The Poet as Maker

Moral Didacticism and Prophetic Inspiration in Sidney and Shelley's Platonic Conceptions of the Poet

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Abstract: This paper explores the key argumentative strategies by which Philip Sidney and Percy Bysshe Shelley deploy their conceptions of the poet in their prose works defending the place of poetry in English culture. Though Plantonists, both Sidney and Shelley ground their accounts of poetic creativity in the Aristotelian concept of the poet as maker. However, given the different historical, philosophical, and religious contexts which separate these two great theorists of poetic practice, what the poet makes in poetic creation diverges markedly for Sidney and Shelley. My discussion centers on exploring the precise nature of the faculty of imagination in the context of Sidney's Renaissance understanding of human anthropology, and Shelley's account of imagination in relation to Enlightenment concepts of modern science and philosophical pragmatism. Both Sidney and Shelley argue for poetry as originating in a divine source of power; this results in the ironic conclusion that Shelley proposes a more religious account of the poet than Sidney's poet of Renaissance sensibility.

The clear influence of Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poetry* upon Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* is idisputable. At the time that Shelley was composing his treatise in March of 1821, Mary Shelley was carefully reading Sidney's text, a copy of which was in Shelley's library. Lucas Verkoren has established the existence of structural parallels in the overall arguments of each text; numerous verbal echoes of Sidney's *Defence* can be heard in Shelley's *Defence*, articulating key concepts that appear to be remarkably similar. On the basis of these obvious similarities, Verkoren claims:

> Though plagiarism would be too bold a word, yet it must be admitted that Shelley cannot have unconsciously borrowed from Sidney's

> treatise, for the recollections of Sidney's essay are too numerous and of too striking a character. His *Defence* should have contained at least an acknowledgement of indebtedness to Sidney and it is worthy of note here that Shelley did not once record the name of his great predecessor. (69)

On these grounds, Verkoren asserts: "Sidney's *Defence* is the prototype of Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*" (Verkoren 69). Perhaps Shelley remained silent on his indebtedness to Sidney because, despite the surface similarities, their poetic practices were so different. Or perhaps, Shelley so thoroughly transformed Sidney's conception of the poet that he felt mentioning his indebtedness would result in misconceptions concerning his own positions. Many of Sidney's claims for poetry become radically transformed in the context of Shelley's own poetic theory, elaborated under cultural pressures that were very different from those Sidney faced. In the course of my essay, I will address some of the key conceptual similarities in each text in order to explain Shelley's transformation of Sidney's ideas about poetry. But in order to understand the precise ways in which Shelley appropriates Sidney's account of poetry, poetic production, and poetic inspiration, for his own purposes, the key argumentative structure of each must be established.

Sidney's *Defence* is a response to Stephen Gosson's Puritanical attack on secular poetry; in *The Schoole of Abuse*, Gosson argues primarily that poets present pleasing pictures of vice, which are a dangerous temptation for the reader: "I must confesse that Poets are the whetstones of wit, notwithstanding that wit is dearely bought: where honie and gall are mixt, it will be hard to sever the one from the other" (10). Gosson argues that poetry should be used only in worshipful praise, "referring all to the glorye of God," grounding this on the claim that reason is to be used in the service of God, both in worship and in moral action: "Man is enriched with reason and knowledge: with knowledge to serve his maker and governe himselfe; with reason to distinguish good and il, and chose the best" (33). In opposition to this, Sidney finds himself arguing on two divergent fronts, for he must argue against the claim that poetry is harmful and dangerous, but he must also make the more positive argument that poetry performs a positive function in the Reformed Church, by showing that poetry, "being rightly applied, deserveth not to be scourged out of the Church of God" (77). In a similar manner Shelley's *Defence* is maintained against Thomas

Love Peacock's *The Four Ages of Poetry*, in which Peacock argues that, "as the sciences of morals and of mind advance towards perfection [...] as reason gains ascendancy in them over imagination and feeling, poetry can no longer accompany them in their progress" (9). In responding to this charge, Shelley must similarly defend poetry against an ethical attack on its cultural value. But while Peacock's claim is less pointed, arguing merely that poetry is useless in an age dominated by a conception of reason that is founded in pragmatism and utilitarian accounts of human action, its force is perhaps more devastating than Gosson's more explicit moral censure. Gosson follows Plato's censure of poetry by banishing poetry from the life of the Church; in doing so, Gosson follows Plato's respect for the perverse power of poetry to move the will against the dictates of reason. In contrast to this, Peacock renders poetry obsolete, useless in the context of the Enlightenment belief in progress achieved through empirical and pragmatic advances over nature, with reason outstripping poetry on purely practical grounds. As James Bunn argues: "Peacock claimed that modern poetry was *futile*. It had no *utile*, no utility, no use. Peacock's trifling tack was all the more threatening to Shelley because his tone and his calculating style implied that poetry deserved scant attention" (97). It is an interesting point that Puritanical and Utilitarian ideas find common ground in disparaging poetry, as aesthetic reproduction is attacked on moral and pragmatic grounds, with the latter providing the greatest threat to poetic practice by marginalizing its power. It is a problem that remains with us today.

Despite the fact that the attacks of both Gosson and Peacock on the poets of their day bear heavy traces of ironic, satirical flourishes of rhetoric, both Sidney and Shelley took these respective arguments very seriously. But it is important to note that what binds these sets of texts together also sends them on markedly divergent paths of argumentation. Both Gosson and Peacock deploy their arguments against poetry on rational grounds, based upon concepts of reason that clearly present sharply contrasting standards of rational judgment, differentiated by a conception of reason as the highest faculty of the human, in accordance with Renaissance ideas of the soul, as distinguished from an Enlightenment idea of reason directed to empirical observation and pragmatic usage. Sidney writes wholly from within the context of Reformation theology and its various religious and cultural preoccupations, while Shelley clearly accepts, at least in principle, Peacock's view of Enlightenment rationality. Maintaining the historicity of these texts is vital to understanding how

the similar claims about poetic inspiration and production made by Sidney and Shelley can be seen to result in markedly divergent ideas about poetic production and its effects. Each defends his own contemporary poetic practice, or at least his own view of that practice, and not upon some abstract, universal idea of poetry, but each according to his own preoccupations and poetic practices which drive their separate arguments. Sidney defends poetry in the service of the Protestant Reformation, while Shelley defends Romantic poetry as the ideal expression of the human subject through the faculty of imagination. While the present state of scholarship notes the similarities in argumentative structure and rather striking verbal parallels linking the two defenses, the failure to take into account the divergent historical contexts in which each text is written obscures the nature of the deeper, more fundamental points of agreement which Sidney and Shelley shared, as well as the profound differences between their conceptions of poetic inspiration and creation, and poetic form, producing radically different poetic theories and radically different kinds of poets and poetic practices.

Both Sidney and Shelley defend poetry by drawing a central distinction which orders the very structure of their separate arguments. Sidney follows the classical and Renaissance rules of rhetoric rather than a logically ordered structure of argument, but begins by offering what William Temple called "an argument from differences" (145), in order to answer both of Gosson's charges against poetry. Sidney distinguishes between the "*vates*" poet, who, in imitating the Psalms of Scripture, plays a useful role in the worship of the Christian church, and the poet as maker, derived from the Greek "word *poiein*, which is to make" (Sidney 77). Clearly grounded in an etymological derivation of terms, the distinction sets forth different forms of subject matter for each type. The religious aspect of this distinction is key; the distinction between the *vates* poet and poet as maker, or what Sidney calls the "right poet," differentiates between religious poetry, largely poetry linked with prayers in praise of God's glory, typically of a hymn-like quality, and secular poetry, concerned with moral didacticism and ethical inculcation. This results in two kinds of poetry: divine poetry fitted for Christian prayer and worship, and human poetry concerned with moral action. As I have argued in an essay on Sidney's Platonism:

> The *vates* poet does not imitate nature, but the God beyond nature, which establishes the difference between God and creatures

> through a divine alphabet. The *vates* does not, as does the 'right poet', present a picture, but a vision of God beyond sense, 'to be seen by the eyes of the mind only cleared by faith.' The *vates* poet marks the separation between creation and God in prayer; the 'right poet' presents an image of goodness that is within reach of the human. (Raiger, "Sidney's Defense of Plato" 30)

Sidney's poetic theory, in following both Plato and Aristotle, is mimetic, which opens up the gap in representation informing the above distinction. God can neither be imitated nor imaged; the *vates* poet is only sanctioned by imitating David's Psalms, and in so doing, serves the Reformed Church in the production of prayers and hymns. Human action, particularly ethical action, can be represented, and is thus the business of the "right poet," who serves the Church by "feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know poetry by" (Sidney 81–82). The rightness of the poet lies in representing moral uprightness, rather than in presenting a true, realistic picture: "For these indeed do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach; and delight, to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger; and teach, to make then know that goodness whereunto they are moved" (Sidney 81).

The "right poet" is mimetic, not in the sense of producing accurate representations of nature, but rather in presenting images of virtue that the reader can imitate. Indeed, Sidney denies that the "right poet" can be charged with false representations, since "he nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth" (S102). Sidney's "right poet" who "feigns" representations of human action proposes to set forth, in "speaking Pictures," the ideal goodness of the human soul in delightful fictions (Raiger, "Sidney's Defense of Plato" 34). The "right poet" "goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have […] Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden" (Sidney 78). As such the poet presents a picture of the Golden Age, a glimpse of human perfection, and in imitation of God, makes images according to God's creation of goodness:

> poetry give[s] right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings—with no small argument to the credulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, since our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching it. (Sidney 79)

It is in this limited sense that the "right poet" imitates God's goodness, by presenting in poetic representation the original goodness of the human being created before the Fall. The "right poet" energizes the desire for moral goodness by presenting "moving Pictures" of that goodness, and so, aids the will to desire that which it knows abstractly. Sidney here makes a remarkable claim for poetry: the "right poet," aided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to see and know the good, overcomes the deleterious effects of original sin, by moving the "infected will" through "moving Pictures" to desire moral goodness.

Sidney's strategy of defining the poet according to the subject-matter of poetry, its formal aspects, and its effects upon the reader, is then developed into a lengthy series of examples from classical and Biblical literature which, rhetorically, has a cumulative effect. The structure of Shelley's argument is similar, but rather than grounding the poet in an ethical framework that relies on an ontology presented in broad, sweeping terms (largely accepted by his Renaissance audience), Shelley presents a series of definitions which are poetic rather than argumentative. In its rhetorical structure, Shelley's approach departs from Sidney's strategy; as Rolf Breuer has argued, whenever in the *Defence* Shelley is confronted with the task of arguing for "the ontological status and the epistemological function of poetry, he reaches for fictional devices, above all for images, metaphors, and similes" (167–8). But in doing so, Shelley imitates Sidney in grounding his theory of poetry in an account of the subjective powers of poetic creation and the effects poetry has on readers. Of course, Wordsworth's "Preface" to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, and Coleridge's strategy of defining poetry by appeal to the creative powers of the poet in *Biographia Literaria*, are the Romantic precursors for Shelley, and in imitating Sidney's basic approach, the poet

of Renaissance refashioning can be seen as a key precursor to all Romantic theories of poetry and poetic creation.

The image-making faculty of the "right poet" is the imagination, a term that Sidney uses frequently throughout his *Defence* to describe the way the mind thinks through images. As such, it has a broad range of applications to all kinds of areas of learning. But for Sidney, the poetic imagination is its highest function, providing the will with incentive to act upon the abstract principles proposed by philosophy, and with patterns of meaning that will give universal significance to examples taken from history, all of which "lie dark before the imaginative and judging power, if they be not illumined or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy" (Sidney 86). Here Sidney employs a conception of the image-making power of the poet which is clearly cognate with that faculty defined by Shelley as imagination; Shelley's use of images to dramatize the way the poet employs the faculty of imagination clearly carries on this tradition, most notably in the production of images that go beyond nature and in tempering pain with the power of aesthetic pleasure to raise the soul beyond immersion in the senses. Shelley's rhapsodic lyricism in praise of the imagination that most closely resembles Sidney's poet in creation of a golden, not brazen world can be seen in the following passage:

> Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds to that which is most deformed; it marries exultation with horror, grief with pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union under its light yoke, all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes; its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms. (Shelley 137)

But whereas for Sidney, sin and death are in some sense overcome in the beautiful representation of the forms of virtue that are to be imitated by the reader; for Shelley, aesthetic form renders the tension between ideal beauty and the dross of human reality into a bearable form, sustained in the representation of that tension

in formal beauty. For Sidney, poetry sublimates the real world of human life, and in doing so, raises desire to seek to transcend nature's bounds; for Shelley, the desire for ideal beauty and its transcendent realm exists in tension with the broken forms of human existence. The difference between the two conceptions of poetry can be reduced to the different terms between which the tension of desire is drawn.

I shall return to the imagination in Sidney and Shelley's theories, in the context of a discussion of how poetry informs and orders all other modes of knowing. I will focus first upon how Shelley follows Sidney in structuring his *Defense* upon a key distinction which will allow him to present his account of the imagination in an overall discussion of the subjective powers of human nature. Whereas Sidney distinguishes between two kinds of poetry, Shelley begins by distinguishing between two primary faculties of knowing. Shelley begins his essay without introduction, going directly to an elaboration of the distinction between Reason and Imagination:

> According to one mode of regarding those two classes of mental action, which are called reason and imagination, the former may be considered as mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another, however produced; and the latter, as mind acting upon those thoughts so as to colour them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity. The one is the τό *ποιειν*, or the principle of synthesis, and has for its objects those forms which are common to universal nature and existence itself; the other is the τό λογιζειν, or principle of analysis, and its action regards the relations of things, simply as relations; considering thoughts, not in their integral unity, but as the algebraical representations which conduct to certain general results. Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known; imagination is the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. Reason respects the differences, and the imagination the similitude of things. Reason is to the imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance. (Shelley 7.4)

Shelley's distinction between Reason and Imagination opens a space for poetry to operate as a synthetic force, bringing together what reason, in its abstract operations, breaks apart by logical analysis. Wordsworth's phrase "we murder to dissect" comes clearly to mind as a poetic statement which informs Shelley's thinking here. In linking reason to calculation and logical analysis of the relations between things, and imagination to synthetic, creative acts of cognition which are universal in nature, Shelley is clearly indebted to Kant, but follows a Cartesian account of the role of mathematics in rational thought, which will be linked with the calculus of pleasure in Benthamite utilitarnianism. One can also detect Sidney's influence here, in the role imagination plays in making abstract and sterile concepts vivid and enlivening for thought. However, Shelley's Platonic materialism overturns the priority of soul over body; for Shelley, imagination is a faculty of universal cognition which intuits value according to the work of spirit, whereas reason is allied with sense perception and the body, engaged in the quantitative analysis of parts. The sets of oppositions are striking: Imagination is the substance of human cognition, whereas reason is the shadow; Imagination is the agent of cognition, reason the instrument. Shelley has taken Coleridge's definition of the secondary Imagination as the agent of all human perception, but has fundamentally transformed it by transposing the priority of reason over sense and linking analytical reasoning with sensible particulars, wholly confined to a quantitative analysis of parts, while aligning imagination with a spiritual power that orders and informs those relations in a cognition of the whole. Shelley's Cartesian/Platonic split between two modes of mind however is conceived within material existence, since Shelley denies the existence of soul as a separable power, immortal in nature. As such, the imagination is an empirical reality and goes hand in hand with scientific discovery, with both, Shelley wants to say, empirically ordered and structured. As Harry White has argued: "[T]he distinction Shelley does make is between abstract knowledge, the result of all rational processes, and empirical knowledge, arrived at through the cooperation of the senses and the imagination" (324).

Shelley's response to Peacock's criticism of poetry as useless in the context of scientific progress and the advance of pragmatic knowledge is to assert the alliance of science and poetry as forms of imagination, an idea which Coleridge articulates in Appendix C to *The Statesman's Manual*, wherein all forms of human knowing are mediated through symbolic images, conducted by the power of imagination.

> True natural philosophy is comprized [sic] in the study of the science and language of *symbols*. The power delegated to nature is all in every part: and by a symbol I mean, not a metaphor or allegory or any other figure of speech or form of fancy, but an actual and essential part of that, the whole of which it represents […] The genuine naturalist is a dramatic poet in his own line: and such as our myriad-minded Shakespear [sic] is, […] such and by a similar process of self-transformation would the man be, compared with the Doctors of the mechanic school, who should construct his physiology on the heaven-descended, Know Thyself. (Coleridge 78–79)

However, Shelley departs from Coleridge by positing a dualistic, rather than dialectic, relationship, wholly immanent and material, and emergent from within the human subject, between imagination and reason, poetry and logic, founded upon the fundamental distinction between synthetic and analytic reasoning. As White has pointed out: "From the very first paragraph, the 'Defence' utterly distinguishes the activities of reason and imagination, indicating that both their processes, analytic versus synthetic, and their objects, abstractions versus sensations, are entirely different" (323). While clearly this distinction follows a Kantian form, the dualistic structure it imposes goes well beyond a Kantian set of antinomies. Shelley's opening move, in asserting a dualism *within* human subjectivity, orders the entire structure of his *Defence*. And despite the establishment of this dualism between two modes of mental operation, Shelley baldly asserts that within the realm of human experience, imagination is the primary agent of human cognition. The precise manner in which poetry and science are operations of imagination is unclear, but as White goes on to say:

> Through its capacity to synthesize experience, the imagination can establish a systematic explanation of the external world; and the analytical reason, unable to create new ideas or connect those already present in the mind, must inevitably defer to those relations built up by imaginative synthesis…. But in addition, the superiority of the imagination, defined as the 'principle of synthesis', over reason, the

> 'principle of analysis', has to do with its ability to advance human knowledge by the discovery of things unknown before." (White 326)

And in elaborating upon this idea, Shelley explicitly turns to Coleridge to articulate his idea of imagination, by appealing to the image of the Æolian harp:

> Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be 'the expression of the imagination': and poetry is cognate with the origin of man. Man is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven, like the alternations of an ever-changing wind over an Æolian lyre, which move it by their motion to ever-changing melody. (Shelley 109)

Shelley's employment of Coleridge's image of the Æolian harp is understandable, given that it derives from the early phase of Coleridge's poetic career, and expresses a materialistic and deterministic view of human nature as a passive instrument played upon and drawn into activity by God's immediate power. In this, the image of the passive lute is particularly well-suited for Shelley's passive account of poetic inspiration, a point I shall return to at the end of this essay. At this point, Shelley considers the power which plays upon the lyre to be an immanent one; however the source of this principle of motion is dispersed, arising both from within human nature and also from external nature, thus indicating that the image of the Æolian lyre is limited and in need of supplementation:

> But there is a principle within the human being, and perhaps all sentient beings, which acts otherwise than in the lyre, and produces not melody alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them. It is as if the lyre could accommodate its chords to the motions of that which strikes them, in a determined proportion of sound; even as the musician can accommodate his voice to the sound of the lyre. (Shelley 109–110)

Shelley's assertion of an active principle animating human nature is introduced without argumentation and without careful systematic exposition; the image of the Æolian lyre is tenuously drawn, introduced as a hypothetical account. To say that "it is as if the lyre could accommodate itself" is to say that it is as if human nature could actualize itself in the production of beautiful forms (Shelley 109–110). If the image is applied to the distinction between reason and imagination, it is clear that Shelley's entire argument for the priority of imagination over reason is based upon hypothetical reasoning and articulated by means of an image that is never clearly determined as an active principle within human nature. Shelley's difficulty is one that all materialist philosophies of mind encounter when attempting to give a rigorous account of the ordering of cognition into a synthetic whole. This is especially true of aesthetic intuition, which is central to Shelley's concern. However, I would like to explore this issue by pursuing the more particular concern of Shelley's *Defence*: that of countering Peacock's charge that poetry is useless in a European culture dominated by utilitarian and commercial interests. I will do so by considering some of the key characteristics Shelley attributes to poetic creation.

The dualism that Shelley establishes between logic and poetry is, as we have seen, hierarchical, instantiating poetry as the architectonic form of symbolic representation which orders all the other sciences and arts. Because they "imagine and express" the "indestructible order" of things, poets are "the authors of language and of music, of dance and architecture, and statuary, and painting; they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true, that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion" (Shelley 112). This is in agreement with Sidney, who claims that poetry, by inculcating virtue through delight and pleasure, gives concrete form to abstract philosophical principles, and so, actualizes all forms of knowing into an *energeia*, a willed energy, in the direction of the final end of human action, which is the attainment of virtue. Poets "do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach; and delight, to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger; and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved—which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed" (Sidney 81). Sidney's "right poet" is foremostly characterized by the ability to produce in the reader a "purifying of wit […] the final end [of which] is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made

worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of" (82). Sidney summarizes his claim by establishing a hierarchy of knowledge in which self-knowledge of the divine origin of the human being, not natural knowledge, is at the pinnacle, as all learning is contained in one purpose: "to know, and by knowledge to lift up the mind from the dungeon of the body to the enjoying his own divine essence" (82). It is in this sense that poetry for Sidney is "architectonike," for self-knowledge informs politics and ethics "with the end of well-doing and not of well-knowing only" (82). Sidney's Renaissance idea of the poet however hinges upon a Platonic dialectic that becomes radically transformed in Shelley's empirico-materialist conception of human nature. Poetry articulates laws of an "indestructible order," and so legislates for science and art the ordering of knowledge. It is in the idea of an architectonic view of poetry as legislative in the realm of knowledge that both Sidney and Shelley ground their idea of poetry upon the Greek term *poiein*: the poet as maker.

The form of making which orders knowing, and so, leads to new discoveries in the order of the sciences, is in the production of metaphors that reveal universal classes of things. The claim that metaphor is the central trope whereby all cognition is ordered finds its origins in Aristotle. In *The Poetics*, Aristotle argues: "Metaphor is the transference of a term from one thing to another: whether from genus to species, species to genus, species to species, or by analogy" (55). Within Aristotle's understanding of science as a series of classifications, metaphor plays a powerful role in organizing those classifications, which are built up on the recognition of patterns of differentiation and similarity in things. For Aristotle, metaphor teaches us the relations between things, and is the mark of native genius, not learned ability, for in matters of style "facility with metaphor" is the most important skill: "This alone is a sign of natural ability, and something one can never learn from another: for the successful use of metaphor entails the perception of similarities" (57). Sidney resituates Aristotle's understanding of metaphor as cognitive into a Platonic framework of erotic desire for the Good produced in beautiful forms, claiming that "Poesy […] is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in the word μίμσις [mimesis]—that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture—with this end, to teach and delight" (79–80). Sidney's most succinct definition of poetry is cognate with Shelley's, who argues that the language of poetry

> is vitally metaphorical; that is it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until the words which represent them, become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and then if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse. (Sidney 111)

For Shelley, metaphor is the form of all cognitive thought, and like Sidney, brings life to knowledge; but while the idea follows Coleridge's account of the symbol in the *Statesman's Manual*, Shelley explicitly links the cognitive role of metaphor with Bacon's account of the way the mind perceives causes in the world, and claims that Bacon sees this as originating in "the faculty which perceives them as the storehouse of axioms common to all knowledge" (111), an idea that Shelley probably received from Coleridge's "Treatise on Method," in which Coleridge argues that modern science is to be properly understood as a synthetic combination of Platonic dialectic and Baconian observation.[1] As such, both poetry and science are grounded in the same form of symbolic cognition, whereby the likenesses of things disparate are organized into new forms of discovery. On this basis, Shelley argues: "Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void for ever craves fresh food" (118).

But while Sidney limits his conception of the "right poet" to human action, and relinquishes the field of the eternal to the *vates* poet, the prophetic poet, Shelley claims that "poetry participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one" (112). Herein Shelley unifies what Sidney had divided—secular, didactic poetry from religious, divine poetry—and affirms for poetry not merely a legislative, but also a prophetic function, which Sidney denies to the "right poets," and so departs from Plato, who "attributeth unto poesy more than myself do, namely to be a very inspiring of a divine force, far above man's wit" (109), as articulated in the *Ion*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Symposium*. Shelley's Platonism, materialist as it may be, aspires to the divine

1 See Raiger, "Coleridge's Theory of Symbol and the Distinction between Reason and Understanding: A Genealogical Recovery of the Baconian Method of Science."

and eternal in a way that Sidney's does not. Of course, Shelley's conception of eternity is immanent, bound by natural laws under which humans must operate, rather than transcendent, marking an essential difference between Sidney's Renaissance Platonism and Shelley's Romantic Platonism. For Shelley then, these immutable laws are simply the expression of cause and effect in material bodies. As such, for Shelley the poet articulates indestructible laws of nature but is also bound by those natural laws, an idea that finds its origin in Bacon's *Novum Organum*, which may in part explain Shelley's various references in the *Defence* to the poetic nature of Baconian prose. And it is within this order that Shelley argues against Peacock's criticism of poetry, for as Shelley claims: "[P]oets have been challenged to resign the civic crown to reasoners and mechanists…, [in which] it is admitted that the exercise of the imagination is most delightful, but it is alleged, that that of reason is more useful" (131). The crux of Shelley's argument against Peacock's utilitarian attack on poetry comes with Shelley's claim that poetry produces permanent pleasures, in allying itself with the expression of those eternal, immutable laws, while submitting to them, in opposition to the commercialism and pragmatism which modern science has produced in its progressive mastery of natural laws. While science attempts to understand laws of nature in order to control and harness its material forces, producing instruments to exert power over nature, the poet accepts those laws and suffers under their powerful force, which frequently runs in opposition to human desire. The tension between poetic pleasure and the crass pleasures of commercial production then establishes the central ground of Shelley's argument, and appears within the very structure of an Enlightenment view of scientific progress.

Shelley's defence of poetry then is deployed against a Benthamite view of pleasure calculated as utility; its central characteristic is discovered in the tension between pleasure and pain, both products inherent in the relationship between human subjectivity and natural objects. Poetry then imitates this tension, reproducing it in a mimetic representation of human existence, which produces a definition of "pleasure in the highest sense […], involving a number of paradoxes" (132). Here Shelley appeals to a hierarchy within human nature, identified with the distinction between the passive and active aspects of human nature previously made by reference to in the image of the Æolian lyre:

> For, from an inexplicable defect of harmony in the constitution of human nature, the pain of the inferior is frequently connected with pleasures of the superior portions of our being. Sorrow, terror, anguish, despair itself, are often the chosen expressions of an approximation to the highest good. Our sympathy in tragic fiction depends on this principle; tragedy delights by affording a shadow of the pleasure which exists in pain. This is the source also of the melancholy which is inseparable from the sweetest melody. The pleasure that is in sorrow is sweeter than the pleasure of pleasure itself. And hence the saying, 'It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of mirth.' Not that this highest species of pleasure is necessarily linked with pain. The delight of love and friendship, the ecstasy of the admiration of nature, the joy of the perception and still more of the creation of poetry is often wholly unalloyed. (Shelley 133)

Shelley's reference to the "inexplicable defect of harmony in the constitution of human nature" is only intelligible in light of Shelley's denial of original sin and his inability to grasp the nature of that defect. This marks a key departure from Sidney, whose "right poet," in recognizing the defects of sin, and the limits of nature, and "disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature" (78). While he rejects the Sidneian conception of the poet who represents a golden world that transcends human life in moral action, Shelley accepts the claim that poetry improves the human lot; in the poetic representation of the tension between suffering and joy, pain and pleasure, the poet creates "the beautiful and the good" (134), which is not achieved in a world of Platonic forms, but in the material world with all of its thwarted desires and tainted loves. This is applied to a critique of utilitarianism: "The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature" (Shelley 135).

For Shelley, it is poetry that produces an aesthetic pleasure which sublimates the suffering of pain into a higher feeling that promotes sympathy for the sufferings of

others, thus leading to moral action. Thus, aesthetic pleasure is opposed to a utilitarian ethic which calculates pleasures on a quantitative scale of pleasure, and thereby reduces human nature to crass materialism. Rather pain must be an element of that pleasure, tempering the body's coarse enjoyments of external, sensuous, material existence. And while Shelley argues that there are experiences, representable in poetry, that express "unalloyed" joy, Shelley's own practice belies the attainment of such an ideal; the human subject is always suspended within the tension between desire for unity and its attainment, and even in such moments of attainment, the reality of lived experience in the flux of temporality gives way to the torpor of satisfaction. Shelley's aesthetic is not ascetic, but agonistic, maintaining the centrality of human suffering against the ruling ethos of Benthamite utilitarianism which values only pleasurable sensations in a quantitative calculus of human social relations.

The utility of poetry is discovered in its uselessness, its inability to produce a preponderance of pleasure over pain, which is the great desire of Enlightenment technologies in exerting their mastery over nature. Rather, poetry stands in opposition to the inhuman nature of Utilitarianism, which reduces the human being to a gross standard of mere corporeality as it exercises its sheer power over the natural world. Poetry thus maintains the value of representing what pragmatic mastery over nature seeks to eradicate: the existence of suffering in human life. The pleasure poetry affords is one of the representation of the co-existence of pleasure and pain.

For Shelley, the representation of this tension is of the greatest use to human beings: "The production and assurance of pleasure in the highest sense is true utility. Those who produce and preserve this pleasure are the Poets and poetical philosophers" (133). The reference to "poetic philosophers" marks another agreement with Sidney: that Plato is a poet, who, as Sidney claims, presented philosophy under the appearance of fictional dialogues, whereby "though the inside and strength were philosophy, the skin, as it were, and beauty depended most of poetry" (75). Shelley however finds in Plato's style the form of his poetic power: "Plato was essentially a poet—the truth and splendor of his imagery, and the melody of his language, is the most intense that is possible to conceive" (114). Their Platonism is more fundamentally allied in the sense that both sublimate the desires of the body to a higher desire—the moral good for Sidney, and aesthetic pleasure for Shelley. This leads to an odd set of paradoxes. While Sidney's mimetic idea of the poet leads to the creation of a golden world, fictive in nature, liberated from the taint of

corruption and sin and representative of the ideal forms of moral action, Shelley's poet is more realistic, more mimetic of human life as experienced, thereby preserving the tensions between desire and unity, pleasure and pain, strung out on the more fundamental tension between the interiority of human subjectivity, organized by imagination, and practical action in the external order of things, ruled by the laws of nature determined by the materiality of cause and effect. But paradoxically, Shelley's poet is prophetic, a power denied to the "right poet" by Sidney. And this produces perhaps the most unanticipated of all paradoxes. For while Sidney's conception of the poet is not opposed to reason, Shelley, writing from within the context of Enlightenment rationality, argues that, while "[p]oetry is indeed something divine…at once the centre and circumference of knowledge…[and] comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred" (135), nevertheless "[p]oetry is not like reasoning, a power to be determined to be exerted according to the determination of the will" (135).

In contrast to Sidney, whose "right poet" moves the will to attempt to achieve, through self-knowledge, the ideals of human life in line with reason, Shelley claims that poetry is not rational and "differs from logic [in] that it is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind, and its birth and recurrence has no necessary connexion with consciousness or will" (138). As Harry White puts it: "[I]nsofar as Shelley, unlike either Kant or Coleridge, does not define the imaginative aesthesis as a manifestation of reason, the resulting order is not a rational one" (323). This produces a striking tension from within Shelley's conception of poetry, which, he claims, "makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world…. Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in Man" (137). For Shelley, poetry is immutable, eternal and divine, but also irrational and illogical; in claiming for poetry a source of power that is beyond human determination, Shelley has appealed to a divine power that is nevertheless immanent in human nature. In this regard, Shelley goes beyond Sidney's conception of the "right poet," whose power, though the greatest on a human scale of human knowledge, is not from divine inspiration: "Now therein of all sciences (I speak still of human, and according to human conceit) is our poet the monarch" (Sidney 91). In accepting the challenge by Utilitarianism that poetry is useless, Shelley gives up the claims to Enlightenment rationality upon which pragmatism is based. And if science too is ordered by poetry, Shelley has unwittingly rendered the hope for delivery from crass pragmatism to a power wholly beyond

human capacity, eternal in nature, but irrational in origin. If Sidney's golden world of moral goodness is unattainable in this life, an ideal ever postponed though continually sought, then Shelley's power of redemption which, through poetry, reclaims beauty from the realm of decay, remains outside the order of human power, its source "immutable, eternal and divine," and so beyond the command of human ordering, awaiting the breath of the divine, which goes where it will.

Shelley's aestheticism produces a most tantalizing, and agonizing, paradox: the establishment of the poetic power as divine, immanent within human nature, but wholly outside the power of human will and reason. For if, as Shelley famously claims in his last statement in the *Defence*, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World" (140), then their reigning power must be acknowledged as something divine, and wholly outside their determination. For poetry "in this respect differs from logic, that it is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind, and that its birth and recurrence has no necessary connexion with consciousness or will" (138), but "is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own" (136) which "acts in a divine and unapprehended manner, beyond and above consciousness" (116). This is because mind does not order the material world, but is in fact the effect of material causes, thus rendering poetic creation a form of representation originating in and determined by that same material universe of things which it seeks to transcend in poetic representation. It is difficult to see how Shelley can place such trust in poetry to liberate human beings from the stress of mechanical influences and the ascendancy of "the selfish and calculating principle" (135) engendered under the ever-growing accumulation of material goods which mechanical power over nature produces, when poetry itself is bound up in those same causal relations. A wholly unanticipated implication of this is that the scientific method, if ordered by poetry, is cut off from its rational ground at its source. Science itself, with poetry as "the centre and circumference of knowledge… [and] that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred" (Shelley 135), thus finds its source, like poetry, in the realm of irrationality, outside human volition and human modes of knowing. Seen in the context of the Enlightenment epistemology which he wholly accepts, the atheist Shelley is then a more religious theorist of poetry than Sidney, whose Renaissance poetics was deployed as a defence of poetry for use in the Reformed Church.

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"How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe…?"

Frankenstein, Walton and the Monster

SIBYLLE ERLE

Abstract: This essay reiterates the importance of Captain Robert Walton in Shelley's novel. Walton is the addressee of Frankenstein's story and drawing attention to his presence helps with unravelling the complexity of the creation scene. The focus is on physiognomical creation, i.e. not only on Frankenstein's body-making but also his aesthetic response to both the immobile and animated body. Though the Creature's physical ugliness may be a matter of degree, Frankenstein contradicts himself in his description of its effects. He also appears to have expected that animation would not substantially have interfered with the anticipated reality of the animated Creature. But it does. Shelley, it has been argued, revised Adam Smith's ideas about sympathy, suggesting that—if a person inspires terror compensatory sympathy can be achieved through narrative. Is Walton able to handle the monster because he knows it? The essay discusses the dynamic between the visual and the auditory in Frankenstein to argue that Shelley responds to Johann Caspar Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy (1789-98).

This essay examines the theme of identity in *Frankenstein* (1818) by contextualising the Creature's looks and speech with Mary Shelley's response to the face-reading practices of the Swiss theologian, writer and physiognomist Johann Caspar Lavater (1757–1801). Lavater had been writing on physiognomy, the ancient art of face reading, since the early 1770s. Stressing the importance of appearance, he claimed that physiognomy's potential for character assessment could be harnessed and developed into the science of character, making the judgement of one person of any other an

objective and, therefore, safe and reliable affair. Lavater was an avid collector of prints and portraits and eventually published his findings as the heavily-illustrated four-volume *Physiognomische Fragmente* (1775–78). The physiognomy project, which was controversial from the start, had a complicated publication history; it was abridged, revised as well as expanded and translated, appearing as two authorised and several pirated translations in England in the 1790s (Johnson 52–74). This essay reads *Frankenstein* as a response to Lavater's discussion and representation of body-soul relationships; the idea that it is possible to pin them down and arrive at conclusive readings of character was at the heart of Lavater's physiognomy. Shelley responds to Lavater's approach by engaging with the question of identity and the claim that the soul imprints itself into the body (Caflisch-Schnetzler 99). Throughout her novel, the Creature's identity is imposed, interpreted and regulated by the responses of others. Appearance is of importance to the Creature's sense of self and yet, this sense of self is not completely reliant on the encounters he has. He is judged repeatedly on his appearance alone but Shelley (contrary to Lavater) gives the Creature his own voice, allowing him to ponder his situation in life:

> And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I […] hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they, and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around, I saw and heard of none like me. Was I then a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned? (96)

In this passage, the Creature is reflecting on the lived experience of failed social interactions. His appearance has prevented any kind of social exchange. Aware of his extraordinary physical abilities, the Creature continues to compare himself with those he cannot meet at close range. Initially, he does not identify himself as a new species; this happens later, when he asks Frankenstein for a mate. He thinks of himself as human-like and "other" because he does not find acceptance and there is no answer to his searching question, only "groans" (97).

The theme of identity recurs in the De Lacey scene with De Lacey asking, "who are you?" (Shelley 110). The blind man formulates this question after listening to the Creature's pleas for protection: "You and your family are the friends whom I seek. Do not you desert me in the hour of trial" (110). When the Creature accepts the invitation to enter the cottage, he knows that he has very little time to win De Lacey over. He thinks that he could succeed because the De Laceys, too, were wronged outsiders. Talking about the family with admiration, the Creature reveals his fear of approaching and befriending them:

> They are kind—they are the most excellent creatures in the world; but unfortunately, they are prejudiced against me. I have good dispositions; my life has been hitherto harmless, and, in some degree, beneficial; but a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster. (109)

Listening to the explanation, De Lacey cannot imagine the speaker to be other than human and yet, he is unsure about his character. He has no way of telling whom he is dealing with without the visual image. De Lacey relies on speech. In the novel, moreover, it does not say that De Lacey ever touches the Creature: "I am blind, and cannot judge your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere. I am poor, and an exile; but it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature" (109). The scene ends abruptly and with the return of De Lacey's children. There is no stopping them; the Creature, who is driven away, is furious.

The Creature's self-identification as formless or monstrous is built from the so-called mirror scene and the moment the Creature grasps the reason for his isolation; when looking into a pool, he realises that he looks different:

> I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified, when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror: and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster

> that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity. (Shelley 90)

Struggling to recognise himself, the Creature is distraught because, despite the evidence he feels that he resembles the cottagers, having aspired to become like them in conduct and language. While living in the hovel behind the cottage, he listens and learns. The expression "in reality" (90) implies that he is beginning to understand the impact of his appearance.

The mirror scene raises interesting questions about the representability of the face (Dutroit 850), but it is doubtful whether the Creature refers to his face only when he considers his physical identity, e.g. if he separates his face from his body. The final sentence of the recognition scene (quoted above) adds poignancy to the Creature's reflections but it also projects his inner strength. The Creature acknowledges his physical identity and, as Paul Youngquist notes, would never forget the "material fact of his physical deformity" (53). Only after De Lacey is rescued by his panic-stricken children (Shelley 110) does he accept that opinions of others do matter. The intervention in the De Lacey scene, in other words, affirms the reality of the deformed body. Regarding Lavater's physiognomical practice, the Creature, though rejected by his maker, resists; when looking into the pool, he sees what others see, but he also disagrees and proposes an alternative interpretation. As a result of his botched creation, moral goodness and physical deformity have been fused into one, clashing image of himself. It is precisely this fusion which he wants to challenge as soon as he realises that it has caused his exclusion.

On the continent, Lavater had been criticised and ridiculed ever since the publication of *Von der Physiognomik* (1772) and Shelley would have known this. She was travelling and staying in Switzerland where Lavater had died in 1801. When the physiognomy project was translated into English, no changes were made; emphasis was put on physiognomy's potential to develop into a science (Shookman 5). As well as admitting that he was still at the information-gathering stage, Lavater declared: "I neither will, nor can write a complete Treatise on the Science of Physiognomies. My ambition is limited to a few simple Essays; and the Fragments which I give, never can compose a Whole" (1). Lavater's ideas about "science," a word used somewhat loosely in *Essays on Physiognomy*, resonate with the approach to science in *Frankenstein*,

because Frankenstein is utterly convinced of the significance and value of his project so that he ignores all criticism and proceeds to work on it on his own (Shelley 35). Like Lavater, Frankenstein would not cease until he achieved his goal. Yet his determination is a calculated decision on Shelley's part, as her contemporaries would not have approved of Frankenstein's ambition. What she proposes through this fictional character's ambition is a radical idea.

The belief in the literal truth of the creation story was prevalent at the time. All of humanity was formed in God's image. In *Frankenstein*, it is through science that new life is created, which suggests that the scene in the laboratory is Shelley's 'modern' interpretation of divine creation. It has often been pointed out that the conversations about science in June 1816 inspired the first incarnation of *Frankenstein*, e.g. the ghost story written on 16 June 1816. Percy Bysshe Shelley was Mary Shelley's source and teacher. He was involved in the writing, composed the first, anonymous preface, and his review, which calls the Creature an "abomination and anomaly," suggests that it is the lack of social relations that caused his moral badness (Hatch 33).

