'The Incantation of this Verse': How Valid was the Magical Analogy?

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ABSTRACT: Magic is inherent in the act of naming things; it accomplishes in the syntax of the spell's language a telescoping of time and space that intensifies the normal activities of language because the juxtapositions are intended to be contagious. Metaphor, personification, and symbol seemed to the Romantic poets, particularly, to transfer vital qualities from one extreme to another, influencing future feeling and action through correspondences. Despite the resemblances between the uses of these elements in primitive and art poems, the comparison does not work as well as the Romantics had hoped, leaving no room for the unique and disjunctive consciousness.

Even systematic critics slip occasionally into praising lines of verse as magical, spellbinding, or incantatory, and Romantic poets encourage them by calling their poems "spells," "charms," or "incantations." But it is time to examine the possible analogies between poems and spells and to ask what technical and theoretical resemblances there might really be and where these resemblances end.

Before we consider the form of the spell, however, we should clarify the philosophical presuppositions on the basis of which the spell is believed to work. The first is the doctrine of mind over matter, and the second is the doctrine that language generates and then carries the mind's power to the world outside the mind, supposing such a dichotomy to exist.

The magician, acknowledging no transcendent divine principle, acts directly on the vital energies circulating through nature and in so doing aims to change nature. Lacking the humility common to the scientist and the priest, he refuses to recognize laws beyond his power, whole systems of reality separate from and defiant of his categories. "Magic embodies the valuable truth that the external world can in fact be changed by man's subjective attitude toward it," writes George Thomson in expounding the magical origins of Greek drama,[1] and his statement helps to clarify the peculiar solipsism of the magical illusion. Such a solipsism, in which man is "consumed by his wishes, [and] produces something similar to the gratification of these wishes," appears in both magic and in art, according to Freud. Freud coins the term "omnipotence of thought" to apply to both these pursuits, and observes that because of this omnipotence of thought "we rightly speak of the magic of art and compare the artist with the magician."[2]

The magician's omnipotence of thought, like the poet's, is manifested in his words -- the "Abracadabras" and "Open Sesames" that combine his own psychic power with the power of the thing lodged in its name, however thickly it may be festooned with gibberish. "The magician's breath is regarded as the medium by which the magical force is carried," explains Bronislaw Malinowski in his "Ethnographic Theory of the Magical World"; "the voice generates the power of magic."[3] The magician's words

seem to have a palpable energy which vitalizes the things beyond his mind. These words achieve their potency by mysteriously combining his own powers, nature's powers, and a presumably physiological power compressed into the sound, the sign, or the idea of each individual word and of these individual words in a rhythmical relation to one another.

The magician accomplishes what every speaker accomplishes, but to a greater extent: he imagines a system in language that substitutes for what we might normally call the real system, if we suppose one to be there at all. In naming things he calls them into being, or, more simply, recognizes them above those things that he has not named. Magical theory claims that by getting a name a thing becomes more insistently istelf, that by being thought of, it enters into a mental world at the same time that it becomes more distinct in the physical one. The magician goes further in the glorification of language than the average speaker, but the process is essentially the same, as many commentators have remarked. Kenneth Burke, for example, states that "the magical decree is implicit in all language; for the mere act of naming an object or situation decrees that it is to be singled out as such and such rather than as something else."[4] In Language and Myth Ernst Cassirer seems to agree that magic is inherent in the act of naming things; he observes that "the potency of the real thing is contained in the name -- this is one of the fundamental assumptions of the myth-making consciousness itself."[5] And Martin Heidegger, in On the Way to Language, is moved by a poem of Stefan George's to think that "only where the word for the thing has been found is the thing a thing....The word alone gives being to the thing."[6] Because of the very limitations that the naming of a thing imposes, the magician, enclosed in an inner universe, can no longer see the world except in the terms that he has set. But he interprets as a sign of power what is in truth a sign of his isolation, and thus bewitches himself.

One of the central features of magical language, correlative with the omnipotence of thought and with the thing's dependence on its name, is a simultaneous realization of events in the mind and in the world outside. Magic tries to transcend successiveness, the diurnal tedium of one thing after another. Instead of submitting to these customary sequences, it permits a leap out of successiveness into simultaneity.

This simultaneity (or synchronicity) in time (paralleled by proximity in space) occurs first in the arrangement of words. In response to them and to their expression of desire and fear, time and space are thought to collapse on each other. Again, Freud has perceived this collapse: "objects as such are overshadowed by the idea representing them; what takes place in the latter must also happen in the former, and the relations which exist between ideas are also postulated as to things. As thought does not recognize distances and easily brings together in one act of consciousness things spatially and temporally far removed, the magic world also puts itself above spatial distance by telepathy, and treats a past association as if it were a present one."[7] The patterns that thought takes in language are assumed to apply to the things that language names: thus things depend on the transformations that grammar imposes.

Jung's term "synchronicity," which appears in his explanation of the archetypal symbol as an agent for the retrieval of past time, is available to us not only for studying Proust, Joyce, Mann, and Woolf, but also for studying the Romantics for whom suddenness, explosion, and revolution were instinctive modes of thought. The Romantic magician shouts "Arise!"

