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# Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis

## About This Volume

This volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* includes an editor's introduction by Joel Faflak, essays by Ildiko Csengei, Matt ffytche, Mary Jacobus, Julie Carlson, Tilottama Rajan, and Ross Woodman.

"Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis" offers a series of shifting perspectives on the emergence of psychoanalysis and a psychoanalytical consciousness in early and later British and German Romantic poetry, fiction, philosophy, and science. Rather than read psychoanalysis as one of Romanticism's inevitable outcomes, this volume reads for what remains unthought between Romantic thought and contemporary theory and criticism about Romanticism and psychoanalysis. The papers herein map versions of a psychoanalysis *avant la lettre*, but more crucially these essays imagine how psychoanalysis before Freud thinks itself differently, as well as anticipating and staging its later concerns, theorizations, and institutionalizations. Together they offer what might be called the profoundly psychosomatic matrix within which the specters of modern subjectivity materialize themselves. Ildiko Csengei reads the faints/feints of eighteenth-century sensibility through novel developments that critique the blind spots of Freud's interpretations. Matt Ffytche examines how the Romantic soul or psyche is neither divine power nor archetypal reality but a mediation between psychology and ontology that brings the psyche into its own radically embodied being. Mary Jacobus explores in Romantic 'autothanography' an uneconomized and uneconomical Romantic feeling – a way of seeing feeling and of feeling what we see – that we are only beginning to understand. Julie Carlson sees in the 'in/fancy' of Romantic (self-)writing a Romantic phantasy that is our reality test, a psychoanalysis wilder than Freud's. Tilottama Rajan examines how German idealist thought, veering toward a psychoanalysis it both entertains and cannot avoid, suggests more broadly how psychoanalysis is always the detour that history and thought take, making both (im)possible, yet forcing history to think the human otherwise. And finally, Ross Woodman reads between Jung's work on analytical psychology and alchemy and Blake and Shelley Romanticism's unavoidable turn sideways from rationality toward the uncanny work of understanding and imagination that makes reason possible in the first place.

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## About the Romantic Circles Praxis Series

The **Romantic Circles Praxis Series** is devoted to using computer technologies for the contemporary critical investigation of the languages, cultures, histories, and theories of Romanticism. Tracking the circulation of Romanticism within these interrelated domains of knowledge, **RCPS** recognizes as its conceptual terrain a world where Romanticism has, on the one hand, dissolved as a period and an idea into a plurality of discourses and, on the other, retained a vigorous, recognizable hold on the intellectual and theoretical

discussions of today. **RCPS** is committed to mapping out this terrain with the best and most exciting critical writing of contemporary Romanticist scholarship.

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# Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis

## Introduction

Joel Faflak, University of Western Ontario

Aside from outlining the historical and critical context within which the volume's papers situate themselves, Faflak's essay explores more specifically how Romantic psychoanalysis emerges alongside Romantic psychiatry. The latter emerges with greater socio-historical force, specificity, and effect than the former. Yet this clear difference also points to how Romantic psychiatry and psychoanalysis become uncanny reflections of the same cognitive maneuver to find and understand the hiding places of the mind's power, a psyche that remains radically unassimilable and indeterminate. It is perhaps one of Romanticism's most powerful and disturbing legacies to modernity that it signifies the absolute ambivalence between marking the psyche's resistance to symbolization and making its darkness visible to a public sphere increasingly concerned to seek out and neutralize the mind's sepulchral recesses. This essay appears in *Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

### I.

1. My thoughts here are not meant to preempt the papers that follow. I leave them to articulate their own voices, concerns, and views with far better precision than I could. Not all of the papers herein remain faithful to the volume's emphasis, and in Woodman's final case make a more analogical use of the period's literary concern with the psyche's labours. That said, I found in this difference of approaches something rather powerfully symptomatic about the period's own symptomatic response to the psyche and its meanings, both personal and social. That is to say, Romantic approaches to the psyche tend to be rather heterogeneous themselves because, well, the psyche's resistance to any monolithic interpretation of it was precisely the period's difficult education to us about psychology and psychic reality—a lesson we still find difficult to learn.
2. I thus want to say something prefatory, yet by no means prescriptive, about the spirit of psychoanalysis that emerges in the Romantic period, to which these essays respond. This volume grows out of a panel entitled "Sciences of the Romantic Psyche," which I organized for the 2006 joint North American for the Society for the Study of Romanticism/North American Society for Victorian Studies Association. The session asked for papers that explored the emergence of psychoanalytical or psychiatric thinking and techniques in Romantic literature and thought, or that explored psychoanalytical approaches to Romantic literature and culture. In truth I was not much concerned about the latter approaches, and was more interested in Romantic psychoanalysis than Romantic psychiatry. At the time I presumed that criticism on Romantic psychiatry was tied to psychiatry's historical origins at the turn of eighteenth century, which were far clearer than those of psychoanalysis, which doesn't emerge until the turn of the next century. This criticism's attachments, I further presumed, were thus stubbornly historicist, reflecting more recent trends in Romantic studies, whereas work on Romanticism and psychoanalysis was more productively dialectical and diacritical. The scholarly genealogy of this latter field played out, if not in the letter, then certainly in the Jungian spirit of Bodkin's or Frye's archetypal criticism or Abrams's natural supernaturalism. It then became symptomatic in the Freudian agon of Bloom's or Hartman's anxieties about Romantic imagination. More recently we can say that it has worked-through these earlier repetitions and rememberings of Romanticism's critical unconscious to the dark phenomenology of poststructuralism's hermeneutics of suspicion, typified by Tilotama Rajan's account of Romanticism as a period of "restless self-examination" (*Dark Interpreter* 25). Moreover, one could roughly map this evolution onto the twentieth-century theoretical development of psychoanalysis from

the split between Freud and Jung to a post-Freudian or post-Jungian complication of both pioneer's insights.

3. The critical distinction I wanted to make here seemed, to me, productive: Romantic psychiatry needed to be historical and cultural, whereas Romantic psychoanalysis, unmoored from the materialisms of psychiatry's early history, needed to be theoretical. Romantic psychoanalysis was psychiatry's gothic and uncanny other, its political unconscious, the free radical of Romantic identity's otherwise organic chemistry. But the binary was/is, of course, too neat. It tends to re-inscribe precisely the kinds of critical divisions that have sometimes plagued the field. The recent turn toward the cultural or political in Romantic studies has attempted to repair these rifts, yet it sometimes does so without making the more incisive gesture of asking how Romanticism's historical identity was a process of *self*-theorization, how the theoretical *within* Romantic historicization is its own most potently self-fashioning gesture, whether as revolution *or* reaction. To proceed in this direction, I thus take the term 'psycho(-)analysis' to specify the multiple personalities of Freud, Jung, and their aftermaths as the future shadows that Romanticism casts upon our various presents. Yet the term also signifies a more broad-ranging analysis *of* the psyche that produces Freud and his heirs, while further taking in a more heterogeneous Romantic concern to explore, understand, and classify the psyche (a concern of Matt fytche's paper, to which we shall return). This matrix encompasses the emergence of psychiatry, which in turn calls forth psychoanalysis as the eventual fulfilment of psychiatry's promise to modernity. But it tracks *both* identities as (dis)positions of Romantic thought which might help us to re-think the disciplinary boundaries of psychoanalysis, and thus to write against the grain of our histories of knowledge and thus against our knowledge of psychoanalytic history, whether psychiatric or otherwise. The papers herein map versions of a psychoanalysis *avant la lettre*, then, but also imagine how psychoanalysis before Freud thinks itself differently, as well as anticipating and staging its later concerns, theorizations, and institutionalizations.
4. To this end I didn't mean 'science' in the sense of its strictly disciplinary, regulative, or empirical nature, for the ambiguity of such distinctions is partly what makes Romantic thought at once modernity's Symbolic, imaginary, and Real. As David Knight notes, in Romanticism's time the sciences still "lacked sharp and natural frontiers," and disciplinary boundaries were as yet indistinct. Instead, "the realm of science, governed by reason," was distinguished from "practice, or rule of thumb; and apostles of science hoped to replace habit by reason in the affairs of life" (13-14). This regulative desire, however, is undone precisely by the time's confrontation with the evasions and anxieties of desire itself. To paraphrase Rajan in this volume, with reference to Schelling's 1815 *Ages of the World*, there can be no science of nature without a detour into nature's history, at which point we are in the laboratory of a psychoanalysis whose history makes history impossible, or rather, a psychoanalysis that withdraws from history itself to think the human otherwise. In this sense something like literature itself becomes the traumatic core of Romanticism's confrontation with itself, the means through which Romanticism discovers human identity's traumatically literary nature. Or to cite Julie Carlson, (Romanticism's) phantasy is our reality test, which she provocatively refers to as the in/fancy of Romantic (self-)writing. This "'wandering fancy' welcomes imaginative life and unleashes what the 'development' in romantic imagination represses: delight in errancy, death-in-life, fits-and-starts of inspiration."
5. Ildiko Csengei figures this delight through her readings of the faints/feints of eighteenth-century sensibility, whose 'novel' developments "critique the blind spots of Freud's interpretations." Fainting stages the hysterical symptom as a scene of resistant self-elaboration, a mode of "unconscious female protest" through which women escape the forced social repression of the novel of sensibility's plot. In such pockets of resistance the unconscious lies couched as a force that knows no "no." However transgressive this scene of gender, its triumph, left at the level of the unconscious, seems rather pyrrhic when read against the gendered social revolutions of the 1790s. However, Csengei's analysis, like Mary Jacobus's, suggests that there is a different confrontation with this specter of failure, an *uneconomized*

and uneconomical feeling that doesn't locate itself within a binary structure of productivity vs. uselessness, but rather thinks feeling in ways we have only begun to understand. Such a process, Jacobus suggests, produces new ways of seeing and feeling—or more specifically, new ways of *seeing feeling* and of *feeling what we see*. In what Jacobus provocatively explores as Romantic autothanography, the valence of seeing, feeling, and thus being is a narrative of being in one's own death. This existence marks the interminable register of one's missed encounter(s) with the real of the world, which nonetheless has an all-too-real terminus. So, if something like psychiatry emerges in the period to provide for the care of wayward souls or psyches, it is equally confronted by a diagnosis without cure. This pathology is the contagion or stain produced by the cognitive business of feeling and thinking about the world, which business halts with traumatically abrupt force, the world's nature lingering far past it and caring nothing for it, like the blind triumph of Schopenhauer's will.

6. One point of these papers, then, is to ask how Romantic psychoanalysis and psychiatry emerge as uncanny reflections of the same cognitive maneuver to find and understand the sources of the mind's power and affinities, knowing these things to be, as ffytche argues, irredeemably indefinite and obscure. And more often than not, this search ends up with specters that the future history of psychiatry and psychoanalysis would rather set aside, but whose powerful hauntings are constitutive of the Romantic psyche's confrontation with itself. This is the implicit point of Ross Woodman's paper, which investigates alchemy as the occult or spectral half-life of psychoanalysis, further reminding us that psychoanalysis and its often more radical investigations of the psyche haunts psychiatry and vexes its social productivity. Alchemy figures how the psychic machinery by which being is transformed into feeling and thinking looks rather like a black magic whose radically unknown speculative power has us perpetually within its spell, human genome projects, neuroscience, and pharmacological wonders to the contrary. Or rather, such attempts at physiological and psychological, or more properly *psychosomatic*, rationalization are symptomatic of how far we *haven't* come in our understanding of the psyche. By taking us back to Jung's and psychoanalysis' future in Blake and Shelley, giving historical precedence to neither, Woodman reminds us that we've been looking at things in the wrong way all along. We turn sideways toward the confidence of rationality, without looking into the uncanny work of understanding and imagination. Coleridge seemed already to know this when he coined the supernatural work of cognition as a willing suspension of disbelief constituting poetic faith, or coined the term "psycho-analytical" (*Notebooks* 2:2670) while attempting to theorize how we come to put our faith in the unknown.<sup>[1]</sup> Despite his later philosophical conservatism, he could never leave behind his own startling accounts of the human mind's mesmerizing powers in *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, or *Kubla Khan*. To borrow Woodman's parlance, these are as radically alchemical in their accounts of the empirical and phenomenological process of the imagination as we yet have in literature.
7. So, in the various Romantic precedents we find here, we can name Romantic psychic organization as the site of a profoundly productive ambivalence, at once foundational and proleptic. Here we are in the realm of science, but one whose critical, cultural, and literary articulation is radically beside the point of its own rationally organized disciplinary other. For this reason, I want to set one primal scene of this volume in Coleridge, not his coining of the term "psycho-analytical," but one of its symptomatic outbreaks.

## II.

8. In 1804 Coleridge left England for Malta, presumably to regain some sense of physical and psychological balance—that is, to overcome his opium addiction and recover his creative focus and purpose. In a notebook entry dated "Sunday Midnight, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1804," Coleridge, still at sea, writes:

O dear God! Give me strength of Soul to make one thorough Trial—if I land at Malta spite of all horrors to go through one month of unstimulated Nature—yielding to nothing but

manifest Danger of Life!—O great God! Grant me grace truly to look into myself, & to begin the serious work of Self-amendment—accounting to Conscience for the Hours of every Day. Let me live in *Truth*—manifesting that alone which *is*, even as it *is*, & striving to be that which only Reason shews to be lovely—that which my Imagination would delight to manifest!—I am loving & kind-hearted & cannot do wrong with impunity, but o! I am very, very weak—from my infancy have been so—& I exist for the moment!—Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, Father & God! omnipresent, incomprehensible, who with undeviating Laws eternal yet carest for the falling of the feather from the Sparrow's Wing.—(*Notebooks* 2:2091)

Such desperate confessions usually accompany one's night-thoughts, when the moon casts its ghostly illumination over the shape of things, though given the inclement conditions endured by the convoy in which Coleridge was sailing, it seems that even that enlightenment was unavailable. Nonetheless, as Wordsworth reminds us in his "Poem on the Formation of his mind" (2:2092), the five-book version of which Coleridge had taken with him to Malta, "when the light of sense / Goes out," other presences and articulations emerge in a "flash" to fill the gap, an "invisible world" or other life of things (Wallace Stevens calls it "ghostlier demarcations") that it was the particular business of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and their age to express. More often than not, this presence opened from the "mind's abyss / Like an unfathered vapour," which rift Wordsworth was prone to sublimate as the site where "greatness make[s] abode" (*Prelude* 6.594-602).

9. Of course, these passages from what would become Book Six of *The Prelude* were not part of the manuscript Coleridge carried with him to Malta. For that he would have to wait until January 1807, after his return to England, when he listened to Wordsworth recite his expanded thirteen-book version over a fortnight, at which point Coleridge also realized the full extent of Wordsworth's rather patronizing psychoanalysis of Coleridge's decline. We read the effect of Wordsworth's transference onto Coleridge in "To William Wordsworth," in which Coleridge experiences the Great Man's diagnosis as "flowers / Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my bier, / In the same coffin, for the self-same grave!" (79-81). With the echo of his analyst's "deep voice" (110) still hovering in the air, Coleridge, "Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close" (115), finds himself "Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound" (118). In the ambivalence of "hanging still" as both lingering cathexis and deadly suspension we see the darker, interminable yearning of Wordsworth's experience of the "mind's abyss" as a "hope that can never die, / Effort, expectation, and desire, / And something evermore about to be" (*Prelude* 6.606-8). No wonder that, at the end of hearing Wordsworth's poem, Coleridge, in ironically reverent Dora drag, "found [himself] in prayer!" ("To William Wordsworth," 119).
10. What compels us here is how the two men proceed in one another's absence, and how this absence stages in their respective writings a dialogue with the unconscious as a missed encounter ("the hiding-places of man's power / Open; I would approach them, but they close," Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude* [12.279-80]). Such latencies compel us to read the evidence of Romanticism always symptomatically rather than definitively. For instance, the indolence plaguing Coleridge's creative will also took its physiological toll. Writing to his wife on June 5, 1804, describing the voyage from Gibraltar to Malta, Coleridge explains that he was "wretchedly unwell; oppressed, uncomfortable, incapable of the least exertion of mind or attention, tho' not sick, in the intervals of eating; and the moment, I eat any thing, I became sick and rejected—at length, my appetite wholly deserted me; I loathed the sight of Food . . ." The result "made [him] neglectful of taking an opening medicine —. O merciful God! What days of Horror were not that . . . Body & Being," though the next day he reports being "comfortable, only a little feverish," and, eventually, for "the remainder of the Voyage enjoyed a lightness, health, & appetite, unknown to me for months before" (*Letters* 1136). The rather quick recovery has to do with two openings: one in the manuscript of Coleridge's letter, which was

subsequently mutilated (at the point of the ellipsis), the other in Coleridge's bowels, for one of the more unwelcome side effects of repeated opium use is constipation. For an account of both, we must go to Wordsworth, who got news of the letter firsthand from Mrs. Coleridge, and reported its contents to George Beaumont in a letter dated August 31, 1804:

[Coleridge] then gives a most melancholy account of an illness which held him during the whole of his voyage from Gibraltar to Malta except the last four or five days, a languor and oppression, and rejection of food, accompanied with a dangerous constipation, which compelled the Captain to hang out signals of distress to the Commodore for a surgeon to come on board. He was relieved from this at last after undergoing the most excruciating agonies, with the utmost danger of an inflammation in the bowels. All this appears to have been owing to his not having been furnished with proper opening medicines. (*Letters* 498)

Coleridge's own relief is, as it were, palpable: "every thing depends on keeping the Body regularly open.—" (*Letters* 1137).

11. When Woodman pointed out to me in conversation the temporal proximity of this episode and Coleridge's September 1805 notebook entry which coins the term "psycho-analytical," I howled with laughter. Yet "keeping the Body regularly open" signifies in several possible ways, for staying open means staying receptive to oneself, the world, and others, a peculiarly regular attention of the senses that by the Romantic period becomes an acute dilemma, the psychosomatics of thinking and feeling vexing creation to the extent that 'regularity' itself becomes problematic, a symptom in turn for what Orrin Wang calls a Romantic sobriety that feeds upon its own desire for self-control, self-discipline, self-containment. That is to say, we can read the rather alarming symptoms of Coleridge's constipated body for the potential psychoanalysis of a mind not quite at one with itself, or rather of a mind and body whose incommensurate relationship with one another indicate the troubling conjunctions of affect within and between subjects, the staging of a (dis)embodied intra- and inter-subjectivity, the syntax of which it is difficult to parse. ffytche examines how the Romantic soul or psyche is neither divine power nor archetypal reality but a different mediation between psychology and ontology, offering a "basis of the self and its imagined processes of production [as] conveyed via metaphors of obscurity, oblivion or abrupt and inexplicable transition," a self "radically self-caused by a logic which belongs wholly to itself . . ." Via such "resistance to rational conceptions of causal process, the self has acquired a certain inalienable freedom."
12. This freedom can be rather vertiginous, however. In *Kubla Khan* Coleridge speaks of a "deep romantic chasm" (12) that fills the poet with a sense of "holy dread" (52) about the unknown. Shelley sees this dread in the ravine of the River Arve from which the subject's entire phenomenological universe emerges and into which it threatens to evaporate. In the post-empiricist mindset that informs their writings, one is tempted to read these tropes as figures for the mind's *tabula rasa* re-cast as the sublime potentiality of imaginative power. As Kant was to write, however, as if to ventriloquize Locke's own anxiety about the "violence" (*Essay* 2:161) of the mind's tendency to find alternate paths of cognition, "The point of excess for the imagination . . . is like an abyss in which it fears to lose itself" (*Critique* 1:107). Such ideas constellate the image of a mind whose cognitive power the age at once esteemed and feared, especially at a time when the increasingly rapid dissemination of thought and thoughts in the public sphere was becoming an activity of some socio-political concern. Goya's monster-breeding sleep of reason suggests that just as soon as one confronts the mind's ability to breed pathologies, one also fears such Malthussian replications and reproductions (De Quincey's rabidly racist, imperialist, and classist confession of the nightmarishly baroque intricacies of his opium dreams being one of the most potent symbolizations of this anxiety).
13. We have come to call this locus of subjectivity the unconscious. Yet naming the power is rather beside



the point, for what seems to mark the Romantic encounter with it differently is this power's psychologically estranging and gothic effects. As ffytche or Rajan remind us, Freud's wasn't the only form of the unconscious with which the Romantics contended. Or as Carlson notes, "Shelley's psychical reality indeed is not Freud's but wilder." In his Prospectus to *The Recluse* (first drafted in 1800), which according to Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* was to have been the "FIRST GENUINE PHILOSOPHIC POEM" (2:156) in British literature, Wordsworth speaks of how nothing, not "The darkest Pit of lowest Erebus, / Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out / By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe / As fall upon us often when we look / Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man" (36-40).<sup>[2]</sup> Something about confronting the work of the individual mind produces anxiety. It's not that the Romantics seemed compelled to prove the existence of this something, for that seemed more the province of science, philosophy, natural philosophy, medicine. Rather, they were at once haunted and fascinated by what power this power might hold for and over human consciousness and imagination, haunted and fascinated by its effects on human minds and bodies. As Jacobus reminds us by taking us back to the future of modernity's dislocating phenomenology (Philip Larkin's unease at seeing wet leaves on a road), the effect on our psyche of encountering a speck of glass on the ground of a ruined cottage can be—*is*—profound. Everything depends upon *how* we see it.

14. Yet the dislocation doesn't come with the observation itself, as Jacobus is quick to add. Like the effects of Mesmerism, gravity, and a host of other phenomena through which post-Enlightenment culture was beginning to encounter its own uncanny nature, the point of post-Baconian scientific observation or post-Lockean associationism, of turning the world over to man's ability to witness it and his place in it, was that the empirical evidence from which we construct our bodies of knowledge was, in fact, merely symptomatic of the world's latency. The power of electricity or of galvanism wasn't as important as their galvanizing *aftereffects*, the startling fact that these effects staged the human as a radical *displacement* in the world. In *that* displacement emerged the unconscious as the radically disjunctive effect of man's consciousness upon the world, or more particularly the world of his own making, which in turn produced the idea that the human, by the very nature of its *being* human, was rather beside the point. Romanticism is filled with such uncanny encounters with otherness (think of how many times something like the Specter of the Brocken appears in Romantic literature). In this respect the unconscious was discovered, not as something that the human had missed about the world, but as an effect of discovering the unconscious, an effect *of* confronting how consciousness is always beside itself.

### III.

15. In returning to the passage we started with, two points should arrest us: Coleridge's desire to achieve the momentary respite of an "unstimulated Nature" and the gesture toward faith. The former would allow Coleridge to "live in *Truth*—manifesting that alone which *is*, even as it *is*, & striving to be that which only Reason shews to be lovely—that which my Imagination would delight to manifest!" Coleridge wants to still the perpetually disruptive psychosomatic body of evidence that is specifically tied to his constipated and opiated condition. Yet one also senses a yearning to put the evidence of the senses altogether into some coherent form, to gain what Wordsworth calls the "genuine insight" of "the individual Mind that keeps her own / Inviolable retirement, subject there / To Conscience only, and the law supreme / Of that Intelligence which governs all" (Prospectus to *The Recluse* 88, 19-22). At the end of the penultimate stanza of his Intimations ode Wordsworth calls this the "philosophic mind," though he is quick at the end of the final stanza to note how such "Thoughts . . . do often lie too deep for tears" (184, 203). This isn't so much a sublimation or transcendence as a recognition that thought itself, when confronting its own nature, lies beyond the cognition of either intellect or feeling. If thought is a shape all light, its illumination, as Shelley will acknowledge with not a little tragic insight, tramples the mind's labour into dust. Confronting one's mind breeds such fear and awe that the mind becomes paralyzed, annihilated, the dark side of the *suspension* of disbelief which produces the

confirming illusions of poetic faith, of the light of sense going out in order for the invisible world, which is the senses' after-staging of the world, to reveal itself.

16. No wonder, then, that Coleridge calls out to God, "omnipresent, incomprehensible, who with undeviating Laws eternal yet carest for the falling of the feather from the Sparrow's Wing." Coleridge is asking for a certain philosophical clarity, and thus appealing more broadly to thought to sober or correct itself, to bring to enlightenment that within itself that won't make itself known. Here, as ffytche's or Rajan's papers again remind us by turning to German science and idealism, both potent *pharmakons* for a British philosophical tradition that couldn't remain immune to its influence (Wordsworth and Coleridge returning from Germany in the late 1790s is rather like Jung and Freud bringing the plague of psychoanalysis into New York Harbour in 1909), thought becomes the very pathogen it seeks to root out, thus giving the time's appeal to thought's power a certain feverish fervency. By the time of the high Anglicism of Coleridge's later philosophical writings, such incipient evangelicisms secure the otherwise heterogeneous and aberrant wanderings of his early thoughts as the internalized "Ideas" of church and state by which the clerical imagination is guided toward its higher social and moral purpose, insuring a cultural stability that the Victorians will find so useful. The turn inward in Coleridge, that is to say, is at once radically transgressive and opportunistically salutary. When Coleridge asks for the strength to "look into" himself and "begin the serious work of Self-amendment—accounting to Conscience for the Hours of every Day"—he is re-staging the disciplinary regime of spiritual exercise as a psychological call to duty, thus deploying psychological ritual as religious practice. Coleridge's unpublished writings, while on one hand demonstrating the often arcane and restlessly alternative cast of his thought, are also filled with repeated calls to "Self-amendment" similar to that of his Mediterranean letter.
17. That is to say, we also see in Coleridge's personal encounter with the unconscious a desire for reparation and the therapeutic, a socially ameliorative gesture that allays fears about these effects in the name of what Wordsworth, in his own way always quick to move past the individual and the personal, speaks of as the collective "Mind of Man." The ideological tenor of this desire to organize the potential disorganization of thought and feeling was, by the turn of the century, well-established. As John Barrell writes,

aesthetics was anxious to pass the concept [of imagination] over to psychiatry; for when the imagination slipped the lead of the will or judgment, often when "heated" by the overwhelming power of the passions, it became "disordered," and produced elaborate structures of ideas associated on accidental rather than on substantial grounds. The relation between insanity and the imagination had been a subject of a famous dispute in the late 1750s . . . (7)

One is reminded here of mid-century works such as Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*, Joseph Warton's "The Enthusiast," or Thomas Warton's "The Pleasures of Melancholy," which make a spectacle of the mind's spectacular capacity to re-envision our environment. They typologize a feeling disposition toward the world and others. In the late eighteenth century the sense of sensibility embodies the exulting solitude of one's communion with nature as a dynamic economy of exchange, which psychiatry as well as psychoanalysis at once originates in and originates.

18. Csengei's paper accounts for the later eighteenth century's powerful resistance to such developments by marking the novel's staging of sensibility as a novel development in sensibility's otherwise conserving and conservative evolution. Csengei reminds us that we need to be reminded of such evolutions, for such is how histories tend to write out of themselves that which might write them otherwise. Psychiatry emerges concurrently with what French psychiatric pioneer Philippe Pinel, in his 1801 *Traité médico-philosophique sur l'aleniation mentale; ou la manie* (first translated into English in 1806), termed the

'moral treatment' or 'moral therapy,' earlier instituted as part of the founding regime of the York Retreat (1796), which pioneered the humane treatment of the mentally ill after the blight of what in his *History of Madness* Foucault calls 'the great confinement.' Yet this otherwise benign and empathic transformation of sensibility also plays out the not-so-benign coercion of sympathy and its desire to bring the other within the sphere of one's influence, and thus to tame the 'wildness' of unconscious exchange in the name of political economy and discursive surveillance. One can locate Romantic psychoanalysis on either side of such developments: either its radical confrontation with the effects of the unconscious is cause for psychiatry's careful observation, or it reacts against such disciplinary effects, radicalizing and unsettling their normalizing imperatives. One remembers that when the pleasure of imagination turns to pain (a distinction that De Quincey further exploits when structuring his opium confessions), the confrontation begins to look less welcoming, even threatening, a point that Rajan's paper makes with reference to Mesmerism and its compulsive cultural repetition of the political specters of the 1790s, or Woodman makes via alchemy as psychoanalysis's matrix of transformational possibility (as Carlson notes with reference to Mary Shelley's first novel, Victor Frankenstein's "active fancy [is] drawn initially to books of alchemy").

19. As I have suggested, the historical contours of psychiatry's emergence in the Romantic period are much more clearly defined than those of psychoanalysis—the numbering, segregation, and treatment of the insane in asylums such as the York Retreat; the development and dissemination of medical knowledge in a number of fields from philosophy to natural philosophy to medicine; etc.<sup>[3]</sup> But we can imagine this psychiatry ambivalently, for it emerges from a Romantic public sphere whose spirit of post-Enlightenment scientific, philosophical, and cultural enquiry informs Romanticism's forming and reforming bodies of knowledge, which are at once interdisciplinary and cosmopolitan, local and general, radical and conservative, national and transnational. Much scholarship attends to *German Romantic psychiatry*, for instance, and it was Johann Christian Reil who in 1808 coined the term "*Psychiaterie*," only three years after Coleridge coined the term "psycho-analytical," and whose *Rhapsodien über die Anwendung der psychischen Curmethode auf Geisteszerrüttungen* (1803) is one of the rather more exotic examples of psychiatry's often anti-scientific origins. As Allen Thiher notes, Reil's text "proposes various therapeutic procedures while it theorizes that the self has hidden depths hiding the fantasies that erupt in madness," and the German Romanticism from which psychiatry partly emerges evokes a "moment during which medicine and literature looked upon each other as complementary discourses, and this moment was continued on, perhaps unknowingly, in the development of psychoanalytic discourse" (169, 167).
20. A similar conjunction exists in Britain at the same time, as Michelle Faubert has argued. Yet Faubert is also quick to add that this conjunction speaks in resistance to what is, more often than not in psychiatry's British inflection, a common sense concern for the effective classification and discipline of feeling and thinking bodies, especially when such human economies turn pathological, as I have already suggested.<sup>[4]</sup> Emerging from the alchemy of German, Scottish, and French, as well as English thought, British Romantic Psychiatry, like the hybridization of British imperial identity from the discrete strands of other nationalities, forges from this philosophical and scientific melting pot an identity that, when it eventually ends up in the hands of an American psychiatric culture industry (and here I am thinking of Lacan's critique of American ego psychology), turns the enlightened self-examination of feeling into the nearly evangelical (which is also to say rabidly ideological) imperative to feel *well* and *not* to worry: to *be* or *get* happy. Here the meeting of Romantic psychoanalysis, and its radical encounter with the unconscious, and Romantic psychiatry, and its desire to economize this encounter, produces an epistemological and ultimately socio-political payoff whose paradigms of management, utility, development, and progress set the stage for a later nineteenth-century consolidation of psychiatric power.
21. So, when Coleridge appeals to God to guide the properly productive labour of illuminating his

inwardly pathological self and root out its mutating effect, we need to be aware, simultaneously, that this is the man who coined the term 'psycho-analytical' in an effort to explain the conjunction of psychology, myth, and faith. There was much to pray for when confronting the mind's heart of darkness, which seemed to know only interminable growth and transformation. This thought's sublime dimensions were a source of wonder and terror, awe and threat, diagnosis and contagion. In terms of Romanticism's own thoughtful response to such vertiginous dualities, this is not to read the Romantic as open critique without ideological borders. There was also much to pray for when one witnessed how even the radically incisive epistemological gestures of psychoanalysis could be turned to aesthetic and ideological profit, as Coleridge learned only too well in hearing Wordsworth's account of his "friend's" pathology of psychological and creative despondency.

22. The papers in this volume, then, speak both implicitly and explicitly to a psychoanalysis haunted by its own specters, one that eventually produces Freud and permits us to recognize how the compulsive repetition of institutional power tends to feed upon its own failed enlightenment. This is also to say that the papers herein address how Romanticism emerges *from this failure*, to which it responds with considerable theoretical acumen, however much it also produces a fundamental split between a psychiatric consciousness, which attends to the socio-political management of psychosomatic causes and effects, and a psychoanalytical consciousness, which stages this management's feeling impossibility, the one interwoven in the other as what Schelling might call rotary drives whose productivity is at once the body politic's cure and pathogen. Perhaps we can frame things differently, however, by noting instead the emergence of a kind of psychiatric or psychoanalytic consciousness through which one can trace, not the *invention* of either psychiatry or psychoanalysis, but the imagining and imagination of their terms and dispositions of thought, feeling, and action. Together these gestures constellate the *habitus* within which the various theories, doctrines, and practices of either field could materialize themselves, but against which the period writes with some resistant force.
23. The contributors to this volume account for this resistance by returning to Romantic literature and thought as expressions of the poetic forces of a burgeoning public sphere imbued with the desire at once to solidify and challenge itself. In short, these papers contribute to a kind of psychosomatic literary history of psychoanalysis, one that traces in Romantic literature, through its shifting textual forms, a cultural symptomatology that marks the affective and affecting influence *in* literature of an emerging consciousness mediated by both its psychiatric and psychoanalytic tendencies. Negotiating between the psychiatric within the psychoanalytic and the psychoanalytic within the psychiatric, the Romantic psyche becomes a productively bipolar cultural dis(-)order which it is the particular business of the psychology of Romantic literature and thought to work out and against, if not to work through.
24. Taken together via their repetitions, transferences, and unconscious desires, these papers evoke what Deborah Britzman might refer to as Romanticism's difficult education. As Carlson notes, this trauma is the work of literature itself: "For [Shelley], the value of creative writing is in 'preparing' readers for the inability to be prepared. This preparation includes a fundamental lack of clarity regarding the coherence of that 'me.'" Books merely objectify the textualization of reality that conditions the formation of the Lockean identity from the traumatic *tabula rasa* of its core self. In short, books and literature traumatize, because that's what they're meant to do. Through them—like the gestures of those still insurmountable and inscrutable texts of Romanticism's thought-ful and difficult encounter with itself—Blake's *Milton*, Keats's *Hyperions*, Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*—exploits the confrontation with thought and feeling for all it's worth, an exploitation that subsequent years and thinkers will take in unimagined and unthinkable ways, in order to make all kinds of cultural profit, yet also to confront the incommensurability of thought itself, the place where our embodied experience of the world becomes the site of an uncanny, traumatic, apparitional encounter. Only by acknowledging such disconcerting psychic realities can we get on with the business of living on.

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## Notes

1 I analyze this passage at some length in my *Romantic Psychoanalysis* 31-36, and again in my Afterword to a forthcoming book, co-written with Woodman, entitled *Revelation and Knowledge*. Woodman also reminded me of the startling affinity between this episode in Coleridge's life and Blake's mythologization of the psychosomatics of Milton moving at once inspirationally and with painful apocalyptic dread through Blake's bowels ("Bowlahoola") in that poem's remarkable scene of psychoanalysis.

2 I quote here from the published version of the poem, appended as part of preface to Wordsworth's 1814 publication of *The Excursion*. In the original manuscript Wordsworth speaks of the "fear and awe" that "fall upon me often when I look / Into my soul, into the soul of man – ," turning toward the collective, yet via a psychoanalysis whose confrontation with the unconscious is as much threateningly personal and idiosyncratic as consolingly universal, the latter clearly taking precedence by the time of the 1814 version, in which the more obscure work of the soul (to borrow Ffytche's term) is sublimated, intellectualized, and allegorized as the collective social work of the universal "Mind." See my discussion of the differences between version of the Prospectus in *Romantic Psychoanalysis* 91-97.

3 For histories of this emergence in the period, see Ellenberger and Shorter. The 1980s and 1990s saw a surge in work on the history of psychiatry in the wake of Foucault, but also the foundational research of McAlpine, Hunter, Porter and others. A 1990 article by Andrew Scull schematizes this work in terms of a tension between history and historiography—the way psychiatry writes its own history. Proceeding on what Scull calls the "firm and neutral ground of value-free natural science" (239), it produced "sanitized" histories of the field in which the spirit of progress guides psychiatry's move toward its own absolute knowledge: the cure of souls in the name of the public good and scientific fact. Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* radically challenged the rules of this game, though his historiography came under attack, a problem redressed, Scull argues, through the more "comparative" (242) approach of recent psychiatric historiography, which proceeds in the spirit thought not always the letter of anti-psychiatry. Writing psychiatric history otherwise, it combines Foucault's hermeneutics of suspicion with a firmer grasp of socio-historical specificity. Call it the New Psychiatry. Part of this effort is to nuance how later eighteenth-century culture produces psychiatry from its own desire to naturalize its citizenship among the disciplines. Scull links this desire more to the nineteenth century, whereas I would locate it earlier in the eighteenth century.

4 Here I want to mention the work of Shorter, again, but also Ingram, Faubert, Burwick, and of course Porter, whose *Mind Forg'd Manacles* is in many ways the ur-text of Romantic psychiatric historiography.

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# Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis

## Psychology in Search of Psyches: Friedrich Schelling, Gotthilf Schubert and the Obscurities of the Romantic Soul

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In the Romantic period in Germany psychology emerges both as an empirical science for the study of the mind, and a forum for a new metaphysics of the individual. fytche examines this dual condition through the intellectual dialogue between Friedrich Schelling and G.H. Schubert and their search for an appropriate description of the psyche. This essay appears in *\_Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis\_*, a volume of *\_Romantic Circles Praxis Series\_*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

Happy are those ages when the starry sky is the map of all possible paths—ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars. Everything in such ages is new and yet familiar, full of adventure and yet their own. The world is wide and yet it is like home, for the fire that burns in the soul is of the same essential nature as the stars . . .

Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*[\[1\]](#)

1. Anyone reading histories of nineteenth-century psychology and psychiatry will come across a paradox in relation to German Romantic material. On the one hand, it is often represented as an intellectual aberration—both superstitious and metaphysical. Furthermore, its conceptual vocabulary stems mainly from German idealist philosophy and this causes problems when translating into materialist and associationist traditions, even regarding some of the most elementary features, such as the I, or the subject. Correspondingly, histories of psychiatry have often dealt with this material quite cursorily, in a way that is designed to make it appear even more mystifyingly Gothic. Klaus Doerner's classic study of nineteenth-century psychiatry skates over a whole generation of Romantic-influenced theorists as if they themselves represented a panorama of mental aberration; he mentions with relish figures such as Heinrich Steffens, for whom insanity could only be treated "within the framework of a planetary cosmology" (235). But on the other hand, there is no shortage of histories willing to acknowledge that some of the innovations of German Romantic psychology were crucial for the evolution of modern approaches. These include, for instance, the elaboration of an unconscious and repression, the concern with development and integration, and also the inclusion of the 'I,' or the sense of identity, as something that can itself be subject to illness. According to Alexander and Selesnick, "In their new and enthusiastic concern over the nature of the psyche, the Romantics brought psychiatry to the threshold of modern concepts and techniques" (135).
2. I want to propose that the manifest obscurities within German Romantic psychical theory, its resistance to straightforward conceptualisation and its signal difficulties in formulating a coherent theory of the individual soul, are both a significant issue for the history of modern psychology and more than an accidental by-product of Romantic confusion. Most importantly, I want to distinguish between different kinds of obstacles and obscurities in the path of psychological theorisation. There are of course tendencies in such material that we might ascribe to the revival of interest in German religious mysticism and neo-Platonism. We can also note points at which philosophical notions of cause and system, of a particularly speculative kind, are being mapped over the findings of contemporary psychiatrists, who are in turn prepared to endorse the existence of supernatural forces in the soul. However, what I plan to concentrate on is a different kind of disturbance, which is the importation of



ontology into psychology. One of the distinctions I most want to develop here is that between a psychology—one which sets out to observe mental life and motivation, whether for therapeutic or sociological purposes—and an ontology of the person, which aims at establishing the substance, integrity or autonomy of individual life, often by recourse to an abstract theory of the 'real' essence or ground of existence. The ambiguity, of course, is that both are adduced within the medium of the soul, or psyche.

3. Such ontologies of the psyche often attempt to re-formulate a sense of harmonious and objective connection between the experience of the individual and the nature of the universe. These theories of the soul become culturally important precisely at the point when the nascent German middle class—partly in reaction to the French revolution, partly via its own attempts at autonomy—is attempting to counter the hold of traditional religious, political and moral orthodoxies concerning the nature of human agency, and to this end is developing new conceptions of the relation between freedom and law, individuality and community, history and nature. At the same time, such attempts at a new moral discourse of man are exposed to the experience of political instability, growing alienation from an organic sense of community, and powerlessness in the face of persisting feudal and religious structures. A key question, then, is whether Schelling and Schubert's theorisation of the psyche is in some sense compensatory—an attempt to formulate a new theory of man, or of individual essence or the 'ground' of the self, within the emerging framework of speculative psychology, as opposed to on more empirical or political terrain. Psychology opens up a new dimension for the philosopher within which to pursue accounts of human integration, motivation and freedom which are sited not in and according to the rules of consciousness, but which take place obscurely in the inner and unconscious depths of the soul and the self. To draw an analogy with the introductory quote from Lukács, the unconscious depths of nature and unconscious depths within the psyche are credited with forms of co-ordination—'inner' connections, obscure but historically unfolding concords—in the same way in which the laws of individual and cosmos, the light of souls and the light of stars, were once wishfully integrated.

### **Languages of the Psyche**

4. I want first to pursue this question of the relation between ontology and psychology, as well as the function of obscurity in Romantic theories of the soul, by examining the dialogue between the philosopher Friedrich Schelling and one of his ex-pupils at Jena, the anthropologist and psychologist Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert. Their output and exchanges in the period 1805-1815 are incredibly informative about German Romantic psychological preoccupations. Schelling's intellectual range was broad and eclectic; having been one of the leading philosophical lights of the early Romantic movement in Jena, his ideas were now becoming a focal point for certain trends in Romantic medicine. In 1806 Schelling teamed up with the psychiatrist Adalbart Marcus to edit the *Annals of Medicine as Science* which placed itself at the intersection between medicine, psychology and philosophy. In his opening editorial Schelling hailed medicine as the "crown and flower of natural science, as man is of the world" (1.1.v). The journal was annotated by Coleridge in England. Schubert was trained as a medical physician and practised as such until about 1805 when he was drawn more to the fields of anthropology and psychology (while studying at Jena from 1801-1803 he had attended Schelling's lectures on *Naturphilosophie*). In 1807 he gave an influential course of lectures in Dresden, published as *Views of the Nightside of Nature*, which included material on animal magnetism and dreams drawn from contemporary psychiatric literature and became something of a Romantic bestseller (it provoked E.T.A. Hoffmann, amongst others, towards an interest in psychopathology). *The Symbolism of Dreams* (1814) and *The History of the Soul* (1830) were also major products of Romantic anthropology and were singled out by Henri Ellenberger for their striking anticipations of modern psychodynamic and psychoanalytic ideas (205).
5. The development of Schelling's thought prior to this point is complex and cannot be rehearsed here. [\[2\]](#)

But, as a way of supplying some minimal context for the new direction both thinkers were taking, both he and Schubert were developing their interest in psychiatry, and both were also moving from a philosophy of nature to an interest in time. Schubert wrote to Schelling in 1808 saying that he was engaged in a new work that would investigate the ages of the world—the *Zeitalter*—in terms of epochs of organic life, which he hoped to bring into line with the sagas of ancient peoples.<sup>[3]</sup> Schelling's own attempt at a foundational theory of time, *The Ages of the World*, or *Weltalter*, was first drafted around 1811 and subsequently rewritten and redrafted over a period of five years, before it was finally abandoned in incomplete form. Its first book, the only one fully developed, was devoted to the past and opened with a magnificent paean to the obscurity of the world's genesis: "The oldest formations of the earth bear such a foreign aspect that we are hardly in a position to form a concept of their time of origin or of the forces that were then at work" (*Ages* 121). Both Schelling and Schubert, then, were concerning themselves with the hidden genealogies of the mind and nature, and this was in conscious reaction to the way in which German idealist philosophers—including J.G. Fichte and the younger Schelling himself—had devoted themselves to theories of consciousness and the I.

6. It is the wide-ranging and speculative character of Schelling and Schubert's thought in this period which makes it so revealing of intellectual tendencies. No discourse or reference point is excluded here: one finds interactions between morality and magnetism, psychopathology and philology, self-observation and metaphysics. What remains striking is the heterodox nature of their approach and the elusive quality of their topic. As they corresponded about the nature of the soul, or as Schelling filled page after page of his notebooks for the *Ages of the World*, the psyche split prismatically between a number of competing vocabularies of substance or process. One kind of language they use to identify a soul-like quality to the self concerns a gleam or effluence—using the terms *Glanz* (shining), *Funke* (spark) or even *Brennendes* (something flammable). Thus Schelling supposes that "Even in the most corporeal of things there lies a point of transfiguration that is often almost sensibly perceptible." This is an "inner spiritual matter which lies concealed in all the things of the world" or "is recognizable in the way that flesh and the eyes shine forth" (*Ages* 151-52). Soul is presented here as an occult quality trapped beneath the objective surface of things, like "the flash of light" which nature conceals in the hard stone (*On the Relation* 12). Such descriptions draw partly on the vocabulary of the German mystical tradition (*Funke* is the term that Meister Eckhart used to indicate the spark of divinity in the soul) and partly on readings in Stoic cosmology, for which the law of the universe was sometimes conceived as a fire running through all things. However, such antique conceptions were updated with reference to contemporary natural science. Schubert writes frequently about a combustible element in nature which appears "at the highest points of existence and interaction"—thus not only in the phenomena of electricity, but also in plants and animals at the time of blooming and mating, and equally in "the phosphor and the shining" released in the decomposition of organic bodies (358-59). Importantly, this "shining" is in each case the sign that an entity has stepped into an "inner relation" with a higher whole. Likewise Schelling, in a description of combustion, alludes to the ancient worship of fire and suggests "in this they left us a hint that fire is nothing other than the pure substance breaking through in corporeality, or a third dimension" (*Ideas* 65).
7. This is one way in which they try to objectify the psyche: as a kind of radiant, pseudo-materiality, imprisoned within objects and organisms, expressive of inner freedom or potency. Another wholly different vocabulary stems from the Platonic and neo-platonic doctrine of archetypes. In the *Ages of the World* Schelling maintains that at some originary point in the evolution of life the potential of all future things to be themselves—their essence—has flashed up in the form of a dream-like vision in which eternity has glimpsed itself. This is described as the Eternal seeing "everything that will one day be in nature," which corresponds to "the deepest thoughts of what lies innermost within its own self" (*Ages* 155). The metaphor is an ancient one in cosmogonic terms, but Schelling was again drawing on contemporary phenomena, this time the reports of clairvoyance by contemporary psychiatrists which Schubert had gathered in his lectures of 1808. These visionary forms, glimpsed in the moment of

world-formation, persist as archetypes concealed at the heart of material things, and life is conceived as a process of emergence into actuality which draws that buried potential into existence. "These archetypes still stream out from the innermost part of creative nature, just as fresh and alive as they were before time" (*Ages* 161). Correspondingly, both Schelling and Schubert subscribe to an anamnestic model of the human soul. Buried within is an inner oracle, "the memory of all things, their original conditions, their becoming, their meaning." It is also an "archetypal image of things" slumbering inside, though this innermost essence is secret and bound, it cannot be made accessible to consciousness except by inference (114).

8. There are further vocabularies, whose points of reference are more unstable, slipping ambiguously between metaphysics and self-observation, cosmogony and existential philosophy. Many of these are based around the notion of a primordial will, or powers of "potentiation" represented in a number of different guises. Sometimes these wills are described as a physics, in terms of gravitation, resistance and striving forces. Sometimes they are approached in terms of affect: there is a painful negative hunger, or a more tender affirmatory yearning, and these modes of will oppose and supplant each other, articulating a dynamic basis to material reality (*Ages* 170). Sometimes these altercating wills are viewed as modes of the possibility of existence: "It begins itself—but in so doing, it only makes a start towards possible realisation, which must in turn be followed by a start of real realisation" (*Philosophische* 99). Often Schelling's research returns to Aristotelian and scholastic interpretations of modes of being; but again there are also contemporary trends at work. Both Schelling and Schopenhauer, for instance, were concerning themselves with the will at this time, as descriptive of the dynamic essence of life.
9. In yet other instances Schelling organises an approach to the soul around the tension between inner and outer worlds. When the soul is asleep it regains a relation to its own inner centre, and when it is awake it acts under the exponent of an outer reality which distorts its true alignment (*Ages* 158). Outerness is associated with egotism and objectification (egotistical because directed towards objects and gratifications), and the inner pole with the self's essence and freedom. This tension was partly an amplification of John Brown's theory of stimulus and excitability, though the model is now given a much broader moral scope. It was also mapped over the co-ordinates of Mesmerist theory, which was undergoing something of a resurgence in Germany at the time. In *The Ages* drafts Schelling uses the Mesmerist term *Rapport* to describe the soul's relation to its true identity, as well as utilising the therapeutic notion of a crisis through which the futurity of the person begins to emerge. In addition to all of these competing discourses, both Schelling and Schubert still also make use of Christian and pietist vocabularies of soul, thinking of the psyche as simply something encapsulating the dynamic essence of the person which will transcend its current earthly existence and take on a future, entirely spiritual life. Schubert writes that "Death emerges in the moment that higher organs, higher powers are woken in us through the flash of a great moment. Then this shell becomes too narrow for the psyche, this form passes away, so that another, higher one returns from it" (*Nightside* 79).
10. These paradigms aren't wholly disjunct; all are concerned with possibility and transformation, with conditions which are concealed, or anticipated, or exist on a dynamic borderline between presence and futurity, objectification and freedom. All are defined in opposition to notions of conscious subjectivity: they are endowments of the psyche, and are cross-referenced with reports from contemporary psychiatry. They also constantly imply each other descriptively. Schubert wrote to Schelling in 1808 suggesting that "the inner light spoken of by those in magnetic trances" was a token of the barely corporeal phosphorescence concealed in organic life. "It is the flammable which, in the whole of nature, becomes free at the highest moments of existence, shot through with eternal light." This light "breaks out of the depth of the inner essence" granting a view into the very nature of the person.<sup>[4]</sup> He thus links the practice of Mesmerism to a theory of an inner fire, while the ecstatic visionary state which the trance elicits gives evidence of the soul's possession of archetypes of the future. But what

still stands out is the extreme heterogeneity of the theoretical apparatus through which both writers were attempting to apprehend something crucial about the nature of the psyche. There may be a consistent goal to their theorising—we can see that each vocabulary is trying to do the same sort of thing—but there is a failure to make the psyche scientifically or even descriptively 'present' in any consistent way. This seems all the more of a failure given that in this period psychiatrists such as Johann Christian Reil, who in 1802 produced one of the first systematic outlines of psychotherapy, were in touch with Schelling and looking to him to clarify the nature of the psyche for them: "What is lacking is a presentation of the soul in itself, or in its archetypal form." [5]

### **The Foundations of Individuality**

11. There are numerous ways in which this impasse over the psyche and the philosophical model that could accommodate it, has been interpreted. One, suggested by Karl Jaspers, is that Schelling's deeper researches into the soul were a deviation, made during a period of depression in response to the death of his wife Caroline in 1809 (35). Another possibility is that Schelling's move to Munich and the Catholic south, which also coincides with this period, brought him under the influence of thinkers such as Franz von Baader, whose bent was more mystical and theosophical. [6] We might also consider this eclecticism as the mark of a period of intellectual transition, from spiritual towards secular models of nature, and from theories of the transcendental subject to the emergence of modern psychology. But these explanations are not wholly adequate, most significantly, because this range of psychic motifs—inner fire or energy, archetypes, and obscure forms of will—remain there as interpretive possibilities, forming part of a Romantic psychological tradition. Versions of exactly these sets of enigmatic description were taken up by Carl Gustav Carus' *Psyche* in 1846. Carus sometimes talks about the psyche in terms of a spark or unconscious radiation (rather like Schelling and Schubert's "gleam") which is now a force governing the maturation of the individual from embryo to adulthood (*Psyche* 15). Equally, he sees the psyche as the repository for a divine archetype which "contains the primary basis of individual life," and which he calls "the idea or the primordial image" (8). As with Schelling and Schubert, too, the psyche is secretly involved in the generation of historical structures: all entities "contain something hidden which refers back to something past, something that has been before, and which yet suggests further development, something in the future" (22). Even more significantly, a similar range of terms—archetype, libido (if we insert that for the burning potency which breaks out at the point of generation) and the unconscious processes of self-development re-emerge in the work of Jung, who saw Carus' achievement as anticipating that of psychoanalysis (*Memories* 193). In fact, Jung's *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido* not only replays the movement between psychopathology, philosophy and philology which emerges in Schelling and Schubert's correspondence; it also retrieves similar insights about the soul, archetypes and a primal unconscious, making reference to the same emerging corpus of Romantic mythography and anthropology with which they were also engaging, including Schelling's own later lectures on mythology. So, rather than indicating purely a failure in theorisation—a kind of bricolage of remnants (mode, fire, archetype, vision) from antiquated thought-systems—Schelling and Schubert's set of partial, obscure and inconsistent solutions appears to reveal something more significant and long-term concerning the nature of psychological theorisation in modernity. What are they looking for in the psyche? Why does the nature of the soul prove so methodologically elusive? And why, in the end, is this elusiveness so important?
12. The first point to make is that, despite those images of the borderline of materiality—the *almost corporeal* gleam—the issue is not one of the search for a new substance, a kind of Mesmeric fluid or vital force which is proving empirically elusive. The elusiveness here springs from a different principle, which is that what Schelling in particular is trying to substantiate is not the grounds of psychology (let alone the grounds of an empirical psychology) but the theoretical grounds of *individuality*. What I want to return to here is the differentiation between a psychology (whose primary

function may be to determine the ways in which an individual mind habitually operates) and a theory of selfhood, which may be inclined to theorise the grounds of identity or of individual freedom, and may, like psychology, be staged in what is imagined to be an inner and non-corporeal aspect of the self. In fact, psychology, for many of these Romantic thinkers, becomes a realm in which some of the more general moral problems concerning the nature of individual agency are played out. The emerging question, "What is the nature of the psyche?" draws into its orbit reflections on the nature of memory and desire, as well as on mental illness and therapeutics, but it also asks about the moral and political nature of individuality, about autonomy, freedom, motivation and progress. What we find in Schelling, as in much of Romantic psychology and some of its inheritors in modern psychotherapy, is that questions of psychology and questions of selfhood become intriguingly intertwined. The psyche is a forum within which writers are constructing both a new language for the mind, and new justifications of individuality.

13. This raises some problematic issues for the history of psychology. The first is a very general question about finding a language for the soul, and is certainly not a problem that Schelling was aware of, but we can see it as a paradox at the heart of what he was trying to do. The problem is that such moral and existential discourses about identity and the medical descriptions of psychic states belong within different paradigms; there is no simple way to suture them together, or house them in the empirical discourses of the body. These are the kind of problems that Paul Ricoeur identified in some of Freud's metapsychological writings, in terms of a paradigm conflict between hermeneutics on the one hand, and a science of forces on the other (92). This is not the question I want to pursue here, but it is worth bearing in mind that these different languages of self-presence cannot simply be joined together by hypothesising some *innermost link* or yet-to-be discovered substance. This is one reason why the language of the psyche remains bound to a kind of obscurity and liminality—it remains inconsistent, in its very essence, and this inconsistency can't easily be dispensed with.
14. The second problem is less generally addressed in the histories of psychology, but is absolutely central to the difficulties that Schelling himself was aware of wrestling with. This is that the psyche is to be the soul of the *independent person*, the inner seat of *selfhood*. This much greater emphasis on individuality, and individual autonomy, is one that will weave its way in and out of the political, psychological and artistic theorisation of the self in the nineteenth century and into modernity. "True beginning in the eternal comes only with self-genesis" is a line from one of Schelling's notebooks of the period (*Tagebücher* 109). His oration on art of 1806 had likewise asked: "What is the perfection of a thing? Nought else but the creative life in it—its power of asserting its own individuality" (*Plastic* 4). For Schelling, the soul acts partly as a place-holder for the belief in self-authorisation at the centre of moral life, and self-origination at the centre of human ontology; however, this raises a completely new set of methodological problems. Most importantly, belief in the possibility of *self*-authorisation, or indeed *self*-creation, seems commonly to have required some corresponding resistance to or interruption within prevailing eighteenth-century accounts of the rationality of the world system, the regulation of beings according to chains of causal determinism, or the universal laws of human moral and cognitive consciousness. German idealist theories of mind, such as Kant's and Fichte's and Schelling's own earlier work, had tended to stress the transcendental identity of the I, or the conscious subject. But at the same time the idealist tradition clearly bridled—and increasingly so under the Napoleonic occupation—at the idea of the subsumption of particular individuality under universal processes, particularly where this threatened to negate the independent moral or political agency of the person. The fit between universal reason and individual autonomy—central to the emerging political demands of the middle class—was at any rate a difficult one to make good.
15. One sees this quandary, which has both epistemological and political ramifications, being played out in the work of Fichte. His productions in the late 1790s and early 1800s continually confront the fear that "I myself, along with everything that I call mine, am a link in this chain of strict necessity" (11). Fichte



supposed that anyone following this train of deterministic thinking to its limits must be repelled by consequences which conflict "so decisively with the innermost root of my existence" (20). Schelling's own Fichtean *System of Transcendental Idealism*, published in the same year as Fichte's *Vocation of Man*, wrestled with a similar impasse over the reconciliation of the forms of science and subjectivity: "The ultimate ground of the harmony between freedom and the objective (or lawful) can therefore never become wholly objectified, if the appearance of freedom is to remain" (210). That is to say, the freedom of the self cannot be represented systematically, or according to logical or causal laws, without negating that sense of freedom. In a similar fashion, Schelling at the opening of the *Ages of the World* resists the notion of time as "a chain of causes and effects that run backwards and forwards to infinity" and solicits instead the individual who is able to "separate himself from himself", who is able to break loose from everything that happens to him and actively oppose it, who is able thus "to create a true past" and "look forward to a genuine future" (120). Further on in the text he asserts that, "Anything that has a freedom with respect to God must come from a ground independent of him" (156).

16. What one finds at work, then, in the emergence of this wider ideological interest in the psychological at the beginning of the nineteenth century, is a corresponding turn towards models in which the basis of the self and its imagined processes of production are conveyed via metaphors of obscurity, oblivion, or abrupt and inexplicable transition. Obscurity and unaccountability start to integrate with a new interest in shielding the grounds of individuality—its supposed inner, ontological roots—from representation, particularly representation according to the universalised laws of physics and logic. Already in the sentences by Fichte and Schelling quoted above one sees an emerging association between personal independence and a rupturing of theoretical models of presence and process. To give some small indication of the future importance such metaphors will have within Romantic and post-Romantic theorisations of the self, and particularly of the associations made between individuality and obscurity, one might turn also to Carus's assertion that "The unconscious is precisely our ownmost (*eigenste*), most genuine nature" ("Über" 154), or Bosanquet's observation in 1913 of the vogue in liberal culture for assuming that "The dim recesses of incommunicable feeling are the true shrine of our selfhood" (36), or even Jung's later pronouncement that, "Each of us carries his own life-form within him—an irrational form which no other can outbid" ("Aims" 41). D.H. Lawrence, drawing on the rogue and speculative inferences of a century in his response to psychoanalysis, was emphatic on this point:

Every individual creature has a soul, a specific individual nature the origin of which cannot be found in any cause-and-effect process whatever . . . There is no assignable cause, and no logical reason, for individuality. On the contrary, individuality appears in defiance of all scientific law, in defiance even of reason (214).

17. My argument here is that the turn to the psyche involves not simply the attempt to produce an adequate language for the phenomena of inner life, but is at the same time concerned to establish the metaphorical representation of autonomous individuality. The metaphors of obscurity serve, then, not only as placeholders for kinds of process—moral, psychological, biological, experiential—which are thought to be too complex to be represented by simple 'chains' of determination; they serve also to introduce the notion that the self is radically self-caused by a logic which belongs wholly to itself and thus is in some way inscrutable. In this resistance to rational conceptions of causal process, the self has acquired a certain inalienable freedom. It is here that psychology tips over into ontology with moral and political implications for a theory of man. The philosophers and anthropologists looked to psychiatry both because they were interested in describing the basis of the individual mind and because in doing so they were able to draw on a whole range of metaphors—trance, seizure, unconsciousness, inner vision—with which to supplant the language of determinism in their depictions of the human world. Hence the emphasis on elements in experience—the crisis, the inner fire, the archetype (to be distinguished from the chain of association or reasoning)—which resisted conscription into the universal laws determining objects and consciousness. At the same time these enigmatic phenomena

stood not for lawlessness, but for the possible agency of deeper, unrepresentable laws operating within nature and the self.

### The Emergence of the Unconscious

18. The discourse which most clearly disrupts the language of causal determinism—and the one which will take an ever deeper hold on the nineteenth-century imagination—is that around the unconscious, which appeared in Schelling's work particularly from 1811-1815, and which emerged specifically out of the need to introduce a foundational obscurity and interruption within the science of the origins of self, and within the paradigm of the psyche. Unconsciousness in the mind, for Schelling, has links to particular empirical psychological phenomena such as dreams and the experience of the past, as well as to states of trance, ecstasy or crisis associated with contemporary reports of psychopathology. It also fits in well with what will turn out to be one of the overriding tendencies of the human sciences in the nineteenth-century—an emphasis on historicity. But Schelling's interest in the unconscious, and even in the past itself, actually arises according to a different principle. First and foremost, it is a theoretical tool which disconnects the ontology of the individual, and the means whereby this could be represented, from eighteenth-century approaches centred on the universal identity of the subject. The unconscious, conceived generally as an event at the origins of the person (rather than a specific psychological mode) establishes an obscurity over the genesis of identity and its relation to general laws of determination, as well as over the original operation of those laws themselves. Schelling finds this necessary if one is going to accord some radical interiority and substance, as well as the possibility of self-authorisation, to the self. This is the thought that dominates the final pages of the *Ages of the World*—that to roll back the carpet of the unconscious, to dissolve the barrier separating the individual from the origins equally of its own self and the absolute, to determine these relationships fully and bring them to light, would dissolve identity. It would either plunge the idea of individuality back into the network of absolute logic, or assimilate it to an absolute or general soul. To quote from the end of *The Ages*: "That primordial deed which makes a man genuinely himself precedes all individual actions; but immediately after it is put into exuberant freedom, this deed sinks into the night of unconsciousness" (*Ages* 181). Furthermore, "The decision that in some manner is truly to begin must not be brought back to consciousness... because this would amount to being taken back" (182). This goes both for the beginning of any single entity, and for the history of the absolute itself: "The will produces itself in eternity without eternity knowing and remains, with respect to its ground, concealed from eternity" (138).
19. What is crucial here is that the trail doesn't lead from psychiatry to philosophy, but in the other direction. It is not that Schelling discovers an empirical psychological phenomenon and sets out to investigate its theoretical basis. Rather, he has a metaphysical need—to provide a theoretical foundation for the freedom of identity—which then integrates with aspects of contemporary psychological description and forms the basis for a new structural delineation of the self's inner nature. The technical requirement for this metaphysical need is that the description of the psyche cannot be completed, and cannot be coherently located in relation to discourses of either cause or presence. For Schelling, this leads to an emphasis on impossibility, a taboo on revealing 'all' about the subject, and hence on to the notion that there are repressed pasts or contents at the basis of the self—indeed of all life—whose full expression would lead to the dissolution of subjective, and objective, identity. In some instances this taboo on revelation is conceived in terms of a concealed and potentially annihilating fire. If this fire were to re-emerge from its latent state it would "consume and destroy us in its effectiveness" (*Die Weltater* 13). In his notebooks the same idea appears as a kind of ultimate blockage on self-perception: "The very innermost, the last foothold of a being, over which no thought can go" (*Tagebücher* 114). While in his late work of the 1840s it will provide the description of the 'uncanny' which Freud famously draws upon in his article of 1919: "Uncanny is what one calls everything that should have stayed secret, hidden, latent, but has come to the fore" (*Philosophie* 2:2:661). However,

this notion of the medium of the psyche being somehow unassimilable to rational laws or to mechanistic description is also implicit in those other theoretical vocabularies. Identity or innerness conceived as 'fire' exceeds and disturbs the notion of a chain of rational determination; an archetype, glimpsed in eternity but concealed at the origin of time, notionally founds identity, but not in accordance with any accessible or generalised idea. These are already attempts to evoke an unconscious principle in which to root the individual soul.

## Conclusion

20. What this article has tried to illuminate is a dual condition in which psychology—in a piecemeal way in the course of the early part of the nineteenth century—is emerging as an empirical science for the study of the individual mind, but is also at this point becoming a new forum for a humanist metaphysics of the individual. On the one hand, the obscurity and eclecticism of Schelling and Schubert's accounts represent a general problem for the nascent disciplines of the psyche, which is the difficulty of forming a new descriptive language for the soul. On the other hand, it manifests something far more significant, which is a positive resistance to description that is morally and politically informed, and which, while entertaining various ways of displacing or interrupting the notional agency of consciousness will ultimately root itself in the structural possibilities offered by a theory of the unconscious. With respect to a shift from metaphysics to psychology the function of the unconscious at this stage (and, in some ways, still) is fundamentally ambiguous. On the one hand, the elaboration of the soul in terms of a relation between consciousness and its concealed historical and natural basis seemingly detaches the theory of mind from the grip of religious, spiritual and philosophical ideologies of transcendence. The soul is inscribed, potentially, within a historical and material world. But the retention of a set of beliefs and demands regarding the inner freedom of the self—indeed, the attempt to organise a theory of the psyche around such assumptions of an inner ground or essence of the person—means that there is at the same time a reverse process acting on the theory of the unconscious, towards the re-enchantment, or mythic substantiation of the self. The nineteenth-century unconscious, by its very nature (and before at least some trends in psychoanalysis sought more rigorously to reduce it to a set of empirical processes and problems) remains permeable to the development of mystical and metaphysical tendencies. This is clear in its development by Carus and von Hartmann later in the century, as well as Schelling's own association of the unconscious with the 'magic' of nature in the 1820s (*System der Weltalter* 109).
21. One might say, then, that certain aspects of the unconscious have an important functional role within an empirical psychology—the unconscious demonstrates the limits of self-identity and reason, as well as of conscious knowledge; it conceives of these against a background of forgotten, repressed and instinctual processes. Such a function complicates the transcendental and integrative tendency found within German philosophy—the tendency to universalise and idealise the I and consciousness. With Schelling's work around the period of the *Weltalter* these tendencies appear to be reversed: the psyche becomes the unassimilable and obscure vortex around which the attempt at self-identity forever founders.
22. However, this interpretation is itself liable to reversal. The transcendental claims for the conscious subject in this period are already under siege from different quarters. The abstract notion of consciousness and the autonomous 'I' are, over the first half of the nineteenth century, being made gradually subordinate to a more sophisticated sociological differentiation of the subject according to its legal, political and economic cultures. The Hegelian and post-Hegelian trend, for instance, will be to replace the abstracted notion of transcendental consciousness with a complex set of recognitions and ethical demands worked out within a particular historical community. In such communities the individual soul is a fundamental component, but is ultimately stripped of its metaphysical priority. From this perspective, the turn to an ontology of the psyche is the philosophical move that retains the



space for metaphysical enchantment in an age of disenchantment. Or at least, Schelling's secret and unassimilable psyche at the core of the person is no more free of metaphysical implication than is Hegel's 'Spirit' at the level of the community. It resists not only the transcendental integrations of consciousness, but also the sceptical analysis of sociological life. In its place it preserves the ideological space for new vocabularies of transcendence. The fact that this may now be conceived as a chthonic descent into the soul's inner mystery does not alter its potential to function transcendently. The model of self-identification through consciousness and logic is replaced by the notion of a *psychic* relation to a concealed and absolute origin to which each individual radically belongs, and which sustains the possibility of its free individuality. The unconscious is able both to resist assimilation to conscious laws of identification *and* to imply secret laws or emerging harmonies of a quasi-metaphysical kind, underwriting the agency of the individual soul, though obligingly concealed from it. In Schelling's case, these are displaced to an absolute point of origin, concealed within nature, behind time, and in the depths of the psyche.

23. My final point is to note how successfully this notion of an unconscious root of the person, which structures a new account of autonomous individuality, was able to merge itself into Romantic accounts of psychology and psychiatry. How ambiguously, that is, the two trends, empirical and metaphysical, were able to co-exist. This positing of the hidden grounds of selfhood gives rise to features (the unconscious, repression, the significant but inaccessible past) which at the same time provide the structure of a modern 'depth' psychology. Already we have reached a range of recognizable psychoanalytic co-ordinates: there is an unconscious; at the basis of the unconscious there is level of primary repression which is necessary to the structure of subjectivity; and these structures are constitutive of human identity. If we notice simply the theosophical, or alchemical or quasi-spiritual components of Schelling and Schubert's speculation, we may be led to think of Romantic theories of the psyche simply as stalled acts of secularisation, which still look for a spiritualised or idealised metaphysics of the person under the rubric of the psyche. These are idealised philosophies of the psyche, and not yet psychologies. However to treat these models as merely antiquated, or superstitious, or secretly theogonic, misses an essential point, which is not only their recurrence but also the modernity of their demand. The need to sustain an account of autonomous individuality or to project an ontology of the self, within the bounds of psychology, will itself also be a persistent need. One might usefully view the emergence of psychology itself as torn between a science of mental control and objectification, and a utopian attempt to preserve an idealised model of selfhood which is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve or extend through the broadening political population, but which can be installed within the individual at an abstract or theoretical level. I would not argue that this is an impetus for the development of psychology as a whole, but that it is a motivation for many of the Romantic theorists of the psyche whose formulations get incorporated within various psychological and psychiatric traditions. Jung's assumption that psychology deals with the problem of 'individuation' — "Individuation, becoming a self, is not only a spiritual problem, it is the problem of all life" — would be an example of this ("Individual" 22). Freud, too, at times recognises that psychology is still implicated in attempts to secure an ontology of the self. In *Totem and Taboo*, after noting that animism in primitive societies populates the world with spirits and also regards these as the causes of natural phenomena, Freud went on to point out a third, and perhaps most important article of this primitive 'nature philosophy.' This article struck him as less strange, since, "we ourselves are not very far removed from this third belief. For primitive peoples believe that human individuals are inhabited by similar spirits" (*Totem* 76). That is to say, the very notion of a soul—the very object of psychology—is itself still entangled in an idealised demand concerning the 'being' of the individual person. Strachey in the Standard Edition adds the marginal note here that, with "nature philosophy" or *Naturphilosophie* Freud is indicating the philosophy of Schelling.

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## Notes

[1](#) Lukács, *Theory* 29.

[2](#) For an overview of Schelling's earlier development, see Beiser 465-564.

[3](#) Letter to Schelling, November 1808, *Schelling: Briefe und Dokumente* 3:554.

[4](#) Letter to Schelling, 29 April 1808, *Briefe* 3:495.

[5](#) Letter to Schelling, *Briefe* 3:510.

[6](#) See introduction to this period by Fuhrmans in Schelling, *Briefe* 1:356 and Lukács, *Destruction* 149.

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# Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis

## "She Fell Senseless on His Corpse": [1] The Woman of Feeling and the Sentimental Swoon in Eighteenth-Century Fiction

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This essay explores the female sentimental swoon in eighteenth-century novels, including Sarah Fielding's *The History of Ophelia* (1760), Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761), and Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791). It argues that losses of sense and consciousness express the discontents of eighteenth-century female psycho-sexual existence. The essay approaches the psychopathology of sensibility by means of a theoretical framework that connects eighteenth-century medical explanations with psychoanalytic ideas of negativity. This essay appears in *Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

1. Lord Dorchester, the male protagonist of Sarah Fielding's *The History of Ophelia* (1760), sets off to fight a duel in order to settle a misunderstanding caused by the naive Ophelia at her first ball. When Ophelia finds that Lord Dorchester left a will she understands the seriousness of the situation and falls into fits of fainting from which she hardly recovers (Fielding 224–25). A strikingly similar episode takes place in Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791). When Miss Milner hears the news that Dorriforth, her guardian, is about to fight a duel with Sir Frederick Lawnly, she "sunk speechless on the floor" (Inchbald 67). In both stories, the heroine's fainting is occasioned by a threat to the life of the man she loves—knowingly or unknowingly; yet social restrictions do not allow her to admit and express this feeling. While fainting reveals their deepest emotion, it is also a disadvantage for both heroines: it prevents them stopping the life-threatening event and assisting where they would be most needed. By losing consciousness, they are forced into an inactivity that hinders the fulfillment of the very desire uncovered by their fainting. But what do novels of the period achieve by staging cases of female indisposition? And why do sentimental heroines faint, after all?
2. While in the mid-eighteenth century the sentimental symptom-language of tears, blushes and swoons was a fashionable indicator of genuine feeling, such expressions of sentiment were often surrounded with mistrust, suspicion, and even ridicule in the period. Following the violent phase of the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror, sensibility became a frequent target of critique both by radical and conservative writers. [2] In England, the belief in the ideology of sentimental philanthropy was shaken by the end of the century, as it is illustrated, for instance, by the attacks of the *Anti-Jacobin*, a Tory satirical review of the 1790s. George Canning, one of its authors, writes critically of the Goddess of Sensibility:

Mark her fair Votaries — Prodigal of Grief,  
With cureless pangs, and woes that mock relief,  
Droop in soft sorrow o'er a faded flow'r;  
O'er a dead Jack-Ass pour the pearly show'r; —  
But hear unmov'd of *Loire's* ensanguin'd flood,  
Chok'd up with slain; — of *Lyons* drench'd in blood;  
Of crimes that blot the Age, the World with shame,  
Foul crimes, but sicklied o'er with Freedom's name . . . (284)

John Gillray's famous caricature, "The New Morality," which appears next to Canning's untitled poem,

depicts the Goddess of Sensibility crying over a dead bird with a volume of Rousseau in her hand, while resting one foot on the decapitated head of Louis XVI. In her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft critiques sensibility for being an institutionalized culture of weakness made fashionable in order to appeal to women, but the cultivation of which brings about their own social enslavement. But there are countless earlier examples of critical attitudes targeted specifically at sentimental transparency. Henry Fielding's *Shamela* (1741) challenges the disinterestedness of authentic female emotion, while Hannah More's critique in "Sensibility: A Poem" (1782) targets the potentially fake and equivocal body-language that is generally assumed to express genuine feeling. As she complains, "And these fair marks, reluctant I relate,/ These lovely symbols may be counterfeit" (284).

