S.T. COLERIDGE'S "CHRISTABEL"

THESE SHADOWS OF IMAGINATION
A PSYCHOANALYTICAL APPROACH TO
S.T. COLERIDGE'S "CHRISTABEL"

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ABSTRACT

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "Christabel" is one of the many unfinished works that has intrigued critics since it was first published in 1816. Due to its incomplete nature the poem readily lends itself to a variety of interpretations, such as the theme of Christian redemption or, more popularly, the belief that the poem was one of the first tales in England of the vampire. Many of the interpretations to date, however, do not adequately explain Coleridge's failure to finish this haunting work, nor do they satisfy the emotional attachment that is formed between the reader and the characters of this poem.

The major emphasis of this thesis will be to penetrate the literal level of the poem in order to explore the symbolic material which "covers but not hides" the intense amount of psychological material in the work. By following the thoughts and ideas of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, the ultimate desires, or wish fulfilments, of the narrator of the poem, will be explored as they are represented by the relationship between the poem's eponymous heroine, and the mysterious and perilous visitor, Geraldine. This relationship and the many conflicts it arouses in the narrator will reveal a potent reason for Coleridge's abandonment not only of this particular work, but of poetic creation in general.

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PROLOGUE

Samuel Taylor Coleridge has been accused, on more than one occasion, of borrowing freely from the ideas and works of others, while often failing to acknowledge that debt.[1] In his Anima Poetae, the poet himself admits this predisposition: "I seem to be seeking, as it were asking for, a symbolic language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing anything new."[2] It is this internal search that occupies the creative imagination of Coleridge in his major poems, especially in the haunting "Christabel".

That this search should be of primary concern for a man like Coleridge who was devoted to the pursuit of psychological, metaphysical and religious matters and ideologies is hardly startling. Coleridge's active and open mind seemed to constantly thirst for different outlets. The man read with so much intensity and enthusiasm that it required a complete book with compendious notes for Professor Lowes to trace the inspirational sources for just "Kubla Khan" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". More importantly for this study, Coleridge was also fascinated by the psychology of the human mind and imagination. Not only did he glean what information he could from his favourite philosophers, Hartley, Berkley, Spinoza and Kant, but he faithfully recorded many of his own

dreams and frequently made observations or short analyses of them.[3]

Was Coleridge ahead of his time in his preoccupations with dream-life and the unconscious material arising from these dreams? Although it would be some eighty years before Sigmund Freud and his disciples would present their views on the subject of psychology and the unconscious, their works and interest were a result of earlier research dating back even to the Ancient Greeks. In the nineteenth century Freud documents research done as early as the 1830's.[4] It would seem likely that Coleridge, during his literary pursuits, would become aware of the developing interest in the psychological field, some of which would eventually find their way into his works.

Coleridge had been visited by dreams and nightmares from his early childhood days, when, as he reveals in a series of biographical letters to Thomas Poole, he was particularly haunted by fairies, geniis and other fantastical creatures, borrowed from The Tales of the Arabian Nights.[5] His was a mind "early habituated to the vast" and easily captured by the unusual and disquieting. His dreams were riddled with distorted images of his past: his loneliness at Christs Hospital School and at home as the youngest of fourteen children, his cool relationship with his mother and his unhappy, and partly imaginary, love affairs with Mary Evans and Sara Hutchinson. In his poetry, particularly

in the three major narrative works, these aspects appear under the guise of various figures and symbols, such as Geraldine as an embodiment of the anima archetype in the human psyche. This is the facet of Coleridge's poem "Christabel" that will be explored in this thesis.

Coleridge did not, of course, sit down and write his poetry with the intention of portraying the unconscious material that is analysed in the body of this thesis. This material, such as the dominant Oedipal conflict and castration themes, are totally unconscious and are not necessarily to be considered as deliberate insertions on the part of the poet as poem narrator.

It is difficult, due to the unfinished nature of "Christabel", to give a comprehensive view of the poet's actual purpose in writing the poem. The varying interpretations of the work offered by the following critics are certainly justified and accurate as far as they venture. However, one wonders at how much they were restrained by their own sensibilities since even after a careful survey of several approaches, one is still left with a vague feeling of inconclusiveness in terms of the emotions aroused by the poem.

Coleridge was clearly concerned with emotional and psychological questions, as his remarks in Chapter XIV of the Biographia Literaria indicate.[6] Yet, why did a poem, that initially seems to be a study of the effect of evil upon

good create such a problem for the poet? Indeed, why did poetic creation as a whole become such a challenge for Coleridge when he was quite able to rattle off prose and critical works with great facility? The suggestion that Coleridge simply did not consider himself a great poet and did not place much importance on his creative works seems unjustified. He was justly proud of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and his frequent disclaimers and apologia often have the ring more of false modesty than of true feeling.[7] His plans for the completion of "Christabel" are frequently mentioned in his letters, and a reference to it appears as late as 1834 in his Table Talk.[8]

We must conclude, therefore, that there were deeper concerns than lack of interest or motivation that halted Coleridge's poetic progress. As the literal level of "Christabel" is penetrated, it becomes clear that it is the dominant psychological undercurrents as revealed by the relationship between Christabel, Geraldine and Sir Leoline which halt Coleridge. It is only when the universal themes such as the desire for union with the Mother, fear of castration, and the conflicting wishes of death and self-aggrandizement, are taken into account that the tremendous emotional impact of the work is understood and the guilt of Christabel and the narrator makes sense to the reader.

The psychological material that is uncovered as the manifest content, or literal level, of the poem is penetrated

should not seem unique or surprising. The themes of incest, patricide and matricide are as old as civilization itself, as even a brief glance at legend and mythology reveals. In Greek legend, Zeus and Cronos subdue and maim their respective fathers to secure rights to their mothers. Hera is, after all, no more than an anthropomorphized version of her fertility goddess "mother", Rhea. Myths and legends, when studied, serve as concrete attempts of generations of people to rationalize and understand the powerful motivations propelling mankind. On a less grand scale, we find that Coleridge's poetic writings represent the unconscious account of one man's struggles with the same forces.

Few modern critics fail to recognize the significance of these psychological undercurrents of Coleridge's works. Even William Hazlitt, a vocal contemporary critic of "Christabel", unwittingly focused on one of the psychological conflicts of the poem when he commented that Geraldine was actually a man in disguise.[9] Generally, the critical interpretations of "Christabel" fall into two categories: those who believe in a thematic, good against evil, approach to the poem, and a second school of criticism which studies the deeper psychological aspects of the work.

Coleridge's physician, James Gillman, and the poet's son, Derwent Coleridge, were the earliest proponents of the thematic view of "Christabel".[10] Both men believed that

Christabel was to endure a kind of vicarious suffering for the "weal of her lover that is far away". However, at this point their interpretations diverge. Derwent believed that Geraldine was not evil, but some kind of amoral spirit appointed to carry out the task. Gillman, on the other hand, believed that Geraldine represents evil and elaborated this idea with a proposed ending for the poem. According to Gillman, Bard Bracy was to discover that Roland de Vaux's castle no longer existed, whereupon Geraldine vanishes, only to reappear later under the guise of Christabel's long lost lover. Under protest, Christabel prepares to wed her strange suitor, but is saved at the last moment by the return of her true Knight. The wedding is conducted and the voice of Christabel's mother is heard above the bells.[11]

This is certainly a tidy ending for a puzzling poem; however, it actually poses more questions than it answers. As Kathleen Coburn suggests in her article, Coleridge may have indeed provided his physician with this "happy-ever-after" ending, for in the throes of ill-health and depression such an ending would be appealing.[12] Yet, if Coleridge's true concern in examining such a situation as presented in the poem was a study of vicarious suffering, this ending does little to contribute to the study. How could the lovely lady possibly have redeemed her lover, when she herself must be rescued by him? Nor does this ending give sufficient explanation for the extraordinary affinity which develops between

the two women. Gillman's suggestions open up a Pandora's box of unanswerable questions, such as, why the heroine is left hanging in an incredibly overwhelming daze of hopelessness when the ending was to have been so straightforward and pat.

These types of problems also arise in the interpretations of many of the modern critics. Arthur Nethercot has devoted an entire book, The Road to Tryermaine, to the poem, yet most of the work is an attempt to follow the footsteps of Lowes, as Nethercot tries to uncover the sources of Colerdige's poetic inspiration in "Christabel". The search is often fascinating, but ultimately disappointing, because as J. Beer points out, in "Christabel" Coleridge seems to have looked for material to express incidents and characters he had already created, rather than incidents created after remembered readings.[13] Nethercot ventures an interpretation of the poem only in the last chapter of the book. He concurs with Gillman and Derwent that Coleridge was interested in the study of vicarious suffering, which, Nethercot states, he examines under the auspices of the preternatural. Geraldine is apparently a preternatural being who is "of a higher class than Man" as Coleridge explains in "The Destiny of Nations". In "Christabel", Geraldine is a creature undergoing a process of metempsychosis, as revealed by her disfiguring mark. Christabel must suffer her afflictions not only for her lover, but also to aid Geraldine's atonement. Clearly, some kind of atonement and martyrdom was on the poet's mind since he recalled

Crashaw's poem of St. Teresa as he wrote, and his own heroine's name has "Christ's name in it".

The main problem with the interpretations which rely on the theme of vicarious suffering is that they fail to account for Geraldine's increasingly prominent role and her literal possession of Christabel. Nor can they account for Coleridge's difficulty in continuing the poem, although he had such models as Crashaw and the Biblical recorders as inspiration. In actual fact, Coleridge's opinion of St. Teresa was not that high, as he discusses in his Philosophical Lectures[14], because she exemplified religion without intellect. Coleridge would, therefore, hardly be supporting a similar philosophy in his poem. The theme of martyrdom, in its religious aspect, and vicarious suffering seems alien to Coleridge's thought. While it is true that the Ancient Mariner must atone for a crime, it is one that he committed himself. Ultimately, the Mariner strives for self-knowledge, something that Christabel would be unable to do if she was merely a tool for the atonement of the crimes of others.

Suggestions, such as Nethercot's, that the poet's fancy and love of the strange ran away with him and caused him to give up the poem, seem weak solutions to the poignant and emotional ending of the second part of the poem. Christabel's passivity has also been labelled as one of the chief reasons for the poem's abrupt ending. Yet, other tales where the heroine's passivity and innocence do not halt the

conclusion do exist, of which Samuel Richardson's Pamela is a prime example. Pamela may be a tedious work, but it reveals that this theme can be carried through.

Walter J. Bate, in Coleridge, J.B. Beer, in his Coleridge The Visionary, and Humphrey House,in the Clark Lectures on Coleridge, all view the poem as basically a confrontation between good and evil. This theme clearly does exist on the literal level of the poem, reinforced by the obvious Christian symbolism and superstition, such as the blessed threshold. Bate believes that Coleridge intended to carry on the ideas initiated in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and explore the idea of openheartedness betrayed by evil in the guise of Geraldine.[15] Christabel is to meet the multifaceted evil and somehow redeem it. Bate says, however, that Christabel has been portrayed as an idealized innocent and therefore cannot change. Her passivity forces Coleridge to abandon his initial concept and, Bate argues, that the whole idea eventually becomes "too great for the quasi-Gothic tale". It has already been shown, however, that the idea of passive virtue overcoming an aggressive force had been accomplished by Richardson, and in a more restricted structure. Passive resistance also shielded some of Shakespeare's heroines, such as Imogen and Miranda, against ravishment and evil. While Bate recognizes that Christabel must assume some responsibility for the introduction of evil, he does not probe this idea deeply, or attempt to answer why she actively seeks it out during her midnight stroll. More importantly, Christabel does change

during the poem. In the Conclusion to Part I, for instance, she almost seems to have enjoyed the consummation of the relationship: "And oft the while she seems to smile/As infants at a sudden light!" (11. 317-318). Is not her guilt of the next morning that of the recognition of her enjoyment?

Beer seems to touch upon this point when he discusses the relationship between good and evil, where goodness and innocence must come to terms with the existence of evil. Innocence must redeem experience, or as Beer sees it, daemonic evil. The logical conclusion to the poem would be when Christabel accepts evil, "subsumes it, and finally transfigures it."[16] Still, one is puzzled by Christabel's active search for the evil and her utter helplessness as Geraldine and the Baron exit.

Humphrey House probes more deeply into the realm of psychology when he sees the poem as portraying the effect of evil upon innocence.[17] He sees the persecution that Christabel feels, and notes the disintegration of her will as Geraldine gains control and Christabel mimics her. Yet, he fails to explain why this happens, or account for the guilt the heroine feels: "'Sure I have sinned!'" (1. 381).

