

Thrice Transcended:  
Existence and Redemption in  
Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,"  
Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,"  
and Coleridge's "Kubla Khan"

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

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## Chapter One

In the world today and, in fact, throughout all of history, there exist certain eternal verities of human reality. These unalterable truths include birth, love, the passage of time, and death. Of these, death receives considerable description and speculation throughout philosophic, theological, historical and imaginative writing. Three distinctive poets, John Donne, Thomas Gray, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, have reflected on this finality. Three of their most significant works, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" (Appendix A), "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (Appendix B), and "Kubla Khan" (Appendix C), are popular poems commonly read by schoolchildren of all ages everywhere, and are often anthologized, studied, and quoted. Although each of these poets describes death and its ramifications, their perspectives vary; and their individual modes of analysis reflect their respective historical and intellectual milieux. Many literary historians have therefore attached these perspectives to the artistic currents of Baroque, Neo-Classicism, and Romanticism.

Walter Jackson Bate, in his book entitled "From Classic to Romantic," describes the Baroque as a period of history possessing a great

concern for the intricate and complex in form. In all its expressions, music, literature, architecture, painting and sculpture, as well as poetry, the Baroque artist sought the monumental and sometimes overly dramatic. In spite of this extravagance, the substance was molded to a form defined by order, logic, and mathematics. The restraint of passion of a Bernini statue or a Bach fugue exemplify the attention to detail and geometric exactness which, characteristic of the Baroque, shapes the potentiality of mind to the constrictions of form.

As history progressed through the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries, less emphasis was placed upon what could only be proved logically and mathematically, and more confidence was entrusted to feeling, sentiment, and instinct as valid instruments of interpretation. The concepts of "beauty" and "good" were no longer fixed truths, but became a part of one's mind, subject to translation. In his description of this Neo-Classic period, Bate states that "the true province of art is to imitate the objective and unchanging truth of 'general nature,' and to shape in accordance with this truth the ethical character of man" (p. 91-92). The ideal was now assimilated into, and integrated with, the particulars of nature. With every particular manifestation of reality as

man, the artist, perceives it, reflections of the universal become immanent and intelligible: each phenomenon, man or object, is an expression of truth and becomes therefore the object of artistic imitation which, in poetry, art, and music, conveys an understanding and appreciation of truth.

In the late eighteenth century, perceptions undergo another alteration that literary and intellectual historians have termed as Romanticism. Bate concedes the diversity and complexity of this movement; and, for him, one of the goals of the Romantic is to find order amidst chaos. Physically, man inhabits a world of chaos. But through the faculty of imagination, he brings order to his world. Unlike his Baroque and Neo-Classic predecessors who looked for truth in the external world, the Romantic employs his imagination, centered in the limitless reaches of his mind, to extract coherent and significant form from an inchoate and apparently meaningless world. By creating and discovering thoughts, beliefs, and ambitions, particular to the individual, he moves from a world of unintelligibility to a comprehension of truth that is real, attainable, and universal.

Donne, Gray, and Coleridge are perhaps characteristic of their

respective periods. Their thoughts and attitudes on death, its speculative premises and its impact upon man, remain pertinent and provocative. For each, death is a finality that reflects, on first thought, fear and sadness. But after meditating on this universal happening, they each overcome the despair and disorder of this world. In spite of their uses of the same theme, their responses on the potentiality of human transcendence vary and typify the mood and perspective of their respective cultural and historical places. By exploring the distinctive modes of analysis associated with each of these poets, the critic can perhaps appreciate a particular perspective that defines, each in its own way, a metaphysical truth affecting man's self-perception and human situation.

## Chapter Two

Within the framework of paradox, John Donne reconciles physical death and spiritual life, earthly existence and divine redemption, and the particularization of many phenomena and the universalization of a single reality. By exploring these apparent contradictions within the limits of the elegy "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" (Donne, The Complete Poems of John Donne, pp. 32-33), he seeks to explain the means whereby man overcomes the suffering and pain of the human condition and thereby discovers a higher meaning of his situation. Such a predicament has confronted thinkers since ancient times: Plato's portrayal of Socrates's stoic but serene death in the *Apology* comes immediately to mind; Dante the pilgrim in the *Divine Comedy* must descend to Hell in order to endure the pain of spiritual salvation; and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* had to forego the social institution of marriage and actualize, through death, the unification of their souls. Donne confronts this recurrent problem; but, unlike Plato, Dante, and Shakespeare, he selects a much more constrained form to describe the dynamics by which man resolves the

tension between the ephemerality of human existence and the eternity of the divine state. Through a close reading of the text, this analysis will attempt to define the problem confronted by the poet, to demonstrate man's means to transcend his situation, and, perhaps equally important, to delineate the activity that Donne employs to present this eternal human dilemma.

In spite of the complexity of this poem, the critic can describe the structure accordingly. The poem can be divided into three major sections, with each section being subdivided into two strophes followed by a third. The first section depicts earthly happenings influencing human emotion. The first two strophes in this section describe the narrative events of a death which, originating externally, affect the poet inwardly. In the third strophe, the poet moves from these events, specific in time and space, to more universal events shaping human nature. In the second section, where the poet examines love, the persona is continuing to center thought on the particular, but he has progressed from an observation of the particulars that are primarily external, to a perception of them on a more human, internalized level. The poet, moreover, characterizes love

into two types, physical and spiritual. Physical love creates a need for material gratification and a dependence upon sensual fulfillment, whereas spiritual love dwells in the mind and is independent of the tangible. It knows no boundaries, no limits, except for those set by man's own blindness. In the third strophe of this section, the poet resolves the struggle in his own life between the humanness of his situation and the sacred bond he shares with his loved one. In the third and final division, the poet moves from the particular to the universal. He creates a bridge, allowing himself to escape the verity of his predicament and to discover a cosmic reality, whereby he may come to know happiness, truth, and contentment. The first two strophes of this section establish this link, describing how the bridge is built. In the third strophe, the poet relates how he is able to make the crossing. The poet, in this final strophe of the poem, is able now to fully accept the wholeness and integrity of his state and completely understand the meaning of his existence and subsequent death.