Shelley's novel renders the relationship between creator and creation as close and interdependent. This allows for a combination of science (Frankenstein) with self-knowledge (Creature) and leads directly to Lavater and the objective of *Essays on Physiognomy* which, according to the work's title-page, is to "promote the knowledge and love of mankind." Lavater was a pastor and committed to physiognomy because he believed that the more that could be known about a person, the easier it was to love this person (1). He never acknowledged the consequences his theory could have and continuously appealed to his readers to understand that his physiognomy was work in progress. It was only natural that he was making the occasional mistake (1). In *Frankenstein*, though nobody should know the Creature better than Frankenstein, only Walton, a fleeting acquaintance, is able to see him for what he is. For Walton, who is writing to his sister, the Creature is a tragic figure: "Great God! What a scene has just taken place! I am yet dizzy with the remembrance of it. I hardly know whether I shall have the power to detail it; yet the tale which I have recorded would be incomplete without this final and wonderful catastrophe" (Shelley 186). Is this also Shelley's position?

Shelley's relation to Lavater's face-reading practice provides a historical as well as intellectual context for Frankenstein's relation to the Creature. Shelley does not reveal how the body is animated. Frankenstein mentions that he "collected the

instruments of life around" him so that he could "infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing" (Shelley 38).[1] In the so-called laboratory scene, creation is presented as a supernatural event. When Frankenstein embarks on the second experiment, the creation of a female body in the Orkneys, the scene is less Gothic; Frankenstein appears to be in control. He is confident that he will succeed and improve on the first experiment. This time, however, he hesitates and decides not to complete the experiment for moral reasons: "Had I a right, for my own benefit, to inflict this curse upon everlasting generations?" (138). Shelley, of course, returns and rises to the provocations of her novel and especially the "spark" of life in her introduction to the 1831 edition. Yet the Gothic qualities of the creation scene (i.e. the absence of any explanation in the 1818 edition) prompts the question, I think, whether it had occurred to Shelley that the Creature could not have a soul, the most radical idea posed by her text.[2] After all, she equipped the Creature with a sense of self and he never doubts that he has a soul. What makes him human is his capacity for love and compassion.

Far too much attention has been paid to the scene set in the laboratory and it seems that interpretations of the novel have been overshadowed by its cinematic reception. This essay concentrates on the encounters of Frankenstein and Captain Robert Walton with the Creature, reading methods of character assessment against methods of observations recommended in Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*. The proposed interpretation negotiates Shelley's treatment of body-soul relationships in the designation process of character and the Creature's attempts at finding out where he belongs, i.e. two important aspects of the identity theme. In the novel, the Creature's moral deformity increases on account of the murders he commits, while his physical deformity stays the same. The growing divide is at odds with one of Lavater's core beliefs, that the surface embodies a hidden depth. The Creature, moreover, keeps returning to this contradiction when he tells his life-story to explain about his

1 Samuel Holmes Vasbinder interprets the absence of scientific explanation as a stylistic decision: "The processes producing the invention or technological advancement are carefully shrouded in mystery. In concealing the secret of the spark of life. Mary anticipates the method of the speculative fiction story in general" (26).

2 Martin Willis wonders at the soul's physicality in Shelley's "Transformation" (1831), a Faustian short story about the bargaining and recovery of a protagonist's soul. Willis reminds us that Shelley, possibly because of her husband, would have been "most enamoured by romantic philosophy" (Willis 25) and interprets the creature as a symbol of "scientific materialism" (27), while claiming that the reason for the monster's animation is that "electricity also gave a soul" (32).

appearance. He actively counteracts the assumptions made about the connection between his body and soul. The overall uncertainty about the connection between face and inner self plays an important part in the novel's engagement with the need for compassion. There is a continuous parallel between the novel's struggle with trusting the face and Lavater's many uncertainties about the face as a representation of character, so much so that we may read *Frankenstein* as a re-enactment of the problems of representation in Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*.

Much has been made of Frankenstein as an unreliable narrator. His relationship with the Creature has been discussed many times over both through the lens of psychoanalytical theories and in terms of a doubling effect. The narrative structure, the narrative frames, the repetition of parts of the story and deteriorating states of mind or dream visions are familiar Gothic devices. They have also been interpreted as threats to the symbolic order and political authority (Mellor; Paulson). Walton is important, because he is the addressee of Frankenstein's story. Drawing attention to his presence helps at unravelling the complexity of the creation scene. This scene is really only a story told by Frankenstein to Walton. The meeting between Walton and the Creature, by comparison, takes place in real-narrative time and, Walton's reaction to the Creature, like that of Frankenstein, is by no means straightforward. He is familiar with the life stories of Frankenstein and the Creature. Should he feel and show compassion for both? Walton, because he has learnt much about the Creature from the story, is a well-prepared observer, who decides, when meeting the Creature on board his ship, to listen (against Frankenstein's advice) but also not to look when listening. Why does he keep his eyes averted? Is it that only by not looking that compassion can be achieved? The relationship between the visual and the auditory in *Frankenstein* is far more complex than has so far been acknowledged.

In *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy* (1988), David Marshall argues that sympathy in *Frankenstein* fails because of "fellow feeling" being converted into "aesthetic pleasure" rather than compassion (179).[3] Marshall draws on the eighteenth-century philosopher, Adam Smith, who, in exploring the motivation of selfish or benevolent human behaviour, develops the concept of the sympathetic spectator, explaining in his highly influential *Theory of Moral Sentiment* (1759) about the process of sympathy: "The compassion of the spectator must arise altogether from the consideration of what he himself would feel if he was reduced to the same unhappy situation,

3 See also: Britton 6; Hatch 34.

and, what perhaps is impossible, was at the same time able to regard it with his present reason and judgment" (Smith 7). Implied is that there need to be two subjects, the observer and the observed, and that the observer can never feel what the other feels but only what they would feel in the other's situation. The desired outcome of the imagined changing-of-places is the assessment of moral conduct (Marshall 222). Analysing Smith's conflation of the discourses of disability and aesthetics, Paul Kelleher delineates that for the model and its alignment of sympathy and judgement to work, Smith cannot but insist that spectators can control emotional responses so as not to completely identify with the observed. This would be counter-productive (Kelleher 45). James Chandler, who examines the problem of sympathy in the context of the sentimental tradition, writes that *Frankenstein* is a "staging of mixed feelings"; it is never made clear whether the Creature becomes or is a monster to start with (249). As Chandler stresses, all characters in the novel are driven by the search for companionship. The Creature himself "makes repeated efforts to forge a human connection" (247). However, we cannot talk of any kind of *proper* interaction or social situations in *Frankenstein*, because those who look at the Creature either run away or attack. They have no self-control which means that they have no time to understand, let alone conceive the Creature's situation. In the De Lacey scene, the Creature comments that Felix intervenes at once and with "supernatural force" (Shelley 110). This would suggest that the failure of sympathy in *Frankenstein* is a failure to check or manage the emotions triggered by the Creature's human-like yet extremely disfigured appearance. According to Smith, a social context is necessary for sympathy to be felt and acted out. In *Frankenstein*, the Creature's search for companionship remains dependent on the outcome of first impressions, just as in Lavater's approach to physiognomy. In *Essays on Physiognomy*, Lavater's character readings tend to be based on the impression captured by a single portrait.

Adam Smith's model relies on interpersonal relations as well as social situations. Without any reference point, a malformed person, Smith speculates, would never recognise their deviation from the norm (107). Only through the reactions of others can they learn about themselves: "Our first ideas of personal beauty and deformity, are drawn from the shape and appearance of others, not from our own. We soon become sensible, however, that others exercise the same criticism upon us. We are pleased when they approve our figure, and are disobliged when they seem to be disgusted" (100). Social interaction is important because, without it,

humans would never develop into moral beings. To put this differently, what connects Smith's thinking to Lavater's is that Smith's aesthetic theory is also a moral theory. Late eighteenth-century physiognomy, i.e. the version championed by Lavater, provides a fitting context for a discussion of the pursuit of sympathy in the midst of a society which is unable to identify with the monstrous other. Lavater proposes a process of sympathy which is sustained by self-knowledge. The better we read ourselves, the better we can understand others. While Smith talks about projection or virtual identification, Lavater explores close human relationships and focuses on physical likeness, which he says is the reason for friendship (Erle 95–114).[4] In *Frankenstein*, all attempts at friendship fail. Since nobody is exactly like the Creature—he literally doesn't fit in—nobody can ever feel for him.

Shelley uses physical description to build the characters of Frankenstein's teachers but also to explain Frankenstein's attitude towards the old and new sciences:

> This professor [Waldman] was very unlike his colleague. He appeared about fifty years of age, but with an aspect expressive of the greatest benevolence; […] His person was short, but remarkably erect; and his voice the sweetest I had ever heard [… and] I attended the lectures, and cultivated the acquaintance, of the men of science of the university; and I found even in M. Krempe a great deal of sound sense and real information, combined, it is true, with a repulsive physiognomy and manners, but not on that account the less valuable. In M. Waldman I found a true friend. (30, 32)

Frankenstein's opinion is based on first impression. He never revises it: Krempe is repulsive. He avoids him and loses interest in his teachings. Shelley, consequently, suggests Frankenstein's preference of Waldman in terms of physical attraction as well as like-mindedness, which he establishes himself by deducting it from physical appearance.

4 Marshall already gestures towards this model when he argues that *Frankenstein* problematises shared likeness: "each character wishes for a fellow being, someone who is *like* himself. What they seek is not a friend or a companion but rather a *semblance*. It is not a coincidence that the moment in which Frankenstein admits being moved and displays compassion in listing to the monster is during his plea for a being like himself. Ironically, it is Frankenstein's creation of a being like himself that seems to cut him off from sympathy" (197).

Shelley's connection to Lavater, I think, is biographical as well as personal and this ubiquity is one of the reasons she set *Frankenstein* in the 1790s. Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who was friendly with the Swiss-born painter, Henry Fuseli, a childhood friend of Lavater's (Allentuck 89–112), was commissioned to translate the abridged German edition of *Essays on Physiognomy*.[5] The second connection exists through Shelley's father, William Godwin, who was a friend of Thomas Holcroft's (a translater of Lavater's physiognomy) and not only called in a physiognomist to have his daughter's face read in 1797 but also used physiognomy for characterization in *Caleb Williams*, published in 1794 (Juengel 367–68). William Nicholson, the physiognomist examining little Mary's face a few days after her birth, later he wrote to Godwin explaining what he had done and warned that the identified character traits should be treated as preliminary observations, not because Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin's face was so tiny and therefore difficult to read but because the reading had been done in a hurry. Putting Godwin's expectations aside, it is worth noting that Nicholson's report bears the same stylistic characteristics as Lavater's physiognomical readings. Like Lavater, Nicholson prevaricates. His letter commences with the following caveat:

> My view was, in fact, slight and momentary. I had no time to consider, compare, and combine. Yet I am disposed to think the following imperfect observation may lead you to more than a suspicion that our organization at the birth may greatly influence those motives which govern the series of our future acts of intelligence, and that we may even possess moral habits, acquired during the foetal state. (Kegan)

Rather than communicate his findings, Nicholson explains what is involved in a physiognomical reading: "time to consider, compare and combine." Next, he pleads with Godwin to accept the scientific basis of his reading. Then he proceeds to list what he has found, emphasising that he is drawing on many years of experience:

> 1. The outline of the head viewed from above, its profile, the outline of the forehead, seen from behind and in its horizontal positions, are

5 Juengel, who hints at Wollstonecraft's response to physiognomy in *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), draws attention to relevant passages in the 1831 introduction and discusses Shelley's concerns about an engraved portrait of her husband (354, 358, 367).

> such as I have invariably and exclusively seen in subjects who possessed considerable memory and intelligence.
> [...]
> 4. The form of the nose, the nostrils, its insertion between the eyes, and its changes by muscular action, together with the side of the face in which the characteristic marks of affection are most prominent, were scarcely examined. Here also is much room for meditation and remark. (Kegan)

Nicholson's reading exemplifies what is typical of a physiognomical reading; he prevaricates about what has been perceived in the face: "Here also is much room for meditation and remark." The first example links its analysis to other, similar interpretations of older faces and the second, though similarly inconclusive, appeals to a superordinate visual code, which Nicholson had no time to examine. Lavater, moreover, delayed or suspended physiognomical judgement whenever he juxtaposed images to make a point about a certain character trait and its rendering in different portraits, all the while educating his readers about details and nuances (Erle 134–63). Nicholson's struggle to both identify and interpret what he has seen can be traced to the face-to-face meetings in *Frankenstein*. Neither Frankenstein's reports nor Walton's letters give straightforward factual narratives about either the Creature's looks or character.

In *Essays on Physiognomy*, Lavater uses the word "character" to mean true, inner self, which is essential and unchanging. To capture "character," Lavater says, the physiognomist needs to differentiate between the fixed and the flexible features of a face:

> The character, in a state of rest, resides in the form of the solid parts, and the inaction of those which are moveable. The character impassioned is to be traced in the motion of the moveable parts. The motion is in proportion to the moving power. Passion has a determinate relation to the elasticity of the man, or that disposition which renders him susceptible of passions.
>
> Physiognomy points out the fund of the human faculties, and Pathognomy the interest of revenue which it produces. (1: 23)

Lavater announces that he intends to analyse fixed and flexible features in equal parts, but he comes to focus on the shapes created by the bone structure (physiognomy), claiming that "character" gets contaminated by momentary expression or muscular movement (pathognomy). He needs physiognomical readings to be reliable and decides to work with portraits. "Character," for Lavater, is linked to the notion of a divine image or likeness, which he associates with the human soul. This original becomes fully visible after death and through resurrection (Pestalozzi 286–87). To get to this image, Lavater says, the physiognomist has to carefully monitor his feelings during physiognomical observation. Since the image is mediated by the body, the physiognomist has to work hard to see it. The soul or "character," according to Lavater, strives to impress itself from the inside (Caflisch-Schnetzler 99).

Lavater's approach to physiognomy also documents the inner life of the observer, because the observer plays a role in the process of observation. Lavater, when examining a portrait, keeps a record of his feelings: "Every one experiences different sensations conformably to the difference of the Physiognomies which excite them. Every figure leaves impressions, which one dissimilar would not have produced" (1: 93). Lavater's practice of physiognomy links a subject (a person) to an object or interpretation (a portrait), while creating an equivalence between what ought to be perceived as separate. By default, this reading process and approach to the face draws attention to the turbulent relationship between difference and similarity, between projection and expression. This phenomenon applies to *Frankenstein*. When they meet in the Alps, Frankenstein is familiar with the Creature's physiognomy and pathognomy. When speaking to Walton, his narrative is mediated by memory from the earlier meetings as well as by address. His narrative also includes the Creature's story. Frankenstein must successfully navigate between description and recognition of the facts. His intention is to convince Walton that his version of events is the master narrative. Shelley's technique, a careful layering of points of view, is an effective tool with which to critique Lavater's physiognomical theory. She does not solely, as Scott J. Juengel suggests, attack "Lavater's reification of the body" (373) but rather targets his approach for blurring the boundaries between an object and its representation.[6]

6 George C. Grinnell, writing on P. B. Shelley's "On the Medusa," considers Lavater in the context of British portraiture. He mentions *Frankenstein* in passing and implies that Shelley, like many others, would have found inspiration in Lavater's physiognomical system "by which visual description blurred into measurements of character" (338).

Reading *Frankenstein* as a response to the representation of body-soul relationships in Lavater's physiognomy, Frankenstein's description of the immobile and animated bodies in the narrative of the laboratory scene appears in a new light. While staring at the body in front of him, Frankenstein records and reports on its animation. Firstly, it opens its eye, then it draws its first breath and finally the whole body stirs: "I saw the dull eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs" (Shelley 38–39). His gaze follows the course of the movement. The animation starts with the eyes and from the lungs before it reaches the limbs. Because of the narrative situation, Frankenstein digresses to share his reflections. He is talking to Walton and he has since tried to make sense of his initial response. Frankenstein could not and still cannot believe his eyes. He carefully selected all parts and, for Frankenstein, beauty and its aesthetic experience are associated with a dead body. This response, however, is at odds with what Philippe Ariès, in *The Hour of our Death* (1981), has described as the typically Western attitude towards corpses. A corpse is normally experienced as a "most loathsome and abhorred spectacle" (342). Frankenstein's emotional response includes disgust, but due to the narrative situation, the account is also infused with the wisdom of hindsight. What disturbs Frankenstein is how movement disrupts the stillness of the Creature's immobile body and what disturbs him even more is the Creature's attempt to speak to him after following him into his bedroom.

It appears that all aspects associated with movement clash with the image created by the still body. The Creature's physiognomy and pathognomy do not work in tandem. The assessment of the Creature is carried out in response to two different body-images: one immobile and one animated. While the former is denotated by *it*, the latter is attributed a *he*. Animation, in other words, projects the transition from "thing" to "catastrophe." (More about this transition in a moment.) The narration of the event is mediated as Frankenstein has told Walton that he carried on, even though he resented what he was doing: "often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation" (37). The description of the transformation of the immobile body is part of a carefully-constructed narrative. It includes remembered responses as well as reflections which postdate the event and Frankenstein does not simply relive the moment because he does not fully identify with his former self:

> How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour of the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips. (Shelley 39)

Frankenstein's report mixes emotional response with rational explanation. Taking in the features of the animated body, he struggles to comprehend and make sense of what he sees: "How can I describe my emotions at the catastrophe"? (39). Even though the experiment was a success, Frankenstein immediately labels it a "catastrophe." This is odd as it had always been his intention to create new life and being alive means movement. In addition, remembering the immobile body, Frankenstein still (when talking to Walton) does not acknowledge that the body he created is an assemblage of parts. Instead, he perceives it as a homogenous whole. What he describes is skin which "scarcely covered the work of the muscles and arteries beneath" (Shelley 39). The skin, he says he saw, is not flabby and the image seems to remind him of a trained, muscular body. The turning point in the description is signalled through the word "but": "but these luxuriances" (39). Another "but," indicating yet another change in narrative direction, is in the next passage, where Frankenstein explains why he cannot bear to look: "but now that I had finished the dream of beauty vanished and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to bear the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room" (39). What confuses Frankenstein is the very fact of movement and his response is two-fold: firstly, he responds to the immobile and then to the animated body.

What is Frankenstein trying to communicate to Walton? The phenomenon of movement has already been discussed in terms of a collapse of surface and depth (Juengel 357). Juengel's interpretation relates to physiognomy but not to Lavater's practice and consequently does not probe deeply enough into the quality of Frankenstein's narrative, which differentiates between the Creature's physiognomy

(bone or fixed features) and its pathognomy (muscle or mobile features). What tends to be discussed is the Creature's perceived ugliness. Denise Gigante, for example, focuses on ugliness, which, she contends, triggers Frankenstein's response. This response is basically the same to both the body dead and alive and it only differs in intensity. The Creature's ugliness "did not bother Victor (or anyone else for that matter) before he came to life." In support, Gigante relates back to Frankenstein's explanation to Walton: "he was ugly then; but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have received" (40). Gigante, too, overlooks the significance of the word "but" and the narrative shifts it introduces. Therefore, the transition from beautiful "thing" to "catastrophe" in Frankenstein's mind is not fully explored.

Though the Creature's ugliness may be a matter of degree, Frankenstein contradicts himself in his description of its effects. He also appears to have expected that movement would not substantially interfere with the eagerly anticipated reality of the animated body. But it does. As long as the Creature is immobile, Frankenstein considers its body to be "unfinished" (Shelley 40). So, while the change in the Creature's body is expected, the change in Frankenstein's is not. As manufacturer Frankenstein is familiar with the body and yet his narrative prevaricates. He describes it but also likens it to a "mummy" (40). The narrative moves back and forth between distanced reflection and lasting emotional upset; it is punctuated by several narrative shifts. The story is told with hindsight but Frankenstein struggles to control his story and it is not clear when exactly the beautiful "thing" becomes a "catastrophe."

Frankenstein leaves the laboratory in a hurry: "Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room"; his emotions are "breathless horror and disgust" (39). Exhausted, he falls asleep only to be woken by the horrors of his dreams. It is then that he realises that the Creature is looking at him and smiling. Very frightened, Frankenstein jumps out of bed and "rushed down stairs" (40). What scares him more than anything is the chance of speech (40). This section includes reflection and hindsight. Frankenstein never realises nor admits (to Walton) that he has misread the Creature's expression. Judging from the description, "His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks" (40), the Creature was not going to attack. The power of speech, which foreshadows the Creature's ability to articulate his feelings, increases the Creature's capacity for agency and social interaction, which this scene intensifies as Frankenstein notices

that the Creature reaches out to him. The repetition, first and second encounter in short succession, also intensifies his horror. So, rather then enter into a social situation with the Creature, Frankenstein states that he has to run to save himself. Recalling his obsession and decision to prioritise work over time spent with friends and family, we are left wondering if he preferred the immobile body because he did not have to interact with it.

Frankenstein's assessment of the body and subsequent rejection of the Creature resembles Lavater's physiognomical readings, because Lavater, too, preferred portraits to people. While a portrait for Lavater at least holds the features in perfect balance, its animated version makes a secure evaluation of character impossible. Thinking of the immobile and animated bodies in terms of two images representing the identity of the Creature helps to explain not only the injustice done to the Creature but also the bias of Frankenstein's story. Read against Lavater's physiognomical practice, Frankenstein, like a physiognomist, first looks at a portrait (immobile body) and then encounters the person it represents (animated body). The Creature is not what he expected it to be—beautiful and good. But Frankenstein so many would think, draws the wrong conclusion. Frankenstein, indeed, panics because the body moves and speaks but not in the way he had envisioned. Lack of interaction had guaranteed Frankenstein a position of control both as a scientist or inventor and a creative artist. The social situation he shares with Walton, the retelling of the event, evidences that he has lost narrative control and is trying to regain it.

In the context of the story, Frankenstein calms down only when he runs into Henry Clerval. Seeing Clerval has a positive effect: "his presence brought back to my thoughts my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home so dear to my recollection. I grasped his hand, and in a moment forgot my horror and misfortune; I felt suddenly, and for the first time during many months, calm and serene joy" (Shelley 41). Shelley's description of Frankenstein regaining control over his emotions is littered with references to beautiful and familiar faces. The calming effect they have chimes with the physical connection that Lavater says exists between the observer and the observed: "*Our imagination operates upon our physiognomy.* It assimilates the face, in some measure, to the object of our love or hatred. […] Our face is a mirror which reflects the objects for which we have a singular affection or aversion" (3: 182). Here, Clerval, a dear old friend, has been looking for him, and his arrival returns 'love' into Frankenstein's life and body. Shelley heightens the impact of the meeting by

introducing touch; that is, Frankenstein, who refused to touch the Creature, recognises his friend and embraces him.

The third meeting with the Creature takes place in the Alps. Regarding emotion, it starts with rage and horror and moves on to compassion. Seeing the Creature running towards him, Frankenstein tells Walton, "I trembled with rage and horror, revolving to wait his approach, and then close with him in mortal combat" (76). The scene in the Alps brings Shelley's critique of Lavater's practice into focus because, during the third encounter, the Creature, whose appearance (not his person) once again upsets Frankenstein, becomes an active participant in the process of observation and character scrutiny; the Creature prevents visual exposure and asks to be listened to: "'Thus I relieve thee, my creator,' he said, and placed his hated hands before my eyes, which I flung from me with violence; 'thus I take from thee a sight which you abhor. Still thou canst listen to me, and grant me thy compassion'" (Shelley 79).

Wanting to protect Frankenstein from the cold, the Creature invites him to go to a mountain hut where they can talk: "I followed. My heart was full, and I did not answer him; but, as I proceeded, I weighed the various arguments that he had used, and determined at least to listen to his tale. I was partly urged by curiosity, and compassion confirmed my resolution" (Shelley 79). In Frankenstein's interior monologue "but" indicates the change in his track of thoughts. The non-visual information sways him, though not for long. As we know, Frankenstein would never finish the female body he promises to create. His reflections are equally revealing:

> His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him, and sometimes felt a wish to console him; but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred. I tried to stifle these sensations; I thought, that as I could not sympathize with him, I had no right to withhold from him the small portion of happiness which was yet in my power to bestow. (121)

Frankenstein listens and is momentarily able to connect with the Creature. He feels for him. However, when he looks at his face, he sways back though not immediately and not completely. It is not clear how much time has passed. The account, again

directed at Walton, includes traces of sympathy (in Smith's sense) and therefore creates the impression that, this time, Frankenstein imagines himself in the Creature's 'situation.' But again, Frankenstein speaks in hindsight as well as to Walton. He says that he wanted to help (Shelley 122). On the way down Frankenstein remembers what he saw, he undergoes a change of heart. It is the visual rather than the auditory that has a lasting effect on him: "Can you wonder […] that I saw continually about me a multitude of filthy animals inflicting on me incessant torture, that often extorted screams and bitter groans?" (123). On the way back, the conversation as well as the promise dissolve into "screams" and "groans" and the visual wins out over the auditory. Frankenstein is overwhelmed and can no longer control his emotions.

Narration plays a central role in the novel's demonstration of the failure of sympathy. Arguing for "compensatory compassion," established through listening, Jeanne Britton writes that "Frankenstein parses sympathy's elements and repeatedly makes the simultaneous alignment of physiological resemblance, visual experience, and auditory engagement impossible" (3). To highlight the complexity of the issue addressed by Britton, the final part of this essay analyses Walton's assessment of the Creature, paying particular attention to the role of voice.

The Creature tried to argue his case with De Lacey and Frankenstein (in the Alps), thinking that his voice was not too bad. He was convinced that he could reason with his interlocutors but was proven wrong and had all but given up by the time he met Walton. In *Essays on Physiognomy*, Lavater explores the possibility of voice analysis. Voices, he writes, "are most frequently associated" with foreheads: "If you have any delicacy of ear, be assured that the sound of the voice will soon furnish you with infallible indications by which you may distinguish the class of the forehead, of the temperament, of the character" (Lavater 2: 419). He also coins the expression "*physiognomical ear*," which, he says, many blind people have acquired, but admits that he has never mastered the "art of Music" (2: 240). Lavater's writing on voice complements his ideas on appearance:

> of every species of dissimulation, that of language, however refined it may be, is the most easily detected. But how is it possible to express, by signs, all the sounds of voice so prodigiously varied! We cannot even acquire the power of counterfeiting them; for the most part we disfigure them. (2: 240–1)

Lavater, in short, associates sound with truth and, therefore, with the original image he is searching for in the face he is analysing. If Shelley read Lavater, this passage would explain why De Lacey, who functions as an intermediary between Frankenstein and Walton,[7] is old as well as blind. De Lacey's treatment of the Creature foreshadows Walton's willed and controlled response at the end of the novel.

Whereas visual information dominates Frankenstein's meetings with the Creature, the meeting with Walton is guided by auditory information. Walton is writing a letter to his sister, but stops as he has heard a noise: "I am interrupted. What do these sounds portend? […] Again; there is a sound as of a human voice, but hoarser; it comes from the cabin where the remains of Frankenstein still lie. I must arise, and examine" (Shelley 186). Walton senses danger but quickly associates the sounds with a human voice. On his return, he finishes his story, talking about a visually overpowering finale—"I am yet dizzy with the remembrance of it" (186)—, but he soon regains control and continues his letter, allowing his sister to *enter* into the social situation (in Smith's sense) he has just experienced.

Walton's account is much more immediate and, therefore, perhaps more truthful than Frankenstein's, but it also echoes the narrative strategies used by Frankenstein in the laboratory scene. Though lost for words, Walton securely identifies the Creature's deformed proportions, mentioning the now "long locks of ragged hair" (Shelley 187). His talk of the skin, which is wrinkled and discoloured "like that of a mummy" (187), confirms all of Frankenstein's descriptions. In the Arctic, however, the order of the description is reversed because the face comes last: "Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome yet appalling hideousness" (187). Walton is overwhelmed by the Creature's ugliness, but after looking him in the face, he says, he "involuntarily" shut his eyes (187). With his eyes shut, Walton tells his sister, he can think and remember his "duties" (187).

Walton calls out, asks the Creature to stay, and when he opens his eyes he begins to read the expressive body: "every feature and gesture seemed instigated by the wildest rage of some uncontrollable passion" (Shelley 187). He steps closer: "my first

7 "The monster understands his own investment in his powers of eloquence and persuasion; he realizes that his fate depends on his ability to move others through a recital of his autobiography. He delays his appeal to the De Laceys until he has confidence in his mastery of their language" (Marshall 194). And: "The monster, of course, knows perfectly well that sight will not be adequate if the representation of his tragedy is to have any effect other than horror; it is for this reason that he first approaches the blind De Lacey" (195).

impulses […] were now suspended by a mixture of curiosity and compassion" (187). The idea of control is evoked by the notion of suspended emotions. Walton is able to approach but also decides to keep his eyes averted, knowing that this is the only way to stay in control: "I dared not again raise my looks upon his face, there was something so scaring and unearthly in his ugliness" (187). Again, he cannot speak; when he can, he confronts the Creature: the display of "stings of remorse" is wasted on him (187). Just as in the Alps, a conversation ensues and Walton feels compassion. In the Arctic, the interaction between the interlocutors, however, is completely different. The Creature howls for pain. Walton shrinks back but steps closer so that he can hear what the Creature has to say. He keeps his eyes averted and needs time to recover but is curious as well as impatient. When he is able to speak, they talk about revenge and remorse. The pace of Walton's report is swift and Shelley, in fact, has Walton meet the Creature twice and in short succession, thus echoing the laboratory and bedroom scenes.

Impelled by the memory of Frankenstein's narrative, Walton decides to take another look and promptly, so he tells his sister, "indignation was rekindled" (Shelley 188). Resentment, it turns out, is exactly what the Creature is feeling at this moment in time: "You hate me; but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself. I look on the hands which executed the deed; I think on the heart in which the imagination of it was conceived, and long for the moment when they will meet my eyes, when it will haunt my thoughts no more" (190). The Creature agrees with Walton, declaring that he deserves to be hated. He confirms that his body ought to be read as a representation of moral depravity as well as of the evil deeds he has committed. This act of moral self-judgement does away with the two positions of observer and observed. The emotional distance between the narrator's voice and its assessment gives weight to the finality of the judgement: the Creature is a monster. He has turned his eyes on to himself but remains in control. Addressing his maker, he says: "my agony was still superior to thine; for the bitter sting of remorse may not cease to rankle in my wounds until death shall close them for ever" (191).

Characteristic of all meetings discussed in this essay is excessive emotion in the observer. The Creature's actions, by comparison, are deliberate and never spontaneous. While Frankenstein persists and pursues his agenda, which is to justify his actions, Walton is able to recognise and respect the Creature's suffering. He manages his emotional response to appearance; he only reassures himself that what

he has been told is true. When Walton remembers that Frankenstein warned him of the Creature's eloquence, he briefly relapses into rage. Interestingly, the intensity of this emotion increases once he looks at the "lifeless form" of his "friend" Frankenstein (Shelley 188). This means that Shelley completely reverses the relationship between observer and observed. In the Arctic, rage is triggered by a corpse rather than a corpse-turned-animated body. Shelley, in short, turns Lavater's physiognomical practice on its head by working towards a scene which confirms otherness rather than likeness. It is the Creature who identifies his moral deviousness with his physical ugliness and Walton feels for the Creature, while disagreeing with Frankenstein. Agreement and feelings of recognition (signs of increasing self-knowledge, according to Lavater) are crucial to Lavater's practice (Erle 35–53).

Walton's decision to listen and to not look can be read as Shelley's critique of the physiognomy project but especially his approach and practice. Lavater never entered into a dialogue with the person whose character he was analysing and in *Frankenstein*, only by not looking, can Walton do the Creature justice. While the portraits discussed in *Essays on Physiognomy* had no chance to talk back, Shelley not only gives the Creature his own voice, she also has Frankenstein convey his point of view so that Walton can know both sides before he meets the Creature face-to-face. In the Arctic, the challenge to understand the Creature's situation in life is finally met. Acknowledging the hopelessness of the situation, Walton realises that he has nothing in common with Frankenstein. This disentanglement or breakdown of the relationship between observer and observed, so carefully triangulated by Shelley, is confirmed by the Creature because he does not expect or ask for sympathy: "'But soon,' he cried, with sad and solemn enthusiasm, 'I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct" (191). The Creature defines himself through the emotions he feels inside his body as well as in relation to outside responses to his appearance. He experiences the physical identity imposed on him through his body, remembers his crimes but also says that his loneliness is unbearable. The Creature is a sentient being, capable of love and compassion and he has a will of his own. To find relief and protect himself from further humiliation, he says, he chooses to die and thus rid himself (his soul) of the body manufactured by Frankenstein.

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A Nation Once Again?

Faith and Criticism of National Ideas in Romantic and post-Romantic Irish Literature

JÓZSEF PAP

Abstract: This paper will focus on the cultural foundation of modern Irish nationalism in the wake of the Irish Romantic and post-Romantic periods. Through the analysis of representative literary works, the complex system of belief and disbelief in an independent Ireland will be shown. Several generations of Irish writers shared their opinion with the public on the subject of national ideals from the late 1830s onwards, when the Young Ireland Movement started to grow in influence, and inspired following generations of Irish nationalists. Some of the junior members of the movement went on to found other associations, but the radical changes of borders did not happen until the 20th century. Faith or disbelief in a culturally and politically independent Ireland was expressed not only prior to 1922 (when independence was finally achieved), but it is still an ongoing debate in contemporary academic and literary circles. Before the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998, or even before the Celtic cultural revival started at the beginning of the 19th century, there had already been a vivid industry working on the definition of Irishness. However, a generation after 1840s the militant tones of national pride were accompanied by milder and more considerate voices as the post-Romanic era came. By examining the problems, forces and counter-forces of this discussion we may arrive at a fuller understanding of Romantic and post-Romantic Irish literature.

This paper will focus on the cultural foundation of modern Irish nationalism in the wake of the Irish Romantic and post-Romantic periods. The complex system of belief and disbelief in an independent Ireland will be shown through the analysis of representative literary works. Several generations of Irish writers shared their opinion with the public on the subject of national ideals from the late 1830s onwards, when the Young Ireland Movement started to grow in influence and inspired following generations of Irish nationalists. Some of the junior members of the movement

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Faith or disbelief in a culturally and politically independent Ireland was expressed not only prior to 1922 (when independence was finally achieved), but it is still an ongoing debate in contemporary academic and literary circles. Before the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998, or even before the Celtic cultural revival started at the beginning of the 19th century, there had already been a vivid industry working on the definition of Irishness. However, a generation after the 1840s, the militant tones of national pride were accompanied by milder and more considerate voices as the post-Romanic era came. By examining the problems, forces and counter-forces of this discussion, we may arrive at a fuller understanding of Romantic and post-Romantic Irish literature.

The significance of these issues becomes clear if we consider a recent example. A typo found in the published "Brexit letter" has caused some controversy, since the letter referred to Ireland as the "Republic of Ireland," although the official name of the country has been "Ireland" for quite some time now (May). And while this may only be a small mistake, it is one of many instances indicating that the UK government has overlooked the Irish/Northern Irish dimension during Brexit negotiations, as Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade, Charlie Flanagan and other MPs pointed out (Flanagan; Fenton).

Namely, that a fine demonstration of century-long struggles is being replayed here. The variations of the upcoming political shifts and the management of borders reassure us about the sensitivity of the topic on which this research elaborates. Such turbulent political forces shaped the literary outlook of the 1840s in Ireland. For a short description, at least three important events should be taken into consideration: Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Association, the tragic impact of the Great Irish Famine, and even before that, the failed Wolf Tone Rising of 1798, the memory of which had an enormous influence over Irish history. There are many reasons why this rebellion, just like many others before it, had failed. One may be that it was not a unified campaign on the rebels' side; they lacked discipline, weapons, leadership and followed a disruptive strategy. Meanwhile, the government had been very successful in sealing off the counties which did not act in unison. Since the Wolf Tone Rising was deeply influenced by the French revolution and was dependent on French military support (reinforcement almost landed at Bantry Bay), Great Britain's

answer was heavy retaliation. In 1798, the country erupted into a violent rebellion and the aftermath showed the British that having an Irish parliament was a liability, for it did not satisfy Catholics and failed to keep Protestant loyalists secure. As a result, immediately upon the outbreak of the 1798 rebellion, they decided to abolish the Irish parliament (Foster 259–86). Although from 1782 onwards, the conditions for Catholics slowly started to improve and until the revolution there was clear evidence how an Irish parliament may be efficient,[1] the example of 1798 showed that it was unable to protect itself. From the perspective of Great Britain, a union of the kingdoms was desirable because of the uncertainty that followed the Irish Rebellion and the French Revolution of 1789; if Ireland adopted Catholic emancipation, a Roman Catholic parliament could break away from Britain and ally with the French, while the same measure within a United Kingdom would exclude that possibility. Consequently, by the Act of Union the two kingdoms were united under British control and a sovereign Irish Parliament ceased to exist. Opposing the desired complete separation and independence, the Union was seen as an utmost insult to national pride and self-confidence; it was a national humiliation, a setback that eroded centuries of Irish freedom.

The time for grand-scale armed conflicts was temporarily over and following the Act of Union. a talented nationalist, Daniel O'Connell, rose to new levels of popularity and political success. His main strategy was one of political reform, working within the parliamentary structures of the British state in Ireland. He campaigned for Catholic emancipation—including the right for Catholics to sit in the Westminster Parliament—and repeal of the Act of Union. With the achieved state of Catholic emancipation, conditions for the majority of the population steadily improved, but parliamentarian ways were slowly losing momentum and many fractions left O'Connell's circle. This was due to two major factors. Firstly, the more radical voices who worked in unison with O'Connell criticized him for being an opportunist politician, especially when it came to his relation with British Whig, conservative politicians. Parallel to this in 1843, *The Nation* newspaper published a poem by John Kells Ingram, the work for which he is best remembered, a political ballad called "The Memory of the Dead" written in honour of the Irish Rebellion of 1798.

1 The Repeal Act of 1782 was an Act of the Parliament of Great Britain, which repealed the Declaratory Act of 1719. The 1719 Act had declared the Parliament of Ireland dependent on the Parliament and Privy Council of Great Britain. The Repeal Act was the first part of the Constitution of 1782, which granted legislative independence to the Kingdom of Ireland.

The poet gave voice not only to his own, but to many of the young Irish intellectuals who were stirred by the lack of regard shown for the Irish rebels of '98 by the contemporary nationalist movement, led by Daniel O'Connell (Barret). Informally, the poem is better known under the opening line: "Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?"

> Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?
> Who blushes at the name?
> When cowards mock the patriot's fate
> Who hangs his head for shame?
> He's all a knave, or half a slave,
> Who slights his country thus;
> But a true man, like you, man,
> Will fill your glass with us. (Regan, "The Memory of the Dead" 162)

O'Connell's dedication to peaceful methods of political agitation of course also meant the exclusion of more radical tones from public life. But for the radicals he was seen as one of those men who fear to speak of '98, which also shows how disputed the memory of the 1798 rebellion was. The poem was published when Daniel O'Connell was at the height of his repeal movement, trying to restore the Irish parliament and it was seen as an expression of support for the memory of 1798 as well as a gesture directed against O'Connell. Secondly, O'Connell had to face a series of scandals challenging his credibility as an MP. There were rumours of secret love affairs and adultery, some of which are now impossible to fully prove or confute. Almost a hundred years later, in a famous speech in the Senate in 1925, W. B. Yeats stated how it was said in O'Connell's time that you could not throw a stick over a workhouse without hitting one of his own children. But Yeats went on to say he believed in the solubility of marriage ("Parliamentary Debates"). Needless to say, these scandals undermined O'Connell's political reputation.

Despite these setbacks, the parliamentarian methods achieved astonishing success, but for the more radical voices this was just not enough, and a new revolution was being prepared. Before this could take place, however, another tragic episode in modern Irish history was about to begin, one that has an impact on the fabric of society up until this day. The population of Ireland in 1845 was 8 million. Within 5 years that number dropped to 6 million. One million Irish people died during the

five years of the Great Famine and another one million were forced to emigrate. This incredible destruction affected the Irish economy, politics and society. Irish culture changed completely after the famine. For those who emigrated, it also created a legacy of bitterness. They had been forced out of their country; they had been forced to flee, to leave. More disturbing was the message that they had been left to starve while food was being exported from the country. The immediate response to the famine was to settle the issue of responsibility: who was to blame for the tragedy? John Mitchell, the Young Ireland leader, raised the issue of the "Potato Disease" in Ireland as early as 1844 in *The Nation*. He also described how hunger can be a powerful agent in certain revolutions. The lack of support in some quarters of Britain created anger and resentment. Alexander Martin Sullivan, an Irish nationalist politician and journalist, speculated in his book *The Story of the Irish* that there was an article in the *London Times* newspaper from the time of the famine, which stated that the arrival of the potato blight in Ireland was to be considered a "blessing" (qtd. in Thornton). It went on to say that many British looked "forward to the day when an Irish man in Connemara would become as rare as a red Indian in Manhattan" (qtd. in Thornton). No wonder that Mitchel later assumed that "God Almighty sent the potato blight but it was the British who created the famine" (Mitchell 218). The question of who was to blame for the famine is certainly to be explored. Some experts even go as far as to call it a planned genocide, but there are several problems with this claim at best.[2] Controversial as it was, the contemporaries' overall conclusions provided them with a moral groundwork for any armed conflict for the decades ahead: if the Irish people's suffering is of little or no concern to the governing British forces then the nation's best interest is to separate from the kingdom.