"Christabel" is written in two distinct parts, which are separated by a three year gap in composition. Yet, within each section, especially Part I, there is a strong internal cohesiveness of mood, atmosphere and intensity of description which seems to break down the natural progression of time,

making it virtually irrelevant. This intensity of action and emotion removes the work from a formal timeframe, and, in this aspect, the poem's relationship to the dream-world emerges. Moreover, the first part of the poem is not set into any particular geographical location. These details only appear in Part II. It is conceivable that this work, like "Kubla Khan", was a result of the many dreams of distorted women that haunted Coleridge during his lifetime and which he recorded in his Notebooks.[18]

There are a few "Christabel" critics who stand as intermediaries between the schools of thematic and psychological interpretation. These critics recognize "Christabel's" place as a dream-poem, but fail to explore the psychoanalytical implications of this theory. One of the critics who explores the relationship between "Christabel" and dreams is Paul Magnuson, in Coleridge's Nightmare Poetry.[19] Magnuson believes that the action of the poem occurs as a part of a dream created by Christabel. The poem "begins with a dream of an imaginative concept that in earlier poems [Coleridge] tries to verify by sensation or by the experience of other minds, but Christabel's dream is proved to be in no sense a liberation."[20] Christabel creates Geraldine as a reflection of herself, a kind of psychological double. Interestingly enough, Magnuson explains that the frequent desire for touching expressed in the poem is a way of substantiating the reality of the incidents. What is felt is real and not

imaginary, and, as the poem progresses, Geraldine does become real, and begins to embody evil, or uncontrollable unconscious motivations regarded as evil instincts. Christabel becomes consumed by her own created image and is utterly destroyed by the violence of her father. The poem terminates, Magnuson states, because of Coleridge's own uncertainty about his own role as father.

This conclusion may be fine as far as it goes, but again it fails to reveal just what it is that causes Geraldine to become so evil and dominant. Why has this representative of the unconscious taken over in Christabel's imaginary adventures? Why is it to be feared? Finally what causes the Baron's violent and exaggerated reaction. Magnuson has not explored the guilt expressed in the poem.

Susan M. Luther and Roy Basler both see the poem as a study in experience, particularly sexual experience.[21] In Luther's view, the poem is Christabel's vision or reverie of her awareness of her own sexuality, and her guilt over this realization. It is a symbolic introduction to sexuality where "Christabel's innocence is a kind of mental and emotional blindness which must be overcome if she is to grow."[22] Christabel, however, avoids recognizing this responsibility, is overcome by guilt and becomes locked in a nightmare.

For Basler, "Coleridge intended 'Christabel' to be a medieval romance of innocent lore hedged about by the dark workings of the imagination and confused by the unconscious power of sexual necessity which motivates not only the main

action of the plot but also the devious perversive counter-action ...[23] Christabel actively seeks sexual experience, through her midnight wanderings, but upon encountering it, feels shame and sorrow. Basler charges that Coleridge did not complete the poem for fear of charges of moral turpitude, since to finish "Christabel" he would have had to further explore the sexual implications.

"Christabel" is undoubtedly about sexuality, yet how innocent and untried its heroine is can be debated. She is the one who initiates all the action of the poem, and during the unrobing scene she displays a lively interest in the proceedings. Geraldine portrays more of the traditional characteristics of the blushing virginal maid than Christabel does. William Blake in "The Book of Thel" presents a more intriguing study of virginity and sexuality than is found on the literal level of "Christabel", and he seems to have had no problem completing it.

Could Coleridge have feared charges of moral turpitude as Basler suggests? While the poet had a compulsion to please his public and friends in his writings, he was sensible enough to realize that an unfinished work would receive the same labels. The fact that he did publish it at all prevents support for this particular theory.

Of all the major critics studied to date, Kathleen Coburn, Beverly Fields and Martin Fruman come closest to recognizing and analyzing the psychological material of

"Christabel". While none of them has pursued the material to its full extent, all three contribute substantially to the underlying unconscious themes of the poem, and they provided the framework for many of the ideas in this thesis.

Kathleen Coburn, the editor of Coleridge's Notebooks, discusses the differing views of the two Lake poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge, on the use of the supernatural. In her article she reinforces the idea that Coleridge attempted to deal with the psychological reality of supernatural stimuli. His aim was "to realize the familiar in the strange."[24] Christabel is suffering from loneliness, motherlessness and fear for her lover when she encounters Geraldine. According to Coburn, Coleridge intended that Part III of "Christabel" consist of a song of the heroine's desolation. By that time, however, the heroine's desolation and depression were the poet's own as he suffered from unfulfilled love, opium and illness. Coburn points to the dreams Coleridge recorded in his Notebooks, as an indication of how close the events in "Christabel" were to his own fears.[25] In his nightmares he was frequently haunted by fearsomewomen who changed shape and were maimed or maiming figures. Ultimately, "Christabel" is a poem about Death-in-Life, and Coleridge could not finish it because it too closely represented his own experience. That experience may be screened through female figures, but these represent nonetheless one side of his own nature.[26]

Beverly Fields, in Reality's Dark Dream, agrees that

the female figures in "Christabel" serve as a screen for Coleridge's own unconscious guilt and fear.[27] In fact, all the women in the poem are one woman, the bad mother figure, or, as will be explained later, an aspect of Carl Jung's anima archetype. Geraldine is portrayed as both a daughter, motherless like Christabel, and also as a mother figure and unattainable love object who belongs to someone else, the father. There is a rivalry in the poem between the child and both parents, partly because the child wishes to incorporate both parents. At the same time, the narrator seeks to purge the sensual uncontrollable feminine within the psyche. Yet, it must be noted that all the male figures in the poem are either impotent or quickly discharged from the scene. As the wish fulfillments of the dream are realized, guilt, fear and hostility begin to emerge. Fields seems to feel that Christabel, or the narrator, fails to achieve the ultimate desire of becoming or incorporating the parents, and the poem ends, because of a witnessed sexual encounter between the parents, a primal scene.

These interpretations provide a clue for solving the dilemma of Coleridge's inability to complete his haunting poem. Clearly, the poet became too involved in the material, on an unconscious level, and the attempt by the censorship apparatus of the waking mind to present the material in an acceptable form was not sufficient to allow any progression in the events.

Martin Fruman, in The Damaged Archangel, provides perhaps the most detailed psychoanalytical view of Coleridge and his poetry. He attempts to demonstrate how closely Coleridge's waking and dream lives were aligned.[28] He points out how the fears expressed in Coleridge's dreams can account for the poet's obsessional need to please people and his frequent inability to complete projects. He too sees both Christabel and Geraldine as projections of Coleridge's inner self, presenting a divided personality. Like Christabel, Coleridge frequently expressed a sense of isolation in his dreams and his encounters with fearsome women similar to Geraldine cannot be coincidental. Basically, in "Christabel", the two women represent two dualities, with Geraldine as the force of extreme sensuality which was to be repressed at all cost. Since neither duality could emerge victorious, the poem was abandoned. While Fruman does make these important points in his discussion, he actually spends little time on "Christabel" and does not present an overall interpretation of the poem. Like many critics he seems over-awed at the quicksilver mind of the poet.

The general consensus among critical writers is that "Christabel is not merely a Gothic romance of particular beauty. Coleridge consciously tried to create a psychological depth to the poem, perhaps, as many of the critics suggest, to explore the relationship between good and evil, innocence and experience. What many critics fail to recognize sufficiently

is the strong relationship between "Christabel" and Coleridge's own nightmares. When the poem is allowed to assume its proper setting of the dream world, as even its internal setting expresses, then the questions aroused by the emotional and psychological content of the work can be uncovered and analysed.

Certainly a psychoanalytical approach to the poem as contained in the following pages will encounter some resistance and disbelief. It may well be that as other interpretations hovered above the psychological void, an element almost all the critics recognize, their originators met that resistance within themselves and left the poem's contents as they stand on a literal level, unfinished and unsatisfying. Like the Lovely Lady Christabel, let us cross that void to meet the beautiful Geraldine and her perilous unconscious burden.

NOTES TO PROLOGUE

1. For an example of a recent accusation see Martin Fruman, Coleridge The Damaged Archangel (New York: George Braziller, 1971).

2. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, ed. Anima Poetae From the Unpublished Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (London: William Heinemann, 1895), p. 136.

3. See Fruman for a discussion of Coleridge's dreams. Also, The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn, Vol. I (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957), for the actual dreams, especially 1250-21. 214, the dream of November 28, 1800 (848-4.123, and 1392-8.120.)

4. See James Strachey, Gen.Ed., The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. IV (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), Chapter I, Section A.

5. Earl Leslie Griggs, ed., Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956). The letters date from February 1797 to 1798.

6. S.T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, Vol. II. J. Shawcross, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1907), pp. 5-6.

7. See Fruman, especially Chapter 1.

8. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Specimens of the Table Talk (London: John Murray, 1909), pp. 221-222.

9. See Coleridge's letter to Robert Southey, January 31, 1819 in Griggs, Vol. I.

10. Derwent's view is discussed at great length in Arthur H. Nethercot's The Road to Tryermaine: A Study of the Historical Background and Purposes of Coleridge's "Christabel", (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), p. 41. Also see James Gillman's The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (London: William Pickering, 1838), pp. 283-303.

11. Gillman, pp. 301-302.

12. Kathleen Coburn, "Coleridge and Wordsworth and the Supernatural", University of Toronto Quarterly, XXV (1955-56), p. 129.

13. J.B. Beer, Coleridge The Visionary (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), pp. 75-76.

14. See The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1772-1834, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Pilot Press, 1949),

15. Walter Jackson Bate, Coleridge (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), pp. 65-74.

16. Beer, p. 191.

17. Humphrey House, Coleridge: The Clark Lectures 1951-52 (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), pp. 122-133.

18. See Kathleen Coburn, ed., The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957) especially Volume I entries for November 28, 1800, October 3, 1802, and December 13, 1803.

19. Paul Magnuson, Coleridge's Nightmare Poetry (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974), pp. 94-106.

20. Ibid., p. 94.

21. Susan M. Luther, "'Christabel' as a Dream-Reverie" Romantic Reassessment, ed. James Hogg in Salzburg Studies in English Literature (Salzburg, Austria: Institut Fur Englische Und Literatur, 1976), p. 1-84. Roy Basler, Sex, Symbolism and Psychology in Literature (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1948), pp. 25-51.

22. Luther, p. 57.

23. Basler, p. 25.

24. Coburn, "Wordsworth and Coleridge and the Supernatural", p. 122.

25. Coburn, Notebooks, November 1800, October 1802, etc.

26. Coburn, "Wordsworth and Coleridge and the Supernatural", pp. 128-129.

27. Beverly Fields, Reality's Dark Dream: Dejection in Coleridge (Kent State University Press, 1967), pp. 59-82.

28. Fruman, pp. 355-409.

INTRODUCTION

In 1765 Horace Walpole published his pseudonymous work, The Castle of Otranto, the first self-acclaimed Gothic novel to appear at the beginning of an age later to be termed the age of the Gothic revival. The book had an immediate impact upon its eighteenth century audience who eagerly devoured its imaginative and extraordinary contents. The greatest achievement of the work, however, does not lie so much in the story itself, but in the fact that within this short tale, Walpole assimilated many of the changing literary ideas and currents of the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century. The revived interest in the past, especially in Medieval times, a renewed concern with human emotion, and especially a fascination with the supernatural began to take precedence over the once prominent Augustan concepts of order, balance, control and harmony, not only in England but on the Continent as well. The concrete and finite concerns of the neo-classicists were gradually being supplanted by the intensity of feeling and awe aroused by the contemplation of the extraordinary and infinite. Walpole's novel was a herald for a new wave of authors who focused more on the individual and his reaction to the awesome world around him. Writers were no longer content to view the world as a concrete and rational place; nature was an uncontrolled and uncontrollable force. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that amidst this changing world view there was a resurgence

of interest in that totally irrational area, the supernatural. Those concerned with the study of nature in its more awesome aspect could hardly neglect that which rises above or beyond the natural. The sublime sensations aroused by the supernatural lured many of the nineteeth century authors to explore its mysteries. One of the many writers who was captivated by the appeal of the supernatural, and its relationship to the irrational elements of both man and his world was Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

In Chapter XIV of his Biographia Literaria Coleridge writes of the plan behind his share of the Lyrical Ballads:

> In this idea originated the plan of the "Lyrical Ballads"; in which it was agreed 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, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who from whatever delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency.
> ... it was agreed, that my endeavors should be directed toward persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and semblence of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith. 1

Such, Coleridge informs us, was the intent behind the creation of his great poems, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and

"Christabel". Although the supernatural does play a significant role in both poems, especially in "Christabel", Coleridge's chief concern was not in the presentation of supernatural incidents, but in the realistic human reaction to such events. The poet was not content merely to generate horror and disgust in his supernatural tales; in fact, he criticized Matthew "Monk" Lewis for this very excess in his review of The Monk , just a few short months before the composition of the first part of "Christabel".[2] For Coleridge, the supernatural was a tool and a touchstone to measure the response of his characters to overwhelming incidents. This use of the supernatural also served an important role in involving the reader in his tales of the hapless Christabel or tormented Mariner.