In the opening strophe, the persona is describing his death and reactions to it. By establishing a circular structure, the poet

undertakes a Journey from death to life that begins with the death of his body and culminates in the endurance of his soul. According to the poet, virtuous men accept this fate for the death of their bodies is hardly a finality. Those around him must resign themselves to this physical end. But, although they are sad to witness the inevitable, they advance empathically with him on his Journey that leads to a sense of joy; and they know that he will continue to live in a higher, spiritual reality. Those who refuse to accept the fact that he must depart, and who hold on to their beliefs of death as an end in itself, will try to keep him alive in their own minds. This only makes the reality of death more painful for them, and they will be making the Journey, not from sadness to joy, but from joy to sadness.

The second strophe continues the thought initially expressed, and is related to this previous thought by the adverb "so" (v. 2, l. 5). The consequence of the acceptance is actualized through the lover's belief in man's resignation of death. Humility, moreover, is required, for man must "melt" (v. 2, l. 5), stand aside and let Nature take its course. Trumpets do not sound, and there is no celebration for this sacred event. Man

"make[s] no noise" (v. 2, l. 5). Rather, through the inevitable sadness that results from this final physical parting, tears become floods and sighs are as significant as tempests. Ironically, this scene is almost joyous. Instead of brooding upon himself, the poet proclaims "No" to these emotions. By rejecting these extreme emotions, man is necessarily hurled in the opposite direction, past simple crying and sighing, past showing emotion at all towards the other end of the spectrum, and emphatically and logically towards the joyous and good.

In centering attention upon the joyous, man confronts and comes to know love, the agent by which he transcends the pain of his physical existence. For the poet, love is sacred, personal, and highly meaningful, and it would be desecrated or defiled if it were to be spoken about, or boasted to others. By keeping it to themselves, the two lovers consecrate their relationship. But love goes beyond the sensual perceptions defined by discrete units of time, and the poet does not center sole attention upon the description of the emotion. Rather, he views love as a dynamic that enables the poet to pass beyond his earthly, temporal situation and ultimately to perceive a harmony and peace identified with, and

transported by, this love. Thus, love is the means by which the persona can free himself of the limitations of physical reality and, at the same time, is a state in which he penetrates a more spiritual, eternal reality.

In the third strophe, the persona returns to the paradox of man and the heavens. But instead of recapitulating this apparent contradiction in personal terms, he applies this truth to the universal. For example, he talks of man's fear of the movements of the earth, something as simple as the rain or the blowing wind, or something more drastic as earthquakes or floods. In the past, men may have looked at these physical phenomena with wonder and tried to calculate their meaning. Similarly, they reflected upon the movements of the heavens, or the "spheres" (v. 3, l. 11). The poet sees these celestial movements to be mysterious and unexplainable to man. But in spite of this human incapacity to understand cosmic happenings, man feared them nonetheless. For the poet, man's empathic encounter with these heavenly movements have meaning; and, by moving from the particulars of the earth to the "trepidation" (v. 3, l. 11) of the heavens, man sees a link between his own independent and seemingly insignificant position and God's divine design. Just as the poet in the

first two strophes rejected death and suffering to find life and joy, he now seems to embark upon an epistemological voyage. A link exists between earthly existence and cosmic reality. By discarding his earthly situation, he seems to have hope in penetrating a higher, more divine state. Man is continually looking up from his ever-changing world to heaven and the "spheres" (v. 3, l. 11), trying to rise above his situation and penetrate this cosmic reality.

The poet now returns to the theme of separation, revived from the initial strophe. There is pain and suffering for those whose love cannot stand on its own. This love is not the consecrated love revealed earlier in the poem, but the love of "sublunary" (v. 4, l. 13) lovers. The souls of the "dull" (v. 4, l. 13) lovers who share in this experience are dependent upon sensual gratification. They are two souls, distinct from one another, but each defined by the presence of the other. When one of them is absent, their love can no longer exist, for sensual gratification is the basis of this love. This is part of the physical reality that we all must endure. Constantly in a state of flux, always changing for the individual, it is temporary, particular, and earthly. The reality and

inevitability of death are two of the few constants in this physical existence. In order for the poet to gain ground on his voyage, he must overcome the pain of absence associated with his death through love and human interaction. This is a continuation of the first three strophes, but the perspective has changed from a particularized description to a higher, more encompassing depiction of human relations.

Love becomes a unifying theme throughout the poem. In the next strophe, the poet moves from a description of a carnal, earthly love, to a special, more human love shared by the persona and his loved one. In comparing this more spiritual love with the previously described earthly love the persona comes to recognize a love that is much more refined than that shared by the "sublunary" (v. 4, l. 13) lovers. It is free from impurities; it has been cultivated and nurtured. In fact, Donne describes this love as so refined that the lovers themselves "know not what it is" (v. 5, l. 18). The poet is now coming to know a love that is a part of the mind and not of the body. The lovers are joined together in a more spiritual sense, and it is this union of their souls that will keep them together, even after death. Earthly lovers depend upon the material and

substantial, and therefore must accept defeat and dissolution after death.

This higher love, however, will not weaken; but, in fact, by overcoming death, it will expand, grow, and become stronger. This description of a higher, sacred kind of love, becomes the basis by which the persona examines the scope and force of love, and upon which human spirit endures, and triumphs over, time.

