

PRINCIPLES OF INTERACTION
BETWEEN ROMANTIC
POEMS
&
READER

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ABSTRACT

The thesis undertakes to examine the dimensions of involvement that may exist between the reader and the Romantic poem. The introductory chapter briefly explores some of the grounds for the mis-conception and denigration of Romantic poetry. Some of the problems in differentiating between Romantic modes of conception and the "normal" results of discursive reasoning as applied to Romantic poetry are introduced. Romantic conception points to an order of interaction with the world that is beyond the capacity of ordinary linear thinking. This chapter suggests the primary significance of the experience of Romantic poets as informing their thought. It also stresses the relation that exists between the "subject" matter of Romantic poems and metaphysical doctrines not usually connected with "historical" Romanticism. The active principles that initiate both Romantic poems and Romantic thought are the same principles that inform the reading experience. The introduction concludes by suggesting the "formal" similarity between the original experience of the poet and the response which a reader may have in any given poem. The reader is often carried beyond what a linear conception of the poem would indicate.

The second chapter picks up the theme of detachment from normal, pre-defined codes of awareness, as this occurs in the historical context of the Romantic movement. Mainly, the chapter explores the existential implications of the Romantic withdrawal from the Enlightenment cultural and intellectual milieu. The condition of vulnerability, which disorientation from conventional values engendered in the poets, becomes the central construct for the ensuing pages. For it is believed that vulnerability initiates the possibility of openness, and that it is from this ground of receptivity that the poets emerge as discoverers. The real dynamics of human life and awareness are not to be found in the world of conceptual thinking, but in the immediate relations a man has with the concrete things in the environment.

The discovery of things, in a state of total receptivity, leads to a dramatic new conception of being, as well as to a new poetic presentation of those dynamics. But it is in a particular culture that these trans-cultural ideas are fostered. It is the impetus of an entire cultural milieu which compels the re-valuation of conceptual and non-conceptual experience that we know as Romanticism.

Chapter Three contains a discussion of the theoretical relation of a reader to Blake's *THE SICK ROSE*, in order to illustrate the requirement of a suspension of disbelief. The central idea here is that the search for the "meaning" of a poem must begin, and does begin, in the very experience a reader "has" while he is engaged in the poem. The principles of the reader's engagement in the activity of the poem are paralleled with the principles of the poet's original discovery of certain energies. The reader actually repeats the Romantic disorientation, and thus comes to make the Romantic discovery. The chapter stresses the necessity of a high degree of involvement with any Romantic poem before the full dimensions of the poem's meaning can be truly comprehended. The reader's involvement is fundamentally characterized by a disruption of one's ordinary anticipation of both language and experience.

The fourth chapter is an illustration of the physical aspects of disorientation, mainly in terms of the reader. Using the analogy of music, the chapter argues the concept of "surprise" as a signal of engagement in the stimulus, be it poem or drums. The fact that physical involvement in the new stimulus can be demonstrated to precede conceptualizing indicates that sense perception actuates new physical orientations even without consultation with logical reflection. This brief interlude prepares for the following chapters by pointing to the fact of physical immediacy in the act of dislocation from a conventional context of response and entrance into the world dictated by the energies of the present stimulus.

The next chapter deals with the "ideas" of some Romantic poets in terms of the ground from which they emerge. The emphasis

here is on the fact that a certain order of non-conceptual experience is necessary before linear conception is capable of entertaining ideas such as those found throughout Romantic writing. Perception precedes conception. But perception--powerful, direct--also stops conception. In Romantic poetry and prose we find that a process of "negative capability" is pre-requisite to any direct perception. Negative capability is a conceptual construct for the process through which the poet gradually, sometimes swiftly, is opened to the things in his immediate environment. Whether that environment be the life of external or internal phenomena does not alter the process, however much the resultant poem may be influenced. The stress which most Romantics give to negative capability and its resulting theodicy, justifies critical attention upon the experiences realized in "spots of time." These experiences are a major source of Romantic concepts of the mind. At the same time, the inherent form of these experiences gives rise to the mythic, multi-dimensional ideas of Romantic thought.

Chapters Six and Seven deal with the formal principles of some Romantic poetry--that poetry in which the full dimensions implicit in a spot of time are expressed. Chapter Six employs Charles Olson's theory of "projective" verse in order to grasp the formal dynamics of Romantic verse. Olson's work is used because his conception of the "projective" act issues from the same ground that gives birth to the most comprehensive vision of Romanticism--the synthesis of the contraries in a direct apprehension of unity. The last chapter demonstrates some precise ways in which the formal properties of certain Romantic poems compel the reader to act in certain ways. Here, the concern is primarily with the dimensions of experience that the unfolding poem is capable of initiating in the 'negatively capable' reader.

In conclusion, the formal activity of certain Romantic poems can be shown to have emerged from a complex experiential matrix, and to have rendered the energies of that matrix to a receptive reader. This transference is the prime "legislative" act of Romantic poetry.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

English Romanticism has often been studied as a body of metaphysical, moral, social and other conceptions. Romantic ideology has been studied more than the transmission of that ideology. Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and some others have disparaged Romanticism on the grounds that the poets often seem to value conception above the rendering of the conception--a failure in "verse." T.S. Eliot's famous essay on the seventeenth-century metaphysical poets makes the sweeping statement that a "dissociation of sensibility" set in after John Donne, that lasted until the late nineteenth century. Romanticism is thereby engulfed. The fact that Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley seem as ready as Pope to use the idiom to expound their cosmologies, aesthetics, ethics, and epistemologies adds force to Eliot's view. And Blake is even more susceptible to a charge of pedantry and absolutism. If a reader elects to peruse a Romantic poem for its moral, its philosophy, or "ideas," then there is an important sense in which the reading has been incomplete. The incompleteness lies in the extrication of some aspect of content from the process of the poem. If, however, the poem is merely a rhyming epistemology--a margin-left arrangement of cerebral and imagistic values--then one can attribute incompleteness to the poem. For the justification of a Romantic poem is in the mode of its interaction with the person who reads. Philosophy addresses quite other properties of mind than poetry. So, the above-mentioned modern poets argue against a tendency, which sometimes exists in Romantic poets, to 'intellectualize' and dogmatize beneath a thin patina of 'poetic' phrasing, meter, and rhyme. Those poems, however, in which more dimensions of mind are engaged than the discursive reasoning, suggest a level of attainment in Romantic verse which, if not consistently upheld, at least points beyond the constraints of such an all-encompassing, problematic, and difficult

notion as "dissociation of sensibility."

Part of the difficulty lies in a traditional attitude toward any poem. The reader is sometimes asked to seek out "meanings" and values in poems, in a quest for the poem's "moral"--the intellectual emblem of the poem's truth. To pursue such a course in the approach to Romanticism is dangerous, for it inevitably leads to the extreme apology of an intellectual worship of the ideational content of the poems in spite of discrepancies in craft. On the other hand, an over-emphasis on technique will perhaps result in a denigration of Romanticism on stylistic grounds. Eliot does this in his essays on the Romantic poets in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism. Neither of these approaches will suffice to achieve a comprehensive view of Romanticism. The first approach remains ideational. The second is subject to biases and preferences of a highly esoteric nature: form is still the most perplexing aspect of poetry.

As a more or less coherent metaphysic, Romanticism can be seen as a particular appearance of a universal doctrine found in nearly all cultures and times. One can study the seeds of Romantic ideas in various hermetic philosophies. But the metaphysics that constitute the conceptual knowledge of Romanticism are also related to aboriginal phenomena--those which enact doctrine by participating in the forces which engender those world-views in the first place. I mean myth. The direct use of myth by the poets, and the invention of new myth, give a sense of a Romantic ground which the isolation of ideas alone cannot declare.

Romanticism was definitely the surfacing of a perennial philosophy usually assigned to the "apocrypha" or the "transcendental." The mythic dimensions of Romantic poetry and thought can easily be lost if one overlooks the possible experiential sources of Romantic awareness in favour of exploring historical Neo-Platonism, pantheism, and transcendentalism. Above all, the ground of Romantic ideology exists in dimensions which, themselves, are not accountable to "ideas" or "culture" as such.

Romantic ideas point to an experience of life which is central to the existence of most "heretic" cosmologies. Shelley's Neo-Platonism extends further back than Plato. The journey would take us back in time, through the beginnings of Greek philosophy, past the cave of Plato and into the authentic cave dwellings of paleolithic man. Research in Romanticism is the search for the authentic sources--right into the beginnings of thought and origins of language. In the beginning was the word.

The relation among the so-called mystery schools lies in the order of experience on which the originals of arcane ideologies were fostered, and out of which arose their respective laws and disciplines. Sometimes the "law" clarifies experience, making it more accessible to the person. In other cases the law is reduced to dogma, and so, removed from the immediate human context.

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.

And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity;

Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of, & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood;

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.

And at length they pronounc'd that the Gods had order'd such things.

Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

(Blake, ¹Marriage of Heaven and Hell, p. 153)

The terms of Blake's sense of history are clearly eschatological. Romanticism can be seen in terms of a discipline carried out in a spirit akin to the "ancient poets." The fundamental intent of such a discipline is significant: "the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite" (Blake, p. 154). Romanticism can be understood as an eschatology of immanence

occurring in a late eighteenth-century culture. The historical milieu modulates but does not block out these deepest workings of the hermetic quest in the Romantic poets. The possibility of experiencing first and last things was more or less open to them. And, of all subjects, Romantic eschatology is most susceptible to abuse and abstraction. This susceptibility is demonstrated not in the the problem of the non-verbal character of "the infinite," but in the non-conceptual. Among the poems of the Romantics, there are not a large number of successful presentations of "the infinite," although there are frequent examples of a falling back on "abstract" terminology and the diction and style of ordinary discourse. In other cases, the energy of the poem flows unimpeded through the "caverns measureless to man."

The evidence of metaphysical and mythic analogues in Romantic writing is so plentifully and powerfully addressed to vehicles of knowledge outside Romanticism's immediate history, that the possibility of expressing an integrated "sensibility" in their poetry and prose is an incentive to seek elsewhere than in ideas. The evidence of eschatological insight, understanding, and experience can be found throughout the canon of Blake, in several of the most successful poems of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley, and in the prose writings of all five. One has to really dig for these things in Byron, or else locate him on a relatively low rung of the celestial ladder--lost in the wilderness ² of Blake's "dark desert," or teetering on the edge of some mystical "dark night of the soul." In other words, one could assess the extent to which the poets had achieved an apocalyptic order of experience by comparing their metaphysical claims and religious assertions with external authorities in philosophy, alchemy, astrology, mythology, eastern religion, and western mysticism. Blake, for example, acknowledges Paracelsus, Swedenborg, and Boehme, all of whom belong to a relatively obscure but nonetheless continuous tradition of ideas. By noting that this occult tradition is founded on experiences of a certain order, one can then adduce patterns of behaviour in wildly

distant and seemingly unrelated contexts, by discovering a contiguity of form. Blake's thought on engraving is related to Eskimo carving; Heraclitus anticipates Wordsworth; the Coleridgean definition of Imagination is enacted by Kwakiutl Ghost Dancer Societies; Keats' notion of "negative capability" is central to the discipline of Zen Buddhism, and so on.

All metaphysical principles have correspondences in the living experience of the men who formulated them. The principles themselves are not limited by historical settings, but manifested in them. For the principles, viewed this way, are existential (ie. experiential) and uniform, but are given a variety of external definition by ~~linguistic~~ linguistic, intellectual, historical, and other cultural causes. This notion seems to apply to Romanticism as a metaphysic. But the experiential base of their metaphysics is of more importance to us, as students of literature, than the systems they evolved. The Romantics' epistemologies, studied in vacuo, lose all the experiential immediacy they possess in the context of their lives and poems. Any mythic reference, for example, becomes not merely a "symbol" that one can trace to discover its meaning, but rather, in addition, a relational force. If we could see Romanticism as mythic in the sense of enactment, then many of the problems in dealing with Romantic ideas would disappear.

A prime motivation for the continued popularity of Romantic poetry lies in the possibilities that the poems offer for the exploration and elucidation of "ideas." This interest tends to be a subjective one. We, as readers, also happen to be human beings who would perhaps like the answers to some questions about the nature of man, mind, and universe. Romanticism achieves a large measure of potency in the reader's anticipation, simply from the fact that it deals so much with our very questions and quests. Childe Harold, "Kubla Khan," The Ancient Mariner, Blake's "Mental Traveller," Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, Wordsworth's Prelude, all address the primal forces of the universe. Furthermore, these poets often project a relatively 'positive' and 'religious' stance toward the world and other

beings. The very possibility of their being "right" summons the subjective sympathy of most readers, while leaving themselves and the poet open to that failure of imagination commonly called "sentimentalism." The subjective overtones of Romantic "content" are likely to tease the reader into value judgments wherein he selects what he thinks he wants, and rejects whatever is not appetizing, covered in metaphysical daffodils. The contemporary denigration of Romanticism that the poet, Robert Duncan, discusses in his book, The Truth and Life of Myth,³ is partly a reflection on sentimental interpretations of the poems, and thus, on the poems themselves as susceptible to sentimentalism, or worse, encouraging sentimentalism. Sentimentalism is, of course, very much related to Eliot's notion of dissociated sensibility. But it seems to me that there is enough sustained, unified awareness in Romantic poems to warrant a fresh discussion of the ground of Romanticism.

Let me persist with the Romantic ideology a moment longer, in view of the notion of sentimentalism. There are no ideas of Absolute Consciousness, Identity, God, Unity, Self, Meaning, Transcendence, and so on, that are not susceptible to sentimental attenuation. Ignorance defies knowledge at every step by the desire to raise itself up or, as is normal, by already having established its own mode of omniscience. There is no Romantic poem, and perhaps no poem, that cannot be manipulated and destroyed. The act of extracting an "idea" from a poem will almost always lead to the diffusion of the poem's energy. Our wonderful facility for "finding the hidden meaning" corrupts the reality of the poem as a present action. Such is especially true when one undertakes to examine Romanticism. The very condition of the success of a Romantic poem, our approbation, depends to a large extent on how much any ideological content of the poem is given an immediate, dynamic context. But the reader is, instead, often drawn to the ideational content of the poem without any active participation. This tendency results inevitably from the normal, insatiable temptation to exercise the discursive and reflective capacities of the mind. Our own stance toward the

poem endangers the poem.

For the last hundred years, manipulation of Romantic ideas has engendered an attrition of appreciation for Romantic poetry. The poets as the "unacknowledged legislators" of the world have been so thoroughly milked of conceptual content that it is hard to get beyond the charge of moral and intellectual tendentiousness. But these poets did not use verse merely as disposable paper cups to dole out their libations of dogma. This was unnecessary. Had the poets wished to pontificate they would have sought means more suited to pontification. Coleridge is honest enough to know when he must leave poetry for "abstruse research." Blake adapts some devices of philosophical style--aphorism, proverb, parable, epigram--for the purposes of poetry. And even a cursory reading of Wordsworth's Prefaces will discover a deeper commitment to poetry than to ethics. The abstraction of ideas from the poems is against the whole drift and force of the Romantic form of presentation.

Simply to extract and quantify concepts from their immediate poetic context--"to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects"--is to do precisely what the Romantic poets fought most powerfully to overthrow. Romanticism is opposed to pre-conception, to thinking before feeling. To introject concepts into a particular poem is just as dangerous. Basically, the Romantic poets attempt to DEMONSTRATE various experiences. It is here that doubts arise as to the validity of abusing the poets with the title "dissociated." There are, in fact, poems in which the Romantics find a form adequate to the presentation of experience in non-linear modes. In these cases, a new light is thrown upon their failures as well as their success. One comes to realize that the prime difficulty that the poets found in their writing was the almost impossible task of finding a language to articulate an order of experience that had no familiar historical precedents. Blake can only summon the image of Jesus; there was no-one else who approximated Blake's vision. In certain respects, Romanticism is a feverish struggle to find words, words that were capable of expressing dimensions

of being that man can know only in the greatest extension of his faculties. Wordsworth's first statement to the public in the Advertisement to the Lyrical Ballads (1798) asserts the "experimental" character of the writing. The poets had to avoid the prosaic without succumbing to the temptation of directing intensely creative experience into sterile channels of English usage.

The validity of Romantic poetry exists in its connection with the reader. This connection, as we shall see, is more complex than the presentation of an idea. The ideal tenet of the poem's "truth to experience" is something that must be carried over to the reader. Ideally, the poem enacts its own nature, its own motivations. But the informing forces of the creative poem make demands upon the reader that are lacking in eighteenth-century poetry for the most part. The Romantic poets achieved new levels, spaces, depths, and durations of intense experience of an eschatological order that, in extending to us, can potentially involve us in activities that discursive conception cannot reach. Romanticism, in re-opening the ground of the non-discursive, re-discovers some of the principles of poetry that Charles Olson calls "projective." At best, the forces that the poet finds operative in his experience come to be presented to the reader in a form that initiates similar awareness in him. Ideas do not exist in the best Romantic poems as discursive, logical equations. In our reading of these poems, we are occupied in modalities where the discursive reason has no controlling overview. The dynamics of the poem involve the reader in such a way that

ideas are not what we act to, however much we
do see⁴ afterwards; therefore, form is before
ideas.

Having penetrated to a certain depth of awareness, the Romantic's first commitment is to experience, that is, to poetry. The dynamics are the same, but the means to the dynamics are different.

Romantic poetry depends on language to demonstrate the form of experience, not just to "name" it. For it is form, the inhering and extension of energies, that gives an experience PRESENCE in the world.

In re-discovering the dynamic and organic principles of life in their living, the Romantic poets necessarily had to find a dynamic way to make language reveal the "new" principles. That is, they had to find DYNAMIC FORM. The accomplishment of this form constitutes a liberation both of language (poetry) and experience (including the conception of ideas). The possibilities extended to the reader are the enrichment of both perception and conception by virtue of our direct involvement with them as they enact their force. The reader is released from the pressures and fetters of external observation. At the same time, the means of poetic communication are released from the bondage of the "well-turned phrase" and the self-contained, bow-tied, done-to-perfection-vision-in-a-nutshell.

Romanticism first discovers the ground of multi-dimensional reality; then it strives to articulate that reality. And to a certain extent, Romantic poetry achieves form beyond the 'conceptual package' that has always been present in English poetry. Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Blake, and Coleridge were the necessary precursors of the modern and contemporary "romantic" writers, from William Carlos Williams down to Olson, Creeley, Duncan, and Ginsberg.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Citations from Blake in my text are to Blake Complete Works, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

² Blake addresses The Ghost Of Abel to "LORD BYRON in the Wilderness: What doest thou here, Elijah?" p. 779.

³ Robert Duncan, The Truth of Life and Myth: An Essay in Essential Autobiography (New York: House of Books, 1968). Duncan is effective in rescuing the "romantic" writing of Denise Levertov from the charge of "sentimentalism."

⁴ Charles Olson, Human Universe and Other Essays, ed. Donald Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 65.

CHAPTER II

Awakening from Newton's Sleep

The emergence of English Romanticism toward the end of the eighteenth century is partly a manifestation of a change in cognition. Morse Peckham believes that "the shift in European thought was a shift from conceiving the cosmos as a static mechanism to conceiving it as a dynamic organism." Adducing Lovejoy's The Great Chain of Being, Peckham goes on to suggest that,

literary romanticism was a manifestation of a change in the way of thinking of European man, that since Plato European man had been thinking according to one system of thought...and that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries occidental thinking took an entirely different direction, as did occidental art. Furthermore, [Lovejoy] says that the change in the way the mind works was the most profound change in the history of occidental thinking, and by implication it involved a similar profound change in the objects and methods of European art.¹

In suggesting a "change in the way the mind works," however, we are dealing with the inevitability of a complete transformation in the receptivity and response to living. The Romantic redirection was not merely a case of a change in "thinking." It was not "Thought altering alters all," but "the Eye altering alters all."² An alteration in the way we think about the smell of a rose does not, cannot, change the way we smell the rose. In terms of the act of perception, "thinking" comes after. Before perception, thinking may constitute that kind of pre-conception that impedes an act of perception. We must see or smell the rose in a new way before new modes of thought can arise. Discursive thinking is a mode of abstraction. In a sense, therefore, "thinking" is removed from an immediate perceptual situation through the very fact of discursive distance. In the best writing of the Romantic poets we find that ideas are subsequent to the act of perception--perception which occurs and is registered in modes other than the

the linear one. Thus, to examine Romanticism as a "historical" movement, that is, in terms of the "ideas" Romantics discovered, is to set our study of Romantic poetry at a certain distance from the actual living condition of the poets. Lovejoy equates "thinking" with "the way the mind works." Such is hardly the case. The only time in which the equation is valid is when the mind is wholly given to thought: Blake says, "One thought fills immensity."

The "ideas" which Lovejoy and Peckham see as central to Romanticism are "organicism, dynamism, and diversitarianism."³ These ideas represent part of the theoretical foundation of any study of Romanticism, specifically, Romantic conception. But a theory is "the articulated vision of experience."⁴ Before we can truly comprehend "dynamic organicism" we must come to grips with how the poets discovered these "ideas." We must understand something of their "experience." For what theories attest to is experience, and, what tests theories is experience. What Peckham outlines as the concepts or "root-metaphors" of Romanticism happened as a result not only of conceiving the world and the self in a new way, but of seeing and feeling differently.

Here we are concerned with the transformation of the workings of the conscious process which is the source of Romantic writing. In a comprehensive definition of Romanticism, then, Romantic is a word which describes the whole new experiential matrix which comes to be rendered in language, belonging as much to the reader as to the poems. The poet's experience is necessarily the pre-condition of his expression. The new experiences (including "thinking in new ways") which the poets realized in their living issue together with their disengagement from the experiences summed up in Enlightenment values:

Now this mighty static metaphysic which had governed perilously the thoughts of men since Plato, collapsed of its own internal inconsistencies...--or collapsed for some people. For most people it still remains the unrealized base for most of their values, intellectual, moral, social, aesthetic, and religious. But to the

finer minds of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was no longer tenable....The principle cause was that all its implications had been worked out; they stood forth in all their naked inconsistency. It became impossible to accept a theodicy based upon it. More and more, thinkers began searching for a new system of explaining the nature of reality and the duties of men.⁵

Writing as a "cultural historian" in his book, Beyond the Tragic Vision: The Quest for Identity in the Nineteenth Century, Morse Peckham conceives cultural groups and the modes of human behaviour in terms of the self-concept or "orientation" held and practised in common. A person's orientation is made up of his social self-concept ("self-definition") and his sense of his own individual existence ("self-identification"). Our orientation, largely unconscious through continual modification and reinforcement on subliminal levels, determines to a great extent how we "order" the environment, and thus, how we discern "value." "To be psychically oriented," he writes, "is to experience identity, order, and value; to be disoriented is to experience their attrition or loss."⁶ "Orientation" becomes Peckham's "instrument" or "historical construct" for examining the breakdown of Enlightenment orientative rationales and their replacement by uniquely Romantic notions. Peckham also notes two opposing orientational drives or needs: one drive is toward increasing "perception" of "a flow of external stimuli," which can either negatively disturb or positively "stimulate" the senses. The other drive seeks perfect "equilibrium" of some kind--a sort of homeostasis.⁷ There is a third thing vital to his construct:

But at the same time, whether the stimulation comes from the external world or from within the mind, a psychic set prevents us from responding to the stimuli which it screens out. Thus there is always a disparity between an orientative act and the data of the real world. On the one hand the drive toward equilibrium preserves the set; on the other, the drive to engage the mind with the real world must break

the set down, show up its weaknesses, reorganize it, introduce new material. The drive toward sensory stimulation, toward perception, toward getting around and through the set, is the predictive drive, the foundation of science. But the drive to break down the set, to permit oneself to experience enough emotional disturbance to open holes in it, to rend it so that new knowledge may enter, whether from the mind or the outside world--that drive is the foundation of art.⁸

Our hard-earned sense of self-definition in a social role, and our self-identification in the private world of the psyche, are threatened by things that have "disturbing" qualities associated with them. Thus, the conception of a "heaven" commonly held by members of a culture, or privately held by an individual, will indicate the symbolized conception of an ideal orientation. Peckham says, "Heaven is a symbol of total orientation, a state in which identity is never threatened and never insecure."⁹ The world of changing and impinging reality is dangerous; heaven is safe. Man seeks knowledge and safety.