The unfinished poem "Christabel" is set within a carefully constructed Gothic framework. Its heroine is cast into a dark midnight nightmare which ultimately leaves both her and the reader speechless and terrified. Yet the Gothic and supernatural trappings of the poem serve more as a disguise for the true intent of the poem rather than as an end themselves. A detailed analysis of the work will reveal that, aside from their mood inspiring functions, these supernatural elements are, in fact, the veil which "covers but not hides" the unique relationships Coleridge develops between the various characters of his poem, especially that of the lovely Lady Christabel and fair Geraldine.

It is upon this relationship that Coleridge expends

so much of his creative energy and which ultimately forces him to abandon the work. The goal of this thesis is to explore the interaction between the supernatural incidents of the poem and the relationships which develop among the mysterious Geraldine and her hosts, Christabel and Sir Leoline. The supernatural, however, serves only as a focus and starting point for this study. The main thrust will be aimed at exploring the unconscious material which underlies, and actually dominates "Christabel". A symbolic approach will be used to analyze the poem and a general acceptance of certain aspects of psychoanalytical interpretation is presupposed. While the initial idea of the work was a straightforward interpretation of the supernatural elements in the poem, further exploration proved that this intention left much of the greatness of the poem unexplored. The psychological material of "Christabel" is much too prominent to be discarded in favour of the manifest surface themes such as good over evil, which many of the poem's critics, such as James Gillman and Derwent Coleridge, favour. An initial exploration of the poem will reveal some of the models Coleridge employed to form his characters and the action of the poem. The last part of the work will be devoted to the discussion of the underlying significance of these elements.

The character Geraldine is clearly the most prominent and compelling part of the poem, and the interpretation of her role has ultimately led to the view of her character as, and relationship to, the Perilous Lady of myth and literature.

It will be shown that she bears a remarkable resemblence, both in appearance and action, to various other female personalities of myth and literature who also possess the same compelling attraction Geraldine has for Christabel, Sir Leoline and even the reader. The prominence these characters often attain in such works indicates that they owe their origin to some depth of man's psychic life. Each of these characters, including Geraldine, embody an inner conflict which surrounds a particular aspect of the unconscious, which, to borrow Carl Jung's term, may be called the feminine anima figure. Coleridge follows this long tradition of the powerful and mysterious Perilous Lady figure, yet his great creative ability has produced a unique version of this character. From this basic concept, Coleridge created the haunting "Christabel" as one of his contributions to the Lyrical Ballads.

The immediate sources which influenced Coleridge's use of the supernatural are not difficult to locate. A voracious reader from early childhood, the poet had more than a passing familiarity with the great masters of the past such as Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton. With the great revival in the past, these poets, who created such characters as the witches in Macbeth, Duessa of The Faerie Queene and the demons and angels of Heaven and Hell of Paradise Lost, would have left a great impact on the imagination of such as man as Coleridge. The Tales of the Arabian Nights filled the young Coleridge's fanciful mind, and Bishop Percy's collection of

ballads, old and recent, Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, occupied a prominent place in his library when he was a man.[3] In fact, according to J. Livingston Lowes and Arthur Nethercot[4], there was very little reading material of the day that Coleridge did not tackle, from languages to philosophy to the Natural Sciences. He was influenced by the relics of the past and in one memorable passage he discloses his views on the emotions aroused by Gothic art and architecture:

> But the Gothic art is sublime. On entering a Cathedral, I am filled with devotion and with awe; I am lost to the actualities which surround me, and my whole being expands to the infinite; earth and air, nature and art; all swell up into eternity, and the only sensible impression left, is "that I am nothing!" 5

The self is annihilated and becomes a part of the art. What better way could the poet involve and tantalize the reader than through the Gothic and supernatural.

In the first few stanzas of "Christabel", Coleridge begins the creation of the eerie Gothic castle of Sir Leoline, perhaps trying to evoke the feelings of the above passage:

> 'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock
> And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
> Tu-whit --- Tu-whoo!
> And hark, again, the crowing cock,
> How drowsily it crew.
> Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
> Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
> From her kennel beneath the rock
> She maketh answer to the clock,
> Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
> Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
> Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
> Some say she sees my lady's shroud. 6
>
> (Part I, 11. 1-13)

From this small beginning, Coleridge carefully constructs his Gothic world, with its towering architecture, deep woods and midnight shrouds. He removes his heroine and his reader from the real world into a midnight dreamland, where we become "lost to the actualities that surround" us. With the creation of such an atmosphere, Coleridge has allowed us to assume "that willing suspension of disbelief" that is needed to appreciate the coming events.

Coleridge did not only find antecedents in the past, however. Among his contemporaries, he found such writers as Ann Radcliffe and Matthew "Monk" Lewis already exploiting the possibilities of the Gothic and the supernatural. When he reviewed both Radcliffe, in 1794, and Lewis, in 1797, for the Critical Review, he criticized both writers for their excessive enthusiasm for prolonging their reader's suspense, or horror.[7] Yet, both writers had an undeniable effect upon the poet. Radcliffe's rushing and gushing natural descriptions find an echo in many of the stanzas of Part II of "Christabel":

> In Langdale Pike and Witch's Lair,
> And Dungeon-ghyll so foully rent,
> With ropes of rock and bells of air
> Three sinful sextons ghosts are pent,
> Who all give back, one after t'other,
> The death-note to their brother.
>
> (Part II, ll. 350-355)

"Monk" Lewis' Matilda and the Bleeding Nun are recalled many times when Geraldine tells her tale of woe and reveals her true nature.

While the influence of these authors upon Coleridge

is important background material, it is also worth noting that his indebtedness is only superficial. From past tradition he has borrowed certain elements he needed to create the pervasive Gothic atmosphere. One can find the predecessors for the Baron's castle and his keep, Christabel's chamber, and her midnight walk, but as the poem continues, Coleridge shifts the emphasis from the setting to character. As suddenly as Christabel meets the "damsel bright" under the oak tree we are caught and captivated by Geraldine's spell. The Lady Geraldine soon takes control of not only Christabel and her father, Sir Leoline, but also seems to become the central force of the whole poem. From what depth of Coleridge's imagination does Geraldine originate? To fully understand her role in the poem, her supernatural overtones and her relationship with Christabel and the Baron, will require a brief study of the tradition from which she springs. Geraldine's character can be traced back through literature and myth as that of one of the common archetypes of man's psyche, the Perilous Lady.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. S.T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, Vol. II, J. Shawcross, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1907), pp. 5-6.

2. See Arthur H. Nethercot, The Road to Tryermaine (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), pp. 193-5.

3. See Nethercot, pp. 166-7. Also Coleridge's letter of October 16, 1797 to Thomas Poole in Earl Leslie Griggs, ed., Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. I (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 354.

4. See Nethercot and Jonathan Livingston Lowes, The Road to Xanadu A Study of the Imagination (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927), both explore Coleridge's reading habits and his creative genius.

5. Mrs. H.N. Coleridge, ed., Notes and Lectures Upon Shakespeare and Some of the Old Poets and Dramatists With Other Literary Remains of S.T. Coleridge, Vol. II (London: William Pickering, 1849), p. 11.

6. Unless otherwise noted all quotations from the poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge are taken from Ernest Hartley Coleridge, ed., Coleridge: Poetical Works (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), pp. 213-236.

7. For the review on Radcliffe see The Critical Review, XI (August 1794), pp. 361-74.

PART I - GERALDINE AS PERILOUS LADY

As the pendulum began its gradual swing away from the neo-classical ideas of the eighteenth century, the writers and philosophers of the new age again turned their attention toward the study of man's inner life. They sought to explore the unknown, and often frightening, aspects of the mind and soul. In this search, they found themselves confronted by unexpected and unfamiliar passions which frequently seemed to defy conventional literary expression. How can one adequately describe feelings of awe, ugliness, beauty or terror? The writer must make the reader feel these emotions, not merely describe them. This is also true when portraying the nebulous concepts of man's unconscious drives, especially those of love and desire. The writers of the Romantic age, with their great interest in the psychic life of man, found the exploration of the erotic and sensual, with their opposing forces of aestheticism and spirituality, too exciting to be ignored. These writers were therefore faced with the daunting task of finding a method of representing the passion, beauty and the ugliness which exist in man's soul without totally upsetting either their own equilibrium or alienating their readers. With the renewed popularity of the supernatural in the late eighteenth century, a vehicle was found for expressing many of the more sublime emotions, such as love and desire, in a manner that

would attract a reader. What could be more natural than exploring man's irrational drives through the medium of the equally irrational force of the supernatural?

Coleridge, as he states in the Biographia Literaria, seized this provided opportunity in both "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel". In the latter, however the poet discovered a further refinement to convey the erotic and the irrational in the guise of Geraldine, a descendent of the Perilous Lady of myth and literature. This is the same persona, who, throughout the centuries and under different names, has tempted and seduced so many.

She has played so prominent a role in the literature and memory of mankind that a list of her appearances stretches back into pre-recorded history. She is the fecund goddesses, such as Persephone, Freyja and Isis; she is also the fallen and beautiful Eve who tempted Adam. As Circe, she tempted the Greek hero Odysseus. In literature, she has often led heroes on great quests, and sometimes to their doom, like Spenser's Deussa, Milton's Eve and Cleopatra of Shakespeare's great play. She made her appearance in the Court of King Arthur as both Morgan Le Faye and Nimüe, the Lady of the Lake. Of ballad fame, she is the fateful Queen of Elfhame who captivates both Thomas the Rhymer and Sir Launfal. She has even assumed the spiritual guise of the poetic Muse who leads her worshippers on a harsh weary road of creation. Who is this lady, who forms the basis of these women, and so many others? While at first glance these characters may seem dissimilar, they share

many common characteristics, such as physical beauty, ambiguity of action and motive, and the key element, the powerful and perilous influence they wield over the individuals they encounter. A brief background of the character of this Lady will further our understanding of why, in a poem entitled "Christabel" this reincarnation of the Perilous Lady, Geraldine, virtually steals the show from the eponymous heroine.

In order to answer the questions that surround this persona, one has to realize that the Perilous Lady is much more than just a common stock character of myth and literature. Whether she is called Medusa, Helena of Troy, or Geraldine she is, in fact, an embodiment of an aspects of man's inner psychic life. She is the archetypal feminine aspect of the unconscious.[1] Carl Jung's discussion of this phenomenon may provide an enlightening key for understanding this character. According to Jung, each person's psyche is composed of various unconscious components which in turn influence almost all our conscious movements. These nebulous concepts have come to assume concrete form and expression as what Jung terms archetypes. In a broad sense, these archetypes are universal symbols for certain preconditioned psychological behaviours or reactions, which are recognized by man, whether on a conscious or unconscious level. One of these symbols, or archetypes, is the anima/animus. Every man has a feminine side of his psyche, the anima, as every woman has the corresponding masculine aspect, the animus. This feminine aspect of the man's psyche governs the more irrational forces, especially emotions such

as fear, hate, love, etc. There is a constant struggle within the individual to confront and understand these potentially uncontrollable drives. These forces are irrational, and therefore their working is often incomprehensible. This situation creates a tension within the individual and a fear of losing control over these forces, and himself. In order to objectify this struggle, therefore, the anima is cast, or projected, upon external objects. The first receptacle for the anima is usually the mother; later, it is shifted to a lover, often one who most closely embodies the feminine attributes of the individual's own psyche. To the individual, the object of the projection assumes attitudes and attributes in tune with his internal struggle, personified by this anima figure. This characteristic will obviously affect the way the object is perceived by the individual.

Furthermore, the anima is not only the individual's ideal feminine, but in the larger sense becomes a collective ideal, an archetype. As an archetype, the anima is a universal projection of the Ultimate Feminine.[2] In this instance, the anima is not only the individual's projection upon his mother, but The Mother, who in myth and literature has been anthropomorphized into such figures as the ancient fertility goddesses, Persephone, Athena, Isis, etc. Along the same vein, the anima becomes not only an individual's lover, but a collective character who contains all the qualities of that role in one persona. In these collective characters the tradition of the Perilous Lady developed, combining both

the roles of Mother and lover.