"Now!" "Come!" He expects an instantaneous response and gets one, insofar as he has imagined it. It is significant that Jung's interest in synchronicity developed as he studied Paracelsus and alchemy, and these studies led him, as they led the Romantics before him, to a concern with a magically unified sensibility ignoring the distinctions between now and then, here and there, I and it, the inner and the outer. The seemingly superficial limits between thoughts and things are cancelled in the words that unite them. At the drop of a hat, as quick as a wink, things seem to rearrange themselves at the behest of words.

Indeed, the Old French word for magic is Gramayre, and this allusion to our "grammar" reminds us of the Protean powers of linguistic structures, whereby we change the aspects of things by the order in which we perceive them and by the actions that we subsequently take on the evidence of these linguistic arrangements. Our emphasis of first and last, here and there, now and later, is expressed in syntax, but bears no necessary relation to the outside world. Each of these temporal or atemporal observations is a spell we cast on things which continue to plod along in their own inscrutable time.

Such a magical simultaneity can be seen in the greater Romantic lyric where the thing observed is both inside and outside at the same time, and observation and meditation, seeing and thinking, are one.[8] It can likewise be seen in the poem which calls for itself and unfolds in that call, with no gap in time between the wish and its realization, as if the poet were wishing in a fairy tale. The poet imagines so clearly what he wants that the imagined vision turns into his desire. Keats's "Lo!" erases time, accomplishing what all Keats's torments at the passing of time could not do. The spontaneity often attributed to the composition of the Romantic poem arises in fact from the careful cultivation of techniques based on magic, for the poem telescopes the time between the command and a response from the outer world. "Already with thee!" sighs Keats, as the image beyond slides over the one within.

The notion of the essential similarity between magic and poetry develops from a theoretical study of anthropology, folklore, etymology, legend, and Renaissance occultism -- studies in which many Romantics indulged. But this notion also develops practically from observing the very nature of metaphor, symbol, personification, allusion, image, and meter. We can see the magical aspects of these poetic elements at work in a rudimentary form in primitive spells. The divergence of spells from art poetry will become clear as we proceed, but the germ of resemblance that seems to have stimulated the Romantics should also be visible.

The underlying magical quality of many poetic elements is explored by Northrop Frye in his section of The Anatomy of Criticism on the lyric. Frye digs down to the two opposing kinds of lyric lying at the foundation of a complex and huge superstructure of lyric. He decides upon two fundamental categories: music and sight, melos and opsis, babble and doodle, or charm and riddle. Charms are ta mele, explains Frye, to be chanted, as opposed to riddles which are to be seen. Frye makes it clear that the charm may have physiological origins: "the radical of melos is charm: the hypnotic incantation that, through its pulsing dance rhythm, appeals to involuntary physical response, and is hence not far from the sense of magic, or physically compelling power. The etymological descent of charm from Latin carmen, song, may be noted. Actual charms have a quality that is imitated in popular literature by work songs of various

kinds, especially lullabies, where the drowsy, sleep-inducing repetition shows the underlying oracular or dream pattern very clearly."[9] Frye does not limit this magical power to the charm, but instead he suggests that at bottom both melos and opsis are magical: "just as the charm is not far from a sense of magical compulsion, so the curiously wrought object, whether sword-hilt or illuminated manuscript, is not far from a sense of enchantment or magical imprisonment."[10]

In so dividing the lyric, Frye implies that there is something self-generating about these charmed and riddling sounds, for they rise up in the child and in the primitive spontaneously, making the whole system of lyrical forms built on top of them the elaboration of these two innate ur-forms. It is possible that the Romantics used the charm as frequently as they did because of a presumption similar to Frye's -- that is, that the charm was an original expression of the structure of a universal mind united with feelings, manifesting the unity of the head and the heart, the rational and the irrational. Because it seemed to arise from a unified mind rather than from a purely analytical "level" of mind, the charm may have seemed to be the perfect vehicle for fleeing the eighteenth century and returning to a Romantic universal poetry, combining the naïve and the sentimental.

The notion that the spell or charm is an original form from an imaginary time when the mind and the physiology were united helps to explain one of the paradoxes of magic. This paradox is that the much praised omnipotence of thought is embodied in mindless forms. Rationality operates through the medium of irrationality. But with the myth of the charm as an ur-form, the Romantics are enabled to return to primitive, childish, and therefore supposedly unified sensibilities. Seeing the spell as "primal" poetry, they hoped to gain power through irrationality and the occult correspondences which seemed to systematize this irrationality.

Irrationality rules the spell from the creative process which overtakes the magician to the weirdness of the lines themselves to the hypnosis of the hearer. In composing his spell the magician sets aside his reason in order to permit the invasion of what seems to be a supernatural power.[11] He anticipates a similar response in his hearers, who are supposed to relinquish their critical faculties under the impact of the spell's rhythm until they find themselves in a subdued and malleable state -- a "willing suspension of disbelief."

In bewitching its audience the spell is intended to release irrational feelings, both tribal and infantile, group-oriented and pre-logical. Hypnotic sound, heavy-handed and repetitive, approaches nonsense and pulverizes meaning. Like the riddle, the nonsense rhyme and the nursery rhyme, the original non-literary spell clings to its primitive character, fearing to release a new and untried effect by changing established formulae. As poems to be chanted, spells emphasize words as sounds more than words as meanings, intended to reach us (like Eliot's auditory imagination) at some level below reasoned discourse. Since the poet claims to have retrieved these sounds from the depth of a dark dream-like irrationality, they are to touch us there also, eroding the boundaries between fact and fancy, meaning and nonsense, sense and sound.