3. But what makes these "lovely symbols" so ambivalent throughout the eighteenth century? The female sentimental psychosomatic repertoire (fainting, silences, sighs, palpitations and states of mental distraction) is often taken for granted as an obvious sign of female sensibility, and the subtleties of its meaning are rarely explored in detail.<sup>[3]</sup> However, many eighteenth-century novels of sensibility respond in different, but self-conscious and politically challenging ways to crises of the female mind and body staged in sentimental writing as early as Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747–48). At a time when openly expressing emotions that related to sexuality was one of the greatest prohibitions affecting women, the discourse of sensibility came to function as a socially acceptable form of expression, a legitimate channel into which forbidden, repressed affects could be diverted. It is hard to find a sentimental novel without a swooning, dangerously ill or seriously distracted heroine, and fictional representations of the fainting, indisposed woman remain frequent throughout the long eighteenth century. Richardson's Pamela faints in order to avoid sexual intercourse, while Clarissa is unconscious while being raped by Lovelace, thus escaping mentally from an unwanted experience; Rousseau's Julie falls into a swoon during her forbidden kiss with Saint Preux.
4. This essay intends to account for the controversial nature of sentimental symptoms by investigating such disruptions to female consciousness—disruptions that are traditionally interpreted as signs of female sensibility. Here I shall focus mainly on three literary texts born in the wake of Richardson's sentimental fiction: Sarah Fielding's *The History of Ophelia* (1760), Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761), and Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791). I will read fictional instances where fainting, as well as altered bodily and mental states seem to relate to what, at least for women in the long eighteenth century, may not be openly communicated: emotions, thoughts and desires that women, as social subjects, were not supposed to have. Tears, sighs, and swoons are frequently referred to as the "vocabulary of sensibility" in literary criticism. I shall argue that these bodily signs are symptomatic of the limitations to feminine self-expression and reflect the discontents of eighteenth-century female psycho-sexual existence. The typical symptoms of sensibility form part of a complex psychopathology that often reaches beyond the concerns of contemporary medicine, staging affects, symptoms and conditions that cannot be understood merely from the "nerves, spirits and fibres" of the eighteenth-century mind and body. Discourses in which sensibility is produced gave an early language to emotions, unconscious elements, and repressed forces long before Freud developed his terminology. Novels of sensibility often already stage cases of hysteria, conveying "an individual's act of protest and rebellion directed against social conditions" (Borossa 70–71). Not only do they anticipate the insights, but they also critique the blind spots of Freud's interpretations.<sup>[4]</sup>
5. Therefore, I will approach such psychologically induced states of consciousness and unconsciousness, using a methodological framework that connects their eighteenth-century medical explanations with psychoanalytic ideas, more specifically, ideas of negativity. While eighteenth-century medical writings relate fainting mostly to somatic, constitutional causes, opening up towards a larger history and theory of feeling will help us understand fainting as a psychosomatic phenomenon rooted in an intricate network of eighteenth-century affective, sexual and social factors. I will read states of indisposition in

relation to what the psychoanalyst André Green calls "the work of the negative." Green's work is famous for his revision of the psychoanalytic theory of affect, and for developing a theoretical framework for the treatment of negative transferences and negative therapeutic reactions (Kernberg xiii). In *The Work of the Negative* he explores the operation of the negative on a broad spectrum of cases ranging from normality to the extremely ill. The "negative" refers, firstly, to the "consistent rejection of what is intolerable to the ego, exemplified by the mechanism of repression". Secondly, it includes the "destructiveness of the death drive, that operates as a radical refusal of satisfaction and pleasure" (Kernberg xiii–xiv). According to Green, the operation of the work of the negative includes a wide range of what he calls, in an umbrella term, "negativising" tendencies: repression, negation, disavowal, and the foreclosure and hallucination of psychosis.<sup>[5]</sup> My analyses of the novels will explore sensibility as the site of the negative, as it comes to function as a code system for transgressive —and often sexual— affectivity, the expression of which, coming up against social and linguistic conventions and inhibitions, becomes dominated by repression, loss of consciousness, blanks, and silences.

6. Eighteenth-century medical treatises only cursorily deal with fainting, and their explanation often remains elusive. In treatises on so-called "nervous diseases," fainting is usually regarded as an accompanying symptom of other conditions such as hysteria or epilepsy.<sup>[6]</sup> In the medical terminology of the period, fainting, swooning, and various states that involve the loss of sensation or consciousness are referred to by the technical terms "syncope" and "lipothymy" (or *lipothymia*). These terms are still used in today's medical vocabulary. Even though syncope and lipothymy are listed in most medical dictionaries, they are often dealt with by means of short and insufficient explanations. For instance, the curious reader of John Quincy's dictionary from the early eighteenth century has to be satisfied with the following description: syncope "comes from various Causes, but mostly hysterical, and is therefore to be treated as such, unless when manifestly from somewhere else, and then it is to be managed accordingly" (Quincy 438–39).<sup>[7]</sup>
7. Perhaps the most elaborate discussion of these conditions is given in Robert James's *Medicinal Dictionary*. Here, syncope (from the Greek "to cut" or "strike") and lipothymy (from the Greek "to leave" and "mind") are seen as manifestations of a weak constitution, and represent two degrees of a sudden decay or failure of the natural forces. Lipothymy, a lower degree of weakness, is characterized by a general depravity of motion and speech, and a failure of the sense organs termed "insensibility" (James, "syncope" and "lipothymy").<sup>[8]</sup> Syncope is a more serious condition than lipothymy. In addition to the loss of motion and sensation, it also includes loss of consciousness. While lipothymy looks like an overall paralysis of the body and the senses, syncope seems to mimic death:

the Patient is deprived of all Manner and Strength, both of Body and Mind, and seems to be dead; for he [sic] falls to the Ground quite speechless, as if oppressed with a profound Sleep, and lies immoveable, without the appearance of Convulsions or Tremblings; the Pulse and Respiration are intercepted, the Limbs are refrigerated, and collapsed, he has the *Facies Hippocratica*, and a copious Eruption of cold Sweat about his Temples. (James, "syncope")

Syncope looks like a short, temporary death, from which the patient slowly comes back to life as the circulation is restored and "all the suppressed Functions by little and little resume their Office" (James, "syncope").

8. Even in its eighteenth-century definitions, syncope links a psychosomatic state with the realm of the verbal, the poetic, and the musical. In the field of poetics, for instance, syncope means the cutting short of a word by ellipsis ("o'er" instead of "over," or "e'en" for "even"). Syncope, in the sense of contraction or elision, is also the name of a poetic device used for securing the cadence of a line, or



making the line fit into the syllable pattern of the stanza. A syllable, so to say, needs to be sacrificed and cut for the sake of metrical regularity (Johnson, "*syncope*").<sup>[9]</sup> For musicians, syncope is a rhythmic form that subverts the order of stress in the bar and puts stress on what is regularly unstressed. In the medical condition of syncope, sensation and life are suspended or repressed by a stronger, debilitating force. Like a syncopated word, life is cut short and abbreviated by a sudden suspension of consciousness. As in music, a subversive shift of stress takes place: a state beyond consciousness suddenly comes to the fore and becomes more emphatic than consciousness. The regular rhythm of life is disturbed, and the patient, even when recovered from the fit, "still complains of an extraordinary Lassitude and Imbecility of the Limbs, and of the whole Body" (James, "*syncope*"). In fact, such states could easily slip into more extreme states of dysfunction. The condition could degenerate from lipothymy to syncope, and, according to one later eighteenth-century source, from syncope to the even more serious "asphixy." In the latter, the pulse and breathing are totally extinguished, the body is cold, and the condition can be followed by death (Motherby, "*lipothymia*").<sup>[10]</sup>

9. In eighteenth-century medicine, such losses of bodily and mental presence were regularly attributed to the heart and its failures, and were thought of as occurring in people of weak constitution. Even in cases where fainting originated in the mind, the condition was still linked to constitutional weakness and was therefore interpreted—and treated—as somatic. Syncope, according to Robert James, is "a sudden Check or Stop put to the Motion of the Heart." This suspension of the heartbeat, resulting from a disorderly circulation, could be caused by the passions and affections of the mind, as well as by other factors, such as bad diet, the temperature of the air, unusual smells, or indulging in "the immoderate Use of venereal Pleasures" (James, "*syncope*").<sup>[11]</sup> A constitution was weak if it was "easily excited to disorderly Motions from some Slight external Cause" (James, "*syncope*"). Women, as well as children or old persons, were regarded as constituting the category of those who, owing to their weaker constitutions, were more prone to having fits of syncope and lipothymy—and, following from this, also more predisposed to becoming subject to violent emotions (fits of anger, fear and confused imagination). The pejorative connotations originally associated with "faint" and "fainting" are also reflected in Eric Partridge's etymological dictionary: from the entry on "faint" the reader is redirected to the entry on "feign," which is explained as "feigned, hence cowardly," "lacking in spirit, hence lacking consciousness."
10. According to the testimony of several medical dictionaries and treatises, fainting and various forms of female indisposition occurring in novels of sensibility were also typical symptoms of hysteria. In Robert Hooper's dictionary, hysteric fits were sometimes preceded by "dejection of spirits, anxiety of mind, effusion of tears, difficulty of breathing, sickness at the stomach, and palpitations at the heart"—symptoms that were also indicative of one's sensibility. Fainting often accompanied the hysteric fit, where "the person lies seemingly in a state of profound sleep, without either sense or motion" (Hooper, *Medical Dictionary*, "*hysteria*"). Not only did sensibility and hysteria share many common symptoms, but sensibility was also, so to say, a borderline condition—a possible cause as well as a common symptom of hysteria and other nervous (or mental) disorders. Extreme sensibility often appears in treatises on madness as a state on its borderline that can easily slip into insanity. Imagining madness as a somatic disease, several treatises eventually turn out to be about something other than madness: they end up describing those conditions that cause it or follow from it, that is, the emotional and mental states on its borderline. These include sensibility and the passions, which always surface from the blind spots of contemporary medical explanations.<sup>[12]</sup>
11. The eighteenth-century novel of sensibility presents a rather complex picture about female indisposition. These novels are in dialogue with contemporary medical theories related to the female body, and they also point towards some of the answers Freud and his successors offered when treating disorders traditionally associated with women. While staging such female "weaknesses of

constitution," Fielding's *The History of Ophelia* reflects subversively on the image of women in the medical imagination of its time. Ophelia's story shows how a young woman comes to acquire, by her entrance into society, the delicacy and "constitutional" weakness necessary for appropriately sentimental reactions. Fielding's novel, published in 1760, before Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761) or *Émile* (1762), stages the theme—also prevalent in Rousseau—of the woman educated in innocence and isolation, promoting the values of natural, self-sufficient life opposed to the corruption of society. Ophelia is an orphan girl who grows up under the guidance of her aunt in a forest cottage on the Welsh border, protected from experience, relationships and unsettling emotions, until one day she is abducted by the rakish Lord Dorchester. He does not directly attack her virtue, but takes her under his morally dubious protection, living with her on his country estate and in London, and surrounding her with an affluence of riches, while isolating her from sources of knowledge that could warn her of her danger. His secret intention is to make her his mistress, and convince her of the validity of his anti-marriage principles.[\[13\]](#)

12. Fielding's novel stages the process in which the woman of sensibility, with all her attributes of female delicacy, comes into existence. Illness, as Ophelia emphasizes, is a condition characteristic of her changed circumstances, and comes with her removal from her original environment. While happy and healthy in her forest cottage and boasting of a naturally strong constitution (Fielding 55, 225), following her abduction Ophelia repeatedly falls into fits, swoons, and serious fevers, becomes melancholy and "half distracted" (Fielding 258), wishes to die, and during her adventures in the world frequently loses the power of speech, feeling, or consciousness. Fever, physical breakdown and death-wish, as Peter Sabor observes, accompany her traumatic transition into adulthood, which takes place through her transportation from her natural, healthy cottage life in Wales to the sickly state of urban English society (19).[\[14\]](#)
13. It is certainly true that fainting was often associated with stays and corsetry in the period, which undoubtedly contributed to producing many sentimental feminine attributes. As Valerie Steele writes in her historical study on the corset, while stays were often experienced as an assault on the body, they also meant more than the instrument of female oppression and sexual exploitation. Hiding, shaping and exposing the female body at the same time, they simultaneously represented respectability and sexual allure, discipline and erotic display. Women's bodies were restricted and made socially acceptable by being fitted into stays. As far as medical consequences are concerned, Steele claims, even a moderately tight corset restricts the respiration and makes one rely on upper-diaphragmatic breathing, which creates palpitations of the breast. As modern medical experiments using tight-laced, Victorian corsets confirm, fainting is likely to have occurred during physical activity, such as dancing—something that further reinforced the idea of the constitutional weakness and disability of the female body (Steele 1, 21, 67-85).
14. But Fielding's Ophelia refuses to wear stays.[\[15\]](#) Her losses of sense and consciousness, I would suggest, are related to the limits of feminine utterance and represent an available and socially acceptable form of emotional expression. In Ophelia's case illness and fainting are a language—a way of saying "no" to the social pattern she is forced into by her violent abduction. Physical indisposition permits her to resort to the figure of the syncope. She censors and cuts short her conscious, healthy state, so as to be able to fit into her new plot and meet its emotional requirements. Syncope is a means of protest, but it also serves as a survival strategy, representing the only (cut and broken) form in which Ophelia can become the protagonist of the narrative that is imposed on her by force.
15. Syncopated sense and consciousness accompany Ophelia's initiation into experiencing, expressing and reading many of the passions with which she had been unfamiliar in her state of innocent isolation. Far away from social influences, the eighteenth-century woman—often accused of emotional excess—starts out naturally void of overwhelming passions. As an epitome of female blankness, Fielding's



Ophelia is a predecessor of Rousseau's Sophie, Saint-Pierre's Virginie, or Edgeworth's Virginia, brought up in isolation entirely for her future husband's benefit.<sup>[16]</sup> Ophelia's cottage life is an idyllic state of contentment and joy; her first violent and distressful passions arise with her abduction. Unlike her aunt, who uses all her powers of persuasion to entreat the disguised man to let go of her niece, Ophelia is so paralyzed by the first overwhelming emotions of her life—terror, fear and grief—that she "had not Power to speak," and became "almost senseless" (Fielding 51). As in the state of lipothymy described by contemporary medicine, she loses sensation and speech—exactly those faculties that would have helped her to escape. Later, while she is held captive by Dorchester, this process culminates in a more serious silencing: illness and fever, which she expects to be mortal, until finally she looks forward to a death caused by fear and grief for what she has lost. Overwhelmed with the novelty of new emotions, not having yet learnt to balance the affective and the symbolic, Ophelia is paralyzed—literally immobilized by her illness, which thus constitutes both the means and the limit of her protest. She cannot be the subject who utters; and so—like Freud's hysteric patients—she turns her entire body and mind into a means of signifying. Her symptoms are often as complex as hysteric symptoms which, as Freud found during his analysis of Dora, can have several layers of meaning and constitute an intricate system of tropes that resist interpretation.<sup>[17]</sup>

16. Disguised by bodily symptoms, Ophelia's desire remains unreadable—and frustrated. It oscillates between the constant longing for her innocent, native state and the emergence of her love for Dorchester. Like Freud's Dora, she is disbelieved and misunderstood; her wish to return home is constantly counteracted, and later she has to learn that the person she loves is motivated by dishonest intentions. Even though Fielding's novel ends with the happy marriage of the two protagonists, Ophelia's frequent losses of consciousness testify to the operation of an alternative, death-driven line of plot, which is fuelled by the wish to escape from the sentimental narrative itself. Time and again, Ophelia longs to go back to her aunt, or desires death like her Shakespearean namesake. Through subtle allusions to the fate of Hamlet's Ophelia, Fielding's novel often invokes the act of suicide, the evident outcome of this trajectory, which nevertheless remains unpronounceable. Ophelia's passions are induced by violence, her adventures take place against her will, and most of the time her greatest desire is to be through with it all. The work of the negative operates in Fielding's construction of the character of Ophelia, who sometimes seems to wish not to be a heroine of a sentimental novel, not to have strong feelings, and not to be the woman of feeling—a desire that can only be expressed through the feminine repertoire of sensibility: fainting, illness, and delicacy of constitution. It is only through such sentimental attributes that the fictional woman of feeling—a figure for unconscious female protest—can say "no" to the plot forced on women in the eighteenth-century novel of sensibility.
17. Asserting sexual desire and saying "yes," however, can be just as complicated for the woman of feeling as an attempt to escape the sentimental plot. While states that reach beyond the conscious experience in *The History of Ophelia* as well as in Richardson's *Clarissa* and *Pamela* tend to express silent (and often unconscious) protest against rape, abduction or participation in the sentimental narrative, the non-verbal symptom-language of sensibility in novels following Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Heloise* often functions as a way of asserting subversive and repressed desire. Inchbald's *A Simple Story* is one of these works. Written in the wake of Rousseau's *Julie*, Inchbald's novel is as much a novel of repression as of sensibility. In a letter to Inchbald, Maria Edgeworth aims to discover "the secret of [the novel's] peculiar pathos." She finds that "it is by leaving more than most other writers to the imagination, that you succeed so eminently in affecting it. By the force that is necessary to repress feeling, we judge of the intensity of the feeling; and you always contrive to give us by intelligible but simple signs the measure of this force" (Edgeworth 152-53). Thus, according to Edgeworth, the novel's effect lies in representing powerful feeling by representing its repression. The gaps and silences make us imagine the force of the emotion, the measure of which lies not in its expression but in what is manifest in the wake of its repression. At the level of both story and storytelling, *A Simple Story* is, so to say, syncopated: structured around gaps, absences and silences, making the novel's discourse convey what

can be said in lieu of blocked, forbidden and thus unutterable affective elements.

18. Miss Milner, Inchbald's heroine, is seen by other characters as coquettish, confusing and unintelligible. Her unreadability goes hand in hand with a crisis of feminine linguistic expression, which surfaces in connection with the Protestant Miss Milner's scandalous, transgressive desire for Dorriforth, her Catholic priest guardian.<sup>[18]</sup> Her desire must remain repressed, however; Dorriforth is a father substitute to her, and, moreover, a priest of a different religion. He is also tied by a vow of celibacy, similar to "that barrier which divides a sister from a brother" (Inchbald 74). Miss Milner's behavior starts to become strikingly confusing when Dorriforth requests her to give account of her affections and her marriage intentions. She keeps turning down suitors and claims that her affections are not engaged—a lack of feeling unimaginable to those around her. She is put under pressure to decide upon a marriage partner and shows a lively interest in one of her suitors, Sir Frederick Lawnly, yet answers with a definite "no" when Dorriforth asks her whether he is the man she would approve for a husband. "'Your words tell me one thing,' answered Dorriforth, 'while your looks declare another—which am I to trust?'" (Inchbald 51)
19. More than a century later, Sigmund Freud was similarly intrigued by the complexities of negation that he observed during his work with hysteric patients. He found that negation always contains an element of affirmation; it implies taking cognizance of an unconscious content. Even though negation does not mean the acceptance of repressed material, it already involves a lifting of the repression, making it possible for the repressed material to surface into consciousness (Freud, "Negation" 235–39). The psychoanalyst André Green further explored the operation of the negative. In "Negation and Contradiction," he mentions a female analytic patient, whose passionate rejection of the analyst's interpretation was always followed by prominent, characteristic gestures of negation. Green discovers that these exaggerated gestures repeat the situation of a childhood experience, when the patient's refusal to eat a dish of tomato rice offered to her by her mother was accompanied by the same violent negating gestures. As a child, the patient did not attend school until a later age, due to her mother's ambiguity and her own phobia of not performing well, which, as it later became clear, only served as a rationalization of the fear of leaving her mother. Enraged by the child's refusal to eat, her mother dragged her to school as a punishment, where, as it turned out, the child was doing surprisingly well. As Green finds, the child achieved her unconscious desire to be sent to school by not wanting to go there, then by misbehaving at home and by saying "no" to her mother. The negative thus functioned as the actual means by which an unconscious, positive desire could achieve its goal. In the analytic setting, the patient introjected or said "yes" to the analyst's interpretation by means of a similar act of negation. Green calls this "negative affirmation," in which case "the apparent expulsion really carried with it, in the opening necessary for the utterance of this "no," a "yes" which slipped surreptitiously into her" (*PM* 257).
20. Miss Milner also has recourse to the negative in order to fulfill a secret desire, her forbidden—and for a while unconscious—passion for her guardian. Even when her love becomes conscious to her, it needs to be hidden and disguised. In order to prevent a duel between Dorriforth and Sir Frederick, she agrees to the marriage with Sir Frederick, only to denounce it again when the immediate danger—that of losing Dorriforth—subsides, thus appearing coquettish and impenetrable. The function of this "no," apart from her rejection of Sir Frederick as a marriage partner (whom, in fact, she accepts later as her lover), is a hidden "yes" to her secret desire for Dorriforth. In addition to verbal ambiguity and silence, Miss Milner often uses the symptom-language of the body to say "yes" to her desire and "no" to the requirements of patriarchal marriage. Her unreadability thus can be seen as one of the many ways in which Miss Milner's body communicates what she is not allowed to feel. When Dorriforth is planning to marry the emotionless Miss Fenton and goes out in the evening, Miss Milner cannot touch her dinner. However, the moment she learns that he did not dine at Miss Fenton's, she puts a piece of food into her mouth. Like Green's patient who was unwilling to swallow the tomato rice, eating and not

eating have meanings related to her secret. Thus, for Miss Milner, the non-verbal sign-system of sensibility, instead of conveying an authentic expression of emotion, reveals itself as the pathological symptom-language of repressed desire.<sup>[19]</sup>

21. Both in Inchbald's *A Simple Story* and in Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Heloise*, the non-verbal signs of feeling, including those states that reach beyond conscious experience, belong to a similar dynamics of negative affirmation. In Rousseau's novel fainting is part of the construction of the figure of the woman of feeling as an object of male fantasy, which construction makes Julie either physically or mentally absent from almost all intense moments of sexual intimacy. When the lovers' hands touch against their will, Saint Preux feels a "tremour," a "fever or rather delirium." Touching Julie blocks out the experience; instead of the other's body, it makes Saint Preux encounter his altered state of mind, one that verges on illness and madness: "I cease to see or feel anything, and in that moment of alienation, what can I say, what can I do, where can I hide, how can I answer for myself?" (I, letter 1, 27) The encounter that stages Julie's absence most powerfully is the lovers' first kiss, as described by Saint Preux. While Saint Preux feels engulfed by "heaven's fire," and is about to reach the heights of ecstasy, Julie falls into a swoon: "Thus alarm extinguished pleasure, and my happiness was no more than a flash" (I, Letter 14, 52). In this moment, it is not Saint Preux who threatens the innocence of Julie. It is Julie, falling unconscious, who possesses destructive phallic force. As he complains about the intensity of her kisses, which are "too acrid, too penetrating, they pierce, they burn to the marrow. . . . they would drive me raving mad;" they make Saint Preux wish to expire at Julie's feet or in her arms (I, letter 14, 52).
22. David Marshall interprets both Julie's and Clarissa's absences from their encounters with their respective lovers as acts of resistance and escape. As Clarissa flees from Lovelace's intrusions into unconsciousness and death, Julie takes flight from Wolmar by dying (Marshall 213–53). I would like to suggest, however, that another important element of Julie's "absences" is provided not by her attempts to escape from Wolmar, but rather by her re-assertion of her transgressive desire for Saint Preux in her last letter—a desire that is at the core of her subjectivity. The most decisive factor in the progression of Julie's plot is the dynamics of the negation and affirmation of subversive affect. In the scene of the kiss Julie's sexual desire is not allowed to reach the surface of her consciousness. While sexuality has to be negated—note Julie's constant claim that she desires only platonic, chaste love—Julie's "yes" is available only in her unconscious.<sup>[20]</sup> In an act of swooning she makes her unconscious available for the encounter. In this way, however, experiencing sexuality becomes impossible: the affirmation of subversive desire takes place through what Green calls the work of the negative. At this moment, Julie becomes a blank, reflective surface for Saint Preux. Her kiss pierces, burns and penetrates, because Saint Preux encounters his own phallic desire at its deepest root.
23. The second part of Inchbald's *A Simple Story* features a similarly passionate fainting scene in the episode where Lady Matilda and her father, Dorriforth (now Lord Elmwood) meet for the first time.<sup>[21]</sup> For Matilda, fainting in the presence of her father means something similar to the absences of Rousseau's Julie from her physical encounters with Saint Preux. The long-awaited contact between a desiring woman and the object of her desire fails to become a conscious experience:

. . . her *fears* confirmed her it was him.—She gave a scream of terror—put out her trembling hands to catch the balustrades on the stairs for support—missed them—and fell motionless into her father's arms.

He caught her, as by that impulse he would have caught any other person falling for want of aid.—Yet when he found her in his arms he still held her there—gazed on her attentively—and once pressed her to his bosom.

At length, trying to escape the snare into which he had been led, he was going to leave her on the spot where she fell, when her eyes opened and she uttered, 'Save me.'—Her voice

unmanned him.—His long-restrained tears now burst forth—and seeing her relapsing into the swoon again, he cried out eagerly to recall her.—Her name did not however come to his recollection—nor any name but this—'Miss Milner—Dear Miss Milner.' (Inchbald 273–74)

For Lord Elmwood, Matilda is the living emblem of the repressed. During Lord Elmwood's three-year absence in the West Indies, Miss Milner, now Lady Elmwood, renewed her relationship with Sir Frederick. At her husband's return, she runs away in shame, leaving behind her daughter, Matilda. Lord Elmwood cannot be reconciled; he decides to banish his wife and daughter, promising never to see them again, and forbidding everyone to pronounce their name in his presence. Even when he later permits Matilda to enter his house, she has to remain forgotten and ostracized, making everyone realize that the most prudent behavior toward her is to "take no notice whatever that she lived among them" (Inchbald 221).

24. Thus, the figure of Matilda comes to embody what Lord Elmwood intends to block out of his and others' consciousness: the memories of a lost felicity as well as Lady Elmwood's infidelity—a story curiously missing from the narrative and buried in the seventeen-year gap between the two parts of the novel. By her father's cruelty, Matilda is turned into an absence and a sign, always standing for something else.<sup>[22]</sup> For Matilda, her father's everlasting absence becomes invested with emotional significance, making the negative of her father more real for her than his actual presence. As the ghost and scapegoat of patriarchy, punished for the failure of domestic felicity, she is forced into a world of the negative, where the presence of the real object, and the affects such an encounter might arouse, are seen as destructive: "I am now convinced [. . .] that to see my father, would cause a sensation, a feeling, I could not survive" (Inchbald 220).<sup>[23]</sup> Like Green's patient in the tomato-rice episode, Matilda in the fainting scene has to have recourse to the work of the negative to express affirmation. Similarly, for Lord Elmwood the act of negation also creates an opening where the repressed content can come to light, and a "yes" can surreptitiously slip in through the utterance of "no." While Matilda remains nameless, through her negation Lord Elmwood recognizes her banished mother, Miss Milner.
25. Inchbald's novel, by staging the erasure of its female figures, brings into consciousness the silencing and negation of woman (even to the point of death) lurking behind the revolutionary ideal represented by Rousseau's *Julie*. Read as a late-eighteenth-century response to Rousseau, *A Simple Story* presents the troubling scenario where a potential Saint Preux-figure, gaining power, recreates the oppressive structure of domestic terror he formerly assisted in overturning. The woman of feeling, even in 1791, is not allowed to be present as a feeling woman. Her feelings are tolerated only so long as they can be used for the re-establishment of patriarchal power. The novel exposes sensibility as part of the psychopathology of the patriarchal household and offers an insight into the shaping effects of social repression on pathological forms in the eighteenth century. These forms include—besides the figure of the domestic tyrant—the woman of feeling, of which both Miss Milner and Lady Matilda are manifestations.
26. When the novel was published, a reviewer of Inchbald's novel—whom scholarship identifies as Mary Wollstonecraft—criticized the weakness of Matilda's character, and was disappointed that the author was not able to provide a more empowering model for women readers:

Why do [all female writers] poison the minds of their own sex, by strengthening a male prejudice that makes women systematically weak? We alluded to the absurd fashion that prevails of making the heroine of a novel boast of a delicate constitution; and the still more ridiculous and deleterious custom of spinning the most picturesque scenes out of fevers, swoons, and tears. (*Analytical Review* 101–2)<sup>[24]</sup>



It is true that fainting, as eighteenth-century medical theories often assume, is a sign of "weakness" in so far as swoons and illnesses stand in for verbal expression or cancel out satisfying encounters. While the fictional representation of the sentimental swoon—as a display of feminine weakness—was a frequent object of criticism in the period, reading the literature of sentiment in the context of a broader history of feeling provides a more complex picture. Many eighteenth-century and Romantic novels explore female concerns hidden behind a so-called "language of feeling" that reach well beyond contemporary explanations of female indisposition. Like hysteria, the sentimental novel becomes a mode of thinking about sexuality and the sexual object.<sup>[25]</sup> These novels are, to some extent, already in Freud's league; and by their sensitivity to gender they provide a form of social critique which not only predates Freud's achievement but also points towards more recent psychoanalytic—and feminist—insights. Novels of sensibility exploit the possibilities offered by the work of the negative, and by their presentation of the negated, oppressed, banished woman, they perform an act of affirmation, taking cognizance of the discontents behind woman's fevers, swoons and tears. They thus give a covert—and often unintended—critique of the pathology of social repression by exposing sensibility itself, in the form of the woman of feeling, as its symptom.

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## Notes

[1](#) Godwin 2:144.

[2](#) For controversial attitudes to sensibility see Brissenden 56-64 and Jones 1-19.

[3](#) Todd discusses the character type of the "woman of feeling" in *Sensibility*. The significance of the blush in nineteenth-century literature is explored by O'Farrell's *Telling Complexions*. For the meanings of tears in sentimental fiction see Csengei, "I Will Not Weep."

[4](#) According to Janet Todd, tears, sighs, and fainting fits constitute a "vocabulary" of sensibility in the "language of the heart." See Todd, esp. 77-81, 65-128. On female nerves and fainting see also Barker-Benfield 23-36. This, of course, is not to say that swooning is an exclusively female characteristic in the eighteenth-century novel. The focus of the present essay, however, will be the female sentimental swoon only. The quote "nerves, spirits and fibres" is from G. S. Rousseau's eponymous essay.

[5](#) Green, *Work*, esp. chapters "An Introduction to the Negative in Psychoanalysis" (1-13) and "Aspects of the Negative: Semantic, Linguistic and Psychic" (14-25).

[6](#) See, for instance, Cheyne 14-16. Cheyne considers loss of sensation, loss of voluntary motion, as well as hysteric and epileptic fits, and even yawning and stretching as different grades of nervous disorders. Loss of sensation accompanies his first category of nervous disorders, which includes melancholy, apoplexy, and fainting fits.

[7](#) See also Blanchard's short, seventeenth-century definition: "a sudden Prostration or Swooning with a very weak or no Pulse, and a Depravation of Sense and Motion." His dictionary was re-edited in the 1720s.

[8](#) Lipothymy is characterized by a "Paleness of the Face, Lips, and Cheeks, and a Stupor of all the Senses", followed by a dimness of sight, falling to the ground, and the patient's being "Insensible to what is done to him" (James, "syncope"). For the distinction between syncope and lipothymy see also Motherby, *A New Medical Dictionary*. According to Motherby, in a state of lipothymy the patient perceives and understands but loses the power of speech. In syncope, the patient loses feeling and understanding.

[9](#) Johnson gives the following meanings of syncope: to contract, to abbreviate by omission of part of a word, and to divide a note in music. See also the entries "contraction," "elision," and "syncope" in Cuddon 178, 255, 890.

[10](#) In Godwin's *Deloraine* (1833) Margaret, Deloraine's second wife literally wastes away during her constant efforts to please her father and to deny the desires of her heart. A victim of relentless obedience, she falls into a fit of asphyxia and dies when she suddenly finds out that William, her long-lost and long-mourned lover is alive.

[11](#) Throughout the eighteenth century, syncope remains interpreted as a heart condition. Robert Hooper's



*Compendious Medical Dictionary*, Hooper's more substantial *Medical Dictionary* (which had several re-  
editions in the early nineteenth century) and Robert Morris and James Kendrick's *The Edinburgh Medical  
Dictionary* place syncope in the class of "neuroses". The respiration and the action of the heart either cease or  
become much weaker. All these dictionaries distinguish ordinary fainting from "*syncope cardiaca*," which is  
an organic, irremediable affection of the heart.

[12](#) See medical treatises by William Battie, William Rowley, Robert James, William Perfect, Robert Whytt,  
and John Haslam. For a detailed discussion of the close relationship between sensibility and hysteria see  
Mullan 201-40.

[13](#) As Moira Dearnley points out, following the poor performance of Welsh troops in the Civil War, satires of  
the Welsh began to proliferate in the popular presses in the 1640s, reinforcing stereotypes which remained  
influential throughout the eighteenth century. Besides the negative, abject image of the ridiculous, cowardly  
Welshman, another view also existed that idealized Wales as a place of uncorrupted nature and virtue distant  
from the life of English high society. Like Fielding's *Ophelia*, Jane Austen's *Love and Friendship* (1790)  
presents a similar encounter of the hero with an innocent Welsh girl. By the time of Austen's novel the theme  
of the retreat into Wales as a way of seclusion from "civilization," and a contrast between simple rustic life  
and London society, had already become a well-established motif. See Dearnley xiii-xxi. While *The History of  
Ophelia* is generally considered to be Sarah Fielding's most conventional novel, some of her critics have  
pointed out its subversive, feminist intentions masked in a linear, seemingly less experimental form. For the  
subversive narrative techniques of the novel see Down-Miers, Bree 135 ff, and Skinner 57-58.

[14](#) Bree (140-41) notes the balance between Ophelia's sentimental capacities for tears and illnesses, combined  
with an unusual toughness. However, I would like to maintain that while Ophelia comes out of difficult  
situations composed (and sometimes even entertained), she responds with weakness, fainting and illness to  
immediate stress, which force her into inaction.

[15](#) In Lord Dorchester's country house, she is led into an apartment that abounds in rich dresses and  
ornaments. She cannot wait to try on her new clothes and jewels, but "immediately threw away the stiff Stays,  
which seemed to [her] invented in perverse Opposition to Nature..." (Fielding 61).

[16](#) For female blankness in Rousseau's *Émile*, Edgeworth's *Belinda*, and Burney's *Camilla*, see Spencer,  
*Woman Novelist* 161-64.

[17](#) For the ways in which the hysteric symptom can signify see Freud, "Fragment," esp. 41-48.

[18](#) For an interpretation of Catholicism and Protestantism in the novel see Balfour 239 and Jenkins 280.  
Manvell calls *A Simple Story* the first English Catholic novel in *Elizabeth Inchbald* 72.

[19](#) For the importance of gestures and non-verbal expressions in the novel see also Nachumi and Spencer,  
introduction. As Spencer writes, "Under the influence of her unmentionable passion for Dorriforth, the  
verbally aggressive Miss Milner is forced into communicating, like a sentimental heroine, through blushes  
and other body-language. The irony is that the bodily signs which usually, in the literature of sensibility, speak  
more truly than words, are radically ambiguous in Inchbald's world." Inchbald, she claims, exploits the  
cultural ambiguities behind such gestures, as they may indicate not just innocence, but guilt and sexual  
consciousness at the same time. See Spencer, introduction xvi.

[20](#) As Freud claims, in the analytic situation we never discover a "no" in the unconscious. Recognition of an  
unconscious content by the ego is often expressed in a negative formula. See "Negation."

[21](#) After the death of Lord Elmwood, Dorriforth, as the nearest relation, inherits the title. In order to preserve  
the aristocratic lineage, Dorriforth, the new Lord Elmwood, is given absolution from his vow of celibacy and

marries Miss Milner.

[22](#) "Matilda's person, shape, and complexion were so extremely like what her mother's once were, that at the first glance she appeared to have a still greater resemblance of her, than of her father—but her mind and manners were all Lord Elmwood's; softened by the delicacy of her sex, the extreme tenderness of her heart, and the melancholy of her situation" (Inchbald 220). Even Rushbrook, Lord Elmwood's nephew, falls in love with her phantom before even meeting her (Inchbald 317). Patricia Meyer Spacks comments on Lord Elmwood's identification of Matilda with her mother in *Desire and Truth* 200.

[23](#) In *Playing and Reality*, Winnicott mentions the importance of the "negative side of relationships." The traumatic experience of waiting for the mother's longed-for response when that response is never forthcoming leads the child to a state where only what is negative is felt to be real. Such experiences result in a psychic structure where even the object's presence cannot modify the negative model that has become characteristic of the subject's experience. For this patient, Winnicott writes, the only real thing is the gap. As Green puts it, "The negative has imposed itself as an organized object relationship quite independent of the object's presence or absence" (Green, *Work* 5). See also Winnicott 20-25 and Green *PM* 274. Another, related pathology is what Green calls "dead mother complex," caused by a depressed, ill or otherwise preoccupied though present mother. The baby conceives such mother as dead and as someone who needs to be brought back to life. See Green, *PM* 142-73.