The common characteristics of this Lady may be best revealed in the portrayal of one of Geraldine's ancestors, the Gorgon queen Medusa. The aura of mystery which surrounds Medusa in popular legend graphically reveals the dilemma one encounters while exploring the persona of the Perilous Lady. Within her character, Medusa reveals the nightmare quality of the revelation of the ugly and the horrible within the beautiful. This duality of her character is especially developed in the later stages of Greek myth when she is not always portrayed as the hideous Gorgon sister, but as a beautiful serpent woman whose unbearable gaze so mesmerizes her beholders that they are literally petrified. This characterization reveals her as that nightmare creature, who, in an instant, changes from the beautiful and safe object to the hideous, terrifying creature who embodies our deepest fears.[3] The actual form of Medusa's ugliness and horror is never overtly stated, in this more modern tradition, nor is it clear that she is intrinsically evil. Her power is more of a burden than a blessing, since, like the golden touch of Midas, it isolates her from the rest of humanity. From our understanding, however, of her role as anima figure it is clear that this ambiguity of motive in her character arises from the individual's struggle with the irrational forces she represents. In a dream, one is often overcome by the sensation of not being able to move from a particular spot, we are glued there and often we awake in great fear. This is

Medusa's power; she personifies a force or internal struggle that is so terrifying that its impact is petrifying.

The power of the Lady is often revealed through her eyes, as the Medusa legend graphically illustrates since it is her gaze that so terrifies her victims. Whatever horror and pain is revealed in Medusa's eyes, also darkens those of the other Perilous Ladies. Geraldine is no exception as she mesmerizes both Christabel and Sir Leoline with her eyes. As the two women enter the castle hall in the first part of the poem, the only thing Christabel is conscious of is Geraldine's bright eye (l. 160). When she later revives the fainting Geraldine, it is the visitor's eyes that indicate her return to normality:

> Again the wild-flower wine she drank:
> Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
> And from the floor whereon she sank,
> The lady stood upright:
> She was most beautiful to see
> Like a lady of a far countrée.
>
> (Part I, 11. 220-225)

With a "doleful look" Geraldine casts her spell of silence upon Christabel and, later, it is the look in this mysterious woman's eye that Christabel helplessly imitates in Part II of the poem. The eyes have traditionally been the window through which inner power is revealed. In this poem, Geraldine's power is not only revealed, but she is able to control her victims through this power, like the mythical Medusa.

The Perilous Ladies share other common characteristics as well. All of them contain within their characters the

dualities of beauty and ugliness, friendship and betrayal, pleasure and pain. With little exception, they are all at least superficially beautiful, like Duessa in The Faerie Queene, or Matilda in The Monk, yet they bear some disfigurement or mark, usually a painful reminder of their inward nature, such as Medusa's eyes and serpent-hair, Duessa's 'nether' regions and Geraldine's side. Another interesting point is that almost all of these Perilous Ladies bear their burden of power reluctantly. The Biblical and Miltonic Eve acts only through misunderstanding and persuasion, the Bleeding Nun in The Monk through compulsion, and Lamia perhaps through thwarted love. Geraldine follows this tradition as well. As she prepares to sleep with Christabel, Coleridge reveals something of her pain:

> Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;
> Ah! what a striken look was hers!
> Deep from within she seems half-way
> To lift some weight with sick assay,
> And eyes the maid and seeks delay,
> Then suddenly, as one defied,
> Collects herself in scorn and pride
> And lay down by the Maiden's side!
>
> (Part I, 11. 255-61)

As a personification of the anima figure the reason for the duality in the character of the Perilous Lady becomes clear. It is from within this so-called feminine side of the psyche that the great depths of the imagination arise. It is therefore a creative force. In myth this creative force was embodied in the great Earth Mother goddess who generates both the natural world and mankind itself. So man has come to worship

this aspect of the Lady, as Demeter, Persephone, in pagan rites. In her honour, and during her rituals, man often allowed the 'darker' side of his nature to surface. Inspired by the Lady, he too becomes a creator, of literature and art.[4]

Yet, even as the Lady creates, she also has the power to destroy and to devour. The springs of imagination can either inexplicably dry up or else overrun the mind and get out of control. In a more symbolic sense, if the goddess creates the beneficent natural world, she also generates its more terrifying aspects. As a creative force, the Lady is a symbol of fertility and inspiration; all good things arise from her bounty and the pursuit of her is desirable. From her all life springs, but in the end she gathers all things back within her darkness, devouring all that has been created. Symbolically, man is torn between his desire for the traditionally young and beautiful creative Mother, while at the same time is repelled by the horrible hag-like destructive force. A few lines from Coleridge's poem "The Pains of Sleep" reveals the ambiguous dilemma:

> For aye entempesting anew
> The unfathomable hell within,
> The horror of their deeds to view,
> To know and loathe, yet wish and do!
>
> (11. 45-48)

The battle between the desire for, and the repulsion of, the Lady is a constant internal struggle. Man always desires to possess her, but finds that in order to do so he must relinquish his claims to humanity. Freud wrote that the desire to possess the Mother, perhaps even symbolically,

involves breaking of the Incest Taboo, which then bars the individual from society and inflicts upon him feelings of guilt and anxiety.[5] For Jung, this desire for the archetypal mother is ultimately a wish to return to an interuterine state of existence, which is to say that the individual seeks death, a return to the universal womb.[6] In either case, the struggles lie within the individual's unconscious as it tries to reconcile the opposing desires of union with the Mother figure, or Perilous Lady, and the fear inherent in such a union.

The reason behind the ambiguity of the Lady's character can now be viewed with greater clarity. It is not the Lady herself who is good or evil, beautiful or hideous; she owes her appearance and temperament to the mind of the perceiver. Like the daemons of old mythology, she is neither beneficient nor malignant; she is entirely neutral and amoral. Her portrayal depends entirely upon how the individual perceives her role in his own psyche. If he is unable to cope with this darker irrational part of his nature, then the Lady as its representative will indeed appear as a frightening terrible being. The individual, therefore, must wrestle with the necessity of recognizing the role that the anima plays in his psyche, while at the same time he must be aware that there is a great danger of allowing himself to become totally immersed in the Lady's enticing coils. A delicate balance must be achieved, one which the narrator of "Christabel" seems unable to maintain as the poem's abrupt ending testifies.

The tale of Geraldine and Christabel cannot be viewed on a totally symbolic level. The poem is rich with vivid concrete events and imagery. While the relationship between the two women can be interpreted on a more literal level, when the various events and themes of the work are analyzed their unconscious symbolism overwhelms the poem's literal level. Nowhere is this connection between the literal level of the poem and its underlying unconscious material more clearly revealed than in the reaction of the poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, to the recitation of Part I of the poem.

In July of 1816, the company of Mary Godwin (Shelley), Claire Clairmont, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley and Byron's physician, Dr. John Polidori, were gathered at Geneva, Switzerland. One evening, Byron recited the first part of "Christabel" for the company. The narration proved to have a dramatic effect upon Shelley who rushed from the room. When questioned later, he confessed that during the reading he had had a vision of eyes in the breasts of one of the women present.[7] Later that same evening, various members of the group agreed to compose a series of supernatural tales which resulted in the creation of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Dr. Polidori's The Vampyre, and a fragment by Byron, also about a vampire. The incident not only reinforces the effect of the supernatural framework of the poem, but, reveals the potent unconscious material it contains. The force of the Lady, and of her sexuality, are in evidence, generating a fearful reaction in more than just one of her readers, if the contents of the resulting works are

any indication. It is interesting to note here, that if anything, Geraldine's malevolence is downplayed in Part I of the poem. There are a great many sympathetic elements in her character; it is not until Part II that Coleridge introduces the serpent imagery that reveals Geraldine's malevolent qualities.

What Shelley may have experienced, is that sudden and inexplicable transformation of the Lady, or Geraldine as her incarnation, from beauty to horror, in particular, from the hapless victim of abduction to a vampire, or Lamia-figure, preying upon Christabel. Shelley confronted the horror of her character, but the others in the group found inspiration in her appearance, as can be seen by the resulting works. Byron and Polidori in particular focused on one aspect of the Perilous' Lady's character exhibited by Geraldine in the poem.

Vampire lore reached a pinnacle of popularity in the early nineteenth century, inspiring an incredible number of tales about this blood-sucking terror, including Bram Stoker's Count Dracula. Legends of ghouls and revenants have always been a stock part of folk tradition; one has only to think of the many daemons of Greek myths or even Shakespeare's many ghosts, borrowed from popular tradition. With the resurgence of interest in the past, this type of lore attracted a great deal of attention, and the nineteenth century writer would have found a good stock to choose from in any of the works of his Medieval counterparts. Even that staunch institution, the Roman Catholic Church, could not ignore the superstitions

of its flock. It not only investigated tales of revenants and vampires, but actually issued instructions on how to deal with them.[8] In 1746 the theologian Dom Augustin Calmet published his Dissertation sur les apparitions des anges, des demons, et des esprits. One of the chief figures of this dissertation is the oupire, or the vroucolacas, the vampire. Calmet presents many incidents of the creature, which especially seemed to flourish in mid-European and Mediterranean countries, such as Greece and the Balkans. This disseration became one of Voltaire's chief sources when he tackled the topic of vampires in the Dictionnaire Philosophique. Later, in the nineteenth century, when physician Dr. John Ferriar wrote a treatise in The Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester entitled "Of Popular Illusions and Particularly of Medical Demonology", Calmet's chronicle played a key role.[9] Coleridge frequently read many selections from the "Manchester Memoirs" and it is quite likely that an article such as this would have captured the poet's attention. Many of the psychological and physiological manifestations of the vampire are described and discussed in this treatise, often taken from sources like Calmet, Tournefort, another chronicler, and Voltaire. How could a poet with Coleridge's fertile imagination withstand these tales of re-animated corpses! One has only to recall the re-animated sailors of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" for confirmation of his interest.

A vampire, so legend has it, is often the re-animated soul of a sorcerer, wizard or heretic, who because of his

past sins is doomed to become a demon of the night seeking the blood of the living to quench his thirst. While this revenant remains vital and sanguine, its victim wastes away and generally dies. Sometimes, in life the victim will unconsciously assume the common or traditional vampire characteristics, such as fear of sunlight, but assuredly upon death, the victim will become a vampire too.[10] Herein lies an interesting implication of the myth. A vampire does not necessarily have to have been a wicked or heretical person in life to suffer the curse of the revenant. After death, victims of a vampire are forced to assume the role of their attacker, and must continue to seek their gruesome nourishment for their existence. Like Medusa, this aspect of vampirism can elicit a certain amount of sympathy because the being often did not seek this destiny; it is forced to bear this burden.

It is not a difficult task to uncover the vampire in Geraldine, even without the reaction of the Byron-Shelley party. She possesses many of those qualities traditionally associated with the demon. She mysteriously makes her appearance at midnight, a traditional time for the denizens of the demon world, and contacts the heroine with a wild tale of hardship and abduction to win sympathy. As Christabel leads her guest up to her chamber, Geraldine reacts violently three different times when confronted with traditional Christian symbols; once at the blest castle gate, once when Christabel invokes the Virgin's name and again when the angel lamp in the bedchamber casts a shadow. All of these events are

really stock incidents, whose roots can be found in any horror tale, but Coleridge becomes more inventive. The description of Geraldine's spell is deliberately ambiguous and we do not know what actually may have occurred, although some kind of penetration is clearly intended. Yet, true to the vampire tradition, Geraldine awakens the next morning refreshed:

> And Christabel awoke and spied
> The same who lay down by her side -
> O rather say, the same whom she
> Raised up beneath the old oak tree!
> Nay, fairer yet! and, yet more fair!
> For she belike hath drunken deep
> Of all the blessedness of sleep!
> And while she spake, her looks, her air
> Such gentle thankfulness declare,
> That (so it seemed) her girded vests
> Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.
>
> (Part II, 11. 370-379)

This is the same person who, the night before, had revealed her stricken side to the amazed Christabel, perhaps as a revelation of her true nature. Geraldine is "the worker of these harms" (1. 298) who was "raised up" from beneath the oak tree, like a revenant raised up from its grave. During the night she had "drunken deep" and awoke with renewed vitality in the morning, while Christabel, if not weak, is nevertheless frightened and troubled: "Sure I have sinned!" she says (1. 381). As Part II continues, the hapless maiden watches as Geraldine begins the seduction of her father by deliberately prolonging his embrace (11. 449-450). This business of attacking the families of the victims is also a traditional vampire characteristic.[11] Then, to Christabel's horror, she begins to unconsciously mimic Geraldine's emerging serpentine

characteristics. For one instant, Geraldine drops her guard and the serpent woman emerges:

> A snake's small eye blinks full and shy;
> And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
> Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
> And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,
> At Christabel she looked askance! -
> One moment - and the sight was fled!
> But Christabel in dizzy trance
> Stumbling on the unsteady ground
> Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound;
> And Geraldine again turned round,
> And like a thing, that sought relief,
> Full of wonder and full of grief,
> She rolled her large bright eyes divine
> Wildly on Sir Leoline.
>
> (Part II, ll. 583-596)

Christabel, like the traditional vampire victim, begins to assume the characteristics of her tormentor. Yet, while Geraldine becomes more overtly malevolent in Part II of the poem, she is still invested with certain sympathetic aspects. Her painful conflict before disrobing the night before is recalled when she must shake off her dread as she wakes up the next morning (l. 362). Even in the above passage dread is in the glance she directs at Christabel. She clearly fears that the maid will disclose her horror.