The general irrationality of the ur-form of the spell is increased by the way the elements are packed together. The spell is thought to gain power by omitting connections, measuring its potency by its density.

Potency measured by density is a principle that applies to the repetition of poetic elements on all levels: density of analogy, of allusion, of meter, of imperatives, and of names, all contributing to a mysterious and compulsive tone. The densities of sound and correspondence frequently override a clear statement of meaning and seem to hypnotize the reader out of expecting one. In the magical spell these repeated poetic elements are so exaggerated that they seem to exist for their own sakes, overwhelming the hearer with often meaningless sound. This density is common to primitive spells collected by Malinowski and Bowra, to Anglo-Saxon spells, to folkloric spells collected in the Romantic era from Scotland and Germany, to Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel." In order to create an aural experience so sensory that the hearer must abandon his private will, analogies are indiscriminate, rhythms emphatic, repetitions shameless. The listener is mesmerized by commands, lulled by lists of magical ingredients, bewitched by alliterations, and subjected to a meter as visceral as a heartbeat.

At least three poetic techniques in particular seem to draw their effectiveness from the philosophy of magic, which they in turn reinforce. Metaphor, personification, and symbol have as their common principle the transference of identity through analogy. All three depend upon a recognition of analogies between nature and human life, and they aim to exploit these analogies to enhance one or the other analogue. Belief in universal sympathies and "participations magiques" (to use Levy-Bruhl's formulation) ties in with Frazer's understanding of contagious and sympathetic magic.[12] The sympathies operate across time and space, through visible and invisible resemblances, through the similarities between past and present, through the coincidence of dream or idea with some slight fact of observed reality. As events happen in similar or contiguous situations, just so in the magical view they will come to pass for the situation at hand. By appealing to parallel events, the magician brings to bear the force of precedent; he pairs the spiritual energies behind a certainty with those that should activate an uncertainty. Allusions as well as physical resemblances accomplish this pairing. As Malinowski discovered, "mythical allusions...when uttered unchain the powers of the past and cast them into the future."[13] The importance of coincidence and likeness for the magical view cannot be underestimated. Nor need their importance be limited to primitive thinking: the omens in physical and historical resemblance, in contiguity, and in synchronicity are dreaded or welcomed in civilized life; and certainly these principles of beneficent or maleficent likeness abound in poetic thinking.

That magical analogies impel incantation is clearly illustrated in the Cheremis charm that Thomas Sebeok examines. Sebeok uses this text to suggest that charms hold"the ingredients of poetry."[14] Conversely, the poems are in turn often composed of magical elements. In translation the charm reads:

> As the appletree blossoms forth,
> Just so let this wound heal!
> . . . . . .
> When water can blossom forth,
> Only then overcome me.

In the first couplet the magician appeals to the certainty of an apple tree's blossoming to assure the healing of the wound, as if by relating healing to a natural organic process, the wound would "understand" that

it had no choice but to heal in the same way that the seemingly blighted winter tree has no choice in spring but to blossom. Here, then, the tree is to be an example to the wound, which is to mimic the tree's restoration.

In the second couplet, however, the magician appeals to an impossibility instead of to a certainty, and reverses the direction of the magical commands. The magician links the fate of the wounds infection with the fate of water, and devises a riddling formula (reminiscent of those in Grimm's fairy tales) according to which the patient's death would be as impossible as the blossoming of water.

In each case the direct commands are preceded by parallel natural situations which govern the effectiveness of the commands by underlining the analogies and sympathies in the animate universe. The first stresses the similarity of manner ("As the appletree blossoms"); the second, the temporal conjunction ("When water"). The symmetries of the charm itself correspond to the symmetries in nature and the lives of men. One action infects another; events are never separate and discrete, but are transmuted by those juxtapositions that language half-creates.

Metaphor, discovering previously unnoticed congruities, tries to use the resemblances of two things to bring them together. Paralleling each other (and thereby lighting each other up) the "extremes" of a metaphor are able to define an area of fear or desire which has as yet no known language to express it.[15] In the spell, this illumination is intended to be not merely enlightening for the reader, but to be instructive to the parts of the metaphor themselves: they are to learn each other's ways.

On a larger scale than the verbal metaphor the two "extremes" of a double plot serve likewise to extend each other's meanings, working on those principles of correspondence so basic to the theory of magic. William Empson in Some Versions of Pastoral brilliantly suggests that the whole idea of double plots is magical in much the same way that metaphor itself is magical. From the example of Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida he ventures:

> The two parts make a mental comparison that illuminates both parties ('love and war are alike') and their large scale indefinite juxtaposition seems to encourage primitive ways of thought ('Cressida will bring Troy bad luck because she is bad'). The power of suggestion is the strength of the double plot; once you take the two parts to correspond, any character may take on mana because he seems to cause what he corresponds to.[16]

Juxtaposed for the purpose of casting light on each other, the two plots, like the two extremes of the metaphor 'Love is war,' extend each other's meanings and the range in which each can operate. A new sphere of power opens up for each, and at the same time they infect each other by magical influence.