In the chapter on "The End of Ancient Thinking," Peckham observes that the Enlightenment orientation, based on Rationalism, and moving into Lockean Empiricism (still rational and moral), and then into sentimental enthusiasm and skepticism (Voltaire), was tested in the French Revolution and failed:

The logical possibilities had been exhausted. Value is not to be found in a divine world into which we shall enter in the future, or into which we can penetrate by pure thought or mystic rapture; nor is value structured into the world we know. The universe is a chaos, a meaningless chaos; nor is society any different. But if order is lost, and value is lost, then identity is lost. And man--or man as a few men see him--truly enters the waste land.¹⁰

Only a few embarked upon the empty wasteland--those who realized that they could not sustain the Enlightenment orientations which had supported them until then. The rest of society continued unwittingly to support and function with the orientation which

Peckham summarises as "static mechanism."¹¹ For the Romantic poets, however, the metaphysical upheaval results initially in the discovery of a landscape of experience totally new, and somewhat alien, inimical to normal orientations. The loss of meaning creates a vacuum; the experience of disorientation carries a sense of negativity. But it was precisely here, in the midst of confusion, loss, and displacement, that the poets were to discover a more actual world than the one they had given up. The Romantic landscape, in its dimension, energy, beauty, and immediacy, gives the lie to Newton and Descartes

In a sense, Peckham's insistence upon the success or failure of the Enlightenment as somehow riding on the success or failure of the French Revolution, is slightly reductive. There had been definitely "Romantic" poems written before 1789. And Edmund Burke had been surveying "the Revolution in France" at least ten years before the storming of the Bastille. It is not so much a departure as an addition to Peckham's analysis of the historical-cultural situation which is needed here. If only a few people realized that the Enlightenment metaphysics had been "put to the test" in the Revolution, and if, therefore, only a few realized that these orientations had failed, the question springs up as to why there were so few. Why did the Revolution not dispel the rationalistic, idealistic, sentimental, and skeptical delusions of greater numbers? Answering this may help to give a further sense to the magnitude of the "change" that the Romantic poets experienced in their "disorientation."

It is clear that the French Revolution certified the rise of the new "middle class." For these, the majority of Europeans, the Revolution was a tremendous success. The idealism which addressed itself to the beggars of the Paris streets, the sewer-dwellers, and the peasants, worked to the advantage of the bourgeoisie. The active principles of the Enlightenment were against the poor as well as against the traditional aristocracy. Poor and royalist form the complementary poles of medieval,

feudal cultures. The Revolution, so-called, had long been under way. What was overthrown was not the aristocracy alone, but the principles of feudalism. What was finally liberated, equalized, and fraternalized was the middle class with its middle-class morals, religion, business concerns, social roles, goals, desires, intellect, and so on.

In other words, the revolutions which happened in America, France, and Ireland functioned mainly to assert and finalize the ascendancy of bourgeois values over traditional values. Enlightenment values, far from "failing" in the French crisis, established their primacy over the minds and actions of the bourgeoisie. Enlightenment values were normative, unconscious forces of motivation in middle-class intellects. The sentimental idealism which Morse Peckham marks in the dying moments of the French court, at the Champ de Mars in 1790, is hardly more sentimental or enthusiastic than the attack on the Bastille or the Reign of Terror that followed. Underneath the fragile yet brutal surface of the rationales which developed throughout the actual revolt of the "people," there are Enlightenment forces at work. This seems preposterous: it seems as if the old order had been completely shattered along with its static hierarchies. But Peckham himself hints at the paradox when he suggests, correctly, that for most people the static metaphysic "remains the unrealized base for most of their values." The old form is perpetuated in new disguises. We must be careful not to identify the underlying forces with the surface manifestations.

Those who were able to recognize the forces through the appearances also recognized the continuance of the Enlightenment in new modes. The common man of the late eighteenth century was not at all interested in, or beleaguered by, the philosophical implications of Enlightenment thought. His concern was his belly. His orientation was socially formed. It would seem that the rejection of medieval hierarchies and their replacement by nationalistic, social, commercial, and parliamentary hierarchies was, in fact, in keeping with the motivations implicit in the Enlightenment dogma. Peckham writes of the French Revolution:

Here was a vast political endeavor in which an enormous effort was made to put the Enlightenment faith into practice, in a situation supported by the enthusiasm--not yet perceived as sentimental--of millions of people, both in France and in other countries. What was its lesson? It released social, emotional and moral forces of which the Enlightenment tradition had been totally ignorant, which the vaunted nature and reason, and enthusiasm, and empiricism had never discovered. And it showed that those forces could be controlled only by a brutal and repressive tyranny which--and here was the real horror--was in itself perfectly justifiable on Enlightenment principles.¹²

The Enlightenment rationales sponsoring the Revolt were not merely philosophical, but were those which had suggested the philosophies of rationalism, skepticism, optimism, empiricism in the first place--namely the direction of technological advancement. The common person lives close to technology, not philosophy. He responds to the exigencies of situations with the mechanisms he has. And with the Revolution in France, as with the entire cultural evolution in eighteenth-century Europe, what was rapidly becoming visible as an active principle in people's acts and concerns was the accelerating change of the basis of society, away from the church and other feudal authorities, toward the social structures fostered, even demanded, by the refinement of technology.

If we could believe the outline suggested by Marshall McLuhan in The Gutenberg Galaxy, we could then infer that the closed systems engendered and maintained by the development of moveable type cannot tolerate any effort to create a synthesis, simultaneity, or, in McLuhan's phrase, "rationality" of activities. As McLuhan understands it, the development of literacy simultaneously fosters the linear modes of perception--the visual modes, and the discursive reasoning in particular--while extending the range, variety, and comprehensiveness of technology. The Age of Science begins at least with Francis Bacon, and the extension of scientific, technological discoveries into the perceptual sphere of the common man seriously alters his world, alters the way in which he greets it and in

which it meets him. So the process had been going on since Gutenberg--over five hundred years, now. Promoted by the model of scientifically precise repetition, correctness, and predictability--the printing press--several other possibilities of mass production began to become realized. Material and ideological developments emanating from the age of Newton and before, had already had over three centuries to mould the directions which were taken in the French Revolution. Technology, the Industrial Revolution, created new definitions of society, and thus, of the identity of individual men. These definitions anticipated the constructs of Rationalism, pessimism, and so forth, by giving supremacy to man's Reason. For it was Reason that dictated to Science; and science has been the property of the discursive intelligence until Einstein, Heisenberg, and the mathematicians, Lobatschewsky and Riemann¹³ (or so Charles Olson would have it). For Edmund Burke, the real "revolution" was to witness the grace and refinement of the Queen of France at Versailles. But the sanctity of the medieval order of things had been thoroughly undermined by a progressing mass production, of both goods and morals. Society slowly had been redefined over the two-hundred years previous to Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France.

New environments inflict considerable pain on the perceiver. Biologists and physicists are much more aware of the radical revolution effected in our senses by new technological environments than are the literati.¹⁴

Blake writes to John Flaxman (September 12, 1800):

Paracelsus & Behmen appear'd to me, terrors appear'd
in the Heavens above
And in Hell beneath, & a mighty & awful change
threatened the Earth.
The American War began. All its dark horrors passed
before my face
Across the Atlantic to France. Then the French

Revolution commenc'd in thick clouds,
 And My Angels have told me that seeing such visions
 I could not subsist on the Earth,
 But by my conjunction with Flaxman, who knows to
 forgive Nervous Fear.

But in the ordinary person, there is only reponse to the subliminal alterations that have already been effected. Humans assimilate change. The aristocrats suffered the most, simply because they were the most disinherited by the mechanical age. That empiricism which was discovered as a philosophy was the orientative basis for the large part of late eighteenth-century European culture, especially in the more advanced technologies. People act upon the laws they have assimilated. As the isolation of the sense of sight leads swiftly to the segmentation of the senses and the diffusion of emotions, incomplete responses to situations are inevitable--built in. "And segmentation equals sentimentality...the isolation of one emotion from another...."¹⁵ Quantification and segmentation, the action of the machine, enforces sentimentalism.

The people of the eighteenth century had, for generations, been undergoing a process of psychic alteration. The forces shaping human perception had mechanical, linear, external, closed forms. Thus they offered a seemingly reliable source of security. The French Revolution secured the French Middle class, led directly into the Industrial age, and perpetuated, in this way, the very discursiveness of form in even more areas of human life than the concept and use of Enlightened Reason. Few saw and felt the disintegrating and destructive powers of this machination of the senses as clearly as Blake.¹⁶

The philosophic ideas of rationalism, pessimism, and other Enlightenment modes of belief are all, in spite of their differing "contents," governed by the form of discursiveness. The failure of the Enlightenment, then, was not so much a failure of sentimental ideas of the equality of men, as a failure of Reason to contain all the possibilities of human perception

and response within a single, all-embracing orientation. The middle class is successful in the Revolution because the real energies of the Revolution are in its favour. The new and very successful closed system is the dollar. It appears as an accurate source of power and authority. Everyone has the possibility of obtaining dollars and repeating this achievement. The Terror is forgotten by most, and the new mercantile security is wooed, established, symbolized, and assimilated at all levels of the culture. The domination of personality by assimilated external forces is complete: the senses are separated; the functions of the mind are isolated; the less differentiated condition of being gives place to the stress upon "individualism"; the simultaneous and uncircumscribed are blocked out by bounded fragments, linear structures, and Reasonable constructs; high definition precludes low definition or no definition; public property becomes private property; distinction is valued above unity; the wide field of the multi-dimensional comes under the omnipotent, narrowing gaze of the "point" of view. The social system is defined by the economic. All these processes were latent, but slowly gathering power over the structure and "values" of society and thought well before 1789. The record of this ascent is partly to be found in The Gutenberg Galaxy.

What we witness is the establishment of an orientation based upon fragmentation and separation of functions--mental, emotional, cultural. It is against the flow of this newly established, official orientation that the Romantic spirit does indeed "rebel." The hierarchy of cosmic order that underpins feudal society is rejected by the technologically 'enlightened' man in favour of differentiation by role. This differentiation has its roots in the definition of the functions of society created by the engulfment of society within economic bounds, which were themselves defined by the mechanistic laws of mass production. Only the Romantic man sensed, more or less fully, that the identification of persons with the products of their

extrapolated visual sense (exemplified in the conveyor belt, and generally, the machine), signalled the subsuming of the multi-dimensional ground of living experience within the one-dimensional "single vision" of Newtonian mechanics. The Enlightenment moves forward to become the philosophic-scientific basis for so much nineteenth-century thinking, and twentieth-century positivism and behaviourism in particular. The discourse of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates still hold us in sway, in 1970, in spite of Freud, Einstein, surrealism, and Kubla Khan's architecture. In philosophy, the roots of this disintegration can be seen in the early Greeks. Although the point has been made often, it may be worth reviewing here, as it issues from the mind of Charles Olson:

We have lived long in a generalizing time, at least since 450 B.C. And it has had its effects on the best of men, on the best of things. Logos, or discourse, for example, has, in that time, so worked its abstractions into our concept and use of language that language's other function, speech, seems so in need of restoration that several of us got back to hieroglyphics or to ideograms to right the balance. (The distinction here is between language as the act of the instant and language as the act of thought about the instant.)

But one can't any longer stop there, if one ever could. For the habits of thought are the habits of action, and here, too, particularism has to be fought for anew. In fact, by the very law of identity of definition and discovery, who can extricate language from action? (Though it is one of the first false faces of the law which I shall want to strike away, it is quite understandable--in the light of its identity--that the Greeks went on to declare all speculation as enclosed in the "UNIVERSE of discourse." It is their word, and the refuge of all metaphysicians since--as though language, too, was an absolute, instead of (as even man is) instrument, and not to be extended, however much the urge, to cover what each, man and language, is in the hands of: what we share, and which is enough, of power and of beauty, not to need an exaggeration of words, especially that spreading one, "universe." For discourse is hardly such, or at least only arbitrarily a universe. In any case, so extended (logos given so much more of its part than live speech), discourse has arrogated to

itself a good deal of experience which needed to stay put--needs now to be returned to the only two universes which count, the two phenomenal ones, the two a man has need to bear on because they bear so on him: that of himself, as organism, and that of his environment, the earth and planets.

We stay unaware how two means of discourse the Greeks appear to have invented hugely intermit our participation in our experience, and so prevent discovery. They are what followed from Socrates' readiness to generalize, his willingness (from his own bias) to make a "universe" out of discourse instead of letting it rest in its most serviceable place. (It is not sufficiently observed that logos, and the reason necessary to it, are only a stage which a man must master and not what they are taken to be, final discipline. Beyond them is direct perception and the contraries which dispose of argument. The harmony of the universe, and I include man, is not logical, or better, is post-logical, as is the order of any created thing.) With Aristotle, the two great means appear: logic and classification. And it is they that have so fastened themselves on habits of thought that action is interfered with, absolutely interfered with, I should say.¹⁷

The action of interference that discursiveness brings between the person and his experience is valid for the moment, and for the vast movements of history. Whatever is enclosed is imprisoned, manacled. The continuance of Enlightenment metaphysics (the metaphysics of "discourse"), extending into the world of science and economics, and thus, into society, demands either obeisance or withdrawal. And withdrawal denoted alienation from the comfort and certainty of the surrounding culture. The Romantic poet was the one who knew the already thorough alienation of his surrounding culture from what, to him, were the authentic possibilities of experience: a knowledge of "what each, man and language, is in the hands of."

The mass of people were (and are) inextricably involved in the demands of linear progression (advancement) and the values deriving from rapidly developing means of production (success). The Romantic poet begins by feeling already apart from the community of thought and interest about him. He

discovers himself a Romantic, not because society rejects him, but because he cannot tolerate society. The values, meanings, and self-definitions which he requires to live are not forthcoming. He is perhaps thrown back in terror, as Blake, upon the resources of his own sensibility: his thoughts, feeling, imagination, perception. If satisfaction and value are not to be derived from the surrounding culture, its actions and patterns and thought, then what is the origin of value? Blake recoils, swearing that he must make his own "system" or "be enslav'd by another Man's." Wordsworth returns from France, disillusioned, and has a mental breakdown. The questioning of accepted values is one entrance to the existential world. There must be a question for there to be a quest.

The point at which the person leaves off grasping at the available external sources of value (mother, society, material things, doctrine) is the point at which he becomes a seeker. To find an answer in a place of deficient values would constitute an abdication of the existential quest--a closing off. To ASSENT to one's own experience, regardless of the fear of danger to one's mind, describes the normal Romantic attitude. To acknowledge the DESIRE to find meaning in a world deprived of authentic meaning, to discover the NECESSITY of the question, is to embark upon an unexpected landscape of feelings and forces. In this new place, struggle and psychic SURVIVAL are prime demands. Honesty requires that the Romantics join the ranks of heretics, wandering Jews, exiles, castouts, pilgrims, hermits, martyrs, and magicians.

Day and night my toils redouble!
 Never nearer to the goal,
 Night and day, I feel the trouble,
 Of the Wanderer in my soul.

(Wordsworth, "Song For the Wandering Jew")

Necessity, of another order than that which informs the bulk of society, demands that the Romantic acknowledge the most "primitive"

or "organic" facts of his aboriginal nature, his nakedness. In this perhaps unfamiliar territory, he is less secure than an Australian bushman. For his departure from the prescribed paths of society and thought leaves him precisely in the jungle of his own undefined, unarranged being. The new path is a completely new world; its discourse is that of the new world. For the alternative "discourse" which Olson sought IS there, in the dimensions of mind that the Romantic poets discovered. It appears as if the possibility of "discovery" depends on the ability of a person to eliminate what impedes discovery. This is "breaking the set down" in Peckham's terms, an act of disorientation. The disorientation works at cultural and personal levels.

There is a central point emerging here which needs stressing. The enormity of the change in "cognition" that Peckham sees in Romanticism, cannot be over-stated. The movement is from the living experience defined by discursive constructs to an experience of immediate action. Romanticism does not merely evolve new "ideas" because it had some great "thinkers." Rather it primarily discovers the ground of experience which permits the "post-logical" assertions of Romanticism. Together with the whole complex motivation and action of the individual poets, Romantic thought and discourse developed its own distinct paths. Ideation is the process of conceiving our experience, the constructions we give to account for awareness. Peckham outlines the integral ideas engendered by, and typical of, Romanticism. But the origin of new awareness is not necessarily ideational. The eye does not "alter" simply because we get a new idea. The effects which precede logical thought, and initiate logical thought of one order or another, and are the "objects" of logical thought, are not themselves thoughts. The drive to predictability is overthrown by the fact of the new ground; and this overthrow is sometimes expressed in violent, absolute terms, especially in Blake.

The condition of the eye altering in such a way that all reality is now experienced anew is VULNERABILITY. And vulnerability as the condition of change summons the threat of pain as well

as the possibility of great "power and of beauty" and of joy. Coleridge, in the "Dejection" ode knows something of

This beautiful and beauty-making power.
 Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
 Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
 Life and Life's effluence, cloud at once and
 shower,
 Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
 Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
 A new Earth and new Heaven,
 Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud--

and he knows something, too, of the danger of allowing in the old compulsions of discursive thinking:

And haply by abstruse research to steal
 From my own nature all the natural man--
 This was my sole resource, my only plan:
 Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
 And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

Coleridge sees that it is precisely the workings of thought, and anticipation, and prediction that belong to the discursive order of things, that brings on suffering:

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
 Reality's dark dream!
 I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
 Which long has raved unnoticed. What a
 scream
 Of agony by torture lengthened out
 That lute sent forth!

The Romantic poet strives to reject codifications of reality that do not tolerate change, the effects of change, the depths of change. Traditional habits of thought cannot bring about the joy that Coleridge describes above. But once such receptivity to all the things of life has shown the possibility of a "new Earth and new Heaven," then discursive speculation can be experienced, too, as a progenitor of imprisonment and pain.

Intellectually, the Romantic poet cannot accept an order of thinking that will not articulate the magnitude of his experience. Inasmuch as he has given primacy to non-conceptual experience, abstract thinking must develop new means and vocabularies of comprehension. Coleridge and Wordsworth and Blake carry their visions and "abstruse" researchings into the stream of occult doctrine, borrowing or inventing diction which is more appropriate to esoteric traditions than the central tradition that descends from the Greeks. Blake extends his cosmogony to the area of "discourse" with his "Tractates" and various other philosophically calculated arguments. Inside the perimeters of Aristotelian logic, there is no way that one thought can be considered "infinite." Blake, however, tells us in his "Proverbs of Hell" that "One thought fills immensity." In linear discourse, such a proposition is not defineable or demonstrable. Once and for all the ideological hex on Romanticism must be removed. Blake is not "making a proposition," but a statement of knowledge realized in his experience. What has happened can be understood IN Blake's terms, but not outside them, not from outside. Could Blake have experienced a "thought" as infinite? The clue, as we shall see later, lies in the fact of the action, the form of the energies and inherent potentialities in any action, including "thought."

True vulnerability requires an abdication of discursive reflection upon the act in order to experience the immediacy of the act. Romanticism as a discipline, then, partly is concerned with the prevention of pre-conception, and prevention of the interference of reflection in the moment of action. Coleridge's "purity" of heart suggests this total receptivity, unmediated by "thinking" and the reductions which accompany "thinking." Thus, for the Romantics, the order of thought which comes to reflect upon experience will differ as the order of experience differs. Romanticism is a ground of experience that dictates form to thought. The opposite tendency obtains in the other discourse. Romantic experience INFORMS Romantic conception. But this experience, as already suggested, is normally of an

eschatological order. Thus the borders of thought expand as the form of awareness becomes greater, more immediate. It was Coleridge who made the most sustained effort to comprehensively describe the activities and implications of Romantic "vision" in philosophical terms. His Notebooks and Biographia Literaria address the several fields of philosophical inquiry in a desperate effort to OPEN, once and for all, the thinking patterns of man to the ground of the Imagination and the Reason informed by Imagination. Each of the other poets, with the notable exception of Byron, supports or modifies an assertion that can be found explicitly stated in Coleridge's prose.

We have seen that the demands of print-fostered technology and culture assimilated naturally all those people who were pre-disposed to it. That is, those who had completely imbibed the Enlightenment manifestations fell willingly into the greater and escalating activities of static mechanism. Their world was meaningful, purposeful, defined, and available. Having completely learned the "dissociation" of their sense ratios facilitated the swing into nineteenth-century science-oriented culture. But the Romantic sensibility was different. It was not susceptible to machination. Otherwise the poet would have succumbed to the powerful incentives of Rational empiricism. While others were being oriented and assimilated, the Romantics were being DISORIENTED. But this disorientation is not indicative of any "dissociation" of sensibility. The vestiges of Enlightenment learning fell away from them, more or less quickly, as the surrounding culture made more and more demands upon them. Romantic poets refused "dissociation of sensibility." Byron leaves behind his Enlightenment wife. Wordsworth and Coleridge get beyond the Enlightened psychology of Hartley and Godwin. One could argue, using McLuhan's terms, that the Romantics' "sense ratios" (sensibilities) were more integrated, less attenuated by linear values and visual extrapolation, and therefore, more awake to the inimical forces inherent in the new

culture. McLuhan notes, as I have mentioned above, that it was the aristocracy who were most alarmed by the stratagems of the bourgeois revolution. It was the inheritors of power, leisure, and education who were most crushed by the advance of liberty, equality, fraternity, and the assembly line. Certainly Lord Byron would have been a candidate for the guillotine. Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Blake, and Byron were candidates for Romanticism and the Romantic crisis on at least three grounds: first, these men were all disenchanted with the proceedings of Enlightenment codifications of reality; second, they were all receptive to their own sense of the difference between how they felt and how they were instructed to feel; third, they all had energy and will, enough to penetrate into another world of experience. One cannot overlook or mistake the desire of the poets to live and write.

Let me recapitulate some of the main principles outlined above. The Enlightenment had created a certain "normality" of values, ideas, and therefore, responses to living. "Newton's sleep" expresses the stance which most people still maintain toward the world. Unawakened experience remains precisely that, until some event happens to liberate the person from the restraints of "sleep." In a sense, the Romantic poets, in discovering the ways in which the human mind can awake to vision and illumination, can be seen as reactionaries. For what they discover is so fundamental to human experience that their vision and poetry could be interpreted as a return to some very basic tradition of human value and insight. However, we still view such ideas as "liberation" and "illumination" with an eye to the rarity of their occurrence. And most critics would be dubious about assigning a Romantic order of experience to a "central tradition." I prefer to look at Romanticism as reflecting the typical, habitual, ordinary limitation which non-Romantic people impose upon life. Romanticism may turn out to present the most "normal" of all possible comprehensions of

life. In the meantime, Romantic poets themselves discover the need for a "suspension" of many forms of "disbelief" in order to attain the new ground of experience. Disbelief is an archetype of that "normality" which Romantics abjured. Romantic receptivity and openness is not usual, but it is in this state that Romantic poets recover the sense of the immediate life of things in the world of the mind and in the "external" world of phenomena. Therefore it is simpler to discuss Romanticism as a penetration of a normal orientation which is static and inflexible, into a world perceived in its authentic, dynamic activity. The Romantic stance is not gratuitously proffered to the poet. He has to earn what he finds. His initial activity is directed, through its very energies, toward the annihilation of things that may come between himself and the "universe." Such annihilation is tantamount to direct perception.

The Romantic order of conception is explored in more detail in Chapter V. For the moment, the central thesis is pointing toward the possibility of seeing Romanticism as a presentation of the FORMAL action of things. Romantic thought is new because it emerges from a ground of experience that has different formal properties from the "universe" comprehended in discourse. This difference is radical. But the fact of the difference makes it possible for us, as readers, to become involved in the poems in a fashion which is not "normally" present for us. In the same way that the poet's experience was unusually "present" for him, so the Romantic poem extends an order of presence that is unusual in eighteenth and nineteenth-century poetry. The formal differences in the way that experience is received by the poet, in his progressive 'descent' through layers of old learning until his separation from life is dispelled, mean a new attitude toward the poem as an act of legislation. And a new form of legislation, a new way of presenting the laws of experience, suggests a new and different form of interaction between the reader and the poem. Romanticism, both in its conception and its poetry, seems to enforce a high degree of immediacy.

The theme of suspension of normal attitudes of our physical and mental being permeates Romanticism. But the historical development of Romanticism demonstrates a similar trend. We must keep in mind that by 1700 (the year of Dryden's death) English letters had, in its main currents, turned away from the imaginative, multi-dimensional presentation and conception of life exemplified in Shakespeare, and moved toward an idolatry of Reason. Reason was used as the instrument to define "Classicism." The eighteenth century took three generations to build up enough energy to break the reification that had proceeded, unimpaired, along the lines set out by Dryden's criticism.

The reinforcement of "neo-classic" principles of writing and criticism prevented the best minds of the eighteenth century--Johnson and Swift--from moving beyond a cynical and negative relation to the world. The central problem for the thinkers of that century lay in the fact that neo-classic thought had totally circumscribed the territory of positive ideas with layers of high definition. In 1720 Shelley would have been called effete, Wordsworth indecorous, Coleridge obscure, Blake a ranter. In spite of the work of Williams and Duncan and others in the contemporary "romantic" field, we still hear warnings of Romantic "sentimentalism," the modern equivalent of the eighteenth-century critical declamation of "enthusiasm."

Ironically, it was precisely the works of "enthusiasm" that opened the way to Romanticism. With the arousal of scholarly and poetic interest in the late eighteenth century for the "primitive," "savage," "wild," "Gothic," Celtic myth, "chivalry," and so on, the circumference of knowledge containing neo-classic ideas began to loosen its tightness. The inherent reasons for this opening are important to our discussion. While Bishop Hurd (Letters on Chivalry), Thomas Wharton (Observations on The Faerie Queene of Spenser), and others were praising the vitality of the world of chivalry and beginning to explore the mythology of the British Isles, the neo-classic critics exposed the weaknesses of their intellectual artillery by proclaiming the evils--notably the regressiveness--of "enthusiasm." They questioned the historicity of Ossian and the poetry of Chatterton. It is

significant that by 1800 Blake was attributing genius to both Chatterton and Macpherson, well after the forgeries had been proven. Historicity has nothing to do with myth. The dimensions of Ossian were imaginative, more so perhaps than Macpherson had intended. As Blake, Keats, and others realized, Ossian was authentic in spite of the reports of philology to the contrary. Here is an example of the typical failure of rigid definition of experience and poetry to grasp what is immediately obvious: Ossian was not a resurrection of history but of the dimensions of myth in the present. The "universe" of myth is a supra-historical tradition of thought and feeling. Here is the validity of the work to Blake. Romanticism, by placing initial stress on the mythic dimensions of immediate perception, contravenes the categorical and reductive compulsions inherent in the logicizing of neo-classicism. The values which late eighteenth-century writers credit begin to affirm the full position of the slightly later Romanticism. For the criticism of Wharton and others carries an awareness of Ossian and the "Gothic" to their studies of the classic authors. Bringing a sense of the mythic proportions of art to the study of the "ancients" effectively introduces values into criticism which do not belong to a temporal, neo-classically conceived lineage of literary virtues.

