

DISSEMINATION, *DIFFÉRENCE*, AND TRACE IN S. T. COLERIDGE'S
"THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER", "THE EOLIAN HARP",
"FROST AT MIDNIGHT", "THIS LIME-TREE BOWER MY PRISON",
AND "KUBLA KHAN"

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ABSTRACT

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For Derrida, a text is something which eludes and escapes not only the reader but also the rules of its own composition. In other words, the meaning of a text is always deferred and thus beyond perception. This is the disruption of writing. Accordingly, the aim of this thesis is to analyse Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, “The Eolian Harp”, “Frost at Midnight”, “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison”, and “Kubla Khan” from a Derridean vantage point through the employment of the such non-concepts as dissemination, *différance*, and trace in order to argue that these Romantic texts are emblematic of the disruption of writing in the Derridean sense. By performing a Derridean reading, the thesis will lay bare the already existing problematisation of the textual relationship between the poetic persona, the text, and meaning as well as of the logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning.

Keywords: Dissemination, *différance*, trace, Jacques Derrida, Samuel Taylor Coleridge



ÖZ

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE'İN “YAŞLI DENİZCİNİN EZGİSİ”,
“RÜZGAR ARPI”, “GECEYARISI AYAZ”, “BU IHLAMUR AĞACI ÇEVRELER
ZİNDANIMI” VE “KUBİLAY HAN” ŞİİRLERİNDE YAYILIM, AYIRAM VE İZ

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Derrida'ya göre metin, hem okuyucudan hem de kendi yazım kurallarından kaçmayı başaran bir şeydir. Bir başka deyişle, metindeki anlam her zaman ötelenmektedir ve bütünüyle idrak edilemez durumdadır. Bu, Derridacı terminolojide yazının yıkıcılığı ve bozuculuğudur. Bu tezin amacı Samuel Taylor Coleridge'in “Yaşlı Denizcinin Ezgisi”, “Rüzgâr Arpi”, “Geceyarısı Ayaz”, “Bu Ihlamur Ağacı Çevreler Zindanımı” ve “Kubilay Han” şiirlerini Derridacı bir okumayla yayılım (dissemination), *ayıram* (*différance*) ve iz (trace) ana kavramları çerçevesinde ele alıp, bu Romantik metinlerin Derridacı anlamda yazının yıkıcılığına birer örnek olduğunu savunmaktır. Derridacı bir analiz yaparak tez, bu metinlerdeki söyleyici-metin-anlam ilişkisinin ve imleyen ile imlenen arasındaki sözmerkezci ve metafizik örtüşmenin *hâlihazırda var olan* sorunsallaştırılmasını açığa çıkaracaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yayılım, *ayıram*, iz, Jacques Derrida, Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZ	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ix
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Romanticism.....	8
2. THEORETICAL BACKCLOTH OF THE STUDY.....	16
2.1. Metaphysics of Presence	16
2.2. Critique of the Western Metaphysics.....	19
2.3. Dissemination, <i>Différance</i> , and Trace	26
3. S. T. COLERIDGE’S “THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER”.....	32
3.1. The Marginal Gloss and Signification.....	34
3.2. Metaphors, Imageries, Figures, and Signification.....	40
4. S. T. COLERIDGE’S CONVERSATION POEMS	52
4.1. “The Eolian Harp”	54
4.2. “Frost at Midnight”	62
4.3. “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison”	68
5. S. T. COLERIDGE’S “KUBLA KHAN”	75

5.1. Preface and Signification.....	77
5.2. Topographies, Imageries, Metaphors, and Signification.....	81
6. CONCLUSION.....	88
REFERENCES	97
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A: TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET.....	104
APPENDIX B: THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU	114



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Romantic period is historically located between the Enlightenment and the Victorian era, but Romanticism as a movement has always been difficult to pin down or categorise within the theoretical scope. It is fascinating that this period is historically located between the Enlightenment and the Victorian era, for the former had emerged as a seemingly progressive phenomenon, which set people free from the religious oppression (Wu, *Companion* 39), only to turn into a totalising epistemology, whereas the latter made the people of Britain feel the scourge of the monarch maybe even more than before. To complicate the definition and location of Romanticism even further, Romanticism emerged as both a reaction to and a continuation of the Enlightenment thought, and it was heavily influenced by the American and French Revolution and the ideas that these revolutions promoted, at least in the beginning. What Romanticism or Romantic literature is can perhaps never be truly answered, for the very linguistic and discursive ground on which it stands upon is ever elusive and ambiguous: “Attempts at a single definition of Romanticism fall far short of matching the facts of a time that exceeds almost all other ages of English literature in the range and diversity of its achievements” (Abrams, *Norton Anthology* 4). The Enlightenment thought, in many ways, is an extension of logocentrism and Platonism. The Romantics were the children of the Enlightenment thought and thus they were born into this Platonic and logocentric discourse, and perhaps this is what makes Romanticism so fascinating and interesting in terms of its literary, linguistic, discursive, and theoretical aspects. On the one hand, because they were born into it, the Romantics embodied the rigid and conservative ideas of a discourse which had become totalitarian, on the other hand they challenged the dogmatic aspects of this epistemology and were under the influence of the ideas promoted by the revolutions. Indeed, as mentioned above, it is

impossible to conceive Romanticism or the Romantic period as a coherent or stable phenomenon because almost each Romantic author or thinker had their unique aesthetic and theoretical mindset, which was simultaneously shaped by Platonism, the Enlightenment thought, Empiricism, Neoclassicism, the American and French Revolution, and so on.

The aim of this thesis is to put under scrutiny Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "The Eolian Harp", "Frost at Midnight", "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison", and "Kubla Khan" and lay bare the already existing problematisation and destabilisation of the relationship between the author, text, and meaning as well as the presumed nature of the overlap between the signifier and the signified from a Derridean vantage point by borrowing the non-concepts such as dissemination, *différance*, and trace from Derridean terminology as points of departure in order to argue that these texts do not maintain any sort of totality; there is no pre-existing, regulating or all-governing transcendental signified in the texts as they do not present stable, self-contained or frozen meaning, but are the playground of the free play of the floating signifiers and thus emblematic of the destructiveness or disruption of writing in Derridean terms. In the process of such an endeavour, the thesis will also try to find possible answers to the following questions from a Derridean standpoint: where do the Romantics stand in terms of their approach and/or reaction to the Western metaphysics (i.e. Platonism, logocentrism, and the metaphysics of presence)? Do they intentionally problematise the logic of the signifiers and the meaning-making mechanisms, or this problematisation only occurs on a textual level notwithstanding the signifying intentions of the author? Do Romantic texts go or attempt to go beyond the binary logic and the phallogocentric discourse by creating a new space of signification or do they fall into the metaphysical trap by only subverting the Platonic dualism? As for the contribution of this thesis to scholarship, there is no Derridean reading of the works of Coleridge specifically in terms of the Derridean non-concepts dissemination, *différance*, and trace. This study, therefore, aims to fill in this gap in scholarship.

There are only a couple of specifically Derridean readings of the works by Coleridge in the scholarship, which are Tilottama Rajan's "Displacing Post-Structuralism: Romantic Studies after Paul de Man", in which she provides a brief poststructuralist reading of "The Eolian Harp" where Derridean overtones, to some extent, can be observed. The other is Patricia S. Yaeger's "Coleridge, Derrida and the Anguish of Writing", in which she analyses Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp" and "Kubla Khan" from a Derridean vantage point. To start with, Tilottama Rajan suggests that "The Eolian Harp" requires the participation of the reader and invites them to pay attention to the rhetoric of the poem (Rajan 469). She reads the poem as "the constant collapse of a language that simulates a continuity between image and reality into a language that discovers itself as an intentional construct" (469). She puts under scrutiny the metaphor of the Eolian harp, which is also the title of the poem. She argues that the Eolian harp, which is the poem's central metaphor and imagery, dissolves the dichotomies such as art/nature and thought/thing (469). Another major point of discussion she focuses on is the attempt by the readers to bring biographical details into play in the analysis of the poem. She states that once the biographical details are included in the reading or analysis of the poem they "disclose their own figurative constitution" (472). Patricia S. Yaeger's reading of "Kubla Khan" and "The Eolian Harp", on the other hand, takes Derrida's "Force and Signification" essay, in which Derrida talks about the anguish of writing, as its point of departure. Yaeger explains that what Derrida means by the anguish of writing is "the undifferentiated play of signifiers" and argues that Coleridge is a good example for that because he had too much in his mind and was able to say too little (Yaeger 89). Coleridge's writing, she maintains, is similar to Derrida's model: "fragmented and discontinuous, it maintains the necessary dissonance between word and thing which enables the production of metaphor" (97). Prior to moving on with the analyses of the poems, she maintains that Coleridge's writing is dominated by the desire to maintain correspondence between language and thought (90). One of the striking remarks she makes is to claim that in the writing process of "Kubla Khan" and "The Eolian Harp" Coleridge realised that "writing involves many of the processes Derrida has defined" and, accordingly, these two poems "become metaphors for a theory of language which Coleridge himself could be said to half-acknowledge and half-repress" (93). The first analysis that she

performs is that of “Kubla Khan’s”, where she argues that the poem reflects Coleridge’s conflict “between his dominant theory of language as totalizing decree and his more instinctive feelings for language as ‘an autonomous overassemblage of meanings.’” (98). She further argues that Coleridge could not finish the writing of the poem because he refused “to recognize that language is dangerous, anguishing, precipitous: as uncontrollable as these multiple voices. ... The poem ends ... because Coleridge sees, or ... his writing produces, the meaning of writing itself” (99-100). Yaeger’s analysis of “The Eolian Harp” is similar to that of “Kubla Khan”. The ending of the poem, she suggests, is different from the rest because Coleridge feels intimidated by the free play of signification, which challenges his own views, and turns towards “a classic logocentrism anchored, according to the poem, in the language of his wife” (100). The analyses that will be performed by the thesis will differentiate themselves from the readings mentioned above by specifically focusing on the textual relationship between the poetic persona, the text, and meaning and the undecidability of the meaning of the poems through the examination of the elusive metaphors, imageries, and figures from a Derridean vantage point via the employment of such key non-concepts as dissemination, *différance*, and trace.

In order to perform a Derridean analysis of the aforementioned texts in the light of the theoretical backcloth mentioned above, the thesis will first discuss the historical, theoretical, and literary background of Romanticism. Afterwards, chapter 2 will lay out the theoretical backcloth of the thesis. In this chapter, the thesis will first discuss what Derrida refers to by the metaphysics of presence. Then it will explore in detail Derrida’s critique of the metaphysics of presence. Last part of the chapter will put under scrutiny the key non-concepts that will be borrowed from Derridean terminology to analyse Coleridge’s “The Rime”, “The Eolian Harp”, “Frost at Midnight”, “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison”, and “Kubla Khan”: Dissemination, *différance*, and trace.

Chapter 3 will first offer a literature review as to show how Coleridge’s “The Rime” has been so far analysed by the scholarship and then state how the analysis undertaken in the thesis will differentiate itself from those mentioned. The chapter will then put

under scrutiny Coleridge's "The Rime" from a Derridean vantage point. A thorough textual analysis of the poem will be undertaken through the employment of the Derridean non-concepts dissemination, *différance*, and trace in order to show the already existing problematisation of the logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning in the text. The focal points of the analysis will be the textual relationship between the marginal gloss and the poem itself, and the elusive metaphors, imageries, and figures dominating the poem. The first part of the chapter will problematise the relationship between the poetic persona and the text through the post-writing addition of the marginal gloss as well as the function of the marginal gloss. The thesis will show how the addition of the marginal gloss deconstructs the poetic persona's own attempt to impose his own signifying intentions upon the text's signifying possibilities by adding another layer of meaning(s) and context(s) upon the already existing meanings and contexts in which the poem can be read, thus giving rise to dissemination, *différance*, and the free play of signification. The second part of the chapter will focus on the elusive metaphors, imageries, and figures recurring in the poem such as the Sun, the Albatross, the Hermit, the water snakes, and the dice in order to lay bare how these elusive textual devices and phrases prevent the poetic persona from limiting the movement of signification and reinforce the already disseminated nature of the meaning prevailing in the text.

Chapter 4 will first offer a literature review as to show how the conversation poems in general have been so far analysed by the scholarship and then state how the analysis undertaken in the thesis will differentiate itself from those mentioned. The chapter then will move on with the analysis of "The Eolian Harp". The subchapter on "The Eolian Harp" will first outline the major points of discussion on the poem in the scholarship in order to clarify how the analysis performed in the thesis distinguishes itself from the remaining of the analyses undertaken by the critics in the scholarship. The first part of the analysis of "The Eolian Harp" will specifically focus on the dichotomy of the "presentness" of the speaking subject and the "absentness" of the listening subject or of the addressee of the poem. This particular section of the subchapter will mainly borrow trace from Derridean terminology to lay bare how the supposed speaker of the poem falls into what Derrida calls the metaphysical trap and

how this reveals the absence of the self-presence of meaning within the context of the poem as well as how the absence of the listening subject can be regarded as trace in Derridean terms. The second part of the analysis will dwell on the transition from the realm of the corporeality/sensible to the realm of the transcendence/conceivable in order to lay bare how the transition in landscape means the transformation of the language from descriptive and referential to metaphorical and poetic. The last part of this subchapter will focus on the commonly used elusive metaphors such as “breeze”, “wind”, “harp”, “lute” etc. in order to lay bare the non-correspondence of the signifier and the signified prevailing in the text and how the text problematises the logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning through the already existing dissemination and *différance*. The subchapter on “Frost at Midnight” will first outline the major points of discussion on the poem in the scholarship in order to display how the analysis performed in the thesis differentiates itself from the remaining of the analyses undertaken by the critics in the scholarship. The first part of the analysis of “Frost at Midnight” will specifically focus on the dichotomy of the “presentness” of the speaking subject and the “absentness” of the listening subject or of the addressee of the poem. This particular section of the subchapter will mainly borrow trace from Derridean terminology to lay bare how the supposed speaker of the poem falls into what Derrida calls the metaphysical trap and how this reveals the absence of the self-presence of meaning within the context of the poem as well as how the absence of the listening subject can be regarded as trace in Derridean terms. The second part of the analysis will dwell on the transition from the realm of the corporeality/sensible to the realm of the transcendence/conceivable in order to lay bare how the transition in landscape means the transformation of the language from descriptive and referential to metaphorical and poetic. The last part of this subchapter will focus on the metaphor of “breeze” and the Paganistic overtones recurring in the poem in order to lay bare the non-correspondence of the signifier and the signified prevailing in the text and how the text problematises the logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning through the already existing dissemination and *différance*. The subchapter on “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” will first outline the major points of discussion on the poem in the scholarship in order to show how the analysis performed in the thesis distinguishes itself from the remaining of the analyses performed by the critics in the

scholarship. The first part of the analysis of “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” will specifically focus on the dichotomy of the “presentness” of the speaking subject and the “absentness” of the listening subject or of the addressee of the poem. This particular section of the subchapter will mainly borrow trace from Derridean terminology to lay bare how the supposed speaker of the poem falls into what Derrida calls the metaphysical trap and how this reveals the absence of the self-presence of meaning within the context of the poem as well as how the absence of the listening subject can be regarded as trace in Derridean terms. The second part of the analysis will dwell on the transition from the realm of the corporeality/sensible to the realm of the transcendence/conceivable in order to lay bare how the transition in landscape means the transformation of the language from descriptive and referential to metaphorical and poetic. The last part of this subchapter will focus on the metaphor of “rook” in particular and the bird metaphor in general in order to lay bare the non-correspondence of the signifier and the signified prevailing in the text and how the text problematises the logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning through the already existing dissemination and *différance*.

Chapter 5 will first offer a literature review as to show how Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” has been so far analysed by the scholarship and then display how the analysis undertaken in the thesis will distinguish itself from those mentioned. The chapter will then put under scrutiny Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” from a Derridean vantage point. A detailed textual analysis of the poem will be undertaken through the use of the Derridean non-concepts dissemination, *différance*, and trace in order to show the already existing problematisation of the logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning in the text. The focal points of the analysis will be the textual relationship between the preface, the subtitle, and the poem itself, and the elusive metaphors, imageries, and figures dominating the poem. The first part of the chapter will problematise the relationship between the poetic persona and the text through the post-writing addition of the preface and the subtitle as well as the function of the preface and the subtitle in terms of its relation to the movement of signification within the context of the poem. The thesis will show how the addition of the preface deconstructs the poetic persona’s own attempt to impose his own signifying intentions upon the

text's signifying possibilities by adding another layer of meaning(s) and context(s) upon the already existing meanings and contexts in which the poem can be read, thus giving rise to dissemination, *différance*, and the free play of signification. The second part of the chapter will focus on how the juxtaposition of two polarised topographies is indicative of the textual conflict between the poetic persona and the text over the full possession of the meaning and language of the poem as well as how the elusive metaphors, imageries, and figures recurring in the poem such as "the sacred river", "ceaseless turmoil", "Ancestral voices" render the meaning of the poem undecidable in order to lay bare the already existing problematisation of the self-presence of meaning and the free play of signification that prevails in the text.

1.1. Romanticism

Before diving into Romanticism, the Enlightenment thought should first be discussed briefly because it is one of the major influences on the Romantic era. The Enlightenment thought, in many ways, is an extension of Platonism and its regulating principle is reason. Therefore, as Wu points out, all the "ideas and opinions were to be subject to the light of 'reason' ... there was an attempt to systematize and codify nature and society" (Wu, *Companion* 39-40). Strictly speaking, nature was to be seen nothing more than an object, which is devoid of an agency of its own, to be studied and explored by way of science through the guidance of reason, which was regarded as the highest faculty in the human mind. In other words, nature was something to be demystified. This Newtonian mechanistic conception of nature was the dominant scientific thought in the Age of Enlightenment (45) and it widened the gap between man and nature considerably.

John Locke, one of the major empiricist thinkers of the Enlightenment, shares with Newton the mechanistic conception of nature and establishes a hierarchical relationship between man and nature as well as between man and other living beings within the context of logocentric binary thinking. Following the traces of Descartes' the Cartesian Self, which assumes that human being is a rational, stable, and fixed entity, Locke, in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, takes the assumed

“superiority” of mankind over other living things for granted because of man’s so-called “God-given” ability to use their higher faculties that are governed by reason: “... it is the understanding that sets man above the rest of sensible things, and gives him all the advantage and dominion which he has over them ...” (Locke 22). As an empiricist, Locke followed in Thomas Hobbes’ footsteps and rejected the neo-Platonic belief in the existence of innate ideas in the human mind (Wu, *Companion* 40). For Locke, the human mind was nothing but “a blank sheet ... upon which experience writes” (40). Moreover, he puts forward that the use of words is the use of reason (Locke 35). Surely by words or language what Locke refers to is referential language because, analogously to Platonic discourse, the Enlightenment thinkers considered poetic language inferior to referential language because it appeals only to the “lower” faculties of the human mind that are regulated by unreason unlike the “higher” faculties that are regulated by reason. To put it differently, Locke, similar to all other empiricists and Enlightenment thinkers, sees language nothing more than a tool or an instrument to convey the ideas generated in the mind succeeding the perception of the material world through sense perception (388), undervaluing language by placing it on the weaker leg in the hierarchy, opposite to the objects in the material world, which constitute the stronger leg. In other words, by seeing language only as a tool which has no agency of its own, Locke takes the correspondence between the signifier and the signified for granted as if meaning is something stable or fixed. Indeed, Locke, similar to the other metaphysical thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Husserl, Hegel, and Saussure that Derrida critiques, takes the subject’s complete control over the words s/he articulates for granted because he assumes that words stand for nothing but the ideas in the mind of the person that speaks them (391). He, in a way, like a structuralist, argues that the connexion between sounds and ideas is completely arbitrary (393).

David Hume, another major empiricist Enlightenment thinker, follows the Platonic tradition in his philosophy, which is built upon logocentric binary thinking. In his *Of The Standard of Taste*, he establishes a hierarchal relationship between sentiment and reason as well as between reason and imagination:

Those who found morality on sentiment, more than on reason ... writers of all nations and all ages concur in applauding justice, humanity, magnanimity, prudence, veracity; and in blaming the opposite qualities. Even poets and other authors, whose compositions are chiefly calculated to please the imagination ... to inculcate the same moral precepts, and to bestow their applause and blame on the same virtues and vices. (Hume 486)

This is a typical example of Platonism that operates through binary oppositions in which Hume associates morality with reason and implies that poetry has nothing to do with reason because it appeals only to imagination, which is one of the “lower” faculties in the human mind. Hume constructs another hierarchy, which is between history and poetry, akin to those of Plato’s and Horace’s, and argues that the aim of history is to teach, whereas poetry only appeals to passions and emotions because it is a product of imagination, which is regulated by unreason (494). He, further in line with the Platonic view of poetry, argues that poetry is based on lies and leads people away from the truth, and those authors who please the audience do not actually please them because they go beyond the boundaries of reason; they please notwithstanding their transgression:

Many of the beauties of poetry ... are founded on falsehood and fiction, on hyperboles, metaphors, and an abuse or perversion of terms from their natural meaning ... though poetry can never submit to exact truth, it must be confined by rules of art, discovered to the author either by genius or observation. If some negligent or irregular writers have pleased, they have not pleased by their transgressions of rule or order, but in spite of these transgressions. (488-89)

When it first emerged, the Enlightenment was a liberating phenomenon that set people free from the chains of the oppression imposed upon them by the Church and religious dogmas:

The writers and thinkers of the Enlightenment imagined themselves as emerging from centuries of darkness and ignorance into a new age enlightened by reason, science and a respect for humanity. ... it was a time of humanity’s coming of age, a process of mental liberation from the bondage of error and oppression. More than a set of shared beliefs or dogma, the Enlightenment stood for an attitude and a sceptical method of thought. (Wu, *Companion* 39)

Later on, however, it turned into a totalising epistemology and promoted a single form of truth which is fixed and stable: “All received ideas ... were to be subject to the light of ‘reason’. ... The great Enlightenment endeavour to collect and systematize knowledge ... was an attempt to systematize and codify nature and society” (39-40). Through its combination with the empiricist thought and Platonic dichotomy, the Enlightenment epistemology widened the gap between man and nature by promoting a mechanistic view of the world and establishing binary oppositions such as reason/imagination, man/nature, sense perception/innate ideas, and so on.

One of the major differences between the Enlightenment epistemology and the Romantic movement is that the latter attacked the former’s refusal of the mind’s creative power (imagination), sharing with Kant the notion of the creative role of the mind:

The attraction of Kant’s philosophy to ... the Romantics was that it assigned an active and creative role to the mind in the formation of human knowledge. ... Kant allowed an important role for the artistic imagination which had been somewhat restrained in the empiricist writings of Hobbes, Locke, Hartley and Hume. (43)

Indeed, though Kant agrees with the empiricists that knowledge derives from experience, he disagrees with them on the notion that there are no innate ideas existing in the human mind when he puts forward that such innate ideas as time and space are pre-existing in the human mind (Kant 489). Kant’s take on the role and limits of the human mind indeed resonates deeply with the Romantics who cherish the imaginative powers of the human mind through their writings. Most of the Romantic writers shared a Kantian notion in terms of the structure of the human mind and “agreed that the mind has access beyond sense to the transcendent and the infinite, through a special faculty they called ... Imagination” (Abrams, *Norton Anthology* 11). Coleridge might be the one in whose writings the influence of Kant is most evident. Indeed, Coleridge divides the powers of the human mind into three in his *Biographia Literaria*: fancy, primary imagination, and secondary imagination, all of which directly coincide with

Kant's reproductive imagination, productive imagination, and aesthetic imagination (Wu, *Companion* 34).

