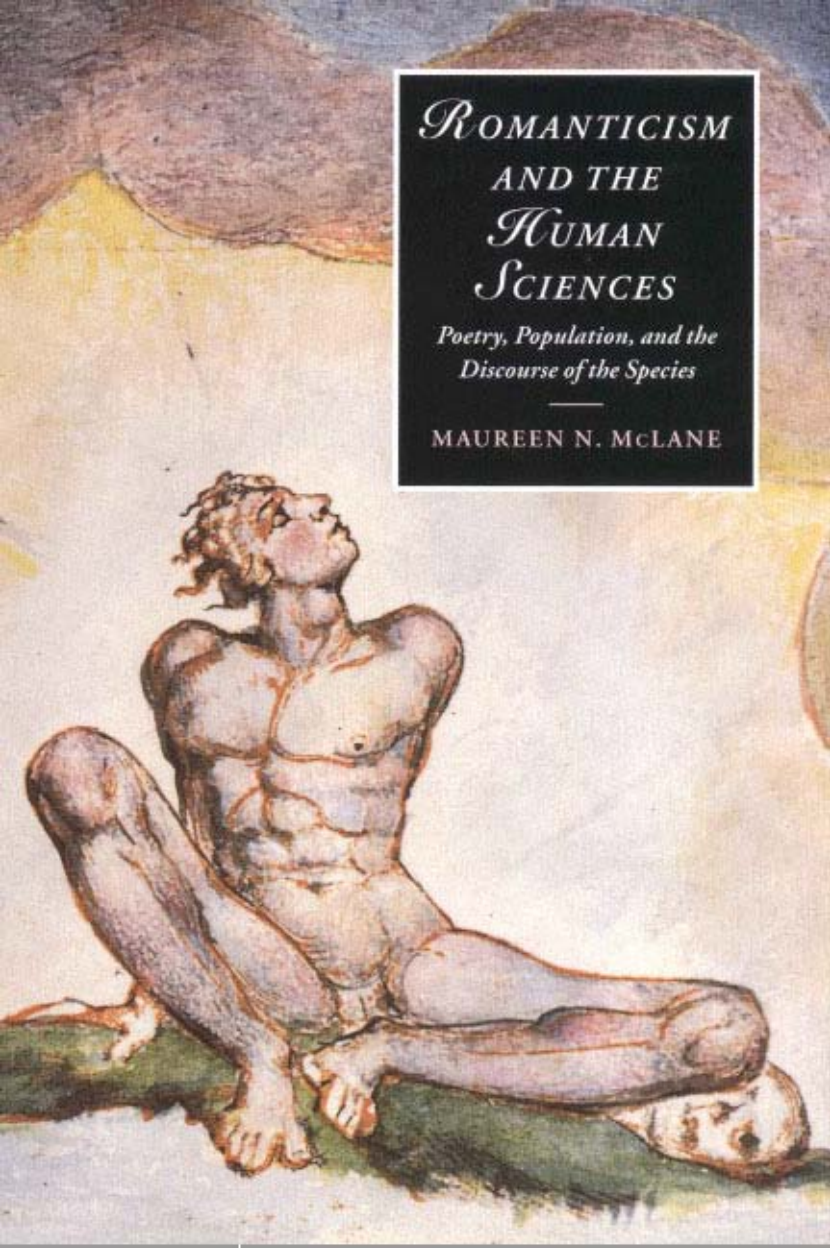
Romanticism and the Human Sciences

Poetry, Population, and the Discourse of the Species

MAUREEN N. McLANE



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This book explores Romantic poetry, and the concept of poetry in the Romantic period, as a locus of debate, defense, and discursive reconfiguration. Maureen McLane shows how the discourse around poetry involved itself intimately with the problem of the human and thus with contemporary discussions and theorizations of Man proposed by such writers as Malthus, Godwin, and Burke. Reading romanticism in relation to moral philosophy, political economy, and anthropology, McLane reveals how Romantic writers explored the possibilities and limits of human being, language, and historicity; she argues further that poetry acquired a new and vexed status as the discourse of both humanization and imagination. This book offers extended readings of canonical works, including *Lyrical Ballads*, *Biographia Literaria*, *Frankenstein*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and *The Triumph of Life*, together with considerations of Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population* and Godwin's *Political Justice*. Each chapter of this book maps a discursive constellation through which these poets and writers linked, re-worked, and re-imagined such categories as poetry, the human, species, population, imagination, and futurity.

MAUREEN MCLANE is a Junior Fellow in Harvard University's Society of Fellows. She has written numerous articles and book reviews for both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Review*. Her article, "Literate Species: Populations, 'Humanities,' and Frankenstein" (*ELH* 63), won the Keats-Shelley Association of America Essay Award in 1997.

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MAUREEN N. McLANE

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Introduction, or the thing at hand

If you should dip your hand in,
your wrist would ache immediately,
your bones would begin to ache and your hand would burn
as if the water were a transmutation of fire
that feeds on stones and burns with a dark gray flame.
If you tasted it, it would first taste bitter,
then briny, then surely burn your tongue.
It is like what we imagine knowledge to be:
dark, salt, clear, moving, utterly free,
drawn from the cold hard mouth
of the world, derived from the rocky breasts
forever, flowing and drawn, and since
our knowledge is historical, flowing, and flown.

Elizabeth Bishop, "At the Fishhouses"[1]

A need for poetry. John Cage, *Themes and Variations*

Any particular academic monograph in the humanities appears as a creature whose species is known in advance. Whether we choose to classify it via "the system" or "the method," as Michel Foucault distinguishes the taxonomic procedures of natural history, nevertheless the particular kind of thing before us tends to display all or some of the following characteristics: an impressive array of footnotes (scholarly and/or discursive), an extensive bibliographic apparatus, a statement on method, acknowledgments, a title page, chapters.[2] All this above and beyond "the argument" or the body of the thing, which itself of course must simultaneously internalize, disguise and yet manifest the requirements of those regimes – intellectual, institutional, interpersonal, economic, ideological – that variously sponsor (even as they impede) the production of academic things. Institutions and academic disciplines require their sanctioned products to be thus identifiable; rightly so. And those desirous, however ambivalently, of institutional sanction and

collegial discussion submit to, embrace, or otherwise navigate these requirements, in hopes of producing a thing recognizable as a literary-critical book.

This thing began as an experiment, an experiment not in its form but rather in its aim: to see whether and to what extent the writing of a literary dissertation was possible in the 1990s at a research university in the US. This question quickly mutated into at least two others, one explicitly personal and the other historical-material: would the writing of such a thing be impossible for me, and further, was the very category of "the literary" now impossible? Having completed the dissertation, and having revised that monograph into the book before you, I consider myself able to lay that first sub-question to rest. As to my second sub-question, about the obsolescence or impossibility of the literary itself, it has been posed and transposed into a variety of keys throughout this text. It is, as you will see, one of the guiding questions and concerns of this project. It is one of my claims – an assumption, really, informed by the work of such diverse scholars as Raymond Williams, David Bromwich, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, Paul de Man, Jerome McGann, and Alvin Kernan – that romantic writers intuited, articulated, and suffered (as McGann might say) this predicament and shadowed its contemporary form.[3] Reading romantic poetry through this predicament, one begins to suspect that inasmuch as the literary, and its kindred but not twin category "poetry," may be obsolete (or may be, to invoke a locution of Williams's, residual), so too may such affiliated concepts and "keywords" (to invoke Williams again) as subjectivity, interiority, imagination, the aesthetic, and the human.[4]

I am bordering here, as must be obvious, on a much-discussed and tendentiously described territory: the crisis in humanism and the concomitant crisis in the humanities. Confronted with such portentous titles as *The Death of Literature* (by Alvin Kernan), one feels immediately and contrarily incited both to dance on the grave and to eulogize the corpse.[5] It is revolting, if intellectually stimulating, to be so consistently provoked and divided. One feels one must declare one's allegiance, that one must or inevitably will encode in a work of literary or cultural criticism a subliminal "Declaration of a Humanist" or, conversely, a "Declaration of an Anti-Humanist." Certainly readers of different persuasions will find traces of each kind of declaration in this project. Under this perceived (and, I would argue, objective) ethical and political pressure, my writing has ranged from a kind of polemical heroizing (for example, of Wordsworth and of "the human" in the "Do Rustics

Think?" chapter, and of "poetry" throughout) to a mode of negative critique (conducted in the chapter on *Frankenstein* and also through Shelley's encounter with Wordsworth in the final chapter). I have let such fissures in tone, mode, and attack stand as a kind of testament to the faultlines this project both responds to and re-describes. To some extent, then, this project testifies to an active if occasionally hapless ambivalence.

Readers of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* or Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" may know the sensation of inescapable bind such vertiginous anti-humanist critique can induce. Any number of more recent books and essays could leave you feeling thus bound but also, paradoxically, relieved. That some have found this mode of critique – variously and complicatedly inflected by post-structuralist, post-Marxist, post-Freudian, and most recently post-colonial analytic tools and commitments – unproblematically liberating suggests how deeply sedimented with bad conscience "the humanities" and "the human" had become. (As Homi Bhabha has asked, with real seriousness, "What authorizes the post-foundational humanities?"[6]) It seems to me, however, that the peculiarly optimistic face that some American intellectuals have turned toward these movements of thought bespeaks a reliance on a reification of both "the human" and "the humanities." That "the human" is always under construction, or may be put violently into question, is something acknowledged by Mary Shelley's monster as well as by Hannah Arendt, who declared that "nothing entitles us to assume that man has a nature or essence in the same sense as other things."[7] In this project terms such as "the human," "literature," and "poetry" are alternately embraced and resisted in an attempt to avoid what Jerome McGann has identified as two particularly vexed (and particularly romantic) critical modalities, the fire of repetition and the ice of reification.[8] Translated into other, more crudely political terms, this project wishes to elude and thus to criticize both neo-conservative humanist pieties and the anti- or post-humanist contempt for literature. To my friends and former colleagues at the University of Chicago it is no news that the former position can seem naive, while the latter signifies a certain sophistication. When meditating on this, I have found Wordsworth and Blake to be especially helpful, envisioning as each poet does – and so differently! – a poetry of sophisticated naiveté, of naive sophistication.

However much an academic monograph discusses or addresses "the naive," nevertheless the work itself is supposed not to be naive: the writer

is supposed to know something (viz. Lacan's definition of the analyst: the one who is supposed to know), or to have learned something, and the reader of such a work is supposed to be able to walk away with, if not some new knowledge, a new arrangement of old knowledge. When considering my own ongoing work, I have often found myself arrested by one of the more heartstopping phrases in academic circulation: "the production of knowledges." The genealogy of this phrase points, it would seem, to such post-Marxist thinkers as Louis Althusser and Pierre Macherey, the latter of whose book, *A Theory of Literary Production*, explicitly calls for a critical science which would produce, rather than assume, an object of knowledge. Literary criticism thus emerges, in his account, as a kind of knowledge which should produce its object, literature.[9] As circulated now, however, the phrase "production of knowledge" tends to disperse, to lose its rigor and focus. Invoked by American academics, the phrase often loses its grounding in the Althusserian critical project, although its use does demonstrate, and is of course meant to demonstrate, that the speaker recognizes the "constructed-ness" of knowledge. One's writing and one's teaching and one's conversation may be assimilated, it would seem, to this overarching project, the production of knowledges. The phrase has a vigorous and, to my ear, quaintly anachronistic cast – brainworkers transformed in a flash to decent hardworking artisanal producers. (The wish to imagine oneself a producer and not a consumer is a particularly telling symptom of the unease left-leaning academics feel – and should feel – about our semi-oppositional relation to the institutions that house us and the economic and ideological systems that structure our livelihoods.) While it is true that I have produced a monograph, it is not at all clear that I have produced any knowledge; nor would I wish to describe my project in this way. Indeed, inasmuch as this book is a long meditation on the status of poetry, in England around 1800 and indirectly in a precinct of the contemporary US academy and in my life, I would say that this book directly confronts and perhaps allegorically re-enacts a rift between "poetry" and "knowledge."

This rift – between positive "knowledge" and the more elusive "poetry" – Wordsworth and after him Shelley identified as a particularly volatile cultural faultline. In a famous passage in the revised *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1802, Wordsworth distinguished between "the knowledge of the Poet and the Man of Science":

> The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of Science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our

natural and inalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of Science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge: it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science . . . In spite of soil and climate, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time.[10]

It is especially curious, from this vantage, to see how Wordsworth describes scientific knowledge as merely individual, a "personal and individual acquisition," whereas the Poet's knowledge stands as a generalizable, imperial, transhistorical, human "inheritance." It is more customary for us (despite the work of such historians, archaeologists, and sociologists of science as Thomas Kuhn, Michel Foucault, Bruno Latour, and Donna Haraway) to consider scientific knowledge impersonal, permanent, objective, public, collectively ascertained and validated, and to regard whatever knowledge the poet may possess as highly personal, even idiosyncratic, subjective, private, un-verifiable, and perishable. Wordsworth was, of course, polemically reversing what were the already established fields of connotation of "poetry" and "science." (And he was also re-vivifying and transforming the famous arguments made on behalf of poetry by Aristotle and Sir Philip Sidney.) Wordsworth is less interested in the content and material efficacy of these competing knowledges than in their differing modes: what the Man of Science conspicuously lacks – at least in terms of his knowledge-project – is "passion," whereas "the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge."[11]

In such passages Wordsworth criticizes a version of knowledge as mere information as well as knowledge as an unfeeling objectification of and abstraction from the world. He theorizes the poet's "knowledge" and work over and against an obviously polemical account of the self-involved Man of Science. He is, in fact, allegorizing through his personifications – "Poet" and "Man of Science" – a reconfiguration of knowledges and discourses at the end of the eighteenth century. Shot through his *Preface* are the shards of eighteenth-century discourse on sensibility: thus the repeated recourse to the language of "sympathy" and "feeling." Also evident is the emergent utilitarian discourse which

would so dominate English moral thinking in the early nineteenth century: Wordsworth defines "[t]he knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of Science" as "pleasure," and indeed he finds it sufficient to refer to "pleasure" as the ground and purpose of all human projects. The difficulty of theorizing "pleasure" is only one of the many aporias of Wordsworth's *Preface*, as it is in other contemporaneous aesthetic and moral treatises (see, for example, Coleridge's analogous, if philosophically more rigorous, invocation of "pleasure" in his Lectures on Poetry in 1810 and 1811).

Wordsworth's "Poet," allied with a generalized human pleasure-project, is implicitly an enemy both of professionalization and of specialization: herein lies a cautionary tale for a graduate student in the humanities. "The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man."[12] That Wordsworth conflates "human Being" and "Man" in his pronouncement need not give us fatal pause: what continues to leap out as a vital commitment is the goal of general, pleasurable communication – the poet conceived as providing good experiences for his readers. We might even discern, below the crust of Wordsworth's decidedly unerotic reputation, the lineaments of the poet as a linguistic erotist.

What, then, is the value of Wordsworth's distinctions? If knowledge does not distinguish men of science, or lawyers, or physicians, from poets, what does? Here Wordsworth's invocation of "the human" becomes critical. For the poet, in his vocational allegiance to "the heart of man," is – unlike the Man of Science – "the rock of defence of human nature." In his role as binder and animator of knowledge, im-passioner of knowledge, the poet "will be at [the scientist's] side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the Science itself."[13]

As the foregoing passage reveals, Wordsworth does not distinguish poets from men of science on the basis of their commitment to "knowledge": both kinds of men possess a "knowledge," yet their motives and modes are quite different. In fact, rather than dissociate "poetry" from "knowledge," Wordsworth boldly assimilates "knowledge" to the category of "poetry": "Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge – it is as immortal as the heart of man." Such pronouncements link the permanence of poetic knowledge to the permanence of the human heart: poetry and "the heart of man" are thus conceived as "immortal," deathless, transhistorical, as in fact resistant to historicism. The heart of

man is, however, an arguably historical heart: the successive waves of feminism, or to reach further back, the anti-slavery movement, are (among other things) arguments for rejecting the romance of timeless structures of emotion. One question this book implicitly asks is whether one can endorse a Wordsworthian or Shelleyan vision of poetry as resistant to historicism without committing oneself to their proposal of poetry as an imperial, universal and universalizing project.

I have mentioned the word "allegory" in relation to this project, and while there may not be four levels here as medieval theory would suggest, nevertheless it does seem to me that various parts of this book often point, in semi-veiled fashion, elsewhere. Buried in this project may be, in fact, the rubble of the book on Anglo-American modernism that years ago I thought I would write. From this vantage it is clear that my Wordsworth, my Shelley, my Malthus, *et al.* are inevitably mediated figures, mediated most powerfully by my own affinities with the aesthetic and philosophical projects associated with modernism and its various avant-gardes. Of course, the poets and writers I discuss conceived of themselves as moderns if not modernists, and (to address this conjunction from another angle) one could quite reasonably date the crystallization of "modernity" in Britain to the late eighteenth century. It is also true that one could describe early twentieth-century "modernism" as the last moment of a protracted literary-historical period whose beginnings we conventionally term "romanticism." Paul de Man has written what may be the two most acute essays on the aporias of the literary-historical project: his astonishing critique of conventional periodization may have fortified my commitment to treat these writers and their works as if their temporality and historicity were to be discovered as contemporary rather than assumed as past.[14] While I generally suspend questions of literary periodization in this work, nevertheless the question of the specificity and the difference of this period, and these writers, hangs over this project as a kind of genial ghost. I have chosen to let it hover rather than to exorcise it or to lay it to rest.

If the poets I discuss often become modernists or even post-modernists *avant la lettre*, so too they become, perhaps inevitably, autobiographical figures. As I have written these chapters, the opportunities for identificatory, mirroring, hostile, and other such transferences proliferated. It is impossible not to figure oneself – or a monstrously abject version of oneself – when, for example, one writes a long essay on the

predicament of a creature, Frankenstein's monster, who discovers that learning how to read and even to appreciate Milton doesn't get him very far. Nor is it entirely irrelevant that, during the years I have described in myriad ways the contradictions of "poetry" – obsolete practice or horizon of futurity? made things or human transcendent? oral tradition or print artifact? versified language-objects or the work of culture? – I have also been laboring on a poetry manuscript.

This somewhat meandering path from romanticism to modernism to historicity to autobiography brings me, by the by, to my opening excerpts from Bishop and Cage. The final extended conceit of Bishop's "At the Fishhouses" rings several variations on the sea:

> Cold dark deep and absolutely clear,
> element bearable to no mortal . . .

the sea which figures not knowledge but "what we imagine knowledge to be." The "clear gray icy water," the unbearable element, offers a likeness not to knowledge but indirectly to the logic of imagination itself. To imagine knowledge *as* something, as, for example "dark, salt, clear, moving," is to figure, to trope, to make sensuous and intelligible, to make intelligibility sensuous. The sea becomes, in fact, the poem's master trope for the imperative to trope even as the waters stand "suspended," permanently resistant to or independent of human figuration. Bishop's intricate choreography of element, imagination, and knowledge – a trio we could reformulate as nature, mind, and the objects or abstractions of mind – offers an exquisitely romantic series of mediations and transformations (one thinks of several signal passages in Wordsworth's *Prelude*, or of Shelley's "Mont Blanc"). In her incrementally developed simile Bishop reveals a disjunction that imagining – and the work of the poem – might mediate. The very effort to imagine knowledge points to a need for such a mediation. However much the sea is "like what we imagine knowledge to be," the sea is not, finally, "our knowledge." Bishop's poem enacts, in its tropological movements and its final conditional clauses ("If you should dip your hand in . . . If you tasted it"), a conviction that Wordsworth and Shelley formulated in their prose writings: that "knowledge" requires "imagining," and also that it requires, figuratively at least, sensuous experience: thus the invitations to immerse, to taste.

Moreover, if our knowledge is like an element "bearable to no mortal" yet solicits mortal imagination, it is also and perhaps more crucially "historical," and thus "flowing, and flown." Our knowledge,

we might say, is both our knowing – our experience of knowing – and what is known; our knowledge is never what we are about to know. Thus we arrive, through this long figuration, at a disjunction between the "suspended," terrible, timeless waters and the "historical" movements of "our knowledge." Bishop's precise conditioning of human knowledge as "historical" and thus "flowing, and flown" directs us to the similarly historical situation of imagination and of such imaginative products as poems. Yet inasmuch as imagining precedes and extends beyond knowledge, imagining may not be restricted to the same historical and temporal limits as knowledge. As Blake says, in one of the "Proverbs of Hell": "What is now proved was once only imagin'd."[15] Even closer to Bishop's meditation on imagining and knowledge may be Shelley's twice-invoked phrase in the *Defence of Poetry*: "to imagine that which we know."[16]

If the final cadences of Bishop's "At the Fishhouses" synecdochize for me the complex relations between figure, imagination, "knowledge," and the "historical," Cage's statement marks and suspends in its very syntax "a need for poetry" to which this project bears witness. "A need for poetry": to which we might respond, whose need? The poet's need? Her readers' need? The culture industry's need, or the need of the academic/pedagogic machine? The soul's need? To invoke a need but not the subject of need: a characteristic gesture of John Cage, concerned as he was to efface the overwhelming dominance of the ego in his work. Thus we may read his line, "a need for poetry," as a kind of proposal or proposition: "a need for poetry" is thrown out, postulated, entertained. Note what Cage does not propose – "the need for poetry." He registers, simply and more modestly, "a need." Considering his ambiguous syntax we may extrapolate from Cage's theme: "a need for poetry to . . . " To do what, or to be what? Poetry may have its own needs, not least a subject who needs it.

CHAPTER I

Toward an anthropologic: poetry, literature, and the discourse of the species

In his 1797 essay, "Of an Early Taste for Reading," the political philosopher and novelist William Godwin announced that "Literature, taken in all its bearings, forms the grand line of demarcation between the human and the animal kingdoms."[1] Five years later, Godwin's lapsed disciple Wordsworth described "the Poet" in the following terms: "He is the rock of defence of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying every where with him relationship and love."[2] What links these two pronouncements, beyond the progressive sympathies of their authors, is their mutual concern for and assertion of "the human." Godwin proposes literature – taken in all its bearings – as a taxonomic boundary; Wordsworth proposes the poet as the defender, upholder and preserver of "human nature." In such statements there emerges the structure of a literary anthropology – a conscious conjunction of the literary and the human.

Why "literature" as a "line of demarcation" between species? Why not look to natural history, or to the new chemistry of Humphry Davy, or to Erasmus Darwin's "laws of organic life," as appropriate means for classifying and distinguishing among forms of life?[3] Further questions arise: is Godwin's "literature" the same as Wordsworth's "poetry"? Why does Wordsworth think human nature requires a "defence," and how does "the poet" become its primary defender? Such questions begin to articulate the concerns of this book, which explores from several angles the predicament of "literature," "poetry," and the human sciences in England circa 1800.[4] In this introductory chapter, I will sketch the domain of several concepts – "literature" and "poetry" among them – and discourses. In the course of this sketch I will turn to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to delineate the contours and crossgrains of specific terms and concepts. This chapter will thus serve both as a survey of discursive ground and as a prospectus for the subsequent chapters through which I will continue my location of what R. S. Crane has

called "the idea of the humanities" in the discursive field which also constitutes the "human."[5] Even a brief overview of the writings and doings of figures such as Godwin, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Scott, Mary Shelley and Percy Shelley reveals that, however different their political, aesthetic, and moral aims, these writers repeatedly inscribed and concerned themselves with the mutual implication of the literary and the sciences of human being.

Several critics have already mapped features of this territory. Alan Bewell's *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in the Experimental Poetry* (1989) reads Wordsworth's early poetry through its engagement with the discourse of what was called "moral philosophy." As Bewell notes, the field of knowledge and inquiry covered by the term "moral philosophy" underwent a profound transformation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: moral philosophy slowly fragmented into newly constituted human sciences, including political economy, anthropology, philology, and a kind of proto-sociology. Wordsworth's writings may be read, Bewell proposes, as a kind of "domestic anthropology," a poetic intervention in and critique of the discourse around human origins, the origin of language, and the comparability of cultures.[6] A commitment to the connections between anthropological discourse and literary production fuels another powerful reconsideration of English literary history, Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* (1992). Crawford deftly demonstrates what he calls "The Scottish Invention of English Literature" and traces the production of that hegemonic subject, English Literature, through and by its colonial and marginal writing subjects, the Scots and the Americans.[7] From the eighteenth-century institution of *belles lettres* in Scottish universities to the apogee of High Modernism, concerns about dialects, savages, barbarians, "Englishness," "Britishness," provincials and metropolitans inflected works both "literary" (e.g. Blair's lectures on rhetoric, Scott's novels, Eliot's "Waste Land") and "anthropological" (Frazer's *Golden Bough*). This persisting set of cultural concerns and tropes manifests, as Crawford demonstrates, not a kind of *Zeitgeist* or two-hundred-year-old *Weltanschauung* but rather a historically traceable set of living actors in specific institutions with particular concerns and linguistic tools.

Bewell sets a portion of the work of one poet against a reconstructed scientific paradigm; Crawford traces a set of problems through several figures working with "the same" language over three centuries. Bewell offers a new map for Wordsworth, a new synchronic field; Crawford

proposes an anti-genealogy, a diachronic dissolution and devolution of English Literature. Each critic presupposes a sophistication about discourse, transmission, and cultural work. Each assumes the conjunction of the literary and the human sciences, most particularly anthropology. Each recovers a conjunction well known to, if not always explicitly articulated by, various writers in England around 1800.

This conjunction appeared explicitly in such projects as Godwin's *Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature* (1797), a collection of essays envisioned as a complement and a corrective to Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793). The crisis in the conception of "Man," propelled most notoriously by the French Revolution, coincided with a re-conception, perhaps even an invention, of "literature." Even chastened progressives in the period of English reaction, such as Godwin after the Terror, sought to link the progress of Man and Literature: as he asserted, "the cause of political reform, and the cause of intellectual and literary refinement, are inseparably connected."[8]

In his chapter, "The Invention of Literature" in *A Choice of Inheritance*, David Bromwich asserts: "Literature is a powerful abstraction that did not always exist. It came to prominence around the same time as Man, and could be used in contrast with books generally, or with books whose particular worth lay in their utility."[9] Bromwich points out the historical range of the "literary ideal" – "literature, that is to say, in a special and nearly sublime sense it carried from 1790 to 1940 or so."[10] Bromwich's dates are suggestive, placing as they do the "literary ideal" between Age of Revolutions and the Second World War. This impulse to historicize and write the epitaph for "literature" appears as well in Raymond Williams's *Marxism and Literature*. Williams's and Bromwich's senses of the moment of literature coincide: both describe the transformation of the concept "literature" from meaning "just books" or plain "literacy" into what Bromwich calls "a special refinement of the common understanding of letters."[11] As Williams notes, ". . . in this first stage, into the eighteenth century, *literature* was primarily a generalized social concept, expressing a certain (minority) level of educational achievement. This carried with it a potential and eventually realized alternative definition of *literature* as 'printed books': the objects in and through which this achievement was demonstrated."[12]

By the end of the eighteenth century in England, the specialization of literature had been achieved. Godwin's use of the phrase "literary refinement" reminds us that, by 1797, "literature" already signified its function as a classed and classing attainment. Williams and Bromwich

describe this transformation in literature in terms of technology (print) and in relation to a particularly and historically classed signification (marked, for example, by the appearance of "fine" versus "bad" literature, and by the ability to discriminate – that is, to consume selectively and well – called "taste"). Thus the "literary ideal," as Bromwich calls it, appeared around 1790 in conjunction with technological, ideological, and socio-political transformations. It also appeared, as I will argue, in conjunction with a specifically anthropological discourse of Man. Through this discourse we may begin to make sense of such a pronouncement as Godwin's, that "literature . . . forms the grand line of demarcation between the human and the animal kingdoms."

The "literary ideal" did not emerge without its immanent critique. As Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe write concerning the Jena Romantics, the "literary absolute" presupposes both "literature" and a "philosophy of literature," both a program for writing and a critique of that program. The English translators of *The Literary Absolute*, Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester, suggest that in English Romanticism as well there is a simultaneous appearance of the concept of literature and of literary theory.[13] They take *Frankenstein* as their example, and show how it reveals "the subject-work" – the "paradigmatic model of the romantic subject's auto-production in the (literary) work of art."[14] I wish to provide a brief reading of the monster as a kind of literary "subject-work," in Lacoue-Labarthe's and Nancy's terms. The monster's engagement with literature also bears the mark of the historical and technological transformations which Williams and Bromwich emphasize in their account of "literature." Finally, the monster – as a literate but indeterminate species being – forces a critique of the anthropological foundations of the literary ideal.

FRANKENSTEIN AND THE END OF LETTERS

Frankenstein provides us with several kinds of literary endings, some disastrous (the series of murders) and some successful (the fact of the novel itself). In a novel obsessed with self-cultivation, it is striking that all routes to *Bildung* culminate in a kind of disaster. Most notably, Victor's horribly successful experiments in chemistry and anatomy produce a disastrously living body, the monster. Yet literary, juridical, and commercial trajectories also meet bad ends. If the monster is the embodiment (or residue or refuse) of one career trajectory, that of academic natural philosopher, he is also the destroyer of several other professional

bodies and careers. His murder of the orientalist-linguist-poet Henry Clerval may be seen as the end of Clerval's literary-linguistic line of work. Clerval's death offers Victor an occasion for allusion and substitution, a literary mediation of an ending. Anticipating in his narration the murder of Clerval, Victor pauses and quotes from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey." He eulogizes Clerval thus:

> The scenery of external nature, which others regard only with admiration, he loved with ardour:
>
> "The sounding cataract
> haunted him like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms, were then to him
> An appetite. . ."
> And where does he now exist?[15]

The poem about self-recollection and revival thus becomes usable as an epitaph. Self-reference disperses into explicitly literary reference: Wordsworth's reflection on Wordsworth works here as Victor's reflection on Clerval/Wordsworth (and further, as Mary Shelley's reflection on Wordsworth, "Tintern," the use of "Tintern," the circulability and utility of "Tintern"). Wordsworth's "me" becomes Victor's Henry, the italicized "him." A drama of self-identity, recuperation, and self-presence becomes in Victor's allusive turn a proleptic citation of pastness, a literarily mediated loss.

Victor's recourse to Wordsworth is a literary mediation of a catastrophe. The monster, striving to educate himself, also attempts a literary mediation of a catastrophe – that is, himself. The monster himself stands as the dubious achievement of Victor Frankenstein's chemical and anatomical researches: he is both a success, in that this being has come alive, and a miserable failure, in that *this being* has come alive. The monster seeks redress for his isolation in a quest for linguistic proficiency, a quest which involves him as well in the acquisition of a literary education. He makes a linguistic wager: if he could become "master of their language" – that is, human language – he might succeed in winning for himself a place in human society.[16]

The monster's language acquisition proceeds according to very specific protocols and in a very specific place, since he lives in a hovel by the small domestic hut of the family De Lacey. Felix De Lacey teaches Safie, his Arabian beloved, to speak French by reading to and with her. De Lacey thus inadvertently provides language lessons for the hidden

monster as well. This covert triangulated pedagogical scene incorporates multiple forms of difference and administration. Teaching Safie French out of Volney's *Ruins of Empires*, Felix enacts the route by which a linguistic, cultural, and political stranger – the half-Turkish female – may be incorporated into the French-speaking republican patriarchal domicile. Yet even this fantasized incorporation is incomplete, perhaps compensatory. The De Laceys are French exiles in Switzerland; they are themselves de-naturalized and incompletely assimilated. That the De Laceys are exiles highlights the non-coincidence of native land and native tongue. Even the native French speakers live outside their native French land.

The monster hopes to "make use of" these language lessons "to the same end" as Safie, but this very hope betrays his naiveté, for his and Safie's "ends" are quite different.[17] The monster, unlike the sexually circulating subaltern Safie, presents an insuperable barrier to domestic, humane assimilation: he is corporeally indeterminate, has no precedent in kind, no self-evident species being. The monster's very "nature" is repeatedly produced as unassimilable, despite his eventual fluency in the supposedly human practices of thinking and speaking. Language would seem to be characteristically human: the monster implicitly understands this, committing himself as he does to the mastery of this mystifying practice. (The monster is unlike the human child in that he *remembers* his time before speech and his struggle to become articulate. This struggle in fact constitutes his self-identity.) *Frankenstein* dramatizes the strangeness of language, the effort required to enter into it, and the treachery of its use. The novel ceaselessly defamiliarizes language and literature, both in its focus on the monster's strained literary education and in its representation of other problematic educational subjects like Safie. The pedagogic scene at the De Laceys assumes that language learning requires mediation, and further, that this mediation objectifies itself through the technology of print and the *combinatoire* of the alphabet. What is most remarkable about Safie's and the monster's learning French is not *that* they learn it, or even *why* they each aspire to this proficiency, but rather *how* the language is transmitted. Shelley presents us with an always already mediated orality, a speech acquired through a technology of the letter.

The letter proliferates in *Frankenstein*. Through this technology of the letter Shelley inscribes a network connecting literacy, literature (for example, the monster's reading of Milton, Goethe, and Plutarch), and epistolary form (the letters sent across the sea and over the land to

Margaret Saville). Even the famous doppelgänger motif, elaborated in the last third of the novel as Frankenstein and monster alternately pursue one another, depends on the letter to transcend vast distances of space and time. Written marks propel the hauntings and recognitions of the novel: the monster constellates his identity crisis after he reads Victor's old labnotes, marks made by the hands that made him. The monster leads Victor on a global chase, perpetually taunting his maker with the bitterly eloquent sentences he leaves on the trees. These lettered traces are not primarily Derridean traces: they are manufactured realizations of emotions and thoughts, in this case, the monster's bitter vengefulness. They are the mediators between monster and man, just as Walton's letters mediate vast distances and extend toward Margaret across the sea. These lettered practices – taking labnotes, reading Milton, learning Greek (Victor) or French (monster) – all point to a condition of made mediation. The intervention of the letter confounds any dream of *im-mediacy*. The monster knows this better than any other figure in the novel, for it is his task to endlessly mediate himself for humans, who consistently and immediately recoil in horror from his "appearance." Perhaps we should say that *Frankenstein* destroys orality as a category of immediacy: only the visual persists as a possible domain of the immediate, the humanly instinctive, and the true. Spontaneous horror at the monster comes to signify natural human response – but of course the blind De Lacey, happy to talk with the monster, complicates even the visual as a trope of immediacy.

Frankenstein relentlessly subjects the "literary ideal" to a critique. Mary Shelley's novel acknowledges the multiple networks which constitute the "literary": pedagogic, textual, poetic, alphabetic, the oral-literate nexus. The novel resists the mystification of literature, in which, as Raymond Williams writes, ". . . it is common to see 'literature' defined as 'full, central, immediate human experience'. . ."[18] The monster critiques "fullness" in his patchwork corporeality, "centrality" in his marginal alphabetization and experience, "immediacy" in his constant recourse to literary and linguistic mediation. In the third chapter, I will propose a further reading of *Frankenstein* as a critique both of the "literary ideal" (known also as the "humanities") and of the anthropomorphic ideal of Man. For if Bromwich's claims are right, that the invention of literature and the invention of Man roughly coincide, then we may say that the invention of a literate monster deforms both the concept "Man" and the ideal of "literature."

''POETRY'' IS NOT ''LITERATURE''

If literature was increasingly rarefied, reified, and transformed as a category, so too the category "poetry" transformed in the face of "Man," changes in the relation of orality to literacy, and the politicization of writing in this period. Godwin proposed "literature" as the divider between man and animal, but it was more often through "poetry" that the ambitions and nature of "man" were specified. That Wordsworth and, after him, Shelley, proposed not "literature" but "poetry" as the marker of this anthropological moment suggests that "literature" and "poetry" are not necessarily congruent categories by 1800. Raymond Williams describes this incongruity in *Marxism and Literature*:

> *Literature* as a new category was then a specialization of the area formerly categorized as *rhetoric* and *grammar*: a specialization to reading and, in the material context of the development of printing, to the printed word and especially the book. It was eventually to become a more general category than *poetry* or the earlier *poesy*, which had been general terms for imaginative composition, but which in relation to the development of *literature* became predominantly specialized, from the seventeenth century, to metrical composition and especially written and printed metrical composition.[19]

Williams suggests that "literature" comes to denote a broader territory than poetry, and that poetry becomes increasingly restricted to "written and printed metrical composition." Williams thus provides a historical-material account of the transformation of the concept "literature" and the simultaneous adjustments of the concept "poetry."

It was precisely these transformations that Wordsworth and Shelley protested in their manifestos. Each refused to restrict poetry to verse, to print, or to a category defined against prose. Each dispensed with the governing category "literature" – with its connotations of the letter, literacy, and print technology – and proposed both social and transcendental functions for poetry, functions broadly conceived in opposition to the claims of "Science" but also resistant to the pressures of literary specialization. If Raymond Williams marks the re-organization of such concepts as literature and poetry (affecting as well the determinations of such concepts as "society" and "politics"), Wordsworth and Shelley offered their own reconfigurations of the terms "poetry," "society" and "man." This is not to override the specificities of Wordsworth's *Preface* and Shelley's *Defence*, but rather to emphasize their common resistances and proposals. The invention of literature and the invention of Man

may be read as simultaneous happenings, as Bromwich suggests, but it was in the name of "Poetry" and not that of "Literature" that Wordsworth and Shelley proposed and defended their visions of Man.

The invention of the concept of literature, then, does not exactly coincide with the modern concept of "poetry." This non-coincidence persists as a problem in accounts of the literary which depend, without mediation, on accounts of poetry. Bromwich, for example, moves from speculations about "literature" and "man" to the concrete substance of Schiller's essay "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry." Thus "poetry," or rather Schiller's version of it, becomes the test case for Bromwich's account of "literature." Certainly this is an ambiguity produced in both English and German Romanticism and by the literary critics who reproduce selected texts and theories. Poetry may be seen as a subset of the literary, or it may, as in Friedrich Schlegel's *Athenaeum Fragment* 116, become a surpassing of extant literature, or a figure of the "literary absolute," to invoke Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy.[20]

It is possible to see the increasingly bold and transcendentalizing claims made for Poetry, both in England and in Germany around 1800, as a sign that "literature" and "poetry" had parted discursive ways. Poetry circa 1800 traverses a discourse network, to borrow Friedrich Kittler's term, a network not necessarily reducible to what Williams calls "the concept of literature." In his introduction to the English translation of Kittler's *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900* (*Discourse Networks, 1800/1900*), David E. Wellbery asserts that "Kittler's work leads to a radical historicism that finally dissolves the universality of the concept of literature."[21] This dissolution, Wellbery notes, also "operates in our own historical background, severing, as Kittler shows, Romantic 'poetry' (produced under the monopoly of print and universal alphabetization) from modern 'literature' (where writing enters into competition with the technical media of phonograph and film)."[22] If the severing of poetry from literature is all the more obvious in the twentieth century, when visual and acoustic technologies progressively displaced writing technologies in the cultural imaginary and the field of imaginative production, nevertheless we can see, with romantic defenses of poetry in mind, that this severing preceded this reconfiguration of media. We might say that, long before literature sensed its decline, poetry intuited it and strove to protect itself from an imminent, merely literary demise.

"Poetry," then, and not "literature" carried the promise of futurity and the promise of a totality for man.[23] As T. S. Eliot wrote of Wordsworth and Coleridge, "poetry was for them the expression of a

totality of unified interests."[24] Among English poets from the 1790s through the 1820s, we can see a conscious revaluation – and some would say egregious idealization – of poetry (the perpetually capitalized Poetry).[25] As T. S. Eliot said, regarding the history of English poetry: ". . . a great change in the attitude towards poetry, in the expectations and demands placed upon it, did come, we may say for convenience towards the end of the eighteenth century. Wordsworth and Coleridge are not merely demolishing a debased tradition, but revolting against a whole social order; and they begin to make claims for poetry which reach their highest point of exaggeration in Shelley's famous phrase, 'poets are the unacknowledged legislators of mankind.'"[26]

Eliot's barely contained contempt for Shelley does not preclude his clear-eyed assessment of the revolutionary claims being made for Poetry circa 1800. (However, Eliot misquotes Shelley's "famous phrase": Shelley declares poets "the unacknowledged legislators of the World" – not of mankind.[27]) Eliot's distaste for revolution does not extend to a distaste for Wordsworth. We could, like Raymond Williams, see the exaggerated claims made for poetry as a distorted recognition of a historical truth: literature had become specialized and restricted; writers were handworkers intent on avoiding the general degradation of "work" exacerbated by transformations in industry and the professions; in an attempt to maintain power and dignity, apologists for poetry transcendentalized their "art" and suppressed its basis in composition, in linguistic social practice. Poets, in this view, experienced the pressure to professionalize. Such a reading is supported by Marilyn Butler's *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries* (1981), which emphasizes the professionalization of literature in the early nineteenth century. This professionalization forms one historical frame in which to view Wordsworth's and Shelley's strong claims for poetry.[28]

Poetry in this period rarely mounts its defense exclusively against professionalism, however. Poetry models itself as a totality for man, a synthesis of his faculties and powers, a return of human language to the human body. If the nineteenth century is the century in which man discovered himself as a historical being, it is not surprising that discussions of "poetry" turned on conceptions of human historicity. Just as Jerome Christensen, in "The Romantic Movement at the End of History," returns to and advances toward romanticism because it is "at the beginning of the nineteenth century . . . [that] history first ended," so too I wish to return and advance toward this discourse-object, "Poetry," which discovers itself in the so-called end of history.[29] Poetry becomes

self-conscious of its historicity and its emergency: the *Athenaeum fragments* of Friedrich Schlegel (1798) and Wordsworth's *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) provide only two exemplary instances of poetry theorizing itself, its emergence, and its historical situation. As it struggles to articulate its ends and uses in post-revolutionary Europe, poetry oscillates between transcendentalizing claims and a recognition of its contradictory situation in a world whose values are derived by a utilitarian, scientistic, and economic calculus. Poetry discovers the world we live in and almost discovers it is not at home there. Whatever they free poetry from – "kind" (Schlegel), versification (Shelley and Coleridge), "poetic diction" (Wordsworth), Alexander Pope (Wordsworth and Coleridge), Erasmus Darwin (Wordsworth and Coleridge), the mere arts of memory or the power of fancy (Coleridge), the "calculating faculty" (Shelley) – these writers coincide in their desire to bestow upon or discover in poetry an absolute autonomy. As Schlegel announced, "It alone is infinite, just as it alone is free."

FRANKENSTEIN: THE MARINER AS A FAILED POET

If poetry were to fail, by Percy Shelley's lights, so too would Man. To counter such Shelleyan pressure, I wish now to offer a brief reading of a passage in *Frankenstein*, through which I may sketch the specific contradiction and cultural work of "poetry." *Frankenstein* is, among other things, a parable of what we might call the "ambiguous cultural work" of poetry. The possibility of *Frankenstein* depends on poetry, or rather, on a failure in poetry. By this I do not refer to the famous stormy night of the ghost-story competition, which brought together Byron, Polidori, Percy and Mary Shelley; nor do I refer to the allusions to "The Ancient Mariner," "Tintern Abbey," "Childe Harold" or the "Mutability Canto," any of which might lead us to consider how Mary Shelley implicates poetry and its citability in the fabric of her novel. I direct us instead to Robert Walton, the English mariner who encounters Frankenstein and his monster in the Arctic. For Walton understands himself to be a failed poet. We might conjecture that, had he succeeded as a poet, he might have remained at home, participating in the literary and political intrigues of the 1790s. As it was, he found himself forced to cultivate other arenas of development.

Several critics have noted the prominence of the educational theme of the novel. Mary Shelley's characters are ostentatiously self-conscious of that very theme. Their self-understanding is repeatedly fore-

grounded, manifested in their attentive rendering of "the progress of [their] intellect[s]."[30] Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the monster each relate a version of his life story: self-understanding is the ground of this plot which appears always as an intellectual history. Walton and Victor and monster carefully cite the books they read, the ones they discarded, in what sequence they read, and with what effect. The importance of their first-person relations emerges here: the successive narrations insist in their difference on the same, that the first-person "I" relates itself as a function of *Bildung*, whether nautical or scientific or literary in its end. That is to say, the narratological structure of *Frankenstein* reveals the conjunction of consciousness (self-consciousness) and an intellectual-aesthetic trajectory. Emile Benveniste famously defined the linguistic intersubjectivity of discourse such that the very positing of an "I" requires, attests to, a "you." In *Frankenstein*, this "I" is both a grammatical and an educational function, one made articulable to others insofar as its education is relatable to itself.

Walton's self-understanding involves poetry, literature, and literacy in a network of cultural, familial, linguistic, and territorial ambitions. This very voyage appears as a literarily mediated dream. As he writes his sister: "This expedition has been the favourite dream of my early years. I have read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages which have been made in the prospect of arriving at the North Pacific Ocean through the seas which surround the pole."[31] Visions of discovery "faded when [he] perused, for the first time, those poets whose effusions entranced my soul, and lifted it to heaven." Thus poetry, another kind of printed object than prose "accounts" of voyages, induces when "perused" a vision surpassing that offered by travelogues. Note, however, that whereas Walton cites specific "accounts" of travel from a particular "library" (Uncle Thomas's), he suppresses the printed incarnation of poetry, its textual materiality and circulability. He proposes unmediated and casual access (perusal) to *poets*. Walton reads poets, not poems. Moreover, he peruses, he does not read. His representation of his encounter with poetry pushes a reading experience ever closer to an experience of unmediated contact. Poets do not write, they "effuse"; their effusions do not instruct, they rather "entrance" and elevate, lifting the soul unto heaven. If one reads travel literature, we might say, one acquires "prospects"; if one peruses poetry, one acquires a "soul."

Because there is nothing for the self-cultivating subject to do but to identify with what he encounters, it is not surprising that Walton then imagines himself to be a poet. "I also became a poet, and for one year

lived in a Paradise of my own creation; I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated. You are well acquainted with my failure, and how heavily I bore the disappointment."[32] The collapse of his self-image as a great poet fortunately coincides with the inheritance of a cousin's fortune, and Walton's "thoughts were turned into the channels of their earlier bent," that is, to travel and discovery.

Why does Mary Shelley include this moment of poetry? What does it feature for Walton, and in the novel more broadly? At the very least, the aspiration held by the dream of poetry introduces an asymptotic curve, a figure of perpetually unachieved desire, which haunts Walton's self-presentation. Walton's wish to be "consecrated" like the "names of Homer and Shakespeare" indicates both the transcendentalizing aspect of the dream and his self-monumentalizing impulse. The cultural prestige of poetry haunts this voyage. Poetry is the lasting presence signified by the proper name: Homer, Shakespeare, but not Robert Walton. "Poetry" supersedes the book and the library; it resists mundane embodiment. If "literature" in *Frankenstein* appears as a series of mediations by the letter, "poetry" appears – in Victor's unsourced allusions, in Robert Walton's poetic fantasies – as a figure of both the immediate and the transcendent. Entranced by "poets," Walton lives for a year "in a Paradise of [his] own creation"; such a Paradise turns out to be always already lost, pre-scripted, whether by Milton or some other creator, human or divine. Walton cannot permanently realize his Paradise; and yet he asserts that he "became a poet." Becoming a poet, for Walton, involves not the production of works or a practice in language but a dwelling in a domain of self-projection. One may "become a poet" without having written a thing. A poet takes up not a profession, not a craft, but rather a kind of self-consciousness: poet-becoming. The pressure of this self-consciousness manifests itself in the rift between self-conception and realization: "You are well acquainted with my failure," writes Walton to his sister. The poet-becoming collapses in the face of his unachieved or inadequate works. A movement of self-consciousness falters when it confronts its own exile from the "temple" where sit Homer and Shakespeare. The gap between this nominal state (the poet) and its evidence (poems) forces Walton to articulate a "failure." He suffers precisely because he sustained a double idea of the "poet": the lasting name signifying yet unrestricted to its works (Homer), and the name assigned to him who produces artifacts called "poems."

As Walton's self-description suggests, poetry is the name for a particu-

lar kind of cultural fantasy. "Poetry" appears at the threshold where cultural ambition, cultural transmission, and property in the self meet. His Paradise is Paradise, however provisional, because it is "of *my own* creation" (emphasis added). If literature first stimulates Walton's fantasies of discovery, it is "poetry" which presents a worthier goal, a goal not of discovery but of "keeping." "Keeping," an eighteenth-century term from aesthetics, here signifies what Walton's thoughts and ambitions "lack."[33] Walton consistently mediates himself through aesthetics; he is a model, if a failed one, of Schiller's aesthetic education. Given that the self-monumentalizing, self-actualizing impulse fails to be realized in his poetry, Walton finds himself on a ship in the Arctic, about to meet two other self-fashioners with their own poetically supported fantasies. The cultural work of poetry thus disperses itself throughout this text – in the monster's Milton, in Victor's allusions, in Clerval's professional trajectory. Yet if the work of poetry goes on, those who attempt to work or signify themselves as poets meet at best failure (Walton), or a bleak death (Clerval).[34]

POETRY AS AN OBJECT OF DISCOURSE: DEFINITIONS AND DISCONTENTS

If Robert Walton's poetic aspirations illuminate the contradictions within poetry, *Frankenstein* as a whole offers several avenues into the broader cultural meaning and the mode of circulation of poetry. Indeed, as Donna Haraway has observed, "[f]rom the early stirrings of Romanticism in the late eighteenth century, many poets and biologists have believed that poetry and organisms are siblings. *Frankenstein* may be read as a meditation on that proposition."[35] Romantic poetry and the monster are two related species of artifact which do cultural work and strain toward self-consciousness: English Romantic poetry and its monsters come to embody a revolutionary rupture in human being and possibility which the Victor Frankensteins of the world try manfully to contain.

As Haraway suggests, these two subjects, poetry and the organism, emerge as specific and analogically related discourse-objects in the late eighteenth century. In this period the dominant image of totality, aesthetic and physiological, was the organic image. *Frankenstein* conjoins its thoroughgoing critique of the organism-as-totality to its critique of totalizing bodies of knowledge, whether "scientific" or "belleletristic." As numerous critics have noted, poetry circa 1800 partakes of the ideology of the organic: a critique of that ideology necessarily implicates

poetry. Yet, to shift ground for a moment, perhaps we might say, invoking Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, that "[t]he poetic is not so much the work as that which works, not so much the organon as that which organizes."[36] With these distinctions in mind, we may begin to think of poetry not so much as a corpus of artifacts, or as a metaphorically living thing, or as an ideological formation, but rather as a discursive movement dispersed over or moving through those objects we call poems.

And what about those objects? That there emerged in this period a phenomenon we might call the "organic fallacy" (poem as organism, poem as living totality) is indisputable; what is striking is the persistence of this fallacy – denominated the "fallacy of neoclassic species" by W. K. Wimsatt – well into this century. Wimsatt attacked the "Chicago Critics" (R. S. Crane, Elder Olson and others of the so-called "Chicago School" prominent in the 1930s and 40s) for their habit of treating the poem "as belonging to a specific kind, species or genre of poems (tragic, comic, lyric, didactic)" and for their belief that "[a] poem should be treated as an instance not of poetry in general but of a specific kind of poetry." Unlike the Chicago School (and unlike, for example, Coleridge), Wimsatt drew a firm line between the conceptualization of organic species and that of verbal artifacts: "the place to defend things and species of things is in the areas where they are found, in the real world, especially the organic, not in that of verbal constructs."[37] Although Wimsatt offers a decidedly unromantic critique of pseudo-organic taxonomizing, he does point us to a predicament keenly felt by romantic theorizers of poetry. As he acknowledged, "It is true that as soon as we undertake to define or defend 'poetry' or 'poem' (as soon, that is, as we are convinced that there is any basic difference between types of discourse such as poetry, philosophy, or science), we are committed to some kind of 'real' and 'essential' inquiry."[38] Among the critical questions of this inquiry: what is "essential" to poetry? and what is "essential" to the poet?

At this point it behooves us to consider once again what exactly poetry in this period might be. We might, shadowing forward, invoke the perplexity of T. S. Eliot, who announced in his first Charles Eliot Norton Lecture on 4 November, 1932, "Let me start with the supposition that we do not know what poetry is, or what it does, or ought to do, or of what use it is."[39] Eliot's rhetorically flourished perplexity is worth taking seriously, especially in light of the romantic formulations of that perplexity. In his initial retreat from definition, Eliot mirrors the theor-

etical stance of Wordsworth, Schlegel, Shelley, and Coleridge, each of whom assumed the problem of definition to be a critical crux in his meditations on poetry. As Schlegel remarks in Fragment 114, "A definition of poetry can only determine what poetry should be." He promptly offers one definition in Fragment 116, a definition restricted and constituted by the modifier "romantisch": "Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry." Such poetry "is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. It can be exhausted by no theory. . ."[40] Fragment 116 modulates toward the conclusion that "the romantic kind of poetry is the only one that is more than a kind, that is, as it were, poetry itself; for in a certain sense all poetry is romantic." Thus "poetry" escapes the reification of nominalization: it forever points to its own becoming and escapes the tyranny of mere "kind."

However different German and English Romanticisms, Schlegel's fragments reveal a project and a concern common to both. Throughout these manifestos, polemics, and prefaces rings the call for a universal knowledge, a synthetic knowledge – or perhaps it is more appropriate to say that romanticism seeks not a knowledge but rather, like Hegelian spirit, a synthesizing movement. This demand for and by poetry marks a break in the history of poetry thinking about itself.

As Raymond Williams suggests, "poetry," like "literature," undergoes a reconceptualization in this period, but this change is not merely the culmination of a subtly accomplished restriction of "poesy" to "verse." The reconceptualization of poetry was, in fact, not accomplished silently but rather loudly contended in essay after essay – in Wordsworth's *Preface*, Coleridge's dispute with Wordsworth in the *Biographia Literaria*, Thomas Love Peacock's utilitarian-reformist attack on "modern rhymesters" in *The Four Ages of Poetry*, Shelley's impassioned response in his *Defence*, and less famously in the endless salvos fired by the energetic scribblers of the proliferating magazines.[41] One finds in Wordsworth's and Shelley's defenses an explicit re-thinking of poetry; one can also discern, in these and other essays, a less clearly articulated re-configuration of the category.