One could perhaps suggest that the tragic despair of Swift, for example, or Pope in Book IV of The Dunciad, is tied up with the cultural restraint characterizing the milieu. This restraint was imposed and maintained by both the economic and intellectual obsessions of the eighteenth century. Wordsworth would probably not have survived then as a poet. The possibility of Romanticism required a distancing in time and space --that is, culture--from the climate Swift endured. Fertile minds such as his could not leap into the new channels of thought, simply because there were no sources of affirmation in his external world; there was nowhere to go. The force of the neo-classic "known" was too present, too pervasive to be side-

stepped for some other fulfilment. The anger and intellect of Swift found ample space to act upon his environment, however, in radical satire. Swift triumphs over the failure of a culture to discover meaning, by laughing. The explosion of Swift's gestures toward his age, and the admission of Pope to cultural disintegration in The Dunciad, further assist the disentanglement of a mythic conception of life from the reductions of neo-classicism. By 1800, Wordsworth could afford the luxury of strolls in the Lake Country, protected by Dorothy and Coleridge. Satire, forgery, popular revival of the Gothic, a growing disdain of pedantry, domestic and foreign revolution, all contributed to the thrust toward revaluation. For the Romantics as much as for Nietzsche, the "revaluation of all values" was feasible and necessary because the errors implicit in neo-classical thinking "stood forth in all their naked inconsistency." The neo-classic failure to comprehend the universe through a discourse of categorical values and imperatives revealed, over and above the incorrectness of their particular views, the inherent forms of thinking that had encouraged these false conclusions.

The fact that the form of definition is clarified suggests a basis for the Romantic rejection of Enlightenment Reason on conceptual grounds. Kant helps resolve the problem of "discursive thinking" in his Critique of Judgment. The correct critique of judgment immediately suggests the "suspension of judgment" or disbelief. Judgment can be seen as an act that interferes with experience, not because it is evil or clandestine but because its mode of operation is already physically at odds with direct perception. Its mediation of experience is virtually a physical thing, inasmuch as thinking is an act. Beyond the fact of reification and enclosure that are latent in the very form of activity of discursive thought, there is the URGE TO REIFY. This urge is more susceptible to criticism than the form of a thought itself. In whose service is this urge? The tools the mind brings to the task of understanding

life are re-examined by Romanticism, at least implicitly.

To achieve Romanticism's new base for conception, the complete relinquishing of Enlightenment goals was required. But goals are only a kind of signal. Beyond the giving up of Enlightenment goals and values, the Romantic gives up the means by which those values were originally projected. Blake gets myth back into the "human breast," where it belongs, and where it always was. Once it is known that the discursive logic is "normally" employed in the service of the "urge" to predict and anticipate (ie. to "know"), and that the predictive drive is normally in the service of defensiveness, one can see how logic coupled with fear soon creates an almost impenetrable wall of pre-conception between universe and man:

And if it is true that we now live in fear of our own house, and can easily trace the reason for it, it is also true that we can trace reasons why those who do not or did not so live found out how to do other than we.¹⁸

Thinking itself is not to blame for anything. It is the use we put to thought that gives thought the appearance of the villain, and inspires one form or another of "anti-intellectualism." Romanticism implies as much. But Romanticism does begin--and here is the important thing--before conception. The mythic dimension of Romantic poetry, which we will look at in another chapter, are revealed in activities inaccessible to discursive thinking. Generally, Romanticism replaces thought as the approach to the moment with the moment as an existential reality demonstrating the coherence of man and cosmos. The approach to such a moment, charged as it is with mythic dimension, is one of a suspension of discrimination. In the Romantic poets this act of suspension is presented as some kind of "passivity." Having relinquished the conceptual goals of the Enlightenment, the Romantic poet can only get to "the moment" by a dislocation from any remaining "normal" pre-disposition

toward experience. What was pre-defined and pre-dictable for others was not so for the Romantic poet. But if the normal predictive drive was more or less nullified in certain experiences, then those experiences would be more or less totally unexpected. Pre-dictable: whatever can be "spoken in advance" cannot be the same thing as what a Romantic poet must feel or what his poem must say. Thus, we find a considerable emphasis in Romanticism on the notion of "surprise," "amazement," "awe," "suddenness," and so forth, together with a vocabulary replete with figures of openness, receptivity, vulnerability, passivity. Surprise in openness.

So here is the question: if Romanticism eschews predictability, then what must be the appropriate stance of the reader to the poem? What is the extent of the reader's interaction with a Romantic poem?

FOOTNOTES

¹ Morse Peckham, "Toward a Theory of Romanticism," PMLA, LXVI (March 1951), 8.

² viz. Blake, "The Mental Traveller."

³ Peckham, "Toward a Theory of Romanticism," 8-9.

⁴ R.D. Laing, The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise (Penguin, 1966), p. 20.

⁵ Peckham, "Toward a Theory of Romanticism," 10.

⁶ Morse Peckham, Beyond the Tragic Vision: The Quest for Identity in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Braziller, 1962), p. 41.

⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

⁸ Ibid., p. 44. italics inserted.

⁹ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 84.

¹¹ Peckham, in "Toward a Theory of Romanticism."

¹² Beyond the Tragic Vision, p. 84

¹³ Olson, Human Universe. See especially "Equal, That Is, to the Real Itself," where he deals with some implications of advances in theoretical science.

¹⁴ Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, War and Peace in the Global Village (New York: Bantam, 1968), p. 7.

¹⁵ Marshall McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy: the Making of Typographical Man (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 138.

¹⁶ viz. the last chapter of The Gutenberg Galaxy, where McLuhan focuses on Blake's intuition of the danger of the proliferation of linear perception in society.

¹⁷ Human Universe, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

CHAPTER III

The Actual Context of a Romantic Poem

Romanticism can be seen in part as a general redirection of the poets' verbal organization of experience toward existential immediacy. A Romantic poem is really a place. Where is this "place"? Where is a Romantic poem? Where does it act?

In the last one hundred and fifty years countless hypotheses have been held up to defend and clarify that body of creative genius and labour known as Romanticism. The poems, like Keats' urn, still "tease us out of thought." What "Romantic" means is still rather equivocal. If we can discover where the Romantic action is happening, if we can go to the true ground of the poem, perhaps we can better see what is happening "in" the poem. I think the main difficulty hitherto has been in discovering the ground--the active, fundamental principles--of Romanticism. If we wish to understand what a poem 'is saying,' or what 'it means,' it is sensible that we should first be aware of the locus of the poem's activity. We are in search of a context, a landscape.

The partial or complete failure to discern the human context of the poem's enactment leads to unresolvable ambiguities in understanding how it acts. We persist in handling poems out of context, in manipulating, adjusting, and re-constructing them in absentia. A poem is originally the articulation of the poet's experience. It is obvious that without the experience there is no poem. When we read a Romantic poem, now in 1970, it becomes an existential actuality for us as persons. Only as the poem is being read and encountered will it declare itself, its intent, its "meaning." Whatever is "Romantic" about a poem cannot be anything disassociated from the poet as poet, from the poem as language, or from us as persons--"readers."

The actual context of the poem is the reader. The ground of the poem's immediate action is not apart from us as we read. To set the poem apart from the reader is, in effect, to remove the poem from its existential context. The last chapter illustrated the danger of such distancing. Here, too, one can see that viewing a poem "out of context" really means looking "at" it apart from the person who reads it. Outside the reader's experience, the poem is literally in absentia.

Outside the experience for which the words on the page have been the occasion, little difficulty is required to reduce the status of the poem to that of a mere object--printed matter. A corollary is that predilection toward poems as if they were objects requiring "elucidation" prefigures the entire separation of the poem from the existential actuality of the reader, that is, the reader's life. In extreme cases, criticism of poetry which seeks to define meaning and "significance" of poems--treated-as-objects is tantamount to the alienation of all but the most "distant" reader. This extremity is nothing short of a "negation of experience" (R.D. Laing). It is of critical importance that we understand some of the contingent motivations and implications of the OBJECTIFICATION of poetry. This is especially true in the study of Romantic poetry. For, as was suggested in the last chapter, the movement of the poet tends to be toward the annihilation of those things that come between the person and the direct perception. The act of objectification of a Romantic poem would, in that case, serve to come between the reader and the words: objectification is the imposition of DISTANCE upon the thing (here, the poem) that we supposedly wish to understand. Here is a famous poem by William Blake:

THE SICK ROSE

O Rose, thou art sick!
 The invisible worm
 That flies in the night,
 In the howling storm

Has found out thy bed
 Of crimson joy:
 And his dark secret love
 Does thy life destroy.

How can we proceed to explicate the meaning of this poem? The first way involves trying to construe the "meaning" with all the concepts available to us; to find and catalogue the poem's components. We are able, more or less convincingly, to make the poem 'fit' any category and obey any postulates which are advanced. Modes of criticism which adhere to analytic systems tend to respond to the question of meaning with a pre-ordained set of constructs, assumptions, definitions--an often predictable vocabulary of "critical criteria."

With Blake's short lyric, the possibilities of categorical representation are numerous and confusing. One might describe the external structure of the poem; its position in the Blake canon as a "song of experience" might be contrasted with the Blakean conception of "innocence"; we could invoke Blake's prose, other poems, his attitudes toward traditional dichotomies of 'good and evil,' 'dark and light,' 'fear and joy,' in order to come to conceptual grips with his rose made sick. We might see the poem as an 'allegory' having historical analogues. We could construe the 'symbolic' meanings of images such as "worm" and "rose." Or we might forge ahead into the realm of "mythopoesis in" THE SICK ROSE. Our attention could be directed to any 'aspect' of the poem which anyone would care to name. We are as ready with notions of how things work as Blake, are we not? We too possess cosmologies, of sorts, for the explicit or implicit function of accounting for our experience of self, others, and the external universe. Normally, the reader's stance toward the external world, and the laws

informing this stance, are brought with him to the poem. In fact, our readiness to comprehend the compelling poem, THE SICK ROSE, is intimately related to our readiness to assign predictable "meaning" to our existence. So the notion of even questioning the meaning of the poem is already a little suspect. Could it be that there are laws invested in anyone's search for truth or meaning which, themselves, preclude the discovery of authentic, lasting meaning?

Something happens when we read the above poem. At the outset we find the poem compelling, some of us. This, already, is closer to what Romantics discovered as 'meaningful' than the external approach. For a time, the poem calls an experience into being. We respond to the poem. And when we are engaged in the poem no analysis takes place. We are immediately and more or less wholly involved. There is, as it were, not enough time to both engage the poem and analyse it. To attempt this would effectively cancel out what immediate engagement there was. The poem would already be past tense, removed from us, set at a literal distance. Here, I am speaking about a temporal dislocation. Such an act succeeds in objectifying the poem by removing it from physically present action. All Romantics from Wordsworth to Keats and on down to Olson and Creeley stress the necessity of a "suspension of disbelief." The reader's true engagement with a poem is a 'negative capability'; that is, the ability to negate or ignore normal tendency of thought to take up a stance external to the activity of the poem. The possibility of the reader's participation in the poem is the condition of any 'communication' taking place. Without the interaction, the poem is useless--black marks on a white background. But the poem is certainly more than graphic art. This is a fundamental belief in the reader articulated by all moderns following Pound and Williams. The precise nature of the interaction between poet and reader in the poem is uncertain

at this point. But the event of interaction is demonstrated by the reader's response to the poem, even if only for a moment.

If we deny primacy to the fact of this baffling connection, our comprehension of the poem's 'meaning' will be limited to what we do after we read (or hear) THE SICK ROSE. This tendency is prevalent in criticism as shown in the diction readers often bring to a poem: we 'look for meaning,' write about poems,' 'look at poems,' and so on. The poem, and thus, the meaning that the poem 'has,' is often treated as existing apart from the reader in some exclusive dimension of meanings reserved for the art itself. Meaning becomes reduced to attribution levied from without. One notes that this is also the normal attitude toward any 'external' object. When the reader thinks himself to be wholly outside the poem, then conclusions about the meaning or significance are necessarily extrapolations from the poem or impositions upon it. That the poem somehow functions with the reader's personality to elicit a response in him could be ignored. This ignorance is the avoidance (conscious or unconscious) of the magnitude of the poem-as-an-immediate-experience in favour of making observations and attributions. The latter choice is both the simplest and, for some, the only choice; for such conception obeys the normal stance of logical thought with respect to things. This is the harmful form of what I referred to above as 'objectification.'

The externalization of the interpreting intelligence may have its particular and valuable applications. This same response--to externalize the critical self in order to appraise and define some function of a poem--may indicate a subsuming of a 'feeling response' within the boundaries of what can be determined from a 'reasoning and codifying' response. The urge, however, to enclose and isolate

aspects of human existence suggests something of the order of a personal and cultural neurosis. Susan Sontag writes:

In most modern instances, interpretation amounts to the philistine refusal to leave the work of art alone. Real art has the capacity to make us nervous. By reducing the work of art to its content and then interpreting that, one tames the work of art. Interpretation makes art manageable, comfortable.¹

In fact, most so-called 'meaning' evolved from a position of 'intellectual detachment,' is primarily delineating the manner and boundaries of its own delimitation of the poem. The problem arises of the value and scope of detached understanding of poetry. The more 'real' the poem is, the more 'nervous' we are likely to feel. And the more nervous we are, the more we might try to relegate 'meaning' to what Sontag calls a "shadow world." 'Critical objectivity' might perhaps be the sign or symptom of a retreat from the vulnerable reality conveyed to us in *THE SICK ROSE*, for example. Objectivity, used in this way, is a place of retrenchment. Romantic poetry, at its best, always arouses intense feeling, and therefore a condition of openness or vulnerability. But one can replace feeling with reflection, and thus avoid what could be a painful encounter.

This reaction is partly a refusal or negation--a thrusting away. It is easier to rationalize than to engage. Psychological studies beginning with Freud in modern history have demonstrated the repression of deep-seated feelings through a process of rapid rationalization--so habitual as to be normal or 'natural.' The fundamental ambivalence is intimated by the introductory paragraphs of Charles Olson's essay, "Human Universe":

The difficulty of discovery (in the close world which the human is because it is ourselves and nothing outside us, like the other) is, that definition is as much a part of the act as is sensation itself, in this sense, that life is preoccupation with itself, that conjecture about it is as much of it as its coming at us, its going on. In other words, we are ourselves both the instrument of discovery and the instrument of definition.

Which is of course, why language is a prime of the matter and why, if we are to see some of the laws afresh, it is necessary to examine, first, the present condition of the language--and I mean language exactly in its double sense of discrimination (logos) and of shout (tongue).²

There is nothing invalid about this functioning of the generalizing, categorizing, and rationalizing intellect in its own sphere. Its fault is in its presumption; its dangerousness is in its behaviour as an invalidating response. This invalidating order of rationalism, when applied to the poem, tells us more about the reader than what was read. THE SICK ROSE catalyses possibilities of experiencing in modes (such as fantasy) which requires a suspension of activities that would normally negate 'fantasy' as an actuality. It is also to be expected that one might notice a disparity between the experience one has with a poem and the thoughts which arise to replace this experience (by construing it). In a more positive sense, however, the condition of fantasy, for example, powerfully contributes to the impressions which will finally enable one to say something intelligent 'about' the poem.

The mind articulates what R.D. Laing calls different "modalities of experience."³ He mentions "perception, imagination, phantasy, reverie, dreams, memory," among others. The delimiting, circumscribing, reifying activity of the discursive reason is an important and eminently useful modality itself. What one objects to is its

exclusiveness, its partial or complete refusal to relinquish primacy over consciousness, its insistence upon speaking 'for' experience. Ironically, all this can be done with the utmost concession to the abstract validity of other modalities: it is abstract because this validity is itself defined by discursiveness. This locating and construing action, which simultaneously separates from while attaining primacy over other modalities, even names the other processes and describes their typology. The logos, its "cerebral" (D.H. Lawrence) activity, perpetuates itself as adjudicator and hierophant. It is possible that its ascendancy become so thorough as to supercede all other modes of conscious response. It is possible for a human to forfeit his contact, communion, and experience in other forms of awareness. Or, even if those others do reveal themselves, they can be suppressed, denied, or otherwise obfuscated. Some students of Romantic poetry allow critics to interpret for them.

I have sometimes called the separative, formula-making function of the mind the 'intellect' or 'thinking.' These words are used in an attempt to describe or point to our typical interpretive activities: discursiveness in form, with strong tendencies toward jurisdiction, hierarchical arrangement, and definition. I am addressing here the 'reasoning' action of the intellect, not that numinous and liberating power which Shelley addresses in his "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty."

Perhaps the motivation in 'explicating,' 'interpreting,' and 'finding meaning' is related to and part of the poem as it happens in the reader's experience. The experience we 'have' when we read is the only viable ground to question, think on, idealize. A critique of the poem in our experience, but not apart from it--this is the second way of understanding poetry. Romantic prose encourages 'original' reading--

reading without external direction. This position affirms as a basic postulate the actuality whereby the read or heard words of THE SICK ROSE immediately summon the "affections." We are aware of a connection with the poem. In this essay, the connection between reader and poem is the most fundamental GROUND OF MEANING of the poem. To attribute 'meaning' to marks on paper is as incomplete as to suppose the words to be the source of attribution of meaning to us. The poem, then, is rooted in a process of INTERACTION and INTERDEPENDENCY. For, as we are reading, we perceive the POEM TO BE OUR VERY EXPERIENCE. The experience of engaging a poem is everything that happens as we read. Nothing that is, properly, the poem, is apart from the reader. Therefore, the poem's meaning cannot exist apart from the reader. The reader is somehow the actual context of the poem.

In the confrontation of Romantic poetry there are few choices given to us. Either we are involved in the vortex of feeling, perception and cognition that the words render, or we are not. It would appear that understanding Romantic poetry is predicated upon the ability to become involved with it--assent to its flow, embrace its demands. (Quite naturally, as we have already seen, since this assent was also the condition of the poets having anything to write in the first place.)

For Blake's poem, we can see the broad implications of what happens when we read and then try to relate what has happened. Almost immediately I find I cannot express what happens, or where it happens. The poem can be investigated as a separate entity; we can stare at the page and grope for 'patterns.' But difficulty is encountered in expressing what happens with the poem. The urgency and potency of the poem are too numinous. THE SICK ROSE engages me in some actual, dynamic way which is not within the definitive circumference of critical diction. The scene, the

encounter between worm and rose, is too actual, too much with me. That which Blake has so vividly informed, is, in the immediate dimensions of experience, too much ME.

For any of us, at any instant, are juxtaposed to any experience, even an overwhelming single one, on several more planes than the arbitrary and discursive which we inherit can declare.⁴

It is I who have difficulty in finding the language to express the feelings which form the interaction with the poem. It is the poem that is eloquent. It is the poem that has the words. Blake's poem of 'experience' occurs in our experience. The sudden entry into the place where the central action is an 'invisible' worm destroying a joyful rose is, after all, best articulated by the poem itself. But the reader can only 'know' this when he is 'in' it, having a powerful experience. For our experience of the poem, the ways in which the written language is transformed in us, is first declared by the very experience we 'have.' Only by an act of self-extrication can we achieve a view of the poem as something 'other,' and therefore susceptible to examination and measurement.

In some way the poem is a 'stimulus.' It engenders, or better, makes possible a response. The moment we begin to read, something entirely new begins to happen. Our surroundings are suddenly different from what they were before we picked up the poem. Our consciousness is transformed, i.e., the FORM of consciousness has changed. And our ATTENTION is not where it was. Laing writes:

What is called a poem is compounded perhaps of communication, invention, fecundation, discovery, production, creation. Through all the contention of intentions and motives a miracle has occurred. There is something new under the sun; being has emerged from non-being; a spring has bubbled out of a rock.⁵

The poem declares itself, its motivation, dynamic, intention, energy, somehow in us.

Safely outside the current of the poem we can judge, decide, advocate, speculate, thematize, deny, refute, argue, ignore, reject, rationalize, interpret, praise, comment, construe, represent, discuss, and so forth ad infinitum. This list is composed of some more or less meritorious actions performed upon poems after the fact: emotion reconstructed in tranquillity. The repetition of these and other post facto operations reinforces habitual constructions and procedures which reappear in the reader or critic as predilections and predispositions toward poems yet unseen. Susan Sontag suggests the historical and literary base of the withdrawal from immediate experience (of art) in favour of positing intellectual constructions:

The fact is, all Western consciousness of and reflection upon art have remained within the confines staked out by the Greek theory of art as mimesis or representation. It is through this theory that art as such--over and beyond given works of art--becomes problematic, in need of defense. And it is the defense of art which gives birth to the odd vision by which something we have learned to call "form" is separated off from something we have learned to call "content," and to the well-intentioned move which makes content essential and form accessory.

Behind a screen of 'defensiveness,' all or some of the above actions have been brought to bear upon poems for the sake of 'interpreting' them, of disclosing their assumedly covert meaning. All or some of these operations have been performed under the banner of 'objectivity' and critical 'detachment.' Two things are clear: detachment here exists for the purpose of examining things-as-objects; this form of objectification has nothing to do with poetry,

and will not help us understand THE SICK ROSE. The result of such critical 'objectivity,' as opposed to 'subjectivity,' gives a sense of the separation of the person from the poem; or more crucially, from the possibility of his direct participation in the poem. The separation is a symptom-- "over and beyond given works of art"--of ontological alienation.

Under the sign of alienation every single aspect of the human reality is subject to falsification, and a positive description can only perpetuate the alienation which it cannot itself describe, and succeeds only in further deepening it, because it disguises and masks it the more.

We must then repudiate a positivism that achieves its 'reliability' by a successful masking of what is and what is not, by a serialization of the world of the observer by turning the truly given into capta which are taken as given, by the denuding of the world of being and relegating the ghost of being to a shadow land of subjective 'values.'

The theoretical and descriptive idiom of much research in social science adopts a stance of apparent 'objective' neutrality. But we have seen how deceptive this can be. The choice of syntax and vocabulary are political acts that define and circumscribe the manner in which the 'facts' are to be experienced. Indeed, in a sense they go further and even create the facts that are studied.

The 'data' (given) of research are not so much given as taken out of a constantly elusive matrix of happenings. We should speak of capta rather than data.

THE SICK ROSE offers to us an "elusive matrix of happenings." Meaning does not exist apart from these happenings: "these happenings do not exist apart from the reader. The ground of the poem IS the reader's psychic involvement: "My psyche is my experience, my experience is my psyche" (Laing, p. 19). To be engaged with a poem is to have something being made 'real' in our experience. THIS REALIZATION IS THE MEANING.

Or meaning is known by the reader as the revelation of how the psyche experiences--grasps--the poem: of the exact ways in which the psyche IS the poem.

The poem is the creation and gift of the poet. Thus, the poem as an interaction, as a meeting place, is also inter-personal. The poet's poem exists AS OUR VERY EXPERIENCE only when we are immediately there, ourselves. As William Carlos Williams writes in Spring and All,

In the imagination, we are henceforth (as long as you read) locked in a fraternal embrace, the classic caress of author and reader. We are one. Whenever I say "I" I mean also "you."⁸

In THE SICK ROSE, this 'embrace' may or may not be known; much depends on the reader. Ideally, possibly, the reader can become, for the duration of his COMPLETE ATTENTION to the poem, nothing other than the poem. In not being separated from our experience, we are the evidence for the actuality of the poem, the ground from which it speaks and which we share with the human who wrote it. If the embrace is as complete as Williams would have it, then there is no difference between "I" and "you." There is only the poem. Wordsworth writes in the Preface (1800) to his Lyrical Ballads (p. 270):

I have one request to make of my Reader, which is, that in judging these Poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgment of others.⁹

Wordsworth, with urbanity and care, strives to impress upon the reader the importance and actuality of PRESENCE in the poems, "Poems so materially different from those, upon which general approbation is at present bestowed." His Prefaces, more than merely philosophic and aesthetic

theory, are directed to the public with the intention of elucidating his intention of 'exciting' intense, immediate 'feeling.' "I wish to keep my Reader in the company of flesh and blood."¹⁰ For a poet is "a man speaking to men."¹¹ He "thinks and feels in the spirit of the passions of men."¹² Wordsworth's advice to his readers is applicable to all poetry; we must look to the 'effects' of the poem. But, as we shall see, the effect of the poem our ability to properly engage it in its dimensions, is determined by the form of presentation. Wordsworth's Prefaces are documents showing the signs of a Romantic preoccupation with a new way of presenting an ancient subject matter. Romanticism must also be considered a FORM OF PRESENTATION. And what is 'Romantic' in this, is the way the poem achieves an interaction with the reader's psyche, literally taking him beyond the pales of discursive conception into supra-rational landscapes of awareness. The 'subject' of a Romantic poem--the 'objects' that are 'in' it--are significant in terms of their relationship to the perceiver; first to the poet, then, through language, to us. The direction and directness must be stressed. It is partly how the poet presents his 'subject' TO us that either enables us or prevents us from realizing it. The other part is our initial willingness to suspend "disbelief" and enter the poem.

