Coleridge, Hyman Hurwitz, and Hebrew Poetics

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OUR GRASP OF THE INTELLECTUAL CIRCLE in which Coleridge participated during his final years in Highgate has in recent times become increasingly comprehensive. *Darker Reflections,* the second volume of Richard Holmes's biography, characteristically provides the fullest account of figures such as Joseph Green, James Gillman, and other notables.[1] One figure that has yet to receive sustained attention, however, is Hyman Hurwitz (1770–1844), a Polish-born Jew who immigrated as a young man to England, where he resided until his death. A gifted linguist, he was appointed Professor of Hebrew Studies at University College, London—the first Jewish professor in England on record—and in 1799 founded the Highgate Academy, an educational institution for the young, in which capacity it was unsurprising that he should make Coleridge's acquaintance.

By recounting this overlooked relationship, this essay seeks to shed light on some of Coleridge's little-known activities as an amateur student, translator and theorist of Hebrew. It does so, however, not merely to flesh out Coleridge's life-story, or provide further proof—if ever more were needed—of his intellectual eclecticism. Rather, I wish to argue that the sustained collaboration and correspondence with Hurwitz reveals a deeper preoccupation with questions of linguistic expression that Hebrew was singularly able to pose. That preoccupation, I claim, permits us to revise some of the disparaging verdicts on Coleridge's theory of language, which have remained stubbornly intact since the high watermark of deconstruction in the 1970s. One of the more fruitful ways in which this revision might be conducted, I will conclude by suggesting, is through a renewed emphasis on Coleridge's poetic work, and the manner in which it might be said to think philosophically, while remaining distinct from philosophy as a discourse.

To judge by the frequent correspondence between Hurwitz and Coleridge between 1817 and 1830, the pair enjoyed a close personal and intellectual relationship.[2] Hurwitz helped Coleridge reconstruct his Hebrew, which had fallen into disrepair following his formal schooling. An entry in Coleridge's notebook, apparently in Hurwitz's hand, lists some of the basic recurrent Hebrew words, which include the 'red' and 'earth' that together form the Hebraic 'Adam'.[3] In return, Coleridge translated a number of texts, including three 'Hebrew Tales' that found their way into both *The Friend*,[4] and Hurwitz's own *Hebrew Tales* (1826).[5] Coleridge's letters also reveal his assistance

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[1] Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), pp. 423–560.

[2] *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956–71), IV, 784, 871; V, 1, 19, 450, 457, 471, 485, 503; VI, 709, 772, 775, 791, 816, 852; hereafter *CL*.

[3] *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Kathleen Coburn, 5 Vols. (each in 2 parts) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957–2002), IV, 4702; hereafter, *CN*.

[4] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke, 2 Vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), I, 370–73.

[5] George Alexander Kohut's introduction to a reprinted edition of the *Hebrew Tales* (Baltimore: Judaica on Demand, 2004) provides a more extensive account of Hurwitz's life.

proofreading and revising Hurwitz's major publications, the *Elements of the Hebrew Language* (1829) and the subsequent *Etymology and Syntax in Continuation of the Elements of the Hebrew Language* (1831). In these latter works we begin to glimpse the real stakes that the language held for Coleridge.

That Hurwitz's two textbooks went through several editions over the first half of the nineteenth century testifies to the enduring vogue within educated British society for Hebrew.[6] While the *Elements of the Hebrew Language* essentially represented a linguistic primer, the *Etymology and Syntax* holds vaster programmatic intentions. Indeed, the abruptly philosophical tone of its preamble (the second work was simply appended to the *Elements*) raises significant authorial questions. If Coleridge did not himself compose the introduction, it bears his unmistakable imprint to such an extent that we can consider it a natural extension of his thought.[7] Having listed a number of works of biblical criticism with which Coleridge was familiar from his time in Göttingen ('[…] *Michäelis, Vater, Gesenius, &c*'), Hurwitz goes on to state that '[i]f I might advance any pretension to novelty, it would be in reference to a higher object, to a more permanent interest; namely that of making a knowledge of the Hebrew Language conducive to a philosophic insight into the structure and essential principles of language generally.'[8]

This highly Coleridgean declaration is then followed by an almost verbatim rendering of his friend's opinions:

> Deeply convinced that words are the signs of men's *thoughts*, and not, as grammarians one after the other have agreed to assert, the representatives of *things*, I have omitted no opportunity of impressing this truth on the student's attention; and instead of contenting myself with that artificial classification or arrangement which assists indeed the passive memory, but, when, exclusively relied on, tends to depress the higher powers, I have endeavoured to re-infuse into the words the living spirit by which they were once animated; opening out the rich and productive, though comparatively few, sources, from which they are derived, still splitting and ramifying, under the various modifying causes and influences.[9]

Given the plagiarism controversies that will remain depressingly tedious for many readers of this journal, it comes as something of a relief to be able to approach the question from the other perspective. But the point here is hardly to indict Hurwitz's borrowings: Coleridge may very well have intended the thoughts expressed in his letters to be used; indeed Hurwitz, perhaps suffering some pangs of guilt, does later go on to acknowledge 'the well-known Author

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[6] For a wider survey that includes Hurwitz, see *British Romanticism and the Jews: History, Culture, Literature*, ed. by Sheila E. Spector (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002).

[7] Cf. *CL* V, 1–9.

[8] Hyman Hurwitz, *Etymology and Syntax in Continuation of the Elements of the Hebrew Language* (London, 1831), pp. iii–iv.

[9] Ibid., p. iv.

of the Aids to Reflection'.[10] Rather, what draws our attention is how familiar motifs within Coleridge's thought—the proximity of '*thing*' and '*think*', for instance[11]—might be fruitfully reconsidered with reference to the Hebrew language.

In order to suggest how this might be done, I am going to propose what might appear a rather counter-intuitive example: Coleridge's *Logic*. There are several reasons for this text's comparative neglect, which persists even following its publication as Volume 13 of the Princeton Bollingen Edition: originally intended as a kind of companion-piece to *The Statesman's Manual*, to educate young gentlemen in the fundamentals of reasoning, the *Logic* is perceived—not without justification—to be highly derivative of Kant's work of the same title. But I here propose to treat several brief yet cumulatively significant moments, where despite Coleridge's intentions the text develops into something quite different, and indeed strikingly un-Kantian.

Here is an early moment, where Coleridge does appear to be sticking to the Kantian script fairly closely. As with so much of the work, Leibniz's law of identity is the principal target:

> "A = A", or "A is [not] not-A", would be no answer, for these are the same with the affirmation implied [in] "A is" [or alternatively] "I am that I am", where (as we have before more than once noticed) the simplest term *sum* or *ego* is equivalent to the whole position. Hence in the formula A = A, etc, representing principles of identity and contradiction, the subject (improperly so called) and its *predicate* are always convertible terms. Example: "Quid est spiritus?" Answer: "Ens se ponens". "Quid est ens se ponens?" Answer, "Spiritus". But let A signify wood and B signify black and then A = B is far indeed from B = A.[12]

So far so bad for syllogistic logic. The Kantian observation that the *ego* equates to 'the whole position' threatens to undermine any Leibnizian treatment of self-identity as reductive.

And yet, the bare copula, the simple 'I am', far from collapsing statements of identity into mere tautology as the above passage suggests, in fact accrues significance for Coleridge. 'I am that I am' becomes increasingly a means of enactment, where the 'subject' is not only minimally implied in its predicate, but actively substantiates itself. A later passage reveals this shift, commencing with a now-familiar attack on identity logic before veering in a totally unexpected direction:

> […] the principium identitatis, is in fact two positions. First, "whatever is, is". Secondly, "what is not, is not". Now the former is merely a repetition during the act of reflection of the term "is". I

[10] Ibid., p. v.
[11] *CN* III, 3587.
[12] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Logic*, ed. J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 88.

> mean that it expresses no more than my consciousness that I am reflecting, that is consciously reflecting the truth of being. The term "is" being a verb substantive, we might without absurdity, though without any change or addition in our knowledge, convert the word "is" to a noun substantive in one case and a verb in the other and say "is, is", and in fact we do what is tantamount to this when we say, "the necessary being is", or "God is". Do not yield to the very natural temptation of impatience with these subtleties so thin that, strip them of their clothing, they totter on the edge of nothing. [13]