In addition to its interaction with and reaction to the Enlightenment thought and empiricism, Romanticism was influenced by the American and French Revolution: "Intellectually [Romanticism] marked a ... reaction to the Enlightenment. Politically it was inspired by the revolutions in America and France. ... Socially it championed progressive causes. ... and its watchword is 'Imagination'" (Drabble 842-843). Although some of the Romantics challenged the empiricist thought and the Enlightenment epistemology and were influenced by the revolutions, not all Romantics shared the same ideas. As mentioned above, the Romantics were born into the Enlightenment epistemology. Most of the Romantic writers, influenced by the French Revolution, such as William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth challenged its discourse and doctrines, whereas others such as Edmund Burke embodied and defended them (Wu, *Companion* 29-30). Most of the Romantics, however, later on became disillusioned as to how the revolution, in a violent way, turned into the very totalising phenomenon it sought to destroy:

But now, become Oppressors in their turn,
Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
For one of Conquest, losing sight of all
Which they had struggled for. ... (Wordsworth, *The Prelude* 206-209)

The Romantic writers were not the only ones who suffered between the late 18th century and the early the 19th century. It was a period of turbulence in which the transition from agricultural society to industrial nation took place and the financial power shifted from aristocracy to the owners of factories (Abrams, *Norton Anthology* 1). This shift in social and economic structure resulted in two massively polarised classes: the owners who were in control of the capital and the workers who had to work for long hours under extremely difficult conditions only to survive (2-3). The French Revolution was influential in Britain and the effects of the revolution were quite visible in all of the institutions in Britain as well as in the everyday life of English

people (Wu, *Companion* 26). The social and political upheaval in France greatly destabilised the social and political state of affairs in Britain, giving rise to the “fundamental questions about the nature of society, the basis of government, the doctrine of ‘rights’, the notion of political justice, the relation between the sexes, even the very concept of ‘reason’” (27). Indeed, the French Revolution was a major inspiration for the Romantic ideology, which promoted “individual experience ... the faculty of imagination ... a profound sense of spiritual reality” (Day 4). The Enlightenment thought first emerged as a progressive phenomenon and it was one of the major influences on the French Revolution; therefore, one cannot simply consider the Romantic writers or the Romantic movement as a unified whole:

any such attempts to summarize Romanticism inevitably end up over-systematising and simplifying the phenomenon. They imply a coherence ... which closer inspection leads us to call in question. ... it is not true that all British Romantic writers display all of those elements all of the time. The summaries which tend to unify Romanticism avoid, in the first place, recognition of the fact that any of the writers who are labelled Romantic may have changed or, at least, shifted opinion in the course of a writing career. ... We hear that Romanticism was a reaction against Enlightenment perspectives and Neoclassical aesthetics and at the same time that it was inspired by the French Revolution. But the French Revolution was in part a direct expression of the French Enlightenment. (5-6)

Although the challenge that Romanticism posed to the Enlightenment thought and the metaphysics of presence was not limited only to the Romantics’ active ideological participation in the French Revolution and the influence of the revolution on the Romantics, Romanticism, needless to say, was under the influence of the French Revolution and thus shared the same notions with it: “Romanticism seeks to effect in poetry what revolution aspires to achieve in politics: innovation, transformation, defamiliarization” (Wu, *Companion* 28). One of the major changes to be observed in writing and literature in the Romantic period is the language of the texts and the fact that poetry was the dominant literary form. Indeed, the role of the writer, who was in the Romantic era beginning to be seen as a prophet (Wordsworth, *Preface* 149-150), as well as the influence of language, words, and ideas became more dominant due to the reformist and nonconformist ideals promoted by the French Revolution (Wu,

Companion 28-29). Another major change which occurred in literature in the Romantic period was the emergence of nature as the subject of literary texts:

external nature – the landscape ... became a persistent subject of poetry ... the romantic [poetry] ... set out from or return to an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape, the outer scene is not presented for its own sake but only as a stimulus for the poet to engage in the most characteristic human activity, that of thinking. (Day 3)

Indeed, as Paul de Man also argues in his essay “Symbolic Landscape in Wordsworth and Yeats”, the landscape becomes the muse for the poet within the context of Romantic poetry (125). Furthermore, in addition to what one might call the positive effects of the liberating ideas promoted in the early phases of the French Revolution on the Romantic literature and writing, the negative effects of the later phases of the French Revolution to the Romantic literature and writing should also be pointed out. Indeed, the Romantic writers were disappointed with the revolution when it betrayed what it stood for in the end, and Wu argues that the influence of this disillusionment can be observed in their works:

What is interesting is that the language of Utopian idealism and apocalyptic vision, indeed the whole transformational texture of revolutionary discourse, remains a central feature of Romantic writing ... a language of disillusion and despair, and it is in moods of alienation or depression that Romantic writing often yields its most powerful insights, or achieves greatest intensity of expression. Moving between the emotional extremes of joy and dejection, hope and despair, certainty and fear, Romantic poetry thus appears to mirror the psychological patterns of the French Revolution, and, at its most complex, to internalize also the ideological conflict of the revolution debate. ... the Romantic aesthetic of inspiration and collapse, of energy and imagination – becomes informed by and subject to the same unstable dynamic as that of revolution. (Wu, *Companion* 34)

However, what the thesis will argue is that the Romantics do not deliberately problematise and destabilise language, the meaning-making mechanisms, and the relationship between the author, the text, and the meaning. This problematisation, as the thesis will discuss in detail, occurs on a textual level which is independent of the signifying intentions of the poetic persona. The language of the Romantic texts, as

Wu also points out (25), is transgressive in the way that it goes beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of the metaphysics of presence as well as critiques the assumed correspondence of the signifier and the signified, as the thesis will point out, through the non-presence of the transcendental signified.



CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKCLOTH OF THE STUDY

2.1. Metaphysics of Presence

Before venturing into the discussion on the conceptual backcloth of the thesis, what Derrida refers to by the metaphysics of presence, deconstruction, the “event” and “rupture” as well as the conventional speech/writing dichotomy in the Western thought and the meaning-making mechanisms in Saussurean terminology (the presumed overlap of the signifier and the signified) must first be discussed in order to pave the way for a better understanding of dissemination, *différance*, and trace.

What Derrida refers to by Western metaphysics or metaphysics of presence is the epistemological framework that has structured the Western world linguistically, discursively, and ideologically for centuries, starting with Plato (Derrida, *Dissemination* 76). For Derrida, logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence are “the exigent, powerful, systematic, and irrepressible desire for ... a [transcendental] signified” (*Of Grammatology* 49). Logocentrism, in other words, as Barbara Johnson puts forward in her introduction to Derrida’s *Dissemination*, means “self-presentation of meaning” (ix). This framework, which is built upon logocentrism, works through binary logic. To be more specific, in the core of this framework is the *logos*, which is the centre that regulates everything else linguistically, discursively, and ideologically, and binary logic, which is formed through the opposition of a stronger and a weaker leg, is structured around this centre:

presence-to-itself of a center (given the name of Origin, God, Truth, Being, or Reason) centralizes the world through the authority of its self-presence and

subordinates to itself, in an agonistic, hierarchical manner, all the other cognizable elements of the same epistemological (or ontological) system. Thus, the metaphysical logic of dichotomous oppositions which dominates philosophical thought (Presence/Absence, Being/Nothingness, Truth/Error, Same/Other, Identity/Difference, etc.) is, in fact, a subtle mechanism of hierarchization which assures the unique valorization of the “positive” pole ... and the repressive subordination of all “negativity,” ... (Felman 3)

The centre in the Western metaphysics has always been reason, consciousness, man, God etc., all of which are the dominant epistemological and metaphysical categories of phallogocentric discourse. Indeed, as the Western metaphysics is “the play of presence or absence” (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 167), the binaries upon which it operates are “speech/writing, life/death, father/son, master/servant, first/second ... soul/body, inside/outside, good/evil, seriousness/play, day/night, sun/moon, etc.” (*Dissemination* 85). In other words, Western metaphysics is the metaphysics of presence. It promotes the metaphysical notion that full presence is achievable. It determinates truth and meaning on the basis of presence: truth as presence or meaning as presence. What *is* can be *true* or can *mean* something. Conversely, absence means non-presence and thus non-truth and non-meaning. The upper legs in the traditionally constructed binaries such as those mentioned above, therefore, assume priority and authority over the lower legs through their metaphysical presence and thus through the assumed absence of the other. As Barbara Johnson puts forward in her introduction to Derrida’s *Dissemination*, these binary oppositions that Western metaphysics relies upon “privilege unity ... immediacy, and temporal and spatial *presentness* over distance, difference ... and deferment. In its search for the answer to the question of Being, Western philosophy has ... always determined Being as *presence*” (viii). This is, however, as Derrida points out and as the thesis will also emphasise, illusory and ironic because if the presence of something is dependent upon the absence of other, then this means that presence is defined and determined by absence, making the superiority of one to the other undecidable and indeterminate.

Plato, through the binary logic regulated by reason, divided the universe into two: the world of Forms/Ideas, which is beyond sense perception, and the world of shadows, which is within the realm of sense perception (Leitch 7). In the *Book VII of Republic*,

Plato elaborates on his cosmological picture with his famous allegory of the cave which displays “the human condition” by putting forward that human beings living in the material world are like prisoners tied up in a cave, compelled to see only the shadows of the people and objects passing behind them that are projected on the wall before them, and this phenomenal state constitutes the only reality that people can perceive through sense perception (Plato 64-65). By the same token, Plato further argues that the “illusory” reality on the world of shadows can be the only reality that human beings can perceive through sense perception and the world of Forms is beyond comprehension:

Imagine that one of them has been set free and is suddenly made to stand up, to turn his head and walk, and to look towards the firelight ... he'd turn away and run back to the things he could make out, and would take the truth of the matters to be that these things are clearer than what he was being shown. (65)

The other major proposition that Plato offers which works through logocentric binary logic takes places in the *Book X* of *Republic*, where he argues that art or poetry appeals only to the lower faculties of the human mind which are governed by unreason, for poetry or any form of art, Plato argues, is thrice removed from truth because they are copies of the appearance of the objects in the material world (78). He further elaborates on this dichotomous thinking by associating desire and emotion with unreason, and order and guidance with reason:

... sex, anger, and all the desires and feelings of pleasure ... poetic representation ... irrigates and tends to these things when they should be left to wither, and it makes them our rulers when they should be our subjects ... If you admit the entertaining Muse of lyric and epic poetry, then instead of law and the shared acceptance of reason as the best guide, the kings of your community will be pleasure and pain. (79)

He downgrades the poet as someone who corrupts the human mind by appealing only to its lower faculties via stimulating desire and emotion.

2.2. Critique of the Western Metaphysics

Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence—including the writings of what Derrida would call the metaphysical thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and Saussure—begins with his deconstruction of the presence/absence and speech/writing dichotomies which lie at the heart of Western thought. Presence/absence dichotomy plays a vital role in the determination of truth and meaning: "The 'is' ... as an indication of presence ... consciousness of ideal mastery ... in the act of showing, indicating, perceiving, or predicating ... assures the West of all its fantasies of mastery" (Derrida, *Dissemination* 352). Indeed, the Western world has deluded itself by the belief that language can be commanded or dominated through the metaphysics of presence, which gives authority and priority to presence over absence. Aristotle, in a quite similar fashion to the other metaphysical thinkers like Plato, Rousseau, and Saussure, gives priority to speech over writing because of the presence of the speaker, as a reliable producer of the sound image or the signifier, in the act of speech: "Words spoken are symbols or signs of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken" (Aristotle 115). The material presence of the speaking subject as well as the temporal and spatial immediacy between the speaker and the listener constitute, within the context of what Derrida calls the metaphysics of presence, the taken for granted nature of the assumed correspondence between the signifier and the signified (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 11). The presence of the speaking subject asserts authority, transforms voice into consciousness, and creates the illusion that what comes out of one's mind directly corresponds to a concept or idea in one's mind ("Semiology and Grammatology" 22). According to Derrida, thinkers in the West from Plato and Aristotle to Husserl, Rousseau, Hegel and Saussure fell into this metaphysical trap (22). Traditionally speaking, the speaking subject, Derrida puts forward, is the father of speech (*Dissemination* 77). What this father would do is to provide validity to his son, *logos*, with his presence and immediacy: "In contrast to writing, living *logos* is alive in that it has a living father ... a father that is *present*, *standing* near it, behind it, within it, sustaining it with his rectitude, attending it in person in his own name" (77). Within the discourse of the metaphysics of presence, "Being-there is always a property of

paternal speech. And the site of a fatherland” (146). Writing, on the other hand, has always been regarded as a secondary mode of communication, as derivative of speech due to the assumed temporal and spatial distance between writing and the signified and the assumed close proximity between speech and the signified (*Of Grammatology* 11-12). Indeed, writing within the Platonic discourse, as Derrida puts forward,

is weakened speech, something not completely dead: a living-dead, a reprieved corpse, a deferred life, a semblance of breath. The phantom, the phantasm, the simulacrum ... of living discourse is not inanimate is not insignificant; it simply signifies little, and always the same thing. This signifier of little, this discourse that doesn't amount to much ... rolls ... this way and that like someone who has lost his way, who doesn't know where he is going, having strayed from the correct path, the right direction, the rule of rectitude, the norm; but also like someone who has lost his rights, an outlaw, a pervert, a bad seed, a vagrant, an adventurer, a bum. Wandering in the streets, he doesn't even know who he is, what his identity—if he has one—might be, what his name is, what his father's name is. He repeats the same thing every time he is questioned on the street corner, but he can no longer repeat his origin. Not to know where one comes from or where one is going, for a discourse with no guarantor, is not to know how to speak at all, to be in a state of infancy. (*Dissemination* 143-144)

The function of writing has always been to provide assistance when speech and thus the self-presence of meaning fail to overcome a certain distance and are absent. This function of writing; it being a signifier of a signifier, a copy of a copy, a supplement of a supplement (109), was imposed upon it by the Western metaphysics on the basis of presence/absence dichotomy. Writing as supplement is regarded as a deformed form of speech or derivative of speech because, as a supplement, writing is thought to be added to something which has already full presence without it; namely, speech: “What is added is nothing because it is added to a full presence to which it is exterior. Speech comes to be added to intuitive presence ... writing comes to be added to living self-present speech” (*Of Grammatology* 167). Furthermore, Derrida regards speech as a supplement just like writing; thus, erasing the “difference” between the two (281). The treatment of writing as a secondary mode of communication by the metaphysical thinkers proves to be ironic, as Derrida puts forward, due to the fact that both speech and writing are signifiers. They both are external supplements to the signified, to the

concept, or to the idea. Speech, as Derrida points out, has only been seen superior to writing due to its “close” proximity to the speaking subject (*Dissemination* 77). This so-called close proximity, however, is of little consequence within the context of metaphysics which, by nature, defines both speech and writing as signifiers whose function is to make up for the non-presence of the signified. To be more specific, Western metaphysics betrays its own nature and destabilises the ground upon which it stands by putting speech over writing. Both speech and writing are considered as signs to make up for the absence of the transcendental signified or of the presence of the thing that they represent. Speech has been given priority and authority over writing because of its so-called close proximity to the source, to the speaking subject, assuming that the presence of a speaking subject in the presence of a listener would somehow ensure the correspondence between the sound image and the concept and thus the presence of meaning and of the signified. The phrases such as supplement, signifier, and representation are often interchangeably used by Derrida. He argues that supplement, which can be a signifier or a representer, does not replace or convey anything. It comes “in the place of a lapse, a nonsignified or a nonrepresented, a nonpresence. There is no present before it, it is not preceding by anything but itself ... by another supplement” (303-304). What’s more, he continues, if one desires to reach the source, which can be the signified or the concept, “one must recognize that there is a supplement at the source” (304). To put it differently, Derrida implies the non-existence of the signified or the presence of the thing represented. The supplement comes into play as a result of the effaced signified and absence of presence. Supplement or the signifier, therefore, merely leads to other signifiers or supplements, and is preceded by nothing but itself.

In addition, Derrida criticises Plato, Rousseau, and Saussure for regarding writing as subordinate and yet employing writing in presenting their ideas (159). He argues that theorisations of Rousseau, Saussure, and Hegel are merely extensions of Platonism (158) in terms of their take on writing as something derivative and exterior and their being non-critical of the assumed nature of the correspondence between the signifier and the signified (*Of Grammatology* 29). Saussure argues in his *Course in General Linguistics* that the words that are uttered through the mouth are called “sound-

images” (signifiers) and the idea or notion that they signify is called “concept” (signified) (Saussure 963-964). He takes the correspondence between the signifier and the signified for granted and takes the meaning as something fixed or stable by claiming that “[t]he bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary” (964). In other words, he urges that there is indeed a correspondence between the signifier and the signified and the meaning is created by the differential relations between signs. Saussure, therefore, remains logocentric and Platonic because he assumes the self-presence of meaning. Derrida suggests that Saussure sees writing as merely a derivation of speech and “takes up the traditional definition of writing which, already in Plato and Aristotle, was restricted to the model of phonetic script and the language of words” (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 30). Moreover, Derrida critiques Rousseau and thus all other metaphysical thinkers for degrading representation, yet at the same time assuming that the source of representation is presence and representation promises presence:

the entire history of metaphysics ... supposes at once that representation follows a first presence and restores a final presence. ... In criticizing representation as the loss of presence, in expecting a reappropriation of presence from it, in making it an accident or a means, one situates oneself within the self-evidence of the distinction between presentation and representation ... One criticizes the sign by placing oneself within the self-evidence and the effect of the difference between signified and signifier. (296)

Derrida lays bare the irony lying in the core of the critique of representation within the metaphysics of presence: the paradox of attempting to achieve presence through representation, which is regarded as a state of non-presence or absence by the discourse of western metaphysics in the first place.

Derrida’s deconstruction of the Western metaphysics extends over representation or mimesis, which is merely a form of—if not *is*—speech, writing, and thus signification. The thing represented or imitated, Derrida argues, is always seen “more real, more essential, more true ... than what imitates” (191) within the metaphysics of presence and this hierarchical relation between imitated and imitator had never been challenged by the metaphysical thinkers (192). Derrida, however, problematises this taken for

granted notion and urges that imitation or the imitator in fact precedes what is imitated. In other words, representation of something can very well displace the status of the thing which is represented and thus take the position of the origin. Indeed, this is one of the main points that Derrida makes. Writing, as he so often points out, has always been regarded within the discourse of the metaphysics of presence as a foul and external extension of speech because it was thought to be derivative of speech; a degraded and worse version of speech which lacks the actual presence of the speaker, who gives speech priority because of the close proximity between speech and concept s/he makes possible through his/her presence. For Derrida, however, the difference between the two is not so unequivocal. Derrida, in his critique of the metaphysics of presence, does not simply prioritise writing over speech. He rather lays bare how chimerical it is to construct a hierarchical binary opposition between writing and speech or between imitation and imitated on the basis of presence and absence:

Representation mingles with what it represents, to the point where one speaks as one writes, one thinks as if the represented were nothing more than the shadow or reflection of the representer. ... In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable. ... an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split *in itself* and not only as an addition to itself of its image. The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles. The origin of the speculation becomes a difference. (*Of Grammatology* 36)

What Derrida refers to as “event” or “rupture” is a linguistic and discursive process of decentring the “centre”, destabilising the presence of the transcendental signified as well as the meaning-making mechanisms, and thus laying bare the “structurality of structure”; that is to say, the problematisation of language as well as the problematisation of the metaphysics of presence with its logic and working mechanisms through language and discourse:

This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic ... in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse ... a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. (“Structure” 354)

Before diving into any further, perhaps what Derrida means by centre and play should be discussed. Centre, in Derridean terminology, refers to the transcendental signified, which can be “defined” as a guiding concept, a blanket term or a core principle that regulates and organises everything in the structure or the system. Play is rather more difficult to define because, as it will be discussed thoroughly in the next chapter, it is related to and interchangeably used with the other non-concepts in Derridean terminology such as dissemination, *différance*, and trace. For the sake of clarifying the points that Derrida makes, play can be defined as the movement or domain of signification; that is to say, the realm of signification in which signs refer to each other. Accordingly, what Derrida implies by “event” or “rupture” is the moment—rather a series of moments—when the structurality of structure and the non-presence of the transcendental signified are laid bare (353). Derrida says that this decentring the centre or structurality of structure being exposed is not something he invented or something that happened all of a sudden, out of nowhere. He ascribes its roots to Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger:

Where and how does this decentring, this thinking the structurality of structure, occur? ... the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, the critique of the concepts of Being and truth, for which were substituted the concepts of play, interpretation, and sign (sign without present truth); the Freudian critique of self-presence, that is, the critique of consciousness, of the subject, of self-identity and of self-proximity or self-possession; and ... the Heideggerean destruction of metaphysics, of onto-theology, of the determination of Being as presence. (354)

Although Derrida emphasises the vital role Freud, Heidegger, and especially Nietzsche, who “far from remaining *simply* ... *within* metaphysics, contributed a great deal to the liberation of the signifier from its dependence or derivation with respect to the logos and the ... concept of truth or the primary signified” (*Of Grammatology* 19), played in the deconstruction of Western metaphysics, they, according to Derrida, nevertheless could not go beyond the boundaries of the metaphysics of presence because they “worked within the inherited concepts of metaphysics ... taken from a syntax ... [which] brings along with it the whole of metaphysics. This is what allows these destroyers to destroy each other” (“Structure” 355-356). Derrida explains the

nature of the structure by putting forward that it prevented the free play of signification through its centre, which limited the play of its units within the boundaries of the structure in order to maintain the totality of the structure (351-352). The history of metaphysics, that is to say, the historical process prior to the exposition of the illusory nature of the structure and the decentredness of centre, Derrida argues, is a period of time in which each centre is succeeded by another in a ceaseless series of substitutions (353). Although these centres had different names, there was always a centre, a regulating and organising principle, at work and its function was always the same: Preservation of the totality and form of the structure. The critique and the subsequent exposure of the structurality of structure come into play when one realises that the centre is in fact not part of or within the structure that it supposedly organises, but outside it (352). The examples for such centres can be God or consciousness, whose presence is metaphysical and therefore non-existent and in fact absent. The centre, which is located outside the structure, nevertheless organises the structure, but “escapes structurality” (352). Therefore, the centre does not exist, but functions. It imposes itself upon the structure as a regulating principle from outside the structure. Indeed, this decentring unveils the illusory and metaphysical nature of the centres (functioning prior to the rupture that Derrida talks about) which replaced each other subsequently as the organising principles of the structure. Lastly, Derrida emphasises that one cannot use a language or system of signification that is not that of Western metaphysics’ in order to critique the metaphysics of presence because neither such syntax nor lexicon exists outside the boundaries of metaphysics (354). In other words, one cannot simply do without a Saussurean vocabulary or forsake the concept of sign in the critique of the metaphysics of presence. However, one does not need to employ another syntax or lexicon to critique the language of metaphysics or any other system of signification, for, as Derrida points out, “language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique” (358).

2.3. Dissemination, *Différance*, and Trace

Reading or understanding Derrida, if such a thing is ever entirely possible, presents a great challenge because of the way he writes. Derrida avoids giving exact or clear-cut definitions for any of the “terms” or “concepts” he uses to elaborate on his theories in order not to fall into the metaphysical trap of presenting a fixed and totalising truth. He does not even call them terms or concepts. He discusses them in detail, provides at least several possible definitions for each and uses them interchangeably, bringing destabilisation and undecidability of meaning into play. The interchangeability that is being spoken of here, as the thesis will emphasise, refers to the idea that all of these non-concepts refer to each other and each definition of one non-concept is applicable to another. Therefore, to attempt to provide a single or exact definition for dissemination, *différance*, and trace would contradict the very theoretical aim that Derrida strived for through his elusive and complex writing, which is critiquing the metaphysics of presence by deconstructing the writings of metaphysical thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and Saussure (Rorty 166). Nevertheless, perhaps not an exact or single but plural definitions can be discussed regarding these non-words or non-concepts, as Derrida would call them, for the sake of clarifying the conceptual backcloth of the thesis.

Perhaps one should first talk about what text “means” in the Derridean sense before attempting to discuss the non-concepts mentioned above. To start with, a text is not something whose “meaning” can be wholly grasped or whose linguistic and discursive system can be wholly dominated by an author or a reader. It not only escapes the perception of the reader but also “the law of its composition and the rules of its game” (Derrida, *Dissemination* 63). In other words, text eludes both the signifying intentions of the author and the signifying possibilities for the reader:

My own presence to myself has been preceded by a language. Older than consciousness, older than the spectator, prior to any attendance, a sentence awaits “you” ... The text occupies the place before “me”; it regards me, invests me, announces me to myself (340-341).