Not only do the "extremes" of a metaphor define an area of unknown and invisible "reality," but the vehicle of the metaphor extends the identity of the tenor, and, by distributing it, annihilates its solidity.

The identity of the thing in question begins to belong to other things and to partake of them. In this distribution of attribute and name, substance is scattered, and things seem to pass from one resemblance to another. Love is a rose; anger is a tree. In each exchange love becomes more rose-like, anger more tree-like, and the real nature of these emotions (whatever that may be) is falsified, because it is changed. Ever more protean, these inexplicable emotions begin magically to assume new shapes, to conquer new areas of possible meaning. As they are metamorphosed by their metaphorical names, they participate in the nature of other things, and in turn animate these other things. In this way the words of a poetic metaphor act to change the substances of feelings or things by identifying them with other things. Like the magical universe, the poetic one is full of participations, sympathies, and transformations. In both worlds the magical word enacts its rearrangements in defiance of discrete identities, and by applying new names betrays these identities.

The magician also personifies the natural world, for it appears to respond to human lamentation or joy in a truly remarkable way. Personification, then, also has its source in magical thinking. The magician who sees the weather as dreary and depressing when his mood is such, is reinforced in his belief in magical sympathies. Trees that seem to weep as he does become emblems of his sorrow and effigies of it. A field of daffodils seems to laugh and dance in a joyous analogy to his mood; or owls hoot and mastiffs stir when he himself senses the presence of evil. This pathetic fallacy is sympathetic in the magical sense; the poet organizes the animate nature around him, and is the axis of its multiple sympathies.

Action symbolically represented in the spell is intended to release the emotion surrounding future action. The magical words become the symbol of an action that is anticipated. To the list of poetic elements that are inherently magical, we thus add "the symbol." To explain the use of symbols in magical thinking, Malinowski gives the example of the savage "whistling for the wind." Whistling relieves the anxiety of waiting for the wind to rise, and in the gust of whistling the breath simulates the very wind that it wants.[17] In Coral Gardens and their Magic, volume two, Malinowski examines spells that by their symbolic action organize the life of the planting culture. The words stand for realities that they initiate: "the magical word," says Malinowski, "is coeval with that aspect of reality which it has to influence."[18] The magician, for example, enacts in advance the harvesting of the crop that is as yet not even sown. Similarly when he elucidates a long Panamanian spell for childbirth, Claude Lévi-Strauss insists on the importance of the symbol for magic. The words of the spell concretize a chaotic event. The spell is "the coalescence and precipitation of diffuse states."[19] For Lévi-Strauss the symbol is not so much aesthetic as psychologically therapeutic:

> The shaman provides the sick woman with a language, by means of which unexpressed, and otherwise inexpressible psychic states can be immediately expressed.[20]

The spell, then, clarifies a series of actions and rehearses them on a symbolic level. The "symbolic action" of magic, like the symbol of poetry, embodies an outside "reality" that is vague and complex; it concentrates the diffuseness, and, in doing so, draws it into the area of the comprehensible. "It always partakes of the reality which it renders

intelligible," explains Coleridge himself; "and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative."[21] As the "visible sign for something invisible," or "the outward sign of an inward state," the symbol is also the present sign of a future state, and, as such, is an augury as well as an instruction -- a symbol and a signal.[22]

The symbolic action of the primitive spell is best illustrated in one of the "predatory" spells collected by C. M. Bowra in Primitive Song. The magician constructs a hunting spell which will accomplish the deed in advance. To be caught at all, the animal must first be caught in the mind's snare. Because of this practical purpose, these spells are precise, observing, shrewd; they frequently imitate not only the hunter's own projected action, but even the sounds of his prey. The spells are full of sharp images and phonetic effects that aim to reproduce the presence of the prey, not in remembrance, but, by a telescoping of time, in advance. To this symbolic action the real hunt is an anti-climax:

> You belly full of rock-flint,
> Great-toed one, who with your feathers say tsam-tsam,
> Who eat the heart of melons,
> Give me one of your feathers.
>
> Ostrich, rising and flying,
> Long-necked and big-toed,
>
> Belly full of rock-flint, great bird,
> Wide-mouthed male ostrich,
> Flying, running, great bird,
> Give me one of your tail-feathers.
>
> Ostrich, with dusty flank
> Running great bird, fluttering feathers here and there,
> Belly that says khou-khou,
> Running, walking male ostrich,
> Give me one of your tail-feathers.
>
> Male ostrich, looking up,
> Belly that says khari, khari,
> Ostrich, whose bowels alone are not fit to eat,
> Give me one of your leg-bones, ostrich!
>
> He who has two bones, which say hui-hui,
> Male ostrich who has wonder marrow,
> Who with his face says gou-gou,
> Might I possess you, my ostrich![23]

The magician seeks directly to enchant the ostrich. He seems to watch closely, as if circling around, ever more familiar and intimate, ever more possessive. At first the ostrich is discovered pillaging melons, fluttering feathers. Then startled by the observer it races away; the pace of the verse accelerates; the magician-hunter seems to be near enough to see its mouth wide in outrage; then, in stanza three, the bird is in a frenzy, losing feathers, covered with dust; and the magician, hearing its rocky stomach growling, emboldens his requests. As the magician anticipates his victory his praise of the bird becomes more culinary. He has mentally transformed the great beast into dinner by

shifting the refrain, closing in on details, escalating his demands. Imagery, refrains, onomatopoeia, direct address, and the anticipation of precise future action substitute for a series of real actions. The spell as a whole with all its poetic effects determines the outcome of the hunt. It stands as a proof that the hunt will succeed. It symbolizes and organizes a proposed actuality.