This poetic flourish is far from the sobriety one would expect of a gentleman's primer, much less a Kantian handbook.[14] But one way to make sense of even such alogical moments—to make sense even of the 'nothing' whose 'edge' it traces—is to consider their relevance to Hebrew. While the 'verb substantive' that Coleridge here references forms part of the grammar Ancient Greek, several of Coleridge's related comments make it clear that he has Hebrew specifically in mind. In manuscript notes that went toward the *Logic*, he speaks of 'the first great truth […] conveyed in the words—*I am, that I am*, or to give a literal sense to the Hebrew words, I shall be that I will be'; and to Moses' 'Absolute I AM, and its grammatical correspondent [the] VERB SUBSTANTIVE'.[15] The finished *Logic* speaks similarly of 'the title "I Am" attributed to the Supreme Being by the Hebrew legislator'.[16]

What Coleridge is striving to render here, I wish to suggest, with a necessary difficulty that reflects upon our own vernacular language, is an alternative means for conceiving self-identity, as being more than mere tautology. Hurwitz's *Etymology and Syntax* clarifies how such a notion might be broached. In what grammarians call alternatively the 'infinitive absolute', or 'tautological infinitive', we see Hebrew entertain a degree of repetition that English finds difficult to countenance:

> 269. The infinitive absolute is used before or after *finite verbs*, to indicate *energy*, *intensity*, or *emphasis*, and must frequently be rendered in English by the adverbs, *surely*, *continually*, *greatly*, *indeed*, &c.
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> 270. Thus, מוֹת תָּמוּת (Gen. ii. 17) *dying thou shalt die*, i.e. *thou shalt surely die*.[17]

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[13] *Logic*, p. 82

[14] Coleridge is here in fact, as Graham Davidson has been so good as to point out, quoting from himself, in an early work entitled 'A Simile', on the Reverend Smerdon (1792):

> 'He, meagre Bit of Littleness
> All Snuff, and Musk, and Politesse,
> So thin, that strip of his clothing
> He'd totter on the edge of Nothing—'* (PW I.1, 49)

'[A] good Line', Coleridge noted for the asterisked passage, and clearly he remembered it though he suppressed the very unkind poem.

[15] *CN* IV, 4644.

[16] *Logic*, p. 82.

[17] *Etymology and Syntax in Continuation of the Elements of the Hebrew Language*, p. 229

In attempting to translate such effects, modern vernaculars offer only apparent 'concentrations' (*'surely*, *continually*'), which rather have the effect of dissipating force.[18] 'I am that I am' is fated to be travestied into bathos, to appear as classically Coleridgean obscurantism, once it is rendered into English. Yet once the linguistic singularity of the infinitive absolute is taken into account, perhaps Coleridge's famous description of the 'sublime tautology' of the Song of Deborah makes him a better biblical scholar than might otherwise be supposed.[19]

By phrasing the matter in this way, I have in mind as a target an influential current in Coleridge scholarship, which seeks to deny any such linguistic self-awareness. The founding monument in this tradition was Paul de Man's 1969 essay 'The Rhetoric of Temporality', which famously claimed that both Coleridge's symbol *and* allegory overlook the irreducibly self-referential, non-representational properties of language.[20] Even those more recent scholars, who have attempted to salvage something from Coleridge's writings in this respect, often do so while accepting de Man's points of departure and conclusion. Ian Balfour's *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy*, for instance, claims succinctly that, 'the greater the number of examples that Coleridge offers for the symbol, the clearer it becomes that the symbol, in the strict sense, has nothing to do with the human language.'[21] Accordingly, on Balfour's reading, we should construe the Coleridgean symbol not as figure or trope, but rather as a non-linguistic sacrament or event: the Holy Communion. To clinch his argument, Balfour takes 'the verses from Isaiah' quoted in the *Manual* as a final demonstration of human language's privation from a realm of sacred coincidence: calling 'the repeated pronouncement "I am" […] a demonic parody of "the divine I AM," that Coleridge takes as the foundation of his theology, ontology, psychology and aesthetics.'[22]

But as we have recently seen, this repeated copula proves anything but futile for Coleridge. The notion that for him something occurs through language, and not mystically beyond or behind it, becomes clearer if we turn to one of the most famous 'examples'—if we can call it that—of the symbol, the opening vision of Ezekiel that *The Statesman's Manual* cites: the wheels of the divine chariot form part, Coleridge says, of 'a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the *conductors*.'[23] Such an example, Balfour claims, confuses different levels of reference, in the process confirming everything de Man says about the

[18] Incidentally, Luther met the problem head on, by translating it as '*wirst du des Todes sterben* [unto death you will die]', a beautiful phrase that nonetheless mitigates the tautology.

