

Silences and silence in ‘creativity’

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This reflective piece – written primarily to provoke discussion – raises some questions about and for the recent ‘creativity agenda’ in educational policy in England, suggesting that something fundamental is missing. The author argues that ‘creativity’ has characteristically been defined in recent policy discourse as a set of skills concerned with developing independent thinking, problem-solving and flexible working. ‘Creativity’ thus turns out to be intimately and explicitly allied to ‘employability’. The author believes that creativity, on the contrary, is stimulated by the encouragement of vivid inner lifeworlds, a sense of imaginative interiority and a sensuously-felt subjectivity – as exemplified in S.T. Coleridge’s poem *Kubla Khan*. She argues that these are part of pedagogic responsibility as well as a *sine qua non* for the work of the imagination. The author is writing in her role as poet (who also leads creative writing workshops, including for teachers), rather than as a researcher.

Keywords: creativity; imagination; teaching

Introduction

This paper is intended to provoke discussion rather than to be a fully-elaborated academic paper, because it is written more from the perspective of a practicing poet than *qua* scholar or researcher in the field of the arts in education – which I am not, or at least not primarily. It is from the poetic perspective that I have been puzzling over the meaning and role of ‘creativity’ in recent policy discourse in education. I was delighted to have an opportunity¹ at the Symposium *Creative Thinking – Re-imagining the University*, held in Galway in June 2010, to air some of the questions that have been preoccupying me. In this paper I revisit those issues, exploring briefly what the policy discourse – which often these days sets the tone for academic and professional discourses in education – seems to mean by ‘creativity’, and then attempting to articulate what it manages to exclude, even if only by default. I am writing about the situation in England, where I live and work, but I suspect some of these issues are replicated elsewhere too.

Ultimately I wish to argue for a more nuanced and subjectively vivid notion of creativity, and this has sent me back to Samuel Taylor Coleridge – I shall allude briefly to his foundational writings on the imagination later in the paper. I begin, however, with what successive governments have seemed to intend us to understand by ‘creativity’.

The policy-speak of ‘creativity’

At the time of writing, it is not clear what effect the coalition government’s comprehensive spending review (undertaken in the autumn of 2010) will have on whether and how

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the Department for Education, schools and/or local authorities can continue to implement what has so far been a broad and varied agenda on 'creativity'. Up until this point, however, 'creativity' has figured strongly in government education policy for over a decade, for example:

The Government attaches great importance to creativity in the curriculum as a means of supporting children and young people's personal development and achievement. We agree that creativity is not just about the arts. It is about problem-solving, exploring ideas, making connections and being imaginative and innovative. And it applies across all subjects. Creativity in science and maths is just as important as in English and art. We recognise that creativity is one of the 'soft' skills which employers and HE providers value. (Government response to the DCSF Select Committee report into Creative Partnerships and the Curriculum 2008)

Since the influential report, *All our futures: Creativity, culture and education*, was published by NACCCE (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education) in 1999, there has been a sustained programme of initiatives, with accompanying reports and evaluations, over a 10-year span; probably the most well-known comprise:

- Creative Partnerships (DfES [Department for Education and Skills] and DCMS [Department for Culture Media and Sport]).
- Artsmark (DCMS and Arts Council).
- Creativity: Find it, Promote it (QCA [Qualifications and Curriculum Authority]).
- Arts Alive (QCA).
- Expect the unexpected: Developing creativity in primary and secondary schools (Ofsted [Office for Standards in Education] 2003).
- *Nurturing creativity in young people* (review commissioned by DfES and DCMS [Roberts 2006]).
- Excellence and Enjoyment (DfES).
- Gifted and Talented, Excellence for All (DCSF [Department for Children, Schools and Families]).