Although the elements of poetry (analogy, metaphor, personification, symbol, image, onomatopoeia) seem to appear in magical spells in a particularly dense form, the meter of the spell is notoriously dense. When this meter reemerges in consciously written art poetry we may suspect an imaginary design to evoke supernatural powers or to accomplish dark and magical deeds.

The meter of the magical spell makes blatant the principle of recurrence on which meter as a whole depends. Individual words pound and shout, creating an unsophisticated emphatic meter which might well be called "isochronic." (Even Wimsatt and Beardsley in their attacks on linguistic analysis of isochronism concede that it may apply to so-called "primitive" verse.[24]) Repeated parts of words (assonantal, alliterative, and rhyming) force the listener to attend to their sound and disregard their sense. These repetitions connect words that should impinge on each other; a free-for-all of emphasis ensues, pitched stridently, like a series of exclamations.

The alliteration and repetition recall the spell's origins: in England, the accentual four-stress tradition to which the spell is still tied. Here, for example, an Anglo-Saxon spell against a wen displays the constant spell elements:

> Wenne, wenne, wenchichenne
> her ne scealt þu timbrien, ne nenne tun habben,
> ac þu scealt north eonene to þan nihgan berhge,
> þer þu sauest, ermig, enne broþer.
> He þe sceal legge leaf et heafde.
> Under fot wolues, under ueþer earnes,
> under earnes clea, a þu geweornie....[25]

An old High German spell betrays a similarly heavy-handed meter:

> Eiris sazan idisi, sazan hera duoder,
> Suma hapt heptidun, suma heri lezidun,
> suma clubodun, ambi cunoniouidi,
> Insprinc haptabundun, inuar uigandun.[26]

It is not difficult to recognize in the Anglo-Saxon spell the origin of the spells of the weird sisters in Macbeth. The background is Germanic, not latinate. These spells, too, repeat whole words, parts of words, and an emphatic four-stress meter, tying in these aural resources with resources of analogy, metaphor, symbol, personification, image, and foreshortened time and space -- the repertoire of sympathetic magic as it deals with the unknown or approximates its voice:

> Fillet of a fenny snake,
> In the cauldron boil and bake;
> Eye of newt and toe of frog,
> Wool of bat and tongue of dog,

Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,
For a charm of pow'rful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.[27]

In the Anglo-Saxon, German, and Shakespearean spells intimations of dance are evident. The association of incantation, motion, and music may account to some degree for the unabashed repetitions and may also suggest a larger, more physiological aspect of the magician's power over his audience's collective intelligence, like a snake charmer charming a snake. Indolent and impassioned, involuntary and voluntary, the spell rouses to action.

The meter of the spells in Macbeth expresses the dark powers of the underworld, rather than the promethean aspirations of The Tempest. The wild and whirling words are as compelling as a nightmare; for the dark powers administer "the insane root that takes the reason prisoner." Thus in Macbeth the heavily accented meter and the repetition of words and whole phrases serve the submerged forces of evil that rise to the surface in the action of the play. On the other hand, Shakespeare brings magic into the rational sphere in The Tempest and the rhythms change accordingly, keeping all the while their close relationship to music and motion. In The Tempest Shakespeare follows the alternate tradition of the Italian Renaissance magicians; Macbeth and The Tempest present the yin and the yang of magical possibilities, the dark side and the bright.

In "Magic in the Tempest," Hardin Craig explains Prospero's rationality: "a master magician leads a spiritual existence in the realm of a limited idea existence....Ideas are the only examples of perfections, but they are only ideas (or dreams)....Prospero operates through Ariel by means of the agency of the mind. Since Ariel's powers are music, poetry, and spectacle as well as fear and terror, he can do whatever mind can do and that is everything that can be conceived."[28] Prospero's spells are appropriately rational, and yet forever illusory. The expression of idea, they nevertheless prove that magic is as disconnected from reality as dream. While Macbeth explores the subconscious aspects of magic -- a kind of black magic that forces rationality to yield -- The Tempest explores the heretical aspects of white magic, in which the magician plays at god, exercising the imagination's control. Prospero's spells are more syntactical but no less authoritative than the witches'; for in each play the spells (whether from the unconscious atavistic depths or from the conscious arrogant reason) instigate the action.