There were, of course, several criteria for defining poetry, many of them announced merely to be refuted by Wordsworth and, later, Shelley – the most obvious of these debunked criteria being that of versification. An article in *The Monthly Magazine* in July 1796, "Is Verse Essential to Poetry?," suggests that when Wordsworth addressed that very question in his *Preface* of 1800, he tapped into a topic of general

interest.[42] The author anticipates the Wordsworthian emphasis on the poet's "powers" when he asserts that "all of the most essential and most valuable powers of the poet may be found in one, who does not understand, or who is not willing to submit to the mental fatigue of practicing, the art of versification."[43] Works of genius, our author informs us, have been written in prose as well as verse. Here we see how the discourse of genius, rather than the "art of versification" had come, for many commentators, to define poetry some forty years after Edward Young's essay *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759).[44] And indeed, as Wordsworth and Shelley would after him, this author concludes that "[i]t obviously follows from the point established in this paper, that the terms *poesy* and *prose* are incorrectly opposed to each other. *Verse* is, properly, the contrary of *prose*; and because poetry speaks the language of fancy, passion, and sentiment, and philosophy speaks the language of reason, these two terms should be considered as contraries."[45] Thus we see that an anonymous magazine writer – this one writing for the featured section, "The Enquirer" – had already outlined by the mid-1790s, if less gracefully, the main points of argument that would appear in the more famous treatises of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley. (And indeed, Hazlitt chimed in with similar, if more polemical, observations in his Introductory Lecture on the English Poets: "All is not poetry that passes for such: nor does verse make the whole difference between poetry and prose. The Iliad does not cease to be poetry in a literal translation; and Addison's Campaign has been very properly denominated a Gazette in rhyme."[46]) However, as we see in the subsequent issue of the *Monthly Magazine*, such re-drawing of the lines remained contentious: in a letter to the editor on 8 August, 1796, the self-styled "Philo-Rhythmus" declared, "I do not feel inclined to decorate with the name of *poet*, one, who through indolence, or incapacity, excuses himself from employing what is undoubtedly a very pleasing and impressive part of poetic composition, and has been a favourite of all nations, savage and civilized – the art of versification."[47] Moreover, Philo-Rhythmus intriguingly rebuts "The Enquirer" by describing poetry as, like prose, a kind of *writing*, not as a manifestation of "powers." Taxonomic confusion and false dichotomies (such as poetry versus philosophy) would be avoided if judicious men should "keep . . . to the leading arrangement of all writing, under the two classes of Poetry and Prose."[48] It is interesting to consider, with Raymond Williams in mind, how Philo-Rhythmus adheres to versification as an index of poetic labor and poeticity itself, and further, how he insists on the genre of "writing"

(an activity of the hand, not a power of mind) as the proper category for subsuming both "poetry" and "prose."

Certainly it is possible to overestimate the novelty of this re-thinking of poetry: after all, Sir Philip Sidney had offered, some two hundred years before "The Enquirer" and Wordsworth's *Preface*, a *Defence of Poetry* that both distilled and "Englished" the classical debates over poetry and forecast the romantic revivification of the controversy. Indeed, in Sidney's assertion that "what poetry is precedes all other learnings," and in his acerbic conclusion that "verse [is] but an ornament and no cause to poetry, since there have been many most excellent poets that never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets," he anticipates almost to the letter the arguments mounted in Wordsworth's *Preface* and Shelley's *Defence* as well as by "The Enquirer."[49] Yet there is also a clear difference between Sidney's Aristotelian defense and, for example, Wordsworth's equally if differently Aristotelian *Preface*: in T. S. Eliot's opinion, with which in this case I concur, Sidney the Elizabethan courtier did not write or theorize under nearly the same kind of pressure as did Wordsworth or Shelley. Whether we attribute this pressure to the modernization and industrialization Wordsworth explicitly deplored, to the impact of the French Revolution on English letters, to the transformation of the class base of British writing, or to any of the socio-historical realities that necessarily excluded these writers from Sidney's aristocratic, Elizabethan *milieu*, nevertheless it is clear that a defense of poetry in the late eighteenth century entered quite another discursive field than did such a defense during the sixteenth.[50]

The question, "Is Verse Essential to Poetry?," pointed, as every theoretician recognized, to a further series of questions – most notably what, if anything, might be essential to poetry. Moreover, as the dispute in the *Monthly Magazine* illustrates, any debate about the "characteristics of poetry" was transformed into a debate about the poet: was he, for example, a "mere versifier" or a person with special "powers"? As Coleridge put it in the *Biographia Literaria*, "What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other."[51]

As one solution to this two-fold question, Wordsworth in his *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads* suggested that foundation of a new poetry was to be sought not only in the "very language of men" but in the very specific body of the poet. Wordsworth's definition of the poet begins with the poet's sensorium: the only valuable poems are those written "by a man

who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply."[52] The defining of poetic value in terms of the poet's sensibility – a sensibility of the poet's *body* – appears as well in Coleridge's Lectures on Milton and Shakespeare delivered at the London Philosophical Society in 1811–1812. Coleridge's notes to Lecture 3 include the following discussion of the difference between Poetry and Prose:

> Poetry is not the proper Antithesis to Prose, but to Science. Poetry is opposed to Science, and Prose to Metre . . . This definition is useful, but, as it would include Novels and other works of Fiction which we do not yet call poems, there must be some additional character by which Poetry is not only divided from opposites [for example, Science], but likewise distinguished from disparate tho [sic] similar modes of composition . . . What is this [additional character]? It is that pleasurable emotion, that peculiar state or degree of Excitement, which arises in the Poet himself, in the act of composition – & in order to understand this we must combine . . . a more than common sensibility, with a more than ordinary Activity of the Mind as far as respects the Fancy & Imagination . . . [53]

In such a passage Coleridge makes plain the various axes of distinction involved in defining and taxonomizing poetry. Having secured poetry from verse, Coleridge finds himself in a generic bind. In his effort to distinguish poetry from "similar modes of composition" – from other writing practices – Coleridge invokes the "Excitement" aroused "in the Poet himself." While it was usual to cite Fancy and Imagination as poetic faculties (they were among the "powers" of the poet as catalogued by Wordsworth in 1815), Coleridge's reference to the poet's "more than common sensibility" suggests that the often-invoked and much-discussed Romantic Imagination required a supplement, indeed a foundation: a specifically sensible body. To compose a poem, Coleridge argues, is to have a specific bodily experience. Coleridge's propositions about the essence of poetry lead us to the poet's body – or rather, to his sensorium, which Erasmus Darwin defined as "that living principle, or spirit of animation, which resides throughout the body, without being cognizable to our senses."[54] In the *Preface*, Wordsworth asked, "What is a Poet?" In his 1811–1812 Lecture Series, Coleridge asked, "What is Poetry?" Each found his answer in the properties of sensibility in that special organism, the poet.

Yet the speciality of the poet co-existed with his typicality: herein lies the key to the cultural work that poetry might do, according to these writers – the work of humanization. Wordsworth repeatedly called for a poetry of humanization, a poetry which would, as he wrote in 1815,

"extend the domain of sensibility for the delight, the honour, and the benefit of human nature."[55] As is clear from the *Preface* of 1800, the poet is special for Wordsworth not in his distance from other men but insofar as he embodies what is most human among them. Wordsworth offers the poet as the prototype of humanity, "prototype" as defined by the life sciences. He bears those characteristics which most typify his kind. The disciplinary function of this humanizing and humane poetry becomes clear in later Wordsworth, when the failure of a poetry of and for humanity – really a failure of Wordsworth's poetry – seemed apparent. In the *Essay Supplementary to the Preface* of 1815, Wordsworth refers to his longstanding and difficult "project," his attempt to "divest . . . the reader of the pride that induces him to dwell upon those points wherein men differ from each other, to the exclusion of those in which all men are alike, or the same. . ."[56] Wordsworth announced in 1815 – as he did in 1798 – a kind of species poetry, a poetry committed to those points "in which all men are alike, or the same." That Wordsworth used the term "men" should not prevent us from discerning the inclusive claims he was making for poetry and its responsibility (however vexed and vexing) to human being. And indeed, such a conjunction of poetry and species was not a Wordsworthian idiosyncrasy. William Hazlitt, in his lecture "On Poetry in General," revised Aristotle's definition of Man such that the "poetical" displaced the "political": "Man is a poetical animal: and those of us who do not study the principles of poetry, act upon them all our lives, like Moliere's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme,* who had always spoken prose without knowing it."[57] Allying man with poetry and poetry with man, poets and critics increasingly committed poetry to the discourse of the species, thereby making poetry answerable to the human sciences. What exactly such a project might and did entail, however, was not so obvious as the bold assertions of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Hazlitt would suggest.

POETRY DISCOURSING: TOWARD AN ANTHROPOLOGIC OF IMAGINATION

The strenuous negations of romantic theorists – for example, that poetry was not literature, not verse, not simply a "mode of composition" – repeatedly forced the question: if poetry was none of these things, what was it? A survey of romantic poetry and theorizing yields, perhaps unsurprisingly in light of the monumental work of M. H. Abrams, Geoffrey Hartman, and Harold Bloom (among others), the following

Coleridgean conclusion: poetry emerges as the discourse of the imagination. "Poetry" most often appears – in the writings of Shelley, Hazlitt, and Coleridge, for example – as that art most representative of the faculty or power denominated by the term "imagination." In their turn to and trumpeting of "imagination," romantic poets famously – some might say imfamously – succeeded in wedding their art to that nebulous power. Many critics have similarly explicated romantic poetry and theorizing by means of this central romantic motif of imagination. C. M. Bowra launched his 1949 study, *The Romantic Imagination*, with the following assertion, "If we wish to distinguish a single characteristic which differentiates the English Romantics from the poets of the eighteenth century, it is to be found in the importance which they attached to the imagination and in the special view which they held of it."[58] As a more skeptical generation of historical scholars has made us aware, readers of romanticism run the risk of acceding prematurely to romantic self-representations – by accepting, for example, romantic definitions of "imagination" as sufficient. The apotheosis of imagination in this period is as much a commonplace and a cipher in the criticism of romanticism as in the romantic texts themselves. Indeed, Bowra's book may be taken as a cautionary example: if in his very first sentence he proposes imagination as that which distinguishes romanticism from the eighteenth century, in his last chapter he more or less throws up his hands when confronted with the problem of defining "romanticism" at all: "The word 'Romantic' has been used so often and for so many purposes that it is impossible to confine it to any single meaning, still less to attempt a new definition of it."[59] So much for the clarifying critical analysis of "imagination" as that which might define the romantics.

Rather than attempting new definitions for either romanticism or imagination, let us instead consider some of the discursive situations of such keywords. "Imagination," like "Poetry," appears as a mutable counter in several works of the period: Hazlitt's *Essay on Human Action* (1805), and more famously, Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Chapter 13 in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, and Shelley's *Defence*. "Imagination" generally appears as a specific faculty or power – the "esemplastic power," as Coleridge neologized. To Hazlitt, imagination was "that faculty which represents objects, not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings, into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations of power."[60] Most typically, of course, "imagination" in this period emerges as that power opposed to "reason." Shelley's explication in the *Defence* may stand as representative, if not

for the particular valence of its definitions, then for its structure of opposition: "Reason is the enumeration of those quantities already known; imagination is the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. Reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things."[61] This famous and much-worked opposition offered these poets and many of their twentieth-century critics an extraordinarily effective and polemical short-hand for distinguishing the commitments of so-called romantic poets from those of their Augustan antecedents, particularly Pope.

Yet however central to romantic self-representations, this opposition "imagination/reason" does not fully cover the discursive ground that "imagination" often traveled. In the discourse around poetry and humanity, "imagination" co-exists with and co-determines other faculties. Coleridge's "imagination" requires his "fancy" as its counter; Hazlitt's "imagination" appears in the *Essay on Human Action* as one of three human faculties, the others being "memory" and "consciousness"; Shelley's "imagination" goes forth against a variety of foes – "analytic reason," "the calculating faculty." Sampling such writers, we see that "imagination" was philosophically, anthropologically, linguistically, and psychologically defined; its expressions could be evidenced by literary excerpts (see Coleridge), in human gesture and social institutions (said Shelley), or in the capacity to project oneself into the future (as Hazlitt asserted).

In each of these cases, "imagination" functions as a distinctively human faculty: its appearance and prominence in this period should be assessed in light of transformation in the natural as well as the human sciences. Indeed, "imagination" had its physiological, organic valence: Erasmus Darwin's *Zoonomia* catalogues many "diseases of the imagination" and discusses the important role of male imagination in generation (that is, in sexual reproduction).[62] As these unsystematically selected examples suggest, "imagination" in this period could be given a material (corporeal) or mental foundation; it could also be denominated, as in Coleridge's philosophical discriminations, a "category" after the manner of Kant.

We could, like Raymond Williams, propose a sketch of the transformations of the concept "imagination." We could do for the "imagination" what John L. Mahoney's *The Whole Internal Universe: Imitation and the New Defense of Poetry* does for "mimesis": document a series of "episode[s] in the evolution of the term . . . from remote origins in classical thought to full flowering in the theory and practice of the so-called English

Romantics."[63] Such accounts already exist in various forms, as Mahoney notes: M.H. Abrams's *Mirror and the Lamp* is only one among many prominent twentieth-century investigations into what has become a sedimentary rock in the waves of successive criticism: Romantic Imagination. My project will not follow "evolutionary" lines, in part because I wish to map both the articulated and un- or underarticulated relations among such concepts as "poetry," "imagination," "futurity" and "immortality." Such a map requires me to bracket certain diachronic concerns. I wish to see how such terms work, how they are contested, what was and is at stake. Like Friedrich Kittler, I am more concerned with networks – heterogeneous interacting apparatuses, discursive fields – than with evolutionary succession.

That Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley invoked "imagination" as the poetic faculty *par excellence* should make us consider what, exactly, a faculty psychology was supposed to do for poetry. If we contemplate anew this recourse to and elevation of imagination – this transformation of an eighteenth-century commonplace into a peculiarly romantic function – we can see what these poets imagined themselves to be struggling against. At the very least, the grounding of poetry in imagination provisionally released poetry, at least in theory, from the march of literary history (a succession of kinds, epochs, excellences and degradations) as well as from the rule-bound logic of generic taxonomy. Poetry sought to insulate itself from a historicism which would render it obsolete or residual, as well as from a mode of literary classification which would render it mere verse. To define poetry via the human faculty of imagination was not only to give it, as Coleridge desired, a philosophical foundation: such a definition also gave poetry an anthropological foundation. Poetry is defined, in fact, as the discourse of the species.

The historical and anthropological discourses of Man fueled such diverse essays as Scott's "Introduction to Popular Poetry" in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and Shelley's *Defence*. When theorizing the history of poetry, Scott, Shelley and Peacock each introduced the fiction of the metrical savage: he who speaks poetically by nature, he whose language is "vitally metaphorical," as Shelley wrote in his *Defence*, whose speech is primary poetry.[64] "Poetry," unlike "literature," precedes the letter. Thus an account of poetry depended on an account of the origin of language (speech), itself derived from various eighteenth-century hypothetical histories, such as Rousseau's and Condillac's.[65]

This turn to conjectural history suggests that many of the English and Scottish Romantics viewed poetry as a cultural project set adrift from its

imagined origins – origins in speech and gesture, in that first "vitally metaphorical" language. To restore poetry to those origins, or at the very least to remind readers of those origins, was the explicit aim of such poets as William Wordsworth and Walter Scott. Shelley described poetry as "connate with the origin of man"; Wordsworth lauded the almost mystical connection between the first bards and their audiences; and Scott derived his own poetic genealogy from minstrels who, he maintained, served the Scottish "National Muse" even as Homer served that of the Greeks.[66]

Indeed, for all their various allegiances and aims, we see that these poets each invoked quasi-anthropological fictions through which to account for the origins and ends of poetry. To recount the history of poetry was, as Shelley put it, to recount "the history of our species." Theorists of poetry in this period thus turned, almost without fail, to the discourse of conjectural history so characteristic of Enlightenment anthropology, a discourse that addressed, among other things, what the first human beings were like, how language emerged among them, whether society preceded language, whether archaic primitives resembled so-called contemporary primitives, how cultures progressed and through which iron-clad stages. Wordsworth and his contemporaries of course knew the standard seventeenth- and eighteenth-century essays on poetry, aesthetics, and the fine arts – Blair's, Dennis's, Ferguson's, Adam Smith's: what I am foregrounding (or rather constructing) here is the synchronic conjunction of poetry and conjectural history inasmuch as both posit a logic of Man, an anthropo-logic sundered from the earlier eighteenth century by (among other things) the French Revolution, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the disintegration of the Augustan convictions about art.

The following passages, taken from several defenses of and introductions to poetry, may be read as indices of this conjunction:

> The *earliest Poets of all nations* generally wrote from passion excited by real events; they wrote naturally, and as men: feeling powerfully as they did, their language was daring, and figurative . . . *the first Poets*, as I have said, spake a language which, though unusual, was still *the language of men* . . . [67]

> . . . all must admit, the general taste and propensity of *nations in their early state, to cultivate some species of rude poetry*. When the organs and faculties of a *primitive race* have developed themselves, each for its proper and necessary use, there is a natural tendency to employ them in a more refined and regulated manner for purposes of amusement. The *savage*, after proving the activity of his limbs in the chase [sic] or the battle, trains them to more measured movements, to dance at

the festivals of his tribe, or to perform obeisance before the altars of his deity. From the same impulse, he is disposed to refine the ordinary speech which forms the vehicle of social communication betwixt him and his brethren . . .[68]

Poetry is thus in its origin panegyrical. *The first rude songs of all nations* appear to be a sort of brief historical notice, in a strain of tumid hyperbole, of the exploits and possessions of a few pre-eminent individuals . . . This is the first stage of poetry before the invention of written letters.[69]

A child at play by itself will express its delight by its voice and motions; and every inflexion of tone and every gesture will bear exact relation to a corresponding antitype in the pleasurable impressions which awakened it . . . In relation to the objects which delight a child, these expressions are, what poetry is to higher objects. *The savage (for the savage is to ages what the child is to years) expresses the emotions produced in him* by surrounding objects in a similar manner; and language and gesture, together with plastic or pictorial imitation, become the image of the combined effect of those objects, and of his apprehension of them.[70]

In these excerpts the recurrence of such words as "rude," "savage," and "primitive" – whether positively or negatively valued – indexes the prevalence of an emergent anthropological discourse. Poetry consistently returns to what we might call "the savage exemplum." The turn to origins relies upon a logic of cultural comparison, an analogizing habit (e.g. savage : : child : : poet, in the last passage from Shelley). We also notice that, as they invoke poetic prototypes – whether wryly as in Peacock's *Four Ages* or rhapsodically as in Shelley's *Defence* – these poets shadow forth, perhaps not surprisingly, their own ideals. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say, especially given Peacock's polemical deflation of poetry, that these several accounts of primitive poetry and savage poets align almost perfectly with their authors' respective proposals for and diagnoses of contemporary poetry. Wordsworth's homage to "the earliest poets" who spoke "the language of men" with "passion" limns the image of the poet he wished to be; Scott's "savage" poet – imagined as a member of a "primitive race" and thus defined as a bard for and of a collectivity – shows himself to be both martially and aesthetically inclined, as well as a fine historicizable figure; Peacock's "rude" poet reveals himself to be a talented opportunist not unlike Robert Southey; and Shelley's poet emerges analogically as akin to the child and the savage, as dialectically creative, both perceiving and expressing. Projections of these poets' theories and allegiances, these savage exempla reveal not only the fairly obvious and commonplace cultural chauvinism of British poets but also the limit to that chauvinism: however great the historical or cultural or developmental rift between the romantic poet

and his rude forebears, his savage contemporaries, or his own children, nevertheless as a poet he found himself aligned and allied with such figures through what we might call the species-logic of imagination.

POETRY UNBOUND/REBOUND: TOWARD A DISCOURSE NETWORK

Thus far I have described the dissociation of poetry from literature and detailed its various contradictions; I have also argued that poetry increasingly allied itself with a kind of species discourse, one aspect of which was registered in the recourse to conjectural history and analogical savages, another in the frequent invocation of "imagination" as a human faculty, and still another in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's theorization of the poet as a simultaneously special but typical kind of human being. I have, then, focused on the more-or-less internal transformations of the category "poetry" – on its efforts to establish new foundations for itself – as well as on those changes related to the re-configuration of the kindred term, "literature." We have observed that poets argued for poetry by virtue of its antiquity, its human centrality, its status as the regulative idea of the fine arts, its possible function as a cultural synthesis. Yet, as my references to conjectural history and the human sciences suggest, poetry did not re-think itself in a discursive vacuum. To broaden the compass of this inquiry, then, it is useful to consider once again some basic questions: Why did poetry need a defense, and against whom (or what) did it defend itself?[71]

Following a long-established critical tradition, perhaps most crucially formulated by M. H. Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, we can observe in this period an obsessive, urgent, and multivalent redefinition of poetry: yet instead of distinguishing, as Abrams does, between "mimetic" and "expressivist" poeisis (or between "neo-classic" and "romantic" aesthetic theories), I would direct our attention to other discursive terrain. Wordsworth pugnaciously warned his imagined readers in the "Advertisement" to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 that "if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, [they] will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to enquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title."[72] That Wordworth's poems were not at all anomalous in the context of 1790s ballads and plaints does not negate the force of his challenge – his daring the reader to recognize (to "re-cognize," re-think) poetry. And if, as Shelley later

claimed, Plato, Christ, Bacon and the designers of the Roman arch were all poets, then one's definition of poetry had to become newly elastic.

Why this challenge, this insistence on invoking and disturbing "poetry" as a category? Wordsworth and Shelley each offered political interpretations of their differently but self-consciously revolutionary verse and prose: as Wordsworth observed, he could not fully explain his purposes in the *Lyrical Ballads* "without retracing the revolutions not of literature alone but likewise of society itself."[73] And indeed, the very titles of recent scholarly work in this period often foreground the intensely political and politicizable energies in these poets' writings: a brief sampling of such titles would include Marilyn Butler's *Romantics, Rebels, Reactionaries*, Ronald Paulson's *Representations of Revolution*, and the anthology edited by Kenneth R. Johnston, *Romantic Revolutions: Criticism and Theory*. Yet I would argue that in addition to this strongly delineated profile of the poet as *engagé*, we should excavate the ground on which these poets walked and which they half-created: the emerging discursive field of "poetry." Poetry – again, "poetry" as postulated by a select group of English and Scottish writers – begins to understand itself as that discourse engaged with and oppositional to the other emergent and co-dominant discourse of the period: what Wordsworth called "moral philosophy," Shelley "ethical science," and historians, isolating the triumphant strain, "utilitarian calculation."[74]

For an example of this conjunction – of poetry and what I will for now call, in a Wordsworthian vein, moral philosophy – we might look to William Hazlitt's *Spirit of the Age, or Contemporary Portraits* (1825). Concerned as he was to distill the *zeitgeist* (and thereby to Anglicize the German conception thereof), Hazlitt limned the figures of representative men through whom he could also chart the ongoing contest between his hallowed principle, "Liberty," and its bitter enemy, "Legitimacy." In this series of essays we can also trace the outlines of several networks: the literary public sphere as constituted by circulating magazines (Francis Jeffrey, Editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, is the subject of one portrait, while the loathed William Gifford, editor of the *Quarterly Review*, features in another); the nexus of poetry, patronage, and class (sketched in Hazlitt's essays on Scott, Wordsworth, and Byron); the political and philosophical debates that dominated the period (explored in the essays on Bentham, Godwin, and Malthus). The spirit of the age, as gauged by Hazlitt's essays, seems best embodied, in fact, by poets and moral philosophers. Indeed, Hazlitt makes a point of juxtaposing his portrait of William Godwin, whose *Political Justice* mesmerized Wordsworth in

the mid-1790s and Shelley twenty years later, against his portrait of Coleridge: although in these men Hazlitt discerned a morality play of Industriousness Posthumously Triumphant versus Dissipated Transcendentalizing Sloth, we can also see them as indices of the vital engagement – which often, for the poets, became an urgent contest – between moral philosophy and poetry.[75] Indeed it is striking to see how relevant Hazlitt's nominations for portraiture continue to be: one could hardly generate a better and more telling roster not of the spirits of the age but rather of its discourses: in Malthus, Godwin, and Bentham, versions of utilitarian reformism; in Wordsworth, Byron, Scott, and Coleridge, emblems of poetry as a cultural discourse.

For another implicit diagnosis – truly a cross-knowledge, a writing-through – of this discursive situation we need only turn to Thomas Love Peacock, satirist, novelist, poet, East India Company employee, friend of Shelley and author of *The Four Ages of Poetry*, which so provoked Shelley that he undertook his response almost immediately, in what we now know as *A Defence of Poetry*. We can read Peacock's novels and his satirical poems as distillations, as virtuoso performances, of the discourse network I am here describing. In his *Paper Money Lyrics* (written 1825–1826, not published until 1837), for example, Peacock energetically satirized and ventriloquized Scottish economists, Robert Southey (the much and deservedly maligned poet laureate), Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Walter Scott. What we witness, through these poems, is Peacock's absorption and display of a myriad of discourses and dictions – the discourse of population popularized by Malthus, of political economy associated with Adam Smith (one of Peacock's "Scotch economists"), of antiquarianism and balladeering (best embodied, perhaps, in the figure of Scott, whose Border Ballads had a wide circulation), of romantic interiority (already, thanks to Wordsworth, an easy target). One lyric features a righteous Scot named MacFungus – apparently a Malthusian as well as a fiscal conservative – who inquires:

A weel sirs, what's the matter?
An hegh sirs, what's the clatter?
Ye dinna ken,
Ye seely men,
Y'ur fortunes ne'er were batter.
There's too much population,
An' too much cultivation,
An' too much circulation,
That's a' that ails the nation.[76]

Other verses on this topic include the "Lament of the Scotch Economists on the Extinction of One-Pound Notes," the "Chorus of the Northumbrians on the Prohibition of Scotch One-Pound Notes in England," and the "Chorus of Scotch Economists on a Prospect of Scotch Banks in England," a verse of which reads:

> Come, sing as we've said it – Oho! Oho!
> Sing "Free trade and credit" – Oho! Oho!
> Sing "Scotch education,"
> And "O'er-population,"
> And "Wealth of the nation," – Oho! Oho!

As a response to the financial panic and paper-credit debate in the winter of 1825–1826, Peacock's lyrics illuminate, among other things, how the symbolic border between England and Scotland (a crucial threshold in the national/imperial British imaginary) had been charged with a particular political-economical valence. (There is, in this last lyric, the amusing yet disquieting prospect of a reverse invasion and colonization, of England by the more crafty, thrifty, and economically wily Scots.) Peacock's lyrics reveal that while the Scots have a certain intellectual capital, the English retain a superordinate national/political power – the power, for example, to prohibit the circulation of Scottish one-pound notes in England. To cast these disputes into the form of the ballad – a border ballad, no less, as popularized by that great mediator and inventor of Scotland for Britain and the world, Walter Scott – shows Peacock's peculiar brilliance. Scotland is displayed as that territory productive both of a certain school of moral philosophy – the newly formulated science of political economy – as well as of a specific culturo-poetic tradition.

Yet the Scottish political-economical-poetical strand is only one among many in Peacock's text: he also takes the time to weave in a send-up of the Lake School of Poetry – which he called, in the fashion of the magazine critics, the "Cumberland School," and which included Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey. Among the titles and authors Peacock invents is "A Mood of My Own Mind, occurring a gale of wind at midnight, while I was writing a paper on the currency, by the light of two mouldy candles. By W.W. Esq., Distributor of Stamps." The first line of this creation reads, "Much grieved am I in spirit by the news of this day's post," and the poem proceeds to argue on behalf of paper money, its life-giving "circulation like the blood, that keeps the land alive."[77] Again, Peacock has struck home, wittily

attacking Wordsworth's solipsism and his habit of idiosyncratically taxonomizing his own poems ("Moods of My Own Mind" was, in fact, a Wordsworthian category in his *Poems in Two Volumes*, 1807) while also criticizing his political servility. (Wordsworth was made Distributor of Stamps for Westmorland in 1813 and was thus awarded a government pension, making him – in the eyes of Hazlitt and Shelley as well as Peacock – a political and poetic turncoat.) Most significant for my argument is the fact that, as in the Scottish lyrics, poetry here, in the person (or impersonation) of Wordsworth, has something to say about the economy, and more broadly about the moral-philosophical debate over "circulation." It is not just that a *poet* has involved himself in current events and moral-philosophical debates (as did Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey) but rather that *poetry itself* has become the discourse of this involvement.

Peacock's *Paper Money Lyrics* thus exploit on several levels the trope of "circulation" – of paper money (to which he was opposed), ideas ("O'er-population"), books ("Wealth of the nation"), prominent poets (Wordsworth, Southey, *et al.*), poetic styles (Wordsworthian lyrics, border ballads) and cultural discourses (the discourse of romantic interiority, say, or that of political economy). His satires rely, in fact, on the ease of such circulation, the recognizability of its currencies, whether denominated as poets, economists, catch-phrases, or potted political opinions.[78] His novels similarly attest to this interest in circulation; in series, they reveal the interpenetration, vitality, simultaneity and complementarity of the discourses I am here highlighting.

Indeed it is extremely telling that in their defenses and definitions of poetry, Wordsworth and Shelley felt themselves forced to reckon with the cultural prestige and ethical claims of moral-philosophical discourse. Wordsworth's immersion in and subsequent rejection of Godwin's rationalistic philosophy in the mid-1790s is well-documented; his engagement with Godwin is attested in (among other writings) the 1805 *Prelude*, Book x, which describes his residence in France, the Revolution, and the various after-shocks he suffered. For another significant representation of moral-philosophical challenge, we might look to *The Prelude* Book xii, "Imagination, How Impaired and Restored," in which Wordsworth gives further evidence of his having tested his poetic commitment against moral-philosophical writings. Alluding in particular to Adam Smith, Wordsworth says of himself that:

> . . . having brought to the test
> Of solid life and true result the Books
> Of modern Statists, and thereby perceiv'd
> The utter hollowness of what we name
> The wealth of Nations, where alone that wealth
> Is lodged, and how encreased, and having gain'd
> A more judicious knowledge of what makes
> The dignity of individual Man,
> Of Man, no composition of the thought,
> Abstraction, shadow, image, but the man
> Of whom we read, the man whom we behold
> With our own eyes; I could not but inquire,
> Not with less interest than heretofore,
> But greater, though in spirit more subdued,
> Why is this glorious Creature to be found
> One only in ten thousand? What one is,
> Why not many be? (*Prelude*, XII, 76–92)[79]

As this passage suggests, Wordsworth understands the works of "modern Statists" to be making claims not only about wealth or nations but about the nature of Man: herein lies the crux of his argument against what he saw as an excessively rationalistic and abstract moral-philosophical discourse on Man. Against Adam Smith's and Godwin's "Abstraction[s]" (85) of Man, Wordsworth posits "the man whom we behold / With our own eyes" (86–7) – an embodied individual presence. Indeed, Wordsworth juxtaposes his poetics of the "dignity of individual Man" against the quantitative logic of political economy. He subtly evokes and transforms that logic in his questions: "Why is this glorious Creature to be found / One only in ten thousand? What one is, / Why may not many be?" This dialectic of individual and mass, "one" versus "ten thousand," is one index, perhaps the index *par excellence*, of what Frances Ferguson has called a "romantic political economy"[80]: the romantic fetish of singular individual consciousness emerges, we might say, against a background of actual and theorized multitudes of men, whether considered as nations (Adam Smith) or as populations (Malthus). Which is to say that Wordsworth understands the restoration of his imagination and the success of his poetry to be intimately involved with the surpassing of the moral-philosophical discourse on Man.

Moral philosophy and its sub-divisions thus become, for these poets, the *askesis* to which they submit in order to rehabilitate poetry: consider Wordsworth's critical and anxious meditation on the claims of "Science" in the *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads*, or Shelley's equally con-

cerned engagement with "ethical science" in his *Defence*. Inasmuch as poets defined their project as a human project, as a species project, then moral philosophy – with its observations on, analyses of, and prospectuses for Man – necessarily presented itself as a counter-discourse, and as a perhaps worthier project. Shelley certainly worried over the merits of his vocation. Writing to Peacock from Naples in 1819, Shelley declared: "I consider poetry very subordinate to moral and political science, and if I were well, certainly I would aspire to the latter, for I can conceive a great work embodying the discoveries of all ages and harmonizing the contended creeds by which mankind have been ruled."[81] The man who declared poetry "subordinate to moral and political science" would go on to write a floridly rhapsodic and intellectually sophisticated paean to the art – defined over and against "ethical science" – within two years: *A Defence of Poetry*. Shelley was obviously not unambivalent about his chosen craft of verse. In 1822 he again mocked his labors in a letter to Peacock: "I wish I had something better to do than furnish this jingling food for the hunger of oblivion, called verse."[82] It is clear that many a time Shelley as much as Peacock felt that poetic endeavors were puerile, especially when compared to such worldly and useful endeavors as moral philosophizing and empire building.

The poets I discuss clearly understood moral-philosophical discourse (whether particularized as political economy, Malthusian theory, Godwinian perfectibility, or utilitarian "calculation") to be a discourse: that is, they recognized, as Elie Halévy has argued since, that despite the many important distinctions among moral-philosophical writers and works they nevertheless pre-supposed a common discursive ground – or, to put it in an epistemological key, a common episteme. My chapters will address and allegorically re-enact particular discursive conjunctions and encounters: Wordsworth's with moral philosophy in the chapter, "Do rustics think?"; Mary Shelley's with Godwin, Malthus and "the human" in the chapter "Literate species"; Percy Shelley's with Malthus and "calculation" in the chapter on futurity; and in the final chapter, both poets' and moral-philosophers' reckonings with "immortality." Such readings risk flattening the very particular texts I invoke and the historical nuances of their production and reception: after all, Wordsworth's apprehensions about moral philosophy culminated in his rejection of Godwin, whereas Shelley continued to find Godwin (as opposed to Malthus and the Anglican utilitarian Paley) a continuously rich resource for his thought and poetry. There is no use in asserting that "poetry" took up a consistent position vis-à-vis specific

moral philosophical texts or writers. Moral philosophy as a broad discursive field cannot be reduced, moreover, to a series of proper names (Godwin, Malthus, Burke), nor should poetry be constrained to or by the proper names of canonized poets. And "poetry" as a discourse is not quite the same as those particular things we call "poems," nor is it fruitful, I think, to read "poems" simply as instantiations of "poetry," as if poems were just so many individuals of the species "poetry." Nevertheless, with these caveats in mind, I will offer a series of readings that I hope will illuminate and complicate just why and how certain poets re-imagined their practice in this period, and in what ways this re-imagining may continue to be vital for poets, critics, and readers. For all my rhetoric of ascertainment, I consider these chapters to be provisional readings, readings as provisions. These essays are thus best understood etymologically as attempts: cast in the mold of critical prose, they nevertheless wish to ally themselves with the simultaneously creative and rigorous commitments of the poets they rely on and solicit.

CHAPTER 2

Do rustics think?: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the problem of a "human diction"

> But alas, amongst *Children, Ideots, Savages*, and the grosly *Illiterate*, what general Maxims are to be found? What universal Principals of Knowledge? – John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1.2:64)

In 1800, William Wordsworth defended the "experiment[s]" of his *Lyrical Ballads* as a new "species of poetry . . . which is genuine poetry."[1] Fifteen years later, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was still assessing the impact of this supposedly new species. Taking Wordsworth's poetry, and his defense of it, as exemplary literary cases in the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge mounted an extended critique of the claims – linguistic, anthropological, and moral – of Wordsworth's poetic species. Chapter XVII features his most sustained analysis, which he introduces as follows:

> Examination of the tenets peculiar to Mr Wordsworth – *Rustic life (above all, low and rustic life) especially unfavorable to the formation of a human diction* – The best parts of language the products of philosophers, not of clowns or shepherds – Poetry essentially ideal and generic – The language of Milton as much the language of real life, yea, incomparably more so than that of the cottager.[2] (emphasis added)

Coleridge's objections to Wordsworth's theory begin with his rejection of "rustic life" as a suitable ground for a "human diction." Coleridge thus marks a gap between the "rustic" and the "human," whereas Wordsworth in 1800 had offered the rustic as a human prototype. Coleridge took very seriously Wordsworth's ambition to write from "the real language of men." Yet if one were to move toward a more "human diction," one could not, in Coleridge's view, sample the language of rustics and lowlifes. Coleridge's commitment to the philosophical trio of universal grammar, logic, and psychology led him to theorize language as an index of thought. The impoverished minds of rustics (or, as in his misgivings about the Immortality Ode, children), could hardly furnish a poet with the material for a "human diction." In the place of Wordsworth's passionate and, to many readers, bizarre

meditations on the language of rustics as the language of reality, Coleridge offered a characteristically universalizing and generalizing model of a common language for poetry: a "lingua communis" purged of the marks of class and peculiarity.

Coleridge understood in 1815 what Alan Bewell has recently vivified for late twentieth-century readers: Wordsworth's poetic project, especially as defined between 1798 and 1807, must be understood as a vital engagement with anthropologic – the logic of Man.[3] To take a rustic or a mad mother or an Indian woman as characteristically human – in speech as well as thought and emotion – was precisely the aim of Wordsworth's "experiments." Comparatively speaking, it was easier for Wordsworth to integrate English pedlars and vagrants than American Indians into a poetry of common life; nevertheless Wordsworth made the attempt. Yet the construction of a universal human from the ethnographic and social margins seems to have strained Wordsworth himself. A brief example will suffice to show how Wordsworth oscillated between an impulse to domesticate the exotic, in Bewell's terms, and an impulse to preserve difference.

One of the *Lyrical Ballads*, "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman," interestingly marks the gap between the generically "human" and the specifically different. Placed between "Old Man Travelling/ Animal Tranquillity and Decay, A Sketch," and "The Convict," the "Complaint" is the most obviously ethnographic poem in its sources and interest, yet it also exists in a continuum of Wordsworth's experiments in sympathy and extremity. As Alan Bewell has remarked, the "Complaint" is the least digested of Wordsworth's ethnographic experiments: its extended prefatory note provides an ethnographic frame both explicit and somewhat cumbersome:

[*When a Northern Indian, from sickness, is unable to continue his journey with his companions; he is left behind, covered over with Deer-skins, and is supplied with water, food, and fuel if the situation of the place will afford it. He is informed of the track which his companions intend to pursue, and if he is unable to follow, or overtake them, he perishes alone in the Desart; unless he should have the good fortune to fall in with some other Tribes of Indians. It is unnecessary to add that the females are equally, or still more, exposed to the same fate. See that very interesting work, Hearne's Journey from Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean. When the Northern Lights, as the same writer informs us, vary their position in the air, they make a rustling and a crackling noise. This circumstance is alluded to in the first stanza of the following poem.*][4]

The brackets and italics typographically insist on the difference between this note – with its informative function, its pathetic and ethnographic

interest, its natural historical anecdote – and the poem proper. Yet the very contiguity of note and poem establishes a supplementary relation between these two textual and discursive modalities. In the note, the Indian is introduced as ethnographic material, a typical specimen of a tribe. The group practices of the tribe implicitly follow an ascertainable sequence, the note suggests, and possess a clear cultural significance. The Indian is then further specified as a female, thus heightening the (typically Wordsworthian) pathos of the case. In thus marking the gender of the Indian, Wordsworth allies her with the many other instances of female extremity and pathos throughout the *Lyrical Ballads*: "The Thorn," "The Mad Mother," "The Female Vagrant." The complaint of the Indian woman may then be read as more a woman's than an Indian's plaint, especially given the privileging of emotive rather than informative utterance in the poem: "Before I see another day, / Oh let my body die away!" The ethnographic scene is, as it were, *outside* the poem – internalized in the title and elaborated in the note. The Indian is also presented as a textual and ethnographic resource – for Samuel Hearne, the participant-observer and writer, and for Wordsworth, the poetic raider of travel literature. In this way the Indian appears as the very figure of ethnographic circulation and exchange. And implicitly, given the concluding observations on astronomy – paraphrased from Hearne – Wordsworth situates the Indian in a world of natural historical phenomena: the Indian functions as an instance in both human history and natural history, the Indian as an exemplum of natural humanity.

Wordsworth exploits, modifies, and individualizes the textual, cultural, sexual, territorial and historical content of Hearne's "Northern Indians." Yet while the prefatory note insistently elaborates the category "Indian," Wordsworth elsewhere cites this poem as one example of his inquiry into common "human being." In the *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth characterizes the purpose of this poem as "accompanying the last struggles of a human being at the approach of death, cleaving in solitude to life and society."[5] The forsaken Indian woman here appears as typically human, confronting a specifically human (and Wordsworthian) predicament: anguishing consciousness of mortality. In the *Preface*, this character serves as a figure for the human; in the note the character is more precisely restricted to a figure of the Indian. These ways of understanding the Indian woman, of creating her individuality and resourcing her ethno-poetically, show the tensions inherent in such a project as Wordsworth's: the exotic figure may alternately trope the

alien or the familiar. As "a human being at the approach of death," the forsaken woman serves as a Wordsworthian everyman; as a sick female "Northern Indian" (and as a mother), the forsaken woman serves as a gendered ethnographic vehicle for what Coleridge later criticized as Wordsworth's "species of ventriloquism."[6]

Wordsworth may have defended his "Complaint" (as well as his idiot boy, his narrator in "The Thorn," his Simon Lee, his Alice Fell) in terms of extending the domain of poetic humanity, but Coleridge was not at all convinced. As he mobilized his arguments against Wordsworth in the *Biographia*, Coleridge moved from questions of poetic style to quasi-anthropological investigations into the relation of rustic mentalité to rustic speech. The dispute over the locus of the *lingua communis* thus extended beyond an argument about whether the language of Milton or the language of rustics should serve as the ground for a "more human diction." In the movements of the *Biographia*, an argument about poetic diction transformed itself into an anthropological debate about the capacity of lower specimens (rustics, children, Esquimos, females) not only for poetic and philosophical speech but indeed for thought. In reading this debate, therefore, it seems appropriate to invoke the title of Levy-Bruhl's book on savage thought, *How Natives Think*: as I will discuss, both Wordsworth and Coleridge launched into meditations on "how rustics think."[7]

FROM HUMAN DICTION TO HUMAN MIND: DO RUSTICS THINK?

To this question, implicitly proposed and answered in the affirmative by Wordsworth, Coleridge gave at best a qualified "yes." Rustics think, but not like the better part of society – certainly not like the clerisy, philosophers, and literati who were destined to provide "the best parts of language" for poetry.[8] The language of Milton was as much the language of real life as that of the cottager, Coleridge argued; moreover, the language of rustics was clotted with imperfections, crudities, and barbaric syntax, all bespeaking a condition of underdeveloped mind. Furthermore, Coleridge maintained, if a "selection" of such language were made for poetry, as Wordsworth recommended, the resulting linguistic resource would be no different from that of "any other man of common sense."[9] In other words, why invoke the rustic at all? To refute Wordsworth's endorsement of the rustic, Coleridge attacks not only the rustic's language but indeed his very faculties. The core of his objection thus proceeds:

> . . . a rustic's language, purified from all provincialism and grossness, and so far re-constructed as to be made consistent with the rules of grammar (which are in essence no other than the rules of universal logic applied to psychological materials), will not differ from the language of any other man of common-sense, however learned or refined he may be, except so far as the notions which the rustic has to convey are few and more indiscriminate. This will be still clearer if we add the consideration (equally important though less obvious) that the rustic, from the more imperfect development of his faculties and from the lower state of their cultivation, aims almost solely to convey insulated facts, either those of his scanty experience or his traditional belief; while the educated man chiefly seeks to discover and express those connections of things, or those relative bearings of fact to fact, from which some more or less general law is deducible.[10]

Note the time Coleridge spends elaborating the "consideration (equally important though less obvious)" – that the very conceptual tools of the rustic are inadequate to the requirements of a human diction. His thoughts – his "notions" – are relatively impoverished; his faculties are undercultivated and underdeveloped; his capacity for generalization and abstraction is poor. In sum, Coleridge writes, ". . . the distinct knowledge of an uneducated rustic would furnish a very scanty vocabulary. The few things and modes of action requisite for his bodily conveniences would alone be individualized; while all the rest of nature would be expressed by a small number of confused general terms."[11] What is Coleridge's rustic – this man of basic needs, sparse speech, and merely concrete thought – but the savage mind?

To show that this query is not merely fanciful, I will turn to another intellectual debate over the nature of "man" and "thought," the one conducted between Claude Levi-Strauss and Jean-Paul Sartre. This may seem a long way from Wordsworth and Coleridge, but further examples from Coleridge's writings suggest that such an anthropological crisis – a crisis in the assessment of peoples, primitivity, and thought – was well-delineated by 1815 in England.[12] Moreover, the conjunction of Wordsworth/Coleridge and Levi-Strauss/Sartre may be understood as a constellation of two moments in the intellectual, historical, and discursive crisis associated with the French Revolution. The *Biographia Literaria*, in addition to being an extended evaluation of Wordsworth, is of course an anti-Jacobinical polemic and apologia. Coleridge's careful distancing of himself from his earlier radicalism, his emphasis on the clerisy, his anti-populism, his constant referencing of the periodical and journalistic debates of the previous twenty years: all place this text as the high-water mark of English reaction to the French Revolution and

Napoleonic ascension. Coleridge consistently alludes to what reviewers responded to in the *Lyrical Ballads* and its 1800 *Preface*: Wordsworth's project, with its commitment to "Man," was consistently read as a quasi-Jacobinical – if not outright revolutionary – project. Coleridge's attack on Wordsworth's "human diction" is thus a political attack, on the old Wordsworth at least, and on the radically democratic implications of such a theory.

Wordsworth's poems internalized the new conceptions and practices of "Man." In another, later context, Levi-Strauss and Sartre continued the struggle over what precisely would constitute Man. The difference between "savage" and "civilized" mind fascinated Levi-Strauss, who struggled to overcome the asymmetry of the opposition by finding in every civilized man (and notably, the figure of the artist) a bricoleur. On the supposed "difference between savage thought and our own," Levi-Strauss wrote that "contrary to Levy-Bruhl's opinion, [savage thinking] proceeds through understanding, not affectivity, with the aid of distinctions and oppositions, not by confusion and participation."[13]

In the middle years of this century, Levi-Strauss invoked the French Revolution as the critical juncture for the modern "sciences of man." He represented his dispute with Sartre as a debate embedded in and generated by the ideologics of the French Revolution. Of Sartre's trumpeting of dialectical reason and historical consciousness, Levi-Strauss wrote:

> . . . we end up with the paradox of a system which invokes the criterion of historical consciousness to distinguish the "primitive" from the "civilized" but – contrary to its claim – is itself ahistorical. It offers not a concrete image of history but an abstract schema of men making history of such a kind that it can manifest itself in the trend of these lives as a synchronic totality. Its position in relation to history is therefore the same as that of primitives to the eternal past: in Sartre's system, history plays exactly the part of a myth.
>
> Indeed, the problem raised by the *Critique de la raison dialectique* is reducible to the question: under what conditions is the myth of the French Revolution possible? And I am prepared to grant that the contemporary Frenchman must believe in this myth in order fully to play the part of an historical agent and also that Sartre's analysis admirably extracts the set of formal conditions necessary if this is to be secured.[14]

Levi-Strauss thus ironizes the idealization of history, transforming historical consciousness – the criterion of civilization, according to Sartre – into a myth with its own historicity and unconscious. The "myth of the French revolution" underlies Sartre's efforts to distinguish

"primitive" from "civilized" peoples. This myth serves a particular function for twentieth-century Frenchmen and for philosophers, Levi-Strauss argues: it places them on the side of agency, history, critical consciousness, and ultimately, the future. It differentiates them from primitives, merely analytic reason, mere praxis, myth, illusion. Levi-Strauss understands this philosophical (over)valorization of historical consciousness to be a telling moment in the history of the human sciences. As he writes, "Sartre is certainly not the only contemporary philosopher to have valued history above the other human sciences and formed an almost mystical conception of it."[15] In the name of anthropology, linguistics, and a psychoanalytically informed understanding of the unconscious, Levi-Strauss attacks the "special prestige" of history. As he recognizes, this conflict within the human sciences (here articulated as one between "philosophy/history" and "structuralist anthropology") involves a dispute over the human: ". . . some special prestige seems to attach to the temporal dimension, as if diachrony were to establish a kind of intelligibility not merely superior to that provided by synchrony, but above all more specifically human."[16] The various human sciences strive to make "intelligible" the human world; moreover, in doing so they establish axioms about the "specifically human."

What kinds of practices or modes of reason should we consider "more specifically human"? The arbitration of what is or might be constructed as "more specifically human" lies at the heart not only of Levi-Strauss's dispute with Sartre but also of Coleridge's critique of Wordsworth. As Levi-Strauss recognized, the attempt to codify certain habits of mind or types of reason produced an inexorable asymmetry: certain types of thought, characterized as "primitive," would persist in these theories as the prior, under- or undeveloped mode in contradistinction to dialectical, or modern, or educated thought. Conversely, those peoples whose way of life was considered primitive or savage (for example, Wordsworth's rustics or Indians) would necessarily exemplify this gap which theory had so logically produced and reified. One would not, must not, ever discover primitives who thought.

Levi-Strauss's passionate assertion that the savage did indeed think, albeit as a bricoleur, ran up against Sartre's (Coleridgean) dismissal of savage thought as mere praxis – non-reflective, non-dialectical. In "History and Dialectic," the ninth chapter of *The Savage Mind*, Levi-Strauss revisits Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, with its radical rupture between "dialectical" (i.e. post-Enlightenment) thought and

merely analytic thought. Levi-Strauss is most indignant about the following passsage in Sartre:

> . . . In fact, the natives of Ambryn "gave Deacon demonstrations, using diagrams." They drew lines on the ground, and these, according to their length and position, represented one or other of the spouses, their sons, their daughters, etc., seen, of course, from the point of view of a complex matrimonial system. In this case, it is important to realise that in producing these relations in the domain of the absolute inert (earth or sand) and of perfect exteriority, they were not copying some model which they carried in their heads; and it would be equally incorrect to say that they project their synthetic practical consciousness of themselves and of everyone into the analytical milieu of the inanimate: such a projection, in fact, is impossible, since it would involve – roughly speaking – two distinct orders of rationality . . . *It is obvious that this construction is not a thought: it is a piece of manual work* controlled by a synthetic knowledge which it does not express.[17] (emphasis added)

If a "native" diagrams his own kinship structure, Sartre asserts, he is not thinking, he is merely doing a bit "of manual work." To this passage Levi-Strauss responds: "Granted: but the same must be said of a professor at the Ecole Polytechnic demonstrating a proof on the blackboard, for every ethnographer capable of dialectical comprehension is intimately persuaded that the situation is exactly the same in both cases."[18] Driven to break down the very barrier which *The Savage Mind* implicitly announces – that between so-called "savage" and "civilized" (or "modern," "Western") minds – Levi-Strauss sees in Sartre's impulse to segregate peoples and modes of thought a false reification of the concept of reason as well as a mystification perpetrated in the name of history. Only peoples with historical, dialectical consciousnesses *think*, in Sartre's terms. Thus, only those peoples who fully participate in the radical ruptures of modernity – for example, the legacy of the French Revolution – may be said to think or to have agency.

A channel between the French thinkers and the English writers appears in the very figure of a man writing in the sand: does he *know* what he depicts? does he understand it? is he immersed in Sartre's practico-inert, the inertial morass of the merely given? Can he form and convey a concept of himself, a concept at all? Such questions appear in Chapter 12 of the *Biographia*, when Coleridge introduces a teachable slave who sketches his thoughts, like Deacon's Ambryn, in the earth. This chapter "of requests and premonitions concerning the perusal or omission of the chapter that follows" (the famous Chapter 13 "On the imagination, or esemplastic power") considers the "problem of natural

philosophy": "it assumes the objective or unconscious nature as the first, and has therefore to explain how intelligence can supervene to it, or how itself can grow into intelligence."[19] Musing on philosophical foundations and the possible attainment of critical consciousness, Coleridge writes:

> . . . philosophy in its first principles must have a practical or moral as well as a theoretical or speculative side. This difference in degree does not exist in mathematics. Socrates in Plato shows that an ignorant slave may be brought to understand and of himself to solve the most difficult geometrical problem. Socrates drew the figures for the slave in the sand. The disciples of the critical philosophy could likewise (as was actually done by La Forge and some other followers of Des Cartes) represent the origins of our representations in copper plates; but not one has yet attempted it, and it would be utterly useless. *To an Esquimaux or New Zealander our most popular philosophy would be wholly unintelligible. The sense, the inward organ for it, is not yet born in him.* So is there many a one among us, yes, and some who think themselves philosophers too, to whom the philosophic organ is entirely wanting.[20] (emphasis added)

Just as Sartre would deny to the Ambryn "thought" or even the capacity to "project their synthetic practical consciousness of themselves," so too Coleridge denies to the "Esquimaux" and New Zealander the "sense, the inward organ" for comprehending even the "most popular philosophy."[21] In terms of the binary asymmetrical opposition of primitive and civilized minds, we may provisionally consider Coleridge's "philosophic organ" to be the romantic analogue of Sartre's dialectical reason.[22] As Coleridge argues, one may draw mathematical figures in the sand and teach "an ignorant slave" to comprehend; but such intellection is peculiar to mathematics. Critical philosophy – and here Coleridge agrees with Sartre – eludes the grasp of the "native" thinker.

Here, as in his essays *On the Principles of Genial Criticism*, Coleridge wavers: is there an absolute chasm between the savage and the civilized or a more bridgeable gap? The philosophical organ is "not yet born" in savages; it may yet be. We see in the above passage an uneasy modulation from Socrates' teachable slave to the as-yet-unenlightened "natives": consistently Coleridge maintains an analogy between the lower orders *within* culture and the primitives *beyond* it. There is a complex comparison and set of homologies operating in his thinking: primitivity may appear on the margins of the civilized or within the domain thereof. "Esquimaux" and New Zealanders persist in a condition of lack, of philosophical wanting. This condition however does not simply arise in savages – as Coleridge wryly notes, "there is many a one among us" who is born similarly "wanting." The primitive in this passage thus

arbitrates a distinction Coleridge elsewhere sees as one *within* the English mind. The comparative method allows him to convert material and historical specificities and differences into a structurally homologous mentality: the uneducated rustic and the New Zealander can represent, in such a passage, the same condition of philosophic wanting.

The problem of the savage mind – or in Levy-Bruhl's terms, "how natives think" – may be understood as an anthropological hypothesis produced by historical crisis: most broadly, the contact of Western Europe with "new" peoples from the Age of Exploration onwards, and more specifically, the crisis of revolution which tore the Enlightenment from its moorings in the eighteenth century. Yet, as suggested by the epigraph from Locke (which began this chapter), there was by the mid-eighteenth century a moral-philosophical rupture in place, one which placed "Children, Ideots, Savages, and the grosly Illiterate" on the same side, the side of the primitive mind.