The rationale for this wholesale policy emphasis on 'creativity' is typically expressed like this:

The Government recognises that young people need to develop the creative skills needed in the workplace of the future. Fast-moving technology and global communications call for an ability to produce creative solutions to complex problems. Creative teaching practices can help develop and release pupils' creativity, increasing their ability to solve problems, think independently and work flexibly. (Teachernet 2007)

Graduates face a world of complexity which demands flexibility, adaptability, self-reliance and innovation... (Jackson, Oliver, Shaw, & Wisdom 2006, Introduction)

Whilst such government support for creativity may have seemed a welcome and enlightened departure from a fixation with 'standards' and 'accountability', it is worth reflecting on the language used of and about 'creativity' in this discourse. 'Creativity' is characteristically construed as a set of skills concerned with developing independent thinking, problem-solving and flexible working – and therefore turns out to be intimately and explicitly allied to the government agenda for 'employability'. Additionally, there is a marked tendency to prioritise the outcomes, as distinct from the processes, of 'creative' activity, with the consequent expectation on educators to identify the 'impact' of 'creativity' on, for instance, academic

performance – so this is not quite so far from the ideology of ‘standards’ and ‘accountability’ as might at first have appeared.

Other writers have made criticisms of ‘creativity’ policy in a similar vein; for example, Pope (2005) claimed that ‘creativity, as a term and concept, is one of the most prized commodities of capitalism’; while Osborn (2003) wrote of ‘the potentially moronic consequences of the doctrine of creativity’ and warns that ‘we should be suspicious of the idea of creativity’.

What meaning(s) does the concept of ‘creativity’ in education carry?

Part of the problem, I think, is that the concept of creativity is being very heavily worked, even overworked, in educational literature, and in a rather uncritical way. ‘Creativity’ is often treated either pedagogically – how specifically to encourage creative thinking/expression/activity in an educational setting or context; or programmatically – how to design, resource and sustain initiatives with that as their core purpose.

But a logically prior way to address ‘creativity’ is philosophically: posing questions and seeking clarity about, for example, what the concept of ‘creativity’ excludes as well as what it includes, in terms of individual aptitudes, inclinations, talents, desires; the extent to which, and the methods by which, ‘creativity’ may be teachable in schools and colleges; what this might entail for the curriculum and assessment; what the connection is between ‘creativity’ and the arts or aesthetic imagination, between ‘creativity’ and the humanities or ethical imagination, between ‘creativity’ and the sciences or ratiocinative imagination. And, last but not least, how far ‘creative’ activities are *educationally valuable* – according to White (1972), such value cannot simply be assumed but must be argued for in educational, not just instrumental, terms.

Furthermore, White prefaces his account thus:

The appearance of yet another article on creativity and education needs a preliminary apology. So much has been written on creativity in the last ten years, from technical articles on the validation of creativity tests to books like *The Goldmine Between Your Ears*, and so widely has the cult of creativity been adopted by teachers in Colleges of Education and elsewhere, that it is profitable perhaps to stop for a moment and look critically at some of the assumptions lying behind the various ideas which are being currently propagated. (White 1972, 132)

That was written 40 years ago: *plus ça change...?*

White also reminds us, *mutatis mutandis*, that some ideas, such as the notion that education is about ‘training some faculty of the mind’, may be out-of-date but die hard: ‘Although such faculty psychology is today largely outmoded, there still seems to be much support for the notion of a *creative* faculty... [which] rests on a pictorial model of the mind as some sort of ghostly machine with different parts which carry out different functions...’ (133). Yet Warnock’s (1976) book on *Imagination*, published just a few years later, pointed out that ‘it is very hard to find a substitute for the vocabulary of faculty psychology. It seems to me in fact that such vocabulary is steadily becoming more innocuous as we more and more clearly recognize it as metaphorical’ (196). The issue arose because she wanted to talk about ‘*a power in the human mind*’ which:

... is at work in our everyday perception of the world, and is also at work in our thoughts about what is absent; which enables us to see the world, whether present or absent, as significant, and also to present this vision to others, for them to share or reject. And this power... is not only intellectual. Its impetus comes from the emotions as much as from the reason... Both artist and spectator have to detach themselves from the world in order to think of certain objects in the world in a new way, as signifying something else. (Warnock 1976, 196–7)

Arising from her belief that imagination is an affective as least as much as a cognitive 'faculty', Warnock's view of the worth of creative education was unequivocally positive: 'Children cannot be taught to feel deeply; but they can be taught to look and listen in such a way that the imaginative emotion follows' (207). Nonetheless, as she was at pains to make plain in her next paragraph, it does not follow that educating children's imaginations requires encouraging children to 'be creative' or to 'express themselves'; rather, she said, they should be reading and looking at the works of other people or the works of nature.

