

*The Traveler from Porlock Makes
a Journal Entry, July 1797*

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 lines and images, all the rest had passed away like images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast.

(Samuel Taylor Coleridge's notes on "Kubla Khan")

Mr. Coleridge seemed much distracted,
like one roused abruptly from a dream.
He signed the papers I had prepared for him,
though his pen hung like a frozen cataract
above each signature, shaken in his hand
as if drawn elsewhere like a water wand.

I tried to catch his interest by describing
the lightning strike on St. Dubricious spire
and the trout run under Porlock Weir.
But his eyes rolled as if he were imbibing
swigs of scrumpy at the market fair.
His busy fingers laced his rumpled hair.

I'll wager he had taken laudanum,
for he would mumble broken sentences
under his breath, describing caves of ice
and brightly clad throngs and cavalcades come

to honor Kubly Can, or some such like.
So I bundled his papers and resumed my trek.

A whiff of opium powder must have strayed
the air of his close, candle-sputtered room.
For, against my will, all the way home
my mind was plagued by images that played
out pagan pleasure domes and roaring streams
of flood. Please God they someday quit my dreams!