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“…as far as words *can* give:” Romantic Poetry as Displaced Mystical Experience in William Wordsworth’s *Prelude*.

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg, 2011.

Abstract

This dissertation investigates the ways in which a broad and perennial problem – 'the problem of dualism' - is approached by three areas of inquiry, namely, English Romanticism, mysticism and contemporary studies of consciousness. By comparative analysis of key passages in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Huxley's survey of mystical traditions in the *Perennial Philosophy* and work by contemporary philosopher Colin McGinn on the 'mind-body problem,' I explain how each discipline proposes an ideal state of 'synthesis' or 'coalescence' between the subjective and objective as a solution to 'the problem of dualism.' In turn, each discipline discerns a faculty or means towards such a synthesis. These are the 'Imagination,' 'Third Eye,' and 'Bridging Principle' respectively. Thus, this dissertation has three additional aims. First, I argue that the Romantic 'Imagination' and mystical 'Third Eye' faculty are conceptually similar in an attempt to show that certain Romantic poets (primarily Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley) sought access to a super-sensuous realm via the 'Imagination.' However, seminal texts such as Coleridge's *Biographia*, Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* and Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* imply that the Romantic poet, unlike the mystic, is thwarted from voluntary and veridical access to these realms: the Imagination reaches an impassable threshold which the mystical 'Third Eye' traverses. This condition, coupled with an inability to convey mystical experience in language with greater acuity, I argue, may account for the presence of melancholy in key Romantic works such as Wordsworth's *Prelude* and *Immortality Ode*. I thus seek to enhance our understanding of the critical commonplace referred to as "Romantic melancholy." Second, I aim to illustrate this view by analysis of key passages in Wordsworth's *Prelude* and *Immortality Ode*. Finally, I aim to show that the early Coleridgean understanding of 'the problem of dualism' as highlighted in the *Biographia* can be further elucidated by contemporary theories of consciousness on the 'mind-body' problem.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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Bradley Dean Kallenbach

25th Day of February, 2011.

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Textual Note

Wordsworth's *Prelude* went through a long gestation period and a number of textual variants exist. The question of the de/merits of these variants, especially those of the 1805 and 1850 versions of the poem, form a field of study on their own, and do not form any part of this thesis and its concerns. Throughout this study, I refer to the 1805 version of the authoritative Norton edition of the poem: *The Prelude: 1799,1805,1850.*, Edited by Abrams, M.H., Gill, S., and Wordsworth, J. NewYork: Norton.(1979). On two occasions I do find it useful to cite the 1850 version of the text. In each instance, this occurs in footnotes to be found on pages 21 and 86 respectively. Here, too, I cite the Norton edition.

Introduction

There is a perennial idea which saturates Romantic[1] poetry, prose and philosophy. It is one which contemporary criticism[2] has characterized as a core concern, although manifested in different ways, in the works of various thinkers such as Leibniz, the Schlegels, Fichte, Schelling, Blake, Coleridge and Wordsworth. Broadly, it is the precept that an adequate philosophy of aesthetics should aspire towards an overcoming of dualism[3]. It is multifariously described thus: 'the solution to the dilemma of dualism;' 'the reconcilement of antithesis;' 'the marriage of mind and nature;' 'the synthesis of antipodes,' (Engell,1981,p.7-8) or most astutely, 'the coalescence of subject and object'[4] (Abrams,1965,p.17). Each formulation expresses a state in which a unification of dialectically opposed entities is achieved. This notion is not exclusive to Romantic literary theory, but is crucial for two further areas of inquiry, namely, philosophy of mind[5] and mysticism.[6] Today, the former is concerned with 'the mind-body problem,' that is, the elucidation of a neuroscientific theory explaining how something like consciousness (the immaterial, phenomenal and subjective) is generated by something like the brain (the material, empirical and objective[7]). The provision of such an account, according to modern theorists, depends upon the discernment of a 'Bridging Principle' which will bridge the 'explanatory gap' between mind and matter (Searle,1997;McGinn,1999,2004). For mysticism, the 'coalescence of subject and object'

[1]Throughout, 'Romantic' will refer to the movement of ideas which occurred in the arts between 1789, marking the outbreak of the French Revolution, and 1840.

[2] Here I allude to the criticism that flourished between 1950 and 1990, which includes key figures such as M.H. Abrams (1963,1965,1971), Geoffrey Hartman (1962,1964,19791987), Harold Bloom (1971a,1971b) and Thomas McFarland (1980,1985,1987)

[3] The term will be expanded upon in the literature review. For the purpose of an introduction, it refers to sets of binaries, that is, mind and body, man and nature, the subjective and the objective, finite and infinite, time and eternity etc.

[4] Coleridge in the *Biographia Litereria* (1817:1969) refers to "the coincidence of an object with a subject" (XII,p.466).

[5] This does nor refer exclusively to Descartes 17th century theory of mind-body dualism, but rather the range of theorizing from Descartes up until contemporary theories of consciousness by John Searle (1997) and Colin McGinn (1999,2004).

[6] I will take 'Mysticism' to refer to the metaphysical speculations at the foundation of all religions, for example, the 'Kabbalists' in Judaism and the 'Sufis' in Islam. Mysticism is "belief in union with the divine nature by means of ecstatic contemplation and in the power of spiritual access to domains of knowledge closed off to ordinary thought." (Blackburn,1996,p, 253).

[7] In chapter 5 of the literature review I elucidate the difference between 'subjective' and 'objective' noted by Searle (1997). For now, let the objective refer to that which exists independent of an individual mind (such as rocks, trees and tables) and let the subjective refer to that which depends upon the individual mind for its existence (such as ideas, emotions and dream imagery).

primarily means the union of the individual soul (the fragmented subject) with the Godhead (the One/Ultimate Objectivity),[8] during meditative states, by way of a distinct faculty in the human mind, often referred to as 'The Third Eye'[9] (Johnson,1939:1993) Romantic literary 'manifestos', however, such as Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817:1969), Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* (1821:2006) and Wordsworth's 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1802:2006), together with the ideas of the German Transcendentalists,[10] attribute the realization of such a 'coalescence' to the Imagination – a concept that has a unique philosophical and psychological heritage in Romanticism. Their ideal of 'coalescence' may broadly be defined as reintegration of a previously ruptured mind (self/subject) with nature (other/object) (Engell, 1981).

The 'problem of dualism,' therefore, means many things to many areas of inquiry. This dissertation considers what the problem of dualism and the form of its solution meant for some of the Romantic poets. It questions, specifically, whether or not the Romantic-aesthetic conception of the 'coalescence of subject (mind) and object (nature)' denotes something different to the mystical notion of 'unity with the One.' Given that the Romantic 'Imagination' and the mystical 'Third Eye' faculty are so conceptually alike as to be *almost* interchangeable, I propose that an important artistic 'purpose' of certain Romantic poets, captured by the phrase 'coalescence of subject and object' and explored in key works, is a different formulation of the mystic's primary goal of merging the self with the Godhead.[11] I argue that certain Romantics were trying to 'get to,' via the Imagination and its sublime product, poetic language, transcendental states of consciousness appropriate to the empirical experience of a different ontological realm.[12] My primary aim is to argue for and substantiate this proposition.

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[8] Mystical rhetoric expresses this by phrases such as the "the union of the many with the One" or "the merging of the drop with the Ocean." (Johnson, 1939:1993, p.24).

[9] Various sects make reference to this 'divine faculty' as an entryway into higher states of consciousness and different ontological realms, 'hidden' from the five senses. This 'Third Eye' is allegedly the vehicle for the apotheosis of human consciousness, that is, for the augmentation of the mind into a divine-like state, appropriate for the perception of a higher realm.(Johnson,1939:1993).

[10] Engell (1981) lists Schelling, Tetens, Fichte, the Schlegels and Kant, who are often considered 'the fathers of British Romanticism.'

[11] This is even the case, I will show, with an agnostic like Shelley, to whom the Godhead need not imply an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient Creator, but a state of consciousness.

[12] 'Empirical' denotes the sensory experience of a hidden, objective realm. Plato in *The Phaedrus* refers to this as the 'hyperouranic' realm and 'the place beyond the heavens.' (370 B.C: 1986). The Kabbalists call it *The Ein Sof*, meaning, 'the place without end.' (Scholem, 1974). Throughout, I employ 'transcendental' or 'supers-sensuous' to denote this realm.

While the conceptual distinction between the Imagination and the mystical 'Third Eye' seems negligible – it is not a difference that makes a difference – it would be fallacious to conflate Romanticism and mysticism more broadly. While they might share characteristics such as a consciousness of interconnectedness, reverence for nature and the pursuit of the extrasensory, works such as *The Prelude* suggest that the Imagination's transcendental capacities ultimately succumb to a form of closure, wherein the poet is 'merely' allowed involuntary 'glimpses' into the transcendental realm. Mystics, on the other hand, allegedly have voluntary and veridical access to such realms (Huxley,1946,Johnson,1939:1993,Hines,1996). Engell's (1981) claim that "[The Romantic poet] has put himself in the position of believing that the poet does affirm something, a higher world, but there is no way to prove that it exists or what it is like"(p.263) is the starting point for this premise. Similarly, Coleridge (in Engell,1981) admitted that "[the mind] by the exertion of its own powers exclusively can lead us to a general affirmation of the Supreme Reality of an absolute Being. But here it stops"(p.363). These and other claims denote the impassable 'threshold' that the Imagination reaches. This is not to suggest that the poet's faculties are 'stunted' compared to the mystic's. Indeed, as I aim to show, *The Prelude* implies that the poet values this balance between poetic thought and mystical consciousness. Moreover one of the Romantic achievements was to put into language, with as much acuity as possible, experiences which would appear to transcend language. Hence, I perpetuate the idea of Romantic poetry as 'displaced' mystical experience, that is, experiences taken out of their 'proper place' and 'put into' language.

However, *The Prelude*, which will be my primary focus, suggests that while the merits of this 'balance' are acknowledged, a palpable sense of melancholia is evident in the poetry. While Romantic poetry offers a plethora of emotions such as rapture, bliss, confusion, lethargy and rage, the notion of 'Romantic melancholy' has become a significant commonplace. The sense of occasionally feeling bereft, desolate and dejected, in spite of the joys inspired by nature and the powers of the Imagination, I believe, may be accounted for by the poets' very efforts to appropriate their transcendental experiences in language. This melancholy, which I refer to as 'post-lapsarian nostalgia,' is the psychological consequence of an inability to portray transcendental experiences in language with greater acuity, as a result of cognitive biases and limitations. Some key assertions by Shelley allude to this condition. Firstly, he endorses

Sidney's (1579:1965) claim that "the poet, he nothing affirms" but "never lieth" either, for, as Shelley (1815 in Engell,1981) admits, "We know nothing. We have no evidence…" [of the existence of a higher world]…we cannot express our inmost thoughts. They are incomprehensible even to ourselves"(p.263). Secondly, he observed: "vain is it to think that words can penetrate the innermost mystery of our being"(1815:2002,p.506). Both claims catch this sense of ineptitude. Similarly, key passages in *The Prelude* have as their topos, the exasperation of being situated in the liminal space between the subjectivity of the fragmented ego and the Objectivity of the transcendental ground, neither absolutely bifurcated, nor coalesced, on the very threshold of apotheosis. Thus, a dialectic emerges between the poet and the mystic: a 'poetic-mystic' (arguably St John, St Theresa and Rumi) values experiential over discursive knowledge, while a 'mystical-poet' (arguably Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley) values the discursive over the experiential.[13] The 'mystical-poet' has given us the remarkable transcendental features of Romantic poetry. I aim to read *The Prelude* as the definitive illustration of this dialectic.

Finally, it is compelling that three distinct areas of inquiry, namely, Romanticism, mysticism and contemporary studies of consciousness, each assert as their crucial purpose, 'the overcoming of dualism.' Each area, moreover, posits a different conception of this problem, and the means or faculty by which to overcome it. Romanticism invokes the Imagination, mysticism the 'Third Eye,' and studies of consciousness, the 'Bridging Principle' which is to bridge the 'explanatory gap' between mind and matter (McGinn,2004). The extent to which these areas of inquiry can engage in a dialogue concerning their various conceptions of 'the problem of dualism' and their respective means towards its solution is, as yet, unexplored. Can we, for instance, learn anything about the Romantic notion of the 'marriage of mind and nature' or 'the coalescence of subject and object' by elucidating the mystical notion of 'merging the self with the non-self' and/or with reference to the mystery of how something like the brain (the material and objective) generates consciousness (the phenomenal and subjective)? I aim to show that we can, and that indeed, these are different appropriations of the same perennial 'problem' in human thought, namely, how to use consciousness to

[13] Coleridge (1817:1969) in chapter 12 of *The Biographia* refers to "the highest and intuitive knowledge as distinguished from the discursive"(p.340). Regarding the former, he cites Wordsworth from Book I of *The Excursion*: "The vision and the faculty divine" (line 79).

transcend itself. Further, I propose that the obstacles towards solving the 'mind-body' problem, as highlighted by McGinn (2004) in his theory of 'cognitive closure,' may further elucidate the moments of 'crisis' in works such as *The Prelude*, wherein Wordsworth alludes to a waning of the powers of the Imagination. This, in turn, may account for the presence of 'post-lapsarian nostalgia.'

The High-Romantic's preoccupation (Wordsworth's *Prelude* is a key example) with the theme of the psyche's progression from an isolated ego or self-hood into the Imagination, that is, into an artist capable of reconciling the dualism between the mind of man and nature, is one proffered by some monumental figures of Romantic criticism.[14] I contend, however, that they do not proceed far enough in fleshing out the profound implications of this progression. This is only possible if the works themselves are illuminated by an expanded set of conceptual tools which traverse seamlessly across the domains of the aesthetic, the psychological, the philosophic, *and* the mystical.[15] Since, as I believe, this correlation between the psycho-aesthetic and the mystical has not been adequately mapped in the extant criticism, I will attempt to adopt an integrative approach, while exploring the challenges encountered along the way.

Moreover, the propositions to be expanded upon were partly the outcome of a discontent felt upon reading claims, pervasive throughout much contemporary Romantic criticism (such as Abrams, 1963; Hartman,1964; Bloom,1971b and Engel,1981) and early theorization (such as Coleridge in *Biographia* (1817:1969**)**, and Shelley in the *Defence*, (1821:2006) which connote, as noted, a reverence for the Imagination as a power capable of 'solving the dilemma of dualism' or 'a unifying force to reconcile all antitheses,' by "merging man and nature, the subjective and the objective, finite and infinite, time and eternity, matter and spirit" (Engell,1981,p.8). What does this amount to? What *is* the dilemma of dualism in this context? As some of these claims currently stand, they appear to be quasi-mystical, pseudo-metaphysical epiphenomena. These thinkers emphasise something very literal when they utter

[14] For example, Geoffrey Hartman (1964) and Harold Bloom (1971b). Bloom (1971b) refers to this as the poet's 'Promethean quest' to become 'unbound.' The progression is from a state of isolated 'selfhood' into Sympathetic Imagination, to be elaborated in chapter one.

[15] Mystical is not to be confused with theological. Following Hines (1996), I take mysticism to have a strong empirical/experimental/practical sense, and theology, to be synonymous with biblical myths, stories or allegories. I sustain this distinction throughout.

these claims, without grounding them in the kind of theory which might prompt us to better understand them. Speculation fast obtains the status of dogma, and we land up, as McGann (1983) implied, with a radical Romantic Ideology.

This tendency has left many of Romanticism's philosophical claims thin, unsubtle and declamatory. Such caprices are subsequently employed by critics in accessing Romantic texts. Thus, what I propose is that by grounding these tenets of Romantic philosophy in contemporary theories of consciousness they are allowed more rigor and intellectual integrity. It is not the claims themselves which are in dispute, but rather, their lack of substantiation. Jerome McGann (1983) has alluded to this very problem in Romantic theorizing:

> Like Hegel, [M.H] Abrams offers a program of Romanticism rather than a critical representation of its character. As such, both reify certain key Romantic self-conceptualizations like 'spirituality,' 'creativity'… 'synthesis' and 'reconciliation'…whose meaning cannot be taken at face value. They lie at the very heart of Romanticism's self representation and as such they must be subjected to critical analysis. This analysis is difficult to perform, however, since the ideologies of Romanticism seek to persuade us that such concepts are fundamental and hence that they need not – cannot – be analyzed. (p, 32).

If Romanticism assumes an ontological priority that should not be questioned, then my response, by integrating its claims with contemporary theories of consciousness, is not to expose them as tenuous, but to vindicate them.

This, however, raises a problematic irony: on the one hand, I criticize capricious philosophizing in Romantic criticism, yet simultaneously, am arguing for a highly pretentious proposition, namely, a psycho-mystical view of poetic language and the Imagination as a vehicle for the apotheosis of human consciousness. Or stated differently, that Romantic poetry is a kind of displaced mystical experience.[16] I cannot adequately respond to this objection in this section, but will show, in the literature review, how the mystical view I am espousing,

[16] T. E. Hulme, in a 1909 lecture, defined Romanticism as "spilt religion….like pouring a pot of treacle over the dinner table." (Hulme, 1909:1994, pg. 62). Hulme believed Romanticism to irresponsibly transgress across exclusive, categorically distinct concepts:
"You don't believe in a God, so you begin to believe that man is a god. You don't believe in Heaven, you begin to believe in heaven on earth. In other words, you get romanticism. The concepts that are right and proper in their own sphere are spread over, and so falsify and blur the clear outlines of human experience" (p. 62)
As I explain in the theoretical framework, this is not the sense in which I consider Romanticism to be 'displaced mystical experience.'

namely, the possibility of accessing a 'hyperouranic realm' by way of a faculty in the mind, meets the criteria for a scientific theory such as falsifiability and precise replicability (Hines,1996). Second, I hope to show that the ideas about the Imagination articulated in Romantic poetry and prose can be shown to seamlessly reconcile with the mystical tenets. Yet to further safeguard against fickle speculation, I consider objections from psychoanalytic theory which intend to expose the human tendency towards myth-making - a fundamental preoccupation of the Romantic poets and, as sceptics would argue, mysticism[17] - as a symptom of our anxieties over our own mortality. Both Romanticism and mysticism are, by this view, defence mechanisms employed to assuage our fears of death. In pitting psychoanalytic objections against Romantic and mystic cant, I shall contend that the 'myths' we find in both cannot be reduced to a purely psychoanalytical account, and that indeed as Plato says in *The Republic*, "poets utter great and wise things which they do not themselves understand." (c 380 B.C:1992, Line 598 c, p. 268).

The Romantic works to be analysed which speak to my hypothesis are wide in scope. This is necessary for I am gesturing towards a theory of Romantic poetry, as a species, rather than that of a specific poet,[18] and thereby aim to get to something more perennial - a meta-poetics. Fragments from the poetry, prose and letters of each of the 'high' Romantics[19] will thus be cited. However, concerning the theory on the Imagination, I employ Coleridge primarily, for he represents the intermediary between the German Transcendentalists and the British Romanticists by his appropriation of the ideas of thinkers such as Hegel, Kant, Schiller, Fichte and the Schlegels into a working Romantic aesthetic, as in the *Biographia*. He is, as we know, the most well-versed in German Transcendental thought and thus serves as the best 'poet-philosopher' amongst his fellow high Romantics.

[17] Consider the perennial mystical story regarding the creation of the universe: 'Once there was a Being who wanted to know Himself. So, He asked, "Who am I?" and came to self-consciousness. As a consequence, he fragmented his Being into individual beings, in order to know himself. Essentially, God created the universe because 'it's no fun having dinner alone.' (Johnson, 1939:1993). .

[18] This is not to imply, however, that Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats are not poets in their own right, without crucial disparities concerning poetic style, subject and ethos. Yet despite this, their views on the *Imagination* can be shown as highly compatible. It is nonetheless important to point out that the ways in which 'problems of dualism' apply to Byron and Keats would require entirely separate studies.

[19] Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats.

Furthermore, it is a commonplace that Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1805:1960) is recognized as a ''Bildungsroman' of the poet's consciousness' (Hartman,1964;Bloom,1971a) – a theme which will be shown to be most compatible with my view of Romantic poetry as 'displaced mystical experience.' My (chapter six) analysis will thus be preoccupied with *The Prelude*. Secondly, as Hartman (1964) aptly noted, two powers – 'Milton' and 'nature' – fought for Wordsworth's soul (p.xiv). By the former he is said to be a prophet, visionary and 'bard elect' and by the latter, he becomes an 'inmate of the world,' a 'man speaking to men.' This, I argue, is a useful starting point from which to elaborate on the dialectic between discursive and experiential transcendental knowledge that I wish to highlight in *The Prelude*.

CHAPTER ONE: The Pursuit of the Transcendental Ground

1.1. The Romantic Revolution: Imagination, Nature, Myth

The literature documenting the 'revolution' that was Romanticism and how it made advances on Enlightenment thought, is vast. In order to remain within the scope of this thesis, what follows is an account of those revolutionary tenets of Romanticism which are most crucial to the elucidation of my propositions. Despite the plausibility of grouping these tenets together such that we may discern, as others have, a 'spirit of the age,'[20] we are aware of the variation and subtlety with which each major figure handled these core ideas.

We have a starting point in A.W. Schlegel: "The expression of a secret longing for the chaos which is perpetually striving for new and marvellous births, which lies hidden in the very womb of orderly creation." This is Schlegel's (in Babbitt,1919,p.85) definition of Romantic poetry. 'Orderly creation' may be the progeny of Enlightenment reason, and "the chaos" of "new and marvellous births," the sublime product of the Romantic Imagination. Yet it is fallacious to hold that Romantic thought was opposed to 'reason.' We know that, for the Romantics, the Imagination reaches the apex of its powers when it is grounded in reason.[21] Indeed, Wordsworth defines the Imagination as "…reason in her most exalted mood" (*The Prelude*,1805,XIII,170). The Romantic project was not the devolution of 'orderly creation' into 'chaos,' but an opposition to reason in its tyrannical forms, of which, as Bloom (1971b) notes, the high-priests were Bacon, Descartes, Newton and Locke.[22] Blake (1804-1809:1965) invokes the Romantic discontent: "The Visions of Eternity, by reason of narrowed perceptions/Are

[20] For example Hazlitt (1825:1910) and McFarland (1987).

[21] For example, Coleridge (1802:1956) in a letter to Southey said: "The poet's heart and intellect should be combined, intimately combined and unified." (pg.32) It is not, reciprocally, correct to posit that Enlightenment thinkers were opposed to Imagination, but also favoured a balance between the two: "poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth by calling imagination to the help of reason" (Johnson,1709-1784:1905,p.170).

[22] To cast off Bacon, Locke and Newton from
Albion's covering
To take off his filthy garments and clothe
Him with Imagination
To cast aside from poetry, all that is
not Inspiration …(Blake,*Milton,*'Reason and Imagination,' 8-13 in Erdman and Bloom,1982,p.102).

become weak visions of Time and Space; fixed unto furrows/of death." (*Jerusalem*, 'Fourfold and Twofold Vision,'1-2 in Erdman and Bloom,1982,p.146). Aesthetically, this discontent was expressed as an opposition to the 'tyranny of the line,' and the 'despotism of the eye,' hence the impressionism of Turner, whereby what is depicted is not so much a landscape as it's 'types, symbols and forms:'

> Line in nature is not found
> Unit and universe are round
> In vain produced; all rays return,
> Evil will bless and ice will burn. (Emerson,*Uriel*,21-24 in Bloom,2003,p.506)

This is Schlegel's 'chaos.' It is the antithesis of Newtonian spatio-temporal and causal linearity. Its 'evil' is not of moral badness, but of obscurity, of the 'darkness' of uncertainty "…when the light of sense/Goes out…" (*The Prelude*,1805,VI,534-535), of the cold, unfathomable regions of the cosmos and of Blake's (1790:1965) 'Marriage of Heaven and Hell.' It is the synthesis between the terrible and the beautiful which is the Burkean (1757:1978) 'sublime' and later, Pater's (1889:1986) "addition of strangeness to beauty." It is this "addition of strangeness" that Pater believes, "constitutes the romantic character in art"(p.541). We can elucidate the rainbow by an account of Newtonian optics, but there is something that the account inevitably 'leaves out.' Where the explanatory reach of the scientific account is exhausted and the mystery takes sway – why the 'heart leaps up' when we behold natural phenomena - is the quintessence of the Romantic interest. There is, further, a wonder with the most alien dimensions of the universe and with contradiction:

> …If the angel in his cloud,
> Serenely gazing at the violent abyss,
> Leaps downward through evenings revelations, and
> On his spredden wings, needs nothing but deep space,
> Forgets the gold centre, the golden destiny,
> Grows warm in the motionless motion of his flight,
> Am I that imagine this angel less satisfied?
>
> (Wallace Stevens,*It Must Give Pleasure*,VIII,1-8 in Morse,1982,p.30)

The "gold centre" in Stevens' lines (and Stevens was greatly indebted to Wordsworth) that is the empirical certainty and logic - the 'cerebral sun' of the Enlightenment – and has no place in its ontology for the moonlit, obscure resonance inspired by a 'motionless motion.' The

Romantic Imagination's wonder is with the possible impossible – with those un-trodden, nether regions of the mind and the hidden arcana of the world. Hence Johnson's (1779:1905) evaluation of Milton, considered widely to be the first British Romantic poet: "Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility: reality was a scene too narrow for his mind" (p.30) – and the creator of the first true Romantic, Satan, the angel forced downwards into the violent abyss, away from the gold centre. This sensibility for the obscure and crepuscular suggests a rupture from the Cartesian law of clarity and distinctness in all things. The moon, Babbitt (1919) observes, is the romantic orb, while all German romance is bathed in moonshine and its thinkers have been called 'twilight men.' Coleridge (1817:1969) referred to "the sudden charm" of "accidents of light or shade" and "moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape"(*Biographia Literaria*,XIV,p.5). The ideals of clarity and distinctness betray the truism that *too much light blinds us*. This is the paradox that the Enlightenment ignored: excess ratiocination is ignorance.

Clarity and distinctness as principles inspire empiricism in science and mimesis in art. Aesthetic products become manufactured and mechanically wrought by a careful consciousness. Their mastery is deliberate, while its beauty is reducible to an architectonics and a calculus. Romantic art, on the other hand, is taken to be inspired. It recognizes that there is an autonomous, unconscious aspect to the aesthetic impulse, whereby something of the self and will are suspended. There is still a fidelity to the empirical world and veridical datum of the senses. But it is filtered through the crepuscular consciousness of the Imagination. To perpetuate a seasonal analogy, the noon of the Enlightenment gives way to a more bedimmed, autumnal lustre:

> The day becomes more solemn and serene
> when noon is past – there is a harmony
> In Autumn, and a lustre in its sky.
> Which through the summer is not heard or seen…
> (Shelley,*Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*,VII,72-76,
> in Raine,1973,p.44)

The poet, therefore, is no longer a member, as Whitman's (1892:1963) diatribe against English Augustan poets such as Pope and Dryden suggests, of an overly polite and gentrified "parcel of dandees and ennui's" and "dapper little gentlemen" who "flood us with their thin sentiment of parlors…chasing one aborted conceit after another…" (II,90-119,p.488). He is not interested in

"Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles [and] Billet-Doux."[23] The Romantic poet becomes a prophet of the 'primal,' a visionary who would "gladly barter" the skills of the greatest bards in history for the 'undulation of one wave…'" (Whitman in Moores,2004,p.106). His fidelity, as Lowth (1787 in Hepworth 1978) suggested, is to the language of the Old Testament prophets, its pathos and animism, which traces, in the natural world, the Wordsworthian "active principle" (*The Excursion*,1850:2007,VIII,1-5) and "sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused" (*Tintern Abbey*,95-96 in Bloom,2003,p.328). He becomes 'a bard elect' teaching 'primeval mysteries,' living as Wallace Stevens (1951:1982) suggested, "in the world but outside of existing conceptions of it"(p.164):

> …I was a chosen son.
> For hither had I come with holy powers
> And faculties…
> Some called it madness; such indeed it was…
> If prophesy be madness… (*The Prelude*,1805,III,82-150).

Keats (1819:2003), similarly, deifies the poet, endowing him with faculties capable of penetrating the very heart of phenomenological reality:

> Whereon there grew
> Within me a power of enormous ken,
> To see as a god sees and take the depth
> Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
> Can size and shape pervade (*Fall of Hyperion*,I,302-306,in Barnard,2003, p.443)

There was, further, an organic, vital current at work, that 'rolls through all things' in the natural world and a temperament which usurped the static, atomistic, 'murder-to-dissect' analysis of nature,[24] congenial to mimesis and the empirical method. He does not mimetically hold up the

[23] Consider Hazlitt's (1825:1910) observation that "Our poetical literature had, towards the close of the last century, degenerated into the most trite, insipid and mechanical of all things, in the hands of the followers of Pope and the Old French school of poetry. It wanted something to stir it up, and it found that something in the French Revolution. From the impulse it thus received, it rose at once from the most sterile imitation and the tamest common place to the pitch of singularity and paradox" (p.74).

[24] Wordsworth captures this:
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things: -
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art
Close up those barren leaves
Come forth, and bring with you a heart,

mirror to nature, but to his own unconscious, and the movements of the psyche's depths have a concrete analogue in nature's kinetic forms. Hence the fascination with mighty torrents, billowing cascades and wind swept valleys:[25]

> …Visionary power
> Attends upon the motion of the winds
> Embodied in the mystery of words. (*The Prelude*,1805,V,619-621).

Similarly, Shelley traces the "awful shadow of some unseen Power" that:

> Floats though unseen among us – visiting
> This various world with as inconstant wing
> As summer winds that creep from flower to flower.
> (*Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*,I,1-4 in Raine,1973,p.42).

His poetry is, as Coleridge (1817:1969) suggests, a repetition in the finite mind of the infinite powers of the Creator, rather than, as Coleridge's (1817:1969) critique of Pope's rendition of Homer's *Illiad*, "not so much poetic thoughts as thoughts *translated* into the language of poetry." For this 'artificiality,' Coleridge disparagingly coined the phrase "conjunctive-disjunctive"(p.19) to signify the polished temporal succession of each finished couplet.[26] This is 'unnatural' – a corruption of the principle of organicism which holds that the poem should emerge autonomously by its inner laws. Indeed the poem-as-plant metaphor became

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That watches and receives. . (Wordsworth, *The Tables Turned*,1798,29-32 in Gill,2004,p.61).

Further:

> Viewing all objects unremittingly
> In disconnexion dead and spiritless;
> And still dividing, and dividing still;
> Break down all grandeur…While littleness
> May yet become more little; waging thus an impious
> Warfare with the very life
> Of our own souls. (*The Excursion*,1850:2007,IV,961-968)

Also, consider Coleridge's (1797:1956) claim: "I can contemplate nothing but parts, and parts are all *little* – my mind feels as if it ached to behold something great – something one and indivisible…" (p. 32)

[25] "That icy water, restless, all-invading, filled with the spirit of motion, that majestic tumult of a leaping torrent, that mist forever sweeping its billows into the air…I seemed engulfed by the waters and living in the abyss; I had quit the earth. (Senancour in Mcfarland,1987,p.21).