[19] Coleridge speaks of 'that Law of Passion which inducing in the mind an unusual activity seeks for means to waste its superfluity—in the highest & most lyric kind, in passionate repetition of a sublime Tautology (as in the Song of Debora) [*At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed there he fell down dead.*][19a] (*Lectures 1808-1819 On Literature*, ed. R. A. Foakes, 2 Vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), I, 267).

[20] De Man's essay, familiarly known as the most frequently photocopied piece of literary critical writing, was published in the second edition to *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 187–228.

[21] Ian Balfour, The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 275.

[22] Ibid., p. 263.

[23] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, ed. R. J. White (1972), p. 29.

arbitrariness of language:

> Is it any accident that Coleridge chooses a vehicle as the exemplary symbol of the symbolic? Coleridge's theologicopolitical program presents the chariot of the divine as consubstantial with the truth it represents, and this vehicle functions as a figure for language, not least because it appears at the moment preceding the definitions of symbol and allegory and serves to exemplify the symbolic. But can one transfer so easily from the divine vehicle to the human, translating from one mode to another? The "vehicles" of ordinary language are not at all consubstantial with the truths they represent: They are, at best, arbitrary signs of them.[24]

And yet, despite Balfour's claims, Coleridge frequently goes out of his way to stress that the relation between linguistic wheel and divine spirit in Ezekiel *cannot* be reduced to the figure of the vehicle. The *Elements and Syntax* once again shed light on this, at a point where Hurwitz is generous enough to cite Coleridge directly. Hurwitz in fact elides two citations:

> "[…] For if words are not THINGS, they are LIVING POWERS, by which the things of most importance to mankind are actuated, combined and humanized." "Horne Tooke entitled his celebrated work […] *Winged Words*: or language not only as the *vehicle* of thought, but its wheels. The *wheels* of the intellect I admit them to be; but such as Ezekiel beheld in 'the visions of God,' as he sate among the captives by the river of Chebar. 'Whithersoever the spirit was to go, the wheels went, and thither was their spirit to go: *for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels also.*'"[25]

This apparently slight distinction—between whether the vehicle or the wheel symbolises the symbol itself—in fact makes all the difference. Balfour would have Coleridge's symbol function on a purely non-linguistic level, and in so doing rescue him from de Man's stringencies: wine would therefore 'reflect' or 'incorporate' the blood of Christ, without recourse to (human) language. Yet by emphatically stating '[...] not only as the *vehicle*', Coleridge both asserts the significance of language, while denying any simply consubstantial relation to what it is seen to express. Where the vehicle metaphor (or metaphor as vehicle[26]) suggests the word acts merely as courier for some deeper reality, Coleridge's 'wheel' generates a more dialectical relation with the 'spirit' it conveys, being at once both mobile cause and effect. Coleridge's fondness for the trope frequently conjoins his lifelong interest in Ezekiel with poetic form: as when he says of Dryden that '[his] genius was of that sort which catches fire

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[24] *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy*, p. 274.

[25] *Etymology and Syntax in Continuation of the Elements of the Hebrew Language*, p. 4. Hurwitz is citing from the *Aids to Reflection*, ed. John Beer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 7.

[26] The split-level analysis of metaphor as 'vehicle' and 'tenor', which I. A. Richards develops in his *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, is what here I am seeking to challenge.

by its own motion; his chariot wheels *get* hot by driving fast'.[27] Heat stems from a heat that in some form must already have been present in poetic language, as the phrase 'catch fire' admits.[28]

Yet to see the symbol as something that the movement of language generates is to raise a number of pressing questions, several of which exercised Coleridge intensely. Nicolas Halmi has charted the effort to reconceptualise self-identity through the concept of 'tautegory', a neologism whose clumsiness did not preclude it from being adopted by Schelling, who gleefully revelled in the irony of his borrowing.[29] The difficulty with which Coleridge conceived of a productive or categorical tautology can be glimpsed in some of the few direct verse treatments of 'the symbol'. An 1810 fragment struggles to redeem ipseity from mere superfluity:

> The body—
> Eternal Shadow of the finite Soul /
> The Soul's self-symbol / it's image of itself,
> It's own yet not itself—[30]

We might compare such self-inherence to the closing couplet of 'Phantom': 'She, She herself, and only She, / Shone thro' her body visibly'. As we have seen, Hebrew appears to promise another treatment of philosophical self-identity through the resources of its grammar; yet what does that mean for we who, like Coleridge, come to the language only from outside, almost certain never to be fluent, and in any case unable to jettison those assumptions that our native tongue has fostered? The attempt to render the unattainable (and very likely fantasised) ideal of Hebrew into the English vernacular emerges, I wish to conclude by suggesting, through poetic form, where the struggle to figure repetition as more than blank tautology arises most clearly.