[24](#) In *Maria; or, the Wrongs of Woman* (1798) Wollstonecraft, subverting the sentimental tradition, experiments with a more outspoken heroine. While Maria often faints, her swoons and illnesses are the direct result of exhaustion from relentless persecution by her abusive husband, George Venables. Here tears and fainting fits are the physical manifestation of oppression rather than the psychosomatic symptoms of a silenced woman of feeling.

[25](#) Following Schaeffer, Perelberg refers to hysteria as something that is fundamentally "a mode of thinking about sexuality and the sexual object" (185).

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# Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis

## Attached to Reading: Mary Shelley's Psychological Reality<sup>[1]</sup>

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This essay explores Mary Shelley's fiction and writings about fiction as anticipating features of Freud's concept of psychological reality that in turn highlight the comparative tameness of his ideas on how creative writing affects phantasy and reality. It reads \*Frankenstein\* as a meditation on the construction of psychological reality and exposure of the dark sides of fiction's effects on the ego. This essay appears in *Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

1. Mary Shelley's psychological reality is not Freud's, but several aspects of hers cast interesting light on his and on the role of psychological reality in the development of psychoanalysis. In fact, a quick survey of details from her literary biography suggests that hers might be wilder. For this is a person whose writings and personae worry aloud about the extent to which fiction not only is their reality but also animates, informs, and sucks the life out of possibilities for living. The creature in *Frankenstein* is raised by books, Mathilda's childhood companions include characters from literature, and Mary Shelley's "personal" journals are not only co-authored but primarily listings of books and persons encountered—a striking re-writing of interior life. Even more basic, her mother literally is author and text, whose headstone first acquaints her with her letters and, thereby, with insight into the inextricability of reading with loving, dying, and living. Then there is the fact that her father must go undercover to produce children's books and transforms his household into a Juvenile Library and children's bookstore that eventually goes under. In addition, this is a writer whose best-known fiction is mythic both in stature and content and whose model for psycho-cultural reform is re-signification—recasting the terms and scripts that have delineated, and thereby constrained, character, especially female character, from time immemorial.
2. A simpler way of delineating Shelley's special place in the development of psychoanalytic thinking comes through reconsidering her acknowledged status as a child of romanticism. The importance of German romanticism to the development of Freud's thinking is well known and rests not only on his references to writings by Goethe, Schiller, E. T. A. Hoffman, and Heinrich Heine but also on their revolutionary insights into the power of imagination, fantasy, and symbolization to unsettle both idealism and reality.<sup>[2]</sup> In fact, the German word "Phantasie" signifies both the process and results of imagination, and the only prize that Freud received in his lifetime was the Goethe Prize, in the acceptance speech for which he credits Goethe with approaching psychoanalysis "at a number of points," including how the treatment of love in *Elective Affinities* anticipates "a connection to which the name of psycho-analysis itself bears witness" ("Address" 208, 210).<sup>[3]</sup> Freud makes few, if any, direct references to English romantic writers, even though Coleridge coins the term 'psycho-analytical' in 1805 (*Notebooks* 2:2670). But the primacy of imagination to English romanticism, especially in its famed (and fabled) division from the fixity and deadness of fancy, has occasioned two strains of proto-psychoanalytic inquiry that follow from the recognized splitting of English imagination into aesthetic and moral realms. One concerns relations between imagination and identification in identity-formation as they map out "untrodden regions" of human or poetic minds.<sup>[4]</sup> A second highlights the organic and developmental aspects of imagination to delineate good art from bad and child as father to man.<sup>[5]</sup>
3. The romantic "discovery" of childhood makes writings from this period even more amenable to psychoanalytic inquiry. Lacan considers this "dated notion that was born long before psychoanalysis" quintessentially English, and it arguably distinguishes the teen culture that Laurence Rickels identifies

in late-eighteenth-century German writings from the seer-blest infancy of Wordsworthian romanticism. [6] "It is no accident," Lacan writes, that "we discover" the idea that "the child is father of the man" in "that period with its fresh, shattering, and even breathtaking quality, bursting forth at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the industrial revolution, in the country that was most advanced in experiencing its effects, in England." "That reference to childhood, the idea of the child in man, the idea that something demands that a man be something other than a child, but that the demands of the child as such are perpetually felt in him, all of that in the sphere of psychology can be historically situated" (*Seminar* 24, 25). This situatable insight into the defining nature of the earliest stages of life, that arises once philosophy clears the inscribed slate of pre-Lockean minds, affects the "poets" of the British romantic era both as the "source of their inspiration" and the "development of their principal themes" (24). New conceptions of mind occasion as well the burgeoning field of children's literature and romantic debates over the relative efficacy of rationality or fantasy for activating and engaging a child's mind.[7]

4. A literal child of the romantic era, in her status both as second-generation romantic and blood child of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, the life/writings of Mary Shelley embody, even better than they define, both of these strains. Indeed, as second-generation romantic, she is well-known for posing a sustained challenge to her contemporaries' over-idealized views of imagination—stressing the sad realities of living and writing and protesting all forms of Prometheanism that mystify the contingencies and non-progressive features of either. Yet this assault on romantic imagination is not the simple reaction that it is often made out to be, whereby her realism squares off against the idealism of her parents' politics and her husband's philosophy in the name of other similarly debased concepts (woman, death, regress). Instead, her embrace of "wandering fancy" welcomes imaginative life and unleashes what the "development" in romantic imagination represses: delight in errancy, death in life, fits and starts of inspiration.[8] Her claim to fame as second-generation is the depth of her challenge to the futurity ostensibly assured by romantic theories of imagination and of her sustained inquiry into the nature of the reality that ensues from a life of imagination and the world of books. More than any other writer of the period, her life/writings dwell on the troubled boundaries between reality and fantasy, enacting what D. W. Winnicott has called "the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related" (3).[9]
5. Boundary confusion, especially concerning the contours of reality, is overdetermined by Shelley's position as blood child of Wollstonecraft and Godwin, first-generation radicals whose own life/writings quite literally wrote her into existence and envisioned features of her ensuing reality. As social experiment, she is herself a "work of a new species," and her life/writings clearly attest to the possibilities inherent in an imaginative life. After all, she invents the genre of science fiction and composes the most widely-recognized modern myth and myth of modernity. At the same time, they struggle as none before over their bondage to precursors, the special constraints that delimit products of revolutionary thinking, and the anxiety of experiencing one's deepest feelings as prescribed, proscribed, and pre-scripted. Moreover, as a female child of romanticism and, even more importantly, the first *girl* insight into the development of whose imagination literary culture has bothered to record, the life/writings of Shelley designate several roads not taken in Freud's engendering of mind. If, as Viola Kolarov has shown, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* fleshes out the childhood of Hamlet in ways that affect Freud's concepts of mourning, melancholy, and the Oedipus complex, imagine what forms might have emerged from Freud's readings of *Frankenstein*, *Matilda*, *Proserpine*, or the 1831 Introductory psycho-analysis of such progeny.[10] In creating and reissuing a creature whose monstrosity is linked explicitly to its origins in literary texts, Shelley's life/writings proleptically redesign Freudian accounts of the pre-Oedipal, the literary dimensions of phantasy, and the alleged passivity of girls.
6. Reconsidering Shelley as a child of romanticism, then, has consequences for the development of

psychical reality that follow from Shelley's unique position as a romantic outsider and insider. As such, she mirrors and at times analyzes what it is to live on the border, especially of the literary world, as well as to perceive oneself on either side of constitutive divides (dead/alive; female/male) that are deeply unstable. As a precursor to Freudian psychical reality, her writings accentuate the prominence of literature in structuring both phantasy and reality which is weakened in Freud's accounts. One can say that this (over-)emphasis stems from her identity *as* a writer, where literature would play a more decisive role than usual in psychical and material realities, but it should not be reduced to this fact. For Shelley's fictions not only respect dreams and employ (i.e., redeploy) myths but also announce through various stylistic hallmarks a troubling of the boundaries between phantasy and fantasy, waking dream and story, or phantasy, literature, and reality that anticipate psychoanalytic insights and methods. They trade on the slippage between autobiography and fiction, are anti-metaphorical and un-literary, do not know their "life" from their "fiction," and often enlist prior fictional works to avow "unconscious" knowledge.[11] This willed nearness to conscious and unconscious life of her fiction—such that her first literary foray is a story about making a new life and her subsequent fictions sustain a bare minimum of grief-stricken life—can be construed as a phantasy that sustains her work of un/mourning. But it also concretizes the illusion of fictional or imaginative worlds by de-mystifying a primary illusion that motivates their genesis: that such worlds necessarily are spaces of possibility, of greater freedom than reality, or more life-sustaining than living. Dissecting this illusion alters productively what romanticism can re-claim on behalf of the literary: its in/fancy. It also clears space for analysis of the literary and analysis by means of it that both Shelley and Freud see as the slow but only means of change.

### "Original Stories from Real Life"

Then I wandered from the fancies of others and formed affections and intimacies with the aerial creations of my own brain—but still clinging to reality I gave a name to these conceptions and nursed them in the hope of realization. I clung to the memory of my parents; my mother I should never see, she was dead: but the idea of my unhappy, wandering father was the idol of my imagination.

– *Matilda*[12]

. . . up to the present we have not succeeded in pointing to any difference in the consequences, whether phantasy or reality has had the greater share in these events of childhood.

– *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*[13]

7. Granting the non-conformity between romantic, Shelleyan, and Freudian understandings of the unconscious, two constituents of Freud's formulation of psychical reality help to illuminate what is distinctive about Shelley's renditions of the relation among phantasy, literature, and reality up to her time.[14] One involves Freud's characterization of the force that psychical reality holds for the subject and that distinguishes it from psychological or interior processes generally. These phantasies assume a consistency and resistance that are comparable to that displayed by material reality and thus have the effect of material reality for the subject.[15] The second involves the context through which Freud's perception of this reality solidifies, his infamous abandonment of the seduction theory. As is well known, in the process of discovering that an actual physical event need not be, and usually is not, the cause of a patient's hysterical symptoms, Freud comes to recognize the force of phantasy, and the related role of infantile sexuality, in the subject's psyche and development.[16] Both constituents hold in Shelley's treatment of the topic. Her writings broadcast the consistency and resistance that characterizes psychical reality, and her insight into this reality emerges in her earliest fictions,



*Frankenstein* (1818) and *Matilda* (1819), both of which thematize the status of incest in developing consciousness of this reality. Even before her writings are seen as pre-occupied with the problem of mourning, then, they register the determinant nature of psychical reality on the formation and deformations of a character's life.<sup>[17]</sup> As we will see, they also enlist the realm of books to designate the ins and outs of psychical reality.

8. Because of its topic, autobiographical resonances, and style of presentation, *Matilda* is the richest text for beginning our investigation. Indeed, in contrast to *Frankenstein*, which appears amenable to virtually every type of critical analysis (another measure of its mythic stature), *Matilda* for the most part has inspired *only* psychoanalytic readings. Its topics—father-daughter incest, trauma, necrophilia—are best explicated by psychoanalysis, and its scene of narration—a death-bed confession that voices the unspeakable to a friend called stranger—pre-figures the talking cure. Several scholars have already detailed how remarkably Freudian is Shelley's treatment of these issues, and I draw especially on the evidence that Tilottama Rajan and Mary Jacobus have marshaled for perceiving *Matilda* as a text regarding trauma and a traumatized text.<sup>[18]</sup> They read as the symptom of Mathilda's trauma the "unreadability" of her narrative, as it is manifested in Mathilda's alienation from the poetry she cites and the literary world it embodies as personified in Woodville.
9. But equally revealing about the centrality of psychical reality is the depiction in *Matilda* of the absence of reality for its protagonist, not only as the symptom of trauma but the precursor to it. Even among Shelleyan texts, *Matilda* contains a striking absence of commentary on social, economic, or political affairs, and, to the minimal extent that Mathilda peoples her world with "real" people, rather than the trees, characters from literature, and airy creations of her brain that she designates as her childhood companions, those people are avowedly unrealised, other-worldly, or idealist. When her father returns in the flesh from his sixteen years of wandering, he is no more fleshed out or historicized than when he existed as the idol of her imagination. "There was a curious feeling of unreality attached by him to his foreign life in comparison with the years of his youth. . . It was strange when you heard him talk to see how he passed over this lapse of time as a night of visions" (16). This mode of irreality extends to his perceptions of her. "[M]y father has often told me that I looked more like a spirit than a human maid" when he first caught sight of her (15)—an accurate materialization of the kind of presence she held for him during his absence, registered for him by the "stupendous difference" between "the women we meet in dayly life and a nymph of the woods such as you were" (34). In this regard, the "young man of rank" whose visits to Mathilda in London trigger her father's crisis and their ensuing misery represents not so much the threat of alternate sexual options as the sheer intervention of non-fictional reality ("well-informed and agreeable in his person") into the irreality inhabited jointly by father and daughter (19). Moreover, in her willed seclusion after her father's death, what allows Woodville to enter Mathilda's reality is less that he too has lost his beloved or that her grief has softened but that his world is fantasy—he is a poet whose writings and existence are devoted to ideality and futurity.
10. Woodville's depiction has long been read as expressing Shelley's hostility toward the idealism of romantic poets and their slim, often gender-opportunistic, purchases on reality.<sup>[19]</sup> In it is also heard a marital lament against having one's misery recast as raw poetic material for a play.<sup>[20]</sup> But the associated view that Mathilda's or Shelley's protest expresses a bald stake in reality over against the otherworldly claims of poetry, imagination, or fantasy is belied by the total lack of reality that constitutes Mathilda's (at times, also Shelley's) world. At best, that reality is merged with literature, when it is not total phantasy for the subject. In the case of *Matilda*, this fact affects the "reality" of the incest ascribed to the father-daughter relation. For not only is Mathilda's existence poisoned by her being invaded by the word "love," rather than by any external physical manifestation of desire. And not only does this invasion prove traumatic because, as Jacobus explains, it replicates an "innocent" girlhood wish that, in the re-hearing, returns as guilt (*Psychoanalysis* 182-85). But, before this scene, Mathilda's sexual maturity for, and availability to, the father is registered not in any bodily observation



or overture but in his asking her to resume reading at the place in Dante where his wife Diana had "left off." In other words, Mathilda's status as erotic partner is affirmed through acknowledging this potential for textual intercourse. (In the event, Mathilda chooses to read a different passage).

11. Certainly, we are invited by this conflation to see *Matilda* underlining the sexual nature of the father's interest in the daughter (also by the father's admission that Diana had died to grant him access to this substitute). But we are also invited to see that the sexual nature of their relation is expressed through a textual relation and that their incestuous passion is mediated, aroused by, and, in the case of the daughter, only "known" or ratified through literature. *Matilda* makes clear that Mathilda's literary knowledge complicates the self-assurance of her claim that "I disobeyed no command, I ate no apple" (17). Technically "innocent" of the "looks and language of unlawful and monstrous passion," Mathilda is well-versed in their literary manifestations via her familiarity with Alfieri's *Myrrha*, Fletcher's *The Captain*, and *Proserpine*. Moreover, she references these texts as a way of dis/avowing desires that she does not own: "On this occasion" —that is, before she learns the meaning of her father's sudden change —"I chanced to say that I thought Myrrha the best of Alfieri's tragedies; as I said this I chanced to cast my eyes on my father and met his: for the first time the expression of those beloved eyes displeased me" (20). Recognizing the literary dimensions, and nature, of this depiction of incest does not mean that it is any less real or traumatic for Mathilda. The point is precisely the opposite: the "reality" of it is not only psychical but fuelled by classics of literature.
12. This is a prescient insight into the centrality of literature in maintaining the phantasy and reality of incest. If Freud discovers the force of psychical reality in the process of abandoning the seduction theory, Shelley uncovers the role of literary classics in enforcing Oedipal phantasies. They at once inform such phantasies and are the only means through which they are (not) known. *Matilda* depicts this complex as guilt by literary association, neither to absolve nor condemn Mathilda, but to question the kind of responsibility any individual has for passions that are so pre-scripted: [21] that is, both prescribed as classical — "high" and "good" — and aroused in beings in proportion to their receptivity to the literary. For Shelley the seductiveness of the classics is arresting in both senses: they convey heightened modes and forms of passion, often before a young reader has "real" experiences of them; they traumatize by bringing to consciousness desires and experiences that have been repressed both in the subject *and* by literary culture. Though a deeply arrested text — one of the most palpably traumatized and devoid of material reality in the entire literary tradition — *Matilda*, through its death-bed scene of narration, nonetheless gestures toward one way out. Daughter-creatures, give voice to your stories, even as — i.e., since — they threaten to kill you. In so doing, lessen the repression effected by a literary culture that has an illustrious history of curtailing "voices of life." [22] In this, Shelley identifies one component of the resistance that psychical reality constitutes for the subject as the consistency of the fantasies avowed in and by the literary tradition: Oedipus, heterosexual, heroic males, happy endings. Perhaps Shelley's most "romantic" and un-Freudian feature is her belief that a subject's phantasy world is freer — has got to be freer — than the world so far of literature. In retrospect, this appears to be the wish that drives her corpus even as that corpus struggles to make its way into the world of books.

### **Pre-Oedipus: The Modern Prometheus**

It was a bold question[;] yet with how many things are we upon the brink of becoming acquainted, if cowardice or carelessness did not restrain our inquiries.

– *Frankenstein* [23]

There is no doubt that the creative artist feels toward his works like a father.

13. This wish that drives her corpus receives its most conscious articulation in the 1831 re-issue of *Frankenstein*, where Shelley names her creature and book "hideous progeny" by way of accounting for their origins in her phantasies as a child- and adult, to which I will return. But the 1818 edition is already hard at work constructing component parts of psychical reality that await their application by Shelley to her "own" situation in 1831. Because of its explicit focus on science, exploration, and the world of men, *Frankenstein* appears to have more reality than the worldlessness that constitutes *Matilda*. We don't need *Frankenstein* to show us how deceiving looks can be, but no literary text is more comprehensive in its explorations of the enabling and deceptive features of reading for the constitution of phantasy and reality. Many scholars have emphasized the centrality of reading to the psychological formations of Victor and the Creature, and they have detailed the text's care in depicting what each of them reads, how they learn to read, and how what they read shapes their visions of reality. [\[25\]](#) Fewer have taken seriously as a commentary on literature the inhumanity that is depicted as stemming directly from the world of books.
14. With Victor, the dynamic is better known at least on a surface level. Victor's interest in science is ascribed to an active fancy drawn initially to books of alchemy, the magic in and of which animates his apparent superseding of them. Medieval literature is thus positioned at the "origin" of scientific inquiry and portrayed as constitutive of empirical reality, and insufficient respect for it (the father's "sad trash") is alleged as the cause of the entire misery that eventuates. Put the other way, because the materialization of Victor's fantasy is perceived by him as having nothing to do with his prior imaginings, the visionary impulses that underlie them, or the beauty of the materials out of which the Creature is composed, Victor feels at once impelled and free to abandon him.
15. The Creature's indebtedness to the world of books is even more thoroughgoing because books are at the source of his creation and his best means of self-rearing. Because his progenitor abandons him owing to the claimed disjuncture between Victor's vision and the Creature's physical reality, the Creature is left to be parented largely by books. His earliest development relies on a mixture of empirical experience and lessons from books whereby books constitute empirical experience that goes beyond the bounds of immediate observation. Experience of the De Lacey's epitomizes the near-identity for the Creature of persons and books, for the Creature observes them as if they are books and learns from reading them how to feel "human" and how to read books. As he tells it, observation of them constitutes his first "lessons" in familial relations, "of the difference of sexes; of the birth and growth of children; how the father doated on the smiles of the infant, . . . of brother, sister, and all the various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds" (90). The literary classics that he then reads (*Paradise Lost*, *Plutarch's Lives*, *Sorrows of Werter*) only intensify his knowledge of passion and consequent desire to experience passion in a personal, i.e., "real," way. The "effect of these books produced in me an infinity of new images and feelings, that sometimes raised me to ecstasy, but more frequently sunk me into the lowest dejection" (95).
16. Recognition of the bi-polar affect aroused by his reading underscores the otherness that inhabits the world of books and the sense of alienation that access to book-knowledge often elicits. That is, at the same time that *Frankenstein* depicts books as essential to the formulation of phantasy and reality, it depicts them as unleashing a level of misery that is capable of annihilating either domain. For both Victor and the Creature, outrage is the consequence of discovering that external reality does not conform to the reality promised in and by books. This mismatch is especially dire for the Creature because of his necessary over-reliance on books. What occasions the misery that unleashes the Creature's monstrosity is his systematic exclusion from the reality promised and heightened by literature—especially, the reality promised by the books that the Creature actively reads, rather than overhears when still listening in on the De Lacey's. For that province is fiction, the domain understood

to heighten desire for connection for two reasons. In a sense applicable to all readers, the lure of great literature is the access it provides to heightened passion and extraordinary adventures not available to the average person (an assertion made in the 1818 preface, written by Percy Shelley).<sup>[26]</sup> In a sense particular to the Creature, the world of fiction is closer to his reality than external reality, "born" as fictional character is out of an author's fancy and real to the extent that disbelief is suspended. The denial of these two constituents of fictional reality by material reality renders the Creature a fiend. Even worse, the Creature learns that he is excluded both from the paradise of fiction, all of whose characters are related to something and by someone, and from the fiction of paradise. "Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect." Even Satan, a "fitter emblem" than Adam of the Creature's reality, "had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and detested" (97).

17. The Creature's alienation raises, and re-poses, an existential question. Which must come first in the effort to form new realities: a work of a new species, or the capacity to recognize it and therefore have it affirmed? As the Creature discovers, for a life to exist, it must perceive itself as related in both moral and aesthetic senses. Its likeness to someone or something must be perceived so that it can feel affection and fit into an existing narrative. In showing the extent to which the realm of literature exacerbates misery for new beings, *Frankenstein* is scornful of the utopianism that underlies highly romantic claims for imagination. But this hardly discredits imagination or literature. Instead, it takes seriously the desires that they are capable of arousing and investigates the responsibility and responsibility of literature for and to those desires. What *Frankenstein* explores is the extimacy of the world of books, at once exterior to the subject and yet a vital part of inner life and interior processes.<sup>[27]</sup> Something of this extimacy is voiced in one of the uncanniest passages in the text, wherein the Creature grounds his self-defense against charges of murder, a defense itself grounded in radical singularity, in a line of poetry written by Percy Shelley that speaks to the beyond-morality of any being who is unconnected to all others. "I was dependent on none, and related to none. 'The path of my departure was free;' and there was none to lament my annihilation" (96).
18. The implications of the extimacy of literature are crucial to the construction in *Frankenstein* of psychological reality. Some of its components are articulated through narrative commentary that stresses the unreality for Victor of characters other than the Creature and that, only when dead, assume a virtual reality: "he believes, that, when in dreams he holds converse with his friends, and derives from that communion consolation for his miseries, or excitements to his vengeance, that they are not the creations of his fancy, but the real beings who visit him from the regions of a remote world" (160). This is precisely not the phantasy of the dream that follows upon Victor's creation of the Creature, whereby a "blooming" Elizabeth is transformed into the "mummy" that Victor refuses to acknowledge and that drives his creativity/destructivity (40).<sup>[28]</sup> Other commentary is less pathological. Resistance to substitution is shown as dependent on the chronological priority of one's attachments, whether to persons or things.<sup>[29]</sup> "Even where the affections are not strongly moved by any superior excellence, the companions of our childhood always possess a certain power over our minds, which hardly any later friend can obtain" (161). The text also specifies what is requisite for books to get inside their reader: some new but precisely not-new event from the real world makes what has been read but not taken in now "come home." This is the one insight into psychological reality that *Frankenstein* ascribes to a female character. Before Justine's condemnation, Elizabeth states, "I looked upon the accounts of vice and injustice, that I read in books or heard from others, as tales of ancient days, or imaginary evils; at least they were remote, and more familiar to reason than to imagination; but now misery has come home, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood . . . Alas! Victor, when falsehood can look so like the truth, who can assure themselves of certain happiness?" (69). Or when literature constitutes so much of one's psyche or reality, where can certainty reside?
19. Viewed in this light, it is not such a stretch to view as the Promethean accomplishment of *Frankenstein*

its construction through the Creature of psychical reality and construction of the Creature as psychical reality. Descriptions of the creation of the Creature specify the ingredients out of which psychical reality is composed: pieces of real, textual material that are made to cohere but in an anti-organic, a-developmental fashion. Moreover, these raw materials are said to be dead and buried, whether in church-yards and charnel houses or the moldy records of literary history; in both cases, they are corp(u)ses that are unearthed, pieced together, and re-animated. Descriptions of the consequences once it is activated emphasize what can make psychical reality monstrous, since it is not destined to be so. The "life of its own" that it appears to take on is difficult to manage because no one wants to claim responsibility for it—neither the authorizing ego nor the authors that shore up, and thereby divide, ego from psychical reality. Victor's consciousness is bent on denying this creature to the degree that it keeps manifesting the wish that animates his phantasies: annihilating women and family, loosening by tightening the ties that bind. Materialization of both wish and phantasy is monstrous to Victor, because his egoic coherence depends on denying the death-drive that he sublimates as life—especially the life of science, invention, and creativity.

20. Nor does the analysis stop here. For *Frankenstein* does not depict these phantasies as belonging only to Victor, but instead as stemming from medieval literature (at once, antiquated and alchemical) and as inhering in a class of men—prometheans—the strength of whose egos and thus of whose ego's defenses leave it to literature to voice what must remain unconscious in them. Moreover, not only does literature double as the unconscious in *Frankenstein*, articulating through displacement what the conscious narration denies, but those "unexplored regions" are shown to be already occupied by literature. This occupation of the unconscious by literature is key to the Creature's self-defense and is previewed in Walton's assurance to womankind that his approach to "unexplored regions, to 'the land of mist and snow'" is fueled by benevolent impulses (14). Indeed, the quoted literary phrase, "I shall kill no albatross," invokes the unconscious through the tell-tale negation, at the same time that its source, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, composed by the coiner of the term, "pscho-analytical," links archaic to modern in its exploration of exploration. While *Frankenstein* is relentless in its exposure of male ambition—which it depicts as clinical megalomania—it does not consign psychical reality via the Creature to monstrosity. Things could be different, but that requires expanding the literature that structures phantasy and reality.

### "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming"

We laymen have always been intensely curious to know. . . from what sources that strange being, the creative writer, draws his material, and how he manages to make such an impression on us with it and to arouse in us emotions of which, perhaps, we had not even thought ourselves capable.

– "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" [\[30\]](#)

I shall thus give a general answer to the question, so very frequently asked me—"How I, then a young girl, came to think of and to dilate upon so very hideous an idea?"

– 1831 Introduction to *Frankenstein*

21. Shelley's Introduction to the Standard Novels Edition re-issue of *Frankenstein* provides a rare look into its author's psyche that is also a striking anticipation of Freud's generic inquiry into how that strange being, the creative writer, comes by his or her material. Both authors look to early childhood for their answers, both underscore the determining role of childhood phantasies on the adult writer's choice of content, and both point to the temporal dynamism and shape-shifting capacities of phantasy, by which "past, present, and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through" the



phantasies ("Creative" 148). The details that Shelley provides of the "waking dream" out of which *Frankenstein* emerges could hardly be clearer in delineating the chief elements of Freudian phantasy. It shows how the phantasy nature of day-dreams, deemed similar to the semi-conscious state of the fiction-writer, can interact with unconscious phantasies from infancy. It structures the phantasy as a wish less for an object than for a sequence in which the subject has a part—and a highly permutable part—to play.[31] It typifies one primal phantasy scene, the family romance.[32] Similar in each essay, too, is a tentativeness and defensiveness in tone that stems from shared anxieties over their respective places within their different professions.[33] If here Freud looks to the creative writer for insight into processes more usually discerned by him in child's play or the analysis of neurotics, Shelley looks to her phantasy life as a means of dis/avowing the creatures she has spawned.

22. Precisely because of their different perspectives and methodologies, reading the two accounts together aids in discerning the place of literature in psychical reality. Not only because he treats the topic generically, Freud's account specifies the usefulness of creative writing in ways that bring into focus Shelley's more tormented version of phantasy-writing. One advantage for Freud is that creative writing restores pleasure to the revelation of adult phantasies, otherwise kept a secretive and intensely private domain, owing to the allegedly shameful nature (child's play) and typical content (infantile sexuality) of adult phantasy life. A second is that the fore-pleasure achieved by the aesthetic nature of creative writing—precisely the assurance that these are not unadorned phantasies, the knowledge of which, should a "layman" venture to communicate them, would "repel us or at least leave us cold"—allows us to receive the greater pleasure of being liberated, through reading an imaginative work, from "tensions in our minds" owing to unresolved conflicts ("Creative" 153). "It may even be" that this includes "enabling us thenceforward to enjoy our own day-dreams without self-reproach or shame" (*ibid.*)
23. Differences between the two writers begin to emerge when Freud elaborates the impelling wishes that underlie phantasies and which, according to him, creative writing at once ratifies and satisfies. While these wishes are said to "vary according to the sex, character and circumstances of the person who is having the phantasy," they "fall naturally" into "two main groups. They are either ambitious wishes, which serve to elevate the subject's personality; or they are erotic ones" ("Creative" 146-47). Not surprisingly, the two groups map onto gender categories. "In young women the erotic wishes predominate almost exclusively, for their ambition is as a rule absorbed by erotic trends. In young men egoistic and ambitious wishes come to the fore clearly enough alongside of erotic ones" (147). Freud emphasizes that his stress is less on the distinction than the fact that the two trends are "often united." Still, from the perspective of Shelley's life/writings, this schema itself appears as a wish—indeed, one that the treatment of gender in *Frankenstein* starts to analyze and that Shelley's "new species" of writing throughout her career is devoted to reworking. From her perspective, too, another use-value that Freud asserts on behalf of creative writing seems highly suspect—that it enhances a "feeling of security" that then allows readers to undertake "heroic actions" in "real life" because literature, especially romance literature, assures all would-be-heroes that "Nothing can happen to me!" ("Creative" 150).
24. Obviously, Freud is not endorsing the phantasy but instead what this linkage between phantasy and creative writing reveals: we are in the domain of "His Majesty the Ego" who utilizes phantasy and literature to re-write reality more to his liking. And while Freud's comments here and elsewhere about how apparent contradictions to his theory actually support it make the baldness of his formulation less reductive of literature than it appears, one of his main points about the realm of creative writing is properly reductive: these works of imagination are not as original, unmotivated, from-out-of-nowhere as all that. They stem from childhood wishes and phantasies that both satisfy basic human desires and help to codify, when they do not assign names to, such desires. Interestingly, Wollstonecraft and Shelley have long been withheld from the ranks of creative writer on the grounds that their fiction is too prosaic, generic, or life-like for art. But Freud's formulation also serves to pinpoint the

distinctiveness of Shelley's theory and practice of creative writing. In a general sense, hers appeals to a much less coherent ego for reasons that at times are conscious and intentional. Put a different way, her creative writing tends to explore the dark side of fiction's effects on the ego: not just how enunciation splits the subject but also how writing tears one apart—originally and subsequently.<sup>[34]</sup>

25. A first level of her revision of Freud's formulation gets at the obvious gender bias that underlies the phrase or feeling, "nothing can happen to me," as well as the terms that undergird it—hero, invulnerable, action. Her version runs counter and inversely: from the "nothing is happening or ever will happen for me" of the heroines of *Frankenstein*, *Matilda*, and arguably *The Last Man* to the "something might happen to me" of the more active heroines of *Valperga*, *The Adventures of Perkin Warbeck*, *Lodore* and *Falkner*. The specific form that the "something" that can happen takes in *Proserpine* (abduction, rape, incest) suggests a second-level intervention. The knowledge that something terrible can happen to me should not be a justification for restricting access to experience, especially for girls. Shelley's creative writing is devoted to redesigning futurity on both of these fronts. The reality it is after makes room for the "something can happen" to women as historical agents and is less pathologically defensive or over-protective in facing that possibility.<sup>[35]</sup> As a commentary on Freud's formulation, then, Shelley rejects both the applicability and the *desirability* of having this phantasy confirmed by literature. For her, the value of creative writing is in "preparing" readers for the inability to be prepared. This preparation includes a fundamental lack of assurance regarding the coherence of that "me."
26. Already a crucial subtext of *Frankenstein*, doubts regarding the security associated with creative writing are intensified in the 1831 Introduction, owing in part to the double nature of its inquiry: how accounting for the origins of *Frankenstein* requires an account of the author's origins and development as a child. Scholars often view this insecurity as "personal," as resulting from her gender and/or her status as girl child of famous writers. While part of the story, Shelley's account is more concerned with how the extimacy of literature, in cutting across both her phantasy- and real life, complicates self (or ego) formation. The episodes she narrates as constitutive of the authorship of *Frankenstein* all disarticulate phantasy from creative writing. Her earliest memories portray phantasy as the antidote to the narcissistic wounding associated with her "favourite pastime," which is "to 'write stories.'" While those "scribblings" are imitative, deferential, derivative, her "waking dreams" are "at once more fantastic and agreeable" because they are "all my own" (175). The conformity demanded by writing marks her girlhood writing style "common-place," as well as her life-experience as a girl. She contrasts both, again, to her "true compositions, the airy flights of my imagination," where "I did not make myself the heroine of my tale" but instead "people[d] the hours with creations far more interesting to me at that age than my own sensations" (176).
27. A similar splitting attends descriptions of her young adult years, when "reality stood in the place of fiction" in the form of "my husband" and the contests over writing that he and the male world generate and signify (176). Descriptions of this period, in which writing fiction as a profession starts to become a reality for her, intensify confusion over the boundaries between these spheres—a confusion that is at once an authorial ruse and a subsequent theoretical position.<sup>[36]</sup> On the one hand, Shelley asserts that the hideous idea is neither of her making nor of Percy's but arises "unbidden" from an "imagination" that "possessed and guided" her (179). On the other hand, her theory of creation as well as its applicability to the origin of *Frankenstein* stresses the necessity that something come before. "Invention" does not "consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded; it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself" (178). The Introduction enumerates the chaos of materials out of which *Frankenstein* is assembled: waking dream—German ghost stories—writings of Byron and P. Shelley—parents "of distinguished literary celebrity"—in sum and particular, phantasy objects that are haunting (175).



28. Descriptions of the waking dream push the dynamic to an extreme. "Unbidden" images rise up before her and us in all the vividness of the eventual text. "I saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision . . . the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together;" the terrified "artist" who "would rush away from his odious handywork, horror-stricken" in hopes that "this thing, which had received such imperfect animation would subside into dead matter," and so forth (179-80). Yet we miss a crucial insight into her creative practice if we conflate the waking dream with the composition of *Frankenstein*. Instead, she points out that the desperate effort to break free of the terror overwhelming her by that vision, by "exchang[ing] the ghastly image of my fancy for the realities around," was unsuccessful—"still it haunted me"—until, in a last-ditch effort to "think of something else[,] I recurred to my ghost story—my tiresome, unlucky ghost story," with the wish that "I could contrive one which would frighten my reader as I myself had been frightened that night." "Swift as light and as cheering," the "idea broke in upon me" that "I had *thought of a story*" (180). Thought—moreover, in the form of an "idea" that "I had thought"—intervenes to break her engulfment in terror and get the story going.
29. This is a stunningly detailed account of psycho-literary reality that positions the realm of creative writing between phantasy and reality and as the go-between. As depicted here, reality, in the sense of sense-based reality, is no match for phantasy. "I see them still; the very room, the dark parquet, the closed shutters with the moonlight struggling through," but "still [my hideous phantom] haunted me" (180). It is the reality of "my story," even as yet unconceived, that loosens the hold of phantasy. For this story is portrayed as doubly external to her—at once out of her reach and a distraction, a "something else to think of," that gets her out of her engulfment by phantasy. This disarticulation of phantasy from creative writing then aids in uncovering some of the wishes impelling either or both. One wish is thematized in the last part of the description of the waking dream, in the "hope" of the "horror-stricken artist" that, "left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade; that this thing, which had received such imperfect animation would subside into dead matter; and that he might sleep in the belief that the silence of the grave would quench forever the transient existence of the hideous corpse which he had looked upon as the cradle of life" (180). This wish is shown to be delusive—"behold, the horrid thing stands at his bedside"—and thus generative of *Frankenstein* and of its counter—to high romantic mystifications of literary creation. The other side to no *creation ex nihilo* is no annihilation. As novel and Introduction explore, try as they might, progenitors cannot destroy their creations once they have been conceived. Moreover, they lose control of them from the moment of their conception, which does not mean that they should cede all responsibility for what they have begun.
30. A related wish, more applicable to the re-issuing that comprises Shelley's notions of creativity, is the desire to begin anew, to be given a second chance at prosperity. The Introduction connects this desire to the reality that intensifies Shelley's affection for her hideous progeny, its association with life with Percy. The precise formulation is instructive for the ways that it connects the issue of un/mourning to the place of literature in psychical reality. "And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I have affection for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words, which found no true echo in my heart" (180). We have heard this "but words" before. Indeed, they compose a female echo chamber in which Elizabeth's account of how the murder of Justine "brought home" the misery voiced in prior passages of text resonates with Mathilda's dis/avowals of the knowledge and cause of her misery: the word "love" in all its traumatizing literary associations.
31. As read back into the Introduction, the "unconscious" knowledge that attends these assertions of "happy days" is voiced once again by references to other literary texts, especially that *History of the Inconstant Lover*, the only one of the "volumes of ghost stories" that the Introduction seems compelled to name in its details of live converse with Percy (177). But, more fundamentally, when were "death

and grief" ever "but words, that found no true echo" in Shelley's heart, born as she was through the death of a mother of "distinguished literary celebrity?" Actually, read in this light, the formulation is as demystified as it is idealized, since it is Shelley's distinctive fate to have learned her first words literally through the signifier of death, both the "M-A-R-Y" of Wollstonecraft's tombstone and its literary remains—Wollstonecraft's fragmentary *Lessons* that instruct a young child how to read. In other words, in Shelley's case, the reality of death is indissociable from her first words that precede experience of the meaning of death or grief. That comes later, in the form of many subsequent books and deaths that flesh out this "grief." To a sizeable extent, literature *is* Shelley's reality-test as much as the means by which she evaluates the adequacy of one to the other. The world of books informs her reality for better and worse. That is, the realm of creative writing informs her psychical reality and provides her surest, though still deeply tentative, way out into reality.