My experience of THE SICK ROSE is not expressible in words, at least not very satisfactorily. I cannot match with critical diction the enormity of the ground from which it speaks, and in which I journey imaginatively. One stammers. The impact of THE SICK ROSE and the possibility of enumerating "meanings" are at odds--two entirely different things. I cannot find words other than "O Rose, thou are sick! " If we approach this poem as possessing some arcane "meaning" no aesthetic statement

can bring it wholly into the mind. If we approach the poem as possessing something even as general as 'content' no formulation can encompass it. In our critical repertoires there are only attributions, analogies, and reference systems. The main thing is that the reader has to risk the full impact of his own feeling if he wishes to apprehend the poem in ways that approximate the writer's informing energy. The Romantic poet demands a great deal from his readers:

If the doors of perception were cleansed every
thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.
For man has closed himself up, till he sees
all things thr' narrow chinks of his cavern.

Suzanne Langer states in her book, Philosophy in a New Key (N.Y.: Mentor, 1951), p. 45, that experiences of an ineffable order, such as we may feel when we read Blake's poem, cannot be expressed by language of discursive conception, because

Only certain products of the symbol-making
brain can be used according to the canons of
discursive reasoning.

This notion, deriving from Kant's Critique of Judgment and Cassirer's work in 'symbolic logic,' further suggests that the laws of discursive thinking demand the linear arrangement and construction of things that are to be treated reasonably. The language of this treatment tends to discursiveness itself, so that from the 'standpoint' of the individual 'thinking back on' his experience, interpretation will tend to represent the world of the poem as a linear phenomenon. Thus, interpretation will summon categorization, generalization, analogy, and hierarchies of one sort or another. The poem can mirror back to my conception anything I wish to see there. One

could read THE SICK ROSE as the overthrow of courtly love values by the energies of darkness. One could then say that this was 'good' by identifying the worm as a force of Imagination; or one could say it is 'bad' by projecting onto the worm a quality of 'death' or linking it up with the vitiating forces of 'reason.' Or one could see the poem as a satire, or a comic piece. But these categories may constitute the "capta" discerned by the selective prejudices of the "discursive reasoning," or urged from us by our own "natural" biases and values. Here, Blake's poem would have the therapeutic action of inadvertently (a poem has no will) showing us the forms of our values and the force of their emergence.

There is much to be said for data (or capta). Data studies data. It does not study what we feel to be a poem. It studies itself, delineates its own activity. Data does not articulate experience. THE SICK ROSE articulates experience. Poems are not discursive, except on the visual level of reading across the page, encountering the first word and then the second and so on. But poems are messages to a whole sensibility and a whole imagination. Nothing less will do to 'know' Blake's poem. Romantic poetry is not addressed to the 'dissociated sensibility'-- which resulted partly from the externalization and hypostatization of the visual sense. Eye movements back and forth across the printed page support similar linear processes in the conception of experience. Even before we reach the poem, our stance toward it is conditioned. Discursiveness sets the stage for behavioural approaches both to the moment and to the world of the poem. It encourages quantitative methodologies of positivism. The nineteenth-century denigration of the Enlightenment Reason is based on Reason's imposition, its domination from without by the distantly superior 'point' of view. The laws and dicta of such a

mode of intelligence appear to be, and act as if they were, incommensurate with the 'ineluctable.' To understand experience (with a poem or with a tree) we must have a reintegration of sensibility. While the discursive asserts dominion over the entire ground of conscious existence, poetry--and especially what is Romantic in poetry--will not even be felt much less comprehended. With the assistance of cultural, historical, social, moral, theological, philosophical and egoic 'values,' the linear holds sway over ontology. The result is the delimiting of experience--all experience--to those possibilities of which linear "mind" is custodian.

I stumble over Blake's lyric because it realizes (I realize) NON-DISCURSIVE modalities of experience. It is from the very habit of thinking about poetry with linear tools that a discrepancy arises between 'manifest' and 'latent' meanings, between apparent content and the esoteric profundities. We are told that there are 'seven types of ambiguity,' and so on. It is inherently impossible for the reasoning process to succeed in its private ambitions; it cannot articulate the poem's meaning because 'meaning' is not something that the poem 'has.' Meaning is what is set in motion; what happens. And the place meaning happens, where activity is known to be going on, extending, is right HERE. Romantic empiricism is the feeling now, in the flesh, the 'passion' which the poem extends to those who assent to it, open themselves up large enough to embrace it.

How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts
the airy way
Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by
your senses five?

(koan: William Blake)

Like Blake and the other Romantics, there is an inertia we

have to overcome; an enclosure, a levelling mediocrity
to penetrate.

May God us keep
From Single vision & Newton's sleep!

FOOTNOTES

¹ Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation (N.Y.: Dell, 1969), p. 17.

² Olson, Human Universe, pp. 3-4.

³ Laing, Politics of Experience, p. 18.

⁴ Olson, p. 5.

⁵ Laing, p. 34.

⁶ Sontag, p. 14.

⁷ Laing, pp. 52-53.

⁸ William Carlos Williams, Spring and All (Dijon: Contact Publishing, 1923), p. 4.

⁹ Citations from Wordsworth's Preface are to Lyrical Ballads: Wordsworth and Coleridge, ed. R.L. Brett et al. (London: Methuen, 1968).

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 250.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 255.

¹² Ibid., p. 261.

CHAPTER IV

Disorientation is Physical:
Tapping Your Toe to Music

The notion of Romanticism that is developing is this: the process of "disorientation" that the poet undergoes in his historical situation also has psychic ramifications. The formal qualities of these ramifications can be seen as laws that are operating on all levels of being. We can, for example, witness the dislocation of the Romantic poets from the security and definition offered by their society. We can further see into the precise ways in which the individual minds of the Romantics dealt with the fact of dislocation: the historical principle is transformed into a psychic principle. But the differences between the two are less important here than the essential similarity. The movement in both culture and person was from a linear orientation to a non-linear orientation via a process of disorientation. This general pattern emerges in specific ways and places, but it is the continuity of form among all Romantic poets (including contemporary "romantics") that I wish to establish and develop.

If the notion is true, we should be able to find many poems in which a process of disorientation from linear perception, value, and thought is succeeded by some order of non-linear re-integration. There are many such poems that demonstrate this process in varying scales. One is tempted to fall back on the familiar notion of "death and rebirth" to clarify the process. But to do this would be to summon already thoroughly assimilated and somewhat hackneyed literary values. For what is most central in the process is a change in the form of PERCEPTION, and the enormous changes in other functions of mind which accompany this. Romanticism presents this process and transformation in physical terms. It is the sense of physical immediacy conveyed by the words of many Romantic poems that simultaneously allows

and demands the co-operation, the co-action of the reader. And it is this co-operation or involvement in an action with respect to another action (the poem) which the reader first manifests as his very experience. Thus, the reader's action may, in fact, parallel the original, poetic act of the poet, and thus be the counterpart, in its form, of the poet's original perception. Here, again, is the "legislative" power of the poem. It forces us to experience, compels us to act (even quietly, within ourselves), and so points to our very experience. This is what is intended in the notion that the great poem "reads me," rather than I read "it." Romantic poetry is immeasurably important for this: its best writing engages us, via its active laws (the laws of language), to become AWARE OF WHO WE ARE--aware of the dynamics of our own being, their magnitude, and their possibilities. For who we are, at any given moment, cannot be more than our relation to the universe shows us to be. For the duration of our attention to the particular poem, the poem is the only available universe. And the poem is an action, specifically, the reader's action, which is never other than the reader himself.

So the reader's engagement is somehow a re-enactment of the poem. As such, the reader is in possession of the poem's "meaning." This is why the extent to which the reader can relieve himself of the burden of pre-conception and that larger impediment, self-consciousness, is crucial to engagement with a poem. The less he has of self-consciousness, the more he is susceptible to the dynamics of the poem. The more he can directly engage these dynamics, the more he will live and act in the world of the poem--the more completely he will be there. And being there, he will "know" the laws of that place. For he will be acting them, living them; they will not be apart from him, or "other" than him.

But the loss of self-consciousness will mean the loss of normal discrimination--namely linear, discursive discrimination. A person cannot accomplish this himself. He requires some form of discipline. The poem is that discipline, or at least, the

occasion for the emergence of a discipline in us. For the "laws" that are active in a poem are somehow in harmony with laws in us: we speak of being "touched" by a poem or by music, for example. The identity of the laws of a poem and the laws of a person makes art possible, creates what we call "communication." Romantic poets began to discover ways to draw out the laws, forms, dynamics of our being by first discovering these laws in their own experience, and second, discovering means of rendering these laws in language.

The poem helps. The process by which the reader is relieved of self-consciousness constitutes a process of "disorientation." For the "normal" orientation of a person is governed by laws that have discursive form. So the swing from a position of ontological security defined by "self-identification" and "self-definition" to a new dimension of being defined by non-discursive principles, is a re-enactment in miniature of the whole collapse of the Enlightenment. Romanticism discovers, in effect, that the actual (active) laws of being are here, in this moment--not in some far off world of ideal Forms, but in the form of the present. Romanticism discovers presence.

For a Romantic poem to bring the reader completely into its "magic circle," it must accomplish a physical presence in the reader. If the reader remains "outside," or if the poem does not render its impulses fully to bring the reader "in," then Romantic interaction between poem and reader will not happen. The poem will not give form to its things, objects, thoughts, and so they will not be real to the reader as immediate action. Romanticism has its great poems--those in which content is fulfilled, unimpeded. These all succeed, in part, by indirectly precluding the reader's stance of detachment by creating physical immediacy.

A brief discussion of Coleridge's poem, "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," will demonstrate the possibilities of the above concept of Romanticism. Then, by using the analogy of music, I hope to parallel Coleridge's development of the poem with the physical interaction of a listener with music.

Coleridge begins in a condition of aloneness and finality:

Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison!

His present condition is presented as desolate. He feels deprived of past possessions:

I have lost
Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
Had dimm'd mine eyes to blindness!

Already he has projected the loss of potential experience in some other place with a loss of something past. He is an old man, mourning the "beauties and feelings" of youth. His awareness is limited to what he cannot have. The conditional voice of "would have been" clearly shows the time-locked form of linear thinking. He suffers, imprisoned indeed, in self-consciousness. He is literally blind to where he is, because his thoughts are where he is not. He even goes so far as to think that he may "never more" see his "friends" again. His loss of expectation at not being able to accompany them, together with his thoughts "about" them, create a sense of negativity and even fatality. He slowly begins to recall his past experiences in the same locale where he has directed them. First, we are given a general sense of the place--"The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep." And then, as his memory brings him more and more particular images of nature, he is able to "see" his friends "emerge/ Beneath the wide wide Heaven." By now (l. 21) he is virtually looking through their eyes;

and view again

The many-steepled tract magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light
up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles
Of purple shadow! Yes! they wander on
In gladness all.

Stopping here, for a moment, one is compelled to ask, "What or who wanders on?" We are as much with the "Isles/Of purple shadow" as with the wanderers, are we not? What moves on here? Are we not somehow right there, "emerging" with the others? Here we see the recurring Romantic theme of the ability of memory working upon the Imagination to release the mind from linear and negating forces. In spite of what we may think of the memory as a receptacle of events in the past, we are here engaged in another man's present. Coleridge has moved out of the force of linear thought and into the energies of memory. Then, he takes a slight step back. He does so by recalling the past condition of life that Charles Lamb had suffered,

for thou hast pined
And hunger'd after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
And strange calamity!

The vividness of the memory of suffering suddenly takes Coleridge out of the positive rhythm that had been developing up to this point. The image of "the prison" shifts to "In the great City pent." We are back to the beginning. But the present condition is one which reflects, once more, the temptation Coleridge is under. He too is "hungering after Nature." He wants what he believes he cannot have. Wherever he fixes his attention, that is manifested to him. Then, without warning,

Ah! slowly sink
Behind the western ridge, thou glorious Sun!
Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers!

This wish for vision, for Lamb, coming suddenly upon us like this, is a suffusion of light and action where there had been stasis and stagnation. The sheer desire and energy of Coleridge to have his friend be filled with "joy" suddenly manifests the image of the "glorious sun." What happens to the reader here?

Do we not see how a sudden presence, the impact of an unexpected thing, reveals the difference between immediacy of form and the continual postponement that linear thinking makes of desire.

A delight
Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there!

These lines reveal that Coleridge realizes that he is not there, but that he is no longer trying to get "there" because he IS HERE. He has left the ambivalent offerings of the memory, the implacable swing between pain and pleasure that thought-applied-to-memory brings, and can now see the whole physical presence of his immediate surroundings.

Nor in this bower
This little lime-tree bower, have I not mark'd
Much that has sooth'd me.

He goes on to mention a few of the things that he had "mark'd." Each is presented as a past entity--"hung," "I watch'd," "lov'd," "that walnut-tree/ Was richly ting'd," and so on. These things, however, were not the prime things of his perception. The preceding lines have shown us where he really had given his attention. But these lines are important. They indicate that Coleridge had noticed some of the things about him, and that they had "sooth'd" him somewhat. All along, in the intervals of his thoughts and vivid projections, he had also been making probes into his immediate surroundings. The past is mediated by time, if we think as such. The present is mediated by self-consciousness, if we become trapped in the swing between pain and longing, between loss and expectation. But in line 54 "now" gets into the poem in a way that is typically Romantic:

and a deep radiance lay
Full on the ancient ivy, which usurps
Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
Through the late twilight: and though now the bat

Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters,
 Yet still the solitary humble-bee
 Sings in the bean-flower!

Note especially how the italicized words themselves "usurp" the previous tone of the poem, pointing directly to things. And how carefully the images are piled, mounting toward the word "gleam," as if the whole force of nature were driving toward that one thing. But it is our enactment really, as much as nature's or Coleridge's. Rather, in the same form as nature perceived by the poet. Lines 59-67 express what Coleridge believes has happened:

Henceforth I shall know
 That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
 No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
 No waste so vacant, but may well employ
 Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
 Awake to Love and Beauty! and sometimes
 'Tis well to be bereft of promis'd good,
 That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
 With lively joy the joys we cannot share.

Coleridge's address to Lamb in these lines is not successful poetry, but it does offer a few hints as to the process Coleridge is discussing. "Nature" does not "desert" us because it IS wherever we are, regardless of how desolate the place itself may be. The mind and "heart" are not "Awake to Love and Beauty," however, except in the act of perception through "Each faculty of sense." It is the knowledge of immediate things that allows the experience of "glory" to be fulfilled in a person. The ability of the poet to follow the various modes of perception and "contemplation" back and forth through various time and space has the effect of making him susceptible to a "sudden" awakening in the full present. The rhythm of oscillation, together with a progressive loss of self-consciousness, unite in the selfless empathy Coleridge feels for Lamb to produce a welling up of numinousness and gratitude.

Listen to the sound of "still the solitary humble-bee/
 Sings in the bean-flower." And at the end of the poem, Coleridge

and Lamb are united in the form of "the last rook" seen as "its black wing" "Had cross'd the mighty Orb's dilated glory." The perception of the hard-edge particular in the midst of the open (dilated), is a powerful epitome of the change that Coleridge has undergone. And Coleridge's offering of an alternative percept--the sound of the "creeking" wings of the rook flying "o'er thy head"--make it clear that Coleridge is not dealing in scientific but in dimensional accuracy. He is saying, in effect, you can take your pick--the sight, or the sound. Each has the power of presence, enough to illuminate the mind with "joy." But more is required than mere looking or listening. In the first case, Lamb must be "gazing." In the second, the condition of full perception is "when all was still." The true figure-ground relation is not only bird against sun or sound against sky. The true figures, things, objects are these. But the true ground is the RECEPTIVITY of the being who ATTENDS to them. In effect, Coleridge's poem demonstrates to us (and in us) as it did to Coleridge, that one must dislocate from one's NORMAL ANTICIPATION OF BOTH LANGUAGE AND EXPERIENCE before the multi-dimensional in experience can be entered "Awake." The Romantic poet cries "Awake." It is a demand.

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Tapping your toe to music. With this action most of us are familiar. It may be fruitful to discuss what we do with a musical stimulus to see if music is a formal analogue of Romantic poetry. I am suggesting one example of what I see as a Romantic principle of mental activity, namely, the process of conforming to the circumambient energies of the human environment. Here, I am referring only to the perceptual environment, not to activities usually considered to be independent of "external" activities or phenomena. It is likely, however, that this other order of mental activity could be comprehended as following similar laws. The relevance to the study of Romantic poetry is simply stated.

The fundamentally oral and aural properties of speech, and poetic speech in particular, begs the question of what happens when we LISTEN. (The "humble-bee/ Sings in the bean-flower.") The dimension of poetry being considered here, then, is the musical character of speech as it is encountered by the listener (a reader). With poetry, we are first listeners, because we are dealing with and responding to sound. So there is some formal continuity between listening to music and listening to poetry. The continuity obviously resides in the form of listening, the act of hearing. How we treat what we hear depends on things other than the fact of hearing. The physical response made to sound does, on the other hand, offer a perhaps more overt and demonstrable index of the direct effects of sound than what we are able to supply afterward.

The body of an attentive listener becomes an extension of the musical instruments; that is, he is audially informed. To be audially or acoustically informed is to take the form of sound and, therefore, to become responsible to the mechanics or physical energies that sound is presenting. This is a "natural" process. Somehow we are what we hear, when we are hearing. Thus, one is required to "play." If one does not play, register the movement or energy, the transference of energy from the source to the person, say by tapping the toe, then a contradiction will be felt. This contradiction is felt in the body, present as a kind of unfulfilled compulsion which has emerged by virtue of an immediate demand. The music sets in motion an entirely different premise for balance, homeostasis--PHYSICAL ORIENTATION, if you like. The properties of music create new "criteria" for equilibrium of the being. The body, via the ear, 'knows' these new criteria instantly. One vibrates to the sounds. Sounds are direct signals to the body. Sound below a certain number of cycles will cause the body to disintegrate. That is, one has no choice, physically, for the toe taps by itself, naturally, unless prevented by an act of will, or other distraction.

Such prevention will perhaps bring some measure of unease or discomfort, or even pain, to the listener, which may compel him to stop completely by withdrawing physically as well as mentally. For discomfort to extend to disapproval is not difficult. This refusal or negation is susceptible to its own laws and can easily proceed along its own pathways--from the refusal to allow the whole self to achieve a rhythmic homeostasis initially, all the way to declamation of the music on "intellectual" grounds. English Blake teaches men to sing. Zorba the Greek teaches the Englishman to dance.

In Human Universe (p. 52), Charles Olson writes:

A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it (he will have some several causations), by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader.

The body wants to render the impulse, to become it, to transform the acoustic vibrations into actions of its own. Such is the principle of IMITATION at its highest pitch. When drums sound their insistent rhythm, their definitive measures, we will perhaps want to play our fingers on the table, or slap our thighs, or get up and dance. The "classic caress," the unity of listening "subject" and external "object," commences with the first sound of drum or word. The vibration against the ear-drum is already a physical, uncontrollable response--the first definitive resonance. The PHYSICAL IMITATION APPEARS AS A RESONANCE CORRESPONDING TO A VIBRATION. The vibration is outside, or seems to be. But the fact of resonance and correspondence obviate a linear distinction.

We can stop listening in part--we can withdraw attention. But the drum has no power to cease its expression, its expulsion, and projection. We can deny or permit its extension to our whole consciousness. The body is, all the while, lyric. It moves outward unless we enclose, deny, enslave it. Here is Wordsworth in "Expostulation and Reply":

The eye it cannot chuse but see,
 We cannot bid the ear be still;
 Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
 Against, or with our will.

To reply to the drums is to complete the action, a full demonstration of feeling--"the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."

The body, in other words, has already attuned itself to the particular demands of sound and concomitant rhythms. The implications are enormous. To give oneself completely, in attention, without cerebral interference, is to penetrate the linear distinctions of subject/object which an external observer would note. Correspondence in the kinetics of sound acts, however, to eliminate such distinctions: SEPARATION is replaced by SIMULTANEITY. So, Keats is able to write to his friend, Woodhouse (October 27, 1818) that the poet "has no Identity." And Zen Buddhism maintains that human beings manifest (without realizing) an order of being which is neither subject nor object, and which does not discriminate between them in a linear sense, cannot, for it interacts completely with whatever it beholds. In the same letter Keats says the poet is "continually informing and filling some other body." Or is it that some "other" body is continually informing him? Only the very act can prove that these are the same.

If the world of division--the "universe of discourse" that Olson questions--is illusory in some way, and Newton was indeed asleep, then these grounds of "truth" and authority are integral in the formation of an erroneous perception. A person could believe, act, respond, and teach as if the world of "single vision" were absolute reality. Hesitancy to respond to the demands of one's body attuned to a new order of interaction with the world or with art, reflects the basic defensiveness and "nervousness" that many people feel when confronted by immediate, physical response.

What we desire and what we permit are often widely separated. Essentially we are as Blake saw us: "less than All cannot satisfy Man." And yet we normally fear what we cannot correctly and confidently anticipate, or "know" from outside. The form of "knowing" that most people are taught to employ in order to make "self-identity" is a linear one: it encourages notions of inside/outside, self/other, good/evil, man/God, heaven/hell. But, ironically, to feel "nervousness" or excitement of some kind before art, or on hearing a poem, is ALREADY TO HAVE LEFT THE SECURITY AND SELF-DEFINITION ENFORCED BY LINEAR RELATIONSHIPS. Loss of predictability is often signalled in the flesh. The body is already moving into new dimensions of response. The slightest sensation or anxiousness signals that the journey is already under way. It is a literal journey. The Imagination of Romanticism is no "mere" imagining. The entry into somewhat un-"known" and un-foreseeable places and spaces is already initiated. Once we are on board the Pequod, or in the company of the Ancient Mariner, or Childe Harold, we are, in a sense, signed to the whole journey. To hide below decks will prove dull indeed.

It happens before we know it. We tap our toe un-self-consciously. We GO WITH the new direction being registered in us, until we become self-conscious. Our disorientation has already happened. Remember that all along Coleridge had been noticing the things of his immediate environment, but that only by opening his initially closed mind could he suddenly see things and partake in them. Under the stimulus of sound and rhythm, our disorientation from beliefs and treasured values and definitions has already been effected with ease. It crept in unexpected and perhaps unwanted, in a microsecond: sound is so fast, its impulse so present. In us, the impulse is felt, in part, as DESIRE. And the warning of the prophet is fierce:

Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse
unacted desires. (Blake, "Proverbs of Hell")

To continue the journey is to allow the physical impulses transformed and registered in the body to inform the other dimensions of mind. Here is seen the physicality of Imagination, why it is possible for one to directly engage the stimuli that especially Romantic art presents. This point will be examined later: Romanticism encourages the physicality of its images and sounds to act upon the receptive reader, to co-respond with him. Romanticism, in beginning with perception, gets the whole rhythm of correspondence back into the body, where it belongs. It seems that to continue the journey requires an act of letting go--the suspension of a repertoire of judgmental and other interfering devices, further and further dislocation from the world of feeling and thought governed by discursive distancing, closer and closer correspondence with the actual things that are there, very much in motion. One might call this act "commitment," and thus be happier with my argument. Either way, it is a RISK. Self-consciously, we can notice the drift and force of the new energies which have appeared, become frightened, threatened by engulfment in alien things, and retreat. Otherwise, we let go. This is partly a decision (a matter of will), partly a necessity (a matter of sensibility), partly already in action (a matter of the body).

The simultaneity of new responses, the new balance or ORDER, actually, the whole new form of our being, is now a fact--in the moment that the toe begins to tap the mind begins its play. This is an act of assent. To dissent or withdraw would be to beckon pain. The re-definition, the new pulse and direction, seemingly carries us away from the old safety of "normal" feeling and behaviour. We go into new places. And the toe is already moving. And the voice would give answer, chorus, song. And the legs would join in the dance.

All this renewal is a basic Romantic urge,

...for axioms in philosophy are not axioms until
they are proved upon our pulses.

(Keats to John Reynolds, May 3, 1818)

And the one thing that makes all communication of energy, "meaning," rhythm, thought, and perception possible in a poem is, in the first place, the burst of SOUND upon the ear--the short, sharp breath of uttering the sound, that is the "cause" or occasion of the ear's resonance. Each word falls upon the ear with an IMPACT, the impact of VOICE. The word is a gun going off. One is slightly startled. With an actual gun the ear's pain threshold is brought into play. But a car backfiring in the street in the quiet of night has nothing to do with pain. We can react against SURPRISE. Our normal stance toward the external world of phenomena avoids shock or real SUDDENNESS. The reason is that for the duration of being startled from our linear orientation, the governing principles of that orientation are unable to exert their power and means of definition. We still hear the expression, "I started." We say, "I started," because, in retrospect, the experience was one of going away from this ground--the secure ground of linear definition--toward or into another dimension. One is left with the feeling of having "started" or "begun" something ELSE. A word, not necessarily an exclamation, can, under certain conditions, produce the effects of powerful exclamation. We take most sounds, including the human voice, for granted. We have assimilated them into our normal orientation. We are capable of anticipating and predicting language more or less completely, so we think. Whenever our normal expectation of language or experience, or the experience of language, is not true to its predictable form, the result can range from mild dismay to anxiety and psychosis.