In this respect, then, Coleridge takes his place within a familiar genealogy of romantic influence by biblical language, which stretches from Bishop Robert Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753)—which Coleridge borrowed as a young man from a Bristol library—to Byron's bestselling *Hebrew Melodies* of 1815.[31] Coleridge, however, took more seriously than Byron the possibilities that Hebrew verse offered, in particular its capacity to organise the poetic unit not around metrico-rhythmical norms, but through parallelism—

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[27] *Table Talk Recorded by Henry Nelson Coleridge (and John Taylor Coleridge)*, ed. by Carl Woodring, 2 Vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), II, 449; cf. BL II, 72.

[28] Fire is, as in the comment on Dryden, the evident effect; yet Coleridge is also fond of the speculative etymology that ties 'cause' to the Greek verb for burning, *xaíω*. See British Library, Eagerton MS, 2801 f 190^{v}.

[29] Nicholas Halmi, *The Genealogy of the Romantic Symbol* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also his 'Greek Myths, Christian Mysteries, and the Tautegorical Symbol', *The Wordsworth Circle* 36 (2005), 6–8; and 'Coleridge's Most Unfortunate Borrowing from A. W. Schlegel', in *British and European Romanticisms*, ed. by Christoph Bode and Sebastian Domsch (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2007), pp. 131–42.

[30] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poetical Works,* 3 Vols. (each in 2 parts), ed. J. C. C. Mays, I.2, 873; hereafter *PW*. Cf. *CN* III, 3764 for the fragment's immediate context.

[31] Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (London: Routledge, 1995). For an excellent account of Lowth's general influence on British romantic poetry, see Stephen Prickett, *Words and the Word: Language, Poetics, and Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 105–25.

the repetition and inflection of key lexical units. Accordingly, he is more proximate to Wordsworth, who in his 'Note to the Thorn' stated that 'repetition and apparent tautology are frequently beauties of the highest kind', going on to cite precisely that biblical passage that Coleridge had identified—the Song of Deborah.[32] Yet Coleridge's attempted importation of this Hebraic ideal is more troubled than was the case for Wordsworth, whose 'The Thorn' confidently wills its repetitions—repetitions that Coleridge rather sniffily dismissed, claiming that 'it is not possible to imitate truly a dull and garrulous discourser, without repeating the effects of dullness and garrulity'.

How, then, does Coleridge seek to import Deborah's 'sublime Tautology' into English verse? Having frequently remarked that many biblical passages resolved themselves into 'slovenly Hexameters',[33] he attempted a hexametrical rendering of Psalm 46 and portions of Isaiah[34]—efforts that remained characteristically fragmentary. Once again, however, Hyman Hurwitz allowed a more sustained engagement: this time in the form of two translations that Coleridge made of Hebrew dirges, which Hurwitz composed on the occasion of the deaths of Princess Charlotte, in 1817, and King George III, three years later. A letter that Coleridge composed to Hurwitz shortly prior to publication demonstrates clearly the difficulties for a modern English poet, along with their bearing on tautology. The power of the original lies, he writes,

> […] in the simplicity of the Thoughts, well suiting a dirge and still more a Hebrew Dirge; but for that reason hard to be translated into our compressed & monosyllabic Language without one or other of two evils—either, the Translator must add thoughts & images, & of course cease to be a Translator; or he must repeat the same thought in other words and become tautological—the more so, as some of the Thoughts can from our habits of Thinking and feeling only be *hinted*—compressed instead of expanded.[35]

A brief extract from the earlier piece should suffice to show the discomfort that Coleridge encountered with this commission. A literal rendering of Hurwitz's Hebrew is on the left hand side, with Coleridge's rendering on the right:

Leader	V.
The sun has set! the light of eyes is darkened.	Lo! of his beams the Day-Star shorn,*
A cloak of darkness clothes the moon.	Sad gleams the moon through cloudy veil!
The stars have withdrawn their brightness from shining.	The Stars are dim! Our nobles mourn
And every heart is sick, and every eye has water.	The Matrons weep, their Children wail.