Indeed, Derrida implies the already and ever present inability of the author to command the language of the text and of the reader to try to interpret the text. Moreover, a text is not a closed set of system that produces stable and frozen meaning or totality as the words and meanings in a text are connected with and refer to a number of contexts within language and thus transgresses the author's or reader's syntax and lexicon (129-30). In between the lines lies what Derrida calls "trace", which will be discussed below, which links what is, in terms of meaning, "present" in the text to what is "absent".

First borrowed non-concept from Derridean terminology to discuss is dissemination. Derrida points out that dissemination does not mean that an ultimate truth or meaning can be reached or grasped, nor does it mean that meaning is non-existent. Rather, dissemination lays bare the "already divided generation of meaning" (268). Derrida further argues that dissemination prevents the text from becoming a totalising and closed entity:

Dissemination ... although producing a nonfinite number of semantic effects, can be led back neither to a present of simple origin ... nor to an eschatological presence. It marks an irreducible and *generative* multiplicity ... forbidding an exhaustive and closed formalization of [text] or at least a saturating taxonomy of its themes, its signified, its meaning ... [which produces] the deviance of meaning ... a nerve, a fold, an angle that interrupts totalization: in a certain place, a place of well-determined form, no series of semantic valences can any longer be closed or reassembled. ("Positions" 45-46)

The definition(s) Derrida talks about are, to no one's surprise, complex and multiple because to provide an exact definition for dissemination would totalise its meaning and thus betray the elusive and bottomless ground upon which it stands. Dissemination simultaneously refers to the superabundance of meaning and the loss of meaning. It also refers to dispersal of meaning depending on the context(s) and text(s). Dissemination, then, can be taken as a critique of the idea that a text can be dominated, possessed or appropriated by an authoritative subject (Norris 112). Dissemination is always at work in any given text as every word or meaning, on a conscious or unconscious level, relates to other words or meanings in a limitless

number of contexts, which are beyond the reach of the signifying intentions of the author or the signifying possibilities for the reader (Derrida, *Dissemination* 290), as they are caught up in an everlasting chain of signification. Dissemination, however, does not simply mean that there is no meaning. On the contrary, it underlines the possibility and play of meaning(s). However, a text does not promise meaning. One cannot simply hope to unravel the thread of signification or language, expecting to achieve full, unified or total meaning. Every sign leads to another sign “in a sprawling limitless web” and this continues through in an endless chain of significations (Eagleton 111-112).

In order to talk about *différance*, one must first talk about its epistemology and relation to the word difference. What is the difference between difference and *différance*? What is the function of “a” that replaces “e” in the constitution of the word *différance*? What Derrida aims to draw attention to is that one cannot simply notice the difference between difference and *différance* in speech, whereas in writing the difference between the two is visible (*Speech and Phenomena* 132), critiquing the taken for granted subordination of writing within the discourse of the metaphysics of presence. Another difference between difference and *différance* is that whereas difference only means to differ in terms of space, that is to say, “of not being identical, of being other, of being discernible, etc.” (136), *différance* means difference both in space (to differ) and time (to defer). *Différance* simultaneously means both to differ and to defer: “différance as temporalizing is conjoined with différance as spacing” (139). To differ is spacing, whereas to defer is temporalising. Thus, *différance* is both spacing and temporalising (143). To be more specific, to defer (as part of the meaning of *différance*) means “to temporalize, to resort, consciously or unconsciously, to the temporal and temporalizing mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfillment of ‘desire’ or ‘will,’” (136). In other words, *différance* refers to “differing ... as discernibility, distinction, deviation, diastem, *spacing*; and deferring ... as detour, delay, relay, reserve, *temporalizing*” (149). *Différance*, then, in terms of spatial difference, refers to meaning which is not single, stable or frozen. In terms of temporal difference, it refers to meaning which is not whole or ultimate, that is to say, it implies that the ultimate meaning (the transcendental signified) can never be reached

or grasped. Accordingly, meaning is never spatially or temporally present; it is always differed and deferred. *Différance*, therefore, as Derrida puts forward, is “an economic concept designating the production of differing/deferring” (*Of Grammatology* 23). Though Derrida uses the word “concept” here to refer to *différance*; *différance*, as Derrida emphasises so often, is not a concept. Instead, the word “assemblage” can be used to refer to *différance* as

the kind of bringing-together proposed here has the structure of an interlacing ... web, which would allow the different threads and different lines of sense ... to separate again, as well as being ready to bind others together. (*Speech and Phenomena* 132)

Indeed, *différance* refers to meaning(s) that is/are plural, multi-layered, and complex, and whose plurality, multi-layeredness, and complexity are not dependent upon or determined by a language, context or interpretation (137). *Différance* is not something that comes to exist because of language or after language, it is what constitutes or makes possible signification and language in the first place:

the signified concept is never present in itself ... Every concept is necessarily and essentially inscribed in a chain or a system, within which it refers to another and to other concepts, by the systematic play of differences. Such a play, then—*différance*—is no longer simply a concept, but the possibility of conceptuality, of the conceptual system and process in general. ... What we note as *différance* will thus be the movement of play that “produces” (and not by something that is simply an activity) these differences, these effects of difference. This does not mean that the *différance* which produces differences is before them in a simple and in itself unmodified and indifferent present. *Différance* is the nonfull, nonsimple “origin”; it is the structured and differing origin of differences. Since language (which Saussure says is a classification) has not fallen from the sky, it is clear that the differences have been produced; they are the effects produced, but effects that do not have as their cause a subject or substance, a thing in general, or a being that is somewhere present and itself escapes the play of difference. (140-141)

Différance, then, is that which precedes language, signification, and meaning because it is what makes “the play of difference” and thus the production of meaning(s) possible. It is anti-essential, anti-ontotheological, and has no origin (134-135). What

différance critiques is, Derrida says, “the determination of being in presence, or in beingness” (153). *Différance*, therefore, is not logocentric. It does not assume the self-presence of meaning or the possibility of full presence. Instead, it lays bare the already disseminated, dispersed, differed, and deferred condition of meaning. Accordingly, *différance* “commands nothing, rules over nothing, and nowhere does it exercise any authority. It is not marked by a capital letter. Not only is there no realm of difference, but difference is ... the subversion of every realm” (153).

All of these definitions of *différance* by Derrida lead one to what Derrida calls “trace”, which is interchangeably used with *différance* as the two non-concepts always refer to each other. Trace, in the Derridean sense, can be taken as residues that are (already) present in the play of differences, the movement of signification, and thus the production of meaning(s). Traces, which are already there and co-existing with *différance*, are comprised of the things that a word refer to in both spatial and temporal sense. That is, each element in the movement of signification

is related to something other than itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element. This trace relates no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and it constitutes what is called the present by this very relation to what it is not, to what it absolutely is not; that is, not even to a past or future considered as a modified present. (142)

Traces that are “present”, Derrida points out, operate in the realm of the unconscious and do not have anything to do with consciousness, therefore are beyond the perception of the language of the metaphysics of presence (152). Trace does not imply or promise presence. On the contrary, it is

the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself. The trace has ... no place, for effacement belongs to the very structure of the trace. ... the trace [is] simultaneously traced and effaced, simultaneously alive and dead (156).

Derrida further argues that neither trace nor *différance* is conceivable or locatable within the discourse of the metaphysics of presence as both these non-concepts transgress the boundaries of the conventional ontology and critique it (152-153). Analogous to *différance*, then, trace is beyond logocentrism as it does not assume the self-presence/presentation of meaning or full presence.

To sum up and bring all these non-concepts together under the same roof, then, the already-thereness of dissemination, *différance*, and trace (all of which refer to what Derrida calls the “disruption of writing”) problematise, in the Derridean sense, logocentrism, structurality of structure, and the metaphysics of presence (Eagleton 116). Borrowing these Derridean non-concepts, the thesis will analyse Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, “The Eolian Harp”, “Frost at Midnight”, “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison”, and “Kubla Khan” in order to show that the already-thereness of the problematisation and destabilisation of the relationship between the author, text, and meaning as well as of the presumed nature of the correspondence of the signifier and the signified are visible in the context of Romanticism. Moreover, through the employment of these non-concepts from Derridean terminology, the thesis will also put forward that Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, “The Eolian Harp”, “Frost at Midnight”, “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison”, and “Kubla Khan” can be regarded as what Derrida calls the disruption of writing in that they do not promote totality or ultimate meaning as the texts do not have a pre-existing, all-organising transcendental signified. On the contrary, they are to be taken as texts which are devoid of self-presence of meaning and thus promoting the free play of floating signifiers.

CHAPTER 3

S. T. COLERIDGE'S "THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER"

Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", which was published in *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, has been subjected to many criticisms and interpretations. M. H. Abrams, one of the major critics in the scholarship of Romantic Literature, maintains that with the publication of "The Rime" Coleridge opened up the gates of magic and mystery, which explores "the exoticism both of the Middle Ages and of the Orient", to poetry (Abrams, *Norton Anthology* 9). Harold Bloom, another major critic, argues in his *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* that the poem tells the story of "the Wanderer, the man with the mark of Cain, or the mocker of Christ, who must expiate in a perpetual cycle of guilt and suffering ... [the poem] is a late manifestation of the Gothic Revival" (Bloom, *Visionary* 201). Furthermore, Bloom puts forward in his "Coleridge: The Anxiety of Influence" that "The Rime" is a manifestation of Primary Imagination through the suffering of the Ancient Mariner ("Anxiety" 40). For Humphry House, richness of "The Rime" invites various interpretations and focusing on a single thread of meaning in the analysis of the poem would result in the exclusion of other things that are vital to the reading of the poem (House 93). Anne K. Mellor argues that the poem's nightmarish vision is thoroughly "dominated by arbitrary tackings and veerings between communion and isolation, between life and death, rather than an orthodox view of a world controlled by a comprehensible rational order or moral theology" (Mellor, *Irony* 141) and that through the Ancient Mariner's painful and inexplicable experience Coleridge created "a powerful expression of romantic irony" (148). Duncan Wu's reading of the poem is similar to that of Anne K. Mellor's. Wu suggests that "The Rime" portrays "a story of damnation. It concerns a godless, arbitrary world in which disproportionate misery is dealt out to the suffering innocent" (Wu, *Anthology* 614). For Elliot B. Gose, Jr.,

the Ancient Mariner's journey is "emblematic of the Romantic urge to explore the eternal soul and the temporal emotions" (Gose, Jr. 244). Christopher Stokes argues that the poem can be read "as part of a Todorovian *fantastic*, suspended between explicable and inexplicable causality ... [in which] Coleridge presents us with a subject that is ... unable to come to terms with itself" (Stokes 3-5). The majority of the analyses of "The Rime" in the scholarship follow a traditional line within Christian thought. One of the major examples for that would be Joseph McQueen's "'Old faith is often modern heresy': Re-enchanted orthodoxy in Coleridge's 'The Eolian Harp' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'", in which he suggests that the poem transgresses the limits of reason and naturalism, but this does not mean that the poem cannot be analysed within a theological context (McQueen 22-23). He further maintains that "The Rime" belongs to "a larger poetic backlash against mechanistic understanding of the world so common in Enlightenment thought" (23). J. W. R. Purser puts forward that the poem is filled with references made to Christianity and the killing and the hanging of the Albatross are emblematic of Crucifixion (Purser 251). For Peter Kitson, "The Rime" is "a poem of restoration" (Kitson 206), whereas for A. W. Crawford it is an allegory which depicts "human life as a Pilgrim's Progress" (Crawford 311). Final example for a theological reading of the poem is William Norman Guthrie's "'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' as Prophecy", in which he asserts that the poem is written with "a deliberate religious purpose" by Coleridge, who was equipped with "the task of reconciling science, political liberty, and the 'Truth in Christ.'" (Guthrie 200). Amongst the major psychoanalytic readings of the poem are David S. Miall's "Guilt and Death: The Predicament of the Ancient Mariner" and Anne Williams' "An I for an Eye: 'Spectral Persecution' in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". The former argues that the ending of the poem does not justify the Ancient Mariner's experience, which "resists the moral reading" (Miall, "Guilt" 653) and that the idea of arbitrariness dominates the poem (653). The latter, on the other hand, offers a Kristevan reading of the poem and maintains that "The Rime" is "extravagantly *disunified*, composed of interruptions, disruptions, ... Split between gloss and ballad, prose and verse, the ... poem partitions commentary and narrative, philosophical and emotive languages (Williams 1115) and that the poem demonstrates "primitive anxieties fundamental to the self" (1125). Last but not least,

Frances Ferguson emphasises in his “Coleridge and the Deluded Reader: ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’” the contradiction between the remarks made in the marginal gloss and what is shown in the text of the poem (Ferguson 624). As the literature review outlined above shows, there is no specifically Derridean reading of the poem in the scholarship. The following analysis, accordingly, will put under scrutiny Coleridge’s “The Rime” from a Derridean vantage point through the employment of the non-concepts dissemination, *différance*, and trace from Derridean terminology. In the process of this endeavour, the thesis will specifically focus on the relationship between the poetic persona, the text, and meaning by exploring the interaction between the marginal gloss and the text itself and the elusive phrases and metaphors such as the Sun, the Albatross, the water snakes, the wedding, the Hermit, and so on in order to lay bare the already existing problematisation and destabilisation of the logocentric correspondence between the signifier and the signified as well as the recurring emphasis of the non-existence of self-presence of meaning in the text.

3.1. The Marginal Gloss and Signification

The marginal gloss is analogous to preface in that both are written after the text itself is completed. From this point of view, they both recreate

an intention-to-say after the fact, the text exists as something written—a past—which, under the false appearance of a present, a hidden omnipotent author (in full mastery of his product) is presenting to the reader as his future. Here is what I wrote, then read, and what I am writing that you are going to read. (Derrida, *Dissemination* 7)

The post-writing addition of the marginal gloss is merely another text imposed upon the primary text, which is very similar to preface, which is also a post-writing addition in the form of another text as Derrida implies. What this post-writing addition does is to add another layer of meaning and context upon the already existing meaning(s) and context(s) within the text’s signifying possibilities. Another thing that it does is to show the reader that the poetic persona has failed to take full possession of the meaning and language of the text and thus is not satisfied with the text written in the

first place. In a way, it is indicative of the textual battle occurring between the poetic persona and the agency of the text over the domination of meaning. Furthermore, such post-writing additions as preface and marginal gloss can be considered as the poetic persona's second attempt to impose meaning, which s/he thinks is in line with his/her signifying intentions, upon the text, which he thinks transgresses his own signifying intentions. In other words, the function of the post-writing additions such as marginal gloss or preface is to prevent the free play of signification. This is ironic on a textual level because it merely increases the number of context in which the text can be both spatially and temporally analysed, thus giving rise to dissemination and *différance* in the Derridean sense.

Similar to "Kubla Khan", Coleridge's "The Rime" is a poem in which the contradiction between the initially written text and the post-writing additions are observable on a textual level. The first instance of the intervention of the marginal gloss occurs when the Ancient Mariner compels the Wedding-Guest to listen to his tale:

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

...

He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner. (Coleridge, "The Rime" 13-20)

The language of the poem's own lines quoted above articulates a harsh expression and emphasises the supernatural aspect of the Ancient Mariner and the world of the poem. The textual intervention in the form of a marginal gloss is added post-writing next to these lines because "the supernatural dominates the Mariner's account, the gloss-maker offers pseudoscientific explanations that rationalize away the existence of chaotic or irrational beings or events" (Mellor, *Irony* 147): "The Wedding-Guest is spellbound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale" (Coleridge, "The Rime" 331). The lines in the text are clear enough and they do not

need further explanation to be understood by the reader. The function of the commentary provided by the marginal gloss here is to soften the alien nature of the uncanny scene depicted by the text. It is a post-writing attempt by the poetic persona to transform the initially written text and its signifying possibilities to his own signifying intentions. However, it ironically implies the failure of the poetic persona in terms of dominating the meaning conveyed by the text. Moreover, the phrase “spellbound” in the gloss adds a magical element to what is already an uncanny supernatural depiction, and thus gives rise to the dissemination of meaning.

The Albatross’s appearance and its interpretation by the marginal gloss related to its significance is another important point of discussion as to how the marginal gloss goes beyond its function, which is to impose the poetic persona’s signifying intentions upon the text, by adding additional context(s) and meaning(s) to the text: “The Gloss, in assuming that things must be significant and interpretable, finds significance and interpretability ... by reading ahead of—or beyond—the main text” (Ferguson 623). The Albatross’s arrival is immediately situated in a theological context by the Ancient Mariner:

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God’s name. (Coleridge, “The Rime” 63-66)

The supposed religious significance of the Albatross is further stressed by the marginal gloss, which is written next to the lines quoted above: “Till a great sea bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog, and was received with great joy and hospitality” (332). The marginal gloss and the Ancient Mariner indicate as part of their Catholic discourse that the reason why the Albatross is taken to be a religious symbol is that after its arrival “[t]he ice did split with a thunder-fit;” (69) and the ship continues to proceed with “a good south wind sprung up behind;” (71). The marginal gloss, which is added post-writing next to the lines quoted above, once more stresses the religious significance of the Albatross: “And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen, and followeth the ship as it returned northward through fog and floating

ice” (332). However, the fact that the weather was fine and the ship was moving forward smoothly prior to the arrival of the Albatross shows that the attempt by the marginal gloss to attribute theological meaning to the Albatross functions only for the sake of merely adding a religious meaning to the text:

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.
The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea. (21-28)

These earlier lines show that long before the arrival of the Albatross the journey was proceeding well and without any interruption (House 94). Later on the weather turns bad with a “STORM-BLAST” (41) and that’s when the Albatross shows up. It shows up not when the weather is fine but when it is bad. This contradicts the interpretation of the marginal gloss and the Ancient Mariner because it implies that the Albatross may not be a sign of good omen after all, for it comes with the bad weather and the journey was proceeding well long before its arrival and this may indicate that it is in fact a sign of bad fortune. Both the narrator and the marginal gloss attribute religious significance to the Albatross because “[w]henver scientific laws fail to establish a necessary relation between the occurrences ... the gloss-maker assigns a moral causation to them” (Mellor, *Irony* 147). Shortly after its arrival, the Albatross is randomly shot and killed by the Ancient Mariner seemingly for no apparent reason:

... With my crossbow
I shot the ALBATROSS. (Coleridge, “The Rime” 81-82)

The lines indicate that the killing of the Albatross occurs “without apparent premeditation or conscious motive” (Bloom, *Visionary* 202) and thus not motivated by hatred, but the marginal gloss, as Mellor also puts forward (Mellor, *Irony* 147), immediately suggests that the Ancient Mariner kills the Albatross out of hatred: “The

ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen” (Coleridge, “The Rime” 332). To start with, there is no evidence provided other than the commentary made in the marginal gloss, which is added post-writing, and the words of the Ancient Mariner, who “interprets events through his Roman Catholic faith and appeals insistently to Christ, the cross, Mary and ... [his] archaic diction might be a way of suggesting that the Mariner is an ... unreliable narrator (Stokes 7), that the Albatross is pious or it is a good omen as Joseph McQueen also points out:

although the poem itself, in the stanzas leading up to the Albatross’s death, says nothing about the bird’s moral meaning, the gloss on this passage twice calls the bird a “good omen” and also describes it as “pious” ... As a result, the Mariner’s killing of the bird appears evil, even though the ballad supplies no moral judgment on this action but merely reports it as a fact (McQueen 29).

Of course one cannot simply eliminate the possibility that the Albatross may have a theological meaning, especially when the Ancient Mariner’s fellow mariners hang the dead Albatross around his neck:

Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung. (Coleridge, “The Rime” 141-142)

However, when one carefully puts under scrutiny the text and the story of the poem, one realises that the Albatross may be a metaphor for arbitrariness rather than Crucifixion because of its sudden arrival out of nowhere without any reason (Bloom, *Visionary* 202), its sudden inexplicable death, and the fact that the poem itself provides no such textual evidence. Moreover, all of these post-writing additions of the marginal gloss to the parts about the Albatross may also indicate that the Albatross is a metaphor for arbitrariness or randomness in the text’s own context, for Coleridge “seems to have felt unhappy about the arbitrariness of the poem, since he ... [added] the marginal gloss ... which tells the moral story of the Mariner in much more straightforward fashion than the poem itself” (Miall, “Guilt” 636). The only visible evidences to be found which imply that the Albatross is a metaphor for Christ or Crucifixion are the Catholic expressions of the Ancient Mariner and his fellow sailors

and the commentary made by the marginal gloss, which “mold[s] contradictory evidences into a cause-and-effect pattern that the main text never quite offers” (Ferguson 624). Rather than ascribing a religious meaning to it, the addition of the marginal gloss renders the meaning of the Albatross undecidable. What’s more, the Albatross is a bird and what a bird signifies is something floating in the air which cannot be caught or grasped. Accordingly, the Albatross metaphor in the text can be interpreted as a textual reference to the non-correspondence between the signifier and the signified or the non-existence of the self-presence of meaning. The Albatross metaphor is indicative of dissemination and *différance* in Derridean terms. Its various interpretations are indicative of the dissemination of meaning already existing in the text. It is an example of *différance* because it symbolises the floating signifier that moves about aimlessly due to its being devoid of the transcendental signified; its ultimate metaphysical destination. To be more specific, the meaning of the Albatross metaphor differs (spatially) in a number of contexts and thus it is also deferred (temporally) because an ultimate, stable or frozen meaning of it cannot be reached. Therefore, it would be safe to say that through the Albatross metaphor the text upsets the signifying intentions of the poetic persona and the attempt by the marginal gloss to prevent the free play of signification, for the logocentric attempt by the poetic persona to achieve a metaphysical correspondence between the signifier (the Albatross) and the signified (Christianity, Christ, Crucifixion etc.) is denied by the dissemination of meaning occurring throughout the text.

Another instance of the textual intervention by the poetic persona in the form of a marginal gloss is visible in the parts where the dead crew members are reanimated by the poem’s supernatural forces:

The dead men gave a groan.
 They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
 Nor spake, ne moved their eyes;
 It had been strange, even in a dream,
 To have seen those dead men rise.
 They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
 We were a ghastly crew. (Coleridge, “The Rime” 330-40)

The uncanniness and atrociousness of the textual portrayal of the events occurring in the text overwhelm the poetic persona's signifying intentions as s/he, through the post-writing addition of the marginal gloss, attempts to rationalise the bizarre happenings: "The bodies of the ship's crew are inspirited, and the ship moves on; ... But not by the souls of the men, nor by daemons of earth or middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint" (339). Some critics take the word of the marginal gloss, which is merely another text that is added post-writing, and interpret the supernatural entities that reanimate the crew members in a sort of robotic state: "Angels come into the bodies of the dead sailors and work the ship" (Peckham 19). However, there is no textual evidence which indicates that the supernatural beings that reanimate the dead bodies of the crew are "angelic spirits". Therefore, the commentary made by the marginal gloss does nothing but to impose "a logical and moral order upon the Mariner's experiences ... [t]he gloss-maker is clearly a rationalist" (Mellor, *Irony* 145-146). The marginal gloss can be regarded as trace in Derridean terms because its present and/or future presence is defined by its initial absence because it is a post-writing addition in the form of another text which does not simply merge with the primary text. As trace, the marginal gloss is "the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself ... simultaneously traced and effaced, simultaneously alive and dead" (Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* 156).

3.2. Metaphors, Imageries, Figures, and Signification

The discussion on the elusive phrases and metaphors which render meaning undecidable will begin with the Sun metaphor. The section will continue with the analysis of the Albatross, the Hermit, the water snakes, and then end with the dice.