By contrast (I think) with Warnock, Hepburn (1972) made the case that children's feelings and emotions *can* be 'educated' – though he was in accordance with Warnock that this is to be accomplished through 'the arts', in which he included, or perhaps prioritised, literature. And by 'educated' he clearly meant morally and ethically sensitised to 'questions of honesty and sincerity... perceptiveness... [and] of one's personal freedom' (487–8).

It will not have escaped your notice that, a few paragraphs ago, I elided 'creativity' with 'imagination'. Partly this is because, as I have suggested, 'creativity' as a concept is over-worked, definitionally ambiguous and these days too closely associated with policy and political agendas to be educationally useful. But it is also because 'imagination' is a more equivocal, and therefore more dangerous, more generative, word – according to Halpin (2008), for over 500 years until the advent of the Romantic period it had 'very shifty, occasionally trivial, sometimes even derogatory, meanings' (61) and is still not quite to be trusted. I shall return to this theme soon, but at this point I should like to acknowledge the writings of Halpin in this field more generally (see also, for example, Halpin 2006, 2007). His work unites the aesthetic, affective and ethical domains of imaginative pedagogical practice; and has opened up the possibility of talking with, as well as about, imagination and 'passion' in teaching – without which education is impoverished for teachers as well as for pupils and students.

Where are the silences in the 'creativity agenda'? What has happened to imagination, inwardness, reverie...

The research by Trotman has been exemplary in revealing the 'lifeworlds' of adolescents, for whom the exercise of creativity is not just about acquiring a set of definable skills but is a holistic way of developing a ethical domains of imaginative pedagogical practice, through the polymorphous work of the imagination (see Trotman 2005, 2008, 2010).

So a crucial starting point for me is that 'creativity' – which, as I said, I should prefer to describe as the work of the imagination – has multiple aspects and affordances; in contrast to prevalent ideas of creativity, it is not always 'purposeful, valuable, original' (*pace* NACCCE, Ofsted and the rest), it is not always visible, measurable, exploitable (in the newspeak form of 'creative capital'). On the contrary, creativity is often unbiddable, unconfirming, uncomfortable and quintessentially idiosyncratic – as any artist knows, there are extended periods of waiting and hoping when you cannot command inspiration (though you can and must routinely practise the skills and disciplines of your craft).

What is missing, then, from current 'creativity' policies and – we may presume – from their concomitant pedagogical values and behaviours? Where are the silences in this discourse? What else, or other, do we need to propose?

Let us start with the question of, the fundamental need for, subjectivity: that is, a person's entitlement to have and inhabit an interior life-world. In an educational context, this surely translates into each pupil's/student's entitlement to have his or her unique sense of creative personhood nourished – which is both an expression and a consequence of imaginative capacity. This sense of self is developed, refined and articulated in many ways, and not least through

the invisible processes of inner image-making and metaphorising... At this point, I shall take the liberty of quoting liberally from other writers whose insights I find both useful and inspiring. First, then, imaginative creativity in this subjective sense needs time and space, but yet: 'I think the older you get the less imagination you're allowed to have... you don't get time to use it' (Josie, a secondary school student quoted by Trotman 2008, 129).

As well as the well-documented pressures on curricula and timetables, I suspect this may also be because 'using one's imagination' often looks like day-dreaming, wool-gathering, reverie, it involves apparently inactive activities, it requires being 'off-task'. Bachelard (2005, 84) calls this process 'the alchemy of the imagination', because it takes place out of sight in the crucible of the psyche; or you might prefer the witty and definitely unesoteric way the Canadian writer and Booker prize-winner Margaret Atwood has put it (in a speech given in 2010): 'A poet is someone who sits looking out the window when other people think she should be cutting the lawn...'