[26] Similarly, Shelley (1821:2006) noted that "Versifying and rhyming are very well. But they don't constitute a poem. Any subject that can be expressed as well in prose an in verse is not poetry of a high class"(p.842). This claim further illustrates the influence of Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* on Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, given Sidney's (1579:1965) assertion that "it is not rhyming and versifying that maketh a poet"(p.103).

prominent. Schlegel (in McFarland 1971) invoked: "Nature is organic, and the highest beauty is therefore eternal and always plant-like"(p. 266). Similarly, Keats famously asserted (1818:1975): "If poetry come not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all"(p.70).

Brief reference has been made to two of Wellek's (1949) three crucial tenets of Romanticism, namely, 'Imagination for the view of poetry' and 'An organic concept of nature for the view of the world.' I now consider the third, 'Symbol and myth for poetic style,' in order to introduce the proposition that the Romantic poets were preoccupied with the pursuit of transcendental experiences via the Imagination.[27]

1.2. Myth

Romanticism engenders a renascence of myth-making. The keynote of its revolutionary status in poetry is that it generates a mythology independent of religion and the golden myths of ancient Greece, with which the Augustans were so concerned (Bloom,1971b). Its mythologies tell the story of 'human consciousness,' a term, I suggest, which can be used interchangeably with 'Imagination.' The core religious, cosmological myth is that of 'The Fall.' The human purpose is thus the reintegration of the isolated ego with Eden/The Godhead. This is reworked by the Romantics into the psycho-poetical story of the mind's rupture or independence from nature (this constitutes 'the fall'), into an isolated state of egocentric solitude, with the final purpose being the growth into sympathetic Imagination, whereby the artist's experience is characterized by the re-coalescence of the self with nature (this constitutes religious 'redemption'). Geoffrey Hartman (1962) highlights this:

> To explore the transition from self consciousness to Imagination, and to achieve that transition while exploring it, is the romantic purpose I find most crucial…Romantic art has a function analogous to that of religion. The traditional scheme of Eden, fall, and redemption merges with the new triad of nature, self consciousness, imagination; while the last term in both involves a return to the first (pg 161).

The impetus which drives the progression from self-consciousness to Imagination is a widening of consciousness. Bloom (1971b) characterizes the progression as the poet's

[27] It is well known that Romantic poets and essayists, notably Coleridge and Hazlitt, were addicted to opium. The hypothesis of Huxley's (1954) "The Doors of Perception," which this dissertation neglects, is that these poets and essayists took opium to reach transcendental states of consciousness.

'Promethean Quest to become unbound.' He, like Hartman(1962), identifies the same mythological pattern in the works of major Romantics as the cyclical narrative of grace, fall and redemption, or psychically, as being bound to nature and outward sense, then gaining independence from the external by way of a solipsistic selfhood, and finally, the integration of the ego with nature by means of the Imagination. So, there is a retention of traditional theological concepts, but they have been *de*mythologized into this triadic logic which M.H. Abrams (1971) thinks provides the distinctive character and design to what we call 'Romantic philosophy.' This is the Romantic genre of *Bildungseschigte* - the re-appropriation of the theological story into the story of the growth of human consciousness. Romantic poetry's innovation is to explore this theme in extended autobiographical meditations, such as we find in *The Prelude*.

Bloom (1971a) explains that the hallmark of the second phase, the state of 'selfhood' or 'self-consciousness' is the poet's sense of aesthetic, religious and socio-political revolutionary activism. The 'poet-as-hero' in this stage has taken it upon himself to subvert all orthodoxies, whether the neoclassical rigours of decorum in verse, the dogmas of traditional Christianity, or oppressive sanctions on human rights.[28] Politically, this was what Hazlitt (1815-1817:1957) called the "glad dawn of the day-star of liberty; the spring time of the world"(p.119). However, the inevitable disillusionment following the failures of this task propels the poet into a state of crisis.[29] With a loss of faith in the power of revolutionary activism, in a time "…of hopes overthrown…Of dereliction and dismay…" (*The Prelude,*1805,II,449-457), in which "moral questions" are "Yielded up…in despair" (*The Prelue,*1805,X,901), accompanied by a subsequent disengagement from 'external things,' consciousness turns inwards, and the poetic quest is to plumb the depths of the psyche. Abrams (1971) describes this phase as follows: "faith in an apocalypse by revelation had been replaced by faith in an apocalypse by revolution, and this now gave way to faith in an apocalypse by imagination or cognition"

[28] He is the 'Burkean' figure described in Wordsworth's (1850:1979) *Prelude*:
"Genius of Burke…launches forth,/Against all systems built on abstract rights,/Keen ridicule… Of Institutes and Laws, hallowed by time;…and with high disdain,/ Exploding upstart Theory, insists/Upon the allegiance to which men are born…" (VII,512-530).

[29] Existentially, Benoit (1955) has characterized this state thus: "Suddenly, [the poet] becomes conscious that his principle is not the principle of the universe, that there are things that exist independently of him …At this moment appears conscious fear of death, of the danger which the Not Self represents for the Self"(p.334).

(p.334). The grand subject thus becomes the self. Hence Hazlitt (1815-1817:1957) will claim of Wordsworth:

> the power of his mind preys upon himself, as if there were nothing but his own mind and the universe. He lives in the busy solitude of his own heart, in the deep silence of his thought. (p.113).

Nature's abysses – oceans, deep cataracts, those infinite repositories which feature so prominently in Romantic verse as the hallmarks of Burke's (1757 in Hepworth,1978) sublime – provide an apt symbolism for the abyss of the psyche that is the unconscious, which Hopkins (1876-1889:1985) later versified:

> O the mind, mind hath mountains, cliffs of fall
> Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. (*No Worst There Is None*,II,9-10,p.61).

The crucial Romantic purpose, as Bloom (1971a) notes, is thus to 'augment' consciousness to the extent that the self may re-engage in a communion with nature, with that which is external and other. This is its vision:

> …There is a dark
> Invisible workmanship that reconciles
> Discordant elements, and makes them move
> In one society. (*The Prelude*,1805,I,352-355).

And

> In one beloved presence…
> … there exists
> A virtue which irradiates and exalts
> All objects through all intercourse of sense…
> Along his infant veins are interfused
> The gravitation and the filial bond
> Of Nature that connect him with the world.
> Emphatically such a being lives,
> An inmate of this *active* universe… [30] (*The Prelude*,1805,II,255-266).

This 'augmentation' or sense of 'communion' requires a compromise between solipsism and sympathy. The apogee of this compromise marks the genesis of the Imagination. The phenomenological experience of this state of 'widened consciousness' may be described as the 'coalescence of subject and object.' Therefore, the typical phrase applied to the Romantic

[30] These lines refer to the "infant babe," envied by the poet for its alleged 'pre-lapsarian grace.' I discuss this theme further in Chapter Six.

vocation as ‘a return to nature’ is more accurately read, as a return to a former self – a more ‘self-less’ self - *via* nature (Bloom,1971b). The Romantics are not poets of nature but poets of consciousness, with the mind as the main region of their song.

Coleridge (1814:1933) captures this aptly: “Man sallies forth into nature” to discover that “what he seeks he has *left behind*” (p.336). This ‘return’ sees the emergence of what is vital to the Romantics, noted by Bloom (1971b) as the double programme of the humanization of the natural world, and the naturalization of the human world. In a sympathetic mind the external voyage is coincidental with the internal. The poet’s growth is defined by coming to know ‘the mind’ of a landscape (the subjectivity of the objective) and ‘the landscape’ of the mind (the objectivity of the subjective). It is a sense of reciprocity, marked by a shaking off of the heavy burden of self-scrutiny and the expunging of an excessive self-consciousness. Yet the solipsistic phase is a necessary precursor to Imaginative autonomy and sympathy, and is thoroughly explored by the poet. Hence the irony of the work - what appears to be solipsism is latently the most unself-conscious yearning to merge with something greater than the self. There is no other means to explore this than by engaging in the most insipid forms of self-aggrandizement and interrogation, for the Romantics have shown us that when self-consciousness reaches its zenith, it fades into the anti-self. Thus Hartman (1964) defines the second phase of the Wordsworthian Imagination as “consciousness of self raised to apocalyptic pitch” (p.18).

This augmented consciousness might be best understood as ‘love,’ which, for the British Romanticists and their father figures, the German Transcendentalists, is the sympathetic reaching out of the psyche, towards the external object, such that the boundary between self and other is traversed:

> There hangs by unseen film, an orbed drop
> Of light, and that is love…
> Melting into its radiance, we blend
> Mingle, and so become a part of it (Keats,*Endymion*,I,806-811 in Barnard,2003,p.128)

Interestingly, Freud (1916:1922) claims that pathology emerges when the mind preys upon itself – when an excess of the libido is invested in the self, ‘imploding’ the ego. This explains

Bloom's (1971b) trenchant claim that we love in order not to get sick. Yet what the Romantics understood as a state of sympathetic Imagination, 'coalescence' or 'love' is, I will show, synonymous with the mystic's experience of 'Union,' which is similarly referred to as 'love' (Johnson,1993:1939). It is my contention that the Romantic re-appropriation of the theological myth of grace, fall and redemption is not merely a psychological 'translation' of the religious mythology – it points towards the mystic's veridical sensory experience. The religious story of Adam and Eve's Fall is an allegory for what mysticism takes to be the literal fragmentation of consciousness from a state of unified consciousness.

Thus, as I will show, while a work such as *The Prelude* has as its topos, a psychological rendering of the Judeo-Christian allegory of the fall (Hartman, 1962), this rendering implies a progression, not only from religion to psychology, but from psychology to experimental science, that is, mystical science.[31] This is unduly signified by Blake when he observes: "Poetry, painting and music are the three powers in Man of conversing with Paradise which the Flood did not sweep away." (*A Vision Of The Last Judgement*,1810:1982,p.76). The bifurcation between the Godhead and the creation represents the original dualism between God or 'the subject' and the fallen world, 'the object.' Romanticism holds that the Imagination or love is the means towards the re-coalescence of this rupture, towards the reinstatement of what Wordsworth calls "the primal sympathy" (*Ode: Intimations Of Immortality*,184,in Gill,2004,p.163). I aim to show what this might mean stripped bare of metaphor, to get to the literalness of this claim. This may appear to be a misguided approach for principles on the Imagination which are to be read strictly as theory. My elucidation of the idea of the Imagination in what follows will suggest that this is not the case, and that a distinction between 'theory' and 'practice' regarding the Romantic Imagination is precarious. The Romantic poet's culmination in despondency and madness testifies to this fact. Against their principles, says Hartman (1962), "the greater romantic poets stake their art, and often their sanity" (p.11). Later, he asserts that for Blake:

> The concepts of Nature and the Divine are a perversion of the joining concept of the Human. The labor of redemption, therefore, is to rehumanise both by perpetual mental flight. According to Blake, all myths are creation myths and tell of man's self-alienation. His own system is a myth to redeem all myths, and to reintegrate… "the human body

[31] The idea of mysticism as an 'empirical science' is explained in chapter 2.2

divine" (1964,p.192-193).

For Romanticism, human consciousness is loaded with transcendental capacity and has the potential to mediate between the Godhead and nature. Art, the creative product of the Imagination, is an analogy in man for the Divine's creative power: "God is Man and exists in us and we in him" (Blake,1744:1982,p.664). This idea, a key tenet of Renaissance thought, is significant for Romanticism for it provides a starting point from which to explore how the metamorphoses of consciousness re-appropriate the traditional religious mythology. Romanticism moves away from external Gods and towards the human psyche. It engenders a profound reversal from pre-Blakean myth-making: we are not God's creatures so much as He is ours. The psyche-in-love, with its escalated consciousness, is synonymous with the Romantic Imagination. It is Leibniz's (in Engell,1981) *la puissance active* (p.27*)* – the bridge between the mind and the universe. In the following section, I suggest that this state and faculty have a significance beyond the fathoming even of Romanticism's most enigmatic and ambitious thinkers, for it is a significance they did not thoroughly explore. It is nothing less than the means towards the literal apotheosis of human consciousness, disguised in their terms as the reintegration of the self with nature, or the reassertion of a condition of pre-lapsarian grace with the universe.

The ways in which myth-making has been re-appropriated in Romanticism has been mapped. This has provided us with a meta-poetics of Romanticism in the form of a pattern which may be abstracted from the major poetic works. It is emphasized that this is not reductive, for the ways in which each poet explores it are marvellously varied into different mythologies.[32] Using this meta-poetics as a statement of the Romantic 'purpose' or 'quest,' the following section analyses the means by which this was to be undertaken by discerning, further, the significance of the Imagination.

[32] For example, 'Child and Man' in Wordsworth, 'Los and Orc' in Blake, 'Hyperion and Apollo' in Keats, 'Prometheus Bound and Unbound' in Shelley.

CHAPTER TWO: The Imagination

In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781:1984) Kant claims that the end point of human reason is to secure three things: the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. It is these criteria that offer humanity salvation from nihilism and the pointlessness of evolution, from "naked existence cast into psychic homelessness" as Heidegger (in McFarland 1980,p.160) puts it, for they secure the possibility of that which is immune to the ravages of materialism and Carlyle's (1833:2006) anti-revelation: "To me the universe was all Void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable steam-engine rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb" (II,VII,p.1009). Yet the history of philosophy has seen the devolution of the word 'soul,' with each transformation expressing more scepticism and discomfort with its divine or transcendental conception. For Descartes, it became the 'cogito,' for Locke, 'personal identity,' for Kant, the 'transcendental unity of apperception' and for Freud the atheist, the 'unconscious.' We might argue that in our present age of neuroscience, constructs like 'memory' and 'consciousness' (as strictly biological phenomenon) have replaced it.

For the Romantic poets, it was Imagination that served what was originally the soul's function of providing a metaphysical refuge from the devastating ramifications of materialism – consciousness of mortality and psychological ennui – and was thus, as Sartre (1960 in McFarland,1985) claims, "the necessary condition for the freedom of empirical man in the midst of the world" (p.xii). Similarly, commenting on the ethos of the post-Kantian German philosophers and Romantic poets, Abrams (1971) asserts that its central enterprise was to "…re-domiciliate man in a world which had become alien to him. The pervasive sense of estrangement, of a lost and isolated existence, is not peculiar to our [modern] age of anxiety, but was a common place of Romantic philosophy" (p.102). In Romanticism we find the origins and archetypal expression of what by the twentieth century has become a commonplace – the idea of the estranged modern man. The rupture from unity which constitutes man's 'fall' is not a religio-mythological idea, but the inevitable angst we feel upon adopting an atomistic, mechanized metaphysic, in which the mind is divorced from the natural world and reason is bifurcated from emotion.

The concept of Imagination, expounded by the high Romanic poets and numerous theories of the German transcendentalists, conciliates this state of fragmentation. As Engell (1981) observes, there is a common idea congenial to all, which is the premise that the Imagination, "the quintessence of Romanticism," became the way to

> …reunify man with nature, to return by the paths of self-consciousness to a state of higher nature, a state of the sublime where senses, mind and spirit elevate themselves even as they elevate the world around them...(p. 7).

This idea of re-unification of man with nature, and thus to a state of 'higher nature' is consistent with the Romantic 'purpose,' discerned in chapter one, which is the expansion of consciousness enacted by a compromise between solipsism and sympathy. The Imagination is thus the fulcrum for that perennial concern of both Romantic philosophers and poets alike, namely, the 'the solution to the dilemma of dualism;' 'the reconcilement of antithesis;' 'the marriage of mind and nature;' 'the synthesis of antipodes' or 'the coalescence of subject and object.'[33] Engell (1981) further highlights its significance:

> The world and the cosmos seemed to operate according to principles that were alien to or beyond common understanding. The principles could be learned only as the senses received them piecemeal from the external world or as the mind intuited them from an internal sensibility or a store of innate ideas. The imagination held out hope and promised a reconciliation of this dualism…with one foot in the empirical and one foot in the ideal or transcendental, [the Imagination] could bestride those two peninsulas of thought, and like a colossus, protect and unify the harbor between. The Imagination could, in its dialectic, synthesise soul and body; it could unite man's spirit and affections with the concrete reality of nature. ..it would solve the dilemma of dualism (p.7).

Its power is redemptive: "It could lead to grace and salvation. It could recapture the ideal of unity" (Engell,1981,p.8). Hence, as elucidated in chapter one, the progression from self-consciousness to un-self-consciousness, from the selfhood into the Imagination, is characterized by a sensibility of coalescence with that which is other to the self. Let us recall Hartman (1962) in illustration:

> To explore the transition from self consciousness to Imagination, and to achieve that transition while exploring it, is the romantic purpose I find most crucial…Romantic art has a function analogous to that of religion. The traditional scheme of Eden, fall, and redemption merges with the new triad of nature, self consciousness, imagination; while the last term in both involves a return to the first. (p.54)

Finally, in accord with this statement, Engell (1981) observes:

[33] Part of my stated aim however, is to get us beyond the mere trotting out of these binaries.

> It becomes the resolving and unifying force of all antitheses and contradictions. It reconciles and identifies man with nature, the subjective with the objective, the internal mind with the external world, time with eternity, matter with spirit, finite and infinite, the conscious with the unconscious and self-consciousness with the absence of self-consciousness. It relates the static to the dynamic, passive to active, ideal to real, and universal to particular (p. 8).

This copious, quasi-mystical rhetoric, which makes reference to phenomenology, existentialism, physics and psychoanalysis, is employed to make a point: the Imagination is the means towards the solution of dualism in any form whatsoever. Hence, Abrams (1971) observes that "Romantic philosophy is primarily a metaphysics of integration, of which the key principle is that of the 'reconciliation' or synthesis of whatever is divided, opposed and conflicting" (p.182).[34] This being its general purpose, in what follows I discuss how Coleridge elaborates on its function, as a preface to my thesis that, in being conceptually identical to the mystical 'Third Eye' faculty, it was intended to function as the vehicle for the apotheosis of consciousness. As we shall see, 'apotheosis of consciousness,' in its mystical sense, is indistinguishable from "the transition from self consciousness to Imagination" or the psychological rendition of the traditional, religious scheme of 'Eden, fall, redemption' into the 'new triad' of 'nature, self consciousness, imagination.'

2.1. Coleridge: The Bridge between German Transcendentalism and British Romanticism.

Critics are unanimous in acknowledging that it is within the Coleridgean psychology of the Imagination as laid out in the *Biographia Literaria* (1817:1969) that we find the culmination of almost a century of theorizing, primarily by the German Transcendentalists, on the Imagination (Engell,1981). The metaphysics established by this masterwork are grounded in two core aims: the unification of the divided psyche, namely, the "head and heart," *and* the reconciliation of the individual mind/ego with the external other, that is, "the coincidence of an object with a subject." (Coleridge,1817:1969,XII,p.290). To this end, Coleridge distinguishes, in what Hamilton (1983) has termed his most notable act of desynonymy, the "fancy" from the

[34] For a useful, further account of what might have motivated this preoccupation with 'synthesis,' see Chapter One of 'Romantic Cruxes: The English Essayists and the Spirit of the Age.' by Thomas McFarland (1987)

"Imagination." Commenting on the difference between the two with reference to Bowle's poetry, Coleridge (1802:1956) observes:

> All natural objects were *dead*…mere hollow Statues…At best it is but fancy, or the aggregating Faculty of the mind – not Imagination, or the modifying, co-adunating Faculty…In the Hebrew Poets each Thing has a Life of its own, and yet they are all one Life" (p.864).

Thus, the fancy associates and aggregates parts. It combines the parts *a* and *b* into the conglomerate *ab*. This is Locke's (1690:1997) 'complex idea.'[35] Imagination, however, is the "esemplastic" power of genius, which combines the parts *a* and *b* into *c* – a new whole, greater than the sum of its parts, or as Coleridge (1817:1969) says, "a higher third, including both the former" (p.63). Epistemologically, the former represents the 'elementaristic' thinking of the Hartleyan associationists[36] and the passive, Lockean *Tabula Rasa*[37] onto which experience records itself. Aesthetically, it is responsible for the Popean "conjunctive-disjunctive," the neoclassical decorum of parts "in a loose mixture," held together by a rhetorical expedient of "formal Similes," rather than "*intimately* combined and *unified*"(Coleridge,1802:1956,p.865). The distinction is thus between artificial combination and organic coalescence.[38] In what we might call a less 'religious' version of what he gleaned from Coleridge, Wordsworth conveys this organicism by accounts of a cognitive process which 'drinks,' 'holds intercourse,' 'weaves,' 'binds' and 'fastens' nature's objects to the mind culminating in a condition of integration between self and other, "…melted and reduced/To one identity…" (*Prelude*,1805,VII,702-703).

The "higher third" creation of the Imagination is a symbol for the interpenetration of the mind with matter or 'thought with thing/subject and object,' and hence, realizes the crucial Romantic

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[35] "The mind…can, by its own power, put together those ideas it has, and make new complex ones which it never received so united" (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,II,XII,p.159)

[36] Of the theory of David Hartley (1705-1757 in Hepworth,1970, p.219-248). Coleridge refutes Hartley's psychology in chapter VI of the *Biographia* (1817:1969) entitled "Hartley's System Not Tenable"(p.107).

[37]Locke introduces this idea as follows: "It is an established opinion amongst some men, that there are in the understanding certain innate principles; some primary notions, *koinai ennoiai*, characters, as it were stamped upon the mind of man…" (Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,II,I,p.82).

[38] Consider Wordsworth's (1815:1974) account of the distinction: "The law under which the processes of fancy are carried on is as capricious as the accidents of things, and the effects are surprising, playful, ludicrous, amusing, tender or pathetic, as the objects happen to be appositely produced and fortunately combined. Fancy depends upon the rapidity and profusion with which she scatters her thoughts and images; trusting that their number and the rapidity with which they are linked together will make amends for the want of individual value…Fancy is given to quicken or beguile the individual part of our nature, Imagination to incite and to support the eternal." (p.33-37).

'purpose' alluded in chapter one, namely, the psyche's triadic progression from dependency on nature, to autonomy in the form of an isolated self-consciousness, towards its birth into Imagination, or the reintegration of the self with nature. The augmented state of 'unself-consciousness' necessary for the reintegration with the external other is the quintessential concern of the high Romantics, despite its variegated expression by each major poet: Coleridge (1819:1956) claims that he is able to "unrealize…and then by a sort of transfusion and transmission of my consciousness to identify myself with the Object"(p.974-975). Similarly, Wordsworth (1798:1941) admits: "I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature"(p.196). A mode of thought which violates this is a mere "…false secondary power by which/In weakness we create distinctions, then/Deem that our puny boundaries are things/Which we perceive, and not which we have made"(*The Prelude*,1805,II,221-224). Shelley (1815:2002) refers to "that state called reverie" where a person may "feel as if their nature were dissolved into the surrounding universe, or if the universe were absorbed into their being. They are conscious of no distinction"(p.507). Byron (1812:2010), although the more ironical about Coleridgean metaphysics, nonetheless writes of his Childe Harold: "I live not in myself," but that the elements of nature "become/Of me, and of my soul, as I of them"(*Childe Harold*,III,122-125,p.199). Keats (1818:1975), finally, notes that the "type of poet of which I am a member…has no self…but is continually filling another Body…The sun, the moon, the sea"[39](p.157).

If the first distinction made by Coleridge in *The Biographia* is between fancy and Imagination, the second is between the primary and secondary Imagination. As will be shown, it is here that the theory progresses from the psycho-poetic to the theological. In connection with the above, Emerson (1837:1888) distils our entire subject when, in *The American Scholar*, he says to his audience: "And, in fine, the ancient precept 'know thyself' and the modern precept, 'study nature,' become, at last, one maxim"(p.321). Following an account of the secondary Imagination, I propose that the British Romantic poets sought the 'coalescence of subject and object,' not merely to capture an aesthetic sensibility of organicism in their work, but to

[39] To this we might add a 'nightingale' or a 'sparrow' given his letter to Benjamin Bailey: " - if a sparrow come before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel"(22 Nov, 1817:1975,p.38).

transcend their own consciousness. This takes us from psychology and aesthetics into mystical science.

2.2. Secondary Imagination

Coleridge (1795:1969) began a lecture on the slave trade with the following quote from Genesis: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." He continues to assert that

> To develop the powers of the Creator is our proper employment - and to imitate Creativeness by combination our most exalted and self-satisfying delight. Our Almighty Parent hath thus given to us Imagination that stimulates to the attainment of real excellence by the contemplation of splendid possibilities…Such and so noble are the ends for which this restless faculty was given us. (*Lectures 1795*, p.235-236)

From within this context, Coleridge (1817:1969) makes the infamous distinction: "The Primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception" (XIII,p.304). At this point, Coleridge is still in familiar territory in that he echoes what neuroscientist Gerald Edelman (2005) refers to as 'primary consciousness,' that is, the brain's ability to construct a unified scene wherein all the information it receives from the senses coheres into a complex whole. But Coleridge continues: "…and as the repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM." Here is the crossing of the threshold into the theological, and the point at which materialists close their Coleridge and open their Dawkins.[40] The repetition of an eternal act in a finite mind is an attempt to square the circle – an apparent contradiction by its conflation of categories, namely, the empirical and the transcendental.[41] To continue with the distinction:

> The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create…it is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are fixed and dead. (*Biographia*,XIII,p.221-222).

[40] Dawkins, of course, proposes an evolutionary theory of the Imagination. In short, the faculty evolved as it gave the human species an advantage over other animals in survival and reproduction. Although this is beyond our scope, see Dawkins' 'The Evolved Imagination' (1995) for an interesting account of the theory.

[41] In Chapter Five I show the profound significance that contemporary studies of consciousness and the 'mind-body' problem have for Coleridge's definition of the Imagination.

Simply put, the primary imagination is that faculty which represents and reduplicates into a coherent field, all the data which simultaneously bombards the five senses. The secondary, however, although not qualitatively distinct, is responsible for the superior, autonomous recreation of a visual or mental scene by assembling the various sensory data into something novel. It is a voluntary act – "coexisting with the conscious will," rather than a passive effect. A famous passage from *The Prelude* describes the action of the secondary Imagination:

> ...his mind,
> Even as an agent of the one great mind,
> Creates, creator and receiver both,
> Working but in alliance with the works
> Which it beholds… (*The Prelude*,1805,II,271-275)

Wordsworth's use of "alliance" denotes reciprocity between the mind and nature. Where the mind, according neo-classical psychology, was primarily a passive 'receiver' of stimuli, here it is a receiver and a creator, actively influencing the way things are perceived. Going a step beyond reciprocity, Wordsworth asserts elsewhere that "…the mind/Is lord and master, and that outward sense/Is but the obedient servant of her will."(*The Prelude*,1805,XI,271-273) and that it is emphatically "Not prostrate, overborne - as if the mind/Itself were nothing, a mean pensioner/On outward forms…" (*The Prelude*,1805,VI,666-668). Here, the mind is given absolute primacy in that subjective perception *is* reality. Further, the deliberateness of the act of secondary Imagination empowers the poet as an imitative artificer in miniature, of the works of the Creative Will on a macrocosmic scale. That to create is to resemble the Creator is an early idea traceable to Plato (380 B.C:1996) in the *Ion*. Later, Sidney (1579:1965) in *A Defence of Poesy* notes that "Among the Romans…a poet was called *vates*, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or Prophet" (p.98). We can now show that the (secondary) Imagination was as much a psycho-aesthetic faculty as a mystical one.

CHAPTER THREE: The Imagination as the 'Third Eye'

…in the presence of the spiritual eye
That aids or supersedes our grosser sight (Wordsworth,*Vernal Ode*,3-4 in Ketcham,1989,p.237).

…I rest not from my great task!
To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes (Blake, *Jerusalem,I,17*-18 in Erdman and Bloom,1982,p.147)

Supreme beyond the power of speech to express, Brahman may yet be apprehended by the Eye of pure illumination. Pure, absolute and eternal reality – such is Brahman, and thou art that. Meditate upon this truth within your consciousness. (Shankara in Huxley, 1946.p 6)

There is a strong sense in which the Romantic 'purpose' of birth into the sympathetic, secondary Imagination can be called a mystical one. To substantiate this, I begin by a brief account of what is meant by 'mysticism.' Then, I foreground the parallels between the Imagination and the mystical 'Third Eye.'

By 'mysticism,' we are referring to a singular idea which is sufficiently captured by the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy (1996): ''Belief in union with the divine[42] nature by means of ecstatic contemplation and in the power of spiritual access to domains of knowledge closed off to ordinary thought."(p.253). There are two parts to this definition. The first notes the goal of the mystic – union with the divine and access to divine knowledge – and the second points to the means by which this is to be achieved – a 'spiritual' mode of cognition - which we take to refer to a state of consciousness purportedly beyond that which is identifiable by material science. Our concern is not with how this is done, only that this, at least, is the purported unanimous goal of the mystic. In surveying the various mystical traditions, Aldous Huxley's (1946) observation in *The Perennial Philosophy* is compatible with the above: "The last end of man, the ultimate reason for human existence, is unitive knowledge of the divine ground…" (p.24). Commenting on Huxley's survey, Shear (1994) elaborates on four principles which constitute *The Perennial Philosophy*:

1) The phenomenal world is a manifestation of a transcendental [divine] ground.
2) Human beings are capable of attaining immediate knowledge of that ground.

[42] I use the terms 'divine,' 'transcendental,' 'super-sensuous' or 'extrasensory' interchangeably in referring to the mystical.

> 3) In addition to their phenomenal egos [that is, self-consciousness, the 'I'] human beings possess a transcendental [i.e. divine, the 'not I'] Self which is of the same nature with that transcendental ground.
> 4) This identification is life's chief purpose (p. 314).

This adds that the phenomenal world, namely, the world available to our experience as thinking and perceiving beings, is the material form of an immaterial realm of existence. This principle of the world as 'God's text' is alluded to by Coleridge: "so shalt thou see and hear/The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible/Of that eternal language, which thy God Utters" (*Frost at Midnight*,IV,58-62 in Halmi, Magnuson and Modiano,2004,p.121). Further, I should like to take note of two key words: 'Immediate' or 'im-mediate' knowledge (premise 2) refers to knowledge without mediation by language or symbol. Mediated or symbolic knowledge includes propositional knowledge, or the necessity of using language, mathematical symbols or diagrams to represent thought processes. Without such mediation, the communication of propositions would be impossible. On the other hand, 'im-mediate knowledge' suggests the acquisition of knowledge by way of faculties whose scope lies beyond epistemology, and which is not contingent on symbolic aid.[43] Second, 'identification' (premise 4) of the phenomenal ego with the transcendental Self implies the reconciliation or synthesis of these binary aspects of the self. Since the transcendental Self is considered to be of the same essence as the divine or Ultimate Objectivity, this denotes the merging of the fragmented ego with the One, or the 'coalescence of subject and object.' Further, it is to be noted that these four statements may, in principle, be read 'secularly' as claims about human consciousness as a biological phenomenon, and that one may enter into states of super-consciousness in the same way unconsciousness is entered into while dreaming. The necessity for theological faith in the existence of a transcendental Self and ground is superfluous, for there is, allegedly, an injunctive method ensuring the veridical sensory experience of this Ground (Johnson,1993:1939,Huxley,1946,Hines,1996). This is the sense in which we refer to 'mystical science,' in that there is a falsifiable, replicable methodology available for experimentation (Johnson,1993:1939,Huxley,1946,Hines,1996). Thus, if mysticism in all its forms agrees with these tenets, it further agrees that there is a means to this end, namely, the accessing of the transcendental ground via a distinctive faculty in the mind through a process of meditation.[44]

[43] That is, beyond our two epistemic faculties or ways of knowing noted by McGinn (1999) - perception and thought/introspection.
[44] Also referred to as 'contemplation.' (Hines, 1996). This is not to suggest that they agree on the precise and best method of contemplation.