For a person who has been isolated from other human beings for a long time, the sound of a human voice will inevitably carry considerable force. It is not merely a question of the renewed fellowship with one's kind that I am suggesting here, although that might well accompany the experience of the sound. A grunt, or a "hello" will penetrate to the centre of his being, will fill him completely with sound; or he will fill sound completely. For previously, he had adapted to the absence of

the sound of another voice. His orientation has been reworked to include silence. But what happens in the moment that he hears what his orientation cannot account for?

Now as a matter of fact there is no stimulus which, in its full impact with us in a condition of openness, that can be accounted for by a linear orientation. IN THE MOMENT OF IMPACT the order of recognition and participation with the energy or stimulus is other than linear. Our normal, linear approach to the moment is effectively broken by the moment. And the subsequent looking back on or at the moment (for we have now reappeared in time), will resume a position of external evaluation and linear thought vis à vis the moment. "I started" is past tense. But what is here, in the moment of "starting?" In this moment, something is accomplished, fulfilled in the PRESENT tense: the "humble-bee/ Sings in the bean-flower."

Our normal anticipation of language is the anticipation of the "content" of language, or some aspect of what can be shown to be "content." That is, a linear orientation toward words or speech concerns itself with what is being said over and above how it is being said. In fact, the formal properties of speech are virtually totally subsumed within the pre-conceptual frame of reference. Gestalt psychology has shown us that, in fact, we respond to much more (in speech) than what is said. Our bodies reveal that part of us is aware of tone, rhythm, pitch; the body is always registering the "speech" (Olson) properties of language. The body also reacts to the subliminal directions which the mind gives as it mulls over the content and projects the implications of speech through time and space. The body reflects our thinking as well as our rhythm. Again, the fundamental defensiveness of human beings can be demonstrated in this context. For whenever thinking assumes a stance of being threatened, the focus upon speech content is partially subordinated to things such as tone. For example, when talking to our friends we are normally consciously directed toward what they are saying. But suppose a very suspicious-looking person

suddenly approaches and begins to address us. Do we not focus our conscious attention as much, or more, on the mannerisms of his speech? Do we not, in fact, look to all conceivable elements of his voice, appearance, behaviour, and so on? Why the change? It is to protect ourselves from sudden attacks, to attempt to quickly and effectively define the stranger according to principles which will allow us to "know" him--to know what "to expect from him." Defensiveness lies at the heart of the MISUSE of linear conception--our almost perpetual insistence upon bringing linear thought to analyse living situations. Before a stranger we are likely, (this too is predictable), to become tense, suspicious, and generally ineffective. Here, the "habits of thought" make real action impossible. Thinking, in a crucial situation, produces a tension and contradiction in most people that makes them incapable of action. And yet, we persist with linear thought, out of habit. For linear definition, we believe, is the only effective way of orienting ourselves to our environment. We are afraid of really being surprised. Our faith is in defensiveness. "Thrills" are not really surprising, they are more or less predictable, more or less secure. This is a vital point to the whole idea being discussed here. For the fact that we seek a certain, manageable amount of surprise and excitement reveals a basic dissatisfaction with normal orientation. But still, few people really go the whole way to disorientation. They settle for "brief flings," and retreat to security in old definitions. With others, like the Romantic poets, the elemental urge to break down the old forms to allow in fresh movement is revealed as a basic quality of man. In the same way that the body can respond to immediacy in life, the mind DESIRES to complete the action. Something in us is dissatisfied, not really content with the separation of mind and body. Something wants to bridge the distance. The possibility that this is actually happening in any moment, for example in a shout, encourages us to make greater efforts to perceive the moment itself more fully and directly.

When in a state of "surprise" a person is deprived of his normal "defense" structures. The more he is committed to the maintaining of these structures, the more he will be aware of danger, and the more fearful he will become. Surprise can reach the level of trauma. We speak of vulnerability in a negative sense normally. But vulnerability is also openness. Here, an authentic activity of language is clear, aside from the wretched "use" we have put to it. Language, beginning with the immediate impact of sound itself, can act to dislocate us from our normal stance toward phenomena. Poetry, as I hear it, is initially this: an act of un-mediated perception. We can make no less a promise, however, that in this "starting" or "surprise," we do not "know" who we are. But we only know this after we have returned from where we were. Then the question remains, "Where were we?"

In the case of the car backfiring, there is no doubt that we do hear the sound. The sound is startling because it is so disorienting. For the duration of this disorientation (later called "startled"), we are not what we normally think ourselves or interpret ourselves to be. We do not then exist inside the circle of definition which is typical and habitual for us. Disorientation produced by sound (or any sudden thing), creates a condition of alertness and readiness. It is not far from this openness to enclosure or defensiveness, as has already been shown. But this need not necessarily happen. One can remain open in a way which is not equated with self-destruction. From an external point-of-view, the situation looks as though what is required is an immediate effort to regain the lost ground, re-establish the circumference of predictable events. We are conditioned to be afraid when we are startled. Fear is something we impose upon openness--a Freudian "projection." But if one is afraid, then one will probably not be utterly open, because fear compels defensiveness, which is an enclosure. But in the case of exclamation, or the backfiring car, can one say that one was afraid in the moment of sound? The answer is that we are undoubtedly not defensive in any sense in the exact instant that the sound strikes us. It is always after that we import fear.

And fear immediately obviates the PASSIVE, RECEPTIVE quality of the moment. When we hear, as we are hearing the sound, the sound itself is the ONLY EVIDENCE FOR OUR EXISTENCE. It IS our very existence, for it is our only EXPERIENCE. We cannot "know" we are different from sound, because the categories of separation and distinction have been effectively removed by the act of sound, and our complete interaction with it.

There is the argument. Its implications, with respect to Romantic poetry, are crucial. Pound has it in his A B C of Reading that prosody is the "articulation of the total sound of a poem." So that we can hear a poem as a continual dislocation, moment by moment, syllable by syllable, from our ordinary ground of experience. And we can hear the "total sound of a poem" in a similar fashion. But here, the multi-dimensional properties of sound, together with the various different means of creating sound, point to a much larger sense of our interaction with a poem as SOUND. For "sound" possesses more dimensions than that physical one at the ear, although it is this that I have tried to show is the beginning of our activity vis à vis the poem. Disorientation through the direct impingement of particular sounds is one formal means of poetry for bringing the reader into the new dimensions of receptivity where he can experience in new ways. Blake writes in "The Auguries of Innocence":

We are led to Believe a Lie
 When we see [With del] not Thro' the Eye
 Which was Born in a Night to perish in a Night
 When the Soul Slept in Beams of Light.
 God appears & God is Light
 To those poor Souls who dwell in Night,
 But does a Human Form display
 To those who Dwell in Realms of day.

Until we are suddenly "awakened" by a sound, or a sight, or somehow, we cannot know our own "Human Form." In the same way that "God" shires far away to those who exist in "Night," so

the reader's connection with the meaning or "truth" of a poem appears to be some remote, attractive, yet hidden thing. Those who think that there is some "meaning" to find--those who look "with" their eyes instead of "Thro'" them--will search for a thing outside themselves, and so, will not "discover" anything. When we see through the eyes and hear through the ears our perception will be transformed. So the effective Romantic poem, like the pounding drums, demands that we cease using our senses at a distance, and instead, enter through them into the "Penetralium of mystery." (Keats' phrase). Edmund Carpenter's work on "Acoustic Space" in Explorations in Communication (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), can assist us in considering the larger dimensions of the poem that sound engenders. First, there is the physics of sound to consider:

The essential feature of sound, however, is not its location, but that it be, that it fill space. We say "the night shall be filled with music," just as the air is filled with fragrance; locality is irrelevant. The concert-goer closes his eyes.

Auditory space has no point of favoured focus. It's a sphere without fixed boundaries, space made by the thing itself, not space containing the thing. It is not pictorial space, boxed in, but dynamic, always in flux, creating its own dimensions moment by moment. It has no fixed boundaries; it is indifferent to background. The eye focuses, pinpoints, abstracts, locating each object in physical space, against a background; the ear, however, favours sound from any direction. (p. 67)

Earlier, Carpenter has seized upon the close relation between linear thinking and linear vision:

Truth, we think, must be observed by the "eye," then judged by the "I." Mysticism, intuition, are bad words among scientists. Most of our thinking is done in terms of visual models, even when an auditory one might prove more efficient. (p. 66)

The thinking life of man becomes closely oriented to his need to "locate and identify objects in three dimensions. It is the objects which compel our attention and orient our behaviour" (p. 67). The "locomotion and attendant kinesthesia" of depth, which is "the chief characteristic of visual space," are 'suppressed and ignored' (p. 67) in order that we may focus on the act of definition. In fact, then, movement and touch, taste and smell make it possible for vision to discover depth. But these are forsaken for the precision and "knowledge" that vision alone can offer.

The second thing to consider is the order of involvement that sound offers:

Not all sounds are sudden, and not all are fear-producing. Auditory space has the capacity to elicit the gamut of emotions from us, from the marching song to opera. It can be filled with sound that has no "object," such as the eye demands. It need not be representational, but can speak, as it were, directly to emotion. (p. 69)

The elimination of the intervening factor of thought and expectation, the elimination of this mediating power, opens a world of all dimensions. These dimensions are those of immediacy and action. In poetry as in music, all the sounds--their cadences, beats, rhythms, momentum, shifts--conspire to create a universe of direct correspondences:

Poets have long used the word as incantation, evoking the visual image by magical acoustic stress. Preliterate man was conscious of this power of the auditory to make present the absent thing. Writing annulled this magic because it was a rival magical means of making present the absent sound. (p. 69)

But the voice restores the acoustic ground and thus supplies the other levels of immediacy which the visual image or thing is capable of showing--"because the visual image that sound evokes comes from the imagination"(p. 69). Sound becomes more

effective a means of demonstrating the full dimensions of a visual image to the perceiver than the image itself. For it makes a ground in which all the senses can mingle and play with each other:

This interplay between sense perceptions creates a redundancy, where, even if one element is omitted, it is nevertheless implied. We feel, hear, and see "flaming, crackling red." Leave out "red," and it's still there; green neither flames nor crackles. (pp. 69-70)

The Romantic poets read aloud to one another. Blake's songs are somehow to be sung. The ground of being where our sense "ratios" (McLuhan) are re-integrated is the Imagination. It is via the senses that disorientation and re-integration take place. Disorientation is, therefore, physical. And the "dissociation of sensibility" is overcome in the Imagination.

If we look back now to Coleridge's poem, we can perhaps better comprehend the process of his recovery of immediacy. The sense of presence is, above all, shown in the movement toward concreteness, that is, toward direct perception. We move toward and into high particularity AMID openness. The music of the poem is very much here, in the resonance of the particular thing in a dynamic, unimpeded perception. That is, the music exists as much in the relationship the reader creates with the poem. For that correspondence has its rhythms too, and its motion. The music is thus an aspect of meaning, inseparable from meaning. In "Kubla Khan" we find some of the most powerful use of tetrameter in English poetry. How much does this underlying stress forge the way we "see" and receive the poem? Is it not an utterly different conception of meter than what Pope gives us? Is it not, too, the product of an entirely different conception of life?

CHAPTER V

Romantic Conception and Romantic Perception

Now I want to get back to a basic distinction which concerns us in the study of Romantic FORM. It is Olson's: "The distinction here is between language as the act of the instant and language as the act of thought about the instant." The difference is between "logos" and "shout," the shout that will inevitably "startle" us into some new awareness. I suggested in the first chapter that Romanticism was the appearance (historically) of a kind of Orphic tradition. In Blake, this character is certainly most clear--his continual assertion of his acts of "prophecy." Most hermetic traditions and doctrines repeat certain principles of experience; they share a common conception of the universe. In contrast to the universe discerned by the laws of "discourse," the world of "Imagination" is peopled with quite different forms and forces. In the imagination things and activities are possible which are not allowed in 'thinking about' life. It is there that even normally painful and repulsive experiences can be seen purified of the egoic values we possess. Enslaved by linear, one-dimensional vision, a person exists in a kind of darkness; he is not attuned to the connections that function everywhere around him, drawing him out of his "cavern" into the real world. For Blake, the possibility is realization of God. For Keats it is "Truth" or "Beauty." In Coleridge's prose we find the metaphysician drawn into the circle of "Unity." Magic and "infinite" possibility of attainment run through Byron and Shelley and Wordsworth. The general principle which comes through the whole "transcendentalist" theodicy that Romanticism points to is NON-DISCURSIVENESS. The Romantic stance toward the world is non-discursive. Thus, the attitude toward the poem--the writing and the purpose--must also change. When the eye alters, the forms and energies of words alter.

Olson's statement of the need for an alternative "discourse" has already been fulfilled many times in history. The principles of that other discourse, that which registers "direct perception and the contraries," are primitive indeed. And they are historically "old" as well as immediately "primitive." One problem needs to be cleared up right away, and that is the danger of misunderstanding the meaning of "primitive." Gary Snyder writes in Earth House Hold (N.Y.: New Directions, 1957):

Poetry must speak from authentic experience. Of all the streams of civilized tradition with roots in the paleolithic, poetry is one of the few that can realistically claim an unchanged function and a relevance which will outlast most of the activities that surround us today. Poets, as few others, must live close to the world that primitive men are in: the world, in its nakedness, which is fundamental for all of us--birth, love, death; the sheer fact of being alive.¹

Olson would add, the moment. That is, the forces and forms that impinge upon us, engage us, make their unique and powerful demands upon us in each instant of perception, are primal. They are thus the actualization of our nature in its most "primitive" reality. Earlier, I suggested that the formal continuity between widely separated occurrences unifies them more surely than any external resemblances. Wordsworth felt that, in spite of his "experimental" treatment of both language and conception, good readers would notice that he was not departing radically from the classic tradition of the finest poetry:

It is apprehended, that the more conversant the reader is with our elder writers, and with those in modern times who have been most successful in painting manners and passions, the fewer complaints ...he will have to make.²

In spite of the enormous differences in language, convention, philosophy, culture, and time between, say, Blake and North American Indian shamans, the same order of reality is evinced in both. Blake is reassured of this by Old Testament prophets!

I then asked Ezekiel why he eat dung, & lay so long on his right & left side? he answer'd "the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite: this the North American tribes practise, & is he honest who resists his genius or conscience only for the sake of present ease or gratification?" (Marriage of Heaven and Hell, p. 154)

The archaic roots of Romantic poetry are perceived by the reader, not as direct reference to a historically defined past, but in the very energy of the unfolding poem. The experiences that are truly ORIGINAL, truly from his origins, are also the ARCHFORMS of MAN. If an Indian sees in a tree what Coleridge sees in Mt. Blanc, then these two are united through a formal contiguity of perception. The spiritual journey is universal. The universality of Romanticism resides generally in its being a manifestation of the spiritual journey. But the spiritual journey, the authentic, existential fact of it, is sometimes confused with things other than the literal GOING on the journey. Philosophy undertakes no journeys. But Romanticism is not a philosophy. It is an enactment.

Morse Peckham's repudiation of a "universal" Romanticism in favour of isolating English and European Romanticism from its apparent formal analogues simultaneously ignores the depths to which such affinities may run, while thrusting the whole burden of Romanticism upon eighteenth and nineteenth-century cultural history. The Romantic--whatever is grounded in and rendered by the non-discursive--traverses the boundaries suggested by the linear study of history. Its universality is inherent in two things: a concept of history

which denies an essentially universal ground of the Romantic is itself linear and static; and the direct influences recognized and acknowledged by the poets lead us back and forth through time and space into cultures and epochs which "historical" eighteenth-century England only barely knew or not at all. Both Romantic conception and perception suggest explicit affinities with minds and cultures geographically and temporally outside this period in Europe's history. The dimensions in which we read and enjoy Romantic poetry relieve it of historical isolation.

The "primitive" mind of the Romantic is the untamed, unfettered mind. But the very liberated consciousness of which we are speaking is one of the oldest possibilities known to man--the possibility of gaining total realization of our "true" nature. Religion, under the pressures of the laws governing social institutions, does not present this possibility. Nor does the philosophic discourse descending from Plato offer an answer. Gary Snyder sees the theme of liberation--authentic, experiential liberation--demonstrated in the "Great Subculture":

At this point, looking once more quite closely at history both East and West, some of us noticed the similarities in certain small but influential heretical and esoteric movements. These schools of thought and practice were usually suppressed, or diluted and made harmless, in whatever society they appeared. Peasant witchcraft in Europe, Tantrism in Bengal, Quakers in England, Tachikawaryū in Japan, Ch'an in China. These are all outcroppings of the Great Subculture which runs underground all through history. This is the tradition that runs without break from Paleo-Siberian Shamanism and Magdalenian cave-painting; through megaliths and Mysteries, astronomers, ritualists, alchemists and Albigensians; gnostics and vagantes, right down to Golden Gate Park.

Snyder continues in a fashion which, outside the context

of Earth House Hold, could easily be taken for a discussion of the central concerns of English Romanticism:

The Great Subculture has been attached in part to the official religions but is different in that it transmits a community style of life, with an ecstatically positive vision of spiritual and physical love; and is opposed for very fundamental reasons to the Civilization Establishment.

It has taught that man's natural being is to be trusted and followed; that we need not look to a model or rule imposed from outside in searching for the center; and that in following the grain, one is being truly "moral." It has recognized that for one to "follow the grain" it is necessary for one to look exhaustively into the negative and demonic potentials of the Unconscious, and by recognizing these powers--Symbolically acting them out--one releases himself from these forces. By this profound exorcism and ritual drama, the Great Subculture destroys the one credible claim of Church and State to a necessary function.⁴

It is clear that the above could be a statement about Shelley's Prometheus Unbound or Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, or Byron's Manfred. Romantic poets embark upon a ground of reality liberated from impositions and definitions from without, and also from the already assimilated definitions. It is these latter which assail the "Unconscious." It is, in part, what the environment has induced in us, and in the poets, which can make the effort to regain the lost world of vision such a difficult, painful task. Here is Byron's anguish in Childe Harold, Canto III:

Yet must I think less wildly:--I have
thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame:
And thus, untaught in youth my heart to
tame,
My springs of life were poison'd. 'Tis
too late! (Stanza 7)

A consistent Romantic notion is the sense of "thinking" as being inimical to liberating perception--an act of interference. Often, thinking creates the "demons" which plague and torment us. Blake devotes the whole of his Job to a presentation of how living according to the "letter" is not living according to the "law." The first is the enactment of a conception; the second is the manifestation of the direct perception. Job has to realize his god-nature before he can be liberated from the demons. Prometheus must realize that his "god" is a creation of his own thought, a victim, like himself, of self-will. Beyond discursive thinking is "direct perception and the contraries."

Romanticism is thus, initially, a working through of the demonic nature and, possible, a subsequent realization 'beyond good and evil.' In this process, at any point in it, we can achieve a fair conception of the poet's imaginative world and his stance toward it. But this has been often done. I am not only concerned with the ideas that the poets possess. Rather, it is the place from which the poets present their experience--the formal ground of their writing--that concerns me here. I mention some of the dimensions of their epistemology only to demonstrate that we must go beyond this, even as when we are engaged in the poems we go beyond any epistemology as such. As Blake writes, "Nor is it possible to Thought/ A greater than itself to know" ("Little Boy Lost"). In the best Romantic poems, we go beyond conception and begin to enact what the poem is presenting. That is, the poem becomes a perceptual matrix. In Romantic poems, what we act to, and how we act, suggest that the Romantics have managed, sometimes, to get beyond what Olson called the "lyric interference" of the poet in the act of writing, so that the whole energy of the poem comes over to us. What I am hinting at here is the possibility of understanding

Romantic poetry in Olson's PROJECTIVE terms.

In some respects, approaching the Romantics in terms of "projective verse" is difficult. Olson himself has suggested that Romantic poets are impeded and "burdened" in one way or another. He believes the "projective" is a development in poetic form beyond what the Romantics accomplished. I agree, in part. Yet it was, to a great extent, experimentation and realization of the Romantic poets which opened the way to contemporary "romantic" poetry. Simply said, the Romantic poets did not always achieve in verse what they seem to have achieved in their experience. But their experience bears directly on what Olson reiterates as the necessary "projective" stance toward the world. Their failure was in finding radically new ways to express themselves. In these cases, the "projective" size of their living is not fully realized in their writing. Nonetheless they sometimes succeeded. And in these times, they fully anticipate and serve as guides for Browning and Olson, Hopkins and Ginsberg.

Olson's famous essay on "Projective Verse" states at the outset that there is "a stance toward reality [that] brings such [projective] verse into being."⁵ This means that there is a certain place-from-which the poet must speak, in order to be considered "projective."

It comes to this: the use of a man, by himself and thus by others, lies in how he conceives his relation to nature, that force to which he owes his somewhat small existence. If he sprawl, he shall find little to sing but himself, and shall sing, nature has such paradoxical ways, by ways of artificial forms outside himself. But if he stays inside himself, if he is contained within his nature as he is participant in the larger force, he will be able to listen, and his hearing through himself will give him secrets objects share. And by an inverse law his shapes will make their own way. It is in this sense

that the projective act, which is the artist's act in the larger field of objects, leads to dimensions larger than the man. For a man's problem, the moment he takes speech up in all its fullness, is to give his works his seriousness, a seriousness sufficient to cause the thing he makes to try to take its place along side the things of nature. This is not easy. Nature works from reverence, even in her destructions (species go down with a crash). But breath is man's special qualification as animal. Sound is a dimension he has extended. Language is one of his proudest acts. And when a poet rests in these as they are in himself (in his physiology, if you like, but the life in him, for all that) then he, if he chooses to speak from these roots, works in that area where nature has given him size, projective size.⁶

The requirement, then, for a poet to fully know his "projective size" precedes the possibility of his rendering of experience in a "projective" manner. Here, the use of "rendering" is important. For the projective poet differs from the "non-projective" poet by presenting language as a 'natural' extension of his being, an approximation of the world of nature--a rendering or revelation of man's (the poet's) very nature. The "stance" or orientation of the poet with respect to nature (the universe of his perception) which Olson is invoking here is experiential, not conceptual. The possibility of the poet recognizing his projective stance in relation to the world is the same as recognizing how, the precise ways and moments, his experience extends beyond discursive bounds. The Romantic poet does move through the walls of his cavern. The times in which this (projective) act is accomplished constitute the "high" points, or "peak" experiences, of the poets. The six main Romantic poets all achieve peak experience--a loss of the "sprawling" and, thus, confining ego--and relate these perceptions in their poems. Some key examples are necessary to show

how some of the poets do, in fact, warrant the name "projective," at least in their connection with the world of things, if not always in their poems.

All the Romantic poets, (except for Byron, who abjured all forms of moralizing and outright didacticism), are concerned with their roles as the "unacknowledged legislators" of man. The radically new nature and implications of their experience places upon them the burden and excitement of two forms of "legislation." The first is the understanding of the 'laws' or principles of their experience--perception, feelings, cognition; the other is the demonstration of these laws in the materials of their verse. To a certain extent, we can understand the projective scope and implications of their experience as they relate the LAWS of that experience. So we have Coleridge in THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER:

Beyond the shadow of the ship
 I watch'd the water-snakes:
 They mov'd in tracks of shining white;
 And when they rear'd, the elfish light
 Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
 I watch'd their rich attire:
 Blue, glossy green, and velvet black
 They coil'd and swam; and every track
 Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
 Their beauty might declare:
 A spring of love gush'd from my heart,
 And I bless'd them unaware!

The first ten lines present the immediate perception of the snakes to us. It is the very IMMEDIACY of their reality to the mariner that allows the burden of his guilt

to fall away from him in the "self-same moment." The condition of his liberation from suffering is his direct perception of the snakes--their movement, colour, form. We will return to these lines later. But for now, the important thing to note is that the mariner leaves off his direct engagement with the perception of THINGS (nature), and immediately leaps into a conceptual mode. He is able, or at least attempts, to account for the nature and order of his liberating PERCEPTION by giving credit first to his "heart," then to "my kind saint," and further WITHDRAWS from the immediate experience of freedom, physical and spiritual freedom, by announcing that THE PRINCIPLE of his emancipation is his unconscious, unself-conscious, "blessing" of the snakes. What Coleridge wants to do is to demonstrate both the ACTION and the PRINCIPLE INHERENT in the action which gives it its inevitable form. Because, for Coleridge, the discovery of a process of perception whereby the control of the ego is attenuated and then penetrated, is as significant a poetic value as the experience itself. The danger is, in many Romantic poems, that the conceptual order of expression subordinates the existential immediacy. In Olson's terms, this would be a failure of form to achieve the "projective." And this would be a significant 'failure,' for "ideas are not what we act to."

But the "idea," as such, is made abundantly clear to us in the above stanzas. It is so thoroughly worked into the personality of the mariner, that one is tempted to suggest that "the act of thought about the instant" is projective, for it is an act, even though an act involving the distancing of an experience. The act of thinking, in itself, is immediate. The real distinction is that "the act of thought about the instant" is not presenting that instant or its objects, but rather is presenting the act of thought itself.