The meter characteristic of spells in Macbeth is modified in such imitations as Jonson's magical Masque of Queenes. The voice of malevolent irrationality seems to become less threatening in such examples as this:

The Owle is abroad, the Bat, and the Toade,
And so is the Cat-a-Mountaine:
And Ant, and the Mole sit both in a hole
And Frog peepes out o' the fountayne.[29]

The expert modulation of assonance and alliteration, the manipulation of quantity and pause, are testimony that control supersedes madness, and in the decorative stanzas of Campion, Dryden, and Gay, not dread, but elegance, enchants:

Choose the darkest part o' the grove,
Such as ghosts at noon-day love.
Dig a trench, and dig it nigh
Where the bones of Laius lie;
Altars raised of turf or stone,
Will th' infernal pow'rs have none.
Answer me, if this be done?
'Tis done.[30]

In this "Spell" Dryden is loyal to the truncated trochaic line that Shakespeare perfected, but he makes it unswervingly regular, without any of the sudden breaks that occur in Macbeth. Here, then, the peculiar spell sound of foregrounded commands, heavily-accented four-beat (or three-beat) meter, heavy alliteration, and frequent repetitions -- the heritage of the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic magicians -- fades into the urbane iambics of the Restoration. It becomes a playful variation of the poet's customary voice. The constant spell meter thus undergoes some variation in the neoclassical period, but with Coleridge on occasion it returns abruptly to its original form. This sound is the unique aspect of magical spells; their other distinctive features are the normal elements of poetry in grotesque disguise, caricatured because their intentions are blatant.

And yet, even after seeing the essentially magical nature of analogies, parallel plots, metaphors that exchange corresponding qualities, symbols that serve as prognostications, and heavy-handed meter, we can certainly make objections to any broad application of magical theory to poetry. While the ur-form of the charm in all its irrationality and lust for power may work along magical principles, sophisticated verse does not really, no matter how consciously it may aim to imitate the spell's form and effect. Notably, it differs from magical verse because it is unique. It does not recur. Similarly, it is free and spontaneous rather than rigidly formulaic. It is often an expression of personality (even when artfully designed) rather than a traditional construct aiming to work automatically on the universe.

In addition, more specific objections should be made to the magical nature of individual poetic elements. Metaphor in most sophisticated verse does not permit a complete submergence of the identities of tenor and vehicle. The vehicle does not really abolish the tenor's true nature, for we are aware most of the time of a tension between the two, and of the presence of an aloof consciousness deliberately making the analogy, and thereby reminding us that this analogy is a fiction, and that therefore no occult powers can truly pass from one side to the other, or from the name to the thing, or from the inside to the outside. There is instead a poet who is doing the comparing, and who is proud of his skill. Blake's "Poison Tree" seems to be a good example of the transference of identities between the tree and love, and then the tree and hate. The tree becomes an effigy of feelings, giving substance within it to the furious rages of insubstantial emotion. But while the tree is an effigy in a magical sense, the metaphor is not truly an identity, but rather a hypothesis, a tentative way of working with these complex emotions, and a representation of parts of them only. There is always a distance between tenor and vehicle, always a sense that the love may have other aspects, and that the poet is trying out allegories to fit it.

Transference of identity through metaphor seems to be true for the famous last stanza of Yeats's "Among School Children." In the metaphor "Labour is blossoming," labour seems at first sight to have no other life of its own; it is a large, abstract word absorbing many unspecified meanings (work, growth, and child-bearing); it gets its real specific life from "blossoming," and becomes as effortless as the productions of spring. But then even this identity is undercut by the next word "or," where again we learn that the assigning of these vehicles is only contingent and hypothetical, for blossoming could as easily be dancing; and dancing and blossoming, despite the ease and grace and wholeness characteristic of both their movements, are not the same. The possibility that blossoming equals labour is further scattered in the next three lines where Yeats enumerates the kinds of activities which could be construed as labour -- soul work, the work of becoming beautiful, the attainment of wisdom. All these elaborations of the tenor prove that it has more of a reality than is shown fully in its vehicle blossoming, and that blossoming, with its later call for the tree's indivisibility of past, present, and future (or of body, heart, and soul), is only a shot in the dark, one of several valiant efforts to describe the complex state of the unity of the self, and the impossibility of separating transcendent ideas of it from the body out of which these ideas grow. Yeats is advocating unity, but not making it in the identities of his metaphors; they are always apart, and while the lines are "enchanting" in their sound, and as unforgettable as a charm, the tenor has not been transformed into a vehicle, but has kept its distance because of its complexity.

Yet some transference has taken place nevertheless. Labour hardly exists for us (except in line four as Blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil) outside of the soul-making of the chestnut tree. And if labour could always have the unity of pattern, motion, body, and idea of that peculiar art form (the dance) which only exists in its enactment, we would truly be Self-delighting. Tree and dance stand for us as ideals of labour. Thus in a future world, where we have attained unity of being, labour and blossoming will indeed be an identity, and both will be identical to the dance. Thus, the analogy is hypothetical <u>now</u>, but when all is arranged, either by the gyres of history or by the phases of the moon or the soul, it will cease being hypothetical and will become identical, <u>then</u>. In other words, tenor and vehicle should become one, but in an imperfect, divided world they are not. We are urged to try to make them one and the first stage of this persuasion is to make us think of them in connection with each other as tentatively one.