An eminent and influential educator believes it is more than this, that education has deliberately turned its back on imaginative selfhood and inwardness: 'Knowledge, after nearly a thousand years, is divorced from inwardness and literally dehumanised... what is at stake is the very concept of education itself' (Bernstein 2000, 86, cited in Beck 2002, 617).

An analogous point about society's expropriation of subjectivity – young women's especially – has been made by the feminist writer Nina Power:

... [you] are at all times supposed to be a kind of walking CV... that neatly summarizes where you've been and how you made profitable use of your time... there is nothing subjective, nothing left, hidden behind the appearance... you simply are commensurate with your comportment in the world. (Power 2009, 24)

By contrast, our ordinary intuition about creativity is, I suggest, that without a private, idiosyncratic sense of self, a subjective consciousness that knows consciousness is not enough, creativity cannot exist, let alone flourish: 'Creativity itself – the ability to generate new ideas and artefacts – requires more than consciousness can ever provide' (Damasio 2001, 'Emotion, cognition and the human brain', quoted, but not cited, in Tudor 2008).

Paradoxically, however, the cultivation of subjective interiority also requires a strong and irreducible sense of 'the other', which is also to be supplied by and through the exercise of the imagination, as the paragraph I quoted above from Warnock suggests. The poet Christopher Middleton wrote – in *Bolshevism in art* – vehemently against the notion of 'relevance' in educational policy and practice because it reduces, ignores, denies, the 'otherness' of texts, pictures, ideas:

No real intellectual transformation, no real structuring refinement of sensibility, no cultivation of instinct, can occur without exertion toward the other, which is the living nerve of both educational and spiritual disciplines... objects of study... cease to radiate their interior life (Middleton, quoted by Schmidt 1989, 107).

Let us now turn with relief and for illumination to the poet and influential critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) and, as an example *par excellence* of creative inwardness and idiosyncrasy, his extraordinary poem 'Kubla Khan'.² The external stimulus for 'Kubla Khan' was a seventeenth century travel book by Samuel Purchas, called *Purchas His Pilgrimage*, that purported to be a survey of the peoples and religions of the world. At the very moment he was reading the passage about the Tartar king Kublai Khan, Coleridge tells us in a preface to the poem, he fell into an opium-induced dream. And while asleep he composed – or received a vision of – a long poem that, on waking, he went to write down. But he was

interrupted by the now infamous ‘person on business from Porlock’, and thereafter could manage to recall and transcribe only 54 lines of the work.

‘Kubla Khan’ is extraordinary and exemplary because what we have in the piece, instead of the wished-for long poem, is a mind in the process of recording its own process of imaginative creation, a poem about writing poetry. ‘Kubla Khan’ is about, or rather enacts, the writer’s intentional and enraptured immersion in an altogether other, intensely private, world. As readers, we are not required to ‘interpret’ the poem but instead are let into the poet’s secret imaginative life – if we are prepared to go there with him. Coleridge did not publish ‘Kubla Khan’ for several years, regarding it as a ‘psychological curiosity’ (it was Byron who later cajoled him into including it with other published poems).

The kinds of questions the poem poses seem to be very different from those that policy-speak offers us; they include such conundrums as:

- How (much) can we prepare or seed the unconscious mind with images conducive to creative writing?
- Is it possible to recreate a visionary epiphanic moment, recapture its emotional and aesthetic perfection – can we make time stand still (as it indeed it seems to do in the momentaneous experience of creating)?
- How *does* the medium of language conjure into being a kind of synaesthesia, how does it manage to evoke a rush of sensory experience, visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile?
- Does the poem’s admitted lack of finish reveal more about the creative act than something notionally more complete?
- And, if creativity is not framed or fixed, but is an endless pursuit, do we have to resign ourselves to the idea that we will never be able to write ‘the long poem’ that came to us in our dream? For its maker, is the product – the poem, painting, film, sculpture, song – inevitably a fragment of an imagined whole, of a more ample reality, no sooner completed than recognised as irremediably incomplete?