In the third and final section of the poem, the poet advances even more definitely and substantially from the particularized perspective of the initial section and from the more encompassing viewpoint of human relationships in the second part. Before moving to a description of the cosmic implication of love, the persona recapitulates the effects of earthly love. On earth, man must accept the reality of his physical surroundings, and therefore must admit the separation of souls. However, he establishes this division under the condition that, if their souls are independent, they resemble the two legs of a compass. With a compass, there are indeed two, distinct legs, but they are joined at the top by a pivot. One cannot be present without the other, nor can one leave without taking the other one with it. They are inextricably and, by the law of

nature, eternally linked. Donne employs the forceful and concrete image of the compass that describes a spiritual force bonding two distinct and separate objects. When one uses a compass, one of the legs is fixed by keeping its "foot" stationary. The other then moves about this fixed foot to construct a circle. And although the foot in the center remains stationary, there is some movement of the leg. As the other leg moves farther and farther away to create larger and larger circles, it is impossible for the center leg to remain erect, and so it leans toward the other leg. It is almost as if the center leg were stretching out, reaching toward the moving leg, calling for it to return. Then it returns to its upright position as that leg that roamed returns home once again.

In the final strophe, the persona applies these ideas to the lovers and their situation, and thereby relates the cosmic with the human and, ultimately, with the particular. Like the foot of the compass that is moving about to make the circle, the poet-lover in this analogy, strays and wanders in this world. However, through the force of love that recalls the magnetic force compelling the movement of the feet of the compass, a bond unites the two lovers with this metaphor. The dying

lover, like that foot which must wander, is compelled to accept a state of change. He transcends the boundaries of his physical existence, and enters a cosmic, mysterious, and eternal existence. Although he journeys physically far from his loved one, both overcome separation and truly experience a spiritual unity. Their souls recall the two feet of the compass, where no matter how far one travels from the other, they are still linked. The compass is connected by the pivot and the lovers are joined by their love. Thus, through the strength of this spiritual experience, they rise above, in the union of love, the limitations of their physical reality and penetrate truth, or the reality and eternity of the soul.

The poet completes this epistemological journey, and the truth conveyed and demonstrated by the movement of the compass is analogous to, and indicative of, the dynamics of human love. During the journey, the persona deals with a tension created by knowing a spiritual existence, while at the same time having to live within the material boundaries of his earthly existence. Man has labored over this incompatibility for centuries. In the elegy "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," Donne

offers a reconciliation for those caught in this struggle. In order for man to attain knowledge of any higher existence and therefore to penetrate truth, he must confront his own existence in an attempt to find the meaning for his life. In the poem, as the poet examines his own life in search of divine independence, he abandons the materialistic and divorces himself from the physical reality of his situation. In so doing, the persona is irrevocably forced to direct his vision to the immaterial and spiritual. During his pilgrimage, the poet characterizes human nature. It is within the nature of man to fear the unknown, however, in order for man to transcend his physical reality and become integrated within a higher spirituality; he must shun this fear. For the poet, this means accepting the reality of death and believing that his worldly existence is only temporary. Love is shown to be the instrument, or the means, by which man comes to know truth and, in turn, is able to penetrate a human and cosmic mystery.

## Chapter Three

About a hundred years separate the lives of John Donne and Thomas Gray. This chronology is significant. As Walter Jackson Bate has amply demonstrated, the mathematical accuracy and metaphysical truths of the Baroque dissolve and become transformed into a perception and description of a universal human sentiment that characterizes the Neo-Classic spirit of the mid-eighteenth century. Such a vision emerges in Gray's own words that depict his particularized self in terms of a universal mankind:

Too poor for a bribe, and too proud to importune,

He had not the method of making a fortune:

Could love, and could hate, so was thought somewhat odd;

No very great wit, he believed in a God:

A place or a pension he did not desire,

But left church and state to Charles Townshend and Squire

(Gray, Gray: Poetry and Prose, p. 68).

As we see, this poem, written in 1761, implies many of the same questions on the human condition that Donne had previously asked. But if the inquiry and even the answers produce similar responses, the modes of inquiry have changed. The reality of a metaphysical truth, logically verified and quantitatively certified, becomes now an examination of human sentiment defined and perceived as thought, attitude, and emotion. All men, according to such a consciousness, experience this human condition. And Gray selects one man, even himself, as reflective of a particular but, in effect, a universal manifestation of this reality.

Truth, as with the Baroque, plays a leading role in the characterization of Neo-Classicism. Man continues to attain truth. Once again, he is confronted with the need to reconcile physical phenomena and abstract reality. But, instead of demonstrating logically, mathematically, and scientifically a truth that is rationally verified, Neo-Classic thinkers take necessarily into account human attitude and aspiration. This stress upon human sentiment becomes a voice that requires an alteration in the mode of inquiry employed by the Baroque thinkers and imaginative writers.

Through an examination of sentiment, the Neo-Classicist examines truth. Sentiment, however, in the sense that Gray is using it, is not a specific, personal reflection. Rather, it is an example, even a demonstration, of man's thoughts and feelings that are a universal instinct. The persona, then, is not a particular character. Rather, he assumes the stance of "Everyman," universal man, or one who, as a thinking and feeling human being, seeks an answer to current quandries.

Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (Gray, Gray: Poetry and Prose, pp. 62-66), a frequently anthologized poem, displays many of these characteristics and, at the same time, underscores the differences in the method of examination used by Donne in "A Valediction: Forblidding Mourning." Like Donne's poem, Gray's "Elegy" is a reflection on the transitory state of physical and earthly beings. The first three strophes serve as an introduction to the poem. Here, the persona is describing the setting of the countryside surrounding the church-yard and providing the reader with a glimpse of how the rest of the poem will progress. In strophes four through seven the poet conveys a dismal, dark picture of the cemetery and the people buried there. He then poses some questions

concerning these persons' lives and their significance in strophes eight to eleven. In the twelfth strophe, he begins an empathic examination into the lives of the deceased. This continues for the next eight strophes, before the reader's focus is shifted back to the author's vision of the cemetery in strophe twenty. In the next four strophes one finds a description of the tombstones, each bearing an elegy, a final and lasting tribute to the cadavers below. In strophes twenty-four to twenty-seven the living pay their respects, pulling the reader deeper into the lives of the departed. In strophes twenty-eight and twenty-nine the persona discloses his own feelings and attitudes about the man the others spoke of. He has progressed from an enlarged, general picture of the cemetery to a particularized description of a tombstone and the life it honors. The final three strophes summarize the entire poem, for it is the epitaph of a man, simple in stature, who, like those around him, has found peace and truth, and has given meaning to his life.