Certainly, given the infinite multiplicity of kinds of metaphors (as indicated in Christine Brooke-Rose's <u>Grammar of Metaphor</u>), we cannot look at one example and draw conclusions about identity or tension in metaphor. If we were to look at Eliot's famous simile -- "the evening is spread out against the sky/Like a patient etherized upon a table" -- we would decide in favor of disjunction. Here a shock of dissimilarity startles us into attending to the poem; the anesthesis forms part of a consciously elaborate design of numbness, and also becomes a projection of the narrator. We have to strain all the facts of existence to imagine an evening (which has no existence in space unless it be as a flat purply sky) as a lumpy body on an operating table, and the effort defeats us. The difficulty of imagining the two as one forces us to ascribe this simile to the mind of the impotent, numb, and passive speaker, who is revealing his own problems exactly by his creation of a simile which has no bearing on the outer scene. That the tenor is in

no danger of merging with the vehicle is an emblem of Prufrock's own isolation from things outside of his mind. Even the names he assigns to things do not correspond. In this example, then, the tension between tenor and vehicle cannot be used to prove that metaphors never achieve identity because this tension is part of characterization. It indicates a spiritual sickness which prevents the character from discovering any healing identity between his own concepts and the world beyond the periphery of his consciousness. Prufrock would be a different "person" if the magical power of metaphor and of assigning names worked for him.

It can be safely said, however, that sometimes metaphors do attempt to establish an identity between tenor and vehicle, even when they record its failure or its postponement to an ideal future. Yeats's poem "Lover's Song," like Sebeok's charm, shows influences and processes moving from one parallel to another, and in Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and Shelley's Prometheus Unbound IV these magical identities and transformations not only occur but become subjects of the poems and sources of wonder.

When images or metaphors become symbols, they begin to perform more strictly magical feats, becoming the thing they signify and at the same time remaining themselves in the remarkable prestidigitation most aptly described by Coleridge. The magical nature of symbols is getting more and more attention from anthropologists. The symbols "which may be described as molecules of rituals [with] great semantic richness" in Ndembu rites have recently been shown to be multivalent, spreading their significance in the directions of the shaman, his patients (or victims), the universe at large, past events and present ones.[31] To see this multivalence at work in the poetic symbol we can look at Wordsworth's "Strange Fits of Passion I Have Known." When Wordsworth's lover allows the moon's fate to substitute for Lucy's, a superstitious terror flashes through him watching the moon drop. The moon is Lucy; the image of the moon is dying in Lucy's stead, but also preceding Lucy, since Lucy's fate is paired to the moon's. Thus Wordsworth's poem is both effigy and prophesy, and the lover is accordingly filled with dread. But even in this remarkably primitive poem, the subjunctive reminds us that we are in the realm of possibility, not in the realm of tribal certainties. We become aware of a speaker thinking up possibilities which might very well come true, and we are aware, also, that this speaker is telling us something about the intensity of his feeling, and the love he feels turns him into a primitive believer in omens and magic, effigies and prophesies. While the identity of Lucy with her symbol the moon shows Wordsworth using the symbol magically, he is also saying beyond this that love itself is magical, perceiving magical significance in everything that concerns the loved one. Love makes magicians of us all, as Plato and then Ficino long ago observed.

Obviously, the very precision of images for things recreated from memory or imagined new is grounded in the need to specify precisely the object to be enchanted. The precise images of Keats's "To Autumn," for example, allow us to see the qualities of Autumn that Keats had in mind and to see Autumn as never before in "reality." Precision is necessary for summoning, and precision of place and time joins paradoxically with the desire to transcend time's successiveness in a fully realized moment; together they typify Romantic technique. To summon the exactly imagined scene in memory and to make it permanent through clarity are the aims of such poems as "The Eolian Harp" and "Tintern Abbey."

But surely it is in their meter that even the incantatory poems of Coleridge and Shelley differ from the weird, pounding, self-assertive primitive spells. Yet here, again, we must make allowance for a misinterpretation of the myth of what a spell is. Swirling, swaying, and circling in wide and undulating swathes of sound seem to have stood in the Romantic interpretation for the dark incantations and invocations of heavy-handed wizards. Instead of end-stopped, rime-packed, and refrain-filled spells such as those we examined previously, the Romantic spells such as "Kubla Khan" and "Mont Blanc" move and wind, and in doing so celebrate the flexibility of the magician's words. Flexibility has replaced rigidity as a sign of words' power.

But, however often and however fervently the Romantics called their poems spells, we must not succumb to their influence. We must be aware of the many ways in which even the most "poetic" spell differs from a poem. Poems differ from spells in the recognition that tenor and vehicle will never be fused into an identity but will always keep tension between them; in the refusal to be an entirely closed and self-referential system, an artifact of inherited power; in the persistence of ordinary meaning and the rejection of weirdness and gibberish, however potent; and in the underlying belief that the poetic utterance is spontaneous and new, instead of rigidly determined by past successes and failures. These factors set poems apart from spells as they are found in truly magical situations. But these differences between the forms which are clear to us seem not to have been important to the Romantics. The Romantics looked for similarities, rather than for differences, and this emphasis deeply influenced their practice. Thus our objections, and particularly our belief that poems are more rational than spells, must be laid aside, for the Romantics were trying to tap that very irrationality that we find alien and to incorporate it into their own verse. Behind this whole effort to make an irrational, ancient, and supposedly original form theirs lay the general belief in the power of names to control things.