Even now, as the historical biographer Richard Holmes says,³ the poem refuses to be pinned down, yet it is still hugely popular; ‘Kubla Khan’ remains memorable, memorisable *and* mysterious; it is ‘portable magic’.

Coleridge developed his concept of creativity and the imagination more discursively in his prose writings, which have hardly been surpassed in terms of a phenomenological account of the creative process; chapter 13 of the *Biographia Literaria* is the famous site of his definition and discussion of ‘the nature and genesis of the imagination’ and in particular the distinction he makes between ‘imagination’ and ‘fancy’:

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

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will,

which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association. (Coleridge 1817, 488–9)

There is much scholarly disputation about the meaning of this passage, though I think we can gather that imagination for Coleridge is a dynamic and unifying principle or force – a ‘living power’, infinite, quasi-divine and unknowable, as distinct from some defined and knowable process which he calls ‘fancy’. Such a proposition ought, at the very least, to make us pause before we agree to government demands to harness ‘creativity’ – our own or our students’ – for extrinsic, economic ends.

The role of the (day-)dream-state – a person’s unconscious or subconscious mind, as some may prefer to think of it – and its centrality to the work of the imagination has been revisited by very many writers and artists since; a famous example is Mary Shelley, contemporary and friend of Coleridge, who wrote in the introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein or The modern Prometheus*:

Still I had a dearer pleasure than this [writing stories], which was the formation of castles in the air – the indulging in waking dreams – the following up of trains of thought, which had for their subject the formation of a succession of imaginary incidents. My dreams were at once more fantastic and agreeable than my writings. In the latter I was a close imitator – rather doing as others had done, than putting down the suggestions of my own mind... but my dreams were all my own; I accounted for them to nobody; they were my refuge when annoyed – my dearest pleasure when free. (Shelley 1831, 1)

The most charming version, perhaps, of such ideas can be found in a little book called *The art of the siesta* by French philosopher Thierry Paquot, which urges us to think again about daydreaming, dozing and the politics of reverie:

The siesta is a sidetrack leading away from all activity that is distinct, obligatory, habitual and mechanical... [as a metaphor, it represents] the capacity we have to dictate the use of our own time rather than selling it short by submitting ourselves to time imposed by ‘society’... The siesta is an act of resistance, an adopted position, a policy. (Paquot 2003, 75)

So perhaps it’s not going too far to suggest that it’s not only time and space (hard enough to come by in school curricula) that are needed to nurture creative ‘inwardness’. Perhaps we, teachers, learners, individuals, need another element, a further dimension, which it is most unusual to encounter in the way both schooling and society are organised – silence. And the kind of silence that is conducive to daydreaming, at that.

The creative resources (and risks) of spending ‘silent time in silent places’ have been explored by the novelist Sara Maitland in a book that shows how scarce and precious silence has become (Maitland 2008). An educational – an educative – culture that privileged ‘silence’ from time to time would probably make the experience of teaching and learning feel very different; it would, for example, require teachers to acquire and practise: ‘... the complex skills of ‘silent pedagogy’ where the teacher makes conscious decisions to abstain from intervention based on continuous sensitive readings of the learning environment’ (Ollin 2008, 265).

And in such silences, what other pedagogical possibilities might arise? In the conference session I led, I gave participants an imaginative exercise; afterwards they said that they had appreciated the unfamiliar invitation to use their own imaginations in this way – several participants also said they felt the exercise gave them an insight into their own pedagogical styles and behaviours.

Is there a pedagogy of creativity?