There is one more aspect of this multi-faceted character that needs to be explored before the relationship between Geraldine, as Perilous Lady, and the supernatural can be fully analyzed. Traditionally, female vampires are a rare breed; Calmet documents only a few in his collection. In literature they are even rarer, certainly at the time Coleridge was writing, Geraldine was the first female vampire of modern

times. Although Coleridge's friend Robert Southey created one for his poem "Thalaba The Destroyer", this work did not appear until 1797, two years after the seeds of Geraldine's vampirism were sown in Part I of "Christabel". Where could Coleridge have encountered a creature who would lead him to the creation of Geraldine? One of the most likely sources is in the story of Lamia, Queen of Libya.

In Chapter XXV, Book IV of The Life of Appollonius of Tyana, Philostratus the Elder chronicled a tale to reveal the keen decisive vision of the philosopher, Appollonius. This episode caught the attention of Robert Burton who recorded it, with slight embellishments, in Part III of his Anatomy of Melancholy. Here, in his extensive readings, Coleridge would have discovered the tale of Lamia:

> Philostratus, in his fourth book de Vita Apollonii, hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age that going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which taking him by the hand carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth, and told him she was Phoenician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him; but she, being fair and lovely, would live and die with him, that was fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius;

> who by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus' gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Appollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant: many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece. 12

The key element that Burton adds, which was apparently absent in the original, is the sympathetic portrayal of the lamia, who pleads with the philosopher not to declare her.

In myth, the beautiful Lamia was one of Zeus' amorous conquests, who was punished by the jealous Hera when all the children born of her union with the god were destroyed. Zeus removed his lovely lady to Italy, but Hera discovered the ploy and continued to persecute the hapless Lamia who was eventually driven mad. She fled to the rocks and caves of the sea coast and, out of envy, began to prey upon the children of others, causing them to waste away or killing them by sucking their life-blood. She was only safe when she removed her eyes, for Hera had doomed her to sleeplessness. Zeus also gave her the ability to change her shape, and her favoured form was that of the serpent. In later tradition, Lamia appears once more as a beautiful woman who preys upon young men she encounters along the road, has intercourse with them and drinks "their blood with feverish delight" at the peak of orgasm.[13]

The Lamia of Philostratus' tale is a blood sucking

serpent in the guise of a beautiful woman, but, when Burton retells the incident, she becomes a lamentable creature who is governed by some kind of genuine emotion. With just a few brief lines Burton has created a creature with whom the reader can identify and empathize.

The origins of Geraldine's serpentine characteristics which make their appearance in the second part of the poem can be traced from this source, as well as from the traditional Biblical elements surrounding the Fall. Coleridge prepares us for the revelation of Geraldine as serpent woman by incorporating serpent imagery into much of the descriptions and dialogue of Part II. When Sir Leoline recalls the now embittered friendship between himself and Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine, who Geraldine claims is her father, he remembers that "whispering tongues can poison truth" (l. 409) and later, threatens to dislodge the "reptile souls" of the traitors who had seized Geraldine (ll. 442-444). Shortly thereafter, Christabel begins her strange hissing (l. 459) and Bard Bracy relates his dream of the green snake and the dove called Christabel. When the dramatic moment comes and Geraldine drops her guard for that brief moment, the readers have been prepared for the effect:

> So deeply had she drunken in
> That look, those shrunken eyes,
> That all her features were resigned
> To this sole image in her mind:
> And passively did imitate
> That look of dull treacherous hate!
> And thus she stood, in dizzy trance,
> Still picturing that look askance

With forced unconscious sympathy
Full before her father's view -

(Part II, 11. 601-610)

With the introduction of this serpent imagery in Part II, Coleridge overtly explores what was only subtly hinted at in Part I, that is the erotic nature of the relationship between Geraldine and Christabel. Sexual desire is another of the irrational forces within the domain of the Lady, where it is shadowed by the restrictions of myth and taboo. As the fertility goddesses of the ancients, the Lady was worshipped in the chthonic fertility cults, often in orgiastic ritual, accompanied by her familiar, the serpent. She is graphically represented with this creature, and sometimes even has serpentine characteristics herself; Lamia is another aspect of this fertility goddess. In many of the ancient mysteries, such as those held at Eleusis, snakes apparently played key roles.[14] The snake is not only a traditional phallic symbol, but in ancient literature and myth it was also a devouring force, like the terrible aspect of the universal Mother, and as such it becomes a feminine symbol as well. Instances of this devouring serpent are numerous, in graphic representations of some of the Eastern religions and as the Nordic Midgardsomr who constantly gnawed the roots of the world tree, yggdrasil. Geraldine, as serpent woman, recalls this ancient fertility connection. As a Lamia, it must not be forgotten that one of her roles was that of the seductress of young men. In literature, vampires are often

portrayed as playing upon the latent desires of their victims; the brooding virility of Lord Ruthven, in The Vampyre, and Count Dracula is self-evident.

Yet, while the eroticism of the poem is more overt in the second part, especially when Geraldine begins her seduction of the Baron, the subtle sexual nuances of Part I are really much more effective, as Shelley's dramatic reaction testifies. The first part of "Christabel" was written in either late 1797 or the Spring of 1798, but for some reason Coleridge stopped writing after the Conclusion to Part I and did not return to it until 1800. In the interim Coleridge had made a memorable trip to Germany and then had moved to the Lake District, which is described in Part II (11. 340-359). Why did Coleridge leave his beautiful haunting poem? What finally forced him to abandon the work completely, even though he constantly stated that he would finish it and had always had its complete plan in mind?

If one interprets this poem on a wholly literal level, with Geraldine as lamia or vampire preying upon an innocent Christabel and her father, such questions as these remain unanswered. This literal level totally ignores the unconscious material that actually dominates the whole work. What the supernatural material does do, however, is to create an atmosphere where the unconscious elements of the poem can operate. Once these elements have established this environment, they have the tendency to fade into the background of the poem, while the unconscious conflicts and the developing

relationships between the characters take precedence. These two areas dominate Coleridge's work, while his inability to confront the psychological material ultimately halts the progress of the poem.

NOTES TO PART I

1. The following discussion is based on Carl Jung, "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious", in Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, translated by R.F.C. Hull (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 188-211.

2. Ibid.

3. H.J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Mythology (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1958), pp. 29-30.

4. As discussed by Robert Graves in The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth (New York: Vintage Books, 1958).

5. For example see Freud's discussion of the Oedipus legend in The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. James Strachey, Vol IV of The Pelican Library (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 362-66.

6. See Carl Jung, The Symbols of Transformation, Vol I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962).

7. As related in The Preface to J.W. Polidari's The Vampyre in Three Gothic Novels and a Fragment of a Novel by Lord Byron, E.F. Bleiler, ed., (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), p. 260.

8. See Anthony Masters, The Natural History of the Vampire (New York: G.R. Putnam's Sons, 1972), p. 89. Master also discusses Calmet at great length, beginning from p. 84.

9. Nethercot, pp. 60-62.

10. Masters, p. 88.

11. Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, Part III, Section 2, Membra I, Subsection II (New York: Empire State Book Company, 1924), p. 494.

12. Masters, p. 196.

13. See Jung, Symbols, pp. 342-3.

PART II - INTERPRETATION

Coleridge initially intended to write five separate books to form the poem "Christabel". While not even half of the poem was completed, the two extant parts contain enough material to present a multi-levelled study of the two main characters whose actions reveal a depth of unconscious desires and motivations. On the literal level of the poem, there is a tale of the chaste heroine who unwittingly brings peril into her home in the guise of the beautiful and mysterious stranger, a story not unlike many other supernatural tales of the era. Coleridge's work, however, progresses beyond the standard horror story as is revealed through the interpretation of the abundant symbols and unconscious material of the poem, both of which disguise many underlying conflicts and fears. These conflicts and fears find a voice in the relationship which develops between the Perilous Lady of the tale, Geraldine, and the heroine, Christabel. The key to understanding the complex undercurrents of the poem is to realize that this relationship is the fountainhead of all the conflicts in the work. It is not the standard supernatural incidents which shock, but the depth

of interpretation that is revealed when the cause of Christabel's horror lays as bare as Geraldine's side.

A poem is not unlike a dream in its use of symbolism and imagery to portray certain emotions and situations. Equating a consciously composed narrative poem with dream material may seem implausible, yet, both processes involve the ordering of subjective thoughts and images into logical thought patterns. In the case of dreams, this is at least true when the dream is related, or interpreted in some manner. To place these subjective thoughts into logical thought patterns both processes employ the same basic tools, such as symbols, images and condensation of character and event. A dream is no more than the working through of certain problems, fears or anxieties when conscious control and regulation has been relaxed. The exploration of these problems is generally presented through a complex system of scattered memories and images. In the creative process of writing, conscious restraint is not subdued, but circumvented, by the use of symbolism and imagery. Each symbol or image, through common usage, can conjure up a myriad of familiar interpretations through the association of ideas. A writer or an artist can use this method, deliberately or unconsciously, to explore the psychological implications of certain situations and emotions. In "Christabel", the most common of symbols,

the archetype, is the key to expose the underlying conflicts of the poem. That archetype is the anima figure who is portrayed by both the Perilous Lady figure of Geraldine, and also by the sweet and innocent Christabel.

Although there apparently is not any documented proof that "Christabel" was written under the influence of a drug, the vivid descriptions and the other-worldly quality of the poem are reminders that "Kubla Khan", written in the same year, was admittedly composed under an "anodyne". Like "Kubla Khan", the composition of "Christabel" was also broken off; in this case at the end of Part I. The poet's dream reverie may have been interrupted by an external event, and he was unable to write anything more on the poem for another three years. By that time he had made a trip to Germany, where he was influenced by such great German writers and philosophers as Goethe and Hegel, and had returned to England's Lake District to live near the Wordsworths and Sara Hutchinson. During this time both his marriage and his health deteriorated, and his addiction to opium deepened. It was at this low point in his life, in the year 1800, that Coleridge returned to the unfinished "Christabel". After a pleasant evening with friends, the slightly intoxicated poet completed the second part of the poem.[1] The suggestion that "Christabel" may owe its creation to outside influences is not meant to detract from Coleridge's creative genius. Merely, it serves to point out that the rigid control of conscious thought was probably further reduced by these artificial stimuli, allowing

the unconscious conflict freer reign.

As in any major work, "Christabel" is constructed of many different layers of conflict and interaction. One method to unlock some of the unconscious material contained in the poem is to explore the interplay between Geraldine and Christabel, and the narrator of the tale. Basically, their relationships gives rise to two major themes: the sexual relationship between the two women, and the desire for a nurturing phallic mother. From these central themes, other concerns also enter into the unconscious, latent material such as the relative strength or weakness of the father figures, and the desire for punishment.

The poem opens with a series of sounds generated by the natural creatures surrounding Sir Leoline's castle. The owls, the cock and the mastiff bitch are all stirred from their sleep at the midnight hour by the advent of something out of the ordinary. They are not the only ones who have been aroused, for into this gloomy atmosphere steals the lovely Lady Christabel from the gates of her father's keep toward the nearby wood. The cause of her awakening is explained, however:

> She had dreams all yesternight
> Of her own betrothed Knight:
> And she in the midnight wood will pray
> For the weal of her lover that's far away.
>
> (Part I, 11. 27-30)

These same dreams, in an earlier manuscript of the poem, had

made Christabel "moan and leap,/As on her bed she lay in sleep."[2] Clearly, Christabel has been awakened on more than one level as she hurries toward the druidic wood, hung with mistletoe and dominated by "the old oak tree." There, like a lover rushing to a secret tryst, she encounters the mysterious Geraldine. For Christabel, lonely and frustrated, the event is exciting and exhilarating. Not only has she met a young woman like herself, but one, moreover, who has been kidnapped. Like the young St. Teresa, whose name played on Coleridge's mind as he wrote the first part of the poem,[3] the heroine leaves her home for adventure and finds her peril. Coleridge, a man of catholic tastes, would surely have been aware of Bernini's passionate statue "The Ecstacy of St. Teresa", as well as the sensual poem of the same name by Thomas Crashaw. Perhaps, like St. Teresa, there is a wish in Christabel for martyrdom. She seems to have a desire to suffer in the relationship with the perilous Geraldine. Either there is some kind of masochistic inclination in this developing relationship, perhaps a wish to suffer for or in love, or a need to be punished, because of the guilt over the death of the mother. This aspect will resurface at a later date.