In short, the spell is important because it promised much. It promised spontaneity; it promised a return to the original voice of savage man; it promised an obliteration of rational sobriety; it promised, through the aboriginal closeness of its metaphors and symbols, some kind of direct interchange between the mind's concept of a thing and the thing's physical body beyond; it promised, finally, the difficult combination of rational power with irrational energy -- "omnipotence of thought" achieved through mindlessness. It promised them all this, but gave them only its form.

NOTES

1. George Thomson, Aeschylus and Athens (New York, 1968), p. 11.

2. "Magic, Animism, and Omnipotence of Mind" in Totem and Taboo, Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, ed. A. Brill (New York, 1938), p. 872.

3. Bronislaw Malinowski, Coral Gardens and their Magic: The Language of Magic and Gardening, intro. Jack Berry (Bloomington, 1935, 1965), vol. 2, p. 216.

4. Kenneth Burke, "Magic and Science" in Perspectives by Incongruity, ed. Stanley Edgar Hyman (Bloomington, 1964), p. 119.

5. Ernst Carrirer, Language and Myth (New York, 1956), p. 84.

6. Martin Heidegger, On the Way to Language (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, and London, 1959, 1971), p. 62.

7. Freud, op. cit., pp. 872-873. For further speculation on the telescoping of time in magic see Waldemar Bogaras, "Ideas of Space and Time in the Conception of Primitive Religion," American Anthropologist (April 1925), 205-236. See also the fluctuations of time in Mann's Magic Mountain, and C. G. Jung, "The Structure of the Psyche," trans. R. F. C. Hull, The Portable Jung, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York, 1971), p. 35.

8. M. H. Abrams, "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric" in Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism, ed. Harold Bloom (New York, 1970), pp. 201-232.

9. Northrop Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, 1957), pp. 270-278.

10. Frye, p. 280.

11. Nora K. Chadwick, Poetry and Prophesy (Cambridge, 1942), pp. 6-61; Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, trans. Willard Trask (New York, 1964); and, for classical enthusiasm, Joseph Pieper, Enthusiasm and Divine Madness: On the Platonic Dialogue Phaedrus, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York, 1959), and E. R. Dodds' The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley, 1968), and Euripides' Bacchae (Oxford, 1944), for the shamanistic aspects of Greek religion.

12. See Lucien Levy-Bruhl, Le surnaturel et la Nature dans la mentalité primitive (Paris, 1931), and Sir James Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion (New York, 1958), pp. 12-56.

13. Bronislaw Malinowski, Magic, Science and Religion (Garden City, New York, 1948), p. 73.

14. Thomas A. Sebeok, "Structure and Content of Cheremis Charms" in Language in Culture and Society, ed. Dell Hymes (New York, 1964), pp. 365 ff.

15. Winifred Nowottny in The Language Poets Use (London, 1962), pp. 54-71, is helpful when she redefines a metaphor's "extremes" as they close in on the mysterious area to be defined. In The Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism (Bloomington, 1964), pp. 175-176, Philip Wheelwright suggests that the structure of metaphor may be magical: the action of both poetry and magic is "intended to work coercively upon nature and bring about specific desired effects by exploiting the sympathetic connection that subsists between things that have once been joined or that are significantly similar."

16. William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral (Norfolk, Conn., 1960), p. 58.

17. Magic, Science, and Religion, pp. 80-82.

18. Coral Gardens and their Magic, vol. 2, p. 229.

19. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Magic and Religion" in Structural Anthropology, trans. Claire Jacobsen and Brooke Grundfest Schoept (Garden City, New York, 1967), p. 162.

20. Ibid., p. 193.

21. "The Statesman's Manual" in The Complete Words of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. W. G. T. Shedd (New York, 1884), vol. 1, 437-438.

22. William York Tindall, The Literary Symbol (New York, 1955), p. 5. Classing symbols and metaphors as subdivisions of analogy, Tindall sees the importance of symbolism developing in conjunction with mid-nineteenth-century hermeticism as it stresses universal correspondences, pp. 50-66. For the differences between symbols and signals, see Wheelwright, pp. 19-48.

23. C. M. Bowra, Primitive Song (New York, 1963), p. 82.

24. W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Concept of Metre, an Exercise in Abstraction" in Hateful Contraries (Lexington, Kentucky, 1965), p. 120.

25. Felix Grendon, "The Anglo-Saxon Charms," Journal of American Folk-lore 22 (April-June 1909), 125.

26. J. Knight Bostock, A Handbook of Old High German Literature (Oxford, 1955), pp. 17-18.

27. Macbeth, Arden Edition, ed. Kenneth Muir (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), IV:i:12-19, p. 109.

28. Hardin Craig, "Magic in the Tempest,"

29. Ben Jonson, "The Masque of Queenes," The Works of Ben Jonson, with notes by W. Gifford (London, 1875), VII, pp. 103-129.

30. Songs from "King Arthur" in The Poems of John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1958), II, pp. 564-578. But in Milton's "Comus" the slickness of Comus' spell is part of its power. Comus pretends to be reasonable, and this veneer of reasonableness is his chief source of danger. The Macbethian "insane root" lies beneath these pretences.

31. Victor Turner, "The Syntax of Symbolism in a Ndembu Ritual" in Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition, ed. Pierre and Elli Köngäs Maranda (Philadelphia, 1971), pp. 125-136.