The signifying possibilities for the Sun varies throughout the poem as its meaning is rendered undecidable by the text. What the Sun traditionally refers to within the context of Western tradition is reason; a guiding principle. At the beginning of the journey, where everything goes smoothly, the Sun can be located in its proper place as a guiding principle:

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea. (Coleridge, “The Rime” 25-28)

The lines indicate that the Sun guides the ship as the regulating principle that is equipped with positive connotations as it is “bright, golden and rayed, quite different from the small, clear-edged, bloody sun which becomes the image of evil two stanzas later” (House 100). Even after the killing of the Albatross, the Sun can be located in its proper place as the regulating element. The first signs of the “already divided generation of meaning” (Derrida, *Dissemination* 268) can be observed when the Sun’s signifying possibilities are enlarged by the text which associates it with God’s head (Stokes 8):

Nor dim nor red, like God’s own head,
The glorious Sun uprist: (Coleridge, “The Rime” 97-99)

A few lines later the Sun imagery gives way to another layer of dissemination as it goes under a sudden and dramatic topographical change:

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon. (111-114)

Within the context of the poem’s uncanny and alien topography, the previously “glorious Sun” (98) becomes “The bloody Sun” (112) perhaps due to the fact that the traditional working mechanisms of signification are no longer applicable to this new and unmapped territory through which the ships travels, which is “a godless, arbitrary world ... which [is] disproportionate” (Wu, *Anthology* 614). Towards the middle of the poem the Sun metaphor goes under another transformation which further differs and defers its meaning(s) as it is “transfigured into a ghastly face” (Stokes 8):

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon grate he peered
With broad and burning face. (Coleridge, "The Rime" 177-180)

Whether the Sun is good or bad or what it is that it exactly refers to is never clarified by the text (House 98). This undecidability gives rise to the dissemination of meaning as the text itself provides a number of meanings for the Sun depending on context and vantage point, which enhances the elusiveness of the metaphor that contributes to rendering the overall meaning of the poem undecidable and indeterminate.

Another such metaphor as the Sun is the famous Albatross, which is the focal point of the majority of the interpretations of the poem. The majority of the readings of the poem which situate the text within a theological context such as those of Peter Kitson's (206), Howard Creed's (221), and J. W. Purser's (251), argue that the Albatross has some sort of religious significance and is a symbol in Christian iconography. Surely these interpretations gain validity because of the such Catholic expressions made by the Ancient Mariner as "We hailed it in God's name" (Coleridge, "The Rime" 66) and by the marginal gloss as "the pious bird of good omen" (332). What's more, the major event which constitutes the foundation of such theological readings is the scene where the crew members punish the Ancient Mariner by hanging the dead Albatross around his neck:

Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung. (Coleridge, "The Rime" 141-142)

These lines, for many critics, refer to the Crucifixion (Purser 251). In the light of situating the Albatross in such a theological context, accordingly, the killing of the Albatross is considered by those same critics as "an act of pure, willful pride" (Creed 221) or as "a spiritual and symbolic sin [for which] ... [h]e is punished ... by physical agony and by loneliness" (Kitson 206). Interpretations of the Albatross such as those mentioned above, which are based on the commentary provided by the marginal gloss and the remarks of the Ancient Mariner, constitute only one part of the signifying

possibilities of the Albatross metaphor. Another part of its signifying possibilities comes into play when one specifically focuses on the text itself rather than the marginal gloss and the words of the Ancient Mariner. As much as the Albatross might be a religious symbol, it can also be a metaphor for arbitrariness and undecidability. To start with, the Ancient Mariner's sudden killing of the Albatross has multiple meanings. Firstly, it foregrounds the underlying emphasis of the text: arbitrariness. The idea of arbitrariness is of importance as to displaying the working mechanisms of the text which subvert traditional binary oppositions such as reason/unreason, rationality/irrationality, familiar/unfamiliar, sanity/insanity, order/arbitrariness, and so on. The Albatross symbolises arbitrariness or randomness because its shooting occurs "quite suddenly and unexplained; superficially it is unmotivated and wanton. The Mariner himself never makes any explicit attempt to explain it: nor does the poem contain ... any defence of it" (House 95). Furthermore, it may stand for undecidability because its meaning is rendered indeterminate by the Ancient Mariner and its crew, whose interpretation of the Albatross is self-contradictory because it depends merely on the changing weather and the topographical elements (Ferguson 621). When the Albatross first appears, the weather is bad and the topographical elements appear uncanny and estranged:

And now there came both mist and snow,
 And it grew wondrous cold:
 And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
 As green as emerald.
 ...

Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
 The ice was all between.
 ...

The ice was here, the ice was there,
 The ice was all around:
 It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
 Like noises in a swound!
 At length did cross an Albatross,
 Thorough the fog it came;
 As if it had been a Christian soul,
 We hailed it in God's name. (Coleridge, "The Rime" 51-66)

Given the topography they find themselves in and the Catholic discourse they embody, the Ancient Mariner's and the crew's interpretation of the Albatross as a religious symbol is quite natural and needs no further justification. When the Ancient Mariner kills the Albatross, the crew members punish him not only because he killed what was for them a religious symbol but also because the Albatross, for them, replaces what was previously their guiding principle: The Sun. For them, the Albatross is not only a religious symbol, but also a familiar entity, a guiding principle that comes to replace the Sun in an alien topography they are situated. Thus, they punish the Ancient Mariner for killing the Albatross because, as part of their Catholic discourse, they fail to make sense of the unknown without the existence of a guiding principle which can be located within the familiar discourse. However, the killing of the Albatross does not seem to change anything and "[n]ature seems curiously unmoved by something that has been read often as a crime against it" (Stokes 6). Accordingly, when the crew realise that the weather is still good despite the Albatross's death and the Sun is once more visible as the guiding principle, they, as the marginal gloss emphasises, justify the killing and "thus make themselves accomplices in the crime" (Coleridge, "The Rime" 333):

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.
The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free (97-104)

As these lines are indicative of, the crew immediately change how they feel about the Albatross's death and the Ancient Mariner after seeing that the weather is good and the journey continues to proceed smoothly notwithstanding the death of the Albatross (Mellor, *Irony* 138-139). This sudden change of attitude by the crew implies that the Albatross may not have any religious meaning after all and thus renders its meaning undecidable:

what the bird represents is still at this stage very unclear. The albatross appeared, it was hailed, and it was killed. Apart from its haunting presence at vespers, which itself could be protective, malign or perhaps even arbitrary, the albatross seems to have no obvious moral or religious significance. Thus, the death of the albatross is a powerful but initially unintelligible event. It refuses to fit into the narrative immediately before and after: we do not know why the Mariner killed it, and, certainly at this point, we do not know what such a killing meant. (Stokes 6)

Later on in the story when the topography once more becomes uncanny and the weather turns bad as the previously “glorious Sun” becomes “The bloody Sun” (Coleridge, “The Rime” 98-118), the crew members once more have a change of heart and ascribe religious significance to the Albatross by hanging its dead body around the Ancient Mariner’s neck (141-142). However, as mentioned above, despite the remarks made in the marginal gloss and the Catholic expressions of the Ancient Mariner and the crew, the text itself does not present the Albatross as a religious symbol (Ferguson 622), “nor is the slaying of an albatross at all an adequate symbol of a lapse that demands expression in the language of theology” (Bloom, *Visionary* 203). What’s more, the text itself, later on in the story, shows that the crew’s treatment of the Albatross as a religious symbol and their subsequent punishment of the Ancient Mariner for redeeming themselves have no influence upon their fate as they are suddenly killed by the poem’s uncanny supernatural forces only to be reanimated into a sort of robotic life:

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.
...
The dead men gave a groan.
They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise. (Coleridge, “The Rime” 216-334)

Within the familiar context and discourse of Catholicism the Albatross may gain religious significance and meaning, but the text’s own linguistic and discursive

framework and its meaning-making mechanisms are entirely different from Catholicism's archaic frame of reference, thus any Christianity-related interpretation of the events in the poem inevitably falls short of making any "sense" within the poem's world. The poem, at times, indeed invites the reader to read the text within a theological context with its perfunctory references to Christianity, but these references, as the text shows us explicitly, are made only through the words of the Ancient Mariner and through the commentary added by the marginal gloss, not by the text itself or through the actual events that take place in the story. To sum up, the various signifying possibilities or meanings attributed to the Albatross by the marginal gloss, the Ancient Mariner, the text itself, and the critics are indicative of its elusiveness and undecidability. As a bird floating in the air, the Albatross signifies something that cannot be fully reached or grasped. Its very "presence" in the text can be regarded as a textual reference to the non-correspondence of the signifier and the signified or the non-existence of the self-presence of meaning that occurs on a textual and unconscious level. To put it differently, the Albatross metaphor or imagery, as mentioned above, is emblematic of dissemination and *différance* in Derridean terms. Its various readings by the critics enhance the already-thereness of dissemination of meaning within the text due to the multiple interpretations of it by the crew as well as the text's own independent presentation of it. Its meaning differs because it changes from context to context and this also makes its meaning deferred because it means that a single, frozen or stable meaning or full meaning of it can never be achieved.

Another metaphor, or rather a character, whose meaning is rendered undecidable by the text and which also contributes to the overall absence of the self-presence of meaning in the text to be discussed is the Hermit. The Hermit makes his appearance in the last lines of Part 6, where the words of the Ancient Mariner indicate that he is a religious authority and can help the Ancient Mariner achieve full salvation:

It is the Hermit good!
...
He'll shrive my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood. (509-513)

Following these lines, the commentary made by the marginal gloss regards the Hermit as “The Hermit of the Wood” (343) and “intends to portray in him Nature’s High Priest, who shrives the Mariner from his sins against Nature. ... and only the Hermit, as Priest of Nature, can shrive him from this sin” (Crawford 311). Both the marginal gloss and the Ancient Mariner agree upon the nature of the Hermit and locate him within theological context as someone who can help him get rid of his sins. The confession he makes to the Hermit (Coleridge, “The Rime” 574-575), however, has almost no influence upon his destiny as he is compelled to suffer in some unspecified “agony” and tell his tale to random passers-by in a manner of confession for temporary relief:

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
...
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns. (582-585)

The Ancient Mariner naturally sees the Hermit as a potential saviour because he interprets everything according to his archaic Catholic point of view, but the poem’s uncanny world is not governed by a Christian God. If it is governed by anything, it would be unreason or arbitrariness. The text shows how futile the Ancient Mariner’s act of praising God is when there is no proof whatsoever of the existence of a Christian God in the poem’s uncharted territory, where things seem to happen arbitrarily. The redemption the Ancient Mariner achieves at the end of the poem “is at best only partial. Although the spell of the curse ... has finally snapped, the Mariner finds that he is still terrifying, even hateful, to the eyes of men” (Mellor, *Irony* 140-141) and “doomed to relive his horrifying experience repeatedly” (Miall, “Guilt” 652). The text shows at the end that the Ancient Mariner does not actually achieve full salvation or redemption and this renders the meaning of the Hermit undecidable because it shows that the Hermit, who is portrayed as a figure with religious authority and significance, has little consequence upon the Ancient Mariner’s fate. This undecidability of the significance and meaning of the Hermit in turn contributes to the overall dissemination of meaning recurring in the text.

Another major metaphor which emphasises the elusiveness and undecidability of “The Rime” is the water snakes. The imagery of the water snakes has been subjected to many interpretations and it is one of the most common points of discussion in the analyses of the poem, perhaps only second to the Albatross. What the text of the poem shows the reader is that when the Ancient Mariner *unintentionally* praises the water snakes he suddenly happens to come across (Mellor, *Irony* 140), the dead body of the Albatross which is hung around his neck falls:

A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
...
The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea. (Coleridge, “The Rime” 284-291)

Majority of the critics who analysed the poem from a theological vantage point has so far interpreted this scene as the starting point of the Ancient Mariner’s redemption (Kitson 206-207), where “[t]he symbol of guilt and alienation and despair vanishes” (Peckham 19). Analogous to the theological readings of the Albatross metaphor, the readings of the water snakes in a theological context are as valid as any other reading and justified by the marginal gloss: “The spell begins to break” (Coleridge, “The Rime” 338). However, similar to the Albatross metaphor, the signifying possibilities for the water snakes vary based on the textual evidence provided by the poem. As much as the imagery of the water snakes is a metaphor for redemption, it is also a metaphor for arbitrariness as well as Paganism. The early imagery of the water snakes suggests non-Christian connotations and bears Paganistic overtones (Stokes 7-8) because they appear as part of the alien topography surrounding the Ancient Mariner:

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.
About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch’s oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white. (Coleridge, “The Rime” 125-130)

Signs of Paganistic overtones, as it will be further discussed in the upcoming chapters, are recurrent in most of Coleridge's works and they are indicative of the already-thereness of dissemination and *différance* in the texts because they add another context and layer of meaning to what is already filled with superabundance of meaning. Moreover, the water snakes are a metaphor for arbitrariness because the Ancient Mariner praises them "unaware"—that is, he is not in control of what he is doing when he praises the water snakes (House 95). The Ancient Mariner's praise of the water snakes to achieve redemption is also ironic because his supposed sin originates from killing another animal (Ferguson 635). Another reason why the imagery of the water snakes symbolises arbitrariness is that although the dead body of the Albatross drops down and he is maybe temporarily relieved in that very moment, he nonetheless remains as "the [w]andering ... outcast ... still unable to reach the daybreak of redemption, unable to expiate his sin, but only to relive it in the telling" (Stokes 10):

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
...
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns. (Coleridge, "The Rime" 582-585)

To sum up, in spite of many interpretations of "The Rime" following a traditional line within Christian thought, in which the Ancient Mariner is redeemed when he begins to praise the water snakes, the text itself contradicts this interpretation because of the Ancient Mariner's eternal wanderings and ceaseless sufferings. Furthermore, the Ancient Mariner's praise of the water snakes may not have any theological bearing because the Ancient Mariner's praise of the water snakes does not seem to lead him to full redemption in any religious context, let alone in Christianity. His ever-lasting agony, in fact, begins after this. In other words, even after praising the beauty of what he thinks are God's creations and confessing his "sin" to a hermit, the Ancient Mariner achieves no salvation because, as far as the text indicates, he was not punished by a Christian God in the first place nor was he sinning against one. His prayers or praise of the water snakes actually mean nothing in the poem's own universe because the

supernatural forces that may or may not be punishing him are not Christian and thus there is no overlap between the signifier (prayers, the water snakes, the Albatross, the Hermit) and the signified (Christ, Christianity etc.). Therefore, similar to the metaphors previously discussed, the imagery of the water snakes stresses the disseminated nature of the meaning recurring in the text further by elusively escaping exact or clear-cut definitions and thus giving rise to the free play of signification.

The final point of emphasis in terms of the non-correspondence of the signifier and the signified throughout the text is the gambling scene and the idea of arbitrariness it underlines. Though some critics have so far argued that the supernatural forces in the poem are the agents of a Christian God (Purser 254), the dicing scene in the poem, by itself, however, suggests that things happen randomly or by chance in the poem's world: "the fate of the Mariner is decided by the throw of dice. So too ... is the fate of ... the crew. It would be hard to conceive of a more effective symbol of arbitrariness than ... dice" (Miall, "Guilt" 645). The poem does indeed first present the gambling as if someone or something has some sort of control over the situation, even while the very idea of gambling itself proves that no one is in control of anything because the fate of both the crew and the Ancient Mariner is decided by a throw of dice:

The naked Hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice" (Coleridge, "The Rime" 195-196).

What's more, the supernatural figures seem to be simply gambling for the sake of passing time, and not as part of any divine mission:

"The game is done! I've won, I've won!"
Quoth she, and whistles thrice. (197-198)

The uncanny supernatural figures of Death and Life-in-Death, which are original creations of the poetic persona and do not have any similarities to Christian iconography or emblems, have nothing to do with Christianity or with a Christian God because they imply that the fate of the characters in the poem has nothing to do with

a Christian God or with natural or divine justice; it is just random: “the fate of both Mariner and crew have been decided *wholly by chance*; they are neither a logical nor a moral consequence of the preceding events” (Mellor, *Irony* 139). The very idea of dice is indicative of the fact that the poetic persona is not in full possession of the text, for the notion of dice suggests arbitrariness, which is a transgression of the poetic persona’s signifying intentions on a textual level because it implies the free play of signification. In other words, the recurrent underlying emphasis of arbitrariness in the poem is also an indication of undecidability of meaning as well as the free play of floating signifiers. The fact that the Ancient Mariner’s fate is decided not by a Christian God to whom he prays, but upon the gambling of two mysterious figures who do not show even the slightest interest to the lives of the Ancient Mariner and his crew are indicative of the free play of signification prevailing in the text.

CHAPTER 4

S. T. COLERIDGE'S CONVERSATION POEMS

It was George McLean Harper who coined the term “Conversation Poems”, inspired by the subtitle of “The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem” (Magnuson, “The ‘Conversation’ Poems” 32). Harper had first called them “Poems of Friendship” because they are “relaxed and genial in mood, domestic in setting, warmly human and personal in their style of direct address, fluent and colloquial in tone and diction” (Dickstein 369-370). Amongst the conversation poems are “The Eolian Harp” (1795), “Reflections of Having Left a Place of Retirement” (1796), “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” (1797), “Frost at Midnight” (1798), “The Nightingale” (1798), “Fears in Solitude” (1798), “Dejection: An Ode” (1802), and “To William Wordsworth” (1807). Harold Bloom, one of the major literary critics in the scholarship of Romantic literature, traces the origin of the conversation poems in his *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* back to Cowper’s *The Task* and suggests that what Coleridge achieves through the conversation poems is to combine Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest* in terms of style (Bloom, *Visionary* 194). For him, the conversation poems are “the origin of the Wordsworthian mode, of *Tintern Abbey*” (194). For M. H. Abrams, another major literary critic in the scholarship of Romantic literature, the content, form, and structure of the conversation poems are as follows:

The speaker begins with a description of the landscape; an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape evokes a varied but integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely involved with the outer scene. In the course of this meditation the lyric speaker achieves an insight, faces up to a tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem. Often the poem rounds upon itself to end where it began, at the outer scene, but with an altered mood and deepened understanding which is the result of the intervening meditation. (Abrams, “Structure” 77)

Peter Barry, in his “Coleridge the Revisionary: Surrogacy and Structure in the Conversation Poems”, follows a path similar to that of Abrams’ in generally explaining the structure of the poems. All of the conversation poems, Barry puts forward, begin with a “locatory prelude” where the speaker provides a detailed description of his/her surroundings, which later gives way to the meditative main part of the poem in which a “transposition of some kind” occurs where the setting, both spatially and temporally, becomes an “imaginatively conjured up” place, which later on gives way to a “resolution”, where the decision to think and behave differently in the future is emphasised (Barry 601-602). Other than the readings based on form and structure, the conversation poems have also been analysed in theological context. One of the examples for that is G. S. Morris’ “Sound, Silence, and Voice in Meditation: Coleridge, Berkeley, and the Conversation Poems” in which Morris argues that “conversation in Coleridge is a sacramental act between the human and the divine” (Morris 52). Another major vantage points employed in the analyses in the conversation poems are imagination and the activity of mind, which were among the major theoretical discussions in both the Age of Enlightenment and the Romantic period. James D. Boulger argues in his “Imagination and Speculation in Coleridge’s Conversation Poems” that the main theme of the conversation poems is “the imaginative power itself, with subordinate themes of the speculative reason pressing to destroy it” (Boulger 693). For Boulger, the conversation poems fuse together the ideas of Berkeley and Hartley by blending emotional experience and imagination (707). Least but not least, Bruce Lawder’s analysis of the conversation poems in his “Secret(ing) Conversations: Coleridge and Wordsworth” is somewhat closer, when of course compared to the sorts of analyses mentioned above, to the analysis that will be undertaken in the following subchapters. Lawder puts forward in his paper that the conversation poems are not actually conversation poems, but rather dramatic monologues in which there is only a single voice (Lawder 68). Only poststructuralist readings of the conversation poems to be found are Tilottama Rajan’s reading of “The Eolian Harp” in her “Displacing Post-Structuralism: Romantic Studies after Paul de Man” and Graham Pechey’s reading of “Frost at Midnight” in his “‘Frost at Midnight’ and the Poetry of Periphrasis”. Tilottama Rajan argues in her paper that “The Eolian Harp” asks the readers to read the poem in a biographical context, but it would be

naive “to treat biography as a collection of facts which can ground the meaning of the text, because once these ‘facts’ enter the poem they disclose their own figurative constitution” (Rajan 427). Graham Pechey suggests in his paper that Coleridge’s “sacramental universe is portended by a new order of sign which at once transcends and gathers up into one substance the signifier and the signified of allegory” (Pechey 231). As the brief literature review summarised above also indicates, there is no specifically Derridean reading of the poems in the scholarship. Accordingly, through the application of the Derridean non-concepts dissemination, *différance*, and trace, the following subchapters will put under scrutiny Coleridge’s “The Eolian Harp”, “Frost at Midnight”, and “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” by focusing particularly on the poetic language of the texts, the transition from the corporeal setting to the imaginative one, the presence/absence dichotomy in terms of its relation to the presence of the speaking subject and the absence of the listening subject, and the constant use of such metaphors as “breeze”, “wind”, “gale”, “harp”, “lute”, “sky-lark”, “rook” etc., in order to lay bare the already existing problematisation of the relationship between the author, text, and meaning as well as of the correspondence between the signifier and the signified and of the logocentric assumption of self-presence of meaning in these texts.

4.1. “The Eolian Harp”

Coleridge’s “The Eolian Harp”, which was written in 1795 and published in 1796, for Abrams, is his

first achievement in the ... Romantic form of the sustained blank-verse lyric of description and meditation, in the mode of conversation addressed to a silent auditor—a form that he perfected in *Frost at Midnight*, and that Wordsworth made use of in *Tintern Abbey*. (Abrams, *Norton Anthology* 326)

For Bloom, it is a “honeymoon” poem where the readers observe two different Coleridges in a dialectical manner: the imaginative and the intellectual poet (Bloom, *Visionary* 195). Albert Gérard agrees with Bloom and suggests that the poem is indeed dialectical (Gérard 415). He further argues that the main argument of the poem

originates from “the Romantic dissatisfaction with the commonly accepted mechanistic view of God and the world” (415). Joseph McQueen’s reading of the poem is quite similar to that of Gérard’s. He argues that “The Eolian Harp” is a reaction against the mechanistic perception of the world promoted by the Enlightenment thought with its “finding the divine in the natural world” (McQueen 23). Furthermore, the poem has been analysed by several critics in terms of Coleridge’s famous philosophy of the reconciliation of opposites. Ronald C. Wendling argues in his “Coleridge and the Consistency of ‘The Eolian Harp’” that although the poem may not be seen as the peak of the philosophy of the reconciliation of opposites, it is at the very least an early effort by Coleridge for such a reconciliation which paves the way for the epistemological and metaphysical developments that occur later in Coleridge’s life (Wendling 41-42). William H. Scheuerle agrees with Wendling that the poem promotes unity and that there is no inconsistency to be found in the poem (Scheuerle 591). One of the critics who disagrees with Wendling and Scheuerle in terms of unity is Allan Chavkin, who asserts in his “The Failure of Unity in Coleridge’s ‘The Eolian Harp’” that the poem fails to achieve unity due to the sudden “change of attitude in which the speaker rejects everything that he has said before” (Chavkin 441). The poem has also been analysed within theological context. One of the major theological readings of the text belongs to Christopher S. Noble, who argues in his “A Transcendent and Pragmatic Vision: Samuel Taylor Coleridge at the Borders of Christian Orthodoxy” that the speaker of the poem admits that the divine cannot be comprehended with a doctrine like pantheism (Noble 36). Only poststructuralist reading of the poem is that of Tilottama Rajan’s, in which she indicates that the poem draws the attention of the reader to its rhetoric and thus requires the active participation of the reader (Rajan 469). The following analysis of “The Eolian Harp” will distinguish itself from the analyses briefly summarised above in that it will specifically focus on the “presence” of the speaking subject and the “absence” of the listening subject, the transition from the realm of corporeality to the realm of transcendence, and the commonly used metaphors such as “breeze”, “wind”, “harp”, “lute” etc. in order to argue that “The Eolian Harp” is an example of the disruption of writing in the Derridean sense in that it problematises the self-presence of meaning; that is, it displays the “already divided generation of meaning” (Derrida,

Dissemination 268). To achieve such a textual analysis in the Derridean sense, the thesis will borrow non-concepts such as dissemination, *différance*, and trace from Derridean terminology.