The sexual undercurrents of the relationship between the two women is fairly basic material. It was not lost on many of "Christabel's" viscious parodists in the nineteenth century. One critic, at least, decided that Geraldine was no less than a man in disguise.[4] The scenes in Christabel's bedchamber, Geraldine's disrobing and Christabel's morning-after

guilt all re-inforce the relationship's sexual aspects. Although this in itself was unique enough to raise nineteenth century reactions to heady heights, the underlying material in the relationship explains the almost violent reactions the poem met in many instances. Shelley's dramatic flight was one of the most positive reviews the poem received.

The motivations leading toward a homosexual relationship are easily established in the context of the poem. Christabel is alone in the silent castle of her father Sir Leoline, who she claims is ill and secluded. A just punishment, perhaps, for the daughter whose birth killed her mother. For Christabel must not only endure the constant reminders provided by her father, as he remains in constant mourning and commands the bells to be rung every morning in memory of his late wife, but she must also deal with the very presence of her mother's ghost (l. 13). She later tells Geraldine of her plight:

> Christabel answered - Woe is me!
> She died the hour I was born.
> I have heard the grey-haired friar tell
> How on her death-bed she did say,
> That she should hear the castle-bell
> Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.
>
> (Part I, 11. 196-201)

With such fear and sense of loss it is not surprising that Christabel should turn her affections to a substitute, someone who is similar to herself. There is also the ambivalent feeling toward the mother's death to be taken into account. The mother is the child's first love-object. It

is only natural, therefore, that the child is also mourning the loss and seeks a substitute, who appears in the form of Geraldine.

Like the Secret Sharer of Conrad's tale, Geraldine is initially portrayed as an empathetic being, who having undergone duress, emotionally appeals to her rescuer. Christabel has just been dreaming of her absent lover while Geraldine has barely escaped the clutches of the five violent warriors. Christabel regards the woman with almost childlike awe, and her attempts at friendship often seem to echo the overtures of a child. The emphasis on the violence of Geraldine's tale may suggest the violence with which young children view the sexual relationship, so both her own dreams and Geraldine's tale indicate Christabel's interest in sexual matters. Also, the only virile men in this whole section are summarily dismissed in these few brief lines. She is more than willing to lead the beautiful woman to her home. The young girl's desire for companionship, however, is soon channeled into deeper areas as Geraldine shares her bed. Christabel's dalliance with this older experienced woman soon leads into treacherous areas for the maid, as the ensuing events suggest.

The ambiguously presented union between the two women also has a more symbolic counterpoint. Geraldine cannot be considered the only representative of the anima figure in the poem. If she is the perilous aspect of the figure, then Christabel stands as the opposing angelic symbol of the archtype. Both the women are both projections of the feminine

aspect of the narrator. The first meeting of the two women outlines the dichotomy of their characters; the opposing forces of good and evil, innocence and experience, are represented as Christabel encounters her counterpart on the other side of the oak tree:

> She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
> And stole to the other side of the oak.
> What sees she there?
> There she sees a damsel bright;
>
> (Part I, 11. 55-58)

Geraldine is, after all, a phantasm; a creation of both the heroine and the narrator. As Walter Jackson Bate observes, she exists "immortally <u>in potentia</u>, able to attain concrete existence only through the mind of a human being."[5] In this instance it is Christabel who forms the phantasmic lady. The confrontation between the two aspects of the anima figure commences with this meeting. As the relationship continues, it becomes clear that although the narrator's sympathies lie with Christabel, Geraldine is becoming the dominant force. Her stock reactions to the Christian symbols they pass further reveal her true nature while her violence when the shade of Christabel's mother apparently appears before her, unveils her perilous qualities:

> 'Off wandering mother! Peak and pine!
> I have power to bid thee flee!
>
> (Part I, 11. 205-206)

Yet, Geraldine's ability to banish the spirit could also endear her to the haunted maid, who sees the mysterious stranger as a new object for her affections.

The conflicting characters of the two women are carefully juxtaposed throughout the next scenes as the pious Christabel prays and makes ready for bed, while the Perilous Lady, with a deep shudder, sheds her garments to reveal the mark of her shame. This mark is regarded by many critics as a kind of witch's mark, that part of the witch's body which reveals her true nature. It could also serve the same purpose as the traditional vampire fangs as the device Geraldine uses to attack her victim. Whether witch's mark or a vampire characteristic, the revelation of Geraldine's side brings her horrifying aspect to light. What was once beautiful has become ugly and evil. The Lady has abruptly revealed the nightmare quality of her nature, and Christabel is struck speechless:

> And in her arms the maid she took,
> Ah wel-a-day!
> And with low voice and doleful look
> These words did say:
> 'In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
> Which is the master of thy utterance, Christabel!

(Part I, 11. 236-238)

Despite the narrator's plea that Christabel be shielded, the perilous, irrational aspect of the anima figure has become the dominant force, both in the poem and within the narrator's own psyche. The narrator is literally becoming possessed. The dichotomy between the two aspects has been lessened as the relationship between the characters develops. When they both share the secret of Geraldine's shame, they have become one being. The similarities are also reinforced earlier in

the action when Geraldine, like Christabel, claims noble birth (11. 79-80). Geraldine too seems to be motherless, or at least she never mentions a mother. If this vein of thought is continued, then Geraldine becomes no more than a kind of doppelgänger, a double image containing some of Christabel's hidden thoughts and fantasies. Yet, while this element undoubtedly exists in the characterization of Geraldine, her role is much more involved than this.

Once the relationship is consummated and the impact of the event is realized, there seems to be some kind of resolution indicated in The Conclusion to Part I. Christabel is troubled, then relaxes and even smiles in her sleep (1. 319). The fear aroused by the event may not yet be great enough for the conscious censorship to exercise its control. Therefore, the dream can conclude with what seems to be the anticipation of a positive outcome:

> No doubt she hath a vision sweet.
> What if her guardian spirit 'twere,
> What if she knew her mother near?
> But this she knows, in joys and woes,
> That saints will aid if men will call:
> For the blue sky bends over all!
>
> (Part I. 11. 326-331)

The last line of the verse, however, also gives ominous warning of some omnipotent power exerting its influence. In Part II this power is realized as the horror of the situation takes hold.

While in Part I it seems that both Christabel and the narrator deliberately choose to "dally with a wrong that does

no harm", the repercussions of the dalliance surface in the second part. In Part I, the conscious control, like the old Baron, is weak and asleep. The unconscious material is therefore allowed a greater degree of freedom to explore some of its inner conflicts; in this initial level of interpretation, the dichotomy of the anima appears in concrete form. Yet, what may have originally been a focus on the gentle side of this figure, is soon usurped by the Perilous and uncontrollable aspect in the narrator's mind.

Part II also begins with a series of natural descriptions, but of the powerful overwhelming landscape surrounding the Baron's castle, and the tale of the ghosts of three sinful sextons who answer the peel of the mourning bell. The description is much more vibrant and masculine than the dream-like atmosphere of the first part. In this section, the Baron is awake and active, no longer ill and withdrawn. His name is linked to a command in the first line; he is now a force to be reckoned with. However, instead of protecting his daughter, and himself, from peril, he actually increases the hold of the Perilous Lady because of this inability to see her true nature.

Guilt plays an important role in this part, for as both women arise the next morning they are confronted by the aftermath of the previous night. Geraldine must shake "off her dread", while Christabel fears that she has sinned. Geraldine, however, does awaken refreshed: "belike she hath drunken deep/Of all the blessedness of sleep!" (Part II,

11. 375-376). This section also begins with a touch of moralizing, over the death of the mother, which indicates that the mind is now reflecting on the events that have occurred, rather than just experiencing them. Together, the women descend to greet a surprisingly vital Sir Leoline.

In Part I, Christabel says that her father is ill, yet when they meet him the next morning he is whole and healthy. In the first part, the father's role has been reduced to a minimum; he has no control over the events. There is a wish to see the father in this weakened state, but as guilt surfaces he gains considerable strength in the second part while the heroine is subdued and overcome. The father is too virile for either Christabel or the narrator to confront, and both become speechless in the end.

The Perilous Lady plays a key role in this tense atmosphere. Initially sought after and cosseted, she now becomes an object of horror as the irrational and uncontrollable feminine forces she represents emerge. Although traces of sympathy for her as a character still exist, her power in overcoming the gentle Christabel is fearful. She is no longer regarded in the ambiguous light of Part I, where she is to be pitied because of her travail. For the narrator, she now takes on the truly maleficient aura of the vampire or Lamia as the second part of the poem progresses. Serpent imagery is prevalent in both the dialogue and descriptive phrases of this section. Geraldine overtly reveals her serpentine qualities to Christabel and the narrator as she

seduces the Baron (11. 450-455, 575-588). The gentle Christabel unconsciously mimics these flashes, further increasing her identification with the Perilous Lady. The two women's characters are progressively intertwining as the action continues. While Christabel still seems to be the narrator's tool, she too is becoming more of a fearsome force.

The situations surrounding the relationships among Christabel, Geraldine and Sir Leoline are growing increasingly painful to confront. The unconscious material is too potent to be effectively concealed behind the masking symbols. The conscious has had to introduce not only one ostensibly strong controlling force, but two: the Baron, and Bracy the Bard. Bard Bracy is the man whose stiring song can cleanse the forest of unholy things, but he cannot protect the dream from the powerful force of the Lady, even though he warns of her power:

> For in my sleep I saw that dove,
> That gentle bird, who thou dost love,
> And call'st by thy own daughter's name-
> Sir Leoline! I saw the same
> Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,
> Among green herbs in the forest alone.
> Which when I saw and when I heard,
> I wonder'd what might ail the bird;
> For nothing near it could I see,
> Save the grass and green herbs underneath
> the old tree.
>
> 'And in my dream methought I went
> To search out what might there be found;
> And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,
> That thus lay fluttering the ground.
> I went and peered, and could descry
> No cause for her distressful cry;
> But yet for her dear lady's sake,
> I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
> When lo! I saw a bright green snake
> Coiled around its wings and neck.
> Green as the herbs on which it couched,

Close by the dove's head it crouched;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!

(Part II, ll. 530-554)

Again the intertwining of the personalities of the two women is strengthened. If Bracy's name is any indication of the role he should be playing in the poem, then he has failed miserably. He cannot brace up either the action, or, more importantly, the symbols of the poem and is banished to seek Geraldine's father. Bracy is made powerless to act upon his dream because the Baron refuses to see its implications and misinterprets the tale. He too has been overcome by the peril. Christabel's reactions to the beautiful visitor confuse him as he grows angry and ruthless toward his child. Christabel, like the Baron, and the narrator, is confronting the horrible aspect of the once beautiful woman. The dream has acquired a nightmarish quality, that prevents the characters from progressing. The fears and desires cannot be worked out to any conclusion because the symbols no longer adequately disguise the guilt and fear involved in the obtaining of these desires.

The one problem with leaving the interpretation of the poem at this level is that the cause of the guilt and fear has not yet been uncovered. The literal level of the tale has been penetrated, and some of the underlying material brought to the surface, but there is still quite a vast well to tap. The relationship between the two women ultimately involves more than just a wish for homosexual union, although

this does occur. There is not really enough conflict in that particular aspect to arouse the horror which eventually overwhelms the heroine and the narrator.

While it is safe to say that a narrator identifies, in one way or another, with all the characters in a work, Christabel is clearly the focus of this poem. She is the one the narrator most closely associates with so that much of the underlying conflict of the poem revolves around her reactions. She is often the mask the narrator hides his own reactions behind. Some of the apparent paradoxes in the interpretation of her behaviour can therefore be explained since many of the narrator's own inner conflicts are represented in the persona of the heroine.

The ultimate desire of the poem, represented through Christabel's actions, is basically a childish one: a wish to possess the good nurturing mother. Much of the imagery of the poem is of an oral, or auditory, nature, such as the creature sounds of the beginning, Geraldine's spell, or Bracy's oral recitations. Other imagery concentrates on the breast. The tree is "broad-breasted", the spell works through Geraldine's bosom, the same that is revitalized the next morning, and Christabel prays with her palms rested "sometimes on her breast" (l. 287). Within the grown character of Christabel rests the desire to return to the security of the breast. This desire seems to produce the major conflict of the poem.

The guilt running throughout has its roots in both

the death of Christabel's mother, and in the relationship between the two young women. This seems to indicate a direct link between the two events. It is not an uncommon occurence for a child to wish the parent of the same sex to be removed, so that access to the other parent is freer. If this unconscious desire is fulfilled, however, through death or separation, it is not unnatural that tremendous feelings of guilt should arise. Such seems to be the case in this poem where the mother has been removed and the child not only feels responsible, but is surrounded by constant reminders of the fact. It is not surprising to find that in these circumstances the role of the father has been dramatically downplayed, to the point where he is virtually non-existent in the first part of the poem. The father could deliver unwelcome retribution, which the child fears. Also, the presence of this once desirable object has become a fearful reminder of the wished for death of a parent.