Any inquiry into the specificity of savage thinking leads the philosopher into the qualities of thought itself. So too when considering the cognitive development of children. In the early years of this century, cognitive psychologists were well aware of the homology to which anthropology had contributed: that between the child, the savage, and the insane. In *Thought and Language*, the Russian linguist Lev Semenovich Vygotsky remarked that what Levy-Bruhl noted in primitive thinking, Storch observed in the insane and Piaget in children: participation. As Vygotsky wrote, "participation" was "applied to the relationships of partial identity or close interdependence established by primitive thought between two objects or phenomena which actually have neither contiguity nor any other recognizable connection."[23] Of such a theory of "participation," Vygotsky is critical: we shouldn't be so literal as to think that the Bororo, who pride themselves on being red parrots (as reported by von den Steinen and quoted in Levy-Bruhl), actually think they *are* red parrots. "[T]he word . . . does not function as the carrier of a concept but as a 'family name' for groups of concrete objects belonging together, not logically, but factually."[24] Leaving aside for a moment this distinction between "family names" and "concepts" (and the opposition between "factual" and "logical" relationships), what we see here is the taking seriously of the complex interrelationships of thought and language *within* so-called primitive thought. Like Levi-Strauss, Vygotsky gives us savages (and children) who think, albeit not (yet) with logically derived concepts. "Participation" is, by his lights, a mystification typical not of savages but of those who would theorize the savage.

But as Vygotsky goes on to say, primitive thought appears *within* the domain of the civilized – most notably, in the figure of the child. Vygotsky's entire book explores the conundrum: if a child thinks in a manner qualitatively different from the adult (and different from other children at different developmental stages), how is it that adults and children use the same language to establish sufficient communication? Vygotsky writes, ". . . we might say that the child's and the adult's words coincide in their referents but not in their meanings."[25] (If I ask, what is a woman?, the child may point to the woman on whose lap he sits, whereas a psychoanalyst – say, Lacan – might discourse on the impossibility of Woman, her excess, her jouissance, the incommensurability of biology and fantasy. Although it is true that each might answer, "Mother.") What bridges the gap between these very different modes of using and experiencing language is, as Vygotsky puts it, "the illusion of being understood."[26]

The illusion of being understood is exactly what threatens to break down in Wordsworth's experiments in human diction – experiments which were also, as Coleridge pointed out, assertions of the dignity and generalizability of the rustic mind. The encounters in some of the more famous *Lyrical Ballads* stage meetings between figures whose minds are not commensurate: the rustic child interrogated by the presumptuous, superior adult in "We are Seven"; the idiot boy and his lucid if silly mother Betty Foy in "The Idiot Boy"; the uncomfortable son and his jovially coercive father in "Anecdote for Fathers." Wordsworth's project repeatedly invokes the possibility of impasse – between adult and child, poet and ethnographic figure (the forsaken Indian woman), poet and prior self (as in "Tintern Abbey"). Yet this is not just a drama of consciousness and interiority, as Wordsworth has so often been read. The encounter *between* subjects is as significant as that *within* the subject. Wordsworth's ballads reveal a drama playable on numerous stages, with various and new actors coming into being as subjects and objects of inquiry, sympathy, and revulsion: the child, the savage, the insane. If the *Lyrical Ballads* are indeed "experiments," as Wordsworth called them, they are experiments in a poetics of the human sciences as well as experiments in poetic style and readerly tolerance. For in his relentless invocation of types of marginal humanity (children, rustics, idiots, females, Indians – to which might be added the "Old Man Travelling" and "The Convict"), Wordsworth brings us to the threshold of an impasse: the imminent breakdown in understanding across human beings is not so much avoided as indicated, articulated, dramatized.

HOW RUSTICS MIGHT THINK: ABOUT MASTERS, FOR EXAMPLE

To look more closely at "We are seven": as Alan Bewell has pointed out, this poem may be read as one of Wordsworth's investigations into the history of the human mind and its conception of death. For the human relation to death has itself a history, as Wordsworth – student of burial practices, essayist on epitaphs, speculator on Stonehenge, invoker of Druid priests and sacrifice – well knew. The framing interrogative of the poem establishes the meeting of maid and man as a kind of anthropological inquiry:

> A simple child, dear brother Jim,
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death? (1–4)[27]

What *should* it know indeed? What does the "simple child" (as yet ungendered, as yet uncultivated) know, what understanding of mortality has this easily embodied and vital creature ("lightly" drawing breath)? The opening question situates the actual encounter of the "little cottage girl" and the man she addresses as "Master" within a context of moral-philosophical inquiry. The dialogue of maid and man should serve to answer this question: what should it know of death? Yet the very speaker who poses the question, if assumed to be the same "I" who meets the "little maid," is soon shown to be an overbearing questioner. The interrogative becomes the instrument of dissection and discipline: he who questions assumes the power to question, the power of inquiry, the power of the "Master."

If there were ever a poem suited to exemplify the annoying persistence of a refrain, "We are seven" is it. Generations of undergraduates must have parodied the maid's repeated reply to the Master's question – "How many may you be?" – to which the maid responds, with various permutations, "We are seven." What is so brilliant about the poem is the way Wordsworth economically reveals the psychological and cognitive structures behind the refrain. Why must the maid repeat? Because her interlocutor adopts a stance of assumed stupidity and repeats his own question. Yet the narrator/interlocutor is stupid in a way he himself cannot have assumed. He who would teach is stymied; moreover, in his attempt to correct the maid's conceptions he reveals the rigid structure of his own.

When the maid counts off her family members, including the two

who "in the church-yard lie," the man refuses to mirror this count, instead enumerating again only those who are alive:

> You say that two at Conway dwell,
> And two are gone to sea,
> Yet you are seven; I pray you tell
> Sweet Maid, how this may be? (25–28)

In his account, the man suppresses the two in the church-yard: this should be read as a deliberate omission with pedagogic intent. In his careful repetition and equally careful omission, the man presumes to teach the maid what she clearly does not understand: dead bodies don't count, or at least not in response to his questions (how many are you? and, where are they?). He will show this maid, patiently and benevolently, in cadences as soothing as a ballad's, that her literal-minded account of her family number will not do.

The maid's equally staunch repetition, and her telling re-assertion of the presence of her two dead siblings, suggest that in the little cottage girl the man has met a match:

> Then did the little Maid reply,
> "Seven boys and girls are we;
> "Two of us in the church-yard lie,
> "Beneath the church-yard tree." (29–32)

Her reiteration forces the man to show his hand. His criterion for counting is life: "Your limbs they are alive; / If two are in the church-yard laid, / Then ye are only five" (35–36).

It is fascinating to see the little maid's continued resistance to this subtraction, and further to witness the revelation of the grounds for her resistance. The little maid defends her count by reference to the visible, the tangible, the concretely remembered, ongoing practice, and the seasonal: "Their graves are green, they may be seen," she says (37). She provides the man with brief histories of her siblings' deaths, which are remembered in conjunction with the season's rhythms. Of little Jane, she says that "all the summer dry" her brother John and she played "together round her grave" (54–55) – Jane having died in late spring or early summer. And John himself "when the ground was white with snow /. . . was forced to go" (57, 59). The maid thinks in terms of season, not month, date or calendar year; she retains significant and telling details as mnemonic traces, such as the fact that the summer after Jane's death was "dry." Her experience of temporality implicitly differs from the

man's, as does her relation to her space – which is always full, concrete, and inhabited in the maid's world. She eats her porridge on her siblings' graves; she knits there; she sings to them. She refuses to respect the logical oppositions which govern the man's thought: "life" and "death" are not opposed. Death ruptures neither the continuity or the contiguity of the family relation, although certainly the maid realizes that John and Jane have suffered a change of state, which she represents as a change of place (of Jane: "and then she went away" [52]). Yet the leave-taking of death does not to her appear as a translation to another sphere: she is in her way a literalist of the imagination, gesturing to the grave where John "lies by [Jane's] side" (60). The decomposed body does not enter the maid's account; nor does the possibly transfigured soul. "Immortality" will not appear in the maid's thought, precisely because "mortality" does not appear to her in the same guise as it does to the man.

If the little maid were purely a specimen of the child mind, or of the rustic mind, or of the savage mind, one might nod and say, well someday she may know better. And meanwhile isn't it nice that she's feisty. And of course Wordsworth himself, most notably in his Immortality Ode and his first *Essay upon Epitaphs*, struggled with the impact of mortality on his sense of life and developed quite another understanding than the little maid's. Yet what is most interesting about "We are seven" is not the illustration of a primitive, localized, charming yet unphilosophical knowledge of death: the tension of the poem, and the source of its momentum, lies in the double revelation of the maid's and master's minds. For just as the maid's steadfast repetition forces the man to point to lively limbs as the only true basis for counting, her further explanation of her siblings' deaths propels the man to invoke a religio-ideological complex, "Heaven," as the proper place for depositing those dead siblings. The maid's longest speech gives the narrative of her siblings' deaths, but to this moving account the man is apparently insensible. He does not respond to this speech *per se* but presses on with his calculus of presence, absence, and the obligatory subtraction of the dead:

> "How many are you then," said I,
> "If they two are in Heaven?"
> The little Maiden did reply,
> "O Master! we are seven." (61–64)

It is the man who introduces the concept, Heaven; it is he who moves from the earth and its homely graves to a concept which is supposed to put a stop to the maid's repetition. Heaven is to function as his peda-

gogical trump-card. He will show her a new, truer structure of reality: for this she needs such concepts as Heaven. As we have seen, the maid counts by a calculus of presence, continuity, and proximity ("Their graves are green, they may be seen"; "he lies by her side"). If the bodies are removed, as it were, from the place "twelve steps or more from [the maid's] mother's door" to the intangible realm of "Heaven," the maid will be forced to see that in fact the dead are not *there*, that they *are* not, that they perhaps *were* seven but now "*are* only five."

Yet still the maid resists, and resistance takes the form of vigorous repetition: "O Master! we are seven." Confronted with the maid's reiteration, the Master cracks. Up to this point, the Master has spoken only in declaratives and interrogatives, the soothing and ultimately disingenuous back-and-forth of exemplary pedagogy. Now he shifts mode and breaks into his first exclamation: "But they are dead; those two are dead! / Their spirits are in heaven!" (65–66). The maid has broken his pedagogic composure: the man has uttered – for the first time in the poem since the framing question about "death" – the word "dead." Not only does he utter "dead," he repeats it, reduced to repetition just as he had before reduced the maid. Moreover, he has invoked "spirits" as well as Heaven, revealing yet another binary opposition structuring his thought, that of body and spirit, which clearly does not register with the maid as meaningful.

It would seem then that "Master" and "maid" demonstrate almost too perfectly the difference and gap between the civilized (or modern, or philosophical, or dialectical) mind and that of primitive thought. The maid's thinking seems to bespeak the very participation Levy-Bruhl found characteristic of the way natives think. Her immersion in practice, and her defense of her family accounting by recourse to such practice – she sings to these siblings, eats on their graves, therefore they are, they exist to be counted – would seem to be a good example of the primitive incapacity for abstract reflection, or for ideation through concepts. She in fact seems to have no concepts at all beyond that of number ("seven," "two"). Every noun she uses is a concrete noun with an experiential referent – cottage, church-yard, porringer, grave. She does invoke God, albeit unreflectively: "God released her of her pain." Compared to the man, with his fluency in spirits and Heaven, the maid seems positively impoverished in thought.

What Wordsworth shows us is not merely the gap in mind, but the currents of power – pedagogic and erotic – fueling the man's attempt to bridge the gap. The poem offers a critique of a version of ethnographic

research: the speaker in the framing stanza proposes a kind of anthropological question, but as he narrates the encounter we see that he proceeds as a willful pedagogue who intends to enlighten this charming native. The encounter, in its motivation and progress, may be read as a dissection of the bad conscience of anthropological inquiry itself: the researcher simultaneously desires the other and wishes to master her through enlightenment. The speaker's attraction to the girl mandates that she be the one subjected to the inquiry which had been asked before as if it were hypothetical: what should it know of death? Yet this particular child is embodied, beautiful, vocal, attractive – not an unmarked "it." Indeed Wordsworth provides us with an ethnographic blazon:

> She had a rustic, woodland air,
> And she was wildly clad;
> Her eyes were fair, and very fair,
> – Her beauty made me glad. (9–12)

How pleasant it is to address one's anthropological queries to such an attractive subject. The speaker's investment in the child's looks and dress shows the investigation to involve pleasure as well as a search for knowledge. Moreover, the disintegration of the speaker's composure – the comic discombobulation – reveals in other ways how motivated was his address to the little maid. If this is human science, it is not a science purged of emotion or passion or a wish to master another. But if the man carries within him a power/knowledge complex tinged with erotic longings for the "wildly" different, the little maid successfully resists his impulse to appropriate her by educating her. The last stanza is a fine rendering of the ethno-pedagogue undone:

> But they are dead; those two are dead!
> Their spirits are in heaven!"
> 'Twas throwing words away; for still
> The little Maid would have her will,
> And said, "Nay, we are seven!" (65–69)

The little maid's "Nay!" appears as the final assertion of her "will": she will not be moved or persuaded; she will not adopt the categories of spirit, Heaven, or death. Her negation is a comic triumph, if one sides with the maid's resistance. Even more interesting is the persistence of the man in his stance, one which reduces the maid's responses to "will" while refusing to recognize his incessant questioning and his refusal to hear as another, more sinister manifestation of will. Perhaps

it is more precise to say the meaning of stupidity is transformed in the poem: at first, the speaker, recognizing his ignorance, poses an apparently genuine question: What should it know of death? But such honest ignorance, as it were, becomes in the poem a naiveté assumed and distorted by the Master. (Could you count up your family again, please?) Sentimental indulgence becomes exasperated mastery rather quickly. By assessing their impasse in terms of "her will," the man shows how he will inevitably reduce encounter to contest, communication to assertion. One is never "throwing words away," as the master claims, if one considers words channels for engagement rather than tools for domination.

This reading is not offered as another ferreting out of the bad conscience of the master, or even of anthropological musings; rather, I wish to stay with "We are seven" for the way it allows us to re-think the problem of the ethnographic encounter, which I argue is but one instance among many of encounters between the potentially incommensurate. It is the man, not the maid, who transforms an encounter into a struggle; the poem enacts this transformation and subtly, comically criticizes it. The poem knows more, as it were, than the man; the poem offers itself as a space large enough to contain incommensurate minds. This is an asymmetrical incommensurability: the difference between man and maid appears to the man as a problem to be solved by a kind of twisted Socratic method – it is he who forces the maid to explain herself in order to correct her. To understand "We are seven" as a contest, one which the maid "wins," is to ratify the Master's understanding of the engagement. For truly, when first questioned, the maid "wondering looked at" the man, as if amazed by such a strange question. And it is odd to be forced to account for oneself and one's family to a stranger, however benevolent he may seem. The maid registers the strangeness of the encounter, whereas the man proceeds as if this were a purposeful and transparent venture: well, child, how many are there in your family? Having to account for herself in this way seems to be a new task for the maid, one arousing wonder as well as a polite willingness to participate. The comic defeat of the interrogation leaves us with a bittersweet impasse: the maid has resisted, but the Master remains self-righteous in his exasperation. There has been no attempt to inhabit the maid's world, only a wish to have it presented in order to be corrected. What could have been an authentic dialogue lapses – because of the man's mulishness – into mutual exasperation, the maid explaining herself to increasingly deaf ears. For truly, though each speaks the same

language, maid and man both suffer the breakdown of what Vygotsky called "the illusion of being understood."

The poem, however, suggests and enacts a provisional alternative: the sustaining of the encounter. The poem contains both minds, explores the limits of each, and invests itself in the drama of mutual and pressured revelation. The impasse itself – how it is produced, under what conditions – fascinates Wordsworth. That he chooses to treat such an impasse as a lyrical ballad should make us consider what relation this lyric form has to this impasse. I would argue that the ballad form, and this particular poem with its exploitation of refrain and rhyme, is uncannily suited for such a dramatization of impasse. The simple diction and populist associations of ballads, however literary, bespeak a commitment to the maid's commonplace world and her lexical resources; ballads are, after all, considered especially appropriate for children. The orality-effect of such a form also contributes to the texture of the impasse: Master and maid are represented as talking, as physically proximate, as conjoined in a moment together. The emphasis is on speech, and on the adequacy of speech to thought. Wordsworth has his Master slowly introduce new words as new conceptual categories – heaven, spirits – but these words do not circulate further in the poem, since the maid will not take them up. The conversation which fills the stanzas is also the material which constitutes impasse and the end of talk: we head as if inexorably to the little maid's "Nay." As noted before, the cognitive and experiential gap between maid and master motivates the repetition throughout (and thus facilitates rhyme): repetition has both acoustic/generic function and cognitive content. Tracing minute shifts in consciousness and revealing in simple phrases the enormous rift between maid and master, Wordsworth in "We are seven" gives us a song with cognitive content, a song whose omissions are as crafted as its inclusions. The lyric allows him to micro-manage, as it were, the dynamic of encounter: this is best illustrated by pointing to the two major formal shifts conjoined in the last stanza. As noted above, the master finds himself resorting to exclamations: "But they are dead; those two are dead!" These exclamations bespeak pedagogic embarrassment and exasperation: the exclamation for the master is a mode to be resisted, and its appearance signifies for him a break. (For the maid, we might argue, the exclamation may carry wonder as well as frustration: "O Master!") In addition to this shift in mode, we also see that in the last stanza (the one composed first, Wordsworth later reported), the four-line stanza pattern expands by

one line. In this stanza the little maid actually gets the last word, and the last words are both a negation of the master and an affirmation of her calculus: "Nay, we are seven." It is as if the force of the little maid's "will" had compelled an expansion of the poem at the end: we feel, by such a rounding out of the stanza, the "modification of structure," the "sense of stable conclusiveness, finality, or 'clinch'" which Barbara Herrnstein Smith has described as the hallmark of "poetic closure."[28] We also hear the poem ending quite literally on the maid's terms. The ballad, with its fairly predictable measures, may also be especially apt for a poem so obsessed with number: the last stanza, with its culminating amplification, conjoins the shift in metrics to the final assertion of number by the maid.

I have been reading "We are seven" as, at one level, a dramatization of a failed encounter; on another level, that which comprehends master and maid, the poem is wise to the nature of the failure. This is a poem, typical of Wordsworth in this period, of "counter-enlightenment." One could imagine the Wordsworth of the *Preface*, or the chastened father of the "Anecdote for Fathers," rebuking the master for his coercive interrogation. The poem itself delivers him his comeuppance, but as I noted before the defeat of the master leaves the master confirmed in what seem to be his implicit (and Coleridgean) prejudices – that the maid is stupid, that children (and perhaps rustics in general) have no idea of philosophical or transcendental truths, that they resist enlightenment. It is notable that the master finds himself exasperated with the maid, not with his own project and technique of enlightenment. The poem, however, reveals the necessary precondition of enlightenment on the master's terms – a mimicry, if not an internalization, of the concepts and coordinates of the enlightened master. Not only can the maid not internalize the master's concepts: she refuses even to mimic. Wordsworth's sensitivity to these differing levels of participation – true internalization versus mere mimicry – is well-illustrated by the child-interlocutor of the "Anecdote for Fathers": the child will produce an answer insofar as he intuits that an answer is demanded, and he will select from the options forced upon him, however irrelevant they may be to him (in this case, Kilve or Liswyn farm). In such poems of pedagogic mischance, Wordsworth allows us to see that what might look to be a successful engagement may well turn out to be a mere simulacrum of authentic encounter.

What would make encounters authentic? What can sustain the "illusion of being understood" without violating the participants? To this

Wordsworth surely would have answered, "sympathy." Wordsworth's polemical sympathy led him to speak in the persons of others; to Coleridge, such a commitment to sympathy led Wordsworth to some infelicitous poems and pronouncements. This argument over the use and abuse of sympathy leads, furthermore, to a debate over the proper work of poetry: should poetry foster sympathetic encounter, or was such humanization more properly the work of moral philosophy?

PERSONIFICATION, IMPERSONATION, VENTRILOQUISM: THE AMBIGUOUS WORK OF POETRY

Wordsworth's poetics of sympathy runs the risk of becoming a poetics of appropriation and condescension, Coleridge argued. One source of readerly pleasure in Wordsworth, he maintains, "may be found in the reader's conscious feeling of his superiority, awakened by the contrast presented to him."[29] The gap between Wordsworth's extremely individualized diction and the demotic was large: on this basis Coleridge attacked the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle": "But are those words in those places commonly employed in real life to express the same thought or outward thing? Are they the style used in the ordinary intercourse of spoken words? No! nor are the modes of connections: and still less the breaks and transitions."[30] Coleridge accuses Wordsworth of ventriloquizing the other: of speaking on his or her behalf in a ludicrous fashion, of representing his or her consciousness in a way which must either confirm the reader in her smug superiority or which falsifies the actuality of the other's mind and speech. Do you know any simple country people who speak in hypotaxes? Coleridge wonders. How could such vocabularies be circulating in rustic communities? "In what sense is a child of that age a philosopher?" he thundered in response to the infamous stanza from the Immortality Ode ("O thou, best philosopher . . . ").[31] Coleridge disperses his *dubitatio* throughout the *Biographia*. Wordsworth should stick to his own person and diction, he advises, and abjure these embarrassing, falsifying experiments in bathetic representation.

What is at stake of course is the use of the other for art, and more profoundly, the use and abuse of sympathy. Coleridge anticipates Wordsworthian objections to his critique: turning to "the great point of controversy between Mr Wordsworth and his objectors; namely, on the choice of his characters," Coleridge imagines Wordsworth's response:

> . . . why with the conception of my character did you make wilful choice of mean or ludicrous associations not furnished by me but supplied from your own sickly and fastidious feelings? How was it indeed probable that such arguments could have any weight with an author whose plan, whose *guiding principle and main object it was to attack and subdue that state of association which leads us to place the chief value on those things on which man differs from man, and to forget or disregard the high dignities which belong to human nature*, the sense and the feeling which may be and ought to be, found in all ranks?[32] (emphasis added)

Coleridge proposes a brilliantly Wordsworthian defense: the aim of the new poetry, his Wordsworth argues, is to take "human nature" as its domain; it turns away from those "things on which man differs from man." To feel superior to the idiot boy, or the mad mother, is to overvalue one's difference from them. As Coleridge acknowledges, Wordsworth presupposes a common base of faculties (imagination, affections, fancy), however impaired or deranged they may be in some of his characters. In this sense his is truly, as Hazlitt wrote in *The Spirit of the Age*, a leveling muse.

Wordsworth's sympoetics provokes in Coleridge not consistent revulsion but ambivalence. Elsewhere in the *Biographia* Coleridge lauds Wordsworthian sympathy, revealing the other pole of his ambivalence. To Coleridge, the flaws in Wordsworth's project lay more in Wordsworth's theoretical "tenets" than in the poems themselves. Coleridge may have been the most forceful and cogent critic of what many have since noted: the *Preface*, with its contentious pronouncements, is neither particularly coherent nor a consistently useful guide to the poetry. ("In short, were there excluded from Mr Wordsworth's poetic compositions all that a literal adherence to his theory would exclude, two-thirds at least of the marked beauties of his poetry must be erased."[33] When assessing the poetry, Coleridge is more friendly to Wordsworth's commitment to philosophic sympathy; in his work Coleridge finds:

> a meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility, a sympathy with man as man; the sympathy indeed of a contemplator, rather than a fellow sufferer or co-mate (*spectator, haud particeps*), but of a contemplator from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature; no injuries of wind or weather, of toil or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine.[34]

Here Coleridge can salute Wordsworth's insistence on a "sympathy with man as man"; elsewhere such a commitment – or rather Wordsworth's attempts to realize it in such poems as "The Idiot Boy" or

the offending stanzas of the Intimations Ode – merits Coleridge's censure. What we see throughout this assessment of Wordsworth is an ambivalence, one directed particularly toward the project and objects of Wordsworthian sympathy. It is interesting to see that Coleridge cites "The Mad Mother" as an exemplary instance of such "meditative pathos": clearly he does not object categorically to representing what might be called marginal others. This poem he calls a "genuine lyric," yet elsewhere Coleridge had criticized Wordsworth's "undue predilection for the dramatic form . . . [which often] presents a species of ventriloquism."[35]

At this point it is useful to refine Coleridge's understanding of ventriloquism. Ventriloquism for Coleridge does not mean speaking in the person of another; it rather indicates the disjunction between the poet's individual diction and that of the rustic, idiot, or child he may be dramatically representing. "Either the thoughts and diction are different from that of the poet, and then there arises an incongruity of style; or they are the same and indistinguishable, and then it presents a species of ventriloquism, where two are represented as talking while in truth one man only speaks." Ventriloquism is a problem of representation, of technique; it is not a function simply of the "choice of characters." A full inhabitation of a mad mother's mind in Wordsworthian diction (using, for example, a narrower lexical range, not the more elaborated patterns and resources of, say, "Tintern Abbey") would suit Coleridge's strictures. "Ventriloquism" thus indicates a failure of style and handling, not necessarily a problem in the "choice of characters" which provoked so many readers.

Coleridge insists he makes an aesthetic judgment here (cf "incongruity of style"), and not a social one. And yet he soon comments on the inadequacy of real rustic minds to the situation and vocabularies Wordsworth loans them in his poetry (as in the "fifth and last" defect he notes in Wordsworth: "thoughts and images too great for the subject"[36]). In addition to isolating style from choice of character, Coleridge separates thought and language in his critique: as he says, it is possible to write poems guilty of "what might be called *mental* bombast, as distinguished from verbal." With this turn to the *mental* limitations which, in his opinion, Wordsworth disregards, Coleridge moves from issues of poetic diction *per se* to the question of human minds and their capacity for thought – questions most often posed in the field of moral philosophy. It was this very treading on the ground of moral philosophy that most troubled Coleridge.

DISCURSIVE NEGOTIATIONS: MORAL PHILOSOPHY AGAINST POETRY AGAINST MORAL PHILOSOPHY

If we read the collaboration, mutual reflection, and disagreements of Wordsworth and Coleridge as a long conversation, their discussion could be assessed in terms of a debate over discursive boundaries: moral philosophy versus poetry. That Wordsworth concerned himself with moral philosophical debates is well established: his infatuation with and rejection of William Godwin is only the most notable instance of this intellectual investment. Critics have long noted Wordsworth's engagement with the political, moral, and economic theories of Godwin and Adam Smith. Alan Bewell has placed Wordsworth in a slightly different moral philosophical field, one constituted by "hypothetical histories of man" – treatises on the origin of mind such as Condillac's, theories of spectatorship and sympathy such as Smith's and Rousseau's, and the tradition of eighteenth-century anthropology as it flourished in England and France. Coleridge was no less an heir to these discourses and theories. When it came time to assess Wordsworth's poetic "tenets," it was on the ground of discursive and philosophic trespass that Coleridge most criticized Wordsworth.

How to assess Wordsworth's defense of his project, his choice of low characters, his refusal to focus on "those things on which man differs from man"?[37] Coleridge insists he must object, not because he is proud or snobbish, but because Wordsworth's project belongs to moral philosophy and not poetry:

> . . . the object in view, as an immediate object, belongs to the moral philosopher, and would be pursued not only more appropriately, but in my opinion with far greater probability of success, in sermons or moral essays than in an elevated poem. It seems, indeed, to destroy the main fundamental distinction, not only between a poem and prose, but even between philosophy and works of fiction, inasmuch as it proposes truth for its immediate object instead of pleasure.[38]

At this point it is instructive to consider an earlier instance of Coleridge's invocation of "poetry" as a discursive category. On 9 October, 1800, he wrote to his friend, the chemist Humphry Davy, about his anticipated project: "The works which I gird myself up to attack as soon as money concerns will permit me are the life of Lessing and the essay on poetry. The latter is still more at my heart than the former: its title would be *An Essay on the Elements of Poetry* – it would be in reality a disguised system of morals and politics."[39] Under the rubric of "Poetry," Coleridge intended

to reveal his "system of morals and politics": the cloak of poetry would "disguise" the body of moral philosophy. Such a project was never carried out in full, although Coleridge's lectures throughout the 1810s may be seen as one version of its realization.

The letter to Davy may serve as an index of the complex relations among the categories "poetry" and "morals and politics." It was the propriety of this relation which, in Coleridge's view, Wordsworth's choice of low characters tended to subvert. One could not take pleasure in such poems; one was forced into incredulity or revulsion. Wordsworth's characters, and his oscillation among dictions, made it all too difficult to suspend disbelief. Displeasure resulted, and the major purpose of poetry, repeatedly stated by both Wordsworth and Coleridge – to give pleasure – was cut off at the root.

What Wordsworth and Coleridge confronted was both the historicity and specificity of sympathy. What would prohibit the taking pleasure in a poem? When was identification impossible, and how would that affect the reading or hearing of a poem? When did the differences among men (or women, or children) necessarily intervene? Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* were experiments conducted at the limits of sympathy and pleasure. In Coleridge's opinion, he had exceeded these limits; in doing so he both usurped the proper purpose of moral philosophical inquiry and eroded the fine philosophical distinction between poetry and prose. Wordsworth had his own responses to such criticism, anticipating as he did the threat which his social and ethnopoetic commitments present. His rejection of Godwin explicitly involved the turning away from moral philosophy to poetry, or rather, the claiming for poetry the "extension of sensibility" to which moral philosophy had so notably contributed in the late eighteenth century. Yet such writing overvalued reason and rationality, in Wordsworth's view: what needed extension and cultivation was not reason but the affections. For this poetry and not moral philosophy was best suited. His "Essay on Morals," undertaken in the same year as the *Lyrical Ballads*, made these points:

> Now, I know of no book or system of moral philosophy written with sufficient power to melt into our affections [?s], to incorporate itself with the blood & vital juices of our minds, & thence to have any influence worth our notice in forming those habits of which I am speaking . . . All this is the consequence of an undue value set upon that faculty we call reason.[40]

Moral philosophy fails to "incorporate itself with the blood of vital juices"; elsewhere Wordsworth makes plain that it is poetry which can

so incorporate itself. In the *Preface* of 1800, Wordsworth used the very phrase – "vital juices" – as part of his assertion of the identity of the language of poetry and prose:

> They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred and almost identical, not necessarily differing in degree; Poetry sheds no tears "such as Angels weep," but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial Ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.[41]

In such a passage, Wordsworth works to demystify the language of poetry, although it could be claimed that in his corporeal metaphors of blood and vital juice he remystifies writing as bodily activity. Yet the human vitality here claimed for poetry and prose is exactly what he two years before denied to moral philosophy. As Wordsworth suggested in his fragmentary "Essay on Morals," a renovation of heart and habit would require a kind of bodily vivification. The *Preface* makes clear what the "Essay on Morals" suggests: "poetry" (or, perhaps, any vitally imaginative writing) would do the work of humanization, work at which moral philosophy – as an abstract, rational discourse – would necessarily fail.

Wordsworth's most famous rebuke to moral philosophy is of course the two-poem sequence, "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned; an Evening Scene, on the Same Subject." Matthew, the poem's representative moral philosopher (inspired by William Hazlitt), rebukes the poet for his dreaminess, for forsaking books, and most notably, for his fantasy of natal singularity:

> "You look round on your mother earth,
> "As if she for no purpose bore you;
> "As if you were her first-born birth,
> "And none had lived before you!" (9–12)[42]

Gently mocking the Adamic pose of the musing poet, Matthew invokes both historical and social context as the loci of truth and maturity. Matthew is the standard-bearer of enlightenment: "Where are your books? that light bequeath'd / To beings else forlorn and blind!" (5–6). The dreamer, he suggests, mistakenly removes himself from the sequence of transmissions – intellectual, spiritual, patrilineal, perhaps national – which makes enlightenment possible: "Up! Up! and drink the spirit breath'd / From dead men to their kind" (7). However unappealing Matthew's invitation, it is nevertheless a serious challenge

to the dreamer's commitments to "mother earth" and dreaming – non-purposive, non-active, matrilocal thought. And indeed, just as Wordsworth in his prose contrasts moral philosophical "books" with the vitality of poetry, so too here he resists Matthew's injunction by appealing to the body and its capacity for feeling:

> The eye it cannot chuse but see
> We cannot bid the ear be still
> Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
> Against, or with our will.
>
> Nor less I deem that there are powers,
> Which of themselves our minds impress,
> That we can feed this mind of ours,
> In a wise passiveness. (17–24)

The image of the passive, receptive body displaces and supersedes the practice of reading and more broadly, what "books" here index – official knowledge, purposive inquiry, rationality, enlightenment ("that light bequeath'd / To beings else forlorn and blind" [6–7]). Again, Wordsworth offers a counter-enlightenment, anchored in the sensuous living body instead of in the books of "dead men." Inasmuch as poetry is allied to dream and Wordsworth's ethos of "wise passiveness," poetry itself emerges as a more instructive engagement than moral philosophy. Considering Matthew more or less checked, Wordsworth in the following poem, "The Tables Turned," continues in the person of the nature-ideologue, despiser of books ("a dull and endless strife") and praiser of the "lore which nature brings."[43] Of course the paradox persists: to encounter this defeat of books, one must read a book. But it is not books *per se* that Wordsworth rejects, rather the belief that enlightenment is to be found only or mainly there. Because this debate is conducted in ballad form, it quite actually dramatizes the containment and supersession of moral-philosophical commitments by poetry. That Wordsworth plays with a pleasurably stacked deck – after all, it is more pleasing for most to absorb a ballad than Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* or Hazlitt's *Essay on Human Action* – does not diminish the importance of the argument represented in the poem.

If understood as an intervention in a debate over discourses and knowledges, "Expostulation and Reply" comes to figure not so much the end of books as a rebuke to moral philosophical hegemony over theories of the human. Indeed, Wordsworth introduced the poem in his "Advertisement" of 1798 as an explicit rebuke to a friend too much taken with moral philosophy: "The lines entitled Expostulation and

Reply, and those which follow, arose out of conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy."[44] The impact of this engagement with moral philosophy becomes even more pronounced in the 1800 collection of *Lyrical Ballads*. In this edition, rearranged by Wordsworth at a distance from the original collaboration with Coleridge, the sequence of the poems suggests a purpose which his prose *Preface* supported in other terms. Instead of "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere" as the starting poem, Wordsworth gives us "Expostulation and Reply," followed by "The Tables turned," "Old Man Travelling," and "The Complaint of a forsaken Indian Woman." It is as if the original project of Coleridge and Wordsworth – in which Coleridge determined to write ballads of "supernatural, or at least romantic" interest while Wordsworth focused on ballads featuring "things of every day" – had succumbed to Wordsworth's domestic anthropology.[45] It is one thing to open a book to "The Ancyent Marinere," quite another to happen upon "Expostulation and Reply." The re-ordering of poems has the effect of leading the reader through a more exclusively Wordsworthian terrain. The supersession of moral philosophy by the poet's stance of "wise passiveness" (and more broadly, by "Poetry" as a discourse) paves the way for Wordsworth's introduction of those no-longer hypothetical subjects of ethnographic and social commentary as well as conjectural history: the aged, the destitute, the savage, the idiot. Before representing others, Wordsworth situates us in a discursive field generated in contest with moral philosophy. No longer objects of representation in conjectural histories (cf idiots, wild children), ethnological and travel narratives (the Indians), or political-economical treatises (the aged, the poor), these figures in the ballads emerge, however problematical, as subjects with voices, situations, histories. The comfortable distance allowed by a treatise (say, William Godwin's *Political Justice*) is abrogated by the immediacy of a woman's plaint, a poet's reflection, a child's insistent "Nay."[46] The work of poetry, through its insinuation into the reader's affections (if successful), offers what might be called a thicker description of potential subjectivities.

TELLING STORIES ABOUT OTHERS: "RUTH" AS A CRITIQUE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC SEDUCTION

Coleridge's concerns about "ventriloquism" anticipate postcolonial critiques of romantic identification: the writer's consciousness of his

difference and his implicit assumption of superiority enables the very representation which is supposed to elicit our sympathy. In other words, the precondition of Wordsworth's experiments with rustics, savages, and children is that he is neither a rustic, a savage, nor a child. One risk of such an interest in the margins, in alterity, is the aestheticization and depoliticization of difference, a risk which increases as the gap between peoples, cultures, lands and languages widens. At this point I direct our attention to "Ruth," a poem which invokes the authenticity and pathos of the rustic as a counter to the romance of the savage.

That Wordsworth was sensitive to the perils of exoticism is perhaps best exemplified by "Ruth," a poem added to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.[47] The poem is another ballad featuring a female vagrant: as the poem reveals, Ruth for the rest of her life has cause to rue her engagement to a dashingly exotic "Youth from Georgia's Shore" (13). The poem traces several crossings and encounters: we see the young English girl, self-exiled from an unhappy home, meet a Youth lately returned from America; we hear of his previous exploits among the Cherokees; and more broadly, we become aware of a dynamic and perilous relation among several lands and peoples – most notably between England and America, and between English adventurers and "savage" (112) Indians. In his engaging narration, the Youth mobilizes the appeal of such perilous crossings; his "wild histories" (a phrase added in the 1802 version of the poem) arouse in Ruth a barely articulated longing. With enormous subtlety Wordsworth works out a complex relation among registers of wildness, offering in his poem both an homage to and a critique of the fantasy of the savage.

The seduction of Ruth originates, we might say, in what Michel De Certeau has described as "the work of returning."[48] The Youth has *returned* from Georgia, replete with Indian(ized) headdress and tales of battles, Indian maids, ritual dances, and exotic American plants. The first appearance of the Youth establishes him as figure of the dashingly exotic:

> There came a Youth from Georgia's shore,
> A military Casque he wore
> With splendid feathers drest;
> He brought them from the Cherokees;
> The feathers nodded in the breeze
> And made a gallant crest. (13–18)

The initial interest in the appearance of the Georgian Youth immediately establishes the importance of seeming, and its soon-to-be-revealed difference from being:

> From Indian blood you deem him sprung:
> Ah no! he spake the English tongue
> And bare a Soldier's name . . . (19–21)

The sudden invocation of and challenge to the reader's perceptions ("you [may] deem him sprung . . .") highlights the challenge to authenticity which the Georgian Youth presents: seeming Indian, he turns out to have assumed the accoutrements of Indianness. Wordsworth puts the reader in the position of a potential ethnographic dupe: you like Ruth may think at first this Youth was actually an Indian! Insisting on the possibility of confusion, Wordsworth focuses us on the borders (national, cultural, stylistic/sumptuary) transgressed by the youth. He is a pseudo-savage, "drest" for erotic (and no longer military) success; his is an acquired and displayed exoticism. The poem assumes, notably, that such exoticism attracts, and it sketches throughout the possible pleasures and benefits not only of going native but of maintaining the native stance in the "home" world.

In addition to the Youth's feathers, the ethnographic inflections of his adventure appear in several ways. The Youth's citations of flora, fauna, and rituals highlight both his ethnological method of representing and his exploitation of his experience as what James Clifford has called a "participant observer."[49] For the purpose of the poem – and for purposes of Ruth's seduction – the Youth resembles the ethnographer making good on his researches. The potential of his escapades abroad is revealed in his return: his American experience becomes the stuff of oral-storytelling, tales of fascination.

The notes to the poem suggest a complicated relation between the Youth's ethnographically spiced speech and the poet's stance. The notes provide another kind of basis – a textual foundation – for whatever ethnographic authority the poem may claim. Wordsworth footnotes the Youth's mention of the "Magnolia" and the "Cypress":

> He told of the Magnolia,* spread
> High as a cloud, high over head!
> The Cypress and her spire,
> Of† flowers that with one scarlet gleam
> Cover a hundred leagues and seem
> To set the hills on fire. (55–60)

* Magnolia grandiflora.

† The splendid appearance of these scarlet flowers, which are scattered with such profusion over the Hills in the Southern parts of North America is frequently mentioned by Bartram in his Travels.

The Youth's honeyed speech becomes, via the footnote, an occasion for the poet's Linnaean clarification. The citation of Bartram works to shore up the authenticity of the Youth's speech. Two tiers of ethnographic authority appear: one claimed as experience, in speech (the Youth), the author claimed through textual references, in writing (Wordsworth's). Whereas the Youth makes his appeal by fluently invoking his own experiential authority, the poet asserts such a claim through a referencing of that other participant observer, Bartram. These notes foreground the textual apparatus of Wordsworth's ethnographic authority: his magnolias and cypresses have been researched, not personally seen; the trees appear here as objects of scientific classification and travel narrative. They are discursively and functionally different, we might say, from the Youth's trees. Yet it is very important to the poem that the Youth himself never resources his material in this way: his authority depends in large part on his assumption of a transparent relation to these marvels. He invokes no other authority than himself: he saw the trees, he heard the "choral song" (47), he experienced these wonders. Thus we may observe in "Ruth" a homology between the tales of the Georgian youth and the work of the poet: each is trafficking in tales of ethnographic seduction. The Youth capitalizes on his experiences in "savage lands," even as Wordsworth capitalizes on his reading experience of Bartram, which he even documents in his footnotes. The poet both relies upon ethnographic authority – in his use of Bartram – and criticizes the all-too-easy manipulation of it.[50]

In his critique of ethnographic seduction, Wordsworth coordinates several discourses of romance. The romance of the savage transforms the more typical ballad romance between youth and maid. Erotic fascination is virtually indistinguishable from ethnographic fascination:

> Such tales as told to any Maid
> By such a Youth in the green shade
> Were perilous to hear. (40–42)

Wordsworth orients us to the multiple discourses of romance in play – all potentially perilous: among them we may observe the medieval, the ethnographic, and the domestic. Each of these, with the possible exception of the domestic, is liable to reveal its bad conscience in the poem, its pseudo-status. For examples of the pseudo-medieval, we may point to the residual elements of chivalric style and courtliness. "The feathers nodded in the breeze / And made a gallant crest," we read of the Youth's casque (17–18); and the narrator reports, in mock-chivalric

language, "From battle and from jeopardy / He cross the ocean came" (23–24). And, as noted above, the fantasy of the Youth's savage status is both invoked and punctured in the early lines: "From Indian blood you deem him sprung: / Ah no! he spake the English tongue" (19–20).

These discourses of romance do not have equal or homogenous appeal. I would argue that Wordsworth constructs different scenes of fascination for the reader and for Ruth. The figure of the Youth provisionally condenses the multiple routes to fascination in the poem. The poem consistently returns to the attractiveness of the Youth, circling back almost precisely mid-poem to his wonderful appearance:

> But, as you have before been told,
> This Stripling, sportive gay and bold,
> And, with his dancing crest,
> So beautiful, through savage lands
> Had roam'd about with vagrant bands
> Of Indians in the West. (109–114)

The Youth has himself taken on the erotic fascination of the "savage lands" – for Ruth, the narrator, and presumably the reader. Yet for Ruth, it is not the fantasy of "savage lands" that attracts as much as the romance of domesticity which seems possible "over there." Here different and gendered investments in the Youth become prominent.

In his address to Ruth, the Youth revivifies in her mind the promise of a happy domicile. The domestic romance is precisely what broke down in Ruth's own childhood: indeed, this is the inaugural scene of the poem:

> When Ruth was left half-desolate,
> Her Father took another Mate;
> And so, not seven years old,
> The slighted Child at her own will
> Went wandering over dale and hill
> In thoughtless freedom bold. (1–6)

It is exceptionally important that Wordsworth begin with such an account: with its sketch of a family romance gone awry (the mother dead, the stepmother perhaps evil but at the very least the cause of Ruth's being "slighted"), Wordsworth gives us the psychological and material bases for Ruth's later vulnerability to the Youth's appeal. Ruth herself seems consistently to understand her possibilities through the discourse of family and domestic romance. The Youth apparently intuits (or lucky for him, guesses) the basic structure of Ruth's desire: to

repair the family, to establish a pastoral domestic scene securely anchored by a benevolent paterfamilias.

The Youth's speech moves incrementally from evocations of wildness and wonder to the pastoral of hearth and home:

> And then he said "How sweet it were
> A fisher or a hunter there,
> A gardener in the shade,
> Still wandering with an easy mind
> To build a household fire and find
> A home in every glade.
>
> What days and what sweet years! Ah me!
> Our life were life indeed, with thee
> So pass'd in quiet bliss,
> And all the while" said he "to know
> That we were in a world of woe,
> On such an earth as this!
>
> And then he sometimes interwove
> Dear thoughts about a Father's love,
> "For there," said he, "are spun
> Around the heart such tender ties
> That our own children to our eyes
> Are dearer than the sun. (67–84)

What could be more appealing to a conventional English girl, a once-"slighted Child," than this? The Youth's speech responds to what the poem presents as the real historical conditions of Ruth's slighting: as a female child displaced by her father's new mate, Ruth has cause to question the permanence of paternal tenderness. It is striking that the Youth elaborates the fantasy of paternal and not maternal love: we are reminded that although Ruth suffered the early death of her mother, it seems to have been the subsequent withdrawal of the father that made her situation particularly precarious and painful, leading to her self-exile at age seven. The Youth's invocation of a "Father's love" would seem to carry especial weight for Ruth; in addition he proposes a vision of her as his "own adopted bride" (88) – a wife selected and perhaps fostered by a parental mate.

Moreover, the Youth's fantasy of a pre-industrial life of gardening and hunting foregrounds the appeal of a domestic and domesticated primitivity. The stanzas above are the first instance of the Youth's

direct speech: we have the sense that he has talked to Ruth on several occasions, enough to have woven several permutations through the fabric of his address. "And then he sometimes interwove / Dear thoughts about a Father's love" (79–80): the Youth sometimes did this, on other occasions presumably recounted the wilder Indian tales. In its movement from the unfamiliar (he seems to be an Indian, he talks of wonders) to the familiar (the prospect of domestic companionship), the poem implies that the decisive fantasy for Ruth is the family pastoral presented last in the Youth's long wooing: that of joining him to be his "helpmate in the woods . . . a sylvan huntress at [his] side" (86–89).

This pseudo-classical idyll is one strain of a fantasized primitivity, a simplicity purged of terror, exoticism, or exciting alienness. The poem presents several versions of the meaning of America, this place of primitivity: for Ruth, America comes to signify a future domestic pastoral, but for the Youth America represents a still unresolved complex. The place "over there," in De Certeau's division of the ethnographically mapped world, appears in his speech as alternately familiar or alien, pastoral or nomadic, a site of "quiet bliss" or violent escapades, a future home or place of wild roamings. His speech modulates among these versions of the "strange lands"; his eventual abandonment of Ruth after their wedding suggests that the nomadic savage strain has triumphed in his nature.

Delineating the emerging impasse between incompatible primitivities – between (we might say) being native and going native – Wordsworth incorporates a moral-philosophical critique of wildness. The encounter of Ruth and Youth involves the conjunction of two genealogies of wildness, one apparently more commendable than the other. Wordsworth takes care to present his heroine as a kind of rustic wild child: after leaving "at her own will" her father's home, Ruth

> built a bower upon the green,
> As if she from her birth had been
> An Infant of the woods. (10–12)

Ruth is "as if" a wild child, self-raised in nature. Yet this assumption of "thoughtless freedom" is not an exercise in romantic agency, even though Wordsworth furnishes his Ruth with "her own will" (4). The child finds herself "upon the green" after the failure of the family

structure. Ruth *becomes* a wild child; she is not natively an "infant of the woods." What seems to be a pleasurable circumstance – replete with music and pastoral bower – has its origin in a series of traumas. Ruth's assumption of (or reversion to) an "as if" state of nature signifies a devastating failure of the cultural and civilizing forms which the patriarchal domicile should have sustained. The failure of her own home does not lead Ruth to any critique of the domestic or of the paternal; instead she (and, we might argue, Wordsworth) desires most deeply to repair the domestic by re-instituting it abroad with the Youth.

Ruth's secondary nativity as an "infant of the woods" suggests one etiology of wildness; the Youth's history as a soldier-adventurer points to another set of motivations and historical circumstances. Wordsworth carefully dates his return to the end of the American War of Independence. The Youth is, however, a romantic and not republican hero; he does not seem to be any kind of Paineite. The Youth's relation to the war appears to be one of medievalizing mystification: "And when America was free/From battle and from jeopardy/He cross the ocean came." This is of course a re-crossing, and we may well speculate what fantasies and material circumstances propelled the Youth to emigrate in the first place.

Ruth's wildness appears as a kind of rustic innocence; the Youth's, however, is a perverse acquisition, and, as his "Casque with feathers" suggests, something of a simulation. Wordsworth represents Ruth's primitivity in terms of English pastoral – oaten pipes, green bowers (8, 10). The Youth's primitivity is a function of regression not within the terms of the home culture and landscape but outside and beyond it. Whereas the child Ruth becomes a primitive isolato by necessity, the Youth appears as a man who more or less chose to be re-socialized by Indians. Contact transforms both the morals and physiology of the Youth. Wordsworth moves to the Youth's insides, both in terms of his body and in terms of what we would now call subjectivity. The Youth's time in savage lands has modified both his exterior and his "nature." The trappings of exoticism which animate his looks are not merely exterior marks: the Georgian Youth has furnished himself with a half-savage hybrid interiority.

Wordsworth spends several stanzas in the middle of the poem assessing the impact of contact upon the Youth. He actually diagnoses him. In assessing the Youth's moral debilitation, the poet writes:

But ill he liv'd, much evil saw
With men to whom no better law
Nor better life was known;
Deliberately and undeceiv'd
Those wild men's vices he receiv'd,
And gave them back his own.

His genius and his moral frame
Were thus impair'd, and he became
The slave of low desires;
A man who without self-controul
Would seek what the degraded soul
Unworthily admires. (139–150)

Wordsworth's interest in the moral and psychological effect of contact is noteworthy. Wordsworth sustains a comparative evaluation of the transactions of the contact zone: he shows himself to be fluent in the "comparative method" so notable in eighteenth-century writings on primitives. What looks to be a tit-for-tat transaction of vice is actually, because of the comparative asymmetry of English soldier and "degraded" Indian, an imbalanced transaction. The Youth becomes "a slave," whereas the Indians presumably became not more enslaved but perhaps more permanently enslaved and "wild." The Indians, men "to whom no better law/nor better life was known," cannot be held morally responsible for the impairment of the Youth's "genius and moral frame." Yet it is as if the Youth failed in what should have been his Christianizing, humanizing mission. The very comparative "better" lets us know that indeed there is a "better law" and "life" than the Indian – that of regulated English domesticity, the very life Ruth desires. It is not contact *per se* that is under critique, but rather the going native of one who should have maintained his "self-controul" (148), one who should have known "better." Nor is contact with such an adventurer seen as any kind of problem for the Indians: contact is assessed only in terms of its use-value for the Youth's tales and in terms of its moral and physiological impact on the Youth. What the Indians made of their new "vices" Wordsworth doesn't say. The impairment of the Youth is seen as a moral tragedy for the Youth, and later more devastatingly for Ruth.

Sustaining the appeal of the Youth, Wordsworth refuses categorically to condemn him. He leavens his critical observations with a variety of caveats: although the Youth in America was too susceptible to the "voluptuous," "Yet, in his worst pursuits I ween,/That sometimes there did intervene/Pure hopes of high intent." Although the Youth acts

basely toward Ruth, "yet he with no feign'd delight / Had woo'd the Maid." Wordsworth insists on a sincere seducer, one whose self-conception hinges on his apparently authentic convictions. This sincerity contributes to the poem's sustained ambivalence toward the Youth: deeply attractive and thus admired, he is also the figure under critique. Throughout the poem, then, a structure of ambivalence dominates – ambivalence about the Youth, about contact, about discourses of romance, about romantic primitivity.

I have been considering "Ruth" a parable and critique of ethnographic seduction. Wordsworth provides in the poem a complex of scenes, motivations, and discourses which fatally conjoin for Ruth: the Youth's appearance, his fluent speech, her family history, the accident of national and personal history (the American War's end) which has allowed the Youth to return. By situating us as an overhearer of the Youth's speech, Wordsworth places us in the position of a seducible Ruth and fully amplifies the Youth's appeal; the second half of the poem introduces a kind of moral-philosophical commentator who restores a critical balance, an evaluative stance, to the poem. Most interesting, for the purposes of this reading, is the displacement of actual contact (of Youth and "wild man") from the contact zone to the scene of report, the scene of tale-telling. The story of primitive encounters, Wordsworth shows us, ends not with the encounter proper, nor even with its official transcription in such works as Bartram's travels. Fantasies and experiences of primitivity disperse themselves throughout the home world, across several domains. Ruth's rustic simplicity provides a pathetic foil for the Youth's dashing nonchalance: both operate in good faith, more or less, the poet claims, yet it is Ruth who ends up mad, sad, and pathetic to know. This is, after all, the tale of Ruth, not the Youth's tale: the youth's tales appear as symptoms of a cultural predicament – the proliferation of primitive encounters – which bears more heavily upon its vulnerable members. Ruth falls for the Youth's simulation; the reader should not similarly yield, however beguiled. The meaning of the Youth's sojourn is made apparent not to Ruth, who lacked the benefit of a Wordsworthian interlocutor, but to the reader, who is given the apparently authoritative reading of the Youth's time in "savage lands": his "genius and his moral frame / Were thus impair'd." What looks like vitality to Ruth must be read as degeneracy by the cooperative reader. As the poem proceeds, then, the reader is encouraged to inhabit the position of the impartial spectator modeled by the narrator. No longer are we simply captive, like Ruth, to the Youth's self-representations.

EXPERIMENTS ON THE BORDER: BALLAD MEDIATIONS

In "Ruth" a prior ethnographic scene – America "over there" – determines the meaning of the conjunction of the returned soldier and the rustic girl. As with "We are seven," I would like to consider the significance of the ballad form in relating such a cautionary tale. As a tale of a ruined maid, the ballad invokes a conventional topos; yet its historical and ethnographic specificity mark it as a modern ballad. The trappings of archaism, such as the medievalisms associated with the Youth, appear as semi-ironic markers of Youth's tendency toward mystification. This is a romantic ballad which attempts to demystify some versions of romance. On another level, of course, the work of the ballad, most simply, is to produce and enhance pleasure – pleasure in sound, story, figure, and pattern; the pleasures of eye and ear. As such the aim of poetry is allied to the aim of the Youth, that is, to delight the senses with tales. Yet the ballad, in its meter, structure, and final narratorial stance, possesses one quality the Youth lacks: measure.

A broader theory of Wordsworth's ballads may be ventured. In both "We are seven" and "Ruth," and throughout the *Lyrical Ballads*, encounters are modeled as embodied exchanges of speech. The poet speaks to Simon Lee and lends him a hand; the poet has heard directly the tale of Michael, has seen the sheepfold; the poet assures us in the last stanzas of Ruth that he in fact knows Ruth: "I, too, have pass'd her on the hills" (217). Orality and contact appear as the very formal conditions for the generation and indeed the transmission of the ballads. This emphasis on speech, proximity, and immediacy lends the poems their moral urgency. It is useful to remember that various theories of sympathy – Rousseau's, Condillac's, Smith's – all presuppose bodily proximity and visual contact: they posit human beings looking at each other (in pain, horror, wonder) as the paradigm for thinking about the origins and limits of sympathy, speech, and human identification.

The *Lyrical Ballads* appeared and were expanded and reprinted in an age of consolidated print, at the beginning of the era of the polemical and centralizing "magazine critics." The ballads may be read as great efforts to resist the actual technology of their production and reproduction. They obscure the many mediations which enabled their being composed and printed, yet they bear traces of their completely literate and literary nature. The citations of Bartram, and even the typographic possibility of an asterisked note, are just two instances of "textuality" internalized in "Ruth." Various ballads map different features of the

oral-literate conjunction: the "Complaint of a forsaken Indian woman" takes as its heroine a presumably illiterate woman, yet relies on Hearne to substantiate and authenticate her person. "We are seven" shows us the meeting of a literate pedagogue and a girl who is likely pre- or at best partially literate. The body of the poem "Ruth" insists repeatedly on oral contact, its pleasures and dangers, but its notes and moral-philosophical commentary reveal its roots in a highly sophisticated print culture.