This faculty has been called the 'Third Eye' (*Tisra Til)* by some sects. The Sufis refer to it as 'the black point' (*nuqta – i – saveida*) and the New Testament, 'the single eye.' (Johnson,1939:1993). It is defined as "a point behind and between the two eyebrows…the seat of the mind and the soul…the point at which the disciples of the saints begin their concentration, and from where they *go up*" (Johnson,1993:1939,p.267). It is explained that 'up' is not to be taken as 'towards the sky' but rather *into* a different ontological realm impenetrable by the five senses during waking consciousness. 'Up' is used to suggest that mode of augmented or super-consciousness needed to enter into such hidden dimensions. Of these dimensions, a student of mysticism said:

> The Masters tell us that beyond the confines of this terrestrial speck of dust lie innumerable worlds full of light and beauty. To explore those worlds at will and to possess them during this lifetime is only a portion of our heavenly birthright. But to most people that universe of finer worlds is locked and impenetrable…but a fabric of poetical fancy…The entire universe of starry worlds may be unlocked. Just how this is to be done constitutes the sublimest secret of the [mystical] wisdom. (Johnson,1939:1993.p.66).

This seems to echo Wordsworth (1802:2006) when he elaborates on the capability of the poet's mind, which possesses something most 'ordinary' people do not have access to. Yet this appears to contravene his dictum that a poet is "a man speaking to men." However, he continues: "a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility…greater knowledge of human nature…a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind"('Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*,p.269). Where "higher vision" is an artefact "to most people," a mere "fabric of poetical fancy," it is the poet's sincere reality. We are investigating the proposition that certain Romantic poets had as their artistic and philosophic goal, the apotheosis of human consciousness. Considering the introductory discussion of some of the crucial Romantic principles on metaphysics and consciousness, with the key concept of the Imagination in the arts as the panacea for dualism, is it plausible to propose that Romantic poets and thinkers endorsed this kind of mysticism? Further, does their poetry or prose reflect a desire for the 'identification' of the phenomenal ego with some transcendental aspect of the Self, and/or an awareness of a dimension of existence beyond both thought and sense?

To form an answer, we might consider Spinoza in *Tractatus Theologica-Politicus* (1670,in Engell,1981) who asserted: "As the prophets perceived the revelations of God by the aid of the

imagination, they could indisputably perceive much that is beyond the boundary of the intellect..."(p.116). This is an early claim for the Imagination as a transcendental organ. Later, Coleridge's (1817:1969) definition of the primary and secondary Imagination as "the repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM"(XIII,p.304) establishes the unequivocal correlation between the Imagination as psychological property and God's unchanging being. As noted, the distinction between the primary and secondary imagination is quantitative, that between fancy and Imagination is qualitative. Differing in both degree and kind, Coleridge places the Imagination in a different ontological category. Its place is not with fancy as an associating, aggregating caprice of cognition, but with the infinite and ineffable, without a hint or trace of neuroscience. McFarland (1985) comments:

> the added gradations [in the distinction between primary and secondary imagination] change what was originally a polar opposition into an ascending ladder. That ladder rises to Godhead itself, to "the infinite I Am." The thrust is inexorably *upward*, towards the most honorific conceptions the mind can entertain…it is this upward movement that typifies the Romantic concern with the Imagination (p.150).

In this sense, the Imagination appears to take on the properties of a mystical 'Third Eye' faculty – the very "seat of the soul" or "point at which the disciples of the saints… go *up*" (Johnson,1993:1939,p.267) - granting the individual potential access to the transcendental ground. Kant's (in McFarland,1985) summation of an essay on the Imagination states: "A pure imagination, which conditions all *a priori* knowledge is thus one of the fundamental faculties of the human soul." (p.158). Once again, we find a conflation of the psychological and transcendental. This hybridization is stressed by Lyon (1966) when he notes how fixated the Romantics were on the idea of an inner, 'super-sensuous' psychology. Coleridge (1812:1969), in the fifth essay of 'The First Landing Place' in *The Friend* refers to "the organ of the supersensuous"(p.157). This super-sensuous realm was important to them for the dominant, materialist or mechanistic approach, especially the associationism of Hartley, was an affront to their spiritual, philosophical and aesthetic values - a crude dehumanization of the mind's subtleties. The subject was thus fraught with allusions to 'inner' faculties, especially 'inner eyes,' which were valorised while the 'external senses' were deprecated. For example, one of Blake's major themes was the difference between seeing 'with the eye' and 'through the eye,' the latter operation requiring the employment of the 'inward Eye:' "With my inward Eye 'tis an old Man grey/With my outward, a Thistle across my way"(1802:1982,p.721). His "great task"

is to reveal "the Eternal Worlds" by 'Opening the Immortal Eyes'(*Jerusalem*,I,17-18 in Erdman and Bloom,1982,p.147). Coleridge, similarly, distinguishes between "the eye of the flesh" or "outward sight" and "the inner eye," the "deep seeing eye" and "the silent eye[45] [46]" (*Lectures*,1812:1969,p.144). This 'transcendental' faculty was to challenge what Coleridge(1803:1957) in Blakean fashion, called "the soul-blinding Worship of Mechanism," as it was to open "eyes filmy with drowsy empiricism" (p.507).

Wordsworth similarly intimates: "... the light of sense/Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us/The invisible world"(*The Prelude*,1805,VI,534-535) or "... with an eye made quiet by the power of Harmony, and the deep power of joy/We see into the life of things" (*Tintern Abbey*,48-50 in Gill,2004,p.63). He also refers to the "inward eye/Which is the bliss of solitude" *(I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud*,15-16,in Gill,2004,p.164). Evidently, Wordsworth links the exercising of this faculty with a temperament of well-being. Pottle (1950) captures the significance of these illustrations: "since Wordsworth was a mystic, subject to occasional mystic rapture, he felt that the deepest truth was not attained until the light of sense went out" (p.22). Further, in the 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface,' Wordsworth (1815:1974) clearly outlines the relationship we are trying to discern: "Poetry is most just to its own divine origin when it administers the comforts and breathes the spirit of religion." He notes the "affinity between religion and poetry…between religion – whose element is infinitude; and poetry – ethereal and transcendent, yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation." "The Imagination," he says,

> also shapes and *creates*; and how? By innumerable processes. And in none does it more delight than in consolidating numbers in unity…alternations proceeding from, and governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her infinite and almost divine power (p.64).

This definitive conferral of the properties of the soul onto the Imagination secures an inextricable nexus between the aesthetic, the psychological and the mystical. Coleridge (1818:1969), moreover, in 'On Poesy or Art,' defines art as the "the reconciler of nature and

[45] Earlier allusions are found in Plato. In Book VII of The Republic (527e) Socrates tells Glaucon that "in every man there is an eye of the soul which ... is more precious far than ten thousand bodily eyes, for by it alone is truth seen" (380 B.C:1992,p.200).

[46] Interestingly, Emerson (1860:1888) in 'Fate' says: "The day of days, the great day of the feast of life, is that in which the inward eye opens to the Unity in things…This beatitude dips from on high down on us and we see"(p.244).

man…the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human" (*Lectures 1808-1819*,p.502). In defining the purpose of mysticism, however, we might simply exchange the word 'nature' for 'super-nature' in Coleridge's definition. As cited above, mysticism's goal is the 'identification or union of the self with the non-self.' Given the above allusions to Romanticism's preoccupation with transcendental faculties, Romanticism traverses freely across these two definitions and employs the following terms interchangeably: "art/[consciousness] is the reconciler of the natural/[supernatural] and man…the union and reconciliation of that which is nature/[supernature] with that which is exclusively human." Romanticism and mysticism overlap, and we have reverted to Blake's (1744:1982) definition of the man who exercises the Imagination (cited in Chapter One): "God is Man and exists in us and we in him" (p.664).

It is in this sense that the 'goals' of Romanticism and mysticism may be said to be synonymous. As argued, both define a 'purpose' or 'ideal,' as well as a 'means' towards their respective ideals. The 'ideal' for Romanticism is the reintegration of the mind with nature – a oneness or 'monism' that mysticism similarly wants to know. For the poet, the vehicle towards this state of grace between the self and the other is the Imagination, and for the mystic, the 'Third Eye.' Given the shared properties between these two faculties, namely that both are redolent of the extra-sensory and the super-cognitive and, hence, occupy a different ontological category, it seems accurate to conclude that Romanticism and mysticism render the same 'problem' or 'challenge' of the mind's experience into different terms. To follow I consider some formal aspects of the poetry of those Romantic poets who share this goal, which I later illustrate in the analysis of *The Prelude* in Chapter Six.

3.1. The mimetic and meontic mode

a) In nature there is everything that is in the subject
x) And something above it
b) In the subject there is everything that is in nature
y) And something above it (Goethe in McFarland 1971.p.312)

Thomas McFarland (1971) distinguishes two broad species of art and poetry, the mimetic and the meontic mode. Within the former belongs art which, as Aristotle explained, seeks to imitate

nature. Hamlet's claim that the function of art "is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature"[47] aptly captures this. Terms such as 'realism,' 'naturalism' and 'verisimilitude' are its cognates. It is to imitate what 'is there,' available to the senses. It is the aesthetic version of the Cartesian law of 'clarity and distinctness' in philosophy and later, 'positivism' in science, and was promoted by Dr Johnson as a founding principle of neo-classical art.[48] Alternatively, the meontic mode is to imitate what is 'not there.' In a letter, Keats's (1819:1975) comparison of himself to Byron illustrates this: "You speak of Lord Byron and me – There is this great difference between us. He describes what he sees, I describe what I imagine"(p.314). Likewise, Blake (1810:1982) asserts: "Natural objects always did and now do weaken, deaden and obliterate Imagination in me"(p.665). Finally, Baudelaire (1859:2006) notes: "In recent times we have heard it said in a thousand different ways: "Copy nature, copy nature…I find it worthless and tedious to represent that which is, because nothing of that which is satisfies me" (p.298). Mimesis was thus devalued by Romanticism. A scrupulous fidelity to the senses is redolent of 'convention' or 'custom,' from whose lethargy Romanticism wants to 'rouse' us, as Coleridge (1817:1969,p.7) famously observed in chapter fourteen of the *Biographia*. Yet it follows from the arguments above that the Romantic purpose was not merely to liberate the mind from the oppression of the senses, but to move beyond them altogether, to get to 'what is not there.' Without initially invoking the presence of a transcendental Ground, 'what is not there' must include psychic content such as dreams, memories and emotions. Of course, the line between the mimetic and meontic becomes blurred when the artist projects, as he inevitably does, his consciousness onto the natural object, rendering it non-static, organic and impressionistic – formal characteristics that, as discussed in chapter 1.1, were crucial to Romantic poetry.

The meontic mode thus differs from the mimetic in this first, less significant sense, namely, that it empties out the contents of consciousness onto the world and imbues nature with an ethereal visage. Yet this need not imply that what the meontic mode imitates is the transcendental Self and 'objects' of the 'transcendental Ground,' for we must not conflate phenomena such as dreams, memories and the fancy – effects of the phenomenal ego/self -

[47] *Hamlet*,III,II,17-19, in Edwards 2003, p.165.
[48] He supported this principle in his 'Preface to Shakespeare' thus: Shakespeare is above all writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life (in Clingham,1997,p.147).

with the mystical experiences of the transcendental Self. Mystics are adamant on insisting that transcendental experiences are not the subjective stuff of dreams or hallucinations (Huxley,1946;Hines,1996). We have established this 'Ground' as accessible by super-consciousness or an 'upward tendency' – the psyche in its empyrean heights. Dreams, memories and, arguably, visions of fancy, are of waking consciousness and the un-conscious depths of the mind. Mimesis is thus necessary but not sufficient for the Romantic aesthetic. However, neither is the meontic mode when taken as 'merely' the imitation of dreams and memories, which are properties of the 'phenomenal self,' which we distinguished from the 'transcendental self.' If mimesis is the product of fancy, employed to "quicken or beguile the individual part of our nature," rather than Imagination, which is "to incite and to support the eternal" (Wordsworth,1815:1974,p.33-37), it is via the meontic mode, as 'imitation' of the transcendental Self and Ground, that the poet can unleash

> a power of enormous ken,
> To see as a god sees and take the *depth*
> *Of things* as nimbly as the outward eye
> Can size and shape pervade (Keats, *Fall of Hyperion*, I,302-306,in Barnard,2003, p.443)

This power of vision suggests something beyond the 'pathetic fallacy' – the projection of temperament onto nature. It points to something more objectively present, in nature, but which is veiled from the outward eye whose capacity is delimited to the lesser but nimble grasp of 'size and shape' in a three dimensional reality. In understanding what Keats might mean by 'the depth of things,' G. Wilson Knight's (1941) comments on Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* are illuminating:

> ….though we must normally think in temporal terms and imagine immortality as a state after death… poetry, in moments of high optic vision…expresses a new and more concrete perception of life here and now, unveiling a new dimension of existence. Thus immortality becomes, not a prolongation of the time sequence, but rather, the whole sequence from birth to death lifted up vertically to generate a super temporal area, or solidity….a higher state of consciousness on the [horizontal] birth-death time stream. This shadow…is cast by a higher, more dimensional reality, such as I have deduced from other poets to be the pictured quality of immortality (p.93)

The Romantic-meontic poet glimpses an extra dimensionality by a faculty of vision which casts a shadow beneath that which is 'flat.' This captures a roundedness and fullness, un-apprehensible to the fancy's 'common sight.' A higher state of consciousness, (which Knight

calls a state of 'immortality') reveals that death is not to be conceived of 'horizontally,' as something to be experienced in a given amount of time. It is here and now, or more aptly, the '*herenow*' of space-time rather than the Newtonian, here *and* now of space and time. Shelley (1821:2006) captures this in the *Defence* when he observes: "A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not"(p.840). The meontic is thus to be conceived vertically, as a hidden dimension of death-in-life, which one may enter into from within consciousness, augmented beyond its spatiotemporal confines.[49] This, I will show, is what meontic poetry continually gestures towards, this sense of roundedness and dimension. It adds verticality to horizontally flat space and linear temporal succession. It adds a psychodynamic depth to the mind, imbuing it with abysmal, unconscious repositories, but simultaneously, mystical *height* - the pinnacles and peaks of an amplified consciousness, which we might call 'superconsciousness.' In short, it erects what Knight (1949) calls a Coleridgean 'starlit dome'[50] upon the surface of the world given to us in its empirically reductive form by the senses, by throwing a 'fourth dimensional,' hyperouranic 'shadow' onto the comparably flat natural plane.

I am suggesting that what distinguishes the meontic from the mimetic mode is that in addition to portraying projected psychic contents (such as dreams, memories and fantasies) it gestures towards a rendition of the transcendental Ground itself. The first way it achieves this is, as noted, by the elucidation of an added dimensionality. There is, however, a second property of the transcendental Ground which this kind of verse captures. Principle 4 of *The Perennial Philosophy* asserts that 'identification of the phenomenal ego with the transcendental Self' is life's chief purpose. Yet principle 3 claims that this Self is *of the same essence* as the transcendental ground (Shear,1994). It follows that identification with the Self is co-incidental with 'entering' into the transcendental Ground. In other words, to transcend the phenomenal ego by reaching a state of super-consciousness is to penetrate that Ground. This amounts to the coalescence of the subject (ego) with the Ultimate Object/Godhead (the Ground and transcendental Self). The same way in which the purpose of the Romantic Imagination is, as

[49] Mystics, similarly, describe the act of meditation or the apotheosis of consciousness as momentarily 'dying while living,' for in these augmented states, one 'glimpses' the higher realms within which one will be immersed upon death. (Johnson, 1939:1993).

[50] The Romantic psyche, I illustrate by analysis of *The Prelude* in Chapter Six, is "a miracle of rare device/A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice." (Coleridge,*Kubla Khan*,III,35-36 in Bloom,2004,p.378)

discussed, to usurp all dualisms by way of 'coalescence of subject and object,' this unification is the crucial mystical purpose.

'Impressionism' is the aesthetic which most aptly suggests such a synthesis. By this we are referring to a depiction of nature as organic, imbued with motion and viscosity, whereby natural phenomena melt into one another. The poet or artist captures the ethereal light, sound and mist given off by the empirical world, and there is a synesthesic interpenetration of the poet's senses. The nature of mimesis is terrestrial and earthly, heavy and laden with matter. The 'other' nature of the meontic is limpid, diaphanous, and celestial. Pater's (1873:1961) observations suggest that not even the loosest mimesis can capture the kinesis of the mind, for the billowing, rushing torrents of nature and its elements are comparably stagnant to the ephemeral stream of super-consciousness, instantaneous glimpses of which, the meontic mode aims to photograph: "At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us a sharp and importunate reality.…"(p.221). This is the state of the mind under the oppressive weight of empirical nature. It is the condition of the eye, in Coleridge's (1803:1957) inimitable phrase, "filmy with drowsy empiricism"(p.766), that is, before

> reflection begins to play upon those objects [and] they are dissipated under its influence; [then] the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic, each object is loosed into a group of impressions- colour, odour, texture – in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them….(Pater,1873:1961,p.221).

Pater's 'flickering, inconstant impressions' echo Coleridge (1817:1969) when he alludes poetically to "accidents of light or shade, [by] moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape" (*Biographia*,XIV,p.5) as an analogy for the effects of the Imagination. The lunar or solar effects of light and shade on an object represent, for Coleridge, the distinctions of the Romantic aesthetic over the neo-classic. McFarland (1971), further, says of this type of verse that it is

> ...in its nature an iridescence. Its various colorations pulsate and shade into one another, its kinetic reaching toward the hyperouranic realm, because of the indefiniteness of that realm, becomes a shimmering…we may think of the shimmering of great meontic poetry as the breaking of linear bounds by the tidal attraction of the hyperouranic realm…the place beyond the heavens (p.415-416).

In a variation of Knight's (1941) notion of an extra-imposed, 'vertical' dimension of experience captured by meontic poetry, McFarland (1971) speaks of "the breaking of linear bounds" by the attraction of the higher realms. Thus, not only are the lethargic senses 'roused,' but they 'rise.' "The thrust" as McFarland (1985) notes, "is inexorably upwards"(p.150), to the 'infinite I Am.' The meontic mode seeks, as Coleridge (in Engell,1981) notes, to "elaborate essence into existence"(p.110) by puncturing holes in being to allow for Being to slip through. Stated differently by the avowed agnostic Shelley (1821:2006) in the *Defence,* "It is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own"(p.847). These are some formal or aesthetic characteristics of the poetry which portrays the Romantic ideal of reciprocal communion between mind and nature. When Goethe (in McFarland,1971) insisted elliptically that "in nature there is everything in the subject…and something above it" and "in the subject there is everything that is in nature…and something above it"(p.312), he was drawing on the this reciprocity or coalescence between the subjective and the objective – a monistic ideal wherein each inheres in each. Put differently, we might refer to the 'landscape' of the psyche, that is, what is 'objective' in the subjective, or what (paradoxically) exists in the mind but independently of it. Reciprocally, we refer to the 'psyche' of the landscape, namely, what is 'subjective' in the objective, or what exists in the external world but is dependent on the mind for its existence. By its consecration of a faculty which can perform the seemingly paradoxical 'eternal act in a finite mind,' Romanticism is fixated on the notion of interdependence between subjective and objective which, so it claims, its neo-classic predecessors neglected. In Chapter Six, the characteristics of this 'meontic' style will be discerned by analysis of passages from *The Prelude.*

3.2. Language as Binding

To say more than human things with human voice,
That cannot be; to say human things with more
Than human voice, that, also cannot be;
To speak humanly from the height or from the depth
Of human things, that is acutest speech. (Wallace Stevens, *Chocorua to its Neighbor, XIX,* 1955,p.300)

[A poet] is a man speaking to men. . (Wordsworth, 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads,* 1802:2006,p.269)

.

The meontic, being the mode which brushes the 'place beyond the heavens,' is often purposefully obscure in its attempts to harness the transcendental within the confines of language. Mystics are confronted with the same inconvenience in their efforts to communicate the experience of 'super-consciousness' and the 'transcendental Ground,' the nature of which is 'ineffable.' Hence the profusion of allegory, paradox, irony and arcane symbolism that constitutes mystical rhetoric. Huxley (1946) characterises this problem:

> …the divine Ground of existence is…out of time, and different, not merely in degree, but in kind from the worlds to which traditional language and the languages of mathematics are adequate. Hence, in all expositions of the perennial philosophy, the frequency of paradox, verbal extravagance…seeming blasphemy. Nobody has yet invented a Spiritual Calculus, in terms of which we may talk coherently about the divine Ground…for present, therefore, we must be patient with the linguistic eccentricities of those who are compelled to describe one order of experience in terms of a symbol system, whose relevance is to the facts of a different order (p.50).

This highlights the primary issue of mystical discourse: supposing there is a 'transcendental Ground,' how to symbolize it when its nature evades the explanatory reach of our epistemological faculties?

Connectedly, of the poetic image, De Man (1968) says:

> The existence of the poetic image is itself a sign of divine absence, and the conscious use of poetic imagery an admission of this absence…poetic language seems to originate in the desire to draw closer and closer to the ontological status of the object, and its growth and development are determined by this inclination…this movement is essentially paradoxical and condemned in advance to failure. There can be flowers that 'are' and poetic words that 'originate,' but no poetic words that 'originate' as if they 'were.' (p.69-70)

Metaphysically, there is a hierarchy between words and things - the thing occupies an ontological primacy above the word. Meontic poetry, as the refinement of language and consciousness, 'gets closer' to that primacy than other forms of discourse. It is language figured, embodied and made malleable so that it may be wrought, not into what the primary ontological ground is, but what it is *like*, with reference to the particulars of nature commingled and in a state of fluid coalescence – a "natural supernaturalism."[51] Yet it will always,

[51] The term was first used by Carlyle (1833:1897) in *Sartor Resartus*,Book III, Chapter, 8,p.202 and then by M.H Abrams (1971) in describing the genre of Wordsworth's poetry.

nonetheless, be a copy and secondary epiphenomenon. Like a literary asymptote, the poetic symbol will tend infinitely towards but never 'become' the thing. If we read De Man's statement mystically, he echoes Huxley above on the insufficiency of the language/consciousness system to circumscribe that meta-system of extra-linguistic and super-conscious experience.

Eagleton (1977) similarly draws on this Derridean idea of the insufficient and regressive nature of signs in getting to the 'thing' in its elemental state and plenitude: **"**To speak is to lack, and it's in this lack that the movement of desire is set up, the movement whereby I move restlessly from sign to sign without ever being able to close my fist over some primordial plenitude of sense..."(p.22). Shelley (1821:2006), earlier on in *The Defence*, acknowledged Sidney's(1579:1965) truism that "the poet, he nothing affirms" but "never lieth"(p.123) either, by his claim that "We know nothing. We have no evidence [of the existence of a higher world]"… and that "vain is it to think that words can penetrate the innermost mystery of our being"(1815:2002,p.506) for "the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is but a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet"(1821:2006,p.846). Thus, the poet only ever has, in Keats's phrase, "Guesses at Heaven" (*The Fall of Hyperion*,I,4,in Barnard,2003,p.435). Finally, Carlyle's (1836:2006) fitful declamation is testimony to the inadequacy of language, and to Huxley's (1946) request for "patience" with the "linguistic eccentricities" of those who attempt to appropriate transcendental experience in words:

> Nothing but innuendos, figurative crotchets, a typical Shadow, fitfully wavering, prophetico-satiric – no clear logical Picture. "How paint to the sensual eye," [Teufelsdroch] asks "what in the Holy of Holies passes in man's soul?" In what words, known to these profane times, speak even afar off of the unspeakable? (p.1019)

Despite the awareness of the insufficiency of language, we might say that one of the 'achievements' of Romantic poetry was to put into language, with greater acuity, experiences which would appear to transcend signification. In this regard, Romantic thinkers and poets devote much theorizing to the notion of the 'symbol.' The symbol, I illustrate, fulfills the important need of approaching a sign system capable of appropriating the ineffable in language. Connectedly, aspects of the theorizing on the symbol explicitly portray the Romantic interest with transcendental experiences. I discuss these aspects to further substantiate the

argument that one of their 'goals' was the apotheosis of consciousness, and to prevent the embers of Carlyle's exasperation from being uncontrollably fanned.

3.3. Symbol

…he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect Whole,
Must see it in its Minute Particulars (Blake, *Jerusalem*,'To the Christians,' Plate 91,20-21 in Erdman and Bloom,p.251)

Didst thou ever descry a glorious eternity in a winged moment of time? Didst thou ever see a bright infinite in the narrow point of an object? Then thou knowest what spirit means – the spire-top, whither all things ascend harmoniously, where they meet and sit contented in an unfathomed Depth of Life."(Peter Sterry in Huxley, 1946, p. 187)

The Imagination, as a divine organ and receptacle for the harbouring of transcendental knowledge, has its most sublime product in the construction of the Romantic symbol. As discussed, Wellek (1949) noted that "symbol and myth for poetic style" is a core criterion of Romantic poetry. Further, he observed that "all the great Romantic poets are mythopoeic, are symbolists" (p.15). Coleridge explains that the 'Symbolical' is to be understood, not unlike synecdoche, as a part that stands in for a whole. The whole, however, being inaccessible to consciousness, is an absence, the part, a presence of the absence. Hence we arrive at a conception of the symbolic employed by the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1952): creativity – the symbolic process – is healing for it allows the subject to secure an internal presence of the lost, loved object in its absence. Thus, every act of creation is an act of re-creation. The Coleridgean resonance of this theory is clear given the definition of the Imagination as that faculty which produces, in the human mind, a secondary repetition of the original act of creation. Symbolical Romantic poetry thus becomes an echo of the original 'Word' or 'Logos,' and therefore a direct link between the extricated subject and the desired, absent Object. Using this logic of the symbol as the particularized manifestation of a greater, inaccessible entity, what was the nature of this 'grand whole' for the Romantics?

The Romantics were obsessed with the notion of infinity, with "…something ever more about to be."(*The Prelude*,1805,VI,542) and believed that great art is that which conveys eternity within the confines of nature and languages 'minute particulars.' "A chief characteristic of Romanticism," says Baudelaire (1821-1867:2006) is "aspiration towards the infinite." (p.87)

Moreover, “infinitude” is “Our destiny, our nature, and our home…” as Wordsworth claims (*The Prelude*,1805,VI,538-539), and the connection between infinity and poetry is the keynote of Shelley’s (1821:2006) *Defence*. Goethe (in McFarland 1971) furthermore, wrote at length about the function of the symbol as a spatio-temporal particular expressing an absent, impenetrable entity: “That is the true symbolism where the particular represents the more universal, not as dream and shadow, but as living and momentary revelation of the *Unerforschlichen* [impenetrable] ”(p.332). Continuing with this idea, he defines the symbol as:

> …above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible, and while it enunciates the Whole, abides itself as a living part of that Unity, of which it is the representative (p.332).

Goethe’s observations on the function of the symbol as “the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal” are congruent with Carlyle’s (1833:1897) view that “In the symbol…there is…some embodiment of the infinite in the finite”(p.175), as well as More’s (1913) definition of Romanticism: “The illusion of beholding the infinite *within* the stream of nature itself, instead of apart from that stream…”(p.xiii). Numerous thinkers utter variations on this same theme, which might be said to engender the essential logic of Romanticism. This ‘logic’ was parodied by T.E. Hulme (1909:1994) when he sardonically defined Romanticism as “spilt religion….like pouring a pot of treacle over the dinner table”(p. 62). Hulme believed Romanticism to irresponsibly transgress across exclusive, categorically distinct concepts:

> You don’t believe in a God, so you begin to believe that man is a god. You don’t believe in Heaven, you begin to believe in heaven on earth. In other words, you get romanticism. The concepts that are right and proper in their own sphere are spread over, and so falsify and blur the clear outlines of human experience (p. 62).

Schelling’s observation (in McFarland,1971) that the beautiful is the infinite finitely represented and, moreover, Coleridge’s ‘repetition of an eternal act in a finite mind’ are characteristic of the categorical transgressions that bothered Hulme. Despite plausible objections to inconsistencies in logic by attempts to ‘square the circle,’ this notion of the transcendental inhering ‘in’ the material was axiomatic.

Above all, the symbol perpetuated a sense of unity or identity between extricated parts and grand wholes or subject and object. In summation of this theme, Carlyle (1833:1897) notes that

"…the Universe is one vast Symbol of God" and that "a Symbol…is ever some dimmer or clearer revelation of the Godlike" (III,III,p.175). What is crucial for our purposes is that there was, in view of these citations, a yearning to apprehend something irreducibly vast. The temporal implies schism, rupture and 'littleness,' as Coleridge (1797:1956), in a letter to John Thelwall, intones mystically: "I can contemplate nothing but parts, and parts are all *little* – my mind feels as if it ached to behold something great – something one and indivisible…" (p.209). It is a self-critical statement of incapacity and restless desire, and speaks to Eagleton's (1977) claim above that language can never grasp or "close its fist"(p.22) over something absolute.

The yearning for the transcendental, at times bordering on desperation as Coleridge's exasperated admission evokes, is unequivocal. The preceding sections have substantiated this view with reference to the Imagination as a transcendental faculty, a desire to transcend the limits of language, and the concept of the symbol as a cognate of this aim. Given these premises, to follow is a theory of Romantic poetry which accounts for these preoccupations and tendencies, namely, a view of Romantic poetry as 'displaced mystical experience.'

3.4. Apotheosis: Romantic Poetry as 'Displaced Mystical Experience' or as the Sublimation/Rarefaction of the Super-Conscious.

...the lyric poets are not in their senses when thy make these lovely lyric poems. No, when once they launch into harmony and rhythm, they are seized with the Bacchic transport – as the bacchants draw milk and honey from the rivers, but not when in their senses. For the poets tell us…that the melodies they bring us are gathered from the rills that run with honey, out of glens and gardens of the Muses…And what they say is true, for a poet is a light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him (Plato, *Ion*.. 534 A-B in Murray,1996,p.115-116)

And all should cry Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair
Weave a circle round him thrice
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of paradise. (Coleridge, *Kubla Kahn*, 49-54 in Bloom,2004,p.379)

The following section brings this dissertation to a statement of a theory of Romantic poetry and thus to its core thesis, which is as follows: The Romantic poets sympathetic with the Coleridgean view of the Imagination sought access to the transcendental Ground by merging the phenomenal ego with the transcendental Self and, in turn, aimed to experience a state of

consciousness wherein the bifurcation between all dualisms is bridged. Their prime vehicle for this apotheosis of consciousness was the Imagination, and their documentation of these experiences is Romantic poetry itself, with its most exalted component being the constructed symbol. This view assigns Romantic art with a purpose. It is not didactic, nor is it 'art for art's sake,' but rather, the means for the philosopher or poet to gain experiential knowledge of his theories. It allows the Romantic to take all his esoteric axioms on the Imagination as "the resolving and unifying force of all antitheses and contradictions" and the reconciler and identifier of

> man with nature, the subjective with the objective, the internal mind with the external world, time with eternity, matter with spirit, finite and infinite, the conscious with the unconscious and self-consciousness with the absence of self-consciousness… the static to the dynamic, passive to active, ideal to real, and universal to particular, (Engell,1981,p.8)

and to 'test them on his pulses,' as Keats noted in a letter.[52] It takes Romantic poetry to be a form of mania (as implied by Coleridge in the lines from *Kubla Kahn* quoted at the start of this section) wherein the poet is allowed an instantaneous 'glimpse' of the transcendental Ground, a momentary "apprehension of truth and beauty," or a transient "participation in infinitude and oneness," as Shelley (1821:2006,p.847) exhorts in the *Defence*. Poetry "arrests" the "vanishing apparitions" and "evanescent visitations" of the Godhead:

> …'Twas a moment's pause:
> All that took place within me came and went
> As in a moment, and I only now
> Remember that it was a thing divine. (*The Prelude*,VIII,707-710)

We are suggesting, following from the distinction between fancy and Imagination, that the latter, belonging to a different ontological category to the former, is for the Romantics a faculty which serves as gateway to the transcendental Ground. Their meontic visions, as Huxley (1946) suggests, cannot all be ineffectual, golden constructs of the fancy:

> The poet or the painter's vision of the divine in nature, or the worshiper's awareness of a holy presence in the sacrament, symbol or image – these are not entirely subjective…what the poet and the painter perceive is actually there, waiting to be apprehended by anyone who has the right kind of faculties (p.59).