There is a variety of warring factions in this child-parent relationship, which is hardly surprising considering the tremendous amount of condensation within the work. Due to its very structure a poem must be a condensed work, which is the reason that symbolism is so prevalent. Symbols are employed with the expectation that the reader is familiar with the identifications aroused by each image or symbol, so that the author does not need to expend unnecessary words. The unconscious material further reinforces the use of symbolism and condensation as it strives to avoid censorship. In this

way, Christabel not only represents the qualities of the anima in certain instances, but stands as the child-like narrator grappling with the desire for the mother.

Initially, Geraldine is a desirable object; one who needs to be nurtured, but more importantly, one who may be called upon to give nurture. She is immediately associated with the mother by the frequent mention of the mother's ghost in Part I (ll. 13,70,193-213), and to the Mother Mary. Geraldine is young, beautiful, and an interesting mixture of experienced woman and a maiden, untouched by her recent experiences.[6] This latter state is one to be desired for it removes all competition and dispels the need for jealousy. For the same reason, the Baron has been reduced to an impotent invalid in order to downplay the guilt and eliminate competition.

Geraldine is wooed, cosseted and even offered the wildflower wine made by Christabel's mother. Until the moment of disrobing, it seems that the latent wish of possessing the mother is being realized. When Geraldine does disrobe, the horrible truth is revealed. She is not the good nurturing mother at all, but instead possesses the bad bosom, which works harm. Not only that, but she is castrated as well.

In The Ego and the Id[7], Freud describes a child's conception of the sexes, who are both viewed as phallic. This is especially true for boys who cannot conceive that women could be different from themselves. Security is generated by this belief and the Oedipal complex develops with this

assumption. When, however, the child learns that the mother does not possess a penis he has no other answer for this problem than that the mother's organ has been removed. This conclusion arouses great fear in the child since he too could suffer the same loss. A wish that had once been desirable is now fearful, especially when confronted by a potent father figure who could carry out the castration. The development of the castration complex annihilates the Oedipal desires and leads the child to seek its love object along other venues.

The fact that the narrator described Geraldine's side as being deformed does not detract from the castration interpretation. Obviously, the sight is horrifying to behold; one that threatens the security and well-being of the narrator. We are told that it is a "sight to dream of not to tell", so to hide the intense fear generated by the disrobing, the main concern, castration, is displaced to the bosom and to the side. Yet, the connection between the breast and the penis is reinforced a scant fifteen lines later when Geraldine works her spell through her bosom. There is, in fact, a mental penetration, and a physical one is implied. This is the main reason that the poem earned its label of obscenity from Coleridge's contemporaries.[8] Nor is it any coincidence that Shelley's chief memory of the poem's recital was that of eyes in the breasts of one of the women present at the time. In the Oedipus myth, the legendary King puts out his eyes when he discovers his patricide and incest. Again, in the context of the legend, the eyes serve as an upward displacement for

the penis, the creator of much of the harm.

Originally Geraldine's disfigurement was described as either, "Behold! her bosom and half her side -/Hideous, deformed and pale of hue" or "Are lean and old and foul of hue."[9] It seems, however, that such descriptions were inadequate to explain the disfigurement, and "the sight to dream of not to tell," is left to the imagination. The impact is immediate, as words become inadequate to express the horror of the discovery. The mother had been a safe object, but her revelation of the fact that she is not phallic damages the security that had surrounded her. The narrator and the heroine lapse into muteness; the poem ends and is only continued through the artificial relaxation of the censorship provided by alcohol.

The conclusion pithily sums up the poem's dilemma:

> With open eyes (ah woe is me!)
> Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
> Fearfully dreaming, yet, I wis,
> Dreaming that alone, which is -
> O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,
> The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?
>
> (Part I, 11. 292-297)

The dreamer is engulfed by sorrow and shame as she relives those dramatic moments. The whole mother-child relationship has been perverted in that scene. Instead of giving nurture, Geraldine delivers harm. She also seems to take nourishment from Christabel, since she is the one who awakes refreshed. The words she utters are not soothing, but cast a foul spell of helplessness. Even so, the initial desire has been met,

and the encounter does produce an apparent peace within the dreamer as relaxation occurs:

> And see! the lady Christabel
> Gathers herself from out her trance;
> Her limbs relax, her countenance
> Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids
> Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds -
> Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
> And oft the while she seems to smile
> As infants at a sudden light!
>
> (Part I, 11. 311-318)

The child has perhaps achieved part of its desire, and is again resting on the mother's breast: "Seems to slumber still and mild,/As a mother with her child." (11. 300-301). Yet, a continuing feeling of security and power has not been generated by the event; a child who can command nourishment with a mere whimper surely has power. Instead, no nourishment is delivered and the mother reveals her power as a castrator, being castrated herself. While she had initially presented a secure front, being described with typical phallic images such as her blue-veined feet and stately neck (11. 62-63), the disrobing violently disrupts that notion. As a portent of the conflict yet to come, the last lines of the poem may indicate the return of the father's virility: "That saints will aid if men will call:/For the blue sky bends over all!" (11. 330-331). The sky is the ultimate father of all.

Before continuing to Part II, it is interesting to recall again the violent reaction "Christabel" received from many of Coleridge's contemporary critics. They were responding not only to the sexual overtones of the relationship,

but also to the deeper unconscious material which they unknowingly participated in. Certain themes are universal to all humankind, themes such as death, murder and love.[10] They are common to all, because they personify our own desires, fears or anxiety, as Freud discusses when he deals with the Oedipus myth. In "Christabel", the theme of murder, patricide/matricide, is again the central point, though obscure, and incest is the pivot. The desire seems to be fulfilled in Part I, but the repercussions are already introduced at the disrobing. In Part II, the guilt and aftermath of the event totally occupy the narrator, and characters, as they try to realize what has actually happened.

The characters have entered a totally new world with the beginning of the second part where both the tone and atmosphere of the poem have changed. The first few lines indicate this change:

> Each matin bell, the Baron saith,
> Knells us back to a world of death.
> These words Sir Leoline first said
> When he rose and found his lady dead:
> These words Sir Leoline will say
> Many a morn to his dying day!
>
> (Part II, 11. 332-337)

The strong masculine presence and the need for some kind of retribution are indicated in this first stanza. The emphasis has so drastically changed in this part that it almost appears to be a totally different work. The large gap between the composition of the two parts indicates that they could very well be two separate, but connected fantasies,

one where the censorship apparatus was relaxed enough to allow the exploration of the fantasy, the other exploring the emotions aroused by the desire. Both parts do deal with the desire for and the repulsion of the mother figure, but in this second part, the once impotent father is strangely virile. While in Part I the union with the mother may have been realized to some extent, the guilt produced by the act demands punishment. This punishment is meted out in liberal doses by the father to the child, while Christabel, as the child, administers it to all the characters around by presenting them in such an incompetent light.

Christabel is not always the passive recipient of Geraldine's doubtful intention, and her father's anger. She often, in fact, actively pursues her goal as she invites the mysterious stranger to share her bed and then almost carries her into the castle. She is the one who actively pursues the relationship much of the time, and initially nurtures the mother. She has also reduced the father's role to a negligible one, by making him an invalid. These examples reveal Christabel's rather egocentric view, as well as her desire to suffer. She, in fact has created her own terrifying situation. Even her name, with its root in the word Christ, indicates her desire for suffering. Coleridge, himself, endorses the idea when he admitted that the poem about St. Teresa was on his mind when he wrote "Christabel". This theme of martyrdom is reinforced by the literal interpretations of the

poem presented by the poet's son Derwent Coleridge, and by the physician, Dr. James Gillman, with whom Coleridge spent his last few years. Both men believed that Christabel was to endure vicarious suffering for the benefit of her far away lover; Geraldine was the appointed agent of this suffering.[11] The theme of guilt and retribution haunted the poet in a previous poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", where the conflict was worked through to a more satisfactory conclusion. This poem too, according to Wordsworth, was begun from a dream.[12]

The conflict in Christabel cannot be brought to any kind of conclusion, however, because in this poem the desirable object is unattainable. Although Christabel strives to keep the father subdued and out of the way, his strength is obvious in Part II as he reclaims his place at the side of the mother-figure. Thus the dreamer is confronted not only with the fearful mother as a castrating power, but now must face a strong father in the same role. In the face of this fear the dreamer assumes a much more passive role, as Christabel's actions reveal.

In the opening stanzas of Part II, Geraldine's story of abduction is again highlighted, recalling the violence of the scene as it was earlier described. In the atmosphere of this section the violence of the abduction perhaps suggests the violence a child believes occurs in the physical relationship between its parents. Certainly the Baron exhibits great power, and even verbal violence, in this early morning

scene. The narrator, through Christabel, appears to have lost control of the events and becomes a helpless victim and observer as the action progresses.

Interestingly enough, the Baron remembers his relationship with Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermain with almost the same intimacy as would surround the relationship between two lovers. The friendship is described with almost the terms as that that initially grew between Christabel and Geraldine. The Baron and Lord Roland had been friends, but "constancy lives in realms above" (1. 40). In reality, madness and harsh unthinking words drove them apart:

> But never either found another
> To free the hollow heart from paining -
> They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
> Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
> A dreary sea now flows between; -
> But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
> Shall wholly do away, I ween,
> The marks of that which once hath been.
>
> (Part II, 11. 419-426)

The violence of the passage leads to the conclusion that there was something more to the breaking of this friendship. Things had been "rent asunder" and now only sea flows between. There are strong indications of the castration theme recurring here in the "marks of that which once hath been." This passage may carry an unconscious warning to the heroine who could face the same consequences of her desire is pursued. While in the first part she assumed the more aggressive "masculine" role, she now becomes progressively more passive and adopts the traditional "feminine" character. With the fear of

castration ever present, the dreamer chooses not to assert the desire for the mother further.

As the father continues to dominate the scene, the wish for the mother is suppressed and she begins to assume the overtly evil qualities:

> And fondly in his arms he took
> Fair Geraldine, who met the embrace
> Prolonging it with a joyous look.
> Which when she viewed, a vision fell
> Upon the soul of Christabel,
> The vision of fear, the touch and pain!
> She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again -
> (Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee,
> Thou gentle maid! such sights to see?)
>
> (Part II, 11. 448-456)

Christabel remembers the castrated mother, and fearing the force of the father, begins to assume a submissive role. The love object has truly become too fearful to contemplate. Christabel is unable even to speak: "I ween she had no power to tell/Aught else: so strong was the spell" (11. 473-474).

The irrational sexual force of the anima figure, as represented by Geraldine as Perilous Lady has over-ruled the controlling censorship. As the heroine struggles with her own desires, the Lady becomes increasingly fearsome and overtly evil. She has gained in stature and power as the conflict reaches its crisis point.

Bracy, the Bard, a man who should bring order and harmony into the chaos of the poem, now enters the scene. His dream has portrayed the incident, and he seems to indicate a remedy; he will use his music and verse to banish unclean things. But, like his famed predecessor, Orpheus, a serpent

proves to be his downfall too. He cannot force any kind of control over the Perilous Lady, who remains haughty and powerful. This ordering force cannot control the desires which have been aroused nor can it mask them sufficiently. Both Bracy and the poet, who try to control the unconscious motivations with ordering words, are also struck speechless. The Bard is banished; the poet cannot write.

In the last two stanzas of the poem the two strong desires war within the breast of the heroine. On the one hand, she still desires the removal of the father so that she has complete access to the mother, but the guilt generated by this desire is also highlighted:

> And when the trance was o'er, the maid
> Paused awhile, and inly prayed:
> Then falling at the Baron's feet,
> 'By my mothers soul do I entreat
> That thou this women send away!'
>
> (Part II, 11. 613-616).

The incestuous aspect of the wish is reinforced with the stark reminder that she is the child of both the mother-figure and Sir Leoline (1. 635). At the same time the Baron's rage and horror increase and he lashes out at his once beloved daughter.

Christabel is not the totally cowed figure she seems to be, however. There is hate shining from her eyes as she regards her father and Geraldine (1. 606), yet the desire for suffering has been well met in these last few stanzas, as the Lady gloats in triumph. Although the Baron feels that he is the one who has been dishonoured (1. 342-343), and Geraldine wronged, the feeling of sympathy for Christabel is the

impression left at the end as she watches the two depart.

Nevertheless, the concessions that have so far been made in the poem to make it presentable to the censorship mechanism have failed. The guilt aroused by the wish of the dreamer, and the fear generated by that dual threat of castration prevents the work from continuing. The poem ends with the father leading the mother away, while the heroine is left speechless in her chaotic world.