So I think it's relevant at this point to refer at this point to Galton's insightful study of creative practitioners working in schools – he found that creative practitioners tend to work in quite different ways, and with different assumptions, from teachers. He reports that, '*compared to teachers, creative practitioners*':

- Gave pupils more time to think when planning and designing activities
- Extended questioning sequences so that classroom discourse was dialogic rather than consisting of the more usual 'cued elicitations'
- Offered more precise feedback
- Tended to extend rather than change pupils' initial ideas
- Built appropriate scaffolding into the task instead of using teacher dominated approaches such as guided discovery. The former while lowering risk of failure maintained the task's ambiguity while the latter often reduced the pupils' uncertainty about what was required to a point where there was little likelihood of arriving at an unacceptable answer. Task related scaffolds appeared to encourage pupil independence whilst teacher directed ones spawned increasing dependency.
- Were more consistent in their management of learning and behaviour. They were more likely to offer explanations when refusing pupils requests and in dealing with negative behaviour they frequently referred to similar incidents in their own past, thereby indicating to the pupil that while they were unable to condone certain actions they understood the reasons why such incidents occurred. (Galton 2008, Executive Summary, x)

Specifically, creative practitioners were not concerned with 'performance' in the same way that teachers were:

Whereas for teachers, evaluation is primarily about whether the pupils have achieved the set criteria, for creative practitioners its main purpose is to indicate possibilities for the learner's future development... (Galton 2008, 75)

Trotman suggests that how we attach value to creativity is an ethical as well as technical challenge; it's possible that conventional forms of assessment and evaluation risk being an invasion of an individual's precious sense of self:

The public evaluation of the outcomes of imaginative and creative activity is regarded by some as essential in establishing their value, worth and originality. For others, the affective and feelingful personal lifeworld is private *and sacrosanct*. (Trotman 2010, 135, my emphasis)

The same kind of ethical problem arises when educators are considering how to research creativity: what are the pre-determined limits of inquiry? Should there be any? Who decides?

These accounts [of secondary school students] reveal something of the important correspondence between imagination, identity, privacy and a privileged ownership of personal original thought... [and] they reveal... the ethical and methodological challenges that have to be resolved in making decisions about research design and representation. (Trotman 2010, 132)

Trotman proposes that research, rather than being used as an instrumental intrusion into private arenas in order, for instance, to identify and justify the ‘impact’ of creativity, should instead be designed and conducted in such a way that it evokes: ‘empathic understanding, virtual realities, new psychological landscapes’ (Barone and Eisner 2006, 98, quoted in Trotman 2010).

So my final thoughts are that the teachers, lecturers, managers and researchers who are responsible for developing and enacting the ‘creativity agenda’ in schools and universities should allow themselves to embrace the richer, riskier, more nuanced and subjectively powerful approaches that individual creativity and the work of the imagination truthfully demand. This perhaps has more chance of happening when teachers are in touch with the creativity and creative responsibilities of their teaching; and when they can reclaim what educators like Abbs (Abbs 2003) and Halpin (Halpin 2006) have named the essentially Romantic, ethically imaginative, ‘passion of pedagogy’. ‘For he on honey-dew hath fed, And drunk the milk of Paradise’.

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Notes on contributor

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Notes

1. In a workshop session titled ‘The sound of violets: Alternatives to military metaphors in education’ – which in turn had its origins in a paper of policy and poetry co-authored by Phipps and Saunders (2009).
2. See Appendix for the text of the poem.
3. In the programme *Adventures in Poetry*, Series 11, Episode 6, ‘Kubla Khan’, broadcast on BBC Radio 4, Saturday 15 January 2011.

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Appendix

Kubla Khan

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

Down to a sunless sea.

So twice five miles of fertile ground
 With walls and towers were girdled round:
 And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
 Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
 And here were forests ancient as the hills,
 Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
 Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
 A savage place! as holy and enchanted
 As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
 By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
 And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
 As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
 A mighty fountain momently was forced:
 Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
 Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
 Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
 And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
 It flung up momently the sacred river.
 Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
 Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
 Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
 And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
 And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
 Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
 Floated midway on the waves;
 Where was heard the mingled measure
 From the fountain and the caves.

It was a miracle of rare device,
 A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
 In a vision once I saw:
 It was an Abyssinian maid,
 And on her dulcimer she played,
 Singing of Mount Abora.
 Could I revive within me
 Her symphony and song,
 To such a deep delight 'twould win me,

That with music loud and long,
 I would build that dome in air,
 That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
 And all who heard should see them there,
 And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
 His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
 Weave a circle round him thrice,
 And close your eyes with holy dread,
 For he on honey-dew hath fed,
 And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1797)