As such, Wordsworth's ballads might be seen as examples of what Susan Stewart in *Crimes of Writing* has described as "distressed forms" under print capital (including the ballad, epic, and proverb). Wordsworth's ballads appear towards the end of the era of the ballad revival in England (fostered most notably by Thomas Percy). Yet Wordsworth's ballads, for the most part, resist the antiquarian investment in ballads as sites of past authenticity and *volkisch* sensibility. Certainly, as Marilyn Butler and others have noted, Wordsworth's balladeering is a function of his late-eighteenth-century primitivism – a primitivism not uncommon among poets and writers with republican sympathies (for example, Blake). Inasmuch as the vogue of simplicity was itself a function of modernity, Wordsworth's work with commoner forms and figures may be read as a nostalgic reflex. Wordsworth's poems are clearly "literary ballads" (a type of ballad, versus the "historical" and "romantic," as categorized in Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 1802–1803). This literariness involves a different nostalgia than, say, the collecting and editing of ballads by Percy or Scott. As "original" works produced by a single author and circulated mainly in print (versus the more collective and oral composition and transmission of the so-called "minstrels" as theorized by Scott), Wordsworth's ballads make no claim to collective consciousness or antiquity. Yet they do invoke, in their choice of characters and in the *Preface*, a relation to the folk, in the form of the rustic collectivity. These rustics, however, are not the folk of antiquity; they are represented as people contemporary with the author – conversing with him, seen by him (as in "Ruth"), challenging educated interlocutors (as in "We are seven"). As such Wordsworth's ballads evoke a world of complex personal interactions among people whom antiquarians would relegate to the past or to the status of the residually oral and archaic. In this way the antiquarian operation is not so different from the ethnographic operation: the peoples and/or texts under scrutiny have especial value as remnants.[51] That a rustic way of life was in fact about to become obsolete contributed to Wordsworth's sense of

urgency, just as the imminent effacement of Highland culture and the oral lore of the Scottish border propelled Scott's historico-poetical mission.

The literariness of Wordsworth's project differs from, say, the literariness of "The Ancyent Marinere," with its willfully archaic spellings (reduced in later additions) and locutions. As the Advertisement of 1798 noted, the poem "was professedly written in imitation of the *style*, as well as the spirit of the elder poets"; here the modern poet collaborates with the literary simulation of archaism (and thus reveals what Stewart calls "the literary self-consciousness of antiquarianism"[52]). In Wordsworth, literature is used, we might say, against itself: against modernization, mediation, writerliness, and literariness as simulation.

What the ballad form maintains, perhaps better than any other quasi-populist form, is the illusion of orality – itself the hallmark of primitivity, as theorists such as Jack Goody and Walter Ong have elucidated. (Levi-Strauss as well suggested that primitives were essentially to be understood not as "peoples without history" but as "peoples without writing."[53]) In the *Lyrical Ballads*, we see Wordsworth straddling the space between the oral and the written, the immediate and the mediated. Wordsworth resists the "ethnographic operation" as De Certeau describes it: he does not textualize experiences "over there" or encounters with others in order to exoticize, eroticize, and aestheticize. Repeatedly the marginal figure is given her due, often in the form of speech and cognitive richness (cf "We are seven"). And if we read "Ruth" as a parable of Ruth's social marginality rather than a commentary on the moral threat of Cherokees, so too "Ruth" appears as another hypothetical history made concrete, historical, rich, and sympathetic: the rustic girl ruined, a genealogy of a female vagrant.

Given the primacy of speech and presence in these ballads, we can also re-assess the oft-quoted Wordsworthian ambition to write a poetry from "a selection of the real language of men."[54] The largely a-literate world of the rustic, as perceived by Wordsworth and pointedly noted by Coleridge, thus appears as a great asset. "Real" language, as circulated in the poems, appears as a spoken, embodied language. When Wordsworth invokes "men speaking to men," we should place as strong an emphasis on his choice, "speaking," as on his insistence on horizontal relations among "men." The problem of a "human diction" thus becomes not so much a problem of rustic or savage or child mind as an index of poetry's relation to the cultural meanings and uses of orality and literacy. I would argue that the orality-effect of the ballads, both in

their emphasis on speech within poems and in their mnemonic pleasures, points to Wordsworth's perhaps unconscious commitment to what Ong called a "residual orality" found in "residually oral subcultures in dominantly high-literacy societies."[55] Wordsworth's attention to children, idiots, savages, and rustics may then be considered as an exploration of the "residually oral" both within England and beyond her borders.

Poetry still bears, in this period and perhaps in ours (as in the proliferation of "Spoken Word" and "Performance Art"), the promise of speech and immediacy. However distressed the genres Wordsworth worked in, nevertheless it is perhaps an overstating of the case to emphasize the criminal conjunction of print, literacy, and capital. Wordsworth did not write in a homogenously mediated field: he encountered people regularly who probably had little contact with book culture; nor did capital disperse its effects evenly throughout England. In terms of the writing and circulation of poetry, some anecdotes illuminate the prominence of the oral and the immediate as the critical elements of composition and transmission. The circuit of the *Lyrical Ballads* often runs from oral to literate to oral: for example, the poet tells us in his notes that he met the little girl who appears in "We are seven." Their conversation becomes the stuff of the poem, ultimately a written document, but first composed – as was usual – in Wordsworth's head. The ultimate orality-effect of the poem is a partial negation of the actual writing which has brought the poem into, in this case, my house. To invoke another case: one of Mary Shelley's earliest memories was of hiding behind her father's couch as Coleridge thundered the stanzas of "The Ancient Mariner": a stanza from that poem later appeared in her *Frankenstein*. She experienced the poem as a recited piece, an acoustic event; like many children, she was introduced to "literature" through the medium of speech, although few children have enjoyed such access to living poets. As another instance: Coleridge himself alludes to the longstanding circulation of "Christabel" in manuscript; before the poem was ever printed it had inspired two imitations by Scott and Byron – which caused Coleridge great irritation. "During the many years which intervened between the composition and publication of Christabel, it became almost as well known among literary men as if it had been on common sale." This intermediate mode of circulation – in manuscript – was complicated by Coleridge's and others' recitations, which further exposed "literary men" to the poem: Byron reports that he heard Scott recite the poem but denied plagiarism.[56] Poetry was thus

circulable in several ways: in speech, in written manuscripts, in printed books. This does not of course alter the general condition of poetry as a linguistic practice in early industrial capital; but these stories show that the oral persists as a vital and perhaps, in some cases, the most vital mode of circulation.

Is the poet himself a residually oral figure? When the primitive mind is understood as the residually oral mind, the use of such figures for a poet becomes especially intriguing. For truly, among the many issues Wordsworth addresses in his *Preface* is the very futurity of poetry when confronted with its exile from speech. What Wordsworth seems less able to acknowledge than Coleridge is the actual mediation which is the condition of literary production by the early nineteenth century. Whereas Coleridge calmly proposes a clerisy as the mediating agent of cultural "diffusion," Wordsworth looks for figures such as rustics who have easy "intercourse" both with the best objects of nature and with each other. Wordsworth looks for a horizontal commerce, Coleridge a vertical one. Their theories of language, culture, mind, and poetry diverge inasmuch as they differently assess the function of mediation in society. Whereas Coleridge would seize the modes of mediation (thus his journalism, his lectures, his sermons), Wordsworth would (theoretically) abandon them in favor of a poetics of immanent presence. Whereas Coleridge envisions a trickle-down theory of cultural capital, Wordsworth proposes a kind of dynamic *conversus* to combat the impasses and "savage torpor" he saw in his countrymen. If Coleridge's dictum was "only discriminate," then Wordsworth's may have been something like Forster's "only connect." The aporias of Wordsworth's poetics of sympathetic connection (most notably in his handling of the Cherokees of Ruth) should be seen as blindnesses characteristic not of Wordsworth's project *per se* but rather of his execution of it.

CHAPTER 3

Literate species: populations, "humanities," and the specific failure of literature in Frankenstein

> When one is studying man, what can be more exact or more rigorous than to *recognize human properties in him*?
>
> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*

> . . . I began the creation of a human being. Victor Frankenstein

In his 1797 essay "Of an Early Taste for Reading," William Godwin announced that "Literature, taken in all its bearings, forms the grand line of demarcation between the human and the animal kingdoms."[1] Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* – boldly dedicated to "WILLIAM GODWIN, Author of Political Justice, Caleb Williams, &c." – may be read as a critique of her father's pronouncement.[2] Shelley's corporeally indeterminate but eccentrically literate monster asks us to consider whether literature – taken in all its bearings – was or is indeed a useful "line of demarcation between" human and animal. The fate of the monster suggests that proficiency in "the art of language" (110), as he calls it, may not ensure one's position as a member of the "human kingdom." Shelley shows us how a literary education, so crucial to Godwinian perfectibility, presupposes not merely an educable subject but a human being. Read through Godwin's dictum, the trajectory of Frankenstein's creature offers a parable of pedagogic failure – specifically a failure in the promise of the humanities, in letters as a route to humanization. In assuming language and literature as domains available to him, the monster succumbs to the ruse of the humanities – the belief that "intellectual and literary refinement," in Godwin's terms, might be the route to his humanization.[3] The novel demonstrates, perhaps against itself, that acquisition of "literary refinement" fails to humanize the problematic body – the ever-unnamed monster. The monster thus introduces and embodies an anthropological problem which literature fails to resolve (within the novel) and yet which literature displays (in the fact of the novel itself). The perfectibility of man

meets its violent contradiction in a speaking, reasoning being which men, women, and children throughout Europe are unable or unwilling to recognize as a fellow species-being.

The meaning of "species," like the meaning of the monster, is not self-evident and indeed remains suspended through most of the novel. I will argue that Victor Frankenstein's final deliberations about the monster's future transform and fix the functional meaning of species; moreover, it is Victor's introduction of a Malthusian discourse which allows him to arbitrate, in the last instance, the question of the monster's "species." As such, I will examine the monster's request for one "of the same species" (140) through the broad contours of the Malthus-Godwin debate, with Malthus figuring the principle of population and Godwin the principle of perfectibility. I understand the discourses of population theory and human perfectibility to be part of the same discursive and historical field: Malthus and Godwin appear (in this essay as they did to themselves) as representative antagonists within that field.[4] It was Godwin's visions of almost unlimited human improvability, and his defense of universal benevolence as the criterion of moral action and political justice, which most irked Malthus. Indeed, Godwin's essay "Of Avarice and Profusion" (published in *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature,* 1797) provoked Malthus to launch his extended attack on Godwinian radicalism, Condorcet's progressivism, and poor relief in his *Essay on the Principle of Population,* 1798. Malthus and Godwin maintained their mutually antagonistic positions for several decades; in 1820 Godwin finally published his own *Of Population: An Inquiry concerning the Power of Increase in the Numbers of Mankind, being an answer to Mr. Malthus' Essay on that Subject.* As Godwin then wrote of his quarrel with Malthus and the surrounding debate, "[such] speculations have now been current for nearly twenty years."[5]

I believe *Frankenstein*, written toward the end of that twenty-year period, should be read in part through the historical specificity of the Malthus-Godwin controversy. During Mary Shelley's lifetime, her father was publicly known as the antagonist of Malthus as well as the author of *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*; any discussion of Godwinian "benevolence" would have moved to its most prominent critic, Malthus, and his cautionary calculus of moral restraint, misery and vice. Certainly Percy Shelley, disciple of Godwin and despiser of Malthus, made the connection between the two, as *A Philosophical View of Reform* demonstrates. Lee Sterrenberg, Ellen Moers, U. C. Knoepflmacher, Anne K. Mellor and Marilyn Butler are only a sampling of the critics

who have pointed to Godwin's tremendous influence on his daughter: she was educated by him; she read and re-read his works, including *Political Justice*, before and during her writing of *Frankenstein;* she took his novels, particularly *Caleb Williams*, as models for her own novel.[6] Throughout *Frankenstein*, careful conjunction and repetition of such freighted phrases as "misery," "human benevolence," "selfishness," "justice," and "duty" indicate a careful and conscious crafting of logical and rhetorical argument around the central problem of the Malthus-Godwin controversy: how to imagine the preconditions, possibilities, and limits of human happiness.[7] In scene after critical scene, characters in the novel speak their predicaments through a Malthus-Godwin problematic featuring self-love and benevolence, misery and happiness.

Mary Shelley's novel internalizes the broad contours of this debate; moreover, it reveals the anthropological precondition of that debate. Although I hope to restore to the Godwinian readings of *Frankenstein* a Malthusian dimension, I hope not to produce merely another exercise in remediary historicism. The historical specificity of the Malthus-Godwin controversy provides one axis for my reading (and a deferred one, in terms of this essay); the anthropological precondition of that debate provides another axis. The monster is a rupture, a "most astonishing thing" not unlike the French Revolution according to Burke.[8] All critics agree with Victor that the monster is a problem; how to describe the problem is a further problem. He is in the words of Peter Brooks an "aberrant signifier," a disturbingly prolific producer of problems in signification.[9] Yet he is also a bodily problem, not merely a signifier. The sutures of his body mark a physiological and aesthetic problem; his rhetorical fluency points to a problem of eloquence; he is at various moments and often simultaneously a linguistic, a national, a political, a sexed and a sexual problem. I do not wish prematurely to resolve or categorize the problem of the monster (nor do I think I can); rather, I wish to trace how the monstrous problem emerges in a specific terrain – that of the discursive construction of human being. This aspect of my argument is most heavily inflected by my reading of Michel Foucault, particularly *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*. The monster, a product of natural science, becomes a problem for human science; literature fails to resolve that problem for the monster, who discovers himself forever exiled from "the human kingdom." The novel may be read, then, not only as a technophobic allegory, a critique of masculinist presumption, or a Godwinian fable (to cite only a few possibilities) but

also as a critique of the anthropological and anthropomorphic foundations of all human knowing.

THE RUPTURE IN THE ''HUMAN'' WORLD

The method, the soul of science, designates at first sight any body in nature in such a way that the body in question expresses the name that is proper to it, and that this name recalls all the knowledge that may, in the course of time, have been acquired about the body thus named. — Linnaeus, *Systema naturae*[10]

. . . if what we saw was an optical delusion, it was the most perfect and wonderful recorded in the history of nature. — Robert Walton, in *Frankenstein*

What kind of being is the monster? What is this body which desires to humanize itself? Anne Mellor writes that "Mary Shelley saw the creature as potentially monstrous, but she never suggested that he was other than fully human."[11] That he might be "other than fully human" seems to me very much the problem. Certainly Victor Frankenstein's ambition was to create a human being. Suddenly possessed of the secret of "the cause of generation and life" (47), the young scientist overcomes his hesitations and begins to work: "I began the creation of a human being" (49). Yet immediately Victor turns from this beginning. The specificity and smallness of the human body frustrate him: "As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature" (49) – that is, eight feet tall. Within several paragraphs we see Victor raiding charnel houses for bones and body parts; and he further notes, "[t]he dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials." Victor dreams now that "a new species would bless me as its creator and its source" (49).

As this brief summation suggests, Victor's aims undergo an unsteady modulation from a vision of "human being" to a vision of a "new species": the physiologically indeterminate being he creates brings us to the threshold of species being. That is, Victor's labors ultimately become not an experiment to create a human being but rather an experiment in speciation, an experiment with extremely heterogeneous "materials" (50). Violating the "ideal bounds" (49) of life and death, Victor inadvertently confronts another threshold, the boundary between species. He produces a biological anomaly; moreover, the production of this anomaly threatens his own "human nature," which "turn[s] with loathing from [his] occupation" (50). As soon as the monster convulses

into life, Victor defensively remarks the "un-human features" (52) of the creature, perhaps attempting to establish immediately the difference in species being. Victor's revulsion from his creature has been read as, among other glosses, an aesthetic rejection, a disgust with childbirth, and a horror at violating a taboo.[12] Yet we can also see that Victor's concern for his own "human nature" and his specification of the "un-human features" of his creature suggest that human being is the species category in question. The rest of the novel considers whether Victor's response indeed forecasts the monster's final state: will he remain an "inarticulate . . . demoniacal corpse" (53), as Victor calls him, or might this creature insert itself within a human community?

Victor's experiment thus implicates human being; this scene is only one of several in which Shelley features the category "human" under critique. The thing originally intended to be a "human being" (49) becomes in fact a threat to "human nature" (50), as Victor sees it. The monster is not decisively human; nor, as his eventual fluency and rationality suggest, is he decisively not human. Victor inadvertently engineers not a human being but the monstrous critique of the very category. The riddle of the monster propels a proliferation of categories, a nominalistic explosion which suggests a taxonomic breakdown: the body in question expresses no name precisely proper to it.

To account for the categorical problem which the monster produces and embodies, it is important to consider the discourses through which the monster speaks (and is spoken) and the modes of being such discourses imply. Victor's ideational and material construction of the monster – the messy work of brain and hand – provides us with at least two routes to the monster's being. Yet the novel offers several other modes of apprehending the monstrous problem, including visual and aural perception, territorial and national forms. These various modes of representation are not at all mutually exclusive. Discourses of human being multiply as the monster forces the rearticulation and reorganization of the content and mode of "human."

Victor relates what we might call the conceptual genesis of the monster; in terms of narratological genesis, Robert Walton (the English mariner, the epistolary framer) introduces the first terms through which to speak to the monster – distinctions based on form and territory. Walton proposes the monster as an "optical delusion," a revolution in the "history of nature" (18): yet this optical delusion lives and moves and has its being. The proliferation of discourses around this rupture in natural history attempts to suture this all-too-corporeal rift in the known

and knowable world. Walton first reports the sighting of "a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature" (17); this apparition is soon followed by "a human being . . . He was not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but an European" (18). To Walton, the first figure, the monster, takes on a gigantic aspect, whereas the second – soon revealed to be Victor Frankenstein – immediately appears as a fellow human being, and more precisely, a European. This first encounter delineates the kind of perceptual oppositions which govern the logic of territory and species. The most obviously "human beings" in *Frankenstein* are inevitably "European," whereas the monster consistently provokes questions such as Walton's: "is this unknown wast [sic] inhabited by giants, of which the being we saw is a specimen?" (18). The hailing of Victor as a European emerges as a differentiation against a savage backdrop. Walton's very syntax performs the negative construction of European being: Victor "was not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage . . . but an European" (18). Walton's report introduces question of seeming and being, appearance and essence, which might allow for an ambiguation of his categories. Yet his very facility with such constructions deserves attention: he provides in embryo the terms and terrain which the novel will eventually fix and specify (savage = not European = not human). In such language Walton introduces one dimension of the anthropological problem of the novel.

Walton's opposition of savage giant and European man soon modulates into a commentary on linguistic and territorial communities. Walton finds himself "addressed . . . in English, although with a foreign accent": the European is then identified as a "foreigner" to the English interlocutor. Walton converses with this figure, who is Victor Frankenstein, "in his native language which is French" (22). These successive translations and the becoming-foreign of Victor (to Walton, the deterritorialized Englishman "at sea," in ice) point to the problematic conjunction of a fantasized unitary place – Europe – and its multiple linguistic idioms. The European community includes England and France so far, and will grow to include, as the novel progresses, Geneva (Victor's native town), Italy (site of Elizabeth Lavenza's birth), Germany (where Victor attends University), Holland (where Victor and his friend Henry Clerval tour), the Orkney Isles (where Victor undertakes the creation of a second female creature), and Ireland (where Henry dies). Yet *Frankenstein* repeatedly suggests that "Europe" may be a phantom, a spectral placeholder beyond and opposed to the clear boundaries of

nation and republic, even as "Europeans" appear in contradistinction to savage "giants" (18). Europe exists as a category over and against the strong persistance of "native" lands – note that the "European" Victor is soon denominated a "foreigner" by Robert Walton. The turning of a fellow "human" and "European" into a specifically Genevese French-speaking "foreigner" shows how humans identify each other through increasingly differentiated and estranging categories; the monster strains against and defines the limits of these kinds and levels of classification.

This sighting reads, as David Marshall argues, as a variation on a Rousseauvian topos – "tableaux of primitive man" – which posited an isolated natural man (or post-diluvian man) who would instinctively react with fear whenever he came across another man.[13] "In the beginning" (or after the catastrophe), the hypothesis went, men would not recognize one another as fellow beings but would rather perceive the other as a giant, a mortal threat. Common human being was thus imagined as emerging slowly and tortuously, only "après beaucoup d'experiences."[14] Such a fiction asserted there was no automatic sympathetic identification among human beings; sympathy and society were conceived as achieved, not natural, aspects of the human condition. Revising Rousseau and other Enlightenment theorists of the primitive, Mary Shelley locates the primitive tableau in modern Europe. This giant thrives and terrifies not in antiquity but in the contested present of late-eighteenth century Europe. We can read the gigantism of the creature as Walton's misprision (he is not *really* a giant but rather appears to be so); yet this gigantism is more than a perceptual error or a trope. Victor tells us later in the novel that he indeed made an extremely large monster, a being "of gigantic stature" (49): Walton is not wrong to identify the monster as such. The monster is not like Rousseau's hypothetical giants; he is not an "optical delusion"; he is quite literally a giant with a specific history, a body whose composition and scale were determined under specific conditions in Victor's workshop. He is theory embodied and made historical.

With its coordination of territorial, cultural and linguistic modes of identification and difference, Walton's sighting introduces the terms by which a human being might know and speak itself – and more relevant to the monster, a discursive range through which an anomaly might humanize itself. When the monster gives the account of his own life, he makes clear that he did not naturally understand himself to be excluded from human fellowship; it is only after he has been rejected as a

French-speaking fellow man that he eventually concludes, as his maker seems to have long before, that there can be "no community" (95) between them. It takes the monster several years to learn what all sighted beings "know" about him: that his presence – whether conceived as a "giant . . . specimen" (18) or as a "demoniacal corpse" (53) – proves an irremediable rupture in the humanly peopled world. What the monster is forced to learn is that his "birth" remains a breach, and further that literate speech provides no adequate redress for natal alienation.

NATIVES OF THE WORLD

In describing the monster as natally alienated, I borrow a term introduced by Werner Sollors in his Harvard lectures on "Literature and Ethnicity in America."[15] This category allows us to trace the relation of knowledge to "nativity" and "natality." Both terms suggest birth, but nativity also connotes the condition of being "native" to a place in addition to having-been-born. As a made thing, the monster violates natality as a condition of human (and animal) existence; yet his development allows us to see how the new-comer, born or made, forces the society to articulate and redefine its understanding of "human" and "native" – and the practices proper to humanity – against the anomaly.

One difference between monster and man appears in the different nativities of these figures, and in their relation to exile and emigration. Victor begins his life history with the ringing Rousseauvian statement, "I am by birth a Genevese; my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic" (27). He goes on to describe his father's career as a "public" servant, one who late in life decided to marry, thus "bestowing on the state sons" (27). Victor provides himself with a specific genealogy implicated in the state; he repeatedly asserts his relation to his "native country" (37). Conversely, the monster opens his life story with an assertion of problematic genealogy: "It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct" (97). Unlike every other character in the novel, the monster has no republic, town or nation to call his own. He articulates his beginnings solely in terms of disordered sense perception. As the furiously disappointed monster later tells Victor, "to me, hated and despised, every country must be equally horrible" (135). Unlike Victor, he cannot appeal to familial, political or other territorial categories which would provide him with techniques of authentication and remembrance. For all his claims on Victor as "creator" and

"author of his being," he exists as a stateless creature who respects no European boundaries, even as his heterogeneous and formerly dead body violates species boundaries.

The monster is a problem both for himself and for Victor; more specifically, the monster forces what we might call the psychological re-mapping of the native human world. The fact of the monster transforms nativity, even as he transforms human being. If the monster is *produced* or made as natally alienated, without native place, Victor faces the prospect of *becoming* natally alienated. He articulates his increasing desperation and guilt as a kind of progressive natal alienation – an exile within Europe, a de-naturing of his bonds with Geneva. When he hears of his brother's murder, he heads back to his "native town," finding himself fearful, "dreading a thousand nameless evils" (69). He soon finds "residence within the walls of Geneva very irksome," the "shutting of the gates" at ten the clang of claustrophobic regime (86). His increasing alienation contrasts with that of his fiancée and father, both of whom offer paeans to the small domestic circle and tranquillity "in our native country" (89). These homages are horribly inappropriate, as Victor realizes: the world has come to Geneva however much Papa the Syndic and Elizabeth the would-be hausfrau think otherwise. It is one of the exquisite ironies of the novel that Victor's first "exile" from home, his going to university in Ingolstadt, was instigated by his father, who thought that Victor "should become acquainted with other customs than those of [his] native country" (37). It is, of course, at Ingolstadt that Victor acquires the means – ideational and technical – of producing his creature. When Victor must later go to England to obtain materials for building his female creature, he parodies his father's logic: he tells his father he wishes "to visit England; but, concealing the true reasons of this request, I clothed my desires under the guise of wishing to travel and see the world before I sat down for life within the walls of my native town" (150). Using the language of filiopiety and native allegiance, Victor dissembles his project, appropriates the language of the European tour, and travesties the security of the "walls of the native town" (151).

Victor marks his alienation with the declaration, "how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow" (48). Even in his disillusion, Victor still attempts to naturalize his alienation and recover his interpellation as a Genevese son: had he stayed within the bounds of his "nature" (read, his socio-political sphere, his domestic circle, or his pre-technological episteme), he would not have destroyed his belief in

his "native town." His lament demonstrates the truth that in fact the native town is not the world, or rather, that the world has come to Geneva. The monster, the living artifact, becomes in fact the figure of the world irremediably transformed.

The monster uses the very same terminological coins as Victor – "exile," "native" (and, as I will discuss later, "sympathy") – but he circulates in a different species economy. His "emigration" (100), as he calls it, brings him eventually to the De Laceys and to acquaintance with Volney's *Ruins of Empires*. This book constellates his conscious formulation of natal alienation: "Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property" (115). This "knowledge" brings him only "sorrow," and he exlaims, "Oh, that I had for ever remained in my native wood, nor known nor felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst and heat!" (116). Thus the monster, like Victor, expresses the counterfactual wish that he had stayed "native." But however rhetorically parallel their laments, and however similar their respective falls-into-knowledge, there persists between monster and man a crucial rift in modes of being. The monster suffers natal alienation in a register distinct from Victor's revulsion from Geneva. To have "emigrated" from the "native wood" because of hunger is quite another thing than to have found oneself a spiritual "exile" within Europe. The monster experiences a nostalgia for the woods, for nature, for purely sensual being, whereas Victor regrets his exile from a naturalized social state and domestic intimacy. The monster also offers a kind of radical materialism; his fall into consciousness conjoins questions of ontology ("creation") and economy ("money," "property"). In their echoes of the other's predicament, they dramatize the difference of their positions – first in terms of the state, and then regarding the states of human civilization they embody, and finally in terms of species. They exist on different sides of the human – that is, the civilized, propertied, native European – border. It is to cross that border that the monster sets about acquiring a linguistic and ultimately a literary education.

THE SCIENCE OF EDUCATION

The world is much like a school. Godwin, *Essay on Sepulchres*

Just as the monster's being launches a critique of "human being" and "nativity," his intellectual history – "the progress of my intellect" (123)

as he calls it – complicates anthropomorphic accounts of mind and educability. That *Frankenstein* concerns itself with the education of its figures (and its readers) is a critical truism: with his exposure to Goethe, Milton, Plutarch, and Volney's *Ruins of Empires,* the creature receives a highly specified course inflected by concerns both revolutionary and romantic. The monster's political and aesthetic education suggest that he serves as an experimental subject for what Godwin called "the science of education."[16] Schooled in part by her father and through her association with Percy Shelley, Mary Shelley's personal pedagogic relations informed her understanding of the complex situations of education. Modeling the monster's reading program on her own in 1815, Shelley furnished her creature's consciousness with the stuff of her own. There is now something of a critical consensus about the monster as a figure of the "second sex" – secondary, incomplete, monstrous – and the monster's education as a "sexual education" – its eccentricity both sexed (more like Mary Shelley's, say, than Percy's) and sexual (among the many "lessons" Felix DeLacey inadvertently teaches the monster is that of sexual difference and reproduction).[17] However sexed and vexed, the progress of the monster's intellect implies a theory of improvable mind, which both Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin endorsed. As Godwin wrote in "Of the Sources of Genius," in *The Enquirer,* "Give me all the motives that have excited another man, and all the external advantages he had had to boast, and I shall arrive at excellence not inferior to his. This view of the nature of the human mind, is of the utmost importance in the science of education."[18] I believe the novel may be read in part as a thought experiment with the anthropomorphic foundations of and limits to Godwin's "science."

Mary Shelley furnished her novel with several routes to and sites of this "science of education" – Victor's boyhood schooling in Geneva and university training in "natural philosophy" in Ingolstadt; the monster's eavesdropping on the language and history lessons given in the De Lacey household; Henry Clerval's attaining proficiency in several "oriental" languages (Persian, Arabic, Hebrew).[19] These different educational modes and contents suggest that all knowledges are not equal, nor are they equally obtained. As the work of Anne Mellor, Marilyn Butler and others suggests, science emerges as the most prominent body of knowledge under critique.[20] Mary Shelley's science may be variously described: as alchemical "psuedo-science" (in U. C. Knoepflmacher's phrase), as a "serio-comic" version of the vitalist controversy in England

(*pace* Marilyn Butler), as a satire on the synthesizing dreams of the *Naturphilosophen,* as a figure for reproduction at the threshold of the "chemical revolution."[21] But however we view the representation of science in the novel, we must concede that it is Victor and not his monster who masters (however unfortunately) this body of knowledge. The monster is a product of natural philosophy, not its student; when he embarks on his own tale of the "progress of [his] intellect" we soon discover that his learning involves not the "science" of "modern chemistry" (or any other natural science) but rather the "godlike science" (107) of "letters" (114).

The word "science" had yet to restrict its range to what we now denominate the physical and social sciences; yet Shelley carefully differentiates among the bodies of knowledge available to and cultivated by the various figures in the novel. Gayatri Spivak has described this apportionment as aligned with "Kant's three-part conception of the human subject," with Henry Clerval (the linguist) embodying practical reason, Elizabeth Lavenza aesthetic judgment, and Victor theoretical reason.[22] This mapping of the subject seems to me inadequate, forsaking as it does the prominence of the monster's own intellectual development. The differential status of "letters" (the monster's material) and of natural philosophy (Victor's domain) illuminates how "the idea of the humanities" (to invoke R. S. Crane) increasingly delimited and defined itself against natural science.[23] That is to say: the agon of Victor and monster may be read as well as an agon between "science" and "the humanities." Indeed, George Levine has called Frankenstein "perhaps the great popular metaphor of the hostility between science and literature."[24] I believe that this "popular metaphor" is no catachresis but rather a recognition of a critical contest within the narrative. Such a reading grossly simplifies the historical conditioning of Shelley's representation of the subjects and techniques of education; I am also choosing to ignore the complications introduced by Robert Walton (the self-described "self-educated" and "illiterate" mariner [13–14]) and Henry Clerval (the oriental linguist whose father, a businessman, asserts that "learning is superfluous in the commerce of ordinary life"[39]). What this simplification allows, however, is an opportunity to explore the novel as a diagnosis of the embodied use and abuse of different knowledges. The novel proposes, in its history of the monster, a remedy for the horrifying body which science has produced: the humanities.

ACQUIRING HUMAN BEING: ''HUMANITIES'' AS REMEDY

> . . . the peculiar dignity of these arts is said to lie in the fact that their cultivation and pursuit differentiates the activities distinctive of man from those of animals. R. S. Crane, *The Idea of The Humanities*

I believe that the monster's *bildung* makes explicit the problematic status of ''human being'' (a species category) and ''the humanities'' (the cultivation of the ''good arts'' – as R. S. Crane described it – whether considered as eloquence and reason, belles lettres, or the ''liberal arts'').[25] If the monster appears as the product of scientific experiment fueled by romantic ambition, his attempt to acquire know-how and fellowship through speech and writing represents another effort at producing himself, this time as a speaking and reasoning being. History and literature, supported by a basic literacy, figure as the most sophisticated techniques for the monster's experiment in his own humanization. He tells his maker that he happened upon a cache of books, ''written in the language the elements of which I had acquired at the cottage.'' Among these books are *Paradise Lost,* a volume of *Plutarch's Lives,* and the *Sorrows of Werther* (123). How is it possible that all these books should be ''written in the language'' the monster has acquired? He never speaks of translation, although this is an obvious solution to the difficulty. He makes a point of telling old De Lacey that he ''was educated by a French family, and understand[s] that language only'' (129). Perhaps I am stressing this point too much – yet we may also understand the monster's assimilation of Milton's English, Plutarch's Greek, and Goethe's German to be a typically ''European'' – or perhaps Romantically eclecticizing – gesture. The linguistic, historical, and cultural heterogeneity of the monster's canon is an intriguingly unthought aspect of the novel. And yet, as the monster's assertion of monolingual fluency suggests, the aspirant to human community must speak at least *one* particular language fluently, must be able to identify his language with a kind of national or at least regional seal – in this case, French.

Several critics have discussed the monster's reading course: the significance of Shelley's choices; the sequence in which the monster reads his books; their political, religious, and aesthetic valences.[26] When considering the anthropomorphic problematic of the *Frankenstein,* the content of and expectations generated by such material as *Paradise Lost* (Adamic sonship and prerogative, Satanic exile and heroic despair) seem less significant than the very literacy which such reading presupposes. What is most striking is not what the monster reads and speaks, or

even that he reads and speaks, but rather what he thinks such accomplishments should signify: the precondition for his "becoming one among my fellows" (116), as he puts it. Shelley repeatedly emphasizes the function of linguistic mediation in constituting communities. She takes care to provide her Europeans with a linguistic education, Elizabeth and Victor having learned English and Latin. Victor also familiarizes himself with "the easiest Greek" (36) and German (this in addition to his native French). Thus the novel traces a linguistic range for her inhabitants and points to the colonial, commercial, and sexual extension of this range, as in Henry Clerval's orientalism and in the "Arabian" Safie's linguistic Europeanization. Given the novel's elision of "European" and "human," it is not at all surprising that the monster looks to language and to European history and literature as the media for his transformation into a member of the community.

The monster understands language to be a route to common human being; he also conceives of language not as an oral exchange but rather as literate (lettered) speech. In his hovel by the De Laceys, the monster discovers the "science of words or letters" (105). Eventually he recognizes that the De Laceys communicate "by articulate sounds" – a "godlike science" he wishes to learn. There is a particular urgency to the monster's wish: he decides he will remain hidden until he has made himself "master of their language" (109). He expects to use his articulate voice against their perception of his hideous form. His idiosyncratic schooling emphasizes the acquisition of speech and writing, a double linguistic fluency which he acquires almost simultaneously. He becomes both phoneticized and alphabeticized. In this he registers the nineteenth-century turn-to-language, in which scholars increasingly established the study of language as the basis of the human sciences (as in the proliferation of universal grammars, the birth of philology, the development of comparative linguistics). He understands human being to be constituted through a very particular "discourse network," in Friedrich Kittler's terms, in which the learning of language required a "naturalization of the alphabet" and as well as an "oralization" of the alphabet; in this way pedagogues attempted to obscure the arbitrariness of what the monster calls the "science of words or letters."[27] The monster's choice of "science" in this last phrase introduces an interesting ambiguity (as does his mention of the "godlike science" of language): he may well be using "science" in its full elasticity, as equivalent to a formal knowledge or method, but he may also register what Kittler describes as the "revolution of the European alphabet" – its oralization through

syllabic and spelling methods around 1800 which contributed to "the epistemological shift from a general grammar to the science of language."[28] The problem of phonetics and the alphabet, posed by the monster to himself, suggests that language has been denaturalized, already broken into a particular *combinatoire*. The monster is unable to acquire French by purely oral means; he requires the intervention of a book, of transcription, whose words he then *hears* Felix reading to Safie. This oral method thus rests on a literate precondition. Whether considered as an art (for example, as part of rhetoric) or as a science (for example, as part of phonetics), language appears as the most basic medium for his humanization.

The monster makes little progress until Safie appears in the De Lacey household. Now the monster realizes there is more than one human language. He notes that, although Safie "appeared to have a language of her own, she was neither understood by, or herself understood, the cottagers" (112). Teaching Safie French out of Volney's *Ruins of Empires*, Felix gives the monster the opportunity to learn both articulate speech and the course of empire, the nature of economics, and conduct of human affairs. As Safie learns French, so does the monster: "the idea instantly occurred to me, that I should make use of the same instruction to the same end" (7). Yet it is important to note that, whereas Safie has "her own" language and is merely acquiring another, the monster is being translated *into* language: he had no language of his own and, unlike a human infant, was unable without administered instruction to "master" (109) their language. Learning the "art of language" (110) – "*their* language" (my emphasis) (109) – coincides for him with learning the "science of letters": speaking and alphabetic writing appear to him as two equally alien media which he requires in order to be recognized. Or rather, he requires these techniques as an anticipatory remedy for being visually cognized as anti- or un-human, a monster. Of course, the promise of letters fails the monster, most dramatically when he is beaten out of the De Lacey household. This expulsion from the domestic idyll prompts the monster's declaration of "everlasting war against the species" (133) – that is, the human species, which the monster slowly and inexorably comes to understand as a class of being from which he is excluded.

The final test of the monster's belief in what I am calling the humanities – in acquired *humanitas* – takes place in his encounter with the small brother of Victor Frankenstein. The crux of Mary Shelley's critique of the humanities may be posed as such: is little William "unprejudiced"

(138), as the monster hopes? Having come upon the child, the monster deliberates: perhaps the child "had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity. If, therefore, I could seize him, and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth" (138). The monster imagines himself as pedagogue to remedy his lack of community. He proposes to himself an experiment in human nature, taking as his subject one still in his "infancy" (138). He approaches the child as a naturally sympathetic being, interpreting the previous horror of all humans to have been a socialized prejudice. But again the monster's experiment fails: the child responds with the instinctive aversion of all other humans and furthermore calls down the juridical wrath of the State in the person of his paterfamilias – "Let me go; my papa is a Syndic . . . he would punish you." In Althusser's terms, the monster discovers there is no subject before interpellation; the child understands and speaks himself through several ideological state apparatuses – familial, legal – and calls upon them to defend himself against the monster.[29] The language of fairytales and nightmares – "ugly wretch! you wish to eat me, and tear me to pieces" the child cries – segues into the language of the socialized subject, the son who calls out for his papa the Syndic. The monster's faith in education shatters, and he murders the child. The wish to "seize him, and educate him" (139) becomes the act of seizing him for strangling. So ends the monster's "idea" of himself as a pedagogue.

It is striking that the monster's first murder appears as the climax of a pedagogical fantasy. The real question is not why little William responded so violently to this monster (who is consistently visually aversive to humans), but why the monster ever considered him educable – or more broadly, why the monster entertains educational fantasies at all. The monster persists in taking himself as an appropriate object of the liberal arts. He believes the methods and arts available to, for example, Safie, are equally available to him. As he says, relishing his language lessons, "I resolved to make use of the same instructions [given Safie] to the same end" (113). The "end" for Safie is the learning of French in order to be assimilated linguistically and sexually into the Christian, republican, patriarchal domicile; so too the monster aspires, but his aspiration also bears the weight of his desire to humanize himself, to distinguish himself from the animals (as both R.S. Crane and Godwin describe the task of the humanities). In entertaining humanist fantasies, the monster forgets his corporeally and nominally indeterminate status: the community of letters presupposes a human community, and the humanities

presuppose humans. The monster presupposes his potential humanity; in this he succumbs to the ruse of the humanities.

RENOUNCING HUMAN BEING: SPECIES REVISING

It is only after the spectacular failure of the monster's education – both in his own training-into-language with the De Laceys, and in his wish to "educate" little William – that the monster admits the anthropological crisis he presents, both for himself and for humans. The monster's tale of his "progress" concludes with his request of Victor:

> I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create. (140)

The creature's understanding of species takes up, and perhaps parodies, the conceptualization of that term throughout what Michel Foucault terms the Classical period (from the mid-seventeenth to the late eighteenth century in Western Europe). As both Foucault and Francois Jacob note, species was defined in this era according to the persistence of the visible structure.[30] For the creature, to be "of the same species" is to look alike, however "deformed and horrible" that might be. Species here seems to follow a logic of appearance. It seems less a scientific category denoting classes of beings which reproduce their like over time than a perceptual-social category which organizes the possibility of contact among beings. Creatures of different species will "not associate" together. Aesthetic revulsion precludes social interaction. This has been repeatedly demonstrated by the visual paranoia the monster induces and the semiological riddle he presents. Yet he is not merely a signifier: he is a body, a potentially reproductive body, as Victor comes to see.

Requesting a female "with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being" (140), the monster links the problem of his "being" to the problem of sympathy. As David Marshall has argued, *Frankenstein* may be read as an inquiry into the specular and spectacular logic of sympathy: the monster appears as the very limit of the economy of sympathetic exchange. The monster is of course repeatedly presented as a specular problem; I have argued that the visual distress he induces may be read as well as a figure for the imaginal-conceptual breakdown he embodies. This leads us to the interesting question: is common species being a pre-requisite for sympathy, or is sympathy the precondition for what I am calling "common species

being"? The question of theoretic priority is ultimately less important than the monster's analysis of the mutual implication of the discourse of sympathy and the construction of human being. The monster acquiesces in the proposition that only beings "of the same species" are capable of sympathizing with each other.[31] His request reflects his experience of sympathy as a specifically *human* specular logic: a body requires a human appearance to stimulate, elicit and participate in human sympathetic reactions. Of course, the monster shows himself capable of sympathizing with humans; yet sighted humans refuse that reciprocity. That blind De Lacey offers an alternative vision of the monster provides not an instance of superior insight (see, the monster really *is* like us) so much as another moment in which blindness calls forth insight. The monster's pleasant discussion with Old De Lacey promises an alternative discourse network, a community independent of visual affinity. The sympathetic blindness of Old De Lacey allows us to read normal human vision as ideologically blinkered; and yet the visual persists as the most powerful mode of understanding the world. Shelley shows us how humans experience sight as transparency; sympathy and its counter, revulsion, occur as if naturally to the sighted. Those with normal and normalizing sight will perceive the anomaly as a threat, as an invasion, and will, like Felix De Lacey, vigorously and righteously resist. She thus displays and critiques the anthropomorphic supports of sympathy. The monster marks the species limit of what Donna Haraway calls, in another context, "primate vision."[32] Both Victor and the monster come to agree: sympathy will not cross the species barrier. Recognizing the primarily specular logic of human sympathy, the monster arrives at a new self-conception. Requesting as he does a being "of the same species," a female who with the "same defects" (140) will presumably violate "human nature" (that is, human appearance) as much as himself, the monster marks his formal and explicit renunciation of human being.

In his turn to Victor for a mate, the monster also marks the narrative convergence of two functions – the critique of the "human" and the critique of the "humanities." The discourse of species confronts the differential power of the disciplines. The well-read and eloquent monster lacks the tools he most needs – the instruments of speciation, the means of production. The monster makes clear the implicit hierarchy of knowledge: the science of "modern chemistry" which led Victor to his first creation stands as a more efficacious knowledge than what the monster hailed as the "science of words or letters" (105). Victor has the solution, the means of production, technical and ideational – the

"chemical apparatus" (168), as he calls it, and the university training in natural philosophy. Natural science – not language, literature, or consciousness – will provide for the monster the community of two he desires. Implicitly acknowledging the failure of the humanities, of "literature – taken in all its bearings" (as Godwin wrote), the monster also acknowledges his acquiescence in the human – that is, the European – reading of him, which has featured such epithets as "savage," "ogre," and "demoniacal corpse." He defines difference as species difference and no longer looks to linguistic or cultural filiation as a means to override his problematic genealogy and form. Thus his request for another "of the same species."

What I read as the monster's understanding of the stakes of species and sympathy must be contrasted and complemented with Victor's reading of this same request. It is Victor who transforms and fixes the meaningful force of these terms. The category of "species," while obviously a multivalent and potentially vague term, requires a reproductive specificity, as Victor's deliberations illuminate. Just as the "idea" which governs the first making of a creature undergoes several ideational modifications (from creating human to giant to "new species"), so too Victor's conception of his second labor of creation undergoes a kind of imaginative transformation. What was originally latent in the monster's request – reproductive possibility – is made manifest in Victor's panicked thought. Sitting in his laboratory in the Orkney Isles, Victor considers how his new creature might turn out: "she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate" (163), or she might find her fellow creature loathsome and desert him. Even more appalling to Victor is the following possibility:

> Even if they were to leave Europe, and inhabit the deserts of the new world, yet one of the first results of those sympathies for which the demon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who would make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror. Had I a right, for my own benefit, to inflict this curse upon everlasting generations? (163)

Is Victor right to envision an apocalyptic threat to the "very existence of the species of man" (165)? Does Victor suffer from reproductive paranoia? How do we know the creature could reproduce? After all, he is a motley assemblage, and Mary Shelley has done nothing to specify his sexual capacity or organs. He may well be a kind of mule – composite, sterile.

Perhaps another way to phrase the problem of the monster's request is this: what does a monster really want? Victor thinks he knows. The monster's request indicates a refutation of Malthus, who in 1798 wrote that, "Life is, generally speaking, a blessing independent of a future state."[33] Victor comes to envision, quite anxiously, the monster's future state in reproductive terms. Victor materializes and sexualizes what the creature has presented in more ambiguous language: the "interchange of sympathies" the creature desires becomes in Victor's imaginings a primarily sexual intercourse. The creature had earlier predicted that, with a mate, his "virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being, and become linked to the chain of existences and events, from which I am now excluded" (143). Certainly this could be read as a series of sexual puns – the monster's phallic virtues rising. We, like Victor, may hear in this the creature's wish to become inserted in the reproductive chain of being, into the time of natural history and generation. In Victor's view, the monster demands a reproductive future, a phylogenetic future (to speak anachronistically) and not a mere ontogenetic existence. To use terms not yet formally defined in Mary Shelley's day, what the creature aspires to is existence *as* a reproductive species being. Only if he can beget like by like will this individual constitute a member of a species. Thus the creature's request for one "of the same species" ironically seeks to make good on Victor's long-dead aspiration, to "create a new species [which] would bless me as its creator and source" (49).

In this second experiment Mary Shelley transforms the problem of monstrous life: Victor shows his Malthusian hand and gropes his way toward the principle of population, a principle through which he finally excuses his frenzied dismemberment of the half-finished female "thing" (64). What the monster proposes as a solution – a species companion – becomes in Victor's prospectus the route to a further and more horrifying problem, that of species competition. The work of speciation, so troubling in the first experiment, now introduces the further threat of reproductive populations. The contest between Victor and monster, at first an agonistic doubling of individuals, becomes in this second experiment a world-historical contest between imagined populations – the "whole human race" versus "a race of devils" (163). Victor's thought follows and parodies the inexorable logic of the principle of population. He cannot imagine his creatures *not* reproducing: this is the most striking thing about his reflection. In this second experiment and its truncation, Victor shows himself to be an adept not of Paracelsus nor even of

Humphry Davy but rather of Malthus, who wrote, regarding progress in human society, that "in reasoning upon this subject, it is evident that we ought to consider chiefly the mass of mankind and not individual instances."[34] From the moment Victor imagines the children of his creatures – monsters as "mass" and not "individual instance" – he introduces a Malthusian calculus in which species "struggle for existence."[35] Whereas the monster newly conceives of himself as an other species being, Victor comes to conceive of him and his potential mate as Malthusian bodies, progenitors of a "mass." Victor is obviously not a doctrinal Malthusian; he does not dabble in the particulars of geometric versus arithmetic growth (increase of people versus increase in means of subsistence); he is a Malthusian inasmuch as he is a population theorist, an imaginer of mass bodies competitively peopling the globe.

In these last pages, Shelley makes clear what has been suspended throughout the novel: the self-cultivation of the problematic body, the assumption of consciousness by the monster – these achievements in the Godwinian "science of education" count for little when the monster is considered as a mass being, a specimen of a potential population. The introduction of the Malthusian problematic thus supports Victor in the contest over the meaning of species difference. That Shelley may be satirizing the Malthusian position – Victor is no reliable narrator, and his thoughts are frequently disordered – does not erode this point: thinking species difference in reproductive terms involves Victor in a Malthusian calculus, and this calculus leads to Victor's thwarting of the monster's aspirations.

SECURING THE WORLD FOR HUMAN BEING: TOWARD A MALTHUSIAN HUMANITARIANISM

Victor is not just a Malthusian; he is a humanist Malthusian. The emergence of a Malthusian calculus in *Frankenstein* propels the final revaluation of the category "human." Both monster and Victor circulate the category "human" in this final contest. In his request for a mate, the monster convincingly presents his request for a partner as his last and greatest attempt at humanizing himself. Describing how he will live as a peaceful vegetarian with his mate in South America, the creature says, "The picture I present you is peaceful and human, and you must feel that you could deny it only in the wantonness of power and cruelty" (142). At the very moment he renounces human being, the monster demonstrates his fluency in anthropo-logic: clearly his literary education

has taught him how to speak human being if not to inhabit it. Indeed, the monster identifies the relentless anthropomorphic prejudice of Victor's thought; as he says to Victor, "you would not call it murder, if you could . . . destroy my frame, the work of your own hands" (141). He is even willing to acquiesce in the naturalization of this lethal anthropomorphism: he wants his own mate precisely because he recognizes that "the human senses are insurmountable barriers to our union" (141).

The monster shows himself to be a canny theorist of human being, a theorist from the outside; Victor persists in the muddy and ultimately murderous thought of the natively and naively human being. Even as the monster promises to "quit the neighborhood of man, and dwell, as it may chance, in the most savage of places" (143), Victor questions whether he will truly be able to "fly from the habitations of man." "How can you," he asks the monster, "who long for the love and sympathy of man, persevere in this exile?" (142). Victor persists in conjuring the romance of humanization, the appealing exchange of "sympathy" among men, precisely as the monster has imagined for himself and his mate a future as "monsters, cut off from all the world" (142) – i.e. from Europe. Victor finally accedes to the request on one condition – that the monster promise "to quit Europe for ever, and every other place in the neighborhood of man, as soon as I shall deliver into your hands a female who will accompany you in your exile" (144). It is striking that "the vast wilds of South America" do not register – for either Victor or the monster – as among the "neighborhood[s] of man." Both Victor and monster imagine this emigration to the New World as an exile from Europe (the ambiguous geographic territory) and from human being (the contested category of being). The monster's prospective exile from Europe thus defines his status as de-territorialized non-human body and reminds us of that early equation established in Walton's account of his first sighting: "Man" = European.

Victor's Malthusian deliberations lead him, then, to re-think not only the problem of anomaly (monstrous individual becomes monstrous population) but also to re-configure the humanly habitable world. Victor asks the monster "to quit Europe forever" – a dream of forced deportation and species isolation (and a bleak parody of forced emigration throughout Europe). He seeks to ensure that the savage within Europe will exile himself from Europe. Yet, as suggested earlier, the very idea of "Europe" appears as a linguistic and juridical phantom to which human citizens appeal only in a crisis of differentiation. The world no longer offers a secure place for the "exile" of undesirables. The

world has contracted to a contest: as Victor foresees, the world is already potentially populated. The problem of exile and emigration – formerly described in terms of individual movement (e.g. Victor's exile from Geneva, the monster's "emigration" from the "native wood") – acquires world-historical importance when considered as a movement of potential populations. There is no safely policed or policeable border; the monster who invades Geneva cannot be confined to the "vast wilds of South America." Monsters will mate, monsters will people (as it were) the globe, monsters will eventually threaten the "existence of the species of man" (161).

Now that the monster appears not as a local but rather as a global threat to humanity, Victor can no longer persist in his second experiment in speciation. His final deliberations suggest a transvaluation of the category human, since he is simultaneously capable of envisioning the female monster as a future "thinking and reasoning animal" and as a threat to the "whole human race" (163). Victor clearly resolves the contradiction of the monster: he decisively dissociates literacy and rationality from human being. Contrary to Godwin's belief, thinking and reasoning will not, indeed must not, carry a creature across the border from animal (or "creature") to human. Confronted by the monstrous contradiction to human being, Victor must dissociate human being from certain capacities and sympathies thought native to it. The culmination of his work on the female shows the violence required to secure such a resolution. Victor looks on the work of his hands: "The remains of the half-finished creature, whom I had destroyed, lay scattered on the floor, and I almost felt as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human being" (167). Almost. As the monster had predicted, Victor "would not call it murder" if he destroyed "the work of [his] own hands" (141).

Victor's aborting of the monster-mate becomes, as he reflects, an exercise in humanitarianism. His increasingly biological interpretation of "species" and of the monster's future state provides Victor with the humanist alibi:

> During these last days I have been occupied in examining my past conduct; nor do I find it blameable. In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature, and was bound towards him, to asssure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being. This was my duty; but there was another still paramount to that. My duties towards my fellow creatures had greater claims to my attention, because they included a greater proportion of happiness or misery. Urged by this view, I refused, and I did right in refusing, to create a companion for the first creature. (214)

Victor's declamation of human conscientiousness invokes and revises a utilitarian calculus: Godwinian concerns about "duty," "happiness," and universal benevolence confront the species barrier. The "duties towards [his] fellow creatures" trump the duties toward created living non-human beings. Indeed, by 1831 Shelley had revised the phrase "fellow creatures" to "beings of my own species," further reminding us that one's "own species" has come to stand, for Victor, as a reified category for human fellowship conceived over and against this monstrous alternative.

By tearing up the female, Victor begins to repair the rent in the humanly habitable world. His heightened species-consciousness allows him a partial recovery of natality, not as a native Genevese but as a "human." In "exile," having left Geneva to create the second monster, he comes to see himself as the species-being *par excellence*. To invoke Marx, "Man is a species being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species as his object (his own as well as those of other things), but – and this is only another way of expressing it – also because he treats himself as the actual, living species."[36] Taking his species, "the whole human race," as his object, Victor acquires, or rather produces, a distinctive consciousness of human species being, which allows him to remember the destroyed female thing with a clear conscience. Victor's refusal to complete the monster-mate does, at least for him, mark his re-entry into the human social body, one which is now imagined as persisting through time, unto "everlasting generations" (165). In a roundabout and perverse way, Victor does traffic in a human reproductive economy, if only in his capacity to imagine future human generations under threat. Indeed, the dismembered female – recollected in tranquillity – embodies the culmination of Victor's conscientious foresight, his carefully defended Malthusian humanitarianism. From a purely human perspective, Victor's violence appears as a true demonstration of Malthusian philanthropy.