Building on the argument that the country is neglected, the Young Ireland movement organised a rebellion in 1848. The British at that time felt that they were aiding the starving Irish and they considered the rebellion as the worst kind of ingratitude. Interestingly enough, it was not only the famine that inspired the Young Ireland

2 There is a website called www.irishholocaust.org. On its home page the quotation reads: "no Jewish person would ever refer to the "Jewish Oxygen Famine of 1939–1945," so no Irish person ought to ever refer to the Irish Holocaust as a famine." The editors argue in detail that the Irish famine was not a famine, it was genocide, but I think there are problems with using those claims. It is offensive to those who perished in real genocide during the Second World War in a deliberate attempt by the Nazis to exterminate them. There is evidence to prove that British officials did not intend this. The great Irish famine, catastrophic as it was, was no genocide.

Rebellion; there was a wave of revolutions that were erupting around Europe at that time. It was seen as the springtime of the peoples and if we look at the history of present-day countries of France, Germany, Czech Republic, Austria or Hungary, there was a strong sentiment that the subjects of crown could assert their own rights and independence; moreover they could abolish the rule of aristocrats forever.

The Irish rebellion (which was also called the Famine Rebellion) was a complete disaster that caused the exile of prominent Irish politicians from the country. Yet, it had a major difference from any other previous armed conflict, mainly because it was preceded by years of intellectual campaigning. The Young Ireland movement and its leader, Thomas Davis, worked on introducing a new kind of Irish nationalism, one that believed that it needed its songs, its stories; it needed its literature; it needed its own identity. Thomas Davis famously proclaimed that Ireland needed to have its own language: "A people without a language of its own is only half a nation. A nation should guard its language more than its territories, 'tis a surer barrier and a more important frontier than mountain or river" (Kearns 409). In contrast, Davis himself did not have a word of Irish and yet he was able to create the symbolism around a new Irish nationalism. His strategy of the national language linked to liberty and a much advertised new art that would support the national identity were desperately needed, although due to the unfortunate early death of Thomas Davis in 1845, the escalation of the potato blight and the English retaliation following the 1848 rebellion, no further development followed in the language question for some time. Part of the cause of the delay was that the issue of a language-based national identity was in conflict with the old-fashioned nationalism of Daniel O'Connell.

In 1801, Ireland became part of the United Kingdom and lost its sovereignty as a country. However, the inspiration from the American War of Independence and the republicanism of the French Revolution had an influence on the way upcoming intellectuals defined national identity.

Among the ranks of the Repeal Association began a tendency associated with *The Nation* newspaper and The Young Ireland or Éire Óg, a political, cultural and social movement that intended to promote the idea of a national identity in all social classes. The authors included programmatic literary voices, programmatic in the sense of setting a trend to be followed by a generation of poets. *The Nation* aimed to promote national and rational recreation. In its first issue a series of arguments

was started for the "literary and scientific institutions" in Ireland. In this way, the Irish could become "the most cultivated," as they were already "the most virtuous" people in the world (Kearns 408). As a first step, they were to be given national ballads. It is hard to exaggerate the benefits that these nationalists expected from songs. Popular ballads could link classes in a common Irish humanity and teach all a common national history. The writers of *The Nation* published a series of books on the national cause, the most successful of which was *The Spirit of the Nation*, a collection of some of the poems and songs published in the paper. This is, again, a slightly different emphasis from that of the Repeal Association, which instead animated its followers through allegiance to the person of Daniel O'Connell.

Davis gave a voice to the 19th-century foundational culture of modern Irish nationalism. He and a halo of poets sought for imminent political change in the country's history to create a common and more inclusive base for the future. Looking at the poems of young Thomas Davis, we can see that he actually developed his ideas while he was a student at Trinity College. He borrowed his persuasive tone from his oratory skills honed as a member of the Debating Society and the college's Historical Society. In *The Nation* newspaper, he also published some of his poems with a more militant, mobilising tone:

> 'And if, when all a vigil keep
> The West's asleep! the West's asleep!
> Alas! and well may Erin weep
> That Connacht lies in slumber deep.
> But, hark! a voice like thunder spake,
> The West's awake! the West's awake!
> Sing, Oh! hurrah! let England quake,
> We'll watch till death for Erin's sake' (Regan, "The West's Asleep" 160)

It is well-established to say that these mobilising tones were fit for their cause, mainly because of the promising functionality rather than aesthetic values. For example, the tone and register are set when 'Ireland' is personified and referred to in Gaelic as 'Erin' and the rise of the country is in a counter position against England. However, these patriotic poems were the first of their kind and had a major influence on the following generations, as will be elaborated later.

Another poem by Thomas Davis, *A Nation Once Again.* Davis wrote many patriotic ballads, among which this may be the most accurate rendition of his and his colleagues' beliefs.

> When boyhood's fire was in my blood
> I read of ancient freemen,
> For Greece and Rome who bravely stood,
> Three hundred men and three men;
> And then I prayed I yet might see
> Our fetters rent in twain,
> And Ireland, long a province, be
> A Nation once again! (Regan, "A Nation Once Again" 159)

Published in 1844, it quickly became a rallying call for the growing Irish nationalist movement. Besides its obvious popularity, it carried some serious generalisations even by contemporary standards. Ireland (here without the Gael transcription) is now compared to archaic Greek and Roman territories. Furthermore, what really causes some confusion is that in the refrain of the poem it is questionable what kind of nation the speaker would like to return to. Just to mention a few ideas, is it a reference to the parliamentarian era prior to the Wolf Tone Rising, or does it go back even further to a pre-colonised state in the island, without a British influence, a Gaelic Ireland? In this sense, especially in this collection of works, I feel obliged to call attention to Coleridge's idea of the suspension of disbelief: that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith (*Biographia Literaria*, Chapter 4). The poetic faith in this case is necessary to conjure up belief in a free Ireland, an act that requires strong belief. The Young Irelanders longed to see the liberties achieved on the Continent achieved in Ireland. With that in mind, they simply disregarded any factors that went against this chosen rhetoric. Namely, that with a Protestant minority, with class and religious diversity on the island, there is no archaic, let alone authentic, Irish nation to return to. Additionally, Thomas Davis was not even afraid of the aestheticization of violence in his works which implies that taking up arms against the oppressors is responsible for a heroic outlook.

Aside from the chief organiser, Thomas Davis, there were other voices in the *Nation* circle as well. Firstly, Samuel Fergusson may be mentioned who revitalised

the keening poetic tradition, a lament tradition to be exact, famously for the funeral of Thomas Davis. James Mangan was another prominent example from a literary point of view. Although his early poetry was often apolitical, after the Great Famine he began writing patriotic poems, including influential works such as "Dark Rosaleen," a translation of Antoine Ó Raifteirí's Róisín Dubh, a political song disguised as a love song. Raifteirí was a travelling bard who lived between 1779 and 1835. He made a life for himself writing songs and poetry, often performing them in the mansions of the Anglo-Irish gentry. He wrote in Irish and the peculiar irony of the case was that his patriotic song was to be translated to the supposed oppressors' language for an Irish audience to enjoy.[3]

O my dark Rosaleen,
Do not sigh, do not weep!
The priests are on the ocean green
They march along the deep.
There's wine from the royal Pope
Upon the ocean green;
And Spanish ale shall give you hope,
My Dark Rosaleen!
My own Rosaleen! (Regan, "Dark Rosaleen" 146)

I may call attention to the religious references in the image of "wine from the royal Pope" and the Catholic solidarity in the form of "Spanish ale." Closely related, but prior to this poem, the adaptation of a popular ballad motif *Kathaleen Ny-Houlahan* was published. Here, the female character, which also stands for Ireland, is in urgent need of physical and spiritual rejuvenation:

Long they pine in weary woe, the nobles of our land,
Long they wander to and fro, proscribed, alas! and banned;
Feastless, houseless, altarless, they bear the exile's brand,
But their hope is in the coming-to of Kathaleen-Ny-Houlahan!

3 *The Nation* newspaper was published almost exclusively in English and Mangan probably used Ferguson's literal translation to write this poem.

> He, who over sands and waves led Israel along—
> He, who fed, with heavenly bread, that chosen tribe and throng—
> He, who stood by Moses, when his foes were fierce and strong—
> May He show forth His might in saving KathaleenNy-Houlahan. (Regan, "Kathaleen Ny-Houlahan" 145)

To give an idea about the long-lasting after effect and the popularity of this motif, Richard Kearney suggested that the Kathleen Ni Houlihan myth represents the view that the blood sacrifice of heroes is needed to free and redeem Ireland (218). At the same time, these heroic sacrificial martyrs are rewarded by being "remembered for ever." This nationalist sacrificial mythology can be tied to pagan concepts of "seasonal rejuvenation" as well as the sacrificial aspects of Christianity and the tradition of martyrdom. Kearney went on to add that in the 1981 Irish hunger strike of Irish Republican Army prisoners, the same ideology is traceable.

Unlike in the works of Thomas Davis, a different cultural approach to the nationalist question appeared with Mangan. Old Irish poetic structures and forms were revisited, making him, I would suggest, a forerunner and promoter of Irish cultural revival and not necessarily a political revivalist. This shift in tone carries the main significance here, because by the end of the century, the "real" revivalist followed this cultural tradition of their predecessors, but not their demanding political programme.

Later, at the end of the century, W. B. Yeats insisted on the order of first becoming culturally independent in Ireland and then politically independent, but the splitting of these two endeavours was definitely a perquisite: cultural nationalism, but from an Anglo-Irish background, a separation of cultural and political nationalisms. With all his predecessors already exploiting several popular myths and ballads, motifs and traditions, Yeats and his contemporaries still had a lot to do from a cultural nationalist's point of view. The reason I call this era the post-Romantic period, in an Irish context, is self-explanatory. After the failed Young Ireland rebellion and the coming British retribution, in addition to the Great Famine decimating the population, the following generations inherited an incomplete Irish national identity. They needed to finish (or restart) the process of becoming a culturally independent nation, but the aftermath of these tragedies promised little success. More specifically, the native language suffered irreversible damage. Yet against these unfavourable

odds, Yeats succeeded in opening new horizons to the Cathleen ni Houlihan myth, the *aisling* and lament traditions and other resurrected Irish topoi. He also explicitly referred to the political legacy left behind by the Young Ireland movement. In his poem, *Parnell,* written in 1891, he comments on the national question: "Parnell came down the road, he said to a cheering man: / 'Ireland shall get her freedom and you still break stone'" (Yeats 267). Even if Ireland's freedom and independence are achieved, nothing will change for the poor. The cheering man Yeats talks about is a poor man excited about Ireland becoming free, since that should mean he, as a poor man, will be able to make a better living for himself. However, Parnell says even if Ireland becomes independent, you will break stone just as you always have, referring to the lack of immediate benefit that certain classes in society will see from Irish freedom. Another famous example, *September 1913*, was written midway through his life as a highly reflective poem:

> What need you, being come to sense,
> But fumble in a greasy till
> And add the halfpence to the pence
> And prayer to shivering prayer, until
> You have dried the marrow from the bone;
> For men were born to pray and save:
> Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
> It's with O'Leary in the grave. (Regan, "September 1913" 346)

Yeats' repetition of the phrase "Romantic Ireland" connects the politically motivated ideals of the Romantics to an Irish national landscape. Attaching a second repetition of "It's with O'Leary in the grave" (a leading Fenian figure and a contemporary to the Young Irelanders), he indicates the speaker's belief that John O'Leary embodied a nationalism in his political actions that now rests solely within a poetic framework. Indeed, John O'Leary had a great influence on Yeats' early political view of combining Romanticism with the quest for political sovereignty into an original synthesis. In other words, O'Leary's influence on Yeats enables the poet to inherit the literary legacy of the Romantics while carrying on the nationalistic vision of O'Leary. And even after this, Yeats remained oppositional to political violence. He preferred a parliamentarian framework for changes.

In conclusion, Yeats did not have the last word on the national question, but it is obvious that his rejection of a simplified national definition and legacy cast a long shadow not just on the poetry, but also on the political view for the coming times. In 2004, George Boyce concluded in the preface to his book on Irish nationalism:

> if the present truce [the Belfast Agreement, signed in 1998] is to turn out not merely an interlude between wars all need to recognise that Ireland has not one but many histories; and a long study of nationalism in Ireland suggests that the outcome of the political process is not only unpredictable, but also unlikely to satisfy all those who wish to see Ireland as "a nation once again." (Boyce, "Preface to the third Edition")

There is a long history of interrelation between poetry and politics in Ireland and in some of these examples the difference is hard to tell. The purpose of poetry for the Young Ireland movement was a mean of rhetoric which served the national cause well. It was only later in the 19th century when authors looked for a way to distinguish their work from the general written corpus of the national *Zeitgeist*. This detachment slowly laid the foundation for a standard, which Irish poets have been constructing and deconstructing up until the present day with each writer highlighting a unique aspect.

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"People do not, as a rule, believe in Vampires!"

Nineteenth-Century Sexology and "The True Story of a Vampire" by Count Eric Stenbock

ZSOLT BOJTI

Abstract: The paper analyses the figure of the Hungarian vampire in the short story, "The True Story of a Vampire" (1894) by Count Eric Stenbock in its literary and ideological context. German-speaking Central Europe produced a number of new sexological categories and respective theories concerning same-sex desire in the nineteenth century. The English joined this discourse rather late in the 1890s. These new English texts on the science of same-sex desire, however, were virtually inaccessible or incomprehensible to laymen including homosexuals themselves. The English public's understanding of same-sex desire came from the press coverage of scandalous trials and clandestine fiction. The paper, understanding Stenbock's short story as his literary introspection regarding his sexuality, seeks to answer the question why Stenbock conceptualised his sexual desires as vampirism in light of his uncertainty of different controversial discourses on sexuality in the 1890s.

In 1894, David Nutt, publisher of Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley and Marc-André Raffalovich, released *Studies of Death*, a collection of short stories by Count Eric Stenbock (1860–1895), a remote member of Wilde's decadent coterie. The penultimate story in this collection is "The True Story of a Vampire," narrated by an old female character, Carmela Wronski, who is reminiscing about her childhood, when her father hosts a Hungarian vampire, Vardalek at their home in Styria. During his stay with the Wronski family, Vardalek forms a curious bond with Carmela's little brother, Gabriel, who is mesmerised by the vampire playing the piano. Vardalek's influence leads Gabriel to a bed-ridden vegetative state; he responds only to the vampire and dies shortly after falling ill. This story, especially the bond between

Vardalek and Gabriel, is often seen as the result of Stenbock's struggle to understand his unconventional sexuality. His confusion is not at all a surprise. From the second half of the nineteenth century, Europe witnessed the emergence of new theories and scientific terms in German-speaking Central Europe to describe male-love, but the English joined this discourse rather late in the century, and the German and English texts were not available nor were they comprehensible to the general public, including gay men themselves. The available discourse on male-love originated from newspaper articles on scandalous sexual affairs and often clandestine fiction. The aim of this paper is to reveal how Vardalek embodies a classificatory problem of nineteenth-century sexology in the short story, which can be considered as Stenbock's literary introspection.

Critics have already established that "The True Story of a Vampire" "is clearly rooted in reality, painful reality" (Adlard 11) and that the story has autobiographical references.[1] For instance, it is clear that Stenbock was familiar with Styria as his aunt had an estate there. His familiarity is pronounced in quite realistic description of the place if we compare it to contemporary travel guides such as Baedeker's *Austria* (Adlard 5). Not only is the setting rooted in reality, but the background of the characters has possible autobiographical sources. Both the vampire and the author were counts and the attributes of Vardalek match how Stenbock was described by his contemporaries. The vampire is effeminate and "rather fair, and though decidedly attractive in appearance, not what one would call singularly handsome… rather tall," according to Carmela, and he plays the piano very well. Stenbock was "girlish" and "tall… not exactly good looking" (qtd. in Adlard 9) and was an impressive piano player, according to his contemporaries (Adlard 9). There is also reason to believe that "[i]n one respect Gabriel is also Stenbock" (Adlard 10): they were both fond of animals. Gabriel had an "extraordinary power over animals," and Stenbock had an extraordinary collection of animals in Estonia (Adlard 10) and had dinners with "a pet toad on his shoulder" (Frost 50). Another similarity between fiction and reality might be the co-dependency of the elder and the youth. Stenbock had "The Little Count," a life-sized doll, the well-being of which was a constant concern for Count Stenbock as if the doll had been his son (Adams, *Written in Blood*). This relationship parallels with that of Vardalek and Gabriel in the story: "When Vardalek was away, Gabriel was continually asking for him and talking about him… Gabriel

1 I am grateful to Tom Sargant of Brighton, UK, for this rare introduction.

would rush to meet him, and kiss him on the mouth." These parallels suggest that Stenbock projected his affection to a younger self, the Little Count in life, which he also articulates in the relationship of his fictional characters.

That Stenbock was attracted to vampire stories and that he was well-acquainted with them is obvious: "[Stenbock] is in the mainstream of vampire art, yet… of all the vampires who preceded Dracula, Stenbock's is the most remote from orthodox legend" (Adlard 6). Although one may certainly find resemblances between "The True Story of a Vampire," *The Vampyre* (1819) by John William Polidori, *Varny the Vampire; or The Feast of Blood* (1847) by James Malcolm Rymer and Thomas Peckett Prest, and *Carmilla* (1872) by Sheridan Le Fanu, Stenbock clearly breaks with the received conventions of bloodsucking in some romanticised foggy moonlight. In fact, the exposition of the short story appears to parody the gothic vampires of its mainstream predecessors:

> Vampire stories are generally located in Styria; mine is also. Styria is by no means the romantic kind of place described by those who have certainly never been there. It is a flat, uninteresting country, only celebrated for its turkeys, its capons, and the stupidity of its inhabitants. Vampires generally arrive at night, in carriages drawn by two black horses.
>
> Our Vampire arrived by the commonplace means of the railway train, and in the afternoon.
>
> You must think I am joking, or perhaps that by the word "Vampire" I mean a financial vampire.
>
> No, I am quite serious. The Vampire of whom I am speaking, who laid waste our hearth and home, was a real vampire. (Stenbock)

Stenbock comments on the similarity of the location, but surprises the reader with an eerie twist. The setting makes us expect a typical gothic vampire story. However, the gothic elements (the night, the carriage, the black horses) are taken away, and we get a realistic contemporary context. But what does a "real vampire" mean in this realistic context? It has been established, given the author's inclination towards literary introspection, that in this story "Stenbock made a genuine attempt to understand his own homosexuality in terms of traditional occultism, eventually

coming to view his condition as an aspect of vampirism and lycanthropy" (King 13–14). In what follows, I intend to substantiate what discursive possibilities and restrictions led to Stenbock's understanding of his sexuality as vampirism; more specifically, how literary predecessors and his lack of access to sexology influenced the creation of Vardalek.

It was German-speaking Central Europe in the nineteenth century that gave new labels and theories for male same-sex desire. For instance, it was Johann Ludwig Casper in the middle of the century, who was the first to conclude from a medical standpoint that the sexual drive of the pederast was inborn and, as a result, should not be subject to legal punishment (Herzer 11). Following along the lines of Casper, the German activist, Karl Heinrichs Ulrichs was the first theorist of male same-sex desire by coining the term, *urning* explaining the sexual drive with a female soul in a male body.

As early as 1869, the public and theorists faced a classificatory issue, which was apparent in the reactions to the trial of Lieutenant Karl Ernst von Zastrow. Though there was no direct evidence against him, Zastrow was sentenced to fifteen years in prison for the "sex-murder of a 16-year-old boy and the attempted sex-murder of a 6-year old boy" (Herzer 12). The public and press were outraged by Zastrow's deeds and demanded his conviction. Zastrow's principal defence was that he claimed himself to be an urning, a term Ulrichs invented a few years before the case. The idea behind his claim was that he might be effeminate and attracted to his own sex, but, as an urning, he was not a pederast whose sexual desires were kindled by children; he was attracted to adult men. Similarly, Ulrichs, the inventor of the term tried to emphasise the distinction between the pederast and the urning in 1869 with regards to the Zastrow trial. However, the public was willing neither to accept nor to understand the urning. Instead, "[t]he crime was so notorious that the verb *zastrieren* briefly came to mean 'to rape homosexually' (rhyming with the German word for 'castrate,' it could be rendered as something like 'to castrate'). An outraged public demanded vengeance against this Zastrow, as well as all other 'Zastrows'" (Tobin 11). Since the meaning of 'urning' was beyond their grasp as its script was not readily available to them, they invented their own terminology, thus adding to the conceptual muddle addressing the classification of same-sex desires.

In the same year, the aim of Károly Kertbeny (born Karl-Maria Benkert) with the coinage 'homosexual' in his two pamphlets sent to the Prussian authorities was

to address the "confusion of ideas" prevailing in the era (Herzer 14–15). In short, his theory was intended to prove that legal penalties were inconsistent: "normal sexualism" (heterosexuality) is unpunished while homosexuality has serious legal consequences. In his view, heterosexuals were more inclined to self-abuse and same-sex excess either in the active or passive role, bestiality, pederasty, necrophilia, and sadistic sexual gratifications. Homosexuals, on the other hand, who unlike the urning have a different male drive (and not a female one), pose no harm to society in general (Feray and Herzer 34–36). His new terms, however, did not have much recognition at the time. Instead, the theory of the "contrary sexual feeling" by somaticist, Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal dominated the medico-legal discourse on same-sex desire as his explanation of bodily symptoms (and not an alleged sexual drive) was what the so-called experts accepted as hard-science. Kertbeny's term was popularised by Gustav Jäger in his second edition of *Die Entdeckung der Seele* (*The Discovery of the Soul*, 1880) and Magnus Hirchfeld in *Jahrbuch für Sexuelle Zwichenstufen* (*Yearbook for Intermediate Sexual Types*, 1899–1923). It must be noted, however, that several terms (such as the urning, homosexual, similisexual, unisexual, intersexual, third sex, intermediate) had become more or less synonymous; furthermore, these texts were available for a specifically professional readership only.

The English joined the discourse of sexology rather late compared to German-speaking Central Europe. The term 'homosexual' entered the English language in 1892 with Charles Gilbert's translation of *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) by Richard von Krafft-Ebing (Halperin 15). The first comprehensive book-length study of same-sex desire in English was *Sexual Inversion* by Havelock Ellis, published three years after Stenbock's short story. Despite the fact that it was a scientific study of the subject matter, it was neither easy to publish nor obtain such texts. *Sexual Inversion*, for instance, was banned in 1898 as a result of the Bedborough trial. The court took issue with the fact that in accordance with prevailing laws, the publisher could not have sold copies to readers other than private subscribers and medical professionals (Crozier 60). George Bedborough was fined a hundred pounds in the end (Cook 73). With regards to *Sexual Inversion*, G. B. Shaw wrote in *The Adult* that "[i]ts publication… was more urgently needed in England than any other recent treatise… Until it appeared there was no authoritative scientific book on its subject within the reach of Englishmen and Englishwomen who cannot read French or German" (qtd. in Cook 73).

More than a decade later, the American émigré, Edward Prime-Stevenson was contributing to both literary and sexological discourses for the same reasons. He lamented in *The Intersexes* (1909) that "[t]he authour [sic] or publisher of a homosexual book, even if scientific, not to speak of a belles-lettres work, will not readily escape troublesome consequences. Even psychiatric works from medical publishers are hedged about with conditions as to their publication and sale" (376). In the preface, he explicitly stated his agenda that his sexological magnum opus was "addressed particularly to the individual layman" to help one understand "the problem of homosexualism, similisexualism, urningism, inverted sexuality, uranianism, as it [had been] variously termed" (ix). At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was still evident that the classificatory and accessibility issues needed addressing as lay-men, including homosexuals themselves could not read nor understand contemporary scripts of same-sex desire.

There were two sources for English readership on male-love in the second half of the nineteenth century. One was the press coverage on scandalous cases such as the trials of cross-dressers and alleged sodomites, Boulton and Park in the early 1870s; the Cleveland Street Scandal of telegraph boys doubling as prostitutes in the early 1890s; and the Wilde trials in 1895. H. G. Cocks in *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the 19th Century* (2003) claims, as the title itself also suggests, that the public could learn almost nothing about these acts as they remained unnamed in court proceedings and in the press.

Another source could be the texts of literary predecessors working with homosexual themes. Christopher Looby suggests that literature as a public discourse is an obvious source on sexological knowledge, since "sexuality is itself a fiction, an imaginary composite of many different experiences, identifications, and performances (bodily sensations, gender determinations, forms of sexual conduct, erotic scripts, and so on)" (843). These "[s]exual identities (or labels or categories or scripts) need to be articulated, promulgated, circulated, and encountered in order to be received and adopted and performed, and this requires a literary public sphere" (Looby 843). Therefore, what Davide Sparti calls the "attribution model," the recognition/application of "the power of naming"/categories/descriptions (332) was not available to Stenbock. His sexual representation works as the "internalization model," the internalisation of symbolic codes (332). The author's literary introspection must be studied not in terms of sexological advances, but literary codes.

Instead of using sexological categories, "The True Story of a Vampire" (1894) accumulates symbolic codes for illicit sexual desires to describe homosexuality, which also shows how Stenbock understood his sexuality. According to Trevor Holmes, though he is uncertain if "there can be much agreement… about which nineteenth-century vampire narrative signals the beginning of representational depth in gay male vampire fiction" (176), by the time the short story appeared, "certain of the generic codes [of gay male vampire fiction] bec[a]me settled, codes through which we might say with certainty in our glance back that a text embodies gay male vampire subjectivity" (176).[2] Although Holmes admits that it is not possible to make an absolute list of such codes, he still tries to identify a few: "the displacement of male-male desire through an aged and desexualized 'female' narrative gaze; reiterations of a Classics-inflected cult of male youth; perhaps the absent mother and ineffectual father; references to unfettered sexuality" (176). The most important code in my following analysis is Gabriel's gipsy origins on his mother's side, "which is the first suggestion of a sexuality coded as unconventional, unstable, and non-normative" (177). I agree that the family background might signal non-normative sexuality in the era as medical psychiatrists, such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing in *Psychopathia Sexualis*, worked within an atavistic framework or degeneration theory. However, as I have outlined above, it is unclear whether these theories could influence Stenbock in 1894. For instance, Oscar Wilde's defence during his trials did not include sexology at all. Only in 1896 did he "appeal for early release … which cited degeneration theorists Max Nordau and Cesare Lombroso" (Cook 59–60).

Moreover, a boy's gypsy origins *per se* could hardly prove that he felt sexual love for men at such a young age. Another problem Holmes' argument poses is that the reader cannot know for sure what Vardalek knows about the boy's background, which is revealed through the narration of Carmela. While it would also be difficult to prove that a character's gypsy origins would, in themselves, suggest inclination to same-sex desires, I intend to complete Holmes' claim to prove that, Gabriel's "blood" has indeed a code for the initiated readers. Vardalek identifies Gabriel's unconventional nature when he plays music:

2 Having considered *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker, he also argues that "there [is not] much agreement at present about which nineteenth-century vampire narrative signals the beginning of representational depth in gay male vampire fiction" (176).

> After dinner my father asked him if he played the piano. He said, "Yes, I can a little," and he sat down at the piano. Then he played a Hungarian csardas—wild, rhapsodic, wonderful.
>
> That is the music which makes men mad. He went on in the same strain.
>
> Gabriel stood stock-still by the piano, his eyes dilated and fixed, his form quivering. At last he said very slowly, at one particular motive—for want of a better word you may call it the relâche of a csardas, by which I mean that point where the original quasi-slow movement begins again—"Yes, I think I could play that."
>
> Then he quickly fetched his fiddle and self-made xylophone, and did, actually alternating the instruments, render the same very well indeed.
>
> Vardalek looked at him, and said in a very sad voice, "Poor child! you have the soul of music within you." (Stenbock)

It is Gabriel's response to Vardalek's music test that proves to the vampire and the initiated reader that the young boy is capable of deciphering and coding a man's desire for a man. Music connects Gabriel's gypsy origins to secreted desires that need another 'language' in order to be expressed. It is not by chance that Vardalek plays a Hungarian csardas. A two-volume travel book, *Magyarland* (1881) attributed to Nina E. Mazuchelli, which devotes a separate chapter to gypsy music, shows the English view on Hungarian music:

> The Magyars have a perfect passion for this gipsy music, and there is nothing that appeals so powerfully to their emotions, whether of joy or sorrows… It is the language of their lives and strange surroundings; a wild, weird, banshee music; now all joy and sparkle, like sunshine on the plains; now sullen, sad and pathetic by turns, like the wail of a crushed and oppressed people… (52–53)

The key here is that music is a language for an oppressed race. Mazuchelli's assertion seems highly probable; gypsy music appealed to most Hungarians because at the time they might have felt like second-rate citizens in the Austro-Hungarian

Empire. However, writers such as Stenbock or Wilde did not, in fact, care about Hungarian national identity. "Musical orientalism," as Derek B. Scott claims, has never been overly concerned with establishing distinctions between Eastern cultures" (158). The *Style hongrois* was known in Western musical cultures from the middle of the eighteenth century, and derived, according to Bellman, "from the exotic-sounding music played by Gypsy bands (not actual Magyars) in Hungary and westward Vienna" (qtd. in Scott 158). In the nineteenth century, the *Style hongrois* became more distinct and popular, partly because of Liszt's influential theory of the "Gypsy Scale" (Scott 159).[3] At the same time, and perhaps for the same reason, gypsy music might have seemed the perfect rhetorical device for "the love that dare not speak its name" signalling illicit desires for the initiated. Gypsy music as an allusion to male-love is present in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Teleny* as well. In the former, events that are out-of-the-ordinary are marked by *ekphrasis*: whenever the plot arrives at a crucial turn, the reader is offered a glimpse at the picture, which shows what could not otherwise be shown. The letters allude to illicit meaning through the description of another mode of art. Gypsy music plays a similar role in Wilde's work: "At another time [Dorian Gray] devoted himself entirely to music… he used to give curious concerts, in which mad gypsies tore wild music from litter zithers… when Schubert's grace, and Chopin's beautiful sorrows, and the mighty harmonies of Beethoven himself, fell unheeded on his ear" (Wilde 94). This might seem an innocent comment on Dorian's musical taste; however, we encounter a similar episode in *Teleny* too. At the very beginning of the novel, the narrator Camille meets Teleny, a Hungarian pianist playing at a concert: "That is just the difficult point, for you cannot disconnect him from the music of his country; nay, to understand him you must begin by feeling the latent spell which pervades every song of Tsigane" (Wilde et al. 4). The detailed description of the rhapsodic music Camille has been listening to correlates with the bodily desires that the music has evoked in him. Camille abuses himself to the rhythm of the rhapsodic music, which leads him to orgasm in the end (Wilde et al. 4–5). It seems these narratives share Hungarian

3 "The *Style hongrois* is marked by syncopation, dactylic and dotted rhythms, virtuoso violin or quasi-violin passages (the Gypsies were Hungary's professional musicians), a more prominent raised fourth than in the Turkish Style, and the melodic interval of the augmented second. It becomes a more distinct style in the nineteenth century and the augmented second is increasingly used to connote 'Gypsy.' The 'Gypsy Scale' is then theorized by Liszt, who emphasizes difference by choosing the raised fourth degree and omitting the equally common diatonic fourth degree" (Scott 158–159).

music as a code for unnameable desires. Like *ekphrasis*, the verbal representation of a work of art, literature is able to talk about male-love through the verbal representation of music. This code became so popular and Hungarian music gained such reputation as the vehicle for same-sex desires that in *The Intersexes*, Edward Prime-Stevenson classifies it as the epitome of musical uranianism:

> Music, as a mystery in aesthetics, unites logically with uranianism as a deep problem in psychology… If we turn from the formalized neurotism of such great composers [like Wagner and Richard Strauss] we may say that no music seems as directly *sexual* as the Magyar; wonderfully beautiful in its rhythms, melodies and harmonies. And the Magyar is a distinctively 'sexual' racial type. (395–96)

Another code of Wildean origins which Stenbock uses is the colour green. Carmela often gives Vardalek's eyes an inquiring look. First, she is unsuccessful at looking the vampire in the eye: "When he arrived his eyes were half closed—indeed they were habitually so—so that I could not decide their colour." This suspense leads to a minor climax in the narrative, when Vardalek looks at Gabriel and the colour of his eyes is revealed: "The stranger looked up at his approach; then I noticed his eyes. They were green: they seemed to dilate and grow larger. Gabriel stood stock-still, with a startled look, like that of a bird fascinated by a serpent." Wilde's symbolism of green, particularly his green carnation, was famous at the time and was well-known by late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century readers as well. So much so that, according to Margot Norris, the children's curiosity for green-eyed sailors in "The Encounter" by James Joyce is a Wildean expression of their immature homoerotic interest, which was appealing to Joyce (38–39). Although Prime-Stevenson views Wilde's role as potentially harmful for the gay community in the aftermath of the Wilde trials (*The Intersexes* 362), for Stenbock, Wilde's texts constituted the evident first base to understand his own sexuality at the time of his short story.

So far, I have studied the literary representation of same-sex desire in the short story in terms of the internalisation model. It has been established that several codes refer to Gabriel's unconventional sexuality and the codes of Vardalek's desire, such as Hungarian music and the colour green, are rooted in Wildean 'traditions.' However, the codes having been inspected do not explain why Stenbock understood

his sexuality in terms of vampirism. Hereafter, I intend to substantiate that Vardalek is described as a vampire to represent the author's inability to cope with his own sexual identity since the scientific discourse on homosexualities was not readily available to Stenbock and the literary codes do not ease the tension between the controversial Victorian ideas on same-sex desire.

Analysing *Dracula*, Robert Mighall claims that "a vampire was sometimes only a vampire and not a sexual menace" (247) and that "[a] tautology operates which insists that the vampire is erotic, and because it is monstrous this testifies to sexual anxieties which the critic identifies. Vampirism is used [in critical literature] to demonstrate what the critic already knows about Victorian 'sexuality'" (211). Mighall refers to Sergeant François Bertrand's case in *Psychopathia Sexualis* to establish that the word 'vampire' was used as a cover for a more general "classificatory problem" (214). Bertrand was a grave-violator with a drive, which was not explicable at the time: "Neither necrophile, sadist, nor even sexual 'pervert' were available" (219). Outrage followed Bertrand's acts: he escaped the authorities for two years despite their best efforts and journalists eventually named him 'Le Vampire' (213). The term 'vampire,' Mighall asserts, was not meant to capture a certain sexual being, but designated, for the lack of a better word, a classificatory problem with regards to such a strange behaviour (214).

Bertrand's case exemplifies the extreme situation, when the categories were simply non-existent. But the issue is similar to the classification of same-sex desire as the labels and their respective descriptions were inaccessible or incomprehensible. To be clear, I do not intend to assert that it is absolutely inconceivable that Stenbock heard of the terms urning, homosexual, similisexual and so on; however, these new terms appeared in English around the 1890s for the first time. What I intend to state here is that the acts of and the theorised medical attitudes towards male-love could not find their clearly distinguished ways into the various competing categories I outlined above, which resulted in a conceptual muddle. Drawing on Mighall's theory, I think that the "psychic vampire"[4] Vardalek also embodies this conceptual muddle, a classificatory problem, the identity crisis Stenbock himself was going through concerning his sexuality.

4 Critics tend to sort literary vampires into two categories: the blood-sucking and the psychic vampire (Adlard 8, Penzoldt 37). The first is craving for bodily interaction, potentially with an erotic interest in the victim; the latter has a psychological, rather than a physical influence on the victim. Since Vardalek is not a bloodsucker, he can be classified in this latter category.

It is this classificatory problem, coming from German-speaking Central Europe that, in my reading, is Stenbock's concern. His realistic Styria is the place of origin of new sexological terms, which are incomprehensible to the general public and where both the Wronski family of Polish origins and the Hungarian vampire are 'others.' Moreover, these terms, upon entering the English language, even became synonyms by the end of the century, as Prime-Stevenson's *The Intersexes* attests. Stenbock's choice of the vampire's name, Vardalek, a highly unlikely name for a Hungarian, points to the same issue. Adlard suggests that Stenbock borrowed the name from Polidori's introduction to *The Vampyre* in which Polidori asserts, "[t]hough the term Vampyre is the one in most general acceptation, there are several others synonimous [sic] with it, made use of various parts of the world: as … Vardonlacha" (qtd. in Adlard 7). On this note, it becomes evident that classifying Vardalek as a vampire (or calling a vampire Vardalek) is redundant. This redundancy hints at the lack of established terminology for vampirism in the short story, which, I suggest, draws a parallel with the lack of established terminology for same-sex desire. The word 'homosexual,' as a result, is somewhat analogous with the word 'vampire' in terms of their established role as the most commonly used term for their respective subject matter, though the prevailing status of the former was crystallised decades later.

The vampire's role in the representation of an identity crisis amidst the above conceptual muddle is also present in Vardalek's polyglossia: "Indeed he seemed to know all languages" (Stenbock, "The True Story of a Vampire"). In her analysis of *Dracula*, Katy Brundan notes that the vampire's polyglossia in Stoker's novel solves the issue articulated by Benedict Anderson: "[W]hat limits one's access to other languages is not their imperiousness, but one's own mortality" (qtd. in Brundan 2). She concludes that "[t]he premise of [*Dracula*] … presents us with a polyglot vampire who exerts control over his victims through his unique abilities of bodily and linguistic translation, resisting the forces of monolingualism as he resists mortality" (2). The parallel I would like to draw here is that the 'homosexual' as a new category also tried to resist mortality and monolingualism. Emancipators such as Ulrichs and Kertbeny tried to legitimise same-sex desire by enumerating international and trans-historical examples to demonstrate that this sexual drive always existed, exists, and will exist, regardless of the dicta of the medico-legal discourse. The 'homosexual' also resisted monolingualism. While Ulrichs' term 'urning' existed in English translation (uranian) by the end of the century, Kertbeny's 'homosexual'

gained popularity by this time for its "unruly" but "readily translatable" Greek and Latin compound to any other language (Breen 6). The gay vampire, Vardalek's polyglossia suggests that there is no single 'language' of male-love but the several 'languages' (or scripts) of the invert, the urning, the homosexual and so on. However, none of these seem to speak for Vardalek's desire, or Stenbock's for that matter. He even tried to articulate his desire in Gabriel's native language, Polish: "Nie umiem wyrazic jak ciechi kocham" (I cannot express my love for you); therefore, he needs to rely on the international language of music as I have discussed above.

Stenbock's story, in the end, does not reach a conclusion regarding the identity of the lover and the nature of the male-love Carmela witnessed. She laments that she and her story are laughed at as "people do not, as a rule, believe in Vampires!" (Stenbock). The aged, desexualised female narrator proves to be a layperson with regards to sexology, as her conceptualisation of the attraction between Vardalek and Gabriel is best described as vampirism. Although from her point of view, the psychic gay man was a real vampire; her narrative only reflects her inability to find a better word. Her conceptualisation of male-love, however, hinders the credibility of her story and the acceptance that same-sex desire exists. According to Tobin, emancipators such as Ulrichs argued that the suppression of witch-hunts at the end of the eighteenth century opened the possibility of eliminating Judeo-Christian superstitions concerning male-love as well. This argument, however, had a significant flaw. The Enlightenment broke with the idea that supernatural creatures exist; they denied the existence of witches, werewolves or vampires. At the same time, the point of the emancipators' argument was that male-love and sexual categories such as the urning did, in fact, exist (Tobin 49–51).

The concluding remark ("People do not, as a rule, believe in Vampires!") indicates, as a result, that Stenbock came to understand his sexuality in terms of the conceptual muddle prevailing in England at the end of the century. Literary predecessors offered a way to code and, hence, represent same-sex desires; however, they did not aid Stenbock to understand his desire as one of a distinct sexual identity. Another key issue in this crisis was that the results of the study of sex were difficult to access and even if one could obtain a book on sexology, it was virtually incomprehensible to Victorian readers. As a result, Stenbock cast his autobiographical character Vardalek as a vampire representing the classificatory issue of the 1890s.

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Disbelief Against Disbelief

The Cases of Goodwife Agnes and Mrs. Larkin: A comparative analysis of János Arany's ballad "Goodwife Agnes" and Eudora Welty's story "A Curtain of Green"

KATALIN G. KÁLLAY

Abstract: In this paper I examine a nineteenth-century Hungarian poem and a twentieth-century American short story. The central characters are both widows who cannot comprehend the death of their husbands, and gradually turn insane, both of them obsessively get occupied with an irrational activity. Goodwife Agnes had helped her lover to kill her husband—but in the text, she is oblivious of the deed: all she knows is that she has to wash her bloodstained linen in the streamlet. Her disbelief is directed against the fact of death and murder, as well as against the fact that the sheet is spotless. Mrs. Larkin's husband died of an accident in the garden, her disbelief is directed against the powerlessness of her own most intimate protective words, as well as against the fact that her husband was killed by her garden, all she knows is that she feverishly has to plant more and more green life in the chaotic sloping plot behind her house. From the point of view of the gesture of abandoning oneself to disbelief, the difference between murder and accident seems to be irrelevant. However, the central metaphors of cleaning and planting might subtly indicate separate attitudes to disbelief in death, i.e. to the continuity of life.