The text begins with the immediate introduction of the addressee of the poem, who is seemingly Sara Fricker, Coleridge's wife:

My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o'ergrown
With white-flowered Jasmin, and the broad-leaved Myrtle, (Coleridge, "Eolian" 1-4)

To call "The Eolian Harp" a conversation poem is ironic because there is no conversation to be found at all in the text as the "pensive Sara", who is supposed to be the other side of this "conversation", is always "silent, and merely has ... thought ... is not really an independent subjectivity at all" (Barry 605). The poem is addressed by the speaking subject, who employs first person narration, to a silent persona; a listening subject. This assumed presence of the listening subject as well as the already existing logocentric authority of the speaking subject due to his/her so-called "close" proximity to the signified (Derrida, *Dissemination* 77) gives the speaker or the poetic persona of the poem an illusory agency. It is an illusory agency or authority because if the presence of something is dependent upon the absence of other, then this means that presence is defined and determined by absence, making the superiority of one to the other undecidable and indeterminate. The fact that the poem is supposedly addressed to a certain listener as part of the signifying intentions of the poetic persona makes the reading of the poem all the more interesting. Addressing a written text, or a direct speech for that matter, to a possible listener through the first person narration, thus anticipating and assuming the presence of the listening subject means taking the assumed nature of the metaphysical correspondence between the signifier and the signified for granted. This signifying intention of the poetic persona leads him/her into the metaphysical trap that Derrida talks about ("Semiology and Grammatology" 22). This trap originates from the metaphysical assumption that what is said or written directly speaks to or find its way to the listening subject in the exact manner intended

by the speaking or writing subject. The absence of the listening subject can be called trace in Derridean terms as it constitutes the link between the presence of the speaker and the absence of the addressee which functions in the production of meaning in the context of the poem. To put it differently, the listening subject of the poem is a trace because her absence defines and thus constitutes the presence of the speaking subject. Derrida points out that each element in the movement of signification relates to something other than itself and preserves the marks of elements to which it relates or refers to (*Speech and Phenomena* 142). The speaking subject, accordingly, as an element in the movement of signification, relates to something other than itself, which is the listening subject, and preserves the mark of the listening subject, thus making the absence of the listening subject trace in Derridean terms. Trace, in the Derridean sense, means residues which are present in the play of difference and the movement of signification. Therefore, the “Meek Daughter in the family of Christ” (Coleridge, “Eolian” 54) is a residue in the poem due to her absence because as a trace it enhances the superabundance of meaning already existing in the text as it enables the poem to be read as a dramatic monologue as well. In other words, it directly lays bare the disseminated nature of meaning and text.

In the first several lines of the poem the language is descriptive and referential and used only to describe the surrounding objects, which indicates that the speaker is in the realm of corporeality or sensibility, where the signifier and the signified supposedly corresponds directly:

My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o’ergrown
With white-flowered Jasmin, and the broad-leaved Myrtle,

...

And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve
Serenely brilliant (such should Wisdom be)
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatched from yon bean-field! and the world so hushed!

The stilly murmur of the distant Sea
Tells us of silence. (1-11)

A transition of some sort occurs towards the middle of the poem via the perception of an external object through the senses. This external object in the case of “The Eolian Harp” is “the lute in the casement that triggers ... associative processes by which the speaker begins his flight away from the actual and into the imaginary” (Wendling 31):

And that simplest Lute,
Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caressed,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
...
Such a soft floating witchery of sound
As twilight Elfin's make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land, (Coleridge, “Eolian” 12-22)

This spatial, temporal, and textual transition is a transition from “the human and concrete to the nonhuman and abstract” (Chavkin 443). Upon this transition, the text or the language of the poem begins to problematise the speaker’s logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning as the language becomes metaphorical rather than descriptive and thus the meaning is no longer a frozen and fixed entity. In other words, the transition causes spatial and temporal disruption in the production of meaning within the context of the text because the setting changes both spatially and temporally as the language also changes and transforms into a metaphorical one. Dissemination is, of course, already there in the text but its “presence” is felt stronger after the transition where the language becomes metaphorical. Indeed, after the transition the agency of the text dominates the speaker’s logocentrism as the metaphors such as “breeze”, “wind”, “gale”, “harp”, “lute” etc., render the meaning of the text undecidable. With the transition *différance* comes into play. As the setting goes under a spatial and temporal transformation, the meaning, too, begins to be differed and deferred as it will be discussed below.

The analysis of the commonly used metaphors, which are the direct causes of dissemination of meaning as well as the superabundance and the loss of meaning that occurs after the transition, should begin with the “harp” metaphor, which is also the title of the poem. Harold Bloom argues that the most commonly used metaphor in

“The Eolian Harp” as well as in the Romantic poetry in general is the Eolian harp (Bloom, *Visionary* 195). M. H. Abrams notes that the Eolian harp

responds to the altering wind by sequences of musical chords. This instrument, which seems to voice nature’s own music, was ... repeatedly alluded to in Romantic poetry. It served also as one of the recurrent Romantic images for the mind—either the mind in poetic inspiration ... or ... the mind in perception, responding to an intellectual breeze by trembling into consciousness (Abrams, *Norton Anthology* 326).

In addition to the interpretations of Bloom and Abrams, for Tilottama Rajan the Eolian harp is a metaphor which “abolishes the duality between art and nature, thought and thing” (Rajan 470). For James D. Boulger, the Eolian harp metaphor is “the vehicle for expressing the Neoplatonic, idealistic notion of the One as a Spirit both in man and of the World” (Boulger 693). The Eolian harp, as a “passive instrument”, Boulger further argues, symbolises the theories of association in Coleridge’s time (695). Surely these wide range of interpretations are as valid as any and they are indicative of the superabundance of meaning prevailing in the text and thus the “already divided generation of meaning” (Derrida, *Dissemination* 268). However, if one focuses on the recurrent metaphors in the poem such as “wind”, “breeze”, and “gale”, which supposedly inspire the imagination of the poet with their blow on the harp which stands for the poet himself/herself (Magnuson, “The ‘Conversation’ Poems” 34), one would immediately realise that the inspiration which supposedly comes with the wind or from the breeze is not something frozen or stable. What the metaphors such as “The Eolian Harp”, “that simplest Lute” (Coleridge, “Eolian” 12), “the desultory breeze” (14), “such a soft floating witchery of sound” (20), “gentle gales from Fairy-Land” (22), which come into play in the chain of signification after the transition, suggest is undecidability and elusiveness in terms of meaning. Wind and breeze metaphors are indeed significant in the interpretation of the Romantic texts and they are quite common in some of the Romantic texts. If one takes breeze or wind as the source of inspiration for the poet, then this source is something elusive and ungraspable. Breeze or wind is not something that can be seen, touched, or located. They are things floating aimlessly in the air and are mostly beyond sense perception. Accordingly, what they

bring to the table in the form of inspiration is also something elusive and ambiguous. These metaphors, then, are in fact metaphors occurring on a textual level—that is, notwithstanding the signifying intentions of the poetic persona or of the speaker—for the non-correspondence of the signifier and the signified, thus critiquing the illusion of the self-presence of meaning in the logocentric tradition. Moreover, the following lines are perhaps one of the best indicators of the dissemination of meaning and the disruption of writing in the Derridean sense within the context of the poem:

Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject Lute! (39-43)

Patricia S. Yaeger, by referring to the lines given above, argues in her “Coleridge, Derrida, and the Anguish of Writing” that “Coleridge initially describes his own mind in terms of the free play leading to signification” (Yaeger 100). The line in the very middle of the extract, however, emphasises the passive nature of the speaker’s mind, thus indicating that the free play of the floating signifiers does not originate from the speaker himself/herself, but occur on a textual level notwithstanding the signifying intentions of the speaker. Furthermore, what are perhaps the most famous lines of the poem also symbolise the already disseminated nature of meaning where, if one takes the “animated nature” as meaning or meaning-making mechanisms, the harp symbolises meaning which is “diversely framed” by a vast breeze which stands for the floating signifiers leading to other signifiers in the absence of the transcendental signified:

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o’er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze, (Coleridge, “Eolian” 44-47)

What’s more, these lines are also indicative of the Paganistic overtones which usually prevail in Coleridge’s poems. What is meant by Paganistic overtones is the association

of nature with the divine or God himself, which violates the doctrines of orthodox Christianity. These Paganistic overtones, which are also observable in “The Rime” and “Kubla Khan”, can be taken as trace in Derridean terms as they disseminate meaning on a temporal level—that is, they defer meaning because they temporally situate the text in another or additional context and thus are indicative of *différance*. Moreover, Allan Chavkin puts forward that the speaker’s change of heart at the end of the poem is a deviation and digression which renders the ending of the poem unrealistic and inconsistent, making the poem a “flawed work which does not meet the qualifications of poem as an organic, unified whole” (Chavkin 447). Textual and discursive digressions in the poem naturally disrupt the wholeness of the poem, but to expect a poetic text, which employs poetic and metaphorical language, to present wholeness and stability in terms of meaning is quite optimistic. Patricia S. Yaeger’s Derridean reading of the supposed change of heart of the speaker towards the end of the poem reinforces the notion that the poem is indeed the playground of the free play of floating signifiers:

Coleridge is ultimately threatened by a freedom of signification so far from his own word-view that he turns from these random thoughts toward a classic logocentrism anchored, according to the poem, in the language of his wife ... Instead of tolerating the future of choosing among the “random gales” of language, Coleridge renounces free choice altogether and substitutes the simpler anxiety of self-abnegation; he closes with prayer. (Yaeger 100)

“The Eolian Harp”, as discussed above, starts with the poetic persona’s description of his/her surroundings, which later on gives way to the main parts of the poem. This attempt by the poetic persona or the speaking subject to form a direct communication with the absent listener is ultimately and inevitably replaced by the textual digressions and fragmentations that occur after the transition, which give rise to the superabundance of meaning as well as the loss of meaning—that is, they give rise to dissemination in Derridean terms. This failure in conveying meaning or speaking to a listener who is absent throughout the course of the poem is indicative of the non-correspondence of the signifier and the signified as the signifying intentions of the poetic persona fall short of producing any sort of totalising truth or meaning. A

thorough and careful textual analysis of “The Eolian Harp”, or of all other Romantic poems in general for that matter, would inevitably show that these texts offer what Derrida calls the disruption of writing. To start with, what for the critics are digressions or failure in terms of unity and structure in the poem is dissemination of meaning in Derridean terminology. Dissemination is not simply a failure to maintain unity or structural wholeness of the text, but rather the ultimate destination of disruptive writing. The transition from corporeality to transcendence or from the sensible to the conceivable that the critics so often talk about occurs as a result of dissemination, notwithstanding the (theological or otherwise) signifying intentions of the poetic persona as well as the (theological or otherwise) signifying possibilities for the readers.

4.2. “Frost at Midnight”

Coleridge’s “Frost at Midnight”, which was written in 1798, Bloom argues, is “the masterpiece of ‘conversation poems’” (Bloom *Visionary* 196). For M. H. Abrams, too, the poem is a masterpiece which follows the model of “The Eolian Harp”, but also “greatly enlarges and subtilizes” its pattern (Abrams, “Structure” 81). Paul Magnuson, another major critic of the Romantic canon, maintains that the poem echoes the political issues of the 1790’s Britain and presents a patriotic poet “whose patriotism rested on the love of his country and his domestic affections” (Magnuson, “The Politics” 3-6). Humphry House, in his famous *Coleridge: The Clark Lectures*, emphasises the traces of Paganism in the poem by putting forward that the poem highlights the mind’s “power of reading nature as the language of God” (House 81). Another reading of the poem within theological context is that of Ronald A. Audet’s, who puts forward in his “‘Frost at Midnight’: The Other Coleridge” that the poem has a simple language that is proper for a conversation (Audet 1080) and that it features panentheistic implications (1083). Another context in which the poem is analysed is the revisions that Coleridge seemingly made. One example for such a reading of the poem would be Matthew Vanwinkle’s “Fluttering on the Grate: Revision in ‘Frost at Midnight’”, in which he says that although he would prefer the final version of the poem, all versions should be made available to the readers because none of them is

inferior compared to others (Vanwinkle 597-598). Frederick Kirchoff, from a psychoanalytic vantage point, argues that the poem mirrors the psyche of the speaker and “becomes a substitute for the idealized omnipotence of the father” (Kirchoff 375). Another psychoanalytic reading of the poem is that of David S. Miall’s, where he examines “Frost at Midnight” “as an act of displacement, a turning away from the emotion of the self which is the central and motivating cause of the poem” (Miall, “Displacement” 102). The only poststructuralist reading of the poem belongs to Graham Pechey, who, in his “‘Frost at Midnight’ and the Poetry of Periphrasis”, puts forward that “Frost at Midnight” is not a conversation poem, but “a poem of *circumlocution*” (Pechey 229). The following reading of “Frost at Midnight” will employ a different vantage point from those summarised above by dwelling mainly on the dichotomy of the presentness of the speaker and the absentness of the addressee, the transition from the realm of sensibility to the realm of the conceivable, and the “breeze” metaphor. Through the application of dissemination, *différance*, and trace from Derridean terminology, the thesis will perform a Derridean reading of the poem by mainly concentrating on these points of emphasis in order to lay bare the already-there-ness of the problematisation of the self-presence of meaning in “Frost at Midnight” and to argue that the poem can be regarded as the disruption of writing in the Derridean sense.

In the exact same manner with the other conversation poems, “Frost at Midnight” starts with the speaker verbally describing his immediate surroundings using a descriptive and referential language:

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet’s cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,

This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life, (Coleridge, "Frost" 1-12)

Analogous to "The Eolian Harp", the "careful factuality" of the topographical elements (Kirchoff 372) as well as the descriptive language that is being employed are indicative of the fact that the speaker is in the realm of corporeality, where the quasi-correspondence between the signifier and the signified is supposedly maintained. The phrase "Abstruser musings" can be seen as a foreshadowing of the transition that will occur. Another thing to be observed here is that, different from "The Eolian Harp", to whom the uttered lines are addressed is not revealed at the beginning, which ironically makes "Frost at Midnight" less a conversation poem even than "The Eolian Harp". In fact, at first glance, "Frost at Midnight" looks like a dramatic monologue more than "The Eolian Harp" does. However, this does not mean that the speaker of "Frost at Midnight" does not fall into the same metaphysical trap that the speaker of "The Eolian Harp" does, for the listening subject of the poem is revealed towards the end of the poem and it happens to be the speaker's infant:

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,

...

My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee, (Coleridge, "Frost" 44-49)

Though the supposed addressee of the poem is seemingly present, the speaker nevertheless falls into the metaphysical trap that Derrida talks about because what is said or written does not find its way to the listening subject in an unaltered manner, for the infant, in psychoanalytic terms, has not yet internalised the logic of the signifiers. In fact, there is no difference between the "pensive Sara" of "The Eolian Harp" and the "Dear Babe" of "Frost at Midnight" in that both are actually absent and silenced throughout the course of the poems. Therefore, in a very similar fashion to the "pensive Sara" in "The Eolian Harp", the absence of "Dear Babe" in "Frost at Midnight"—that is, the infant's inability to "make sense" of language or signification and thus systematically being silenced—can be regarded as trace in Derridean terms as this lack of presence plays a vital role as a residue in the production of meaning or

in the movement of signification in the context of the poem in that it contributes to the already existing superabundance of meaning. The infant is trace in the Derridean sense because his/her absence defines and thus constitutes the presence of the speaker. As an element in the domain of signification, the speaker relates to something other than itself, which in this case is the infant, and preserves the mark of that which s/he relates to. Hence, the absence of the listening subject makes the signifying intentions of the poetic persona fall short and thus also renders meaning undecidable and indeterminate. To put it differently, it displays dissemination and “already divided generation of meaning” (Derrida, *Dissemination* 268).

The transition occurs through the perception of an external object via sense perception. This external object is “the thin blue flame” in “Frost at Midnight”, upon whose perception “the meditative mind disengages itself from the physical locale, moves back in time to the speaker’s childhood, still farther back, to his own infancy” (Abrams, “Structure” 81):

Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
...
But O! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering *stranger!* and as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birthplace, and the old church tower,
Whose bells, the poor man’s only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot fair-day,
So sweetly that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams! (Coleridge, “Frost” 13-35)

Upon the transition, analogous to “The Eolian Harp”, the language of the text starts to destabilise the speaking subject’s logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning by becoming metaphorical instead of descriptive. In other words, with the transition comes spatial and temporal disruption in the production of meaning within

the context of the text. Whereas the setting changes both spatially and temporally, the language rids itself of its previous descriptive characteristic and transforms into a metaphorical one: "The second paragraph complicates matters by not only expanding temporally backwards, but also beginning spatially at another hearth and then expanding ... further back into a deeper past" (Pechey 238). Dissemination and *différance*, as Derrida puts forward so often, are of course already there in any text, but their presence and operation become more visible after the occurrence of the spatio-temporal linguistic change. Meaning is differed (spatial) and deferred (temporal) because the setting (and thus the context) is moved from the speaker's "cottage" to his "sweet birthplace".

Among the frequently used Romantic metaphors only "breeze", which indicates the free play of the floating signifiers, is present in the poem. The absentness of the self-presence of meaning or the free play of signification which occurs after the transition, similar to "The Eolian Harp", does not originate from the speaker as the following lines, which are addressed to his/her baby, indicate the passive nature of his/her mind:

And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars. (Coleridge, "Frost" 50-53)

The subsequent lines where the speaker associates nature with the divine are filled with Paganistic overtones, which are also recurrent in "The Eolian Harp", "The Rime" and in "Kubla Khan":

But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.

Great universal Teacher! he shall mold
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask. (54-64)

Lines quoted above hold significance in terms of dissemination and superabundance of meaning in the Derridean sense because many different interpretations or readings can be inferred from these lines depending on context or vantage point, notwithstanding the signifying intentions of the poetic persona. To start with, Paganistic implications—that is, the association of nature and the things in nature with God—is visible. Furthermore, Ronald A. Audet suggests that the lines mentioned above “identify God and nature, seem at first to hint at a variety of pantheism ... however, the faith is more clearly allied to panentheism, for there is a suggestion that God includes nature but is himself more than that” (Audet 1083). Humphry Houses’ interpretation demonstrates that these lines can be indicative of the mind’s power to consider language as the language of the divine (House 81). Another reading of these lines might be that of Paul Magnuson’s, in which he argues that the speaker simply wishes his/her child to have a different upbringing than that of his/her (Magnuson, “Dead Calm” 58). Pechey’s interpretation that the baby in these lines is described as a *tabula rasa* which will be shaped by reason (Pechey 239) is as valid a reading as any other. Another meaning that can be inferred from these lines is the elusiveness and instability of language. In other words, if language is something eternal and transcendental that derives from God himself/herself and is shaped by ancient mountains, lakes, shores etc., as it is implied here, then this indicates that full comprehension of language or full presence of meaning is never attainable. All of these different interpretations that are based on various contexts are indicative of the dissemination of meaning on both spatial and temporal level, displaying the already-thereness of *différance* in the text itself, which is “a hush or trance in the noisy flux of things” (Pechey 238). The poem’s final stanza is also indicative of the already existing dissemination and *différance* as it “incorporates both the present scene and the results of the remembered past in the enchanting close” (Abrams, “Structure” 81):

... whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost

Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon. (Coleridge, "Frost" 70-74)

"Frost at Midnight", therefore, can be regarded as disruption of writing or as a text in Derridean terms. That is, what the poem presents is not a closed set of system which produces meaning as a stable and frozen entity because the words in the poem refer to a number of contexts within signification and thus goes beyond the syntax and lexicon of the author and the reader (Derrida, *Dissemination* 129-30).

4.3. "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison"

Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison", which was written in 1797, for Wu, "contains an element new to Coleridge's writing: love of nature. At its conclusion he is no longer the self-pitying solitary ... but is solaced by the awareness of natural beauty even in that most unlovely of birds, 'the last rook'" (Wu, *Anthology* 613). For Michael Schmidt, it is a poem of friendship and the power of imagination which cherishes nature (Schmidt 44). Anne K. Mellor argues in her "Coleridge's 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' and the Categories of English Landscape" that the poem is a "paradigm of the historical movement in England from an objective to a subjective aesthetics at the end of the eighteenth century" (Mellor, "Categories" 253) as well as a biographical work which is "a meditative consolation for Charles Lamb" (254). Paul Magnuson maintains in his "The Dead Calm in the Conversation Poems" that the garden that the speaker is forced to stay and wait is not a place which cherishes nature, but a prison locking up the speaker's subjectivity (Magnuson, "Dead Calm" 57). The speaker's task, Magnuson further argues, is to "discover a way of overcoming his loss and of breaking out of the emptiness of his self" (57). The poem does not have a poststructuralist or Derridean reading made by any critic. As the briefly referred sources above from the Romantic scholarship indicate, the poem has been so far analysed mainly as a biographical document and in terms of the natural landscape it describes. The following examination of "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" will differentiate itself from such analyses as briefly mentioned above by focusing primarily on the duality of the presentness of the speaking subject and the absentness

of the listening subject, the transition from the realm of corporeality to the realm of transcendence, and the “rook” metaphor in order to argue that the text is indicative of the already existing problematisation or destabilisation of the self-presence of meaning and thus can be regarded as the disruption of writing in Derridean terms. To undertake such a Derridean reading, the thesis will borrow dissemination, *différance*, and trace from Derridean terminology.

Similar to “The Eolian Harp” and “Frost at Midnight”, “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” “announces an explicit audience that it simultaneously silences” (Noble 29). Analogous to “Frost at Midnight”, the listening subject of the poem is revealed not at the beginning of the poem, but towards the middle of it:

In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
And hungered after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain (Coleridge, “Lime-Tree” 27-31)

In exactly the same fashion with the two poems analysed above in this section, the listening subject or the addressee of the poem is absent throughout the text. The function of the “Charles Lamb” of “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” is analogous to the “pensive Sara” of “The Eolian Harp” and to the “Dear Babe” of “Frost at Midnight”: he does not have a voice of his own; he is the silenced other who does not speak, but spoken of by the speaker:

Coleridge’s idea of the “conversational poem” is actually a fragment of a conversation, the isolation of one voice, where the necessary other takes over what one might call “the silent half” of poem: the listening that should precede and accompany the speaking. The dramatic poem would seem the more accurate mimetic model of an actual conversation, with its exchange of roles and voices, just as the dramatic monologue would seem to summon up more honestly the fragmentary nature of individual speaking in a moment broken off from and suspended in time. Once the other person is denied the possibility of a response, the “con” in “a conversational poem” becomes problematical: the poem turns away from the usual exchange, or sharing, to something else. (Lawder 68)

To define “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” as a conversation poem is to give the speaker a metaphysical authority as the father of *logos* due to his/her supposed close proximity to the idea or the concept (Derrida, *Dissemination* 77) and due to the logocentric assumption that what comes out of one’s mouth directly corresponds to the idea or the concept in one’s mind, to which Derrida refers as the metaphysical trap (“Semiology and Grammatology” 22). However, the poem itself undermines this firstly because of the absence of the listening subject, which makes the poem not a conversation poem, but rather “soliloquies, rhetorically posing as dialogues” (Noble 29) or “a one-sided conversation” (Potkay 109) in which the speaker talks only to himself or herself and secondly because this attempt by the poetic persona or the speaker to form a direct communication with the absent listener is ultimately and inevitably replaced by the textual digressions and fragmentations later on in the text, which give rise to the dissemination of meaning. Furthermore, if the presence and thus the so-called metaphysical authority of the speaker is defined by the absence of the listening subject, then this makes the superiority of the speaker undecidable and indeterminate because it is based on the absence of the listener. What’s more, the absence of the listening subject functions as what Derrida calls trace—that is, as a residue which is not actually present but functions in the production of meaning within the context of the poem as it connects the speaker and the listener together. To be more specific, the speaking subject is an element in the movement of signification and relates to something other than itself: the listening subject. The speaker retains the mark of the listening subject within the context of the poem, thus making the absence of the listening subject trace in Derridean terms. This trace adds another layer of meaning to the poem and situates the poem in an additional context and thus increases the signifying possibilities for the reader as it turns the poem into a dramatic monologue rather than a conversation poem, displaying the already disseminated nature of meaning within the context of the poem.