Sometimes whole poems, very long ones at that, are given to us with the intention of relating abstract principles of being instead of being itself. Wordsworth's Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind is concerned more with heavily discursive discussion of abstract ideas than with the rendering of concrete percepts. Wordsworth wishes to record a linear development or "growth" as well as a multi-dimensional process. He gives us more lines of the former than the latter. This makes the poem invaluable as an intellectual document, but withdraws from the projective form inherent in the very things and feelings Wordsworth is writing about. The poet seems to use his concrete images to "illustrate," or serve as exempla for such conception as these:

There are in our existence spots of time
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired. (Prelude, XII, 208-215)

Wordsworth's best poetry, those lines in which the projective act of verse is but an extension of the perception he has had into the realm of language, are often precisely these "spots of time." But in the above it is evident that the poet is not concerned with rendering but with explicating. He has found a principle of the life of the mind, and wishes to inform us of it. It is a high order of intellect, but didacticism nonetheless. The vocabulary, the linear syntax, and the 'subjectivity' all belong to philosophy--the theoretical interpretation of his original vision. A few lines later, beginning at l. 225, Wordsworth goes on to relate a particular "spot of time."

He recalls a time in his early childhood, certain images that impressed themselves upon his memory, adding

It was, in truth,
An ordinary sight; but I should need
Colours and words that are unknown to man,
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,
The beacon crowning the lone eminence,
The female and her garments vexed and tossed
By the strong wind. (Prelude, XII, 253-261)

The poet, whose job it is to make a language that will co-respond with the non-verbal impingement of reality, feels that he must reiterate for us the fact of principle of the non-verbal. He feels he cannot present it plainly, 'ordinarily,' without telling us in ornamented prose what has already been successfully presented in verse (ll. 245-252). The effect of this is to distance the reader from the events in a concrete setting. Wordsworth, more than any of the Romantic poets, succumbs to the powerful temptation of the intellectual push to realize (in Blake's sense of "realize or abstract") the laws of action. In attempting to fulfill a double role within the poem, both contemplation and expression, Romantic poetry often does not get out of the circumference of the overview imposed by the discriminating ego--the "egotistical sublime." When linear thought controls the verse, then neither 'act of thought' nor 'act of instant' is projective.

Wordsworth, then, sometimes falls precisely into the trap of the moralist envisioned in "A Poet's Epitaph":

--A Moralist perchance appears;
Led, Heaven knows how! to this poor sod:
And he has neither eyes nor ears;
Himself his world, and his own God;

One to whose smooth-rubb'd soul can cling
 Nor form nor feeling great nor small,
 A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
 An intellectual All in All!

Wordsworth himself is not quite "Contented if he might enjoy/ The things which others understand." He insists upon "understanding," often to the loss of the impress of "form" and "feeling." In "Hart-Leap Well" we find the following absurd intellectualizing:

"Grey-headed Shepherd, thou has spoken well;
 Small difference lies between thy creed and mine;
 This beast not unobserv'd by Nature fell,
 His death was mourn'd by sympathy divine.

Such an overwhelming desire to make sure that the reader 'gets the point' does damage to the poetry. "Simon Lee," for example, is inanely over-written. Wordsworth's redundancy is a quality not of his perception but of his thought. But the projective stance is implicit in his writing even if it is not utterly registered in words. His intellectual effort to grasp; the process, the dynamic, the ACT of vision often succeeds in discovering the Romantic character of experience--the multi-dimensional, the simultaneous, the organic possibilities of the non-discursive. Still, he often presents these processes as "ideas," in the language of ideas. But the context of the ideas, and the implications which Wordsworth discerns, lead one to suppose an authentic perception in spite of the often non-projective character of his language. The authentic alternative to the constricting activities of "These mighty workmen of our later age" (Prel., V. 347) is shown when the poet "sees into the life of things." William Carlos Williams' famous poetic statement--"No ideas but in things," is brought to fulfilment in Wordsworth's "spots" of time.

The core of Wordsworth's message is that one must descend through regions of despair and futility in order to discover where the true life and meaning of one's being exists:

So I fared,
 Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
 Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind,
 Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
 Her titles and her honours; now believing,
 Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of obligation, what the rule and whence
 The sanction; till, demanding formal proof,
 And seeking it in everything, I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
 Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
 Yielded up moral questions in despair. (Prel., Xl, 293-305)

He "turned to abstract science, and there sought/Work for the reasoning faculty" (Xl, 328-329). But for all his labor to rescue some sense of truth from the paradoxes of existence, he finds "I was no further changed/Than as a clouded and a waning moon" (Xl, 343-344). The presence of Dorothy

Assisted, led me back through opening day
 To those sweet counsels between head and heart
 Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught
 with peace. (Xl, 352-354)

Wordsworth is led back to re-discover "the common language of all eyes;/ As if awaked from sleep" (Vl, 756). In this spirit of AWAKENING, Wordsworth has his finest perceptions, both intellectual and direct. He bends "in reverence/To Nature, and the power of human minds,/ To men as they are men within themselves" (XlII, 224-226). Of Wordsworth's many "spots of time," one which clearly presents the condition of the awakening vision of the real is the scene on Mt. Snowdon:

Ascending at loose distance each from each,
 And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band;
 When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,
 And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
 Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,
 For instantly a light upon the turf
 Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,
 The Moon hung naked in a firmament
 Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
 Rested asilent sea of hoary mist. (XIV, 33-42)

"Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause" becomes the condition of immediate perception. Wordsworth has no choice but must follow the inclination of his eyes. What we see is what he saw, because he does not distance us through explication. But the egotistical sublime is not yet done with the direct perception. But in line 63 the intellect of the poet first places the vision in the memory, and then commences its discursive operation:

When into air had partially dissolved
 That vision, given to spirits of the night
 And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought
 Reflected, it appeared to me the type
 Of a majestic intellect, its acts
 And its possessions, what it has and craves,
 What in itself it is, and would become.
 There I beheld the emblem of a mind
 That feeds upon infinity. (XIV, 63-71)

This order of interpretation is what Keats meant by Wordsworth's "egotistical sublime." It continues here for the rest of Book Fourteen, a highly charged rhetoric, consolidating the perceptual facts within a diction familiar to discursive thought. The accuracy of the "ideas" that Wordsworth finds articulated in man and nature are dependent upon the accuracy of his ability to respond to the immediate conditions of life. In his own imaginative correspondence we find that it is the peak moments of realization which allow him to speculate successfully upon the questions of definitions and causes.

But the poet's philosophy often holds the projective quality of his vision in check. He returns to speculation--to "reflection"--the instant that his imagination is not totally captured by the moon and sky. The shift back to reflection is, in Wordsworth, reflexive. It constitutes another form of that "irritable reaching after fact and reason" which Keats saw in Coleridge, and which Wordsworth himself repudiated. But it is clear that although Wordsworth saw the "despair" of "moral questions," the force of his mind was mainly in his ability to explicate what had happened to him. It is from this continual looking back upon experience that he derives the notion of "emotion recollected in tranquillity." Blake is right to oppose this narrow definition of poetry:

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.
Imagination has nothing to do with Memory.

Imagination "is" vision itself, not vision "of" something. Linear thought inserts the "of."

The experience itself, that which makes the Snowdon passage so vivid, is arrogated by the subsequent development of the poem. The immediacy is turned to the uses of conception and detachment.

But what is evolved conceptually is a new ORDER of conception. It is a conception based in, rooted in, a PROJECTIVE correspondence with the world. Somehow Wordsworth's IDEALIZATION of experience in spots of time does parallel, in its own detached way, the actuality of experience which he has so dynamically presented. It was the other, visionary, perspective in thought which the Romantic poets divulged to us. The inherent forms of classification and logic are still there in the Euphuistic cadences of the above lines of Wordsworth. And in the

following quotes from the Prelude, the conceptual language intimates a projective originality of perception in spite of the abstract diction:

That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive,
And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
Resemblance of that glorious faculty
That higher minds bear with them as their own.
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With the whole compass of the universe. (XIV, 85-92)

.....

Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
That flesh can know is theirs--the consciousness
Of Whom they are, habitually infused
Through every image and through every thought,
And all affections by communion raised
From earth to heaven, from human to divine;
Hence endless occupation for the Soul,
Whether discursive or intuitive. (XIV, 61-69)

.....

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
Without Imagination, which, in truth,
Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And Reason in her most exalted mood. (XIV, 188-192)

A new order of perception makes possible a new order of thought. But the perception is, itself, not linear. As Wordsworth shows us, the attainment of the synthesizing perception is absolutely dependent upon the cessation of linear thought. Here is the Wanderer as a boy in Book One of The Excursion:

--Far and wide the clouds were
touched,
And in their silent faces could he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life.

In such access of mind, in such high hour
 Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
 No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
 Rapt into still communion that transcends
 The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
 His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
 That made him; it was blessedness and love.
 (ll. 203-218) italics mine.

When thought ends, there is no "I" to pray or praise. There is no ego to think about "God." In the abeyance of the normal SUBJECT-OBJECT stance toward the 'external' world, the person has no "identity" apart from whatever holds his attention. What he sees, he is. What he hears, he is. Even the "egotistical sublime" has disappeared in such an act of being. And it is an act. Wordsworth's "wise passiveness" is a tremendously dynamic force. Receptivity, vulnerability, the risk one takes in dropping all external and defensive postures, are the pre-condition of this order of "knowledge." Having once realized that we are what we behold, that we are the living (Divine) Imagination which "is the express/Resemblance" of "absolute power," the conclusions of intellect will necessarily change. They will articulate the laws and active principles of being in spite of their "discursive" form, because they are rooted in deep "insight."

The intellectual stance, if not often projective itself (as it appears on the page), nonetheless indicates an energetic perception which is projective. The central clue to the order of perception which Olson calls projective is, I believe, epitomized in the falling away of ordinary subject-object relations, and their replacement by a unity. Coleridge and Wordsworth both see this unity as obtaining in all things and in all modalities of "mind." The dichotomy of linear thinking and Imagination is resolved not by reason but by

Imagination--in direct perception. So in Blake, we find that the separation of Los from Urizen (Urizen is "torn" from the side of Los), is resolved in a Divine unity wherein both Reason and Imagination are "types" of the same source. In Blake's Romanticism too we find that "One thought fills immensity." A "thought" is somehow as infinite and undefineable as Divine Love.

The process works both ways. Once the reasoning faculty acknowledges the possibility of arriving at comprehension (unity) by following its energies toward their "goal," then the discursive or linear movement toward this end will be the very thing that obviates success. The reason will always be looking, never finding; and the result will be "despair." For reasoning soon arrives at the contraries, the paradoxes, the solipsisms that it cannot cope with. On the other hand, the ACT of thought is as sure as the act of hearing a word; and as FAST. One thought does, then, fill immensity. For when I am thinking, then what I am, as a being who is experiencing, is nothing other than the very thought I am thinking. When the linear delusions of intellect are firmly discovered to be expressions of the Divine Nature, then the "fallen" state of Urizen will be cleansed. Reason loses its pretensions and spiritually separative character as soon as the person experiences the whole depth of his original nature--his being before "the fall." For the "fall" is nothing other than the illusion of a spiritual goal, heaven, paradise, freedom, and truth, that can be found and re-attained by intellectual effort. This creates suffering instead of eliminating or illuminating it. But given its own head and means, the discursive reason cannot realize its own nature. Our divine nature is revealed and experienced in other modes. Thought will not be "pure" (projective) until discursive thought ceases. The projective

nature of both language and experience will not be manifested until discursiveness is "transcended." The boy in Wordsworth's poem is so utterly at one with the phenomenal world that he could possess no "idea" of transcendence, God, purity, unity, mind, ineffability, joy, peace, love, or prayer because he IS those things. He is ENACTING and MANIFESTING them. If some perplexed philosopher came and asked the boy, "Where is God?", then nothing that the boy would do or say could appease the thinker. For once there is a question, the philosophic mind will undertake a thinking quest. Meanwhile the boy need not search anywhere. He IS already there. Wordsworth's diction and syntax of equations make it clear that he knew these things, or show at least, that he was intellectually aware. But the more Wordsworth 'talks about' the meaning of existence, the further he gets from enacting it in his own life, and therefore, in his own poetry. The projective stance in life, as in the poem, is dependent upon the sustaining of a multi-dimensional experience and vision of the real world. The world of ideal "forms" and fortunate "prospects" is somewhat isolated by thinking, and removed from the proximity of direct sense perception and imagination. Wordsworth's imaginative creations often seem better off than the poet himself: for example, when his "Herdsman" views nature,

There littleness was not; the least of things
Seemed infinite; and there his spirit shaped
Her prospects, nor did he believe,--he saw. (Excur., 1,
230-232)

Wordsworth knows that the act of perception transcends the need to have faith. To see unity is superior to believing that unity is possible. The places where unity is shown in Wordsworth are the "spots of time." We find similar and even identical insights and experiences throughout the

writings of the other Romantics. In all these cases, the emphasis is on the things, the objects of perception in the field and act of perception. Here, Romanticism attains its highest concretion of language; from here, it derives its greatest insights. In Keats, for example, we find the same proposition offered as "negative capability." I see this working in his poem, "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity.

A condition of no-thinking is necessary before one can know that the sum and scope of all our "knowing" of truth lies in the immediate perception of beauty. Thinking mediates between the perceiver and the thing. When there is no thought, what is there to come between? Nothing comes between. So what, then, is there? Just the direct contiguity of person and thing--correspondence in "beauty." The poem develops toward this climactic re-cognition (or better yet, pure cognition) by demonstrating the gradual possession of the poet's mind by the object, the urn. Keats begins,

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness.
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,

and moves on carefully, attentively, and without anticipation of the result of his imaginative journey, to see the "eternity" of the "form." The perceptions move moment by moment, one thing after another, without pause for external comment. One witnesses each perception as emerging directly from the urn to us. And so, Keats moves through the dimensions of feeling which the perception of the particulars in the "brede" surface of the urn compel. His progressive immersion takes him beyond thought into the actions and legends there. And as he is led further inside, all his normal external attributions and explanations are

suspended. It is the sense of "quietness" and "slow time" that here conduce to the suspension of disbelief Keats knew as negative capability. These particular features of the general form of the urn enable him to grasp its entirety in an active relation with himself. They conspire in his imaginative intercourse to produce his "identity" at that moment. This is why we are certain of the poem, why its communication to the reader is so final, so exact. For it is the thing-as-perceived which comes over to us. The congruence between the suspended, timeless activity on the embossed urn accords perfectly with the suspension necessary to "see into the life of things." Here is Wordsworth's treatment of the same slow possession:

that blessed mood,
 In which the burthen of the mystery,
 In which the heavy and the weary weight
 Of all this unintelligible world
 Is lighten'd:--that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things. ("Tintern Abbey," 38-49)

Wordsworth treats the process of losing self-consciousness in a more abstract, subjective manner. "Subjective" really means here, the fact that there is still a "subject" who is the speaker of this poem. The linear development and general diction reveal the discursive stance of a "subject." Most of Keats' ode escapes this subjectivity. But the process which Wordsworth talks "about," and that which Keats renders, is the same. When our habitual or "Natural" (Blake) attitudes fall asleep, then we awake in a much deeper connection with things, a connection accompanied by "joy"

and "power." One further example from Wordsworth should make it clear that he had an authentic "understanding" of the need for openness to experience as prerequisite to profound perception. Here is part of his "There was a Boy" from the Lyrical Ballads (1800):

There was a boy, ye knew him well, ye Cliffs
And Islands of Winander! many a time,
At evening, when the stars had just begun
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake,
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Press'd closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
That they might answer him. And they would shout
Across the wat'ry vale and shout again
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled, a wild scene
Of mirth and jocund din. And, when it chanced
That pauses of deep silence mock'd his skill,
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents, or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, receiv'd
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

Again, we see the familiar process of the impress of the images of nature upon the boy's receptive mind. The correspondence between the boy and the sounds ("voice") or the "visible scene" is all that is between him and the world. But the correspondence is not itself a thing; it is no-thing. So the boy is, in fact, not different from nature. Or the dynamics of the boy's interaction with nature, in a unity, are not different from the dynamics of nature. His nature IS Nature. And the poet is very explicit as to the necessary pre-requisites for this intense communion to happen. Here, the boy must first become pre-occupied. This is presented as his calling across the lake to the owls.

They are unseen. There is only the sound, building, gathering intensity, "redoubled" and again "redoubled." Then, all of a sudden, there is a pause. The silence returns IN THE HEIGHT OF HIS INVOLVEMENT with the "voice" of the birds. Here is the second exigency: there must be an unexpected shift after involvement has been established. The first involvement increases the person's potential for a "spot of time," or visionary experience, by unconsciously increasing the person's level of attention--his engagement in an action. The sudden change, unprepared for and unanticipated, "shocks," startles, or "surprises" him awake. The awakening itself is the transference of energy, the FREE FLOW of force between the perceiver and the "thing." In this condition, one is ABSOLUTELY CO-EXTENSIVE with the "object of perception." For there no longer is any "object," as such, separated from the perceiving "subject." The "shock" literally causes (or permits) the "subject" to disappear. The boy and the lake are interchangeable metaphorically, The "bosom" of each "passively" receives the things around. The "knowledge" of what transpires in this moment is spontaneous, instantaneous. So Wordsworth says in "The Tables Turned":

Enough of science and of art;
Close up these barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

Here is quite plainly shown the other prospect of that "vulnerability" which I have mentioned several times. It is vulnerability as receptivity. One must have all one's defenses removed--all egoic needs and pre-conceptions, all the distance built into the form of discursive thinking. These must vanish before true vision happens. When one is sufficiently engaged (in reading, looking, hearing, or whatever), then a sudden shock will effect the opening into full conscious perception. It is this principle of receptivity that Wordsworth repeats

most often, and the concomitant emphasis on the act of perception. For this is nothing less to him than a complete interchange of "power," and thus, a transformation of the person. Wordsworth's tendentiousness was in a very important cause: the possibility was human liberation from folly and suffering through a direct "knowledge" of God, or what is god in us.

Coleridge's child in "The Nightingale,"

awoke

In most distressful mood (some inward pain
Had made up that strange thing, an infant's dream)

so Coleridge does the one thing he knows will help. He takes the child to the dark orchard, "And he beholds the moon, and hush'd at once/Suspends his sobs, and laughs most silently." In Romanticism, the ability to respond to whatever is there is a child-like ability. Indeed, the child can forget himself faster, allow himself to pay more attention to one thing after another, and so is more receptive than an adult who must be constantly on guard (such is our learning).

Throughout Romanticism, forgetting the self becomes a principle of awakening. One forgets the self by giving up completely to the many things of our perception. There is the famous letter in which Keats says he is a sparrow. But note the whole context:

--I scarcely remember counting upon any Happiness.
--I look not for it if it be not in the present hour--nothing startles me beyond the Moment. The setting Sun will always set me to rights--or if a Sparrow come before my Window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel. The first thing that strikes me on hearing a Misfortune having befallen another is this. 'Well it cannot be helped--he will have the pleasure of trying the resouces of his spirit. (November 22, 1817)

Earlier in the letter he has repeated the familiar discovery

of Romantic poets:

The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream--he awoke and found it truth. I am the more zealous in this affair, because I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive [sic] reasoning.

Linear thinking cannot achieve the stance to the world that the first passage illustrates. There we find, perhaps to our bafflement, that Keats holds a similar stance toward the most disparate events. What have a sparrow, the setting sun, and the misfortune of another in common? They have the projective perception of Keats in common. Even misery is beautiful and 'true,' so why try to escape it or mourn over it? Keats rescues himself from the intimidation of "hell" and the attraction of "heaven" by living in "the present," "the Moment." If the present moment is one of pain, then that is its reality. If the wretched man could look out the window in the same "spirit" that Keats does, then his suffering would cease anyway. How can one worry about misfortune when one is occupied with being a sparrow? It is what we do with pain that prolongs and aggravates it. To Keats, suffering indicates a possibility of "pleasure." Suffering, in the sense of "permitting," is only possible for a man who is living in the now, one who, like the poet, can say, "nothing startles me beyond the Moment." The certification of this interpretation of Keats' meaning is in the words "The first thing that strikes me." Pain, too, is startling or striking in its force, momentaneousness, reality, and therefore in the pleasure which it affords the person. For pleasure, as all the Romantics agree, exists in the participation in the dynamics of the moment, its force, its reality.

Blake developed a completely unified poetic cosmology. The laws perceived by Romanticism--all the metaphysics central to the Romantic conception of the universe and man's relation to it--can be found in his writing. Like Coleridge in Biographia

The "expanded" senses of Blake see the entire universe, which our instruments of discursiveness define, as the "Natural" world. Our interactions with such a world, conducted in a spirit of "blindness," constitute the "Natural" cycle. Romantic Blake sees mankind drowning in the morass of values, ideas, and beliefs that reason (Urizen) has engendered and nourished. Man lives his life trapped between the "Contraries," languishing, suffering, enslaved. The "natural man" rises up and down within the circumference of the Natural cycle, unable to see himself truly, always under the control of energies which have been diverted from their potentialities as liberating forces, and subsumed beneath a weight of linear principles. Blake's poem **THE MENTAL TRAVELLER** demonstrates the full range and predicament of the "natural man."

Blake could only have known this cycle, its formations and origins, by having "transcended" it. The escape from the cycle of Good/Evil, Heaven/Hell is actually the embrace of the entirety within the infinite grasp of "God." Blake escapes enslavement by spontaneous realization of the "Divine" nature of man. The doorway of this realization is "Perception," and the vision is "seen" by "the Eye of Imagination." That is, the ground of the divine is not "other" than the Imagination of "Every Man." Blake is not dealing in idealities at a distance. He uses the word "Body" for a reason. To "Awake" in the "Imagination" is not to transcend the flesh, but to realize it for the first time as being more than the "natural" flesh. The body is no prison, except to those who have imprisoned it. The body is the very physical incarnation of "God"--nothing less. To escape the linear laws that seem to bind man to his mortality is to discover the multi-dimensionality of "Immortality." Blake has one theme: **LIBERATION**. It is the theme and urgency of all Romanticism. But it is not merely a "metaphysical" liberation. It is freedom and joy of being alive, in the flesh--existential liberation. And always, the condition of liberation is the act of "Immediate" **PERCEPTION**:

The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way. Some See Nature all Ridicule & Deformity, & by these I shall not regulate my proportions; & Some Scarce see Nature at all. But to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. (in a letter, August 23, 1799)

The "Nature" which enslaves some is the very occasion of celebration and "Vision" to the "Eye" of Imagination. The "eye altering alters all."

Blake gravely accepts his calling as a "legislator." The laws he extends to us are, however, directly from his experience. The energy of his vision seems to carry over to us even in his most blatantly philosophical expressions. Perhaps this is because of the very vigor of the syntax--the unmitigated voice of prophecy and assertion. But what are the conditions of all this enormous possibility of spiritual attainment? Blake's letter to Thomas Butts, October 2, 1800, describes his first visionary experience after moving to Felpham. It registers a perceptual progression which, by now, is familiar in our study of Romantic "discovery" as a necessary process:

To my Friend Butts I write
My first Vision of Light,
On the yellow sands sitting.
The Sun was Emitting
His Glorious beams
From Heaven's high Streams.
Over Sea, over Land
My Eyes did Expand
Into regions of air
Away from all Care,
Into regions of fire
Remote from Desire;
The Light of the Morning
Heaven's Mountains adorning:
In particles bright
The jewels of Light
Distinct shone & clear.
Amaz'd & in fear
I each particle gazed,
Astonish'd, Amazed;
For each was a Man

Human-form'd. Swift I ran,
 For they beckon'd to me
 Remote by the Sea,
 Saying: Each grain of Sand,
 Every Stone on the Land,
 Each rock & each hill,
 Each fountain & rill,
 Each herb & each tree,
 Mountain, hill, earth & sea,
 Cloud, Meteor & Star,
 Are Men Seen Afar.
 I stood in the Streams
 Of Heaven's bright beams,
 And Saw Felpham sweet
 Beneath my bright feet
 In soft Female charms;
 And in her fair arms
 My Shadow I knew
 And my wife's shadow too,
 And My Sister & Friend.
 We like Infants descend
 In our Shadows on Earth,
 Like a weak mortal birth.
 My Eyes more & more
 Like a Sea without shore
 Continue Expanding,
 The Heavens commanding,
 Till the Jewels of Light,
 Heavenly Men beaming bright,
 Appear'd as One Man
 Who Complacent began
 My limbs to infold
 In his beams of bright gold;
 Like dross purg'd away
 All my mire & my clay.
 Soft consum'd in delight
 In his bosom Sun bright
 I remain'd. Soft he smil'd,
 And I heard his voice Mild
 Saying: This is My Fold,
 O thou Ram horn'd with gold,
 Who awakest from Sleep
 On the Sides of the Deep.
 On the Mountains around
 The roarings resound
 Of the lion & wolf,
 The loud Sea & deep gulf.
 These are guards of My Fold,
 O thou Ram horn'd with gold!
 And the voice faded mild.
 I remain'd as a Child;

All I ever had known
 Before me bright Shone.
 I saw you & your wife
 By the fountains of Life.
 Such the Vision to me
 Appear'd on the Sea.