[52] "Nothing becomes real till it is experienced…axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proven upon our pulses" (Keats, 1818:1975, p. 93).

Concerning the 'right kind of faculties,' this endowment is a gift that Wordsworth (1802:2006) attributes exclusively to the poet of the highest order (and thus to the mystic) which eludes 'all the rest of us,' for a poet possesses "a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind" ('Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*,p.269). Further, Huxley's claim is fraught with irony since the species of poetry most divorced from realism, namely, what we have defined as 'meontic poetry,' is supposed to contain a higher degree of objectivity – albeit 'hidden' from unrefined faculties - than its mimetic counterpart. Wordsworth, moreover, implied that mimesis in its most oppressive form is "vulgar sense" which "substitute[s] a universe of death,/The *falsest* of all worlds, in place of that/Which is divine and true…"(*The Prelude*,1805,XIII,140-143,italics added).

This theory of Romantic poetry is greatly illuminated by drawing on psychoanalysis. Freud hypothesized that art is sublimated unconscious content in the form of wishes which were repressed as a consequence of their being culturally unacceptable. The basic psychoanalytic principle for the relationship between the unconscious and creativity is that the impulse for creative thought is promoted by the artist's need to do something with repressed material on a symbolic level, that is, through sublimation (Kris, 1952). Freud (1908:1985) explains that the sexual and aggressive instincts may be diverted away from their primary aims and objects towards more socially acceptable endeavours. The primal, sexual and aggressive psychic energy is discharged towards a pursuit that has no explicit connection to sexuality or aggression but may be assumed to derive their motivation from these instincts. The key, culturally respectable pursuits towards which these drives are channelled are the arts, academia and religion (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973). Thus, a work of art is, for Freud, fundamentally, a product of the id's primal, unconscious instincts, channelled and refined into a culturally revered medium. The transformation of the fluid, unbound, sexual and aggressive energy of the 'primary processes' into contents and products under the direction of the 'secondary process' results in a created product that is acceptable to allow its integration into society.[53] Creative production depends on the artist's capacity to transform primary process content, with the help

[53] Primary process thinking is a mode of thought which is non-discursive, disobedient of grammatical and logical laws, and negligent of spatio-temporal categorization. This is the kind of thought employed in the dream (consider, for example, that in the dream one may have a conversation with 'time' and be two people at once). Secondary process thinking, on the other hand, is discursive, grammatical and logical. This is the kind of thought employed by waking consciousness in discourse, mathematics etc.

of secondary process ideation, into symbolic forms that achieve the status of art. Sublimation therefore implies rarefaction, or the distillation and refinement of primal psychic energy into an organized essence.

Using this, in the same way in which psychoanalysis claims that art is sublimated unconscious material, it is proposed that the kind of Romantic poetry presently expounded on is sublimated *super*-conscious material. The view of the psyche that has been proposed is of one which not only has psychoanalytic depth, but *transcendental height.* Romantic poetry in the meontic mode is thus a tempering, by secondary process thinking, of mystical vision. It is the circumscription, by the discursive laws, of apotheosized consciousness and of the extra-linguistic, or that which is intuited *im*-mediately, without the interpretative mediation provided by language. This is similar to the way in which we apprehend our own consciousness – if you think you are in pain, you are - whereby any symbolic aid becomes redundant[54] We recall Shelley in the *Defence* on this point: "the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is but a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet"(1821:2006,p.846). Thus, if the phenomenal ego produces poetry, the transcendental Self achieves the 'poetry of poetry,' but the ineffability and psychic privacy of this meta-poetry cannot be communicated publicly without condescending to certain rigors of convention.[55] Emphatically, it is not suggested that all poetry is 'displaced mystical experience.' There can be and is a secular poetics. We are only applying this theory to a very distinctive school that grounds itself in the above elucidated theories of the Imagination.

To elaborate further by analogy between the dream and the poem: Freudian dream theory (1908:1985) suggests that what the dream work achieves, on an unconscious, involuntary level, is what the poet achieves by tropes and figures, on a conscious and more voluntary level. Some

[54] Philosphers of mind (Searle,1997; and McGinn,1999,2004) call these experiences *qualia*, which refer to the qualities of conscious experience, or 'what it is like to be' in a certain state, for example 'what it is like' to see red, feel happy etc. Symbols are used as we do not have access to another person's consciousness, and are employed to assist conveying one's *qualia* to another person.

[55] A passage from Derrida captures this idea: "This recourse to logos, from fear of being blinded by any direct intuition of the father, of good…of origin of being in itself, of the form of forms, this recourse to logos as to *that which protects us from the sun*. Socrates: I thought that as I had failed in the contemplation of true existence, I ought to be careful that I did not loose the eye of my soul as people may injure their bodily eye by observing…the sun during an eclipse, unless they take the precaution of only looking at the image reflected in the water or some analogous medium." (Derrida, *Dissemination*, 1981,p. 83-4).

theorists such as O'States (1978) have gone as far as to draw a one to one correlation between each element of the dream work - condensation, displacement, representation and secondary revision – with each of the four master tropes – metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, irony – by the abstraction of identical cognitive operations that occur (unconsciously) in the dream work and (more consciously) in the tropes. Therefore, the dream work is an unconscious form of rhetoric, and rhetorical devices are a conscious form of dream work, or: the dream is an involuntary poetry,[56] and by corollary, poetry is a voluntary kind of dreaming. Hartman (1987) gestured towards this reciprocal premise when he observed that "The poet, a famous definition holds, dreams with his eyes open…." (p.191). Of interest are the implications of this theory for the notion of Romantic poetry I have been proposing: my views on Romantic-meontic poetry situate it as something like a *super*-conscious form of dream work, 'sublimating' or 'rarefying' the experiences of an augmented consciousness.

So we arrive at the idea that Wordsworth is sublimated, 'gentrified' Milton, and Romantic poetry, more broadly, is sublimated 'infinitude' (or what the Cabbalists call the *Ein Sof* – the 'without end' (Scholem,1974)) whereby Kant's 'noumenon,' Heidegger's 'Being' and 'Presence,' and Plato's 'Forms' are always 'condescended' or 'accommodated' into 'phenomenon,' 'being,' the 'present' and the 'particular.' In *The Biographia* (XIV) Coleridge cites a poem by Sir John Davies about the effect of the soul on the body. Coleridge suggests, however, that the description may plausibly be applied to the Imagination instead. The poem addresses the 'sublimating' action of the Imagination we have alluded to:

> …she turns bodies to spirit
> by sublimation strange…
> As we our food into our nature change.
>
> From their gross matter she abstracts their forms,
> And draws a kind of quintessence from things,
> Which to her proper nature she transforms,
> To her them light on her celestial wings
>
> Thus does she when from individual states
> She doth abstract the universal kinds,
> Which then re-clothed in diverse names and fates,
> Steal access through our senses to our minds.

[56] In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin cites Jean Paul Richter as claiming that "The dream is an involuntary kind of poetry" (1852 in Darwin, 1871:1930, p. 82).

(Sir John Davies,*On the Soul of Man* cited by Coleridge,1817:1969,XIV,p.17)

In short, it is the distillation (should we say 'discursive pasteurization?') of 'the milk of paradise.' Hartman (1964) claims that 'Milton and nature' were the two powers that fought for Wordsworth's soul. If 'Milton' is the anomalous and the visionary, then "[Wordsworth's] genius as a poet arises from the first" (p.218). Yet from the second, if we take 'nature' as the familiar and the law-like, he becomes an inmate of the world, "a man speaking to men." If Wordsworth's task is to 'domesticate nature,' to impose a human form on its 'prophetic blasts' and inchoate 'primal warblings,' such an imposition, understood as the refinement of savage noise into the "still, sad music of humanity" (*Tintern Abbey*,91 in Bloom,2004,p.328) may now be read as rarefaction by an augmented secondary process thinking. The consequence is

> Not chaos, not
> The darkest pit of the profoundest hell
> Nor aught of [blinder] vacancy scooped out
> By help of dreams can breed such fear and awe
> As fall upon us often when we look
> Into our Minds, into the Mind of man. (Preface to *The Excursion*,35-40 in Owen and Syser,1974,p.7)

Conclusion of Chapter 3: Nature, self, Imagination: Hartman's Triad

We began by citing a meta-poetic narrative that critics such as Hartman (1962), Bloom (1971b) and Abrams (1971) have abstracted from each of the high Romantic works. Hartman (1962) described this as the re-appropriation of the biblical myth of 'Eden, fall and redemption' into the psychological pattern of 'integration of the mind with nature,' 'isolation' and 're-integration' (or, 'nature, self-consciousness, Imagination'). The theory of the Imagination espoused places it as the panacea for the rupture between 'self and other.' The Romantic 'purpose' of the coalescence of this subject/object dualism was placed in propinquity with the mystical goal of 'identification' of the phenomenal ego with the transcendental Self (or the attainment of super-consciousness) as a means towards experiential knowledge of the transcendental Ground. It was thus illustrated that the Imagination and its most sublime product – the meontic mode and the Symbol - are pregnant with the impulse to venture

'upwards' towards this Ground. Having interpreted Romantic verse to be a kind of sublimated super-consciousness or 'displaced mystical experience,' both mysticism and Romanticism have as their topos the story and movement of consciousness described by Hegel (1770-1831:1977):

> On the one hand [consciousness] alienates itself, and in this alienation sets itself off as object…On the other hand there is…this other moment in which it has equally transcended this alienation and objectification, and taken it back into itself, and is at home with itself in its other-ness. (p.21)

For consciousness to be "at home with itself in its other-ness" lucidly exemplifies the state of coalescence between the self and the Self, or subject and object. Similarly, Bloom (1971a) posits that the "poet-hero" is not a

> seeker after nature but after his own mature powers, and so the Romantic poet turned away, not from society to nature, but from nature to what was more integral than nature, within himself. The widened consciousness of the poet did not [necessarily] give him intimations of a former union with the Divine, but rather of his former self-less self. (p.26).

It has been the precise purpose to render both claims contextually ambiguous, in that we should not be able to place either definitively within a phenomenological, Romantic or mystical paradigm. "Intimations of a former self-*less* self" or the progression into Sympathetic Imagination is Hegel's story of consciousness, which is similarly, the mystic's story of union or reunion. The vicissitudes of consciousness and its own transcendence is the core concern, a co-ordinate in whose ocean - 'the overcoming of dualism' - is reached by Romanticism and mysticism from different seas. The following chapter investigates the phenomenon of 'Romantic melancholy' in suggesting that the former is the more perilous channel.

CHAPTER FOUR: Romantic Melancholy: 'Post Lapsarian Nostalgia'

We have fallen out with nature and what was once one…To end that eternal conflict between our self and the world, to restore the peace that passeth all understanding, to unite ourselves with nature so as to form one endless whole, that is the goal of all our striving, *although one that is achievable only in infinite approximation*. (Holderlin,1795:1961, 'Preface' to *Hyperion*,p.25).

It is at once by and through poetry, by and through music, that the soul glimpses the splendours situated behind the tomb; and when an exquisite poem brings tears to the rim of the eyes, the tears are not proof of an excess of pleasure, they are rather the witness of an irritated melancholy, of a postulation of nerves, of a nature exiled in the imperfect that would like to take possession immediately, on this very earth, of a paradise revealed. (Baudelaire,1859:2006,p.204-205).

[The Romantic poet] has put himself in the position of believing that the poet does affirm something, a higher world, but there is no way to prove that it exists or what it is like (Engell,1981,p.263).

For all this, the Romantics often 'ended in despondency and madness,'[57] as Wordsworth lamented in *Resolution and Independence.* Such is the trenchant irony of Romanticism: while the promise of the transcendental capacities of the Imagination, as well as the 'bliss' it inspires through encounters with nature are assured, the notion of 'Romantic melancholy' is a commonplace. How can one account for the current of dejection and nostalgia that courses through Romantic poetry, particularly the pervasive moments of 'crisis' in works such as *The Prelude* and *The Immortality Ode* where Wordsworth casts doubt on the Imagination's powers? Why, despite the plethora of emotions we encounter in Romanticism, is it inevitably *sad*? Why, as Babbit (1919) initially asked, if superlative bliss is elusive, "must the Romantic be superlative in woe?"(p.265)

It has been argued that the Romantic purpose is primarily a mystical one, in that both Romantic poets and mystics sought transcendental experiences. The similarities between the Romantic Imagination and the mystical 'Third Eye' faculty as vehicles towards transcendence have been argued for to substantiate this view. However, while Romanticism and mysticism might share characteristics such as a consciousness of interconnectedness, reverence for nature and the pursuit of the extrasensory, works such as *The Prelude* and *The Immortality Ode* suggest that the Imagination's transcendental capacities ultimately succumb to closure, wherein the poet is 'merely' allowed involuntary 'glimpses' into the transcendental realm.[58] Mystics, on the other hand, allegedly have voluntary and veridical access to such realms

[57] "We Poets in our youth begin in gladness/But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness." (VII,48-49 in Gill,2004,p.139).
[58] I aim to defend this proposition in Chapter Six by analysis of these poems.

(Huxley,1946,Johnson,1939:1993,Hines,1996). Romantic melancholy, I propose, is to be accounted for by this distinction, which Engell (1981) highlights: "[The Romantic poet] has put himself in the position of believing that the poet does affirm something, a higher world, but there is no way to prove that it exists or what it is like"(p.263). This melancholy, which we might refer to as 'post-lapsarian nostalgia,' is the psychological effect of both an inability to have voluntary, veridical access to such realms, as well as an incapacity to portray transcendental experiences in language with finer lucidity, as a result of cognitive biases and limitations. Certainly, this is not to discredit Romanticism with the achievement of putting into words - and with unrivalled acuity - experiences which would appear to transcend language. While this might be a reader's perspective today, the poet's themselves, I aim to show, are less gracious towards their capabilities.

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The poet's melancholy is thus (among other things) a consequence of possessing greater 'discursive,' rather than 'experiential,' knowledge of the transcendental Ground.[59] Shelley's (1821:2006) acknowledgment of Sidney's assertion that "the poet, he nothing affirms" but "never lieth" either, by his claim: "We know nothing. We have no evidence [of the existence of a higher world,]…" and that "vain is it to think that words can penetrate the innermost mystery of our being" (1815:2002,p.506) catches the exasperated tones of this 'ineptitude.' In what follows, I draw on McFarland's (1980) concept of 'the diasporactive triad: incompleteness, fragmentation and ruin' – three unhappy states of being which he attributes to the Romantics - to further define the idea of 'post-lapsarian nostalgia.' Chapter Six argues for the presence of this particular form of melancholia by analysis of key passages in Wordsworth's *Prelude* and *Immortality Ode.*

Let us pose the question again: Why, therefore, is the Romantic poet 'sad?' I believe Carlyle (1833:2006) knows: "Man's Unhappiness, as I construe, comes from his Greatness: it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning, he cannot quite bury under the Finite"(II,IX,p.1021). This is a statement of the (confused, for Hulme) Romantic metaphysic already alluded to: that the transcendental inheres *in* the material, along with its variations such as Carlyle's 'natural supernaturalism' or Goethe's 'the translucence of the eternal through and

[59] The Chapter 6 analysis of *The Prelude* shows why Wordsworth's view on this dialectic is particularly interesting, for he, unlike Coleridge and Shelley, values a balance between the two.

in the temporal.' Yet the claim further implies that the 'infinite' component of the psyche is a perpetual reminder of the mind's ultimate capabilities, and that these are rarely or insufficiently cultivated. In this regard, no question is more pertinent to the Romantics than J.S. Mill's (1863:1971): "Is it better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied?"(p.6). Contrary to the blissful ignorant, Socrates is dissatisfied precisely because he is *not* a 'brain-in-a-vat,' but utterly aware that he is a sojourner in a strange land, poised between the terrestrial and the celestial. Of this bereft condition, "Half dust, half deity/alike unfit to sink or soar"(Byron,*Manfred*,Act I,II,40-41 in Levine,2010,p.257), Rousseau (1712-1788:1937) has said: "Behold me then alone upon the earth. I am in the world as though on a strange planet upon which I have fallen from the one I inhabited." He continues:

> In myself I have found an unexplainable void that nothing could have filled; a longing of the heart toward another kind of fulfilment of which I could not conceive, but of which I nevertheless felt the attraction. (p.213-214)

Our aim is to account for this emotional void by elucidating the nature of this 'other kind of fulfilment,' - an impenetrable, higher realm - whose relentless pull and presence is at once so elusive and so inexplicably 'there.'

In connection with Carlyle's claim, the Romantics (I use Wordsworth as a case in point in Chapter Six) clearly intuited that there is "…something ever more about to be" (*The Prelude*,1805,VI,542). Yet to be allowed ephemeral, involuntary 'glimpses' into the hyperouranic realm is a greater torment than full ignorance of its presence. Provocative hints from the hyperouranic, characterized by a poetry which consistently traces the extraordinary in the quotidian, but which is ultimately elusive, are the roots of Romantic nostalgia. Bourget (in Babbitt, 1919) said: "all those who took the romantic promises at face value, rolled in abysses of despair and ennui…"(p.251). This is why it is accurate to divorce the Romantic from the empirical mystic, for only the mystic, allegedly capable of voluntary access to the place beyond the heavens, can bear positive fruit. Without this evidential fruit, and armed only with poetic numbers which point towards this empirical experience, is to roll in ennui and despair, to generate the forms of ruin. Perhaps one would do better to be ignorant of the existence of this fruit, rather than to know of it while forever be denied its taste - be a fool satisfied rather than Socrates dissatisfied. Milton might have chosen the former:

Heaven is for thee too high
To know what passes there; be lowlie, wise…
Dream not of other worlds, what creatures there live….
(*Paradise Lost,*VIII,172-176 in Leonard,2000,p.171).

Should we therefore concur with Babbit's (1919) critique of Romanticism implied in: "What is the value of unity without reality?" (p.150). Romantic melancholy, in the present context, must be a self-reflexive awareness of possessing a faculty which at once arrests the ineffable in the material, but ultimately succumbs to cognitive closure, biased by the epistemic faculties. Experiential, in addition to discursive, 'coalescence of subject and object,' might have perpetually eluded them. The keynotes of the Romantic awareness are thus incompleteness, fragmentation and ruin - what McFarland (1980) has termed "the diasporactive triad"(p.5). Of Augustine, Brown said:

> If to be a Romantic means to be a man acutely aware of being caught in an existence that denies him the fullness of that which he craves, to feel that he is defined by his tension towards something else, by his capacity for…longing, to think of himself as a wanderer seeking a country that is always distant but made ever present to him by the quality of a love that 'groans' for it, then Augustine is imperceptibly a 'Romantic." (in McFarland, 1980,p.7)

This is an apt description through which to understand the nature of Romantic melancholy and nostalgia in the face of dejection that I shall highlight in Chapter Six. We have our point of entry into *The Prelude's* underlying melancholy via a key passage from Book Eleven, which we shall give due attention:

…The days gone by
Come back upon me from the dawn almost
Of life: The hiding-places of my power
Seem open; I approach, and then they close;
I see by glimpses now, when age comes on
May scarcely see at all… (*The Prelude,*1805,XI,333-338)

Nietzsche, in this regard, suggested of Rousseau that his writings always fall short of conveying exactly what he longs for in its most naked intensity. This bears on the point concerning the 'glimpsing' of the 'hiding places of man's power:'

> His work never quite expresses what he would really like to express and *what he would like to have seen.* It seems that he has had the foretaste of a vision and not the vision itself, but an immense desire of this vision has remained in his soul, and it is from this that he derives his equally immense eloquence of desire and craving…It

> benefits his fame that he does not really achieve this goal (Nietzsche,1844-1900:1974,p.133).

'The foretaste of a vision' is a superb formulation which adroitly conveys the 'stunted' mysticism of the Romantic, the "hidden world" which is revealed only "…when the light of sense/Goes out *in flashes…*" (*The Prelude*,1805,VI,534-535,italics added). The claim goes hand in hand with Coleridge's (1811-1812:1969) that "[Poetry] is the language of heaven, and in it we have…a *foretaste* and a *prophecy*, of the joys of heaven" (*Lectures*,p.191,Italics added). The prevalence of nostalgia, however, suggests that Romantic poetry is both "foretaste" and '*aftertaste'* of divine experience. As we shall see in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth writes to 'enshrine' the past, specifically the visionary power he calls 'The Child.' Both views, moreover, speak to Engell's (1981) observation that "We glimpse a higher realm, but only briefly, and then we are back in the…shadow-show of present reality"(p.262). As for Nietzsche's opinion that "it benefits [Rousseau's] fame that he does not really achieve his goal," it similarly benefits the poet 'as a man speaking to men' that the complete vision is forever deferred. It is this that guarantees that his muse remain a 'levelling one:' the vision needs to be sufficiently and thoroughly sublimated and rarefied – only a few morsels of honey dew may be ingested - lest he should become an arcane, incoherent mystic, a denizen of paradox, a shouter of mad epiphanies and deserter of the discursive function. Yet this same fidelity to the art form, to the troping of hyperouranic longing *as an end in itself*, is what inhibits the poet from the fullness of his vision: "…if we could enter rather than glimpse [the hyperouranic realm], all strivings would cease, for there could be no need for art in paradise" (McFarland,1980,p.418). What banishes the Romantic from paradise is the fact that he romanticizes the fact that he is banished from paradise. In favouring the discursive over the experiential, the art function guarantees that 'the place beyond the heavens' eludes him.[60] For we have shown that to Imagine, to perform a 'repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in infinite I Am,' is to instantiate the self as a subject, further intimating the dualism between the I and the 'not-I.' Lao Tzu's (in Suzuki,1970) aphorism that "nothing that can be said in words is worth saying"(p.70) has been re-appropriated by the Romantics to read: anything that can be said in Romantic-meontic verse is *almost* worth saying.

[60] In Chapter 5.6, it will be illustrated, further, that the state of 'coalescence' necessitates the subjugation of the self, and nothing is as reified as the Romantic ego

CHAPTER FIVE: Romanticism, Mysticism, and Contemporary Studies of Consciousness: The Problem of Dualism

Of the place beyond the heavens, none of our earthly poets has yet sung, and none shall sing worthily. It is, however, as I shall tell; for I must dare to speak the truth; especially as truth is our theme. It is there that true being dwells . . .mind alone, the steersman of the soul, can behold it, and all true knowledge is knowledge of it. (Plato, 370 B.C: 1986, *The Phaedrus*,p.100).

We have identified and argued for a core Romantic concern– the attainment of an ideal of 'coalescence' between subject and object, which may be broadly defined as 'the overcoming of dualism.' Given Coleridge's conferral of transcendental properties onto the Imagination, it was argued that the Romantic notion of 'coalescence of subject and object' is synonymous with the mystical ideal of 'Unity.' By juxtaposition of the faculty of the Imagination and the mystical 'Third Eye,' it was illustrated that the Romantic poet and the mystic share the goal of extrasensory experience. However, the salience of 'post-lapsarian nostalgia' alluded to by poets and thinkers proposed an important distinction between Romanticism and mysticism, despite their common purpose: The poet is 'merely' allowed involuntary glimpses into the higher worlds, whereas the mystic allegedly has voluntary and veridical access to these worlds – a condition Engell (1981) alluded to by his assertion that "[The Romantic poet] has put himself in the position of believing that the poet does affirm something, a higher world, but there is no way to prove that it exists or what it is like (p.263).

Thus, the 'problem of dualism' has been investigated, via Romanticism and mysticism, from a transcendental perspective, that is, a view which assumes the existence of a 'higher' ontology which we may call the extrasensory or supernatural. However, 'the problem of dualism' is crucial for a third area of inquiry. Today, studies of consciousness aim to solve the 'mind-body problem.' They investigate how something like consciousness (the immaterial, phenomenal and subjective) is generated by something like the brain (the material, empirical and objective). The provision of such an account, according to neuroscientists, depends upon the discernment of a 'Bridging Principle' which will reconcile the 'explanatory gap' between mind and matter (McGinn, 1999). Grounded in a different set of metaphysical assumptions to Romanticism and mysticism - one that denies the existence of the supernatural - this constitutes the materialist

perspective on the 'problem of dualism.' It is the contemporary, neuroscientific approach to the traditional 'mind-body' problem of early Cartesian thought.

It is compelling that three distinct areas of inquiry, namely, Romanticism, mysticism and contemporary studies of consciousness, each assert their crucial purpose to be 'the overcoming of dualism.' Each area, moreover, posits a different conception of this problem and the means or faculty by which to overcome it. Romanticism invokes the 'Imagination,' mysticism, the 'Third Eye' and studies of consciousness, the 'Bridging Principle.' In this chapter, the extent to which these distinct areas of inquiry may engage in a dialogue concerning their respective conceptions of the 'the overcoming of dualism' is explored. The question I pursue is whether or not contemporary materialist studies of consciousness can further elucidate Romanticism's and mysticism's transcendental interpretation of the problem. Can the 'mind-body problem' offer anything significant to our understanding of the Romantic and mystical notions of 'coalescence of subject and object' and 'Unity' respectively?

Firstly, and unlike Romanticism and mysticism, studies of consciousness locate subject-object dualism at the level of the mind-brain relationship. This, as I aim to show, in addition to providing clarity of definition concerning the meaning of 'subjective' and 'objective,' allows us to elucidate the Romantic and mystical versions of the problem with enhanced rigour and depth. For example, I aim to show how McGinn's (2004) theory of 'cognitive closure,' which posits obstacles towards solving the mind-body problem as a result of limitations in our epistemic faculties, may greatly elucidate the moments of 'crisis' in *The Prelude*, wherein it is implied that the power of the Imagination succumbs to a similar form of closure, and reaches an impassable threshold. I propose that the barrier restricting neuroscience from elucidating the 'Bridging Principle,' is the same one that prevented the Romantics from absolute experiential knowledge of the transcendental ground, which they hoped to have access to via the faculty they called 'Imagination.' In short, I propose that the 'Bridging Principle' is to studies of consciousness, what the 'Imagination' is for Romanticism and the 'Third Eye' for mysticism. Each faculty is valued for its 'synthesising' capability in overcoming subject-object dualism. These are merely different appropriations of the same perennial problem in thought: how to use consciousness to transcend itself, or as Kierkegaard (1844:1967) put it, "…to discover something that thought cannot think"(p.55).

5.1 The Principle of Closure in a System: Godel

Douglas Hofstadter, in *Godel, Escher, Bach*, (1980) introduces us to the mathematician Kurt Godel who developed the following theorem: any system of thought is ultimately self-referential, and thus contains the seeds of its own destruction. To understand 'self-referentiality,' we might consider the following two claims:

> The following statement is false.
> The preceding statement is true.

This is truly a 'hall of mirrors.' As Hines (1996) notes, the circularity is evident in that if we believe the first claim, then the second needs to be restated as "the preceding statement is *false.*" Yet if this is so, then we cannot believe the first claim, and we are cast into a vicious vortex of circularity. Puzzling over these two claims is a dog-chasing-tail exercise. Boslough (1992) explains:

> the proof for the validation of any system could not be established from within that system. There must be something outside the theoretical framework – whether the framework be mathematical, verbal or visual – against which a confirming or disconfirming test could be made…No theory of the structure of the universe could be made from within that structure (p. 33).

Self referential logic is defeating because there is an intimate connection between the object of study, and the means or tools used by the subject to conduct the study. Consider: using consciousness to explain how consciousness emerges. This circularity is analogous to 'turning a tool in on itself,' such as using a camera to photograph itself, a sword to cut itself, or one attempting to soar off the ground by tugging on one's bootstraps (Guzeldere,1995). The notion of closure in a self-referential system is, I will show, significant for studies of consciousness, language, and moreover, Romanticism. As a perennial metaphysical problem, it manifests itself in each of these areas of inquiry. The Romantics were, partly unbeknownst to them (and us until now), subsumed under its laws.

5.2 The Principle of Closure in the System of Consciousness: McGinn and The Mind-Body Problem

"Science," says Max Planck (1951, as cited in Peat, 1990) "cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature, and that is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are part of nature, and

therefore, part of the mystery we are trying to solve"(p.74). Indeed, the problem of how something ineffable and phenomenal such as subjective experience can emerge from the concrete matter and inert meat that is the brain is an example of one of the 'ultimate mysteries' of nature. Yet Planck's claim is an epistemologically insightful one for it points out that to know the nature of a system objectively, the knower cannot *be* the system, for ultimately, he becomes both the instrument and the object of study. This gestures towards the argument of this sub-section: that we cannot solve the mind-body problem philosophically or scientifically, given that it is an inherently circular exercise. That is, the very tools we use to approach the subject are what limit us and make the solution elusive. Miller (1962, as cited in Guzeldere, 1995) illustrates the nature of this circularity: "The fish, someone has said, will be the last to discover water"(p.38). The image suggests that the fish cannot know the water because it is immersed in it, surrounded by it. It cannot get out of the water to know it objectively, that is, without being a part of it. Similarly, we will have to be 'out of our minds' before we can know the nature of consciousness. The exercise of using consciousness to know itself is likened to trying to soar off the ground by tugging on one's bootstraps, suggesting that one cannot escape the system of representation that is sought to be understood – consciousness is simultaneously the instrument and object of study. The aim, however, is to illustrate how this is significant to the stated Romantic purpose of 'coalescence of subject and object' or, the identification with a transcendental plane via the Imagination.