32. Shelley's insight into the reality-testing provided by creative writing is indebted to those two persons of distinguished literary celebrity whose romance sets the terms of the family romance of her psychical reality. Too large a topic to explore in detail here, I want to conclude by suggesting how two ramifications of her parents' promotion of reason as the path to perfectibility through their creative writings helps to concretize Shelley's origins and legacy as "author of *Frankenstein*." Part of Wollstonecraft's and Godwin's efforts to construct a better future entails writing and revising children's literature as a chief way to re-form the minds of the future, and part of that revision entails re-positioning fancy at the origin of rational enquiry. Opposing the binary logic that structures romantic debates on children's literature, whereby self-declared fantasists (Lamb, Coleridge, Wordsworth) counter the "cursed crew" of rationalists (Barbauld, Trimmer, Wollstonecraft) in the name of a less inhibited childhood, Wollstonecraft's and Godwin's writings for children portray the activation of fancy as indispensable to educating minds that are curious, wide-ranging, avid, perpetually open to research—perhaps even to Freud's "little sex researcher."[\[37\]](#) As a means of so doing, their writings are particularly creative about concepts. They conceive fancy as inhering in the factuality of life, display the "facts of life" as informed by fiction and phantasy, and deem a young person's comprehension of such fact-fictions as central to achieving better options and life-choices.[\[38\]](#) Moreover, this restructuring of reality is ventured through features of style that simulate the proximity of life to fiction and vice versa: announced in titles such as *The Female Reader*, *Original Stories from Real Life*, *The Looking Glass*; in articulations of method whereby books substitute for "live" textual mentors, history raises the dead, biography is *Life*; or in conceptions of individual character as generic ("a thinking woman," a "nobleman," a melancholic) but singular.[\[39\]](#) Raised on such "facts," then, the question of how *this* young girl conceived the idea of animating a new species is not such a mystery. *Frankenstein* and the author of it are "logical" extensions of their progenitors' efforts to make a different world by composing works of a new species as and for children.
33. A second ramification stems from negative aspects of her parents' celebrity, their public status as a cause célèbre. This status owes less to their emancipated sex lives than to how their sex lives are seen to broadcast major discrepancies between what they write and how they live, especially as relates to family life. Allegations (still ongoing) of their incoherence on these matters, of how their actions as family members belie their promotion of autonomy, female rationality, and consequent rejection of marriage, are particularly problematic for writers like them whose political as well as authorial credentials are tied to progress at expanding spheres of reason.[\[40\]](#) There is reason to counter that such charges often oversimplify what each of them means by rational activity as well as the large share that both grant to passion in activating, directing, and facilitating rational enquiry. But why bother when their incoherence illuminates part of what they are after in their promotions of reason: making reason responsible to the vagaries and befallen nature of living; exposing family values as antithetical to justice because unreceptive to difference? More to the point, their concept of inquiry understands error to be on the way to truth as long as it is not defended against but instead analyzed.[\[41\]](#)

34. As bequeathed to Shelley, parental incoherence familiarizes her from early on with far more than the don't-do-as-I-do-but-do-as-I-say illogic of parenting. It grants her a "novel education," in all the complexity, retroaction, and necessary wandering that Deborah Britzman means to encompass by the term.<sup>[42]</sup> In modeling how one's life often fails to live up to one's writings especially when the latter are directed at recreating the former, the life/writings of her progenitors display what education is after and why its progressive features keep it perpetually behind—often making the child fall behind.<sup>[43]</sup> At the same time, they also suggest what can be liberating about the mismatch between what one writes and how one acts. Often books are better parents than one's parents, certainly at providing space for wandering—perhaps especially when one's parents are bookish people. Moreover, learning to perceive discrepancies between these domains is a crucial literary-life skill. It should not be grounds for invalidating either book or author but recognized as indicating the conflicts that need some working through. Shelley's life/writings adopt this novel education belatedly and half-heartedly, and after a period of extraordinary acting out (*Frankenstein! Matilda! The Last Man!!*). But that they come to it at all is a signal achievement, one under-recognized because of our preference for her more exhibitionist texts. One sign of her adoption of this novel education is revision of the futurity that the writings of her parents pursued: not of perfectibility but a minimal possibility that the act of writing signifies, especially as it works through grief. The sheer being-occupied-by-writing that is "discovered" in the writing of *The Last Man* represents a major step forward from the blankness of world and page that threatens to push her under. But it represents as well the desire that renders one's writings perpetually foreign, alien, to the self allegedly composing them in the hope that, down the line, they will render that self more coherent and bearable.
35. For a creature so informed by literary celebrity that all of her names are already famously occupied, the capacity to start anew is a real question. No wonder her girlhood wish is having a phantasy free from the inscriptions of others, where what makes it "my own" is not "mak[ing] myself the heroine of my tales" (175, 176). Later, conscious reflection indicates that she has begun in the wrong place in linking freedom to a phantasy from which one cannot break free without the intervention of judgment. This aspect of thought is what becomes freeing about her parents' determination to lead with the head and try to get the heart to follow, no matter the costs. If one bases one's actions on what feels natural, intimate, personal, one is likely never to get farther along. At the same time, acting in line with an idea of change feels self-violating, because it is destructive of the habits that make the ego cohere. Thus, this making something of oneself is (no) child's play, but, as the life/writings of Shelley show, it is essential to forward-motion. Hers proceeds by not opposing reality to phantasy but utilizing the extimacy of literature to redesign all three. In this way, the melancholic "I was just getting started" of daughter Mary's birth and even Godwin's articulated mourning of Wollstonecraft is transformed into the "we're just getting started" of a life of psycho-literary analysis.<sup>[44]</sup> For serious readers, recognizing the extimacy of literature restores to creative writing the portion of reality that is characteristic of child's play.

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## Notes

1 I thank Joel Faflak for inviting me to be a part of this volume. I also thank Richard Caldwell, Lionel Corbett, Aranye Fradenburg, and Elisabeth Weber for providing helpful resources and commentary.

2 Though characterized as classic as well as romantic, Goethe remains the strongest German literary influence on Freud's thinking. For the fullest account of Goethe and Freud, see Rickels, *Aberrations*.

3 In pointing this out, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* differentiates *Phantasie* from *Einbildungskraft* in ways useful for understanding Shelley and her difference from other English romantic writers: "less in the philosophical sense of the faculty of imagining (*Einbildungskraft*) than in the sense of the world of the imagination, its contents and the creative activity which animates it" (Laplanche and Pontalis 314). Owing to Freud's illness, Anna Freud delivered the acceptance speech in his absence. On the Goethe prize, see Mahony 1-4.

4 For a general treatment, see Wollheim. For romantic connections on poetic minds, see McDayter. For an account of English romanticism's pre-theoretical invention of psychoanalysis, see Faflak. For a psychoanalytic account of romantic theories and practices of reading, see Jacobus, *Psychoanalysis and the Scene of Reading*.

5 For a critique of the developmental imperative, see Pyle.



[6](#) See Rickels.

[7](#) On the false binaries underlying these debates, see Richardson and Myers. For a recent survey, see O'Malley.

[8](#) The term appears first in the ur-text to *Matilda, The Fields of Fancy* (365) by way of connecting *Mathilda* to *Proserpine*, and later in *Matilda* (19). On the term and topic, see Graham Allen and Carlson 152-60.

[9](#) For the importance of object-relations theory to the analysis of reading, the book-object, and learning, see Jacobus, *Psychoanalysis and the Scene of Reading* 1-51 and *The Poetics of Psychoanalysis*, and Britzman.

[10](#) Kolarov's specific argument depends on not positing Freud's relation to Goethe (or Shakespeare) as transference but instead as transmitting a core of their corpus that is not available to Oedipal dynamics.

[11](#) See esp. Rajan, "Autonarration," and Shelley's proclivity for it in "Between Romance."

[12](#) *Matilda* 13-14.

[13](#) *Introduction* 370.

[14](#) On precursors to Freud's discovery of the unconscious, see Ellenberger 53-181. See also Punter, who focuses more on the unconscious of romanticism than romanticism's discovery of it.

[15](#) See esp. "The Unconscious" 187.

[16](#) For the crucial Freudian texts and contexts, see Masson. For an argument about the use of literature in surviving incest, see Champagne, which includes a chapter on *Mathilda* (53-90).

[17](#) Here I emphasize reception history since, as Rickels argues in the case of *Frankenstein (The Vampire Lectures* 287-300) and Jacobus in the case of *Matilda (Psychoanalysis* 172-77), both of these texts are marked by a refusal to mourn the mother.

[18](#) See Francois and Mozes, Harpold, Jacobus, *Psychoanalysis* 165-201, Rajan, "Mary Shelley's Mathilda."

[19](#) See Mellor 191-201.

[20](#) Jacobus, *Psychoanalysis* 196.

[21](#) It is as if Shelley here addresses to the phantasies inspired by literature the question that Freud applies to dreams: "must one assume responsibility for the content of one's dreams?" Her answer is similar to Freud's: "I shall perhaps learn that what I am disavowing not only 'is' in me but sometimes 'acts' from out of me as well" ("Moral Responsibility" 132, 133).

[22](#) To different ends, this is a point made by Jacobus, *Psychoanalysis* (194-201) and Champagne 3-6, 85-89.

[23](#) *Frankenstein* 175.

[24](#) *Leonardo* 121.

[25](#) One of the best remains Knoepfmacher.

[26](#) Percy Shelley ascribes to imagination "the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield," which even the "most

humble novelist" can enlist.

[27](#) On extimacy in relation to the Thing, see Lacan, *Seminar* 139. On how books constitute their reality—that is, the techniques by which their objects are perceived as palpable and life-like—see Scarry, esp. 3-74.

[28](#) Rickels, *The Vampire Lectures* 295. See also 282-83, 292-99.

[29](#) Interestingly, this is another "psycho-analytic" insight that Freud ascribes to Goethe: his familiarity with "the incomparable strength of the first affective ties of human creatures" ("Address" 209).

[30](#) "Creative Writers" 143. Philip Rieff's translation of the title, "Dichter und Phantasieren," as "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming" is more accurate (*Dichter* rarely being translated as "creative writer"), but the breadth implicit in Strachey's choice suits the scope of Freud's essay, which focuses on novels and considers the "less pretentious authors of novels, romances, and short stories" largely because they "have the widest and most eager circle of readers of both sexes" (149). The distinction he makes, between writers who, "like the ancient authors of epics and tragedies," take over their material ready-made from writers who "seem to originate their own material," indicates another way that the example of Shelley complicates such distinctions.

[31](#) The equitability of Mary Shelley, Victor Frankenstein, Margaret Saville, and the Creature has often been noted – striking "proof" of "A Child is Being Beaten."

[32](#) See Laplanche and Pontalis 314-18.

[33](#) In his introduction to "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*" Strachey notes how Freud's studies of literature during 1906-7, especially "Delusions" and "Creative Writers," are connected to efforts to "please Jung" (4).

[34](#) I deal with this claim in *England's First Family of Writers*, but would instance here the following legends from their biographies: Godwin's letters during Shelley's overwhelming grief at the death of William in which he instructs her to stop grieving or lose the love of those around her; the lines in *Memoirs of the Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman"* where Godwin reports that Wollstonecraft on her death-bed had "nothing to communicate" about the care of her two daughters; or the many references in the press after 1805 that Godwin's writings fall "dead-born" from the press.

[35](#) The best example of the first is the character Fanny Derham in *Lodore* (the one satisfied by a life of reading who does not aim after marriage); of the second, virtually all of the novels that deal with female character in a "feminist" fashion (*Valperga*, *Adventures of Perkin Warbeck*, *Lodore*, and *Falkner*).

[36](#) The term is Tilottama Rajan's.

[37](#) These debates are well-rehearsed in Jackson, Myers, O'Malley, Richardson, and Summerland.

[38](#) See esp. Godwin's "Of History and Romance" (1797), which privileges the romance-writer above the historian on the grounds that "nothing is more uncertain, more contradictory, more unsatisfactory than the evidence of facts" (297) and Wollstonecraft's fragmentary "The Cave of Fancy: A Tale" (1787; pub. 1798) that, in linking female education to fancy, story, and better object choices, sets the novelistic agenda to follow.

[39](#) The book as mentor equation is clearest at the end of Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life* where Mrs. Mason presents her charges with a book of their prior experiences as a means of future counsel, but is thematized also in Mary, in Godwin's *Fleetwood and Deloraine*. History as necromancy is avowed in

the *Preface to Life of Chaucer* (1803) and enacted in *Essays on Sepulchres* (1809).

[40](#) Many of these critiques are readily visible in the collection of contemporary responses to their life/writings in *Lives of the Great Romantics III: Godwin, Wollstonecraft, and Mary Shelley By Their Contemporaries* (Vol. 1 *Godwin*, ed. Pamela Clemit; vol. 2 *Wollstonecraft*, ed. Harriet Jump; vol. 3 *Shelley*, ed. Betty T. Bennet).

[41](#) See esp. Godwin's "Essay of Scepticism" 302-11 and Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 178-82.

[42](#) Several aspects of Britzman's "psychoanalytic studies of learning and not learning," the subtitle to *Novel Education*, resonate with the life/writings of Shelley: recognition of how "cathetic loyalty" impedes rational or psycho-analysis (14); the fact that the "novel" aspect in psychoanalytic discourse is that it "allows for and welcomes its own incoherence for what it does not know, namely its own means of representation" (20); the definition (de Certeau's) of fiction as a "knowledge jeopardized and wounded by its otherness (the affect)" (210); the role of fancy and phantasy in a "pedagogical fact" (158-60).

[43](#) See especially the footnote in Godwin's *Essay on Sepulchres* that makes an analogy between "progress" in the world and in school by way of explaining his assertion that "the world forever is, and in some degree for ever must be, in its infancy" (14n10).

[44](#) At the end of *Memoirs*, Godwin specifies as what "I have for ever lost" through the untimely death of Wollstonecraft the redesigning of his mind that was in a preliminary stage through his daily proximity to the intellectual tact that characterized her mind. "This light was lent to me for a very short period, and is now extinguished for ever" (141).

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# Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis

## The Ordinary Sky: Wordsworth, Blanchot, and the Writing of Disaster

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Taking as its point of departure Wollheim's autobiographical observation about a sight that stirred him to melancholy, this essay explores a series of passages that attest to Wordsworth's fixation on similar sights in poetry associated with the composition of 'The Ruined Cottage'. Other poems by Wordsworth--'A Night Piece' and 'The Discharged Soldier'--open transcendental or deathly vistas relating to the sky. In *The Writing of the Disaster*, Blanchot testifies to his childhood experience of a premature death that emptied the sky of significance, suggesting (with Winnicott) the unrecognized trauma attached to ordinary sights, and--by extension--the problem of autobiography. This essay appears in *Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

1. In *Germes*, a posthumous memoir of his suburban childhood, the philosopher and aesthete Richard Wollheim describes his deep-seated dread, on emerging from rainy-day afternoon trips to the cinema, of the sight of the sun on a wet road—"where the first rays of pale sunlight hit it, so that, looking out, I could see the tarred surface glint and sparkle in the late, departing glory of the evening" (45). "A natural cause of joy to many," he recalls, "this sight stirred in [him] the deepest, darkest melancholy." As one can tell from even this brief excerpt, the young Wollheim is a budding aesthete—a Wordsworthian Proust, fostered alike by beauty, boredom, and suburban fear. His confessional memoir sometimes refers to discussions with his psychoanalyst, Dr. S.<sup>[1]</sup> As the psychopathology of everyday life goes, British suburbia has a lot to answer for. But it has also produced its own distinct aesthetic, as we know from the poetry of Wollheim's near contemporaries, John Betjeman and Philip Larkin.
2. The sight of a shiny wet road retained its life-long capacity to induce dismalness in Wollheim: "Even today," he writes, "when in actuality the sheen on a bright wet surface has more or less lost its terrors for me, I have only in imagination to take myself back in years, and recall it in the mind's eye, and, in such moments, once again understand the full dismal power that the experience had over me." But attempts to convey the depths of this melancholy experience to others comically misfire. The test comes in a moment that occurs during Wollheim's undergraduate years at Oxford. On one occasion, after-dinner talk turns to the difference between melancholia, sadness, and nostalgia; between Ivan Turgenev, Jane Austen, and Thomas Hardy. Wollheim plucks up his courage to bare his soul and announces that he "knew nothing more melancholy than sun after rain on a suburban road" (46).
3. At this, his literary interlocutor, Lord D[avid] C[ecil], "blurted out his answer in a fast, high-pitched voice: 'Richard,' he said, 'I think I see exactly what you mean, and it's fascinating, but really I don't see why 'suburban.' Aren't you trying to be too—specific? I don't see why 'suburban' has anything to do with it. I really don't think it has.'"<sup>[2]</sup> At that moment, Wollheim records, the certainty that he "had had interesting experiences, and that one day I would be able to convey their poignancy in words of great precision, died. Over the years it was to die many deaths, none altogether fatal" (46). Fortunately, then, not a writer's death: he lived to tell the tale.
4. The young Wollheim might have objected that the thudding predictability of "sún after ráin on a ród" required "suburban" for metrical as well as purely cognitive reasons. Lord DC (aesthete as well as aristocrat, author of—among other books—*The Fine Art of Reading*, *The Stricken Deer*, *Hardy the*

Novelist, Jane Austen, and many others) possibly envisaged a pared-down *imagiste* line ("petals on a wet, black bough"), or even an un-specifically Wordsworthian spot of time, singular yet universal, but never prosaic—let alone suburban. In any event, his blue pencil descended unerringly on what is least "Romantic" in Wollheim's formulation—neither urban and modern, nor rural and Wordsworthian. But did he miss the point? It's not just that an affluent childhood passed in Weybridge or Walton-on-Thames was melancholy or boring. It was also, for Wollheim, associated with death.

5. As Wollheim explains, privation and excess were intimately connected in his psychic economy. He "always found one thing worse than having too little, and that was having too much" (46). Having too little—the parsimony of affluence—meant that having too much (for example, the sun breaking through on a rainy afternoon on quitting the cinema) was like being God, if you happened to be a superstitious child; or like being rich, if you were the adolescent socialist Wollheim became; but worst of all, he says: "It handed life over to boredom" (46). The only thing that brought him closer to the sense of death was the glimpse from his mother's car of "a man in white tennis trousers, who had been walking home after an energetic game of tennis" and who had collapsed from a heart-attack, lying dead beside the road with his un-pressed tennis racquet (the un-pressed racquet is a telling detail of disaster-stricken suburbia).
6. The shining wet road of Wollheim's memoir came to mind for me because its serio-comic narrative of his emotional de-formation unexpectedly condenses a number of recurrent motifs in the autobiographical writings of William Wordsworth and Maurice Blanchot. These motifs include a fixation on "the glint and sparkle" of reflected light; a moment of sudden revelation in which joy and sorrow are indistinguishable; and the disquieting glimpse of death by the road as the traveler passes by. I will argue that the shine (the *Schein* or sheen; the appearance), the vision, and the intimation of mortality together signal an aspect of Romantic autobiography that Jacques Derrida, writing apropos of Blanchot in *Demeure* calls "autothanographical" (55); that is, a narrative of one's own death. Derrida's account emphasizes the structuring of "real experience" by fiction, creating a form of testimony in which "the border between literature and its other becomes undecidable" (92). This is the border traversed by Wollheim's memoir, with its staging of the formative literary encounter. As Freud reminds us in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) with his account of memory's tricky relation to temporality, childhood memories and "screen memories" are themselves a kind of fiction, a retrospective projection on the past, date-stamped by subsequent events, fantasies, and desires—not to be trusted any more than the dream-screen.

### Road-Sights

7. I want to turn to two early testimonial fragments by Wordsworth, "The Baker's Cart" lines and "Incipient Madness." Both fragments survive from spring 1797 and the origins of work towards *The Ruined Cottage*, the narrative of a passer-by who encounters the melancholy sight of a ruin once inhabited by a now-dead woman. In both fragments, melancholy road-sights converge with melancholia; the setting is late eighteenth-century Dorset, where Wordsworth was living at the time—then the poorest of all agricultural counties.<sup>[3]</sup> The first draft describes a poignant scene of rural poverty and neglect. A woman stands with her children while the baker's cart passes by their wretched hut, not stopping to make its usual delivery. In this scene, an unbalanced mind is attributed to the starving and depressed woman. Seeing the narrator's eyes following the cart, "in a low and fearful voice / She said "That wagon does not care for us" (15-16).
8. The attribution of uncaring to the wagon strikes the narrator as eloquent testimony to a "sick and extravagant" mind:

The words were simple, but her look and voice  
Made up their meaning, and bespoke a mind  
Which being long neglected and denied  
The common food of hope was now become  
Sick and extravagant—(17-21)

The truth-value of the passage lies in Wordsworth's insight: the mind is made sick by—what? By "strong access / Of momentary pangs driv'n to that state/In which all past experience melts away" (21-23), the combination of hunger and neglect (stomach and mind). Made creative by suffering, "the rebellious heart to its own will / Fashions the laws of nature" (24-25). The emphasis on "Fashions" links poet and sufferer. Mingled hunger and hopelessness produce a rebellious figure of speech: pathetic fallacy, or an unfeeling wagon ("that wagon does not care for us").

9. The everyday psychopathology of displaced affect is attributed here to the pangs of privation, already metaphorically—extravagantly—understood by Wordsworth himself as having to do with affect as well as appetite ("denied / The common food of hope"). Hopelessness is located in the stomach. Another fragmentary draft describes the woman's mind as "by misery and rumination deep / Tied to dead things and seeking sympathy / In stocks and stones" (Butler 467). Again the word "rumination" suggests an oddly somatic association: to ruminate is to turn over in mind and mouth (as in: chewing the cud). The same ambiguously sympathetic link to "dead things" surfaces in the related fragment, "Incipient Madness." Here the pathology is attributed to a narrator who crosses "the dreary moor / In the clear moonlight" and reaches an abandoned hut, where he has his own version of the hunger-experience. As for Wollheim, so for Wordsworth: if there is one thing worse than having too little, it is having too much:

. . . within the ruin I beheld  
At a small distance, on the dusky ground,  
A broken pane which glitter'd in the moon  
And seemed akin to life. There is a mood,  
A settled temper of the heart, when grief  
Become an instinct, fastening on all things  
That promise food, doth like a sucking babe  
Create it where it is not. (4-11)

We might recall that the hungry baby, according to Freud, hallucinates or creates the absent breast (as Wordsworth puts it in *The Ruined Cottage*, "obedient to the strong creative power of passion," like the poets in their elegies and songs). For Klein, the breast that feeds is the good breast. The bad breast is the absent breast—making its presence all too much felt in the unconscious phantasy and persecutory hunger-pangs that are impossible for the infant to distinguish.

10. The glittering pane in the moonlight "was in truth an ordinary sight" (a phrase imported here from another fixation-spot in the 1798-99 *Prelude*, the gibbet on the moor).<sup>[4]</sup> Seeming "akin to life" it offers its own hallucinatory tribute to the instinct to create meaning in the face of absence, or instinctual grief. At once a visual and an emotional fixation-point, the glittering glass (a light-reflecting surface) fixes the narrator's eye and his sick state of mind: "From this time / I found my sickly heart had tied itself / Even to this speck of glass" (again the word *tied*—"tied to dead things"—comes up in relation to the inanimate). A draft adds: "It could produce / A feeling as of absence" (13-14). Eager for "the moment when [his] sight / Should *feed* on it again" (15-16; my emphasis), the narrator revisits it every night when the moon rises:

. . . I reach'd the cottage, and I found



Still undisturb'd and glittering in its place  
That speck of glass more precious to my soul  
Than was the moon in heaven. (20-24)

What is "more precious" than the moon—another mirroring, secondary light-source—is the hallucinatory nourishment provided by its reflection. The sound that later startles the traveler from the ruin (the clanking chain of a hobbled horse sheltering from the rain) adds a gothic resonance to an everyday psychopathology of the eye.

11. These fragments convey Wordsworth's well-known narrative fixation on a spot (a ruin haunted by the absence of a dead woman). But in this case, the poet-narrator is fixated, not just on a "spot," but on a "speck" (an interesting word: a speck is sometimes thought of as a minute mark, almost too small to see, or as a speck that is in the eye, on the retina itself): a glittering pane of glass. Here one might recall Lacan's parable of the look (*le regard*) in his 1964 seminars on the Gaze: the fisherman Petit-Jean points to a floating sardine-can, glittering (*miroitait*) in the sun and says to Lacan: "*Tu la vois? Eh bien, elle, elle te voit pas!*" ("*You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you!*"). Lacan glosses the glittering can otherwise: "in a sense, it was looking at me, all the same. It was looking at me at the level of the point of light, the point at which everything that looks at me is situated" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 95).<sup>[5]</sup> At the level of the subject, it is not the eye that singles out the mirroring source of light, but the reflected light that singles out and constitutes the look: "That which is light looks at me." The play of light and opacity is analogous to the relation of gaze and screen: "It is always that gleam of light—it lay at the heart of my little story—it is always this which prevents me, at each point, from being a screen, from making the light appear as an iridescence that overflows it" (96). So much for phenomenology.

### Seeing Things

12. "The Line and Light" follows on from Lacan's earlier seminars prompted by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's recent posthumously published *Le Visible et l'invisible* (1964). Merleau-Ponty is concerned not only with the emergence of vision from the iridescence of which it is part, but with the illusion that consciousness has of "seeing itself seeing itself" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 82). Hence the inside-out, glove-like structure of the gaze. For Merleau-Ponty, the reciprocity of seeing turns the self inside out:

"As soon as we see other seers, we no longer have before us only the look without a pupil, the plate-glass of the things with that feeble reflection, that phantom of ourselves they evoke by designating a place among themselves whence we see them: henceforth through other eyes we are for ourselves fully visible. . . . For the first time I appear to myself completely turned inside out under my own eyes." (143)

The structure of vision is that of a visibility that involves the non-visible. The lens through which we see ourselves is not the plate-glass of shimmering things but being seen by another. The implication I want to draw from these reflections on the optics of seeing is that the autobiographical self may be imagined, contrarily, as both finding and losing itself in the eye of another—as both bathed in iridescence and uncomfortably skewered by a sardine-can. For Merleau-Ponty the seeing eye finds itself in the eye of another, rather than in the plate-glass of things; but for Lacan this is the illusion of the phenomenological subject. The difference is not one of emphasis, but absolute.

13. And what about that shine in Wordsworth? Written less than a year after "The Baker's Cart" lines and

"Incipient Madness," during the winter of 1797-98, a related pair of fragments in the Alfoxden Notebook focus on sights seen on a moonlit road.<sup>[6]</sup> Although not overtly melancholic in the Wollheim mode, both "A Night-Piece" and "The Discharged Soldier" share some of its features: light-sensitivity; immanent revelation; and the sense that elation and melancholy are never far apart. Wollheim recalls his love of the moment, "half sunset, half sunrise," when the lights in the cinema dimmed and the titles come up, "and they could, just for a moment, be seen, the far side of the gauze curtains, as clear as pebbles through still water"; before the curtains slid open, the gauze was gathered into pleats, the lettering became blurred, "until the curtains passed across it, and then, one by one, the words again became legible, and the screen took on the unbounded promise of a book first opened" (*Germs* 45)—surely a screen memory: the young Wollheim is an avid reader of Sir Walter Scott's romances.

14. "A Night-Piece" offers its own promise of transcendental disclosure by a sky that is similarly veiled — "overspread / With a close veil of one continuous cloud / All whitened by the moon" (1-3)—until (with the slight suspension of the line-break) "the clouds are split / Asunder" (8-9) to reveal

The clear moon & the glory of the heavens.  
There in a blue-black vault she sails along  
Followed by multitudes of stars, that small  
And bright, & sharp along the gloomy vault  
Drive as she drives. How fast they wheel away!  
Yet vanish not! The wind is in the trees,  
But they are silent. Still they roll along,  
Immeasurably distant . . . (10-15; Butler and Green 276-77)

A visionary silent cinema indeed, with its rolling credits and focused motion. "At length the vision closes," and the mind re-settles, "Not undisturbed by the deep joy it feels" (20-21). As described in Dorothy's Alfoxden journal entry, the brightness of moon and stars, "seemed concentrated" (*Journals* 4).<sup>[7]</sup> Sharp focus gives way to the unbounded promise of an immensely open book, or the unmasterable field of vision that, for Lacan, "grasps me, solicits me at every moment, and makes of the landscape something other than a landscape, something other than what I have called a picture" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 96).

15. Another night-time experience, once more involving a moonlit road, introduces the figure of the other-worldly war-veteran in "The Discharged Soldier," later to be embedded in Book IV of *The Prelude*:

I slowly mounted up a steep ascent  
Where the road's watry surface to the ridge  
Of that sharp rising glittered in the moon  
And seemed before my eyes another stream  
Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook  
That murmured in the valley. (6-11; Butler and Green 277)

Here the "glint and sparkle" of Wollheim's tarred surface is rendered as the "watry" surface of an unpaved road which "glittered in the moon," like a "stream / Stealing with silent lapse." The narrator's "exhausted mind worn out by toil" is restored unawares, as if by "the calm of sleep. Into this restorative scene intrudes "an uncouth shape," the gaunt and spectral figure of the discharged soldier. Propped and ghastly, this scarcely human figure induces "a mingled sense / Of fear and sorrow" (68-69) in the onlooker, "Myself unseen" (41). It is, in fact, the immobility and abstraction of the Discharged Soldier that disconcerts the onlooker: no visibility is to be found here in the eye of the seer.

16. Wordsworth's description of "a man cut off / From all his kind, and more than half detached / From his

own nature" (58-60), summons death onto the scene. The "uncouth shape" of Milton's Death casts its long shadow across the pretext (or post-text) of a trumped up humanitarian narrative. In "Mourning and Melancholia" Freud famously argues apropos of the processes of identification involved in melancholia that 'the shadow of the object falls on the ego.' The spectral figure of the soldier embodies what Blanchot calls "the passivity which is beyond disquietude" (*Writing* 15); his is not the calm of sleep. A dis-identificatory Other—"dis-identifying me, abandoning me to passivity"—causes the bereft self to take leave of itself (*Writing* 19). His trust (he says) is in God and "in the eye of him that passes me" (165; Darlington 437). Like a speck of glass in the moonlight, the Discharged Soldier mirrors the eye of an alienated beholder. He takes his meaning from the passer-by because he himself has lost it. But for the passer-by, his failure to return the look, like his words, have the effect of "a strange half-absence." If autobiography entails visibility in the eye of the other, the soldier resembles that figure of unseeing in Book VII of *The Prelude*, the blind London Beggar. "His fixèd face and sightless eyes" admonish the onlooker ("I looked, /As if admonished from another world" [7.622-23; 1805]) just as the writing he wears undoes that peculiar form of seeing we call reading.

### Autothanographies

17. Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster* (*L'Écriture du désastre*) is a book of fragments: "Fragments are written as unfinished separations" (Blanchot, *Writing* 58); they implicate both temporality and its absence: "Fragmentation is the spacing, the separation effected by a temporalization which can only be understood—fallaciously—as the absence of time" (60). The sketch, study, or rejected version overturns what has never been whole; fragments ruin the totality of the work. Linked to the disaster, unity disappears, along with identity; repetition signals the peculiar presence of the work of art's (parenthetical) absence: "(to say it all again and to silence by saying it again)." The fragmentary "(. . . dismisses, in principle, the I, the author)" (61). *The Writing of the Disaster* is autobiography without an author, temporality without time (as in the unconscious).
18. "Let us suppose," writes Blanchot, "that every one has his private madness" (*Writing* 44). The phrase "private madness" is Winnicott's and it refers to the private madness—the hallucination—of the creative individual.<sup>[8]</sup> Blanchot calls it "knowledge without truth." For all Blanchot's notorious reticence, *The Writing of the Disaster* invokes a Winnicottian child who lives on in the wake of an anterior disaster—an uncertain death that has already happened. Prior even to having a self, Winnicott's child may have experienced overwhelming states of anxiety or "primitive agonies" which he cannot know. Blanchot calls this a "fictive application," but the fiction that Winnicott calls "fear of breakdown" (the breakdown that is feared is the breakdown that has "always-already" happened) permits him to say, however fictively, "I remember" (Blanchot, *Writing* 66). What Blanchot remembers is an unexperienced event, "the experience that none experiences, the experience of death." Here is the dead child, "the child who, before living, has sunk into dying" (*Writing* 68), as Blanchot offers, speculatively "(A primal [primitive] scene?)":

. . . suppose, suppose this: the child—is he seven years old, or eight perhaps? — standing by the window, drawing the curtain and, through the pane, looking. What he sees: the garden, the wintry trees, the wall of a house. Though he sees, no doubt in a child's way, his play space, he grows weary and slowly looks up towards the ordinary sky, with clouds, grey light—pallid daylight without depth. What happens then: the sky, the same sky, suddenly open, absolutely black and absolutely empty, revealing (as though the pane had broken) such an absence that all has since always and forever been lost therein—so lost that therein is affirmed the vertiginous knowledge that nothing is what there is, and first of all nothing beyond. The unexpected aspect of this scene (its interminable feature) is the feeling of happiness that straightaway submerges the child, the ravaging joy to which he can bear witness only by tears, an

*endless flood of tears. He is thought to suffer a childish sorrow; attempts are made to console him. He says nothing. He will live henceforth in the secret. He will weep no more.*  
(72)

(The young Wollheim weeps inconsolably, submerged in tears at the sound of music). The secret is that there is no secret; the disclosure of a sky that it is absolutely black and absolutely empty.

19. *The Writing of the Disaster* returns to this "screen memory" as if to a spot of time. Blanchot calls its banality "*consolation's commentary whereby solitude is shut out.*" In this "*pre-story, 'the flashing circumstance' whereby the dazzled child sees . . . the happy murder of himself,*" the child's tears "*shine in this dissolution and keep shining all the way to emotion that gives no sign at all*" (115). The lack of emotion is the sign, signaled by the shine of tears combined with banality (the "suburban"?):

*Let me continue to emphasize the banality; the circumstances are of this world--the tree, the wall, the winter garden, the play space and with it, lassitude; then time is introduced, and its discourse: the recountable is either without any episode of note, or else purely episodic. Indeed, the sky, in the cosmic dimensions it takes on as soon as it is named--the stars, the universe--brings only the clarity of parsimonious daylight, even if this were to be construed as the "fiat lux."--It is a distantness that is not distant.--Nevertheless the same sky . . .--Exactly, it has to be the same.--Nothing has changed.--Except the overwhelming overturning of nothing.--Which breaks, by the smashing of a pane (behind which one rests assured of perfect, of protected, visibility), the finite-infinite space of the cosmos--ordinary order--the better to substitute the knowing vertigo of the deserted outside. Blackness and void, responding to the suddenness of the opening and giving themselves unalloyed, announce the revelation of the outside by absence, loss and the lack of any beyond.* (115)

The last line of Blanchot's fragmentary work plays on the *-aster*—the star—in disaster: "*Shining solitude, the void of the sky, a deferred death: disaster*" (146). The concentrated star in Dorothy's *Journal* entry is dis-astered by Blanchot's tearful eye.