What we might call ideological biologization of species difference – first by the monster (who wants one "of the same species") and then by Victor (who refers to "his [i.e. the monster's] own species") – fixes the asymmetry between monster and man. In Victor's turn to population he demonstrates the motivation of a discursive shift: he is no innocent, ingenuous, or disinterested speculator but rather a human being who imagines his "species" under threat and acts accordingly. Victor's Malthusian panic ensures that the conflict of monster and man will be imagined as a species or race conflict. Clearly this progression can be

read as an allegory of the colonial enterprise, or of the racial consciousness of English Romanticism, or as a representation of the unruly proletariat. Yet, in a more localized reading, we can also see how biologization – the nominalization of a corporeal and social problem as a species *difference* – succeeds (that is, follows) and supports the failure both of humanism and the humanities. It is Victor – the human being, the natural philosopher, the population theorist – who emerges dominant, both in terms of species competition and in the utility of his education. The course of the novel suggests that the principle of population – of species competition in a world become suddenly too small – trumps the principle of benevolence. Considered as such, the novel undermines not only Godwin's faith in the "science of education" but in fact the anthropological foundations of *Political Justice*. One could say, in fact, that in *Frankenstein*, Malthus triumphs over Godwin: the "perfectibility of man" announced by Godwin and ridiculed by Malthus appears in the novel as a perfectibility for European species men only. In the ideological contest between "benevolence" (the Godwinian principle) and "misery" (the Malthusian check), benevolence extends only to the limits of one's own species being, a status represented in the novel as constituted through various local apparatuses – familial, political, educational, yet with a biological, anthropological determination in the last instance. The monster's misery is, in the end, no business of Victor's and indeed must be resisted with the newly discovered language of human-all-too-human fellowship. Victor's experiments have demonstrated, however ironically, the truth of Malthus's dictum: ". . . an experiment with the human race is not like an experiment upon inanimate objects."[37] Neither human nor inanimate, the monster persists as a challenge to those who would build communities of affinity, to those who wish to redeem the promise of the humanities.

CHAPTER 4

The "arithmetic of futurity": poetry, population, and the structure of the future

In Thomas Love Peacock's novel *Melincourt* (1817), the seventh chapter, entitled "The Principle of Population," features a sustained conversation between the Malthusian Mr. Fax and the Shelleyan Sylvan Forester. As is typical of Peacockian style, "conversation" becomes the mode for the elegant display, dramatization, and contestation of ideas. In this as well as his other novels, Peacock's characters range widely and easily among a variety of political, intellectual, and artistic topics. Fax and Forester, in this scene, anatomize and dispute the state of human society. Among the many topics they discuss is the "principle" Malthus made infamous, the principle of population. As the following excerpt suggests, Fax and Forester address this principle, and its calculability, quite differently:

> Mr. Fax.
>
> The cause of all the evils of human society is single, obvious, reducible to the most exact mathematical calculation; and of course susceptible not only of remedy, but even of utter annihilation. The cause is the tendency of population to increase beyond the means of subsistence. The remedy is an universal social contract, binding both sexes to equally rigid celibacy, till the prospect of maintaining the average number of six children be as clear as the arithmetic of futurity can make it.
>
> Mr. Forester.
>
> The arithmetic of futurity has been found in a more than equal number of instances to baffle human skill. The rapid and sudden mutations of fortune are the inexhaustible theme of history, poetry, and romance . . . [1]

In this exchange Peacock provides a brief sketch of the discursive range of futurity. The elegance of Mr. Fax's phrase – "the arithmetic of futurity" – condenses a host of operations. Mr. Fax offers a brisk and concise formulation of what had come to be the vulgar Malthusian

doctrine – that the evils of society were reducible to one cause, and that this cause could be explained in terms of the "principle of population." The language of calculation, characteristic of utilitarian thought, makes its appearance here as the quantitative logic which structures both Malthusian thinking and the Malthusian version of progressive humanitarianism. Sylvan Forester registers Mr. Fax's language and gives it a typically Shelleyan twist: the "arithmetic of futurity" becomes in Forester's response precisely that which may not be calculated.

For Mr. Fax, futurity appears as a horizon which may now obtain its own mathesis. According to Mr. Fax, futurity is mathematicizable. "Futurity" submits to calculation: this is the basic premise and promise of Malthusian foresight. This calculation is understood to be an arithmetic operation, a production of ratios, as Mr. Fax implies. Forester's resistance to calculation – his insistence on futurity as non-mathematicizable and "baffling," "mutational" – is couched in a language that itself replicates a calculating operation: "The arithmetic of futurity has been found in a more than equal number of instances to baffle human skill." Even as Forester claims the future for "history, poetry, and romance," he resorts to a language of measure and quantitative comparison, the logic of more and less. The ghost of calculation and quantity haunts Forester's/Shelley's attempts to imagine a future independent of a Malthusian mathesis.[2]

Peacock's invented conversation between Mr. Fax and Sylvan Forester may be seen as a symptomatic dialogue: "population" and "poetry" meet, greet, and dispute. What they dispute is the logic of futurity itself. Both "population" and "poetry" address themselves to the problem of mathematicization: does the future require a mathesis, as Mr. Fax implies, or must futurity necessarily escape mathematicization, as Sylvan Forester suggests? Should "futurity" seek a calculus, or should it rather reveal itself in genres and modes like Forester's "history, poetry, and romance"? These options, however distinct, presume a similar set of discursive operations and contextual understandings: "poetry" knows exactly what the "principle of population" is; "poetry" tries to claim the future for "history, poetry, and romance" even as "population" marches onward to its own calculable, improvable, rationalizable future. It is significant that Peacock resists the temptation to turn Forester into a full-blown utopian crank; he similarly prevents his Mr. Fax from simply lapsing into the crude caricatures of Malthus so devastatingly drawn by such opponents as William Hazlitt and William Godwin, not to mention Shelley himself.[3] Allowing each figure a de-

gree of measure and disputational competence, Peacock forces the reader to confront – on a provisionally equable and sociable field – the competing claims of his characters. We might say that "ideology" acquires, if not a human face, a lucid and engaging manner. This novel of ideas aspires to the condition of the literary public sphere, Habermas's enlightened coffee house: the pleasures of such a novel, then and now, lie in its commitment to a light seriousness, a commitment to the vital exchange and refining of ideas.[4] Neither "population" nor the opposing triad of "history, poetry, and romance" simply congeals into a reification. If ideology involves, as Althusser has said, the production of obviousnesses, then Peacock's vivification of topics resists their degradation and reification into "obviousnesses."[5] By animating "population" and "poetry," Peacock allows us to see the early nineteenth-century discursive constellation as a mobile, dynamic, and discussable arrangement.

TOWARD A DISCOURSE NETWORK: POETRY, POPULATION, AND "REFORMING THE WORLD"

That some early nineteenth-century poets understood their projects to be competing with utilitarian and other quantifying projects has become apparent, or apparent again, as the work of Frances Ferguson on Malthus, Godwin, and Wordsworth most notably suggests.[6] The notorious and qualitatively new privileging of consciousness in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats may be read as a re-functioning of poetry and subjectivity in the face of astonishing social, political, and economic transformations. It is instructive to recall that Malthus had as great a hold on the imagination of this period (1798–1825) as did Wordsworth or Byron; it is useful to read both "population" and "poetry" as new possibilities for theorizing persons, whether as reproductive beings, conscious sensoria, excitable organisms, or self-reflective consciousnesses. The hypertrophy of interiority in this period – manifested in the Gothic explosion as well as in what Harold Bloom has termed "the Internalization of Quest Romance" in English romantic poetry – coincided with the emergence and stabilization of a mathesis of persons as "bio-power," as reproductive bodies quantified and managed through various institutional and discursive regimes (for example, the census, first conducted in England in 1801).[7] The degradation of person into reproductive meat and the elevation of person into exalted mind may be seen as complementary operations. On either side

of this operation we see men and women struggling to maintain an integrity of meat and mind: Malthus lamenting in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* the fate of a woman unhappy (and thus implicitly, if sadly, conscious) in marriage; Shelley claiming on behalf of the poor in his *Philosophical View of Reform* the right to the free indulgence of their one exercisable freedom: to copulate.[8]

The sketch of the penultimate chapter of Thomas Malthus's 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population* begins with the following observation: "The constant pressure of distress on man, from the principle of population, seems to direct our hopes to the future."[9] Malthus's "hopes" for the future were notoriously bleak. Accordingly, his name and his doctrine continued to rankle such disparate visionaries as Percy Shelley and, later, Karl Marx, who devoted an extended footnote in *Capital* to "Parson Malthus" and his principle. Marx reiterated what Percy Shelley and William Hazlitt had each observed in the 1810s: the appeal of Malthus's "principle of population" had to be understood as part of the English reaction to the French Revolution and to the radical philosophy associated with it. As Marx wrote, "The 'principle of population,' slowly worked out in the eighteenth century, and then, in the midst of a great social crisis, proclaimed with drums and trumpets as the infallible antidote to the teachings of Condorcet, &c., was greeted with jubilance by the English oligarchy as the great destroyer of all hankerings after human development."[10]

Obviously Marx's vigorous denunciation of Malthus was a partisan one; yet his summation reminds us that Malthus's principle, with its apparent regard for mathematical and biological fact, was (and is) an ideologically and historically situated formulation. Marx noted that "the French Revolution had found passionate defenders in the United Kingdom"; Malthus's *Essay* served the interests of those hostile to France, revolution, and English reform. Twenty years after the first publication of the *Essay*, Percy Shelley found himself arguing on behalf of revolutionary progress and against Malthus. In several prose works, most incisively in the unfinished "A Philosophical View of Reform" (1819), Shelley identified Malthus as a symptom of reaction. Indeed, just as he approaches the crux of his reformist agenda in "A Philosophical View," Shelley invokes Malthus as the pre-eminent antagonist:

> A Reform in England is most just and necessary. What ought to be that reform?
>
> A writer of the present day (a priest of course, for his doctrines are those of a eunuch and of a tyrant) has stated that the evils of the poor arise from an excess of population . . . [11]

Shelleyan reform thus had to address the Malthusian proposals for reform, and it is only after dispensing with Malthus that Shelley is able to move on to specific proposals, including the abolition of the national debt, the disbanding of the standing army, and the rendering of all religions "equal in the eye of the law."[12] Shelley's anathematization of the conspicuously unnamed Malthus (as if Shelley could not bear to speak the name) reveals what a powerful opponent he understood Malthus – or the conceptual complex associated with Malthus – to be.

Shelley's attack on Malthus and its concomitant political, social, and erotic implications informed not just his political prose but the very fabric of his poetry. Towards the end of his Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley wrote, "Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have, what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms, 'a passion for reforming the world': what passion incited him to write and publish his book, he omits to explain. For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of life."[13] Such a passage epitomizes a kind of Shelleyan operation: re-appropriating the apparently belittling phrase of Robert Forsyth, the unnamed "Scotch philosopher," Shelley directly opposes his "passion for reforming the world" to Malthusian pessimism and Malthusian foresight.[14] In his *Essay* Malthus had indeed proposed a "theory of life," in Shelley's words, and when Shelley elaborated his own figurations of futurity, it was in part a legacy of Malthusian "hopes" – that is, a sturdy and melancholy pessimism – that he strove to surpass.

Why is it so difficult to imagine rigorously a better future? This was the question posed and answered differently by such English writers as Malthus, Godwin, Shelley, and Hazlitt. With the example of French excesses always at hand, Malthus cautioned his readers thus:

> The moment we allow ourselves to ask why some things are not otherwise, instead of endeavoring to account for them as they are, we shall never know where to stop; we shall be led into the grossest and most childish absurdities; all progress in the knowledge of the ways of Providence must necessarily be at an end; and the study will even cease to be an improving exercise of the human mind.[15]

Malthus urges a judicious restraint of the intellect; in the great commonsensical tradition of English thought he commits himself to "things . . . as they are." Obviously a man of such different disposition and vocation as

Percy Shelley was incapable of such a commitment; as a poet, he ceaselessly proposed, as he wrote in the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, the "reforming [of] the world."

Shelley's futurism has become a staple of literary criticism; an example may be found in the title of the eleventh chapter of Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology*: "Shelley's Poetry: The Judgment of the Future."[16] Shelleyan futurity has a history of attracting and repelling his readers: one may recall T. S. Eliot's indictment of Shelley's thought as "puerile" and irredeemably adolescent.[17] I find Shelley's futurism neither puerile nor ineffectual; it seems to me more and more a tremendous and continuously compelling intellectual and imaginative achievement. I wish to emphasize here both the specificity of Shelley's imagining of futurity and its situation vis-à-vis other contemporary discourses of human futurity. Shelley *imagines* the future; he defines the future as that which must be imagined. This imagining, which as he declares in his *Defence of Poetry* is the work of poetry itself, may be seen in part as a resistance or alternative to calculation – that operation characteristic of the emergent utilitarian philosophy.[18] With this in mind, we have a new perspective on Shelley's idiosyncratic couplings of the infernal saints Bacon and Plato versus the damnable Paley and Malthus. For Bacon and Plato, along with the crossed-out Milton of the *Prometheus Unbound* manuscript, appear again later as vital poets in Shelley's *Defence*; they epitomize the workings of the imaginative faculty in and on the world. Conversely, "Paley and Malthus" figure for Shelley a bad version of utilitarian philosophy; they personify the calculating power itself. Shelley's association of Paley (a prominent Anglican utilitarian moralist, author of *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, 1785) and Malthus is a telling one. The eminent historian of English Utilitarianism Elie Halévy notes that Coleridge also grouped together "Paley and Malthus" in a reproof of so-called "sages of the nation": in this case, if only here, Coleridge and Shelley identified a common enemy.[19]

To emphasize Shelley's hostility to Malthus and to the other thinkers Shelley grouped with him is to run a risk – the risk of transforming Shelley's work into a series of intellectual and moral-philosophical arguments. This is the risk I will run and hopefully avoid. The future envisioned by Malthus and that announced by Shelley are clearly different futures; it is, moreover, a distortion to imagine these two figures locked in a closed conversational hold. At various points I will refer to relevant works by Godwin and Hazlitt to broaden the scope of this debate over futurity. It is my hope that "Shelley" and "Malthus" will

figure, in this essay as they did to Shelley himself, as names synonymous with the discursive categories of, respectively, poetry and population theory. In his commitment to a non-mathematizable future, Shelley confronted an impasse: if not an arithmetic, what? if revolutions were doomed to fail, what then? if facts and calculation were indeed the express route to reform, why imagine?

EXPERIMENTING WITH THE FUTURE: THE MORAL PHILOSOPHICAL IMPASSE OF REVOLUTION

In 1793, William Godwin published his *Enquiry concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness*, a treatise inspired, as he wrote, by "the recent experiments of America and France."[20] We might list tens, if not hundreds, of other English works similarly inspired by these "recent experiments": Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) was only the most famous of the early responses to the French crisis, a crisis which was – as Wollstonecraft, Paine, and Godwin each realized – a political crisis of Enlightenment. The revolutionary "experiments" indirectly inspired other speculative works, most notably Malthus's *Essay on Population* (1798), itself a response to Godwin's 1797 essay "Of Avarice and Profusion," and Hazlitt's *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805) and his *Reply to the "Essay on Population" by the Rev. T.R. Malthus . . .* (1807).

While only a small percentage of the public read Godwin compared to Burke or Paine, it was to Godwin that the young Wordsworth and later the young Percy Shelley looked for moral and political guidance concerning revolution.[21] Godwin attempted to steer a course between the Scylla of "innovation" and the Charybbdis of "antiquity." "The great cause of humanity, which is now pleading in the face of the universe," he wrote, "has but two enemies: those friends of antiquity, and those friends of innovation, who, impatient of suspense, are inclined violently to interrupt the calm, the incessant, the rapid and auspicious progress which thought and reflection appear to be making in the world."[22] Godwin's theory of rational, non-violent progress, and his defense of "benevolence" rather than "selfishness" as the ground for human action and morality, comforted English republicans looking for evidence that history was, despite the failure of the French Revolution, on their side. Godwin argued both that human achievements were permanent (citing in particular the inventions of the alphabet and of print, technologies which allowed men to retain what they had learned), and that human progress would continue asymptotically into the future.

On such hopes Malthus poured a perhaps salutary bath of cold water. The "perfectibilian school," as it was known, aroused in Malthus as much ire as did poor relief. If Malthus is known today as the formulator of the principle of population[23] he was known as well in the early nineteenth century as an opponent of what William Hazlitt approvingly called "the modern philosophy." Indeed, when Hazlitt took up his pen in 1807 to oppose the latest edition of Malthus's *Essay*, he opined that Malthus's main target was not population or the poor but rather the French and English perfectibilians. As he wrote of Malthus in *A Reply to the "Essay on Population,"* "His first, his grand, his most memorable effort was directed against the modern philosophy."[24] Moreover, Hazlitt emphasized the remarkable confluence of intellectual, political, and ideological currents in Malthus's book: "The most singular thing in this singular performance of our author is, that it should have been originally ushered into the world as the most complete and only satisfactory answer to the speculations of Godwin, Condorcet and others."[25] Hazlitt's observations in 1807 have the great merit of re-animating the discursive and political contours of debates Malthus entered and transformed. For truly, when looking at the first edition of the *Essay*, the 1798 version, what we find are entire chapters devoted to refutations of Godwin and Condorcet, and many passages discoursing on the impossibility of perfectibility, the cherished Godwinian doctrine. This is an essay, Malthus informs us in his introduction, on "the general question of the future improvement of society"; moreover, this is an essay which emerges in a self-consciously revolutionary age:

> *The great and unlooked for discoveries that have taken place of late years in natural philosophy, the increasing diffusion of general knowledge from the extension of the art of printing, the ardent and unshackled spirit of inquiry* that prevails through the lettered and even unlettered world, the new and extraordinary lights that have been thrown on political subjects which dazzle and astonish the understanding, and particularly *that tremendous phenomenon in the political horizon, the French revolution*, which, like a blazing comet, seems destined either to inspire with fresh life and vigour, or to scorch up and destroy the shrinking inhabitants of the earth, have all concurred to lead many able men into the opinion that we were touching on a period big with the most important changes, changes that would in some measure be decisive of the *future fate of mankind*.[26] (emphases added)

Malthus launches his *Essay* with a spirit-of-the-age flourish, and most prominent of the age's remarkable phenonema is, unsurprisingly, the French revolution. Such a passage, with its annunciation of stunning advances in natural philosophy, print media, and the spirit of inquiry,

could have appeared and in fact did with different emphases in such books as Godwin's *Political Justice*, Wordsworth's *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads* and, twenty years later, in Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*. In Malthus's "either/or" ("the French Revolution . . . seems destined either . . . or . . ."), he deftly sketches and contains the limits of responses to the French revolution: it may inspire us, or it may doom us. Yet, like Godwin, Malthus imagines himself to be a mediator between these extremes of enthusiasm and romantic pessimism: even though he colors his observations and predictions with a "melancholy hue," Malthus proposes his own version of enlightened foresight by which public policy may be guided.[27] Both Malthus and Godwin, then, agreed that the question of their age was, as Malthus put it, the "future fate of mankind."

That Malthus inserts the modifier "future" should alert us: while "fate" always bears within it the seeds of an unavoidable and perhaps determined futurity, a "future fate" suggests a fate potentially distinguishable, intellectually and in terms of political action, from what looks to be the present contour of man's fate. Godwin described the situation of Man in characteristically stark terms: "The condition of the human species at the present hour is critical and alarming."[28] To look at and beyond the emergency of the "present hour" to the horizon of mankind's "future fate" was thus the common concern of each. Like Malthus, obsessed with "mankind," Godwin manifested a totalizing impulse: not just France, not just England, but indeed the entire "human species" faced a crisis.[29]

When poets and social thinkers imagined futures and invoked "futurity" in the early nineteenth century, they inevitably confronted the burden of the French Revolution and its failure, a failure which could only seem to the once-hopeful, such as Wordsworth, a referendum on futurity itself. Malthus and Shelley (as well as Wordsworth, Godwin, Bentham, Keats, and Hazlitt) understood that any prospectus – poetic or political – required a reckoning with the historical event or series of events adumbrated under the rubric of "the French Revolution." The French Revolution and English reaction seemed both to open and to close the possibilities of human perfectibility. The collapse of France became an obsessively worked topos in, to cite only some of the most prominent poetic examples, Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*, *Prometheus Unbound* and *Triumph of Life*, Byron's *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*, and of course, from the previous generation and contemporary with the evolutionary events of the 1790s, Blake's revolutionary epics. These poets invoked – sometimes naturalistically, sometimes

allegorically – the events, dates, and scenes that Burke, Wollstonecraft, Godwin, and Paine had so vividly and differently addressed in the 1790s: the storming of the Bastille, the Triumph of the King, the Terror, the death of Robespierre, the rise of Napoleon, the forming of the Holy Alliance, the Peninsular War, the mass slaughter on the European battlefields. The impact of the failure of the French Revolution on this generation of English poets cannot be overestimated, and numerous literary critics and historians have documented and elucidated this phenomenon.[30] Jerome McGann's *Romantic Ideology*, for example, elegantly delineates the predicament of what he calls primary and secondary romantic poets (Blake alone a pure primary poet; Wordsworth and Coleridge a mix of primary and secondary; Byron, Shelley and Keats wholly belated): he reads their works as a kind of "permanent and self-realized condition of suffering, a Romantic Agony."[31] Their increasingly melancholy (and, from McGann's Marxian perspective, reactionary) poems expressed the historical predicament of men who witnessed, in the period of English reaction, a violent contraction of the horizon of hope. Whereas Blake was able to channel his unreconstructed revolutionary fervor into increasingly esoteric works (*Jerusalem*, *The Four Zoas*), poets without such striking religio-ideational resources found themselves forced to articulate a theory of history which would make sense of the political and spiritual violence so characteristic of their times.

What is particularly striking about this period is the continuing immediacy of the French Revolution: Shelley in 1817 wrote of the "panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all classes of men during the excesses consequent upon the French Revolution": he invokes this panic as if it were recent news.[32] And of course, for him and for other English radicals, reactionary panic was indeed the news of the times. More significant, perhaps, than the strength of English reaction almost thirty years after the Terror was the fact that every plot, every massacre, every reform, every sign of republican fervor and reactionary quelling would be interpreted via the French example. How to think, re-think, and possibly re-imagine this example, then, became the dominant intellectual task of the period.

REVOLUTION REDUX: SHELLEY'S REVOLT OF ISLAM

Shelley characterized *The Revolt of Islam* as his "first serious appeal to the public." The poem is an Orientalized romantic epic in twelve cantos:

the "revolt of Islam" may be read as a deft and disturbing transposition of French Revolutionary episodes.[33] In his Preface to the poem, Shelley makes explicit his program: he will both re-do, as it were, the French Revolution, and do so in order to awaken and test "public hope." Shelley's aim in the "Revolt" is to imagine a revolution in which violence, mass death, and total failure are averted or at least imagined as avoidable. As to why this is a "revolt" and not a "revolution" of Islam: we may recall that in *A Philosophical View of Reform* Shelley refers to the "just and successful Revolt of America" in contradistinction the "French Revolution."[34] This suggests that while revolts are successful, revolutions ultimately fail permanently to liberate. "Revolution" may have still connoted, for Shelley as it had for most thinkers prior to the American and French Revolutions, a full circling back. In the case of France, Shelley believed there had been a regrettable circling back to reactionary thought and practice, with Napoleon a tyrant fit to replace Louis XVI. To interrupt this revolutionary circulation – to arrest its movement at the apogee of liberation – is the dream of the enlightenment revolutionary. What is desired is not a permanent revolution à la Mao but a condition of permanent liberation: a unilaterally and perpetually redeemed world.

In *The Revolt of Islam*, Shelley's improved imagined revolt features a typically Shelleyan hero, a Greek youth named Laon.[35] He possesses an enlightened consciousness and, with his anima-figure Cythna, he struggles non-violently to liberate Greece from the tyrannous Turks. In his Preface, Shelley informs us that his poem will describe:

> . . . the growth and progress of the individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses; its impatience at "all oppressions which are done under the sun"; its tendency to awaken public hope, and to enlighten and improve mankind; the rapid effects of that tendency . . . the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue.[36]

In Shelley's drama of effective consciousness, the growth of benevolent, enlightened mind seems almost single-handedly to propel revolution. The "individual mind aspiring after excellence" has immediate worldly consequences – surely a pleasing fantasy for a poet. Indeed, Shelley's synopsis follows this allegory of "individual mind" with a series of transformations of national and collective consciousness, including "the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and

degradation to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom; the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors, and the unveiling of religious frauds by which they had been deluded into submission." The Preface next outlines a series of actions which closely parallel the by-now iconic structure of revolution and reaction, involving ". . . the faithlessness of tyrants; the confederacy of the Rulers of the World, and the restoration of the expelled dynasty by foreign arms; the massacre and extermination of the Patriots, and the victory of established power; the consequences of legitimate despotism – civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter distinction of domestic affections; the judicial murder of the advocates of Liberty."[37]

In this "series of pictures" Shelley gives us an apocalyptic vision of recent history which culminates in the destruction of Patriots (i.e. revolutionaries) and friends of Liberty. Yet the critical transformation in Shelley's *Revolt* is to imagine another end, for as he concludes his synopsis, we see that the Revolt of Islam will not end with revolution crushed but rather with revolution triumphant: "the temporary triumph of oppression [gives way to] that secure earnest of its final and inevitable fall." The poem's conclusion shall reveal "the transient nature of ignorance and error" and "the eternity of genius and virtue."

The great impulse behind this revolutionary re-imagining is, as I have argued, to cure the poet and the public of the malaise which has sickened England and imagination itself.[38] Shelley's recourse to the conditional is highly suggestive: "If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence . . ."[39] Shelley diagnoses the problem of reciprocal violence and revulsion: the haters of "oppressors" become violently oppressive in their rage to stamp out oppression. He notes the despair occasioned by the violent and reactionary turn of the Revolution: "The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues, and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France, was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilised world." This is an historical despair, a despair occasioned by and dramatized in history. As such, the poem needs to think its way around and against this history toward a new futurity; moreover, Shelley understands that he needs to combat the images of "future fate" offered by such powerful documents as Malthus's *Essay*. Poetry thus engages itself, here as in Wordsworth's early writings, with the claims of moral and political philosophy.

Shelley makes clear the intellectual, political, and discursive context of his efforts: "Metaphysics, and inquiries into moral and political

science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those of Mr. Malthus, calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph."[40] Shelley here records what he sees as the degradation of moral philosophy into purely reactionary doctrine: by mentioning Malthus as a soother of "oppressors" Shelley links him to the "oppressors" he had mentioned when summarizing his plot. Yet in a characteristic recuperation of what looks to be the bleakest possible moment, Shelley provides a note to his mention of Malthus, in which he reads Malthus's successive revisions and emendations of his principle since 1798 as a "symptom of the revival of public hope."[41] When Malthus conceded that "moral restraint" – that is, conscious foresight and behavioral change – might mitigate the terrors of population, he showed himself to be an inadvertent friend of those who would advocate, like Shelley, "the growth and progress of individual mind." Even Malthus, Shelley asserts, has modified his misanthropy. Moreover, Shelley goes on to link Malthus back to Godwin: "This concession [i.e. the nod to moral restraint] answers all the inferences from his doctrine unfavourable to human improvement, and reduces the *Essay on Population* to a commentary illustrative of the unanswerableness of *Political Justice*." Even Malthus, then, shows himself to be, through a Shelleyan dialectic, a supporter of refined consciousness and indirectly of reform. Malthus becomes, in fact, a lesser Godwin.

The Revolt of Islam internalizes Malthus, Godwin, and the legacy of revolution in several ways. The text of the Preface and of the second footnote explicitly situate the poem vis-à-vis Malthus's and Godwin's debate over "human improvement," in Shelley's words. Moreover, Shelley dedicated the poem "To Mary – –."

> They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
> Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.
> I wonder not – for One then left this earth
> Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
> Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
> Of its departing glory; still her fame
> Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
> Which shake these latter days; and thou canst claim
> The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name. (100–108)

The meaning of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin for Percy Shelley seems, in such a passage, almost embarrassingly overdetermined. He invests Mary with both the legacy of her dead feminist mother (the "One" who

seems passively to "le[ave] this earth") and the "immortal name" of Godwin. Calling Mary an "aspiring Child," Shelley echoes his description of the logic of the poem, which traces, as he noted in the Preface, the "growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence." Mary's aspiring excellence, notably figured as a child's, emerges as a function of her famous parents. Her political, intellectual, and erotic significance for Shelley condenses in such a stanza and forecasts the constellation of erotics and politics which fuels the epic. She is Cythna to Percy's Laon.

If the Preface and dedicatory verse establish a discursive field for the poem which ranges from Godwin to Malthus to the legacy of France, the first stanza of the poem proper alerts us even more powerfully to the burden of the revolutionary past. The entire poem is framed by a vision granted to a narrator who explicitly identifies himself as a dejected French sympathizer. The poem begins:

> When the last hope of trampled France had failed
> Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
> From visions of despair I rose, and scaled
> The peak of an aereal promontory. (127–130)

The poem thus introduces itself as a narrative propelled by a specific historical trauma. The trampling of France has induced "visions of despair," and "hope" has revealed itself to be "a brief dream." With this stanza Shelley explicitly politicizes his oriental romance; however misty and mystified the Greek heroes and struggle may be, Shelley intends the work to be read as a critique of the contemporary.

FIGURING FUTURITY: THE FUTURE'S URN

From his mountain vantage the narrator witnesses a horrific struggle between an apparently evenly-matched serpent and eagle – Shelley's favored symbols of world-historical struggle (see, for example, "Alastor," lines 227–237). The meaning of this "monstrous sight" (191) – "An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in fight" (193) – is at first opaque. After vicious combat, the Serpent finally drops to the sea, and the Eagle flies off: we have here an allegory whose veil is yet unrent. Fortunately an interpreter appears, a glorious female exegete who weeps for the defeated serpent and calls to it, after which "coiled in rest in her embrace it lay" (306). After noticing the narrator and accepting him into her boat (the characteristic Shelleyan vehicle), the

Woman (always capitalized) staves off the narrator's questioning looks and begins her lesson:

> Speak not to me, but hear! Much shall thou learn,
> Much must remain unthought, and more untold,
> In the dark Future's ever-flowing urn:
> Know then, then from the depth of ages old,
> Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold
> Ruling the world with a divided lot,
> Immortal, all-pervading, manifold . . . (343–349)

Thus the Serpent and Eagle begin to acquire their cosmological and ultimately historical pedigree. They are quasi-Manichean forces endlessly contending, the Eagle representing the forces of oppression, and the maligned Snake the forces of resistance and liberation. The Snake and Eagle persist in an ongoing battle, first dramatized in the creation of the world, re-inaugurated when "Greece arose" (406), and endlessly recapitulated as Good and Evil, Snake and Eagle, incarnate themselves in human history.

More significant and more elusive than Shelley's symbolic dialectic is the stunning image associated with "the dark Future": the "ever-flowing urn." The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives as the first meaning of "urn": "an earthenware or metal vessel or vase of a rounded or ovaloid form and with a circular base, used by various peoples esp. in former times (notably by the Romans and Greeks) to preserve the ashes of the dead. Hence vaguely used (esp. *poet.*) for 'a tomb or sepulchre, the grave.'" Among the literary uses of the word, the *OED* cites Byron, who in *Don Juan*, XVI, xviii declares: "As you turn/Backward and forward, . . .voices from the urn begin to wake." The *OED* also cites lines from Gray's *Elegy*, stanza xi: "Can storied urn or animated bust / Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?"[42] The urn, in English literary history, connotes variously the funerary, classical antiquity, and – as epitomized in Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn* – the pathos of historicity itself.

Yet Shelley's urn is the very vessel of futurity. To associate the urn – container of ash, funerary vessel, relic of antiquity – with the future and with the Woman's pedagogic prophecy strikes me as a brilliant conjuring and superseding of the historical predicament of the despairing narrator, who, we recall, begins his story "[w]hen the last hope of trampled France had failed." Shelley's syntax enacts the possession of the urn by the "dark Future": it is "the dark Future's . . . urn," not the

urn of or for a usable past. Its contents, "ever-flowing," seem to be the vital waters of the future, and not the incinerated *materia* of history and death. This urn will not serve antiquarian musing or historicist melancholy, nor will it speak to us, like Byron's urn, with the tongues of the dead. This urn both flows and resists. "Much must remain unthought, and more untold," the Woman admonishes the narrator, "In the dark Future's ever-flowing urn." This urn negates, as it were, affirmatively: the "unthought" and "untold" contents of the urn present neither a defeat of interpretation, nor a crux of decipherment (along the lines of, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" – we could in this case substitute "history" for "beauty") but rather an as-yet-unrealized potentiality of thought, speech, and action harbored in the dark recesses of the Future. Shelley has found, in this image, the very figure of what may yet be figured, the as-yet-unfigured. Unlike Gray's "storied urn," Shelley's remains stubbornly unstoried. What could signify the pathos of remains (bodily, cultural, historical) instead objectifies the structure of Futurity.

The instructing Woman cites the Future's urn at the beginning of her lessons in cosmology and history. Throughout the *Revolt* Shelley explores the use and abuse of history from the perspective of radicalizing hope. The poem acknowledges everywhere the burden of history but proposes a pedagogical "cure" for vulgar historicism. The Woman distinguishes her exemplary relation to history from that of "others":

> Thus the dark tale which history doth unfold
> I knew, but not, methinks, as others know,
> For they weep not . . . (460–462)

The Woman "knew" differently from others. "Knowing" history thus appears not as a mastery of facts but as a mode of encounter: she knows in one way, not "*as* [in the mode] others know." Yet the difference between the "others" and the Woman is not simply one of affect. It is not enough to "weep" for the oppressed; nor is it sufficient to devote oneself to mere activism – action untroubled by thought.[43] One must radically re-think the horizon for imagining the future. As a poet, Shelley gives us new images of Futurity – his ever-flowing urn in Canto I of the *Revolt*, the "dark shadows" which Futurity casts upon the present in his *Defence of Poetry*. These images have a pedagogic value and cognitive content as well as an imaginal vividness. They reveal, in their strangeness, the deadness of the letters usually used to indicate the

Future. To look to the Future while wearing historicizing glasses leaves Hope no light to appear. Yet Shelley wants to foster not a "sweet hope," as Paolo Freire has described the more-or-less resigned and complacent optimism of those less radicalized than he, but a critical hope. The poet can write new language, provide new images, for hope, for futurity itself. Indeed, as Wordsworth and Shelley came to see at different points, it was the pre-eminent task of the English poet engaged with the world to "*imagine* that which we know." A reader in 1817 might have "known" that an urn signified death, the past, classical culture, melancholia, the residue of antiquity: Shelley transfigures the urn such that it now *images* the future. This re-imagining is a critical, dialectical one: his urn nods to, negates, and supersedes the urn of mortality, history, and the merely residual. In the *Revolt*, then, Shelley acts as a poet: he critically recognizes and re-imagines, making new forms and symbols dialectically out of the old.

Toward the end of the first Canto, the transfigured and transfiguring urn re-appears. The Woman brings the narrator to a Temple; here he encounters two "mighty Spirits," later revealed to be the revolutionary heroes Laon and Cythna, who have been transported to this ethereal realm. A "voice" tells the narrator,

> "Thou must a listener be
> This day – two mighty Spirits now return
> Like birds of calm, from the world's raging sea,
> They pour fresh light from Hope's immortal urn;
> A tale of human power – despair not – list and learn!" (644–648)

Again, Shelley's image condenses an array of meanings. Hope, like the future, has its urn; from this urn "pour[s] fresh light." Here Shelley specifies the contents of the urn, whereas of the dark Future's urn he said only that it was "ever-flowing." The "immortal" status of this urn suggests the wish for permanence embodied in every artifact of material culture: the very pathos of urns derives in part from the juxtapostion of the lasting object with the vanished human being whose ashes it may yet contain. Yet it may be that the "immortal" quality of this urn is a function of Hope itself, of the stance of optimistic expectation which gestures toward the new and the better. Hope ever resists the mortal, the irrevocable, the irreplaceable; so too this urn resists, holding within not ash but light.

Here Hope's urn yields its light through definite agency: the spirits, Laon and Cythna, "*pour* fresh light." The appearance and substantializ-

ing of hope requires action. While the Future's urn may be "ever-flowing," the urn of Hope dwells in a different modality, that of acting and being acted upon. The spirits will tell their "tale," the voice says, to make Hope "fresh": so too the poem as a whole aspires. Again, this is a critical hope, a radicalizing light; it is also a freshening conducted under duress. Without such light the story of "human power" may well cause the listener to "despair."

THE THREAT OF HISTORY: FUTURITY AS "KNOWING NOT"

The *Revolt* presents itself as a poem oriented to the future, yet its action manifests a deep engagement with both the events of and discourse about the past. As he does in his prose Preface, Shelley soon establishes in the poem a "critique-of-history" thematic. Even as the Woman in the first Canto provided an account of her radicalizing *Bildung*, so too Laon and Cythna in their turn narrate their development. Laon describes his coming into critical consciousness as, in part, a revolt against "feeble historians." He grew up in Argolis, he tells us, where:

> I heard, as all have heard, the various story
> Of human life, and wept unwilling tears.
> Feeble historians of its shame and glory,
> False disputants on all its hopes and fears,
> Victims who worshipped ruin, – chroniclers
> Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their state
> Yet, flattering power, had given its ministers
> A throne of judgment in the grave: –'twas fate,
> That among such as these my youth should seek its mate. (685–693)

The "story of human life" moves Laon, like the "weep[ing]" Woman of Canto 1, to tears. He strongly indicts his nation's historians as "slaves"; he rejects their falsifications, their political thralldom, their willingness to "flatter . . . power." The work of the historian, Laon suggests, is inherently political; he observes the complicity of official history with the political *status quo*.

A critique-of-history, then, includes a critique of the historian's profession and situation vis-à-vis power. This theme recurs most dramatically in the ninth Canto, when the revolution has apparently failed, and the tyrant Othman has launched his reign of terror. After long separation, Cythna is re-united with Laon, and she describes the ideological henchmen of the counter-revolution:

> And grave and hoary men were bribed to tell
> From seats where law is made the slave of wrong,
> How glorious Athens in her splendor fell,
> Because her sons were free, – and that among
> Mankind, the many to the few belong,
> By Heaven, and Nature, and Necessity.
> They said, that age was truth, and that the young
> Marred with wild hopes the peace of slavery,
> With which old times and men had quelled the vain and free.
>
> And with the falsehood of their poisonous lips
> They breathed on the enduring memory
> Of sages and of bards a brief eclipse . . . (3586–3597)

Revisionary history, proclaimed by "priests" (3583) on behalf of the tyrant, legitimizes the tyranny even as its power wanes. Describing them as "grave and hoary," Shelley subtly and punningly extends the metaphor he develops throughout: the past-as-a-grave. The hoary (whorish?) men ally themselves with a corporatist, hierarchical, anti-democratic reading of history: Athens is, appropriately for this philhellenic epic, their perversely and systematically mis-read political test-case. The priestly historians and law-givers denounce enthusiasm with all the vigor (but none of the nobility) of Burke, and the man-made conditions of social and political life are explained variously and opportunistically as divine, natural, or otherwise necessary configurations. Cythna's speech, then, economically outlines the reactionary position. Moreover, as she observes, this series of historico-political explanations takes shape in a moment of great urgency: these are not neutral readings of the text of Athens but strongly motivated accounts. Thus "history" shows its own historicity and politicizability. These history lessons appear on the public stage as a defense against revolution.

Cythna's account of the Terror in Othman's land leads her to speculations about the proper stance one should take in the face of apparent defeat. She has arrived at a moment of conceptual and affective perplexity: as she tells Laon, "I cannot grieve or fear / . . . I smile, though human love should make me weep" (3633–35). Because Cythna and Laon maintain an unassailable erotic bond, neither has to face the stark world-destroying impact of the Terror, even though each acknowledges it. As lovers, they are insulated from total disillusionment: this is perhaps the most prominent and characteristic lapse of thought in the *Revolt* – the structural compartmentalization of the political and erotic motifs of the work. Yet, even though Shelley's eros often functions

as a retreat, swerve, or an evasion of the political, nevertheless the lovers at their re-uniting express the predicament the poem has so powerfully produced: if revolution has failed, how is one to face the future?

Cythna declares, "We know not what will come – yet Laon, dearest, / Cythna shall be the prophetess of love . . ." (3640–3641). She then articulates her philosophy of hope, envisioning a world in which "violence and wrong are as a dream" (3647). Here she abandons the political idea of human intervention as the engine of change and turns instead to a seasonal metaphorics. In the moment of revolutionary defeat, she declares, "This is the winter of the world; – and here / We die, even as the winds of Autumn fade" (3685–3686). Even though it is winter, seemingly the season of death, the seasonal complex provides a structure for revivification, just as in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." As Cythna declares, her optimism tinged by melancholy: "Behold! Spring comes, though we must pass, who made / The promise of its birth . . ." (3688–3689). The individual deaths of revolutionaries, even of revolutionary leaders, does not – indeed must not – portend the death of the revolutionary idea. Cythna further elaborates this by invoking the "good and mighty of departed ages" who left "the vesture of their majesty / To adorn and cloak this naked world": "we / Are like to them," she says, insisting on the imperishability of "hope, or love, or truth, or liberty" (3712–3718).

Unable to point to revolutionary success, the work of human action, Cythna resorts alternately to natural cycles to provide the temporal structure of hope or to the logic of memory to ensure the fame of dead republicans. These two modes of solacing, the seasonal and the memorial, suggest a crucial impasse in Shelley's imagining. Each of these turns indicates a kind of defeat. When Cythna turns to seasonality as a model for thinking futurity, she shows us how naturalizing tropes may work to depoliticize "the various tale / of human life." Inasmuch as the human story is a part of natural history, the recourse to the "winter of the world" and its imminent "spring" are rich and revealing metaphors. (They are also quintessentially romantic metaphors: viz. Wordsworth in the *Prelude*, Book XI: "Spring returns, / I saw the spring return, when I was dead / To deeper hope" [32–34]). Yet inasmuch as the human story is or may be a tale of human agency, this emphasis on seasonal structures threatens to foreclose any blasting through naturalized history to what Walter Benjamin invoked approvingly in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" as "Jetzeit," the "time of the now."[44] The seasonal is one mode of binding the future to the past. Reactionaries

could (and did) just as easily invoke the natural as their own ideological resource; and as for the memories of "Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages" (3714), it is the very burden of memory that Laon (and Shelley) struggle elsewhere to cast off. Obviously the past can be invoked on either side of revolutionary struggle, and it may be used to inspire or to discourage "wild hopes": consider how the fate of Athens is used by both revolutionaries and reactionaries in the poem. My point here is that Shelley elsewhere takes up an even more difficult, if less obviously politically salient, project than that of mobilizing a critical historical consciousness for revolution. In his images of the future's and of hope's urn, Shelley turns us from the teachings of history – usable or not, naturalized or not – to the structure of futurity. And that structure involves the work of human hands, in the artifact of the urn.

In Cythna's long speech, perhaps her most striking line is this: "We know not what will come – " (3640). This declaration of unknowing recalls the play on knowing begun by the Woman of Canto 1. We remember that she "knew" the tale of human history but not "as others" did: she felt its pathos. To "know not what will come" could be a condition of hope or despair; in this moment, certainly, it seems born of Cythna's exhaustion. Yet, given Shelley's energetic critique of bad knowing, of knowing false stories well, perhaps to "know not" is in fact the very condition of a liberated futurity. It is perhaps the cognitive pre-condition for a freely determinable "future fate of mankind," to invoke Malthus's phrase again. That is, Shelley's repeated use of obscuring figures – dark shadows, the dark Future, the opaque urn – points us to this consideration: it may be better to "know not what will come" than to know the future as the past.

The need to "know not" emerges under pressure: it first appears, in the context of the revolutionary narrative, in the sixth canto, when Othman has returned and re-inaugurated war. Cythna rescues Laon from the general massacre, after which he reflects: "We know not where we go, or what sweet dream / may pilot us through caverns strange and fair . . ." Such musings, with their origin in escape and emphasis on reverie, remind us of the Spenserian debt as well as the romantic mode of the poem. Revolution is represented through the trappings of romantic epic – pilots, caverns, bowers, generalized battles, fortuitous escapes – and is thus systematically displaced from the real or, if "the real" be itself a fantastic domain, from the concrete. This is, after all, the prerogative of poetry – to escape or rather to expose the tyranny of the real, the literal, the merely given. My point is not to indict Shelley for

mystification but rather to note the narrative logic which produces a specific impasse in knowing. He renders the "untold" and "unthought" future through images adequate to this crux (such as the urn) and a rhetoric capable of tracing its predicament (as in his series of negations: "We know not"; "I knew . . . but not as others"). The problem of and value in "knowing not" stands as the most challenging ideational and imaginal crux of Shelley's poem.

ENTOMBING THE PAST: FIGURING A WAY OUT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY IMPASSE

The French Revolution was widely acknowledged to be "a most astonishing thing," in Burke's terms, a rupture in the sleepy continuum of "homogenous empty time," to invoke Benjamin again.[45] Yet Shelley also longed to bind future to past, and he expressed that longing in the fearsome and bivalent nominal "Necessity." Shelley's recourse to "Necessity" suggests the insufficiency of such potent images as the Future's urn. At signal moments in the *Revolt*, Shelley accents the opacity of the "unthought" and "untold": futurity resists knowledge, cognition, speech itself. It is precisely that which we know not. Yet elsewhere Shelley allies futurity with necessity – with what will happen regardless of any imagining or other action.[46] This insistence that "Necessity" is on the side of revolt becomes ever more prominent in the second half of the poem, once the reaction has begun. Indeed, Cythna's meditation on revolution reaches its climax when she invokes necessity:

> One comes behind,
> Who aye the future to the past will bind –
> Necessity, whose sightless strength for ever
> Evil with evil, good with good must wind
> In bands of union . . . (3706–3710)

Necessity thus appears not only as a law or principle guaranteeing revolutionary success but also as a kind of temporal adhesive "binding" future to past, past to future. Yet for all his seemingly approving endorsement of this principle, Shelley clearly displays what motivates the invocation of Necessity. Necessity emerges as a principle for revolutionaries only when the counter-revolution becomes ascendent. In defeat, Cythna desires that the past be bound to the future; yet when mobilizing for revolt, she and Laon seemed rather to prefer a rending of the future from the past.

The figure of the grave becomes prominent when revolutionary violence threatens to besmirch the patriots' "virtue" (1789), just as it had in France. The fifth canto describes the decisive assault on the tyrant's city, the battle, the triumph of the patriots, and the fall of the tyrant. Throughout this sequence, Shelley has his hero confront and then surpass the threat of revolutionary violence. In the heat of battle, a patriot points his "mortal spear" at his foe: Laon bursts in, crying, "Forbear, forbear!" Oratory will supersede violence as the revolutionary weapon; Laon fortifies himself with these words: "Oh! thou gifted / With eloquence which shall not be withstood, / Flow thus!" (1794–1796). Words, not blood, must flow. Laon understands his primary labor to be that of transforming consciousnesses. He concludes his speech to his comrades thus:

> Join then your hands and hearts, and let the past
> Be as a grave which gives not up its dead
> To evil thoughts . . . (1819–1821)

Not the battlefield but the past should "be as a grave": not reactionary foes but a demoralizing past should be killed and interred. Thus Shelley transposes and elides the force of revolutionary murder. Oratory intervenes and prevents the cycle of reciprocal violence. A different conception of revolutionary inspiration and action would seem, in the foregoing passage, to substitute for and even to cure the impulse – or, to put it more strongly, the requirement – to kill. If the patriotic multitudes would only understand the hero, such passages imply, they would abandon violence. In this passage we see Shelley ringing his variation on Godwin, who in *Political Justice* endorsed only non-violent, persuasive means to secure his ideal: utopian anarchy.

Laon thus emphasizes a new relation to the past and to the illustrious dead. Walter Benjamin, in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, wrote that "[o]nly that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins."[47] Laon would have the dead remain interred; he would not have the dead be invoked as inspiration for violence, however hopeful that violence may be. It has been said that the memory of mistreated, hungry, and demoralized grandparents – not any hope for one's children – fuels the fervor of the oppressed. In this moment of the poem, Shelley struggles to break the circuit of memory. Instead of keeping the dead safe from the enemy, Laon strives to keep his revolutionary idealism safe from the angry dead.

Laon's figuration of the past-as-a-grave is a strategic figure. It emerges in a moment of violent crisis. The figure aims at preventing a degeneration into mechanical violence. Shelley provides, as it were, a demobilization via figure. This poetic strategy (substituting speech for violence) recurs in the canto, when Laon averts another imminent murder. Offering another scene of revolutionary re-vision, Shelley stages a "triumph of the King" sequence. Laon "led him [Othman] forth from that which now might seem / A gorgeous grave" (1945–1946) – the golden palace of the tyrant. The crowd gathers round the unsceptered "fallen tyrant" and soon cries for vengeance – "blood for blood" (2000). Laon rebukes the crowd, insisting that republicans have nothing to fear from "this one poor lonely man" (2012). He concludes his speech with the reminder that "the chastened will / Of virtue sees that justice is the light/Of love, and not revenge, and terror and despite" (2023–2025). Substituting persuasive, pathetical speech for violent action, Shelley imagines a revolution which swerves from what would seem to be a predictable phase of violence: this tyrant, unlike Louis XVI, keeps his head because Laon convinces the crowd to keep theirs. The "sacred Festival" of revolutionary triumph can now begin: a pyramid is built, an Altar established, and music fills the air. Laon reports:

> To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
> Lethean joy! so that all those assembled
> Cast off their memories of the past outworn . . . (2089–2091)

The ambiguity of this triumph can be traced in several figures, for example its "Lethean joy" – not a joy, I would think, espoused by actual revolutionaries, who tend to want their joy memorable, concrete, and born of action. The success of the patriots culminates in a "casting off" of memories; the "past outworn" – reminiscent of Wordsworth's "creed outworn" from the sonnet "The World is Too Much With Us" – discovers itself obsolete, superseded, and above all, forgotten on the day of triumph. Wordsworth in his sonnet acknowledges the pagan creed as outworn yet prefers it "rather" to modern economicism; Shelley in this moment renders the past itself as outworn and resists a compensatory nostalgia. To make the past past and not a compensatorily invoked ghost: this is the aim of decisive revolutionary interment. We recall as well that Shelley transforms Othman's palace, orientally splendid as all orientalist palaces must be, into a seeming "grave." The tyrant's "gorgeous grave" appears fast on the heels of Laon's grave-of-the-past speech. Shelley's metaphoric network thus links the fallen tyrant with

the obsolete past itself: each is "outworn," each deserves symbolic interment.

Such passages in the fifth canto outline a metaphorics of and about the past: the grave of the past emerges as the "outworn" antithesis to the "ever-flowing urn" of the future. Even more stunning is Shelley's following through of the chiasmus: the past is death's, death is the past's. The second half of this formulation appears in the second half of the poem, when the tyrant has revived, Laon has been captured, and Cythna kidnapped. Toward the end of the seventh canto, Cythna describes how she was captured by slave-trading mariners. This episode gave her an opportunity to enlighten and convert the marauders. Her extended speech to the sailors, urging their "expiation," concludes:

> Be at rest. –
> The past is Death's, the future is thine own;
> And love and joy can make the foulest breast
> A paradise of flowers, where peace might build her nest. (3393–3396)

Again, liberation requires consigning the past to death. The conversion Cythna recommends – in notably unpolitical terms – involves an assumption of property in the future, which may then become "thine own."

HYPOTHETICAL HISTORIES AND FUTURITIES: THE FUTURE OF THE EARTH

When considering the "future fate of mankind," both Malthus and Godwin offered hypothetical scenarios. Alan Bewell has situated Wordsworth within the eighteenth-century anthropological tradition of "conjectural histories," and certainly Wordsworth's contemporaries Malthus and Godwin were also steeped in this moral-philosophical habit of mind. This method of hypothesizing about primitive man and society produced such enduring figures as Rousseau's *homme sauvage* and, in another vein, Wordsworth's idiot boy. The tradition of hypothetical history influenced such diverse texts as Godwin's *Political Justice* and Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, with its long passages on the "infancy of society" and the "infancy of language." Given the projective cast of such works, it is appropriate to propose a relationship between conjectural histories and what I will call conjectural or hypothetical futurities. Whether considering primitive man or prospective man, these writers gave themselves over, necessarily in the case of the future, to the conjectural.

Meditations on the history and prospects of the world were a commonplace of eighteenth-century moral philosophy; what is new in this period is the political urgency of the question. In the eighth book of *Political Justice*, "Of Property," Godwin offered a typical musing on the subject of the earth: "The very globe that we inhabit, and the solar system, may, for anything we know, be subject to decay."[48] Just as Malthus would in his *Essay*, Godwin envisioned a future time "when the earth shall refuse itself to a more extended population." Godwin's solution, in this thought experiment, is to propose "men . . . [who] will cease to propagate. The whole will be a people of men, and not of children. Generation will not succeed generation, nor truth have, in a certain degree, to recommence her career every thirty years."[49] Godwin's fantasy of a world without children is a stark, equally unpalatable alternative to Malthus's dystopic projections of a world with too many children. Not surprisingly, Malthus scorned this kind of speculation, as he did Condorcet's belief that in the future men would discover themselves to be immortal. Malthus assumed that sexual passion persisted more or less unchanging through the ages (although with some cultural variability – the North American Indians, in his account, being "less ardent"); he also assumed mortality as a given, more-or-less desirable condition of human life.

When William Hazlitt entered the fray in 1807 he also considered how the earth might become a potentially full or overfull space, yet he rejected Malthus's doomsday scenarios. "'Till the world is full, or at least till every country is full, that is, maintains as many inhabitants as the soil will admit, namely, till it can be proved satisfactorily that it might not by taking proper method be made to maintain double the number than it does, the increase of mankind is not necessarily checked by the 'limited extent of the earth,' nor by its 'limited fertility,' but by other causes. Till then population must be said to be kept down, not by the original constitution of nature, but by the will of man."[50] Hazlitt thus provides a critique of Malthusian mystification: Malthus's theory naturalizes what are man-made conditions of reality. Hazlitt also took seriously Condorcet's argument "in favour of the infinite prolongation of human life." Like Godwin, he argued that "There is no fixed limit: the present length of human life is not evidently a general law of nature. The mere naked fact of its never exceeding a certain length at present is just as decisive against its ever having been longer, as it is against its ever being longer in the future."[51] For Hazlitt, it was important to leave open the possibility that even mortality,

characteristic of the human condition, might yet prove a surmountable barrier.