In a similar fashion to “The Eolian Harp” and “Frost at Midnight”, the first several lines of “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison”, in which the speaker’s immediate surroundings and the landscape of the place s/he resides are described, feature a descriptive and referential language, which is indicative of the fact that the speaker is

located in the realm of corporeality or sensibility where the logocentric correspondence between the signifier and the signified is supposedly maintained:

Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison!

...

Friends, whom I never more may meet again,
On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told;
The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
Flings arching like a bridge;—that branchless ash,
Unsunned and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
Fanned by the waterfall! and there my friends
Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone. (Coleridge, "Lime-Tree" 1-20)

Transition occurs in the poem not through the sense perception of an external object like it does in "The Eolian Harp" and "Frost at Midnight", but with the conception of a landscape. Through imagining the landscape that the friends of the speaker are supposedly seeing, the text moves from the realm of the sensible to the realm of the conceivable—that is, from the realm of corporeality to the realm of transcendence:

Now, my friends emerge
Beneath the wide wide Heaven—and view again
The many-steepled tract magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles
Of purple shadow! Yes! they wander on

...

Ah! slowly sink
Behind the western ridge, thou glorious Sun!
Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!
Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves! (20-36)

Analogous to both “The Eolian Harp” and “Frost at Midnight”, meaning begins to be disseminated both spatially and temporally after the transition—that is, the meaning starts to be differed and deferred after the transition through which the setting changes and language, which was previously descriptive and referential, becomes metaphorical. Of course, as Derrida so often points out, dissemination is already there in any given text with or without the transition that is being discussed here, but its presence is felt more with metaphorical language, which destabilises the conventional meaning-making mechanisms. “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” may not be offering as many elusive metaphors as “The Eolian Harp” and “Frost at Midnight” offer, but the ones it offers are worth discussing in Derridean terms. One of the elusive metaphors in question is “the last rook”, which for the speaker has a unitary function as the following lines indicate:

My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook
Beat its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blessed it! deeming its black wing
(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
Had crossed the mighty Orb’s dilated glory,
While thou stood’st gazing; or, when all was still,
Flew creaking o’er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
No sound is dissonant which tells of life. (68-76)

In addition to the speaker of the poem, some of the critics maintain that the function of “the last rook” is to unite Coleridge and Charles Lamb (Schmidt 45), assuming that the bird which is supposedly seen by both the speaker and the addressee of the poem is the same bird. However, this might not be the case at all because there is no indication on the listening subject’s part that he actually sees a bird. Even if he saw one, he cannot tell the reader because he is silenced by the speaker throughout the poem. Moreover, notwithstanding the signifying intentions of the speaker or the poetic persona, “the last rook” metaphor may even deepen both the material and metaphysical distance between the speaking subject and the listening subject. To put it differently, in a quite similar fashion to the elusive metaphors discussed in the previously analysed poems such as “breeze”, “wind”, “gale” etc., what a bird signifies

is something floating in the air without a definitive destination, something that cannot be reached or grasped, and something that can be sometimes barely seen. From this vantage point, the bird metaphor that is being employed in the text can be interpreted as an unconscious textual reference to the non-correspondence of the signifier and the signified or the non-existence of the self-presence of meaning. Furthermore, the bird metaphor can also be interpreted as dissemination and *différance* in Derridean terms. It emphasises the dissemination of meaning because its interpretation may vary from reader to reader or critic to critic. It is an example of *différance* because it stands for the floating signifier which wanders around aimlessly because it is devoid of the transcendental signified; the ultimate destination. To be more specific, the bird metaphor is a fine example of *différance* that already exists in the text because it is a floating signifier, for its meaning differs (spatially) endlessly in a number of contexts and it does not present a fixed or stable meaning. That is, because its meaning differs depending on context, the meaning of the metaphor as well as of the text is always deferred (temporally) and thus can never be fully grasped. Another part of the text which problematises the self-presence of meaning through dissemination and *différance* is where the speaker associates the divine with nature:

Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
 On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
 Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
 As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
 Spirits perceive his presence. (Coleridge, "Lime-Tree" 39-43)

Différance is observable here as part of the Paganistic overtones which imply the association of the divine with nature as the lines explicitly suggest that the presence of God can be felt in nature as the speaker and

Charles Lamb apprehend the presence of a divine force in nature and in their own selves. ... they perceive themselves as they are perceived by God ... This union of man and God is implied linguistically by Coleridge's repetition of the word "Spirit" to refer both to God ("Almighty Spirit") and to human beings ("Spirits"). (Mellor, "Categories" 264)

These lines are indicative of *différance* which occurs in the text because the meaning is both differed and deferred simultaneously. To start with, these lines can be interpreted in a Paganistic context because of the explicit association of God with nature. Moreover, these lines can also be interpreted in the context of Pantheism which considers everything identical with the divine. The fact that the meaning(s) of these lines change depending on the context shows the already disseminated nature of meaning visible in the text, which indicates that “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” can be regarded as the disruption of writing or as a text in Derridean terms that produces meaning which changes from context to context, notwithstanding the poetic persona’s or the reader’s syntax and lexicon (Derrida, *Dissemination* 129-30).

CHAPTER 5

S. T. COLERIDGE'S "KUBLA KHAN"

Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", which was written in 1797 and published in 1816, has been subjected to many analyses from various vantage points. M. H. Abrams argues that "Kubla Khan" is a gateway to the realm of magic and mystery, which explores "the exoticism ... of the Orient" (Abrams, *Norton Anthology* 9). For Harold Bloom, the poem is a "vision of creation and destruction" (Bloom, *Visionary* 212) and that "the sexual intimations of the poem are undeniable" (214). Humphry House maintains in his widely quoted *Coleridge: The Clark Lectures* that the poem emphasises the act of poetic creation and is a manifestation of "the potentialities of poetry" (House 115-116). Anne K. Mellor puts forward in her *English Romantic Irony* that the poem "poses the enduring vision of a unifying imagination against the antithetical forces of mortality, self-doubt, social respectability, and rational understanding—and leaves them unreconciled" (Mellor, *Irony* 155). The majority of the critics in the scholarship of the Romantic literature agree upon the view that the poem is emblematic of Coleridge's famous philosophy of reconciliation of opposites. Amongst such critics the most notable one is Duncan Wu, who puts forward in his *A Companion to Romanticism* that "Kubla Khan" is a "fulfilling fitting-together of extremes" (Wu, *Companion* 143). Another such reading is that of Fred L. Milne's, who asserts in his "Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan': A Metaphor for the Creative Process" that although the gardens and forests are oppositional, the poem unifies and blends them together harmoniously (Milne 22). Richard Harter Fogle suggests that "Kubla Khan" is a poem which is emblematic of the philosophy of reconciliation of opposites, in which the "visual unification extends to the feelings and ideas which the scene evokes" (Fogle 15). Irene H. Chayes puts forward in her paper that the vision of the poem emphasises a reconciliation of opposites and that it is "the only Romantic poem in which the

audience has a function in the creative process itself, carrying on the progression from perception to creation to perception once more” (Chayes 19-20). The final example of the readings which highlight the philosophy of reconciliation of opposites is Dorothy F. Mercer’s “The Symbolism of ‘Kubla Khan’”, in which she argues that “Kubla Khan” is a poem where Coleridge’s “most constant beliefs—the reconciliation of anomalies and a redemptive process in operation—are given expression” (Mercer 65). N. B. Allen suggests that “Kubla Khan” is not a fragmentary but a complete poem that talks about the poet’s loss of vision (Allen 109). Similar to N. B. Allen, Alan C. Purves maintains that the poem is complete and carefully written (Purves 191). Another vantage point which constitutes the great bulk of criticism of the poem is psychoanalysis. One of the major psychoanalytic readings of the poem is that of S. K. Heninger, Jr.’s, who, from a Jungian point of view, asserts that the symbols in the poem “bring into our ephemeral consciousness those time-less psychic experiences shared with our ancestors” (Heninger, Jr. 358). Another such psychoanalytic reading belongs to Eugene H. Sloane, who argues in his “Coleridge’s ‘Kubla Khan’: The Living Catacombs of the Mind” that the poem is a gateway to the return of the repressed and the unconscious (Sloane 98). Hilde Scheuer Bliss and Donald Thayer Bliss’ psychoanalytic reading of the poem puts forward that the poem represents “sexual needs” and from this point of view the “pleasure-dome” imagery symbolises “the female sexual parts”, whereas the final lines of the poem emphasise “deep oral attachment to the mother” (H. S. and D. T. Bliss 263). James Bramwell’s paper titled “‘Kubla Khan’ – Coleridge’s Fall?” argues that “Kubla Khan” is Coleridge’s attempt to “regain a lost paradise of spiritual harmony and creative vision, and that the attempt ended ... in his being cast down into the pit of depression that he was to describe, four years later, in *Dejection: An Ode*” (Bramwell 465). The only Derridean reading of the poem is that of Patricia S. Yaeger’s, who maintains in her “Coleridge, Derrida, and the Anguish of Writing” that the poem can be interpreted as the “conflict between [Coleridge’s] dominant theory of language as totalizing decree and his ... instinctive feelings for language as ‘an autonomous overassemblage of meanings.’” (Yaeger 97-98). The following analysis will make use of Yaeger’s Derridean reading, but distinguish itself from it as well as from the readings briefly mentioned above by performing a Derridean reading of the poem through the employment of the non-

concepts such as dissemination, *différance*, and trace from Derridean terminology. In the process of undertaking such a Derridean reading of the poem, the thesis will specifically dwell on the function of the preface and its relation to the conflict between the poetic persona and the text on a textual level and the struggle between the poetic persona and the text itself over the domination of the meaning and language of the poem as well as on the undecidable imageries and metaphors in the text in order to lay bare the already existing problematisation of the logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning and the free play of signification that is recurrent in the text.

5.1. Preface and Signification

The nature and function of the preface of “Kubla Khan” is similar to the marginal gloss of “The Rime”. It is seemingly written upon the completion of the primary text. Accordingly, a preface

would announce in the future tense (“this is what you are going to read”) the conceptual content or significance ... of what will *already* have been *written*. And thus sufficiently *read* to be gathered up in its semantic tenor and proposed in advance. From the viewpoint of the fore-word, which recreates an intention-to-say after the fact, the text exists as something written—a past—which, under the false appearance of a present, a hidden omnipotent author (in full mastery of his product) is presenting to the reader as his future. Here is what I wrote, then read, and what I am writing that you are going to read. ... The *pre* of the preface makes the future present, represents it, draws it closer, breathes it in, and in going ahead of it puts it ahead. The *pre* reduces the future to the form of manifest presence. (Derrida, *Dissemination* 7)

The preface, as Derrida implies, is simply another text which is attached to the primary text post-writing in order to impose the signifying intentions of the poetic persona. This post-writing addition enhances the “already divided generation of meaning” (268) by adding another layer of meaning(s) and context(s) upon the signifying possibilities of the text. The addition of a preface is ironic and self-contradictory because it implies the poetic persona’s inability to take full possession of the meaning and signification of the text and shows his/her dissatisfaction with the final product of his/her writing process. It merely deconstructs itself, thus its very presence implies

absence. To be more specific, it is indicative of the textual conflict that takes place between the poetic persona and the agency of the text over the domination of meaning and meaning-making mechanisms within the context of the text. Moreover, the post-writing additions in the form of a preface can be regarded as the poetic persona's second attempt to impose his signifying intentions upon the text, whose signifying possibilities go beyond the poetic persona's signifying intentions. To put it differently, the purpose of adding a preface to an already written text is to limit the movement of signification and thus to prevent the free play of signification. This is self-contradictory and ironic on a textual level because, instead of limiting the movement of signification, it merely broadens the scope of the possible meanings that can be inferred from the text as well as increases the number of context in which the text can be both spatially and temporally analysed. Thus, in Derridean terms, it brings forth dissemination and *différance*.

"Kubla Khan" includes a preface and a subtitle (*Or, A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment*), both of which were seemingly added upon the completion of the poem. In the preface, the poetic persona, in a very detailed manner, states the events which supposedly take place before and after s/he writes the poem:

In the summer of the year 1797, the author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farm house between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effect of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in *Purchas's Pilgrimage*: "Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall." The author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines ... On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone had

been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter! (Coleridge, "Kubla Khan" 346-347)

Instead of providing further explanations on the poem itself or saying anything about the text itself, what the preface does is to provide a list of excuses and justifications listed by the poetic persona as to why the poem is not, in his/her eyes, a finished product. The preface "undermines the poem in ... [a] profound way. Its voice ... dismisses the poem as a mere 'psychological curiosity,'" (Mellor, *Irony* 158). The attempt to justify the supposed incompleteness or failure of the poem in his/her own eyes through the claims of having written the poem based on the recollections of a faded dream and under the influence of opium as well as the writing process being interrupted by a man is indicative of the conflict between what was intended to be conveyed through the poem and how the final product turned out to be. To put it differently, the poetic persona renders the poem "fragmentary and include[s] a preface to explain the circumstances of disappointment" (Wu, *Companion* 141). In a way, the preface implies that the poetic persona abandons the primary text and labels it as a textual failure. The function of the preface, thus, is to transform the text into something else than what it is on its own terms. Even if this preface was not a post-writing addition, its function would still be the same because "[t]here is nothing before the text; there is no pretext that is not already a text" (Derrida, *Dissemination* 328). What's more, whether the origin is the poem or the preface is irrelevant and can never be determined because in the "play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable. ... an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 36). Yaeger reads the preface of "Kubla Khan" as Coleridge's cry for the lost unity in the writing process of the poem. For Coleridge, she argues, "writing must move toward the *center* of meaning; it cannot move, like the dispersing images on the surface of the water, centrifugally. But the poem itself subverts this preliminary theory" (Yaeger 98). Indeed, as the thesis will also show, the poem moves far away from Coleridge's desire for unity. Furthermore, the use of dream as a cover or justification for the work itself or its failure in the eyes of its author is similar to the dream vision technique used by the medieval authors (Mellor, *Irony* 158) like Geoffrey Chaucer and William

Langland, who wanted to protect themselves from the possible negative consequences of their work, which may or may not transgress the boundaries set by the Church. In addition, the poetic persona's own remarks on his/her inability to write the poem on his/her own terms towards the end of the text show his/her frustration over the struggle to command the language of the text and impose his/her own signifying intentions upon it, which is basically the poeticised version of the preface:

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
...
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! (Coleridge, "Kubla Khan" 37-47)

The lines quoted above are further indicative of the fact that the poetic persona added the preface due to his/her discontent with the poem itself. Similar to the preface, the subtitle of the poem, *Or, A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment*, which is another post-writing addition by the poetic persona, functions as a manipulator of the signifying possibilities for the reader because it is the first thing that the reader would read prior both to the preface and the poem itself. It not only manipulates the reader but also adds another layer of meaning and context upon the text, which ironically disseminates the meaning of the text even further. The subtitle seemingly reinforces the claim uttered in the preface, which indicates that the poem is a recollection of a faded dream. It also states in advance that the poem is a "fragment"—that is, it is not a complete work. Humphry House, one of the critics who defends the addition of the preface, puts forward in his *Coleridge: The Clark Lectures* as follows:

If Coleridge had never published his Preface, who would have thought of "Kubla Khan" as a fragment? Who would have guessed at a dream? Who, without the confession, would have supposed that "in consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed"? Who would have thought it

nothing but a “psychological curiosity”? ... Coleridge played, out of modesty, straight into the hands of critics. (House 114)

Humphry House takes the preface for granted in his analysis of the poem and suggests that it clarifies the meaning of the poem. However, whether it helps the reader achieve a better “understanding” of the poem or what the preface ultimately means for the text itself is ultimately irrelevant because the preface is merely another text which not only refers to the poem but also refers beyond the poem and beyond itself and thus infinitely increases the amount of context in which itself and the poem can be examined. In other words, the preface of “Kubla Khan”, similar to the marginal gloss of “The Rime”, can be regarded as trace in Derridean terms because its present presence and future presence are defined and determined by its initial absence because it is merely another text which does not simply merge with the poem itself. It is trace because it is “the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself ... simultaneously traced and effaced, simultaneously alive and dead” (Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* 156). Moreover, the poetic persona’s attempt to render the poem a fragment by the addition of the preface and the subtitle is also ultimately irrelevant in the Derridean sense because “[t]o write is to acknowledge fragmentation, to become fragmented, to produce only a fragment of that which can be said” (Yaeger 92). Whether one deems it or not, any form of writing is already a fragmentation.

5.2. Topographies, Imageries, Metaphors, and Signification

The opening lines of the poem immediately indicate a non-Western figure and topographical elements:

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. (Coleridge, “Kubla Khan” 1-5)

On a superficial level, the non-Western topography and figure depicted in these lines can be observed easily. What can be also observed here is the superabundance of meaning that is reflected through the “sacred river” imagery which runs towards “a sunless sea” through measureless caverns. For S. K. Heninger, for example, the sacred river is measureless because “as a component of the moon-world of the unconscious, it is beyond perception by the senses” (Heninger, Jr. 363). Richard Harter Fogle’s interpretation of the sacred river imagery is somewhat similar Heninger, Jr.’s. For him, given the river’s relation to the dome and the pleasure-grounds, it symbolises “the primordial and the irrational, whatever lies beyond the control of the rational and conscious mind” (Fogle 16). Humphry House follows a different path compared to the readings mentioned above and suggests that it is “an imaginative statement of the abundant life in the universe, which begins and ends in a mystery touched with dread” (House 121). For Anne K. Mellor, the river goes down to “a sunless sea” because “the creative and destructive impulses of chaotic life overwhelm the constructions of the conscious mind” (Mellor, *Irony* 156). In addition to all of these interpretations which already lay bare the disseminated nature of the meaning of the poem, the sacred river imagery may also signify the endless chain of floating signifiers which cannot be pinned down. The river which runs through measureless caverns may stand for the free play of signification or the free floating of the signifiers. The destination of the river, or the floating signifiers, is “a sunless sea”. As it is discussed above in the chapter of “The Rime”, the Sun stands for reason, a guiding principle within the context of Western tradition. Accordingly, what these three lines metaphorically symbolise is the free play of the floating signifiers, which are devoid of the transcendental signified as their ultimate destination. The fact that the same lines are repeated in the text is significant in that it puts further emphasis on the absence of the self-presence of meaning. The sacred river imagery here is similar to the imageries and metaphors analysed in the previous chapters. It is a metaphor for the free play of signification because its meanings vary depending on context. In other words, it is a textual reference to the non-correspondence of the signifier and the signified. The sacred river imagery can be regarded as an example of *différance* firstly because its meaning differs from context to context, reading to reading as exemplified above, secondly because its meaning is deferred, for the full meaning of it can never be

reached or grasped as its meaning becomes elusive since it changes depending on context.

In the second and third stanza, a strange comparison of two different landscapes can be observed. In the second stanza, the landscape and the topographical elements that are described are in line with the traditional English landscape:

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 sports of greenery. (Coleridge, "Kubla Khan" 8-11)

The imagery in this stanza is of significance to laying bare the working mechanisms of the poetic persona's discourse because the garden imagery is a symbol of the English culture and the notion of Englishness as the English philosopher Francis Bacon's own account on the gardens illustrates: "it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man ... there ought to be gardens, for all the months in the year" (Bacon 101). Moreover, in this stanza also emphasised the Sun, which stands for reason within the Western tradition. This is an attempt by the poetic persona to locate the non-Western Kubla Khan, who is an exotic other, within the Western discourse and language. In other words, it is an attempt to make the unfamiliar familiar by associating it with the things known and familiar, which is similar to what the colonisers did in the 20th century and before:

to decipher unfamiliar spaces ... travellers and colonizers relied on and scattered about them the stock descriptions and authoritative symbols that lay to hand. They transferred familiar metaphors, which are themselves already bridging devices, which carry meaning across, to unfamiliar and unlikely contexts. Strangeness was made comprehensible by using everyday names, dependable textual conventions, both rhetorical and syntactic. (Boehmer 15)

In the third stanza, the setting and the topographical elements dramatically change as the landscape becomes Paganistic and non-Western:

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

...

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

...

And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
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! (Coleridge, "Kubla Khan" 12-30)

Paganistic overtones are visible throughout the poem as the lines quoted above indicate. The "savage" non-Western and Paganistic topography described in these lines are not a place but a space, which is "non- or pre-linguistic ... [and] beyond the power of language" (Bramwell 167). The phrase "ceaseless turmoil" can be regarded as a metaphorical expression of the superabundance of meaning in the Derridean sense and thus symbolises the dissemination of meaning recurring in the poem. "Ancestral voices" that come from afar stand for "an overassemblage of meanings too boisterous to be articulated as anything other than fragments" (Yaeger 99). The war that these ancestral voices prophesy can be regarded as the textual conflict between the poetic persona and the text over the meaning-making mechanisms within the context of the poem. Furthermore, the Sun is now replaced by the Moon, which is analogous to the dramatic change of the setting occurring in "The Rime" when the "glorious Sun" is replaced with the "bloody Sun". The Moon appears at night and thus symbolises darkness and unreason, whereas the Sun stands for light and reason. The Moon and the Sun are juxtaposed in the text as the Sun symbolises reason because it is associated with day and light. This leaves the Moon as the representative of unreason because it is associated with night and dark. The Sun and the Moon are also juxtaposed in that what the former symbolises may also stand for the conscious, whereas the latter for the unconscious:

On one side are the sunny pleasure-dome, the gardens bright, and the forests with their sunny spots of greenery; on the other are the sacred river which flows down to a sunless sea, a chasm associated with a waning moon, and caves of ice ... there are symbol-clusters depicting the sun-world of the conscious and the moon-world of the unconscious ... (Heninger, Jr. 362-363)

What is manifested in the text through the juxtaposition of the two different landscapes and topographies—namely, Western and non-Western—is in fact an indication of the textual conflict between the poetic persona and the agency of the text over the domination or full possession of the meaning and language of the poem. The transition from the traditional English landscape to a non-Western one is indicative of the transition from the poetic persona to the text itself, whose signifying possibilities transgress the boundaries of the signifying intentions of the poetic persona. This is indicative of the poetic persona's failure in preventing the free play of signification through asserting his own will over the will of the text's own agency. Moreover, similar to the number of critics such as Dorothy F. Mercer (46), Richard Harter Fogle (14), Irene H. Chayes (11-12), Hilde Scheuer Bliss and Donald Thayer Bliss (270-271), Fred L. Milne (21), and S. K. Heninger, Jr. (365), Duncan Wu argues that the juxtaposition of two different landscapes ultimately serves to Coleridge's philosophy of the reconciliation of opposites:

The small third verse ... represents an alternative kind of vision, an altogether more inclusive or comprehensive kind of unity, 'mingling' the artistry of the pleasure dome with the 'given' natural world of the chasm. A fulfilling fitting-together of extremes is implied in the adeptly antithetical correspondence the poem contrives between 'sunny pleasure dome' (illuminated, warm, convex) with 'caves of ice' (dark, cold, concave). ('Extremes meet' was Coleridge's favourite motto.) (Wu, *Companion* 143)

The phrase "A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice" (36) is not an indication of the reconciliation of opposites, but on the contrary, is indicative of the fact that there is no reconciliation. However, even if these two different landscape descriptions were to somehow produce unity, which they do not, the remaining parts of the text do not show any signs of reconciliation as the text maintains its fragmented nature through

the end, and in the fourth stanza the narrator suddenly changes the subject and talks about his inability and struggle to continue the process of writing (Allen 109):

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
...
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! (Coleridge, "Kubla Khan" 37-47)

These lines, as mentioned in the previous chapter, are the poeticised version of the preface and merely reflect the poetic persona's frustration in not being able to write the text on his/her own terms and in his/her inability to finish it as planned. The "damsel" that the narrator refers to has been interpreted by many as Coleridge's Muse: "she is Coleridge's Muse, the spirit whose secret music had enabled him to sustain his creative power ... If only he could revive her ... song within him, he would regain the spiritual harmony so necessary for him as a creative artist" (Bramwell 458). Rather than Coleridge's Muse, what the damsel or these lines indicate is the loss of poetic creativity (Mellor, *Irony* 156). What's more, the damsel imagery and these lines can also be interpreted as the embodiment of the poetic persona's desperate cry which reflects his/her inability to take control of the narrative and prevent the free play of the floating signifiers. Another take on these lines and the "fragmentary" nature of the poem as a whole might be that of Yaeger's, in which she puts forward that the poem is seemingly not finished because

Coleridge refuses (on the level of theory) to recognize that language is dangerous, anguishing, precipitous: as uncontrollable as these multiple voices. Language will never say everything; it cannot produce a totality. For the poem to continue, the knowledge of writing as anguish would have to become self-conscious on Coleridge's part ... The poem ends, then, because Coleridge sees, or at least his writing produces, the meaning of writing itself. ... To write

more would make it necessary to see ... the overabundance of that which cannot be said. (Yaeger 99-100)

All in all, imageries such as “the sacred river”, “ceaseless turmoil”, and “Ancestral voices” as well as the post-writing additions of the preface and the subtitle display that “Coleridge’s ... writing is closer to Derrida’s model: fragmented and discontinuous, it maintains the necessary dissonance between word and thing which enables the production of metaphor” (97). To put it differently, as the analysis performed above implies, the elusiveness of the metaphorical expressions used in the poem as well as the poetic persona’s ironic and self-contradictory attempt of imposing his/her own signifying intentions upon the text in the form of a post-writing preface and subtitle enforce the already-thereness of dissemination and *différance* prevailing the poem. All of these indicate that “Kubla Khan” is an example of the disruption of writing in Derridean terms because the text lacks transcendental signified and thus does not maintain any totality; therefore, is a playground of the free play of floating signifiers.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to put under scrutiny Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "The Eolian Harp", "Frost at Midnight", "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison", and "Kubla Khan" from a Derridean vantage point in order to lay bare the already existing problematisation of the relationship between the poetic persona, the text, and meaning as well as of the logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning recurring in the poems. In order to undertake such a textual endeavour, the conceptual backcloth of the study was established through the borrowing of such key non-concepts as dissemination, *différance*, and trace from Derridean terminology. Before moving on with the outcomes of the textual analyses performed, it would be befitting to provide a brief review of the Derridean non-concepts, which form the backbone of the study.