By 'consciousness' we are referring to subjective experience - 'what it is like to be,' to use Nagel's (1986 in Guzeldere, 1995) phrase - in a given mental state. This is the mystery of consciousness from a contemporary materialist perspective: we know *that* the brain generates consciousness, but not *how* it does so (Searle,1997;McGinn,1999). The many correlations between brain processes and states of consciousness make this clear. If we doubt that the brain generates consciousness we may consider, by analogy, that a plant photosynthesizes, or that the digestive system in the stomach converts food into energy. If the plant or digestive organs are destroyed, then neither the products of photosynthesis nor energy can be generated from food. Similarly, neuroscience has established that if certain brain regions are ablated, we may lose or alter our conscious states. The analogy also illustrates, however, that inferred concepts such as kinetic energy are real effects in the natural world. So it is with consciousness from a contemporary perspective: the mystery surrounding it does not imply that consciousness is

something mystical that needs to rely on God or ontological dualism for an explanation. It is embodied, a part of nature. It is, as Searle (1997) notes, a natural, biological feature of the world. The difference is only that we do not know how the brain produces it, in the same way that we know how a plant converts sunlight into 'food.' We might thus say that there is no ontological mystery concerning consciousness, for it is an objective feature of nature. Rather, the mystery is an epistemic one, for we do not know (and perhaps will never know) how something *like* consciousness can emerge from something *like* a brain.

5.3 What the Solution Requires.

Searle (1997) points out that the explanation needs to be more than a correlation between consciousness and brain processes, for correlations do not imply causality – it does not follow from the fact that a given set of brain processes occur during consciousness and are absent during unconsciousness, that these states are necessary and sufficient for consciousness. In proposing what such a solution would entail, McGinn (2004) thus argues that it needs to explain how consciousness arises from the brain in such a way that its emergence is not 'radical' or 'brute.' This would involve a causal explanation of how consciousness emerges that is necessary, and transparently so. It should not rely on radical contingencies to bridge the 'explanatory gap' (Levine, 1983;1993, as cited in Guzeldere, 1995) from matter to mind.

For example, drawing on Chalmers and Jackson's (2001) discussion of the neuroscience of vision and memory, we can adequately explain certain properties of these functions with neuroscience. Vision has the property of 'boundedness,' yet we can rely on explanations from neuroscience and the laws of optics to explain why it is that what we see in the visual field is bounded and limited in scope. Similarly, it is noted that we can rely on arguments from the complexity of the brain to explain an aspect of memory, namely, the amount of memories we may have - for each and every memory there is a specific, corresponding brain state or combination of states, such that the number of memories does not exceed the number of brain states, or integrations of states. There is thus no 'explanatory gap' concerning these properties of these functions and the neural processes which inform them. This is not the case with consciousness, for there is no corresponding neural property for consciousness in the way there is for these properties of memory or vision.

In a similar vein, Chalmers (1995) distinguishes between 'the easy problem' and 'the hard problem' of consciousness. The easy problem involves providing an explanation of certain cognitive functions such as memory and attention. As noted above with reference to memory and vision, this is something that is within the explanatory reach of neuroscience. The 'hard problem,' however, involves explaining why it is that these functions are accompanied by 'subjective experience,' that is, 'something it is like to be' in such a state. It is fitting to apply Guzeldere's (1995) list of 'W-questions,' to 'the easy problem.' These are the *what, where, who and why* questions of consciousness, for example, 'what are the mechanisms [or neural correlates] of consciousness?' and 'who can be said to be a conscious being?' Alternatively, there is an additional *How* question which asks how something physical can give rise to something phenomenal. This is a non trivial addition given that an answer for all the 'W-questions' may be necessary but is not sufficient for a solution to 'the hard problem.' The easy problem may thus be associated with physicalist theories of what consciousness *does,* from the perspective of a 'third person,' whereas the hard problem is concerned with the phenomenal problem of how consciousness *seems.* Explaining how the brain generates 'the qualities of consciousness or experience,' or *qualia,* is another way of posing the hard problem. Thus, says Searle (1997), the mystery of consciousness just *is* the anomaly of *qualia* – they are one and the same problem.

In summation, these different appropriations of the problem show that its solution depends upon the *a priori* entailments that McGinn (2004) argues is needed for a causal explanation. Such *a priori* explanations would take the form: 'P, if and only if Q,' where P refers to a state of consciousness and Q, a neural process. The difficulty in arriving at such a causal explanation is found in the conceptual divide between P and Q: P is something unobservable by the senses, immediately accessible only by the subject undergoing P, un-extended in space and dependent for its existence on the individual undergoing P. This denotes 'subjectivity.' Q, on the other hand, is observable by the senses, accessible to another in the same way as the individual undergoing Q, is extended in space and could (in principle) be experienced without there being an individual. This denotes 'objectivity.' P and Q are thus very different *kinds* of concepts. Such an account would have to mediate between these different concepts, thereby 'closing the

explanatory gap.' In explaining what is special about the problem of consciousness, and what such a 'bridging principle' would involve, Edelman and Tononi (2000) note:

> Unlike any other object of scientific description, the neural process we are attempting to characterize when we study the neural basis of consciousness actually refers to ourselves – it *is* ourselves – conscious observers. We cannot therefore tacitly remove ourselves as conscious observers as we do when we investigate other scientific domains (p.13).

We cannot 'get out of our minds,' to know the nature of consciousness, like the fish cannot get out of the water. McGinn's (1999, 2004) view, to be considered next, suggests that such a property or 'bridging principle' cannot be found for philosophical reasons that bring us to the limits of our epistemic faculties. This argument claims that consciousness emerges from properties in the brain, but which are necessarily unknowable. Interestingly, this bridging principle, I illustrate, shares features with the Romantic 'Imagination' and the mystical 'third eye.' In light of these shared features, it greatly illuminates the Romantic notion of 'coalescence of subject and object,' as well as elucidates aspects of Romantic melancholy, which we defined in the previous chapter, as the sadness caused by an inability for voluntary access to the transcendental Ground owing to cognitive biases and limitations.

5.4. Cognitive Closure

The supreme paradox of all thought is to discover something that thought cannot think. The Unknown is the different, the absolutely different. But because it is absolutely different, there is no mark by which it could be distinguished. If no specific determination of difference can be held fast, because there is no distinguishing mark, like and unlike finally become identified with one another, thus sharing the fate of all such dialectical opposites. (Kierkegaard,1844:1967.p.55-56)

In introducing this argument, it is useful to adopt Bertrand Russell's (1912:1967) distinction between 'knowledge by acquaintance' and 'knowledge by description'. Of the former, Russell states "…we have acquaintance with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths" (p.25). It is thus with states of consciousness that we seem to be in, that we have this 'direct awareness'-if we think we are in pain, we do not need to reason about, nor hold any scientific theory on sensations, in order to think we are in this state. Such a theory on pain would constitute 'knowledge by description' or 'propositional knowledge.' This illustrates an epistemic feature of

consciousness which, as will be shown, plays a role in our predicament of circularity in the knowledge of consciousness. We have, concerning our own phenomenal states, what has been termed 'privileged access.' This relates to the Cartesian property of the mental as being 'incorrigible'- we know beyond any doubt that we are conscious if we are in the process of questioning our consciousness. For this reason, if we *seem* to be in a certain state, we must be in that state, for with consciousness, 'the appearance is the reality,' as Searle's (1997) says. Yet others can only know what state of consciousness we are in through the 'public' means of symbols, whether this involves behaviour or language, but no symbol will generate one's phenomenal experience for another.

Further, Russell's taxonomy suggests that we do not need 'knowledge by description' in order to have 'knowledge by acquaintance,' for we may have direct awareness of something, independent of being able to describe what we are aware of in the form of propositional or theoretical truths about it. Based on the assumption that consciousness is something that arises in the brain, but is in turn, not reducible to the brain in the eliminative sense, we know the nature of consciousness by acquaintance, but we cannot express that nature propositionally. As a consequence, we resort, according to McGinn (2004), to metaphorical description, in which we can only say what consciousness is *like*, namely a stream, light, a mirror or a theatre.

Having expounded the problem as being one in which neuroscience should identify not only the correlates of consciousness, but those properties which allow for a causal explanation, this would appear to be something which may be found in time, with the advancement of neuroscience. Yet McGinn (1999) argues that the problem will not yield to such a solution, for the issue is more fundamental and conceptual than the identification of properties of neural mechanisms or neural processes. Symbols have been used for clarification in posing McGinn's argument. It is as follows: let us suppose that a given property, X, would adequately mediate between consciousness and its brain processes. It is the 'bridging principle' which reconciles the 'explanatory gap' between mind and matter - the 'missing ingredient' (Chalmers, 1995) which answers the essential *How* question introduced above. X will either be an 'introspective' concept, or it will be a 'perceptual' concept. These are the only two possibilities that are available to our epistemic repertoire as human beings – we can only know something by introspection, which includes *a priori* reasoning, for example, logical inference, or by

perception, which includes *a posteriori* reasoning, such as empirical observation. However, as discussed above with reference to the 'P, if and only if Q' conditional needed to solve the mind-body problem, the concepts P and Q form a *conceptual* dualism, for if P symbolizes consciousness, it is a radically different *kind* of concept to Q, if Q symbolizes a neural property or process. Since all we have at our disposal in discovering X is introspection or perception, a concept like X is impossible to know because the faculties of introspection or perception are what cause the conceptual divide in the first place.

To explain further with reference to space: concepts about the brain (or the objective and material) refer to the spatial, or things extended in space, whereas concepts about the mind (or the subjective and phenomenal) refer to the non-spatial, or the un-extended. Yet the argument suggests that the required 'bridging principle' would need to make reference to something *between* the spatial (or concrete) and the non-spatial (or abstract). This illustrates the impossibility of arriving at such a concept, for we cannot, via perception, which allows us to know the spatial, or introspection, which allows us to know the non-spatial, imagine what lies 'between' extension and non-extension. If we use either perception or introspection to come to know such a concept, in the first instance, our 'bridging principle' makes reference to something extended, and in the second, something non-extended. We will have come full circle by regressing back to the conceptual divide between the mental and the physical. So the tools we use to arrive at such a concept – perception and introspection - are the very source of the problem: indeed, using these faculties to arrive at X is a dog-chasing-tail exercise. The conceptual dualism that arises when we attempt to find X is what makes the mind-body problem more fundamental than the mere identification by neuroscience of such a neural process. This is a philosophical problem that brings us to the boundaries of our cognitive faculties.

In connection with Russell's (1912:1967) theory of knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description, the above argument seems plausible if we consider that introspection cannot reveal anything to us about the brain as a physical object, whereas perception cannot grant us any access to consciousness. No thinking about consciousness will discern for us the neural processes or properties that generate consciousness, and similarly, empirically observing a brain cannot allow us to perceive the mind itself, or the *qualia* of the subject whose brain we

are observing, only perhaps the neural correlates of it. So our acquaintance with our own consciousness is independent of propositional truths about it, that is, it cannot answer the '*How* question,' the *means* by which the brain generates phenomenal experience. Similarly, our propositional knowledge and empirical observation of the brain contributes nothing to our knowledge of 'what it is like to be' in a certain conscious state. The idea of the conceptual divide introduced above maintains, and the underlying unity between mind and body, in the form of a concept that links the two cannot be known, no matter how advanced our neuroscientific knowledge or faculties of introspection become, since we cannot, on the one hand, accentuate our introspective capacities to grant us objective perception of the brain, nor can we enhance our perceptual faculties to generate the subjective experience of a mind. We are limited in that neither of our two epistemic faculties can transcend themselves: perception can only allow us to know the external world, and introspection, the internal. But the point is that neither can allow us to know a concept that mediates between and links this conceptual divide, without further intimating the divide, that is, without reinforcing the distinction between mind and matter.

It seems we are in the curious position of using our faculties to come to the conclusion in which we know they are limited. An example of meta-level but limited awareness may be illustrated with regard to the imagination – we know that we cannot imagine a new colour, but only combine a limited set of colours into different hues, but this awareness does not allow us to create novelty from something we cannot already imagine or perceive. Edelman and Tononi (2005) reflect:

> The issue concerns the so-called explanatory gap that arises from the remarkable differences between brain structure in the material world and the properties of *qualia*-laden experience. How can the firing of neurons, however complex, give rise to feelings, qualities, thoughts and emotions…The key task of a scientific description of consciousness is to give a causal account of the relationship between these domains so that properties in one domain may be understood in terms of events in the other. (p. 12)

In *Table Talk*, Coleridge (1823:1969) anticipated this dilemma two centuries earlier by his assertion that "materialism will *never* explain those words," in response to the biblical passage regarding how "a living soul was breathed into man" (p.25). Perhaps we need not take 'soul' and 'qualia-laden experience'/consciousness/subjective experience to be distinctive. The problem of consciousness is 'special' precisely because we are out of our depth, scientifically

and philosophically, for the solution we want demands the impossible of us – the transcendence of the faculties we use when grappling with problems of science and philosophy, neither of which require us to "tacitly remove ourselves as conscious observers" (Edelman and Tononi, 2000, pg. 13).

It has been proposed that the mystery concerning how consciousness emerges from the brain will remain. The notion of cognitive closure explains that as soon as we use our epistemic faculties of introspection or perception to come to know a concept which mediates between consciousness and the brain, we cast ourselves into further ignorance by accentuating the vast conceptual dualism between mind and matter, which characterized the problem at the outset. So long as we are bound by our epistemic faculties, we will remain both the instrument and object of study. This need not be disillusioning, for the same faculties which constrain us, may enlighten us: are we not wise if we know our limits?[61]

[61] Interestingly, we have a precise analogue to McGinn's argument in Derrida's theory of *differance*. D*ifferance* may be viewed as a linguistic manifestation of the same problem highlighted by McGinn as it is applied to consciousness, and by Godel at a more fundamental level regarding the self-referential logic of any system of thought.

Of 'differance,' Derrida (1981) claims: "Difference – the play of differences supposes…syntheses and referrals, which forbid at any moment, that an element be *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself." (p.26)

One can never 'catch' or 'pin down' the meaning of an element in its absolute presence or absence, for there is no point at which it is either 'there' or 'not there.' He continues: "no element can function as a sign without itself referring to another element which itself is not fully *present."* This is further explicated by the following: "The elements of signification function not by virtue of the force of their compact cores, but by the network of oppositions that distinguish them and relate them to one another." (p.26)

Saussure (in Derrida, 1981) makes the same point when he says: "The…substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it." (p.27) Derrida continues:

> Every concept is necessarily inscribed in a chain or system, within which it refers to another and other concepts, by the systematic play of differences…Differance is the movement of play that produces these differences…it is the nonfull, nonsimple, origin: it is the structured and differing origin of differences.(p.140)

Applying the idea to consciousness, namely, McGinn's system of cognitive closure: no concept can be arrived at by thought or perception alone, without in turn making further reference to thought or perception. Hence, we cannot arrive at the 'space between' thought and perception - the 'Bridging Principle,' which we termed 'concept X' - in and of itself, in its full and absolute presence. This analogy with Derrida illustrates that this problem is perennial. Like McGinn's argument from cognitive closure, it prompts the mental apparatus to usurp cognition itself, which is as impossible as the imagining of a new colour. The implication of both McGinn's and Derrida's versions of cognitive closure for the Romantic poets is illustrated with reference to De Man's (1968) previously cited observation:

5.5. The Romantic 'Imagination' and The Neuroscientific 'Bridging Principle'

What is the significance of the contemporary 'mind-body problem,' the subsequent 'problem of cognitive closure' and the 'bridging principle' for Romanticism?

First, let us recall Engell (1981) on the function of the Romantic Imagination:

> The imagination held out hope and promised a reconciliation of [subject/object] dualism…with one foot in the empirical and one foot in the ideal or transcendental, [the Imagination] could bestride those two peninsulas of thought, and like a colossus, protect and unify the harbor between. The Imagination could, in its dialectic, synthesise soul and body; it could unite man's spirit and affections with the concrete reality of nature. ..it would solve the dilemma of dualism. (p.7).

This certainly violates Hulmes's (1909:1994) propriety of place – a case of 'spilt religion' if ever there was one. Engell's account betrays how, in Romanticism, "the concepts that are right and proper in their own sphere are spread over, and so falsify and blur the clear outlines of human experience"(Hulme,1909:1994,p.62). As a philosophical concept, the Romantic Imagination is a breach of cognitive propriety, a blatant category error, for it is based in a contradictory world view, namely, one which 'synthesizes' mutually exclusive ontologies - the material and the transcendental. We have seen how this 'hybrid' metaphysic is repeatedly stressed: for example, by the Romantic [Coleridgean] conception of the 'symbol' – "the translucence of the eternal through and in the Temporal" – and by definitions of Romanticism itself, such as More's (1913): "the illusion of beholding the infinite *within* the stream of nature itself, instead of apart from that stream…'(p.xiii). The 'meontic mode' was characterized, moreover, as that style which glimpses that 'other' nature – the aesthetic product of the Imagination whose "thrust…is inexorably *upward*" (McFarland,1981) into augmented states of

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> The existence of the poetic image is itself a sign of divine absence, and the conscious use of poetic imagery an admission of this absence…poetic language seems to originate in the desire to draw closer and closer to the ontological status of the object, and its growth and development are determined by this inclination. We saw that this movement is essentially paradoxical and condemned in advance to failure.

By analysis of *The Prelude* in Chapter Six , I aim to show that Wordsworth cannot arrive at an account of his mystical object, the transcendental Ground. All he has at his disposal are 'signs' in the form of nature's objects, referring to other signs or natural elements. In this sense, *The Prelude* is a dramatization of both the McGinnean and Derridean dilemma.

extrasensory awareness, *via* the senses. The apogee of this awareness and the key portrayal of this 'conflated metaphysic' is Coleridge's 'repetition of an eternal act in a finite mind.' Whether defining the symbol, the meontic mode, the Imagination or Romanticism itself, all point towards a monism between the infinite and the finite.

Thus, the connection between the Imagination and the neuroscientific 'Bridging Principle' is clear: In order to reconcile the 'explanatory gap' between mind (the subjective) and brain (the objective), the bridging principle, we recall, needs to mediate 'between' the phenomenal and the material. Yet to do so, it must be discovered neither via the senses nor thought alone (for this would only yield either an introspective or perceptual concept), but through a different epistemic faculty altogether, situated 'between' thought and perception. The discernment of this 'hybrid' faculty would necessitate the employment of a faculty that transcends both thought and perception – to be duly 'extra-sensory' and 'extra-cognitive.' The discovery of the 'bridging principle' thus requires us to use our own consciousness to transcend itself – in short, to generate the ideal or 'infinite' by way of the mundane and finite.

The lucid connection between the Imagination (or the 'infinite I AM') and the 'bridging principle' is made explicit in the following claim by Coleridge in *Biographia*. The 'infinite I AM:'

> …is to be found therefore neither in object nor subject taken separately, and consequently, as no other third is conceivable, it must be found in that which is neither subject nor object exclusively, but which is the identity of both (1817:1969,XII,p.271)

Let us substitute the 'Bridging Principle' for "The infinite I AM," 'perception' for "object" and 'introspection' for "subject" and we have an exact rendition of McGinn's argument from cognitive closure. This reads as follows: 'The Bridging Principle is to be found therefore neither in perception nor introspection taken separately, and consequently, as no other third is conceivable, it must be found in that which is neither perceptive or introspective exclusively, but which is the identity of both.' This 'identity of both' – a transcendental 'higher third' - situated 'between' subject and object and evidently crucial for both Romanticism and studies of consciousness was identified as the 'Third Eye' for mysticism.

Thus, as the Imagination seeks to 'coalesce' the subjective and objective *via* the senses, that is, to exercise a transcendental faculty by way of the 'natural faculties,' (to "harness the eternal *through* and *in* the temporal") both the Imagination and the 'Bridging Principle' require a feat of the mind beyond the mind, like the conjuring of a new colour. Both areas occupy a liminal, limbo region of the psyche, a border land between two metaphysical countries - the psychological/scientific/mimetic land of 'outward sense' and the mystical/transcendental/meontic place of the Coleridgean "inner eye,"[62] revealed as "…the light of sense/Goes out…" (*The Prelude*,1805,VI,600-602). Moreover, since Chapter Three established the congruency between the Imagination and the mystical 'Third Eye,' we have three distinct areas of inquiry – Romanticism, mysticism and modern studies of consciousness – with a common 'problem of dualism.' In turn, each area posits a faculty by which to overcome this problem, namely, the 'Imagination,' 'Third Eye,' and 'Bridging Principle,' respectively. It is apparent that these different areas of inquiry are in conversation with one another, in that they converge on the same principle, despite their differing material (in the case of contemporary studies of consciousness) and transcendental (in the case of Romanticism and mysticism) world views. This is the problem of how to use consciousness to transcend itself – to discover something that thought cannot think. As always, in making claims of this nature, we revert to Blake who alluded to the cleansing of the doors of the finite to reveal the infinite.

And this is precisely what the employment of all three of these elusive faculties ask of us – to conceive of a 'higher third,' neither subjective nor objective but a synthesis of both. As I argue in Chapter Six, this tension between opposing metaphysics is explicitly dramatized in *The Prelude* by its 'ambiguous aesthetics.' Wordsworth's nature is the site 'between' these two metaphysical world views, neither mimetic and sensory nor purely meontic and extrasensory, but something between the two. M.H Abrams (1971) famously described the genre of Wordsworth's poetry as 'natural supernaturalism' – an apt formulation for a poetics which is the product of a state of consciousness that lies 'between' the material and transcendental, on the threshold of apotheosis. We have thus essayed to give exactness and precision - a 'habitation and a name' – to what Abrams' term embraced.

[62] Further allusions to this faculty by various Romantic poets and thinkers were provided in chapter 3.

5.6. A Distinction between Mysticism and Romanticism: Accounting Further For 'Romantic Melancholy.'

…when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, whether heat or cold, light or shade… never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception". (Hume,1739:1946,p.296)

Therefore, O Sariputra, in emptiness there is no form, nor feeling, nor perception, nor impulse, nor consciousness; No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, No forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables or objects of mind; No sight-organ element, and so forth, until we come to: No mind-consciousness element: there is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so forth until we come to: there is no decay and death, no extinction of decay and death. There is no origination, no stopping, no path. There is no cognition, no attainment and no non-attainment. (*Buddha Sutra* in Schumacher and Anderson, 1979,p.80)

In his study of mysticism, Hines (1996) refers to a state of consciousness known as the 'Objective Private.' Entering into this state is coterminous with penetrating the transcendental Ground. When one is 'in' the Objective Private, there occurs a cessation of the activities of waking consciousness – there is no imagining, thinking or observing (Hines, 1996). Coleridge, similarly, as observed by Lyon (1966), claims on numerous occasions throughout his poetry that one or more of the bodily senses are 'suspended,' 'idle,' 'sleeping,' or 'silent' when an intense aesthetic or spiritual experience occurs. Empirical studies have shown that it is possible to enter into such a state of consciousness. I quote Stace (1985) on these findings:

> A vast body of empirical evidence…affirms that Hume was simply mistaken on a question of psychological fact, and that it is possible to get rid of all the mental contents and find the self left over and to experience this. This evidence…[also] can be taken as implying that it [the self] is a pure unity, the sort of being which Kant called the "transcendental unity" of the self. (p.82).

Kant (1781:1984) describes the "transcendental unity" of the self as "pure, original, unchanging consciousness"(p.98). This is synonymous with mysticism's 'transcendental Self' alluded to by Huxley (1946). Yet a key tenet of mysticism is that in order to 'identify' the phenomenal ego with the transcendental Self, a complete evacuation of the former is necessary. By Hine's (1996) model of consciousness, this amounts to entering into the 'Objective Private.' What occurs in the 'Objective Private,' however, is independent of the subject, hence of the phenomenal ego. To imagine, think or observe is to instantiate the self as a subject *in opposition* to the object imagined, thought about, or observed – to that which is external to the self. Any of these operations of consciousness throw the 'I-ness' of the subject into relief.

Wilbur (1977) emphasizes this: "The original act of severance, the consciousness of self, the utterance 'I', amounts to the following: "*let there be a distinction*"' (p.108).[63] Hence, these operations are the origin of dualism, of bifurcation between self and other, mind and nature - the very condition the Romantics sought to augment themselves above by the 'synthesising' capabilities of the Imagination.

This 'primary dualism' has various forms: In epistemology it separates the knower from the known; in ontology, being from doing; in theology, the pre and post lapsarian[64] and in Romanticism, mind and nature. Yet the problem of Romanticism has been framed as the problem of each and all of these described in essence as the ultimate rupture between subject and object. Since, by Hines' (1996) divisions of consciousness poetry originates from the 'subjective' domain of imagination, it too, from a mystical perspective, is 'murder by dissection.' There is too much of the poet's self in it:

> The poet, the nature lover, the aesthete are granted apprehensions of Reality analogous to the contemplative [mystic]. But because they have not troubled to make themselves perfectly selfless…they are incapable of knowing the divine Beauty…True his idolatry is among the highest of which human beings are capable, but an idolatry, nonetheless, it remains. (Huxley,1946p.138)

Further, Shelley invokes with derision how 'God' was created by "a moon-struck sophist" upon:

> …watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
> Fill Heaven and darken Earth
> The form he saw and worshipped was his own
> His likeness in the world's vast mirror shown.
>
> (*Revolt of Islam*, canto VIII,VI,3245-3246, in Rogers,1975,p.213)

Finally, Rumi (in Chittick, 1983, p.149) says: "To every image of your imagination you say 'Oh my spirit. My world!' Were these images to disappear you yourself would be the spirit and the world." 'Psychological idolatry' is the identification of God or nature with the ego's

[63] Such is mysticism's account of the creation – the One came to self-consciousness by asking 'who am I?' which, in turn, initiated the schism between the One and the many, or the Creator and the creation (Johnson,1939:1993).

[64] We recall that this refers to the second stage in Romanticism's psychological re-appropriation of the biblical myth of 'Eden, *fall*, redemption' as 'nature, *self-consciousness*, Imagination' as highlighted by Hartman (1962).

affective attitude towards them, such that the emotion becomes an end in itself. Babbitt (1919) charged the Romantics with worshipping the way they felt, not that for *which* they felt: "they were in love with love"(p.47). There is thus a tension between the poet and the Godhead. God 'came to self-consciousness' by uttering the Word: 'who am I?' and created the universe. The poet comes to self-consciousness by uttering the word of the ego, and creates the poem. "You remain silent and it speaks. You speak and it is dumb," say the Taoists (in Suzuki,1970,p.74). And as Hartman (1987) further observes, "we understand Wordsworth best when we are too near ourselves, too naked in our self-consciousness"(p.17). Indeed, the ultimate instance of the Wordsworthian 'egotistical sublime' is evident in his vocation as a poet, namely, continuity of a past self into the present, or what Coleridge (1801-1806:1956) described elliptically in a letter as "a reflex consciousness of [the self's] own continuousness"(p.1197). Veridical transcendental experience necessitates the subjugation of the self, yet nothing is as reified as the Romantic ego. Mysticism stresses that the path to union with the Godhead is only traversable once the phenomenal ego has been evacuated:

> Direct knowledge of the Ground cannot be had except by union, and union can be achieved only by the annihilation of the self-regarding ego, which is the barrier separating the 'thou' from the 'That.'(Huxley,1946,p.35).

Translated into the Romantic dialectic between the mind of the poet (the thou) and nature (the 'That') the barrier is usurped by the poet's progression from a state of self-consciousness to Imagination. That "nothing burns in hell but the self" (*Theologica Germanica* in Huxley,1946,p.72) is significant to both mystics and Romantics. Carlyle (1833:2006) made the same point in *Sartor Resartus*:

> The fraction of life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your numerator, but by lessening your denominator…Unity itself divided by zero will give me infinity…It is only with Renunciation that life, properly speaking, can be said to begin." (p.1021).

Moreover:

> The consciousness of [the transcendental] Self is the primal metaphysical experience, which, whilst causing one to penetrate into one's innermost being, *at the same time causes one to penetrate into the universe.* (Lavelle in Johnson,1939:1993,p. xv).

'Consciousness of [the transcendental] Self' is to be read interchangeably with the Romantic Imagination, wherein the poet returns, via Hartman's triad of 'nature, self-consciousness, Imagination' to a more self-less Self. Yet the progression beyond solipsism by identification

with the transcendental Self, Lavelle notes, is coterminous with penetrating the hyperouranic realm, which Romantic-meontic verse aspires towards and instantaneously traces. What, in addition to the similarities between the Imagination and the mystical 'Third Eye' faculty highlighted in Chapter Three, is special about the Imagination that thrusts the poet into temporary super-consciousness?

5.7. Sympathy and Love.

I will go down to self-annihilation and eternal death
Lest the Last Judgment come and find me unnanihilate
And I be seized and giv'n into the hands of my own Selfhood
…I in my Selfhood am that Satan: I am that Evil One! (Blake, *Milton*,I,Plate 14,22-30 in Erdman and Bloom,1982,p.108)

Who would be a poet cannot be master of himself (Plato in Engell,1981,p.155)

Keats's (1817:1975) doctrine of 'Negative Capabilility,' "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason"(p.43) forms the beginning of an answer to the question posed above. This capacity necessitates the negation of the ego, a state of being which Keats (1819:1975) denies to his friend Dilke, with whom a conversation had prompted the principle itself. Dilke was "…a Man who cannot feel he has a personal identity unless he has made up his Mind about everything"(p.326). Keats suggests, rather, that "the only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing" and further, that "Dilke will never come at a truth so long as he lives; because he is always trying at it"(p.326).[65] This receptivity of mind has its stronger form in the Romantic notion of 'sympathy,' whereby the poet aims to negate his own subjectivity and merge with the object.[66] Wordsworth alludes to this coalesced state in the *Immortality Ode* as the "primal sympathy" (line 184). Indeed, as Chapter Six illustrates, the Ode is arguably 'about' a process of gradual dislocation and loss of sympathetic coalescence, so prominent in childhood. The Romantics anticipated Freud (1929:1930) in this respect, who appropriates this idea in the language of the child's ego and its relationship to the world:

> Originally the ego includes everything, later it detaches from itself the outside world. The ego feeling we are aware of now is thus only a shrunken vestige of a more extensive

[65] Compare with: ''How do align myself with the Tao? I am already out of line with it.'' (Taoist aphorism in Huxley, 1946,p.18)
[66] Keats, further, noted: "when I am in a room…the identity of everyone else in the room begins to press upon me that I am in a very little time annihilated" (in Bloom,1971a,p.312).

> feeling – a feeling which embraced the universe and expressed an inseparable connection of the ego with the external world. (*Civilisation and its Discontents*, p.13).

In the same essay, Freud describes the state of 'love' in adulthood in terms reminiscent of the mystical notion of 'union' we have expounded: "At the height of being in love the boundary between ego and object threatens to melt away. Against all the evidence of his senses, a man who is in love declares that 'I' and 'you' are one, and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact"(p.80). Once again, we encounter the principle as perennial: what for psychoanalysis is the rupture between the ego and the world or object, is for Romanticism the divorce between mind and nature, which is, for philosophy and neuroscience, the dualism between mind and body. In turn, this is the isolation of the soul from the Godhead in mysticism. These are merely different formulations of the same content, each proposing a solution which revolves around the idea of 'synthesis.' This is, as argued, 'Sympathetic Imagination' for Romanticism, the 'Bridging Principle' for philosophy and neuroscience, and the 'Third Eye' for mysticism.

Yet for the Romantics, Imagination was, among other things, a moral faculty. Symbols, it was discussed, exist because we do not have access to another's consciousness - we cannot give our *qualia* to another mind. Imagination allows us to come as close as possible to experiencing the *qualia* of another mind. This sympathy with the other is inextricably linked to aesthetic production: "The great secret of morals is love, or a going out of our own nature and an identification with the beautiful…a man, to be good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively" (Shelley,1821:2006,p.844). Sympathy is an intense concentration on the first person perspective, on Nagel's (1986 in Guzeldere, 1995) 'what it is like to be' in someone else's mental state. This capacity is thwarted the moment the ego asserts itself, for it projects its own psychic content onto the other, distorting its true nature.