Hazlitt did not engage deeply with the question of man's possible immortality on earth; he rather addressed himself to that question to refute what he saw as Malthus's premature and characteristic foreclosing of possibility. Hazlitt described Malthusian thinking as a blighting of humanity and the world itself. In a footnote, he declares: "He [Malthus] lays open all the sores and blotches of humanity with the same calmness and alacrity as a hospital surgeon does those of a diseased body. He turns the world into a charnel house."[52] "Humanity" displayed as a "diseased body," the world become a charnel house – the discourse of population abounds in such ghastly corporeal and funereal metaphors. The body of the earth, too fertile, strained, or overstocked; the body of humanity, "diseased"; the potentially immortal bodies of men; the excessive and potentially explosive bodies of poor women; the tidy self-governed and morally restrained bodies theorized approvingly by Malthus – these proliferating bodies provided the metaphorical and logical ground for the discourse of population. To dispute Malthus was (and is) to dispute the Malthusian body in some or all of its forms.

When Percy Shelley proclaimed that, *contra* Robert Forsyth, he did indeed have a "passion for reforming the world," he was in part resisting the "form" or body of the world as given by Malthus, "Scotch philosopher[s]," and more broadly by revolutionary defeat. In the following pages I will explore how the moral-philosophical commitment to reform the world takes shape in *The Revolt of Islam* and more decisively in *Prometheus Unbound*. Godwin, Malthus, and Hazlitt all debated whether the earth could sustain its present and future populations. Shelley takes up the earth as *habitus* and the world as humanized environment; he does not calculate the pressure of population but rather images futurity as a time and a condition in which the "wreck-of-the-world" shall yield to a vision of earth as, in Laon's words, "our bright home" (703).[53]

"REFORMING THE WORLD": REALIZING THE REVOLUTIONARY FICTION

Early in *The Revolt of Islam*, Laon describes how "the vital world" (712) has become habitable only "as a dungeon" (713). Laon characterizes the blighting of the world as a political and ideological operation. In his youth, he informs us, he realized:

> This vital world, this home of happy spirits,
> Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind;
> All that despair from a murdered hope inherits
> They sought, and in their helpless misery blind,
> A deeper prison and heavier chains did find,
> And stronger tyrants:–a dark gulf before,
> The realm of a stern Ruler, yawned; behind,
> Terror and Time conflicting drove, and bore
> On their tempestuous flood the shrieking wretch from shore. (712–720)

In this passage Laon describes the predicament of Argolis's people: the future (the "dark gulf before") seems to hold only tyranny, while the past, in the custody of "feeble historians" (687), benights the present with a legacy of terror and defeat. This predicament has disturbed and deformed the relation of men and women to the Earth itself:

> . . . its mountains and waters,
> And the ethereal shapes which are suspended
> Over its green expanse, and those fair daughters,
> The clouds, of Sun and Ocean, who have blended
> The colours of the air since first extended
> It cradled the young world, none wandered forth
> To see or feel: a darkness had descended
> On every heart. (703–710)

Revolt emerges as a response to this alienation from the world (the human *habitus*) and from the earth (the natural ground of that *habitus*, always in Shelley friendly to man). Although the revolt aims to extirpate tyranny (understood as political, religious, and ideological), the revolt arises more deeply from a wish to restore an imagined primary relation to the world and to the earth. Although this dream takes a political shape in human action, it is – as Hannah Arendt melancholically observed of modern revolutionary aspirations – at bottom a profoundly unpolitical vision.[54] Shelley's frequent invocation of the earth, its seasons, and its fabled abundance alerts us to the phenomenological and ontological – as opposed to political – orientation of his poetic task. The "bright home" of the earth, the "vital world," should be the house of being, of free being. This aspiration – more than universal suffrage, poor relief, or the reduction of the national debt (all espoused in *A Philosophical View of Reform*) – lies at the heart of what Shelley called, in the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, his "passion for reforming the world."

Revolution thus appears as a redress for natal alienation. Its provisional success in the fifth canto opens the space for figures of harmony and plenitude. Entering the city in triumph, Laon hears the "shout of joyance" which "sprung/At once from all the crowd,"

> As if the vast
> And peopled Earth its boundless skies among
> The sudden clamour of delight had cast,
> When from before its face some general wreck had passed. (1851–1854)

This simile is one among many which invoke the "wreck"-of-the-world motif – although here we see the "Earth" a-clamour and not the "world." Shelley's vast and peopled Earth, however, at times resembles Martin Heidegger's "world" rather more than it does his "earth." The humanized, vocal earth sympathizes with the emergent world of revolutionary action. Shelley assimilates, we might say, the Earth to the world. If, in Heidegger's terms, "[t]he opposition of world and earth is strife," then this revolutionary success, this reconciliation of earth and world, may be seen as a fantasized surpassing of strife.[55] The old religious idea of the Earth's rejoicing takes on a particular pathos throughout the imagining of this poem. It is as if the Earth itself could do nothing but acclaim the success of patriots; the shout of the collective human "crowd" yields almost effortlessly to the happy noise of the Earth.

After Laone's (see p. 148) (Cythna's) Victory hymn, the patriotic multitudes relax on the plain, eating and talking. "[O]f Liberty, / And Hope, and Justice, and Laone's name, / Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame" (2296–2297). Revolutionary triumph gives way to cheerful conversation. We see also the re-emergence of the motif of earth-as-home and mother.

> Their feast was such as Earth, the general mother,
> Pours from her fairest bosom, when she smiles
> In the embrace of Autumn. (2299–2301)

Shelley bestows on his triumphant patriots a calendrical season quite different from the pseudo-Roman festivals and calendar of revolutionary France. Shelley gives us not Thermidor and Brumaire, not a classical pageant, but a vision of the Earth's seasonal cycles and plenitude. We have not a new calendar, but the oldest. This is a feast of nature, not politics; it celebrates, in Arendt's terms, a dream of abundance, not freedom. The myth of natural fecundity revives:

> Such was this Festival, which from their isles
> And continents, and winds, and oceans deep,
> All shapes might throng to share, that fly, or walk, or creep–
>
> Might share in peace and innocence, for gore
> Or poison none this festal did pollute,
> But piled on high, and overflowing store
> Of pomegranates, and citrons, fairest fruit,
> Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root
> Sweet and sustaining . . . (2305–2313)

The festival of Earth, which coincides with the "human feast" of the revolt, marks the high point of the *Revolt of Islam*. A provisional transfiguration, it fades when the tyrant musters his forces again, ultimately capturing and sacrificing Laon and Cythna on a counter-revolutionary bier of flame. Yet the image of the transfigured earth, the redeemed human populace, and its festival temporality clearly constellates the core of Shelley's revolutionary imagining. For when he took up these themes again in *Prometheus Unbound*, the motifs of the *Revolt* became the very characters of the drama. In *The Revolt of Islam*, Shelley considered the revolutionary what-if but conceded its failure. In *Prometheus Unbound*, he explored more fully just what a revolutionary reconstruction – of Earth, Man, and time itself – might look and sound like.

SHELLEY'S PROMETHEUS UNBOUND: FUTURITY AS SUCCESSIVE RECONSTRUCTION

Prometheus's first speech articulates a vision of the populous, even too-populous, earth. The multitudinous Earth herself appears as a character in the poem; her bondage symbolizes more concretely, as it were, the blighted Earth Laon describes in *The Revolt*. In the opening scene, Prometheus rages at and exhorts Jove to:

> . . . regard this Earth
> Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
> Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
> And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
> With fear and self-contempt and barren hope. (I. i. 4–8)[56]

In this opening speech Shelley introduces the motif of multitudes – of human populations – a motif that, given Shelley's anti-Malthusian

Preface to the poem, asks for (at least in part) a reading with Malthus in mind. These slavish multitudes are enslaved consciousnesses as much as oppressed "toil[ers]": slavery, throughout Shelley's oeuvre, appears primarily as a condition of mind rather than as a condition of race, sex, labor, or wage. Yet these multitudes may well be slavish *inasmuch* as they are multitudes: reduced to generic quantities under Jupiter's regime, they lack any specificity, individuality, or will-to-freedom. These are not, then, the happy multitudes commemorated in Hume's influential essay "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations," the argument of which presumes, as did most pre-Malthusian essays of this type, that the populousness of a nation indexes its health. (Moreover, the eighteenth-century discourse on population was, before Malthus, largely conducted under the sign of an Ancients/Moderns debate: Malthus thoroughly – if not completely originally – reframed the issue by reversing the value ascribed to populousness and by pathologizing the emergent populousness of a certain segment of the social body, the poor.[57]) In *Prometheus Unbound* the swarming multitudes suggest, in their very number, the magnitude and extension of Jupiter's oppression. We might even say that, inasmuch as the sheer mass of "multitudinous" slaves – the emphasis here as much on "multitudinous" as on "slaves" – reveals the perniciousness of Jupiter's regime, Shelley shows himself to have learned some lessons from Malthus. *Contra* Hume, Shelley suggests that human populations may well proliferate, however unhappily, under tyranny, and further that the members of a tyrannized populace will never transcend their condition as massified generic bodies. To redeem this populace *as* a populace is one of Prometheus's tasks. The work of liberatory rupture will thus require, as in *The Revolt*, a reconstruction of consciousness and concepts; poetically, Shelley's project involves a re-imagining of earth, humanity as a populace, "Man" as a category, and time itself.

Both *The Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound* explore what the reconstruction of the world would look and sound like. The fifth canto of *The Revolt* offers itself as a sustained meditation on the renewed "feast" of "Earth, the general mother" (2299). This glorious festival soon shows itself to be, like its French prototype, unsustainable. The other major visionary moment of the poem involves the apotheosis of Laon and Cythna (and her child) in the twelfth and last canto. The bulk of this canto is, in fact, a post-mortem. Preparing the way, conceptually and imagistically, for the stunning conclusion of *Adonais*, Shelley transports

his immolated heroes to the shining realm of the Eternal via a "divine canoe" (4730). Their apotheosis coincides with and dialectically comments upon the failure of the earthly revolt. Thus is an ambiguous aesthetic and spiritual triumph wrested from Othman's "consuming flames" (4666). Revolutionary triumph, in *The Revolt*, truly lies elsewhere.

In *Prometheus*, Shelley abandons the agenda forced upon him by the actual course of the French Revolution. Without the pressure of referring to the actual, his imagination loosed itself. The structure of the revolutionary what-if, and the triumphant if-then, becomes clearer. When Hercules unbinds Prometheus in Act III, scene iii, the reconstruction of the earth and of humanity can begin. The Earth recognizes with a thrill the new dispensation which she marks with the adverb "henceforth":

> Henceforth the many children fair
> Folded in my sustaining arms – all plants
> And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
> And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes
> Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
> Draining the poison of despair – shall take
> And interchange sweet nutriment . . .
>
> And men and beasts in happy dream shall gather
> Strength for the coming day, and all its joy:
> And death shall be the last embrace of her
> Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother
> Folding her child, says, "Leave me not again."
> (III. iii. 90–95, 103–107)

Restored to her maternal benevolence, the Earth envisages a sweet life and an easy, cradled death for her inhabitants. The speech witnesses her own transformation from "wan" and diseased (a bad suckler, it seems) to nourishing and bountiful. The Earth's restoration is the first of a series of transformations enacted in the rest of the drama. A new character, the "Spirit of the Earth," soon makes her appearance: she has the form, significantly, of a child – the living human expression of the new, the young, the beginning. The Spirit of the Earth reports on the transformation of men and women, or rather of the "fair being whom we spirits call man" (III. iv. 45). Such beings have hitherto worn "foul masks" (III. iv. 44). As the Spirit reports, Prometheus's liberation has had immediate effects below:

> . . . soon
> Those ugly human shapes and visages
> Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,
> Passed floating through the air, and fading still
> Into the winds that scattered them; and those
> From whom they passed seemed mild and lovely forms
> After some foul disguise had fallen – and all
> Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
> And greetings of delighted wonder, all
> Went to their sleep again: and when the dawn
> Came – wouldst thou think that toads, and snakes, and efts,
> Could e'er be beautiful? – yet so they were,
> And that with little change of shape or hue:
> All things had put their evil nature off. (III. iv. 64–77)

In this drama, in which appearance had hitherto equalled the perversion of essence, the falling away of "foul masks" and casting off of "evil nature" finally reveals "all things" – even toads and snakes and the reptilian efts – in their beautiful aspect. Aspect now manifests essence.

Following Earth and the Spirit of the Earth, The Spirit of the Hour provides the third report of Act III. Whereas Earth witnesses her own transformation, and the Spirit of the Earth reports on the beautification of human aspect, the Spirit of the Hour records a reconstruction of psychological, erotic, cultural, ideological, and political forms.

> . . . I wandering went
> Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
> And first was disappointed not to see
> Such mighty change as I had felt within
> Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked,
> And behold! thrones were kingless, and men walked
> One with the other even as spirits do,
> None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
> Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
> No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
> "All hope abandon ye who enter here . . . " (III. iv. 126–136)

The human countenance itself renovated and re-written (no longer fearfully "inscribed"), the inferno of human relations gives way to a liberated paradise, making "the Earth like heaven" (III. iv. 160). The third act ends with this vision of man reconstructed:

> The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
> Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed – but man:
> Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
> Exempt from awe, worship, degree, – the King
> Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man
> Passionless? no – yet free from guilt or pain,
> Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
> Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
> From chance, and death, and mutability,
> The clogs of that which else might oversoar
> The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
> Pinnacled dim in the intense inane. (III. iv. 193–204)

The falling away of masks – of falsification, of bad mediation, of the personae enforced by oppression – expresses itself as a series of negations and un-doings: men now stand "uncircumscribed," "unclassed," divested of tribe and nation. This fantasy of essential man could certainly be described as the kind of ideological inversion Marx denounced in *The German Ideology*. Change in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* occurs at the level of forms and ideas; the material basis for this reconstruction never appears, only its glorious and displaced effects. As Jerome McGann has so effectively argued in *The Romantic Ideology*, Shelley's critique of oppression takes place *within* ideology: one example of its limit is the recurrence of his master-slave trope, which governs even, and perhaps especially, after the freeing of Prometheus, and by extension, humanity.

In a drama devoted to liberation it is particularly striking to consider from what Shelley does not release man. If man is now "sceptreless, free . . . / Equal, unclassed" he is nevertheless not free from "chance and death and mutability." Shelley retains mortality as a condition of human life; in this feature *Prometheus Unbound* is, surprisingly, one of his more "realistic" works. The speech of the Spirit of the Hour demonstrates the overcoming of the constraint outlined in Prometheus' first speech: the "multitudinous . . . slaves" discover themselves, by Act III, to be free, yet this freedom consists in "ruling" the conditions of life – "chance, and death, and mutability" – "like slaves." Abstractions (chance, death, mutability) themselves become the necessary slaves of the triumphantly new regime. Shelley of course tells us in his Preface that his drama concerns itself with "beautiful idealisms": more striking than the ideality of the poem, and the strangeness of its mental theater, is the persistence of the dream of power purified.

Yet this new regime and its purified power does not, significantly, overcome death, and in this refusal Shelley admits a permanent gulf between the immortals of his drama and the humans spoken of but never seen. It is useful to consider the diction and resolutions in this last speech of the third act in light of the kindred lexical and ideational complex in *Adonais*. While in that poem the dead Keats outsoars us into the "abode where the Eternal are" (reminiscent, as I have noted, of Laon's and Cythna's end in *The Revolt*), here Shelley conceptualizes a liberated humanity still "clog[ged]" by forces "which might else oversoar" the conditions of man's mortality. If in *Adonais* Shelley imagines a Keats who "has outsoared the shadow of our night" (352), in *Prometheus Unbound* "oversoaring" remains stubbornly counterfactual. Heaven remains "unascended," even in imagination.

NEW ENDINGS: RUINING RUIN AND REHABILITATING "MAN"

The liberation of Man having been accomplished in Act III, Act IV continues the drama of reconstruction and begins the liberation of time itself. Its first movement features a parade of "past Hours weak and gray" (IV. 31); the very hours have been turned out of office. Soon we hear a "Chorus of Spirits of the Human Mind," who are the liberated form of the formerly oppressed category, the Human Mind (even as the Spirit of the Earth stands in dialectical relation to the enshackled Earth). The Oceanides, Panthea and Ione, have a stunning cosmological vision in which a winged Infant approaches on a lunar chariot while the Earth, its Spirit beginning to rouse within its whirling sphere, rushes toward them. They elaborate further on this revelation:

> . . .The beams [of the Spirit of the Earth] flash on
> And make appear the melancholy ruins
> Of cancelled cycles; anchors, beaks of ships,
> Planks turned to marble, quivers, helms and spears
> And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
> Of scythed chariots, and the emblazonry
> Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
> Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems
> Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin!
> (IV. 287–295, my clarification in brackets)

Panthea thus celebrates the cancellation of the old cycle itself. The Spirit of the Hour is the figure of a new, liberated time, a perpetual now which

resists the lapse into "cycle" and thus into what Jerome McGann characterizes as the bad alternatives of the fire of repetition and the ice of reification.[58] The weapons of war and the symbols of power – the engines of a blighted historical machine – stand annihilated; the tools of death are themselves "dead." Furthermore, Panthea's speech points beyond the inversion or even surpassing of prior forms and materials toward the destruction of the very categories of "ruin" and "death." Ruin becomes a self-consuming condition; ruin ruined, the wreckage wrecked. We are close to the wish that Shelley expressed in *Adonais* as an assertion: "'tis Death is dead, not he."

Panthea continues her anatomy of wreckage, through which wreckage becomes positively valued as the destruction of the false and the blighting:

> The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
> Whose population which the Earth grew over
> Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie,
> Their monstrous works and uncouth skeletons,
> Their statues, homes, and fanes; prodigious shapes
> Huddled in gray annihilation . . . (IV. 296–301)

Panthea's speech relegates the pre-revolutionary population to the in- or non-human; only the reconstructed beings of liberated time earn, it would seem, the honorific "human." Panthea's extended description of the "wrecks" of cities culminates in the stunning assertion that their "population[s]" were "mortal, but not human." The population lies entombed in the grave of the earth, which "gr[ows] over" the dead. This pre- or non-human urban population lies near and below the wrecks of its material culture (statues, homes, fanes): the works of mortal hands – what could be the very definition of human culture – appear, in this speech, as the justly ruined "monstrous works" of non-human but mortal makers. The "ruins" of "cancelled cycles" and the ruins of culture exist on the same plane and plain.

The final and, as Panthea's speech suggests, most important transformation occurs in the category Man itself. In Act IV, the Earth joyfully expels the old forms of "Man" in a series of anaphoric imperatives:

> Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror
> Which could distort to many a shape of error
> This true fair world of things . . .
>
> Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left . . . (IV. 382–384, 388)

This abandoning of pre-revolutionary Man culminates in a new refinement of the category "Man" itself:

> Man, oh, not men! a chain of linked thought,
> Of love and might to be divided not . . .
>
> Man, one harmonious Soul of many a soul,
> Whose nature is its own divine controul . . .
> (IV. 394–395, 400–401)

Thus we witness the birth in song of the universal and spiritualized concept of Man. No longer will the Earth teem with multitudinous slaves. No longer will cities be erected by the hands of those "mortal but not human." The fractious collectivity of "men" – whose manifold "foul masks" have been denounced by the Spirits of the Earth and Hour – gives way to the beaming, soulful, singular substantive, Man. We may well observe the relation, however mediated, between Shelleyan Man and the liberated "Man" posited in that most controversial of documents, the Declaration of the Rights of Man. As Hannah Arendt observed, seconding Burke, "There is no period in history to which the Declaration of the Rights of Man could have harkened back . . . And it is interesting to note that the Latin word *homo*, the equivalent of 'man,' signified originally somebody who was nothing but a man, a rightless person, and therefore a slave."[59] Shelleyan Man is imagined, of course, as a post-revolutionary and not as a Roman being. His "Man," always capitalized, outsoars the political domain of rights; he exercises his force throughout nature, such that "All things confess his strength" (IV. 412). Even "[t]he Lightning is his slave" (IV. 418). What Shelley was not in a position to see, or what he failed to address, was the cost of valuing abstract "Man," however idealized, over the particularized specificity of men, women, and children: and here we reach, with and through Shelley, the all-too-familiar impasse of Enlightenment humanism.

MAKING POSSIBLE: POETRY AND THE DISCOURSE OF MAN

Thus far I have been considering Shelley's *Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound* in terms of motifs and cognitive structures, including the revolutionary impasse and desire to "know not" in the *Revolt*, the tropological outlines of and for futurity, whether in mode ("perhaps," "henceforth") or image (the future's urn), and the imaginings of

transformation – earthly, human, conceptual – in each poem. I have considered, albeit in broad strokes, Shelley's project within and against the moral philosophical discourse of human futurity, especially as elaborated in Malthus, and to a lesser extent in Godwin and Hazlitt. I have gestured toward a poetics of futurity in contradistinction to an arithmetics of the same, recognizing of course that such an "arithmetic" operates tropologically as well as "scientifically," especially in such barely mathematized texts as Malthus's 1798 *Essay*. At this point I wish to shift and enlarge the frame of my consideration, to return to the category of poetry itself, to make explicit some of the implicit questions propelling my readings.

What has poetry to do with history, or with the other explanatory discourses of the human sciences? This is a question American literary critics have been asking with increasing urgency in the past twenty years; it is also a question posed repeatedly, and of course differently, in Shelley's oeuvre. Both Wordsworth (in the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*) and Shelley (in the *Defence of Poetry*) took up Plato's indictment of poetry, its bad relation to truth; as history and science increasingly established their discursive hegemony over truth, these poets struggled to make their vocation answerable to this reconfiguration of knowledge and value. Each argued for poetry's special claim to "generality," to an Aristotelian "philosophical" truth. Wordsworth, for example, insisted that the poet's knowledge was "general," while the scientist's was merely "individual." In his *Defence*, Shelley insisted that the animating power of imagination would always and necessarily transform the prevailing historical and scientific truths of his and any age. Perhaps the most characteristic and impressive contribution of Shelley to the history of English-language defenses of poetry is this: just when contemporaries like Peacock discovered themselves capable of wittily relegating poetry to the dustbin of history, Shelley allied "poetry" with the "shadows of futurity." What had not yet happened could not be disputed. What had not been thought could not be critiqued. What had not been seen could not be represented. Poetry would not bind itself to scientific truths or arithmetic calculations, nor would poetry surrender itself to a historicism disguised as "history." What might yet be could always be, indeed must always be, imagined.

Certainly the claims Shelley made for poetry and poets tended toward the histrionic, unacknowledged legislators and all. There is something pathetic, something almost already obsolete, in Shelley's declarations.[60] Perhaps he was, as he himself suspected, whistling in the

dark. Yet, for a moment, let us keep in mind both Keats's listening to his nightingale and Shelley's imagining of the "dark Future's ever-flowing urn." While Keats whistles in an annihilating dark (the dark of Tom's death, of his own grave-bound consciousness, of the mortality of human making, of music "fled"), Shelley whistles through the dark toward yet another dark. Transvaluing the obliterating dark of history such that it becomes the potentially welcoming dark of futurity: this is, in one instance, what poetry has to do with history.

Shelley's long poems suggest another avenue for considering the relation of poetry to history. Just as "poetry" is no one thing, so too "history" is a loose term which tends to work differently in different contexts. History conventionally appears as a kind of narrative writing; it may be understood to be a discourse (or set of discourses) about the past, with its own premises of chronicity, continuity and discontinuity, cause and effect. Certainly the historiographic self-consciousness of the late twentieth century puts pressure on all these assumptions: such keywords as structure and event, base and superstructure, microhistory, history-from-below – these terms only begin to suggest the epistemological and methodological reconfigurations of the discourse of history. Yet let me for the moment rely on a crude but useful proposition: "history" wishes to commit itself to what happened.

Aristotle in Chapter 9 of the *Poetics* famously distinguished between the task of the historian and that of the poet: "the poet's object is not to tell what actually happened but what could and would happen either probably or inevitably . . . the real difference[between the historian and the poet] is this, that one tells what happened and the other what might happen."[61] "What could and would happen," "What might happen": the reconstruction of the world and humanity in *Prometheus*, the festival of earth in *The Revolt of Islam*. Yet each of Shelley's fictions was infused, of course, with a particular knowledge of what had happened.

In her "Preface to a Lyric History," Susan Stewart writes,

> To imagine the relation between poetry and history is to bring forth immediately the problem of genre as fixed form and the problem of history as a discourse of reference. *Genre* is a problematic term because it implies fixed categories of the literary that, if they do not transcend, at least endure temporal change. It is quite easy to call into question all of the essentialism, or nominalism, or idealism such a stance implies about cultural forms. And *history*, as we commonly use the term to refer to a narrative of event or events, raises questions of rhetorical convention and, ultimately, ideology as conditioning the possibility of historical perception from the outset.[62]

Shelley's *Revolt* and *Prometheus Unbound* internalize the double problem contained in the "relation between poetry and history": that of literary genre and that of historical referent. Laon's indictment of the tyrant's "feeble historians" in Canto II is an effective diagnosis of, in Stewart's words, "ideology as conditioning the possibility of historical perception." Shelley is fluent in the language of situated thought: indeed, in *Prometheus Unbound* the task of Prometheus is to overcome Jove's ideological inversion of the world. Yet Shelley's primary task as a poet is not to liberate the historian from his bad conscience or humanity from the tyrant's ideology. That is to say, Shelley's work is not only cognitive or political: it is also and equally formal. These long poems, one an extended revolutionary romance, the other a "lyrical drama" (in Shelley's words), situate themselves self-consciously within a literary history of forms. At this point it seems worthwhile to consider what exactly Shelley's forms – or more precisely what various moments of form – have to do with the larger themes of this essay, including the structure of the future.

POETIC INTERVAL, INVENTION, AND INTERVENTION

David Duff has recently considered Shelley's *Revolt* as one case among other contemporary instances of the revolutionary romance, which we might call a historically emergent genre not unlike the Jacobin novel (of which Godwin's novels were prime examples).[63] I wish now to consider an instance of a formal shift *within* the *Revolt*; it is my argument that Shelley's curing of history with poetry, of the past with a "time of the now," displays itself formally as a kind of lyric outbreak. *The Revolt of Islam* takes the Spenserian stanza and the Spenserian canto as its formal units; it gestures toward the romantic epic of the *Fairie Queene* even as it rejects the monarchical and medievalizing apparatus of that great work. The overwhelming and ornate structure of the Spenserian stanza propels the poem with no interruption until the fifty-first stanza of the fifth canto: at this point, Cythna – in her persona as "Laone" – begins to sing an ode. In the course of the narrative, which is, we should recall, a transformed version of revolutionary "event," we have arrived finally at the moment of triumph. We have seen the patriots mobilize and win the battle; we have seen the Tyrant led forth in peaceful triumph; we have seen Laon avert time and again a revolutionary bloodbath. The revolutionary Pyramid and Altar have appeared by the grace of heaven, and the rites of triumph have begun. Laon and Laone have been installed as

High Priest and Priestess of the rites, and Laone begins her hymn, addressing the crowd:

> Calm art thou as yon sunset! swift and strong
> As new fledged Eagles, beautiful and young,
> That float among the blinding beams of morning . . .
> (2182–2184)

She continues through six strophes of fifteen lines each; she hails the crowd ("My brethren, we are free!"), exults in political triumph ("Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations!"), and rejoices in the earth's transfiguration:

> . . . The fruits are glowing
> Beneath the stars, and the night winds are flowing
> O'er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming –
> Never again may blood of bird or beast
> Stain with its venomous stream a human feast,
> To the pure skies in accusation steaming;
> Avenging passions shall have ceased
> To feed disease and fear and madness,
> The dwellers of the earth and air
> Shall throng among our steps in gladness
> Seeking their food or refuge there.
> Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
> To make this Earth, our home, more beautiful,
> And Science, and her sister Poesy,
> Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!
> (2242–2256)

Cythna's "passionate speech" (2277), delivered almost exclusively in the exclamatory mode, constitutes a new formal moment in the poem. Thematically, her speech conjoins several motifs introduced earlier in the poem: she cites cosmological forces sympathetic to political triumph; she invokes the "earth-as-renovatable-home" motif; she hails the triumph of revolutionary values such as fraternity (note her reference to "my brethren") and "divine Equality"; and significantly, she forecasts a newly harmonious relation between "Science, and her sister Poesy." The lyric begins with an address to the "Spirit vast and deep as Night and Heaven" whose flame now burns in the breasts of "millions"; the lyric proceeds to describe the changes on earth and the cooperation of heaven, all in the present tense: this is the moment of recognition. Cythna first enunciates what is happening and what is the case: "we are free"; "the fruits are glowing"; "Earth bares her general bosom." The last stanzas of the ode move to the future tense of prophecy: the fifth

stanza ends with the claim that "Science, and her sister Poesy,/*shall clothe* in light the fields and cities of the free"; and the sixth concludes with an exorcism of Fear:

> . . . Almighty Fear
> The Fiend-God, when our charmed name he hear,
> *Shall fade* like shadow from his thousand fanes,
> While Truth with Joy enthroned o'er his lost empire reigns! (2268–2271)

Cythna thus modulates from rejoicing in the present to a forecast of revolutionary prospects, among which are a reconstruction of the arts and sciences and an abolition of emotional and ideological slavery. Cythna both announces and foretells; her lyrical enunciation establishes a celebratory time-of-the-now and, beyond that, an agenda for the future. Her very speech encodes in its tenses, and the shift in tense from present to future, the structure of Shelley's desired temporality: the present liberated, the future more and continuously so.

I have been calling, perhaps too loosely, Cythna's speech a lyric and an ode. It is time to specify these terms. I believe this speech, and the shift to this new stanza structure, epitomizes a movement specific to poetry, or rather an opportunity carried in poetry: that of the lyric outbreak. *The Revolt of Islam* is, taken *en masse*, an often exhaustingly narrative poem. It tells a story – that of a revolt and its failure. It concerns itself with events and with the structures of events; it also concerns itself with the making of both revolutionary heroes and revolutionary concepts, for example, in Laon's account of his youth, and in the tutelary Spirit's explication of the Serpent and Eagle in the first Canto. All this is to re-iterate the general contour of the poem as a kind of poem, a long narrative poem.

Yet Cythna's speech, culminating in the dense activity of the fifth canto, appears as a lyric interval, or at least as an attempt at such. Throughout the poem Cythna, as female, carries the burden of the erotic motif; she also and not surprisingly carries the possibility of lyric enunciation, most spectacularly in this first, singular deviation from the Spenserian stanza and the revolutionary propulsion of narrative. I consider her speech a lyric first because it appears as a kind of stanzaic set-piece, a moment of song formally integrated in which nothing *happens* except the enunciation itself. Cythna never speaks in the first person, the vocality which would seem to be a characteristic of lyric utterance; yet in her "passionate speech," Laon tells us, she "[p]oured forth her inmost soul" (2277). He thus invokes one of the clichés of lyric

enunciation. That Cythna's "inmost soul" concerns itself with fraternity and equality suggests that lyric topoi have expanded via revolution to include political as well as erotic values.

Shelley indicates the lyric break in several ways: he changes his mode of numbering stanzas, and he introduces a wholly new stanza form. The Roman numerals of the Spenserian stanzas give way to the Arabic numbering of the six lyric strophes. With its new stanzaic arrangement of fifteen lines, varying from five to four to the concluding six feet, Shelley allows himself and his Cythna more metrical variety; such metrical irregularity – made regular over the course of six stanzas – is a characteristic resource of the English ode. More abstractly, we can follow Susan Stewart and consider Cythna's speech as one that foregrounds enunciation itself: as Stewart observes, "In theories of lyric we constantly return to the site of enunciation."[64] Most importantly for Shelley's project in *The Revolt*, what we see here is the establishing of the conditions for this utterance. The narrative of revolt culminates in that which negates narrative itself: the lyric interval. Obviously lyrics have their own semantic and sonorous narratives; one can "plot" their progressions; but lyrics are not tracings of event, nor are they propellers or recorders of action. As such they appear outside time; or perhaps it is better to say that lyric utterance aspires to emerge as such.

In focusing on Cythna's triumphal speech I am attempting to trace a generic outbreak with the *Revolt*. Obviously the mixing of modes within the long poem was a staple before Shelley: one thinks, for example, of Chaucer's *Troilus and Cridseyde*. When and why such songs emerge should concern us: these poets show us, in their formal shifts, the possible meanings of the forms they use. It is notable that in the *Revolt* lyric utterance happens only after revolutionary success. Indeed, we could say that the *Revolt* makes revolutionary success the very condition (as well as occasion) of lyric. Lyrical immanence and plenitude appears, then, as a better condition than, for example, historical or narrative struggle; yet Shelley, in his deliberate construction of the narrative poem, shows lyric paying its debt to history. The song coincides with, indeed marks, the feast of Earth, and the "human feast" (2246) as Cythna calls it. There is no other formal deviation from the Spenserian stanza and narrative structure in the rest of the poem. Even the dedicatory verse takes form in Spenser's stanza. Thus Cythna's victory hymn stands out as *the* formal deviation in the poem, the singular compositional event, the defamiliarized device against what has come to be, certainly by Canto v, the humming background of the Spenserian

stanza. This lyric outbreak is the first, and sadly the last, moment of full and happy presence in the poem. As soon as the sixth canto begins, a mere seven stanzas after Cythna concludes her hymn, we are launched into the tyrant's counterrevolution. There will be no more songs in the poem. The feast of Earth withers; Cythna's "tones" also die out. The poetry of narration resumes, and lyric enunciation retreats. The lyric outbreak thus marks the moment of revolutionary success and, in retrospect, its unsustainability.

In *Prometheus Unbound*, a far more metrically inventive work than *The Revolt of Islam*, we can also trace the critical emergence of lyric utterance. In the first act, Prometheus, Jupiter, and the Earth curse, plead, torment, suffer, and speechify in rhetorically elaborated blank verse paragraphs. The various choral voices and spirits speak in lighter, swifter stanzas and tercets, alleviating the stentorian monolith of the iambic pentameter. It is true that Shelley devises many and various stanzas for such set-pieces as the Phantasm's curse in Act I. Formal shifts thus appear not as a function of revolutionary triumph, as they do in *The Revolt*, but rather as a dramatic function of character: this is in keeping, of course, with Shelley's Aeschylean models. Yet if we consider the lyric outbreak as a site of enunciation, as a kind of vocality not assimilable to dramatic or narrative poetry, then we see that in *Prometheus Unbound* as well as *The Revolt* the lyric outbreak marks a special moment and claims its space outside of dramatic time – even as it unfolds within and is occasioned by the very logic of the drama.

I direct our attention to Asia's song in Act II, scene v: "My soul is an enchanted boat." If the first act lays out for us the structure of torment in the figures of Jupiter, Prometheus, and the Earth, the second takes us to the more shadowy realm of dream and revelation. Just as Prometheus must "recall" and "repent" his curse, so too Asia must "follow" her dream and its meaning: this leads her to the cave of Demogorgon, where Asia undergoes a daemonic catechism. At long last Demogorgon tells her to "behold" the "immortal Hours," and in the fifth scene we see the approach of a "Car" which "pauses within a Cloud on the top of a snowy mountain." Here, finally, is the Spirit of the Hour. Infused with hope, Asia appears transfigured, and her companion Panthea observes:

> How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
> I feel, but see thee not. I scarce endure
> The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
> Is working in the elements which suffer
> Thy presence thus unveiled. (II. v. 16–20)

The "unveiled" Asia quite literally comes into her own, manifesting her manifold status as archetypal female and anima. Panthea recalls Asia's birth as a Venus who "didst stand/within a veined shell." This scene then, is something of a theophany, but – as is characteristic of Shelley's mythic works – a theophany internalized, experienced subjectively. (We may think also of Keats's anguished, exultant Apollo in *Hyperion*: "Knowledge enormous makes a god of me.") Here the goddess first and fully appears to herself. Attended by Panthea, in the presence of the Spirit of the Hour, the goddess recognizes herself.

Shelley represents this recognition first as a transfiguration of appearance ("How thou art changed!") and next as a lyric utterance, a singing into being. Listening to "Voices in the Air, singing," Asia begins:

> My soul is an enchanted boat,
> Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
> Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing,
> And thine doth like an Angel sit
> Beside the helm conducting it
> Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
> (II. v. 72–77)

In terms of the structure of the scene, we see and hear that song begets song. The singing "voices in the air" prompt, it would seem, Asia's lyric. They hail her, as Panthea did, addressing her as "Life of Life!" (48) and "Child of Light!" (54). Thus far in the second act, Asia and Panthea have conversed in blank verse; Asia has sustained a long cosmo-theological discourse with Demogorgon, also in blank verse. It is only here, only now, that Asia moves into song. And this movement into song displays the conditions of its very occasion, as Asia relates her passage from a kind of bondage "to a diviner day":

> We have passed Age's icy caves,
> And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
> And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray;
> Beyond the glassy gulphs we flee
> Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
> Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day,
> A paradise of vaulted bowers,
> Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
> And watery paths that wind between
> Wildernesses calm and green,
> Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
> And rest, having beheld; – somewhat like thee,
> Which walk upon the sea, and chaunt melodiously!
> (II. v. 98–110)

The journey of the soul thus appears as a regression and a retrogression through and beyond the ages of man (Age, Manhood, Youth, Infancy); like Wordsworth in the Immortality Ode, Shelley invokes a version of the Platonic myth of the soul. Of course, the apparently backward movement in terms of the human lifespan tropes the progressive movement of the soul toward her destiny, in this case figured as a "paradise of vaulted bowers." Significantly, Asia sings her soul into being *before* Hercules unbinds Prometheus: her transformation, and her lyrical enunciation of her transformation, precedes the liberatory act. Hers is the first of the many transformations in the poem, which I have charted above. The Spirit of the Hour, whose presence will soon supersede the dreary "past hours," presides as a kind of tutelary spirit of a new dispensation. Asia's song marks the emergence of this, closes the second act, and ushers us into the series of restorations which constitute the rest of the drama.

For Asia, song is a new mode of utterance. It coincides with, vocalizes, the movement of the soul, which here is a self-recognition on behalf of humanity. Song in fact enunciates a kind of acoustic unbinding: Asia "float[s] down, around,/Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound" (II. v. 83–84). The knotty disputation with Demogorgon gives way to joyfully spreading sound; song supersedes dramatic rhetoric. The movement of Asia's speech in this scene tracks the change Panthea witnesses in Asia's appearance. The outbreak of song recalls Stewart's account of lyric, for as she says: "the key to lyric as enunciation, for lyric's defining formal feature, paradoxically a presentation of temporal alteration, is the condition under which the semantic is brought forward from the somatic." While Stewart is speaking most specifically of lyric's transforming of pain into speech or song, we can say of Asia – who as a "beautiful idealism" of Shelley has, as it were, little "somatic" surface – that her song also puts into musical language a liberation from pain, confusion, "Death and Birth."

We recall that in scene iv, prior to her song, Asia interrogates a wily Demogorgon; throughout the lesson she struggles forward in her perplexity:

> "What canst thou tell?" (II. iv. 8)
> "Who made the living world?" (II. iv. 9)
> "Who reigns?" (II. iv. 32)
> "Who is his master? Is he too a slave?" (II. iv. 109)
> "Who is the master of the slave?" (II. iv. 114)

Asia announces that "Prometheus shall arise/Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world." Yet she must ask Demogorgon, "When shall the

desired hour arrive?'' This last question, one uttered variously by several characters in the play, propels Demogorgon's ''Behold!'' which signals the arrival of the Spirit of the Hour. Asia's quest thus turns on a temporal pivot, the ''when'' that shall bring the ''henceforth.'' The Spirit of the Hour answers in his very figure the question of when: this very hour shall be the desired hour. ''Henceforth'' may begin. The first moment of the henceforth, then, is Asia's own change; furthermore, this change is marked in time, in song, in her lyric, which ushers us metaphorically and dramatically to the paradise of Shelleyan revolution. As in *The Revolt of Islam*, song enunciates the transformation from the when to the now; struggle and deferral give way to immanence and imminence. This movement to and through lyric in Act II, scene v of *Prometheus Unbound* accords with the definition of lyric offered by Susan Stewart: ''Lyric is not denotation; it is rather a process of enunciation, expressing the passage from not knowing to knowing through which we represent the world to ourselves.'' Asia's anxious interrogatives, posed in blank verse, yield to the lyric strophe, even as pre-revolutionary anxiety and doubt give way to serene prophecy and joyous expectation.

Again, as in my reading of Cythna's lyric in the *Revolt*, I am focusing on formal shifts and mixed generic movements within long works to trace what lyric might have to contribute to, on the one hand, narrative sequence, and on the other, dramatic structure; the ''lyric'' appears in my discussion not as a fixed form but as a moment of coming-into-being and coming-into-speech within larger literary structures. I wish, by extension, to propose some hypotheses about what poetry has to do with the discourses of man, with the ''tale of human life'' in Shelley's words. In each of the instances I have chosen to explicate, lyric allies itself with a radically new present and orients itself to a liberated future. Cythna's ''shalls'' and Asia's confident momentum ''to a diviner day'' are both indexes of poetic speech infused with promise. These songs oscillate between their status as interval – as a-temporal, as soundings-between – and their status as movement, soundings-toward. Each song aspires to be both an unfolding of presence and a pointing, a moving, toward the next full moment or interval. They take place in time but also move us through time; that is their temporal paradox. Each song enunciates an arrival and points beyond it.

Cythna's and Asia's songs exceed subjective utterance, though each is sung by one character, as if from her very heart. They concern themselves with larger processes of revolution and transformation. Indeed,

Cythna addresses her "passionate speech" to the crowd, and it reads more like a Pindaric ode to the successful athlete than a more conventionally inward-looking romantic lyric. Asia too, while self-reflexive in her outpourings, orients herself both to her own soul and to those of her fellow travellers: "we sail on, away, afar . . ." (II. v. 88). She charts the journey as a collective abstract quest: "We have passed Age's icy caves . . ." Her soul moves beyond the four ages of man "[t]hrough Death and Birth" to a new region "peopled by shapes to bright to see." It is instructive to recall the peopling thematic in *Prometheus Unbound*, the references to the earth "made multitudinous" (I. i. 5) with slaves. Anticipating the liberatory act, peopling has been transformed; the dense, gross bodies of slavish populations now appear in Asia's voyage as a shining ineffable populace.

BUT POETRY MAKES NOTHING HAPPEN: MALTHUSIAN REBUTTALS

Let us, as we approach the end of this chapter, return to Peacock's Mr. Fax and Mr. Forester. I have been charting the internalization of population theory in Shelley's work; more broadly, I have focused on the specific work and potential of poetic invention and intervention – tropological, imagistic, temporal, conceptual – in contradistinction to pseudo-scientific facticity. Yet it is quite true that, if judged from a political or activist stance, Shelley's fictions do seem to be, by his own criteria of "reforming the world," ineffectual, just as Matthew Arnold said. Mr. Fax could have told Shelley as much. In his conversation with Mr. Forester he deflates the stereotypic aspirations of radical romantic poetry:

> Mr. Forester.
>
> A modern poet has observed, that the voices of the sea and of the mountains, are the two voices of liberty . . .
>
> Mr. Fax.
>
> And yet I question it much; and in the present state of human society I hold the universal inculcation of such a sentiment in poetry and romance, to be not only a most gross delusion, but an error replete with the most pernicious practical consequences . . . Look into the records of the world. What have the mountains done for freedom and mankind? When have the mountains, to speak in the cant of the new school of poetry, 'sent forth a voice of power' to awe the oppressors of the world?[65]

Mr. Fax puts his finger on a troubling slippage, through which the "new school of poetry" (for Peacock this meant Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey in particular) invested nature with politically transforming values. Mr. Fax may, of course, be asking the wrong questions. Not mountains but men and women send forth voices which may act in and on the world. Yet regarding the very specific question of what poetry may have to say to and about the future, Peacock shows his representative poet, Mr. Forester, to be depressed. Indeed, Forester more or less cedes the ground of reform to moral and political science, the *métier* of Mr. Fax. In Chapter XL, "The Hopes of the World," Fax and Forester again put their heads together:

> Mr. Forester.
> What then becomes of the hopes of the world, which you have admitted to consist entirely in the progress of the mind, allowing, as you must allow, the incontrovertible face of the physical deterioration of the human race?
>
> Mr. Fax.
> When I speak of the mind, I do not allude either to poetry or to periodical criticism, nor in any great degree to physical science; but I rest my hopes on the very same basis with Mr. Mystic's fear – the general diffusion of moral and political truth.
>
> Mr. Forester.
> For poetry, its best days are gone . . . [66]

Mr. Forester's elegiac stance should not, however, be identified as purely Shelleyan, nor as the final word on Shelleyan or any other kind of imaginative futurity. Peacock was surely no friend of untrammeled idealism; as his *Four Ages of Poetry* reveals, he considered the "degenerate fry of modern rhymesters" to be hopelessly and dangerously deluded. The march of intellect, in his view, had rendered poetry obsolete.[67] Despite the powerful claims in Shelley's famous rebuttal, *A Defence of Poetry*, he too expressed in his letters profound doubt about what we would now call the "cultural work" of poetry. Yet let us leave Peacock, Shelley, Malthus and their contemporaries to their own historical misgiving; it need not be ours. Shelley himself provides an avenue through and beyond his own predicament: assimilating "poetry" to the "imaginative faculty" itself in his *Defence*, he shows us that we need not bind ourselves to poetry *per se* but rather to the human capacity carried within it – the capacity to project, to figure, to make real in language the as-yet-unarticulated visions, longings, and despairs which yet propel us

even in this age of the simulacrum, the hyperreal, and the supposed irrelevance of the arts. As Franco Moretti has observed, "The *future* of a text – the conventions and world views it will help to form and consolidate – is just as much a part of its history and its contribution to history."[68] Not only the histories of texts but also their futures demand a critical, imaginative care.

CHAPTER 5

Dead poets and other romantic populations: immortality and its discontents

> Eternity and immortality are phrases to which it is impossible for us to annex any distinct ideas, and the more we attempt to explain them, the more we shall find ourselves involved in contradiction.
>
> William Godwin, *Political Justice*

> The temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say, its eternal survival after death, is not only in no way guaranteed, but this assumption in the first place will not do for us what we always tried to make it do. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

> Death is a displaced name for a linguistic predicament.
>
> Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement"

Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" still stands as perhaps the representative English Romantic lyric.[1] Less well known to non-specialists is Percy Shelley's powerful, disturbed response to Wordsworth and to Wordsworthian immortality, the long allegorical poem "Alastor; or, the Spirit of Solitude." In Shelley's poem, a Wordsworthian spirit of solitude, in the person of a self-involved but sincerely questing poet, meets a bad end and goes to an "untimely tomb" (50).[2] Whereas Wordsworth's Immortality Ode enacts the complex movements of a consciousness variously dejected, exultant, sobered, yet ultimately solaced by "the faith that looks through death" (187),[3] Shelley's allegory polemically depicts a spirit permanently alienated, a poet prematurely yet decisively dead. From Wordsworth, intimations of immortality recollected from early childhood; from Shelley, a critical death, an insistence on mortality unredeemed and unredeeming.

Wordsworth's and Shelley's differing mortal poetics reveal not only a difference between, for example, the sensibilities and politics of two poets, or between the first and second generations of English Romanticism, or between the stakes of immortality in 1804 (the year

Wordsworth finished the Immortality Ode) and 1815 (the year in which Shelley wrote "Alastor"): these different poetic handlings suggest as well a dispute over the poet's vocation and more broadly over the relation of poetry to a future state as well as to the human condition. Thus the significance of Shelley's response to Wordsworth resonates far beyond these particular poems and these poets' respective biographies and œuvres. Having committed poetry to the species, these poets discovered in immortality a topic of both permanent human and recently politicized interest. How and indeed whether to propose and explore this topic became a particularly charged question for those poets (and also for those moral philosophers) committed to re-thinking and re-imagining the limit-case of a possibly human future: death and its imagined negation, immortality.

Through his many quotations of and allusions to Wordsworth, Shelley clearly points to Wordsworth as the interred poet of "Alastor"; yet inasmuch as the poem follows the fate of a generalizable "poet," "Alastor" also chronicles the untimely death of a certain strain of poetic imagining, a strain that – in Keats's as well as Shelley's assessment – had been most nobly sung by Wordsworth.[4] In the sonnet "To Wordsworth," included in the same 1816 volume as "Alastor," Shelley makes clear that "Wordsworth" stands as both a particular and a representative case – the case of the "Poet of Nature" who has abandoned his former dedication to singing "[s]ongs consecrate to truth and liberty" (12).[5] A revolutionary apostate, Wordsworth is indicted by the standard of his (imagined) former self. Shelley's sonnet annihilates Wordsworth even more directly and decisively than does "Alastor": "Deserting these [songs], thou leavest me to grieve, / Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be" (13–14).[6] The sonnet enacts in miniature the operation extended in "Alastor': turning an idealized Wordsworth against a diminished Wordsworth, Shelley locates a rupture *within* the poet, a rupture not of consciousness or subjectivity (the quintessential Wordsworthian and, metonymically, romantic rupture) but rather of political conviction and poetic commitment.[7] In "Alastor" Shelley identifies through and in Wordsworth an exemplary if regrettable lapse; moreover, he generalizes this failure into that of "a poet" (raising the spectre of his own, and any poet's, possible failure as well as that of Wordsworth's).

Having followed his unfortunate poet-hero to his death, Shelley concludes his lament for and critique of the Alastor-poet with the following assertion:

> It is a woe too 'deep for tears,' when all
> Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
> Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
> Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
> The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
> But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
> Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
> Birth and the grave, that are not as they were. (713–720)

With the ostentatiously flagged phrase, "too deep for tears," Shelley points to the very last lines of Wordsworth's Immortality Ode: "To me the meanest flower that blows can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears" (204–205). Shelley's concluding passage, remarkable both for this quotation and for its more general allusion to that ode's structure and claims, delineates as well a broader poetic and political horizon. As several critics have observed, "Alastor" (like the Immortality Ode itself) is a post-revolutionary poem, a poem informed by years of English reaction and Shelley's response to it. More precisely, as James Chandler has illuminated in "'Wordsworth' after Waterloo," both "Alastor" and the sonnet "To Wordsworth" – composed in the second half of 1815 – are best read as post-Waterloo poems.[8] "Alastor" alludes to and thematically conjoins the failure of Wordsworth and the failure of the revolution, most explicitly in veiled but seemingly topical passages, such as the apparent references to Napoleon (the "vessel of deathless wrath" roaming the Continent [678], the "colossal Skeleton" undertaking "its irresistible career," [611–612]) and Shelley's survey of "the red field / Of slaughter . . . the reeking hospital, / The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed / Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne" (614–617). Such a catalogue – patriots, scaffolds, thrones, not to mention colossi – provides a brief synopsis of revolutionary-reactionary iconography. Typical of Shelley is the assumption that these failures – of the poet, of revolution – are linked. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that in these poems Shelley highlights what he saw as the obnoxiousness of Wordsworth's quietism given the revival of revolutionary, or at least reformist, sentiment after Napoleon's defeat. In its exploration of the possible relations between poetry and the future of revolution, "Alastor" presages some of the themes that Shelley would explore more thoroughly in *The Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound*, themes that I have discussed in the preceding chapter. Yet I would now point us to another aspect of Shelley's closing lines: his insistence that "birth and the grave . . . are not as they were."

We may wonder, how exactly *were* they, birth and the grave? For a literary-historical answer, we might look to such classic specimens of the mid-eighteenth-century "graveyard school" as Robert Blair's "The Grave" (1743), Thomas Gray's "Elegy Wrote in a Country Church Yard" (1751), or Edward Young's "Night Thoughts" ("The complaint: or Night-thoughts on life, death, and immortality," 1750). As John Draper observed seventy years ago, the graveyard school, in its successful generalization of the elegy into the elegiac mode, prepared the way for a "melancholy of nascent Romanticism both in England and on the continent."[9] So often approvingly invoked by Wordsworth (especially when he was anathematizing Pope), Gray and Young and Blair might be seen as having established a semantics of poetic and poeticizable graves (if not births) as well as a horizon of sensibility for their romantic successors.

In light of the moral-philosophical disputes these poets engaged, it would also be useful to consider quite another discourse than the poetic. We might refine our understanding of English births and graves in this period by referring to an essay such as Alan Macfarlane's "Death and the Demographic Transition: a note on English evidence on death 1500–1750," or to such a tome as E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield's *The Population History of England, 1541–1871: A reconstruction.*[10] And indeed, as Macfarlane suggests, the apparent gap between a cultural history of sensibility (implied by an invocation of graveyard school antecedents) and historical demography need not be so great a rift: "In answer to the question, 'What did people feel about death in this period and in what way did the feelings change?,' an obvious source of evidence is the poetry of the period."[11] As Macfarlane demonstrates in his review of the historical interpretations of the "revolution in mortality," demography has been powerfully marshaled to support cultural histories of sentiment (as in the work of Philippe Ariès and Laurence Stone); poetry may provide another relevant archive.

I suggest we go further, or at least in a slightly different direction, by exploring just how poetry internalized and transformed the facts and discourse of what we now subsume under the rubric of demography: rates of birth and death, figures of natality and mortality. In "Alastor" Shelley suggests that "birth" and "the grave" have undergone a transformation; we may assume, given the tone of his peroration, that this change – like Wordsworth's supposed falling away – is not to be celebrated. Shelley lists birth and the grave in a series including "the web of human things" as well as "Nature's vast frame": clearly he is

sketching a totality, a complex, a nexus of things "human" and "natural" that are no longer "as they were." "All is reft at once," the narrator declares. Yet what, exactly, has been "reft"? Given Shelley's recourse to Wordsworth's Immortality Ode, we may propose one possible answer: immortality itself. More precisely, I would argue that Shelley's critique of Wordsworthian humanism, politics, and *poeisis* necessarily involves him in a critique of Wordsworthian immortality. It is important to note that this engagement with immortality takes place *within* an increasingly secularized poetic space: Shelley's reaction to Wordsworth and to the Immortality Ode, that is to say, cannot be dismissed as the response of a committed atheist (for which atheism Shelley was sent down from Oxford) to the work of an increasingly orthodox Christian. Instead, we might read – and I would argue that we should read – Shelley, Wordsworth, and indeed many other writers in this period (believers and unbelievers of various stripes) as participating in and responding to the discursive reconfiguration of birth, the grave, and immortality itself.

Both Wordsworth's Ode and Shelley's "Alastor" critically re-constellate birth, the grave, and immortality: so too this essay aspires, albeit in a slightly altered universe.[12] "Immortality" is not an abstractable, isolatable idea: it requires a simultaneous investigation of natality and mortality, of "birth and the grave," in Shelley's terms. As Hannah Arendt remarks in her prologue to *The Human Condition*, any transformation of the condition of having-been-born or being-destined-to-die would necessarily reconfigure the human condition itself.[13] Neither Wordsworth nor Shelley proposed such a wholesale transformation of the human condition; yet several of their contemporaries did – most notably Condorcet and Godwin, each of whom speculated that the human life span might extend indefinitely, thus rendering man for all practical purposes "immortal."[14]

IMMORTALITY, NATALITY, MORTALITY: PRELIMINARIES

If Wordsworth's Immortality Ode offers the most seductive articulation of romantic immortality, it was far from the only such articulation in the period. Wordsworth's one-time hero William Godwin offered his own intimations of immortality at the close of *Political Justice* in a section entitled "Of Health, and the Prolongation of Human Life": "The men therefore whom we are supposing to exist, when the earth shall refuse itself to a more extended population, will probably cease to propagate.