Blake comes to the beach. It is a fine, sunny day. In the pleasure of the warmth and freshness, Blake relaxes his mind. His eyes begin to survey the horizon, sky, and sands. He opens himself to the elements of water (sea), earth (land), "air," and "fire." But notice that he is not looking "for" anything: his "regions of air" are "Away from all Care"; and his "fire" is "Remote from Desire." Like Keats, and the children and "common" men of Wordsworth, Blake does not anticipate any reward: "Not seeking recompense." He looks with an "expanding" eye and an open heart. The vision JUST HAPPENS. His sight is progressively drawn to the "particular" things--the "particles bright"--attracted by their "distinct" radiance. His experience turns to awe and amazement. He is "Astonish'd" (turned to stone) to discover that each particle is a "Man." They appear to him in "the Human Form Divine," and lead him further still to realize that all things are "Men Seen Afar." But still his eyes "continue" to increase their vision; his Imaginative Eye becomes more and more comprehensive. He awakens to the full vision of the distinct entities of the universe as a single, whole being, "One Man." The "Man" is, of course, the incarnate Imagination of Christ--God himself--in Blake. This, in Blake's terms, is equivalent to entering "Eternal Life"--satori. The possibility of attaining comprehensive vision beyond the dualistic world perceived by discursive thinking, is determined by the extent of the relation, that a perceiver can enter, with the things of this world--nature.

In the Notes to "A Vision of the Last Judgment," Blake addresses those who see (or read) his works of art:

If the spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination, approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought, if he could Enter into Noah's Rainbow or into his bosom, or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder, which always intreats him to leave mortal things (as he must know), then would he arise from his Grave, then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy. General Knowledge is Remote Knowledge; it is in Particulars that Wisdom consists & Happiness too. (Blake, p. 611)

The very stance toward the world, the liberating order of realization that the Romantic poet possesses, demands that he communicate his "Particular" knowledge to others. Blake is deeply aware of the revolutionary base of his art and his speech. The above sentences constitute a threat to the normal orientation of most people in the conception alone, as much as in the experiential implications. The existential goal was always happiness and freedom. But Wordsworth's comment on the reception of poetry applies to life generally:

we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. (Preface, p. 272)

Blake has found the immediate source of "Happiness" in the dimensions of experience with immediate things. To arrive at the place where he could "remain as a child," he had to go through an anguish of disorientation from divided existence. He writes of this in a letter to Hayley, December 4, 1804:

...I have indeed fought thro' a Hell of terrors and horrors (which none could know but myself) in a divided existence; now no longer divided nor at war with myself, I shall travel on in the strength of the Lord God, as Poor Pilgrim says.

To awake from one's "shadow" is to live in the Light.

Blake, like other Romantic poets, powerfully stresses the need to undergo a kind of "death" before one can attain divine union. In the "Inscription in the Autograph Album of William Upcott," Blake wrote (January 16, 1826):

William Blake, one who is very much delighted with being in good company.

Born 28 Nov 1757 in London & has died several times since.

After his "enlightenment" of 1803 in "the Truchessian Gallery," Blake is able to see the manner in which he has been enslaved by a demon (a "Fiend" and "iron-hearted tyrant") "for the past twenty years" of his life. Each enlightenment acts as a "death" in the sense that the "Immortal" energy of his being is victorious over the forces of "self." It is the "self" that dies. But one's normal attachment to the modes of "self-identification" is so powerful and persistent that the thought of their loss projects an aura of acute danger upon existence. But here, the bard is able, once more, to penetrate the veil of discursiveness and defensiveness created by the illusions of the ego:

...but I was a slave bound in a mill among beasts and devils; these beasts and these devils are now, together with myself, become children of light and liberty, and my feet and my wife's feet are free from fetters. (to Hayley, October 23, 1804)

Blake, like the Ranters in seventeenth-century England, succeeds in keeping suffering of all descriptions, and "sin" of all orders, very much in the world. The devils remain "these" very same "devils." Except now Blake has established a new relation with them. He befriends them, "forgives" them, and thus is liberated from them as much as they are liberated to enact their own energies and beauty.

In "A Memorable Fancy" (Plates 17-20) of THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL, Blake expands and enacts the process of

liberation of his own consciousness from the "Natural" polarity of Heaven and Hell. The passage is, in itself, an epitome of the epithalamium--the embrace of opposites. As soon as the intimidating and moralizing "Angel" leaves Blake to ponder the depths of "Hell," Blake finds himself

sitting on a pleasant bank beside a river by moonlight, hearing a harper, who sung to the harp; & his theme was: "The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, & breeds reptiles of the mind."

Whereas the angel had not entered hell, but had merely hung over the edge at a convenient distance to observe, Blake had descended completely. The way is down, further and further into whatever is there, even if this be hell or sin. Blake later chastises the angel, saying, "All that we saw was owing to your metaphysics." The departure of the externalizing and hypostatizing angel is the agent of Blake's entry into the liberated hell. Once there, he finds that even the worst horrors are actually "children of light and liberty." Again, the theme or principle operative here is the abandonment of self to the experience at hand, regardless of the danger. "If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise." Blake makes it most clear that the possibility of enlightenment is as present in hell as in heaven. For the infinite is everywhere we are: we ARE infinite. "ALL LIFE IS HOLY" ("Annotations to Lavater," number 309).

Perception through the senses is the condition of transcendence. How to cleanse "the doors of perception" becomes a Romantic pre-occupation. When Blake looks at the sun, he HEARS a choir of angels. And he is ever directing us to look at things:

When thou seest an Eagle, thou seest a portion of
Genius; lift up thy head.

But the "Natural" man does not see. Blake has Isaiah say:

"I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my sense discover'd the infinite in every thing" ("A Memorable Fancy," plates 12-13). Blake is careful to separate every and thing. For he is talking about finite, "organical" things, even though the "perception" is not "finite" but "infinite." "No ideas but in things." The person's perceptual relation determines the scope of his vision:

The Sun's Light when he unfolds it
Depends on the Organ that beholds it.
(Blake, Frontispiece to "For the
Sexes: The Gates of Paradise," p. 760)

His "Tractates" delineate, in a pseudo-deductive fashion, the metaphysical principles of being which Blake, as artist and legislator, is most concerned with conveying. It is certain that (apart from Byron) the Romantics were not above the use of philosophical STYLE in the expression of their cosmologies. But their means, instruments, and assumptions argue, at every step, beyond the circumference of Aristotelian and Socratic "discourse."

The perceptual ground which the Romantic poets in England discovered is examined by Charles Olson in another historical context. Although he sees the nineteenth-century genius mainly in Melville, his statements on the author of Moby-Dick paralll~~el~~ those principles we have already noticed in some of the Romantic ideology. Melville works from the same ground of being. Olson quotes him in a letter (1851) to Hawthorne:

By visible truth we mean the apprehension of the
absolute condition of present things.⁷

TRUTH IS AN ACT OF PERCEPTION. In poetry, truth is involved with the PRESENCE of the poem--its various energies in relation to a reader. The presence of the poem is an existential fact, to

the reader, over and above any "idea" of the "absolute condition of present things." We have seen the conception of this principle expressed in various forms of Romantic logic. The Romantics encountered the same difficulties in writing that Olson forsees in the effort to find language to articulate multi-dimensional experience:

This is not easy to save from subjectivism, to state so that you understand that this is not an observation but a first law to a restoration of the human house.⁸

If we supply Blake's intimation of a "last judgment," or a "New Jerusalem," or Coleridge's "Infinite I AM," or any of the innumerable expressions of "awakening" that Romanticism offers, the connection between Olson's ground of the "projective" and the Romantic act of immediate perception will be seen. The relationship is very important, because Olson carries his remarks on "the absolute condition of present things" over into the act of writing a poem. I hope to show that Romantic poets were aware of the necessity of carrying their projective stance toward the world over into the act of writing a poem. For it is in this further extension into the realm of the poem that is the most pertinently legislative quality of poetry. If poetry can be PROJECTIVE, that is, ENACT ITS OWN ENERGIES, then the reader's engagement with such a poem will be DIRECT--the poem will be an ABSOLUTELY PRESENT THING, the "condition" of which will be the LIFE OF THE READER AS HE READS. Even if the poem presents thoughts, so long as it enacts them and renders them immediately, the thought will remain projective. If, however, the poet insinuates himself between the reader and the action, a distance will be engendered which will effectively "end" the projective activity of the poem. Immediacy will be lost.

It is in this last, necessary extension of the principle--into the lives of others--that Romantics of all breeds, epochs, and cultures attain to the act of PRESENTATION OF THE LAW. And it is here that enactment and participation reveal the contiguity

of Romanticism with the ground of MYTHMAKING, ritual, dance, song, and tapping your toe to music.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Snyder, op. cit., p. 118.

² Wordsworth, "Advertisement" to the Lyrical Ballads (1798), pp. 7-8.

³ Snyder, pp. 114-115.

⁴ Ibid., p. 115.

⁵ Olson, op. cit., p. 51.

⁶ Olson, p. 60.

⁷ Olson, p. 118.

⁸ Olson, p. 7.

CHAPTER VI

A Romantic Concept of Form

Criticizing "the third of the great Greeks, Plato," Olson writes in Human Universe:

His world of Ideas, of forms as extricable from content, is as much and as dangerous an issue as are logic and classification, and they need to be seen as such if we are to get on to some alternative to the whole Greek system. Plato may be a honey-head, as Melville called him, but he is precisely that--treacherous to all arts, and where, increasingly, my contemporaries die, or drown the best of themselves. Idealisms of any sort, like logic and classification, intervene at just the moment they become more than the means they are, are allowed to become ways as end instead of ways to end, END, which is never more than this instant, than you on this instant, than you figuring it out, and acting so. If there is any absolute, it is never more than this one, you, this instant, in action. (p.5)

This is the theoretical expression of the projective basis of the moment, emanating from a true perception of the laws of that moment by involvement in them, and thus, enactment of them. The relevance to the act of writing a poem is crucial. For writing must also be a manifestation of projective involvement in the moment:

There must be a means of expression for this, a way which is not divisive as all the tag ends and upendings of the Greek way are. There must be a way which bears in instead of away, which meets head on what goes on each split second, a way which does not--in order to define--prevent, deter, distract, and so cease the act of, discovering. (p. 6)

Thus, Olson comes to write in his "Projective Verse" essay:

From the moment the projective purpose of the act of verse is recognized, the content does--it will--change. If the beginning and the end is breath, voice in its largest sense, then the material of verse shifts. It has to. It starts with the composer. The dimension of his line itself changes, not to speak of the change in his conceiving, of the matter he will turn to, of the scale in which he imagines that matter's use. I myself would pose the difference by physical image. It is no accident that Pound and Williams both were involved variously in a movement which got called "objectivism." But that word was then used in some sort of a necessary quarrel, I take it, with "subjectivism." It is now too late to be bothered with the latter. It has excellently done itself to death, even though we are all caught in its dying. What seems to me a more valid formulation for present use is "objectism," a word to be taken to stand for the kind of relation of man to experience which a poet might state as the necessity of a line or a work to be as wood is, to be as clean as wood is as it issues from the hand of nature, to be as shaped as wood can be when a man has had his hand to it. Objectism is the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the "subject" and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to carry out) and those other creations of nature which we may, with no derogation, call objects. For a man is himself an object, whatever he may take to be his advantages, the more likely to recognize himself as such the greater his advantages, particularly at that moment that he achieves an humilitas sufficient to make him of use. (pp. 59-60)

Olson's stress upon immediacy, physicality, openness ("humilitas"), perception (the object), the "relation to experience" rather than the egoic detachment from nature, and the "clean," solid authenticity which verse must

acquire (if it is to stay inside the projective ground), are discovered or implied by Romanticism. In all the Romantics we find precisely this concern about the new dimensions of the act and purpose of expression which experience has opened up. Blake writes to Hayley after a recent "enlightenment":

Consequently I can, with confidence, promise you ocular demonstration of my altered state on the plates I am now engraving. (October 23, 1804)

Blake believed continually that his writing was an absolute rendering or "demonstration" of his spiritual experience; that an attentive reader could enter the imaginative realms through the "Forms" he presented. The poem, for Blake, was a vehicle of pure "Energy." Thus he advises his readers in the address "To the Public" prefacing JERUSALEM:

The Enthusiasm of the following Poem, the Author hopes no Reader will think presumptuousness or arrogance when he is reminded that the Ancients entrusted their love to their Writing, to the full as Enthusiastically as I have who Acknowledge mine for my Saviour and Lord; for they were wholly absorb'd in their Gods. I also hope the Reader will be with me, wholly One in Jesus our Lord, who is the God of Fire and Lord of Love....

The Spirit of Jesus is continual forgiveness of Sin: he who waits to be righteous before he enters into the Saviour's kingdom, the Divine Body, will never enter there. I am perhaps the most sinful of men. I pretend not to holiness: yet I pretend to love, to see, to converse with daily as man with man, & the more to have an interest in the Friend of Sinners. Therefore, dear Reader, forgive what you do not approve, & love me for this energetic exertion of my talent.

Reader! lover of books! lover of heaven,
And of that God from whom all books are given,
Who in mysterious Sinai's awful cave
To Man the wondrous art of writing gave:

Again he speaks in thunder and in fire!
 Thunder of Thought, & flames of fierce desire:
 Even from the depths of Hell his voice I hear
 Within the unfathom'd caverns of my Ear.
 Therefore I print; nor vain my types shall be:
 Heaven, Earth & Hell henceforth shall live
 in harmony. (Blake Complete Works, pp. 620-621)

Blake's spiritual commitment to absolute perception of truth is undeniable. But what of his stance toward the act of writing itself? If the reader is expected to join with Blake in love and "forgiveness" and so enter "the Divine Body" of the poem, how can the poet assist this interchange within the materials of verse itself? Olson writes (of "closed" verse):

I would suggest that verse here and in England dropped this secret [the projective character of the syllable] from the late Elizabethans to Ezra Pound, lost it, in the sweetness of meter and rime, in a honey-head. (The syllable is one way to distinguish the original success of blank verse, and its falling off, with Milton.) (p. 53)

And he goes on to speak of contemporary poetry in terms of liberated "measure":

Already they are composing as though not the eye but the ear was to be its measurer, as though the intervals of its composition could be so carefully put down as to be precisely the intervals of its registration. For the ear, which once had the burden of memory to quicken it (rime & regular cadence were its aids and have merely lived on in print after the oral necessities were ended) can now again, that the poet has his means, be the threshold of projective verse. (p. 59, italics mine)

One should not be too surprised to find that the Romantic poets had probed many of the questions raised

over "rime & regular cadence" (meter), in view of their recognition of the new ground of experience from which they spoke. Note the concern of Blake, for example, in precisely these matters in the prefatory notes to JERUSALEM:

When this Verse was first dictated to me, I consider'd a Monotonous Cadence, like that used by Milton & Shakespeare & all writers of English Blank Verse, derived from the modern bondage of Rhyming, to be a necessary and indispensable part of Verse. But I soon found that in the mouth of a true Orator such monotony was not only awkward, but as much a bondage as rhyme itself. I therefore have produced a variety in every line, both of cadences & numbers are reserved for the terrific parts, the mild & gentle for the mild & gentle parts, and the prosaic for the inferior parts; all are necessary to each other. Poetry Fetter'd Fetters the Human Race. (Blake, p. 621)

It is Olson's point exactly. Form in verse is determined by the form of what is to be presented. The perception of "this moment" articulates the laws of registration. Anything less is a withdrawal from the immediate. Blake's effort to create an "unfettered" form is his effort to create OPEN, FREE, form. The "allegorical" figures which Blake gives us are the forms of the human mind, the activities themselves, both what they do and how they do it. Blake has a unique vocabulary for each of his "Forms," and an unfailling insistence upon the "reality" of these forms or principles:

Allegories are things that Relate to Moral Virtues. Moral Virtues do not Exist; they are Allegories & dissimulations. But Time & Space are Real Beings, a Male & a Female. Time is a Man, Space is a Woman, & her Masculine Portion is Death. (Blake, p. 614)

Blake's assertion of the non-figurative existence of "Good" and "evil," "Truth and Error," and so on, is grounded in his knowledge that these are all principles enacted by "Man"--"There is not an Error but it has a Man for its Actor del. Agent, that is, it is a Man. (Blake, p.615) Such a statement puts the old notion of "Allegory" back in its experiential perspective. Allegory is the enactment of human being by the Principles of being. Here, unless I am seriously mistaken, is the only valid claim that any "Allegory" may make for the projective. The strenuousness and "energetic" power of Blake's larger works comes directly to us from this perceived relation of thing-as-principle to thing-as-man. Blake's conception of allegory "addressed to Intellectual Powers" is the highest form of poetry.

Blake's concern with form in art as in life (it is the same form) is an oft repeated theme. "I do not condemn Pope or Dryden because they did not understand Imanination," he writes, "but because they did not understand Verse" (p. 602). He blames their failure to "know the Effect" of their art. He sees that those who prefer Dryden's "finishing" of Milton, to Milton, are as "degraded" and "stupid" as Dryden's "Rhyme & Monotonous Sing Song, Sing Song from beginning to end" (p. 600). Blake is caught up in the swell of authentic "invention":

I have heard many People say, 'Give me the Ideas. It is no matter what Words you put them into,' & others say, 'Give me the Design, it is no matter for the Execution.' These People know Enough of Artifice, but Nothing Of Art. Ideas cannot be Given but in their minutely Appropriate Words, nor Can a Design be made without its minutely Appropriate Execution. The unorganized Blots & Blurs of Rubens and Titian are not Art, nor can their Method ever express Ideas or Imaginations any more than Pope's Metaphysical Jargon of Rhyming. Unappropriate Execution is the Most nauseous of all affectation & foppery. He who

copies does not Execute; he only Imitates what is already Executed. Execution is only the result of Invention. (Blake, p. 596)

What Blake seeks is a presentational method which will render ("Execute") in a form which is true to nature. Like Olson, he demands the purity of natural creation for the artist, in the same way that nature perpetuates its individual forms. The verse must be an authentic extension of the natural act, in his voice, at his ear, in his imagination. His stress is on the certainty of the creative act, the emphatic statement:

The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life, is this: That the more distinct, sharp, and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art....How do we distinguish one face or countenance from another, but by the bounding line and its infinite inflexions and movements? What is it that builds a house and plants a garden, but the definite and determinate? What is it that distinguishes honesty from knavery, but the hard and wirey line of rectitude and certainty in the actions and intentions? Leave out this line and you leave out life itself; all is chaos again, and the line of the almighty must be drawn out upon it before man or beast can exist. (Blake, p. 585)

Blake sought the central, informing energies of life and perceived them in the manifestations of "definite" things. Forms are not static, but verbs, "actions." Blake's "bounding line" is not a container, because it must register "infinite in flexions and movements." Importantly, he sees this line in everything, even in such "abstract" things as "knavery." The line is the truth or "certainty" of an action--the thing itself. but the thing itself in action requires direct perception. Form is what is rendering a thing, that is, it is an energy realized in perception. In his "Annotations to Berkeley," we have already noted that Blake sees a thing's "Reality" as "Its Imaginative Form."

The above quotations from Blake are to illustrate that a Romantic conception of the need to change the materials of verse points to the evolution of new and powerful Romantic techniques in writing. The highly "experimental" character of all Romantic poetry (all Romantic poets avoid static structures, prosody, and images) leads one to suspect that the "lyrical interference of the individual as ego" was not an absolute condition in Romantic writing. I have already presented some cases in which the poet was more concerned with the transmission of doctrine than with the act of writing; but such was not always the case. The Romantic poets exhibit sustained passages of "projective" writing. In these places, the notion of "lyric" as an aspect of "interference" changes to become lyric as a formal means to involve the reader. In such cases, as we shall see, lyric becomes more than a means 'to an end,' but is, in effect, the music of the poem. Eliot writes: "The music of poetry is not something that exists apart from the meaning." We do not suppose, do we, that Blake's rebellion against the old measuring devices of rime and meter thereby precludes the music of his poems? The fact of the matter is that music, as Ezra Pound pointed out, is not from the "metronome" but from "the musical phrase." Olson is more explicit:

(1) the kinetics of the thing. A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it (he will have some several causations), by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader. Okay. Then the poem itself must, at all points, be a high energy-construct and, at all points, an energy-discharge. So: how is the poet to accomplish same energy, how is he, what is the process by which a poet gets in, at all points energy at least the equivalent of the energy which propelled him in the first place, yet an energy which is peculiar to verse alone and which will be, obviously, also different from the energy which the reader, because he is a third term, will take away? (p. 52)

It is Blake's question, is it not? We are dealing then with more, even, than "the musical phrase." What is governing the flow of words from the poet is the whole condition of the moment of writing--the act of writing itself. The "flow" of images, sounds, lines, pauses, and all the "parts" constitutes a co-herent music. Most Romantic poetry is "lyric" in this other sense. The music is not something "else"; it is not other than the energy released when one word, image, perception, breath, pause, moves DIRECTLY on to another. This is the "principle" of projective verse for Olson: "that right form, in any given poem, is the only and exclusively possible extension of content under hand." (p. 52) And,

(3) the process of the thing, how the principle can be made so to shape the energies that the form is accomplishedONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTIONUSE USE USE the process at all points, in any given poem always, always one perception must must must MOVE, INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER! (pp. 52-53)

A poem so made will be the occasion of a high "energy-discharge" at each point and throughout. This energy goes directly to the reader. It is what we participate in when a poem is successful, successful in that nothing, truly nothing, is imposed between the reader and the poem. But a great poem will make it very difficult for the reader to retract his imaginative organs from the field of the poem's force.

So Keats writes in a letter (October 9, 1818):

The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself. That which is creative must create itself--In Endymion I leaped headlong into the

Sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksands, and the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea and comfortable advice.

Romantic writing, both prose and poetry, shows a consistent concern with the double sense of "Soundings." The poets as poets are up against the necessity of original "Invention" and the stylistic demands of immediate "Creation." As men, hardly separable from the fact of being poets, they are hard pressed to fulfill the demands of their spiritual, experiential relations with all facets of the world. Byron "sounds" the labyrinthine depths of the despairing yet determined soul in Manfred. And he spends weeks searching for the exact translation of a Greek word to see if it accords with the drift of a poem he has been working on. The classical sense that the Romantics possessed of le mot juste (most extreme in Byron), says something of the more than flighty, "dissociated," or "closed" temperament with which they approached the act of writing. There is something of the projective size or scope in all the Romantics, issuing from the projective size of their quest. Keats, in reference to Wordsworth, speaks of "epic passion," and "martyrdom." And he sees Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey" probing "dark Passages" in an effort to relieve "the 'burden of the Mystery'" (letter to Reynolds, May 3, 1818). The order of existential "sounding" that Byron undertakes in Manfred (Manfred's "Knowledge is Sorrow"), or that Shelley undertakes in Prometheus Unbound, have the projective size that Olson witnesses in Moby-Dick. The "Right Reason" that Melville opposed to reason, "dubbing reason and her tools--logic and classification--'Baconianism'" (p. 113), and Blake, in their own particulars, opposed to the discursive reason. (Byron stayed secular.)

But just before we consider a few examples of the projective scope in particular instances of Romantic poetry, I would offer a couple of examples of Olson's observations of the "projective" as it applies in Melville. They are epitomes of a critical stance, in addition to being elucidations of the complex of issues involved in the Romantic ground of the projective. He writes, here, of Melville's rendering of physical presence in the chapter, "The Tail," of Moby-Dick:

...I felt the wonder all over again of Melville's knowingness of object and motion, those factors of a thing which declare what we call its physicality (and do not mean physiology). "The Tail" is as lovely an evidence as any other of Melville's ability to go inside a thing, and from its motion and his to show and to know, not its essence alone (this was mostly the gift of ideality--of Gautama's, Socrates', or Christ's), but its dimension, that part of a thing which ideality--by its Ideal, its World Forms or its Perfections--tended to diminish; that quality of any particular thing or event which comes in any one of our consciousnesses; how it comes in on us as a force peculiar to itself and to ourself in any of those instants which do hit us & of which our lives are made up. We call it size; we say: it was a big thing--a kick; he's a big person; the day was a whopper. We have more of a vocabulary for the physics of it than Melville had. We know the literal space there is inside a microcosm, the nature of the motion hidden in any mass. Yet I do not know another writer except Homer who achieves by words so much of the actual experiencing of this dimension as Melville does.

If I put this first--if I put Melville in the context of Homer--I do it because, until any of us takes this given physicality and moves from its essence into its kinetic, as seriously as we are all too apt to take the other end--the goal, we'll not be busy about the civilization breeding as surely now as that other one was between Homer and 500 BC. And we'll not know

what Melville had started a hundred years ago. For the metaphysic now to be known does lie inside function, methodology is form, Rimbaud's question is the incisive one--"what is on the other side of despair?" There is no where else to go but in and through; there is no longer any least piece of pie in the sky. With Melville's non-Euclidean penetrations of physical reality ignored or avoided, all the important gains he made in expressing the dimensions possible to man and to story are also washed out. (pp. 113-114)

To Olson, Melville, in Moby-Dick, "entered the mythological present"--"the apprehension of the absolute condition of present things" (p. 115):

All things did come in again, in the 19th century. An idea shook loose, and energy and motion became as important a structure of things as they are plural, and, by matter, mass. It was even shown that in the infinitely small the older concepts of space ceased to be valid at all. Quantity--the measurable and numerable--was suddenly as shafted in, to anything, as it was also, as had been obvious, the striking character of the external world, that all things do extend out. Nothing was now inert fact, all things were there for feeling, to promote it, and be felt; and man, in the midst of it, knowing well how he was folded in, as well as how suddenly and strikingly he could extend himself, spring or, without even moving, go, to far, the farthest--he was suddenly possessed or repossessed of a character of being, a thing among things, which I shall call his physicality. It made a re-entry of or to the universe. Reality was without interruption, and we are still in the business of finding out how all action, and thought, have to be refounded. (pp. 118-119)

.....