Derrida critiqued and deconstructed the Western metaphysics, which is "the play of presence or absence" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 167). Logocentrism, upon which the metaphysics of presence is built, is the self-presence of meaning. The metaphysics of presence assumes that full presence is possible. It takes the determination of truth or meaning on the condition of being present for granted. Whereas presence means truth and meaning, absence means non-truth and non-meaning. Such a metaphysical logic is illusory, Derrida argues, because if the presence is dependent upon absence, then the supposed hierarchisation which is constituted through binary opposition becomes undecidable. The scope of Derrida's critique and deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence encompass the writing of such metaphysical thinkers, as Derrida would call them, as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and Saussure, whose theorisations are built upon presence/absence and speech/writing

dichotomies, which are at the centre of the metaphysics of presence. Derrida lays bare the illusory nature of the speech/writing dichotomy, which is established upon the supposed superiority of speech due to the presence of the speaker who makes possible the supposed close proximity between speech and concept. He erases the difference between the two by showing that both speech and writing are merely supplements or signifiers (281), whose sole function is to make up for the absence of the transcendental signified. Moreover, Derrida lays bare the non-existence of the transcendental signified and thus erases the signified. He suggests that the signifier comes “in the place of a lapse, a nonsignified or a nonrepresented, a nonpresence. There is no present before it, it is not preceding by anything but itself” (*Dissemination* 303-304). The signifier comes into play as a result of the absence of presence and wanders around through the endless chain of signifiers, which are devoid of the transcendental signified.

The thesis, as mentioned above, borrowed dissemination, *différance*, and trace from Derridean terminology as part of its theoretical backcloth. Of course none of these non-concepts has clear-cut definitions as Derrida provides several definitions for each and interchangeably uses them. Prior to discussing these non-concepts, what text means in the Derridean sense should be stated first. A text, for Derrida, is something whose meaning can never be wholly grasped. Neither an author nor a reader can take full possession of a text. A text always eludes and escapes “the law of its composition and the rules of its game” (63). In other words, it always goes beyond the signifying intentions of the author and the signifying possibilities for the reader (340). A text, then, refers to not only itself but also beyond itself and transgresses the syntax and lexicon of both the author and the reader (129-30). Dissemination means both the superabundance of meaning and the loss of meaning at the same time. It makes “the already divided generation of meaning” visible (268). Dissemination is always at work in any given text and it is indicative of the notion that a text can never be dominated, possessed, and appropriated by the writing or reading subject (Norris 112). *Différance* means the dissemination of meaning on both spatial and temporal level. It shows that meaning is always (spatially) differed and (temporally) deferred. It refers to “differing ... as discernibility, distinction, deviation, diastem, *spacing*; and

deferring ... as detour, delay, relay, reserve, *temporalizing*” (Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* 149). Spatial difference means that meaning is never stable or frozen, but ever elusive. Temporal difference means that the full or ultimate meaning (the transcendental signified) can never be reached. *Différance* is what makes the play of difference and thus the production of meaning(s) possible. It is not preceded by language or anything else; it defies essence and origin (134-135). It eliminates the logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning. Trace is some sort of residue which takes part in the movement of signification through its absence. It does not exist in a text, but its “absence” generates “presence”. However, it does not promise presence or meaning, for it is “the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself. ... the trace [is] simultaneously traced and effaced, simultaneously alive and dead” (156). Dissemination, *différance*, and trace always refer to and speak to each other.

The first text that was analysed in the thesis was Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”. Coleridge’s “The Rime” can be regarded as the disruption of writing or as a text in the Derridean sense because it problematises the self-presence of meaning through the addition of the marginal gloss and the elusive metaphors, imageries, and figures such as the Sun, the Albatross, the Hermit, the water snakes, and the dice which render the meaning undecidable by laying bare the non-existence of the transcendental signified. To start with, the post-writing addition of the marginal gloss does not fulfil the poetic persona’s desire to impose his/her own signifying intentions upon the text and prevent the free play of signification. On the contrary, it deconstructs the poetic persona’s aim by indicating that the poetic persona has already failed to take full possession of the language and meaning of the text and by ironically adding another layer of meaning(s) and context(s) upon what is already differed, deferred, and disseminated. To illustrate, notwithstanding what it means or what it refers to on its own terms, the Albatross metaphor is immediately forced into a theological context by the marginal gloss as “the pious bird of good omen” (Coleridge, “The Rime” 332), whereas the text itself never provides any textual evidence of that (Ferguson 624). Moreover, the Albatross is taken as a sign of good omen both by the marginal gloss and the Ancient Mariner. However, it arrives when the weather is bad. Prior to its

arrival the weather was well and the journey was proceeding as planned, and after it is killed by the Ancient Mariner the weather still continues to be good. More than its religious significance, the textual evidence points to its arbitrary nature as well as its insignificance to the events occurring in the text. Therefore, the attempt by the marginal gloss to impose religious significance upon the Albatross not only fails to achieve its purpose, but also deconstructs itself by rendering the meaning of the Albatross undecidable, thus giving way to dissemination and *différance*. Another instance where the marginal gloss deconstructs itself occurs when the commentary made by the marginal gloss on the nature of the supernatural forces which reanimate the dead bodies of the ship's crew: "The bodies of the ship's crew are inspirited ... But not by the souls of the men, nor by daemons of earth ... but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by ... the guardian saint" (Coleridge, "The Rime" 339). Similar to the Albatross case, the marginal gloss, without the existence of any textual evidence, deems the supernatural forces which reanimate the corpses of the crew angelic. The excessive uncanniness and atrociousness of a scene where zombie-like figures dominate the imagery of the poem overwhelm the poetic persona and the remarks made by the marginal gloss are a way of rationalising this uncanniness. Yet again, however, the addition of the marginal gloss merely adds another layer of meaning and context to what is already a free play of floating signifiers, thus giving further rise to dissemination and *différance*. Moving on from the discussion on the marginal gloss to the discussion on the metaphors, imageries, and figures; the Sun metaphor is one of the major examples of the dissemination of meaning recurring in the poem. The Sun is not only ascribed positive connotations such as reason and "God's own head" (97), but is also simultaneously ascribed negative connotations such as "With broad and burning face" (180). Whether the Sun symbolises something good or bad or what it is that it refers to is never explained by the text (House 98). Thus, this gives rise to the dissemination of meaning and contributes to the overall undecidability of the meaning of the poem. Another such major example is the famous Albatross metaphor. In addition to the marginal gloss and the Ancient Mariner, the majority of the critics have so far argued that the Albatross is a religious symbol. Such an interpretation, of course, cannot be denied or disregarded altogether, but the poem itself points to another part of its signifying possibilities: arbitrariness. When one

carefully puts the text under scrutiny, one realises that both the Albatross's arrival and death are arbitrary and inconsequential. There is no apparent reason either for its sudden appearance or death. What's more, the fact that the crew's opinion of the Albatross changes with the weather is further indicative of its elusive nature. In addition, as a bird floating in the air, what the Albatross also signifies is something that is beyond reach, something that aimlessly flies in the air without a certain destination, indicating that it may also stand for the floating signifier. All in all, the Albatross metaphor is dissemination and/or *différance* itself, for its meaning differs from context to context and is deferred because the full meaning of it simply does not exist and therefore cannot be reached. The Hermit, too, as an elusive figure, contributes to the dissemination of meaning recurring in the poem because the religious authority and significance attributed to him both by the marginal gloss and the Ancient Mariner prove to be self-contradictory due to the fact that he cannot prevent the Ancient Mariner's eternal damnation. The imagery of the water snakes is another major point of discussion in terms of the undecidability of meaning within the context of the poem. The majority of the critics have so far interpreted the water snakes as a symbol of redemption because the poem indicates that when the Ancient Mariner *unknowingly* praises the water snakes, the dead body of the Albatross falls from his neck. Religious significance of the water snakes is indeed reinforced both by the commentary provided by the marginal gloss and by the poem itself. However, as the imagery of the water snakes can be a metaphor for salvation, it can also be a metaphor for arbitrariness and Paganism. The initial appearance of the water snakes hints at Paganism as "The death-fires danced at night;" (Coleridge, "The Rime" 128). It can also be a metaphor for arbitrariness because the Ancient Mariner blesses them "unaware". Lastly, the dicing scene is one of the major indications which shows that the fate of the Ancient Mariner and the crew is decided upon a throw of dice—that is, it indicates that there is no regulating principle, organising element, or transcendental signified in the poem's world. It speaks for itself as a symbol of arbitrariness and needs no further discussion, for "[i]t would be hard to conceive of a more effective symbol of arbitrariness than ... dice" (Miall, "Guilt" 645).

Chapter 4 put under scrutiny Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp", "Frost at Midnight", and "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" amongst the conversation poems. The conversation poems are emblematic of the disruption of writing in the Derridean sense because they destabilise the metaphysical assumption of the correspondence between the signifier and the signified by showing the "already divided generation of meaning" (Derrida, *Dissemination* 268). They problematise the self-presence of meaning firstly through the destabilisation of the logocentric authority of the speaking subject. All three poems are dominated by the "presence" of the speaking subject and the "absence" of the listening subject, to which the poems are addressed. All of the speakers in the conversation poems fall into the metaphysical trap that Derrida talks about ("Semiology and Grammatology" 22), for they take the metaphysically assumed nature of the correspondence between the signifier and the signified for granted by assuming that their signifying intentions will exactly match the signifying possibilities for the listening subject, which is the "pensive Sara" in "The Eolian Harp", "Dear Babe" in "Frost at Midnight", and "Charles Lamb" in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison". Moreover, the absence of the listening subject constitutes what Derrida refers to as trace because as a residue, it is absent from the text itself but nevertheless takes part in the movement of signification within the context of the conversation poems. In other words, the absence of the listening subject generates "presence" within the context of the text. The conversation poems problematise the self-presence of meaning secondly through the poetic language and the elusive metaphors and imageries that they are dominated by. In all of the conversation poems a simultaneously topographical and linguistic transition occurs towards the middle of the text. The change in topography is paralleled by the spatial and temporal change in the language of the poem, which transforms the previously descriptive and referential language into a poetic and metaphorical one. This spatio-temporal change in language brings into play the already-thereness of dissemination and *différance* through the metaphorical language which is dominated by the elusive metaphors and imageries such as "breeze", "wind", "gale", "harp", "lute", "rook" as well as the Paganistic overtones. The metaphorical language, metaphors, and imageries render the meaning of the poems undecidable and indeterminate, laying bare the non-existence of the self-presence of meaning.

The last poem that was analysed in the thesis is Coleridge's "Kubla Khan". "Kubla Khan" is a fine example of a text in the Derridean sense because it promotes the free play of signification through the problematisation of the logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning. The poem achieves this firstly due to the preface, which is ironically added post-writing, and secondly due to the poetic language which is dominated by the elusive metaphors and imageries such as the "sacred river", "ceaseless turmoil", "Ancestral voices" as well as the Paganistic overtones. Similar to "The Rime", the post-writing addition of the preface as well as the subtitle deconstruct the intentions of the poetic persona by adding another layer of meaning and context upon what is already emblematic of the "already divided generation of meaning" (Derrida, *Dissemination* 268). They merely lay bare that the poetic persona has already failed to take full possession of the meaning of the text and is dissatisfied with the final product of his writing process. In other words, the function of both the preface and the subtitle is to prevent the free play of signification through the imposing of the poetic persona's own signifying intentions upon the text, but what they instead do is to deconstruct the poetic persona's purpose by going beyond the boundaries of the signifying intentions of the poetic persona via infinitely increasing the amount of meaning(s) and context(s) in which the poem can be analysed, thus enhancing the already existing dissemination and *différance* within the context of the text. Another major indication of the poem's nature as the disruption of writing in the Derridean sense is the poetic language which is dominated by elusive imageries and metaphors. The "sacred river" imagery, to start with, promotes undecidability and the already disseminated nature of meaning through its numerous signifying possibilities as the symbol of the unconscious (Heninger, Jr. 363) or of the primordial (Fogle 16) or of "the creative and destructive impulses of chaotic life" (Mellor, *Irony* 156) and so on. What's more, the destination of the river is "a sunless sea", which indicates that the river is also a metaphor for the floating signifier that is devoid of the transcendental signified as its ultimate destination, for the Sun stands for reason and thus for the organising principle within the context of Western tradition as often mentioned in the thesis. Similarly, the phrase "Ancestral voices" also stand for the free play of the floating signifiers because it symbolises "an overassemblage of meanings too boisterous to be articulated as anything other than fragments" (Yaeger 99). Similar to

the transition which takes place in the conversation poems, the transition from the traditional English landscape to a non-Western one is indicative of the transition from the poetic persona to the text itself, whose signifying possibilities transgresses the boundaries of the signifying intentions of the poetic persona. All in all, the post-writing addition of the preface and the subtitle and the undecidability of the metaphorical language lay bare the already-thereness of dissemination and *différance* prevailing the poem.

To conclude, the thesis put under scrutiny Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "The Eolian Harp", "Frost at Midnight", "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison", and "Kubla Khan" from a Derridean vantage point and argued that these poems lay bare on a textual level the already-thereness of the problematisation of the relationship between the poetic persona, the text and meaning as well as of the logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning. In the process of such an endeavour, the thesis made use of the Derridean key non-concepts such as dissemination, *différance*, and trace as its theoretical backcloth. Through the specific focus on the marginal gloss and the elusive metaphors, imageries, and figures in "The Rime"; on the "presence" of the speaking subject and the "absence" of the listening subject as well as on the metaphorical language which is dominated by the elusive metaphors and imageries such as "breeze", "harp", "rook" etc. in "The Eolian Harp", "Frost at Midnight", and "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison"; on the post-writing additions of preface and subtitle as well as on the poetic language which is dominated by the elusive imageries and metaphors such as the "sacred river" and "Ancestral voices" in "Kubla Khan"; the thesis has concluded that all of these poems are emblematic of the disruption of writing in Derridean terms because they promote anti-totality and they are not regulated by the all-governing transcendental signified as they do not offer self-contained and fixed meaning, but instead are the playground of the free play of the floating signifiers which destabilises the illusory logocentric assumption of the self-presence of meaning. With the exception of a couple of papers, there is no specifically Derridean reading of the poems by Coleridge in the scholarship. What's more, there is no Derridean reading of any of the Romantic texts through the non-concepts dissemination, *différance*, and trace. Therefore, this study

fills in this gap in the scholarship. For further studies within this context, the Derridean non-concepts dissemination, *différance*, and trace can be applied to other poems by Coleridge or to the poems by the other Romantic writers such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats and so on because there is so much to read, so much to analyse, and still so much to find out about the Romantic literature, which “exceeds almost all other ages of English literature in the range and diversity of its achievements” (Abrams, *Norton Anthology* 4).



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE'İN “YAŞLI DENİZCİNİN EZGİSİ”,
“RÜZGAR ARPI”, “GECEYARISI AYAZ”, “BU IHLAMUR AĞACI ÇEVRELER
ZİNDANIMI” VE “KUBİLAY HAN” ŞİİRLERİNDE YAYILIM, AYIRAM VE İZ

Çalışmanın ilk bölümü Romantik dönem tartışması ile başlamaktadır. Bu kısımda kuramsal ve tarihsel bağlamda genel hatlarıyla Romantizm ve Romantik dönemden bahsedilmiştir. Romantik dönem, tarihsel olarak Aydınlanma Çağı ve Viktorya Devri'nin arasında konumlanmaktadır. Ancak edebi bir akım olan Romantizmi kuramsal bağlamda konumlandırmak oldukça güçtür. Romantik dönemin tarihsel bağlamda bu iki dönem arasında konumlanmış olması çok enteresandır. Aydınlanma felsefesi ilkten ilerici bir düşünce olarak ortaya çıksa da sonradan baskıcı bir epistemolojiye dönüşmüştür. Baskıcı ve muhafazakâr bir dönem olan Viktorya Devri ise Britanya'da yaşayan insanların hükümdarın kırbacını enselerinde hissetmelerine sebep olmuştur. Romantizmi tanımlamak gerçekten zordur, zira Romantizm bir yandan Aydınlanma düşüncesinin bir uzantısı, bir yandan ona karşı ortaya çıkmış bir tepki, diğer yandan ise Amerikan ve Fransız devrimlerinin ciddi ölçüde etkisi altında kalan bir akımdır. Bir edebi akım olan Romantizmi tam anlamıyla tanımlamak belki de hiçbir zaman mümkün olmayacak, zira Romantizmin üzerine kurulduğu zemin kavraması zor ve müphemdir. Aydınlanma düşüncesi birçok yönden sözmerkezciliğin ve Platonculuğun bir uzantısıdır. Romantikler Aydınlanma düşüncesinin çocuklarıydı ve dolayısıyla bu Platoncu ve sözmerkezciliğin egemen olduğu bir dünyaya doğmuşlardı. Belki de Romantizmi edebi, dilsel, söylemsel ve kuramsal açıdan böylesine ilginç kılan şey budur. Romantikler bir yandan içerisine doğdukları katı ve

muhafazakâr düşüncenin belli başlı yanlarını benimsemişlerdi, öte yandan devrimlerin de etkisiyle bu epistemolojinin dogmatik yanlarına karşı çıkmışlardı. Bütün bunlar göz önünde bulundurulduğunda Romantizmi ya da Romantik dönemi tutarlı ve sabit bir olgu olarak nitelendirmek mümkün değildir çünkü her bir Romantik yazar ve düşünürün kendine özgü bir estetik ve kuramsal düşünce yapısı bulunmaktadır. Romantik dönem yazarlarının ve düşünürlerinin düşünce yapısı eş zamanlı olarak Platonculuk, Aydınlanma felsefesi, ampirizm, Neoklasisizm ve Amerikan ve Fransız devrimleri tarafından şekillenmektedir.

Çalışmanın amacı, Samuel Taylor Coleridge'in "Yaşlı Denizcinin Ezgisi", "Rüzgâr Arpı", "Geceyarısı Ayaz", "Bu İhlamur Ağacı Çevreler Zindanımı" ve "Kubilay Han" şiirlerini Derridacı bir bakış açısıyla ele alıp yayılım, *ayıram* ve iz ana kavramları bağlamında incelemektir. Bu incelemenin merkezinde bulunan sav ise bu Romantik metinlerin yazar-metin-anlam ilişkisi kapsamında Derridacı bağlamda yazının yıkıcılığına birer örnek teşkil etmesidir.

Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde Derrida'nın düşünceleri ve kuramları detaylı bir şekilde ele alınmıştır. Sonrasında ise çalışmanın iskeletini oluşturan yayılım, *ayıram* ve iz ana kavramları detaylı bir şekilde açıklanmıştır. Derrida, varlık/yokluk ikiliği üzerine kurulu olan Batı metafiziğini yapısöküm kuramı bağlamında eleştirmektedir. Batı metafiziğinin üzerine kurulduğu sözmerkezcilik ise anlamın kendiliğinden var olmasıdır. Batı metafiziği, anlamın tam olarak, sabit ve değişmez bir şekilde var olduğunu varsaymaktadır. Hakikati ve anlamı yalnızca varlık ya da var olma durumuna göre belirlemektedir. Varlık, anlam ve hakikat anlamına gelirken yokluk, hakikat olmayan ve anlamsızlık anlamına gelmektedir. Bir başka deyişle, Batı metafiziği mekânsal ve zamansal varlık/var olma durumunu hiyerarşik olarak yokluk, mesafe ve farklılığın önüne koymaktadır. Derrida'ya göre bu metafizik mantık bir hayal ürünüdür çünkü eğer varlık, yokluğa bağlı ise bu ikili zıtlık üzerine kurulu hiyerarşi belirsiz bir hale dönüşmektedir, zira varlık, yokluğa bağlıysa yokluk, varlığın temelini oluşturmaktadır ve varlık, yokluk olmadan tanımlanamaz ve var olamaz. Derrida'nın Batı metafiziğini yapısöküme uğratma girişimi, kuramları Batı metafiziğinin kalbinde yer alan varlık/yokluk ve söz/yazı ikili zıtlıkları çerçevesinde

şekillenen Platon, Aristoteles, Rousseau, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger ve Saussure'ü de kapsamaktadır. Batı metafiziğine göre söz, yazıdan üstündür çünkü konuşma anında hem konuşan kişi hem de dinleyen kişi o anda orada bulunmaktadır ve dolayısıyla varlardır. Yazıda ise bir yokluk söz konusudur çünkü ne konuşan kişi oradadır ne de dinleyen; arada bir mesafe vardır. Batı metafiziği tarafından inşa edilen kurgusal hiyerarşide sözün yazıdan üstün olmasının bir sebebi de imleyen ile imlenen arasındaki ilişkinin sorunsallaştırılmamasıdır. Açıklamak gerekirse, Batı metafiziği, ağızdan çıkan söz (imleyen) ile zihinde canlanan kavram (imlenen) arasında mükemmel ve sorunsuz bir bağlantı olduğunu varsaymaktadır. Yani, Saussure'ün de öne sürdüğü gibi konuşmacının ağızdan çıkan söz, direkt olarak dinleyicinin zihni tarafından hiçbir değişikliğe uğramadan ve konuşmacının kastettiği şekilde kavranmaktadır. Bu varsayımın temelinde ise konuşmacının ve dinleyicinin varlığının/mevcudiyetinin söz ve kavram arasındaki mesafeyi ortadan kaldırması ve bir yakınlık sağlaması yatmaktadır. Bu aldatıcı yakınlık da söz ve kavram arasında sabit ve değişmez bir uyum olduğu izlenimini vermektedir. Derrida, Batı düşüncesine çağlar boyunca yön veren bu metafizik varsayımı, yapısöküm kuramıyla altüst etmiştir. Derrida, hem sözün hem de yazının, işlevi metafizik imlenenin yokluğunu gidermek olan birer imleyen olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Dahası, Derrida imlenen diye bir şeyin olmadığını savunmaktadır. Derrida'ya göre dilde, anlam üretme mekanizmaları bağlamında imlenen diye bir şey bulunmamaktadır. Dil ve anlamlandırma, sonsuz bir döngü içerisinde birbirine göndermede bulunan ve sonu herhangi bir yere varmayan bir imleyen zincirinden oluşmaktadır.

Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünün son kısmında tezin kuramsal altyapısını oluşturan yayılım, *ayıram* ve iz ana kavramları tartışılmaktadır. Derrida'ya göre yayılım, *ayıram* ve iz kavram değil, kavram-dışıdır. Derrida, her bir kavram-dışı için birden fazla tanımlamada bulunmaktadır ve hepsini birbirinin yerine kullanmaktadır. Bunun amacı ise bu kavram-dışların yapısöküme uğrattı ve eleştirdiği sözmerkezci ve totaliter epistemolojinin bir muadiline dönüşmesini engellemektir. Yayılım, *ayıram* ve iz kavram-dışlarını tartışmaya geçmeden önce Derrida için metin nedir, ondan bahsedilmelidir. Derrida'ya göre metin, anlamı hiçbir zaman bütünüyle kavranamayacak bir şeydir. Ne yazar ne de okuyucu metnin anlamsal bütünlüğüne

ulařamaz ve metin üzerinde bir himaye kuramaz. Metin, yalnızca kendisine deęil, ayrıca kendisinin ötesinde olan řeylere de göndermede bulunur ve böylelikle yazarın ve okuyucunun dısel ve anlamsal sınırlarının ötesine geçer. Yayılım, hem anlam çokluęu hem de anlam yoksunluęu anlamına gelmektedir. Yayılım, her metinde hali hazırda mevcuttur ve metnin herhangi bir özne tarafından hükmedilmesini engellemektedir. Yayılım her metinde mevcuttur çünkü metindeki anlam(lar) hem bilinç hem de bilinçdışı kapsamında birden fazla bağlama gönderme yaptığından bir metinden çıkarılabilecek anlam sayısı sonsuzdur. Bu, anlam bolluęu olduęu kadar anlam yoksunluęudur da. Metinde yayılım mevcuttur çünkü metin yazara ya da okuyucuya anlam vaat etmez. Metni bir iplik gibi ele alıp o iplięi sonuna kadar takip ederek bütüncül ve sabit bir anlama ulařılamaz. *Ayırım*, anlamın mekânsal ve zamansal bağlamda yayılımıdır. Anlamın her zaman (mekânsal olarak) farklılařtığını ve (zamansal olarak) ötelendiğini vurgulamaktadır. Mekânsal farklılık, anlamın hiçbir zaman sabit ve tekil olmamasıdır. Zamansal farklılık ise bütüncül veya nihai anlama ulařmanın imkânsız olmasıdır. *Ayırım*, anlam farklılıęını ve böylelikle anlam üretimini mümkün kılan řeydir. Dil ya da başka bir řey *ayırımdan* önce gelmemektedir. *Ayırım*, öz ve köken karřıtıdır. İz ise yoksunluęu ile anlamlama sürecinde yer alan bir çeřit kalıntı olarak tanımlanabilir. İz, metinde somut olarak var olmaz ancak onun bu yoksunluęu “varlık” üretir. Yayılım, *ayırım* ve iz her zaman birbirine göndermede bulunur ve birbiriyle etkileřim halindedir.

Çalıřmanın üçüncü bölümünde tezde incelenen ilk eser olan, Samuel Taylor Coleridge’in “Yařlı Denizcinin Ezgisi” isimli řiiri ele alınmaktadır. Bu bölümde savunulan argüman ise “Ezgi”nin Derridacı bağlamda yazının yıkıcılıęına örnek teřkil ettięidir. Daha açık ifade etmek gerekirse; řiirde bulunan Albatros, Keřiř, su yılanları, zar atma gibi metaforlar, imgeler, figürler ve řiirin yazım sürecinin bitmesinden sonra sayfa kenarlarına eklenen yorumlar, anlamı bulanıklařtırmakta ve sözmerkezci Batı metafizięinin kalbinde yatan, anlamın kendilięinden, sabit ve deęiřmez olarak var olmasını sorunsallařtırmaktadır. Bütün bunlar ayrıca metafizik imlenenin yokluęunu da göz önüne sermektedir. Örneęin, řiirin kenarlarına sonradan eklenen yorumların amacı, söyleyicinin kendi anlamlandırma niyetini ve mekanizmalarını metne empoze etmesi ve anlamlandırmada oluřan bořluęu ve bolluęu engellemektir. Bir başka

deyişle söyleyici, metnin okunmasında ve yorumlanmasında kendi niyeti doğrultusunda tekil bir yol dayatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Fakat bu girişim ters tepmekte ve kendi kendini yapısöküme uğratmaktadır. Söyleyicinin sonradan sayfa kenarlarına eklediği yorumlar, onun metnin dilinin ve anlam(lar)ının üzerindeki kontrolünü kaybettiğini ve zaten hâlihazırda mekânsal olarak farklılaşmış, zamansal olarak ötelenmiş, yayılımın hâkim olduğu bir metne ilaveten anlam(lar) ve bağlam(lar) ekleyerek kendi amacından ironik bir şekilde daha da saptığını göstermektedir. Örnek vermek gerekirse; kendi başına ne anlama geldiği ya da neye gönderme yaptığına bağlı kalmaksızın Albatros metaforu, sayfanın kenarına eklenen yorumlar tarafından zoraki olarak teolojik bir bağlama konumlandırılmaktadır. Ancak metnin kendisinde buna dair bir delil bulunmamaktadır. Albatros, yalnızca sayfa kenarlarındaki ifadeler ve Yaşlı Denizci tarafından dini bir sembol ve iyiye işaret olarak yorumlanmaktadır. Metnin kendisine bakıldığında Albatros metaforu hakkında bu tarz kesin yargılara varmak mümkün değildir. Mesela, Albatros gemiye gelmeden önce hava açıktır ve yolculuk herhangi bir sorun olmadan devam etmektedir. Albatros, havanın kötüleşmesiyle meydana çıkmaktadır. Albatros, Yaşlı Denizci ve tayfası tarafından iyiye işaret olarak görülse de sonrasında Yaşlı Denizci tarafından aniden ve sebepsizce öldürülmektedir. Ancak “iyiye işaret” ya da dini bir sembol olarak yorumlanan Albatros’un ölümünden sonra hava aynı seyrinde devam etmekte ve doğada hiçbir değişiklik olmamaktadır. Bunu gözlemleyen denizciler, ilkten kınadıkları Yaşlı Denizci’yi Albatros’u öldürdüğü için övmeye başlarlar. Ancak aradan zaman geçtikten sonra havada ve denizcilerin içinde bulundukları mekânsal atmosferde değişiklikler yaşanmaya başlar. Havanın kötüleştiğini gören denizciler, bu sefer tekrardan Yaşlı Denizci’yi suçlamaya başlar ve Albatros’un ölü bedenini, çarmıha gerilme benzetmesi bağlamında Yaşlı Denizci’nin boynuna asarlar. Bir bakıma, Albatros’un ne şekilde yorumlandığı ironik bir biçimde hava durumuna bağlıdır ve sürekli değişmektedir. Albatros’un şiirin dünyasında sayfa kenarı yazılarının ve Yaşlı Denizci ve tayfasının düşündüğü kadar bir öneme sahip olmadığı, dini bir sembol olmaktan öte aslında gelişigüzelğin bir sembolü olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır. Toplamak gerekirse Albatros, kendi kendine sahip olduğu anlam, sayfa kenarı notları, denizciler ve bazı eleştirmenler tarafından ona yüklenen teolojik anlam, şiirin kendi dünyasına pek de etkisinin bulunmamasıyla kazandığı gelişigüzellik

anlamı gibi daha birçok şekilde yorumlanabilmektedir. Sayfa kenarı notları, Albatros'a ek bir anlam kazandırarak söyleyicinin kendi kendisini yapı sökme uğratmasına sebep olmaktadır çünkü tüm bu ek ve olası anlamlar şiirde hâlihazırda var olan yayılım ve *ayırma* gözler önüne sermektedir. Sayfa kenarına söyleyici tarafından eklenen notların kendi kendisini ve söyleyicinin metne dayatmaya çalıştığı anlamlandırmayı yapı sökme uğratmasına bir başka örnek de zombi-vari bir şekilde diriltiren denizcilerin cansız bedenlerinin bulunduğu kısımdır. Albatros metaforunda olduğu gibi burada da hiçbir yazınsal kanıt bulunmadan sayfa kenarı notları, denizcilerin ölü bedenlerini diriltiren doğüstü güçleri “melek” olarak tanımlamaktadır. Buradaki sayfa kenarı notları, zombi görünümüne figürlerin yer aldığı bu esrarengiz ve korkunç imgelemenin altında ezilen söyleyicinin yaşananları mantıksallaştırma çabasından ibarettir. Ancak bu çaba, Albatros metaforunda olduğu gibi metne ek anlam ve bağlam katmanı ekleyerek zaten hâlihazırda metinde var olan, herhangi bir metafizik imlenene bağlı olmaksızın, serbest olarak oradan oraya atlayan imleyen bolluğunu daha da artırarak daha kuvvetli bir yayılım ve *ayırma* sebebiyet vermektedir. Sonuç olarak sayfa kenarına eklenen notlar, metinde hâlihazırda mevcut olan anlam bolluğunu daha da artırarak söyleyicinin metne kendi iradesi doğrultusunda dayatmak istediği tekil ve sabit anlamı yapı sökme uğratmaktadır. Üçüncü bölümün ikinci kısmına gelecek olursak, bu alt bölümde anlamın yayılımı bağlamında ele alınan ilk metafor Güneştir. Metin boyunca Güneş metaforuna akıllı gibi olumlu anlamlar yüklenildiği gibi, alev almış bir yüz figürü gibi olumsuz anlamlar da yüklenmektedir. Güneş'in iyi bir şeyi mi yoksa kötü bir şeyi mi simgelediği, metin tarafından hiçbir zaman net bir dille ifade edilmemektedir. Bu anlam belirsizliği ve çeşitliliği, Derridacı bağlamda yayılıma ve *ayırma* sebep olmaktadır. Bu bağlamda çalışmada ele alınan bir başka metafor da biraz önce farklı bağlamda ele alınan Albatros'dur. Sayfa kenarı notları ve denizciler dışında eleştirmenlerin büyük bir bölümü de Albatros metaforunu dini bir sembol olarak yorumlamaktadır. Bu tarz bir okuma elbette topyekûn göz ardı edilemez fakat şiirin kendisi, Albatros'un bir başka şekilde daha yorumlanabileceğine işaret etmektedir: gelişigüzel. Albatros metaforu yakından incelendiğinde, ortaya çıkışının ve ölümünün tamamıyla gelişigüzel olduğu ve hiçbir şeye sebebiyet vermediği görülmektedir. Ne aniden ortaya çıkışının ne de aniden ölüşünün belirli bir sebebi

yoktur. Dahası, denizcilerin Albatros hakkındaki görüşleri daha önce de bahsedildiği gibi hava durumuna göre şekillenmektedir. Ayrıca Albatros, özünde havada uçan bir kuştan ibarettir. Bir kuş olarak Albatros, belirli bir varış noktası olmaksızın havada serbestçe dolaşan, yakalanması ve ele geçirilmesi imkânsız olan bir şeyi; yani imleyeni simgelemektedir. Tüm bunlar hesaba katıldığında, Albatros'un anlamının bağlamdan bağlama, mekânsal olarak farklılaştığı ve böylelikle tekil ve sabit bir Albatros anlamına ulaşmanın zamansal olarak ötelendiği görülmektedir. Sonuç olarak Albatros metaforu, Derridacı bağlamda iyi bir yayılım ve *ayıram* örneğidir. Keşiş de hem Albatros hem de Güneş gibi tanımlanması zor bir figürdür. Keşiş'e sayfa kenarı notları ve Yaşlı Denizci tarafından yüklenen dini anlam ve önem, çelişkilidir ve kendi kendini yapısöküme uğratmaktadır. Bunun sebebi ise Keşiş'in bir dini otorite olarak Yaşlı Denizci'nin kaderine herhangi bir etkide bulunamaması ve Yaşlı Denizci'nin sonsuz lanetlenmesini durduramamasıdır. Su yılanı imgesi, şiir bağlamında anlamın belirsizliğinin bir başka önemli örneğidir. Bugüne dek eleştirmenlerin büyük bir kısmı, su yılanı imgesini bir kefarete simgesi olarak yorumlamıştır. Bunun ana sebebi, Yaşlı Denizci'nin su yılanlarını *bilinçsizce* övmesi ve bunun akabinde boynuna denizciler tarafından onu cezalandırmak için asılan Albatros'un ölü bedeninin boynundan düşmesidir. Su yılanı imgesine yüklenen bu dini bağlam, sayfa kenarı notları ve şiir tarafından gerçekten de zaman zaman desteklenmektedir. Ancak su yılanı imgesi, bir kurtuluş simgesi olduğu kadar gelişigüze ve Paganizmi de simgelemektedir. Su yılanlarının ilk ortaya çıkışı, Paganizme işaret etmektedir. Yaşlı Denizci'nin onları *bilinçsizce* övmesi de gelişigüze işaret etmektedir. Bu alt bölümde incelenen en son imge, zar atma imgesidir. Zar atmak bir kumardır ve tesadüf ve gelişigüze anlamına gelmektedir. Yaşlı Denizci'nin ve diğer denizcilerin kaderlerinin iki gizemli figürün zar oyununa bağlı olması, şiirin dünyasında düzenleyici bir gücün ya da metafizik imlenenin bulunmadığını göstermektedir. Şiirde yaşananların birer tesadüf olduğunu ve herhangi bir ilahi planın parçası olmadığını vurgulamaktadır.

Çalışmanın dördüncü bölümünde incelenen eserler, Samuel Taylor Coleridge'in "Rüzgâr Arpı", "Geceyarısı Ayaz", "Bu İhlamur Ağacı Çevreler Zindanımı" şiirleridir. Bu şiirler, Coleridge'in "sohbet şiirleri" olarak değerlendirilen şiirlerinden

üç tanesidir. Bu metinlerin analizinde öne sürülen sav, sohbet şiirlerinin imleyen ile imlenen arasında Batı metafiziği tarafından bulunduğu varsayılan mükemmel uyumu sorunsallaştırması ışığında Derridacı bağlamda yazının yıkıcılığına örnek teşkil etmesidir. Çalışmada ele alınan bu üç şiirde de anlamın kendiliğinden, değişmeyen ve tekil bir olgu olarak var olması ve şiirdeki konuşmacı öznenin sözmerkezciliği sorunsallaştırılmaktadır. Üç şiirde de konuşmacı özne “varlığı”, dinleyici ise “yokluğu” bağlamında tanımlanmaktadır. Şiirlerin sözüm ona atfedildiği dinleyiciler, kendi sesleri olmadığı için söyleyicinin sözmerkezci söylemi doğrultusunda, konuşmacı öznenin “varlığı” karşısında “yokluk” olarak konumlanmaktadır. Bu durumda dinleyiciler birer özne değil, birer yoksunluktan ibarettir. Ancak bu hem ironiktir hem de bir yanılsamadır çünkü konuşan öznenin “varlığı”, söyleyicinin benimsemiş olduğu sözmerkezci söylem bağlamında dinleyenin “yokluğu” tarafından tanımlanmaktadır. Yani bu durumda hiyerarşik olarak üstün olan aslında varlık değil, onu tanımlanabilir ve var olabilir hale getiren yokluktur. Konuşmacı öznenin kendinden gördüğü sözmerkezci otorite, böylelikle Derridacı anlamda yapısöküme uğratılmış olmaktadır. Sohbet şiirlerindeki tüm konuşmacı özneler, Derrida’nın bahsettiği metafizik tuzağa düşmektedir çünkü hepsi imleyen ile imlenen arasında sorunsallaştırılmadan olduğu varsayılan metafizik uyumu kanıksamaktadır. Bir başka deyişle bu konuşmacılar, kendilerinden çıkan imleyen dinleyicinin kafasındaki imlenen ile birebir eşleşeceğini farz etmektedir. Şiirlerdeki dinleyiciler ya da şiirlerin atfedildiği kişiler, Derridacı anlamda birer izdir, zira onların “yokluğu” metinde anlam bağlamında “varlık” yaratmaktadır. Sohbet şiirleri, anlamın sözmerkezci söylemde kendiliğinden, değişmez ve sabit bir olgu olarak var olmasını şiirsel dil ve anlamı belirsizleştiren müphem metaforlar ve imgeler aracılığıyla da sorunsallaştırmaktadır. Sohbet şiirlerinin hepsinde topoğrafik ve dilsel bağlamda, eş zamanlı olarak gerçekleşen bir geçiş meydana gelmektedir. Topoğrafyada meydana gelen mekânsal değişiklik, şiirin dilinde vuku bulan mekânsal ve zamansal değişiklik ile paralellik göstermektedir. Bu topoğrafik ve dilsel değişiklik, şiirin daha önce betimleyici ve göndergesel olan dilini şiirsel ve metaforik yapar. “Rüzgar”, “esinti”, “fırtına”, “arp”, “ut” gibi anlamı belirsiz kılan, müphem metaforlar ve imgeler aracılığıyla şiirsel ve metaforik bir biçime bürünen dilde meydana gelen bu mekan-zamansal değişiklik, metinde halihazırda mevcut olan yayılım ve *ayırımı* daha

belirgin hale getirmektedir. Şiirlerin metaforik dili, kullanılan metaforlar ve imgeler şiirlerin anlamını belirsizleştirmekte ve Batı metafiziğinin altyapısını oluşturan; sabit, değişmeyen ve kendiliğinden var olduğu var sayılan tekil anlamın yokluğunu vurgulamaktadır.

Çalışmanın beşinci bölümünde, çalışmada incelenen son eser olan “Kubilay Han” ele alınmaktadır. “Kubilay Han”, anlamın metafizik bir imlenene bağlı olmaksızın, esnek ve çoğul bir biçim olarak sözmerkezci bir varsayım olan anlamın tekil ve değişmez bir olgu olarak kendiliğinden mevcut olmasını sorunsallaştırdığı için Derridacı anlamda yazının yıkıcılığına iyi bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Şiir bunu, ilk olarak yazım sürecinin bitiminden sonra ilave bir metin olarak şiire eklenen önsözle, ikinci olarak da “kutsal nehir”, “sonu gelmeyen kargaşa”, “geçmişten gelen sesler” gibi anlamı bulanıklaştıran metafor ve imgelerle donatılan şiirsel diliyle gerçekleştirmektedir. “Ezgi”de olduğu gibi “Kubilay Han”da da şiire önsöz ve alt başlık biçiminde sonradan eklenen metinler, söyleyicinin metne kendi amaçladığı anlamı dayatmasını, metne ekstra anlam ve bağlam katmanı ekleyerek yapı sökme uğratmaktadır. Sonradan eklenen bu metinlerin ironik bir şekilde gözler önüne serdiği şey, söyleyicinin “kendi” yazdığı metin üzerinde kontrolü sağlamayı başaramadığı ve ortaya çıkan üründen memnun olmadığıdır. Daha net bir dille açıklamak gerekirse, sonradan eklenen önsöz ve alt başlığın amacı, metne söyleyicinin kendi anlamlandırma niyetini ve mekanizmalarını dayatarak anlam bolluğunu ve esnekliğini engellemektir. Ancak neticede şiirden bağımsız birer metin olan önsöz ve alt başlık, şiirin anlam ve bağlam kapsamını genişleterek söyleyicinin anlam üretme mekanizmalarının ve anlamlandırma sınırlarının ötesine geçmekte ve sonuç olarak bu girişimi yapı sökme uğratmaktadır. Bir başka deyişle, sonradan ilave edilen birer metin olan önsöz ve alt başlık, şiirden çıkarılabilecek anlamları ve şiiri okumakta kullanılabilecek bağlamları sonsuz şekilde artırdığı için metinde hâlihazırda mevcut olan yayılım ve *ayırımı* daha da kuvvetlendirmektedir. “Kubilay Han” şiirinin Derridacı bağlamda yazıcının yıkıcılığına iyi bir örnek teşkil ettiğini gösteren bir başka şey de metnin anlamı bulanıklaştıran metafor ve imgelerle donatılmış şiirsel dilidir. Bu kısımda ilk olarak ele alınan imge, “kutsal nehir” imgesidir. “Kutsal nehir” imgesi anlamın belirsizliği ve yayılımını öne çıkarmaktadır çünkü imgeden çıkarılabilecek anlam sayısı oldukça

fazladır. Örnek vermek gerekirse “kutsal nehir” imgesi, hem bilinçdışı hem ilkelik bağlamında okunabilmektedir. Dahası, şiirde nehrin istikameti “güneşsiz bir deniz” olarak betimlenmektedir. Bu da “kutsal nehir” imgesinin metafizik imlenenden yoksun olan, serbest ve esnek bir şekilde akan bir imleyen olarak yorumlanabilmesine yol açmaktadır çünkü Güneş imgesi, çalışmada da pek çok kez dile getirildiği gibi Batı geleneğinde akıl, düzenleyici ilke ve yol gösterici olarak konumlanmaktadır. Keza “geçmişten gelen sesler” metaforu da metafizik imlenenden bağımsız, esnek ve serbestçe dolaşan imleyeni simgelemektedir çünkü geçmişten gelen sesler konumlandırması zor, parçalanmış ve bütüncüllük taşımamaktadır. Sohbet şiirlerinde gerçekleşen geçişe benzer bir şekilde “Kubilay Han”da da bir geçiş yaşanmaktadır. Bu geçiş, geleneksel İngiliz manzarasından Batı-dışı bir manzaraya doğru gerçekleşmektedir. Metin, geleneksel İngiliz manzarası sırasında söyleyicinin anlamlandırma sınırlarının içinde konumlanırken, Batı-dışı manzara metni egemenliği altına aldığı anda metin, söyleyicinin anlamlandırma sınırlarının ötesine geçmektedir. Neticede, hem yazım sürecinin bitmesinden sonra şiire ilave edilen önsöz ve alt başlık hem de şiirin metaforik dili, şiirde hâlihazırda mevcut olan yayılım ve *ayırımı* gözler önüne sermektedir.

Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, Samuel Taylor Coleridge’in “Yaşlı Denizcinin Ezgisi”, “Rüzgâr Arpı”, “Geceyarısı Ayaz”, “Bu İhlamur Ağacı Çevreler Zindanımı” ve “Kubilay Han” şiirlerini Derridacı bir bakış açısıyla ele alıp yayılım, *ayırımı* ve iz ana kavramları bağlamında incelemiştir. Bu bağlamda çalışmanın öne sürdüğü sav, bu şiirlerin söyleyici, metin ve anlam arasındaki ilişkiyi ve sözmerkezci söylemin kalbinde yer alan anlamın kendiliğinden, tekil ve sabit bir olgu olarak var olduğu olgusunu metinsel düzeyde sorunsallaştırdığıdır. Samuel Taylor Coleridge’in bu çalışmada incelenen eserleri Derridacı bağlamda yeteri kadar ele alınmamıştır. Çalışmanın bilim dünyasına katkısı da akademideki bu boşluğu bir nebze olsun doldurmaktır. Bu bağlamda gelecekte yapılabilecek benzer çalışmalar için de Samuel Taylor Coleridge’in diğer eserleri ya da William Blake, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley ve John Keats gibi Romantik yazarların eserleri incelenebilir.

APPENDIX B: TEZ İZİN FORMU/ THESIS PERMISSION FORM

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YAZAR/AUTHOR

Soyadı/ Surname: Akı

Adı/ Name: Ercan Tugay

Bölümü/ Department: İngiliz Edebiyatı/ English Literature

TEZİN ADI/TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce/ English):

Dissemination, *Différance*, and Trace in S. T. Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "The Eolian Harp", "Frost at Midnight", "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison", and "Kubla Khan"

TEZİN TÜRÜ/ DEGREE: Yüksek Lisans/ Master

☒

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