20. Attentive readers will have noted how Blanchot negates the voluminous Wordsworthian sky ("a blue-black vault . . . the gloomy vault") as a sky that is absolutely empty. As if the pane of visibility has been broken, the child sees "that nothing is what there is"—not at all the same as "*a calm and simple negation (as though in its place the eternal translator wrote 'There is nothing')*"(116). "*Ordinary order*" becomes "the knowing vertigo of the deserted outside. Blackness and void . . ." (115). For the young Wollheim, reflected sunlight undercuts the "*fiat lux*" of the cinematic apparatus. The un-broken window pane is like the screen through which the child inserts himself into an imaginary cinematic order (as opposed to the "ordinary order" of his childhood); the aftermath is a Blanchotian "*absence, loss and the lack of any beyond.*" Blanchot's commentary evokes "*A scene: a shadow, a faint gleam, an 'almost' with the characteristics of 'too much,' of excessiveness*" (114). Even the shadow of a scene offers the gleam of "too much," worse than too little.
21. Apropos of Blanchot's fragmentary autobiographical texts, Derrida writes that "testimony is always autobiographical: it tells, in the first person, the sharable and unsharable secret of what happened to me, to me alone" (43). But a testimony is not supposed to be either a work of art or fiction. Derrida's reading of *The Instant of my Death* (Blanchot's account of his narrow escape from death during WWII) invokes *The Writing of the Disaster*, which defines writing one's autobiography ("like a work of art") as seeking to survive through a perpetual suicide, or "a death which is total inasmuch as fragmentary" (Blanchot, *Writing* 64; Derrida 44).<sup>[9]</sup> The work of art, the fiction, the fragment, all "place" autobiography in literature. This is the fracture—between (false) testimony and (true) fiction—that

Derrida explores in his reading of Blanchot's autobiographical fragments.

22. For Derrida, Blanchot's "unexperienced experience" (65)—experience which escapes comprehension—defines the literary. Fiction plays a disconcerting game with testimony. In a court of law, Derrida observes, an accused who launched into the discourse of "the unexperienced" would be turned over to a psychiatrist. He connects Blanchot's "feeling of lightness" as he faces the firing squad—"The encounter of death with death?" (Blanchot, *Writing* 5; Derrida 63)—with the child's feeling of happiness in the "primal scene" of *The Writing of the Disaster*: "A child, perhaps the same as this "young man", experiences, through tears, following something that resembles an unspoken trauma, a feeling of lightness or beatitude" (64). What they share is "the memory of lightness" due to "the imminence of a death that has already arrived" (88).
23. Wollheim's memoir ends with one of the many ways in which childhood ends, "when, no longer reconciled to the cold fact that there are things about ourselves we cannot say but can at best express in tears, we try obliquely to conquer the inability to say one thing through the hard-won ability to say another thing that neighbors on it" (255). His telling of an (un)thought that lies too deep for tears deploys the metonymy common to both confession and "screen memory," testimony and autobiography. It links a suburban road to Blanchot's "ordinary sky," and the "ordinary sight" of Wordsworth's *Prelude*. As Freud puts it, "the affect was in the wrong place" (51-52)—or rather, not the affect, but the stress. Romantic autothanography transforms an endless flood of tears into the melancholy sight of "sun after rain on a suburban road," a line that just fails to be Wordsworthian blank verse.

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## Notes

1 Characters in Wollheim's adult life are referred to by initials only. The distinguished Kleinian psychoanalyst, Hannah Segal, seems a likely candidate, given Wollheim's psychoanalytic era and orientation.

2 Lord David Cecil, Professor of English at Oxford; author of *The Stricken Deer: A Life of Cowper* etc.

3 Both passages were written at Racedown in Dorset, among the poorest of agricultural counties at the end of the eighteenth century. They survive in DC MS. 13; see Butler 461-62. Reading texts and drafts are cited from this edition.

4 Cf. the episode of the gibbet, associated with murder and hanging, is one of the two germinating "spots of time" in the 1799 two-part *Prelude*: "It was in truth / An ordinary sight ..." (1799; 1.319-20).

5 ". . . en un certain sens, tout de même, elle me regarde. . . . Ce qui est lumière me regarde" (*Livre XI* 89).

6 By now Wordsworth had moved from Racedown in Dorset to Alfoxden in Somerset, in order to be closer to his friends Pobjole and Coleridge.

7 Entry for 25 January 1798. Cf. Dorothy's entry for a few days after, again describing a landscape transformed by moonlight: "a brighter gloss spotted the hollies" (*Journals* 5).

8 See Winnicott on going to a concert: ". . . I say I created it, I hallucinated it, and it is real . . . This is mad. But in our cultural life we accept the madness, exactly as we accept the madness of the infant" ("Fate" 58).

9 Derrida's translator, Elizabeth Rottenberg, gives "like" as "in the manner of."



# Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis

## Romanticism, Alchemy, and Psychology

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Ross Woodman explores the dialectical relationship between Jung's analytical psychology, particularly his interest in alchemy, and the Romantic concern with the work of the psyche and psychology, specifically in Blake and Shelley. This essay appears in *Romanticism, Secularism, and Cosmopolitanism*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

### I.

1. Unlike Freud, Jung approached psychoanalysis from its occult side in alchemy rather than through the natural sciences. As if to have it both ways, he nevertheless insisted that, as the soul of matter, the analysis of the psyche was the analysis of the container (*temenos*) of matter, which is to say that within which the natural sciences are contained. Nowhere is this apparent difference more evident than in Jung's opposing approach to Freud's notion of the Oedipus complex. Exalting incest as the "*hieros gamos*" ['chymical marriage'] of the gods, the mystic prerogative of kings, a priestly rite, etc.," alchemy, Jung writes in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, archetypally transformed "the most heinous transgression of the law . . . into a symbol of the union of opposites, hoping in this way to bring back the golden age."[\[1\]](#)
2. The alchemical symbol of this union is the celestial marriage of the Great Mother with her Son, a marriage most immediately acknowledged for Jung in the 1950 Papal Bull of Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, which promulgated the physical Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the heavenly bridal chamber of her Son where, as Sophia, she is united with the Godhead. As the spiritualization of matter, this dogma, long affirmed in alchemy, counteracted for Jung the demonization of matter, which Jung identified with Freud's reduction of the libido to sexuality and Marx's reduction of it to "dialectical materialism," both of which had, in his view, reduced western culture to the level of farce. ("'Yes,' [Freud] assented, 'so it is, and that is just a curse of fate against which we are powerless to contend.'"[\[2\]](#) )
3. The divine marriage (*hieros gamos*) of the Virgin and Son, of which Christ's marriage with His church is the institutional form, becomes in alchemy the marriage of *Sol* and *Luna* who are the parents of Adam Kadmon, the Original Man of Jewish *gnosis* in the Kaballah. As the original Adam containing Eve within himself, Adam Kadmon is a hermaphrodite. Undifferentiated from the feminine as the mother of his unconscious self (the Virgin as the Mother of God), whom Jung calls the anima, Adam Kadmon is, for the alchemical Jung, the God who dwells in the unconscious as the philosopher's stone. "I now see / Bone of my Bone, / Flesh of my Flesh, my Self / Before me. Woman is her name" (*Paradise Lost* 8.494-96), Milton's Adam declares, as he sees the feminine portion of himself extracted from his rib advancing toward him. This division into male and female (as it becomes for Blake the twofold realm of Generation) is, for the alchemical Jung, comparable to Freud's sexual notion of the libido against the material limitations of which Jung rebelled, Milton's God having warned Adam about the separated feminine as his "single imperfection" (8.423). "No need that thou / Shouldst propagate, already infinite" (8.419-20), Adam declares of God.
4. In alchemy, as in Gnosticism, the division of the hermaphroditic Adam Kadmon into male and female, Blake's twofold Generation as the creation of the fallen world, is the work of Satan (Urizen), who as

the Demiurge reduces the soul to that portion of itself "discern'd by the five Senses" (*Marriage* 4).<sup>[3]</sup>  
As carnal knowledge, this reduction becomes in Milton's rendering of the Semitic myth

. . . Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit  
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought Death into the World and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden. (1.1-4)

5. While in 1955 continuing to argue that alchemy sought in the pelican-shaped *vas* (receptacle) to provide ocular proof of the Incarnation, he now does so by warning against the many "false prophets" in our midst who presume to know what is "incommensurable with human reason." Jung, that is, concludes his study of alchemy by associating it with the false claims of its false adherents who, among other things, would, as the dogma of materialism, deify matter. As an archetypal model for his analytical psychology, he now distances himself from the "*mysterium coniunctionis*" of alchemy, which, he explains, "can be expected only when the unity of spirit, soul, and body is made one with the original *unus mundus*." While an interior union may be mystically experienced (as indeed Jung experienced it in 1944 after a near-fatal heart attack), "its reality," he insists, "is merely potential and is validated only by a union with the physical world of the body" (*Mysterium* 664). Such an incarnation of spirit in matter remains a delusion that both Nazi Germany and Communist Russia sought to promulgate as the demonic parody of what in *theoria*, as distinct from *praxis*, Jung's psychology had affirmed.
6. In alchemy, the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical is fundamental. Carnal knowledge is the literal "Fruit / Of that Forbidden Tree." Its spiritual fruit is the elixir of life, the Philosopher's Stone, which is not a literal stone. Carnal knowledge of oneself ("my self / Before me") as sexual communion with one's self as the mother (anima) of one's self is, *sub specie aeternitatis*, "the *hieros gamos* of the gods," their "mystic prerogative" as the "I Am that I Am." It is also biologically the pre-natal state of the soul, which, even after the umbilical cord is cut, continues at the breast of the mother, though, as Melanie Klein has argued, the early distinction between the good and bad breast as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil with its forbidden fruit, is already the beginning of an instinctual separation in which, as it evolves toward consciousness, ultimately reaches beyond the "Opposition" between good and evil to a recognition of their dialectical dependence upon each other as what Blake calls "true Friendship" (*Marriage* 20).
7. The dialectical operations of the creative imagination in Romanticism locate Jung's notion of the unconscious within consciousness itself as what Wordsworth describes as "two consciousnesses, conscious of myself / And of some other being" so that even the "vacancy" between himself and "infantine desire" has "self-presence in [his] mind" (*The Prelude* [1805] 2.30-33). Consciousness, that is, feeds dialectically upon itself as mind coming to know itself as the author of its own thoughts. Crucial to an understanding of this consciousness is the mind's dialectical staging of it as the overcoming of its own recalcitrance to thought. The mind's staging of its own operations as its differentiation from its primal oneness into a new recognition of itself becomes, as still restricted, one in which, by virtue of the energy that propels it, it is forbidden to remain. It must therefore continue to advance until its knowledge of itself fully affirms what in itself it is as the "I Am that I Am."
8. Rejecting Jung's regression to the Judeo-Christian myth of forbidden knowledge as a betrayal of "the soul's logical life," which Jung's own dialectical study of alchemy cautiously affirmed, the controversial Jungian analyst, Wolfgang Giegerich, employing Hegel in opposition to Jung's (mis)use of Kant, argues:

It is always consciousness that thinks, and that *thinks* whether it dreams, muses, fantasizes,

is poetically or artistically creative, or whether it thinks in the narrower sense of the word. The delusional concept of "the unconscious" amounts to a mystification, be it that it is understood as a reservoir of repressed archetypal contents and desires, or as an agent behind the scene that produces dreams and directs our fate, or as a region of the mind. "The unconscious" is really a *metaphysical* presupposition, a dogmatic concept, in Jung's psychology, notwithstanding Jung's oft-expressed horror of metaphysical assumptions and his avowal of a strict empiricism. Inadvertently, it serves a certain *strategic purpose*, although it is consciously intended as a simple naming of an "obvious phenomenon." But this alleged phenomenon does not exist and this is why "the unconscious" is a mystification and a metaphysical hypothesis. ("Alchemy" 41)

9. Far from viewing "Man's First Disobedience" as a loss, alchemy, as Giegerich first learned from Jung, treats it as the birth of consciousness, which releases the soul from its imprisonment in matter—understood as the womb (*massa confusa*) of the Great Mother—into an ongoing "Soul-making"[\[4\]](#) life, the goal of which is a fully individuated state of absolute consciousness. The symbol of this state is the philosopher's stone whose elaborate evolution takes place in the alchemical retort, known as the Pelican, its operations, in turn, known, as named by Keats, as the "pelican brood" [*Endymion* 1.815]. (The retort was shaped like a pelican, its neck curved toward its body feeding on its own blood. The "pelican brood," in turn, was thought to feed on its mother's flesh.) The "Soul-making" action, minutely controlled, using exactly prescribed, organically interacting ingredients subjected to graduated levels of heat, enacted the raw matter's growing consciousness of its initially leaden, undifferentiated operations as the operations of soul. The divinity informing the operations hidden in the fiery core of matter is the energy which, properly heated in the furnace, transforms the leaden into the alchemical gold, the *lapis* or the philosopher's stone. ("In what furnace was thy brain?" [16] Blake asks the Tyger as the personification the alchemical operations fearfully at work in the "dreaded" transformation of the Christian Lamb from a state of innocence into its contrary state of experience.) The spiritual nature of matter as the Alma Mater, which serves as the alchemical framework of Hegel's dialectical idealism, is the sublation (*Aufhebung*) of raw inchoate matter by which it becomes what it always already potentially is: *Geist* or Spirit. In this creative process, which, Jung insists, constitutes the biology of consciousness, the observer (psyche) and the observed (soma) are in reality one, the distinction between them serving as the dialectic that, as consciousness, unites them.
10. Nowhere is the radically heterodox nature of alchemy more dramatically evident than in its notion of the *felix culpa* or fortunate fall as the birth of consciousness in which knowledge of what Jung calls the Self replaces faith in an otherwise unknowable God. In this radical shift, in which original sin becomes an active or creative virtue, Satan, who released Eve from the bondage of innocence, becomes the personification of the dialectic of individuation, which Giegerich, rejecting as obsolete its mythical formulation, describes as "the soul's logical life" to distinguish it from the kind of individualism to which Jung reduces it as "immediate psychology" grounded in myth. Dismissing myth as the "ordinary consciousness" derived from "its [immediate] experience in and with the phenomenal world," Giegerich insists that "we now live on a totally different abstract *level* of reality" ("Alchemy" 27), Hegelian or noumenal rather than Kantian or phenomenal. On this Hegelian level, Jungian psychology, as "the soul's logical life," properly belongs as the true, rather than fictional, level of alchemy.
11. In his Foreword to R. J. Zwi Werblowsky's *Lucifer and Prometheus* (1952), Jung explains "how and why the devil got into the consulting-room of the psychiatrist" (11:473) by arguing that, in *Paradise Lost*, Milton "apostrophizes the devil as the true *principium individuationis*, a concept which has been anticipated by the alchemists for some time before." "The Satan-Prometheus parallel," he goes on to explain, "shows clearly enough that Milton's devil stands for the essence of human individuation and thus comes within the scope of psychology" ("Foreword" 470-71). While Giegerich would agree that Milton's devil "comes within the scope of psychology," he would, and does, argue that there is a radical

distinction to be drawn between what is "within the scope of psychology" and what constitutes its "essence." Jung's "immediate psychology," like literature itself, remains, as a pictorial or phenomenal world, cut off from its "essence" as "the soul's logical life." Jung, he insists, betrayed his own intuitive insight into the nature of psychology by taking up empirical residence in the phenomenological process of becoming (psyche), rather than in the noumenal reality of being (soul).

12. Jung's understanding of *Paradise Lost*, in which Satan fictionally serves as the archetypal protagonist of Jung's individuation process, contains within it, as a temptation willingly to suspend disbelief, what Jung viewed as the real danger of human inflation, which he associates with psychosis. Jung, that is, rejected as delusional what Giegerich calls "the soul's logical life," in which, for Giegerich, the soul assumes full conscious responsibility for its dialectical operations. So long as the archetypal realm remains limited to the phenomenological symbol-making operations of the human mind, Jung argues, it avoids an encounter with psychosis in which the symbol becomes the reality itself rather than the fiction that mirrors it. Jung's fear of Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung*, in which, as Spirit or *Geist*, the soul dialectically becomes the mind of God, enacts his fear of the psychosis (diagnosed in Jung's case by Winnicott as "childhood schizophrenia"), which, as an inflated identification with the archetype, can take possession of the soul as, for example, it took possession of "Nietzsche, Holderlin, and many others" (*MDR* 177). "The victory of Hegel over Kant dealt the gravest blow to reason and to the further development of the European mind," Jung insists,

all the more dangerous as Hegel was a psychologist in disguise who projected great truths out of the subjective sphere into a cosmos he himself had created. We know how far Hegel's influence extends today. The forces compensating this calamitous development personified themselves partly in the later Schelling, partly in Schopenhauer and Carus, while on the other hand that unbridled "bacchantic God" whom Hegel had already scented in nature finally burst upon us in Nietzsche. ("On the Nature" 358)

13. The numinosity of Milton's Satan as the primeval alchemical son of the mother who, "trust[ing] to have equal'd the most High," raised "impious War in Heav'n and Battle proud (*Paradise Lost* 1.39-42), as Jung raised it in *Answer to Job*, did not threaten to take possession of Jung in his understanding of *Paradise Lost* because, in preparation for his Foreword to Werblowsky's manuscript, he probably never read it. What interested him was Werblowsky's Romantic reading of Milton's epic, which is indebted to Blake and Shelley, whose poetry Jung had also probably never read. Jung stayed away from literature as literature because he feared the consequences of willingly suspending his disbelief in it. If he was "put off" by Hegel's language, "as arrogant as it was laborious," Jung regarding it "with downright distrust" (*MDR* 69), he was equally put off by the archetypal language imposed upon him by the unconscious as, fearing psychosis, he struggled with fantasies that had, after his break with Freud, burst upon him. "First I formulated the things as I had observed them, usually in 'high-flown language,' for that corresponds to the style of the archetypes," Jung explains. "Archetypes speak the language of high rhetoric, even of bombast. It is a style I find embarrassing; it grates on my nerves, as when someone draws his nails down a plaster wall, or scrapes his knife against a plate. But since I did not know what was going on, I had no choice but to write everything down in the style selected by the unconscious itself" (*MDR* 177-78). What, for Giegerich, Jung refuses to recognize is that the style was not chosen by "the unconscious itself." It was chosen by Jung whose consciousness, seduced by his fantasies, became as art the willing victim of them, as, indeed, his psychology became the victim of myth.
14. The threat of possession by Satan came, as Jung himself admits, in his feverish writing of his *Answer to Job*, which is, in certain respects, comparable to Blake's writing of *Milton*. Both in their different ways focused upon the end of the Christian aeon in their prophetic announcement of the Second Coming. A fundamental difference between them lay in Blake's rejection of "the majesty of Nature" as his inward source in favour of divine revelation from a supernatural source. Quoting Tertullian's defence of "the

testimonies of the soul" as his own defence of *Answer to Job*, Jung writes:

"I think that they [testimonies of the soul] cannot appear to any one to be trifling and ridiculous if he considers the majesty of Nature, whence the authority of the soul is derived. What you allow to the mistress you will assign to the disciple. Nature is the mistress, the soul is the disciple; what the one has taught, or the other has learned, has been delivered to them by God, who is, in truth, the Master even of the mistress herself. What notion the soul is able to conceive of her first teacher is in your power to judge, from that soul which is in you. Feel that which causes you to feel; think upon that which is in forebodings your prophet; in omens, your augur; in the events which befall you, your foreseer. Strange if, being given by God, she knows how to act the diviner for men! Equally strange if she knows Him to whom she has been given." (Cited in *Answer* 556)

15. Jung claimed to have written *Answer to Job* under the dictation of his mistress Nature as the testimony of her disciple, his soul, in the conviction that the dictation of his mistress Nature came ultimately from her Master God, whom, Jung explains, "we can imagine . . . as an eternally flowing current of vital energy that endlessly changes shape just as easily as we can imagine him as an eternally unmoved, unchangeable essence" (555). Aware that he is working with images, which do not touch "the essence of the Unknowable," he insists that his "remarks" do not "mean anything more in principle than what a primitive man means when he conceives of his god as a hare or a snake." "But," he then adds, defending the prophetic nature of his soul's "primitive" testimony as omen and augur, "although our whole world of religious ideas consists of anthropomorphic images that could never stand up to rational criticism, we should never forget that they are based on numinous archetypes, i.e., on an emotional foundation which is unassailable by reason. We are dealing with psychic facts which logic can overlook, but not eliminate" (556).
16. No statement of Jung's archetypal psychology—in which his numinous "remarks" about Yahweh are equated with "primitive man[s]" conception of "his god as a hare or snake"—is more defiantly and instinctually anti-intellectual than this. Nothing more separates him from Giegerich than his obsessive, immediate engagement with what he projected onto Yahweh as his own fearful engagement with Satan as his "daimon of creativity," which, he concludes in his memoirs, "has ruthlessly had its way with [him]" (*MDR* 358).
17. In his Foreword to *Lucifer and Prometheus*, written in the same time frame as *Answer to Job*, Jung makes it clear that he is not competent to deal with the literary epic, whether Milton's or Dante's or Goethe's or Klopstock's, as other than "testimonies of the soul." Like alchemy, they require, for Jung (as Jung required it for himself), psychological analysis in order to explain their divine madness as other than mere madness, to which the triumphant materialism of the natural sciences had rationally reduced them (as Freud reduced Jung). At a time when, he argued, the soul is increasingly dismissed as a delusion, his task as a psychologist (a knower of the psyche) is to treat these epics as what Keats calls acts of "Soul-making" by examining them, as Jung examined the dreams of his patients, as psychic documents whose images are psychic facts. The truth of these psychic facts lies not in their poetic nature embraced as "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment" (*Biographia* 2:6), but as an empirical reality. Psychology, Jung insists, is the uncrowned queen of the natural sciences. The psyche as observer contains them all, quantum physics becoming the first natural science to recognize it. Subject to the dictates of its mistress Nature, acknowledging God as her ultimate master who bestows the crown, she experientially becomes for Jung what she has become in quantum physics: "an eternally flowing current of vital energy that endlessly changes shape" while in itself remaining an "unmoved, unchangeable essence" that is "ineffable."
18. If, however, one is not to become the victim of this "eternally flowing current of vital energy" by

drowning in it (as Shelley did, when he gave his sails to the tempest), then one must, he insists, separate it from the ego in order dialectically to interrogate it. The ego, at least initially (assuming it is strong enough), is the unwilling disciple of its mistress Nature. The ego receives her as the "daimon of creativity" (*MDR* 358), who, "ruthlessly" and "shamefully," has its way with it, sometimes, as in the case of "Nietzsche, Holderlin, and many others" whom Jung fearfully admired, driving them into insanity. Jung argues that he avoided their fate, the "Solar niger" of alchemy, by surrendering his ego to the *ignotum per ignotius* rather than hiding in terror among the ruins of its brutal defeat. "I am incapable of determining ultimate worth or worthlessness," he concludes his memoirs. "I have no judgment about myself and my life. There is nothing I am quite sure about. I have no definite convictions—not about anything, really. I know only that I was born and exist, and it seems to me that I have been carried along. I exist on the foundation of something I do not know." This "something" that he "do[es] not know" has, he concludes as his final sentence upon his life, "revealed to me an unexpected unfamiliarity with myself" (*MDR* 358).

19. Read in the context of Giegerich's strenuous rejection of Jung's notion of the unconscious, Jung, by placing his faith in it as the "*ignotum per ignotius*" (the unknown as the more unknown in an infinite regression toward nothingness, which is, as God, everything), abandons his responsibility for his conscious life. Bollingen, which Jung considered his alchemical crucible, is dismissed by Giegerich as Jung's Disneyland.
20. The alternative to a willing, if reluctant, surrender to the "daimon," Jung points out in the concluding paragraph of *Answer to Job*, is to become its psychotic victim. This threat, which, as defeat, haunted him throughout his life, allowed him in the name of willing surrender to improvise an ego which, as his "No. 1 personality" hopefully would not result in a split with his "daimon," his "No. 2 personality." "The Christian solution," he writes in the final sentences of his concluding paragraph, which serves as a postscript to his entire text,

has hitherto avoided this difficulty [the 'two relatively autonomous factors' of the independent archetype and the creative freedom of consciousness] by recognizing Christ as the one and only God-man. But the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the third Divine Person, in man, brings about [potentially in alchemy] a Christification of many [the goal of alchemy], and the question then arises whether these many are all complete God-men. Such a transformation would lead to insufferable collisions between them [such as Jung found in his work with schizophrenics at the Burgölzli], to say nothing of the unavoidable inflation to which the ordinary mortal, who is not freed from original sin, would instantly succumb. In these circumstances it is well to remind ourselves of St. Paul and his split consciousness: on one side he felt he was the apostle directly called and enlightened by God, and, on the other side, a sinful man who could not pluck out the "thorn in the flesh" and rid himself of the Satanic angel who plagued him. That is to say, even the enlightened person remains what he is, and is never more than his own limited ego before the One who dwells within him [the *lapis* or philosopher's stone], whose form [as celestial matter] has no knowable boundaries, who encompasses him on all sides, fathomless as the abysses of the earth and vast as the sky. (*Answer* 758)

## II.

21. In her lectures on alchemy, delivered as an introduction to Jung's psychological treatment of it, Marie-Louise von Franz argues that alchemy as Jung deals with it enacts the inevitable *enantiodromia* that sets in as a result of the patriarchal rigidity of the dogma of the Trinity, which excluded the feminine because of its alliance with Satan as the father of original sin. Alchemy in this sense is not only the release of the feminine as the Fourth that constitutes the transformation of the Trinity into a



Quarternity, but also a Fourth that restores Satan to his original station as the older Son of God who sits on His left side as Lucifer, as distinct from Christ, who, as God's younger Son, sits on His right side. As the Trinity, God the Father is eternally arrested in His immutability. As the Quaternity, God is the Mother-Father who in alchemy becomes as celestial matter the eternal Virgin Alma Mater whose Son fathers Himself, Her womb as the eternally pregnant virgin becoming the coffin from which, as the resurrection, Her Son arises. For Jung, this coffin as the womb of the Great Mother is what he calls the Land of the Dead into which the soul descends as the divine mother searching for Her divine child who is begotten by the angel who appears in Revelation as the dark side of the angel waiting to devour him as soon as he is born. This angel, as Satan, presides over the Trinity as the coffin which contains as matter (*mater*) the *lapis* or philosopher's stone. The coffin, far from standing empty with the linen clothes folded up, is, as the alchemical retort, the site of transformation sometimes imaged as a corpse sprouting sheaves of corn. "That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / Has it begun to sprout?" (Eliot, *The Waste Land* 71-72).

22. In Blake, the coffin is his "Printing House in Hell" (*Marriage* 15) in which, as in alchemy, the elements are melted down by means of corrosives and then reconstituted as the illuminated text as their transformation, described by Blake in the last line of *Milton* as "the Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations" (43[50].2). Confined for one hundred years in the coffin of *Paradise Lost*, described by Blake as a "couch / Of Gold" (15[17].13-14) where Milton lies asleep, Milton, Blake explains, does not, in the confines of his coffin, know what as dream his unconscious knows. Milton in his coffin does not consciously know that in entering his coffin (Blake's "Vegetable Body") as the "Shadow" of his resurrected life, "the Seven Angels of the Presence" entered with him, giving him

still perceptions of his Sleeping Body;  
Which now arose and walk'd with them in Eden, as an Eighth  
Image Divine tho' darken'd; and tho' walking as one Walks  
In sleep; and the Seven comforted and supported him. (15[17].3-7)

for a man cannot know  
What passes in his members till periods of Space and Time  
Reveal the secrets of Eternity; for more extensive  
Than any other earthly things, are Mans earthly lineaments. (*Milton* 21[23].8-11)

23. In *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley finds himself in a similar situation. Prometheus's life as a god is supposed to be defined by his divinely incestuous attachment to mother Earth. That he is bound to her for "three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours / And moments" (1.12-13), however, means also that he is bound to the materialistic, non-alchemical reality of Jupiter in the form of a self-imposed curse that buries Prometheus in Earth as a stone coffin "black, wintry, dead, unmeasured without herb, / Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life" (1.21-22). In this sense he is like Wordsworth's child buried alive in the earth until Coleridge persuaded him to remove the lines from all future printings of the 'Intimations' ode. "For know," Earth explains to her son,

there are two worlds of life and death:  
One that which thou beholdest, but the other  
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit  
The shadows of all forms that live  
Till death unite them, and they part no more. (1.195-99)

24. Far from separate, these "two worlds of life and death" co-exist, death being the unabsorbed shadow side of life, which, as in Jung's psychology, must as the process of individuation be absorbed as it can be absorbed. The psychic action of Shelley's lyrical drama is less Prometheus's absorption of Jupiter as

his shadow than it is his release from Jupiter, who, as unabsorbed energy, falls back into the "Abysm," which, as the "deep truth," cannot "vomit forth its secrets" (*Prometheus* 2.4.114-16). What lies "underneath the grave, where do inhabit / The shadows of all forms that live" (1.197-98) remains for Shelley the spectral or phantasmagoric life pursuing him to an untimely grave. However delusionally or metaphysically, Shelley hopes to be finally united with them, hope, as Demogorgon describes it, creating "from its own wreck the thing it contemplates" (4.574).

25. One resolution that Shelley strenuously rejects is the Christian Incarnation, for which Jupiter, in his delusional begetting of a son in the raped body of Thetis, provides a demonic parody. Fearing that, as religion, his depiction of the suffering Prometheus may, like Milton's epic, harden in time into a demonic parody of his intention, or, indeed, that the psychic drama it enacts may be reduced to the curse imposed upon Coleridge's mariner compelling him to repeat his tale over and over again, Shelley, in the guise of Prometheus reduced by the Furies to the condition of the crucified Christ, exclaims: "Oh horrible! Thy name I will not speak, / It hath become a curse" (1.603-4).
26. The Incarnation of God in Christ as the second person of the Trinity is, Jung argues, the futile attempt to reify forever the figure of the suffering Christ as a symbol of patriarchal power that excludes as false all other forms of religious expressions, such as Gnosticism and Alchemy. Awaiting the birth of his son begotten in the rape of Thetis, Shelley's Jupiter proclaims to the "congregated Powers of Heaven," who share his power by serving him: "Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent." Only the "soul of man, like unextinguished fire, / Yet burns toward Heaven," Jupiter declares of the three-thousand-year-old struggle in which Prometheus remains bound to Jupiter as his specter or shadow. The "fatal child, the terror of the earth / Who waits but till the destined Hour arrive," Jupiter delusionally asserts, will quench the Promethean fire by "redescend[ing] and tramp[ing] out the spark" (*Prometheus* 3.1.1-24). Alchemy, as Jung understands it, is a psychic response (*enantiodromia*) to the patriarchal tyranny of the Roman Church in which vicarious atonement as power rather than love is replaced by active "Soul-making" in which the psyche assumes full responsibility for its own salvation. Jung describes this responsibility assumed in alchemy by the soul—as it is also described by Keats—as individuation (Keats's "[f]ull alchemized" as a "fellowship with essence" [*Endymion* 1.779-80]).
27. Jung's *Answer to Job* provides a psychological reading of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, a reading which releases the soul from the patriarchal tyranny of the entire Semitic tradition, the three religions of which, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, constitute for Jung, as for Shelley, an unholy trinity waiting to be redeemed by the release of the feminine, enacted by Shelley in Asia's return from her long exile as her descent into the cave (coffin) of Demogorgon where the soul of Prometheus, temporarily released from his dead body, lies waiting to be re-united with that body in its resurrected form as the body of a god, which is the apocalyptic body of Shelley's lyrical drama, even as it is the apocalyptic body of Blake's illuminated text. Shelley's Asia, however, remains far too innocent, far too ideally conceived, to perform her larger role as the bride of Prometheus enacting in their spiritual consummation the descent of the New Jerusalem. Instead, she, along with her sisters, retreats with Prometheus into an enchanted cave (Blake's Beulah) "like human babes in their brief innocence" (*Prometheus* 3.3.33), the larger action of the drama dissolving into a "void circumference" (*Adonais* 419) or "intense inane" (*Prometheus* 3.4.204). What we witness in Shelley's closet drama is finally nothing more than a frail spell.
28. Invoking the "Daughters of Beulah! Muses who inspire the Poets Song" (*Milton* 2.1), Blake identifies them with the human brain where, he explains, God, by the ministry of the feminine, "planted his Paradise, / And in it caus' d the Spectres of the Dead to take sweet forms / In likeness of himself" (*Milton* 2.8-10). This "Paradise," issuing "from out the Portals of [Blake's] Brain" and "descending down the Nerves of [his] right arm" into his right hand (2.5-7), becomes, as writing, engraving, printing and illuminating (each stage a progressive unfolding of the operations within the alchemical retort or

"Printing house in Hell"), the transformation of his "Vegetable Body" into its resurrected, and therefore eternal, life. Milton thus becomes Blake's alchemical enactment of his "Resurrection & Judgment in the Vegetable Body" (42[49].27) in which the mortal body, far from being consumed by "the fire for which all thirst" (*Adonais* 485), is alchemically raised to its inherent spiritual state.

29. While both Blake and Shelley affirm that the inspiration for their apocalyptic works issues from a realm described by Shelley as "beyond and above [rather than below] consciousness" (*Defence* 516), they make it abundantly clear that the act of composition is a fully conscious action of the mind, the apocalyptic vision of it arising from "thoughts . . . in their integral unity" which, as their prose works demonstrate, they are quite capable of analyzing as what Shelley describes as "the algebraical representations which conduct to certain general results" (510). Their "arrangements of language, and especially metrical language," are "arbitrarily produced by the imagination and [have] relation to thoughts alone," rather than what lies "beyond them." Indeed, these "arrangements" arise "from the manner in which they express the influence of society or nature on their own minds, and communicate [themselves] to others, and gather a sort of reduplication from that community." As the metrical communication is absorbed by the community as a "sort of duplication of it," its "vitally metaphorical" nature, which "marks the before unapprehended relations of things, and perpetuates their apprehension," becomes "through time signs for portions or classes of thought, instead of pictures of integral thought." "[A]nd then," Shelley concludes, "if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized [their vitality becoming fixed and dead], language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse." As for the metrical arrangement (which is "arbitrarily produced by the imagination"), it seeks as rhythmical sound to prolong "the duration of the effect" of impressions received both from within and without as they modify each other as a way of also prolonging "a consciousness of the cause," sensation as impressions becoming, both as metaphors and linguistic sounds metrically arranged, their conversion into thought as the poet's consciousness of them. The result is what Shelley calls "the hieroglyphic of [the poets'] thoughts" (512-13).
30. In all of this, as Shelley describes it, the unconscious performs no role. Like the alchemists as already described by Giegerich, the visions of poets "are conscious events, products of a speculatively thinking consciousness, their dreams the products of a dreaming consciousness." The Romantics know what they do not know because as poets it is their responsibility to know it. Blake, who unlike Jung had read *Paradise Lost* so many times that, as some have suggested, he knew it by heart, knew that, in reading it aloud to his wife, Catherine, in the garden at Felpham, Milton had entered his body and that it was in his body that his own epic, *Milton*, was, "in a Pulsation of the Artery" (*Milton* 29[31].3), conceived. The physical act of writing becomes, as engraving, printing and illuminating, a mounting consciousness of his body as the "hieroglyphic" of his soul as the soul issues "[f]rom out the Portals of [his] Brain, and "descend[s] down the Nerves of his right arm" into his writing "hand" (2.4-6). He knew this in the same immediate way that he knew, from his ceaseless reading of the Bible, that in his brain "[t]he Eternal Great Humanity Divine" had "planted his Paradise, / And in it caus' d the Spectres of the Dead to take sweet forms / In likeness of himself" (2.8-10). In a very real sense, he knew what Jung, for fear of madness, could not allow himself to know. Jung's notion of the unconscious is, Giegerich argues, a burial (repression) of a consciousness that, as a direct encounter with the real, he seeks to avoid.
31. But is this the case? Is Jung's notion of the unconscious his elaborately staged avoidance of what within himself, Jacques Lacan, as distinct from the imaginary and the symbolic, calls the Real? Is Jung, like Lacan, confining psychology to a series of clarifying encounters with the fictional, less as a repression of the Real than as a recognition that it is, like death, unknowable as other than the imaginary or symbolic representations of it? Is the knowledge of the psyche a knowledge of the nature of fiction, which constitutes its truth?