If the phrase *hope against hope* means clinging to a mere possibility that something, though very unlikely, might still happen, *disbelief against disbelief* may mean clinging to a mere impossibility, that something that has happened, might still *un-happen*. In spite of all evidence, perhaps it can still be undone. In such a case, one might become obsessive in undoing the evidence, while this behavior in itself might become a proof of the thing that had happened, as well as of the traumatic deformation it had caused.

In my paper, I wish to examine a nineteenth-century Hungarian poem[1] and a twentieth-century American short story. The central characters are both widows who cannot comprehend the death of their husbands, and gradually turn insane, both of them are obsessively occupied with an irrational activity (washing a clean sheet, planting new shrubs in a jungle-like garden), they both become not only exposed to the natural elements, but in fact, part of them, transforming into mythical figures of the landscape.

Goodwife Agnes had helped her lover to kill her husband—but in the text, she is oblivious of the deed: all she knows is that she has to wash her bloodstained linen in the streamlet. Her disbelief is directed against the fact of death and murder, as well as against the fact that the sheet is spotless. Mrs. Larkin's husband died of an accident in the garden, he became the victim of a fragrant chinaberry tree that fell on his car, in spite of his wife's protective words: "You can't be hurt" (Welty 109). Mrs. Larkin's disbelief is directed against the powerlessness of her own most intimate protective words, as well as against the fact that her husband was killed by her garden; all she knows is that she feverishly has to plant more and more green life in the chaotic sloping plot behind her house. She, too, almost becomes a murderer: when she approaches Jamey (the young black boy helping in her garden) from behind, she is tempted to take his life by striking him in the neck with her hoe, thus compensating for her own losses—but the sudden rain confuses her and prevents the tragedy. From the point of view of the gesture of abandoning oneself to disbelief, the difference between murder and accident seems to be irrelevant. However, the central metaphors of cleaning and planting might subtly indicate separate attitudes to the disbelief in death, i.e. to the continuity of life.

János Arany, one of the most prominent nineteenth-century Hungarian poets and a translator of Shakespeare, wrote the ballad "Goodwife Agnes" in 1853. Eudora Welty, one of the most sensitive twentieth-century prose writers of the American South, published her first volume of short stories entitled *A Curtain of Green* in 1941, in which the story with the same title appeared as the 13th piece of the collection. Yet, in spite of the undeniable distance between the age, the nationality, the gender and the genre of the two authors, I believe the two texts may enter into a meaningful conversation, not only on the basis of the similar theme but also on the basis

1 The English translation of the poem was created by Géza Kállay, published in: "A Stain of Blood as Cultural Transmission. Lady Macbeth and János Arany's 'Goodwife Agnes'" (135–138).

of the two authors' extraordinary sensitivity to psychological subtleties and their power of expressing these in ageless metaphors, as well as on the basis of their precision in observation, especially concerning effects of light. Perhaps it goes without saying, I still feel it important to state that this poem is, to a large extent "narrative" and this short story is remarkably "poetic." Arany's powerful verse, with the refrain "O, merciful Lord, never leave me" sounding like either a prayer or an exclamation of shock or distress at the end of each stanza, also tells a story. Welty's prose, without leaving the tone of colloquial storytelling, also has a rhythm, which derives from the alternating description of stillness and movement, and it also contains poetic, ballad-like elements in its metaphors and in its obscure conclusion: Mrs. Larkin is left lying among the shrubs in her garden and it is not clear if she will ever get up: she seems to have succeeded in planting herself and becoming a part of nature.

Before turning to the main question of disbelief strongly connected to memory, I would like to examine the two protagonists' place in their respective communities, their relation to their society, since their beliefs and disbeliefs are also influenced to some extent by their social situations.

Goodwife Agnes is seen surrounded by "urchins" of the village in the second stanza, whom she tries to hush away saying her "chicken's blood smudged [her] linen." As Géza Kállay has observed, this may be a euphemistic allusion to menstruation, thus indirectly to her infertility. She has no children of her own—although apart from this, very little is said about her private life, neither her husband, nor her lover are described in the poem (145). The next stanza gives an account of the neighboring women asking where her husband is, and she wants to keep them away by saying he is asleep inside. When the bailiff comes to take her to prison, she argues that she must clean her sheet of the spot before going. It is clear that she wants to pretend that all is well, and by playing this role, she distances herself from the others, still, the way she addresses them ("my dearest," "my dove, darling," even to the bailiff) indicates that she is on good terms with the neighborhood and its authorities. Although she is imprisoned and tried, she is not alienated from the community: the hoary elders judging her deed call her "my child," and after seeing her concern for continuing her washing, after recognizing her insanity, they tacitly agree on letting her go and abandon herself to her self-imposed punishment.

Mrs. Larkin (after whose father-in-law the whole small town, Larkin's Hill was named) is in a different position. Her garden is surrounded by a high, wall-like

hedge (a real curtain of green), so the neighbors (mostly gossipy ladies) can only see her in it from their windows upstairs. This way, she is both secluded and exposed. The garden, symbol of safety, privacy and virginity embraces her, she has not left it since the accident. Yet it is also the place where the accident happened, imprisoning her in her memory. The only person she allows to enter this space is Jamey, but she is not content with his work, far from being kind or grateful. She becomes extremely vulnerable in her exposure, and the women judging and criticizing her from above keep no direct contact with her at all. Not that she would care about this in the least: she does not feel the need to play a role for the sake of social acceptance. The only thing she can concentrate on is planting more and more life (the gesture in itself may be a compensation for her own infertility).

So, in spite of the fact that Goodwife Agnes is imprisoned and tried for complicity in murder whereas Mrs. Larkin is an innocent widow, the respective communities accept the former and refuse to accept the latter. Perhaps this is why Agnes is so concerned about appearances, including her own appearance: she desperately tries to convince herself and the jury of her sanity. Out of the three instances, perhaps the second one, in stanza 9, is the most telling:

> She tidies up her attire,
> Her kerchief neatly arranged,
> Her straight hair adjusted also,
> Lest they think something's *deranged.*
> O, merciful Lord, never leave me. (Kállay 136)

As opposed to this, Mrs. Larkin wears her husband's untidy overalls, "often with her hair streaming and tangled where she had neglected to comb it" (Welty 107).

There is another difference between the two protagonists, which concerns their attitude to light and darkness, so attention must also be paid to the role of light in the two contexts. Both authors refer to light in memorable images. For Goodwife Agnes, a ray of light in the prison is essential, as we can see in stanzas 5–7:

> Deep's the prison, one ray of light
> Can hardly find way to enter,
> One ray of sun's the prison's day,

And its night a swarm of specter,
O, merciful Lord, never leave me.

All day Agnes keeps an eye on
This narrow light, slender, small,
She stares it out,—it's so tiny,
It fits into one eye-ball.
O, merciful Lord, never leave me.

For when she turns, right around her
There dance specters, up they wind,
If that tiny light were not there,
She believes she'd *lose her mind.*
O, merciful Lord, never leave me. (Kállay 135–136)

By *italicizing* "lose her mind," as well as "deranged" in stanza 9, Arany seems to suggest that it is already too late, she had hopelessly gone insane. Still, she clings to the one slender ray of sun and associates it with sanity, although towards the end of the poem, in stanza 24, she must lose her trust in the sun as well, since "The sun scorches her dewy cheeks."

In "A Curtain of Green," the scorching sun appears in the setting; the tension of the summer afternoon, and the waiting for the rain is described in powerful words:

> One day, almost as late as five o'clock, the sun was still shining. It seemed almost to spin in a tiny groove in the polished sky, and down below, in the trees along the street and in the rows of flower gardens in the town, every leaf reflected the sun from a hardness like a mirror surface. (Welty 107)

The repetition of the word "almost" in the quoted passage makes the description tentative, in line with the hesitant and vague character (who also *almost* becomes a murderer) and is introduced in the text in sharp contrast with the harsh light:

Now the intense light like a tweezers picked out her clumsy, small figure in its old pair of men's overalls rolled up at the sleeves and trousers, separated it from the

thick leaves, and made it look strange and yellow as she worked with a hoe—overvigorous, disreputable, and heedless. (Welty 107)

It seems that the sun is harmful for Mrs. Larkin. It throws light on the hard leaves (whose "mirror surface" she is forced to face), it throws light on her separation from her surroundings, it ultimately throws light on her insanity. For her, it is only the clouds and the rain that might bring some relief.

This difference in attitude to light might be explained by the difference of the time-span of the two texts: "A Curtain of Green" embraces one single afternoon, whereas "Goodwife Agnes" opens up the span of many years to come, which expresses the process of ageing. Agnes is young in the prison and has enough time to grow old, develop "freakish wrinkles," become "misshapen," weather-beaten, ignorant about light or darkness. Mrs. Larkin is also young: when she lifts the hoe above Jamey's head, "the clumsy sleeves both fell back, exposing the thin, unsunburned whiteness of her arms, the shocking fact of their youth" (Welty 110). However, in her case, ageing is expressed in her longing for the shade, some "pale darkness" that will come with the rain, some protective cloud of her memory (Welty 111).

It is at this point that memory as well as the crucial difference between the metaphors of cleaning and planting must be examined in the two cases. The stain is an age-old metaphor of sin: the obsession of trying to get rid of it may indicate the need of getting rid of memory, erasing the past. For Goodwife Agnes, disbelief might mean a deliberate act of forgetting about the murder, her excuse is the priority of household duties: stains must be washed. There is another act of disbelief: the deliberate act of forgetting that the linen she keeps washing is clean. As stanza 21 states:

> For in vain is the linen clean
> No sign of blood offered to sight,
> Agnes can still see it clearly,
> Just as she did then, *on that night.*
> O, merciful Lord, never leave me. (Kállay 138)[2]

So, by the double act of disbelief, by wanting to forget, first the murder and then, the fact that the linen is clean, she forces herself to remember and to re-enact, if not

2 Emphasis in the original.

the murder, then the consequence caused by the guilt, i.e. the cleaning. With the words "that night," italicised, it becomes clear that she in fact remembers.

Mrs. Larkin does not want to forget at all, she is rather trapped in her memory. Her different attitude to disbelief is explained in the following paragraph:

> […] memory tightened about her easily, without any prelude of warning or even despair. She would see promptly, as if a curtain had been jerked quite unceremoniously away from a little scene, the front porch of the white house, the shady street in front, and the blue automobile in which her husband approached, driving home from work. It was a summer day, a day from the summer before. In the freedom of gaily turning her head, a motion she was now forced by memory to repeat as she hoed the ground, she could see again the tree that was going to fall. There had been no warning. But there was the enormous tree, the fragrant chinaberry tree suddenly tilting, dark and slow, like a cloud, leaning down to her husband. From her place on the front porch she had spoken in a soft voice to him, never so intimate as at that moment, "You can't be hurt." But the tree had fallen, had struck the car exactly so as to crush him to death. She had waited there on the porch for a time afterward, not moving at all—in a sort of recollection—as if to reach under and bring out from obliteration her protective words and to try them once again … so as to change the whole happening. It was accident that was incredible, when her love for her husband was keeping him safe. (Welty 109)

The text's word for disbelief is "incredible." Instead of trying to forget these details, she deliberately recalls them, in the form of a "little scene," quite theatrically, even feeling the jerking away of the "curtain." It is her aim to re-enact the moment, to repeat it over and over, to make the tragedy un-happen by giving more power to her protective words. She wants to "reach under" the cloud of the tree in order to bring him out with the words, again and again. In a strange and desperate moment of the story, the idea of taking revenge or of performing a sacrifice crosses her mind, when she stands above the vulnerable neck of Jamey, lost in his own daydreams.

However, the rain intervenes, confuses her even more, until the complete confusion brings her some relief:

Then, as if it had swelled and broken over a daily levee, tenderness tore and spun through her sagging body.

> It has come, she thought senselessly, her head lifting and her eyes looking without understanding at the sky which had begun to move, to fold nearer in softening, dissolving clouds. It was almost dark. […]
>
> Then Mrs. Larkin sank in one motion down into the flowers and lay there, fainting and streaked with rain. Her face was fully upturned, down among the plants, with the hair beaten away from her forehead and her open eyes closing at once when the rain touched them. Slowly her lips began to part. She seemed to move slightly, in the sad adjustment of a sleeper. (Welty 111–2)

The frequent use of the words "seemed" and "almost" creates an opaque atmosphere around the story: the text ends on the note of Jamey running away, horrified, but it is not clear whether Mrs. Larkin will ever get up from her final position. Whether Mr. Larkin is buried in the garden also remains unsaid, but with her last motion, Mrs. Larkin re-enacts what had happened to him. The clouds folding near her repeat the gesture of the chinaberry tree, and the whole event is gentle, tender, as if the protective words had also become effective somehow, now referring to both of them: "You can't be hurt." Planting as a reaction to her disbelief emphasizes the proliferation not only of her memory but of the power of the life-giving words as well and she finally comes to a rest by sharing her husband's experience, in a sense, planting herself in the garden.

But is there any protection for Goodwife Agnes? By perpetuating her position in the streamlet, she, too, becomes a part of nature. The detailed description of her withering away in stanza 25 seems to indicate incessant pain:

> The ruffled hair has turned hoary
> No strand is dark, none is raven,
> Freakish wrinkles creep all over

The smooth face moulded misshapen.
O, merciful Lord, never leave me. (Kállay 138)

If the result of her double disbelief is re-enactment, she must constantly be conjuring up her guilt and pain.

But double disbelief might end up in belief. The mantra-like refrain, repeated just as obsessively as the movements of Agnes' mallot, might also gain some power and become effective. Perhaps this had already been foreseen by the "hoary elders," and slowly accepted by the community: Agnes, as part of the landscape, gradually enters another dimension where even Mrs. Larkin's protective word might also apply to her: she can't be hurt.

In both texts, disbelief concerns two facts. In both cases, one of these facts is the death of the husband. The second, in Agnes' case is the fact that the sheet is clean; in Mrs. Larkin's case, it is the powerlessness of her protective words. The repetitive irrational action that follows their disbelief results in the re-enactment of the tragedy they had wished to make un-happen: Agnes through erasure, Mrs. Larkin through proliferation. Agnes deliberately wants to forget, Mrs. Larkin deliberately wants to remember. Unable to come to terms with death, both protagonists go through a shift of dimension, grammatically speaking, a shift of voice, from active to passive. Both become the objects of their frenzied repetitive activity. Mrs. Larkin keeps planting until she becomes planted in the end, Agnes keeps cleaning until she is slowly washed away by the streamlet, until she is finally cleaned. It is only in this new dimension (or new voice) that their disbelief against disbelief might end up in belief, that they "can't be hurt" and, perhaps, the merciful Lord never leaves them.

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The New Series of *The AnaChronisT*

Zsolt Komáromy
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Since 1995, *The AnaChronisT* has been a forum of research published under the auspices of the Department of English Studies at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. As the journal's founder Ágnes Péter summed up its mission in the opening issue, "it is vital to create an intellectual ambience that would encourage a spirit of adventure, a hunger for the new, while preserving a respect for the more traditional scholarly practices worthy of our attention." *The AnaChronisT* met a demand larger than initially envisioned, and soon became a major forum in Hungary for graduate students and academics publishing in English, and attracted authors from all over Europe, and even beyond, growing into an international scholarly journal, indexed by major bibliographies and databases.

The journal discontinued publication in 2014 due to financial reasons. But we have received many encouraging words, ensuring us that the scholarly community in which we work felt that the journal's termination was a loss, and would welcome its relaunching. Most of the members of the original editorial and advisory board were willing to continue work with the journal. After negotiations with L'Harmattan publishing house, Budapest, whose dedication to scholarship is exemplary, and who's business expertise was a major factor in the success of renewed attempts at finding financial resources, the journal has now been relaunched.

We call this and the ensuing issues the New Series of *The AnaChronisT* because we have slightly changed its profile and publishing policy. Originally, each issue was a medley of articles, irrespective of subject matter. In the New Series, we plan to publish partly or wholly thematic issues. There have also been some personal changes. Géza Kállay, who was editor-in-chief between 2009 and 2014 has tragically passed away. His memory and his unceasing inspiration continues to be a source of energy for work with the journal. Ágnes Péter, the founder of the journal and

editor-in-chief until 2009 has in the meantime retired, but she accepted our invitation to take a place on the Advisory Board and to keep lending us her knowledge, expertise, and wisdom. Boldizsár Fejérvári, our technical editor, whose ideas and work ensured the distinctive design and layout of the journal could not join the work on the New Series, and we thank him for his immense contribution in the past, as well as for continuing to advise us, and for sharing his knowledge with Bence Levente Bodó, who took on the task of redesigning the appearance of the journal with professionalism and commitment. I thank all the editors wo decided to return to the journal for their dedication. In our first venture, we have also joined forces with a new generation of graduate students at Eötvös Loránd University, whose energy and inventiveness in initiating and organizing scholarly work was an inspiring example for relaunching the journal, signalling that the dire financial situation of the University and the deteriorating working conditions of scholars in Hungary have not led to apathy. We hope that the New Series of *The AnaChronisT* can do its part in maintaining commitment to scholarship, and live up to its tradition of creating a space for the quality work of a community of scholars of different generations and fields of study, in and beyond Hungary.

Disbelief in Romanticism

Andrea Timár
ISSUE EDITOR

The Early Modern English Research Group (EMERG) of the Department of English Studies at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) was founded in 2015 by the late professor Géza Kállay and some of his students with whom he worked closely: Bence Levente Bodó, Ágnes Bonácz, Zsolt Bojti, and Gergő Dávid. The aim of the research group is to further the study of the literature of the early modern period through the organization of lectures and conferences in an interdepartmental and interdisciplinary manner. From 2015 until Professor Kállay's untimely death on the 17th of November 2017, the research group met every month.

In December, 2016, I had the chance to participate in one of the monthly meetings of EMERG, where Géza Kállay suggested that we organise an international conference together, inviting scholars from the fields of both Renaissance and Romantic studies. This conference, the most ambitious project of the research group to date, took place in the May of 2017, with Géza Kállay as Renaissance project leader, and myself as Romanticism project leader. Drawing on Coleridge's definition of "poetic faith," Bence Levente Bodó proposed that we use "Disbelief" as the key term of the conference, to which we eventually gave the title "Disbelief: from the Renaissance to Romanticism." In the call for papers, we encouraged participants to track down the historical, political, religious, ethical, metaphysical, and aesthetic implications of disbelief in cultural productions between the 16th and the 19th centuries. This issue of the New Series of *The AnaChronisT* contains articles that grew out of presentations and discussions at the conference, focussing on the 18th and 19th centuries.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Willing Belief in the Logos of Shakespeare and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

GÉZA KÁLLAY

The following piece is the last we have of Professor Géza Kállay. He could not revise, let alone edit his paper before its publication. Although he had expressed his doubts concerning its "merits" after the conference, and considered it rather a "curiosity"—a curious digression from his ongoing research on Shakespeare and philosophy—the editors wish to pay homage to him by conveying his words as faithfully as they can to transmit, however imperfectly, what Géza calls, in his paper, "voiced animation". That is, the "heated passion" with which he – like Coleridge or the actors impersonating Shakespeare's characters—used to "animate the 'cold,' arbitrary and conventional symbols [...] of everyday language" in lecture theatres, in seminar and conference rooms. Géza had a "strange power of speech" that used to mesmerise his students and colleagues alike.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner has been haunting me ever since I read it as a second year undergraduate student for one of my favourite professor's, Professor Kálmán Ruttkay's class, sometime in the spring of 1981. But the urge to revisit it recently engulfed me when—for an article for *The Routledge Companion to Shakespeare and Philosophy*—I was looking for metaphysical readers of Shakespeare (among whom, absolutely not accidentally, I welcome, also in my article, one of our distinguished guests at this Conference, Professor Tzachi Zamir). Re-reading

Coleridge's—characteristically haphazard, disorganized but ingenious—notes on Shakespeare, I came across the following passage (in the section entitled "The Drama Generally and the Public Taste"):

> Men are now so seldom thrown into wild circumstances, and violences of excitement, that the language of such states, the laws of association of feeling with thought, the starts and strange far-flights of the assimilative power on the slightest and least obvious likeness presented by thoughts, words, or objects,—these are all judged of by authority, not by actual experience,—by what men have been accustomed to regard as symbols of these states, and not the natural symbols, or self-manifestations of them.
>
> Even so it is in the language of man, and in that of nature. The sound *sun*, or the figures *s*, *u*, *n*, are purely arbitrary modes of recalling the object, and for visual mere objects they are not only sufficient, but have infinite advantages from their very nothingness *per se*. But the language of nature is a subordinate *Logos*, that was in the beginning, and was with the thing it represented, and it was the thing represented.
>
> Now the language of Shakespeare, in his *Lear* for instance, is a something intermediate between these two; or rather it is the former blended with the latter,—the arbitrary, not merely recalling the cold notion of the thing, but expressing the reality of it, and, as arbitrary language is an heir-loom [a family relic of great value] of the human race, being itself a part of that which it manifests.

Coleridge, continuing this rather brief exposition of a philosophy of language, further concludes—very much in line with the claims above—that the real life of a word is in the actor's mouth, when the actor is performing on stage. Coleridge, talking about the "dead palsy [that is, paralysis] of the public mind," seems to claim that the actor, through actual performance, is able to animate dead concepts. Thus the actor is capable of doing the same job that the heated, throbbing symbols of poetic language can do when animating the "cold," arbitrary and conventional symbols

(here: mere signs) of everyday language. Thus, to make words representing "cold notions" come alive we have, it seems, three options:

1. To get into a state of excitement, frenzy, fervour [i.e. intense heat] and in allowing feeling to fly far and high, re-experience the reality behind the notion. This is possible because a host of associations will rush forward and the physical experience of excitement, shaking and moving the spirit, the soul of the human being, will break through the dry, dull and over-used cover of words and will reveal to us the true nature, the reality, of a thing or notion.

2. Resort to poetic langue which will poke out something from the Logos; Shakespeare's language (e.g. in *King Lear*) is capable of that. This is possible because there are two languages (we live in two orders): ordinary language stands for things and notions but it only touches their surfaces, whereas the Logos contains the original nature, the primordial essences of things. Poetic language (in fortunate cases natural symbols) can also penetrate the dull surfaces of overused ordinary words and will pad words from the inside with life. So Shakespeare's language is in between ordinary words and the Logos; today we would say that according to Coleridge, Shakespeare's language does its ordinary job of naming and referring but, through its poetic, symbolic power, also takes part in, and thus reveals, the natural, inner reality of the thing or notion. In an outstanding survey of Coleridge's philosophy of language, Michael O'Neill—in the *Oxford Handbook of Coleridge*— quotes from Coleridge's work on the *Logos* that "words," for Coleridge, "are organs of the human soul" (126).

3. Our third option, as we heard, is that we listen to the ordinary words spoken on stage, uttered in heated passion, as described above: and I only add: this is something Plato's Ion talks about. This may be called voiced animation.

The cited remarks on Shakespeare's Logos prompted me to do some research in Coleridge's philosophy of language, and—having some background also in linguistics—I soon learned that present-day theoreticians of language consider his claims either mystical and incomprehensible, or downright untenable and false. It is true that Coleridge was an unsystematic and repetitive thinker, like several genii have been, struggling, for a lifetime, with what cannot—and, for many—should not, be said, and especially not about language, the means of representation itself. It is also true that one can hardly put Coleridge's philosophy of language into a nutshell, but—at the risk of oversimplification—I will point out some of its features I find important to try to re-read, of course, by no means exhaustively, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

as a dramatization, a re-enactment of the very process of finding a poetic language which is capable of fulfilling the emphatically *philosophical* task of presenting the metaphysical, ultimate essence of things, of notions and of the human being. I hasten to add that, as far as I can tell, *The Rime* does not show these essences directly but indirectly, by presenting the—tentative—conditions and limits of presentation. The text of the *The Rime*, I claim, implies that these conditions and limits are precisely the very essence of the human being. In other words, it is the limits of the never-attained whole whereby we may get a glimpse of our predicament. But, as postmodernists, from Derrida to Stanley Cavell, have warned us, all great works of art call attention to their limits and through those limits prompt us to start working with them, interpreting them.

Limits are certainly convenient starting points but not all works of art see the limits at the same place. I think that in Coleridge's case, the particular limits—which the marginal glosses added to the poem in 1816 call the "Line"—can be detected if the world is seen in terms of verbs instead of nouns, in terms of *dynamis* rather than *stasis*, if language is seen as *Energeia*, energy, rather than *Organon*, tools. It is by noticing these limits that we may give back basic meanings to items in our basic vocabulary, to such words as *see, hear, move, drink, hold, come, love*, *hospitality*—for Coleridge certainly to the word: *pray*—so that we may have a goal, a purpose, and, thereby, be convinced that it makes sense to go on living. I mention *hospitality* ("The ancient Mariner inhospitably kills the pious bird of good omen," says the gloss at the end of Part I) because a Conference-organizer cannot remind himself enough of that. I would like to read *The Rime* as displaying the price we have to pay for authentic presentation, for a new language. It is only if those prices are paid that we may reckon with the possibility of taking part in, and cheer at a real celebration at, for example, a Wedding. I consider a Wedding a promise of life even without the prospect of children because in real partnership, I believe, two people are always more than 1+1.

In a brilliant chapter on "Allegory and Symbol," also in the *Oxford Handbook of Coleridge*, Professor Nicholas Halmi warns us that it was "only by 1816" that Coleridge considered the defining characteristic of the symbol the grounding of its representational function in a relation of ontological participation. "For only when he began to assert—Professor Halmi writes—that the symbol is a part of what it represents, did [Coleridge] also begin to differentiate it from allegory." So, at the time of the

first composition of *The Rime,* Coleridge was not thinking in terms of natural symbol—somehow metonymically—participating in essences. Yet I wish to claim that, at least when he gives an account of the compositional circumstances of *The Rime* in *Biographia Literaria*, the role of the symbol is given to "poetic faith," i.e. "the willing suspension of disbelief," while the "supernatural" corresponds to "essence." But, in spite of the dates, we should recall that *The Rime* was a point of reference for its Author all through his life; he had a very troubled journey with it first induced by Wordsworth in the 2nd edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, and there are no less than 18 versions of it: Coleridge kept rewriting it, reworking it, retelling it, again and again. Leslie Stephen, Virginia Wolf's father was right when he said: "The germ of all [of Coleridge's] utterances can be found […] in the *Mariner.*" In a way, the Mariner, "the grey-beard loon" remained a life-long "old Navigator" for Coleridge, as (according to Wordsworth's notes dictated to Izabella Fenwick) they called the Mariner between themselves when planning the composition of the poem, originally together.

I think it is important to remember that the pieces in *Lyrical Ballads* were, indeed, both experimental and programmatic, as already Wordsworth's "Advertisement" in the 1st edition indicates, and although this is one of only a few places where Wordsworth talks about language in connection to his program ("[These poems] were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure"), language was central to this program: testing the power of poetic expression, asking what language is capable of. *Lyrical Ballads* wishes to investigate, through demonstration and performance, in the words of the Ancient Mariner, the "strange power of speech."

As it is well known, in the famous 14th chapter of *Biographia Literaria*, almost 20 years after the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge finally tries to formulate both programs, Wordsworth's just as much as his own. Coleridge assigns to his one-time friend the agenda we may call, after Victor Shklovsky, defamiliarization. As for his own part, the program is trying to produce such an effect in the reader which makes her suspend, at least momentarily, disbelief as regards the reality of supernatural beings. Both programs are thus reader-oriented and aim at providing the reader with a chance to participate in the supernatural. Wordsworth's curriculum is:

> to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

The length of the sentence and its picturesqueness aside, this is a possible formulation of one of the agendas of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations:* to reinterpret the ordinary, including everyday reality, which is inaccessible because it is so obvious, trivial, well-known, and even boring: it is closer to us than our hands. By revisiting and re-acquainting, literally, re-*cognizing* them, we give them life again, we re-animate them. Thus, we may reach the *extraordinary* of the ordinary.

Coleridge's program aims at the supernatural directly, as one may aim at an Albatross with a cross-bow:

> the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency.

To paraphrase: this way of participating in the supernatural allows into, or even recommends for, the story, supernatural agencies, like "fiends," "slimy things that did crawl with legs upon the slimy sea," "death-fires," "a Sprit" "ninefathom deep" following the ship, i.e. a Spirit, who is neither a "departed soul, nor an angel," but is an "invisible inhabitant of the earth" about whom the "learned Jew, Josephus" and the "Platonic Michael Psellus" "may be consulted." This Spirit later turns out to be the "Polar Spirit," assigning the Mariner "penance long and heavy," as two "inhabitants of the element" point out. Further supernatural agencies are a "ship that comes onward without wind or tide," "the western wave all a-flame," a "skeleton

ship with bars" or "ribs," a "spectre-bark," "DEATH" and "LIFE-IN-DEATH" "casting dice," souls flying out with the whizz of the cross-bow, the "horrible curse in the dead men's eyes," "water burning away," "water-snakes," "blest spirits," "sweet sounds" passing through the mouths of dead men, "angelic souls," a man "all light," i.e. a "seraph-man." These are strictly the inhabitants of the Sea. And supernatural events also abound at sea, like the ship moving very fast driven by the Polar Spirit, or the ship not moving at all; it is either unbearably hot or terribly cold, the water is either "everywhere" or there is no (drinking) water at all, either everything, and especially the mouth is totally dry, and even water burns away, or the mariner is soaking wet. We should have "poetic faith" in these beings and incidents, we have to suppose they are *real*, we should look at them *as if* they were real. They are created by the imagination, and the relationship to them, in the willing suspension of disbelief, is described as dramatic, i.e. conflicting, consisting of turns (perhaps turns of belief and disbelief). It is then that we may participate in the *truth* of the supernatural.

What is the ontological status of the supernatural? As I interpret Coleridge's lines in the *Biographia*: they are created in the modality of the subjunctive. After *as if* we use the Past Subjunctive in English, "as if it were" or "had been"; *as if* occurs three times *The Rime*, the most famous being: "As if it [i.e. the Albatross] had been a Christian soul." Grammatically, the Present Subjunctive is the infinitive without *to*, e.g. "God save the Queen," and after certain verbs and expressions: "Let there be light," "It is vital that you switch off the light" etc. The Subjunctive is volitional, and it is more than the 'wishing mood:' 'if only I survived all these adventures!' In the subjunctive mood reality is not yet there as an accomplishment, but the speaker wants it so much that she is able to already see it "with her mind's eye"; the Subjunctive is the "creational mood," as in "Let there be light!" The willing suspension of disbelief then is going from "as if," and from "Let there be," to fact: *it is*. "It is an ancient Mariner"—so the poem starts. Whatever one says in the realm of the supernatural, her language is padded, from the inside, with the subjunctive mood. This testing the expressivity, the power of speech may help us realize that even when we refer to facts, when we describe things, the subjunctive mood does not entirely leave us: we lend stability and identity to reality in the subjunctive, we wish that it would not substantially change, move, alter while we are talking about it.

What is one's conditioned attitude, her basic ontological relation to the supernatural? The Mariner can see all the horror and the grace of the supernatural in

being in *medial* relationship with it. The *medial* (sometimes called by grammars *inchoative* or *ergative*) can be exemplified by such uses of verbs as *The cup broke, The sky darkened, The barrel leaks, The Albatross died.* The sentence has a subject, of course (cup, sky, barrel) but they are not agents; they are passive sufferers of the events, even more so than in passive voice: *The cup was broken by the cat*; *The sky was darkened by clouds*, while *The barrel leaks* and *The Albatross died*, cannot even be transformed, keeping the respective verbs *leak* and *die*, into passive sentences (which shows that there are degrees of mediality). As early as in the Preface to the 2nd edition of *Lyrical Ballads,* Wordsworth noted—as one of the defects of *The Rime*—that the Mariner "does not act" and it is true that he experiences his own story medially: the only single instance when he is an agent is when he kills the Albatross: "With my cross-bow / I killed the ALBATROSS." The medial aspect of the Mariner is the mirror of the subjunctive mood on the poet's (and, under favourable circumstances, the Reader's) part. Even the great turn, the blessing of the water-snakes, happens, according to the Mariner himself, without him being aware of the act: "And I blessed them unaware." The ballad poem also contains its audience, its first readers within the poem, first and foremost the Wedding Guest, and then, at the end of the story, the "Hermit good," the Pilot and the "Pilot's boy." The Wedding Guest is "spell-bound," mesmerized, "He cannot choose but hear," the Hermit asks "what manner of a man" the Mariner is, and silently disappears from the story, the Pilot and the Pilot's boy disappear, too; the first "shrieks and falls down in a fit," the second "goes crazy," "laughing loud and long": they are recipients also in the medial and cannot do anything with the story and its narrator.

Thus, in startling contrast to this overall mediality, it is activity which is murderous, as if using ordinary words to describe, to characterise, to understand, to grasp things and notions willingly were equal to killing them, to quench the fire in their souls, to turn them into inanimate objects, dead things. According to this understanding, there is no real "motive" for murdering the bird other than our motivation to speak, to communicate, to use ordinary words; we cannot help but kill, "unaware," when we make use of our everyday language. If we (our souls) do not participate in the Logos of Shakespeare, or if we do not take part in the supernatural, if we do not experience all the extremes (extreme cold, hot, dry, moist, etc.), which extremes are also capable of breaking the dull surfaces of the everyday, if we do not suspend our disbelief, we cannot even hope for giving back the original meanings to our

basic vocabulary of life, from *live* to *die*, from *hear* to *speak*, from *stand* to *move*, and so on. The Mariner singles out *love* and *pray* at the end: "He prayeth best, who loveth best / All things both great and small." This might be the simplicity of a "three years' child" (this is how the Wedding Guest is listening to the Ancient Mariner at the beginning of the story) but this is a second "innocence," when we may start to learn to move and speak again.

Disbelief in Disbelief

William Blake and the Moravian Brethren

ÁGNES PÉTER

Abstract: This essay is focused on some temperamental and conceptual relations between Blake's vision and Ludwig Zinzendorf's theology and practice, and hopes to contribute, however modestly, to the clarification of the question of how much Blake's hypothetical contacts with the Moravian Church may alter his position among artists and thinkers concerned with the "limits" of the Enlightenment.

The question of how much William Blake's hypothetical contact with the Moravian Church would call into question his definition as a religious sympathizer with the dissenters of his time has recently presented perhaps the greatest challenge to Blake scholarship. In the last decade or so, the scholarly interest in European patterns of thought in Blake's work has received a new impetus from the very sparsely documented assumption that Blake was influenced by the theology and religious practice of the Moravian Church. Although there had been an oral tradition about contact between Blake's family and the Moravians, it was only in 2001–2004 that some documents were eventually found in the Moravian Archives in London which reveal that Blake's mother, her first husband and probably Blake's uncle on his father's side belonged to the congregation of the Moravian Church at Fetter Lane, London.

When publishing the documents, the scholars who found them, Keri Davies and Marsha Keith Schuchard, foretold that this discovery "opens up a new frontier in Blake studies" (Davies, Schuchard 42) since, in light of the new biographical data, "the scholarship of Blake needs to be repositioned within a very different cultural and religious background" (Davies 1316).

A number of critical responses have appeared since then. Schuchard published an entire book in 2006 in which she outlines an esoteric, mystical subculture with

clandestine brotherhoods across Europe whose sexualized spirituality was infused into revolutionary politics. She defines Blake based on that background. Her essay, "Young William Blake and the Moravian Tradition of Visual Art," shows how Zinzendorf's "struggle to move beyond speculative abstraction to imaginative visualization" and his "*fleischliche Spiritualität*" (fleshly spirituality) may have re-emerged in the early work of Blake (87). In 2006 Keri Davies published a convincing contrastive analysis of Moravian hymnody, iconography and Blake's *Songs*. Robert Rix, in his survey of Blake's indebtedness to the cultures of radical Christianity, detects all the points of intersection between Moravian sensibility and Blake's (mainly) later poetry with laudable respect for supporting evidence. Most recently, Alexander Regier has opened a new avenue to the research into the Moravian components in Blake's work by pointing out the importance of the polyglot milieu in which the Moravian congregations practised their faith in London and with which Johann Georg Hamann probably had some contact during his spiritual crisis and conversion in 1758. I assume that the theses of Alexander Regier suggest that as soon as more evidence is found regarding Blake's indebtedness to the Moravian tradition, a new source shared by Hamann and Blake will give new impetus to the research into the spiritual and linguistic kinship between them.[1]

In the present essay, I would like to suggest some further areas in which Moravian theology and religious practice can be a useful point of reference in the clarification of Blake's work, especially his later prophecies. My argument will be that there are a number of interconnected points which seem to suggest an extraordinary affinity between the charismatic leader of the Moravian Church in the first half of the 18th century, Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760) and Blake, a close kinship of vision which—in light of the scarcity of data at our disposal at the moment—will be attributed not so much to influence but rather to a shared source of inspiration, mainly the Christian mysticism of Boehme. The influence of Boehme on Blake has been discussed by a number of critics, though "precisely how much Boehme contributed to Blake's thinking has not been settled with certainty" (Rix 14). The focus of my present discussion, however, will be restricted to parallelisms between Zinzendorf and Blake, and the larger context of the influence of the theosophy of Boehme and the English Behmenists on Blake's work will be ignored.

1 Of this kinship see my "Second Essay in Romantic Typology: Lord Byron in the Wilderness" (Péter 39–54).

Luckily, Blake himself provided us with the basic facts concerning the influences that, in his view, had contributed to his spiritual and intellectual growth. He described his own mental history ("his lot in the Heavens") to John Flaxman in a letter dated 12 September 1800:

> Now my lot in the Heavens is this; Milton lovd me in childhood & shewd me his face
> Ezra came with Isaiah the Prophet, but Shakespeare in riper years gave me his hand
> Paracelsus & Behmen appeard to me. terrors appeard in the Heavens above
> And the Hell beneath & a mighty & awful change threatend the Earth
> The American War began All its dark horrors passed before my face
> Across the Atlantic to France. (Erdman 707)[2]

Apart from the Bible and Renaissance poetry (and besides events in Hell: the political crises), he identifies alchemy and Christian mysticism as the most important stimuli in his development. Blake is not the only one to have found inspiration in these sources, indeed a number of the major figures of the 18th century embraced the same traditions in their desperate search to solve one of the major problems of the age: how to preserve the unity (and sanity) of the Western mind against the threat of a split between scientific investigation and artistic representation, or science and religion. How would it be possible to preserve some of the values of the Enlightenment while redressing at the same time the balance between reason and sensation, spirit and nature? An interesting and often unexpected kinship can be detected among people without any direct contact with one another which is due to the fact that a new interest emerged in Britain as well as in continental Europe in hermetic and mystical writings that chronologically date back to the Renaissance and even before. I am going to chart this family resemblance by concentrating on Blake's kinship with some basic aspects of the religious and visionary dimensions of the "spirituality" (Davies 1311) associated with the Moravian Brethren.

To bring into view the wider implications of the spiritual condition of Europe, I would like to quote a witness close to Moravianism, who had a shaping impact

2 This passage is quoted by Rix as well (14).

on Modernism in criticism and theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher defined himself as "a Moravian of a higher order." His self-assessment was emphatically corrected by Karl Barth in his *History of Protestant Thought* in which he characterized Schleiermacher's course of thought as a search for a synthesis of the most pronounced opposites. In Barth's view Schleiermacher found inspiration in the synthesising tendency of the Moravian tradition in his search for harmony. What he bequeathed to the 19th century was, Barth claims, "a Moravianism of the highest order" (Barth 332).

In a 1830 public letter to his friend, the evangelical theologian Friedrich Lücke, Schleiermacher expressed his anxiety about the disintegration of the mind of Europe due to the conflict of scientific progress and the religious understanding of the human situation. Frustrated by the conflicting aspirations of the three main contemporary trends in the Evangelical Church of his country, the Pietists, the rationalists and the liberals, he wrote:

> If the Reformation, from whose first beginnings our Church took its life, has not the aim of establishing an eternal covenant between the living faith and scientific research, which is free to explore upon all sides and works for itself independently, so that faith does not hinder research, and research does not preclude faith: if it has not this aim then it is not adequate for the needs of our age and we require another Reformation… Should history's verdict mean that Christianity would be identified with [the Pietists'] barbarism and scientific inquiry with [the rationalists'] disbelief. (qtd. in Barth 321, Bigler 169)

Zinzendorf's interpretation of the Biblical traditions in the first half of the 18th century and Blake's art at the turn of the 19th century can be seen as attempts to halt the advent of barbarism and disbelief.

In his youth Schleiermacher had close contacts with the famous group of young theology students in the Tübingen Stift, Schelling, Hegel and Hölderlin, and we may assume that he shared their concepts of religion and poetry. Their joint statement, *Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus* [The Oldest System Program of German Idealism, 1796] articulated the need to overcome Kantian dualism in

the form of a new religion expressed in a new mythology, a mythology of reason as they called it in the document:

> First I shall speak here of an idea that, so far as I know, has not before entered anyone's mind–we must have a new mythology, but this mythology must stand in the service of ideas, it must become the mythology of *reason.*
>
> Before we make ideas aesthetic, that is, mythological, they are of no interest to the *people*, and conversely, before mythology is rational the philosopher must be ashamed of it. In the end, therefore, enlightened and unenlightened must shake hands, mythology must become philosophical and the people rational, and philosophy must become mythological in order to make philosophers sensuous. Then eternal unity will reign among us... Only then will the *equal* development of all powers await us, those of the particular person, as well as all individuals. (Halmi 172)

The aim, the "equal development of all faculties" emphasized in this system program was an aim which stimulated the minds of the major figures of contemporary poetry and philosophy/theology everywhere. Obsession with systems and search for a *new religion* are characteristic aspirations in the British literature of the Romantic Age as well. Though Blake was cut off from the major trends in British as well as Continental criticism,[3] he responded most creatively to the situation diagnosed by the critics and poets of German *Frühromantik*: his mythology is an expression of a new religious vision of the world, and when his alter ego, the prophet Los, is building Golgonooza, the city of the arts, i.e. a spatial image of this new mythology, he famously says: "I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Mans" (Erdman 153).