[32] *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, eds. E. de Selincourt, rev. Helen Darbishire, 5 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952-9), II, 513.
[33] *CL* II, 857.
[34] See, respectively, *PW* I.2, 601; 615.
[35] *CL* IV, 784.

The asterisk confesses this translation's own unease, with Coleridge reduced to the rather feeble expedient of informing his readers, in footnotes separate from the verse, that '[t]he author, in the spirit of Hebrew Poetry, here represents the Crown, the Peerage and the Commonality, by the figurative expression of the Sun, Moon and Stars.'[36] Modern readers clearly need to have their symbols dictated to them! Where Hurwitz happily advances clauses that logically add little—the first two lines of the stanza reiterate 'darkness'—Coleridge feels the need to vary the tone by reaching for the pathetic fallacy of the 'sad' gleaming moon: an incongruous reversion to the idiom of his conversation poems, which suits neither register well. (In fact, this is not the only source from which he borrows here: strangely enough, the 'Day-Star' shorn of its beams apes Wordsworth's early 'Descriptive Sketches' (1795).)[37]

Faced with such difficulties, I wish to suggest that Hebrew's ultimate significance for Coleridge lies not in his attempt to realise its core grammar as a codified form of German idealism, nor simply to transliterate it into our vernacular; rather, it is precisely the resistance that English demonstrates to self-identity, to redundancy, to tautology, that gives Coleridge's writing—and in particular his verse writing—some of its most distinctive effects. Let me conclude, with undue brevity, with a few instances that demonstrate how such matters preoccupied Coleridge even prior to his active engagement with Hebrew. The drama of 'Frost of Midnight' turns on the moment where a mind distracted by the meaningless multiplicity of the world appears to grant its fears, tempting us to read 'sea and hill and wood' as a mere, blank repetition, where in fact the simple additional, 'and', subtly alters our rhythmical experience of the line, of our understanding of conjunction itself:

> And extreme silentness. Sea, hill and wood,
> This populous village! Sea, and hill and wood (10-11)

Or take a later, yet darker production such as 'Limbo', where an array of linguistic self-mirroring seems to suck the poem inexorably into what its title proposes, only for the overt parallelisms of a single line again to shift our grasp of the whole, in an effect that is again as much rhythmical as semantic—producing the sole alexandrine in an otherwise dutifully decasyllabic poem: 'he seems to gaze on that which seems to gaze on Him!'

Or, finally, perhaps most significantly, take the 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', whose images and rhythms—from the self-reflective frozen regions, to the banal risings and settings of the sun—lay bare a terror of the self-identical, the tautological. A line such as 'For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky' begins finally to inhabit the repetition that has disquieted the poem, to convert its threat into a potential resource. When, some few lines later, the Mariner finally accepts to receive the guilt cast upon him, he does so

[36] *PW* I.2, 985.

[37] 'To him the day-star glitters small and bright,
Shorn of its beams, insufferably white' (324–25)

through a formulation that is yet more striking when considered in the light of our broader discussion: 'The look with which they looked on me', in its wilful matching of act and predicate finally realises within English something like the verb substantive—a yield that has, however, not come without substantial pain along the way.

This has not been, to conclude, an essay principally concerned with poetic form, which I have elsewhere treated at greater length.[38] But it does attempt to pave the ground for, and argue the necessity of, a fuller treatment of Coleridge's verse, as a site where his thinking is at its most acute. The remarkable burst of publication set in train by Kathleen Coburn's monumental edition of the Notebooks, and continued through the Bollingen Series *Collected Works*, has understandably concentrated critical attention on previously unavailable material, the majority of which takes prose form. Yet this array of new materials only deepens the need to return to Coleridge's poetry, not as naïve reversion to a more canonical (or less obscure) output, but rather to test those moments where his verse engaged critically with the fullest extent of his philosophical thinking. The philosophical and linguistic implications of Hebrew provided a central site for this critical engagement.

[38] See 'Less Gross than Bodily: Materiality in the Conversation Poem Sequence', forthcoming in *The Review of English Studies*; advance access available at http://res.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2012/08/30/res.hgs087.full.