The author uses the introductory three strophes to allow the reader to paint a mental picture of the area around the cemetery. This picture, for the most part, is a vision of darkness that depicts a sort of

intellectual blindness. He utilizes this concept of darkness to communicate the ignorance of the persona. As the persona begins his journey, he is in a state of unknowing and of confusion. He is seeking truth, the light of knowledge which will bring him from the darkness to a spiritual redemption. Just as the persona is symbolizing a universality of man, so is this introduction an image of a world encompassing a general perspective. When he begins describing the cemetery, the reader is drawn into a more particularized view of man and his world.

In strophes four through seven there is a grim description of the cemetery and of the persons laid to rest there. The persona gazes at the trees and each crumbling mound of earth moldering in their shade. Beneath these decaying heaps, "the rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep" (st. 4, v. 16). By using the title "Forefathers," the poet creates an allusion that there is something historical and permanently antiquated about these people. He goes on to tell of a time and events long past for the "sleeping" villagers. Never again will the piercing call of the cock wake them, or children run to their open arms. Many often left behind a harvest when they died, however, in the final strophe of this section,

there is a small shift from the gloom of their death, to the strength and pleasure in their lives. The poet continues this praise in the next section of the poem.

In the course of the next four strophes, he emphasizes the simplicity with which these people led their lives. The main point of this section is to stress upon the reader that these people, though they may not have led a life filled with pomp and heraldry, should not be condemned for the poor lot they bore. They did not let "Ambition" (st. 8, v. 29) and "Grandeur" (st. 8, v. 31) cloud their perceptions, or take away the simple joys of their labor. They were not boastful and did not long for wealth and power to be theirs, for these paths of "glory lead but to the grave" (st. 9, v. 36). The persona also entreats those who have chosen this path of glory, that they not seek to find fault with these people. Though there are no great monuments or imposing statues raised in their memory, the song of praise is now offered to them. In the last strophe of this section, he poses questions, noting that death does not differentiate between rich and poor, powerful and weak.

In the next section, comprised of strophes twelve through nineteen,

the persona takes a closer look at the lives of the deceased, speculating on the various roles each might have played in life. He begins by reiterating the point that this was a simple peasantry. They were neither great heroes of battle nor proud men endowed with the knowledge of the universe. Rather, they were like gems in the deepest caverns of the sea, or blooming flowers in the farthest corners of the desert. It may be true that these priceless stones will never be set in gold, and the flowers will never be painted by Van Gogh, but they are still no less radiant and beautiful for it. Their lot forbade them to become a Milton and a Cromwell; it was not their destiny to command the senates, or "read their [history] in a nation's eyes" (st. 16, v. 64). The poet then employs the image of a circle. This tiny world that these people lived in, that is, within the boundaries of their own village, confined, not only their virtues, but also their weaknesses. It was this encompassment that denied them the thrones of power, and at the same time shielded them from the ills and sins of society. They were free of guilt and were not kin to "Luxury and Pride" (st. 18, v. 71). Their knowledge was defined by the parameters of their everyday existence. Their thoughts and dreams never

longed to wander "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife"  
(st. 19, v. 73). They very quietly, yet nobly lived their lives, and, as  
the persona is discovering, are left now with very little evidence as  
proof that they existed at all.

Thus far, the persona has progressed on his journey from a very  
general view of the cemetery and the universality represented by the  
deceased, to a more particularized examination of the individuals in an  
attempt to achieve some knowledge of truth. He now focuses on what  
scarcely remains as testimony for each person's existence. In accordance  
with their lives, a small, humble memorial has been erected, a tombstone.  
Each engraved with unflowery, but often holy text, the "shapeless  
sculpture" (st. 20, v. 79) mirrors the severity of their lives. In death,  
they have become prey to the oblivious nature of society. However, the  
poet contends, there will be at least one who, like the persona in Donne's  
poem, will mourn their departure: one who will bear the memories of those  
laid to rest, so that their spirit shall continue to live. A special  
relationship exists bonding mankind to one another: an alliance that  
transcends simple words carved on a block of stone. This interaction

requires the human spirit to thrive. The persona is now beginning to center his attention less upon the physical aspects of death, and thereby return to his examination of the deceased. However, instead of scrutinizing them as a group, he now narrows his vision to focus upon the life and memories of a single man. Again, by becoming more and more specific in his examination of human nature, the persona will arrive at a better understanding of truth.

The opening strophe of the next section notes that the lines on the tombstone are there for anyone who may, by chance or by "lonely contemplation" (st. 24, v. 95), happen to stroll by. Upon further inquiry about the fate of this person, one may hear of the places he frequented, or perhaps of his peculiar or not-so-peculiar disposition. One might hear a talk of his loves, his dreams, his hates, and his fears. In this tale, the persona is told about how the man rose with the sun each morning, full of vigor. He also learns of how the man used to relax in the afternoon by a babbling brook under a tall beech tree, and of how he spent his time walking by the woods, "muttering his wayward fancies" (st. 27, v. 106).