The Moravian Brethren identified themselves as the descendants of the 15th century Hussites who had been savagely persecuted, many of them destroyed or scattered by the turbulent events of the Thirty-Years' War. In 1722 a great number of them, who still maintained some memory of their ancestors' creed, fled to Lutheran Saxony from Catholic Moravia and Bohemia to escape harassment. They

3 It has been suggested that Henry Fuseli, who was an ordained Zwinglian minister with a life-long interest in theology, as well as Lavater, who had close ties with Pietism as well as the Moravian Church (Erle 6), could have served as sources of information for him about the German scene.

were offered asylum by Count Zinzendorf who permitted them to build a village on his estate later known as Herrnhut. Thanks to his charismatic personality and ardent personal experience of Jesus, Zinzendorf, who had had no systematic theological education, developed a set of values acceptable for the different denominations that made up the community at Herrnhut, which has been described as an amalgam of Lutheran and Calvinist elements mixed with elements of Christian and Jewish mysticism, Gnosticism, and alchemy (Schuchard, *Mrs. Blake* 14). He had no interest in dogmatic rigour: creedal orthodoxy in his teaching is replaced by intense devotion to Christ. He was inspired by the Philadelphian ideal, an ideal of a Church which embraces all, even Catholics, in the name of the love of Christ: the Herrnhut congregation "implemented the idea of a free connection between all the churches, based on their common 'love of the Savior.' This notion was the all absorbing interest of Count Zinzendorf (Barth 44).[4] Soon the Herrnhut *Brüdergemeine* (*Unitas Fratrum*) became synonymous with religious freedom. Its importance in the history of the religious landscape of Europe becomes quite evident as soon as one remembers that, on the one hand, Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795–96)—which Friedrich Schlegel defined as one of the three greatest tendencies of the age—devoted a separate book, Book 6 entitled "Bekenntnisse einer Schönen Seele" ("Confessions of a Fair Saint" in Carlyle's 1825 translation) to the analysis of the religious sensibility that was associated with Herrnhut. On the other hand, Coleridge's *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* opens with a reference to this Book in *Wilhelm Meister.* Herrnhut represents a typical form of religious quest in the aftermath of the Enlightenment.

We have many eye witness reports of life at Herrnhut, one of them comes from Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702–1782), who himself—along with Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788)—was a significant and characteristic representative of the spiritual undercurrent of the German Enlightenment. He was a Lutheran theologian

4 Blake's own Philadelphian ideal announced in the later prophecies of the unity of all who can recognize their potential divinity in Jesus through compassion and self-annihilation has been already pointed out by Robert Rix (9). In *Milton* (23[25]: 45–50) Blake subverts some of the basic dogmas of Protestantism, e.g. predestination, atonement as well as asceticism and repentance in the name of universal brotherhood: "O when shall we tread our Wine-presses in heaven; and Reap / Our wheat with shoutings of joy, and leave the Earth in peace Remember how Calvin and Luther in fury premature / Sow'd War and Stern division between Papists & Protestants / Let it not be so now! O go not forth in Martyrdoms & War / We are plac'd here for Universal Brotherhood & Mercy" (Erdman 119).

deeply affected by Pietism. To rehabilitate the contact between senses, perception and abstract reason, Oetinger produced a Christocentric alchemical eschatology drawing heavily on Boehme, Swedenborg (whom he translated into German) and alchemy. Parallelisms with his theosophical speculations had been detected in the works of Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, Hegel, Schelling, or perhaps it is better to say that 'he can be placed within a tradition of hermetic and theosophical thought to which many intellectuals in the second half of the eighteenth centuryturned to find a corrective to the rationalistic Wolffian philosophy of the German Enlightenment' (Heyden, Roy 68). In 1730, Oetinger went to visit Herrnhut and stayed there for several months as a teacher of Latin and Greek. He was deeply impressed by the search of Zinzendorf for the correct understanding of religious truths. It is very interesting how he was sympathetic and critical at the same time in his assessment of the state of affairs there: "O you dear people, I induce from everything you say that you insist not upon Holy Scripture but the Count's hymns." He criticized Zinzendorf's utilitarianism that held that the growth of his "community" was more important than the question of truth. Zinzendorf would make "a little treasure chest of sayings" of the Bible with Jesus at the centre, thereby forgetting God the Creator. He also would disregard judgment and the Law, and thereby "open the door to arbitrariness and pious totalitarianism" (qtd. in Lindberg 244). Indeed disregard of judgment and the Law, arbitrariness and pious totalitarianism eventually led to a clash with the leading circles of Pietism and he was banished from Saxony on suspicion of heresy in 1736.

Zinzendorf laid a great emphasis on missionary work, and he sent out his disciples in all directions on the continent as well as overseas to preach their creed and convert people. Moravian type congregations emerged in Denmark, the Netherlands, America even as far away as Russia. A few of his followers soon appeared in London as well where in 1738 they established a Moravian Church in a former Presbyterian chapel at Fetter Lane. Zinzendorf himself arrived in London and stayed there for six years after his banishment. Whether Blake's mother's Moravian sympathies influenced Blake's mind to any degree is probably very hard to say, but it might be worth remembering that religious thinkers he followed with a great deal of interest, John Wesley as well as Swedenborg, also participated in the services of the Fetter Lane Congregation for a time. John Wesley actually experienced his evangelical conversion when under the impact of the Moravians' faith; he learned German

and went to visit the Brethren at Herrnhut to study their way of life and theology. For a time, the Moravian Church and Methodism were very closely knit together. Later on, however, John Wesley turned away from the Moravians partly because he could not accept their disregard for the ordinances of the church and their passive reliance on grace.

> The Moravians placed an emphasis on "stillness." Those who did not yet have faith should "be still," and await God's grace. That is, they should abstain from Communion and even from excessive prayer, Bible reading, and attendance at church, regarding such as supererogatory. (Davies 1302)

If Blake had any knowledge about the "stillness" practised by the Moravians he probably would have been in full sympathy: he never attended church and in his later prophecies, patience is a quasi-religious virtue that Los inculcates as a condition that precedes vision.[5]

What seems to be the most conspicuous aspect of the similarity between the respective answers Blake and Zinzendorf gave to the challenge of their times is the intense dynamism of their vision maintained by the dialectical contraries which in their view are to be reconciled by imagination or faith so that we could arrive at a true vision of the inner and external man. Contemplation and prophetic enthusiasm, wrath and pity, the Law and Mercy, Elohim/Yahweh and Jesus, the masculine and the feminine are some of these contraries. The reconciliation of the antithesis between Elohim/Yahweh and Jesus is a central problem of their systems. Zinzendorf believed as much as Blake in the unity of the Old and the New Testaments and claimed that the God of the two Testaments is the same though His person undergoes some modification. Zinzendorf actually read the New Testament as a hermeneutic to the Old one, an exegesis of, and initiation to the Old Testament (Deghaye 178). In this dialectical view, Yahweh/Elohim and Christ mutually define each other and the antithesis between the Law and Mercy is reconciled. The narrative constituted by the 21 plates of Blake's illustrations of the Book of Job can be read as the story of Job's spiritual growth until he understands this mystery. (Incidentally, both Zinzendorf and Blake hated the word "mystery.") The error of the traditional view

5 See e.g. Los's long speech addressed to his Sons in *Milton* 23[25]: 32–61 (Erdman 119).

of the Old Testament God as Creator and Judge is disclosed in Plate 13, "And then the Lord answered Job from the Whirlwind" (Fig. 1.). In this moment of revelation, Job and his wife are granted a vision of the identity of the Judge and the Redeemer. The Lord answering from the whirlwind in the crucified position of Christ is a disclosure of the organically connected Creator and Savior aspects of the divinity.

In *Jerusalem* (16: 61–69) the same identity of the Law and the Gospels is symbolically represented by the sculptures in the halls of Los:

> All things acted on Earth are seen in the bright Sculptures of
> Los's Halls & every Age renews its powers from these Works
> With every pathetic Story possible to happen from Hate or
> Wayward Love & every sorrow & distress is carved here
> Every Affinity of Parents Marriages & Friendships are here
> In all their various combinations wrought with wondrous Art
> All that can happen to Man in his pilgrimage of seventy years
> Such is the Divine Written Law of Horeb & Sinai:
> And such the Holy Gospel of Mount Olivet & Calvary… (Erdman 161)

The Yahweh/Elohim of the Old Testament is identical to Christ: this is the gnosis that the truly initiated will be able to recognize. The idea alters the traditional concept of Christ in a radical way. In Karl Barth's judgment, Zinzendorf was the greatest and probably the only genuinely Christocentric religious thinker in modern times (qtd Beyreuther 9).[6] In his great study of Zinzendorf's theology, Erich Beureuther quotes the Count's graphic definition of Christ's position in Creation:

> The importance of precision: the Redeemer is to be represented as the circle around all things, which goes round and round, in which the universe is closed and which cannot be transcended by anything in all Eternity: all things are from him, through him and for him so that he could for ever control and reign over the whole Creation. From him:

6 The central role of Christ in the Moravian Church has been traced back to the theology of Jan Hus. Hus and his followers emphasised the sovereignty of Christ instead of that of God; Christ in the teachings of Hus was Creator, Saviour, Redeemer, the most active force from creation through redemption to the end of time: "the Father and the Holy Ghost are merely supporting characters" (Font 27).

> he has created all. Through him: nothing, neither anything spiritual, nor anything material can ever emerge on the earth and in the heavens but through his hands, mediante illo. (qtd. in Beyreuther 10)[7]

In one of his London sermons, nine of which were published in English in 1757, Zinzendorf admitted that "the Father and the Holy Spirit are Co-Creators (Mitschöpfer)," but all the activity emanates from Christ alone:

> He had invented the creation of all things before the beginning, before the foundation of the world was laid. Then had the Son, who played on the Father's lap and refreshed the Father forever, created all (mark my words!) […] The Holy Divinity is pleased to see that the beloved Son has created hundreds of worlds or stars. (qtd. in Beyreuther 13)[8]

In Zinzendorf's mythological narrative of the creation, Christ represents the limit: he is defined as Creator since he contains the archetypes of all things (Deghaye 471).

In a way that is reminiscent of Zinzendorf's Christocentrism, in the late prophecies Blake moves his mythological Christ centre stage, where he seems to overshadow the Father and the Holy Spirit, implying a radically unorthodox concept of the Holy Trinity. Blake arrived at this position after much deliberation and along a difficult path. As is fairly well known, after the publication of *The First Book of Urizen* in 1795, Blake underwent a deep spiritual and artistic crisis: there is a lengthy hiatus in the history of his public performances; his private writings, however, directly reflect his sense of disorientation. And then, in 1802, all of a sudden, his melancholy was replaced by extreme elation and high energy. In his letter to Thomas Butts

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7 The original: "Die Wichtigkeit der Präzision, den Heiland vorzustellen als den Zirkel aller Dinge, der um und um geht, in dem das Universum eingeschlossen ist und über den es nicht hinauskommen wird in alle Ewigkeiten: das ist der große Punkt der Religion, von ihm, durch ihm und zu ihm sind alle Dinge, daß er die ganze Kreatur ewig beherrsche und regiere. Von ihm: er hat alles geschaffen. Durch ihn, es kann nichts vorkommen im Himmel und auf Erden, nichts geistlichs, nichts leiblichs, es geht allemal durch seine Hand, mediante illo."

8 The original: Zinzendorf räumt ein, daß "auch der Vater und der Heilige Geist Mitschöpfer sind. "Doch alle *Aktivität* bei der Schöpfung geht allein von Christus aus. Der hat erfunden die Schöpfung aller Dinge, vor dem Anfang, ehe der Grund zu der Welt gelegt war. Da hat der Sohn, der auf des Vaters Schoß spielte und seinen Vater ewig erquickte, erfunden (merke, was ich sage) […] Es freuet sich die heilige Gottheit, daß der liebe Sohn so viel hundert Welten oder Gestirne geschaffen."

(22 Nov. 1802), he reports on his emergence from darkness to light, and closes his report in the following way:

> And now let me finish with assuring you that Tho I have been very unhappy I am so no longer I am again Emerged into the light of Day I ſtill & shall to Eternity Embrace Chriſtianity and Adore him who is the Express image of God but I have traveld thro Perils & Darkness not unlike a Champion I have Conquerd and shall ſtill Go on Conquering Nothing can withſtand the fury of my Course among the Stars of God & in the Abysses of the Accuser My Enthusiasm is ſtill what it was only Enlarged and confirmd. (Erdman 720)

There is a tradition to reading the above and similar ſtatements from roughly the same period as indicative of Blake's return to a more or less Anglican form of Chriſtianity. That would have been a very typical ſtory, the usual path of the early Romantics from free thought, from "unchartered freedom"[9] to the security of orthodox Chriſtian faith. Blake, however, in my reading of this crucial turning point in his life, is using the religious terminology of the evangelical experience of conversion or second birth, but he is actually speaking about his moſt pressing artistic problem. He recognized that he could incorporate Jesus into his mythology to give it a focus and a central symbol. Thus he could reconcile his spiritual aspirations with the sensuous image, the only effective tool of his craft. From this time on, Jesus becomes a central figure in his myth, and whereas previously, e.g. in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* he relies on the synoptic gospels and the hiſtoricity of Jesus to define the Jesus of his early works, who was a revolutionary hero subverting the Law, now the background is increasingly the Gospel according to St John, and Jesus is the Word made flesh, Logos incarnated, Jesus is a symbol of the potential identity of the divine and the human. Blake's mythology becomes Chriſtocentric.

Blake's moſt radical ſtatement concerning the aeſthetic implication of his emblematic Jesus can be found in his commentary, *A Vision of the Laſt Judgment*, composed in 1810. He describes his own representation of the Laſt Judgment and explains one of the motives: "Jesus is surrounded by Beams of Glory in which are seen all around him infants emanating from him; these represent the Eternal Births of

9 See Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty," l. 37.

Intellect from the Divine Humanity" (Erdman 562). The infants in the halo around the head of Christ are symbolic of the eternal creativity of the divine/human mind. In Blake's fully developed mythology, Jesus is the archetypal source of all the forms which constitute visionary art: "All things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the Divine body of the Saviour [sic!] the True Vine of Eternity" (Erdman 555).

Zinzendorf's God is transcendent, inaccessible, ineffable and unknowable. Very early on, Zinzendorf realized that for him there was only one alternative, either to be an atheist or to believe in Jesus: there is no direct access for man to the divinity (Deghaye 453). Without Christ's compassion, the divinity is a dark frightening force, sometimes identified by Zinzendorf with hell or with aspects of the gnostic or cabbalistic Devil. This image of the primordial God, which is the face of the divine when separated from its contrary Christ-like aspect, has been described as very close to the dark world in Boehme's theosophy (Deghaye 452). "In his first principle God is the master of Hell, and Boehme inclines dangerously towards identifying him with Satan. The world of Hell is the *fundamentum,* that is, the basis or the first level of the universe" (Koyré 405).[10]

Zinzendorf, for his part, suggests that for those who regard Christ as an abstraction the devil is found lurking in the depth of this Godhead (Deghaye 453). This terrifying, diabolical divinity is well known to Blake as well: he can be found in the deep abyss of the human soul. In Plate 12 of his illustrations of the Book of Job he offers a graphic image of the terror in face of this threatening cosmic/psychic force (Fig. 2). One of the legs of this Creator God, who simultaneously points at the Law and at damnation, has a hoof: he is identified with Satan.

All the similarities I have touched upon can be explained by a reference to a tradition of hermetic and theosophical thought that, after a long period of suppression, came to the surface and in the second half of the eighteenth century was drawn upon by thinkers and artists who wanted to complement Enlightenment anthropology by disclosing the emotive and irrational energy in the creative human mind. In conclusion, without any further evidence of Blake's interest in the Moravian Church, one tends to doubt if indeed the Moravian background of his mother and his father's relations is likely to change our image of Blake as a radical opponent of the artistic, clerical and political establishment in any significant way.

10 "Dans son premier principe Dieu est le maître de l'enfer, et Boehme penche dangereusement vers son identification avec Satan. Le monde de l'enfer est le *fundamentum*, c'est-à-dire la base ou le première étage de l'Univers."

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Figures

Fig. 1. William Blake. *The Book of Job*. Plate 13.

Fig. 2. William Blake. *The Book of Job*. Plate 12.

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Demonstration and Damnation

William Blake's Eternal Death of Unbelief

JOSHUA SCHOUTEN DE JEL

Abstract: In Blake's mythopoeia, as well as his personal eschatology, belief is the source of life itself; all creative acts, all visionary episodes, stem from an individual's belief. "Eternal Death," which is the cycle of Generation, is the result of unbelief. Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and John Locke were, for Blake, the triumvirate of culpable votaries for the propagation of rational reductionism which had led to the reification of "Natural Religion" in the form of Deism and Rational Dissent in England and, with the addition of Rousseau and Voltaire, of the apotheosis in France of the Cult of Reason. The French philosophes and the English empiricists were not only at fault for forming the wheels which turned the "dark Satanic Mills?" (M 514 1.8) of man's cognizance but, and what Blake considered their primary offence, of unbelief. This paper will discuss how unbelief is the main cause of division in Blake's universe, accentuated "by the cruelties of Demonstration" (M 578 29.36) of empiricists who "Doubt Doubt & dont believe without experiment" (NB 609 5–9), and how the Limits placed upon man's fall(s) act as one possible mode of redemption which allows for the return of belief and the individual's creative vision.

Near the end of his life, William Blake proclaimed that "[t]he Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of Art" (*Writings* 777). The *Laocoön*, completed in 1826, rekindles that forthright-fire of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790–3) which Blake had produced nearly thirty-years earlier and similarly recovers that stridently aphoristic voice which was so effective in the "Proverbs of Hell." Throughout those intervening years, Blake consistently incorporated Old and New Testament narratives within his mythopoeia to both glorify and criticize certain moral strands within Christian doctrine almost in equal measure.

It is evident, however, from the satirization of the law-giving Jehovah of Genesis in *The Book of Urizen* (1794) and the law-enforcing Moses of Exodus in *The Book of Ahania* (1795) that Blake's critique tended to fall upon the Old Testament.[1] Christopher Rowland, in his defence of Blake's worth to biblical exegetes and theologians, observes that Blake "seeks to liberate the Bible from the dominant patterns of interpretation of his day. His exegesis represents a distinctive reformulation of the text" and, though at times the newly-created work of art can be considered quite "formidable," Rowland adds that "problems of exposition" reflect "the interplay between tradition and innovation that has always been such a central feature of New Testament exegesis" (182).[2] It is the New Testament which acts as the visionary vehicle for the artistically creative process and it is the soteriology of belief as it was preached by Christ that forms the foundation of Blake's redemptive process.

The layering of centuries and the layering of centuries of thought within Blake's work tends to conflate systems and thereby bring to light the parallels which are maintained across those centuries. By associating Christian Orthodoxy with Natural Philosophy—and often by superimposing the liturgical dogma of the Old Testament onto the rational epistemology of empiricists—Blake brings each to bear upon the other.

It is within this context that the Romantic incorporation of a Deistically-infused poetics provided a contemporaneous analogue for Blake's polemical hermeneutics. In his 1826 marginalia of William Wordsworth's "Poems," Blake writes, "I see in Wordsworth the Natural Man rising up against the Spiritual Man Continually, & then he is No Poet but a Heathen Philosopher at Enmity against all true Poetry or Inspiration" (*Writings* 782). According to Blake, Wordsworth's reliance upon natural objects neglected the role of the Imagination. Indeed, Blake asserts that "Imagination is the Divine Vision not of The World, or of Man, nor from Man as he is a Natural Man, but only as he is a Spiritual Man" (*Writings* 783). The distinction made is between the "Natural Man" and the "Spiritual Man" and the way in

1 This is partly avowed by Blake himself in the *Laocoön* where he adds that "Jesus & his Apostles & Disciples were all Artists" (Writings 777). The emphasis here is on the New Testament.

2 Eric Pyle has noted that, "[t]hough the Bible, for Blake, is undoubtedly the great code of art, and the writings of the prophets are the greatest example of wisdom, appearances of the Bible as a physical book in his visual work are not generally positive" (263). In part, this is a pictorial representation of the codification Blake feared and this is also why Rowland's observation of the innovative potential of the New Testament is so apt.

which each creature operates within the fallen world, observes the fallen world and understands his role within the fallen world. Blake believed that the "Natural Man," limited to the natural world, cannot move beyond the confines placed upon the natural body; the "Spiritual Man," able to utilize the "Imagination" and to perceive with "Divine Vision," extends his sight beyond Wordsworth's natural objects. Thus, when Wordsworth writes, "And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety," Blake responds with, "There is no such Thing as Natural Piety Because The Natural Man is at Enmity with God" (*Writings* 782).[3]

Blake criticizes Wordsworth for prioritizing the "Natural Man" and for allowing natural objects to assume the significance of spiritual sensations and sympathies. Blake similarly derides the empiricists for their "crucifying cruelties of Demonstration" with which mankind attempts to assume "the Providence of God" (*Poems* 683 24.55–6). However, instead of becoming god-like, man falls through Blake's modes of vision and becomes increasingly vegetative. It is the apotheosis of nature, it is the Deism upon which the Romantics relied and the Natural Philosophy of the Enlightenment philosophers, which in fact removes man from his spiritual station and alienates him from God. In place of the "Spiritual Man" there is the "Natural Man," in place of "Divine Vision" there is temporal sight, and in place of life there is death.

This death-like state to which mankind regresses in turn promulgates the conditions in which such a state is maintained: it is the empiricists' demonstrations which evidence the limitation of their logical discourse. In *The Book of Urizen*, the recently fallen Urizen succumbs to such a discursive mind-set:

> Time on times he divided, & measur'd
> Space by space in his ninefold darkness
> Unseen, unknown! changes appeard

3 Though the Romantic Imagination is inexorably linked to growth—often through the modification or unification of raw materials into a spiritual epiphany of something which is, but is also more than, the original raw materials—Northrop Frye has observed in his seminal *Fearful Symmetry* that for Blake "[i]t is precisely because man is superior to nature that he is so miserable in a state of nature" (41). This is the primary difference between Blake and his fellow Romantics, and it is an important article to remember when re-evaluating Rachel Billigheimer's assessment that "Blake, Coleridge, Keats, Shelly and Wordsworth […] conceived of nature as the symbolic representation of an inner truth" (94).

In his[4] desolate mountain rifted furious
By the black winds of perturbation. (*Poems* 242 3.8–12)

Urizen is adapting himself to his new surroundings through the use of mathematics: his ability to divide time and measure space is a fallen attribute. Interestingly, the measurement of space may be a reference to either the development of the microscope or, alternatively, the telescope, and the fact that Blake suggests both points to the loss of a divine perspective.

Blake maintains this ambiguity in the syntax, which allows for two further interpretations: firstly, that "changes appeard" in Eternity as a whole; or, secondly, that "changes appeard" in Urizen's mountain only. If we take the first reading, it follows that Urizen's fall has altered the topography of Eternity; that, perhaps, his mountain is a physical construct which he has raised from "ninefold darkness." If we take the second reading, we must understand that the mountain belonging to Urizen is not a physical mountain but a metaphor for his "desolate" state of mind. Thus, if "changes appeard" in the mountain, these changes take place within Urizen himself. As Urizen is at this point without a body, and thus has no means of affecting the external world, it becomes clear that Urizen's empirical activity has influenced the way he sees the world.[5]

Soon afterwards, Urizen finds himself "in battles dire" and "[i]n unseen conflictions with shapes," but these "battles" and these "shapes" are "[b]red from his forsaken wilderness" (*Poems* 243 3.13–5) and it is not immediately clear whether this "forsaken wilderness" is internal or external. In part, the ambiguity can be read as a conscious attempt to suggest the conflation of the fallen world with the fallen mind:

Dark revolving in silent activity:
Unseen in tormenting passions;
An activity unknown and horrible;
A self-contemplating shadow,
In enormous labours occupied. (*Poems*, 243 3.18–22)

4 This was initially "Like desolate mountains." The change removes the equivocation brought about by using the simile and makes the "desolate mountain" a part of Urizen.

5 This also suggests that whilst Urizen's initial activity may, at best, have been curiosity or, at worst, compulsion, his activity henceforth will be framed by what he has learnt. This is echoed in *The Four Zoas* (1795–1804) where Man "hid within the caves of night" (*Poems* 431 108.33).

Urizen has, by dividing and measuring the world which he inhabits, multiplied the division of which he is the representative. It follows that his conflict "with shapes" is the product of his mind, hence why they are "unseen." However, although Urizen may be the creator of such shapes he is not their master: Urizen is capable of reinterpreting his space, but he has no power over it.

It can thus be seen how reason, of which Urizen is the anthropomorphized representation, has the potential to divide not only the subject from the divine but also from the spirituality which constitutes the self. Dramatically, the subject becomes a white-robed, aged man bent over books and mechanical instruments in the cold, far north, spreading ideological webs from an egotistical centre:

> a shadow of horror […] risen
> In Eternity! Unknown, unprolific!
> Self-closed, all-repelling: what Demon
> Hath form'd this abominable void
> This soul-shudd'ring vacuum? (*Poems* 424 3.1–5)

Urizen is "Self-closed" because the isolated reason considers itself to be the centre of all life; Urizen is "all-repelling" because the isolated reason rejects brotherhood and all communion with mankind (and God); Urizen is formed in an "abominable void" and a "soul-shudd'ring vacuum" because, without spiritual vision, the isolated reason remains in darkness. Indeed, Urizen's mental incarceration is so strong that it has, for him, a physical effect like Satan's hell in *Paradise Lost*.[6]

Yet Urizen is ignorant of his State. He celebrates the creation of the fallen world as a triumph over the elements:

> I alone, even I! the winds merciless
> Bound […] I repell'd
> The vast waves, & arose on the waters
> A wide world of solid obstruction. (*Poems* 244 4.19–23)

6 "The mind is its own place, and in it self / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (Milton 24 i.254–5).

Urizenic law is the realization of Enlightenment philosophy and within its sphere of vision—and only within its sphere of vision—it has the ability to bind the elements according to its will, to contract and diminish the universe, to redefine the subject's relationship with the world:

> The Fall is not a literal fall from a high place […] but a closing of possibilities and perceptions […]. Instead of the infinite perceptions of Eternity, the senses close down to our present limited five […and] [b]ecause man's perception is reduced to what his eyes—his "little orbs"—and the other passive sense-receptors of his body can take in, he is blind to nearly all of the universe. (Pyle 10)

Of course, this effect is only visible to those operating under the reduced sight of single vision, yet this is also the cause of Blake's alarm. If Enlightenment philosophy is the *modus operandi* of eighteenth-century society, then man is succumbing to that form of reality. Reason, when it does not engage with the spiritual, is a reductive organ of human selfishness which brings together mankind not in brotherhood but in bondage.

The dire end to which such a rationalism leads is shown in "Night the Sixth" of *The Four Zoas* where Urizen can be found

> with a Globe of fire
> Light[ing] his dismal journey thro the pathless world of death
> Writing in bitter tears & groans in books of iron & brass
> The enormous wonders of the Abysses […] among
> The ruind spirits once his children.' (*Poems* 359–60 70.1–6)

The darkness of the void which *was* the reasoning mind has become the darkness of the world the reasoning mind *now* observes.[7] Instead of the glories of fourfold vision, single vision traps the subject within a cave of darkness—a Platonic image which Blake amalgamates with the father of classical mechanics:

7 Reuben and Levi, for instance, "behold / What is within now seen without" (*Poems* 304 25.22–3).

> Now I a fourfold vision see,
> And a fourfold vision is given to me;
> 'Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
> And threefold in my supreme delight
> And threefold in soft Beulah's night
> And twofold Always. May God us keep
> From Single vision & Newton's sleep!' (*Writings* 818 83–8)

In his letter to Thomas Butts, dated 22nd November 1802, Blake elucidates how individuals are capable of varying degrees of vision because existence is determined by the subjective eye—a point he had already made in the narrative of *The Book of Urizen*. It is the extent to which we allow our sight to be informed by material reality—which includes both the objects in our line of vision and the cognizance which drives our actions in the material sphere—which determines our limited vision.[8]

It is salient that Blake links single vision to Isaac Newton, for it is Newton's *Opticks: or, a Treatise of the Reflections, Refractions, Inflections and Colours of Light* (1704) which not only influenced eighteenth-century physical science but also informs Blake's own understanding of light and sight (a point upon which he is moot).[9] One observation from *Opticks* which Blake may have had in mind when writing his letter to Thomas Butts is the relationship between natural objects and the eye, a relationship which Blake would attack in his marginalia to Wordsworth's "Poems" twenty-four years later:

> For Anatomists, when they have taken off from the bottom of the Eye that outward and most thick Coat called the Dura Mater, can then see through the thinner Coats, the Pictures of Objects lively painted thereon. (Newton 15)

8 Conversely, if we allow ourselves to be open to the spiritual reality which buttresses all forms of life and which ensures that all life is holy, then we will be viewing the world through a higher form of vision, then we will be viewing the world and each other—which is another important qualification—as things that truly exist.

9 Robert Markley has evidenced the ubiquity of Newtonian thought in eighteenth-century England. *Fallen Languages: Crises of Representation in Newtonian England, 1660–1740*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Blake would have read this passage as proof of the natural body's reliance upon the natural world, so much so that the natural world imprints itself upon the eye of the natural man. What's more, this passage from *Opticks* would have reminded Blake of John Locke's epistemology; in particular, passages from *An Essay on Huming Understanding* (1689)—a treatise Blake mocked in *An Island in the Moon* (1784–5) as "An Easy of Human Understanding, by John Lookye" (*Writings* 52).[10]

Blake's primary objection to Locke was the philosopher's theory that there are no innate ideas and that the formulation of ideas relies solely upon the engagement of the physical faculties with the external world. Blake differentiates sight from vision because vision does not depend upon the "Optic" quality of the physical eye. It is Locke's distinction between sensations, which are gathered by perceiving external objects, and reflections, which are formed by the classification of sensations into coherent ideas, which accentuates the Cartesian split between subject and object:

> Our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring. (Locke 51)

Sensations are unfiltered whilst reflections are filtered, and it is therefore only reflections which are useful to Locke as they make sense of this mass of data.

Locke continues by discussing how some ideas are maintained whilst other ideas fade from the memory and it is this passage in particular that allows us to reflect upon Newton's treatment of "Pictures of Objects" on the eye.

Locke talks about ideas as being "imprinted on the memory," and that ideas fade when the "the stamp" is not set "deep." One course of action which prevents the loss of ideas is repetition:

> Attention and repetition help much to the fixing any ideas in the memory…those that are oftenest refreshed (amongst which are those that are conveyed into the mind by more ways than one) by a frequent

10 Note the barbed reference to sight in Locke's modified surname.

> return of the objects or actions that produce them, fix themselves best in the memory, and remain clearest and longest there. (Locke 86)

Blake would continue to attack Locke's epistemology from *An Island in the Moon* to the *Laocoön*, but it is perhaps in the early emblem-book, *There Is No Natural Religion* (1788), that the most concise rebuttal is made: "The bounded is loathed by its possessor. The same dull round of a univer[s]e would soon become a mill with complicated wheels" (*Poems* 76 [b]iv).

For Blake, the repetition of ideas, rather than ensuring the survival of ideas, deadens the mind to a cycle of vegetative stupor. This is effectively demonstrated in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) where the Lockean storing of sensory impressions and the construction of ideas from memory leads to Theotormon's passive existence, as he "sits / Upon the margind ocean conversing with shadows dire" (*Poems* 207 8.11–2).[11]

Locke's reflections are not only unavoidably reliant upon a faculty which is capable of order, with obvious Urizenic connotations, but also upon a faculty which makes the subject believe that its ability to recall unused data is as true, and as real, as first impressions.

Theotormon's passivity is the "Single vision & Newton's sleep" to which Blake referred in his 1802 letter to Thomas Butts and it is this hierarchy of vision which is therefore such an important component within Blake's overall structure because it demonstrates how individuals are capable of living their lives according to their receptibility, or refusal, of the spiritual; for, whilst we are susceptible to single vision, we also have the potential to view the world through Blake's highest possible faculty, where we will be able to behold the glory and the wonder of life:

> That is the very thing that Jesus meant
> When he said Only Believe Believe & try
> Try Try & never mind the Reason why. (*Poems* 609 10–2)

If we believe in the spiritual, then the laws of the material become redundant. This is evidenced in the Bible, where Jesus will heal the sick simply because the sick believe that they will be healed (Matt. 9.28–30; John 9.6–7). Jesus will ask, do you

11 The narrative of *Jerusalem* (1804–20) follows the attempt to awaken Albion from a similarly passive existence.

believe in the power of God? do you believe in the righteousness and the forgiveness of God? do you place your life in the power and faith of God? And, if the sick person believes that their ailment is simply a momentary disorder, a corruption of the flesh rather than the soul, then their bodies will be healed. Are we then asked to discover how Jesus accomplishes these miracles? No. This would be the route taken by the Natural Philosophers, who wish to understand the minutiae of human biology.

It is belief that is the spiritual formula for well-being; it is belief that redeems the Individual and makes the impossible seem possible. Although the language of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* may be more secular than that of the 1800s and 1810s—it is "perswasion" rather than belief, "genius or conscience" rather than soul—Blake is working with the theological premise of the canonical gospels. Blake asks Isaiah,

> does a firm perswasion that a thing is so, make it so? He replied. All poets believe that it does, & in ages of imagination this form perswasion removed mountains. (*Poems* 186 12.11–4)

Although Isaiah specifically mentions "poets" rather than prophets, his reply recasts Matthew 17.20 where, after the disciples have failed to cure a sick child, Jesus reprimands them for their "unbelief" before driving the devil out himself.[12]

> Jesus tells his disciples, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Blake incorporates such passages from the New Testament in order to set the foundations for prophetically-inspired poetry.[13] Furthermore, although Blake was not a follower of Pauline Christianity, he need only have turned to Paul's epistle to the Hebrews to find a record of the divine properties of belief and the flesh-bound perspective of unbelief.

Paul writes that the crucifixion of Christ—an image to which Blake returns as the epitome of material renunciation and the acceptance of the spiritual—made

12 See also Mark 11.23 where, having passed a withered fig tree which was cursed, Jesus answers Paul that whosoever believes in a thing will find that that thing will come to pass. All passages refer to the authorized King James version.

13 See also Luke 22.67, Acts 7.51, and Hebrews 3.12–3.

"the captain of [our] salvation perfect through suffering" (Heb. 2.10). Christ manages to achieve salvation because he casts away the corporeal body of Error and enters a new life in the spiritual body of Truth.[14]

It is this turning towards God which "sanctifieth" the soul of the sufferer, a movement which is rooted in our determination to follow, and never to abandon, Christ's example: "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Heb. 3.8). The reference to "wilderness"—and one is immediately reminded of Urizen's post-lapsarian psyche in *The Book of Urizen*—harkens to the Israelites' travails in Exodus, where the familiarity of slavery in Egypt could appear more agreeable than the hardships of their newfound freedom.[15]

The Book of Ahania also incorporates the *topos* of the wilderness and similarly uses it to evidence the bareness of the wayward mind. Blake casts Fuzon as the biblical patriarch who, in his attempts to overturn the authority of Urizen (Pharaoh), brings further ruin upon his people:

> Fuzon, on a chariot iron-wing'd
> On spiked flames rose; his hot visage
> Flam'd furious! sparkles in his hair & beard
> Shot down his wide bosom and shoulder…
> Shall we worship this Demon of smoke,
> Said Fuzon, this abstract non-entity
> This cloudy God seated on waters
> Now seen, now obscur'd, King of sorrow? (*Poems* 259 1.1–13)

By reworking and amalgamating Christian symbolism with pagan idolatry, and by casting the Moses-inspired Fuzon as a sun god speeding upon his flaming (Egyptian) chariot and the Pharaoh-inspired Urizen as Jehovah (with particular reference to Genesis 1.2), Blake is again conflating centuries of time and

14 Blake is at his most iterative in *Milton* 603–4 41.3–17.

15 Paul, like Blake, uses the "wilderness" *topos* in a twofold manner, and also refers us to the "evil heart of unbelief" (Heb. 3.12). Thus, whilst "we which have believed do enter into rest," Paul adds that "if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 4.3, 10.38). The unbeliever will be an outcast from the holy brotherhood of Christ, uneasy and troubled in his material justifications, anxious, fearful, and disaffected.

centuries of thought in order to evidence the cyclicality of civilizations and the revolutions of reigns.

And it soon becomes clear that Fuzon's rebellion will not lead to freedom but to further thraldom:

> While Fuzon his tygers unloosing
> Thought Urizen slain by his wrath.
> I am God, said he, eldest of things! (*Poems* 261 3.36–8)

Rather than rejecting the basis of power upon which Urizen constructed his rule, Fuzon attempts to reincorporate that structure as the source of the apotheosis of his own self-proclaimed divinity.

As Blake would note in a later work, "Natural power continually seeks & tends to Destruction / Ending in Death: which would of itself be Eternal Death" (*Poems* 570 26.41–2). This is true in *The Book of Ahania* where Fuzon, misjudging his usurpation, is strung upon the Tree of Mystery by Urizen:

> Round the pale living Cor[p]se on the Tree
> Forty years flew the arrows of pestilence […]
> Fuzon groan'd on the Tree. (*Poems* 264 4.36–42)

Blake draws upon Paul's reference to the Israelites plight in the wilderness to evidence the myopic nature of Old Testament dogma. Similarly, Blake introduces Paul's detestation of the flesh as part of the physical torture Fuzon faces at the hands of Urizen. Blake then unities these two theological strands within the narrative as a whole to evidence how the wilderness of the mind brings about the persecution of the body.

To return then once more to Enlightenment epistemology, it is clear that Blake views the Lockean senses as a prison within which the individual becomes trapped; for, if we allow ourselves to be corrupted then the world, for us, will also become corrupted. Empirical demonstrations are an example of such corruption, for Natural Philosophers "Doubt Doubt & dont believe without experiment" (*Writings* 609 5–9). For Blake, such a thought process is based upon scepticism at first and then upon a mistaken, and misplaced, security.

Francis Bacon's seminal work, *Novum Organum Scientiarum* (1620), offers a formula based upon such reasoning, whereby the hidden structures of nature can be deduced by the careful analysis of causation. Whilst Urizen is the earliest anthropomorphised form of this model, Blake satirizes Bacon's fetishization of scientific enquiry as the female character Vala in his later Prophetic Books. She is the Mother Goddess of Albion's sons and daughters, the earth, the personification of a Deistic absolutism wishing to rule all, consume all, and be all: "the evil omnipotence of nature" (Quinney 105). This resemblance is, in part, also based on the female-orientated metaphors present in Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* (1605).[16]

Bacon believed that man must dominate nature and bind her to his will; nature must be tested, exploited experimentally to give up her secrets:

> [f]or like as a man's disposition is never well known till he be crossed […] so the passages and variations of nature cannot appear so fully in the liberty of nature as in the trials and vexations of art. (Bacon 71–2)

By placing within the bosom of nature the ark of knowledge, Blake realized that it is for Vala to share her secrets or, as often as not, to retain them.[17] Thus, whilst Bacon may claim that "it is no more but by following, and as it were hounding nature in her wanderings" that man is "able to lead her afterwards to the same place again" (Bacon 70), to continually prise her folds apart and to view her mysteries, it is in fact Vala who controls the limits of knowledge and who reigns over mankind:

> Know me now Albion: look upon me I alone am Beauty
> The Imaginative Human Form is but a breathing of Vala
> I breathe him forth into the Heaven from my secret Cave
> Born of the Woman to obey the Woman O Albion
> the mighty. (*Poems* 692 29[33].49–52)

16 "[…] as both heaven and earth do conspire and contribute to the use and benefit of man […] and to preserve and augment whatsoever is solid and fruitful: that knowledge may not be as a courtesan, for pleasure and vanity only, or as a bond-woman, to acquire and gain to her master's use; but as a spouse, for generation, fruit, and comfort" (Bacon 34).

17 The metaphor of truth being a veiled female is as old as Christianity itself, with a student of the second century Gnostic teacher Valentinus remarking that in a vision he saw "'the form of a woman" who told him, "I wish to show you Truth herself; for I have brought her down from above, so that you may see her without a veil, and understand her beauty" (qt. Pagels 20).

As Thomas Altizer observes, "Vala rules the fallen world but her rule is invisible to all but the imaginative seer" (47). It would take Albion most of *Jerusalem* to realize this and to be able to throw off the yolk of Vala.