### III.

32. Blake's distinction between inspiration and memory is the distinction between presence and the fading echo of it. Narcissus dissolving into the memory of himself as a siren confrontation with nothingness, as distinct from a conscious union with himself as the "I Am that I Am," is the difference between alchemy as ideally conceived as Giegerich's notion of the logos as the "soul's logical life" (which is, for him, what in itself psychology really is), and alchemy as the echo or fading image of itself to which, he argues, Jung's psychology remained empirically bound. For Jung, on the other hand, Giegerich's notion of psychology is subject to a delusion in which the human mind is fatally identified with the archetype of the mind of God, an identification in which the essential distinction between soul and spirit is dissolved. Jung's horror of Hegelian idealism is his conviction that, if he were to immerse himself in it (as on occasion he did, or nearly did), he would drown. He knew, as a Kantian, that he had to wear a diver's suit if he hoped to survive his exploration of the depths of the psyche.
33. After a major heart attack in 1944, Jung for ten days remained suspended between life and death, kept alive by oxygen and camphor injections. During this critical period, he experienced his entire life dissolving as he moved into an outer space from which he could see far below "the globe of the earth, bathed in a glorious blue light" shot through with "a silvery gleam." Floating in this space close beside him was a dark block of stone, like a meteorite, shaped like a temple about the size of his large house in Kusnacht. In a comatose state, he entered it and saw a yogi in the lotus position waiting for him. He was the ineffable essence of himself, which remained after the entire phantasmagoria of his earthly existence had fallen away. In a dream, following his heart attack, he again confronted this yogi in a far more naked chapel. When Jung looked at him more closely, he realized that the yogi had his (Jung's) face. Waking with a start, he thought: "'Aha, so he is the one who is meditating me. He has a dream, and I am it.' I knew that when he awakened, I would no longer be" (*MDR* 323).
34. Who he might be when the yogi awakened was indicated to him in the ecstatic state that accompanied the heart attack: he found himself not only at the marriage feast of the Lamb, but was himself the Lamb. He was, though admittedly in a comatose state (in which, as described by his nurse, he was surrounded by light), the crucified Christ, who, in alchemy as in Gnosticism, is not really crucified, another being substituted for him. The other, being sacrificed in his place, was his doctor—"or rather his likeness," who, "framed by a golden chain or a golden laurel leaf," floated up from earth toward him. Jung knew him at once. "'Aha, this is my doctor, of course,'" Jung writes, presumably repeating what he said in his comatose state, "'the one who has been treating me. But now he is coming in his primal form, as a *basileus* of Kos [the healing temple of Asklepios, birthplace of Hippocrates, father of medicine]. In life he was an avatar of *this basileus*, the temporal embodiment of the primal form, which has existed from the beginning, Now he is appearing in his primal form'" (*MDR* 292).
35. To which, now at the age of eighty-four, Jung adds: "Presumably I too was in my primal [prenatal] form, though this was something I did not observe but simply took for granted. As he stood before me, a mute exchange of thought took place between us. Dr. H. had been delegated by the earth to deliver a message to me, to tell me that there was a protest against my going away. I had no right to leave the earth and must return. The moment I heard that, the vision ceased" (*MDR* 292).
36. Jung then goes on to explain the psychic phenomena taking place in his comatose state as the reversal of the relationship between ego-consciousness and the unconscious by representing the unconscious, rather than the ego, "as the [alchemical] generator of the empirical reality." "This reversal," he explains, "suggests that in the opinion of the [alchemical] 'other side,' our unconscious existence is the real one and our conscious world a kind of illusion, an apparent reality constructed for a specific purpose, like a dream which seems a reality as long as we are in it." Struck by the resemblance between "this state of affairs" and "the Oriental conception of Maya," Jung consciously draws his conclusion: "Unconscious

wholeness therefore seems to me the true spiritus rector of all biological and psychic events. Here is a principle which strives for total realization—which in man's case signifies the attainment of total consciousness" (MDR 324). Jung, it will be noted, is here describing the unconscious as the true form, as distinct from the conventional form, of consciousness.

37. Jung's long engagement with alchemy is an intense engagement with consciousness the goal of which is "the attainment of total consciousness." Its mythical form, now, for Giegerich, obsolete (Shelley's "ghosts of a no more remembered fame" [*Prometheus* 3.4.169]) is the philosopher's stone as the elixir of eternal life shaping itself in the dialectical operations of the pelican *vas* (the symbol of "the true *spiritus rector* of all biological and psychic events") as it feeds upon its own life-blood in order to bring it fully to consciousness as the "I Am that I Am." "Attainment of consciousness is culture in the broadest sense," Jung insists, "and self-knowledge is therefore the heart and essence of this process. The Oriental attributes unquestionably divine significance to the Self, and according to the ancient view self-knowledge is the road to the knowledge of God" (MDR325). By questioning this "divine significance," as a way of testing it through experimentation, Jung hoped to provide it with the objective, empirical evidence, which now constitutes the necessary scientific proof of God, which the scientific mind without proof, cannot, since the seventeenth century, be said to know. This scientific notion of proof Giegerich dismisses in favour of the self-evident presence of the soul as a dialectical confrontation with its logical life.
38. Jung's own personal symbol of the pelican *vas* (the alchemical retort) was Bollingen, which, as already noted, Giegerich dismisses as Jung's Disneyland best understood as an embodiment of his mother's esoteric nature as a disciple of Wotan, an embodiment which Jung began soon after his mother's death. Immediately following his traumatic break with Freud, Jung confronted within himself an abyss of inchoate energy that signified nothing, though it was so "seething with life" that, as he describes it, "[s]ometimes it was as if I were hearing it with my ears, sometimes feeling it with my mouth, as if my tongue were formulating words; now and then I heard myself speaking aloud" (MDR 178). Hearing it speaking aloud as issuing from his own mouth, he began to take conscious responsibility for it. He recognized the voice as the voice of a "talented psychopath" who had been in analysis with him. Jung rationalized the sounds of her voice issuing from his mouth, particularly as he was violently opposed to what it was saying, by finally taking responsibility for it, rather than receiving it as automatic writing. "I took hold of her," Jung writes, telling her that what she was insisting on calling art was not art, but nature. Ready to argue it out with her, he was met with silence. "When nothing . . . occurred," Jung explains, "I reflected that the 'woman within me' [whom he calls the anima] did not have the speech centers I had. And so I suggested she use mine." Taking him up on his offer, she "came through with a long statement" (MDR 186), which, since it presumably deals with nature vs. art, Jung, though it came through his speech centers, does not reproduce by writing it out. We do not know, nor perhaps did Jung, what her "long statement" was. The distinction between psychology as an art and psychology as a natural science never became clear. He dismissed psychology as an art. He could not affirm it as a natural science. Then what is it?
39. The danger of images is, for Giegerich, the danger of idolatry, which is the danger of "immediate psychology" as a personal therapy in which the patient settles into his or her own fiction (individuation) as the false self that neurosis affords. "The time for indulging in *myths* and *images* of the Gods, the Self, the daimon, etc. is passed," Giegerich argues in *The Soul's Logical Life*. "We no longer live in a psychological age where the image as a content of consciousness would and could have any truth for us" (23). Giegerich here clearly has Jung in mind when Jung insists in his memoirs that "[w]hat we are to our inward vision, and what man appears to be *sub specie aeternitatis*, can only be expressed by way of myth. . . . Thus it is that I have now undertaken, in my eighty-third year, to tell my personal myth. I can only make direct statements, only 'tell stories.' Whether or not the stories are 'true' is not the problem. The only question is whether what I tell is my fable, *my truth*" (3). "And the more we do this

[tell our own stories ]," Giergerich goes on,

the more we set up ourselves as the [watching, admiring or worshipping] ego. The Self, the *genius*, the Gods as *positive images, or symbols* are obsolete. The time of this logical innocence, where truth could still *really* happen in the *form* of symbols, images or rituals, has long been *pas*sé. In the shows of television and the images of advertising we have the constant reminder of the objective ("material") representation of the psychological or logical obsolescence of the "image" as such. . . . Above all, they are the place where *today's truth* about the image is made evident for everyone to see. Nobody needs to develop a theory about and preach the obsolescence of the image; the obsolescence is objectively visible and speaks for itself. (23-24)

40. At the end of his memoirs as a kind of postscript to it, like his postscript to *Answer to Job*, Jung, as if to reject the vanity of imagination, which Paul describes as turning the incorruptible God into a likeness of corruptible man, rejects his highly wrought "fable" as "truth," negating his "personal myth" by insisting that there was now "nothing" he was "quite sure about" other than that he "was born and exist[s]." Beyond that, he declares, "it seems to me that I have been carried along" (*MDR* 358). At best, he has willingly suspended his disbelief, which is the most a "fable" can, "for the moment," induce, short of finally settling into it as madness. (Jung was not at all sure he wanted his memoirs published. He went so far as to suggest that his secretary, Aniela Jaffe, who daily received his dictation and shared in the editing, publish them under her name, a suggestion his editors rejected.)
41. Coleridge, who in so many ways pre-figured Jung, experienced his own "personal myth" in something of the same way. The "excellence aimed at," he writes of his own contribution to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) was to deal with circumstances, which were, "in part at least, supernatural," or "at least romantic" by "the interesting of the affections, by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in *this* sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency" (*Biographia* 2:6). The truth of supernatural delusion lay in the psycho-analysis of it, Coleridge inventing the term in 1805.
42. Wolfgang Pauli, the Nobel laureate quantum physicist who worked on and off with Jung on some fourteen hundred of his archetypal dreams over a period of twenty-six years, interpreted his dreams as the sub-atomic operations of matter in quantum physics. His growing impatience as a quantum physicist with Jung's notion of the unconscious lay, in part, in Jung's apparently invincible ignorance of the mathematical nature of the operations of matter upon which his notion of the unconscious appeared to depend. Pauli treated his dreams, not as the expressions of the unconscious, but as an extension of his knowledge of the laws of motion to embrace the presence of the observer in what is at the sub-atomic level is observed. While the ways in which the observer interferes with or changes what is observed has not yet been determined, the evidence at least of its indeterminacy was being shown to him in his dreams as the shadow or phantasm of the consciousness he as a micro-physicist brought to them. These phantom operations, so powerfully present in the poetry of the Romantics, for example, influenced, if not determined, the sub-atomic behaviour of the atom as that behaviour was now determining the future life of humanity, if indeed, given the atomic bomb, it had a future life. In leaving Princeton and returning to Zurich in 1946, Pauli was persuaded that the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was a betrayal of the human intellect at the highest level of its operations, a betrayal that, relative to the logos governing the mind's operations, constituted a psychosis capable of destroying the rational life of the mind (as the logical life of the soul) forever. Watching with his brother the explosion of the first atomic bomb at its testing site in the Alamogordo desert known as "the journey of death," Robert Oppenheimer, who was in charge of the entire project (which Pauli strongly opposed) quoted Vishnu in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "Now I become Death, Destroyer of Worlds."



43. Initially bound together in what they considered a life and death project, they became increasingly divided. As perhaps the leading mathematician among the quantum physicists, Pauli relied increasingly upon its mathematical foundations in his search for a unifying equation. Jung, by contrast, remained bound to his schoolboy distrust of mathematics as the soul's logical life. "Mathematics classes become sheer terror and torture to me," he writes of his earliest experience of them. The torture lay in the equal sign:

But the thing that has exasperated me most of all was the proposition: if  $a=b$  and  $b=c$ , then  $a=c$ , even though by definition  $a$  meant something other than  $b$ , and being different, could not therefore be equated with  $b$ , let alone with  $c$ . Whenever it was a question of an equivalence, then it was said that  $a=a$ ,  $b=b$ , and so on. This I could accept, whereas  $a=b$  seemed to me a downright lie or a fraud. . . . My intellectual morality fought against these whimsical inconsistencies, *which have forever debarred me from understanding mathematics*. Right into old age I have had the incorrigible feeling that if, like my schoolmates, I could have accepted without a struggle the proposition that  $a=b$  or that  $\text{sun}=\text{moon}$ ,  $\text{dog}=\text{cat}$ , then mathematics might have fooled me endlessly—*just how much I only began to realize at the age of eighty-four*. (MDR 28-29)

44. Rejecting, never more so than at the age of eighty-four, what he considered the logic of causality (and indeed the logic of the soul) arbitrarily assumed in the equal sign, Jung found in the acausal notion of synchronicity an alternative that did not insult his "intellectual morality" by imposing upon him "a downright lie or a fraud." "When I enter the sphere of physical or mathematical thinking *sensu strictiori*," he wrote to Pauli (13 January 1951), "I lose all understanding of what the term synchronicity means; I feel as though I am groping my way through a dense fog. This feeling is obviously due to the fact that I do not understand the mathematical or physical implications of the word, which you certainly do. I could imagine that, for similar reasons, the psychological aspect seems unclear to you" (*Atom* 68).
45. In his search for the mathematical equation that would logically prove at the sub-atomic level of quantum physics that psyche=matter, Pauli in his relations with Jung gradually realized that he was imposing an intolerable burden upon Jung, which was alarmingly undermining Jung's problematic health. Increasingly suffering from the consequences of his heart attack, Jung, in his continuing effort to work with Pauli, became subject to mounting attacks of tachycardia and arrhythmia. "Your work is highly stimulating and credible," he wrote to Pauli in October 1955. "It is to be hoped that your train of thought will also have an enhancing effect on your special field. Psychology at the moment is lagging so far behind that there is not much of value to be expected from it for quite a while yet. I myself have reached my upper limits and am consequently hardly in a position to make any contribution of note." He concludes his letter by expressing his gratitude to Pauli for "tackling the problem of my psychology," which he now would have to abandon, Jung turning to his final and most difficult book, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, in which, with the close help of Marie Louise von Franz, he gathers together and sums up his now equally "dreaded" work in alchemy (*Atom* 133). "The existence of a transcendental reality is indeed evident in itself," he concludes with a warning,

but it is uncommonly difficult for our consciousness to construct intellectual models which would give graphic description of the reality we have perceived. Our hypotheses are uncertain and groping, and nothing offers us the assurance that they may ultimately prove correct. . . . If we are convinced that we know the ultimate truth concerning metaphysical things, this means nothing more than that archetypal images have taken possession of our powers of thought and feeling, so that they lose their quality as functions at our disposal. . . . Truth and error lie so close together and often look so confusingly alike that nobody in his right senses could afford *not* to doubt the things that happen to him in the possessed

state. (*Mysterium* 787)

46. Jung's quarrel with the Hegelian notion of "the soul's logical life," as the Jungian analyst, Wolfgang Giegerich, would later articulate it, lies in the identification of logic with causality, more particularly with what he considered the self-enclosed nature of the logic that solipsistically isolates the soul within its narcissistic operations as the "I Am that I Am." "A real psychology of the Self," Giegerich argues in *The Soul's Logical Life*,

has to *start out* from the *accomplished* Self, otherwise there can be no Self-development. The Self has to be there from the outset, i.e., *prior* to the attempt of realizing the Self, if the Self is to be realized at all. This is an obvious contradiction. But this contradiction is what the entrance problem is about. The transgression across the threshold is nothing else but this *hysteron proteron*, this "crazy" reversal of the order of time: what is 'later' (*hysteron*) in time (here the realization or finding of the Self) has to be *proteron*, 'earlier,' 'prior'; it has to be the precondition of a search for the Self. You have to already be there if you want to get there. You have to arrive before you set out on the way that is to take you to where you want to arrive. (21)

47. But where is the soul "from the outset"? Giegerich answers: "with itSelf." But what is the Self? Giegerich tautologically answers: "the soul." Jung answers: "the God image" as distinct from God himself, which is unknowable. Otherwise the soul is the Self is God. It is precisely this logic, soul=Self=God, that Jung all his life considered a "lie" and a "fraud." For Giegerich, it is neither. It is, rather, a "contradiction" and a "transgression across the threshold," a "threshold" that Jung's intuitively crossed, only on a discursive, empirical level to retreat from it into a phenomenology that betrayed it.
48. In *Adonais*, Shelley having, as Actaeon, transgressed "across the threshold" to be slain by his own "hunter's dart" [297] enacts the kill, which sublates his mythopoeia, raising it as "the One" to its abstract essence. He thereby completes the logical work of the soul, which, as in Giegerich, conducts to the soul's direct, rather than mirrored, encounter with itself. ("Oh, where was then / Wisdom the mirrored shield" [*Adonais* 240], Urania asks as she stands over the corpse of Keats hoping to revive it "so long as a kiss may live" [227].) Though tempted to retreat "into a [Jungian] phenomenology that betrayed it," Shelley's logocentric mind could no longer take up residence in it. He could no longer let life divide what the kill had joined together. "Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?" Shelley asks in the guise of the trembling Dionysus whom Jung feared as the madness in himself. "Thy hopes are gone before; from all things here / They have departed; thou shouldst now depart" (469-71).
49. "We must also conclude that the Dionysian telos is inherent in any archetypal situation or image," Giegerich insists in a way that best explains the dialectic of *Adonais*.

The Dionysian 'fate' [dissolution] does not come over it from outside. Without this self-sublation the archetypal truth would still have the logical form of a mere content of consciousness, some idea, ideal, message 'out there.' It would somehow be 'concretized,' literal, abstract—'positive.' It would not be the existing Notion because the content has been dissolved (de-ontologized, de-imagined, i.e., transported [as in alchemy] from the sphere of existence to that of 'pre-existence,' 'non-existence.' (*Soul's Logical* 266)

50. "Why open all gates?" Jung asks himself after completing *Symbols of Transformation*, which, in his defence of the spiritual nature of incest included in the second part, he knew would end his complex friendship with Freud. "For two months," he writes, "I was unable to touch my pen, so tormented was I about the conflict" (*MDR* 167). Having in the chapter, "The Sacrifice" settled the matter of incest, the question yet remained: why transgress across the final threshold by moving beyond the Self as symbol

to what it symbolizes? Is the unknowable really unknowable or is it the last frontier of knowledge?

51. Giegerich crosses it, as, he argues, the alchemists before him crossed it, not as the goal of the work, but as the condition of it. Jung, on the other hand, having crossed it as the condition of it, then retreated to safer ground in which what he intuitively knew became what he was forbidden to know. He became, for Giegerich, the victim of everything he had fought against, a tragic figure rather than a parodic one, though, nevertheless, a figure that, as an act of alchemical betrayal, he himself had made. If Giegerich remains a Jungian, it is because he is concerned to confront and rectify what Jung betrayed. In this radical respect, he in his confrontation is determined to complete the work of alchemy, logically understood as a completion necessarily present prior to its beginning as the "I Am that I Am." Jung, on the other hand—or so it may be argued—, was defeated by the logic he, as his fear of madness, could never embrace. Alchemy in this radical sense, continues to haunt the pursuit of truth, Giegerich, like Shelley before him, recognizing that only by turning and facing the apparitions of knowledge could they be absorbed as the truth, which, disguising itself as "invulnerable nothings" (*Adonais* 348), continues to avoid detection as "the soul's logical life."

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#### Notes

1. Jung, *Collected Works*, volume 14, paragraph 106. Hereafter cited by title and paragraph number.

2 Citations from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* are cited by plate number. Citations from Blake's poetry are cited by plate and/or line number.

3 The term is Keats's (*Letters* 249).

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# Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis

## "The Abyss of the Past": Psychoanalysis in Schelling's *Ages of the World* (1815)

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Focusing on the differences between the three versions of Schelling's *Ages of the World*, this paper takes up the invention of psychoanalysis in the third (1815) version. The third version, unlike the more idealistic first and second versions, introduces terms such as the unconscious, inhibition, and crisis, contains a crucial section on mesmerism, and is structured around the trauma of onto- and phylogenesis. The paper also explores the larger epistemic consequences of looking for a return and retreat of the origin of psychoanalysis before its institutional emergence. This essay appears in *Romantic Psyche and Psychoanalysis*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

1. Nature, Schelling says, is "an abyss of the past."<sup>[1]</sup> Or in Hegel's words, it is "an alien existence in which Spirit does not find itself," "the Idea in the form of otherness," as "the negative of itself" (*Philosophy* 3, 313). In this paper I argue that the science, or rather *history* of nature, could be seen as a laboratory for a psychoanalysis *avant la lettre*. For in *The System of Transcendental Idealism* Schelling had already described nature by the term "unconscious," though only in the sense of something non-conscious or non-voluntary that works synchronously with spirit (208, 210). But in *Ages of the World* (1815) nature is the unconscious of spirit in ways closer to the modern sense of the term unconscious. Nature is the traumatic core of spirit, which begins not as spirit but as "soul, which dwells within matter" and the "inner life" (*W3* 69). Focusing on the third extant version of *Ages* (1815), I argue that the history of nature in German idealism is the site where concepts such as inhibition, drive, archetype, "crisis," the primal scene of trauma, and the (im)possibility of remembering and working through this trauma to enlightenment, receive their earliest expression. Indeed Schelling even uses the term "unconscious" in what will become its psychoanalytic sense, when he writes:

There is no consciousness [*Bewusstsein*] without something that is at the same time excluded and contracted [*ausgeschlossen und angezogen*]. That which is conscious excludes that of which it is conscious as not itself. Yet it must again attract it precisely as that of which it is conscious as itself, only in a different form [*Gestalt*]. That which in consciousness is simultaneously the excluded and the attracted can only be the unconscious [*das Bewusstlose*]. (*W3* 44; 10:68).

Moreover, psychoanalysis is the form as well as content of the 1815 version, which inscribes itself within a movement of return or unworking. As Foucault writes, "whereas all the human sciences advance towards the unconscious only with their back to it . . . psychoanalysis . . . points directly towards it, . . . not towards that which must be rendered gradually more explicit by the progressive illumination of the implicit, but towards what is there and yet is hidden" (*Order* 374). Similarly, it is not that nature in *Ages* is the prelude to spirit. Rather, because "all evolution presupposes involution," spirit must perpetually return to its nature, to "the darkness and closure . . . of primordial time" and "the self-lacerating madness [that] is innermost in all things" (*W3* 83, 103). Nor is this recursiveness confined to the text; it extends to an entire topology that marks the place of the third version in the body of Schelling's work. For the text's reversion to the beginnings of the world also puts under erasure its own originary moment: the moment of the dawn of transcendental idealism as a shape all light that later becomes the philosophy of revelation. This moment, recapitulated in the Introduction to

all three extant versions of the *Ages*, is accomplished ontotheologically in the first, and mythopoeically in the second, which in fact describes its own "first distant beginning toward a revelation [*Offenbarung*]" (W2 143). But it is abandoned to the future in the third version as the impossibility of emerging from the past except theoretically.

2. Yet, if the 1815 *Ages* both enacts a profoundly psychoanalytic movement, and evolves a matrix of psychoanalytic concepts, one cannot fairly say that it is "about" psychoanalysis. It is more (yet also not entirely) about history, as what Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno will later call "natural history."  
[2] For *The Ages* returns to the theory of history (and its three ages or periods) sketched at the end of *The System*, to provide a psychoanalysis of this history: to disclose that history cannot begin without a psychoanalysis that may well make history impossible, in the Hegelian sense of a transition from nature to spirit and from necessity to freedom. This deconstruction in turn proceeds by way of a psychoanalysis of God or metaphysics, as the transcendental guarantor of Idealist history. In short, if *The Ages* invents psychoanalysis, it does so not as the still unnamed science of psychoanalysis but as a new orientation for understanding history, philosophy, and even "revelation." Moreover this new "interscience," in Jacques Derrida's term ("Titles" 205-6), is produced not as positive knowledge, but through a radically transferential, indeed counter-transferential, relation with what it reads, be it history or nature. Thus the term *Hemmung* or inhibition, as David Farrell Krell points out (74-77), already existed in the *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (1799). But because it was not part of a history, it was not yet resistance, inhibition in the psychoanalytic sense of something foreclosed or not known. In *The Ages*, then, it is the grasping of nature as historical that analogically generates a psychoanalysis that exists only transferentially and not as a positivity. More specifically it is through the history of nature as human nature, the enfolding of phylogeny in ontogeny, that psychoanalysis is intergenerated. "One who could write completely [*von Grund aus*] the history of their own life," Schelling says, "would also have, in a small epitome, concurrently grasped the history of the cosmos" (W3 3; 10:13). Which is not to say that one *can* write one's history, which is itself enveloped in a prehistory that exceeds it, the prehistory of life, of being.
3. In what follows I want to take up the way psychoanalysis emerges in the 1815 *Ages* within an interdisciplinarity that recasts all particular disciplines—history, ontology, nature, and psychoanalysis itself—as part of absolute knowledge. Positive sciences, Schelling writes, are those that "attain to objectivity within the state" and are "organized in so-called faculties" (*University Studies* 78-79), thus existing in and for themselves as reified and instrumentalized entities. Or as Hegel argues, positive sciences are sciences that do not recognize their concepts as finite, as capable of being unbalanced by their "transition into another sphere" (*Encyclopedia* 54). They are thus constituted as what Pierre Bourdieu calls "fields," with their own self-confirming rules and "regularities," their own "network" of "objective relations between positions" within which a particular kind of "capital is . . . efficacious" (94-114). Absolute knowledge, by contrast, is not total but unconditional knowledge, the following of a particular direction or connection for its own sake, without regard for its potential to "derange" the whole (Schelling, *First Outline* 26). Thus in *Ages* Schelling gives geology an "archeological" role (in Foucault's sense) in the science of nature, even at the cost of disturbing a *Naturphilosophie* through which philosophy had colonized Nature as a region of spirit. By reading history and geology through each other and thus psychoanalytically, he pursues knowledge of these spheres and knowledge itself absolutely. To be sure psychoanalysis in Schelling's day had not yet "attained to objectivity" within an organization of knowledge. But by seeking the return and retreat of its origins in Schelling, *we* recover its vitally metaphorical functioning outside of its constitution as a finite science in the late Nineteenth Century. In other words an implicit question in this paper is also what it means to see Romanticism as "inventing" psychoanalysis, as Joel Faflak puts it.[3] What does it mean to articulate psychoanalysis through a transference onto Romanticism or Schelling, and thus to understand it unconditionally: outside of any disciplinary institutionalization or social outcome that might make it a "positive" science?



4. In the *System* Schelling had already positivized history as the culmination of his project. History is the "first step out of the realm of instinct" where man, like "the animal," as Schelling says in anticipating the *Ages*, was confined "to an eternal circuit of actions in which, like Ixion upon his wheel, he revolves unceasingly" (199, 202). Echoing Kant at various points, including in his imagining of a "universal constitution" or league of nations that will be the culmination of world-history (198), the role Schelling gives nature in this history is one of aesthetic and teleological ordering. Indeed history, art and nature are coordinated in the *System* within a closed pattern of regulated metaphoric transfers that forwards the goals of Idealist philosophy. Comparing history to a play guided by "an unknown hand," Schelling thus writes of a single "spirit who speaks in everyone" so as to compose it as "a progressive . . . revelation of the absolute" (209-10). As in *Ages*, there are to be three periods: the "tragic period" where there is only "blind life," the emergence of "lawful" nature in Rome, and the rule of "providence" when "God" will finally "exist" (210-11). Schelling will return to the fabulous scene of this white mythology in the Introduction to *Ages*: an epic overview in lyric form of past, present and future, which he kept largely unchanged through the three extant versions from 1811 to 1815.<sup>[4]</sup> In the Introduction to *Ages*, Idealism, to adapt what Schelling says of the will in 1813, "produces itself out of itself" through a form of auto-affection in which two beings, "one questioning and one answering," become as one through the impossible paradox of a "silent dialogue" (W2 137, 115). This "inner conversation" (xxxvi) interiorizes dialectic in a way that makes Schelling vulnerable to Hegel's criticisms of his transcendental idealism.<sup>[5]</sup> It resembles nothing more than the subterfuge of a pure "expression" sheltered within "the transcendental monadic sphere of what is my own" that Derrida in his analysis of Husserl in *Speech and Phenomena* associates with the tropes of "meaning as soliloquy" and the "voice that keeps silence" (32, 39, 70).<sup>[6]</sup> As I shall suggest, the hermeneutic fiction set up here as a guide to how we are to produce the text as "the unanimity of the expressing and the expressed" (W2 177), is elaborated in 1813 in the section on magnetic sleep as a form of pure (un)consciousness and transcendental "self-relationship" (*Speech* 69). This section in 1815 will take on a completely different meaning by virtue of two infinitesimal but crucial shifts in wording. These shifts, in turn, completely recast the relation of the text to an Introduction that it leaves behind as a horizon that it struggles im-possibly to rejoin: a space no longer folded into the interior of the text but left utterly outside, as a supplement.
5. Schelling himself initially uses the term "history of nature" in his *First Outline Of A System of the Philosophy of Nature*, distinguishing it from what Kant calls natural history as the "description of nature" (44), in the sense of "extended" as opposed to "thinking nature" (*Metaphysical Foundations* 4).<sup>[8]</sup> For Foucault "the history of nature" is the "counterscience" that unworks the positivism of this natural history. Despite its name, the classical discipline of natural history had no sense of time; rather it spatialized nature so as to make the world totally legible within discourse, excluding what could not be brought into "a taxonomic area of visibility" (*Order* 133-35,137). Even Kant's idea of natural history as a "systematic presentation of natural things at various *times* and places" (*Metaphysical Foundations* 4; my emphasis) involves a foreshortening of time as space, wherein the past is taxonomically organized as the property of the present. By contrast the history of nature, as Foucault defines it, emerges around geology and biology, as opposed to botany for example. In the history of nature time actually becomes "a principle of development for living beings in their internal organization" (*Order* 150): in biology because the animal, unlike the plant, exists on "the frontiers of life and death" (277); and in geology because the notion of receding geotemporal strata introduces a historicity into nature that pushes it towards the limits of knowability.
6. If we wanted to speak of a history of nature in the true sense of the word, we should have to picture nature as though, apparently free in its productions, it had gradually brought forth the whole multiplicity thereof through constant departures from a primordial original; which would then be a history, not of *natural objects* (which is properly the description of nature), but of generative *nature itself*. (*System* 199)

7. What makes the history of nature in the 1815 *Ages* a counterscience rather than a further example of Idealist science is its turn from anthropogenesis to psychoanalysis. For even though the 1813 version contains discussions of archetypes and magnetic sleep, it is only in 1815 that psychoanalysis emerges in its full trauma. Both the earlier versions are highly idealistic. In 1811 Schelling locates the past in a "time before the world" which, like Eternity in Blake's (*First*) *Book of Urizen*, is pure "limpidity," and which promises a similar "indifference" "after the world" (*WI* 11, 29, 37). He postulates three distinct "periods" (and periods of philosophy) which together result in the "completed time" that is the future. These periods are part of an enlightenment guaranteed by the Trinity (82ff.): a myth that sublates the recognition of "God" as a "life, subject to suffering and becoming" (*Philosophical Investigations* 274) within ontotheology as anthropology (*WI* 67-68), and that confines the trauma of the "rotary movement" to a paganism that is decisively past (38-39). This is to say that the 1811 version, although like all three versions it contains only one book on the "past," is the complete work that Schelling later unworked, because each period contains "the whole of time" (82). Less theological but even more visionary is the much briefer 1813 version. Indeed the 1813 text omits entirely the passages on the rotary motion that recur throughout the third version. Consequently, if there is an "unconscious" that unfolds in history (the word is only used as an adjective), it is not a psychoanalytic unconscious, but simply an existence before existents. The troubling potential of this ex-sistence or *il y à* (later elaborated by Emmanuel Levinas) is in effect veiled in the language of spirit, as the past is figured as a "tranquil realm" (*W2*:148), and eternity as a space where the "will produces itself . . . without eternity knowing": "produces itself absolutely—that is, out of itself and from itself" (138, 137). Given this being that does not have to know what it knows, history develops unproblematically through nature as a "ladder of formations" that is still conceived as a prophetic poem, in which the "creative spirit" sees the "spirits of things" and "make[s] them corporeal" so as to "unfold a complete image of the future world" (154).
8. By contrast, at the heart of the third version is the revolutionary turbulence of a "rotatory movement that never comes to a standstill," and which Schelling compares to an "unremitting wheel" and the "self-lacerating madness" of Dionysiac music (*W3* 20,103). The two wills comprizing this madness, one "negating" and the other "freely effluent," were already present in the 1813 version (*W2* 144), in contrast to the *System*, where there was only the will as "outgoing activity" (*System* 193) or expression. But unlike the 1813 version, which schematizes the two forces in a dialectic of distinct wills, or in contrast to the 1811 version, which sees the negating force as a usurper (*WI* 23), in 1815 the two wills constitute an "annular drive . . . in which there is no differentiation": neither "a veritable higher nor a veritable lower" (*W3* 20), as the two exchange places, each becoming the outside or inside of the other, in a relation of folding rather than of contraries leading to progression. As there is no distinction between lower and higher, but only a "circulation" between them (20), so too there is none between nature and history as a "higher potency" of nature (*University Studies* 103): the raising to self-consciousness of what had been implicit in nature. Consequently in 1815 there is no longer a "true beginning" that does not "always begin again" but becomes the "ground of a steady progression," nor is there a "veritable end in which a being persists that does not need to retreat from itself back to the beginning" (*W3* 20). Rather in Schelling's deconstruction of the Hegelian logic that underwrites an Idealist history, the third, the synthesis he had continued to project in 1813 (*W2* 144), is itself a moment in the cycle. For to escape this cycle the "unity" would have to be "outside the antithesis." But this is impossible, since the unity would then have to "exclude" antithesis, which would make it the opposite of, and thus still within, the antithesis (*W3* 36-37). Put differently, the "third" that is the synthesis is "incapable of continuance," because "each of the three has an equal right to be that which has being" (36, 19).
9. Several other things distinguish the 1815 text.[\[10\]](#) Most significant is the form of the text's content: the transference of the section on the rotary motion closer to the beginning, and the section on Dionysian madness (*WI* 42-43) closer to the end (*W3* 102-3), such that the negating potency contains rather than

being contained in the text. Not that idealism, as the "soul of philosophy" (*Philosophical Investigations* 236), is absent from this version. But the text is turned back on itself, as what was concealed in the unexamined interior of Being is brought out, while this interior that folded the world into itself is now only on its horizon. Thus the famous passage on the disavowal of the "negative" and the human "predilection for the affirmative" is also transposed from the end in the second version (W2 140) to the beginning in the third (W3 6).<sup>[11]</sup> Within this derangement of the original structure, there is a pivotal rethinking of *Hemmung* as inhibition rather than simply a limitation similar to Blake's definition of reason in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* as the "outward bound of energy." Briefly *Hemmung* in the *First Outline* and the Introduction to it is thought within a rhetoric of the prolific (as Blake calls it), that is simply an inversion of Fichte's dialectic of the I and the not-I. For Fichte it is the I which meets resistance in the Not-I; for Schelling it is the infinitely expanding force of the Not-I (the vital force in nature) that is curbed by a force of defining resistance. But in 1815 inhibition is rethought within a theory of lack, wherein selfhood is "self-wanting [*sich-wollen*]" that through which "a being withdraws itself or cuts itself off from other things" and is "exclusively itself" and "from the outside and in relation to everything else, purely negating" (W3 16; 10:30). This is to say that the negative that resists any positing, the "darkening that resists the light" or "obliquity that resists the straight" (W3 6) is now constitutive of a being that would otherwise "sink back into universal being" (92).<sup>[12]</sup>

10. In a further radical shift, the 1815 version recasts the wills as compulsive rather than voluntaristic, which forces us to confront what Slavoj Žižek calls "the Real of the drives." By contrast the 1813 text had been more purely about "freedom" (W2 172),<sup>[13]</sup> and that too the Idealist freedom sought in the *System* (192, 195-96) rather than the more difficult freedom of the *Freedom* essay, where freedom is compulsively entwined with necessity.<sup>[14]</sup> For while Schelling in 1815 still uses *Kraft* or *Potenz* more than *Trieb* to describe the two wills, they are now structured as *drive* because of the way they are interlocked in, and can only be configured within, an *Umtrieb* (annular drive) whose rotary motion defines the very notion of drive as a positing caught and turned back upon itself, an "auto-castration" (103; 10:143), or freedom that (never quite) emerges from the heart of necessity. Schelling had already used the notion of drive (*Trieb*) in the *System*, but as a Fichtean and expansive form of will, geared towards an "object" and towards "self-interest," even if "blindly" (*System* 185-86, 194, 189; 7:571). But the notion of the drive as a rotary motion or *Umtrieb* means that the drive has only itself as an object and is fundamentally a force of *contraction* into the self. This darker and more psychoanalytic notion of drive was already implicit in the word *Kraft* which, as Pascal David points out, is etymologically linked to *Krankheit* (illness), "which occurs when the organism turns its force against itself," as in a muscular contraction to which *Kraft* is also related (335). Nevertheless, it is the notion of an *Umtrieb* that turns each of these forces back on itself and into the other that is crucial here, rendering the expansive force as well as the force of contraction a drive. This is to say that it is the obsessiveness of their entwinement within the *Umtrieb* that makes the two wills drives as well as "powers," which in 1811 and 1813 produce history seamlessly, while the drives produce it more unreadably by darkening the enlightenment whereby will becomes representation.

11. A drive is not a primordial positive force, but a purely geometrical, topological phenomenon, the name for the curvature of the space of desire, i.e. for the paradox that, within this space, the way to attain the object is (a) not to go straight for it (the safest way to miss it), but to encircle it, to 'go round in circles'. Drive is this purely 'topological' distortion of the natural instinct which finds satisfaction in a natural consumption of its object.

