editors cite SAMUEL JOHNSON, *Rambler*, no. 154 (1751): "That which hopes to resist the blast of malignity, and stand firm against the attacks of time, must contain in itself some original principle of growth."  
2. Paired lines (in Greek and Latin verse, such as the *epigram*) do not rhyme.  
3. The free spirit must be hurried onward (Latin) from *Satyricon* 118, a novel by the Roman writer Petronius Arbiter (1st c. C.E.). *Libet* means "free."  
4. Thomas Burnet (1635-1735), an English clergyman who wrote *Telluris Theoria Sacra* (1684).

5. See *Sarced Theory of the Earth*. Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), Anglican religious writer whose sermons, Coleridge esteemed. On the Greek philosopher PLATO (ca. 427-ca. 347 B.C.E.), see above, fifth chapter 4.  
6. Unremitting.

7. It is exalted with loose reins (Latin).  
8. English poet (1569-1626). Coleridge slightly misquotes his poem *Nosee Teipsum* (1599; the title means "know thyself"), which explores the theme of immortality and the nature of the soul.