For the first time, in the final two strophes of the poem, the poet directs his attention inwardly, thereby discovering his own personal feelings and attitudes about this person. He has progressed from a view based primarily on an internalized view of "Everyman's" inherent characteristics. The reader will recall that the persona is a representation of mankind in general. He tells of missing the man one morning when another came to sit by his favorite tree on the hill. He did not see the man in the meadow, by the stream, or by the forest. Then, with an appropriate hymn playing sadly, he found him in the church-yard. In order to comprehend the essence of this man and, in turn, to penetrate the core of human nature, the poet invites the reader to read the words etched "on the stone beneath yon aged thorn" (st. 29, v. 116).

The final three strophes of the poem comprise the epitaph. The epitaph is a summary of the poet's journey toward understanding. And just as Donne's poem was a meditation upon the dead, this epitaph is a description of a youth who, though physically dead, is an example of the living who must pass on to death. Through the poet's contemplation, the deceased transcends his earthly oblivion and passes into human thought.

As we have seen in our analysis of strophes twelve through nineteen that depict the simplicity of the country villagers, this unidentified Youth recapitulates aspects of the lives of simple folk. He is unnamed, however, though he existed in a particular form during his life, he is now being universalized. He is not only a reflection of the villagers, but there is also an abstraction suggested by the reference Gray makes to "A Youth" (st. 30, v. 118). Like the villagers, he led a life hidden from public recognition. But, like the loved one in Donne's poem who has passed away, this "Youth" has not led an insignificant life, for "Fair Science [frowned] not on his humble birth" (st. 30, v. 119). His life was, however, marked by Melancholy, a force that individualizes but, as we shall see, universalizes his identity.

The second strophe of the epitaph is a continuation of the interpretation of his life. He was endowed, not with the talents nor the opportunities of a Milton or a Cromwell but, like all men, he possessed a soul, and his soul was "sincere" (st. 31, v. 121). His very existence as a human being ennobles him, for "[Heaven] did a recompence as largely send" (st. 31, v. 122). His earthly subsistence and spiritual perception

recall Donne's view on the dual nature of man: physically, man must die and shed his worldly endowments; spiritually, he continues to exist in the minds and memories of others. Similarly, Gray's "Youth" sacrificed himself and, in body, came to know Misery. Misery, as defined by eighteenth century standards, has two meanings; unhappiness and impoverishment. But in spite of this physical depravity, the seemingly insignificant tear that marks his existence in the here-and-now offers a spiritual redemption; for, in the words of Gray, "He [gained] from [Heaven] ('twas all he [wished]) a friend" (st. 31, v. 124).

Through the spirit, this unidentified youth transcends his earthly limitations. In the final strophe of the epitaph the persona advises the reader to refrain from seeking information on his merits or on his shortcomings influenced by his "dread abode" (st. 32, v. 126). His presence as a universal human being existing in earthly form, but residing in spiritual perfection indicates the promise of hope and redemption. Through his material sacrifice, the Youth has now discovered his identity: as a Youth enduring this world, he has found his Father who, in reality, is his God.

Both Baroque and Neo-Classic writers are concerned with such general themes as transcendence and the condition of man. However, in characterizing the differences between Baroque and Neo-Classic, W. J. Bate has, in many respects, touched upon the essential. One of the basic premises of the Neo-Classic period was the intrusion of pathos into analysis of art: that is, instead of judging the ideal by what is fixed and sure, or by what can be proved scientifically, Neo-Classic thinkers emphasize feeling, sentiment, and instinct. Pathos, then, is the part of analysis that changes, or fluctuates from one perspective to the next. The concepts of beauty, good, and truth are no longer universally fixed as the Baroque thinker would affirm, but are found in the mind and in varying degrees from person to person. The Neo-Classicist maintains that an absolute truth can never really be known. The mind, however, will perceive the ideal by estimating the extent to which that ideal is communicated in a given particular. The closer a person is able to make this estimation, the better his perception of the ideal will be. This is the process Gray carries out on his "Journey." A second major difference between Baroque and Neo-Classic scholars is perspective. Donne inquires

about truth through reason and logic. Gray arrives at a similar conclusion based upon an observation that has its authority in analogy. By studying man, who accepts a particular physical but uncelebrated form, Gray examines the frailty of human existence. Within human shortcomings, somewhat ironically, he discovers a nobility that is heroic and universal. Man's situation then, encompasses body and soul. And it is through the spirit that man is able to escape his physical limitations and realize a spiritual dignity. Both Donne and Gray describe human existence in terms of a paradox. But, as we have seen, the modes of inquiry differ. In spite of these divergencies of perception, Donne's rationalization that touches upon the absolute and Gray's description that universalizes the particular substantiate, in their own ways, a vision which for Baroque and Neo-Classic thinkers reflects the truth of human existence.

## Chapter Four

As we have seen, Donne and Gray employ the theme of death to examine the nature of man. But in their analyses, they reflect an intellectual perspective that exemplifies a mode of examination particular to their respective period of history. For Donne, the individual was a paradigm of universal law; and, through contemplation of death, Donne's poet penetrates the nature of man and, through the spirit, triumphs over death. Gray, too, centers attention upon the finality of earthly existence. But whereas Donne endeavors to discover the dynamics of universal law, Gray seeks to appreciate the common threads that bind all beings and thus account for the essence of mankind, or "Everyman." Finally, Samuel Coleridge, in his poem "Kubla Khan" (Coleridge, Coleridge's Verses: A Selection, pp. 177-179), treats of the same theme: the death of man or, in this case, the legendary leader Kubla Khan who, though dead, attains immortality through his feats and fame. At first glance, man seems remote, in time, geography, and achievements, from Kubla Khan. But like Donne, Coleridge explores the human means to overcome physical decay

and demise and to penetrate the mysteries of human nature. And like Gray, the persona is a representation of mankind who seeks insight into the mechanics of the spirit.