Negative capability and sympathy are the *sine qua non* of mysticism. As noted, mysticism holds that the identification of the phenomenal with the transcendental Self is accomplished when the action of consciousness has ceased, placing the subject in the 'Objective Private' mode. In the language of mysticism, to 'die to self' is to be 'born into eternity'(Johnson,1939:1993). Similarly, 'when the drop merges with the ocean, its individuality annihilated, it becomes nothing.' The mystical argument, however, is that in becoming nothing, it becomes everything. Engell (1981) noted that by Shakespeare's ability to

coalesce with his characters, he was the ultimate 'anti-egoist,' the exemplar of an artist who 'became nothing to become everything.' In a lecture given by Hazlitt entitled 'On Shakespeare and Milton,' which Keats allegedly attended, Hazlitt (1825:1910) claimed that "Shakespeare was the least of an egotist that it is possible to be. He was nothing in himself, but he was all that others were"(p.36). Similarly, in a letter, Keats (1817:1975) defined "Men of Genius" as those who "have not any individuality"(p.36). By the revered principle of sympathy, the Romantics longed to coincide with a universe larger than themselves. Nonetheless, the fundamental ambiguity at Romanticism's core – at once the 'cult of the self' *and* by the desire of its exponents for birth into Sympathetic Imagination – casts this lot into a condition of liminal dereliction, "alike unfit to soar or sink," as Byron declares.[67] I argue, by analysis of key poems in the following section, that there is a self-reflexive awareness of their blasted ambition of veridical immersion in 'the place beyond the heavens,' and of being perpetually thwarted by the very tools employed as a means towards the transcendence of consciousness. The argument's ambitious introductory tones begin to wane, and aspects of the project culminate in a prospect of gloom, much like the end point of some of the lives of the Romantic poets.

By the Sympathetic Imagination, the Romantics have been conceived as obtaining transient glimpses into the transcendental ground, thwarted, however, from complete veridical immersion as a consequence of the prevalent egotistical sublime. Romantic verse, interpreted as a sublimation or rarefaction by secondary process thinking of the transcendental ground or as a harnessing of the infinite through the temporal by the Symbol, is in the meontic mode, at once the record of these fleeting moments and a yearning for utter sensory experience of this ground. This goal has been argued to be synonymous with the final stage in Hartman's citation Romanticism's re-appropriation of the biblical myth of 'Eden-fall-redemption' into the progression of human consciousness, that is, from dependence on nature, to isolated self-consciousness, to reintegration with nature by birth into the Imagination. The last state being the ultimate instantiation of that equivocal ideal we hear so much about in Romantic theorizing on the Imagination – 'the coalescence of subject and object.' In what follows, Wordsworth's *Prelude* and *Immortality Ode* are considered to illustrate these arguments.

[67] *Manfred*. Act 1, scene 1, 301-302

CHAPTER SIX: An Analysis of *The Prelude* and *The Immortality Ode.*

I aim to read *The Prelude*[68] as an illustration of my thesis that Romantic-meontic poetry is a self reflexive account of thwarted mystical experience. The application of Wordsworth to this end may be justified in several ways. First *The Prelude*, as a story of the progression of the poet's mind from isolated subjectivity to Sympathetic Imagination, situates the poet dialectically between nature as a humanizing agency and Imagination as an unruly, apocalyptic force (Hartman, 1964). Wordsworth grapples with these two influences in *The Prelude*. This will provide a dramatic illustration of my proposition that Romantic-meontic verse should be conceived of as 'sublimated super-conscious material.' This troping of higher consciousness is portrayed in *The Prelude* as an oscillation between a poetry which is here literal, spare, and earthy, and there diaphanous, celestial and strange. There are instances in *The Prelude* where we feel at home, and others where we feel ourselves, to paraphrase Leavis (1949) on Shelley, to be 'flying away from reality'(p.68). He would seem to violate the useful aesthetic distinction set out in chapter 2.3 between the 'mimetic' and 'meontic' modes. This ambiguity presents *The Prelude* as a prototypical display of Romantic-meontic verse.

Therefore, the main premise of the analysis is that Romantic-meontic consciousness is a hybrid awareness of ascension and fall, poised between the weight and gravity of 'nature' or 'outward sense,' and the 'upward tendency,' or what I have been referring to as 'The Third Eye.' Thoreau (1845-1854:1992) notes the dialectic between an anomalous, pure, supernal consciousness on the one hand, and 'nature' on the other – used throughout this analysis as a figure for 'the discursive,' 'secondary processing[69],' or the 'art function:'

> He [the poet] must be something more than natural – even supernatural. Nature will not speak through but along with him. His voice will not proceed from her midst, but, breathing on her, will make her the expression of his thought. He then poeticizes when he takes a fact out of nature into spirit. He speaks without reference to time or place. His thought is one world, hers another. He is another Nature – Nature's brother. Kindly offices do they perform for one another. Each publishes the other's truth. (*Journal*, 1, 74-75)

[68]Hereafter cited as '1805.'

[69] Primary process thinking is a mode of thought which is non-discursive, disobedient of grammatical and logical laws, and negligent of spatio-temporal categorization. This is the kind of thought employed in the dream. Secondary process thinking, on the other hand, is discursive, grammatical and logical. This is the kind of thought employed by waking consciousness in discourse, mathematics etc. (Freud, 1908a).

This gestures towards the tension between discursive and experiential transcendental knowledge, which I aim to highlight as Wordsworth's 'natural supernaturalism' in *The Prelude.* I arrive at the conclusion, however, that this is less a dialectic or a tension than a form of reciprocity for the poet.

In this regard, throughout I wish to employ Vendler's (2004) definition of 'thinking:' "The second order formation of an aesthetic and linguistic gestalt from a first-order perception" (p. 48). The idea is a Freudian (1908a) one, namely, that 'thought' or 'expression' in the arts, is the outcome of a progression, whereby raw, undifferentiated psychic contents ("first-order perceptions") undergo a process of rarefaction. In poetry, this 'rarefaction,' which Vendler refers to as "second-order formation," would involve the employment of figurative language, the stress being on the 'figuring' of these "first-order perceptions." In applying this definition to my views, the use of terms throughout such as 'sublimation' and 'art function' are intended to convey this "second-order formation." By itself, a "first-order perception" takes the form of inchoate rambling, akin to a stream-of-consciousness-like writing wherein there is deficit of aesthetic discretion. This, I have suggested, is what distinguishes the Romantic-meontic poet from the mystic – the poet exercises aesthetic control on his prophetic thinking in the fashioning of a linguistic "*gestalt"* – something unified and coherent. Through illustration from *The Prelude* and passages from other works, my argument will be that Wordsworth's struggle is with the finding of a style which can at once retain the inclination towards the prophetic, while maintaining the rudiments of the poetic, that is, to be both artist and mystic, without 'condescending' to the status of artist, nor freely 'ascending' too far into the mystic heights. Wordsworth refers to this process of rarefaction as the "co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed when in…a less excited state." This "cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feeling" ('Preface' to *The Lyrical Ballads*,1802:1974,p.146). It is poetry, those "second-order formations," which provides an "intertexture of ordinary feeling." This keeps him grounded on the shore, without which he would be blown out to sea.

Hartman's (1964) insightful claim that two powers, 'Milton and nature,' fought for Wordsworth's soul (p.xiv), aptly captures the tension we are elucidating. By the former he is said to be a prophet, visionary and 'bard elect,' and by the latter, he becomes an 'inmate of the

world,' a 'man speaking to men.' In a single vision he apprehends that 'apocalypse, paradise, groves Elysian, huge, mighty shapes and forms' are rooted in the soil of common experience – "the simple produce of a common day" ('Preface' to *The Excursion*,105-113, in Owen and Smyser,1974,p.7) Typically, this dialectic is also characterized in aesthetic terms as the distinction between the 'sublime and the beautiful.' In what follows, this commonplace is reexamined – perceptions of the sublime are the consequence of insufficiently sublimated super-conscious material, while those of the beautiful are the outcome of rigorously rarefied super-conscious material. Whether conceived of as 'Milton and nature,' 'the sublime and the beautiful' or 'the prophetic and the artistic,' all signify a common hypothesis: a view of the Romantic psyche as integrated, in that it is imbued with both unconscious 'depth' and mystical 'height.'

Finally, as argued, the crisis of cognitive circularity and closure is one which manifests itself in various systems of thought. It is what hinders the philosopher from solving the mind-body problem and the Romantic from voluntary experiential knowledge of the transcendental ground. Wordsworth's is a poetics of closure,[70] and his verse demonstrates this principle in action: as I aim to show with reference to both *The Prelude* and the *Immortality Ode*, Wordsworth cannot revert to his old powers of 'Child'-like vision for his ambition to versify this problem is what thwarts him. He becomes the proverbial dog chasing his tail in his efforts to use consciousness to poeticize higher-order consciousness. After the failed *Recluse*, and by its demonstration of this 'philosophical' point, *The Prelude* is the product of a poet who Coleridge (1804:1956) insisted was "…the first and greatest Philosophical poet"(p.206).

6.1. The Sublimation of Super-Consciousness by Secondary Process Thinking: The 'Intertexture of Ordinary Feeling.'

> With [nature's] hues,
> Her forms, and with the spirit of her forms,
> He clothed the nakedness of austere truth (*The Excursion*,1850:2007,I,268-269).

[70] On the other hand, there is an important sense in which *The Prelude* is a fundamentally 'open-ended' poem – one that was begun without a definite structure in mind, and which grew and grew over time by an extended 'tinkering.'

In Book XIII of *The Prelude* (1805), Wordsworth reflects on the course he has taken with his reader through this extended autobiography of his own consciousness, and thus discerns the three-part logic of the work, which reconciles with Hartman's (1962) triad of 'Nature, self-consciousness, imagination:'

> …we have traced the stream
> From darkness, and the very place of birth
> In its blind cavern, whence is faintly heard
> The sound of waters; followed it to light
> And open day, accompanied its course
> Among the ways of Nature, afterwards
> Lost sight of it bewildered and engulphed
> Then given it greeting as it rose once more
> With strength, reflecting in its solemn breast 180.
> The works of man, and face of human life;
> And lastly, from its progress we have drawn
> The feeling of life endless, the one thought
> By which we live, infinity and God. (1805,XIII,172-184)

The "course among the ways of Nature" I take to mark Hartman's (1962) first phase ('Nature'); having "Lost sight of it, bewildered and engulphed," we find the poet isolated in the 'self-consciousness' of phase two, wherein apocalyptic visions and terrible 'shocks of consciousness' from what Hartman (1964) calls the 'apocalyptic' Imagination plague the poet, and lastly, as [nature] "rose once more," the poet's mind is reconciled to nature's familiar forms, marking the genesis of the sympathetic Imagination. I will consider what the culmination in "Infinity and God," might mean in concluding the analysis by exploring the idea of 'Wordsworth as Mystic.' First, however, to discuss Hartman's (1962) second phase, 'self-consciousness,' wherein the poet has "lost sight" of nature, "bewildered and engulphed," and its significance for the idea of language as displaced mystical experience in *The Prelude* (1805).

The following passages from Book I portray the poet in an anxious and unfamiliar state:

> … my brain
> Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
> Of unknown modes of being. In my thoughts 420.
> There was a darkness - call it solitude,
> Or blank desertion - no familiar shapes
> Of hourly objects, images of trees,
> Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields,
> But huge and mighty forms that do not live
> Like living men moved slowly through my mind
> By day, and were the trouble of my dreams. (1805, I, 418-427)

"Dim, undetermined, unknown, darkness" and "blank" are all suggestive of a recondite mode of consciousness. The necessarily vague "modes of being" and "huge and mighty forms" obscure any sense of familiar detail. Similarly, he will go on to write of "those fleeting moods/Of shadowy exultation" (1805,II,331-332). Here is *The Prelude's* first statement of those loose, un-identified arcana of the Imagination's conceit, both horrifying and delighting, which will continue to overwhelm the poet before his visions become more rarefied, that is, until:

> With life and Nature, purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought,
> And sanctifying by such discipline,
> Both pain and fear, until we recognise
> A grandeur in the beatings of the heart (1805, I, 437 - 441)

There are numerous cognates throughout *The Prelude* for the idea of 'sublimation' or, as discussed in the literature review, 'rarefaction by an augmented secondary process thinking.' Here, we have three: "purifying," "sanctifying," and "discipline," the consequences of which is recognition of and joyful acquiescence in our mortal selves - "a grandeur in the beatings of the heart." "Nature," will act as "the intertexture of ordinary feeling" ('Preface' to *The Lyrical Ballads*,1802:1974,p.146) and 'organize' psychic forces which are 'unbound,' by rendering them into a familiar aspect. This idea is a fundamental preoccupation of the poet throughout. In preceding lines he refers to the "severe[r] interventions" that Nature would employ in order to "frame" his mind (1805,I,363-370). The difference between "elements of feeling and of thought" 'unsanctified' and 'unpurified' on the one hand, and those which have been "disciplined" on the other, may be elucidated by the commonplace distinction between 'the sublime and the beautiful.' Of the 'sublime,' Burke (1757:1978) said that "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger…or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime…"(p.197). He further cites 'obscurity,' 'vastness,' and 'infinity' as sources of the sublime. 'Beauty,' he suggests, is characterized by images of clarity, littleness and quaintness. Passages in *The Prelude* associated with the sublime can be shown to connote fear, grandeur, passion, and power, whereas those associated with the beautiful connote tenderness, calmness and gentleness[71]. Stalknecht (1929), however, fixes the analogy between the aesthetic distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, with the psychological

[71] The following journal entry by Dorothy Wordsworth captures the essence of 'the sublime:' "[William] had been surprised and terrified by a sudden rushing of winds, which seemed to bring earth, sky and lake together, as if the whole were going to enclose him." (in Bowra, 1950, pg.91).

distinction between the unconscious and the conscious mind. The unconscious is thought of as a dark repository for psychic impulses which have been pushed out of awareness to protect the ego of the individual from their dreadful content. Those bits that have been adequately sublimated and gentrified are allowed into conscious awareness. Thus, while the correlation between the sublime and the unconscious on the one hand, and the beautiful and the conscious on the other is well established, we may consider the implications of this correlation for Wordsworth's poetry when viewed as a form of displaced mystical experience. This view extends the association between the aesthetic and the psychological highlighted by Stalknecht (1929) thus: verse in *The Prelude* which we call 'sublime' is those remnants of higher-order consciousness (as opposed to *un*-consciousness) that remain un-rarefied and un-sublimated. The product is a 'terrible beauty.' The beautiful, on the other hand, are rigorously sublimated super-conscious contents, whereby the prophetic vision, by way of the secondary processes, has 'condescended' to art. The product is a vision of nature in its familiar, almost pastoral, aspect.

However, it is plausible to assume that Wordsworth valued a balance between these two types of vision. By his definition, "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility" ('Preface' to *The Lyrical Ballads*,1802:2006,p.273). Potent, overwhelming feelings are necessary but not sufficient for poetry. What poetry requires are emotions "recollected in tranquility," that is, sublime and visionary experience remembered in a less excited state. Wordsworth, as noted by Bloom (1994) and as I shall illustrate by analysis of *The Immortality Ode*, values memory and time in order to narrate experience after the fact. This 'distance' allows visionary experience to be gentrified by language and hence for the public articulation of sublime experience. This 'mediated' access is, in a sense, all there *can* be. This places Wordsworth as artist first and mystic second. In prioritizing the discursive over the experiential, we are assured that he remains 'a man speaking to men.' Similarly, Wordsworth asserts that nature exerts, upon "circumstances most awful and sublime," and upon "…that beauty, which as Milton sings/ Hath terror in it" (1805,XIII,225-226), a "domination" which "moulds, endues, abstracts, combines" these sublime visions. Nature, moreover, is a "…counterpart/And brother of the glorious faculty [the Imagination]/Which higher minds bear with them as their own" (1805,XIII,88-90). Thoreau (1845-1854:1992) was apparently alluding to this reciprocity when

he asserted that "[the poet's] thought is one world, [Nature's] is another. He is another Nature – Nature's brother. Kindly offices do they perform for one another"(*Journal*,1,74-75).

Thus, by the beginning of Book II, as his "sympathies enlarge" and the "common range of visible things" grow dear to him, he "already begins to love the sun" (1805,II,181-184), that is, the empirical sun of the 'outward,' rather than the 'inner,' eye, for:

> A tranquilizing spirit presses now
> On my corporeal frame, so wide appears
> The vacancy between me and those days,
> Which yet have such self-presence in my mind… (1805, II, 27-30)

It is not without a sense of nostalgia that the poet yields to the dulling, etherizing effects of nature, 'pressing' down on his flighty Imagination, and driving a wedge between the states we may refer to as 'the Child' and 'the Man.' It is via the 'spots of time' that the poet retains 'such a self presence' of the Child. We are here introduced to Wordsworth's fears of discontinuity, shared by Keats who 'has fears that he may cease to be,' (*When I Have Fears That I May Cease To Be*,1 in Barnard,2003,p.221*)* and his desire noted by Coleridge (1811:1969) to "carry the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood"(*Lectures*,p.326). 'The Child' is the repository, as he will go on to describe, of "…the hiding-places of my power…" (1805,XI,336),[72] and he wants to harvest up this state of being for some desolate season of the heart, which adulthood will surely present him with:

> I have endeavoured to display the means
> Whereby the infant sensibility,
> Great birthright of our being, was in me
> Augmented and sustained… (1805,II,264-267)

There is an implicit distinction here between the reader and the poet: the "infant sensibility" inheres in us all, yet *The Prelude* itself could only be written by one within whom this sensibility is "augmented and sustained." It is thus a poetic formulation of the point made in *Lyrical Ballads* (cited on page 35) that the poet is a man, but one more greatly endowed than the 'common man.' As I will illustrate with reference to *The Immortality Ode*, the sustenance of this sensibility is a core concern. The poem is a lament for this loss of sustenance, and the usurpation of the Child's capacity for unbounded, Imaginative vision, tempered by those forces which habituate and localize, namely, nature and the discursive function. By analogy, Freud

[72] The 1850 version states: "The hiding places of *man's* power/Open…" (XII, 279, italics added), drawing on his principle that "the child is father of the man." (*My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold*,1802,7).

(1916:1922) used the word ‘culture’ to denote that circumscribing influence which represses the primal instincts. Here, it is the act of writing itself, using nature as a muse, that binds the Child’s mystic awareness, allowing the common range of “…*visible* things” (1805,II,182,italics added) to grow dear to him, and thereby initiating an illusory dualism between Man and Child: “…I seem/Two consciousnesses - conscious of myself [The Man],/ And of some other Being ([The Child]…” (1805,II,31-33) which I suggested are the phenomenal and transcendental selves respectively.

The most lucid statement of the idea of sublimation, however, is in Book V:

> …Visionary Power
> Attends upon the motion of the winds
> Embodied in the mystery of words;
> There darkness makes abode, and all the host
> Of shadowy things do work their changes there,
> As in a mansion like their proper home.
> Even forms and substances are circumfused
> By that transparent veil with light divine,
> And through the turnings intricate of verse,
> Present themselves as objects recognised… (1805,V, 619-628)

In the preceding lines (612-619) Wordsworth distinguishes two kinds of ‘nature.’ The first is “living nature” – the natural world experienced through the senses – and the second is the “great nature” experienced vicariously through the “glittering verse” of the works of “mighty Poets.” In the latter, language “embodies” visionary power, provides an “abode” for darkness, and “circumfuses” the Forms such that they may be presented as familiar to the empirical ear and eye. It is the “turnings” of verse, namely, the troping and figuration of thought into language, which Wordsworth identifies as necessary for a recognizable art form. Freud (1908) Lacan (in Kristeva 1984) and Kristeva (1984) have each theorized that poetry may broadly be defined as ‘the troping of the unconscious.’ The fact that the night dream, wherein the unconscious is in a state of uncensored play, may present us with “objects recognized” or ‘re-cognized’ is a result of ‘the dream work,’ which Freud (1908) explained as processes which ‘condense,’ ‘displace,’ ‘symbolize’ and ‘represent’ primal psychic energy in the form of impulses and desires, into allegorically familiar elements from everyday life. Generally, the images in the dream function metaphorically. Wordsworth’s terminology for these processes, conducted by ‘nature,’ - “That domination which…oftentimes/Exerts upon the outward face of things,/So moulds them, and endues, abstracts, combines…” (1805,XIII,77-79) - is an

analogous function. Wordsworth's "Nature" is a proleptic version of modern psychology's 'dream work,' making him the unacknowledged preemptor of this theory.

The poet's mind, it is argued by these theorists, conducts a similar, albeit conscious, form of dream work when employing figurative language. Rhetoric is a kind of voluntary dream work, 'condensing,' 'displacing' and 'symbolizing' thought. Yet I want to propose that the prophetic tones in Wordsworth suggest that it is more appropriate to think about this verse as the rhetoric of a transcendental or super-conscious, as opposed to unconscious (as Freud would have it), faculty, rarefied into a medium, not entirely empirical and mimetic, but nonetheless grounded enough in convention to be identified as poetry. This rarefied medium is supposed to function as art, as opposed to a diffuse and arcane, mystic rapture[73]. The "shadowy things" that are subjected to "changes" through discursive laws are typically conceived, apropos Freud, as proceeding from the unconscious depths of the psyche. Yet Romanticism, certainly Wordsworthian Romanticism, I would argue, wants them to be sourced from its 'heights.' This 'condescension' from mysticism to art is often alluded to:

> But *descending*
> From these imaginative heights, that yield
> Far-stretching views into eternity,
> Acknowledge that to Nature's humble power 1190.
> Your cherished sullenness is *forced to bend*
>
> (*The Excursion*,1850:2007,IV,1188-1192, italics added).

Both passages point towards a meta-level awareness within the poet – he acknowledges a difference in kind between the state of 'Imagination' and the state of 'Nature,' yet this acknowledgment *itself* takes the form of verse. We cannot take seriously that Wordsworth is disillusioned by the fact that his visions of eternity are humbled by 'nature's' appropriations, for he uses this state of affairs as the subject matter *of* his poetry. Hence, as suggested in the literature review, the Romantic is deferred from paradise because he romanticizes this very deferral, as Wordsworth appears to be doing here. Moreover, since this kind of 'dejection' is a resource for poetic subject matter, the Romantic *revels* in it. Few things are as sweet to the

[73] Interestingly, the latter is precisely what FR Leavis (1936) will charge the quality of Shelley's poetry in *The Triumph of Life* with: "A drifting phantasmagoria – bewildering and bewildered. Vision opens into vision, dream unfolds within dream, and the visionary perspectives…shift elusively and are lost; and the failure to place the various phases or levels of visionary drift with reference to any grasped reality is the more significant because of the palpable effort." (pg.222)

Romantic poet as to be, in Keats's phrase, "alone and pail'y loitering." (*La Belle Dame sans Merci*, 1, 2).

This ironic reverence for the inevitable 'bending' of the Imagination to the conventions and rigours of a natural art form, for its utility as a subject matter, is similarly seen in:

> Imagination! - lifting up itself 525.
> Before the eye and progress of my song
> Like an unfathered vapour… (1805,VI,525-527)

I have been discussing the idea of sublimation primarily in terms of a corollary to Freudian theory, the key principles of which are alluded to in this passage. "Lifting up itself/Before the eye and progress of my song" is significant. The Imagination's eminence precedes the eye (sense) and song (language/art), thereby usurping the epistemic faculties. Extrasensory and extralinguistic, it is a transcendental faculty which precedes sublimation. With the extinguishing of the "…light of sense…," "…in flashes…" (1805,VI,534-535), the 'despotic eye' yields to the 'Third Eye,' allowing glimpses into the hyperouranic. Moreover, it is an "unfathered" or 'uncultured' faculty. In Freudian (1916:1922) terms, fear of the threatening father, troped as 'civilization,' which is the formative stuff of the tyrannical superego,[74] has not initiated its repressive mechanisms on the psyche's 'inappropriate' primal impulses. To perpetuate the analogy, Imagination as transcendental faculty, hovers in a meta-realm, untouched by the rigours and conventions that classify a form of creativity as 'a work of art.' Nature and the secondary processes cannot repress nor rarefy it, and it will resist any 'local habitation and name' that language or song will impose on it.

A further connection to this is found in the idea of the Wordsworthian 'Child' which I have already suggested is Wordsworth's symbol for a state of mystic consciousness. For Freud (1916:1922) the child's psyche is less governed by repressive mechanisms and before a certain age remains, like the Imagination, 'unfathered.' As noted, the "spots of time" are inextricably linked to 'the Child,' indeed, they "tak[e] their date/From our first childhood…" (1805,XI, 274-275). Yet the famous passage will elaborate the connection further:

> There are in our existence spots of time,

[74] 'Superego' is not to be confused with what I have been referring to as 'super-consciousness.' The superego is a Freudian component of the psyche which governs our commitment to cultural norms and conventions, and is facilitated by the imposition of these norms by the parents in the child's formative years.

Which with distinct preeminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier and more deadly weight
In trivial occupations and the round
Of ordinary intercourse… (1805,XI,257-263).

If this poetry is indeed, a kind of 'displaced mystical experience,' it is through 'the spots' that the poet's mystical experience is displaced into his art. They are like a jolt of consciousness into the empyrean heights – momentary flashbacks and reminders, not only of that 'other world,' but of the sordidness of this one – its dull film of routine and familiarity - teasing the mind with offerings from afar. For this reason, coupled with the inability to invoke them at will, they may ultimately be a burden rather than a relief, and are thus indispensable to the roots of Romantic melancholy, that is, consciousness of a latent potential for veridical mystical experience, but which is perpetually thwarted.

The spots of time, those harvested portions of the Child and the agent by which his days may be "bound each to each by natural piety," are "depressed/By false opinion and contentious thought" and burdened by our "trivial occupations" and rounds of "ordinary intercourse." Such is the Wordsworthian definition of popular culture. 'Popular opinion,' that populace of

… men adroit
In speech and for communion with the world
Accomplished, minds whose faculties are then
Most active when they are most eloquent,
And elevated most when most admired. (1805,XII, 255-259)

is the progeny of the repressive function, and it is this which blots out our spots of time, sealing 'the hiding places of man's power.' The spots themselves are depressed/repressed downwards and out of awareness by "the weight/Of all this unintelligible world" (*Tintern Abbey*,1798,40-41). Too much clarity and distinctness as an artist can cloy one's vision, as an excessive concern with social plaudits – by "a mind most active when most eloquent, and most elevated when admired" - can make one neurotic. "The child" is indeed "father of the man." (*My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold*,1802,7). Interestingly, the formulation 'spots of time' also implies the coalescence of the spatial and temporal – the 'space-time' of a higher dimension alluded to in Chapter 3.1 - rather than the mechanistic separation of 'space and time.'

This section has introduced the broad idea of the sublimating and rarefying action of nature on the poet's Imagination. The tension between these two 'forces' was elucidated with reference to the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, the 'Child' and 'the man' and by Freudian dream theory. The following extends the theme of sublimation by focusing on the sublimation of sound.

6.2. Sublimation of Sound

This reading of *The Prelude* may suggest that the transcendental Self, or Wordsworthian 'Child,' is susceptible to undifferentiated, inchoate blasts of sound, as opposed to melody and music, which are products of the secondary processes. "At that time [of Childhood]," the poet would "feel whate'er there is of power in sound/To breathe an elevated mood" and listen to

> …sounds that are
> The ghostly language of the ancient earth… (1805,II,327-328).

Hartman (1979), in the earliest reference to this idea, defines the poetry in these passages as "echo humanized" (pg.195). *The Prelude's* key illustration of this idea is an oft quoted passage from the first book:

> The mind of Man is framed even like the breath
> And harmony of music. There is a dark
> Invisible workmanship that reconciles
> Discordant elements, and makes them move
> In one society… (1805,I,351-355).

This elucidates Hartman's phrase, for the poet alludes to an inexplicable cognitive process which organizes disparate psychic elements into an orchestrated unity. The mind under the governance of these processes is of a piece -it is, to stress the poet's simile, like "music," as if constituted by aesthetic form, in contrast to dissonant noise. Here, "harmony," "framed," "workmanship" and "reconciled" are employed as variations on the "discipline" motif introduced above. The use of "society," moreover, accentuates the sense of the inexplicable and unruly as being 'localised' or 'humanised' by these processes. Hartman, however, does not go so far as to make the Freudian connection by inviting us to think of this process of 'humanization' as a form of 'sublimation' or 'secondary process thinking.' Moreover, the present argument uses the Freudian theory of poetry as 'sublimated unconscious material' to

invoke a corollary theory for Romantic-meontic poetry as the product of 'sublimated super-conscious material.' As there is a faculty of vision which penetrates the transcendental ground, allowing the poet impressions of that 'other nature' which lacks the 'familiar shapes' detectable by outward sense – "…I forgot/That I had *bodily* eyes…" (1805,II,368-369,italics added) - so there are primal melodies, unchastened by "the still, sad music of humanity"(*Tintern Abbey*, 91). This faculty will wane with age:

> For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of Thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes,
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. (*Tintern Abbey*, 88-93)

Mysticism posits that a current of sound streams through the universe, known as the *Shabd* or 'sound current' and is audible in certain states of raised consciousness. It is perceived as light and sound. (Johnson, 1939:1993). Coleridge (1798) discerns it in the *Eolian Harp*: "a light in sound, a sound-like power in light" (28). Further, in *Frost at Midnight* he instructs:

> So shalt thou see and hear
> The lovely sounds and shapes intelligible
> Of that eternal language which thy God
> Utters, who from eternity doth teach
> Himself in all, and all things in himself. (58-62 in Halmi, Magnuson and Modiano,2004 p.121)

Interestingly, *Frost* appears in February 1798 and *Tintern* in July 1798. Given that both stress a certain kind of 'education,' one of the characteristics of which is a more 'refined' way of seeing and hearing, they are undoubtedly in conversation with each other.[75] This 'education' seems to entail a disciplining of the faculties appropriate to the construction of nature poetry in a familiar style. The apocalyptic visions and inchoate warbles give way to sights and sounds recognized. There is often a coincidence of light and sound in these poets' allusions to the primal melodies, similar to Johnson's (1939:1993) account of the mystical 'sound current.' Coleridge's "Thou needst not ask of me/what this strong music in the soul may be!...This light,

[75] In addition to Wordsworth's adoption of the form of the 'conversation poem' from Coleridge, arguably 'the father' of the form, the two poems describe benedictions and hopes for the future lives of loved ones based on retrospection into the poets' pasts. For example, an identical tone is evident in Wordsworth's "Therefore let the moon/Shine on thee in thy solitary walk"(*Tintern*,134-135) and Coleridge's "Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee" (*Frost*, 65). Some common imagery, moreover, is the moon - Coleridge describes "icicles/Quietly shining to the quiet moon"(*Frost*,73-74), as well as the wind as a benevolent force to prompt their loved one's onward: Wordsworth's blessing is that "the misty mountain winds be free to blow against thee"(*Tintern*,136-137), while Coleridge hopes that his child "shalt wonder like a breeze/By lakes and sandy shores"(*Frost*,54-55).

this glory…All melodies the echoes of that voice/All colours a suffusion from that light" (*Dejection,*V,59-75 in Bloom,2004,p.391) seems to be alluding to the same ineffable, synesthesic phenomenon. The mystic resonance, moreover, is accentuated when one considers the New Testament's "In the beginning was the Word" (*John* 1,1), as well as the Old Testament's "And God *said*: Let there be Light."(*Genesis,*1,3 in Fisch,1992,p.1, Italics added). Similarly, Wordsworth refers to "the master light of all our seeing" (*Immortality Ode,*153*).* The poetry thus suggests that both poets were interested in extrasensory experience – consider Wordsworth's "…the light of sense/Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us/The invisible world…" (1805,VI,534-536) – regarding which Bowra (1950) notes: "There were moments when by some mysterious and magnificent process he passed beyond the visible world into some other order of being, vaster and more wonderful"(pg,92). The aim has been to elucidate this 'process' and this 'other order of being' – to account for *The Prelude's* seemingly vague allusions to such processes and orders of being with more precision.