Near the beginning of *Jerusalem*, after Blake has warned his readers of the threats posed to Golgonooza, the city of Art, Vala appears in "a pillar of cloud" eastward of "[t]he Starry Wheels [which] revolv'd heavily over the Furnaces; / Drawing Jerusalem in anguish of maternal love" (*Poems* 641 5.46–8). Having compared Urizen to Jehovah, Blake begins to tease out the parallels between Vala and Jehovah; first, by incorporating the *topos* of the wheel which reflects the Urizenic, mechanized parameters of Natural Philosophy; and secondly, by incorporating the *topos* of the cloud, taken from the Old Testament, which replicates the secretive predilection of hegemonic powers. In particular, Vala's clandestine nature is similar to the way in which Jehovah shares knowledge in the First Book of the Kings.

> After the Israelites have built the temple of God, the cloud filled the house of the LORD, So that the priests could not stand to minister… Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. (1 Kings 8.10–2)

Jehovah is a god of mystery, of obscurity and secrecy, and Blake amalgamates the Hebrew God with Bacon's female figure to create a dire image of man's servitude to nature:

> A pillar of smoke writhing afar into Non-Entity, redounding
> Till the cloud reaches afar outstretch'd among the Starry Wheels
> Which revolve heavily in the mighty Void above the Furnaces
> O what avail the loves & tears of Beulahs lovely Daughters
> They hold the Immortal Form in gentle bands & tender tears
> But all within is open'd into the deeps of EntuthonBenython
> A dark and unknown night, indefinite, unmeasur-
> able, without end. (*Poems* 641–2 5.51–7)

What's more, by conflating Vala with Jehovah, and by reworking the earlier conflation of Urizen with Jehovah, Blake is able to exploit both religious and scientific

symbolism. Nelson Hilton writes that "wheels epitomised the gathering mechanisation of life and thought that Blake perceived" (Hilton *Literal* 218), and Vala's movements exhibit the industrial changes which were reordering everyday life in the eighteenth century.

Hilton goes on to say that "[m]ore than industrial mechanisation, it is the logical, linear, cause-and-effect organisation predicated by such material improvement that Blake fears" (218). As previously mentioned, Bacon is one such manifestation of Blake's fears, but the wheel image is particularly Newtonian and the visual stimulus of "starry wheels, turning in [a] vacuum" is representative of that empiricist "Error" which "sucks in Truth" (Ostriker 998–9).

Natural Philosophers are at fault for "Accident being Formed / Into Substance & Principle, by the cruelties of Demonstration" (*Poems* 578 29.35–6), but it is the apotheosis of nature to the godhead Vala that shackles the mind to material circumstances. Los speaks for Blake when he informs Satan that "Thy Work is Eternal Death, with Mills & Ovens & Cauldrons" (*Poems* 518 4.17), because if man has bound his present to the productions of nature, limited his future to the cycles of nature, then he is restricted to a life of nature.

Vala then works within these frameworks to create an environment in which humans continue this process themselves. The twentieth-century American professor of sexual identity Robert J. Stoller, though not a Blakean academic, offers a valuable observation in *Sexual Excitement: Dynamics of Erotic Life* to the current line of enquiry:

> [t]he point is not simply that in the past a person was frightened by mystery but that, paradoxically, he or she is now making sure the mystery is maintained […] if the appearance of mystery does not persist, excitement will fade. (17)

There is more than a passing resemblance in Stoller's remarks to the mystery upon which Jehovah bases his authority in the Old Testament, but what plays a crucial role in Blake's mythopoeia is the relationship between mankind's faith in Vala and the internalization "of political and sexual domination," a process during which women are the "victims who have become the vicious propagators of the very ideology and organization which oppresses them and their male counterparts" (Aers 508). Both men and women are therefore trapped by Vala: the former celebrates

the virginal qualities of modesty whilst at the same time eroticizing that modesty which would preserve its virginity; the latter, realizing the significance of accentuating the physical worth of the female body, frames abstract concepts such as virginity as an intrinsic virtue.[18]

Blake is aware of this hypocrisy, noting that if a woman is deemed virtuous by her ability to control her sexuality, then sexuality becomes a method for controlling the world:

> The Stars flee remote: the heaven is iron, the earth is sulphur,
> And all the mountains & hills shrink up like a withering gourd,
> As the Senses of Men shrink together under the Knife of flint,
> In the hands of Albions Daughters, among the Druid Temples,
> By those who drink their blood & the blood of
> their Covenant. (*Poems* 774 66–7.81–1)[19]

Sexuality, far from a passion of which the virgin is ignorant, is the main tool used to manipulate man. Blake develops this into a physical arbiter called "the cruel Virgin Babylon" (*Poems* 520 5.27)—in part based upon Babylon's depiction in The Book of Revelation as a city, "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. 18.2), as a temptress, "[Babylon] made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Rev. 14.8), and as the antithesis of spirituality, "the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev. 17.6).

John repeatedly casts Babylon as both drunk and the one providing the wine that leads mankind to drunkenness, and as an image of disconnection, of dissolution

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18 "The virginal woman," writes Luce Irigaray, "is nothing but the possibility, the place, the sign of relations among men" (186). A linguistic void is created which must be filled by members of the socio-political hierarchy in order to sustain that hierarchy, since there is nothing concrete upon which to base a discourse. The concept of the virginal woman cannot, therefore, be said to exist ontologically, yet she exists for a society that has imbued abstractions with the plausibility of concrete forms. Irigaray continues by noting that "[i]n and of herself, she does not exist: she is a simple envelope veiling what is really at stake in social exchange," and it is the space opened up by the "exchange" of ideas into which the female anchors her power.

19 As Alicia Ostriker notes, "Vala is […] the chaste mistress who withholds favo[u]rs so that her lovers will become warriors, and she is the blood-spattered priestess who with a knife of flint cuts the hearts out of men—all the while protesting that she craves nothing but Love" (Ostriker "Desire" 160).

(in the eighteenth century it would be phrased "in drunk"), and of disjunction. Such a state is the antithesis to vision which Blake distils succinctly in *Milton*:

> in Satans bosom […] dwells Mystery Babylon, here is her secret place
> From hence she comes forth on the Churches in delight
> Here is her Cup filld with its poisons, in these horrid vales
> And here her scarlet Veil woven in pestilence & war. (*Poems* 598 38.15–26)

Like Vala-as-Jehovah, Babylon works in a "secret place" and manipulates the holy places of the earth; like Vala-as-seductress, Babylon works from within "vales" and the homophone "Veil" to tempt and seduce mankind; and like Vala-as-murderess, mankind will enter into conflict for the glorification of the female form.

Like Vala, modesty is an affectation; but Babylon is a harlot capable of acting in accordance with the false pretences of female virtue. She embodies the Error of "natural" laws, both biological and scientific, and is thus referred to as "the City of Vala, the Goddess Virgin-Mother" (*Poems* 670 18.29) because she is the realization of that faith placed in Natural Philosophy.

The fetishization of nature, such as Bacon's treatment of the pursuit of knowledge, has found its equivalent in the biblical antagonist of the Israelites, a city built on the slavery of those who are spiritually disengaged. Unbelief, therefore, is the province of Vala, of Babylon, who base their authority upon fallen frameworks. As Paul writes in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "we wrestle […] against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6.12).

Blake terms this antithetical evil "Negations," and it is with this concept and the restorative Limits which are put in place by Los that I will bring this discussion to a close. Unlike contraries which, through their dialectical development, contribute to the progression of mankind, unbelief is a Negation.[20] Anne Mellor describes Negations as "empty abstraction[s] which never existed, a meaningless concept

20 Blake certainly conceived of the concept of contraries as early as 1789; indeed, the act of working on the back of used, copper plates to produce new pieces of art, new poems, contributes to the dialectical formulation of Blake's thought. At all times, Blake is facing up to the colossi of his age and of previous ages: his work is a sparring ground in which alternative philosophies are pitted against one another. Although Blake never references Hegel, we need not look much further for a philosophical context.

such as 'sin' which can only destroy the divinity within man, his imagination and his capacity for pleasure" (602). In the same way that virginity is a vacuous concept bereft of existential worth, sin acts as a control on the minds of man, regulating his actions, splitting the world into holy places and unholy places. Oothoon's cry in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) that "every thing that lives is holy!" (*Poems* 206 8.10)[21] is a direct attack on such arbitrary religiosity found in the construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 26.33).

What Mellor also alludes to is the cap or lock placed on the human "capacity for pleasure." In part, this is sexual: *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* calls on man to sate his desires which, if left unfulfilled, would create "reptiles of the mind" (*Poems* 191 19.8–9). Pleasure, however, can also be understood more broadly to mean happiness, as the bliss expressed by the infant in "Infant Joy," *Songs of Innocence*. Social-sexual stratifications therefore distort that "divinity," that love and peace, which makes us *human*.

In *Milton*, the stultifying effects of Negations are contrasted with the redemptive qualities of contraries:

> There is a Negation, & there is a Contrary
> The Negation must be destroyd to redeem the Contraries
> The Negation is the Spectre; the Reasoning Power in Man
> This is a false Body: an Incrustation over my Immortal
> Spirit; a Selfhood, which must be put off & annihilated always
> To cleanse the Face of my Spirit by Self-examination. (*Poems* 603 40.33–8)

Blake creates a link between reason and unbelief, a further link between unbelief and falsehood and finally the necessity to engage in an act of self-examination to cleanse the mind from unbelief. Thus, what Blake sets out is the association of unbelief and Enlightenment rationalism and, by contrast, the relationship between belief and spirituality. What's more, by classifying unbelief as a Negation, and by defining a Negation as something that can be, and must be, destroyed, Blake is diametrically opposing falsehood to the truth of belief. It becomes clear that unbelief, and the abstract reasoning which formulates such a position, is based upon a "false body," an "incrustation." Enlightenment philosophers and their mechanistic

21 See also *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (*Poems* 195 27.15) and *America* (213 8.13).

theories have formulated an understanding of the universe according to mankind's *fallen* nature: what their discourses therefore lack, according to Blake, is an awareness of this fallenness.

One of the reasons for this lack of awareness is the death-like sleep into which mankind has fallen:

> In the Optic vegetative Nerves Sleep was transformed
> To Death in old time by Satan the father of Sin & Death
> And Satan is the Spectre of Orc & Orc is the generate Luvah.
> (*Poems* 578 29.32–4)

Again, the image is Newtonian, and this context helps to elucidate the cyclical nature of Eternal Death.

In *Opticks*, after discussing the manner in which bodies (such as the sun) conserve heat, Newton asks "Do not the Rays of Light in falling upon the bottom of the Eye excite Vibrations in the Tunica Retina?" We can already infer how the relationship between the natural sun and the natural eye, and the relationship between natural light and physical vibrations, would have troubled the divinely-inspired vision of Blake. Newton's answer would have increased Blake's antipathy:

> Which Vibrations, being propagated along the solid Fibres of the optick Nerves into the Brain, cause the Sense of seeing. For because dense Bodies conserve their Heat a long time, and the densest Bodies conserve their Heat the longest, the Vibrations of their parts are of a lasting nature, and therefore may be propagated along solid Fibres of uniform dense Matter to a great distance, for conveying into the Brain the impressions made upon all the Organs of Sense. (Newton 345)

Phrases like "cause the Sense of seeing" and "conveying into the Brain" would have been anathema to Blake because they evidence the disconnect between mankind and his spiritual existence. Equally, the Lockean-sounding "impressions made upon all the Organs of Sense" would have been proof that Natural Philosophers

were subject themselves, and were subjecting mankind as whole, to a ratiocinative view of the world.

In *Milton*, Blake picks up on Newton's organic language and developed what he saw as the fibrous relationship between the reasoning mind and the corporeal body. Tirzah, who "numbers with her fingers every fibre ere it grow," ties the knot of nervous fibres, into a white brain!

> She ties the knot of bloody veins, into a red hot heart!
> Within her bosom Albion lies embalmd, never to awake
> Hand is become a rock! Sinai & Horeb, is
> Hyle & Coban; (*Poems* 550 19.55–8)

The body, tied and woven into a fibrous rock, is now subject to the rational thought of Hand, Hyle, and Coban: Newton, Locke, and Bacon. What's more, this embalming occurs on Sinai and Horeb, mountainous pillars of Orthodoxy which evidence the ossification of ecclesiastical dominion:

> Therefore bright Tirzah triumphs: putting on all beauty,
> And all perfection, in her cruel sports among the Victims.
> Come bring with thee Jerusalem with songs on the Grecian lyre!
> In Natural Religion: in experiments on Men,
> Let her be Offerd in Holiness! (*Poems* 550 19.44–8)

Yet Blake does not leave mankind doomed to Eternal Death. The Limits Los puts in place, "Giving to airy nothing a name and a habitation" (*Poems* 574 28.3), is a mercy which restricts the degree to which mankind will fall. On Plate 12 of *Jerusalem*, when Los sees "the finger of God go forth / Upon my Furnaces, from within the Wheels of Albions Sons," it is a moment in which systems are fixed and made "permanent: by mathematic power / Giving a body to Falsehood that it may be cast off for ever" (654 12.10–3). Errors must be limited in order to be destroyed; it is only by revealing the groundless basis for what man considers to be truths that he is able to distinguish between the corporeal and the spiritual:

> Where Luvahs World of Opakeness grew to a period: It
> Became a Limit, a Rocky hardness without form & void
> Accumulating without end: here Los who is of the Elohim
> Opens the Furnaces of affliction in the Emanation
> Fixing the Sexual into an ever-prolific Generation
> Naming the Limit of Opakeness Satan & the Limit of Contraction
> Adam... (791 73.22–8)

Michael Ferber notes that, "[i]f anything, at least after the stalling of revolutionary momentum in France and England, Blake's overall sense of human history seems to have been that things were getting worse." However, what becomes apparent with Los' creation of Limits, is that "things must get worse before they get better, so the worst of times was also the best of times" (173).[22]

The *reductio ad absurdum* groundwork which Los must put in place is similar to that of Blake himself in *There Is No Natural Religion*, showing the parallels between the prophetic artist and poet. In 1788 Blake wrote that "[n]one could have other than natural or organic thoughts if he had none but organic perceptions" (*Poems* 75). These "organic thoughts" relate not only to thoughts which are biologically natural but also organ-based, hence limited to our senses. This leads Blake to the following inference:

> [m]an's desires are limited by his perceptions. none can desire what he has not perceiv'd… If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again. (*Poems* 75)

Altizer claims that this judgement anticipates "Blake's mature understanding" (22), and my analysis of the creation of Limits in *Milton* and *Jerusalem* certainly

22 Ferber refers to *Fearful Symmetry*, in which Frye writes that Blake "postulates a historical process which may be described as the exact opposite of the Hegelian one. Every advance of truth forces error to consolidate itself in a more obviously erroneous form, and every advance of freedom has the same effect on tyranny […] The evolution comes in the fact that the opposition grows sharper each time, and will one day present a clear-cut alternative of eternal life or extermination" (Frye 260).

supports this assessment. It is only by recognizing the extent to which one has fallen, having the ability to perceive this State, that one is able to pass beyond it.

Whilst Natural Philosophers place nature on the rack to discover her secrets, their demonstrations provide the furthest boundary to which mankind may fall; and, having found that boundary, man can begin the process of working his way back towards Eternity. It is typical of Blake to provide a possible means of redemption despite standing at the gates of damnation, to find hope in the face of adversity, and to subvert the basis of that power which impinges upon his freedom. Limits allow mankind to fall but also to rise: they are the foundations for future recovery.

Blake's faith, therefore, requires action as much as anything else. Los is able to limit the fall because he believes in the spiritual capacity for redemption—Los-as-Blake believes that without a meaningful process and progress conviction stagnates into ideological frameworks (the Established Church is just one such example).[23] Action reveals the humanity of the man because action is a representation of man's visionary potential:

> The Last Judgment [will be] when all those are Cast away who trouble Religion with Questions concerning Good & Evil or Eating of the Tree of those Knowledges or Reasonings which hinder the Vision of God, turning all into a Consuming Fire. When Imagination, Art & Science & all Intellectual Gifts, all the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, are look'd upon as of no use & only Contention remains to Man, then the Last Judgment begins, & its Vision is seen by […] Every one according to the situation he holds... (*Writings* 604)

The Limits Los creates act not only as the redemptive groundworks for the whole of mankind but also allow Los to redeem himself, for he is engaged in a selfless labour of brotherly love.

This is one of the reasons why Urizen fails, and fails for the second time, to enter the Consummation:

> Urizen arose up with [the fallen man] walking thro the flames
> To meet the Lord coming to Judgment but the flames repelld them

23 This is perhaps also why Blake continued to alter his mythopoeia.

> Still to the Rock in vain they ſtrove to Enter the Con-
> summation. (*Poems* 449 9.124.2–4)

Although Urizen is inspired by good intentions, he has not prepared himself to undertake such an act; this is why his failure precipitates the return of his sons to rural work, taking the plow and tilling the earth to prepare the soil (and soul) for the Laſt Harveſt.

The sons of Urizen begin their labour and rid themselves of weapons of war, whereupon their rural tools become "inſtruments of harmony" (17); wartime apparatuses are deſtroyed (450 19); they join in with Urthona's sons and work together "to forge the spade the mattock & the ax" (21) to continue their own, and encourage others to join in with, rural work; and Urizen himself "laid his ha[n]d on the Plow" and "Thro dismal darkness drave the Plow of ages over Cities" (26–7), undoing the damage he has caused the earth.

This physical activity then culminates with "the golden harrow in the midſt of Mental fires" (*Poems* 451 125.17), revealing how the imaginative faculties are fired and made productive when the body contributes to the invigoration of the soul:

> Man walks forth from midſt of the fires the evil is consumd
> His eyes behold the Angelic spheres arising night & day
> The ſtars consumd like a lamp blown out & in their ſtead behold
> The Expanding Eyes of Man. (*Poems* 474–5 138.22–5)

It is only by such an immersion in labour, as evidenced by Los' building of Golgonooza in *Jerusalem*, that the individual is capable of being redeemed. It is action, as well as conviction, that is required.

Although the Limits Los puts in place do not of themselves conſtitute our salvation, they are part of the process by which we are capable of escaping the cycle of Eternal Death. Falsely believing that we will be saved by the actions of another, that we will be saved by Los, will only leave the passive subject floundering in Generation like Theotormon in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. What Blake requires is for an individual to engage in a holiſtic form of action.

An inadequate response, such as the charity of "Holy Thursday" in *Songs of Innocence*, only exacerbates injuſtices. The patron's pity simply permits the children,

cleaned for the day and dressed in fresh clothes, to be paraded around London's streets on their way to St Paul's; yet they are marshalled as they walk by wardens carrying sticks, they are gathered into the cathedral, made to sing. "Imagination demands action," writes Michael Ferber, "to rid society of tyranny and warfare and usher in the city of brotherly love" (127). The children of "Holy Thursday" must raise their voices "like a mighty wind […] like harmonious thunderings" (*Poems* 112 9–10), subverting the parameters of their detention, to reveal the duplicity of their "wise guardians" (11) who sit beneath them.

More, of course, is required to derail the social order than mere song: *The Four Zoas* involves rural labour; *Milton* the ability to understand that what is happening on earth is a perversion of brotherhood; *Jerusalem* requires the awakening of Albion, who must recognize that Jesus, rather than Vala, is the saviour of mankind. A transformation of one's perspective is the pivot upon which salvation turns, but for those who suffer under the delusion of the Natural Philosophers such a change is a herculean effort for they suffer under the misbelief (unbelief) that the Imagination does not inform thought.

However, as Blake tells us in *A Vision of the Last Judgement* (1810),

> All Life consists of these Two, Throwing off Error & Knaves from our company continually & Receiving Truth or Wise Men into our Company continually. He who is out of the Church & opposes it is no less an Agent of Religion than he who is in it; to be an Error & to be Cast out is a part of God's design. No man can Embrace True Art till he has Explor'd & cast out False Art (such is the Nature of Mortal Things), or he will be himself Cast out by those who have already Embraced True Art. (*Writings* 613)

We are reminded of Blake's aphorisms on the Old and New Testament in the *Laocoön*, and realize that Blake suffered and travelled through darkness as much as his characters. Yet if, like Los, we recognize the Errors of our ways, we are able to limit our fall. If we break free from the reductive principles of empirical thought and if we strive to see the world according to its spiritual splendour, then Blake believes that there is yet hope for us and a path towards salvation.

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Disbelief in Historical Examples

The Hampden-Milton-Cromwell passage in Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

BÁLINT GÁRDOS

Abstract: This paper discusses the different conventions of literary didacticism in Gray's Elegy from almost medieval allegorical teaching, replete with capitalized moral qualities ("Ambition," "Grandeur," etc.), through the humanist model of exemplary history (teaching through the powerful rhetorical presentation of turning points in the lives of great men) to a modern model of teaching that is not directed at action but at sympathy evoked through the understanding of socio-economic and cultural forces. The analysis focuses on the transactions between exemplary history and the "annals of the poor" in the poem.

The two probably most familiar critical statements on the poetry of Thomas Gray seem to contradict each other rather sharply. The first is, of course, Samuel Johnson's famous verdict on the *Elegy* from the concluding words in his life of Gray (1781). "The *Church-yard* abounds with images which find a mirrour in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo" (Johnson 1471). The second, by Matthew Arnold, written almost exactly a century later (1880), is part of a critical introduction to Gray's poetry: "'He never spoke out.' In these four words is contained the whole history of Gray, both as a man and as a poet." The first is a dream of perfect communication, the second is a tragic image of almost no communication. Johnson's hope appears to be sustained by the perceived universality of Gray's Christian response to mortality. Arnold's despair springs from his conviction of the hopelessness of serious poetry in an age of prose. While both approaches have found

followers, neither of them seems to allow for a more detailed examination of how (far) communication happens in the *Elegy*.

The following essay investigates the rhetorical strategies—by which I mean the strategies of conveying a moral argument—used in Gray's poem. Its argument, briefly, is that most readers pay insufficient attention to the breaks in the *Elegy*'s structure, in order to focus on its supposedly universal moral teaching instead. While there are plenty of studies devoted to the ideological import of Gray's meditation on social difference in the face of the ultimate democracy of death, no analysis that I am familiar with details the radical ruptures in the rhetorical strategies that are used for articulating and maybe inculcating those ideas. In different sections of the poem, Gray addresses the questions related to mortality and social inequality in markedly different ways, testing different rhetorical models and seemingly finding them all wanting.

I will begin with a short discussion of the passage I have indicated in my title and then proceed to compare that passage with other sections in the poem and briefly look at some further examples in Gray's poetry where the difficulty of speaking out assumes precedence over the content of what the "message" might have been.

The Rhetorical Function of History

> Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
> The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
> Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
> Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood. (56–60)[1]

This section is an exercise in sketching hypothetical histories. Readers usually see it as a thought experiment in a nutshell. What would have happened if the cottagers buried in the country church-yard had been given the advantages of education? Gray is typically assumed to imaginatively measure the losses and gains involved in denying those to large sections of society. We lose great poets, he seems to say, but we are spared murderous dictators. In the wake of William Empson's very influential—although very brief—remarks on the poem in *Some Versions of Pastoral*, many scholars have commented on the way the supposed advantages and disadvantages

1 Gray's poetry is cited from Lonsdale's Longman edition.

seem to cancel each other out, leading to a poem that sharply indicates a cruel injustice, but then, according to Empson, "the reader is put into a mood in which one would not try to alter it" (109).

Much less attention, however, has been given to how poorly the iconic names in the quoted stanza do the job of measuring gain and loss. First of all, if they are supposed to represent the two arms of the scales, then why are there three of them (consistently in both the manuscript and the published version)? Secondly, why would Gray use names whose historical associations, whatever the explicit words of evaluation, inevitably overlap? Milton was, of course, not just seen as a great poet, but also as a supporter of Cromwell and while Hampden is here seemingly praised for bravely standing up to tyranny, everyone would have known that his resistance to taxation contributed to turning the antagonism of King and Parliament into armed conflict and thus making Cromwell guilty "of his country's blood."[2] There was, however, contention even over the evaluation of Cromwell's career. While most agreed in denouncing him as a tyrant and a fanatic, many also emphasized his more likable personal qualities (his braveness and sincerity) and his foreign policy successes. A rather dark myth of "greatness" and "heroism" had thus begun to emerge (Davis 48–52; Howell).

The Eton manuscript had Cato, Tully, and Caesar where the published text has Hampden, Milton and Cromwell. Henry Weinfield, in his essential book-length study of the poem, claims that "the revision is crucial" partly because "it complicates the political (and ethical) associations" linked to the theme of unfulfilled potential. "Cato and Cicero betoken republican virtue, and Caesar, the beginnings of empire, and so with the Roman names there would have been something of a binary opposition between liberty and tyranny. With the shift to an English frame of reference, however, the implication that Cromwell was guilty of his country's blood—and Milton, of course, was Cromwell's Latin secretary—suggests that the stanza cannot be understood in terms of such simple political counters" (89–90). However, in some respects, the shift is not that great: the difference between somebody who, having realized his potential, has proven glorious and somebody who only became guilty of crimes is plainly visible in both the Roman and English references. Moreover,

2 On Milton's troubled reception in the eighteenth century, see e.g. Zwierlein and Kolbrener, on Hampden, see Crawford.

the historical associations that accumulate around the given names are also to some extent, maybe to a lesser extent, hazy already in the case of the Roman examples.

There was no consensus over the reading of these classical life stories in Gray's day. According to Louise Marshall, on the one hand, "the Roman Republic was adopted as justification for the Glorious Revolution and became the model to which all parties, indeed all factions aspired" (110), and Cato was often referred to as an embodiment of the values associated with the republic. On the other hand, however, Marshall documents a "shift in focus away from 'the virtuous Republic' to the Rome of insatiable military expansion" (111). She also examines a range of pro-Caesar works in which the Roman leader is presented as "an appropriate model for British colonial aspiration" (113).

When it comes to the republican heroes, Cicero, as Robert G. Ingram demonstrates, "was a much-appropriated figure. Freethinkers like John Toland and Anthony Collins found in him a kindred spirit, while others, like Herbert of Cherbury and Samuel Clarke, employed him as a tool against Hobbesian materialism" (110). Some Whigs relied on "Cicero's political vision," while others on a "Catonic vision" of politics "and the 1720s and 1730s saw attempts to cast Walpole [the father of Gray's close friend] as a responsible Ciceronian leader" (110). Matthew Fox has described the diversity of the issues and debates that Cicero's name invoked. These include "[t]he relationship between Cicero as a man and Cicero as a writer; the role of Cicero as a pioneer of religious scepticism; the reputation of Cicero as a stylistic or literary model" (324).

Cato, as Nathaniel Wolloch explains, was often compared to Cicero: "While Cato was considered impractical, Cicero was criticized for being too pragmatic, and the fact that Cicero was murdered and did not end his own life worked in favor of the praise of Cato" (66). However, "Cato's strict virtue could be seen as excessive, while his suicide raised religious questions" (67). There was, therefore, considerable ambiguity present from the start, because the Roman names had already been appropriated for widely different purposes.

While we have no explicit comment by Gray on the shift from Roman to British references, we have his letter of 1761 to his friend Christopher Anstey, who was then translating the *Elegy* to Latin, on how the "English characters" might be "romanized." "Virgil," he suggested, "is just as good as Milton, and Caesar as Cromwell, but who shall be Hampden?" (Mack 539). The introduction of Virgil's name probably

indicates, just like the final question, that Gray is hesitant about which names might serve as the best exemplars. Just as importantly, the rather offhand "Virgil is just as good as Milton" might indicate a hint of uncertainty as to *what* these exemplary figures are supposed to exemplify. While in the *Elegy* the famous names are accompanied by strongly evaluative thumbnail descriptions, the historical associations triggered by them are invariably too ambiguous for any straightforward didactic statement to emerge. The iconic names do not play their rhetorical functions well.

Changing Rhetorical Strategies

What is also noteworthy about the Hampden–Milton–Cromwell passage is that it is both preceded and followed by discursive sections of the poem that include or imply strong didactic statements but they indicate dissatisfaction with the deliverance of those messages with abrupt changes in rhetorical strategy.

The section that precedes the one just discussed is based rhetorically on capitalized abstractions. A somewhat preacherly, almost sermonizing voice teaches "Ambition" and "Grandeur" some humility vis-à-vis the "rude forefathers of the hamlet." The language is characterized by distance: the village poor and the capitalized "Proud" aptly think of each other in terms of such abstractions, as Frank Brady observes, since they neither know about nor sympathize with each other. The speaker's self-assured, judgemental voice also suggests a certain detachment from the entire scenario, the rich and famous as well as the poor and obscure are equally discussed in the third person. There is a medieval quality to the *danse macabre* emphasis on death awaiting everyone in equal measure ("The paths of glory lead but to the grave"). Anne Williams comments on the affinity of all graveyard poetry with the medieval *memento mori* tradition (108). Cleanth Brooks associated the allegoric figures with the ones which "clutter a great abbey church such as that at Bath or Westminster" (23). This rhetoric, however, immediately breaks down once the topic of unrealized potential and the modern political question of the equality of opportunities are introduced.

The third great didactic movement focuses on the universal human desire to be remembered. Remembered, that is, no longer only through physical memorials but more importantly through a loving connection to people who survive ("On some fond breast the parting soul relies"). The rhetoric of this section is that of sighs

and tears. It is based neither on moralizing abstractions nor on historical examples of uncertain relevance to the lives of the villagers, but on an emotionally-charged description of a central moment in the life of a community. The movement of the poem, as Roger Lonsdale has observed, is "towards sympathy" ("The Poetry" 26).

Following readers such as Howard D. Weinbrot, I also believe that the gradual articulation of Gray's sympathy for the village poor and his choice to be buried in their graveyard (repeated, one might add, in Gray's careful arrangements about his own funeral) is the moral centre of the poem. Moralizing, however, is systematically undercut by an emphasis on the rhetorical fragility of the speech situations. We have to remember that after the discursive sections we move to narrative and finally an epitaph. The narrative about the life and death of the fictional poet is spoken "haply" (i.e. perhaps) by "some hoary-headed swain" and is spoken by this hypothetical person to a hypothetical listener in a hypothetical future ("If chance, by lonely Contemplation led, / Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate") about a hypothetical past ("like one forlorn / Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love"). The epitaph is actual enough, as much as anything can be in a work of fiction, but its author is not identified, and its reader is the same hypothetical person who is just as alienated from the villagers as the speaker of the poem once was, he too because of his superior education ("thou can'st read") and the fact that he too is not a member of the community.

The Motif of Self-subversion in Gray's Poetry

We observe in many important poems of Gray a tendency to undermine the explicit statements and didactic "messages." Linda Zionkowski has analysed what she calls "the speaker's problems with rhetorical strategies" (336) in "Ode on the Spring" and "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" in excellent detail, but has only short comments on the *Elegy*. The first ode memorably compares humans to insects and draws a lesson from the similarity which is not unlike the supposed "message" of the *Elegy*.

> To Contemplation's sober eye
> Such is the race of man:
> And they that creep, and they that fly,

Shall end where they began.
Alike the busy and the gay
But flutter through life's little day,
In fortune's varying colours dressed:
Brushed by the hand of rough Mischance,
Or chilled by age, their airy dance
They leave, in dust to rest.

Methinks I hear in accents low
The sportive kind reply:
Poor moralist! and what art thou?
A solitary fly!
Thy joys no glittering female meets,
No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
No painted plumage to display:
On hasty wings thy youth is flown;
Thy sun is set, thy spring is gone—
We frolic, while 'tis May. (31–50)

Here the "Poor moralist" first reaches a perfectly good and perfectly conventional conclusion about the ultimate insignificance of all our differences in the face of our common destiny, but is, more importantly, then reduced first to the same level as the other insects who are the objects of his sober contemplation and finally even below them, for his inability to enjoy "while 'tis May." The speaker effectively loses all authority to moralize and we are left with only two contending perspectives on reality, neither of them evidently preferable to the other (Terry 101–2). In an unusual paradox, the "message" is both said and unsaid, the teaching is there but it is clearly deprived of all its power to create change.

The Eton ode reaches another perfectly good and perfectly conventional moral conclusion about the inevitable interconnectedness of growing up and the experience of pain and disappointment. In this case, quite explicitly, the moral message remains undelivered, because in the famous final lines the speaker decides not to reveal his insight to the children.

Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies.
Thought would destroy their paradise.
No more; where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise. (96–100)

As in the *Elegy*, a personal experience is connected to a general moral insight. In both poems, however, the articulation of that insight remains deeply problematic. It almost seems here that the ethics behind the decision to speak or not to speak are ultimately more important than the moralizing content of the preceding contemplation.

I would also like to refer briefly to two other examples, where the emphasis falls not on the choice not to speak out but on the inability to do so. "Mountains, ye mourn in vain" cries the speaker of "The Bard." In vain, that is, because all the other bards have been killed and there is nobody left to voice the pain of occupied Wales. The public inability to mourn repeats Gray's much earlier private and unpublished attempt to voice his private pain in the sonnet on the death of Richard West: "I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear, / And weep the more because I weep in vain" (13–4).

A historical argument and a deep interest in history seem to lie at the heart of Gray's small poetic oeuvre and his scattered critical thinking on poetry. There is a primitivist argument concerning poetry's super-human capability of "Sailing with supreme dominion / Through the azure deep of air" ("The Progress of Poesy: A Pindaric Ode" 116–7), since this is precisely the type of elevation that is denied to the modern poet. The "lyre divine" is "heard no more." Already Dryden's "car" was "less presumptuous" in its flight than those of Shakespeare, Milton and a host of named and nameless poets from classical Southern antiquity and non-classical Northern forbears. As opposed to his close friend Thomas Warton, who inherited his project for writing the first history of English poetry, as David Fairer has shown, Gray typically established historical lines only to display signs of fragmentation and discontinuity. The famous schools of poetry that his sketchy plan establishes also create a mixed case of a view which is historical but contains no model for continuity, no explanation for how one school replaces another (Beresford 373–5). The ancient prophetic or bardic role of the poet is present in Gray's work (especially late in his career), but as far as the present is concerned, this elevated

public role is only a haunting memory from the past: difficult to let go of, but lacking its erstwhile power altogether.

Summary: The Rhetorical Structure of the *Elegy*

Gray's pervasive interest in rhetorical strategies has been discussed in the literature but their systematic investigation in the *Elegy* has gone largely unnoticed. I would argue, however, that the problem is emphatically present from beginning to end and sustained attention to it even yields a useful structural description of the poem.

1) The *Elegy* opens with descriptive stanzas (lines 1–28), evoking, as Suvir Kaul explains, conventions both of pastoral and prospect poetry, but with important differences: the poet here is emphatically distanced from the rural community (the ploughman's work is done, while the poet's is just beginning) and the speaker's vision is limited both by the falling "darkness" and by the fact that he is in no way elevated above the scenery (278–280).

2) Description is followed by three explicitly moralizing sections, which I have already discussed. Gray's dogged attention to questions of rhetoric is shown by the fact that the sections follow a logic of historical development.

2/i) Lines 29–44 are characterized by an allegorical language that evokes the Middle Ages.

2/ii) Lines 45–72 are based on invoking morally and politically meaningful historical examples. This recalls but also complicates the early modern, humanist understanding of the poetic use of historical examples. In Anthony Grafton's concise summary: "Good history narrated past events, in an accurate, prudent, and eloquent way. Readers studied it in the hope of understanding the political calculations of ancient leaders […] and of sharpening their grasp of moral precepts and their applications, as embodied in crisp, specific historical examples" (11). This tradition strongly associated poetry and history and celebrated poetry's ability to mediate between the vivid representation of a specific instance of behaviour and a general moral rule (Youngren). The problem in this connection is precisely that Gray chooses names where the specificity of moral and political significance is uncertain.

2/iii) Lines 73–96 shift to an idiom typical of Gray's own age, a sentimental code of sighs, tears and the moral problematic of sympathetic identification. This very personal passage no longer pretends to give advice or even to address a broader audience.

3) In lines 97–116 we read a "swain's" narrative about the poet, which mostly focuses on the fact that the poet seemingly had no role and no authority in any given community.

4) Finally, lines 117–128 (the epitaph) are characterized by very powerful, evocative language but an extremely fragile rhetorical situation in that the speaker is unidentified, the audience is merely hypothetical and the subject, of course, is dead.

Conclusions and Context

Before I finish, I would like to return very briefly to Empson's previously-mentioned critical remarks suggesting that Gray's ostensible interest in the politics of education is spurious. I think we have no reason to suspect Gray of disingenuousness. We have his notes concerning the educational theories recorded in Plato's *Republic*. We have his unfinished philosophical poem on "The Alliance of Education and Government." We know from the correspondence how enthusiastically he studied Montesquieu; we know of his sustained interest in Rousseau. Thanks to William Mason's *Memoirs* certain maxims by Gray on social life have survived; these also emphasize the importance of education, e.g. "Any nation that wants public spirit, neglects education, ridicules the desire of fame, and even of virtue and reason, must be ill governed." (Lonsdale, *The Poems* 91) We also have no reason, I believe, to suspect Gray of naïve sentimentality regarding the innocence of the uneducated either. After all, in a letter of 1763, he talks of "people without education" as "slaves and mercenaries" (Beresford 256).

Empson talks about readers' irritation by the "complacency in the massive calm of the poem" (109). Instead of calm, we find restless search throughout the poem. Even the turn to God at the end, which many readers have seen as the final "resolution" offered by the poem, contains signs of emotional turmoil in the paradoxical image where the dead "in trembling hope repose." Gray, it seems to me, remains restless and ill-at-ease to the very last and maybe even beyond.

I believe that part of this restlessness results from the lack of a comfortable and practicable rhetorical position that would enable the fulfilment of a conventionally Augustan poetic task, that of confidently teaching and delighting a polite, attentive and available audience. It seems to me that research into the inheritance of the

humanist tradition of exemplary history is well suited to the examination of a culture that still remembers but is no longer entirely at ease with this model.

The exemplary view of history in the humanist tradition combined an understanding of the moral-political role of literature (by depicting essential turning points in the lives of an established canon of great men, it was meant to provide guidance in the decisions readers needed to make), characteristic aesthetics (the powerful representation of a decisive moment was essential), a hermeneutics (both the writer and the reader were assumed to be able to make the interpretative moves necessary for connecting the specific moment represented, the general principle revealed by the decision and the application of the recognized principle to the specific situation of the reader). The model was usefully contained within a broader rhetoric that the educated members of an elite community would surely have. History was thus seen as an inventory of examples available for delighting, teaching and moving the audience. The model, however, only seems viable with respect to an exclusive community, which could rightfully believe that the decisions of the heroes of, for instance, Plutarch's histories, are directly relevant to their own lives (I offered a general overview of the relevant problems in Gárdos).

Gray's *Elegy*, of course, directly challenges such anti-democratic ideas and shows interest in the slow processes of the life of the rural community that is usually disregarded by the older narrative. By the modern period, a firmer understanding of cultural diversity (as a result of geographical discoveries, for instance) leads to some scepticism concerning the historical continuity (with classical antiquity) implied by the model. Looking at examples where old patterns are still discernible while the old certainties seem to crumble is, I believe, a fruitful way of examining a culture caught between two rather better-known patterns of historical self-understanding: the old humanist tradition and emerging nineteenth-century historicism.

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Disbelief and the Aesthetic

Literary, Experimental and Prophetic Language in Joseph Priestley

STEPHEN BYGRAVE

Abstract: This paper considers some implications of the hesitation or interruption inherent in disbelief by looking at some instances from the English polymath Joseph Priestley (1733–1804). It suggests that the aesthetic, the mode of response characterised by disbelief, influences judgements in other fields of inquiry despite Priestley's hostility.

If unbelief is an ideology or state of mind, disbelief is more evanescent: a failure or refusal that may be corrected by subsequent knowledge. That moment of disbelief is provisional: it has to be supplemented or corrected and it must be followed by conviction. The term *conviction* comes from the believer who is the subject of this article, the English cleric and natural philosopher Joseph Priestley (1733–1804) and the evanescence of disbelief perhaps requires that we look at disbelief in time.

Modes of perceiving time are clearly marked by class and gender. E. P. Thompson's classic essay on the management of time in burgeoning capitalism, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism" (Thompson 1967), is about the commodification of this abstract entity. An earlier mode can be found in the clog almanacs in the enlightenment gallery of the British Museum. These almanacs seem to represent a wholly different conception of time—they are pieces of carved wood with incisions marking quarter days, holidays and changes of the moon. Conversely, at the time of writing this paper, I was looking at the work of a beginning doctoral student on the ways in which not to waste time were interpreted by aristocratic women largely as an imperative about the best ways of employing time in order to satisfy the demands of both piety and utility. There are chapters on

Catherine Talbot and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and in those and other cases, the fact that these are specifically Protestant imperatives returns me to my subject.

Joseph Priestley was both a Dissenting minister and a natural philosopher who made significant experimental advances in the study of optics, electricity and gases, among other fields. His work can represent what might seem to us a juxtaposition of religious faith with the protocols of scientific inquiry since Bacon and Newton, a juxtaposition of pre-enlightenment and modernity instanced in apparently opposed views of the world and time. The former is convinced that human life can be only probationary; the latter is subject to the scrutiny of experimental method. There is, however, an evident link between the kind of eschatological time everyone knows about in Priestley and others in a millenarian kind of decade in the 1790s, and a more prosaic world in which—like the present—things had taken an unpleasantly fictional kind of turn. By that, I mean not only that what had seemed certainties might be questioned, but also that the grounds of argument, the framing categories by which those arguments were negotiated discursively might themselves be questioned. These might be articulated in temporal terms as a heady sense of regress as well as progress, for instance.