The whole will be a people of men, and not of children. Generation will not succeed generation, nor truth have, in a certain degree, to recommence her career every thirty years."[15] While Wordsworth in his ode elaborated on his paradox that "the child is father to the man," Godwin fantasized a future race of men who would never father children – nor would they need to, even from the vantage of species-interest, since their own lives would extend indefinitely. Immortality, in Godwin's imagined futurity, meant the end of sexual generation and of generations. Such a reconstructed (and masculinist) humanity implied, in fact, a negating and surpassing of both natality and mortality.

Godwin's gesture toward immortality suggests that "immortality" might comment as much on "natality" – the condition of having-been-born – as on the more obvious "mortality." Birth, in Godwin's vision, would become as obsolete as death. Godwin's nearly immortal men would forget their childhoods as well as eschew children; this transformed "generation" would never need to confront what Arendt called, in the context of meditating on revolution, "the pathos of novelty."[16] Godwin's speculation emerges, then, as one solution to the problem of revolution, which he characterized as an excessive passion for "innovation," for the willful, violent production of novelty – political, social, commercial, rhetorical. Not new and immature bodies but new and better thoughts soberly assimilated: these are the only new elements Godwin wishes to accommodate in his futurity.

If Godwin strove to obviate birth and more broadly natality, Wordsworth ceaselessly invoked natal tropes in his speculations, poetic and moral philosophical, about immortality. His Ode repeatedly returns to images of the dawn, to the sun's "glorious birth," to the time when the world and the self shone new. It is in this context that Hannah Arendt's discussion of natality is especially illuminating. Distinguishing in *The Human Condition* among labor, work, and action, Arendt says:

> . . . of the three, action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore of natality, is inherent in all human activities. Moreover, since action is political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought.[17]

Arendt restores a philosophical depth to the cliché about the miracle of birth. Like "mortality" – the condition of having-to-die – "natality" is

an ontological category with political implications. Birth is the exemplary case of natality, yet "natality" re-appears with each new beginning. "The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted."[18] Natality, then, reveals each beginning to be, *qua* beginning, unprecedented. As she writes, "It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before . . . The new always happens against the overwhelming statistical odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to a certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle."[19]

The miraculous apparition may be welcomed or abominated: consider Burke's response to the French Revolution, Urizen's hatred of Orc, or Victor Frankenstein's revulsion from his monster. The natal eruption thwarts expectation: that is how the truly new thing displays itself as new. If Arendt's "natality" ushers us from ontology to politics, "natality" also allows us to move from ontology to phenomenology, as Gaston Bachelard does throughout his astonishing *Poetics of Reverie*. He, like Arendt, links natality and mortality as conditions of the human, yet like Arendt he also takes pains not to propose these categories as reciprocal limits. Birth and death are neither philosophically nor psychologically symmetrical. "In the human being, there are so many forces being born which do not, at their beginnings, know the monotonous fatality of death! One dies only once. But psychologically we are born many times."[20] Wordsworth's Ode puts pressure on such an assessment: one of its characteristic movements is to dramatize successive rebirths but also to mark repeated metaphorical deaths. "One dies only once," but then of course one is only born once as well. Phenomenologically speaking, however, one might be born and die many times, at different levels of consciousness and consolidation: this is one way to diagram the movements of Wordsworth's Ode. Yet Bachelard's observation holds its truth: natality may persist as a psychological resource (or, to change domains, a political opportunity) even after a single overwhelming recognition of man's finitude.

Hannah Arendt lists "life itself, natality and mortality, worldliness, plurality, and the earth" as among "the conditions of human existence."[21] *Frankenstein*, as I have discussed, interrogates each of these conditions. The monstrous birth (rather a fabrication or experiment) induces more visceral responses than, say, Wordsworth's luminous

nativities: the monster is as it were more tangible, his disjunctions corporeal as well as philosophical. Yet both the monster and the Wordsworthian solitary confront ruptures in the human world: one might argue that their unhappinesses reveal the world and the human to have been already ruptured. *Frankenstein* offers an extreme critique of the human and of the human condition: its analysis of natality, mortality, and the human lays bare the categories structuring the movements of such diverse texts as Malthus's *Essay*, Godwin's *Political Justice*, Wordsworth's Ode, and Shelley's "Alastor."

During this period (1789–1825) immortality emerged as a vital domain of speculation, musing, and figuration in such discourses as poetry, physiology, political economy, medicine and population theory. "Immortality" is, of course, a familiar topos in many a romantic text – from Keats's nightingale ("Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird!") to Shelley's *Adonais* (in which the elegized Keats sings "an immortal strain"). Critics have long and persuasively described English romantic poetry as a sacralization of man and nature in reaction to the waning of Christian theological hegemony: M. H. Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism* remains the most powerful and comprehensive exegesis of that process, and Geoffrey Hartman and Harold Bloom among others have kept alive this religio-visionary strain of reading romanticism. Such a critical orientation considers "immortality" as, in the first instance, a theological or at least a spiritual concept and conundrum. In such readings, Wordsworth's Immortality Ode becomes a reconstructed religious hymn, its Platonic antenatal myth ("Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting . . .") an alternative to and displacement of orthodox Christian belief.

In addition to this central religious problematic in English Romantic studies – and in the works of the poets themselves – there is another prominent tradition of poetic immortality which extends back through the abysms of time: that of poetic fame. Witness Homer's *kleos*, Virgil's Fama, Chaucer's House of Fame, Shelley's "abode where the Eternal are"[22]: the prestige of poetry as an enterprise has long and perhaps always rested on its claim to immortalize. Whether commemorating the exploits of kings and heroes (in what Thomas Love Peacock slightingly referred to as the "rude bards['s] . . . rough numbers"[23]) or monumentalizing the genius of fellow poets (as in Shelley's *Adonais*), poetry both oral and written strives to defeat and surpass the depredations of death and time.[24] This is a much-worked topos in the poetries of many peoples and in the literary-historical tradition.

There were, to invoke a phrase of Thomas Malthus's, several "species of immortality"[25] available for consideration between 1790 and 1820. Even as (to invoke my most recent cases) Malthus and Shelley proposed alternative futurities and modes of futurity, so too we find poets and political economists investing themselves in various immortalities which, if not exactly congruent, were nevertheless similarly concerned with the limits of human thought and possibility as well as the mortal human body. Therefore I would like to consider immortality as the occasion of several profound thought-experiments. Immortality, I will argue, indexes the possibility and promise of surpassing, whether we are talking of surpassing death, time, the human body, adult ennui, the contemporary political situation, the empirically knowable. Immortality marks both a limit and the exceeding of that limit: the prefix "im-" performs in miniature this operation of negation in order to surpass or – as Shelley would say – "outsoar."

It is all too easy to assimilate "immortality" to utopian dreaming, ideological inversion, or, to put a more sinister spin on it, bad faith: this is exactly how Malthus read Godwin's speculations about immortality, how Shelley read Wordsworth, and how contemporary demystifiers tend to read "romantic ideology."[26] Immortality, from such a critical angle, seems to be another fiction among the many supreme fictions offered by poets and other supposed fleers from reality. Nevertheless, the horizon of possibility is itself part of the actual world: when new possibilities appear, the situation of the actual – and any thinking about "the actual" – must adjust. The many and violent responses to the French Revolution show how traumatic that adjustment might be: if, as Burke declared, that Revolution was "a most astonishing thing" (and yet an actual thing), then one could no longer so easily deduce the future from the past. For some, such as Burke, this presented a monstrous rupture, for others such as Tom Paine, a glorious opportunity. This is an oft-told tale, its ramifications in English literary culture well documented.

Adjunct to this story is another one – the story, we might say, of a category. For immortality points to the threshold of the unprecedented and the unknowable. What all people know, and most resist, is that they are born and will die. As Wordsworth observed in his first *Essay upon Epitaphs*, "To be born and to die are the two points in which all men feel themselves to be in absolute co-incidence."[27] That this death might not be final is, of course, an old and primal hope born of an intuition. The idea of immortality, in many traditions and in various guises, answers

that hope, formalizes that intuition. This is true whether "immortality" means – to mention only a few possibilities – the resurrection of the body, the perpetuity of one's name, the reincarnation of the soul, the joining of one's ancestors, the aggregation of individuals into a deathless species, or the figure of longing itself.

By juxtaposing the poets' immortalities against moral-philosophical conjectures, I do not mean to suggest that the poets' "immortality" was equivalent to or even informed by these radical conjectures. (Nor is Shelley's "abode where the Eternal are" in *Adonais*, to cite an example within poetic discourse, necessarily the same place as Wordsworth's "immortal sea which brought us hither" in the Immortality Ode). In this essay I begin rather with the assumption that "immortality" and its discontents point to a predicament shared by a variety of writers who understood that the transformations of the age – political, scientific, moral-philosophical – invited and perhaps required a new imagining.[28] "Immortality" may denote a condition, a place, a limit, a remembrance, a bogus fiction, an imaginative triumph, a religious promise, a utopian dream; what becomes clear – in signal poems as well as in the more obviously contentious works of Godwin and Malthus – is that immortality had become a problem, and a new kind of problem, for those engaged with the promise and failure of revolution. In this respect the concerns of this chapter are intimately linked with those of the preceding one: immortality is, from one angle, the most extreme and compelling instance of what Malthus often invoked (in traditional Christian usage) as "a future state." Inasmuch as "immortality" carried and may yet carry the promise of the future, we might expect to see the controversies over the meaning of revolution shaping the "sense of immortality" (to borrow a phrase from Wordsworth's first *Essay upon Epitaphs*) as much as they informed debates over "futurity."

IMMORTALITY IN THE MORAL PHILOSOPHICAL FIELD: PERFECTIBILITY VERSUS "CHASTIZED THINKING"

To focus our discursive survey of the immortality topic, and to begin to identify the stakes of raising the topic, I direct our attention to the specifics of the immortality controversy (a subset, as I see it, of the "revolution controversy") as it played out across several moral-philosophical texts: Godwin's *Political Justice*, Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population*, and Hazlitt's *Reply to the Essay . . . by T. R. Malthus*. The immortality topos becomes, in this series of treatises and essays, an

arena for several contests: political, logical, scientific, physiological. Godwin's asexual, perfectible immortals emerged, so to speak, after a crisis. That he phrased this crisis in terms of population should alert us to the complicated nexus of political and quasi-biological themes linking Godwin's work to that of Burke, Paine, Franklin, Malthus, and Hazlitt. Whether arguing from "improvements in science," the "knowledge of medicine," the "organic perfectibility of plants," or from historical precedent, Godwin, Malthus, and Hazlitt each invoked immortality as the figure of the limit of conjecture itself. Immortality appears, as it were, at the limits of an episteme, at the edge of the knowable and the thinkable: what Malthus saw as a dire challenge to "human science" emerged within the field of human science. Indeed, it was this very conjecture "concerning the infinite prolongation of human life" that inspired Malthus to dissect Godwin in Chapter XII in his *Essay on Population*.

One of the most curious things about the many curious things in Malthus's 1798 *Essay* is that he should have devoted eight out of nineteen chapters to refuting Godwin's and Condorcet's different – but to Malthus equally vexing – conjectures about immortality and the perfectibility of man. Malthus objected, as I have detailed in the preceding chapter, to Godwinian perfectibility; in a similar sturdy fashion he objected to Godwinian immortality. Observing that in *Political Justice* Godwin linked population, perfectibility, and immortality, Malthus noted wryly that, "Mr. Godwin's conjecture respecting the future approach of man towards immortality on earth seems to be rather oddly placed in a chapter which professes to remove the objection of his system of equality from the principle of population."[29] Malthus unerringly pinpoints Godwin's link between population (a possible limit to human perfectibility) and immortality (a possible realization thereof); yet what he considered an "odd" link is in fact exemplary of what Frances Ferguson has called a "Romantic political economy." Godwinian immortality, as a bid for a qualitative shift in human being, suggests that Godwin was as disturbed as Malthus by the spectre of unruly quantities of people, whether considered as bodies or consciousnesses.

In what was one of his wildest flights of thought, Godwin attempted in *Political Justice* to think beyond and even outside the categories of birth and death.[30] Toward the end of *Political Justice*, having laid out his vision of a radically egalitarian society without a state, a society populated by rationally benevolent beings, Godwin turns to various objections to his

system. Among those threats he briefly considers is the pressure of population. He offers a peculiar comfort, arguing that since "[t]hree fourths of the habitable globe are now uncultivated," it will be a long while before the strain of mass humanity would necessarily jeopardize his system. Godwin continues: "The rational anticipations of human improvement are unlimited, not eternal. The very globe that we inhabit, and the solar system, may, for anything that we know, be subject to decay." No need to worry yet, he implies, about population; moreover, he observes, the earth might well decay before the human race.[31]

Having discounted (however unpersuasively) the threat of masses of men, Godwin then hypothesizes a qualitative shift in human being. In the Appendix "Of Health, and the Infinite Prolongation of Human Life," Godwin invoked the "sublime conjecture of Franklin . . . that 'mind will one day become omnipotent over matter.'"[32] Citing Bacon and Condorcet in support of this possibility, Godwin lays out a vision of increasingly extended human lifespans. Whereas Bacon and Condorcet "rested their hopes . . . upon the growing perfection of art" Godwin rests his "upon the immediate and unavoidable operation of an improved intellect."[33]

> Our involuntary motions are frequently found gradually to become subject to the power of volition. It seems impossible to set limits to this species of metamorphosis. Its reality cannot be questioned, when we consider that every motion of the human frame was originally involuntary. Is it not then highly probable, in the process of human improvement, that we may finally obtain an empire over every articulation of our frame?[34]

Thus Godwin implies, as Condorcet did as well, that the increasing power of mind over matter could possibly modify the workings of the human body and the extent of the human life span itself. He concludes:

> The sum of the arguments which have been here offered amounts to a species of presumption that the term of human life may be prolonged, and that by the immediate operation of intellect, beyond any limits which we are able to assign. It would be idle to talk of the absolute immortality of man. Eternity and immortality are phrases to which it is impossible for us to annex any distinct ideas, and the more we attempt to explain them, the more we shall find ourselves involved in contradiction.

Godwin thus carefully avoids committing himself to an "absolute immortality": what he establishes is the figure of a line approaching infinity, an asymptotic curve. Not absolute immortality but an approach toward one: this Godwin endorses.

As an approachable but never attainable goal, "immortality" partakes of the logic of perfectibility itself. Godwin took care to explain in a previous chapter that perfectibility was similarly asymptotic: ". . . Man is perfectible. This proposition needs some explanation. By perfectible, it is not meant that he is capable of being brought to perfection. But the words seems sufficiently adapted to express the faculty of being continually made better and receiving perpetual improvement; and in this sense it is here to be understood.[35] *Perfectibility*, he avers, "stands in express opposition" to *perfection*: "If we could arrive at perfection, there would be an end to our improvement." It is in this spirit of endlessly mounting improvement (or as the language of rudimentary graphing has it, "x approaching infinity") that Godwin's speculations about immortality should be received.

Godwin hoped to dispense with birth and to render death a remote possibility; but Malthus insisted on retaining these terms as necessary, unalterable limits and conditions of human life. Frances Ferguson has argued that Malthusian forecasting, and its "actuarial terror," assumed the "immortality of a mathematical body" reproducing itself endlessly over time: in this regard, Malthus posited a bio-logic of species immortality.[36] With biologics went theologics: as Malthus's final chapters make clear, he wished to reconcile his rhetorically arithmetical thinking with the general pieties of orthodox Christianity.[37] The only personal immortality to be hoped for, he insisted, was that offered to the devout by the Creator. Yet when Malthus confronted Godwin, he understood that he was involving himself in another kind of conjectural immortality than the theologic, an immortality pertaining to the human life span as a duration, to the possibly perfectible body itself. Thus this immortality controversy was not, at least in its first parries, about theology, or about advances in medicine or physiology, or about the likelihood of one couple's reproducing itself within three years; the debate took its particular cast from its participants' ideological and political investments in what Malthus called "the progress of human science."

Consequently, when Malthus attacked Godwin's and Condorcet's immortalities, he moved fluently between bio-logics and ideo-logics. Although he devoted many paragraphs to analyzing Condorcet's theory of organic perfectibility (which for Condorcet modelled the progressive perfectibility of the human body and mind), it was not the biological underpinning of immortality that most exercised Malthus. He understood this debate to be one about the nature, aims, and limits of conjecture itself. In Malthus's view, both Godwin and Condorcet

manifested a speculative wildness all too characteristic of a revolutionary age. "[C]ould [giddy men] be persuaded to sober themselves with a little severe and chastized thinking," he admonished, "they would see, that the cause of truth and of sound philosophy cannot but suffer by substituting wild flights and unsupported assertions for patient investigation and well authenticated proof."

In his twelfth chapter heading Malthus outlined his response to Godwin's and Condorcet's "conjectures":

> CHAPTER XII
>
> Mr. Godwin's conjecture concerning the infinite prolongation of human life – Improper inference drawn from the effects of mental stimulants on the human frame, illustrated in various instances – Conjectures not founded on any indications in the past, not to be considered as philosophical conjectures – Mr. Godwin's and Mr. Condorcet's conjectures respecting the approach of man towards immortality on earth, a curious instance of the inconsistency of scepticism.[38]

As this heading suggests, Malthus objected to the prominence of the unprecedented in Godwin's and Condorcet's thought. He understood that their speculations appeared on the border between the possible and the probable. If moral philosophy and political economy dispensed with the probable – as did Godwin and Condorcet in their immortality conjectures – then human science as a form of knowledge or a space of inquiry was itself imperiled. Considering Condorcet's "conjecture . . . concerning the infinite prolongation of human life," Malthus first makes clear his reservations, then provisionally rebuts his own doubt, and then decisively vetoes what he sees as Condorcet's implicit logic:

> . . . it may be fairly doubted whether there is really the smallest perceptible advance in the natural duration of human life since first we have had any authentic history of man . . .
>
> It may perhaps be said that the world is yet so young, so completely in its infancy, that it ought not to be expected that any difference should appear so soon.
>
> If this be the case, there is at once an end of all human science. The whole train of reasoning from effects to causes will be destroyed.[39]

According to Malthus, immortality – speculatively proposed and considered – destabilized the logical foundations of human science.

Although Malthus attempted to exorcise conjectural immortality from the body of human science, we can see that in fact such conjectures emerged precisely within its domain. Malthus recognized this himself,

explaining in a long and remarkable footnote why he devoted himself so passionately to analyzing and refuting "so absurd a paradox as the immortality of man on earth":

> [7] Many, I doubt not, will think that the attempting gravely to controvert so absurd a paradox as the immortality of man on earth, or indeed even the perfectibility of man and society, is a waste of time and words, and that such unfounded conjectures are best answered by neglect. I profess, however, to be of a different opinion. When paradoxes of this kind are advanced by ingenious and able men, neglect has no tendency to convince them of their mistakes . . .
>
> On the contrary, a candid investigation of these subjects, accompanied with a perfect readiness to adopt any theory warranted by sound philosophy, may have a tendency to convince them that in forming improbable and unfounded hypotheses, so far from enlarging the bounds of human science, they are contracting it, so far from promoting the improvement of the human mind, they are obstructing it; they are throwing us back again almost into the infancy of knowledge and weakening the foundations of that mode of philosophizing, under the auspices of which, science has of late made such rapid advances.[40]

In this note Malthus cements the link – to him, a fatal link – between perfectibility as a doctrine and immortality as a speculation: both stand indicted as "absurd . . . paradox[es]," examples of dangerous philosophical overreaching. "Improbable and unfounded hypotheses" could only retard the formalization of knowledge; if such conjectures were left to stand uncriticized, Malthus argues, human science would devolve into an unrigorous and untestable set of hypotheses.

To argue against speculative immortality was, consequently, to defend human science itself. As Malthus said in his chapter contraverting Godwin: "I expect that great discoveries are yet to take place in all the branches of human science, particularly in physics; but the moment we leave past experience as the final foundation of our conjectures concerning the future; and still more, if our conjectures absolutely contradict past experience, we are thrown upon a wide field of uncertainty, and any one supposition is then just as good as another."[41] We note that, for Malthus, physics was still a branch of human science: the category "human science" conjoined and subsumed, in the *Essay on the Principle of Population*, those disciplines we would now distribute among the natural and social sciences. Yet despite the flexibility of the category "human science," we see that for Malthus, discoveries in the natural sciences provided an ambiguous and problematic model for moral speculation. As he observed in his note: "The present rage for wide and unrestrained speculation seems to be a kind of mental intoxication, arising, perhaps,

from the great and unexpected discoveries which have been made of late years, in various branches of science."[42] In Malthus's opinion, improbable conjectures confounded his hope, one shared of course by Godwin himself: that moral science (what Shelley in his *Defence of Poetry* called "ethical science") might itself achieve the status of the natural sciences.

If conjectural immortality threatened the prestige and rigor of human science, it presented a typically French threat: or so Malthus insinuated. "Immortality" in this period inevitably acquired a nationalized, politicized flavor. Should the speculations of Condorcet and Godwin prevail, Malthus wrote, "The grand and consistent theory of Newton will be placed upon the same footing as the wild and eccentric hypothesis of Descartes."[43] Godwin and Condorcet here presage not only the spectre of philosophical regression but also the defeat of English empiricism by French speculation. Surely it is not a strain to hear in this echoes of Burke's attack on French "oeconomists," enthusiasts, and geometricians in his *Reflections on the Revolutions in France*. Conjectural immortality thus becomes, in Malthus's reading, a particularly Jacobinical idea. As he wrote of Condorcet, "[his] book may be considered not only as a sketch of the opinions of a celebrated individual, but of many of the literary men in France at the beginning of the revolution. As such, though merely a sketch, it seems worthy of attention."[44] When he considered Condorcet's organic analogy concerning the perfectibility of plants, Malthus observed that you can "force" a plant but only at great cost: "In a similar manner, the forcing manure used to bring about the French Revolution, and to give a greater freedom and energy to the human mind, has burst the calyx of humanity, the restraining bond of all society."[45] Malthus transfers the political valence of perfectibility to immortality, the conjecture of which then reads as a revolutionary symptom.

However much Malthus distorted Godwin and Condorcet – ignoring, for example, Godwin's qualifying remark that "it would be idle to talk of the absolute immortality of man" – he nevertheless correctly identified the political valence of immortality for these writers. Yet he who politicizes and polemicizes shall soon be the target thereof, as Burke could have told Malthus. If Malthus read conjectural immortality as a Francophilic threat to the reasonable English procedures of human science, Hazlitt read Malthus's resistances as symptoms of English reaction, both intellectual and political. In his *Reply to Malthus*, published in 1807, Hazlitt transformed the immortality question back

into a question about precedent and conjecture. "There is no fixed limit: the present length of human life is not evidently a law of nature. The mere naked fact of its never exceeding a certain length at present is just as decisive against its ever having been longer, as it is against its ever being longer in the future."[46] Hazlitt thus criticized Malthus for naturalizing a limit, just as he objected to Malthus's naturalization of the principle of population. Arguing from improvements in medicine, Hazlitt wrote: "If it is allowed that the improvements in physic have an influence on the duration of human life, and that these improvements may go on indefinitely, I do not think Mr. Malthus's answer a conclusive one that no considerable progress will ever be made in this respect, because none has hitherto been made." And, taking a page from Godwin, who invoked printing as a technological revolution which had permanently transformed the diffusion and storage of knowledge, Hazlitt continued:

> If the improvements in science have not hitherto been regular and permanent, it cannot be expected that any advantages depending on them should have been so: nor does the past history of mankind in this instance furnish a rule for our future conjectures, inasmuch as in all that relates to the permanence and general diffusion of knowledge, a new turn has been given to the question (as before observed) by the invention of printing. This single circumstance, which was a matter of mere accident, may be said in many respects to have given a new aspect to human affairs . . . [47]

"Human affairs," then, may acquire a "new aspect" at any moment: this may not be probable, but Hazlitt insists it is possible. Science itself – with its "astonishing discoveries," in Malthus's phrase – argues for the suspension of disbelief and the sustaining of conjectural freedom. There is no pattern, Hazlitt notes, of predictable, gradual or "regular" "improvements in science." Sudden discoveries have unpredictable effects; a specific technology may revolutionize knowledge; and precedent need not – indeed must not – "furnish a rule for future conjectures." In such a passage Hazlitt re-opens the very space for conjecture that Malthus had attempted to close in his *Essay*.

IMMORTALITY AND THE STRUCTURE OF FEELING: "MODES" OF IMMORTALITY

However much Malthus may have politicized immortality (or may have foregrounded its ready political implications), he also recognized the

more permanent human aspirations embedded in the category. Indeed, he not unsympathetically diagnosed the appearance of "immortality" in such apparently atheistical works as Condorcet's and Godwin's as a symptom of a residual religious longing.[48] As he wrote:

> I cannot quit this subject without taking notice of these conjectures of Mr. Godwin and Mr. Condorcet concerning the indefinite prolongation of human life, as *a very curious instance of the longing of the soul after immortality*. Both these gentlemen have rejected the light of revelation which absolutely promises eternal life in another state. They have also rejected the light of natural religion, which to the ablest intellects in all ages, has indicated the future existence of the soul. Yet so congenial is the idea of immortality to the mind of man that they cannot consent entirely to throw it out of their systems. After all their fastidious scepticisms concerning *the only probable mode of immortality*, they introduce a species of immortality of their own, not only completely contradictory to every law of philosophical probability, but in itself in the highest degree, narrow, partial, and unjust.[49] [emphases added]

In this passage Malthus points to the psychological appeal of the immortality topos. The proliferation of "species of immortality" even after the Enlightenment suggested, as Malthus noted, the persistence of a human aspiration at odds with, or unanswerable by, the professed skepticism of these philosophers. Moreover, in suggesting that this "idea" arises deep within "the mind of man" – however irreligious a man might be – Malthus nods toward an anthropological basis for the "idea of immortality."

Restoring "immortality" to its traditionally religious discursive home, Malthus offered a keen insight. For certainly the appendix "Of Health, and the Prolongation of Human Life," was only one of several instances in which Godwin demonstrated a "longing of the soul after immortality." And, as any reader of the Immortality Ode and the *Essays upon Epitaphs* knows, a similar longing suffused Wordsworth as well. In such meditations "immortality" reveals itself to be an idea with its own emotional urgency as well as its own genealogy, whether its origins be located in sacred history, enlightenment anthropology, or individual memory. The persistence of this longing, in fact, became a moral-philosophical problem for Godwin and Wordsworth both, neither of whom could reconcile himself to the Reverend Malthus's Creator. Malthus asserted that "life is, generally speaking, a blessing independent of a future state": yet the fascination that immortality still held for such men as Godwin and Wordsworth, and its centrality in their thinking, suggests that mere life was hardly to be counted a blessing. As the central

yet problematic example of a "future state," immortality moved to the foreground not only of moral-philosophical conjecture but indeed of poetic imagining as well.

Mode I: Godwin's sepulchral mnemotechnics

In his *Essay on Sepulchres*, William Godwin remarked that "The greatest of earthly calamities, and the most universal, is death."[50] Godwin seemed to find death most traumatic because it thwarted the progress of knowledge: "it is owing to this calamity of death, that the world for ever is, and in some degree for ever must be, in its infancy."[51] Death as a rupture prevented the maturation of the world and of the human race. Godwin's loathing of this perpetual childhood of the race broke out earlier in *Political Justice*, when (as I have already noted) he imagined his increasingly rational and long-lived population as non-reproductive. What some might consider a lamentable transformation of the human condition (one thinks of Swift's Struldbruggs), Godwin celebrated. Considering man as an optimally rational and intellectual being, Godwin despised the weakness of the body, all signs of "involuntary" behavior or thought, and more broadly, any mental, emotional, or physical encroachments on the radical autonomy of men and women. That people might choose to bind themselves to others – as Godwin bound himself to Mary Wollstonecraft – rarely entered the field of his consideration in the first edition of *Political Justice*.

Yet Godwin was as much a "man of feeling" (as he subtitled his novel *Caleb Williams*) as a man of reason. His particular investment in reason and feeling furnished him with an abstract object of mourning: the defeat of reason and knowledge over time. Thus the melancholia that colors the entire *Essay on Sepulchres*. The "calamity of death" that keeps us Babes in the Woods of Truth had to be recognized and mitigated: to this end, Godwin proposed to place simple memorials (wooden crosses) at the burial spots of all the Illustrious Dead in the world. In this way the living might commune with the intellectual vitality of the dead. Godwin's desire was not so much to monumentalize as to promote an intellectual remembrance, a kind of cultural memory. As he wrote: "Do not fear to remember too much; only be on your guard not to forget anything that is worthy to be remembered."[52] Godwin's proposal calls for a sepulchral mnemotechnics; the "simple landmarks" he envisions would be complemented by a book which "might be called, The Atlas of those Who Have Lived, for the Use of

Men Hereafter to be Born." "It might be plentifully marked with meridian lines and circles of latitude . . . so as to ascertain with incredible minuteness where the monuments of eminent men had been, and where their ashes continue to repose." Such documents and monuments could ameliorate the "calamity" that moved Godwin to write: "Though cities were demolished, and empires overthrown . . . the materials would thus be preserved, by means of which, at the great distance of time, every thing that was most sacred might be restored, and the calamity which had swallowed up whole generations of men, might be obliterated as if it had never been."

In such passages Godwin mourns the loss of "whole generations of men"; in others he emphasizes the personal component of grief, how one is attached to a friend or a wife, to the body and habits of a specific person. Moving between the very particular body of the deceased beloved and the abstract mass of deceased generations, Godwin describes "death" as both personal and a cultural calamity. In the *Essay on Sepulchres*, as in *Political Justice*, he focuses far more on the implications of death for the species. In *Political Justice* he allowed himself to speculate about the possible longevity of one enlightened generation – a nearly immortal, non-reproductive "race of men." In his *Essay on Sepulchres* he acquiesces, however reluctantly, to mortality as an aspect of the human condition. Although his proposals are quite different – a conjecturally immortal generation versus an exhaustively memorialized Illustrious Dead – Godwin's "longing . . . after immortality" clearly persisted. His longing expressed itself as a defense of enlightenment. What he seemed to fear most from death, at least in these writings, was not the individual's prospect of non-being but the human race's tendency toward retrogression. Mortality appears, then, as the most powerful threat to Godwin's cherished vision of perfectibility: his immortality – whether of a long-lived generation or as a global remembrance – attempts to stave off that threat.

Mode 2: Wordsworth and the anthropologic of natality

Where does the idea, the conviction, of immortality come from? Abandoning or at least bracketing the sureties of revealed religion, Wordsworth proposed to himself a question that still animates many an anthropological treatise and ethnographic monograph.[53] The *Essays upon Epitaphs* are the fruits of Wordsworth's attempt to work out a simultaneously cultural and psychological account of the genealogy of

the idea of immortality. As such they are essays within a tradition of amateur enlightenment anthropology.[54] In their comparativist procedures these essays, like Godwin's *Essay on Sepulchres*, suggest how broadly diffused among literate Englishmen were the habit of cultural comparison and the discourse of conjectural history. Belief in immortality had become an object of study in the human sciences. Enlightenment theorizing about death and immortality, combined with the eighteenth-century rage for antiquities and travel-writing, fueled interest in such phenomena as Turkish burial practices, Druid mounds, and sacrificial rites.[55] In Wordsworth's corpus, the scene of Druid sacrifice in *The Prelude* (1805), Book XII, exemplifies a poetic fusion of such fascinations.

In the first *Essay upon Epitaphs*, Wordsworth proposed an anthropological account of the origin of monuments and epitaphs:

> It need scarcely be said, that an Epitaph presupposes a Monument, upon which it is to be engraven. Almost all Nations have wished that certain external signs should point out the places where their dead are interred. Among savage tribes unacquainted with letters this has mostly been done either by rude stones placed near the graves, or by mounds of earth raised over them. The custom proceeded obviously from a twofold desire: first, to guard the remains of the deceased from irrreverent reproach or from savage violation: and secondly, to preserve their memory.[56]

An epitaph presupposes a monument: in this statement Wordsworth swiftly proposes both a theory of writing and a theory of culture. Following Weever's seventeenth-century *Discourse on Funeral Monuments*, Wordsworth resolves "two sources of feeling" – a desire to protect the dead, and to preserve their memory – "into one": the presage or forefeeling of immortality. The "sense of immortality" itself is part of the human inheritance; from it Wordsworth derives both the growth of social affections and the wish of men to be remembered. The wish materializes itself in monuments and practices such as the writing of epitaphs.

There are, as Malthus might have said, several "species of immortality" contending for Wordsworth's attention throughout his œuvre. As Wordsworth observed in several prose writings and conversations, his painful meditations on death led him to a conviction of the soul's immortality as well as to a theory of poetic composition. If the *Essays upon Epitaphs* and the Immortality Ode are the most prominent realizations of his inquiries, it is also true that, as Alan Bewell has

illuminated, several of the *Lyrical Ballads* similarly explore the cultural meaning of death.[57] "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman" was designed, as Wordsworth noted in his *Preface*, to "follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature . . . by accompanying the last struggles of a human being at the approach of death, cleaving in solitude to life and society." So too he wrote in the *Preface* that another ballad, "We are seven," deals "with the perplexity and obscurity which in childhood attend our notion of death, or rather our utter inability to admit that notion."[58] Taking an Indian woman and a rustic "cottage-girl" as experimental specimens, Wordsworth explored in these ballads, in a quasi-ethnographic register, a conundrum that had plagued him for years. Even as Dorothy figures the prior stage of Wordsworthian consciousness in "Tintern Abbey," the forsaken Indian woman and the little maid represent, in Wordsworth's cultural poetics, alternative and more primitive possibilities in human thinking about death. Wordsworth's account of these poems allows us to read them doubly – as lyrics investigating cultural and social difference (Indians vs "civilized" English, rustics vs the literati) and also as lyrics asserting a general human identity (Indian and rustic as "one of us"). In the *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth refers to "We are seven" as an occasion for exploring "*our* notion of death," or "*our* inability" (emphases added) to admit that notion. The little maid's perplexity and insistence thus registers an aspect of Wordsworth's own, as well as a generalizable human "notion" and "inability." Thus the little cottage girl in "We are seven," whose mind remains so impenetrable to the Master, could stand as a permanently unchanging and unchangeable primitive; conversely, her thinking could be seen as a childhood cognitive formation, its rigidity and concreteness to be outgrown, even as Wordsworth outgrows his own "simple creed of childhood" in his Immortality Ode. There is some sense here, then, that for the little maid – even as for Wordsworth in the Immortality Ode – there awaits a "philosophic mind." Arriving at that philosophic mind – and the "faith that looks through death" – was, however, an excruciating and arduous process, the vicissitudes of which Wordsworth re-imagined in his Ode and alluded to in his *Essays upon Epitaphs*.

The first *Essay upon Epitaphs* reads as a retroactive précis of Wordsworth's Ode. The phrases, motifs, and structures of feeling in the poem recur in the essay: both invoke "obstinate questionings," "intimation[s]," the "blank" ignorance of the child superseded, albeit painfully, by a philosophically mature "sense of immortality." The *Essay* provides,

after the fact, the moral-philosophical underpinnings of the ode: the "forefeeling of immortality" and the cultural practices among "all Nations" and "savage tribes" set the stage for the "sense of immortality" as it develops in a single person. The discourse of cultural comparison modulates with no break into the anatomy of a single developing consciousness: psychology, in this essay, supersedes but also complements Wordsworth's anthropology.

Wordsworth ultimately proposes immortality as a "sense" reconstructed in each person as well as in each age of man. Even as it has realized itself variously but consistently in human cultures, the "sense of immortality" undergoes several reconstructions within the life of the individual. The child, Wordsworth argues, possesses from the first a "consciousness of a principle of immortality" in terms of "an intimation or assurance within us, that some part of our nature is imperishable." Yet the "sense of immortality" transforms itself within the person as she comes "into contact with a notion of death." Indeed, Bewell considers Wordsworth's analysis of immortal dispossession, as it were, to be his major deviation from and revision of the Enlightenment discourse he engages.[59] Wordsworth concludes his account with a nod to what Freud called the sexual researches of children:

> has such an unfolder of the mysteries of nature, though he may have forgotten his former self, ever noticed the early, obstinate, and unappeasable inquisitiveness of children upon the subject of origination? . . . for, if we had no direct external testimony that the minds of very young children meditate feelingly upon death and immortality, these inquiries, which we all know they are perpetually making concerning the *whence*, do necessarily include correspondent habits of interrogation concerning the whither. Origin and tendency are inseparably co-relative.

Through the child, then, Wordsworth correlates the question of immortality – the "whither" – with the child's "unappeasable inquisitiveness" concerning the "whence."

Just as the Ode takes us from the happy unconscious assurances of a child through "blank misgivings" to "the faith that looks through death," so too the first *Essay upon Epitaphs* sketches a journey through the abyss, an abyss which resists decisive closure. Immortality is both an intimation all children have and a difficult achievement of the adult mind. Newly conceived and cherished by the "philosophic mind," immortality emerges in the structure of the Ode as it does, Wordsworth suggests, in human consciousness – only after successive recognitions of "hollowness," and finally as a response to the terrible "impression of

death." The following passage in the first *Essay upon Epitaphs* summarizes Wordsworth's thinking:

> We may, then, be justified in asserting, that the sense of immortality, if not a co-existent and twin birth with Reason, is among the earliest of her offspring: and we may further assert, that from these conjoined, and under their countenance, human affections are gradually formed and opened out . . . [60]

Under the guise of reason, through the discourse of moral philosophy, Wordsworth rescues Immortality from the purely theological domain and renders it a permanently human "sense." Yet as this *Essay* suggests, the "sense of immortality" both offers "assurance" and intermittently fails to re-assure. Immortality thus appears in at least two guises, as a fundamental human "fore-feeling" and as a constructed solution to a predicament. Oscillating uneasily between a native human sense and a cultivated idea, Wordsworth's immortality indexes, we might say, a nature/culture predicament.

Even as Freud's 1917 essay on mourning and melancholia has been used to diagnose romantic mourning (with "elegy" its cure), one could imagine a critique of Wordsworthian Immortality along the lines of Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*.[61] Wordsworth's quasi-anthropological derivation of the "sense of immortality" is, we might say, a transposition of an infantile fantasy into a sophisticated discursive key. But, as must be clear, I am not reading Immortality as a malady, a symptom, or as a mystification. It is not *that* Wordsworth preserves the "sense of immortality" but *how* he does so that interests me. When we consider this essay in conjunction with the Ode, we see that the most striking thing about Wordsworthian Immortality is that it requires a reconstructed natality. Wordsworth directs Immortality toward Natality; in doing so he reveals both the structure of a predicament and its imagined solution.

TOWARD WORDSWORTHIAN IMMORTALITY: NATALITY, NATIVITY, AND "VAIN PERPLEXITY"

As one brief example of Wordsworth's recourse to Natality, let us consider a signal passage from *The Prelude*, Book I. Here Wordsworth discusses how he wishes to write "a glorious work": to that end he has made "rigorous inquisition" of himself and his possible topics. He famously sifts through several themes – romantic, military, imperial – and invokes poetic forebears (Milton and Spenser most prominent), but he arrives at an impasse:

> . . . for either still I find
> Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
> Or see of absolute accomplishment
> Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself,
> That I recoil and droop, and seek repose
> In listlessness from vain perplexity,
> Unprofitably travelling towards the grave,
> Like a false steward who hath much received
> And renders nothing back.
> (*Prelude*, Book 1, "Childhood and School-Time," 263–271)

Such impasses and perplexities are, of course, the very stuff out of which the *Prelude* is made. The poem becomes a progressive account of the establishing and superseding of these predicaments, whether considered as psychological, poetic, political, intellectual, or in veiled fashion, erotic. For my purposes this passage acquires a special force when we proceed to Wordsworth's next gesture. To resume the passage:

> And renders nothing back. – Was it for this
> That one, the fairest of all Rivers, lov'd
> To blend his murmurs with my Nurse's song,
> And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
> And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
> That flow'd along my dreams? For this, didst Thou,
> O Derwent! travelling over the green Plains
> Near my 'sweet Birthplace,' didst Thou, beauteous Stream,
> Make ceaseless music . . . (271–279)

Having stalled, Wordsworth finds a new channel. He turns to various sites and sounds of origin – the river, the nurse's song – and he invokes his own "sweet birthplace." He exorcises the fear that he will not make good on his inheritance by hymning the locus of the inheritance itself. The turn to the birthplace remedies the "vain perplexity" that Wordsworth had just invoked. Flagging the phrase – "sweet birthplace" – as a quotation, Wordsworth alerts us to the literary mediation of this topos; and indeed, the phrase comes from Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," l. 28.[62] Of course, this is a rhetorically brilliant and characteristically Wordsworthian unfolding: what seems like an evasion of the problem at hand – perplexity regarding poetic theme and poetic capacity – becomes in fact the most direct addressing of it. The poem itself will prove his capacity. Wordsworth's theme will be, of course, his own mind, its birth, growth, and development. We could rephrase this to say that one of Wordsworth's primary compositional resources

will be the natal/native fiction. Throughout the poem we see Wordsworth foreground the motifs of birth and nativity at strategic moments and for specific reasons: in this case, to modulate out of a "vain perplexity." And indeed, this passage concludes with a fantasy of primitive nativity, as Wordsworth recalls the long summer days in his youth when he

> . . . stood alone
> Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
> On Indian Plains, and from my Mother's hut
> Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport,
> A naked savage, in the thunder shower. (300–304)

Not fantasies of savage youth *per se* but the occasion for their appearance: this is what I want to emphasize. The occasion here is a perplexity, which elicits an elaborate series of natal tropes.

As he would in the first *Essay upon Epitaphs*, Wordsworth in this passage conjoins the question of the "whither" to the "whence." To arrive at the question of "whither," in fact, is in Wordsworthian poetics to return to the ground of the "whence." "Was it for this?" that he was born? Does the "fair seed-time of the soul" only yield perplexity? How to avoid an "unprofitabl[e]" journey "to the grave"? If the *Prelude* as a whole implicitly addresses these questions, answering doubt with profitable poetry, nevertheless the question "Was it for this" remains unanswered and disjunctive at the local level of this passage. Indeed, the abandonment of the interrogative in the passage presents a modal rupture. "Was it for this . . . ?" Wordsworth addresses the Derwent; and then again, "For this, didst Thou . . . make sweet music . . ." The syntax in the second iteration preserves the questioning inflection, yet the sentence modulates toward the declarative as Wordsworth recalls how the River gave him "a foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm/That Nature breathes among the hills and groves." (We could also read the repetition of "for this" as the transformation of the question into an answer: as in, "Was it for this?" Yes indeed: "for this" – for the poem, for Wordsworthian profit – the river "made sweet music.") Where does the question go? Into modulating thoughts, perhaps; into the fabric of rumination and remembrance. The question goes, we might say, toward natality, and more specifically, toward a remembranced natality. Whether it is elaborated in an English locale ("O Derwent!") or in an exoticizing rhetoric (Wordsworth the "naked savage"), the natal fiction, as Wordsworth employs it, acquires the

power to transform and even to dissolve the obstinate questionings. And indeed, it is this same natal logic that structures the movements of the Immortality Ode.

WORDSWORTHIAN IMMORTALITY: THE RECONSTRUCTION OF NATALITY

As a much-discussed and much-anthologized poem, the Immortality Ode may be exhausted, its visionary gleams so reified one can hardly imagine re-animating its life. Nevertheless, and without recapitulating a history of criticism on the Ode, I wish to turn briefly to a few of its passages. Critics have usually debated what this poem is "about": Lionel Trilling, for example, read it as a poem "about growing up," Frances Ferguson as a meditation on and inscription of the alternation between "certain belief" and uncertainty, Alan Bewell as "a graveside elegy for the twilight of an age," and Marjorie Levinson as Wordsworth's repudiation of his earlier allegiance to Enlightenment categories and to revolution.[63] Instead of proposing a thematic or meaning that the poem might yield, I will focus on its internal movement to answer some questions: when does "immortality" emerge as a category in the poem, and how does it function? what relation do Wordsworth's "intimations of immortality" have to his recognition of "our mortal Nature"? and finally, what are the implications of suturing "intimations of immortality" to "recollections from early childhood'?

The Immortality Ode enacts a series of impasses which culminate in the famous couplet at the end of the fourth stanza: "Whither is fled the visionary gleam?/Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" The preceding stanzas have moved us through several swells and eddies of Wordsworthian consciousness. Wordsworth establishes his privatized melancholy in his first two stanzas, concluding that –

> The sunshine is a glorious birth
> But yet I know, where'er I go
> That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.
> (16–18)

These initial stanzas suggest a mind struggling to accept the demise of the pathetic fallacy. What once was harmonious – childhood spirits and nature's glory – is no longer so. We sense both that Wordworth's grief disrupts this harmony and further that his grief reveals this harmony to have been a fiction. Cast out from "celestial light," the self experiences a

painful singularity: "To me alone there came a thought of grief." The danger, as Wordsworth makes clear by temporarily mastering it in the third stanza, is that one's grief may "the season wrong." ("No more shall grief of mine the season wrong," l. 26.) Each stanza traces the movement of a double instinct: to protect the world from the self's alienated and alienating vision, and simultaneously to relieve the self through "timely utterance."

Wordsworth's "grief" may be read as a spiritual crisis, existential despair, a psychologization of political misgiving, a phenomenological registering of the disjunction of subject and object, a subjectivization of historical ruptures. Recalling the ontological, psychological and political valence of the term "natality," we can also broadly describe this "grief" in terms of a vexed and nearly divested "natality." Wordsworth's tropes and images support this account. Figures of birth, youth, and the new proliferate only to intensify the speaker's sense of being "alone." The birth-motif dominates the poem; this is, however, a negative domination – the appearance of birth organizes, in fact, Wordsworth's progressive enactment of natal alienation. Throughout the poem, Wordsworth yokes birth to glory and light, as the following passages suggest:

> The sunshine is a glorious birth . . . (2. 16)
>
> . . . trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home:
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy! (5. 64–66)
>
> The innocent brightness of a newborn Day
> Is lovely yet . . . (11. 196–197)

Yet the opening conjunction of sun, birth, glory, and the Day offers no human promise, as Wordsworth soon establishes. (And indeed, the effort required to salvage the "brightness of the day" is exquisitely recorded in Wordsworth's "yet" [197].) Though "the sunshine is a glorious birth," the speaker asserts that for him "there hath passed away a glory from the earth" (18). He confronts birth (figuratively speaking) without glory, a newness stripped of luster. In the children, the lamb, and the gloriously rising sun Wordsworth witnesses the phenomenon of birth without sentience. In order for mere birth, for the merely new, to become "natality" – a condition of human existence, in Arendt's terms – the phenomenon must be humanized. At this point in the poem, the phenomenon of birth remains; what has faded, as Wordsworth makes

clear, is what Bachelard calls the "brilliance of the first openings."[64] Thus the question: "Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

Wordsworth's Ode may be read, then, as an extended struggle to rehabilitate the promise and premise of natality. The crucial birth myth of the fifth stanza – "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting . . . " – offers one route to this re-imagined natality. Again, it is useful to consider where Wordsworth's questions go, and how and whether his poems absorb them. In this case, the ante-natal fiction provisionally absorbs the force of his "Whither" and his "Where." Ever since Coleridge's *Biographia*, critics have debated Wordsworth's "belief" in this fiction, its merits, the extent to which Wordsworth was a Platonist; however we assess it, the stanza offers an exemplary case of romantic mythopoesis. I prefer to read this stanza as a provisonal solution to the foregoing impasses, one answer – logical and figurative – to the questions Wordsworth has just posed.

The significance of the ante-natal myth arises not from its Platonic pedigree, its swerve from Christian orthodoxy, or its persuasiveness as a solution to dejection. Its power and pathos derive both from its structural position in the poem and its turn to natality itself. That is: Wordsworth has constructed his Ode such that his birth-myth emerges under duress (as it did, in fact, as a solution to a compositional impasse – viz. the two-year hiatus between the completion of stanza four and the resumption of stanza five[65]). The escalation of duress – "It is not now as it hath been of yore," "there has passed away a glory from the earth," "to me alone there came a thought of grief," "Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" – is the precondition for this enunciation: "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting." We feel this assertion, and the subsequent story, to be a *motivated* utterance:

> Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
> The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar:
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home . . . (5. 59–66)

If the first four stanzas trace a progressively profound experience of homelessness, this fifth generates a fiction of home. Out of his predicament, then, the poet fabricates a vision of shelter, however receded in

time or myth this home might be. Re-imagining God as home, Wordsworth arrives at a possible answer to and surpassing of the self's estrangement.

In a related pronominal move, Wordsworth ushers us out of this intense but merely personal dejection by conjuring a "we." It is interesting that, in the first section of the poem, Wordsworth does not generalize his predicament: if anything, he stringently restricts his melancholy to himself: "to me alone there came a thought of grief." (Let us put aside, for the moment, Wordsworth's notably underpopulated world: his gambolling children are as generic and non-sentient as his flowers.) In the ante-natal fiction, he offers a myth for "us"; he proposes a story about "*our* birth," "*our* life's Star," "*our* home," "*our* infancy." Even when he describes the gradual imprisonment of the "growing Boy," still there is a sense of a generalized human predicament flagged most prominently by his first and capitalized reference to "Man": "At length the Man perceives it [the vision] die away,/And fade into the light of common day."

Wordsworth thus offers not "God" as a response to his own obstinate questionings but natality itself, natality conceived as a general and generic human inheritance indexed by the shift from the first person singular to the first person plural (and a corresponding shift in possessive pronouns, from "my" to "our"). Yet, for all this human fellowship, this natal bond ("our birth," "our home") does not generate a vision of common endeavor. "Natality" appears in Wordsworth as a category of origins and the new; it does not announce itself, as it does in Arendt, as a condition of human action. For Wordsworth, "worldliness" (a condition of human existence, Arendt notes) threatens to efface "natality." Indeed, the child's entry into the field of action and the world only obscures his natal inheritance: thus Wordsworth's hostility to the seductions of "Earth" (st. 6) and to the deformations of socialization (st. 7).

Thus far my reading has more or less acceded to Wordsworth's phenomenological self-representations: yet with the broader political and revolutionary connotations of "natality" in mind, we are well-prepared to examine just what such a self-representation has privileged and suppressed – including the political, the historical, and the material resonances of "immorality." In *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems*, Marjorie Levinson has offered one bracing historical-material critique of the Ode as a swerve from prior revolutionary hopes and commitments. As Shelley's "Alastor" demonstrates, Wordsworth's contemporaries were equally capable of mounting such a critique.

THE END OF WORDSWORTH AND THE END OF IMMORTALITY: WORDSWORTH'S ODE UNDONE

This long excursion through Wordsworthian immortality brings us back, finally, to the critical encounter with which I began this essay: Shelley's with Wordsworth, and more broadly, that of younger poets with Wordsworthian immortality and its related tropologies of natality and mortality. As I suggested earlier, Shelley's "Alastor" tends toward a demythologizing of Wordsworthian immortality. Yet of course the Ode is in its own right a kind of demythologizing of dejection, a lyrical critique of the inwardness of an unhappy soul: the poem finally ushers us with the speaker back to the "human heart" and the inhabitable world, a world made inhabitable only after a prolonged and difficult cure of the self. Whether the self should be cured on Wordsworth's terms was, however, the crux of Shelley's and Keats's queries. We might say that while Shelley, and Keats as well, agreed with Wordsworth's identification of symptoms they each disputed his diagnosis and his cure. Here the political and moral-philosophical aspects of the immortality controversy become as relevant for considering the work of these poets as for examining Godwin, Malthus and Hazlitt. For if Malthus recognized in Godwin's speculations about immortality both a politically radical aspiration and a more neutral "longing of the soul," so too Shelley and Keats located in "immortality" a nest of political, material, and spiritual concerns. We might say that while Shelley, like the moral philosophers, emphasizes the political stakes of the category "immortality," thereby focusing on what Arendt called the conditions of wordliness and "plurality," Keats focuses instead on singularity, the body-in-pain, the irreducible sensorium.

Readers have long observed the critical relation of "Alastor" to Wordsworth's Ode, and of Shelley's 1816 volume *Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude: and Other poems* to what we might call the Wordsworth problem. For purposes of my argument, Shelley's critique of Wordsworth becomes most interesting in its focus on and negation of both Wordsworth's account of human predicaments and his proposed solutions. "The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin": such is the fate of Wordsworth in his infamous "seclusion," but such is the fate as well of a poet unable to invest in the world. In its own peculiar fashion, "Alastor" opens out onto the world and thereby reveals the thinness of the world Wordsworth conjured in his Ode.

In "Alastor" Shelley critically pits the "spirit of solitude" against the idea of a populated, adequately responding world, a human *habitus*. Exploring the pleasures and dangers of solipsism, Shelley sympathetically diagnoses its causes and symptoms but refuses to endorse the dead poet's ethos. Yet he also refuses the Wordsworthian cure for solipsism. Alastor thus maintains a double argument, first against his poet's justified alienation that tips into solipsism, and secondly and simultaneously against a premature and Wordsworthian consolation in the "human heart." The framing device of the poem extends the scope of the critique: distinguishing the quest of the framing narrator from the critical representation of the dead poet, Shelley can both inhabit and interrogate the Wordsworthian poet-function and the predicament of unhappy consciousness dramatized in the Immortality Ode. Shelley makes clear in Alastor that Wordsworth's resolutions – cadential and ideational, musical and philosophical – in the Immortality Ode rest on a truncation which is due in part to a depoliticization of alienation.

If "Alastor," like the sonnet "To Wordsworth," addresses what we might call the Wordsworth problematic, it also explicitly mediates this address through the Immortality Ode. The framing invocation of "Alastor" transforms a series of specific motifs and phrases from the Ode, including the signal Wordsworthian phrase, "obstinate questionings":

> Mother of this unfathomable world!
> Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
> Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
> Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
> And my heart ever gazes on the depth
> Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
> In charnels and on coffins, where black death
> Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
> Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
> Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost
> Thy messenger, to render up the tale
> Of what we are. (18–29)

Shelley re-inaugurates the predicament of the Ode and leaves it suspended. The story of Alastor thus appears at first as an attempt to still, not to praise, these "obstinate questionings." What Wordsworth had philosophically praised – the experience of dissatisfaction, of not-knowing, of distress – this narrator wishes, impatiently, to remedy or at least mitigate.