Who still knows what's called for, from physicality, how far it does cover and reveal? No one has yet tried to say how Melville does manage to give the flukes of the whale immediacy as such. It is easier to isolate his skill over technology than

to investigate the topological includes, able to discriminate and get in between the vague types of form morphology offers and the ideal structures of geometry proper, explains Melville's unique ability to reveal the very large (such a thing as his whale, or himself on whiteness, or Ahab's monomania) by the small.

Difficult as these ideas may appear, they do constitute a major breakthrough from the traditional superficial conception of "form." Olson points to a source, and a form of dynamic perception in Melville which, I believe, is working before 1851, in the conception and writing of the Romantics. Still, it is the ground of the Romantic which is easiest to conceive. The particular workings of the "process" are more difficult to grasp. Before we approach examples of Romantic poetry where the "mythological present" is "projected" successfully to the reader, there is another statement which commands a view of Romanticism relating to Olson's last point--the mythic dimensions released by the presentation of the large in the small. Here, it is Robert Duncan, in The Truth & Life of Myth:

But in Germany, poets--Tieck, Goethe, Hoffman, Novalis--had written myths and fairytales that came not from the ground of lost religion nor from the ground of the folk but from the ground of a fictional imagination that we recognize as Romanticism. The very word "Romantic" is, in literary and social criticism today, pejorative. But it is in the Romantic vein--to which I see my own work as clearly belonging--that the two worlds, the lordly and the humble, that seemed to scholars irreconcilably at odds, mythological vision and folklorish fantasy, are wedded in a phantasmagoria...the spiritual romance. This wedding of higher orders with lower orders has a prototype in Greek theater, where high tragedy and the satyr play belonged together, and today, over a hundred years after the beginnings of the Romantic synthesis, our poetic task remains to compose the true epithalamium where chastity

and lewdness, love and lust, the philosopher king and the monstrous clown dance together in all their human reality. (p. 38)

Duncan's confession of the process whereby he came to truly grasp the world of Blake's "Introduction" to the Songs of Experience perhaps brings all the high particularity of Olson into more manageable reach. It is a movement from intellectual distance and ideality to imaginative proximity with the true form ("topology") of the poem:

My earlier work...I had viewed as I wrote as forms embodying or expressing the content of an inner psychological drama; and though, in fact, in the rapture of writing what I experienced was also a world of the poem, where I actually saw in the mind's light persons and knew their lives --Orpheus, the Gnostic Dragon, or the Child Zagreus--in all the force of the real, I thought of them as belonging to the order of symbols relating to the state of my own soul. But, with the book Letters, a book that might have been dedicated to Helen Adam, bringing the book of Blake forward to me--for it was by Blake that I read the Zohar in those years--

O Earth, O Earth, return!
Arise from out the dewey grass;
Night is worn
And the morn
Rises from the slumbrous mass.

--I was already a convert to the Romantic spirit, and myth in that spirit is not only a story that expresses the soul but a story that awakens the soul to the real persons of its romance, in which the actual and the spiritual are revealed, one in the other. (p. 42, italics mine)

Duncan's articulation of the projective energy of the Romantic spirit in a poem, and the ground that energy reveals, are, again, somewhat more generalized than Olson's comments, but in the context of the latter attain to a real comprehensiveness:

Whatever I think of devices of the art, of metaphor and simile, of development of themes and composition, when I speak of resonances I mean that the music of the poem--a music of sounds and meanings--awakens the mythological reality in the actual; and when I speak of form I mean not something the poet gives to things but something he receives from things. We are no further from this romance of the spirit in the light of electricity than Shakespeare.... (p. 41)

The "projective" is not something that the poet imposes; it is not the one-way "projection" of Freudian psychology. Rather, it is our sense of the thing presenting itself directly to us, and even in us, unmediated by the poet. Coleridge as an "ego" is no more present in Kubla Khan's "pleasure dome" than Shakespeare in Lear's tempest. It was a similar sense of "natural" presentation that Wordsworth is seeking in writing his Lyrical Ballads. There is no doubt that Wordsworth's motivation in choosing the language of "common" men for his poems was to reveal the "high orders" in the "low." The impulse to seek out "a plainer and more emphatic language" (Preface, p. 245) emerges from his intuition of "the primary laws of our nature" (p. 245). The possibility of awakening "the mythological reality in the actual" is at the core of Wordsworth's experimentation with words, images, sounds.

It will prove valuable, I believe, to examine a few of Wordsworth's notions of his purpose and methodology, to show how he does, in fact, propose a "projective" notion of the verse of Lyrical Ballads. First of all, he intends to avoid the means of conventional verse:

...the Reader will find no personifications of abstract ideas in these volumes....I wish to keep my Reader in the company of flesh and blood. (p. 250)

.....

There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction. I have

I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it; this I have done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men, and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. (p. 251)

Wordsworth sees himself cut off

from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of Poets. (p. 251)

On several occasions, Wordsworth anticipates that the reading of his poems will produce some kind of violation of expectation. This, he feels, is because

we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular fashion in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. (p. 272)

Wordsworth, too, is aware of the revolutionary implications of his new poetics. To what or whom does he address his poetry?

...its object is truth, not individual and local, but general and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives strength and divinity to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. (p. 257)

This is Blakean language, is it not? The order of "truth" that the poet invokes here is that in which there is a complete relation or interchange between "the heart" and the "tribunal." But the tribunal is "divine." The energies or "general" forms of particular things are to be "carried alive" into the "heart." But the "heart" must be the reader's as much as the poets. Wordsworth is invoking the formal dynamics of a poetry that will

bring the reader into a perceptual relation with the "life of things," the elemental life of "the primary laws of our nature" as they are demonstrated in commonplaces. His poems are offered to

this knowledge which all men carry about them, and to these sympathies in which without any other discipline than that of our daily life we are fitted to take delight. (pp. 258-259)

The large is revealed in the small.

But forging the language to carry these truths "alive" into the receptive reader is an arduous business. Wordsworth begins at least, the task of stripping the language of its excess baggage--its proliferation of cerebral and poetic values. His first strides toward form, after he had realized the ground from which his words needed to emerge to be "alive," are indeed pertinent to this study. He repeats the word "accuracy" in several contexts where he is primarily discussing form:

The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of the passions of men. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly.....To this it may be added, that while he is only selecting from the real language of men, or, which amounts to the same thing, composing accurately in the spirit of such selection, he is treading on safe ground....
(p. 261)

He must have accuracy--"spiritual" accuracy, in fact--if he is to succeed in effecting the "end" of poetry, which is:

...to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure. Now, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind; ideas and feelings do not in that state succeed each other in accustomed order. (pp. 263-264)

Is not the "projective" emerging here? Wordsworth wants to bring us into a condition where we will be disoriented from

our normal, "accustomed" anticipation: because it is in the "unusual" that one will experience both "immediate pleasure" (p. 258) and immediate realization of general laws of nature. Wordsworth nowhere intimates that these laws are anything but "organic" and active. That is, they exist in our lives. The great emphasis that Wordsworth places on directness leads him to consider the actions of a poem which assist or encourage directness. There is first "accuracy" of language. Another discovery is the effect of a poem's music:

--an effect which is in a great degree to be ascribed to small, but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement.
(p. 265)

The whole naturalness of Wordsworth's poetics is rooted in something close to Olson's sense of the projective and Duncan's sense of the high and the low. For Wordsworth's "natural" in describing the language of his poetry is directed to the possibility of bringing people into community with their elemental possessions--what they are as creatures--and in this, Wordsworth touches upon the "mythological" reality of life in the "natural" body. For a man to be "true to Nature" is the same as to be joined in a spiritual tribunal--a multiplicity of dimensions in any act. It is only from such a ground that Wordsworth, like Blake, can make an eschatological claim for poetry:

Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge.
(p. 259)

The measuring poem, the foot that steps through the dance of the words, is also the measurer of first and last things. Romanticism gives us the basis not only of an eschatology of being, but for an energy that undertakes and informs the poem. It is precisely here, by the way, that a powerful therapy in the act of writing occurs. The reader and the poet, in their

own ways, undergo therapy in giving themselves to their respective actions, and interactions, in the dynamics of language:

Concentrating on the constructions of the poem, following the workings out of sound and content, in order to cooperate fully with what is given, the poet is protected from what might otherwise disturb his personality. His intellect intent upon the ratios and movements of the poem, he is almost unaware of depths that may be stirred in his own psyche. What he feels is the depth and excitement of the poem. (Duncan, p. 28)

Byron, in a letter to Miss Milbanke (November 10, 1813), puts this proposition a little more bluntly:

I by no means rank poetry or poets high in the scale of intellect. This may look like affectation, but it is my real opinion. It is the lava of imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake. They say poets rarely go mad.

Byron, in CHILDE HAROLD (Canto III), expresses the liberating character of the act of writing. In this third Canto, Byron again picks up the journey of the exile, Harold:

Still must I on; for I am as a weed,
Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam to sail
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's
breath prevail. (St. 2)

In my youth's summer I did sing of One,
The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind;
Again I seize the theme, then but begun,
And bear it with me, as the rushing wind
Bears the cloud onwards. (St. 3)

Yet, though a dreary strain, to this I cling;
So that it wean me from the weary dream
Of selfish grief or gladness--so it fling
Forgetfulness around me--(St. 4)

He, who grown aged in this world of woe,
 In deeds, not years, piercing the depths
 of life,
 So that no wonder waits him; nor below
 Can love or sorrow, fame, ambition, strife,
 Cut to his heart again with the keen knife
 Of silent, sharp endurance: he can tell
 Why thought seeks refuge in lone caves,
 yet rife
 With airy images, and shapes which dwell
 Still unimpair'd, though old, in the soul's
 haunted cell. (St. 5)

'Tis to create, and in creating live
 A being more intense, that we endow
 With form our fancy, gaining as we give
 The life we image, even as I do now. (St. 6)

Byron, writing in this moment, lives into the very things of
 his mind, the people there, the places, the forms, torments,
 forces, and Harold.

CHAPTER VII

The Reader Again

The therapy, the liberation, the creation belong as much to the act of reading (hearing, imagining, joining) as to the act of writing. I would like to look at a few places where Romantic poetry "extends" the possibility of a "projective" involvement (outlined in the last chapter) to the reader. Let us first consider again the passage from Coleridge's RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER cited above (Chapter V). Leading directly into the moment in which the weight of the albatross falls away from the mariner, we have the following process. First, the mariner endures for seven days the "curse in a dead man's eye"; second, he wishes to "die," he desires death to take away the present pain; then he watches the "moving Moon" that "no where did abide"; then, his vision moves down to the water where he is confronted with "the charmed water" which "burnt away/ A still and awful red"; then his eyes move "Beyond the shadow of the ship" where he sees snakes moving in "tracks"; following their movement still, he is drawn back again into the space within the shadow of the ship.

What happens to the reader is what happens to the mariner. The lines and images conduce to a pendulum-like movement, drawing the reader further and further into the precise motion and colour of the snakes. From the readiness for death, to the perception of the moving moon, in a context of the heavy mass of the ship and its shadow, then a swing out, and back. Up and down and out and in. The exactness and care of the image-making create a passivity, and so, a receptivity to the existence of the snake-creatures. The mariner wishes to die, is able to die. Is this not "an humilitas sufficient to make him of use"? Even if the labours of Coleridge to this point have not succeeded in achieving the reader's attention and suspension, the description of the snakes and the concomitant enlightenment are clear enough and vigorous enough to draw most of us into the circle of force.

The mariner is no longer thinking about death or suffering. His attention now is given to visual perception, particularly colour and motion. The seemingly arbitrary choice of moon and sea, beyond and near, which precede the central perception constitute, in fact, a panoramic survey of his entire visual field. The comprehensive glance is then carefully brought down to focus upon the details of the snakes' action, form, and colouring. In such a condition of desire for self-annihilation, the pendulum-swing of vision acts to make him perceptually aware and vulnerable. The mariner is now existentially open, as well as physically receptive. The movement of the snakes, and the earlier scanning of the sky and sea effected the latter. With the sudden, direct engagement with the snakes, the suspension of all activities save direct perception creates the possibility of authentic vision. With the eyes open, the Imaginative Eye is able to open.

The movement is presented to us first as a ritual (the corners of the universe), then as a dance of living things. Only in his (and our) truly seeing, truly "apprehending the absolute condition of present" snakes, can the heavy burden, itself a physical weight, fall away. The falling away of self, of ego, completes the momentum of desire and physical motion in a "moment" of liberation--"the self-same moment." That Coleridge renders this freeing as an action in physical terms, assists the reader in penetrating to an order of perception which may approximate the poet's. To see the thing itself (Blake's Particular and Definite), to see the snakes wholly is to so become their dynamic, their "flash of golden fire," that there is no room left for suffering, or hope, or dead, pendant albatross. The vision of the great, the fact of prayer, is presented to us as emerging directly from an act of perception of a "small" thing. Past the "flash" there is nothing to say. It is on "the other side of despair," and yet, very much in this world.

Romantic poems which are songs of enlightenment tend to follow a basic pattern. The perceiver is prepared, through any

of several means, for a dramatic awakening in an act of perception. When the perception, the thing, is actual enough to the reader, the encumbrances of meter and rhyme do not interfere with the presentation. Such is the case with the lines above. One does not merely obey the demands of cadence, because one is in the sweep of a more powerful "resonance"--the dance of the snakes. Here is the source of what some have noted as the "transparency" or invisibility of poetic language. When the reader is so tensed into the rhythm and measure of perception, when the act of the word is simultaneous with the act of engagement, then the "word", as such, will disappear. For the word is actually a registering of what is non-verbal--action itself. Words somehow manage to say what they cannot say. I have suggested already that this comes, in part, from the inherent projective form of sound itself, and therefore, of words. Poetry subordinates the referential use of language to the relational force of language. Such is the case in the most direct Romantic poems. We are not burdened with trying to figure out "symbols," or looking "behind the words" for the hidden meaning. Taken as given, in their acting (ie. verbal) sense, words can register action (ie. meaning) without the mediation of symbol or rhetoric. Romantic poetry does achieve this order of immediacy sometimes. Watch Coleridge at work in the "Hymn Before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni":

Hast thou a charm to stay the morning-star
In his steep course? So long he seems to pause

Note how Coleridge immediately leads us away from any definition by attracting our anticipation--suspending us on the edge of the star. He suspends us by asking a question. And what of the magnitude of that question? He even ends the line with a pause.

On thy bald awful head, O sovran BLANC,

Then, immediately, we move, not resting in this passivity of

awe, but shifting our vision down to pick up the acoustic dimensions:

The Arve and Arveiron at thy base
Rave ceaselessly;

Note how Coleridge sets up, already, two distinct but co-extensive orders of action: we have both continuity of the form of perception, and continual shift in the act of perception. From the precise sound of "raving," distant rivers, we move suddenly to

but thou, most awful Form!

Here he brings us back, full up against the huge form, the solid mass and weight of the mountain. The speed and direction of the shift in perception, the mountain suddenly filling the entire field of vision is an extension of man into space--Olson's spatial intuition. But even the solid mass moves!

Risest from forth thy silent sea of pines,
How silently!

And how silently the accents and vowel/consonant distribution leads our vision slowly up the form of the mountain. It is the very slowness of mass, of a great weight. It is the very act of the imperturbable.

Around thee and above
Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black,
An ebon mass:

Coleridge here presents the close weight of Mt. Blanc in the context of a deep, dark sky. There really is no sky, but rather "air," the element, possessing the same elemental presence as the mountain which moves up.

methinks thou piercest it,
As with a wedge!

A wedge is something in action, hard, tense, poised to act. In the image, Coleridge presents the mountain in its dimension as a force, unfolding its power into the air in that exact time just "before sunrise." The unseen sun is mounting in this poem, already, deep in the heavy, slow mounting of rock itself.

But when I look again,
It is thine own calm home, thy crystal shrine,
Thy habitation from eternity!

The necessary repetition, sustaining, of the act. He looks ~~and~~ again, and again shifts suddenly upward. The mountain is wedded to the deep air in a synchronicity of vision. They are perceived together and so, joined together. But the dimension given here is also the very force of a place, a "habitation."

O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee,
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
Didst vanish from my thought:

How the tone of reverence develops here! It comes together with the ponderous size of the mountain itself. Again, Coleridge "gazes," expands his vision. The pace of the line slows right down without diminishing the sense of the visually "present." His reverence is the very form of the mountain, is it not--the place that the mountain fulfills? It has the mountain's and also the yet unseen sun's slowly mounting power, its gathering force, and radiance. He is teased out of thought; he is left only with perception. The colon signals the equation: the loss of thought and fullness of perception equals the entrance to prayer, as with the mariner.

entranced in prayer
I worshipped the Invisible alone.

One cannot avoid the pun. The ear is accurate. To be "entranced" is to make an entrance. The "Invisible" is communicated directly to the senses. Olson might object to the use of the word. Well enough. But the fact remains. Coleridge is legislating on several levels at once. The entrance is made into the only available place--the "habitation" from eternity." The laws extant there are the laws of that place itself, and of the things in it.

Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,
 So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
 Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my
 Thought,
 Yea, with my Life and Life's own secret joy:
 Till the dilating Soul, enrapt, transfused,
 Into the mighty vision passing--there
 As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven.

The gathering form of the poem makes it possible for the reader to accept and relate with notions that, in another context, would impede and distance him. All along, we have been experiencing a "dilation," so that the nominative thrust of the words "Soul," and "joy," and so on, are possible. The swing from thoughtlessness to realization is a presentation of Coleridge's conception. But what matters here is that it is prepared for and paralleled by the perceptual concentration of the preceding lines.

The next sixty lines become a wild, passionate celebration of discovering the things of nature in relation to one's own being. The poet has, however, prepared the reader for the madly courageous apostrophe that follows the initial awakening. The important thing is the way that Coleridge, in the early lines, renders the slowness of awakening. The process has the slowness of the sun rising, the slowness of organic life, the slow revolution of the earth. This is what I mean by Romantic poetry sometimes getting the projective into the act of writing. Perhaps a few more lines from Coleridge would serve the purpose

here. The last lines of "Frost at Midnight," demonstrate, I believe, a high order of something beyond the reach of much verse:

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops
 fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet moon.

The ease and generality of the first two lines, drawn out upon the repeated sounds, leads swiftly into a series of hard-edge images of high particularity. High definition amid low definition creates the sense of each particular, each action, within the larger space of the seasons. Coleridge has a definition of beauty, that, it subsists "in simultaneous intuition of the relation of parts, each to each, and of all to a whole: exciting an immediate and absolute complacency" or equilibrium. In the above lines, Coleridge is concerned with RELATING the things to the elemental pattern of the seasonal cycle. The movement or form here is increasing imaginative involvement or commitment together with increasing discrimination of image and sound.

The first line establishes a general premise of possible fulfilment. "Sweet" appears as the last general use of diction. Even the word "general" in the next line works upon developing form by delivering up its soft sounds, its roundness. But the protracted music of these lines leads immediately into the isolated colour, "with greenness," and thence to the colour, position, and voice of the robin. But already, the object is presented to us in high specificity. The image of the bird finding a bare place between the patches of snow is an unexpected concretion. Each unanticipated word (the more original the better)

functions to abdicate our distance from the poem. We zoom in, or focus suddenly on the object. The robin is, by now, an over-used image. But here Coleridge has given the bird such special physical position, that it appears to us physically. The words point to the thing, saying "There!" And the tree is further particularized, and then, juxtaposed with the thatch roof that "Smokes in the sun-thaw." Say the words out loud; the very effort and action of speech enforces the action of the thing itself. But the preceding lines, those perceptions, have made it possible for this delicate image to concretize. What comes through to us is Spring--the heat of it, its smokiness, the sense of the change and the coming changes--that peculiar and unique conjunction of actions at a certain point on a bare branch beside a steaming roof. Immediately followed by the falling, dropping, raining, blasting autumn. Here, the unseen, unheard thing--water pouring from the eaves--is brought into a concrete object by discovering it between the "blasts," that is, "in the trances of the blast." Coleridge creates a pause, a suspension, suddenly. If he had omitted this line and just given us the water, or just the blasts, the concretion would have been lost. But his facility with discovering the exact means of allowing discovery, creates the "high-energy" discharge for the reader. The reader has to, must, enter that trance, that brief pause. Coleridge uses the cessation of one activity to introduce another. It is the sudden leap between them, the rapid exchange of one Gestalt for another, which allows the direct perception to take place, and allows (or is) the exchange of energy. The last two lines are superb, even aside from the way they gather the whole poem in the image of the title. Once again, the impact of the shift from the slow image, "Shall hang them up in silent icicles," to the image of the moon, gives life and action to what otherwise could remain static things. These changes and shifts occur in the interstices of the moment; they are sudden and final. But they are the condition of the poem being able to communicate at all.

Imagination is not so much a faculty as a function of the moment, the act, the physical happening. In the last line, either the reader succeeds in making the leap to the moon, or not. The whole force of these lines, however, is a "teasing" us out of thought to the point where, in the spontaneity of action itself, with the swiftness of the ear or the eye, we move. This is Olson's "extension" and extensibility of human being into "far" places. Coleridge, no, the icicles themselves demand it of us, and we, of them. Are we not suspended too? slowly, silently, just as ice, in the very "spirit" of "the secret ministry of frost"? If so, then at the last moment we shine out too, to the moon. But there is another order of subtlety here. The whole piece is set in the conditional future. But here, the conditional future is revealed in the present, in the immediacy of present things. The spatial deployment of things is joined to a temporal deployment. We begin with a "shall" and move to a "whether," and thence to "sit" and "sing," and now to the present "smokes" and "drops," and then, again, to an on-going "shining." It is what we are left with--the on-going, expanding process, brought to physical concretion in the Moon--the only visible thing.

Keats writes in a letter (November 22, 1817):

--the simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent Working coming continually on the Spirit with a fine Suddenness.-- To compare great things with small--have you never by being Surprised with an old Melody--in a delicious place--by a delicious voice....

Keats has struck upon the projective in himself. He describes it in terms of "suddenness" and "surprise." For Keats, therefore, poetry must "startle" and "amaze" the reader. Poetry must come upon the reader like the workings of his own mind, with the same immediacy and proximity. "I think poetry should

surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity" (February 27, 1818). It is suddenness combined with receptivity that make the most fertile condition for both poet and reader. Wordsworth's "Strange Fits of Passion," for example, shows a situation in which Wordsworth is progressively lulled to a deep meditation upon the "descending Moon"; at the same time, the horse maintains its steady plodding. The combined rhythms induce a state of openness in the poet, until, when the moon suddenly drops behind the roof of Lucy's cottage, a thought flashes across the empty mind of the poet: "If Lucy should be dead!" It is not the ideas associated with the thought that the poem immediately presents. What is first is the arc of the thought across the mind, like the stroke of light from a lighthouse. The fact that it is "a Lover's head" that the thought enters, and that the poem is for "the lover's ear alone," increase the force of recoil and impact. For the lover would naturally be more vulnerable, and also in higher anticipation, before the occurrence. It is a threatening experience indeed, if one stops to consider the implications of the thought. But this is not what we are asked to do. Where we really connect into form in this poem is in that surprise of the last moment. For a duration of time, the reader is completely given to the force of that idea (or phantasy); he is completely occupied, identified in the action--that sudden discharge directly into the brain. Eliot's dictum about feeling a thought with the same proximity as the odour of a rose, could hardly be better illustrated than in this poem. "At once the planet dropp'd." It is as much as the earth, this planet, as the moon. Again, the sense of falling away, the dropping, the earth moving out from beneath, is accomplished in a single thought. "One thought fills immensity." For an instant, there is nothing but the thought--no "I."

It would take a long time and much demonstration to show exactly how Shelley's Prometheus Unbound and Byron's Manfred

are among the most sustained masterpieces of Romantic projective verse. One is tempted to add the seldom read Sardanapalus of Byron, as well. It has the space and depth of Goethe (to whom the play was dedicated). Pound remembers the fifth Act of The Cenci with favour. And Coleridge's Kubla Khan is succeeding in ways which few other Romantic poems do. The discovery of particular examples and cases of the Romantics getting the dimension of experience "immediately" across to the reader require a whole re-reading of Romanticism again--this time aloud, for the ear. It is the ear which will right the balance of too long and too heavy a stress upon the conceptual content of Romantic verse, at the expense of form. For the dimensions implicit in much Romantic verse will be released upon a true hearing of that verse. Or, at least, we will have a fuller sense of their writing, to match the understanding of their "subject."

"And all who heard should see them there."

CONCLUSION

"ENERGY IS ETERNAL DELIGHT"

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