For most of that decade, Priestley was in the United States. The new republic ought to have been the fulfilment of those eschatological hopes; it ought to have been the domain of promise, but it was also what he called an asylum, as did his friends John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the second and third presidents. Priestley had remained in England for nearly three years after a traumatic event. In July 1791, on the second anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, his house, library and laboratory near Birmingham in the English midlands had been sacked and razed to the ground by a crowd which destroyed both his "apparatus of philosophical instruments" and his unpublished manuscripts.

That was the event he struggled with for the rest of his life—not just its material consequences but its meaning, because amongst other things, it certainly represented a break in the notion of inevitable progress that undergirded both faith and experiment. In this paper, I wish to consider three kinds of disbelief: firstly, that idea of 'progress' which many see as definitive of the Enlightenment; secondly, to suggest that Priestley's view of it might be compared with two contemporaries whose conceptions of time certainly seem opposed not only to him but also to each other, that is, Edmund Burke and William Blake and thirdly, to suggest that there

is a third (maybe mediating) term between faith and natural philosophy. This is the domain of Coleridge's disbelief, the aesthetic. It is the aesthetic that justifies a movement that may appear regressive rather than progressive, that wants to shape the future by revising the past.

To some, the 1790s promised to be the last days, while others preached that the kingdom of heaven "is not yet come, but much nearer than it was in [the gospel writers'] time" (*Works* 15. 532). Priestley read what he called the 'present disturbances in Europe' through the language of Revelations to show supersession of the kingdoms of the world by the kingdom of Christ (*Works* 15. 533). While figures such as Richard Brothers collapsed 'symbolic' and 'literal' levels, those—like Priestley on the rational fringe of millenarianism prophesied the downfall only of Catholic states, which was unlikely to disturb the British wartime government. Nevertheless, even in retirement thirty years later, the former United States President John Adams recalled with exasperation Priestley having averred in the 1790s that all his hopes for France were founded "on revelation and the prophecies" explaining "that the ten horns of the great beast in revelations, mean the ten crowned heads of Europe: and […] the execution of the king of France is the falling off of the first of those horns; and the nine monarchies of Europe will fall one after another in the same way." Adams comments: "Such was the enthusiasm of that great man, that reasoning machine."

This apocalyptic sense, however, is a kind of accelerated version of progress. "That the world is in a state of improvement, is very evident in the human species, which is the most distinguished part of it," Priestley wrote in 1772 (*Works* 2). "If things proceed as they have done [...] the earth will become a paradise" (*Works* 2. 7–8). For Priestley, progress is a power akin to a natural force that could be harnessed but that operated outside the established channels of communication. He recommends continuous "improvement" in civil matters as the alternative to what otherwise would not even be stasis but decline: "Were the best formed state in the world to be fixed in its present condition, I make no doubt but that, in the course of time, it would be the worst" (Priestley, *Political Writings* 109). This is a kind of t-shirt slogan for progress and its challenge to those such as Burke is evident.

The political appeal is made by analogy with progress in science, but there are other disciplines not merely trumped or cancelled by science. Those attached to progress need not hold a monopoly on future time either. There is a mystic sense to Burke's claims in his controversy with Priestley with which the latter might have

sympathized, because of their relation to time. Although Burke's insistence on continuity with an unbroken past is at odds with the claims his opponents make for the restoration of ancient liberty, both arguments rely on seeing the present as a staging-post in existence rather than its be-all and end-all.

"By a constitutional policy, working after the pattern of nature," Burke writes in his *Letter to a Noble Lord*, "we receive, we hold, we transmit our government and our privileges, in the same manner in which we enjoy and transmit our property and our lives" (120). This "philosophic analogy" ascribes vitalism to the constitution and, of course, it too implies a monopoly on "conformity to nature" (Burke 121). Like Voltaire, in reputation anyway, Priestley assumed the momentum of progress to be unstoppable. If Burke's history relies on repeated precedents from an unbroken narrative, Priestley's depends—like Blake's—on restoring an ancient usurpation.

II

The great progenitor of the notion that it might be possible to carry over calculation from the physical to the social world was Locke, for whom "Morality is capable of Demonstration, as well as Mathematicks" and "perfect Knowledge" as likely: "clear and distinct Ideas" arise from the consonance of words with ideas and words ought not to produce "Uncertainty and Obscurity" merely because they are "mixed modes" conveying "complex Ideas" (516). However, the aesthetic is a type of explanation susceptible neither to the rigours of experiment nor to the truth-claims of scripture; it is a discourse that cannot be reconciled to Priestley's system and sometimes it cannot be incorporated or even acknowledged within this system.

Priestley tells the young readers of his *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion* of 1772–4 that he aimed at "Conviction" (*Works* 2. xx), which is a rhetorical effect, or the end of a series of such effects. Priestley's movement to what he calls "conviction" is based on the reasonableness of an appeal to readers who are posited as similarly reasonable and who weigh the balance of probabilities. "Conviction," the term believing Protestants used to attest to acts of conscience, is nevertheless different from a claim of truth as it tends to be frequently revised.

For Priestley, the study of revealed religion held out the promise of a leap beyond time in to a millennial state—promise that events of the 1790s seemed to go some way to confirming—and not only that but the same kind of study may also reveal

the route to progress to be back in time rather than forwards. He shares with a contemporary such as Blake the ambition of reforming Christianity to a pristine state: for Priestley this meant before its 'corruption' by the accretion of superstitions—as he regarded them—that included original sin and the virgin birth, but chiefly of course the divinity of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. The Dedication to *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (1782) promises:

> The gross darkness of that *night* which has for many centuries obscur'd our holy religion, we may clearly see, is past; the *morning* is opening upon us; and we cannot doubt but that the light will increase, and extend itself more and more unto *the perfect day.* (*Works* 5. 4)

Enlightenment is an ultimate state rather than an event, though it depends on an apocalyptic event to which Priestley looks forward not least because the rhetorical confusion into which his own work intervenes will be rendered lucid: "the time will come when the cloud, which for the present prevents our distinguishing our friends and our foes, will be dispersed, even that day in which *the secrets of all hearts will be disclosed* to the view of all" (*Works* 5). Secular progress is guaranteed by the biblical account of apocalypse and millennium.

This optimistic contemporary view is the kind of thing to which some object, seeing belief in 'progress' as a delusion foisted on us by Enlightenment (Gray).[1] Disliking what they see as the instrumentalism of enlightenment thinking (the ruinous environmental impact of technology, for instance) its opponents have come to see belief in 'progress' as definitive of enlightenment. Priestley's is a double notion of progress that depends on a negative activity and one that recedes as well as proceeds, goes backwards as well as forwards, that is, by a method of historicizing that is forensic, even archaeological in uncovering the errors with which Christianity has been overlaid.

1 Liberalism now being the only game in town, the alternative is a mode of thinking that would bypass Kant and the Enlightenment altogether, a kind of 'agonistic liberalism', to which Gray himself had, he says, previously subscribed. That is, only if the town is in the West: in Japan, Singapore, Malaysia and maybe even China the free market exists successfully without Enlightenment civil society (Gray 127). They are not liberal democracies but they are successful, economically and otherwise. However, they have the same instrumental and exploitative relation (Gray calls it 'nihilist') to the earth and its resources as the West.

Parallel to the history of inevitable progress, it seems that there must be a history of degeneration as well, a degeneration beginning with the ancients.

For some in Priestley's circle, reason and the experimental method may be antithetical not to religious faith but to an aesthetic sense with which it could sometimes be confused. Thomas Cooper opined in 1812 that the literary in particular may be "licentious" and appeal in an individual's "boyish years" and therefore be symptomatic of a society stuck in its own infancy: "When experience has taught us wisdom, we begin to estimate utility as the criterion for desert, and look back with some regret at the time misemployed in mere amusement" (Kramnick 9). Priestley was distrustful of fiction from childhood; his brother remembered the young Joseph having torn from his hands the book of chivalric romance he was reading and thrown it away and Joseph Priestley was pretty clearly the descendant of the kind of Protestants who beheaded statues of the virgin, broke stained glass and whitewashed wall paintings.

All the same, Priestley is never as outspoken as Cooper in demeaning the aesthetic, towards which he is suspicious rather than antagonistic. Priestley wrote an interesting if derivative treatise on aesthetics, but it is rather the way aesthetics leak in to the experiments, the theological work or the polemics that is significant. It is the return of the repressed or the revenge of *id* on *superego*. In that sense, disbelief is like the moment of the sublime—or at least it would be a moment where epistemological issues are suspended in favour of aesthetic issues. In Priestley's *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1778), the aesthetic features as a discourse (or perhaps as a set of effects) that even where it is explicable, it could not be assimilated.

The aesthetic really only comprises the last and longest part of the *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, "Of Style" in which style is defined as the ornament or exterior of that to which the earlier two parts have given body. Priestley might seem an unlikely theorist of aesthetics, claiming elsewhere that his own writing is always only instrumental: it is never play, display, nor anything other than a medium for arriving at conviction or agreement. This puritanical and utilitarian approach to the aesthetic is evident in his rhetoric. Fine writing can be a cloak for a dangerous, even atheist suspension of certain knowledge, as is also evident elsewhere when he criticises Hume "as a mere writer or declaimer" (*Works* 4. 368) to whose seductive style the reader needs to remain alert because it might lead them to overlook logical flaws in the analytic method: Hume therefore "ought […] to be read with very great caution" (*Works* 24. 301). Priestley says sternly that the goals of the orator are

to inform and to influence action: "let him only attempt to please or affect, when it is subservient to that design" (*Works* 23. 307); and he speaks of reading "history, romance, familiar essays and poetry" rather than harder study as if he were condemning computer games or masturbation—"we give over with disgust, and a secret dissatisfaction with ourselves" (*Works* 23. 364). What is needed, Priestley insists, is conviction rather than speculation.

The lectures are principally concerned with method (with the ordering of thoughts and materials) and make an absolute distinction between narrative and argument. Conviction is the intellectual reflex of a process that originates in the body: "all our *intellectual pleasures* [are] derived originally from *sensible impressions*, variously mixed, combined, and transferred from one object to another, by that principle" (*Works* 23. 422). The theory of association from Hartley (but originating in Locke) underlies his work in all the disciplines to which he contributed and the lectures, too, are based on them. Rhetoric for Priestley is a province of the understanding of "human nature" as a whole. In the case of aesthetics, a method of association makes him suspicious of anything apparently unmotivated or novel: not only that the ode, for example, may offend against unity or regularity (*Works* 23. 306) but that "the mind is greatly disgusted with unusual, and consequently unexpected, and, to us, unnatural connexions of things" (*Works* 23. 281). In that sense the aesthetic shares a rational basis with the experiments and with the biblical interpretation.

Of course Priestley is not alone in his attempt to generalize—or even to essentialize—what may by its nature resist generalization, but if his aesthetics are conventional in that sense there are also ways in which the aesthetic may serve to destabilize the "convictions" of other discourses. Priestley's treatment of the sublime in Lecture XX of the *Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* provides him with a means of conjoining the aesthetic with experiment, and with biblical interpretation: while "instances of the true sublime abound no where more than in the *Scriptures,*" he says, there is also a sublime of science and it is also the case that "the sciences of natural philosophy and astronomy exhibit the noblest fields of the sublime that the mind of man was ever introduced to" (*Works* 23. 373, 377), so the potential for electricity, for example, "is a prospect really boundless, and sublime" (*Electricity* ii).[2]

2 Some of the most suggestive accounts of the sublime—by Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla in their *Reader*, or more recently by Sharon Ruston or Isobel Armstrong are concerned respectively with the history of the concept in aesthetics, in its interaction with the practice of poetry or with the claim that co-religionists might have found in Priestley an aesthetic adapted to the

Priestley was less an opponent of sublimity than he was wont to claim for polemical purposes, averring that biblical texts can "produce feelings similar to those which we receive from the view of grand and elevated objects" (*works* 23). Theological speculation is not only an improving but a pleasurable pursuit, requiring a change of perspective from which to contemplate sublimity:

> there is a peculiar pleasure attending the speculations; and from the relation they bear to the greatest of all objects, they have a dignity and sublimity in them, and eminently contribute to inspire a *serenity* and *elevation of mind*, which both improves and enlarges it, and thereby enables us to look down upon the trifling but tormenting pursuits of a bustling world. (Priestley, *A Free Discussion*)

This is not a defence of the aesthetic as much as an attempt to find a vocabulary of equivalent terms for the religious sublime. "The object and end of all speculation is practice," he writes (Priestley, *A Free Discussion* viii), and the utilitarian criterion applies to theology, which will lead to practice where art cannot. Priestley found, like Robert Lowth, that sacred poetry was sacred but that it was also poetry, however the move from the subject being sublime to a representation being sublime is a step too far. He wanted to resist a secular sublime that was merely an aesthetic effect because it was not susceptible to reason.

Priestley tries to account for the sublime effect in the associationist terms that derive from Hartley. The sublime is a kind of foundational phenomenon: the sublime is immanent, or may pre-exist that which triggers it. Association is cognate not only with Priestley's belief in "a gradual rise and improvement in things" but also with the sublime effect as the climax of a series of terms (*Works* 23. 455–6).

Those ideas can derive from the spectacle of virtues just as much as the spectacle of large natural objects—or, for the mathematician, of numbers—but, significantly, it is the aesthetic that for Priestley enables a solution to communicative failure. He claims that there are similar terms for sensations analogous to those provoked by natural objects across foreign languages—so 'a great man' can be physically small—implying the universality of the effect (*Works* 23. 372).

distinct literary needs of religious dissent. Only Kingston, whose Sussex doctoral dissertation is the best account I know of the place of the aesthetic in Priestley and for whom Priestley's aesthetics are a central problem, tries to locate them within the broader context of his own writings.

It remains, however, an effect that ought to be susceptible to rational explication from start to finish. Priestley resists the obfuscatory potential of sublime discourse, Burke's claim that *obscurity* may be a source of the effect. Rather, for Priestley the sublime is an effect dependent upon an Addisonian insight that "we contemplate ideas" derived from sight and hearing "as if we were wholly abstracted from the body" (*Works* 23. 351). It is therefore dependent upon comparison, on a "secret retrospect to preceding ideas and states of mind" (Priestley, *Works* 23. 369). The habit or custom that even for the generation of Locke may hinder lucid understanding is here the source of a comparative understanding, even a kind of dialectical one.

Isobel Armstrong has recently written illuminatingly on the way a "Unitarian Poetics" in the poems and speculative writings of Joanna Baillie and Anna Barbauld might also have found a warrant in Priestley's aesthetics, which she describes as "characterized by a paradoxical kind of sacramental materialism with an empirical base" (Armstrong 64). For Armstrong, Priestley provides not only a critique of the Burkean sublime but an alternative to it that might perhaps mediate the evident masculine bias of the Burkean account and which is implicitly progressive:

> Priestley demystifies the sublime; in place of Burke's terror and power Priestley offers a range of concepts that all depend on an enlarging hermeneutic to comprehend them—"Fortitude, magnanimity, generosity and universal benevolence." He is anti-gothic. (Armstrong 67)

For Armstrong, the "gothic" is an attachment to a past which carries weight because of its survival in to the present rather than because it can be rationally defended.

Despite the "disgust" with which we are likely to respond to what is unusual, there is in the human mind a "constant appetite […] for novelty," a novelty upon which the mind exercises itself:

> As the mind conforms itself to the ideas which engage its attention, and it hath no other method of judging of itself but from its situation, the perception of a new train of ideas is like its entering upon a new world, and enjoying a new being, and a new mode of existence. (Priestley, *Works* 23. 365–6)

Priestley had described the effect of reading Hartley to be also like "entering upon a new world" (*Works* 3. 10).[3] Objects take on qualities from those they do not possess themselves through association. It is not that Priestley's account of the sublime is incoherent nor that it is out of step with his "system" as a whole, but rather that the associationist method that reaches an apotheosis here is as it were portable. Priestley's is a "transferred sublimity" in which the transfer does not take place between objects but from the aesthetic to the world of actions; sublimity is not to be found in the vocabulary but in the means of argument which produce the sublime effect.

Priestley, a couple of generations older than the generation of Southey and Coleridge—who briefly toyed with establishing a utopian community around him on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania—is a Dissenter but only reluctantly a Romantic. His time is not theirs but he was never disillusioned, as they were, of the faith in improvement (partly because secular improvement had a kind of divine guarantee attached). If disbelief is an interim stage to be distrusted as the scepticism of Hume was to be distrusted, its flourishing as belief depends on convictions that always have to be defended rhetorically.

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3 See Kingston 48.

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The "Strange Self-power in the Imagination"

Epilepsy, Fancy and Disbelief in the Writings of Coleridge, Erasmus Darwin and Thomas Beddoes

KIMBERLEY PAGE-JONES

Abstract: This paper will focus on Coleridge's writing of epileptic signs in the light of contemporary debates on the physiology and psychology of the brain. By examining the medical narratives of epilepsy, widely debated at a time where both evangelical movements and consumer behaviors were threatening the nerves and brains of English society, I intend to explore the cultural components and meanings attached to epileptic fits in order to understand Coleridge's dreadful fear of epilepsy and its relation to fanciful imagination. I will argue that his fear of epileptic seizures may have laid the ground for his theory of fancy: body and brain could create against the will of the poet thus acting as moral alibis for his more radical poems.[1]

In a letter to Daniel Stuart written in May 1816, Coleridge sketched his famous theory of the "willing suspension of disbelief" that he would later develop in *Biographia Literaria.* Images and thoughts, he wrote, "possess a power in, and of themselves, independent of that act of the Judgment or Understanding, by which we affirm or deny the existence of a reality correspondent to them" (Griggs 4: 641). Drawing from the experience of dreaming, he explained that at times, we could not believe or disbelieve images because the "comparing power" had been suspended, namely the ability to compare dream images to other external stimuli (Griggs 4: 641).

As it has been widely acknowledged, Coleridge drew this theory from his own experience of being "acted on by stories" (Griggs 4: 641). The "willing suspension

1 A revised version of this essay will be published in the special issue of *Essays on Romanticism* dedicated to Romantic-era literature, culture & science.

of disbelief" principle was first and foremost a recognition of his own "feebleness" of nature that he generalized to man's nature and then theorized to distinguish illusion from delusion; as such, he aptly managed to invent "the true theory of stage illusion." His own struggle with visions, reveries, trance-like experiences, nightmares born from bodily affections that he painstakingly detailed in his letters and notebook entries paved the way for "a theory which […] w[a]s most important as the ground and fundamental principle of all philosophic and of all common-sense criticisms concerning the drama and the theatre" (Griggs 4: 641).

To be "acted on" by images, feelings and thoughts weaved by a fanciful process recalls his 1803 poem "Pains of Sleep," written to his friend Robert Southey while touring Scotland on foot. This narrative of anxiety and dispossession staging Coleridge the dreamer pursued and tortured by a "fiendish crowd / Of shapes and thoughts" has become emblematic of his dreadful nights; sleep being the moment when the power of volition is suspended and thus when man can fall prey to those feelings and images which Coleridge ardently believed did not belong to the dreamer (Griggs 1: 982). His concern with dream visions, feelings and their moral meaning began in the early 1790s as his body started showing signs of disorder; his diseased body is connected to an amazingly rich range of concerns, from idealism to materialism, from poetry to sensibility. He developed, scattered among his notebooks, letters and essays, a theory of feeling, a theory of dream, a theory of the mind, which stem partly from this necessity to doubt those dream visions and to interrogate the pathology of the mind: "He never truly believed, who was not made first sensible and convinced of unbelief" (Beer 107). Belief was to be weighed and evaluated by the scientific mind: "Men that know nothing in sciences, have no doubts" (Beer 107).

Coleridge tested as much his bodily affections as his thoughts with the scientific breakthroughs of his time. A close friend of Humphry Davy, Thomas Beddoes, Tom Wedgwood as well as other physicians and scientists, he was at the very forefront of the latest discoveries, whether scientific or physiological, and well versed in the medical writings of that time that could help un-riddle the mysterious connections between mind and body. Having embraced enthusiastically Hartley's theory of neural vibrations in his early years as poet, Coleridge had little doubt about the "corporeality of the thought" (Griggs 1: 137). Yet, as his bodily struggle against disease and opium became more intense, Coleridge recoiled from this idea of a mind located in the brain and of a fluid, whether galvanic, electric, animal or ethereal,

that could connect the various powers of the mind. In 1817, as he published *Stateman's Manual, Sibylline Leaves* and *Biographia,* his belief would lie in the presence of a divine "unseen Agency" (Shedd 359); the bone, the brain, the flesh and blood were simply the visible work of this divine presence, "the translucence of the invisible energy" (Shedd 359). The thought, no longer corporeal, was to grasp, through the faculty of imagination, the intuition of this Agency. Thinking about the mind for Coleridge was a molten process that would never be cooled into dogma or doctrine. Readings and debates influenced the shaping of his theory but probably more than anything else, the working of his own body steered his understanding of the mind.

In December 1804, Coleridge wrote in his notebook:

> I do not understand the first sentence of the above—I wrote them after that convulsed or suffocated by a collection of wind in my stomach & alternately tortured by its colic pangs in my bowels, I in despair drank three glasses running of whisky & water [….] how strange that with so shaken a nervous System I never had the Head ache!—I verily am a stout-headed, weak-bowelled, and O! most pitiably weak-*hearted* Animal![2] (*The Notebooks* 1: 2368)

Coleridge's entangled note reflects contemporary debates on the connections between bodily affections ("colic pangs") and nervous disorders ("Head ache"). This wrangling question whether bodily disease could affect the working of the mind is certainly one that steered Coleridge away from the "mind-in-the-brain" precept. Brain disorders, such as mania, melancholy, stupor, giddiness were also discussed in relation to the changing society, to the emergence of a middling-class indulging, according to some physicians, in the accumulation of goods and comforts. As Roy Porter writes in *Doctor of Society: Tom Beddoes and the Sick Trade in Late-Enlightenment England*:

> This "coming-out" of the hypochondriac and hysteric marks an important cultural juncture, the pathologization of Enlightenment individualism. Polite society encouraged a certain narcissism.

2 The notebook entries will be referred to as *The Notebooks*, the number of the volume and the entry reference.

> Within the permitted degrees of conventional polish, the literati were expected to dazzle, be different, even a touch prima donna-ish.

Madness, delirium, masturbation, nymphomania and other symptoms were reconfigured as "nervous disorders" and "mental treatment" could cure patients from those disorders. Thomas Beddoes, among others, debated this issue in his essay *Hygëia,* encouraging the valetudinarian, the weak and sick body, to discipline mind and body and make them "terror-proof" as:

> […] in this jarring and boisterous world, the poor sensitive human plant will be utterly at a loss to find an asylum. Wherever he retires, the occasional causes of his paroxysms, be they epileptic, hysterical, *cephalalgic*, or anomalous, will pursue and hunt him out. (Beddoes 201)

Tremors and convulsions were the most distinctive signs of the pernicious effects of this "polished society," suffering from an excess of sensibility and prone to dread. Coleridge himself recorded in a notebook entry his propensity to feel terror and act faultily under its spell:

> It is a most instructive part of my Life[,] the fact, that I have been always preyed on by some Dread, and perhaps all my faulty actions have been the consequence of some Dread or other on my mind / from fear of Pain, or Shame, not from Prospect of Pleasure. (*The Notebooks* 2: 2398)

Dread from the alienation of friends, fear of sex, deficiency of bodily feeling, unrequited love are listed alongside "mental agitation," "almost epileptic night-horrors" and "the Dread of these bad most shocking Dreams." Coleridge's poetic and personal writings reflect a dreadful fascination for these anomalies of the mind and for what imaginative writing could make out of them.

This paper will focus more specifically on Coleridge's writing of epileptic signs in the light of contemporary debates on the physiology and psychology of the brain. By examining the medical and cultural narratives of epilepsy, widely debated at a time where both evangelical movements and consumer behaviors were threatening the

nerves and brains of English society, I intend to explore the cultural components and meanings attached to epileptic fits in order to understand Coleridge's own pathography writing in 1802 and 1803. I will show how his own understanding of epilepsy has influenced his theory of a poetic mind creating involuntarily stories and fictions that could be disbelieved and thus disavowed.

Epilepsy, reverie and the "catenation of ideas"

Coleridge was probably one of the most eloquent sufferers of his time; and his private and epistolary writings have been copiously used in medical and neural studies to gain insight into the symptoms and diagnosis of nervous disorders (see Michael Trimble, Alice Flaherty for instance), but also on their cultural components: namely, what did it mean to have epilepsy at that time? Was it purely psycho-physiological or was the brain disorder related to class? To gender? To religiosity? Phenomena of "nervous disorders" were rather a *terra incognita* when Coleridge started connecting his bodily diseases, tooth-aches, scrofula, and rheumatic pains with frightful dreams, hypochondria, giddiness, head-aches and other symptoms. As it has been well-documented, he elaborated, while still concerned with poetry writing, a theory of poetic creation that stemmed from these Eye-spectra or "facts of minds□:

> [...] but overpowered with the [? emotion] Phaenomena I arose, lit my Candle, & wrote—of figures, even with open eyes / of squares, & & of various colours, & I know not what / How in a few minutes I forgot such an Assemblage of distinct Impressions, ebullitions & piles of golden colour & thence to think of the Nature of Memory. So intense / & yet in one Minute forgotten! the same is in Dreams / *Think of this* / if, *perchance,* thou livest—ALAS! (*The Notebooks* 1: 1750)

It is often assumed that Coleridge wrote this type of hallucinatory entries when intoxicated, whether with opium or other stimulants. In *Coleridge and the Doctors,* Neil Vickers has traced in Coleridge's 1796 to 1804 letters and notebooks his interest in nervous symptoms and, from 1802, the signs of his belief of having suffered from epileptic auras. Could this entry then be connected to some kind of nervous seizure or stupor, both being epileptic auras, Coleridge had, or at least believed he had?

As Neil Vickers underlines, it is extremely challenging to explore Coleridge's writings on brain disorders as he rarely mentions his sources. Yet, from Coleridge's close connection with the Bristolian physicians and from the allusions and lexicon used in his letters and notebooks to describe his ailments, we can infer the influence of two major works on nervous disorders: Erasmus Darwin's *Zoonomia* from 1794 and volume 3 of Thomas Beddoes's *Hygëia*.

Coleridge's profuse writing on body-mind connections and dysfunctions came at a time when the publication of their work was much discussed and debated. Darwin, as a nosologist, classified diseases according to physiological criteria and connected epilepsy and hysteria to a deficiency in the power of volition. According to Darwin, four faculties belonged to the "spirit of animation": irritation, sensation, volition and association. The ideas (the "sensual motions") were usually excited by irritation (bodily reactions or external stimuli) but could occasionally be produced by sensations (hunger, pain, pleasure, thirst, etc.), volition (desire or aversion) or association (the involuntary calling up to the memory of ideas or images).

For Erasmus Darwin, what distinguished human creatures from mere brute creation was the power of volition; language, prayer, tools were products of the power of volition and could bring either human bliss or human misery. This logical sequence was disrupted during sleep due to the absence of volition and of external stimuli. In sleep, he argued, we dream under the influence of sensations which still depend upon bodily affections (posture of the body, pain in a muscle, etc.); images (ideas of the imagination) then arise with "terrible vivacity" since, with the suspension of the power of volition, the dreamer loses the capacity to compare ("comparing power") those ideas of imagination with acquired knowledge or external objects (Darwin 54).

In Darwin's nosology, sleep is as much a disease as reverie, vertigo, drunkenness or epilepsy and in those states, because the power is not equally distributed between the four faculties, association and sensation thus act with "greater vigour": man becomes then a "much less perfect animal" (Darwin 285). If the flow of ideas during sleep becomes too important, it excites inflammation; either volition is exerted violently in the form of an epileptic fit to relieve the pain; if not, delirium or nightmares seize the dreamer.

Epilepsy was located at the crossroads of sleep and reverie in Darwin's theory and he envisaged it as a relieving discharge, something necessary to liberate the mind and body of the sufferer or the dreamer. Darwin illustrates his point on

epilepsy using different cases that share similarities. All of them are women, suffering similar epileptic and post-epileptic symptoms: convulsion of limbs, hiccoughs, "efforts to vomit," followed by "convulsions of ideas" that Darwin describes as "talkative delirium" or "drunken delirium" and usually triggered by Darwin's remedy: large doses of opium (Darwin 32). Darwin, unlike Thomas Beddoes, believed that opium, rubbed on the body and ingested, could cure, or at least reduce those convulsions and the trance-like state that followed—"the convulsion of ideas"—was preferable to the convulsions of the body. Opium-induced reverie following an epileptic paroxysm was thus fashioned by Erasmus Darwin as an escape-valve for the mind. Opium reverie did not relinquish volition and even carried mysterious powers: one lady is described as "repeating whole pages from the English poets" or singing "music with accuracy" with no external stimuli being able to disunite her ideas (Darwin 320). Similarly, a somnambulist could write "from line to line regularly," even "correcting some errors" without being distracted (324). Darwin thus entertained the idea that the post-convulsive state, the "reverie," produced a "catenation"—a blending of ideas and motions—guided by the voluntary power (13); yet upon awaking, this network of ideas and motions would be lost and impossible to recollect. Darwin described those networks of swarming ideas and connected clusters of images, wrought by memory and experience, in *The Temple of Nature:*

> Last, in thick swarms Associations spring,
> Thoughts join to thoughts, to motions motions cling;
> Whence in long trains of catenation flow
> Imagined joy, and voluntary woe. (Darwin 27)

The "Assemblage of distinct Impressions, ebullitions & piles of golden colour" quoted above from a notebook fragment hints at this idea of an involuntary self-organizing composition, poetic but not erratic, induced by opium reveries or state of stupor. The creative potentiality of a diseased mind, when volition is suspended, or external stimuli blocked, is suggested more than once by Coleridge in his notebooks and other writings:

> Strange Self-power in the Imagination, when painful sensations have made it their Interpreter, or returning Gladsomeness from

> convalescence, gastric and visceral, have made its chilled and evanished Figures & Landscape bud, blossom, & live in scarlet, and green, & snowy white. (*The Notebooks* 3: 3547)

"From the analogy of Dreams during an excited state of Nerves, which I have myself experienced, and the wonderful intricacy, complexity, and yet clarity of the visual Objects" (Whalley 403).

The notebook image of the flight of starlings projected on the natural world this Darwinian swarm of ideas, impressions and thoughts always in motion. Yet the image is an ambiguous one, fluid yet fragmented, glimmering yet blackening and suggests Coleridge's shifty position regarding the creative role of a mind bereft of volition:

> Starlings in vast flights drove along like smoke, mist, or anything misty (without) volition—now a circular area inclined (in an) arc—now a globe—(now from a complete orb into an) ellipse & oblong—(now) a balloon with the (car suspend)ed, now a concaved (sem)icircle& (still) it expands & condenses, some (moments) glimmering & shivering, dim & shadowy, now thickening, deepening, blackening! (*The Notebooks* 1: 582)

"BREEZES OF TERROR BLOWING FROM THE STOMACH": EPILEPTIC AURAS IN BEDDOES'S *HYGËIA* AND COLERIDGE'S *NOTEBOOKS*

As underlined in his 1816 letter quoted above, the absence of volition was very much on Coleridge's mind when he shaped and reshaped his theories of poetic creation and reception. But from 1803, he questioned with greater anxiety in his letters and notebooks this idealized "Eolian Harp" connection between reverie and poetry. The medical works of the Brunonian school, which influenced his friend the physiologist Thomas Beddoes, provide a fruitful lens through which to read and evaluate Coleridge's pathography writing. Thomas Beddoes had translated and published the work of John Brown, *The Elements of Medicine,* in 1795. Unlike the nosologist approach of Darwin and Cullen, John Brown considerably simplified the approach to health and disease, connecting them to a vital force stored in the nerves and muscles, namely excitability:

> To every animated being is allotted a certain portion only of the quality or principle, on which the phenomena of life depend. This principle is denominated EXCITABILITY. (Brown 127)

This life force could be disrupted by external stimuli (air, food, wine, opium, heat) or internal stimuli (bodily functions, muscular activities, thinking processes, feelings, passion). All diseases affecting both mind and brain could be explained by this disturbed balance between exciting powers and excitability. Epilepsy belonged to asthenia, its pre-convulsive symptoms being "heaviness of intellect, dullness in the exercise of the senses" followed by "various convulsions of the body" terminating with "foaming at the mouth" (Brown 274). The "debilitating noxious agents" responsible for epileptic fits were both external and internal and extremely varied: "excess in venery, such passions as fear, terror, assiduous and intense thinking in persons of great genius" (274). Although Beddoes would distance himself from this over-simplistic approach to health and disease, the notions of "exciting powers" and of sympathy between the body and the mind were important components of his moral and medical approach to epilepsy: "Do not states of distant part, by sympathy, produce such changes in the brain, as to call up ideas vivid enough for madness?" (Beddoes 72).

As suggested by a letter to Southey, Coleridge had read the third volume of Beddoes's *Hygëia* published in 1803: "I admire Dr Beddoes's part of the Pamphlet very much. It is far superior to the Hygeia 1 in Style, & Reasoning. And yet with the exception of the Essay on Mania the Hygeia is a valuable & useful work" (Griggs 936). As Beddoes's book, tagged "Essays, moral and medical on the causes affecting the personal state of our middling and affluent classes," was composed of only three essays, one on epilepsy, the second on mania, and the third on contagious disorders, we may safely conjecture that he had read the first one on epilepsy. Beddoes's approach, as the title suggests, was radically different from Darwin's *Zoonomia*. He did not discard the physiological approach, influenced by the radical brain science, but his purpose lay elsewhere.

Nervous disorders, as a reviewer suggested in 1804, were becoming increasingly fashionable yet "little did they know of the origin and progress of this extensive tribe of fashionable complaints" (Aikin 741). *Hygëia* was thus concerned as much with epileptic symptoms as with medical and societal causes since, according to Beddoes,

epilepsy affected "three out of ten in every genteel circle" (Beddoes 78). The "exciting powers" that destabilized the body were not restricted to bodily organs, food or even liquor; mental depression, as well as anxiety, disappointment in life, a reliance on commodity goods, an excess of comfort, or too much fictional reading, could all predispose a body, especially a female one, to epileptic fits. Beddoes was quick to conclude that the Englishmen and women were inevitably prone to suffer from epilepsy as "in no country perhaps has the pursuit of gold occasioned so much anxiety" (Beddoes 30).

As Beddoes's aim was clearly to cure the British population of this commodity culture disease, the picture he draws of convulsions and seizures is far less fascinating and alluring than Darwin's opium reverie state. Beddoes's conclusions on pre- and postictal symptoms were mostly drawn from the journal of illness of a young man who scrutinized and partly recorded for 7 years 65 epileptic fits and over 7,000 nervous seizures. The prefiguring signs of epilepsy, according to Beddoes, were numerous: "Flashes of light before the eyes," "headache of various degrees," "dizziness," "excessive sensibility," "suspension of the intellectual powers" were aboding symptoms "felt by persons who afterwards become subject to epilepsy" (Beddoes 48). Coleridge's 1803 letters scrutinize, as Beddoes's patient's journal does, the bodily symptoms of nervous seizures:

> […] distortion of Body from agony, profuse & streaming Sweats, & fainting—at other times, looseness with griping—frightful Dreams with screaming—breezes of Terror blowing from the Stomach up thro' the Brain / always when I am awakened, I find myself stifled with wind / & the wind the manifest cause of the Dream / frequent paralytic Feelings—sometimes approaches to Convulsion fit—three times I have wakened out of these frightful Dreams, & found my legs so locked into each other as to have left a bruise—/ Sometimes I am a little giddy; but very seldom have the Headache/ (Griggs 3: 975)

The "aura," the Greek word for "wind" or "breeze" first mentioned by the Greek physician Galen, referred to the physical sensation experienced by epileptics just before a seizure: a cool breeze running from the abdomen up to the brain. This

symptom pointed at the fact that epilepsy could originate from the vital organs ("epilepsy by sympathy" to use Galen's expression). In a notebook entry written a few months later, Coleridge restated this idea of something rushing from his stomach to the brain and giving birth to an excess of images:

> Images in sickly profusion by & in which I talk in certain diseased States of my Stomach / Great & innocent minds *devalesce*, as Plants & Trees, into beautiful Diseases / Genius itself, many of the most brilliant sorts of English Beauty, & even extraordinary Dispositions to Virtue, Restlessness in good—are they not themselves, as I have often said, but beautiful Diseases—species of the Genera, Hypochondriasis, Scrofula, & Consumption! This was at first a Joke; but is now no longer so / for under the 3 Genera Hypochond., Scrofula,& Consumption (under Hypochondriasis implying certain sorts of Epileptic winds & breezes, gusts from the bowels of the Volcano upward to the Crater of the Brain, rushings & brain-horrors, seeming for their immediate proximate Cause to have the pressure of Gasses on the Stomach, acting possibly by their specified noxious chemical […] all those Diseases which proceed from or produce, in one word, which *imply* an overbalance of the vital Feelings to the Organic Perceptions, of those Parts which assimilate or transform the external into the personal, or combine them thus assimilated (stomach, lungs, Liver, Bowels, & many others, no doubt, the use of which is not yet known) over the Eyes, Ears, Olfactories, Gustatories, & the organ of the Skin. (*The Notebooks* 1: 1822)

Coleridge elaborates from his dysfunctional body a theory of poetic creation where images, "manufactured" from the diseased Vital organs, are rushed to the Brain through the epileptic breeze, the latter creating both the Dream, or "brain-horrors," and the paralytic feeling. Those "images in sickly profusion" originate from this transubstantiating something that circulates in the body, from Gout or epilepsy—the two being interconnected in the Brunonian approach to disease—independently from the mind. Because they are rushed to the brain, the mind cannot choose but hear those strange tales of the "*devalescent*" mind.

Epileptic thoughts and fanciful creation

The poem "Pains of Sleep" was scribbled in a letter to Southey in a hysterical fit: "I do not know how I came to scribble down these verses to you—my heart was aching, my head all confused" (Griggs 2: 983). In a letter written three days later, Coleridge would ascribe those lines to a "wretched Stomach" affected by Southey's pain: "I wrote mechanically in the wake of the first vivid Idea." The profusion of verses and images and the compulsion to write them would today be called hypergraphia; Coleridge hints at this symptom in several notebook entries. Addressing Sara Hutchinson, he confides in his notebook:

> Misery conjures up other Forms, & binds them into Tales & Events—activity is always Pleasure—the Tale grows pleasanter—& at length you come to me / you are by my bed side, in some lonely Inn, where I lie deserted—there you have found me—there you are weeping over me! (*The Notebooks* 1: 1601)

In a letter addressed to Sara in 1802, Coleridge would refer to this pleasure activity he named "fantastic pleasure" as resulting from the suspension of volition; connecting it to the poetic flight of starlings:

> When the Reason and the Will are away, what remain to us but darkness and dimness and a bewildering shame, and pain that is utterly lord over us, or fantastic pleasure, that draws the soul along swimming through the air in many shapes, even as a flight of starlings in a wind. (Griggs 2: 841)

The diseased vital Organs and the epileptic breezes allowed him to construct a theory of poetic creation wherein the poet could disconnect from its intellectual self and from reality those internal fanciful artefacts. The body becomes an "artificial Brooding-machine" creating "wild poem(s) on strange things" (*The Notebooks* 2: 2334); the author does not have to believe them as they do not belong to his conscious and wilful self.