The notion of humanizing sound, of ascribing a local shape to the noises of the earth, is one with which Wordsworth is heavily preoccupied: "And heard that instant in an unknown tongue…A loud prophetic blast of harmony" (1805,V,94-96); "Black drizzling crags that spake…As if a voice were in them…" (1805,VI,563-564); "A deep and gloomy breathing-place, through which/Mounted the roar of waters, torrents streams/ Innumerable, roaring with one voice" (1805,XIII,57-59). "Such rebounds," moreover, "our inward ear/Catches sometimes from afar/Listen, ponder, hold them dear; For of God/of God they are (*Yes It Was The Mountain Echoe*,1806,V,17-20). For those who are attuned to the primal melodies, "Theirs is the language of the heavens" and "Words are but under-agents in their souls - /When they are grasping with their greatest strength/They do not breathe among them" (1805,XII,270-274). The apogee of this idea is found in Book IV of *The Excursion* when the poet asks whether or not "the soul, the being of your life has/Received a shock of awful consciousness"

> too enormous for the sound
> Of human anthems – choral song,
> Or burst sublime instrumental harmony
> To glorify the Eternal!...
>
> Inaudible by daylight…
> With the loud streams, and often, at the hour
> When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,
> Within the circuit of this fabric huge,
> One voice…

(*The Excursion*,1850:2007, IV, 1162-1178)

Again, in a quintessential Romantic re-appropriation of Enlightenment thought, the "One voice" is "inaudible by daylight" because too much light blinds us, as too much clarity and distinctness deafens us. The Nature of the Enlightenment was under the microscope - crude, cluttered and empirical, killing, at least for Keats, "the poetry of the rainbow."[76] Only states of 'twilight consciousness'[77] can discern that 'underpresence.' Yet absolute higher vision is always thwarted and deferred in Wordsworth. The result is "…an obscure sense/Of *possible* sublimity"(1805,II,336-337,italics added), an important ur-formulation in Wordsworth denoting a gentrified Miltonic sensibility, and a quarantined prophecy in the form of instantaneous glimpses into the place beyond the heavens. This quarantining effect is assisted by his disposition for defining things in the negative. M.H. Abrams (1971) notes that Wordsworth rarely says what something *is*, but rather, uses the words 'neither' and 'nor' in conveying what it is *not*. There is, at times, a reticence about his visions, whereby what he offers us are, in T.S. Eliot's (in Leavis, 1936) words, "shy intuitions on the edge of consciousness." (p.74) A noteworthy exception would seem to be: "There *is* an active principle alive/In all things, in all natures…in the moving waters and invisible air." (*Excursion*,1850:2007,VIII,1-5) and similarly, the earlier and better known account of "A motion and a spirit, that impels/All thinking things, all objects of all thought/And rolls through all things." (*Tintern Abbey*, 100-102). These references might lead one to believe that Wordsworth subscribed to the philosophy of 'panpsychism,' which holds that everything in the universe is conscious (Searle, 1997). It is difficult to avoid this ascription for his insistence that "there is an active principle *alive* in all things" is an unequivocal definition of the position. While this may be a deranged view in light of modern biology, a psychoanalytic account would read the sentiments as a projection of his emotions onto the world, rather than the identification of something that exists in nature, also implied in: "To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower…I gave a moral life…Or linked them to some feeling…the one presence, and the Life/Of the great whole" (1805,III,124-131). A mystical reading, however, might allude to Wordsworth's acquaintance with the mystical 'sound current' which surges through every

[76] "Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings/conquer all mysteries by rule and line…Unweave a rainbow…" (*Lamia*, II, 234-236).

[77] As noted in Chapter One, Coleridge (1817:1969) referred to "the sudden charm, which accidents of light or shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape." (*Biographia*,XIV,p.5)

atom of the universe (Johnson, 1939:1993). The poet perhaps alludes more explicitly to this phenomenon, invisible and inaudible to the 'empirical' senses, by his assertion that he "…felt the sentiment of being spread/O'er all that moves…lost beyond the reach of thought/And human knowledge, to the human eye/Invisible" and "Most audible when the fleshly ear…Forgot its functions, and slept undisturbed." "…in all things," he continues, "I saw one life, and felt that it was joy" (1805,II,420-434). Here, furthermore, is the Romantic reconciliation of reason and emotion, or heart and head, that neo-classical psychology bifurcated: to 'see' or 'understand' *is* to 'feel' – to have what Wordsworth called "a heart that *watches* and receives" *(The Tables Turned*,1798,31-32 in Gill,2004,p.61,Italics added). If situated in context with the broader Romantic concerns of 'sympathy,' this current, like the synthesizing capabilities of the Imagination, is the unifying principle, for it inheres in man (the subject) and the world (the object) and is thus the means towards the 'coalescence of subject and object.'

Yet his authority is compromised when he says elsewhere of this principle that "tis a thing impossible to frame…" (*The Excursion*,1850:2007,IV,136). Once again we have the use of "frame" as a key synonym for 'discipline.' The assertion that exact knowledge of this principle "is impossible to frame" is not to suggest that the assertion is itself counterfeit or framed. He acknowledges its presence, but it is ultimately elusive, for "…in the main/It lies far hidden from the reach of words"(1805,III,184-185). The 'active principle' will not yield to the limitation of definition. He seems to confirm what Plato (*Republic*,380 B.C:1992,598c) considered to be the defect of the poet, when Plato observed that poets "utter great truths which they themselves do not understand:"(p.268)

> … the soul -
> Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
> Remembering not - retains an obscure sense
> Of possible sublimity. (1805, II, 334-337)

The memory retained of such glimpses is non-sentential – he cannot formulate what he experienced in propositional, symbolic terms, but has only a visceral recollection (the 'how') of the emotions it engendered. The use of 'how,' however, is ambiguous, for it might also refer to the manner by which the soul felt. The lines might suggest that both the visceral element and the manner are coterminous, in that there is reciprocity between them in memory.

With age, the poet will lament the waning of the Imagination, and hence his growing incapacity for mystic vision:

> The days gone by
> Come back upon me from the dawn almost
> Of life; the hiding-places of my power
> Seem open, I approach, and then they close;
> I see by glimpses now, when age comes on
> May scarcely see at all; and I would give
> While yet we may, as far as words can give,
> A substance and a life to what I feel:
> I would enshrine the spirit of the past
> For future restoration. (1805, XI, 333-342)

Herein lies a culmination of each of the core concerns I have been dealing with: Nostalgia for a past self and the harvesting and storing up of this self for the future; the lamentable fact of cognitive closure, and the very attempt to usurp this closure as responsible for the further deferral of transcendence and the extent to which romantic-meontic language may sublimate super-conscious experience. Shelley's (1821:2006) characteristic expression of the Romantic Imagination in the *Defence* captures the latter theme unequivocally:

> The mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness…Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is but a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet (p.846)…few poets of the highest class have chosen to exhibit the beauty of their conceptions in its naked truth and splendour, and it is doubtful whether the alloy of costume, habit etc., be not necessary to temper this planetary music for mortal ears. (p.843)

Drawing on Vendler's (2004) definition of 'thinking' as "the second-order formation of an aesthetic and linguistic gestalt from a first-order perception" (p.48), Shelly's "composition" is this "second-order formation " – it is the contamination of a mystical 'pure consciousness' (what Shelley's calls "the original conception of the poet" and what Vendler calls "first-order perception") by the 'art function,' and the output, having filtered through the sublimatory vessels of poetic decorum – "the alloy of costume and habit" to "clothe the nakedness of austere truth" (*The Excursion,*1850:2007,I,269) - is a pallid copy of the luminous Ground. Similarly, as cited, Coleridge claims that "All melodies the *echoes* of that voice/All colours *suffusion* from that light" (*Dejection,*V,74-75). Coleridge (1811-1812:1969) also noted that

"[Poetry] is the language of heaven, and in it we have…a *foretaste* and a *prophecy*, of the joys of heaven" (*Lectures*,p.191,Italics added). It is, however, also a nostalgic *reminder* of these joys. While one of the Romantic achievements was to free language from the Augustan forged manacles of convention, Shelley suggests that a fidelity to certain habits must maintain in the arts. Mystic rhetoric, perhaps, disregards these habits in that it is less concerned with "composition," and its utterances retain the mind's "original purity and force." It is these habits which temper the "planetary music" into the "still, sad music of humanity." At its most oppressive, the habitual secondary processes become the servants of "vulgar sense" and "…substitute a universe of death,/The falsest of all worlds, in place of that/Which is divine and true" (1805,XIII,140-143). The Freudian (1908) interpretation holds that poetry – that "feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet" – is the product of unconscious content sublimated by the rigors of figurative language and allowed into consciousness as a recognizable art form. In advocating a more appropriate view of Romantic-meontic poetry, namely, one which accounts for the Coleridgean (1817:1969) conferral of transcendental properties onto the Imagination, the aim has been to prompt ourselves to think of the repository of Romantic inspiration, which harbours verse in the order of Shelley's "planetary music," as a transcendental faculty. This led, furthermore, to a view of the Romantic-meontic psyche as a corollary to the Freudian psyche: as we attribute 'depth' to the latter, we should associate 'height' with the former.

Moreover, it was argued in Chapter Five that the cognitive closure within which the poet finds himself is symptomatic of the irrevocable need to romanticize the inability to know the transcendental ground in its full, veridical presence. Wordsworth's awareness of this fact in the above passage takes the form of a superbly controlled aesthetic statement. We note, for example, the use of punctuation to produce a tidy succession of claims which avoid enjambment: "The hiding places of my power/Seem open;
I approach, and then they close;/I see by glimpses now, when age comes on,/May scarcely see at all…" (1805,XI,335-338). His awareness of his decline in awareness is clear - the dramatization of his artistic crisis is made most lucid through the use of action and motion ("I approach; I see") and juxtaposed images of openings and closings, a sense of waning and winding down. Thus, by invoking his dejection *through* a poetic utterance of the highest order, he exacerbates it, for mysticism suggests that precise rhetorical refinement, coupled with an

intense preoccupation with the self - “The hiding places of *my* power;” “*I* approach;” “*I* see by glimpses;” “*I* would give;” “to what *I* feel;” “*I* would enshrine” - further extricates the mind of the poet from the hidden realms. Despite the appearance of the humbling of poetic powers with age, the humility is reified and glorified. It is a prototypical portrayal of what Keats (1818:1975) referred to as “the egotistical sublime”(p.157).

This section has argued for a view of Romantic poetry as sublimated super-consciousness. Passages which allude to this broader theme have been analysed, as well as those which deal more specifically with the idea of ‘sublimated sound.’ Having established this general theme, in what follows I focus on the form of the poetry in *The Prelude,* including imagery, diction and tone, which illustrates this argument in finer detail.

6.3. *The Prelude’s* Ambiguous Aesthetics.

Wordsworth must know that what he writes valuable is not to be found in nature (Blake,1810:1965,p.821-822).

It is difficult to reconcile Blake’s claim above with the popular view of Wordsworth as *the* poet of nature. To explain this discrepancy, it is necessary to embrace a third perspective: that the Wordsworthian aesthetic is, fundamentally, an ambiguous one. As will be shown, its imagery can be at once grounded in the soil, earthy and common to the extent of sordid pedestrianism – consider Macauley’s (1850) reference to “an endless wilderness of dull, flat, prosaic twaddle,” as well as Coleridge’s complaint to Hazlitt (1823:2006) of “a something corporeal, a matter-of-factness, a clinging to the palpable or often to the petty”(p.550) - and it can be transparent and ethereal to the point of non-recognition. Alert to this, Davie (1976) remarked that “The diction of *The Prelude* is neither abstract nor concrete, but something between the two.” (p.107). Further, where Abrams (1971) alluded to Wordsworth’s ‘natural supernaturalism,’ Bloom (1971) described his poetry as “hallowed commonplace” (p.224) or “secularized epiphany” (2004,p.333) and Hartman (1979) referred to his “divine idiocy.” (p.213). Each formulation responds in a different way to the same phenomenon. Finally, Darbishire (1972) observed that “his meaning has deep roots in spiritual experience, and for him, the life of the spirit is vitally one with the life of the senses” (p.74) and “his deepest experience, both of man and of nature, coming to him in rare moments, was the authentic experience of the mystic” (p.78). Such is his

'natural supernaturalism.' We have endeavoured to define and dramatize these somewhat vaguer allusions to Wordsworth's style and metaphysical perspective.

Johnson (1997) notes that the perfect mystic is typically unrecognizable, common and unassuming. He may even be considered by some to be derelict. Wordsworth's is thus the apt mystical aesthetic: a childlike innocence almost to the point of clumsiness pervades much of his verse, but which is yet often stirred up by sharp shafts of insight of vatic proportion. We may find ourselves swatting flies with the ignominious in a decrepit old cottage[78] only to be engulfed, moments later, by a terrible prophecy. Versatility for the oscillation between the sublime and the capricious is required from the reader. Coleridge (1817:1969) recognized this when he said:

> The first characteristic, though only occasional defect, which I appear to myself to find…is the inconstancy of the style. Under this name, I refer to the sudden and unprepared transitions from lines or sentences of peculiar felicity – at all events striking and original – to a style not only unimpassioned but undistinguished. [Wordsworth] sinks too often and too abruptly into that style…(*Biographia*,XXII,p.453).

Of course, we are less interested in the 'success' of *The Prelude* as a piece of poetry by Coleridge's standards, than in the possible reasons for this stylistic ambiguity, for which the hypothesis is that certain types of Romantic verse may be likened to sublimated super-conscious material. In conceiving of Wordsworth's poetry in this way, one can account for both the 'high' and the 'low' style, the latter being super-conscious material rigorously sublimated and gentrified, and the former, un-rarefied mystic rapture in, what Shelley (1821:1954) called, its "naked truth and splendour." (p.43). The following analyses argue for this view by foregrounding passages in *The Prelude* which portray this ambiguity.

To illustrate, let us consider:

> The solid mountains were as bright as clouds,
> Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
> And in the meadows and the lower grounds,
> Was all the sweetness of a common dawn -
> Dews, vapours and the melody of birds,
> And labourers going forth into the fields. (1805, IV, 334-339)

[78] See *The Ruined Cottage.*

This is not a nature we are always quite familiar with. While there is a suggested solidity and spatiotemporal cohesion (mountains in the background, meadows in the lower ground, birds above, labourers in the fields below) this does not sustain itself, for the mountains 'drenched in empyrean light,' burning bright as morning clouds infused by the sun, are rendered translucent. 'Empyrean' denotes a substance of pure fire or light from the abode of the gods. It connotes the transcendental, the sky. 'Dews' and 'vapours' allow the elements of the scene to melt further into themselves. These are not everyday workers going into the field – they have become symbols as diaphanous as the mist around them. These elements betray any clear sense of a "common dawn." The rendering of common folk into the symbolical is more strongly apparent in:

> …and suddenly
> Surprized with vapours, or on rainy days…
> Mine eyes have glanced upon [a Shepherd]…
> His Form hath flashed upon me glorified
> By the deep radiance of the setting sun… (1805,VIII,397-405).

The device is to envelop these solitaries in belts of mist and light – at once to mystify or obscure (an element of the Burkean sublime) and irradiate. The solidity of "solitary object[s]"(line 407) breaks down into the translucent, as impressionistic mist and light deliquesce the scene's particulars into "form[s]"(line 404). A similar effect is produced earlier on when we witness the poet "…drinking in/A pure organic pleasure from the lines/Of curling mist, or from the level plain/Of waters coloured by the steady clouds" (1805,I,590-593). That the poet also glimpses the Shepherd in the "distant sky"(VIII,406), further stresses the sense of the ethereal. The shepherd, "In size a giant, stalking through the fog,/His Sheep like Greenland bears"(VIII,401-402) (the ominous portrayal of size is another characteristic of Burke's sublime) is referred to as a "creature"(line 417). However, the poet acknowledges that the Shepherd is also "…a man/With the most common"(line 423-424). Herein lies the admixture of the common and the exceptional. The 'creature' is "spiritual *almost"* (line 417, italics added) – a phrase whose qualification reminds us of "…an obscure sense/Of *possible* sublimity…"(1805, II,336-337,italics added). Thus, in *The Prelude's* earliest reference to this tendency, Wordsworth stipulates that even in his ecstatic moments, "…those fits of vulgar joy…'mid that giddy bliss/Which like a tempest, works along the blood…The earth/And common face of Nature spake to me…" (1805,I,609-615). It is thus a defining characteristic of

his style to blend the mundane with the extraordinary – to give, as Coleridge (1817:1969) claims in *Biographia*, "the charm of novelty to things of the everyday"(XIV,p.5).

The following takes this ambiguous mode further, both aesthetically and metaphysically:

> …The immeasurable height 556.
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> And everywhere along the hollow rent
> Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears -
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
> As if a voice were in them - the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light,
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
> Characters of the great apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of eternity
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end. (1805,VI, 556-572).

There is a great deal of sensory and temporal disarray in this passage - things are at once in motion and arrested, in a state of finitude and infinitude, achieved by the use of oxymoron – 'immeasurable height,' 'stationary blasts,' – and the juxtaposition of 'tumult and peace.' Time is a non-entity in that finality and the perpetual present are indistinguishable, given by "woods decaying, never to be decayed" and "Of first and last, and midst, and without end." There is an agitation and an ontological confusion here. This volatile and vertiginous sight contrasts sharply with the "calm delight"(1805,I,580) and the "holy calm" (1805,II,367) he encounters elsewhere. Yet there is also an aesthetic, in addition to a metaphysical, confusion. This is not mimesis, nor is it unrecognizable. Three elements in the passage interact to contribute to this ambiguity. First, the sense of kinesis and violent flux, evoked by the blasts, shooting torrents, colliding winds, and the raving streams. Then, the sense of liquidity and melting evoked by the "black drizzling crags." Dark shades, movement and the deliquescence of the solid makes for a particularly ominous version of the Burkean sublime. Lastly, it is the abstractness inspired by "characters of the great Apocalypse/The types and symbols of eternity." These vague 'forms,' 'types' and 'characters' that haunt the poet throughout serve a similar function to the broad brush strokes and washes by which a painter smudges some of the particularity and detail of nature, coalescing its parts and obscuring its definition. It appears, however, as if the passage is

'grounded' by these 'characters,' 'types' and 'symbols,' for they seem to temper or contain the dizzying effects of the preceding lines. By ascribing to the vertiginous impressions these more 'steadying' terms, Wordsworth delineates, albeit loosely, the meontic boundaries, thereby avoiding sheer abstract delirium. He demonstrates 'how far one can go' before 'naturalism' is altogether done away with. These three impressions – motion, viscosity and partial formlessness – evidently interact with the ontological inconsistencies noted above to produce a prototype of the Romantic-meontic mode. Despite the circumscription by way of the 'characters,' 'types' and 'symbols,' this is still an a-nomological world, rather than the nature we know and about which we can make predictions.

Freudian theory (1908:1985) suggests that during the unconsciousness of the dream, a non-discursive mode of cognition, characterized by disobedience to spatiotemporal and logical laws, governs. This allows for contradiction to makes sense.[79] It would appear, by the metaphysical confusion depicted in the above passage that Wordsworth is 'dreaming with his eyes open' – a witty definition of poetry[80] given the notion of the 'troping' and 'figuring' of unconscious content - as a psychoanalytic account of the artistic process holds. This also suggests, further, that dreaming is like writing poetry with the eyes closed. Yet the view of Romantic-meontic poetry that has been proposed throughout suggests that he is troping the mystical superconscious, rather than the Freudian unconscious, and it is thus a transcendental, rather than subliminal, influence which steals over his waking sight. "Half dust, half deity/alike unfit to sink or soar,"[81] he is on the threshold of cognitive apotheosis. If there was ever an instance where the reader feels to be far from home in Wordsworth, it is here, when the sense of "…an under-presence…or whatsoe'er is dim/Or vast…" (1805,XIII,71-73) is felt.

Similarly, consider the following from Book II of *The Excursion*:

> *Oh, 'twas an unimaginable sight!*
> Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,
> Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,
> Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
> Molten together, composing thus,

[79] For example, one may have a conversation with time or the days of the week, or a single person in the dream may be two people at once.
[80] Hartman (1979) employed this in an essay as follows: "The poet, a famous definition holds, dreams with his eyes open…." (pg.191).
[81] Byron, (1817:2010). *Manfred*. Act 1, scene 2, 40-41,p.257.

Each lost in each, that marvelous array
Of temple, palace, citadel and huge
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapped. 860
Right in the midst, where interspace appeared
Of open court, an object like a throne
Under a shining canopy of state
Stood fixed; and fixed resemblances were seen
To implements of ordinary use,
But vast in size, in substance glorified;
Such as by Hebrew prophets were beheld
In vision – forms uncouth of mightiest power… (*The Excursion*,1850:2007,852-868).

This is Wordsworth engaging in turgid meonticism. While *The Excursion* has been criticized for its length (Hickson, 1997), it is not its length per se which renders the poem flawed, but passages in the above style, sustained for too many pages, which make it oppressive. Aesthetically, Wordsworth pursues a tangential account of his encounters with a wispy world of 'Forms,' 'types' and 'shapes,' while the particulars of nature are rendered into a debauched state of fluid coalescence. By way of copious impressionisms, nature has become diaphanous and ephemeral. If encounters with this alien nature were isolated and flanked by passages in a more familiar style, as I believe is characteristic of *The Prelude*, the dynamics would not be defective. With excessive violence done to realism and naturalism, we are overwhelmed by a deluge of wholly subjective and fleeting impressions.

This may be what Romanticism wants, but this kind of mania is not a telling example of how the Romantic aesthetic, in Wordsworthian practice, evolves from the Augustan. Since *all* is lofty and transcendental in *The Excursion*, the effect is diminished, dynamic flattens out into something surfeit, and the picture cloys. He thus becomes vulnerable to the same criticism that Leavis (1949) charged Shelley with, namely his "weak grasp upon the actual" by his almost "complete inability to hold an object in front of his mind." (pg.205) Of *The Triumph of Life*, Leavis (1949) observed:

> …in spite of the earnest struggle to grasp something real…the poem is a drifting phantasmagoria – bewildering and bewildered. Vision opens into vision, dream unfolds within dream, and the visionary perspectives…shift elusively and are lost; and the failure to place the various phases or levels of visionary drift with reference to any grasped reality is the more significant because of the palpable effort (p.222).

Wordsworth, beside himself in *The Excursion*, becomes as 'ineffectual an angel[82]' as Shelley, drunk on the milk of paradise. Once again, the necessity for 'nature,' which we have been using as a metaphor for the quality control of secondary process thinking, to gentrify his swollen transcendentalisms so as to condescend to the rigours of art, is shown to be crucial.

Yet it has been said of Wordsworth that "his muse…is a leveling one," (Hazlitt, 1825:1910, p.253) and that "literalness is the necessary preface to his genius…the most vital quality of his mind" (Jones,1954,p.15). Both are a commentary, in contrast with the above, on his vigilant *devotion* to the actual - a poet *is* "a man speaking to men" (Worsworth,1802:2006,p.269). Instances of this common, familiar style are frequent. In the 'Preface' to *The Excursion* he outlines a program for his poetics. He will speak "On Man, on Nature, on Human Life:"

> I…
> Would sing in spousal verse
> Of this great consummation, would proclaim –
> *Speaking of nothing more than what we are –*
> How exquisitely the individual Mind
> (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
> Of the Whole species) to the external world
> Is fitted, and how exquisitely too –
> Theme this but little heard of among men –
> The external world is fitted to the mind
> And the creation (by no lower name
> Can it be called) which they with blended might
> Accomplish: this is my great argument ('Preface' to *The Excursion*, 56-70 in Owen and Smyser, 1974,p.8)

His preoccupation will be with "how exquisitely the individual Mind…to the external world is fitted" and how the external world is fitted to the mind…" He will, moreover, intimate on this reciprocal communion, this 'coalescence of subject and object' (which might be taken as a definition of Imagination itself), *without* the explanatory aid of an exploded mythology or a newly fabricated one.[83] Rather, he draws on the elemental psychic states of man to discourse on this ideal of coalescence, this pre-lapsarian 'grace' he alludes to above, denoting a 'fit' between man and place or circumstance. There is no trace of Greek or Roman gods, allegory or a distinctive 'style.' The diction is often plain and spare, and the truths belong to everyman:

> Vain is the glory of the sky

[82] Arnold (1888:1967) described Shelley as a "beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain." (pg.730)
[83] This is in opposition, of course, to Blake, Keats and Shelley who invoke Los and Orc, Hyperion and Apollo, and Prometheus Bound and Unbound respectively.

The beauty vain of field and grove
Unless, while with admiring eye,
We also learn to love (*Glad Sight Wherever New with Old*, 5-8)

Using the premises of this thesis, we can offer a 'mystic' reading of the lines: the poet notes the worthlessness of observing nature if it only inspires a poetic response, and not 'silence,' with 'love' as a quieting and bracketing of the self, such that sympathetic communion with the other is made possible. The literature review elaborated on the Romantic notion of love by citation of Shelley's (1821:1954,p.127) concept of the psyche's 'reaching out' or identifcation of the self with the other. The "admiring eye" is a way of seeing that inspires lyrical utterance or artistic tribute. Yet my argument has suggested that this is ultimately an act of severance from the transcendental Self and Ground – "there is no need for art in paradise," as McFarland (1980, p.418) states, with "paradise" as a figure for that state of coalescence between the self and the Godhead, or 'love.' It was suggested that the Romantic poet may be limited to discursive, rather than experiential knowledge of transcendence, precisely because he perpetually romanticizes this limitation. For mysticism, the ego is the barrier between the self and the Godhead (Johnson,1939:1993). Yet the romanticizing of this 'fallen' condition is the very means by which the ego is reified. This is unduly portrayed in the above passage: in the very recognition of this truth, the poet utters it in verse, thus, in a sense, negating it. The lines are a succumbing to the circularity of human consciousness - to recognise that art is limited is one thing, but the poet cannot help but poeticize this fact, that is, to use this as subject matter for art itself, thus instantiating the problem of cognitive closure.

Perhaps it is unnecessary to invoke mystic ideas of 'annihilation of the phenomenal ego in love' with regard to the above passage, for this may corrupt its simplicity. One can easily mutilate the limbs of Wordsworth's poetic corpus by such an approach, and we assume that 'murder by dissection' is not the way the poet would have us read his work. Is it not, anyway, a certain naiveté which we find charming in his work? This philosophical innocence and 'matter-of-factness' is similarly apparent in

… From love, for here
Do we begin and end, all grandeur comes,
All truth and beauty - from pervading love -

That gone, we are as dust.[84] Behold the fields
In balmy spring-time, full of rising flowers
And happy creatures; see that pair, the lamb
And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways
Shall touch thee to the heart; in some green bower… (1805,XIII,149-156)

The declamatory tone in "From love…as dust" is perhaps reminiscent of Keats' "more happy, happy love" (*Ode on a Grecian Urn*,III,25) wherein quality control, after a moment of pontification, gives way to a brief episode of gushing. The naïve perspective is appropriately dramatized within a pastoral scene of spring, lambs and green bowers. This is a homely nature that we are familiar with. The poet seems to imply, further, that the 'love' associated with this nature is rather 'mundane,' for it is "human merely"(XIII,164) There is, he observes, "…higher love/Than this…" which "…proceeds/More from the brooding soul, and is divine"(1805,XIII,161-165). The opposition between the quotidian and the extraordinary is thus re-instantiated with reference to different kinds of love. Stylistically, there is no 'pull' in the above passage by what Hartman (1964) calls the 'apocalyptic Imagination,' into that nether world of terrible 'forms' and 'shapes.' Yet how seamlessly the poet can revert to the sublime mode:

Upon the edge of Autumn, fierce with storm
The wind blew down the vale of Coniston
Compressed as in a tunnel: from the lake
Bodies of foam took flight, and everything
Was wrought into commotion, high and low –
A roaring wind, mist and bewildered showers,
Ten thousand, thousand waves, mountains and crags,
And darkness, and the sun's tumultuous light
Green leaves were rent in handfuls from the trees…
The horse and rider staggered in the blast…
Meanwhile, by what strange chance I cannot tell,
What combination of the wind and clouds,
A large unmutilated rainbow stood
Immovable in heaven (From 'Notes' to 1805,VI,8-25)

The pastoral images are there – lakes, horses and riders, green leaves – yet they are uprooted in a vehement blast of wind, light and sound. The disarray and tumult juxtaposes magnificently with the stillness of the unmutilated rainbow, a quintessential Wordsworthian Romantic symbol. No reductive account will suffice for it. The awe and reverence it inspires in the poet, given in "by what strange chance I cannot tell/What combination of the wind and clouds" (18-19) renders it immune to rational explanation – Newtonian optics fall short in their explanatory

[84] Similarly, note: "…they whose hearts are dry as summer dust burn to the socket." (*The Excursion*,1850:2007,I,501-502)

reach. The image recalls to us Robert Frost's "Secret" that "sits in the middle and knows" (*The Secret Sits*,1-2,1951,p.394*)* and Melville's "insular Tahiti." (*Moby Dick*,58,p.202) All three suggest a point of repose in spite of the tumult, and are symbolic of consciousness unencumbered, poised and augmented.

There is thus an easy oscillation between the employment of imagery which is material and spare on the one hand, and diaphanous and strange on the other. The mimetic sensibility in Wordsworth suggests a humanization of the Imagination by nature, namely, what Keats (1818:1975), with reference to Wordsworth, called a "marty[ring]" of the poet's self to "the human heart(p.93)," and Hartman (1964) expressed as "the abnegation of Spenserian and Miltonic modes"(p.31). Yet the synthesis of Nature and Imagination is the Romantic 'purpose' previously discussed. The merging of these two currents marks the birth of Sympathetic Imagination, which corresponds to the third stage of Hartman's (1962) triadic progression of the poet's mind. Wordsworth was indubitably attracted to the prospect of extrasensory experience. The goal, at times, was not 'merely' to awaken the senses from the "lethargy of custom"(Coleridge,1817:1969,*Biographia*,XIV,p.7), but to move beyond them altogether, to identify with "The invisible world…" (1805,VI,536). Of this world, however, Bowra (1950) claims that "this is the only reality for Coleridge, but it is not what Wordsworth sought (p.92)." We might add that this is not what Wordsworth sought as tenaciously as Coleridge – a provision which accounts for the stylistic 'ambiguity' we have been discerning, manifested as a 'tension' between the sensory and the extrasensory, or the mimetic and the meontic.