12. Thus the 1815 text is punctured by words like "madness," "self-laceration," and "revulsion." This last is Schelling's term for the involution by which nature, as in the case of planets rotating on their own axis, "evolves itself out of its own powers," yet not by any "peaceful eisemplasy [*Ineinsbildung*] of forces" (103, 91-92; 10:128), such as was envisaged in the earlier *Naturphilosophie*,<sup>[15]</sup> or in the process of

the will in 1813 producing "itself absolutely—that is, out of itself and from itself" (W2 137). Nevertheless, if at the core of nature as the dark heart of history is something Žižek calls psychosis (*Indivisible* 31), the text is the *analysis* of this "madness," framed as a process in which there is a "questioning being" and an "answering being, an unknowing being that seeks knowledge and an unknowing being that does not know its knowledge" (W3 xxxvi). This famous phrase from the Introduction, which describes a visionary hermeneutic in the first two versions, always already contained the trace of something else: an unknowing that returns the *cogito* to its unthought, a non-knowledge at the heart of "knowing" that becomes the very core of the epistemology of the third version. In 1813, this non-knowledge is short-circuited by the section on magnetic sleep, which comes close to the end of the text, and expands the trope of "silent dialogue" or "inner . . . conversation" in the Introduction (W2 115; W3 xxxvi).<sup>[16]</sup> Enacting as well as glossing the earlier dialogue, the magnetic cure in 1813 effects a "decision" between the two wills (W2 172), from which the future unfolds archetyp(ologic)ally through a hermeneutics of "spirit." Again, the end of the text, with its unfolding of the archetypes out of the wisdom of "deepest antiquity" (161-62), thus circles back to the beginning, to the Introduction where "the archetypal image of things slumbers" within "the memory of all things" (114). The magnetic cure also functions as a key to reading the 1813 text, through a kind of slumber in which the outer, analytic potency is stilled so as to release the visionary forces within.

13. In 1815 the discussion of magnetic sleep is just as much a *mise-en abime* of our relation as analysands to the medium or mediation that is the text. But in the third version, where it is placed far from the end, this section becomes far more problematic, even though Schelling reproduces much of the same material. For by introducing the supplement of psychoanalysis through the figure of "guidance [*Leitung*]" (W3 69; 10:100) so as to resolve a problem in the 1813 version—that of how to ground freedom and spirit in a subject—, Schelling shifts this silent dialogue from hypnosis to analysis. And that too, an interminable analysis, given that the guidance that connects the "higher" and "lower" principles can never be final. For as we shall see, the higher must constantly become lower and the lower again higher, in the rotary motion that characterizes Schelling's dialectic and distinguishes the structure of this text from the teleological form of the 1813 version.
14. The word guidance is significantly absent from the 1813 version, where magnetic sleep unfolds independently of any agency or affect, in the pure unconsciousness of "spirit" (W2 158-60). Schelling's interest in magnetism and somnambulism, which are often seen as part of the prehistory of psychoanalysis,<sup>[17]</sup> marks an early concern on his part with unconscious phenomena that goes beyond the mere use of the word unconscious (*bewusstlos*) in *The System* (7:607) to mean non-voluntary. If we are to discern a "psychoanalysis" in the 1813 version, it would have to be in this section, since in Mesmerism we are dealing specifically with a sick being, a being that is affectively and not just philosophically self-different. But in fact Mesmerism in 1813 is still connected to Schelling's early interest in a vital fluid that is the physiochemical proof of the world-soul (*Weltseele*),<sup>[18]</sup> and it involves the rebalancing of the inner chemistry (as in humoral theory) with this larger universal chemistry. As Henri Ellenberger points out, Mesmerism in Germany unlike France was a serious science in which chairs were instituted at the universities of Berlin and Bonn, and which engaged artists and philosophers; it was an "experimental metaphysics" leading to powers of vision (77-82). In line with this philosophical as well as therapeutic understanding of Mesmerism, magnetic sleep in the 1813 *Ages* provides a mechanism for healing the tension between the two wills, since it is predicated upon "the separated poles of a magnet" being in a "state of constant, unconscious longing [*unbewussten Sehnsucht*], by virtue of which they strive to come to each other" (W2 136; 136). For as Schelling had said in 1799, annotating the concept of magnetism: "Nature is originally identity—duplicity is only a condition of activity because Nature constantly strives to revert into its identity" (*First Outline* 117n).
15. In magnetic sleep, moreover, this healing is unconscious, encapsulating what we shall see is a problem pertaining to the production of the subject, and thus history, in the first two versions. Briefly, in all three



versions, if we are to move from eternity to time, the will must "produce itself out of itself and from itself [*aus sich selbst and von sich selbst*]" (W2 137; 137)—an idea(1) that Schelling repeats almost obsessively throughout the 1813 version. In 1811 Schelling has no means of imagining this transition, except to assume it happens. Thus in 1813 he realizes that the being that is "selfless and completely immersed in itself" must "attract a subject" if it is to become actual (W2 123-24). Yet he remains mesmerized by a notion of this auto-production as absolute autonomy: a problem that goes back to the imagining of "freedom" in the *System* in terms of a "pure will" that is self-determining (*System* 185-93). As in Derrida's analysis of the Husserlian idea of expression, the will must come out of itself while remaining wholly inside: in expression the "meaning intends an outside which is that of an ideal object; this outside is then ex-pressed and goes forth beyond itself into another outside, which is always 'in' consciousness." Through this sleight-of-hand "expressive discourse," as Derrida observes, avoids any need "of being effectively uttered in the world" (*Speech* 32). In the 1813 *Ages* the process by which the will "produces itself out of itself" thus remains purely ideal. This is all the more so as the subject in whom this happens seems absent from the process—which is indeed the nature of the magnetic cure. Put differently the mode of the 1813 text is expansive. Missing from this version is the sense, so powerfully present in 1815, of a force of contraction. For if the will were to contract itself into a real subject—a contraction that Schelling recognizes in 1815 as crucial to the formation of a subject (W3 16)—then the very nature of "freedom" would be radically altered, as indeed it is in the *Freedom* essay.

[19]

16. the power [is] . . . given to one man to transcend that outer potency and return another man to the free inner relations of life, so that he appears dead externally, while internally a steady and free connection of all forces [*Zusammenhang aller Kräfte*] emerges from the lowest up to the highest. (158; 160)

Magnetic sleep, in other words, allows for a bracketing of the external world that concentrates and (di)stills actuality back into its potentiality. However, in the more humanistic *Ages* (1813) this depotentializing is finally aimed at "returning" the soul "to its potency" (W3 69). It is not aimed at reducing "human spirit" "into soul [which] becomes effective by willingly subordinating itself to God" (Habermas 70), but rather at raising soul to spirit. There are therefore three "gradations" in magnetic sleep as described in the 1813 *Ages*: a simplification of the six stages outlined in C.A.F. Klügel's 1811 textbook on the subject, which culminate in "Universal Clarity" or the "removal of veils of time and space," such that "the subject perceives things hidden in the past [and] future" (Ellenberger 78). In the lowest of Schelling's stages the "life-spirit [which is the] intermediating essence between body and spirit" heals "the disorders of the body." This allows, in the next stage, for a "free relation" by which spirit becomes both an instrument of, and a slate for, [the] higher principle . . . on which this higher principle is able to read what lies concealed within itself." Finally, in the highest stage "the process of freedom spreads up to what is eternal of the soul itself" (W2 159). All this time the empirical self is asleep, like Blake's Milton on his couch in Eternity. Once the transcendental self has been freed from the spectre of the outer potency, we have made "the first, distant beginning toward a revelation" (143), through a liberation of the archetypes [*Urbilder*] that makes Mesmerism still very much part of an aesthetics rather than a psychoanalysis of history.[21] These archetypes, then, which "stream out from the innermost part of creative nature," are "visions of future things," through which the "will of eternity . . . externalize[s] itself" in "expression" (W2 161,167).

17. The concept of expression that dominates the last pages of the text marks the strongly logocentric character of the 1813 version, which Schelling prepared for printing but then abandoned because, according to his son Karl Schelling, it "falls into utter falsehoods" at the end (W2 180n). Moreover, as the figure that orchestrates this end in the same way that the Trinity had done in 1811, magnetic sleep symptomatically embodies the very essence of transcendental idealism as a philosophy that produces itself inside itself through a hypnotism of itself, thus sidestepping the labour of the negative. This

interiorization that is part of transcendental idealism had been described in the *System*, where Schelling concedes that it is immaterial how "the self determines itself, whether through the subjective determining the objective or *vice versa*," since in the latter case "the external object actually has no reality *per se*, being simply a medium for the . . . *expression*" of "the pure will" (*System* 193-94; emphasis mine).

18. In 1815, however, there are several changes that complicate magnetic sleep as a trope for transcendental idealism. First, in a crucial passage to which we shall return, Schelling introduces the word guidance into the first stage of magnetic sleep:

The lowest rung would be where the crisis is posited (*gesetzt wird*) or where the material of human nature is liberated [*in Befreiung gesetzt wird*]. . . . Each subordinated nature, whose guiding connection with its higher principle is interrupted, is sick. But it is precisely this guidance (*Leitung*) that is always restored, at least for awhile, by magnetic sleep. Either what has been unnaturally intensified by this magic, and has sunk into deeper sleep, is restored to its potency (and hence, to its potentiality with respect to the higher principle), or the life that has been excessively weakened and oppressed by the higher principle becomes free for a moment and breathes again. (*W3* 69-70; 10:99-100)

19. Moreover, if we look closely, it seems that the crisis in 1815 may not be resolved so much as opened up. It is opened up first of all by the rotary logic of the text, within which the linear schema of three stages is untenable, because each of the three has "an equal right to be that which has being" (*W3* 19). But it is also opened up by Schelling's actual account of the crisis. For in describing the *transference* of the lower into the higher that constitutes guidance, he admits to a "potency [and] potentiality" of the lower that has been "excessively weakened and oppressed by the higher principle." If the higher is oppressive, then the higher must itself be part, even a cause, of the crisis. Put differently, since each principle has an equal right to be that which has being, any principle that constitutes itself as higher so as to limit what Schelling in 1809 had called freedom risks being oppressive. But this is, if not to negate, at least to put any form of guidance under erasure. Indeed in returning not thrice but twelve times to the first book of *Ages*, in revolving about the "axis" of his own thought in a "revulsion" that seeks absolute (self)knowledge (92), Schelling questions all the forms of guidance he himself offers through such figures as the Trinity in 1811, or the archetypes in 1813 and even 1815.
20. To be sure the notion of higher and lower principles was also in the 1813 version, where it was also a question of liberating the lower. But what is different here is that within the logic of folding in the third version the higher and lower principles, or the outer and inner potencies, are structural positions whose content is not fixed. This constant reversion of each into the other means that the valence of the higher, as either a principle of healing or a force of oppression, is also constantly changing. We already have a sense of the oppressiveness of "higher" principles such as totality in Karl Schelling's note to the 1813 version, which unexpectedly goes on to take up the concept of disease. In contrast to Hegel's theorization of disease as caused by the contraction of the part away from the whole into its own separate selfhood (*Philosophy* 428), and in contrast to some of Friedrich Schelling's own disavowals of evil and illness (*W3* 48), the note attributes disease to the coerciveness of the whole:

Disease is only possible to the extent that all forces and organs of life are subjugated to a common exponent, whereby the individual [*das Einzelne*] is sacrificed to the whole [*zum Opfer des Ganzen*] and must follow in a direction that is inappropriate for it or against its nature. (*W2* 160n; 162n)

21. In short in the 1813 version we witness a straightforward transference of the lower into the higher that continues seamlessly through the gradations of the psychic process. But in the 1815 version the crisis



that is the first gradation threatens to derail the entire process, insofar as the relation between higher and lower is unstable and countertransfereential. The crisis that is (psychic) illness is the freedom of the lower against the higher. As a result the guidance regulating the healing transference of the lower onto the higher is itself threatened, since we no longer know what is lower and what is potentially higher. The entire section therefore goes back to the problematic of evil explored in the *Freedom* essay. There Schelling, by thinking disease in terms of freedom—the freedom of the part to separate from the whole, or of the individual to separate from the goals of the species—, rethinks the very relation between good and evil, higher and lower, and thus rethinks the very nature of freedom.

22. If we work back to the beginning of the section on magnetic sleep, the counter-transfereential nature of the process, which is what renders it a "crisis" in a psychoanalytic sense, becomes more evident. Here Schelling expands on the mesmerizing of the subject to detail something potentially far more chaotic than the integration of forces from "the lowest to the highest" (W2 158) that he still wants to attribute to the second stage of magnetic sleep in 1815 (W3 70).

Two different and, in a certain respect, opposed states, share human life. The waking person and the sleeping person are inwardly altogether the same person. None of the inner forces that are in effect in the waking state are lost in sleep. . . . All forces of the person during the waking state are apparently governed by a unity that holds them together . . . [and] communally expresses them (or is their exponent). But if this link is dissolved . . . then each force retreats back into itself and each tool now seems to be active for itself and in its own world. A voluntary sympathy enters the place of the externally binding unity, and while the whole is outwardly as if dead and inactive, inwardly the freest play and circulation of forces [*das freieste Spiel und Verkehr der Kräfte*] seems to unfold. (W3 68; 10:98)

23. The "crisis" was of course important to Mesmer, though he avoided its full radicality by dealing with it only physiologically and seeing it as cathartic or curative. Mesmer famously induced crises in his patients to bring the disease to a head. These crises, moreover, were potentially uncontrollable: "sometimes a crisis ignited in one patient induced similar crises in others in the group" (Crabtree 14). Schelling does not use the word "crisis" in the 1813 *Ages*, focusing instead on the so-called "gentler crisis" of magnetic sleep promoted by Mesmer's follower the Marquis de Puységur. Puységur took Mesmerism in a more visionary and eventually spiritualist direction that dominated its reception in German Romanticism. Similarly the 1813 *Ages* refers only to a "disorder in the body" that is no sooner named than resolved (W2 159), in keeping with the text's idealization of magnetic sleep as a harmonizing of the chemistry of the individual with the cosmic fluid of the world-soul. While the 1813 version stresses the reconnecting of conflicting forces, the explanation of "crisis" in the *Stuttgart Seminars* (1810) is more revealing:

All crisis involves some kind of exclusion. . . . By means of a process of veritable alchemy, good and evil are separated, and evil will be altogether expelled from the good; an entirely healthy, ethical, pure, and innocent nature will result from this crisis. It will comprise nothing but true being . . . freed from all false being. (*Stuttgart* 242)

24. The crisis for Mesmer also has this function of *katharsis* and exclusion, involving "an effort of the living body to throw off an illness" and marking "the general action and effort of Nature to restore the disturbed harmony" (Crabtree 65). Yet it is precisely this repressive notion of crisis, the resolution of which requires the supplementary trope of alchemy, that Schelling psychoanalyzes in the 1815 *Ages*. For Mesmer's crisis is in effect a *pharmakon*, the unleashing of a certain violence and disorder in the psyche—hence the revolutionary pathogens with which his work was associated. In fact part of Mesmer's hesitation about Puységur's induced somnambulism was that it might really be an

intensification of mental disorders such as madness, epilepsy and convulsions (Crabtree 65). But then, this could surely be extended to Mesmer's own notion of crisis.

25. In magnetic sleep as Schelling develops it in 1813 following Puységur, "all the powers" are present, but "in subordination to the Ideal" (*Stuttgart* 242). But the material added in 1815 registers a crisis of the Real, closer to the hysteria of the crises Mesmer actually induced. In this darker version of the opening up of primary process, "all the forces of the person" forcibly unified in the waking state are present, but are unbound so that each is "active for itself" (*W3* 68) in a psyche that dissolves into a body without organs. The body without organs, as Deleuze explains, "is not defined by the absence of organs," but is a "hysterical" body defined by an "indeterminate organ" or by "the *temporary and provisional presence* of determinate organs" (*Francis Bacon* 47-48). In this sense, the mesmeric crisis of 1815 anticipates the darker side of "double consciousness" that was to emerge in the work of Puységur's successors, culminating in Charcot and Freud. Nor is it surprising that Schelling finds himself developing the more disturbing implications of magnetic sleep, given how he had already complicated the allied figures of a cosmic fluid and world-soul in *The First Outline* by thinking them through John Brown's theory of "excitability" as the core of life (106-40). For excitability, even if in a physiochemical rather than psychological way, introduces a volatility, a certain restlessness of the negative, into the world-soul as the embryo of the "world-spirit." This volatility comes to a head in the Appendix on disease as the expression of the "organic individual" whose "perspective" is excluded by the 'higher' perspective "provided for *the whole of organic nature*." In disease there is a reassertion of "the original duplicity," the "constant restoration" of which prevents the organism from "sinking back into absolute homogeneity," and which means that "the organism never ceases to be its own object." Moreover, disease is by no means an aberration since it has "the same factors as life" (159-60), and is a disclosure of the pathological within the normal.
26. That the crisis in 1815 is "posited" means it is forced out into the open as a psychic, and not inevitably therapeutic, crisis. And indeed that a crisis "lies buried within" any self-constitution or event was already conceded by Schelling in the 1813 *Ages*. Here he admits that if "what-is were actually to be posited "we would "discern in it the conflict of those inner principles that we must recognize in everything that is." As he further elaborates, though the "*expressing [das Aussprechende]*" or "(the essence of the copula, as one would have to say in the language of logic) can only be one. . . . this does not prevent the expressed [*das Ausgesprochene*] . . . from being Two that are opposed" (*W2* 127; 126-27). The point is made parenthetically, so that we do not experience the trauma of this expressing as exclusion: what Žižek calls "castration" or "the passage from S (the full 'pathological' subject) to \$ (the 'barred' subject)" that "marks our entry into language" ("Hegel" 190). But the crisis buried in Schelling's own expressing of this inner division as only a problem of logic in 1813 explodes in 1815 in the passage on magnetic sleep, where the unity that holds the "inner forces" together in the waking state and "communally expresses them (or is their exponent)" collapses (*W3* 68). As if alluding back to the terms used in 1813, Schelling describes this "crisis" of mesmeric sleep as one in which "the external copula that coerces and dominates people" is severed so that "each principle is again posited in its freedom" (67). This freedom in turn takes us back to the beginning of the world, where the planets, to evoke Maurice Blanchot, are produced out of disaster. In this primal scene of autogenesis "each single particular nature commences with the rotation about its own axis and hence, manifestly, in a state of inner revulsion" or "anxiety." Emerging when "the two opposed forces in initial nature are brought to a common denomination," this nature then becomes a "gathering together" that "cannot persist" because of its underlying "inherent contradiction" (*W3* 91-92).
27. If the crisis of a rotary movement exists at the origin of beings, and indeed being itself, then there can be no history in the sense of what Schelling calls "actual history": a "series of free actions through which God . . . reveal[s] itself" (49). A "true beginning," Schelling writes in describing a more conventional Hegelian history, would be "one that does not always begin again but persists," so that

there is a "steady progression" and not an "alternating advancing and retreating movement" (20). A "veritable end" is likewise one that "does not need to retreat from itself back to the beginning" (20). But for this progress to occur, there must be a decisive separation between present and past: "no present is possible that is not founded on a decisive past," and "no past is possible that is not based on the present as something overcome" (42).<sup>[26]</sup> Yet the present itself "cannot persist," let alone be overcome, if what is "gathered together" and expressed contains "two opposed forces." This unbearable contradiction repressed by expression is one that Schelling locates at the very origin of things, in what Žižek calls the "psychosis" in which God, "upon 'contracting' being as an illness . . . gets caught in the mad . . . alternation of contraction and expansion" ("Hegel" 191). This psychosis, for Schelling, results in the emergence of the first objects in nature as "rotary wholes [*rotatorischen Ganzen*]," created in the most "violent revulsion," since everything that "becomes can only become in discontent" (W3 90-91;10:128-29). "Hence, scarcely has [this whole] . . . felt the common denomination and the conflict of forces when it wants to separate" (91), which is to say that anything posited must almost immediately be deconstructed.

28. To be sure, the account of the world's creation as a series of "rotary wholes" has to do with nature, not with freedom. More specifically, Schelling is describing the creation of the planets. But one cannot avoid sensing in the background of the text and the prominence accorded to the rotary movement the crisis that would also mark Shelley's *Triumph of Life* a few years later. Shelley's last poem rethinks Romanticism, and indeed history itself, as the interminable analysis of its revolutionary ideals figured in the rotary movement of the Car of Life and the involution of the narrator's magnetic sleep within the crisis of 'Rousseau's' waking dream. Evoking the same event, "the revolution of a gifted people" as Kant calls it (*Conflict* 153), Schelling describes it in similar terms to those he will use in his account of the mesmeric crisis, which therefore acquires a certain resonance as a historical crisis:

If an organic being becomes sick, forces appear that previously lay concealed in it. Or if the copula of the unity dissolves altogether and if the life forces that were previously subjugated by something higher are deserted by the ruling spirit and can freely follow their own inclinations and manners of acting, then something terrible becomes manifest . . . which was held down by the magic of life. . . . For when the abysses of human life open up in evil . . . we first know what lies in the human in accordance with its possibility. . . . If we take into consideration the many terrible things in nature and the spiritual world that a benevolent hand seems to cover up from us, then we could not doubt that the Godhead sits enthroned over a world of terrors. (W3 48-49)

29. This is to say that if the rotary movement of history as its own psychoanalysis stalls "actual" history, it is also this psychoanalysis that produces a very different kind of history. For in the first two versions there was no history because there was no subject, no real explanation of hypostasis and beginning. The problem of history in both texts can be stated as that of a will that "produces itself out of itself," and is therefore "unconditioned," "pure freedom." But this will that "wants nothing" and "knows no differentiation" is really the stilling of what Schopenhauer calls will, and is thus without "effectivity" (W1 15; W2 137). To explain the transition from eternity to time Schelling, as we have seen, must construct the will as subject: the "subject" is the means by which a being "completely immersed in itself" can "step forth from . . . potentiality into activity" (W2 123-24). Yet it is unclear how a *subject* can be engendered "at the heart of the objective" (W1 35) if the will is a non-will. Schelling therefore sees this subject as produced "unconsciously," through a peaceful eisemplasy of the two wills, in which the second, "actively opposed to eternity," also engenders itself spontaneously, and without "know[ing] what it does" (W1 18; W2 136-37). But immaculate as this conception of a "will, generated out of itself" is (W2:140), such a will cannot be a subject. And indeed in 1813 this will produces itself "not out of, but rather in eternity" (137), in a transcendental rather than real genesis. Or to adapt what Žižek says of the late philosophy of revelation, "God possesses in advance his existence" ("Hegel" 190-91)

and does not personally suffer the force of contraction.

30. In 1811 it is the figure of the Trinity that protects God from his existence, while in 1813 this role is played by an unconsciousness crystallized in Schelling's idealization of magnetic sleep. For insofar as there is an unconscious in 1813 it functions as a form of anesthesia, painlessly producing "an urge to become conscious, *of which eternity itself does not become conscious*" (W2 136). But in 1815 Schelling introduces the crisis of the drives as the interminable analysis of the higher and the lower by each other. The drives mediate between the primal narcissism of Being and the differentiated subject, thereby also producing an unconscious closer to that of psychoanalysis, and a history that must be responsible to this psychoanalysis. The drives are the way an in-different Being that would otherwise be "eternally in itself" (W1 16) produces itself as subject, but only because this non-difference never existed, since the "annular drive" is now "among the oldest potencies" rather than coming later as a "supplement" (W3 92). For "the will that wills nothing" is now not the beginning, but the "Other" that is "outside and above all potency," beyond "obsession and nature" (23-24), which is to say outside life. What this also means is that though the text's psychic "action" appears to be before the beginning, in a pre-history that the will yearns to leave behind, because there never was a prior time, it is already *in* history as the impossibility of any dialectical enlightenment.
31. The drives produce the self as a "rotary whole" in which "the negating primordial force" (7) is also "elevating and creating" because the "selfhood [*Selbstheit*]," turning around itself and contracting away from universal Being, "eccentrically seeks . . . its own foundational point" (92; 10.129). But the text is not about the production of a psychotic subject and is rather about understanding the drives: their affect, consequences and interrelation. For the very notion of the annular drive already contains a form of self-reflection, even if in a blind way, since each drive is the object of the other: a reflexive structure that is part of Schelling's deeply deconstructive unworking of self-consciousness as enlightenment. This revolving around itself or revulsion that is (not yet) self-consciousness is a *historical* responsibility, for those who would grasp "the history of the cosmos" must confront "what is concealed in themselves . . . the abysses of the past that are still in one just as much as the present" (3-4). Indeed as we have already intimated, the "rotary whole," in contrast to the whole that demands the subordination of its parts, is a simultaneously psychotic and critical structure. As such it produces historical and hysterical forms-in-process such as the French Revolution or fascism as theorized by Bataille,[\[27\]](#) but within a rotary rather than linear movement which, far from establishing these forms in a present we move beyond, forces them to return into themselves and interrogate their very foundations.
32. If the *Ages* is not "about" psychoanalysis as a positivity but only as a topology, is it about history? But the question then is *what* history might result from this text? One could argue that spirit's difficulty in emerging from the darkness of matter makes *Ages* a forerunner of negative dialectics, whether in the form of a "natural history" (in Adorno and Benjamin's sense) that exposes spirit to the suffering of history; or in the form of a utopianism that discerns in the "dark ground" of history "something not yet made good that pushes its essence forward" (Habermas, *Philosophical-Political* 63-64, 71). Schelling calls this something "soul," as the ideal principle that is not spirit and dwells in matter, and that can "come out" only if it is "enveloped and retained by the negating force as by a receptacle" (W3 69, 57-58). Or one could argue that the history shadowed in this text through the development of "freedom" in its most radical sense is a post-anthropological history that Schelling draws out of the physiogony of Robinet and Charles Bonnet.[\[28\]](#) Such a reading would align Schelling with the post-Heideggerian thought with which Peter Fenves also aligns the late Kant. Or one could generate a psychoanalytic politics from the *Ages* that sees the creative "potency" in evil without imagining that there can ever be a history without psychosis.[\[29\]](#)
33. But such readings, while persuasive in different ways, posit a theory of history at the cost of not seeing

history itself as also something cathected onto being, nature or self. That is to say the shrouding of all things in a past that marks their finitude makes history too, as historicity, a counterscience that maintains with the sciences a "relation that is strange, undefined, . . . and more fundamental than any relation of adjacency in a common space would be" (*Order* 367). David Ferris takes up this interdisciplinarity wherein disciplines must be thought from their outside, in rethinking the very nature of interdisciplinarity with and against Kant's notion of the formation of new disciplines through a process of epistemic supplementation and transference. For Kant "The principles of a science are either internal to it, and are then called indigenous (*principia domestica*), or they are based on principles that can only find their place outside of it, and are foreign principles (*peregrina*)." For Kant, however, the supplementary constitution of a different form of knowledge through its borrowing from a foreign body of thought results in a new positivity: "the principle of one science, once borrowed," is "forgotten as another science or discipline emerges" whose "principle" and "guiding concepts" become "internal to it." By contrast, in a more modern interdisciplinarity that, we could argue, Romanticism invents, the formation of interdisciplines through a process of supplementation is the (in)completion of one discipline by another, in a process wherein disciplines in a positive sense remain a point of reference only in their "critical negation" (Ferris 1251-53). Or as Schelling says, the unconditioned can reveal itself only through "negations. No *positive* external intuition of [it] is possible" (*First Outline* 19). Rather, unconditional knowledge in *Ages* consists in a *retreat* from positive knowledge through the turning of all sciences into countersciences, as history is a contraction away from the plenitude of nature, and psychoanalysis a withdrawal from any positing of history.

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## Notes

[1](#) Schelling, *The Ages of the World* (1815), trans. Jason M. Wirth (Albany: State U of New York P, 2000), 31.

Hereafter *W3*. The untranslated 1811 version (*W1*) is included in Manfred Schröter, *Die Weltalter* (C. H. Beck: München, 1946). References to the 1813 version (*W2*), are to the translation by Judith Norman in Slavoj Žižek/F. W. J. Schelling, *The Abyss of Freedom/Ages of the World* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997). References to German texts, when used, are given by volume and page number after the references to the English translation and, except for *W1* and *W2*, are to *Ausgewählte Werke*, 10 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966-8). *W2* was not included in the *Ausgewählte Werke*, the version dated 1813 being actually the 1815 text. References to the German texts of *W1* and *W2* are therefore to the edition by Schröter. Translations from *W1* are mine.

[2](#) For Benjamin's and Adorno's concept of natural history see Hanssen 49-101; Lupton 27-37.

[3](#) See Faflak, *Romantic Psychoanalysis* 7.

[4](#) There are some differences between the three versions, which are not of significance for the argument here.

[5](#) Hegel saw Schelling as not paying enough attention to "dialectic" and the labour of the negative. As Jürgen Habermas points out (47-51), however, after *Bruno* Schelling silently took account of this criticism first levelled against him in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, embracing the negative affectively as well as logically, as Hegel (according to Habermas) did not.

[6](#) The connection with Derrida is also made by Scribner 152-55. However, Scribner focuses on the issue of temporality and uses Paul Virilio to protect an idealistic notion of *phone* through *techne*.

[7](#) The importance of geology to *Ages* is taken up in a different way by Grant, who is not concerned with geology as a science of deep time, but rather with transformative chemical processes occurring deep within the earth. Developing a chemistry rather than history of nature, Grant therefore aligns *Ages* with a radicalized *Naturphilosophie* and "physiology" (in Green 102-3), rather than with a radicalized "physiogy" as I am doing here.

[8](#) For further discussion of natural history and the history of nature in Schelling see my "Spirit's Psychoanalysis: Natural History, The History of Nature, and Romantic Historiography." *European Romantic Review* 14:2 (2003): 187-96.

[9](#) Robinet published the first four volumes of *De la Nature* in 1761-66. He added Volume 5 as *Considérations philosophiques sur la gradation naturelle des formes de l'être, Les Essais de la Nature qui apprend à faire l'homme* (Paris: 1768). Despite the title of the fifth volume, Robinet sees nature as possibly proceeding to forms beyond man. On Robinet see Lovejoy 269-83.

[10](#) In addition, the 1815 version introduces the notions of crisis and the unconscious; it makes extensive reference to sickness—a notion completely absent from the 1813 version; and it emphasizes the Sisyphean structure of cosmic and personal history as an endlessly advancing and retreating movement.

[11](#) Indeed the passages that set the tone for an irremediable darkening of enlightenment at the beginning of the third version are all clustered at the end of *W2* (179ff.). Rather than "shroud[ing] the point of departure" for our reading "in dark night" (*W3* 3), they are dissolved and dissipated in a movement of expansion at the end.

[12](#) Note the very different distinction in 1811: "Expansion is spiritualization, contraction is incarnation" (*W1* 36; translation mine).

[13](#) Slavoj Žižek makes the important point about Schelling's invention of a theory of the drives in *The Indivisible Remainder* 27-32, 38. However, Žižek does not relate the drives specifically to the 1815 version:

indeed he also discusses them in his essay "The Abyss of Freedom," which accompanies Judith Norman's translation of the 1813 text (14-21). My argument is that a theory of the drives emerges only in the more psychoanalytic 1815 version.

[14](#) In fact Schelling had begun planning and thinking about the *Weltalter* project much earlier than 1811. See David 319.

[15](#) Again, a similar passage on the planets can be found in *WI* (38), but is used as a way of normalizing the rotary motion as part of a system of regularities in nature.

[16](#) For the idea of non-knowledge see Bataille 111-18, 129-32. On the unthought, Foucault writes: "Man is a mode of being which accommodates that dimension—always open, never finally delimited, yet constantly traversed—which extends from a part of himself not reflected in a cogito to the act of thought by which he apprehends that part" (*Order* 322).

[17](#) For a discussion of Mesmerism, magnetic sleep and hypnotism as part of the prehistory of "dynamic psychiatry" (a broader category that includes psychoanalysis), see Ellenberger 53-83. It is important to note, however, that Schelling, though obviously familiar with Mesmer's concept of the vital fluid, uses the term "magnetische Schlaf" in this section (Shröter 160-61), which Judith Norman loosely translates as "mesmeric" and not magnetic sleep (*W2* 158-59). Although I will argue that there is a greater presence of Mesmer in *W3* than in *W2*, Mesmer did not see magnetic sleep as the only way of effecting the mesmeric cure or deploying magnets and magnetism (Ellenberger 72). Mesmer stressed the "crisis," while magnetic sleep (later called hypnotism) was more fully developed by the Marquis de Puységur (see Crabtree 38-53, 65). Eventually Mesmer took a position against magnetic sleep, partly because he wanted to avoid charges of occultism (Crabtree 54, 65). In *W2* Schelling's discussion of magnetic sleep has the most affinities with the work of Puységur, whose *Recherches, expériences, et observations* appeared in 1811, and with G. H. Schubert's *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (1808) and C.A.F. Kluge's *Versuch eine Darstellung des animalischen Magnetismus als Heilmittel* (Berlin, 1811). These thinkers all omit a certain violence that characterizes the psychoanalytic scene of Mesmerism itself in France. In general Mesmerism in the German Romantic tradition is more psychologically than medically oriented, but in a spiritualist way.

[18](#) For a discussion of the importance to Schelling of Humphry Davy's theories of electromagnetism, see Wallen 122-28. Wallen's reading of *W3* is quite different from mine, in that he sees the trope of vital fluid as organizing Schelling's entire *oeuvre*, integrates the movements of contraction and expansion within the figure of "electromagnetic orgasm," and on this basis associates *W3* with a philosophy of revelation, albeit in a Spinozistic rather than theistic form. The world-soul, of course, should not be seen as a conventionally organicist concept. Writing from a Deleuzian perspective, Iain Hamilton Grant distinguishes organicism from the notion of "organization" with which it is associated in Raymond Williams' *Keywords* (227-29). Grant argues that the world-soul "*unconditions the subject of the organization*. In other words, infinitely individuated parts never turn back on themselves to be sealed up into *an* organization, but proliferate unrestrictedly, as the 'positive force' of nature. . . . the World Soul cannot be approached as if it were a body" (132-33).

[19](#) Indeed as Schelling puts it in 1811: "In the will that wills nothing there was no differentiation, neither subject nor object, but only the highest simplicity. The contracting will, however, which is the will to existence, produces in itself a divorce between the two [subject and object]" (22).

[20](#) My implicit argument here is that *Ages* (1813) anticipates the late philosophy of Revelation.

[21](#) Odo Marquard argues that Schelling's *System* "takes an aesthetic perspective on existence: it determines philosophy primarily as aesthetics" (13).

22 Semantically the material in *W2* (156-58; 157-59) and *W3* (68-97) is fairly similar; however the discussion of primary process (in effect) takes on a different colouring in light of the more darkly psychoanalytic and existential framing of *W3* as a whole. *W3* adds the figure of the mirror, the reference to "the potency of the beginning," and the notion of "counterprojection" to *W2*.

23 For different views about the date of *Clara* (which is normally placed at 1810) and about its relation to the *Ages*, see Steinkamp's Introduction (x-xvii). The entire text, which is in dialogue form, can be read as an example of the mesmeric dialogue outlined in the Introduction to *Ages*.

24 "Counterprojection" is Jason Wirth's translation: "*Gegenwurf* is an obscure and extremely difficult word to render. The general sense is that each order knows itself in contradistinction to what it is not. It sees itself only through having lost or betrayed itself such that the other half mirrors the other back to itself. One discerns one's ownmost through the foreign" (*W3* 143n).

25 The socially subversive effects of Mesmerism, which culminated in the establishment of a commission to investigate it, are described by Darnton. On the other hand, its place in the prehistory of psychoanalysis (or psychiatry) is taken up by Ellenberger. What Faflak does by taking it up in both these registers is to emphasize its socially disruptive potential, but to give that disruptiveness a long-term cognitive weight by developing mesmerism towards its future in psychoanalysis. See Faflak, *Romantic Psychoanalysis* (50-55) and "Philosophy's Debatable Land in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*" (136-43). Psychoanalysis, in other words, suggests the serious cultural and personal work for which the pseudoscience of Mesmerism prepares a space, while Mesmerism is the scene of a schizoanalytic potential in psychoanalysis (to evoke Deleuze and Guattari) that Freud seeks to contain. In its cultural effects, and also in its deployment by Schelling (who introduces something quite volatile into the *Ages* under the idealistic cover of the harmonization of the individual with the rhythms of the universal fluid), Mesmerism therefore functions as what Derrida calls a "hinge" that simultaneously closes down and opens up radical possibilities (*Resistances* 78-84).

[26](#) The equivalent passage in *W2* emphasizes positing, and does not mention the alternating advancing and retreating movement: "true progress [*Fortschreiten*], which is equivalent to an elevation [*Erhebung*], takes place only when something is posited permanently and immutably and becomes the ground of elevation and progression" (*W2* 135; 135)

[27](#) Fascism has of course fascinated French intellectuals of the twentieth century. In "The Psychological Structure of Fascism," Bataille opposes fascism to monarchy and the state, even though both are authoritarian forms, on the grounds of a homogenizing force in the former which can be contrasted with the heterogeneity and disruptive force of a fascist authority that is not grounded in tradition or inheritance, and that is therefore profoundly unsettled and unsettling.

[28](#) I explore these possibilities in "Spirit's Psychoanalysis" and in "F.W.J. Schelling."

[29](#) Such a reading could be described as "Žižekian," in the way it builds on Žižek's reading of Schelling as the "vanishing mediator" between absolute idealism and psychoanalysis. A theory of history is at the core of absolute idealism—something completely neglected in the readings of Schelling provided by Heidegger and Nancy. However Žižek himself reads Schelling only psychoanalytically, rather than extrapolating a theory of history and politics from *Ages*, which, however, one can find in his own work as read through Schelling.

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