As a Romantic poet, Coleridge differs, in outlook and thought, from his predecessors. In examining the dynamics of the soul, or the essence of man, he confronts the problem of discordia concors. But whereas Donne stresses the relevance of logic to reconcile the paradox, and whereas Gray emphasizes the analogous relationships among all men, Coleridge focuses attention on the individual and the difficulties that each man must overcome in his persistent need to discover the essence of harmony. The faculty of the imagination becomes central to his attempts to interpret images derived from nature and experience and to place these interpretations into a pattern that culminates in truth and contentment. Through an analysis of this poem, this chapter will attempt to elucidate not only Coleridge's treatment of the theme of the triumph of spiritual stability over physical disintegration but, equally importantly, his speculation on the dynamics of this intellectual and spiritual process. In one way, Coleridge seems to continue, and even to elaborate upon, a

theme that intrigues and mystifies his predecessors. But in another way, he sets forth a mode of thought which distinguishes him as a Romantic, and which enables the modern reader to appreciate a third mode of analysis that describes the multi-faceted nature of man.

Like many Romantics who broke away from conventional structures and techniques, Coleridge did not write "Kubla Khan" in the accepted form of strophes with equal numbers of lines. In fact, there really is no definite pattern to his writing. In spite of this unorthodox and somewhat freer style of writing, this poem can be divided into six sections according to scene changes, differences in action, and subjects discussed. The first section includes the first eleven lines. Here Coleridge is setting the stage on which the poem will take place, and he is describing a vision in Kubla Khan's mind, a paradise, a "pleasure-dome" (l. 2) which, filled with trees, gardens, and all other types of greenery, is the place of Kubla's descent into the great chasm. In the second section (ll. 12-22), Coleridge relates the physical aspects of this vision to human qualities. There is also a change from the bright blossoming of the initial setting to a description of a more active, wild, "savage" scene.

A forceful act of regeneration adds to the humanness of the action, as Kubla continues his descent into the next section. The third section (ll. 23-28), somewhat shorter than the first two, is an elaboration on the river introduced earlier in the poem. There is a greater emphasis on the concept of descent. Here, Kubla's journey through the paradise comes to an end. In the following eight lines (ll. 29-36), he returns from his imaginary world to reality. In almost losing his vision of the pleasure-dome, the persona bridges past and future; and, by reconciling these opposites, he finds meaning in a world and shapes chaos to order. In the fifth section of the poem (ll. 37-47) the poet shifts focus from Kubla Khan, a representative of the past, to the persona, who is living and thinking in his present tense. The poet has had a vision similar to that of Kubla: a damsel who sang and played beautifully on a dulcimer. And like Kubla, he has lost his vision to reality, but he concludes that, if he could hear her song once more, he, too, could build his own pleasure-dome. By establishing a link between the past and his present, Coleridge relates himself to Kubla Khan. In the final seven lines of the poem (ll. 48-54), the persona illustrates the imagination's ability to

transcend time; and, going beyond a bridging of the gap between himself in his present day and the past, the persona relates present and past perspective to future generations.

This gets at the core of Romanticism. No longer is a man simply a piece of a larger puzzle with a predetermined place and shape as he was so categorized by the Neo-Classic. Now he is able to stand alone as an individual, still part of a bigger picture, but also a whole puzzle unto himself.

At the opening of the poem, Kubla Khan has created a "stately pleasure-dome" (l. 2), a place of grandeur meant to be pleasing to the senses in every way, encompassing all his dreams. And he has not only created this place, but "decreed" (l. 2) it. This gives Kubla full authority and dominion over it; it is his and his alone to create as he pleases. In this place the holy and unblemished waters of the river Alph flowed through seemingly endless caverns to a "sunless sea" (l. 5). Such an impressive landscape, though, is only a part of Kubla's imagination. He has created a paradise in his mind and has afforded himself a pathway to escape reality. Unlike Donne's persona who can only escape through

death, and Gray's poet who finds truth and goodness through an examination of others, Coleridge's poet-persona looks within himself in order to actualize his own vision of truth and beauty. He elaborates upon this by describing the ten miles of gardens and forests and streams that fill this Elysium. Acres of bright, sunny meadows and "incense-bearing" (l. 9) trees excite the senses. There were, moreover, great forests, "ancient as the hills" (l. 10). By using a word such as "ancient," Coleridge creates the impression that there is something immortal about this land; somehow, it will exist forever. And Kubla, within these parameters of thought, has built walls and towers around his private Eden to protect its sacredness, as well as himself and his fragile but real hope that keeps alive this vision.

Coleridge begins the second section with an exclamation, "But oh!" (l. 12), signaling to the reader that there is a change in mood or action. Kubla continues his descent into the "deep romantic chasm" (l. 12), and immediately, one envisions a dark place, lit only by a few stray rays of the sun breaking through the trees above. It is a passionate, but imaginary place and, as Coleridge describes it, "a savage place" (l. 14),

wild and enchanted. A metaphor illustrates and emphasizes this imaginary scene: this place is compared to a woman, under a "waning moon" (l. 15), calling desperately for her "demon-lover" (l. 15), overly desirous and passionate. Introducing this woman into the description of the chasm also forms a relationship between the physical and the human. The next several lines describe movement, an earthquake perhaps, in which the earth seems to pant, as if it were breathing quickly. Then a fountain erupts in "half-intermittent bursts" (l. 20), and spews forth rocks like "rebounding hail" (l. 21) or grain from a "thresher's flail" (l. 22). This great cataclysm of generation evokes, in word and rhythm, human orgasm. As a man is aroused sexually, his breathing becomes faster, leading to orgasm when he, like the earth in the poem, "erupts" and spews forth in quick releases of energy. And just as this act is one of generation, the action of the earth also "gives birth" to the sacred river.