At once the literal genius and 'ineffectual angel,' as this juxtaposition of moments within and between *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* shows, this ambiguity makes for an apt mystical aesthetic, for the mystic is, by definition, to be at once unassumingly humble and supernaturally charged. Hitchens (2007) has parodied this paradox: "pray excuse my…humility, but I happen to be…on an errand for God" (p.74). We find something of this self-derisory yet ego-maniacal attitude in the Romantics. The source of the contradiction in persona was accounted for by the Romantic poet's tendency to deify his dejection and isolation in the production of a self-obsessed mythology. Prior to concluding with a discussion of *The Immortality Ode* and Wordsworth's 'mythology of the self,' I discuss the idea of Wordsworth as a mystic, as we have defined the term.

6.4. Wordsworth as a 'Voluntary Mystic'

To consider, in greater detail, the final theme of 'the poet as mystic' in *The Prelude* and the Romantic fuss with 'coalescence of subject and object' as a mystical definition of 'love:' It was suggested that when a mystic discourses on his experiences, he is involuntarily elevated (or condescended) to the status of poet, for his rapturous accounts of the higher regions cannot but take on the aspect of romantic-meontic language. To recall two instances:

> The Masters tell us that beyond the confines of this terrestrial speck of dust lie innumerable worlds full of light and beauty. To explore those worlds at will and to possess them during this lifetime is only a portion of our heavenly birthright. But to most people that universe of finer worlds is locked and impenetrable…but a fabric of poetical fancy…The entire universe of starry worlds may be unlocked. Just how this is to be done constitutes the sublimest secret of the [mystical] wisdom.[85] (Johnson, 1939:1993.p.66).

These "starry worlds" remind us of Shelley's (1821:2006) "planetary music," (*A Defence of Poetry*, p.846) and the philosophical/spiritual vocation of their "unlocking" as a portion of our "heavenly birthright" speaks to Coleridge's (1795:1971) claim that "to develop the powers of our Creator is our proper employment" (pg.235), and moreover, Blake, whose "great task" is "To open the eternal worlds/To open the Immortal eyes…" (*Jerusalem*,I,17-18). Finally, Wordsworth saw himself as "…a chosen son/For hither I had come with holy power/And faculties" (1805,III,82-85).

In considering a second example of the ways in which mystical prose resembles Romantic verse, the Cambridge Platonist and theologian Peter Sterry's (1613-1672) claim is telling. If we placed each sentence of this citation, one beneath the other, this may be taken for a verse in Blake's *Jerusalem*, or if left as is, a passage in Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*:

> Didst thou ever descry a glorious eternity in a winged moment of time? Didst thou ever see a bright infinite in the narrow point of an object? Then thou knowest what spirit means – the spire-top, whither all things ascend harmoniously, where they meet and sit contented in an unfathomed Depth of Life."(Peter Sterry in Huxley, 1946, p.187)[86]

[85] Similarly, Socrates in Plato's (360B.C:1863) Phaedo observes: "In this other earth the colours are much purer and more brilliant than they are down here. The mountains and stones have a richer gloss, a livelier transparency and intensity of hue" (p.149).

[86] Alluding to the 'Depth,' Wordsworth exhorts: "Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth/Proceed thy honours! (1805,XI,272-273)

However, given Wordsworth's 'ambiguous aesthetic' argued for above, he is far more interesting to conceive of as mystic than Blake or Shelley, whose works are fraught with palpable transcendentalisms. By Wordsworth's equivocation between a nature that is both commonplace and recondite, we have a poetics which clarifies and mystifies at once, a 'natural supernaturalism,' much like the above quoted passage by Johnson (1997). Lindenberger (1963) highlights this:

> The inner world, the moment of vision is never, of course, defined exactly…This struggle towards definition which characterizes his poetry makes for a peculiarly rhetorical type of art – one much more foreign to the symbol-centered writings of Keats or Eliot to record spiritual experiences…In thus recapturing the mind's struggle for expression of the inexpressible, Wordsworth stands apart from such visionaries as Boehme and Blake, who set down their visions directly (p.52-58).

Wordsworth deals with the "struggle for expression of the inexpressible" when he says that

> …Of genius, power
> Creation, and divinity itself
> I have been speaking, for my theme has been
> What passed within me. Not of outward things
> Done visibly for other minds - words, signs,
> Symbols or actions…
> …but in the main
> It lies far hidden from the reach of words. (1805,III,171-185)

He establishes a key mystical idea – the issue of using signs to capture experiences which elude signification. Yet the mystical resonance in this passage is not sustained. Several lines after invoking that the mind harbours "Power/Creation and Divinity itself," a theme 'beyond' the reach of language, he qualifies this hyperbolic declamation by adding that every person knows what "majestic sway" individuals have "As natural beings in the strength of Nature" (1805,III,194). As always, the mystical tone, the conferring of prophetic powers on the mind, is sanctioned by some assertion of our naturalness. The mind's transcendental properties are never acquiesced without a disclaimer or qualification. Such passages follow a pattern of climax and bathos (depending on whether the qualifications of our humanness are taken as anti-climatic.) For Wordsworth this is seemingly not the case, for "Paradise and Groves Elysian" are the "simple produce of a common day" (*The Recluse*,I.I.800-808). Perhaps *The Prelude* admits of no 'tension' or 'dualism' between materialism and transcendentalism, only a monism where each inheres in the other. This accounts, once again, for the common critical opinion that the mundane and extraordinary are unified in his mind.

He does, however, outline the characteristics of different 'types' of men, one of which resembles the traits of a mystic:

> …men adroit
> In speech and for communion with the world
> Accomplished, minds whose faculties are then
> Most active when they are most eloquent,
> And elevated most when most admired.
> Men may be found of other mold than these,
>
> Who are their own upholders, to themselves
> Encouragement, and energy, and will,
> Expressing liveliest thoughts in liveliest words
> As native passion dictates. Others, too,
> There are among the walks of homely life
> Still higher, men for contemplation framed,
> Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase,
> Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink
> Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse:
> Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power, 270.
> The thought, the image, and the silent joy;
> Words are but under-agents in their souls -
> When they are grasping with their greatest strength
> They do not breathe among them… (1805,XII,255-274).

Here, three different kinds of men are described. The first, "men adroit in speech and communion/Accomplished minds," seems to refer to the Popes – those titans of wit, unrivalled in linguistic artistry, but whose faculties are nevertheless capricious to Wordsworth, since they are "elevated most when most admired," that is, contingent upon the nod of approval from dilettantes at afternoon teas. They are the exponents of the world "that is too much with us" (*The World is Too Much With Us*,1, in Gill,2004,p.144) and the "loveless, ever-anxious crowd" (Coleridge, *Dejection*,IV,53) of rhetoricians and politicians. The second, those "upholders of their own wills" who express "liveliest thoughts in liveliest words/As native passion dictates...," I believe, stands for what Wordsworth takes to be the poet of the highest order. This is the poet who exercises the Imagination, whose "mind is lord and master/Outward sense the obedient servant of her will." Such a mind is "Not prostrate…[nor] a mean pensioner/On outward forms…" (1805,VI,666-668). The sensibilities of 'the Child' are still prominent in such a mind, attuned to "native passion" (1805,XII,264). However, such passion is nonetheless rarefied in "liveliest words," marking the 'compromise' to secondary process thinking. This is the precarious position of the Romantic-meontic poet as we have framed him throughout: Notwithstanding his affiliation to 'the Child,' and the conception thereof of the "liveliest

thoughts," his primal passion must ultimately be circumscribed by the art function. By this yielding, he must banish himself from the 'higher regions.' As we saw before, he is one:

> …But descending
> From these imaginative heights, that yield
> Far-stretching views into eternity,
> Acknowledge that to Nature's humble power
> Your cherished sullenness is forced to bend
>
> (*The Excursion*, 1850:2007,IV, 1187-1191).

However, there is a class of "still higher men…unpractised in the strife of phrase." Ironically, Wordsworth suggests that this ineptitude and meekness is the source of their power, for "theirs is the language of heaven." The poetic function is subordinate, a mere "under agent." These simpletons, less governed by the secondary processes, have an accentuated 'sympathetic imagination,' and hence, moral capacity. To be more finely attuned to the quiet rhythms and natural pieties of rustic life, is to possess a greater sense of interdependence with others. Such minds are "…more fit/To hold communion with the invisible world./[They] are truly from the Deity" (1805,XIII,104-106). What appears in this verse, despite Wordsworth's use of "still higher" to introduce each genus of man, to be a diminuendo from the heights of Augustan sophistication to rustic simplicity, I read, in congruence with my arguments throughout, as a crescendo from 'mere' poetic genius or refined artistic awareness, to mystical meta-awareness. Coleridge says of the rustic that he possesses a "very scanty vocabulary," drawing, once again, on the idea of the mystic as a paradoxical figure, being at once ordinary and extraordinarily blessed. This, of course, has its aesthetic corollary in the kinds of poems Wordsworth was to write for the *Lyrical Ballads*, namely, poems which would blend a sense of the supernatural with the commonplaces of "low and rustic life" ('Preface' to *The Lyrical Ballads*,1802:2006,p.264).

Given that, in various places, Wordsworth is interested in the idea of 'native passion,' and further, frames these ideas in a verse whose style has been referred to as 'modern,' precisely because, unlike Augustan art, it is unfettered by a fidelity to certain structures of rhyme, metre and subject matter (which, innovatively, is 'subjectivity' itself), the outcome is a poetry which is inevitably more 'free associative,' and thus lends itself to elucidation by psychoanalysis. The psychoanalyst Ehrenzweig (1967) has elaborated on the notion of the 'privacy' of the artist and the value of states of isolation for creative enlightenment. This is in contradistinction to the

social self-consciousness characterized by the anxieties of upholding cultural norms and social propriety, to which Augustan art was committed. It is contrary, that is, to the ways of "men adroit/In speech and for communion with the world." It is, furthermore, a rudimentary principle of psychodynamic theory that intrapsychic conflict, or what has been termed the 'civil war' between the id and the superego, is a consequence of the culturally fashioned superego's tension with the id's primal instincts (Freud, 1911). A state of isolation is thus most conducive to thought which is more 'free-associative' and 'unrepressed' than that which occurs in social settings – to the exercising of the Imagination, that "inward eye" which is the "bliss of solitude" (I *Wandered Lonely As A Cloud*,22). If Wordsworth was versed in contemporary psychoanalytical ideas, he might attribute the sense of fulfilment and happiness possessed by these rustics to this reduced intrapsychic tension. 'Solitude,' a state most revered by the Romantic poet,[87] need not imply an estranged, hermetic way of life, but rather, immunity to pretense and dictatorship in spite of "the lethargy of custom." (Coleridge,1817:1969,*Biographia*,XIV,p.7). This seems to be the mark of the 'revolutionary.'

Such an individual

> … communes with the Forms
> Of Nature, who with understanding heart 1210.
> Both knows and loves such objects as excite
> No morbid passions, no disquietude,
> No vengeance and no hatred – needs must feel
> The joy of that pure principle of love
> So deeply, that unsatisfied with aught
> Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
> But seek for objects of a kindred love
> In fellow-natures and a kindred joy. (*The Excursion*,1850:2007,IV,1208-1218).

It is 'quotidian' passages like this in Wordsworth where commentary in the form of paraphrase seems vulgar. I will avoid this by reading it via our major themes. The person described here is the Romantic who is beyond reactionary responses to oppressive socio-political injustices – he is 'post-revolutionary.' Moreover, as he is governed by "The joy of that great principle of love," he is "compassionate; and has no thought/No feeling, which can overcome his love."

[87] This is not to neglect that at times, Coleridge found isolation distressing. Wordsworth, on the other hand, abounds with allusions to its joys: "The bliss of solitude" (I *Wandered Lonely As A Cloud*,22); "…from distress a refuge might be found/And solitude prepare the soul for heaven"(*Descriptive Sketches*,2-3). As Prickett (1970) states "Wordsworth's final affirmation of strength from the memory of childhood [in *The Immortality Ode*] is a reply to Coleridge's lament [in Dejection] that isolation suspended his Imagination" (pg.155).

(*The Excursion*,1850,1229-1230). 'Compassion' is synonymous with sympathy, and more importantly, 'Sympathetic Imagination.' To be able to imagine intensely 'what it is like to be' another, that is, to have the phenomenological experience, or the qualia[88] of another's feelings, is the profoundest moral capability. Wordsworth asserts this as a principle: "Imagination having been our theme,/So also hath that intellectual love,/For they are each in each, and cannot stand/Dividually" (1805,XIII,185-188). Although, we wonder at the qualification 'intellectual' in the phrase "intellectual love," and whether this kind of love is, in fact, synonymous with 'sympathy.' The phrase appears to reconcile, once again, the 'head' and the 'heart,' such that feeling for the other necessitates an intellectual understanding of the other.

Mystical 'love' is defined, not unlike the way in which Shelley (1821:1954) conceived of it, as a submerging of the self in the other. The accomplishment of this lofty state necessitates the sacrifice of the ego, the self, or subjectivity. The philosopher of mind, Colin McGinn (1999), suggests that the need to believe in God is a consequence of our inability to have access to others' minds – our consciousness is hermetically sealed off from the other. Since believers can 'experience' God in the privacy of their own minds, this is the ultimate palliative to our sense of aloneness. Yet mysticism, which considers its veracity to be irreducible to psychological comfort, posits that the coalescence of consciousness with the Godhead is coterminous with the obliteration of individuality, like a droplet in an ocean. Hence, it is said: "Upon this merging, you become nothing. But in becoming nothing you become everything." (Johnson, 1939:1993,p.45). As suggested, it is interesting to consider Wordsworth as a mystic for he violates (at least for Keats, 1818:1975) this principle – he is "the egotistical sublime -" (p.157) for he often asserts his identity over and above all externals. As already quoted, Wordsworth (1807:1893) admits this in a note to *The Immortality Ode*: "I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own nature."(p.196) Hazlitt (1815-1817:1957) elaborates by observing that "the power of his mind preys upon himself, as if there were nothing but his own mind and the universe"(p.113). On the other hand, the preoccupation throughout with the notion of 'Communing' and 'consummation' with externals may be interpreted as an act of sympathy, whereby he loses elements of his subjectivity in an object. His use of the verbs

[88] As noted, this term refers, in the philosophy of mind, to 'the qualities of conscious experience,' (Searle, 1997).For example, 'what it is like' to be a bat, or see red through another's eyes.

"drinks," (*Vernal Ode*,13) "holds intercourse," (*Excursion*,VII,336) "weaves," (*Excursion*,IV,610) "binds," (*The River Duddon*,10) "fastens" (*Excursion*,VI,748) and memorable phrases such as "…melted and reduced/To one identity…" (1805,VII,703-704) testifies to this. In turn, the deliquescence of solid objects as a result of this preoccupation with 'sympathetic communing' contributes to what we highlighted as *The Prelude's* 'ambiguous aesthetics.'

Thus, the plight of the Romantic poet, as I have suggested, has been twofold: The apotheosis of the mind, *and* the inscription of the experience of this higher-order-consciousness, such that it may be 'given' to another: "…what we have loved/Others will love, and we may teach them how:/Instruct them how the mind of man becomes/A thousand times more beautiful than the earth/On which he dwells…"(1805,XIII,444-448). Wordsworth, particularly, intended to sing "Of this great consummation" by "speaking of nothing more than what we are" ('Preface' to *The Excursion*, 56-58). By the lamentable fact of cognitive closure, they struggled in the first task, which, I have suggested, is responsible for their "begin[nings] in gladness," their perpetuation in melancholy, and their "end in despondency and madness." (*Resolution and Independence*,VII,48-49). Coleridge (1817:1956) understood this when he said: "It is the Intuition, the Beholding, the Immediate Knowledge, which is the substance and true significance of all – But to *give* or *convey* this Immediate to another is a contradiction in terms" (p.768). Wordsworth too, felt his epistemic ineptitudes, the mind "that can no further go," but was bewildered by them:

> But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might,
> Of joy in *minds that can no further go*
> As high as we have mounted in delight
> In our dejection do we sink as low;
> To me that morning did it happen so
> And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
> Dim sadness – and blind thoughts, I knew not,
> Nor could name.
>
> (*Resolution and Independence*, IV,22-28,italics added).

It is interesting that the counterpart to what we may call Browning's ineffable 'good moment,'[89] namely, the lowest point of dejection, is as ineffable as the good moment itself. The vacillation between moments of conviction and doubt, epiphany and anti-epiphany, have been elucidated with reference to the 'dialectic' between discursive and experiential transcendental knowledge – the defining attribute of Wordsworth's 'mysticism.' By way of conclusion, I discuss *The Immortality Ode* with emphasis on the 'post-lapsarian nostalgia' that is symptomatic of this precarious dialectic. Wordsworth, as we shall see, may however value this dialectic as a form of reciprocity.

6.5. Conclusion: *The Immortality Ode* and The 'Descent' Into Art

When a person desires to recollect a thing that has escaped him…he recalls the visible idea, or some other associate, again and again, by a voluntary power, the desire generally magnifying all the ideas and associations; and thus bringing in the association and idea wanted, at last. (David Hartley, 1705-1757 in Hepworth,1978,p.243-244)

You know one of the most difficult things is…to see a flower without the image, the memories, the associations, concerning that flower. Because these associations create distance between the observer and the observed. In that distance…the whole conflict of man exists (Krishnamurti,1969,pg.50).

To conclude, I would like to read *The Immortality Ode* as a eulogy for a lost state of consciousness, allegorized by the poet as the soul's descent from the heights to the sordidness of the human condition. This former superlative state, the poet suggests, was prominent in his childhood, and was coterminous with a distinctive way of seeing, whereby all was "apparelled in celestial light (line 4)" This faculty, "the visionary gleam," (line 56) wanes with age. Shelley's (1821:2006) premise in the *Defence*, specifically his likening of the Imagination during the act of composition to a "fading coal" (p.846) is the apt metaphor for Wordsworth's theme in *The Intimations Ode.* The poet concludes the eulogy in a tone of stoic endurance of his loss "with thoughts too deep for tears," exercised by "the philosophic mind" (lines 198-206). Bloom (1994) places the Ode, along with *Tintern Abbey* and *Resolution and Independence*, as one of the three great "crisis poems," and Wordsworth, as the poet of "canonical memory" (p.253). 'Memory' is a crucial term for Wordsworth as the 'crisis poems'

[89] In a letter to Julia Wedgwood, Browning (1864:1937) described this as "the rare flashes of momentary conviction that come and go in the habitual doubt and dusk of one's life" (p.29).

seem to be narrated after the fact – they recollect, repose and eulogize.[90] For this reason their key note is an almost unbearable post-lapsarian nostalgia, which I should like to highlight in what follows.

Certain lines from the introductory stanza are substantially poignant:

> There was a time …..
> It is not now as it has been of yore –
> Turn wheresoever I may
> By night or day,
> The things which I have seen, I now can see no more.(1-9)

Three symbols follow, the rainbow, the rose and the moon, each quite obviously a synecdoche for the protean. Nature has much to show for itself: starry skies reflected by water, the glorious sun, yet even these pale into insignificance next to the sights of childhood: "But yet I know, wherever I go/That there hath passed away a glory from the earth" (48-49). The extrapolation from the individual to the universal is noteworthy here – because *his* vision has waned, there is an ontological deficit, in that the whole earth suffers the deprivation of a certain glory.

The crisis responsible for this, the initial trauma, is birth:

> Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting….
> Shades of the prison house begin to close
> Upon the growing Boy….
> At length the man perceives I die away
> And fade into the light of common day…
> The holy earth doth all she can
> To make her foster child, her Inmate man
> Forget the glories he hath known… (58-83).

The idea of birth and the initial waking consciousness as partial amnesia originated in Cabbalistic thought, whereby it is claimed that upon emerging from the womb, the infant is touched on the lip by an angel (some believe this is responsible for the cleft in the upper lip we all have) (Scholem,1974). The stanza recalls the uterine imagery in the passage from Book Thirteen of *The Prelude* we cited at the outset: the poet leaves the dark, "blind cavern" of birth and follows the sounds of nature into "light/And open day"(1805,XIII,173-176). That the amnesia is merely 'partial' is echoed by Hartley (IX,p.227 in Hepworth 1970) in his account of

[90] For example, "I Wander*ed* lonely as a cloud;" (*I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud*,1) "There *was* a time when meadow, grove and stream;" (*Immortality Ode*,1). "That time is past and all its aching joys are no more"(*Tintern Abbey*,83-84). In a wonderful observation, Conrad (2006) claimed that a Wordsworth poem resembles "an epitaph to an experience it has extinguished"(p.398).

the memories and associations that he believes the child begins to form in utero. Upon birth, however, sensory objects initiate memories of these prenatal associations: "As soon as the child is born, external objects act upon it violently, and excite vibrations in the [brain]." These "external objects" form the "prison house" that closes in on the 'Inmate,' the growing child, which is, as we have discerned in the above analysis of *The Prelude*, nature and convention, those secondary processes responsible for bedimming the lustre of the "visionary gleam," for cluttering and clogging the Blakean 'doors of perception:'

> …Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight
> And custom lie upon thee with a weight
> Heavy as frost and deep almost as life! (149-151)

This pathos and burden is countered by the poet's stoicism as the panacea for Romantic melancholy:

> We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind,
> In the primal sympathy
> Which having been must ever be (182-185)

Since the poem intimates loss – the waning of "the visionary gleam" - Sperry (in Trilling,1949:1970) believes that the Ode is Wordsworth's "conscious farewell to his art…a dirge sung over his departing powers" (p.136). Yet the current thesis suggests, like Trilling but on different grounds,[91] precisely the opposite: the sublimation of a pure, augmented consciousness into the strictures of the art form represents the very genesis of poetic powers. The poet's exquisite aesthetic control in the major 'crisis odes,' (in contrast to some of the more frantic exhortations in *The Excursion* and parts of *The Prelude*, both of which adopt a Whitmanesque 'free verse' more regularly) secure him a placement in the canon. On the other hand, the relinquishing of poetic control for mystic rapture compromises the status of the poet *as* an artist. It is precisely through repression of his mysticism, the germination of the 'philosophic mind,' and the move away from his celestial origins, that Wordsworth is a 'better' poet. The lyrical capacity depends upon the sequestration of celestial vision, and hence the dissolution of this primal sympathy with the object.

[91] Trilling (1951) contests Sperry's claim by arguing that the Ode is a poem about growing into new ways of seeing and knowing and hence, new artistic capacities. He makes no allusions, as I do, to states of mystical consciousness and to Romantic poetry as the sublimation of these mystical states.

To supplement our reading of *The Immortality Ode* above by a passage from *The Prelude*, the exchange is between mysticism and art, as vision yields to words:

> Thence came a spirit hallowing what I saw
> With decoration and ideal grace;
> A dignity, a smoothness, like the works
> Of Grecian Art and purest Poesy (1805,V,478-481).

The refinements of artifice are a figure for 'discipline' and 'mediation.' Thus, in *Tintern Abbey*, he acknowledges the "abundant recompense" for the sacrifice of 'The Child's' sensibilities, whereby the melody in his mind changed from the 'primal warblings' of the Sound Current or "sounding cateract[s]" that "haunted [him] like a passion," (*Tintern Abbey*,68-81) into the "still, sad music of humanity," along with its "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures" :

> That time is past
> And all its aching joys are now no more,
> And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
> Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
> Have followed, for such loss, I believe,
> Abundant recompence. For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of Thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes,
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. (*Tintern Abbey*, 84-94)

He will, further, acknowledge "nature" and "the language of the sense" in *Tintern* – the 'outward' sense of "eye, and ear," that is - as his "anchor," "nurse" and "guide" (106-110). Every major Romantic made this decision – to "chasten" and "subdue" their mysticism, to 'naturalise' their 'supernaturalism,' although all mythologized it in a different way. By trading higher vision for poetic faculties, they learned to appreciate how:

> …everyday brought with it some new sense
> Of exquisite regard for common things,
> And all the earth was budding with these gifts
> Of more refined humanity… (1805,XIII,241-244)

Thus, Longfellow (1850 in Linderberger 1963) paraphrases Shelley's image of the Imagination as a "fading coal" when he asserts that "In Wordsworth's most excited mood we have rather the reflection of the flame than the authentic and derivative fire itself. Its heat and glare pass to us through some less pervious and colder lens" (p.460). Yet this compromise is coincidental

with nostalgic yearnings for the intensity of the original faculties and higher sates of consciousness, recollections of which are given by momentary 'glimpses,' 'spots of time' and mere "foretastes" of hidden worlds - a compromise deftly captured by Hamilton (1983) on Coleridge, and which is partly responsible for the stylistic ambiguity emphasised: "Coleridge makes the high esteem of poetry inseparable from its unhappiness arriving from its necessarily *unliveable* character…it exists merely as 'foretaste,' 'shadow,' or prophecy' of 'what we are not'" (p.134).

The Immortality Ode may thus be viewed as an epitaph to an experience that wasn't quite experienced: a distinct genre of poetry wherein memory and 'false' memory blur as a consequence of an unbearable yearning. All the high Romantics were canonized at the cost of living with perpetual, post-lapsarian nostalgia. Wordsworth, however, seems to think the transaction was profitable:

> Above all
> Did Nature bring again this wiser mood,
> More deeply reestablished in my soul,
> Which, seeing little worthy or sublime
> In what we blazon with the pompous names
> Of power and action, early tutored me
> To look with feelings of fraternal love
> Upon those unassuming things that hold
> A silent station in this beauteous world…
> …I sought
> For good in the familiar face of life
> And built thereon my hopes of good to come. (1805,XII,44-52,66-68)

Hence, as Darbishire (1972) claims "The experience of the mystic is not for most of us, but Wordsworth's poetry…can meet our need…it has its roots in an intimate knowledge of man and nature…" (p.79). To elaborate on this, Wordsworth's poetry can meet our need for it gives us mystical experience in its most accessible form – publicized and naturalized – by displacement into the "familiar life," and by the consecration of those "unassuming things." Wordsworth's perpetual mourning for the visionary 'child' demonstrates his understanding that 'only those who become as little children shall enter the kingdom of heaven.' (New Testament,1,1). Despite this, he decided to 'grow up' and settle for the hills and plains of England, its sweetness and common dawns – what was for him, a worthwhile exchange. The Earth of *The Immortality Ode* does all she can to make the poet 'forget' his origins. Yet the Earth is not necessarily 'facetious,' for the forgetting of celestial origins is compensated for by

the genesis of poetic powers. Rather than being a valediction to poetic powers, The Ode demonstrates precisely what poetic powers require – a phlegmatic and indomitable continuation in spite of the crisis of loss and the almost unbearable nostalgia accompanying it.

Epilogue: "Not in a mystical or idle sense…" (*The Prelude*,1805,II,235)

… this history is brought
To its appointed close: the discipline
And consummation of the poet's mind
In everything that stood most prominent,
Have faithfully been pictured… (1805,XIII,269-273).

As proposed, if it is appropriate to use metaphors like 'repository' to denote the Freudian psyche with its unconscious 'depths,' then it is similarly plausible to attribute a dimension to the Romantic psyche, which would undoubtedly be 'height:' It is spherical and integrated, imbued with both depth and height: "Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light,/Were all like workings of one mind" (1805,VI,567-568). We might assign the image of the Coleridgean 'dome' to this end. The Romantic psyche is "a miracle of rare device/A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice" (Coleridge,*Kubla Khan*,III,35-36). The dome is fitting in that despite its 'height,' it is closed, finite and 'half perfect' in its hemi-spherical form, just as the Romantic psyche or Imagination must inevitably cede to cognitive closure. The Imagination is, to paraphrase Coleridge, the repetition of an eternal act in a finite mind – apparently a contradiction, yet the "rare device" that is the Romantic psyche reconciles this incongruity, and finds characteristic expression in Wordsworth's 'divine idiocy.' The question remains as to whether these are merely 'images,' to assist us in 'ways of thinking' about the mind. The 'transcendental' or 'superconscious' psyche may be, at best, a metaphor, yet it would be plausible to suppose that Coleridge, and perhaps even Wordsworth, took this quite literally.

The challenge of the artist is to give symbolic form to a nebulous and fluid, psychic content – as Vendler's (2004) definition of 'thinking' as "the second order-formation of an aesthetic and linguistic gestalt from a first order perception," (p.48) shows - whether in language, music, or visual representation. What is special about the Romantic version of this problem is that their psychic content is marked by a yearning for a vague 'something,' saturated with references to the 'infinite.' Speaking for poetry generally, Eagleton (1977) observes that **"**To speak is to lack, and it's in this lack that the movement of desire is set up, the movement whereby I move restlessly from sign to sign without ever being able to close my fist over some primordial plenitude of sense, a movement which will be satisfied only in death" (p.1). Freud (1916:1922) suggested that all Romantic love in adulthood is a longing for the mother in the form of

substitutes or 'imagos.' As the drift of my thesis has been to perpetuate a view of the psyche as imbued with both unconscious 'depth' *and* mystical 'height,' I hope to have shown that Romantic poetry is a longing for the Father/the One, in the form of the substitute provided by nature. Wordsworth's declamation that "Our destiny, our nature, and our home/Is with infinitude - and only there;" (1805,VI,538-539), would seem to concur with this proposition. Art and longing are inextricably linked, for every act of creation is an act of recreation, that is, an attempt to represent the presence of an absence[92] - a variation of Wordsworth's tendency to recollect and eulogize – stressed by his claim that a poet is one who possesses "a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present" ('Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*,1802:2006,p.269). The "as if" is, no doubt, the root of 'post-lapsarian nostalgia.' Hence the poignant truism that "…if we could enter rather than glimpse [the transcendental] all strivings would cease, for there could be no need for art in paradise" (McFarland,1980,p.418). In other words, the 'restless movement' to which Eagleton (1977) refers would cease. If the Romantic object of longing is an ontological dimension beyond thought and sense, Wordsworth, with some sense of regret, and some stoical forbearance, seems to have come to grips with its absence. To reconsider the lines cited at the outset, it is evident that, over and above providing an outline of the 'plot' of the poem, they trace the very pattern of loss and gain we discerned in *The Immortality Ode* and (more briefly) in *Tintern Abbey*:

> …we have traced the stream
> From darkness, and the very place of birth
> In its blind cavern, whence is faintly heard… (1805,XIII,172-174)

This is another intimation of loss, but which rises into "The feeling of life endless, the one thought/By which we live, infinity and God" – a feeling, the poet says, which was "drawn" (1805,XIII,172-184), educed or 'drawn out' – a process of 'detective work' which is ultimately stymied. Once again, it is a 'feeling' – that inexplicable body image which is at once so imprecise and so finely articulate. Moreover, this visceral impression is implicitly linked with the cognitive, since "Infinity and God" is described as both "the feeling of life endless" *and* "the great thought." Rousseau (1712-1788:1937), perhaps less stoic than Wordsworth, was less able to embrace the absence of this grace without the pining tones of reminiscence: "In myself I found an unexplainable void that nothing could have filled; a longing of the heart toward another kind of fulfilment of which I could not conceive, but of which I nevertheless felt the

[92] This view was emphasized by the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1952).

attraction”(p.112-113). *The Prelude* is the chronicle of a poet who, about this thoughtless and senseless place, ever present, ever absent, would think hard and feel much.

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