Many critics believe that the Conclusion to Part II was something Coleridge just tacked on to the end of "Christabel". It was written at a slightly later date than the rest of Part II, and is ostensibly concerned with the poet's son Hartley. Coleridge, however, was too good a poet and too concerned about his art to include an unrelated verse with another poem. Clearly, the subject matter of parent-child relationship is too similar to be coincidental.

"Love's excess", he writes, is often hidden within "words of unmeant bitterness" (11. 664-665). So the poet attempts to justify the desires and emotions generated in his poem. Instead, he reinforces the fact that the characters of the poem are endlessly locked in a mass of opposing desires and fears. The dalliance "with a wrong that does no harm" has not worked, because the 'wrong' involved too potent a force to be confronted. Instead of resolving the conflict, the dalliance becomes a nightmare which could not be completed, leaving the narrator and Christabel as petrified as any of Medusa's victims. It is interesting to note that although

Coleridge did write a few more creative pieces, the decline in his career as a poet coincides closely with the completion of the second part of "Christabel". The abandoning of his poetic Muse may have been caused by this inability fully to express the feelings of guilt and rage raised by the contemplation of the unconscious material of "Christabel" and the other poetic works of the same period.[13]

All of the confusing desires, passions and guilt of the poem find a focus in the persona of the Perilous Lady. It is her presence that serves as a catalyst for the events, and her overwhelming power that contributes to the inarticulateness at the end. She represents the power of the irrational desires that force the abrupt conclusion of the work. At the end, words no longer suffice to express the enormous conflicts of the poem and it finishes with this thought:

> At each wild word to feel within
> A sweet recoil of love and pity.
> And what, if in a world of sin
> (O sorrow and shame should this be true!)
> Such giddiness of heart and brain
> Comes seldom save from rage and pain,
> So talks as it's most used to do.
>
> (Part II, 11. 671-677)

The hopes for catharsis has not been achieved, and the dreamer does not feel the "sweet recoil of love and pity", instead the rage and pain remain behind to hinder the release of emotion and desire.

NOTES TO PART II

1. Earl Leslie Griggs, ed., Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 362. Letter of November 1, 1800 to his patron Josiah Wedgewood.

2. E.H. Coleridge, p. 216n.

3. Nethercot, p. 26. Also reported by Coleridge's friend Thomas Allsop.

4. A rumor apparently begun by William Hazlitt. See Coleridge's letter to Southey, February 1819, in Griggs, Vol. II.

5. Walter Jackson Bate, Coleridge (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1968), p. 68.

6. Compare this with the legends of many of the ancient fertility goddesses, such as Hera or Persephone, who appear as both maiden and experienced woman. See H.J. Rose, p. 103.

7. Strachey, Vol. XIX, pp. 256-257.

8. Nethercot faithfully reports most of the reviews for "Christabel" in Chapter II of his book.

9. E.H. Coleridge, p. 224n and Nethercot, p. 32.

10. James Strachey, Vol. IV, see the section on Typical Dreams, Part D.

11. James Gillman, The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (London: William Pickering, 1838), p. 283.

12. As quoted in David Perkins, ed., English Romantic Writers (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1967), p. 404.

13. See Lowes, p. 570n.

CONCLUSION

Most of the poem "Christabel" seems to be a dream reverie, possibly induced by opium, but certainly aided by alcohol in the second part. In this reverie certain unconscious conflicts surface, and the poet attempts to explore these conflicts in the poem, disguised by symbolism, character displacements and projections. Ultimately, however, these disguises fail and the characters in the poem are overpowered by the conflicts as the material becomes too close to Coleridge's own life for him to continue. He is forced to abandon the poem, leaving Christabel "speechless, rejected, in a universe gone awry."[1]

The major conflict, or theme, of a dream may reappear in a variety of other dreams, perhaps in a different guise, but bearing recognizable traits that establish a connection. Most people would be familiar with this type of recurring dream, or fantasy. Literature also has this characteristic, where certain themes are continuously repeated, not only by a single author, but by generations of writers. In fact, the poem "Christabel", shows evidence of being not one continuous work, but a series of shorter poems containing the same conflict. The first part of the poem was written in

1797, while its conclusion appeared a few years later.[2] These initial parts deal mainly with the relationship between the two women, and the conflict of the good and bad mother figure. The second part, however, written two to three years later, introduces the strong father figure, exploring the relationship from all three sides. The Conclusion to Part II was added in 1801, apparently about Coleridge's infant son, yet bearing such a strong resemblance to the other sections that its place in the work can stand undisputed.

Recognizing the divisions of the parts does not imply that the poet merely tried "to force together/Thoughts so all unlike each other;" (11. 666-667), since all the sections do explore the same conflicts: those between parent and child. What this thought does suggest, however, is that this was a common theme which plagued the poet, and was coalesced into one work, albeit unsuccessfully. Like a recurring dream, the poem splices together the different aspects of one central conflict; in one part there is the action, in the second the reaction.

In the evening part of the poem, the character of the mother figure is established as she transforms from the beneficial nurturing mother to the "bad" mother who cannot, or will not provide sustenance. She is not only portrayed as the type of Perilous Lady figure who appears in myth and literature, but she also resembles the fearsome female figures who pursued Coleridge in his own dreams. These figures often were

transformed as well, "sometimes to impersonate those he loved."[3]

Both Jung and Freud differentiated between two different types of thought patterns, one in which ideas are conceived in subjective images and symbols, the other an objective reasoning mode used to convey the images conceived in the primary thought processes into a concise and understandable form.[4] Imagine the job of the creative writer who must find a language to convey those initial thoughts and images into language. It cannot be coincidental that certain characters make their appearance throughout both the oral and written traditions of humankind. These characters are the archetypal images Jung discusses in his works, and the one particular archetype Coleridge employs, the feminine anima figure, is the springboard to the understanding of many of the unconscious wishes which permeate the poem.

The female characters serve as a screen behind which the narrator, perhaps unconsciously, projects his own wishes.[5] Christabel pursues the union with Geraldine with just as much vigour as, often even more than, the mysterious visitor. She too is a representation of Coleridge's anima figure, as is more clearly revealed when she begins to assume the physical characteristics of her antagonist. The two women could almost serve as mirror images of each other.

As these figures become more frightening to confront, they are invested with the characteristics of vampire and lamia. What is only hinted at in the beginning of part one,

with references to the Christian symbolism, grows more obvious as the union approaches. As the fear of the mother figure and her consuming destructive power surfaces, the censorship intercedes with the symbolic, but compelling, disguises of the vampire/lamia. After the mother is revealed as both non-phallic and non-nurturing this symbolic portrayal increases. A union that had once seemed pleasurable, now is overwhelmed by the fear of being consumed by this false mother. There has been a reversal in roles since it now seems to be the mother who is consuming nourishment, rather than the child, as the Lady's role as vampire illustrates.

If the first part of the poem concentrates on the development of the Oedipal complex, a desire for the parent of the opposite sex, then the second part of the work completely demolishes that fantasy with the growth of the castration complex. The mother has been revealed as a possible castrator, and almost immediately afterward the threatening presence of the father is introduced (Part II, ll. 332-337). The heroine, as the narrator's screen, is compelled to react by assuming the role of the passive sufferer, to calm these fears. Freud believed that the castration complex "leads to progressively feminine traits and limits masculinity."[6] Christabel reinforces this view as she progresses from the aggressor in the relationship to a helpless observer. The heroine's sexuality not only diminishes, but she seems to have adopted a voyeuristic inclination as she

watches the parental figures embrace. Beverly Fields suggests that Christabel may be viewing a primal scene; the resulting guilt from this voyeurism eventually halts the poem.[7]

The child ultimately seeks to control, or possess, both the mother and the father. The desire to take the mother's place with the father becomes just as strong in Part II as the wish to displace the father. As with all unconscious wishes, this one is extremely ego-centric and narcissistic. Notably, the only father figure who appears to have any degree of potency is Bard Bracy, a man of poetic insight, who stands as a not so disguised image of the poet himself. Bracy's power, however, is frustrated as is that of all the other controlling devices of the poem.

The feminine force acquires a totally malevolent character by the second part of the work, and the threat of castration cannot be alleviated by the heroine's passivity. Coleridge's creative force has run out of control in the grasp of the Perilous Lady as he confronts the images of his unconscious life. As Coleridge himself expresses it in a letter to a friend, the struggle to overcome his inner conflicts to create is becoming increasingly difficult:

> From the commencement of November next
> I give myself exclusively to the life
> of Lessing - till then I occupy myself
> with a volume of Letters from Germany -
> to the publication of which my Poverty
> but not my Will consents. - The delay
> in Copy has been owing in part to me,
> as the writer of Christabel. Every
> line has been produced by me with
> labor-pangs. I abandon Poetry
> altogether - I leave the higher and

> deeper kinds, to Wordsworth, the delightful, popular and simply dignified to Southey; and reserve for myself the honorable attempt to make others feel and understand their writings, as they deserve to be felt and understood. 8

It was not too long after this letter that Coleridge did indeed abandon poetry for metaphysical and critical writing. The joy of creation was lost to him as he reveals in "Dejection: An Ode":

> There was a time when, though my path was rough,
> This joy within dallied with distress,
> And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
> Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
> For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
> And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
> But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
> Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
> But oh! each visitation
> Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
> My shaping spirit of Imagination.
>
> (11. 76-86)

That "Christabel" should be connected with this dejection is not surprising, for it is in this poem that the internal conflicts are allowed to briefly surface until the dream ends in a nightmare of guilt and anxiety.

There is no sought after relief in "Christabel", nor is there one in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" since the Mariner is doomed to retell his tale continuously. Like the Mariner, Coleridge is not able to find "a natural outlet" for his fear and grief. Some of the poet's letters indicate that at least as many as fourteen hundred lines may have been originally written for the poem, yet only six hundred and seventy-seven survive. From comments made by both the poet and

Wordsworth[10], it seems that the poem grew wildly out of proportion and that Coleridge was not able to control the events. What survives is perhaps the only portion of the work the poet felt comfortable about publishing; even so, "Christabel" was not published until 1816. This is a rather curious action from a man who needed every penny he could make and consequently was not normally tardy about publishing his works. The constant promises to complete the poem, extending to as late as 1833[11], sound more like platitudes to satisfy friends rather than any serious committment to complete the work.

Some of Coleridge's early commentators, such as James Gillman, attempted to finish "Christabel" for the poet.[12] Gillman prophesized that the heroine's far away lover would eventually return, Geraldine would be exorcised and the ghost of Christabel's mother would preside over her daughter's wedding. However pleasant such continuations may be, the poem has in fact come to a sort of conclusion as it stands. By destroying any other lines written for the poem, Coleridge clearly demonstrated that the work had reached a crisis point and the ending could not be achieved. The guilt and anxiety aroused by the unconscious material overwhelmed the poet and left Christabel hanging in a nightmare of her own creation.

"Christabel" may not be Coleridge's greatest poetic work, but as a study of the psychological aspects of creative writing it proves to be an invaluable tool. When Coleridge set out to explore human reactions to unusual, supernatural events, he unwittingly discovered an unfailing method to create

realistic human reaction. The "shadows of imagination" he created did not only appear real to the reader, but also captured the inward nature of the poet himself. The poem became lost in the conflicting wishes, which could never be fulfilled because of the guilt that was aroused, and remains as puzzling and intriguing to modern critics as it did to the slightly scandalized nineteenth century reader. Perhaps Coleridge's poem "The Pains of Sleep" best explains the dilemma of the poet and his ultimate abandonment of his great poetic gift:

> Such punishments, I said, were due
> To natures deepliest stained with sin, -
> For aye entempesting anew
> The unfathomable hell within,
> The horror of their deeds to view,
> To know and loathe, yet wish and do!
> Such griefs with such men well agree,
> But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?
>
> (11. 43-50)

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. Coburn, "Coleridge and Wordsworth and the Supernatural", p. 129.

2. Bate, pp. 68-73.

3. Coburn, Kathleen, ed., The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957), October 3, 1802.

4. Based on Carl Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), Chapter II. See Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, Gen ed. James Strachey, Vol. IV, Chapter VII, Section E.

5. See Fields, p. 69. "All female personae in the poem are manipulated as elaborations of the female aspect of Coleridge's personality ..."

6. Strachey, Vol. XIX, p. 257.

7. Fields, p. 79.

8. See Lowes, p. 570n, where he gives a lengthy discussion of this letter written in September 1800.

9. Griggs - letters, October 14, 1800; October 22, 1815 and and October 9, 1800.

10. Griggs, p. 643.

11. Table Talk, July 6, 1833.

12. Gillman, pp. 301-302.

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