The third section of the poem is concerned with the river that has sprung up amid this turmoil. The river acts as a transport or pathway leading Kubla through the forests and caves to the very heart of the chasm. Much movement marks this section with scenes going from the open

meadows, through the caverns, and sinking "in tumult to a lifeless ocean" (l. 28) in just three lines of the poem. The motion in this section signals to the reader a transition. The amount of action has been building from the outset and is centered on the course and flow of the river. In the first section, the river is introduced as "Alph, the sacred river" (l. 3). Its name, taken from the Greek letter alpha that denotes beginning, implies not only the source of the river, but also may be interpreted as the initiation of Kubla's journey through the pleasure-dome; as the beginning of his descent through the "measureless" (l. 4) caverns, rushing over waterfalls to the "lifeless ocean." And here, in this ocean, the river terminates, ending his descent, and, as we shall soon discover, the end of his vision.

This land that Kubla has created is a land of bliss, teeming with life, but not free from conflict. How, then, can conflict exist in a supposedly perfect world? That is perhaps the dilemma that the Romantic seeks to resolve; and, in seeking to reconcile opposites, in mind and sense, the Romantic searches as his ideal a discordia concors that shapes chaos to order. In the fourth section of the poem, for example, Kubla

hears "ancestral voices" (l. 30) amid all of the agitation from the water rushing over the falls. These voices echo past events and generations that form reality. But these same voices are "prophesying" (l. 30). By interrelating the past and future, the poet establishes a link between Kubla Khan and himself, for he is part of Kubla's future, a future that the ancestors predict will include "war" (l. 30). The poet avoids use of the term "war" in its literal sense; however, he is employing it to represent conflict, change and discord. Such a discordia occurs as Kubla Khan begins to lose the vision of his pleasure-dome, becoming a mere "shadow...floating midway on the waves" (l. 32). The voices of the past are the cries of reality beckoning for his return; he cannot ignore them.

The final lines of this section, then, recall the image of the pleasure-dome, a place, according to the poet, where one could hear music, all types of music "mingled" (l. 33), or harmoniously ordered. This music was not deformed into chaos but orchestrated into a symphonic work. And it was heard from the highest reaches of the gardens to the deepest crevasse of the caves. The poet thus integrates opposites into a coherent description of the pleasure-dome. Again, in the final line of this

section, when he states that it was "a sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice" (l. 36), apparently contradictory images interact and form in a united vision an impression of integrity and stability. One would not normally associate the sun with ice, and, in reality, these caves of ice could not exist. Therein lies the magic of the pleasure-dome, for these caves could only exist in the realm of imagination. But, alas, Kubla Khan has lost his pleasure-dome and his vision, and empathic experience now becomes part of the past. The reader has been transported from the time of Kubla Khan to the poet's present day through the bridge that the poet constructs in logic and through feeling.

In section five, the poet conveys a description of his own imaginary paradise, where a damsel, an Abyssinian maid, played her dulcimer and sang of Mount Abora. We know the poet is relating the message here because of the use of the first-person singular. With respect to time, the events are now taking place in the present, that is, the poet's present tense. The poet, like Kubla Khan, has envisioned a mythical land within his mind. Once again, this image is solely his, to shape and reshape as he wishes; and like Kubla Khan, he cannot help but return to the reality around him.

The poet, however, does not grieve the loss of his vision, for he knows that he can regain the images and escape, once more, from the imperfect world that all must endure, to a perfect world that transcends time and space. If he could only resurrect within himself "her symphony and song" (l. 43), he could recreate his vision of the damsel. And with her music "build that dome in air, that sunny dome! those caves of ice!" (ll. 46-47). Through allusion to Kubla Khan's imagination that enabled him to build a pleasure-dome, the poet employs the past event to construct present experience. And by relating Kubla Khan to himself, he presents, illustrates, and demonstrates a universal nature, the dynamics of which enables the individual to transcend the physical limitations of time and space and come to know an ideal and a truth.

In the final section of the poem, the bridge that links past and present and personal and universal now extends to future generations. Through the faculty of imagination, all experience fuses into a coherent universal experience. For the reader, Kubla Khan becomes our mythical "demon-lover," the spark by which we, as particular individuals, might light the fires of our own imaginations. And through imagination, we are

able to transcend the earthly confines of our environment and to create truth and beauty within our own minds. Thus, in this poem, the persona reaches for and, in fact, grasps the goal of the Romantic; for he actualizes within himself, the individual, a knowledge of the ideal that is universally real and enduring and, at the same time, is personally perceived and appreciated.

Coleridge has pieced together the puzzle of time. He has carefully connected each piece of the puzzle, past present and future, with the themes and examples set forth in this poem. Donne focuses on the reality of death in an imminent sense, as something yet to happen. Gray uses death as a window through which one sees past events, hoping that by this examination, he may be able to understand his present life a little better. In describing the legend of Kubla Khan, Coleridge's poem employs past perspective and therefore implies death. He uses this image from his past to build a bridge to his future, and thus transcends not only his own physical being, but also time. As Kubla dies, he becomes a memory, a part of our minds. But through this account, Coleridge evokes scenes that create for the persona and the reader a world of truth and beauty.

Without this knowledge, man is trapped, in time and space, within the cage of reality. But with this knowledge that signifies and leads the reader to an understanding of possibilities, man can create his own world, in his own mind, in his own imagination, and thereby escape the burdens of his existence. And this is perhaps one of the essential ambitions of the Romantic, to examine and penetrate the thoughts, beliefs, and ambitions of the individual, and thus to find within himself a truth and order that are real, attainable, and universal.

## Chapter Five

Through this analysis of three poetic works, the critic has illustrated, through an examination of the aesthetic uses of death, three diverse perspectives that define the nature of man. As we have seen, these perspectives are associated with distinct periods in history commonly termed Baroque, Neo-Classicism, and Romanticism. Through their poetry, John Donne, Thomas Gray, and Samuel Coleridge have demonstrated the modes of analysis which, characteristic of their respective time periods, enable them to explain the human predicament and to establish order in a world of chaos.