In 1803, Coleridge, while still embracing Darwin's embodied thought theory, sketches a far darker picture of those wild enticements of the diseased body and mind and the resulting rush of thoughts and images:

> Renew the state of affection or bodily Feeling, same or similar—sometimes similar / and instantly the trains of forgotten Thought rise from their living catacombs! (*The Notebooks* 1: 1575)

The journal of Beddoes's epileptic patients similarly describes the symptoms of epileptic auras as "an excessive distension of all the veins" followed by an "involuntary whirl of ideas" (Beddoes 86). The "swarm of confused intruding images" is described in the very specific case of Dr Spalding of Berlin who suffered from a confusion of ideas "forced on him" and blocking speech and writing faculties:

> For a good half hour, there was a tumult in part of his ideas. He could only recognize them for such as forced themselves on him without his participation. He endeavoured to dispel them to make room for better, which he was conscious of "in the bottom of his thinking faculty." He threw his attention, as far as the swarm of confused intruding images would permit, on his religious principles, and said to himself distinctly that *if by a kind of death, he was extricated from the tumult in his brain, which he felt as foreign and exterior to himself, he should exist and think on in the happiest quiet order.* (Beddoes 61)

Those nervous seizures prefiguring the epileptic paroxysm strangely echo Coleridge's "crowding of thoughts" forced on his mind:

> I had only slumbered. I was in a dream at the moment, and my fancy continued too busy after waking. All at once I felt, while lying in bed, that suspicious crusade of a number of ideas against one another, which has heretofore preceded the most violent attacks. […] a seizure immediately preceded by ideas of a kind that had not occupied him before. They hurried, as it were with violence, across the mind. (Beddoes 49, 48)

The "crusade" of ideas described by Beddoes has little in common with Darwin's "long trains of catenation" releasing a body from an excess of vital feeling. Images and ideas are here forced violently onto the passive mind, broken, unconnected and those whirls of ideas and eddies of thoughts could be so overwhelming as to produce fainting: "What wonder that while idea reels against idea, we should so often experience an analogous unsteadiness of footing" (Beddoes 164)? Coleridge would make visible the processes of a suffering mind by projecting them onto the landscape. The swarm of unconnected and involuntary ideas, the ensuing feeling of giddiness and thus the threat to moral Virtue are thus translated in his poetic notebook images:

> As he who passes over a bridge of slippery uneven Stones placed at unequal distances, at the foot of an enormous waterfall, is lost, if he suffer his Soul to be whirled away by its diffused every where nowhereness of Sound / but must condense his Life to the one anxiety of not Slipping, so will Virtue in certain Whirlwinds of Temptations. […] The Sails flapped unquietly, as if restless for the Breeze, with convulsive Snatches for air, like dying Fish—May 8th (*The Notebooks* 1: 1706, 2: 2084)

Beddoes's conjectures might even have led Coleridge to speculate on the origin of moral Evil:

> […] for Reason and Reality can stop and stand still, new influxes from without counteracting the Impulses from within, and *poising* the Thought. But Fancy and Sleep s*tream on*; and (instead of outward Forms and Sounds, the Sanctifiers, the Strenghteners! they connect with them motions of the blood and nerves, and images forced into the mind by the feelings that arise out of the position & state of the Body and its different members. […] All the above-going throw lights on my mind with regard to the origin of Evil. (*The Notebooks* 2: 2543)

For Beddoes, indulging in those waking dreams and fancies was as dangerous for the body as for virtue. Nervous disorders, he argued, are "shared among the luxurious and indolent, whose artificial modes are for ever destroying the balance

of action in the system, and reducing one part to death-like torpor, while in some other, as if to make amends, they excite a mischievous activity, or kindle a spurious sort of inflammation" (Beddoes 165). Asthenia or sthenia preyed on the body that would take solace from those "exciting powers" vehemently condemned by Beddoes and other physicians: popular entertainments, "places of glitter" or novels that "kindled the tender Passion" were to be shunned so that the mind could regain stronger associations of ideas. Geometrical studies, botany, mineralogy, the contemplation of countryside scenes could discipline the mind and retransform it from a visual and passive organ to an active one.

Interestingly, Beddoes also condemns poetry composition and reading as "exciting powers" that could have a morbid effect on the body. A patient is thus described: "On the approach of the disorder and at the period of the first fits, the perusal of poetry and poetical attempts, which were resorted to by way of salutary dissipation, had the reverse effect, for they excited a dangerous agitation of the nerves" (Beddoes 78). Coleridge may have hinted at this fact when he wrote in his notebook: "I wish I dared use the Brunonian Phrase—& define Poetry—the Art of representing Objects in relation to the excitability of the human mind" (*The Notebooks* 3: 3827). Fanciful poetic creation and poetry at large carried dubious undertones in Beddoes's essays which might partly account for Coleridge's disbelief in poetry as a sanctifier of the mind.

If Coleridge shied away from those radical materialist brain theories in search of this indivisible, divine and unseen Agency, he did not relinquish this theory of involuntary creation or authorship to which he gave the name of "fancy." Whether Coleridge really believed in this "disbelieving process" is a matter of conjecture but his rebuff of fancy holds as much to his dysfunctioning body as to the cultural concepts attached to nervous disorders and epileptic auras during the revolutionary decade.

In *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind,* Alan Richardson has discussed the implications of radical brain theory in the publication of "Kubla Khan" and its famous preface some 20 years after its composition. As he underlines, we are looking back at a time where brain-based psychology flirted with unorthodox and radical politics. Coleridge publicly divorced from these two principles in 1816, although he had enthusiastically embraced them during his millennial hope. It is thus quite remarkable that, as Coleridge abandoned this idea of a mind located in the body and acted upon by bodily organs, claiming in *Biographia Literaria* that only an "infinite

spirit, an intelligent and holy will" could ensure human agency, he nonetheless continued to assert that poetic creation could be the product of a seething brain and not the reflection of the writer's beliefs or the realities of his time. He would summon this disbelieving process for personal or political reasons. In *Sibylline Leaves,* published in 1817, he would thus justify the composition of "Fire, Famine & Slaughter," a violent indictment of Pitt's policies published in 1798 in *The Morning Post*, as "mere bubbles, flashes and electrical apparition from the magic cauldron of a fervid and ebullient fancy, constantly fuelled by an unexampled opulence of language" (Coleridge, *Poetical Works* 278). Though he disavowed his belief in materialist brain theories in his theoretical essays published at the same period, he still revived "fantastic pleasure" generated from an overexcited mind to rationalize the composition of those seditious lines. A twenty-page apologetic preface describes a dinner taking place at Sotheby's where Sir Walter Scott recited "Fire, Famine & Slaughter" without revealing its author. Coleridge, according to his prefatory narrative, embarks upon a long monologue to convince his audience that there is no possible co-existence between those "vivid and fantastic images" and "a serious wish to realize them." Real hatred or desire of revenge cannot find the words: "rooted hatred," he argued, "is a sort of madness and eddies round its favourite object, and exercises as it were a perpetual tautology of mind in thoughts and words, which admit of no equal substitutes" (Coleridge, *Poetical Works* 276). In a self-defence of his own virtue, Coleridge concluded by drawing a portrait of the author:

> Were I now to have read by myself for the first time the Poem in question, my conclusion, I fully believe, would be that the writer must have been some man of warm feelings and active fancy; that he had painted to himself the circumstances that accompany war in so many vivid and yet fantastic forms, as proved that neither the images nor the feelings were the result of observation, or in any way derived from realities. I should judge that they were the product of his own seething imagination, and therefore impregnated with that pleasurable exultation in all energetic exertion of intellectual power. (*Poetical Works* 276)

Was Coleridge aware of the far-reaching implications of his fanciful rewriting of history? Coleridge went to such a length to disconnect those "creatures of imagination" from voluntary authorship and from actual events that, as a critic noted in *The Westminster Review* in 1829, we could even think that "perhaps there actually never was such an event as the French Revolution, nor such a man as William Pitt."

> Were there really no mothers and infants perishing with starvation? Was there never a cottage burned, nor a "naked rebel shot" in Ireland? We thought something of the sort had been matter of history. […] It seems we were mistaken. But our mistake was nothing in comparison with that which Mr Coleridge makes if he thinks that his Apologetic Preface can do him any credit with any body, or give a particle of pleasure to any being in existence—except the Devil. (*The Westminster Review* 14–15)

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Poetics of Un/feeling

T. S. Eliot, Coleridge, Shakespeare[1]

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Abstract: This article contributes to the re-assessment of the role of affect in the writings of T. S. Eliot and argues that Eliot's thinking was shaped by earlier—notably Coleridgean—discussions of the feeling and writing self. It offers a dialogical reading of the two poet-critics, in which Coleridge's interpretation of Venus and Adonis and the typist scene of The Waste Land play central parts.

> Who is the third who walks always beside you?
> When I count, there are only you and I together
> But when I look ahead up the white road
> There is always another one walking beside you
> Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
> I do not know whether a man or a woman
> —But who is that on the other side of you?
> (T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* ll. 359–65)

According to the critical tradition and Eliot's own notes, this passage from *The Waste Land* is built upon Ernest Shackleton's account of a hallucinatory experience during his Antarctic expedition. It also subtly recalls the Biblical journey of the disciples to Emmaus, as described in Luke 24: 13–16 (Eliot, *The Poems* 1: 692–3). Each of these narratives contains a dramatic moment of dis/belief, which opens towards different resolutions: a mirage or a miracle. In Eliot's poem, however—a "lyrical epic" with its narrative links consistently missing (Craig 286–302)—closure does not arrive; the question insits: "Who is the third who walks always beside you?"

1 Supported by the ÚNKP 17–4 New National Excellence Program of the Hungarian Ministry of Human Capacities.

According to Anthony Cuda, such ambivalent scenes of recognition are used by Eliot "both to explore and to enact the extremity of the soul's emotional response to the realization of its own limitations" (331). For this reason, the naming of such apparitions is both impossible and beside the point; more specifically, Cuda contends that these scenes convey what Eliot had already described in his essay on Andrew Marvell (1921) as "a recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible" (Eliot, *Selected Essays* 303). It is based upon such underlying patterns and preoccupations that Cuda has argued for "the presence of a surprisingly unfamiliar poet lurking over Eliot's shoulder," one whose work is far less "detached" and far more invested in emotional upheavals than it is customarily believed about Eliot, "the accomplished proponent of classicism and orthodoxy" (362).

The present paper aims to contribute to the reassessment of Eliot's thinking about affect; however, I propose an alternative account of how feeling and detachment are configured, at least in some of his writings. In order to do this, I need to return to the much-discussed theme of Eliot's indebtedness to other poets, especially Shakespeare and Coleridge. Of course, intertextuality is germane to *The Waste Land* and is necessarily part of any interpretation of it. In an earlier discussion of "the third who walks always beside you," Maud Ellman, for instance, has highlighted the role of repetition and the Freudian death instinct, with the figure of the sexually and ontologically ambiguous "third" straddling the realms of life and death: "Neither absent nor present, this nameless third bodies forth a rhetoric of disembodiment, and figures the 'continual extinction' of the self. For the speaker rehearses his own death as he conjures up the writings of the dead, sacrificing voice and personality to their ventriloquy" (Ellman 275). Thus, Ellman connects the unknown "third" to the allusive method that informs Eliot's entire poem, which makes the subject continually appear and disappear on the shimmering surface of the text. This interpretation is worth remembering in the light of Cuda's emphasis on emotional extremity, because it throws into sharp relief the question of the experiencing and/or speaking subject. Given that the "third" person lacks a coherent identity in Eliot's text, we may still ask: what about the first person? Where does Eliot's interest in depths of feeling leave the idea of the lyrical subject? The present paper argues that Eliot's thinking about such matters was shaped by earlier—notably Coleridgean—discussions of the feeling and the writing self, and suggests that a scene of ambivalent passion

in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* might have informed both poets' explorations. What I offer is essentially a dialogical reading of Eliot and Coleridge, in the hope that it may reveal new aspects of how these two poet-critics confronted the question of literary feelings, especially through Shakespeare's example. Meanwhile, I will also refer to recent theoretical work on affect in literature, most importantly, Rei Terada's *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the Death of the Subject* (2003), whenever it seems to assist the clearer formulation of my concerns.

Eliot and Coleridge

Anne Stillman observes in an excellent essay that Eliot and Shakespeare "don't perform alone as a pair. They become a double-act only with a third term" (61). In this essay, I will be looking at what happens when that "third" is Coleridge, and it is worth noting that, similarly to the one "who walks always beside you," Coleridge is consistently associated with spectrality in Eliot's prose. In a chapter of *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), Eliot calls him a "haunted man": "for anyone who has ever been visited by the Muse is thenceforth haunted"—to which he adds something that had to be read from the start as a roundabout confession: "he was condemned to know that the little poetry he had written was worth more than all he could do with the rest of his life. The author of *Biographia Literaria* was already a ruined man. Sometimes, however, to be a 'ruined man' is itself a vocation" (69). The book elsewhere engages with Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817), not just as a chapter in literary history but in order to clarify Eliot's own theoretical positions. Some of this will boil down to a critique of notions we might label, by and large, "Romantic." Thus, stressing the importance of originality or the tendency to neglect the role of memory in the workings of the imagination, are clearly not compatible with Eliot's aims. About the much-quoted distinction between the fancy and the imagination, he drily remarks: "I wholly fail to appreciate this passage. My mind is too heavy and concrete for any flight of abstruse reasoning" (77). It is understandable if such words led scholars such as Eugenia Gunner to assume that Coleridge serves primarily as a foil to Eliot's own arguments, a Romantic antagonist for the self-professed Classicist, although, as Seamus Perry has made clear, the distinction is far from straightforward ("Eliot and Coleridge" 224–227).

In the same book Eliot describes the workings of literary memory pointedly through the case of "Kubla Khan," in a passage that makes Coleridge the best illustration of Eliot's understanding of how a writer acquires his own personal tradition:

> Coleridge's taste, at one period of life, led him first to read voraciously in a certain type of book, and then to select and store up certain kinds of imagery from those books. And I should say that the mind of any poet would be magnetised in its own way, to select automatically, in his reading (from picture papers and cheap novels, indeed, as well as serious books, and least likely from works of an abstract nature, though even these are aliment for some poetic minds) the material—an Image, a phrase, a word—which may be of use to him later. And this selection probably runs through the whole of his sensitive life. (*Use of Poetry* 78)

Here, Eliot deconstructs the critic with the help of the poet, showing that in spite of his apparent emphasis on originality, Coleridge is the best example to prove that writing is, and should be, a speaking through other voices, the voices of the dead. Characteristically, Eliot cites a line from Shakespeare—one that reverberates in *The Waste Land*—to illustrate the psychological process he stipulated behind the writing of "Kubla Khan": "The imagery of that fragment, certainly, whatever its origins in Coleridge's reading, sank to the depths of Coleridge's feeling, was saturated, transformed there—'those are pearls that were his eyes'–and brought up into daylight again" (*Use of Poetry* 146). A few years earlier, Coleridge's creative process had been analysed by John Livingston Lowes in *The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination* (1927), and Lowes's careful tracing of "the accumulated images from Coleridge's reading that formed associative hooks and eyes" (Maniquis 718) informed Eliot's own interpretation. Lowes did not accept the fancy/imagination distinction and argued that memory played a central role in creativity, while he also admitted that "there is no poem built upon associations without will, judgement, and disciplined selection" (quoted in Maniquis 718). Eliot criticizes Coleridge's work on precisely these grounds—"the poem has not been written"—but I think it at least possible that Coleridge himself would have concurred (after all, he published "Kubla Khan" only as a "psychological curiosity"). Similarly, he would have

probably accepted Eliot's dictum that "even the finest line draws its life from its context," and therefore "Organisation is necessary as well as inspiration" (*Use of Poetry* 146). Indeed, when Eliot concludes his book by remarking that in Shakespeare's case we find an exceptional combination of literary inspiration with the power to rationally organize it (146–7), we may well suspect that this is not so much a case of a hypothetical Coleridge agreeing with Eliot, as much as Eliot agreeing with Coleridge.

The Coleridgean version of this insight, that is, his formulation of how Shakespeare combines "opposite or discordant qualities" is quoted with approval in the same book by Eliot: "the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgement ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement" (qtd. in *Use of Poetry* 79; cf. Perry, "Coleridge's English Afterlife" 23). This is an excerpt from Chapter 14 of the *Biographia Literaria*, which Eliot cites via I. A. Richards, together with another passage from Chapter 15, on *Venus and Adonis*. For Eliot, these are instances of Coleridge reflecting on his own experiences of writing poetry and are highly instructive. Meanwhile, the edifice of Coleridge's transcendental theory offers, for the modern critic, a wholly different kind of evidence: it exemplifies what it means to have a passion for metaphysics. Earlier, Eliot had written extensively about that "passion," which, he believed, compromised Coleridge's achievement:

> Coleridge's metaphysical interest was quite genuine, and was, like most metaphysical interest, an affair of his emotions. But a literary critic should have no emotions except those immediately provoked by a work of art—and these (as I have already hinted) are, when valid, perhaps not to be called emotions at all. Coleridge is apt to take leave of the data of criticism, and arouse the suspicion that he has been diverted into a metaphysical hare-and-hounds. His end does not always appear to be the return to the work of art with improved perception and intensified, because more conscious, enjoyment; his centre of interest changes, his feelings are impure. In the derogatory sense he is more "philosophic" than Aristotle. For everything that Aristotle says illuminates the literature which is the occasion for

> saying it; but Coleridge only now and then. It is one more instance of the pernicious effect of emotion. (*Sacred Wood* 12–13)

Before turning to the question of what, then, is Eliot's position with respect to the role of emotions—in what sense they are "pernicious," and how this is related to Coleridge—let me note that when Eliot says that Coleridge is illuminating "only now and then," he still accords him the second place in literary criticism after Aristotle, and, in English letters, the first. This explains the full import of the opening sentence of the essay—"The Perfect Critic" (1920)—according to which "Coleridge was perhaps the greatest of English critics, and in a sense the last" (*Sacred Wood* 1). When, in 1934, Eliot writes a survey of Shakespeare criticism from Dryden to Coleridge, he still "defines Coleridge as 'perhaps the greatest single figure in Shakespeare criticism down to the present day'" (Corcoran 67). Such remarks signal the modern writer's anxiety about his own position, revealed in the self-dramatizing final sentence of *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* that warns against the lure of too much theorizing: "The sad ghost of Coleridge beckons to me from the shadows" (156).

Un/feeling

Let me now take a step back and consider the context of this dialogue in today's scholarship, while also clarifying why I think that the role of emotion, feeling, or affect, is of key significance. The literature on Eliot and Coleridge, or Eliot and Romanticism, not to mention on Eliot and Shakespeare, is extensive, and therefore I cite only one example here which conveniently demonstrates many of my concerns. Peter Holbrook in *Shakespeare's Individualism* (2010) devotes a chapter to "Eliot's rejection of Shakespeare," arguing along the way that

> Eliot's anathematizing of the emotive literary criticism of the 19th century has a clear cultural and political agenda. The 19th century implied the twin pathologies of "exaltation of the *personal* and *individual*" and "emphasis upon *feeling* rather than *thought";* and his antipathy towards this civilizational phase is one of the distinctive features of his criticism. (154)

According to this account, Eliot is against Romanticism, against the dominance of feeling, and against the rise of the personal and the individual (in Holbrook's reading Eliot thought that the latter process began with Shakespeare). Other critics looking at the issues separately have already qualified some of these generalizations—I hope that my earlier points have also indicated, although not explored, the depth of Eliot's engagement with Coleridge.[2] Before turning to the question of feeling, however, it is worth pondering for a moment why it is so easy to come to diametrically opposite conclusions about Eliot's sympathies. I think it has to do with an unusual reading style exhibited throughout Eliot's prose. It happens that he refers to a line or passage in order to vehemently criticize it—but this does not prevent him from citing something else by the same author which he, in turn, warmly admires. Helen Thaventhiran has recently argued that Eliot was "an 'annotative' critic in a broader sense: a critic whose essays could take a form closer to that of commentary than argument, based around fragments of quotation" (34). Annotation is not meant to produce coherent interpretations; driven "by the vitality of accident, by 'chance encounters, appreciations and revulsions'" (Thaventhiran 35), it allows for a certain inconsistency or open-endedness that seems to have suited Eliot's thinking style. In his essay on "Eliot and the Shudder" Frank Kermode makes a related point: "It is in his brilliant responses to [...] particular instances, rather than in his apprehensions of philosophical or theological wholeness, that I find Eliot at his most impressive as a critic." It seems to me that in Eliot's critical prose an author like Shakespeare or Coleridge (or Tennyson, who is in the focus of Kermode's article) is very close to being a bundle of texts or even lines, that enable all kinds of separate perceptions, and far less a unified 'person' than what we are still accustomed to as the organizing framework of modern literary criticism. In other words, Holbook's claim that Eliot rejects the "*personal* and *individual*" is probably *the* main point here, and it is related to both Eliot's reliance on intertextuality and to how he writes about affect.

For Eliot, of course, is not really "against feeling," in spite of his image as an icily intellectual modernist, guarded by the New Criticism and its injunctions against the Affective Fallacy. True, if we take a look at our quoted passages so far, we cannot

2 For detailed discussion, see Perry's "Eliot and Coleridge." Corcoran and Stillman offer rich accounts of Eliot's complicated interest in Shakespeare, while O'Neill shows that Eliot, while ostensibly in revolt against Romanticism, "is recognisably its heir" (200). Edward Lobb's study offers a thorough investigation of these interrelations, while Kermode's *Romantic Image* was the ground-breaking monograph on Modernist debts to Romanticism.

ignore the reference to the "pernicious effect of emotion," or even the claim that "a literary critic should have no emotions." However, Eliot adds a curious caveat to the latter: "a literary critic should have no emotions, except those immediately provoked by a work of art—and these (as I have already hinted) are, when valid, perhaps not to be called emotions at all" (*Sacred Wood* 12–13). It is these peculiar kinds of emotions—or should we call them "un/emotions," "art-emotions" (*Sacred Wood* 57; 87), or maybe just "feelings"?—that are Eliot's primary "data of criticism." As he puts it in a later piece: "a valid interpretation [of a literary work] … must be at the same time an interpretation of my own feelings when I read it" (*On Poetry and Poets* 113–4; cf. Shusterman 11). It is entirely in line with such a view that he criticizes Coleridge not because he 'feels', instead of, say, thinking, but because "his feelings are impure"—and they are claimed to have been made so precisely by his passion for thinking. Seen from this angle, Eliot suddenly starts to appear guiltier of 'emotivism' than most Romantic writers.

If we were to believe that such language occurs only in Eliot's later woks, and is absent from the so-called 'objectivist' essays published in *The Sacred Wood* (1920), we would be mistaken. In these writings, 'feeling' is everywhere, and is treated with great care and sophistication, for instance when Eliot writes that a poem "may be formed out of one emotion, or may be a combination of several; and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular words or phrases or images, may be added to compose the final result. Or great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever: composed out of feelings solely" (*Sacred Wood* 54). Here, Eliot implies a distinction between "feeling" and "emotion" reminiscent of later theories which tend to view "emotion" as "a psychological, at least minimally interpretive experience," and "affect" as its "physiological aspect," while "feeling" is often used as a broader term connoting "both physiological sensations (affects) and psychological states (emotions)" (Terada 4, cf. Leys 441–42). Much recent work focuses on "affects," described by Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg as "visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion" that "can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability" (1). Accounts like this make it very clear that such states—together with the concepts related to them—are fundamentally unstable

and tend to slide into each other. Eliot himself provided formulations alive to their instabilities; in 1957 he wrote the following (cited by Cuda together with earlier similar passages): "It seems to me, that beyond the nameable, classifiable emotions and motives of our conscious life […] there is a fringe of indefinite extent, of feeling which we can only detect, so to speak, out of the corner of the eye" (*On Poetry and Poets* 93, Cuda 334).

In this context, it becomes highly significant that Eliot's "impersonal theory of poetry" (*Sacred Wood* 53), as put forward in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), is in fact a theory of poetic *emotion*. The conclusion at which the final paragraph arrives is that "The emotion of art is impersonal" (Eliot, *Sacred Wood* 59). This theory, then, rests on the same conundrum as Eliot's comment, cited earlier, on the feelings proper to the critic (or, for that matter, his idea of the objective correlative): the concept of an emotion without an experiencing subject or "person" closely inter linked to it. The existence of such feelings is implied in some of Eliot's most memorable comments, which explains their curious grammar; for instance, when he claims about his favourite poets that their "words have often a network of tentacular roots reaching down to the deepest terrors and desires" (115). Neither the author's nor the reader's, and not even a fictitious character's, these feelings seem to travel with poetic language "mixing memory and desire" –or, as "Portrait of a Lady" has it, "Recalling things that other people have desired" (l. 42). To the wholly disinterested reader they *are* the text.

Readers who recognized the centrality of feeling to Eliot's criticism were at times deeply hostile to it. Terry Eagleton in his *Literary Theory* attributes to Eliot "the contempt for the intellect of any right-wing irrationalist" and, quoting Eliot himself, states: "The advantage of a language closely wedded to experience, for Eliot, was that it enabled the poet to bypass the deadly abstractions of rationalist thought and seize his readers by the 'cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts'" (40). It is not hard to see why Eagleton might have found such a stance objectionable. Ruth Leys in her critique of the "turn to affect" in cultural theory has also highlighted how recent approaches with close ties to neuroscience tend to privilege the pre-ideological and non-rational (Leys 437), which makes politically meaningful engagement difficult to imagine. From a very different standpoint, Wimsatt and Beardsley had voiced related anxieties already in the wake of World War II: "Emotion," as they note in "The Affective Fallacy," "has a well-known capacity to

fortify opinion, to inflame cognition, and to grow upon itself in surprising proportions to grains of reason. We have mob psychology, psychosis, and neurosis" (38). It is as if the personal and political risks of free-floating emotion had also infected the poetic or critical engagement with them—and the reason for this seems to lie in the inherent capacity of feelings to undermine rationality and stable distinctions between self and other.

Eliot's interest in the construction and circulation of literary affect goes hand in hand with scepticism concerning the subject—a "disbelief" in its ability to know itself or indeed, in the possibility of arriving at any coherent description of it. In his dissertation on the philosophy of F. H. Bradley, the young Eliot "imagines the soul as a reservoir for the perceptual modes of experience that flood the mind and the senses simultaneously but are channelled into psychological foci that he calls 'points of view' or 'units of soul life' (Cuda 332). Four years later in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot is still "thinking about the irreducible plurality of these units," as Cuda points out (332), and he makes explicit the philosophical doubts informing his critical position:

> The point of view which I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul: for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. (Eliot, *Sacred Wood* 56)

The poet's soul or mind is "perhaps" not a unity. It might be de-centred, a medium receiving impressions and letting them be arranged into patterns of experience, which, however, have no stability over time and no regularities to conform to. Lacking "personality" to express in his work, this poet does not even have a unified or autonomous self to do the expressing, but is described as a "medium"—an inhuman or partly super-human entity, depending on whether we rely on science or the occult to contextualize the metaphor. Such an account of the poet's mind—of anyone's mind—is cognizant of the death of the transcendental subject that was theorized by various philosophies of late modernity. Eliot's emphasis on the impersonal nature of poetic emotion also comes close to what Terada calls "the

nonsubjectivism of emotion" (7), that is, the view that emotion is not compatible with the idea of a centred subject.

The so-called "affective turn" in criticism has brought this side of Eliot to the attention of a number of critics. Apart from Anthony Cuda, Jean-Michel Rabaté has offered extensive analyses of Eliot's poetry in *The Pathos of Distance: Affects of the Moderns*. In a similar vein, Charles Altieri has highlighted "transpersonal" intensities in Eliot (161) and "a profound suspicion of all romantic expressivist notions of identity" (162), linking Eliot to Lacan. In the same collection, Tim Dean has argued that "[i]n place of the modern rationalist understanding of individual personality, Eliot substitutes a premodern—or postmodern—notion of the self as disunified and unbounded, a self that functions as a conduit not only for voices of the dead but perhaps for others' experiences too" (57). Such a way of putting it suggests that Eliot's understanding might be fruitfully studied in the light of not only what came later in philosophy, but also of earlier thought. While Dean goes back as far as Plato's *Ion* to trace Eliot's ancestors, Cairns Craig makes a compelling case for the poet's reliance on an essentially modern framework—associationism—which explored alternatives to the Cartesian and the transcendental self from the age of the Scottish Enlightenment to Modernism (286–308). Indeed, the Eliot for whom "Not only all knowledge, but all feeling, is in perception" (*Sacred Wood* 10), and who imagines poetic consciousness as a medium "in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" (*Sacred Wood* 56), sounds strikingly close to David Hume, who wrote in his *Treatise* (1739): "But setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (252).

In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,* Eliot makes a passing reference to David Hartley, the physician and thinker who aimed, like Hume, to describe the workings of the mind by applying Newton's experimental method, and who, in Eliot's words, "turns up at any moment with Coleridge" (77). At this point Eliot tries to account for the affective charge of an image he borrowed from Chapman, who in turn had found it in Seneca:

> I suggest that what gives it such intensity as it has in each case is its saturation—I will not say with "associations," for I do not want

> to revert to Hartley—but with feelings too obscure for the authors even to know quite what they were. And of course only a part of an author's imagery comes from his reading. It comes from the whole of his sensitive life since early childhood. (*The Use of Poetry* 147–148)

Ron Bush notes that Eliot here follows I. A. Richards in discounting "old associationists" like Hartley (726). Nevertheless, this too is an associationist interpretation in all but name, especially if we bear in mind that even for "old" theorists, the realm of associations was rarely confined to conscious thought. Hartley wanted to describe the physiology of nervous vibrations corresponding to mental processes, while his one-time disciple Coleridge found in the poet of *Venus and Adonis* "[a]n endless activity of Thought, in all the possible associations of Thought with Thought, Thought with Feelings, or with words, or of Feelings with Feelings, & words with words" (*Lectures* 1: 66). Such multifarious connections between word, thought, and feeling also underlie the process described by Eliot, by which an image encountered in reading might become intertwined with early memories or unconscious feelings. Eliot's sense of the mind's associative nature probably also informs what Ron Bush calls his "passionate allusions": in his writings, feeling seems to travel and be transformed through the circuits of intertextuality. In what remains of my paper, I will look at an earlier elaboration of impersonal feeling in English criticism, Coleridge's commentary on *Venus and Adonis*, which, as we have already seen, Eliot knew well, and then I will conclude with its potential relevance to Eliot's poetry and especially *The Waste Land*.

Coleridge and Shakespeare

Scholarly accounts of the reception history of *Venus and Adonis* tend to describe a downward curve, starting with the poem's great popularity among all sorts of readers, and then describing its fall into revulsion and neglect (Kolin 10–15; Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen 78–79). Its eroticism was, of course, a problem. Catherine Belsey sums up the complications as follows: "Love's object is a boy who looks like a girl, and who is in one sense too young for the difference to matter; its modes of address are at once absurd and lyrical and tragic. Passion is contrary, contradictory; 'love is,' the text affirms, 'wise in folly, foolish witty'" (l.838, 53). In the century following the poem's first publication, the taxonomy of love and lust, which is offered but

not sustained in Shakespeare (cf. Belsey), came to be applied more rigidly, with the result that *Venus and Adonis* had to be perceived as either pornography or moral allegory. Editions of Shakespeare tended to leave it out altogether and although Edmund Malone included it in his own edition, he could not help complaining of its "wearisome circumlocution" (Kolin 11–12). This, however, already points towards the other problem with *Venus and Adonis*, which, from the later 18th century, became as significant an objection as that of immorality. The poem did not conform to the norms of sincere emotional expression that became so central to the literature of sensibility and romanticism. J. W. Lever sums up the situation succinctly: "On moral grounds [the poem] was deemed too sensual yet artistically it was considered too cold" (19). The charge of *coldness* was expressed most notably in William Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817):

> It has been the fashion of late to cry up on our author's poems, as equal to his plays: this is the desperate cant of modern criticism. […] The two poems of *Venus and Adonis* and of Tarquin and Lucrece appear to us like a couple of ice-houses. They are about as hard, as glittering, and as cold. (347–8)

Shakespeare is described here as shockingly unfeeling, interested only in his own virtuoso display:

> The author seems all the time to be thinking of his verses, and not of his subject,—not of what his characters would feel, but of what he shall say … Sentiment is built up upon plays of words; the hero or heroine feels, not from the impulse of passion, but from the force of dialectics. (348–9)

It is significant that Hazlitt is attacking "modern criticism" along with Shakespeare's narrative poems: his immediate target was almost certainly Coleridge, who had been giving public lectures in London during the same years as Hazlitt himself. As early as 1808, Coleridge spoke warmly about *Venus and Adonis*; he repeated and developed his points in 1811–12 and 1813–14, and finally published his observations in the *Biographia Literaria* in the year in which Hazlitt's *Characters* also appeared. From

the start, Coleridge relied on *Venus and Adonis* to demonstrate his general conception of what poetry is, or should be, and to show what he thought of Shakespeare's character as a poet. Importantly, he did not choose to argue that the poem *was*, in fact, a sincere expression of Shakespeare's feeling or a record of his own experiences in any sense. That would be the course taken by Arthur Symons in his 1885 introduction to *Venus and Adonis* (Holbrook 152–3), whose approach, in turn, is criticized by Eliot in "The Perfect Critic." Coleridge, rather, is astonished by what he tentatively calls Shakespeare's "alienation" and "utter *aloofness*" (*Biographia* 2: 22), and celebrates him for choosing a topic that had nothing to do with his own affections.

Romantic writing has been known for its investment in feelings virtually from the moment of its inception; however, until recently, "this issue was dead, or worse, a critical liability" (3)—as Joel Faflak and Richard Sha put it in their introduction to *Romanticism and the Emotions*. Interest in embodied experience and gender, the intense study of medical and scientific texts, and a re-assessment of philosophical positions such as empiricism or associationism have led to critical articulations that broach the subject of 'romantic feelings' in meaningful new ways. Coleridge, like most critics of the age, relied on a range of terms in connection with affect, as when he wrote in 1808 that "Strong Passions commend figurative Language & act as Stimulants" (*Lectures* 1: 86)—a claim that evokes the medical discourse of John Brown and his followers ("Stimulants"), together with the new rhetoric of the later 18th century (developed variously by Kames, Priestly and others). However, a peculiarity of Coleridge's thought is that, although he believes in passion's stimulating power informing poetic creation, his view of poetry is non-expressivist, at least when he is thinking of Shakespeare. According to him, Shakespeare was able to speak "the language of passion" while he remained uninvolved; through figures of great "force & propriety" (*Lectures* 1: 267), he created emotional states that were radically improper to him. It may be noted that the feelings in question could be "im-proper" in more than one way; as Coleridge's notes reveal, he hesitated to read out in the lecture-room one of the more sexually suggestive passages from *Venus and Adonis*. In 1808, he quoted the description of the Hare to support his point about the poet's "Love of natural Objects," noting that "there is indeed a far more admirable description precedent, but less fitted for public recitation," meaning the love-pursuit of the horses (*Venus and Adonis* 2.259–318). By 1811, he seems to have got over his worries (*Notebooks* 3247 and note), but the reference is again absent from the *Biographia*. This suggests

that Coleridge insisted on the "utter *aloofness* of the Poet's own feelings, from those of which he is at once the painter and the analyst" (*Biographia* 2: 22), at least in part for reasons of propriety. Contrasting Shakespeare with other writers who degrade "the passion of Love into the Struggles of an animal ~~ap~~ Impulse" (*Lectures* 1: 243), he wanted to refute any possible charges of immorality against the author of *Venus and Adonis*. Indeed, he writes that Shakespeare "has here precluded all sympathy with the Desire by dissipating the readers [sic] attention" into elaborate imagery and witty reflection—turning even the "animal impulse" (in a double sense) into an object of disinterested contemplation (*Biographia* 2: 22).

However, as Terada points out, not feeling something is sometimes itself a feeling—in cases like that "anesthesia hurts" (14), as in Keats's line, quoted by her, "The feel of not to feel it." In *Venus and Adonis*, the speaker's lack of sympathy with his characters' passionate plight, in conjunction with his keen observation and the characters' own diminished understanding of themselves, produces a unique intensity that Coleridge saw as central to Shakespeare's poetry. The *Biographia* states that "the legitimate language of poetic fervour [is] self-impassioned" (2: 65)—in other words, it is generated by the very activity of poetic creation, without being dependent on the outside world or the poet's personal feelings. Shakespeare is the greatest example of this: like the Spinozistic deity or a veritable Proteus, he "becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself" (2: 27–8). Such paradoxical formulations can be seen as Coleridge's way of uniting his sense of the decentred self of the artist with an equally strong need for conscious control and self-possession. It is at this point that Coleridge's Shakespeare comes closest to Eliot's impersonal artist. In a lecture note on *Venus and Adonis*, Coleridge claims that Shakespeare writes "as if he were of another planet," and in the *Biographia* we find the following:

> It is throughout as if a superior spirit more intuitive, more intimately conscious, even than the characters themselves, not only of every outward look and act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings, were placing the whole before our view; himself meanwhile unparticipating in the passions, and actuated only by that pleasurable excitement, which had resulted from the energetic fervor of his own spirit in so vividly exhibiting, what it had so accurately and profoundly contemplated. (2: 21)

The author-figure Coleridge is at pains to describe resembles nothing so much as Tiresias in *The Waste-Land*: unparticipating, yet paradoxically conscious, even more so than the participants, of everything "Enacted on this same divan or bed" in the typist scene of "The Fire Sermon." Similarly to him-her ("old man with wrinkled dugs"), Coleridge's Shakespeare is "more intuitive than the Parties themselves" of every thought and feeling, "the flux and reflux of the mind." We may also note that this "superior spirit," while not involved in the passions of the lovers, is actuated by a "pleasurable excitement and emotion" which results from the activity of his own expressive powers—such "poetic feeling," in Coleridge's parlance, is the minimal but sufficient affective justification for poetic language, the "excitement" or "stimulant" that makes poetry possible.

The Waste Land and *Venus and Adonis*

Reading Coleridge's elaboration of this conception of Shakespeare in tandem with modernist writing brings out certain features of it that tend to remain hidden in accounts focusing on the romantic context alone. For one thing, the implied androgyny. Coleridge did not dwell on this, but certainly Virginia Woolf picked up on his remark that "a great mind must be androgynous" (*Table Talk* 2: 190–1), as we can see from *A Room of One's Own* (1929), where her thoughts leap from Coleridge to Shakespeare as a matter of course.[3] Recent studies have engaged more extensively with gender ambiguities in Eliot, often returning to an early poem—first published in *Poems Written in Early Youth* (1967)—that offers a striking enactment of transpersonal affect: "The Death of Saint Narcissus" (e.g. Dean; Rabaté 40). The opening lines were going to be reworked for *The Waste Land* ("Come under the shadow of this gray rock—"), but something quite astonishing happens in the later parts, which makes the protagonist a more extreme version of Tiresias (cf. Comley):

> First he was sure that he had been a tree,
> Twisting its branches among each other
> And tangling its roots among each other.

3 "He meant, perhaps, that the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided. In fact, one goes back to Shakespeare's mind as the type of the androgynous, of the man-womanly mind" (Woolf 71).

Then he knew that he had been a fish
With slippery white belly held tight in his own fingers,
Writhing in his own clutch, his ancient beauty
Caught fast in the pink tips of his new beauty.

Then he had been a young girl
Caught in the woods by a drunken old man
Knowing at the end the taste of his own whiteness
The horror of his own smoothness,
And he felt drunken and old. (2.21–32)

This, too, is a portrait of the artist—according to Ted Hughes, "the first portrait, perhaps the only full-face portrait, of Eliot's genius" (cf. Schuchard). While Hughes takes this in the direction of the shamanic experience of the unity of all being, it is also a variation on Coleridge's Protean poet in whom sympathetic identification co-exists with "unparticipating" aloofness: the poet who "passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and the flood" (*Biographia* 2: 27). In what remains of my paper, I will briefly suggest that the connection between Coleridge's view of the impersonal poet and Eliot's Tiresias may amount to more than a passing resemblance.

As we have seen, Coleridge described Shakespeare's genius through the discussion of *Venus and Adonis* in a section of the *Biographia* cited with approval in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*. Not much later in *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies* (1934) Eliot again referred to this analysis in connection with Shakespeare's "most profound, energetic and *philosophic* mind" (298–9). In light of this, it is surprising that *Venus and Adonis* itself has so rarely been considered as a source for Eliot's "lyrical epic," in spite of the fact that the Adonis myth is mentioned in Eliot's own notes, and that Shakespeare's source, Ovid, is recognized as a major influence (but cf. Laroque who does suggest a connection). As we have also seen, a double experience of rape was crucial to Saint Narcissus's loss of personhood, and it is a similar scene which triggers the appearance of Tiresias in the geometric centre of the *The Waste Land*, in the middle of "The Fire Sermon":

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference. (2.235–242)

The consciousness in control of this passage and the lines surrounding it—the famous double sonnet embedded in *The Waste Land*—is intimately aware of both the male and the female experience, and even of something more, which follows from the external point of view and is the source of its troubling pathos. Let me juxtapose to this three stanzas from *Venus and Adonis* that describe another assault:

Now quick desire hath caught the yielding prey,
And glutton-like she feeds, yet never filleth.
Her lips are conquerors, his lips obey,
Paying what ransom the insulter willeth;
Whose vulture thought doth pitch the price so high
That she will draw his lips' rich treasure dry.

And having felt the sweetness of the spoil,
With blindfold fury she begins to forage;
Her face doth reek and smoke, her blood doth boil,
And careless lust stirs up a desperate courage,
Planting oblivion, beating reason back,
Forgetting shame's pure blush and honour's wrack.

Hot, faint, and weary, with her hard embracing,
Like a wild bird being tamed with too much handling,
Or as the fleet-foot roe that's tired with chasing,
Or like the froward infant still'd with dandling,

He now obeys, and now no more resisteth,
While she takes all she can, not all she listeth. (2.547–564)

The rhythms and intensities in these lines have such resonance with Eliot's typist scene that would justify a closer comparison. Some of this follows from the way the sonnet form informs both texts, with special features like the combination of feminine and masculine rhymes. On the thematic level, the typist scene has more conventionally assigned gender roles and therefore it has to be seen as transforming Shakespeare's transformation of Ovid. However, all three poems have to do with fertility rituals gone wrong. But if Eliot is indeed rewriting Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* in this section (which I think he is doing), the presence hovering at the edges of the text must be that of Coleridge.

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