Donne reconciles physical death and spiritual life through an examination of love. In a dialectical argument on the inevitability of death and the eternity of love, he demonstrates that, in order for man to overcome the suffering and pain of the human condition and to discover a higher spirituality, he must realize the temporal state of his earthly existence. By inquiring into the universal nature of love, Donne uncovers truth, thereby penetrating a cosmic reality. On the other hand, Gray's

mode of analysis differs in that he seeks to define the nature of man through an inspection of the particular, hoping to discover a situation universal to all men. In finding the seeds of this universal sentiment, Gray and other Neo-Classicists identify and convey to others truth of human existence. Coleridge also seeks this truth; but, unlike Donne and Gray who take "all men" into consideration, he focuses attention on the individual and his quest for contentment in his own life. For the Romantic, imagination becomes the means by which man is able to interpret his physical surroundings and to arrive at truth. Man's imagination enables him to create the ideal in his mind and to rise above his earthliness to attain knowledge of a spiritual reality.

As the reader can see, although each of these poets arrives at similar conclusions, their modes of inquiry differ. In these poems, each has given considerable attention to the theme of death. Through their individual treatment of this inevitability, these poets have speculated upon the true nature of man and the meaning of his existence. Through an analysis of the respective writings of Donne, Gray, and Coleridge, one attains an appreciation of the perspectives that define, each in their own

way, a metaphysical truth affecting man and that describe his perceptions of self, life, and the human predicament.

## Appendix A

## A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING

As virtuous men pass mildly away,  
 And whisper to their souls to go,  
 Whilst some of their sad friends do say,  
 "The breath goes now," and some say, "No,"

So let us melt and make no noise, 5  
 No tear-floods nor sigh-tempests move;  
 'Twere profanation of our joys  
 To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears;  
 Men reckon what it did and meant; 10  
 But trepidation of the spheres,  
 Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love,  
 Whose soul is sense, cannot admit 15  
 Absence, because it doth remove  
 Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refin'd  
 That ourselves know not what it is,  
 Interassured of the mind,  
 Care less eyes, lips, and hands to miss. 20

Our two souls, therefore, which are one,  
 Though I must go, endure not yet  
 A breach, but an expansion,  
 Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so 25  
 As stiff twin compasses are two;  
 Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show  
 To move, but doth if th' other do.

And though it in the center sit,  
 Yet when the other far doth roam, 30  
 It leans and hearkens after it,  
 And grows erect as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,  
 Like th' other foot, obliquely run;  
 Thy firmness makes my circle just, 35  
 And makes me end where I begun.

## Appendix B

## E L E G Y

WRITTEN IN A

## COUNTRY CHURCH-YARD

THE Curfew tolls \* the knell of parting day,  
 The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,  
 The plowman homeward plods his weary way,  
 And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
 And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
 Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
 And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds ;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r  
 The mopeing owl does to the moon complain 10  
 Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,  
 Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,  
 Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,  
 Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,  
 The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,  
 The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,  
 The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,  
 No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. 20

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
 Or busy housewife ply her evening care :  
 No children run to lisp their sire's return,  
 Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,  
 Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke ;  
 How jocund did they drive their team afield !  
 How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke !

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
 Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ; 30  
 Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,  
 The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,  
 And all that beauty; all that wealth e'er gave,  
 Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.  
 The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to These the fault,  
 If Mem'ry o'er their Tomb no Trophies raise,  
 Where thro' the long-drawn isle and fretted vault  
 The pealing anthem swells the note of praise. 40

Can storied urn or animated bust  
 Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?  
 Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,  
 Or Flatt'ry sooth the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;  
 Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,  
 Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page  
 Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll; 50  
 Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,  
 And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
 The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:  
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast  
 The little Tyrant of his fields withstood;  
 Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,  
 Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood. 60

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,  
 The threats of pain and ruin to despise,  
 To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,  
 And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbad: nor circumscrib'd alone  
 Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;  
 Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,  
 And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,  
 To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame, 70  
 Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride  
 With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,  
 Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;  
 Along the cool sequester'd vale of life  
 They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect  
 Some frail memorial still erected nigh,  
 With uncouth rhimes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,  
 Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. 80

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,  
 The place of fame and elegy supply :  
 And many a holy text around she strews,  
 That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,  
 This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,  
 Left the warm precincts of the chearful day,  
 Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind ?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,  
 Some pious drops the closing eye requires ; 90  
 Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,  
 \* Ev'n in our Ashes live their wonted Fires.

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead  
 Dost in these lines their artless tale relate ;  
 If chance, by lonely contemplation led,  
 Some kindred Spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed Swain may say,  
 ' Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn  
 ' Brushing with hasty steps the dews away  
 ' To meet the sun upon the upland lawn. 100

' There at the foot of yonder nodding beech  
 ' That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,  
 ' His listless length at noontide would he stretch,  
 ' And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

' Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,  
 ' Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,  
 ' Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,  
 ' Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

' One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,  
 ' Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree ; 110  
 ' Another came ; nor yet beside the rill,  
 ' Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he ;

' The next with dirges due in sad array  
 ' Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him born.  
 ' Approach and read (for thou can'st read) the lay,  
 ' Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'

## The EPITAPH.

*Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth  
A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.  
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,  
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.*

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*Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,  
Heav'n did a recompence as largely send :  
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,  
He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.*

*No farther seek his merits to disclose,  
Or draw his fraillies from their dread abode,  
(\* There they alike in trembling hope repose,)  
The bosom of his Father and his God.*

*Kubla Khan*

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. 5  
 So twice five miles of fertile ground  
 With walls and towers were girdled round:  
 And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
 Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;  
 And here were forests ancient as the hills, 10  
 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 15  
 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 momently was forced:  
 Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst 20  
 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 momently the sacred river.  
 Five miles meandering with a mazy motion 25  
 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! 30

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, 35  
 A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer  
 In a vision once I saw:  
 It was an Abyssinian maid,  
 And on her dulcimer she played, 40  
 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, 45  
 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! 50  
 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.

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