In his Preface Shelley described "Alastor" as "allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind."[66] This situation, as we

soon see, is a variation on Wordsworth's diagnosis of and recovery from wounded consciousness. Shelley's poet-hero leaves his "cold and alienated home," wanders through foreign lands, experiences a series of visions – erotic, poetic, historical, cosmic – and yet ultimately sails on to his death in an overgrown hothouse of a landscape. The poem conducts the hero through a hallucinatory landscape, a kind of hypnogogic tour of the East and its ruins. This is a severely and intentionally underpopulated world: this is the world of pure consciousness, with room enough for one and one only. Shelley disperses Wordsworth's lyric enunciation and solitary consciousness over an almost absurdly orientalist geography. (Its simultaneously specific and hallucinatory feel may derive from one of its source-poems, Robert Southey's *Thalaba*, a romantic travel poem that had enormous influence and may be the most overlooked poem in romantic criticism.) Thus the Alastor-poet, unlike the lyrical "I" of Wordsworth's Ode, achieves neither a "philosophic mind," nor a "faith that looks through death": his visions are "vastations," emptyings, and unlike a benignly Zen emptiness the hero's vastation fuels a story of "waste" and "ruin."

"Alastor" offers itself as both the internalization of quest romance (in Harold Bloom's phrase) and the critique of that internalization; it is both an homage to and a murder of Wordsworthian consciousness, a poem that enacts perfectly the double-sided drama Freud describes in *Totem and Taboo*. The need to bury Wordsworth, to inter securely and indict the father-spectre, animates the poem. Yet this is not only a ritual sacrifice of an overbearing father; "Alastor" is also the account of the sacrifice of subjectivity itself. The self has lost its moorings; in his narcissistic search for a purely mirroring sympathy the hero loses the capacity to participate in an economy in which sympathy would flourish. Need and desire have become amputated: the Arabian maid who shyly brings him food, the "savage men" (80) who conveniently supply his needs at an earlier point on the journey – the hero barely registers these subaltern providers. In the astonishing dream vision he encounters his soulmate, a female lyrist whose swaying body and voluptuous clasp propel the barely-embodied hero to a dewy climax. Of course, it's all in his head. His fantasy-girl, who appears fast on the heels of the disappointed Arabian maid, is the guarantee of a non-reproductive eros, a sympathy always already mastered and orchestrated by and for the self. Shelley's ambivalence here about dream, about vision, appears as a supersubtle critique of narcissism.

Yet the critique of narcissism, however prominent, cannot account

for all the operations in the poem. The increasingly desolate hero accuses the earth and heavens "which echo not [his] thoughts" (290). The poem knows the hero to be a narcissus, a person without an echo to reassure him of his substantiality. The failure of the world to mirror consciousness – a version of the crisis Wordsworth enacts repeatedly, in the Immortality Ode and throughout the Prelude – must be understood here as the failure of consciousness to dwell in or connect to a populated world. The poets swerve from materiality and the social world – from the actual Arabian maid, from one's actual needs for food, for touch – justifies itself as a consciousness unmet, unhoused. One begins to suspect that the world is far too small for the Alastor-poet: his moments of "vacant" (191), cosmic grandiosity and his wish to fuse with his dream-woman illuminate the regressive impulse underlying his claims.

If Shelley explores in his poet-figure the limits of narcissistic solutions, he also and simultaneously reveals the broader limits of Wordsworthian resolutions. We recall that in the last stanza of the Ode, Wordsworth arrives at an attenuated yet still appreciated natality. The benediction of the last stanza rings the final variation on the natal topos:

> The innocent brightness of a newborn Day
> Is lovely yet;
> The clouds that gather round the setting sun
> Do take a sober coloring from an eye
> That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality . . . (11. 196–200)

The conclusion of Alastor, conversely and polemically, calls for a rigorous refusal of mourning and of the arts of mourning. In an astonishingly harsh series of negations, Shelley suggests that art has proved itself inadequate to its worldly situation.

> . . . Let not high verse, mourning the memory
> Of that which is no more, or painting's woe,
> Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
> Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
> And all the shows o' the world are frail and vain
> To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
> It is a woe *too 'deep for tears,'* when all
> Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit
> Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
> *Those who remain behind*, not sobs or groans,
> The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
> But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
> Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
> Birth and the grave, that are not as they were. (707–720)

In this remarkable passage, Shelley mobilizes poetry against poetry, art against art, Wordsworth against Wordsworth, to banish the ruse of false consolation and of misdirected mourning. It is instructive to recall the decisive ninth stanza of the Immortality Ode in which Wordsworth begins his benediction-through-negation. Invoking "the simple creed of childhood," "delight and liberty," he finally turns toward the more complex situation he will commit himself to praising:

> Not for these I raise
> The song of thanks and praise;
> But for those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings;
> Blank misgivings of a Creature
> Moving about in worlds not realized . . . (141–147)

Whereas Wordsworth arrives at a paradoxical gratitude for difficulty, impasse, and "blank misgivings" (all located, it might be argued, within the prison-house of consciousness), Shelley emphasizes, we might say, the problem of the "worlds not realized." To put it differently: it is clear that, however much the Ode testifies to a commitment to obstinate questionings and blank misgivings, the *tone* and *resolutions* of the Ode take the edge off that obstinacy and blankness, which edge Shelley restores and sharpens. Whereas Wordsworth celebrates "what remains behind," Shelley concerns himself explicitly with "those who remain behind." The ostentatious failures and negations of "Alastor" (the hero dies, the narrator remains unappeased) reveal that for Shelley Wordsworth's success in the Ode was in fact a kind of failure. In "Alastor" Shelley suggests that Wordsworth did not misgive enough. If obstinate questionings are to be praised, Shelley implies, the terror of their insolubility must be acknowledged again and again. Shelley clearly attacks the resolutions of the Ode, and in particular its natal grounds for resolution, as insufficient.

If in the first passages of "Alastor" Shelley introduces the Wordsworthian motif of "obstinate questionings," in this peroration he seals his engagement with Wordsworth and the Immortality Ode with his critical citation of a phrase from the last line of the Ode – "too deep for tears." We may recall that Wordsworth ends his Ode with a humanized benediction, a "Deo Gratias" transformed:

> Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
> Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
> To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears. (202–205)

Shelley's scathing quotation – "too 'deep for tears'" – highlights his bleak acknowledgment that the human condition has indeed been transformed, and not for the good. His catalogue of things "that are not as they were" reads as an almost exact anticipation of Hannah Arendt's account of the human condition. Arendt lists "life itself, natality and mortality, worldliness, plurality, and the earth" as among "the conditions of human existence."[67] Whereas Arendt invokes "worldliness" and "life itself," Shelley refers to "Nature's vast frame"; where she mentions "natality" and "mortality," Shelley offers "Birth and the grave;" and for Arendt's account of "the conditions of human existence itself," we have Shelley's "web of human things." In his closing concatenation of nouns (birth, grave, nature, web of human things), Shelley emphasizes the links among these categories even as he insists they "are not as they were." There is no overcoming this recognition: to recover, he suggests, would be to falsify. He refuses to concede a philosophically tranquil mind, much less a "faith that looks through death."

Shelley insists on leaving us in this mortal predicament; only later, in *Prometheus Unbound*, did he allow himself to imagine the full unfolding of a reconstructed Earth, Man, and Mortality. By refusing Wordsworth's reconstructions, and more particularly Wordsworth's pre-emptively restricted field for re-conceiving these categories, Shelley laid the groundwork for a more exhaustive and difficult poetic achievement: to sustain both the ontological and the historical dimension of human being in the field of poetry itself.

SHELLEY'S GRAVE INQUIRIES: "POPULOUS SOLITUDE" AS A CRITIQUE OF ROMANTIC CONSCIOUSNESS

"Alastor" ends with the stunning assertion that "birth and the grave . . . are not as they were." Yet elsewhere Shelley showed himself to be quite fluent in the so-called graveyard school of poetry, which rendered the grave thrillingly poetic, melancholic, and romantic. In some respects Shelley's poems "On Death" and "A Summer Evening Churchyard/ Lechlade, Gloucestershire," give us graves and tombs already familiar to readers of Robert Blair's *The Grave* and Gray's *Elegy*. Shelley's poetic graves, in these cases, seem almost exactly "as they were" in the 1750s. Yet, as I have argued regarding the moral philosophers, poetic immortality was no longer what it once was; neither was the grave. In addition to the more obvious and documented pressures of secularization, en-

lightenment skepticism, and political radicalism, we can consider these related transformations (of birth, of the grave, of immortality) as registrations of another pressure: the pressure of population. (But we might say equally that the ascendancy of this "principle of population" was itself a registration or symptom of discursive, political, economic, and theological re-organization.) For if the poet-hero of Alastor rests in an "untimely tomb," he also rests in what Shelley called in another poem in the same volume "the peopled tomb."[68]

This poem – later titled "On Death" – has a properly sobering epigraph from Ecclesiastes: "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." The poem, austerely agnostic if not explicitly atheistic, proposes death as a "fearful blow / To a brain unencompassed with nerves of steel." The death of the body involves the death of sensation and consciousness. Yet Shelley counsels neither Stoic acceptance nor some kind pantheistic optimism: in fact, he counsels nothing, ending his poem with a series of questions that take us from the domain of graveyard-school diction ("The pale, the cold, and the moony smile . . . ") to the realm of unresolved predicament. The final two stanzas read:

> The secret things of the grave are there,
> Where all but this frame must surely be,
> Though the fine-wrought eye and the wondrous ear
> No longer will live to hear or see
> All that is great and all that is strange
> In the boundless realm of unending change.
>
> Who telleth a tale of unspeaking death?
> Who lifteth the veil of what is to come?
> Who painteth the shadows that are beneath
> The wide-winding caves of the peopled tomb?
> Or uniteth the hopes of what shall be
> With the fears and the love for that which we see?

It is no news that Shelley was extremely, some might say morbidly, fascinated with "the secret things of the grave": he would recall such fascination in other poems, most notably in the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," when he portrayed himself as a youth:

> While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
> Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
> And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
> Hopes of high talk with the departed dead . . . (V. 49–52)

And indeed, in "Alastor" the narrator declares in his invocation that he had "made [his] bed / In charnels and on coffins, where black death / Keeps record of the trophies won from thee, / Hoping to still these obstinate questionings." In these poems there lurks the conviction that the dead know something, that they wish to keep it from the living, that the grave is the domain of secrets to learn which requires magic, violence, or some other transgression. Yet we can read Shelley's lines on the "secret things of the grave" in another light: inasmuch as a dead body is a thing, the grave's "secret things" may well be corpses, charnel, and other decayed once-human remnants.

Even as the poem "On Death" raises the spectre of indifferentiation, of the reduction of the "fine-wrought eye and the wondrous ear" to dust, it also retains an anthropomorphizing hope in its final stanza. Death is, as Paul de Man and Cynthia Chase (among others) have shown, the limit case of apostrophe: if apostrophe is the figure of addressing an absence, and thus the figure of conjuring presence, how much more filled with pathos is this figure when the addressee is the dead rather than, say, the west wind.[69] "Who telleth a tale of unspeaking death?" Shelley asks: this very poem may be one version of that tale, inasmuch as it asserts that the organs of perception and communication die with death: the poem thus *says* something about death. Yet Shelley also refers to the "secrets" that the poet may or may not wrest from the grave. Thus the question may also read this way: Who can, will, or might tell such a tale? Or, alternatively, who dares to assert that death is "unspeaking"? Who will come to tell us, who will "lift the veil of what is to come"? That the artist might do so, or might have done so once, is clear from the following lines, with their emphasis on telling and painting, on human communication and artifice: "Who telleth a tale of unspeaking death / . . . Who painteth the shadows that are beneath / The wide-winding caves of the peopled tomb?" These final lines evoke, however tentatively, a humanized grave. There is an elsewhere, and it is peopled: or so someone might "paint" or "tell." Yet, couching these lines in the interrogative throws the possible telling and painting of death and the tomb into question: stripped of religious narratives yet resistant to a simply materialist account, Shelley's meditation on death results in the deferral and ambiguation – if not the end – of representation, human making, and of people themselves.

However minor a poem, "On Death" serves as a useful introduction to what Shelley elsewhere explored more fully – the peopling thematic. I would argue that Shelley's suspicion of hypertrophied interiority is

fueled in part by his awareness of, his ethical insistence on, the pressure of other people. One could argue, in fact, that Shelley's engagement with Malthus (and more broadly, with "ethical science") functioned as a kind of pedagogical *askesis*. The large claims for consciousness, mind, liberty, and nature – so characteristic of the early Wordsworth and of most of Shelley's corpus – were refined, nuanced, and chastened by the difficult knowledge announced by the moral and political philosophers. In a roundabout fashion, we might say, Shelley uses "population" as a tool against a depoliticized celebration of consciousness. "Alastor" criticizes the overestimation of consciousness, in part by insisting on the claims and desires of other people (the Arabian maid, for example) and the reality of the world. So too many other poems show Shelley acknowledging the pressure of other people, if not the validity of Malthusian politics.

More abstractly, we might say that Shelley tries to chasten his own tendency to celebrate abstracted human or humanized qualities (cf the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty") by acknowledging the impact of humans as quantities. Indeed, his "Ode to Liberty" explicitly nods to the claims and pressures of human beings considered as populations:

> What if earth can clothe and feed
> Amplest millions at their need,
> And power in thought be as the tree within the seed?
> Or what if Art, an ardent intercessor,
> Driving on fiery wings to Nature's throne,
> Checks the great mother stooping to caress her,
> And cries: "Give me, thy child, dominion
> Over all height and depth"? if Life can breed
> New wants, and wealth from those who toil and groan,
> Rend of thy gifts and hers a thousandfold for one!
>
> (XVII. 246–255)[70]

Shelley's reference to the "amplest millions" who require food and clothing is, for him, a moment of almost materialist specificity. I read Shelley's questions as follows: what if needs were satisfied, the ideal "power in thought" (and of thought) unleashed? What if "art" – in other words, human making – were to be sovereign over and sufficient to "need"? The imagined encounter (and implicit contest) between "Art" and "Nature" is, of course, an old poetic theme: yet here the theme acquires a specifically political flavor (this is, after all, an Ode "to Liberty"). We might say further that Shelley refigures this theme in terms of the politics of population, given the clamouring "amplest

millions" who "toil and groan," who must and should be satisfied. The old dispute between art and nature is thus transformed in this stanza into a challenge presented by population, a challenge to be overcome by human making and care under the new dispensation of Liberty. The dense final lines of the stanza summarize a moral and political demand: if life can breed new "wants" (new desires as well as new deprivations) and can extort value from laborers, Liberty and Art should repay these toilers "a thousandfold for one."

Shelley's lyrical prospectus of a time when the "amplest millions" might enjoy life, liberty, and happiness acquires its urgency and pathos from its recognition of just how bleak things actually are for the "millions." Indeed, the condition of being one of the millions is, quite often in Shelley, an index of one's exclusion from liberty. Millions are usually, *qua* millions, enslaved. Earlier in the "Ode to Liberty," as he surveys in sweeping stanzas the universal history of man, Shelley observes that, before the dawn of Liberty:

III.

Man, the imperial shape, then multiplied
His generations under the pavilion
Of the Sun's throne: palace and pyramid
Temple and prison, to many a swarming million
Were, as to mountain-wolves their rugged caves.
This human living multitude
Was savage, cunning, blind, and rude,
For thou [Liberty] wert not; but o'er the populous solitude,
Like one firece cloud over a waste of waves,
Hung tyranny . . .

. . . and priests, who feed on gold and blood
Till with the stain their inmost souls are dyed,
Drove the astonished herds of men from every side.

(31–40, 43–45)

The trope of quantity, of massification, governs this account: with his reference to "astonished herds of men" as well as the "swarming million" and the "human living multitude," Shelley emphasizes the abject animality, the "savage" state, of humans considered merely as masses. Indeed, this retrospective dystopia is so energized that it threatens to overwhelm Shelley's subsequent vision of redeemed "millions" in the seventeenth stanza. This move from "swarming" millions to satisfied millions may be, in the end, insufficiently inspiring: when

troping masses and "millions" it is almost impossible to divest these terms of their faceless, anonymous, and thus morally and emotionally flat aspect.

Shelley's attention to the "millions" in the Ode to Liberty is not anomalous; the ideas and tropes of the Ode are in many ways a condensation of those of *Prometheus Unbound*. In *Prometheus Unbound*, as I have discussed in the preceding chapter, Prometheus redeems the enslaved multitudes, populations whose slavery consists at least in part in their being reduced to generic multitudes – human quantities without human qualities. Yet Shelley also retains in this poem the idea of a redeemed human collectivity, captured in the transition from "men" – anonymous multitudes – to "Man," the shining idea, the universal human. Operating at the level of generality, Shelley in this poem moves from one abstraction to another ("men" to "Man"), yet we can also see that liberation is imagined as a shift from the plural to the singular. In the grammar of Shelley's ideas, such a shift represents an advance from slavery to freedom. What such a drama of ideas omits, of course, is all the painful specificity of men and women and children, their needs and desires. Assuming the vantage of immortals and spirits, Shelley soars clear of the possible inadequacy of the world and its resources to those human needs; he postpones the political problem of adjudicating human claims. Nevertheless, his oeuvre consistently makes a case and a place for those claims.

Millions, masses and multitudes are, by definition, undifferentiated; they are abstracted unindividuated quantities; they are, in Marxian terms, humans abstracted through the general equivalent of number. Such a logic of quantitative abstraction governs a variety of techniques (for example, census-taking) and discourses (population theory and, more broadly, utilitarianism). And of course in this period the demonization of masses, multitudes, and "the people" was a powerful political tool: the monstrosity of "the people" or "the crowd" ungoverned in France and possibly in England animates Burke's conservative rhetoric, whereas the staunchly republican Hazlitt insisted years later that "the people" were in fact the guardians and repository of English liberty. I will not presume to survey the political discourse surrounding the problem of "the people"; suffice it to say that the spectre of roaming masses, undifferentiated and proliferating bodies, haunted Malthus's *Essay* as much as the more obvious anti-Jacobin polemics. It was this spectre that Hazlitt took pains to exorcise in his famous essay, "What is the People?" and I would argue that it is the same spectre that Shelley

confronts time and again in such explicitly radical poems as "On Liberty" and *Prometheus Unbound*. I would also argue that, even when divested of its more obvious political resonances, the figure of the people (whether as millions or swarms or multitudes) still carries a potential danger – the danger of massed humans whose needs persist unmet.

In this light, the romantic emphasis on singularity, subjectivity, and interiority looks like a powerful, if occasionally oblique or displaced, response to the spectre of massification and quantification. If "Alastor" focuses on the difficulties and aporias of singular consciousness, other poems focus on the problem of generic masses of men and women. More precisely, Shelley's poems tend to dramatize the uncomfortable dialectic between consciousness and massed bodies, subjectivity and human multitudes. A phrase from the "Ode to Liberty" encodes a brilliantly Shelleyan paradox: the poet declares that in the "savage" era before Liberty triumphed, Tyranny ruled "o'er the populous solitude." That a solitude could be populous is a wonderful Shelleyan, and romantic, insight; with this phrase in mind we can see how the "spirit of solitude" (which was the subtitle of "Alastor") might point to alienated masses of men as much as to an unhappy poet fleeing a "cold and alienated home." The enemy of Romantic consciousness – however self-regarding, self-inquiring, even self-annihilating it may be – is the non-differentiation, the indifferentiation, that threatens to efface it. Of course, the argument has been made that such a threat – whether experienced as "the sublime" or as a longing-for-death – is in fact the *engine* of the tropologics of Romantic consciousness. However much certain figures of Romantic consciousness may long for death (a theme so ostentatious in "Alastor," in Byron's *Childe Harold*, in Keats's Odes), nevertheless there is a crucial distinction to be made between indifferentiation-in-death (which of course may be desired, when consciousness is experienced as a wound) and indifferentiation-in-life. It was the latter prospect that appalled and energized Shelley when he wrote his great last and unfinished poem, *The Triumph of Life*.

As Frances Ferguson has argued, Romantic consciousness – impassioned, ecstatic, stationed, forlorn, recreative, despondent – circulated within a Romantic political economy that also trafficked in the idea and fear of proliferating bodies. The Wordsworthian "spirit of solitude" was one denomination of this currency; Malthusian bodies another. Yet we can also see that some poets internalized both aspects of this economy – or perhaps we should call it "this predicament" – within the poems themselves: Shelley's "Alastor," in which the gifted Wordsworthian poet

refuses human traffic, social or sexual, and soon dies, is only one example of such internalization and critique. In this poem, Shelley mounts his critique from the side – as it were – of consciousness. Yet one need not go to Malthus, or to Godwin or to Bentham or to the 1801 Census, to find the pressure of needy bodies: Keats's remark to his nightingale – "no hungry generations tread thee down" – is only one example of the highly wrought dialogue conducted in several poems between forlorn consciousness and greedy populations. (*Frankenstein* is, of course, another meditation on this theme: Victor recognizes the monster's loneliness and to that extent sympathizes with his desire for a mate, yet he also sees him as the possible progenitor of a "race of devils.") That these greedy populations, these hungry generations, might include the dead as much as the living – that in fact the massed bodies of the dead might be even more oppressive than the all-too-visible bodies of the living poor – should not and probably does not surprise us: poets as poets tend to respond quite keenly to the "burden of the past," in Walter Jackson Bate's phrase, and in this light Keats's lament may reflect the weariness one feels as belated, preceded, or pre-empted. Yet hungry generations may also be the generations of the future as much as those of the past: the spectre of a future filled with mindlessly reproducing and sad millions haunts Keats's Ode as much as Malthus's essay. Whether these generations extend forward or back, or whether they might point more particularly to Keats's own hungers, it is clear that the hungry generations he invokes are intensely embodied, pathetically human: these generations cannot be reduced to a purely or exclusively literary burden.[71] Indeed, Keats's emphasis on the pathos of the body, its defeat in sickness and in death, reminds us of what my discussion of immortality, mortality, and natality has thus far deferred: the body in pain.

OTHER POPULATIONS: "HUNGRY GENERATIONS" AND KEATS'S IMMORTALS IN PAIN

One of the most peculiar and yet characteristic aspects of Keats's last poems is his investigation of pain and death – more broadly, the condition of mortality – from the imagined vantage of immortality. If Wordsworth generates his intimation of immortality, and his Ode thereof, out of the shards of a remembered or reconstructed natality, Keats ceaselessly interrogates "immortality" – of the soul, of the song – from the perspective of mortality, usually figured as deep embodiment or sheer corporeality. The Nightingale Ode, with its vision of the poet as

a "sod" – insensate dirt, a corpse at one with the earth – is the most prominent example of this corporeal imagining. In another register, Keats's *Hyperion. A Fragment,* and his unpublished second attempt, *The Fall of Hyperion, a Dream,* show him working out – through a mythographical method – the stakes of mortality vis-à-vis immortality.[72]

Hyperion. A Fragment (which I will hereafter simply call *Hyperion*) takes as its theme the defeat of an old order and the birth of a new. Keats places us on the cusp of the new dispensation, with some Titans already acquiescing in their defeat (the moribund Saturn most notable among them), and others still straining to retain "power," Hyperion the most prominent. Yet it is clear that the Titans must give way to the Olympians, Saturn to Jove, Hyperion to Apollo. If this is tragic from the Titan point of view, it is an advance from the Olympian perspective and from the perspective of any who would subscribe to the view that genealogical (and, allegorically interpreted, historical) transformation and succession equals progress. Keats's ambivalence toward process-as-progress disperses itself throughout both *Hyperions*: inasmuch as the poet wishes to ally himself with power, particularly with Apollonian power, he must welcome the violent supersession of the old gods. Yet inasmuch as the drama among immortals may be another version of contesting "hungry generations," the poet adopts a stance neither Titanic nor Olympian but human and weary. This need to clarify the human reading of events and power may account for Keats's renewed effort in *The Fall*, in which he meditates powerfully on the poet's possibly deluded relation to power, hope, and the making of fictions.

The war among the gods may be seen as an allegory of the inherent violence of historical change, of the ambiguous status of aesthetic and political power, of the pleasures and dangers of tyranny, of the all-too-predictable logic of revolution, of the pathos of history masquerading as genealogical "necessity." *Hyperion* is also, as Keats observed in his letters and critics have elaborated upon since, an allegory of Keats's encounter with Milton. His later handling of the Hyperion-myth in *The Fall* tempers the astonishing Miltonic performance of the first by making use of a more supple diction, a dream frame, and the insertion of the poet-dreamer himself. In addition to these manifold aspects of meaning and style, we can also see that in the two poems Keats works out a critique of the category, "immortality." The significance of the Titans' defeat lies not in their catastrophic end as the ruling generation but rather in their status as both overthrown generation and overthrown gods – immortals dispossessed *as* immortals, *from* immortality.

Among the stranger but absolutely central operations achieved in these poems, I would argue, is the destabilization of immortality as a quality of being or as a future state. Immortals may become mortal. Gods may be, to invoke a word from *Hyperion*, "disanointed." As such, immortality must be considered as a kind of phase state, a contingent quality of being, which may suddenly and violently give way to that other condition all too familiar to humans and poets, mortality. In Keats's two epic fragments, one's state is neither given nor fixed: the condition of being mortal or immortal is not ontological, as the Gods themselves seem, mistakenly, to assume. Diagnosing immortality as the condition of being-in-power, Keats restores to the category "immortality" the political and moral-philosophical complexity which Wordsworth's Ode, read in isolation, tends to obscure.

What navigates between the apparently unbridgeable gulf between "immortals" and "mortals" is the capacity to feel, and more precisely, the sensation of pain.[73] Throughout *Hyperion*, Keats emphasizes the sensoria of his defeated immortals. This is a paradoxical emphasis, since Saturn, Thea and the Titan crew should not, as immortals, be susceptible to pain. Keats exploits this "as if" in numerous passages, as in his description of Thea's sympathetic desolation at the sight of Saturn:

> One hand she pressed upon that aching spot
> Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
> Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain. (I. 42–44)

As if, though an immortal, Thea felt cruel pain: but she doesn't. Keats's syntax, however, leaves us with the distinct impression of a goddess in pain. He soon reports that the beleaguered Titans "listened in sharp pain for Saturn's voice" (I. 164).

Saturn himself appears as a kind of abject monument, a deadened thing; the opening lines of the first book emphasize the deadly stationing in nature and in the god:

> . . . where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
> A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
> By reason of his fallen divinity
> Spreading a shade . . .
> . . . . . .
> His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead . . .
> (I. 10–13, 18)

Both nature and the god's body seem depleted, "listless, dead." These figures of the enervated body – which orient us to body parts and

sensory states – are, however, only one aspect of Keats's tropology. Sepulchral imagery also dominates this first book, as in the likening of Thea and Saturn, frozen in their stupefied pose, to "natural sculpture in cathedral cavern." Saturn and Thea threaten to become their own funeral monuments, to remain forever as Saturn first appears, "quiet as a stone" (I. 4). Only Thea's burst of speech and feeling disrupts the dead calm. In contradistinction to Saturn's appalling lifelessness, Keats depicts Thea feeling, weeping in sympathetic pain: as the poet observes, "how unlike marble was that face" (I. 34). In these first passages Keats establishes a network of opposing figures and concepts: vital sympathetic bodies in pain versus immobilized monuments, sensoria versus stone.

Yet we can see how complementary are these oppositions, dramatized most starkly in Saturn's and Thea's respective persons. To remain conscious is, as Thea most powerfully demonstrates, to be in pain; to freeze in the face of trauma is to become an unfeeling anesthetized monument. Through Thea, Saturn, the anguished Hyperion and the agonizing Apollo, Keats works out in a mythological domain what he in his "Ode to a Nightingale" enunciated lyrically: the terrible but seemingly unavoidable options of being insensate, dead, or conscious and thereby in pain. It is true that in the Ode the poet projects himself as a "sod," and thereby, perhaps, as part of nature; yet inasmuch as the sod is a non-sentient thing it is more like a stone (more like the sepulchral Saturn) than the living spirit of nature.

Consciousness of transformation casts the body into pain or into stone, that is, into the condition of nonsentience. Hyperion, the Titan who refuses to accept the apparent state of affairs, experiences Saturn's fall and his own possibly imminent fall as agonies. Overcome with disbelieving dread, he cries out:

> "O dreams of day and night!
> O monstrous forms! O effigies of pain!
> O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom!
> O lank-eared Phantoms of black-weeded pools!
> Why do I know ye? Why have I seen ye? Why
> Is my eternal essence thus distraught
> To see and to behold these horrors new?
> Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall? . . ." (I. 227–234)

Astonished by his own terrible visions, Hyperion speaks a language stocked with figures of the posthumous. "Effigies of pain," "spectres"

and "phantoms" haunt his dreams. The remarkable phrase "effigies of pain" condenses the range of meanings Keats forces his bodies to bear: effigies, as stone monuments, would seem to be impervious to pain, and yet Hyperion sees his fellow titans as "effigies of pain" – a figure that recalls Thea's double-sided aspect as a sculpture and as a body-in-pain. Hyperion himself undergoes his questioning, his cosmological doubt, as a bodily torment: ". . . through all his bulk an agony / Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown, / Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular / Making slow way" (I. 259–262). The Luciferian imagery here should alert us to another dimension of Keats's deep familiarity with Milton: Hyperion's torments, like those of the fallen angel, are perhaps not to be sympathized with. Most important, in terms of the critique of immortality, is the way this speech reveals Hyperion's profound and characteristic delusion, that he had, and indeed still thinks he has, an "eternal essence."[74]

Keats reveals the gods' so-called "essence" to be violently contingent. As the narrator observes in Book II, Saturn's struggles against "these plagues" are "vain":

> . . . for Fate
> Had poured a *mortal oil* upon his head,
> A *disanointing* poison. (II. 96–98, emphasis added)

As with Saturn, so too with the Titans. All are disanointed; only some realize it, and fewer still accept it (the wonderful Council of the Gods in *Hyperion* Book II, the casuistic speeches of which brilliantly imitate those of Milton's War Council in *Paradise Lost*, Book II, shows the fine distinctions among the gods' and goddesses' several understandings and attitudes). Ascribing this "disanointing" to Fate, Keats provisionally suspends the problems of agency and virtue – the realm of the moral. As Oceanus proclaims, in his speech to the Council of the Gods in *Hyperion* Book II: "For 'tis the eternal law/That first in beauty should be first in might" (II. 228–229).

Clearly this quintessentially Titanic reading of history does not satisfy Keats, however much his poem is a hymn to power, poetic and otherwise. The uneasy relation between gods and men, rarely explicit in *Hyperion*, nevertheless informs the narrator's editorializing remarks: this poem is a "translation" for mortals, he asserts. It is a translation not across languages so much as across orders of being. Thus, immediately after we hear of the "disanointing poison," the "mortal oil" that explains Saturn's wretchedness, the poet interjects:

> As with us mortal men, the laden heart
> Is persecuted more, and fevered more,
> When it is nighing to the mournful house
> Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise
> So Saturn, as he walked into the midst,
> Felt faint . . . (II. 101–106)

What we might call the "mortal simile" proliferates – as in the "mortal oil" that disanoints Saturn, or in Keats's likening of the god's sorrow to that of "us mortal men." Again, the mortal/immortal comparison works rather to widen the gap between the two than to suture it. Every citation of mortality by immortals, every comparison by the poet is thus disjunctive, emphasizing the gulf between immortals and mortals more than the likeness.

It may seem that I am belaboring these phrases and tropes: there is, after all, nothing literarily remarkable about pointing to the gulf between gods and men. That dangerous, attractive chasm appears in Genesis – when the sons of the gods looked at the daughters of men and found them fair – as well as in the myriad stories of Greek myth and epic. Keats's *Hyperion* is not, however, the story of the happy or tragic mingling of gods and men; like Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, it takes place completely within a mythographic domain in which human characters are utterly absent if frequently invoked. By focusing on the vicissitudes of "immortality" among the gods themselves, Keats paradoxically – through a negation – brings to the fore the vicissitudes of immortality among men. Mythography is, after all, an allegorical technique useful for exploring the genealogy and structure of ideas: mediating "immortality" through immortals, Keats brings us to the core of human myth-making, the desire to embody abstractions. It is Keats's particular genius that he managed to sustain equally the pole of embodiment and that of abstraction.

This double sustaining – of body and idea – reaches its culmination in *Hyperion* Book III, when we finally encounter Apollo. In this third book, Keats abandons his steely Miltonic style and shifts to a blatantly different discourse and diction. With his talk of "soft warble[s]" (12), "flush[es] (14)," a "vermeil hue" (14), and "faint-lipped shells" (19) it is as if the Keats of *Endymion* had suddenly erupted in a Miltonic epic. Keats strongly signals that this shift is a turning away from the Titans ("Leave them, O Muse!" [III. 1]), from Miltonisms, and perhaps from epic itself toward the pastoral idyll and lyric: "Apollo is once more the golden theme!" the poet proclaims. (And yet, Apollo has not yet been the theme

of this poem: he is only "once more" the theme if we consider Keats's self-appointed task to be a reconstruction or genealogical retracing always under the sign of Apollo and the lyre.) The "awful Goddess" Mnemosyne tracks down the young perplexed Apollo in his grove, and in his long speech we discover that he has been weeping, full of an unplaceable sorrow. What is crucial to this book is the fact that Apollo does not *know* of the new dispensation, yet he *has been feeling* it. Apollo's very body has registered, as it were, the massive shift in cosmological and genealogical order – yet he needs this goddess, the goddess of memory and the mother of the muses, to spur and guide his interpretation of the meaning of this shift. Asking the silent goddess question upon question, the young god almost complains but then moves confidently into an assertion of his divinity:

> Mute thou remainest – mute! yet I can read
> A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:
> Knowledge enormous makes a god of me.
> Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,
> Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
> Creations and destroyings, all at once
> Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
> And deify me, *as if some blithe wine*
> *Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,*
> *And so become immortal.* (III. 111–121, emphasis added)

More remarkable even than the assertion that "knowledge enormous makes a God" of Apollo is the suggestion that Apollo had not experienced himself as a god before this moment. Only when infused with the materials of poetry (names, deeds, etc) is he "deified." The following clause ("as if some blithe wine . . . I had drunk") further complicates our sense of the temporality and essence of Apollo's divinity: having recourse to stories of men made immortal through magic drinks, Apollo likens his phase change, his experience of deification, to that of mortals miraculously given the gift of immortality. Yet Apollo was never mortal; as Apollo he is always already immortal. And yet he did not know it. That Apollo experiences this agony of knowledge in the presence of the goddess of Memory indicates that, in fact, what he experiences as an accession into a new knowledge is rather a remembrance of an old, a re-cognition indeed.

With its myriad links to Keats's other works, we can see that, as many critics have observed, the self-discovering Apollo of *Hyperion* is as much a figure of the poet coming into his powers as that of a god coming into his divinity.[75] For Apollo, of course, godhead and poetic capability are

simultaneous and inextricable. Yet I would urge us to observe the gulf between Apollo and the human poet: indeed, it was Keats's consciousness of that very gulf, I would argue, that propelled his revision of Hyperion in *The Fall of Hyperion, A Dream*.

If in *Hyperion* the central perplexity and agony is Apollo's, in *The Fall* such perplexity and agony belong to the mortal poet. In the second *Hyperion* the poet explicitly comes into his mortality. Moneta, the veiled and admonitory version of Mnemosyne, addresses the dreamer-poet – he who narrates this vision – as "Mortal." Through Moneta Keats points to the task of poetic mediation, a task described as "humanization":

> Mortal, that thou mayst understand aright,
> I humanize my sayings to thine ear,
> Making comparisons of earthly things . . . (II. 1–3)

The mediation between immortals and mortals becomes an explicitly linguistic mediation. Moneta's account of her humanized speech is one version – the immortals' version, as it were – of Keats's theory of the work of poetry itself. What in *Hyperion* had been a task of mediating across orders of being becomes here the task of mediating within and through language: the work of poetry as Keats understands it. More precisely, this mediation becomes the *action* of *The Fall*. Yet if it is obvious in *The Fall* what poetry should or might do, or what it might require, it is not at all obvious that this dreamer-poet is up to the task: the dialogues between the "Mortal"-poet and the forbidding Moneta – through which the possibility arises that this poet is not a poet but rather a vexing "dreamer" – dramatize the difficulties of defining poetic responsibility and the poetic vocation. Keats has his tentative dreamer grope toward such a definition:

> . . . Sure a poet is a sage,
> A humanist, physician to all men.
> That I am none I feel, as vultures feel
> They are no birds when eagles are abroad.
> What am I then? Thou spakest of my tribe:
> What tribe? (I. 189–194)

Moneta proceeds to accuse him of being "of the dreamer tribe"; yet with the first passage of the poem in mind – its references to "savage[s]" as well as "fanatic[s]" – we can consider the matter of "tribe" to be an issue of human as well as literary community. When Keats asks Moneta, "What am I then?," he questions himself both as a poet and as a man: he asks, we might say, the so-called "anthropological question" that Au-

gustine asked in his *Confessions* (not "who am I" but "what am I"). The poet is supposed to be a "humanist," our narrator avers, and he also insists that he "feel[s]" that he is "none" – neither a poet nor a humanist. Yet the poem itself stands as ambiguous witness to the poet's identity: who is this creature, we might ask, who writes poems and yet fails to inhabit, or at least ceaselessly interrogates, the category "poet"? That he is a lesser thing, and scavenging thing, is clear from the simile – he feels himself to be no poet, he says, just "as vultures feel / They are no birds when eagles are abroad." But of course, vultures are birds; and so, this passage insinuates, is this paltry scavenging dreamer – this creature who feeds on the immortals' "remnants" (I. 33) and "refuse" (I. 30) – a poet. For good or ill.

Indeed, whether the poet works for good or ill is the crux of *The Fall*. Moneta insists that the poet "pours out a balm upon the world," whereas the dreamer "vexes it." If the ideal of poetry-as-balm persists, the poem also endorses what we might call the ethics of vexation. In its understanding of poetry, then, the poem is more capacious and consequently more contradictory than Moneta, who austerely and stringently distinguishes true poets from vexing dreamers. The poem poses but refuses the distinction. After all, the poem is conspicuously titled, "The Fall of Hyperion, *A Dream*."

CRITICAL MORTALITIES: DEAD POETS

In *The Fall*, the poet's accented mortality becomes the index of his representative human being under the sign of his difference from immortals. His mortal "weakness" becomes not a "human" strength, however, but rather an inherent if defining species vulnerability. Keats's uncertain poet-dreamer differentiates himself from the austerely confident Moneta. He beholds the awesome scene of Saturn and Thea (the tableau with which *Hyperion* began), the "silent" Moneta now beside them:

> Without stay or prop,
> But my own weak mortality, I bore
> The load of this eternal quietude,
> The unchanging gloom, and the three fixéd shapes
> Ponderous upon my senses a whole moon. (I. 388–392)

Bearing oneself up through and only through weakness, a weakness described as "mortality": such is a typically Keatsian "strength."

A question arises: to what extent is the mortal poet a representative human being? and, given the proliferation of dead poets in romantic literature as well as romantic biography, what are the uses of dead poets? The opening of the second *Hyperion* offers one kind of answer, since it offers one of the most moving assertions of poetic representativeness – of the poet as the universal particular human. The poem begins with this meditation:

> Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
> A paradise for a sect; the savage too
> From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
> Guesses at Heaven: pity these have not
> Traced upon vellum or wild Indian leaf
> The shadows of melodious utterance.
> But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die;
> For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
> With the fine spell of words alone can save
> Imagination from the sable charm
> And dumb enchantment. Who alive can say,
> "Thou art no Poet – mayst not tell thy dreams"?
> Since every man whose soul is not a clod
> Hath visions, and would speak, if he had loved,
> And been well-nurtured in his mother tongue.
> Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse
> Be Poet's or Fanatic's will be known
> When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave. (I. 1–18)

In this passage Keats articulates both a cultural history of poetry and an egalitarian, democratic humanism. It is not at all clear, Keats admits, that a poet's convictions are any sounder than those of a man called a "fanatic"; moreover, Keats implies, the major distinction between savages and fanatics on the one hand and poets on the other is the ability of poets to write, to record, to make artifacts out of their "Imagination." "[E]very man whose soul is not a clod / Hath visions," he asserts: who is to deny another the faculty of vision, the faculty of imagination? Like Wordsworth and Shelley, Keats posits "imagination" as a *human* faculty, not as an exclusively poetic one. Moreover, Keats here links the realization of "visions" and "Imagination" to a linguistic erotics: what prevents men and women from telling their dreams is not just their lack of access to writing or print but also and more fundamentally their estrangement from and within language. Loving language and being well-nurtured within language thus become, in Keats's meditation, the pre-conditions for a more generalized

and well-distributed human realization, both material and spiritual. "Poesy" alone – the "fine spell of words" – can save these sub-articulate dreams, this human ephemera, from superstition, "sable charm and dumb enchantment." Against "dumb enchantment" – a mute and intellectually impoverished spell-binding – Keats proposes "Poesy" as a communicating, communicative, and liberatory "spell." (Again, it is instructive to see how Keats, like Shelley, refuses to renounce the magical aura of poetry-as-spell, as transporting power and mesmerizing utterance: their skepticism, we might say, fuels a rage not for demystification but for a more adequate imagining, a better and qualitatively different "spell.") Keats moves here, albeit tentatively through negations, interrogatives, and conditional clauses, toward a vision of Imagination that does work in the world, an imagination made efficacious for and by the many, not just those few sanctioned as poets. In this passage, moreover, we see that Keats attempts to preserve both the specialness of poetry as "Poesy" (the "fine spell of words" permanently cast) and the generalized, if all-too-infrequently realized, capacity of human beings to be poets (that is, to have "dreams" and "visions" and to "speak").

Again, we can return our inquiry into the uses of mortality and of dead poets in particular to the texts with which I began: we might observe, when thinking of Wordsworth's Immortality Ode and Shelley's "Alastor," that while the ode explores intimations of immortality from the perspective of the generic human (however singularly experienced and expressed), "Alastor" narrates the travels and death of a "spirit" specifically identified as a "poet." "Alastor" is, we might say, an "Elegy for an Unnamed Poet." Shelley leaves his hero ostentatiously unnamed: while some commentators believe "Alastor" to be the name of the hero, others note that the term "Alastor" had more sinister Zoroastrian connotations in the Shelley circle and may in fact have represented the evil spirit "pursuing the poet to a speedy ruin," as Shelley says in his Preface. Whether Alastor betokens the poet as the spirit of solitude or an avenging figure who pursues the hero, we see that within the poem the poet is presented as unknown and unmourned. He has no name, nor – the narrator insinuates – did he make a name for himself. He was all capacity, no execution. He was all voice, no product. He was all imaginative impulse, no poetic artifact.

Inasmuch as "Alastor" is a critique of poetic solipsism, the poet is faulted for a narcissistic foreclosing, a failure to realize himself; yet inasmuch as the poem is – as the preface suggests – an indictment of

unsympathetic, unimaginative, fellow citizens and critics, the poet's anonymity and death register not his own private failure but the failure of his age to facilitate and recognize the gifts of one of its own. This is, of course, a Shelleyan problematic, one he most famously elaborated in the "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" passage that appears both in *A Philosophical View of Reform* and *A Defence of Poetry*. The figure of the poet, in such passages, provides a negative critique of the age even as he best embodies its genius; his failure is symptomatic not of his own lack but of the deformations of the socio-political system and the literary-critical milieu. At times, then, Shelley can read like Theodor Adorno *avant la lettre*: each suggests that only through a rigorous alienation and critique does the poet's art evade, however partially, the reification of the aesthetic.[76]

It is clear that, as part of the project of defining the poet, of theorizing poetry itself, poets established a new and critical relation to the field of immortality. Again, the significance of this relation arises not from its content (immortality re-discovered, say, as in the Immortality Ode, or finally renounced, as in *Prometheus Unbound*) but from its status as a predicament, a problem, a territory to be mapped, a limit to be re-defined, an idea to be re-imagined, a prospect to be embraced or renounced. Just as poetry discovers itself to be "historical" in such polemics as Thomas Love Peacock's *The Four Ages of Poetry*, so too "immortality" becomes in this period a historicizable idea, an idea whose genealogy could be traced, contested, and re-derived. Immortality thus has especial relevance for a generation of poets concerned to theorize both the work of poetry and the place of the poet vis-à-vis the human.

Poetry presents itself, in fact, as that discourse and practice capable of mediating between the mortal and immortal, or – to put it in other, perhaps Keatsian or even Yeatsian, terms – between the body and the artifact. In such poems as Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" we encounter poetry conscious, or nearly so, of its double and often contradictory status as artifact and expression, as thing and thought, as print and speech, as reification and imagination, as alienated language and linguistic reclamation. The gods of *Hyperion* figure one form of this paradox: alternately sepulchral statues and bodies-in-pain, the gods trope the oscillation between objectification and feeling that the poem itself wishes to mediate. That the poet him- or herself could become a thing is, of course, the recognition Shelley makes, for example, when he speaks of the "secret things in the grave" ("On Death"): more famously, Keats

achieves that descendental revelation when he inters himself in the "Ode to a Nightingale" – becoming to the bird's "high requiem . . . a sod" (60).[77]

Indeed, on a closer look, Keats's Ode presents a corporeal critique of Wordsworth's Ode, and of what Malthus called "the longing of the soul after immortality." Keats's poem reads as a kind of "Ode: Intimations of Mortality." Like Wordsworth, Keats experiences singularity as pain: his excruciating attention to his sensorium – to his singular, sensible body – registers on the body what Wordsworth preferred to trope through the lexicon of emotions ("to me alone there came a thought of grief") and the phenomenology of perception ("I hear, I hear, with Joy I hear!"). And I would suggest we read Keats's crucial fifth stanza as a complex engagement with Wordsworth's most intense formulation of impasse. In the Immortality Ode, Wordsworth arrives at his decisive collapse in the fourth stanza:

> – But there's a Tree, of many, one,
> A single Field which I have looked upon
> Both of them speak of something that is gone:
> The Pansy at my feet
> Doth the same tale repeat:
> Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
> Where is it now, the glory and the dream? (52–58)

In the "Ode to a Nightingale", Keats recapitulates this scene with a difference. The pansy at Wordsworth's feet – single, capitalized, symbolic, maddeningly repetitive – appears transfigured in the fifth stanza of the Ode as the plural flowers at Keats's feet:

> I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
> Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
> But in embalméd darkness, guess each sweet
> Wherewith the seasonable month endows
> The grass, the thicket, and the fruit tree wild . . . (41–45)

One imagines Wordsworth standing up, looking down at his annoying pansy; conversely, one may imagine Keats *lying* down, horizontal, the flowers "unseen" because of "darkness" but also because of this bodily position. Instead of unhappy consciousness phenomenologically rendered Keats gives us, I would argue, an entombed, embodied poet. Indeed it is no stretch, I think, to read the last half of Keats's Ode as a kind of figurative post-mortem, a sustained utterance of newly and progressively buried human sentience. Such a reading tends toward the

vulgar and literal, but Keats orients us this way with his fantasy of his insensate body. Should he die, he apostrophizes the bird:

> Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain –
> To thy high requiem become a sod. (59–60)

The figure of a body with organs of perception but no capacity to perceive, a body possessed "in vain": here we have the poet approaching the condition of a corpse. If all art aspires to the condition of music it may be that romantic poets aspire to the condition of singing corpses – viz. Keats in Shelley's *Adonais*.

Keats's self-entombing leads, in fact, to his signal variation on the immortality theme in the seventh stanza: "Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!/No hungry generations tread thee down" (61–62). In this stanza Keats distinguishes, as readers have long observed, between birdsong and human poetry, and between expressivity of nature and the human arts; what is less frequently remarked is how Keats makes this distinction – by exploiting the mortal/immortal crux. Keats subjected "immortality" to the pathos of embodiment: insisting on the corporeality of the poet's body, he dissociates the song of the "immortal bird" from the products of human "fancy." "Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!" – well, exactly, we might say: this tautology about the bird's species immortality points us to the paradox of human mortality. A consciousness of human species immortality only intensifies the mortal predicament of the "sole self": to consider "hungry generations" is hardly, for Keats, to be relieved. As Hannah Arendt writes of the Greek conception of mortality: "Men are 'the mortals,' the only mortal things in existence, because unlike animals they do not exist only as members of a species whose immortal life is guaranteed through procreation. The mortality of men lies in the fact that individual life, with a recognizable life-story from birth to death, rises out of biological life."[78]

The difference between "individual life" and "biological life" is of course the very chasm that immortality as an idea hopes to bridge. That the "longing for immortality," in Malthus's words, stimulated and organized such powerful polemics and poems reveals the high stakes of its cultural poetics and politics; that these poems continue to attract readers suggests that the stakes, however differently formulated, remain high. The moral philosophers understood immortality to be a species-question as well as a particularly volatile conjecture emerging in the human sciences. Like the moral philosophers, the poets understood the

question of immortality to be in part a question of the value of life: would mere life, or non-sentient life (Keats's bird), or massified life (Shelley's "millions"), suffice? and if not, why not? If the conditions of life could be altered, as Shelley argues in the "Ode to Liberty," why not the condition of mortality itself? Indeed, some hundred years after Keats and Shelley had died, Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* was revivifying the very terms they had so imaginatively and critically engaged: "If we are to die ourselves, and first to lose in death those who are dearest to us, it is easier to submit to a remorseless law of nature, to the sublime Necessity, than to a chance which might perhaps have been escaped. It may be, however, that this belief in the internal necessity of dying is only another of those illusions which we have created '*um die Schwere des Daseins zu ertragen* .' "[79] Freud's ambivalence about the necessity of death, and his provisional diagnosis of fatalism as possibly its own illusion (and not a fine functioning of the reality-principle), moves to the heart of the Romantic investigation of immortality. Resolving this ambivalence into a powerful opposition between life and death instincts, Freud ultimately naturalized and biologized what Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats had variously explored in their poems as the conditions under which one might long for either death or life. We would do well to consider, as Shelley did in "Alastor," what material, historical, and cultural forces would condition these longings. For indeed, as Roland Barthes has argued, birth and death – whether posited as human conditions, figures of speech, objects of longing, or instinctual aims – always appear, "however universal," as "the signs of an historical writing."[80] It is not the poets alone who lyricize and thus mystify birth and death; Godwin and Hazlitt accused Malthus of the same, and certainly Freud's reveries about the imminent triumphs of biology suggest a romance masquerading under the guise of science.[81] And indeed, as Shelley and Keats and Wordsworth may teach us, to write poetry is not necessarily to poeticize. It may be in the most figurative and least factual of texts that the analysis as well as the pathos of a predicament may emerge.

EPILOGUE

Immortality interminable: the use of poetry for life

One way to re-state the inquiry of the preceding chapter would be to ask, what do dead poets have to do with immortality? Or, to frame the question discursively, what did poetry and moral philosophy have to do with immortality in this period? To address each of these questions, I will turn yet again, this time the last, to the moral-philosophical text I have so often invoked in this project, Malthus's 1798 *Essay*. For it is in Malthus's *Essay* that we may discover a surprising case of the use and abuse of poetry for immortality.

A reader of Malthus's 1798 *Essay on Population* may not be surprised to find included in the essay such data as Dr. Price's tables of births, burials, and marriages. These tables, with their formidable columns and shining official numbers, tend to reinforce the mathematical – that is, the tropologically "real" – foundation of Malthus's thinking. Yet in several quotations Malthus shows himelf fluent in another kind of discourse than the demographic, the arithmetic, or the moral-philosophical. At two critical junctures of his argument, Malthus seals his conclusions with poetic allusions. And these allusions are not to any contemporary poet but rather to Alexander Pope. Within the text of population, then, we find the trace of poetry; this mobilization of poetry is, unsurprisingly, in the service of Malthusian ideology. Moreover, these citations of poetry serve to clinch Malthus's arguments against the conjectures of Godwin and Condorcet.

Summing up his arguments against the immortality of man, Malthus writes,

> I only conclude that man is mortal because the invariable experience of all ages has proved the mortality of those materials of which his visible body is made.
>
> What can we reason but from what we know.
>
> Sound philosophy will not authorize me to alter this opinion of the mortality of man on earth, till it can be clearly proved that the human race has made, and is making, a decided progress towards an illimitable extent of life.[1]

The indented line comes from Pope's *Essay on Man*. This line appears in the first division of Epistle 1, just as Pope has rhetorically established his project in language conspicuous for its Miltonic allusions:

> Let us (since life can little more supply
> Than just to look about us and to die)
> Expatiate free o'er all this scene of man . . .
> Laugh where we must, be candid where we can;
> But vindicate the ways of God to man.
> 1. Say first, of God above, or man below,
> What can we reason, but from what we know? (3–5, 15–18)[2]

Considering this passage, we notice its public and social orientation and its suave sententiousness. It is perhaps unsurprising that a line of Pope's could so effortlessly appear in Malthus's text. It is of course a truism that Pope, and the eighteenth-century couplet, lends itself to clichéd citation (what oft was thought and so on).[3] Poetry seems here to devolve into maxim: we notice that Malthus does not affix Pope's name to the line cited, most likely because such a note would have been, to most English readers, superfluous. Malthus invokes not Pope *per se* but a kind of poetry-effect: something "literary" is happening here, something rhetorically clinching, something designed to make us nod (in both senses: to make us affirm and to make us go to sleep). Pope, thus deployed, confirms Malthus in his stance of intellectual restraint. What can we reason but from what we know. Poetry here serves to underline what for Malthus should be obvious. As such, poetry is mobilized to do the work of ideology as Louis Althusser defined it in the essay on Ideological State Apparatuses: ideology as the ceaseless production of "obviousnesses."

Yet something has happened to Pope, and not just the effacement or suppression of his name. Malthus's Pope is truncated and modified; his quotation both invokes and distorts Pope's line, which makes itself a new home among Malthus's sentences. In the *Essay on Man*, Pope's line appears as a question; in Malthus, it is a statement. In Pope, the line is broken with a comma after "reason"; in Malthus the sentence moves forward inexorably. Pope poses the question of man's range of reason *as a question*; he further elaborates the problem in the series of interrogatives which make up the rest of the first verse paragraph. What Pope's poetry proposed, however provisionally, as a territory to be explored, Malthus transforms into a maxim to be deployed. Pope's "essay," his attempt, his going forth, becomes in Malthus an instance of Pope-as-epigrammatist. It is intriguing, then, to recall the hostility with which various romantics,

including Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, regarded Pope. It is hard to imagine a line of Shelley's which could be so easily assimilated into the Malthusian text.

I read this allusion closely to remind us of the mutual implication of poetry and moral philosophy, and to illuminate how in this case the latter takes and quite actually uses the former. In terms of the movement of Malthus's argument, the allusion deepens and sanctions Malthus's reasoning and conclusions: because we only know of men who are mortal, we must assume that man is and will forever be mortal. The "invariable experience of all ages has proved" this. We recall that Malthus is taking seriously (if only to skewer) Condorcet's and Godwin's conjectures about man's immortality; we note that Malthus was, as Marx sarcastically noted, a "parson," one committed to reconciling his theory with Christian theology. We may recall as well that Pope in his poetry strove to reconcile a theological with a social view of Man. Here Pope works for Malthus. He is made to endorse Malthus's rejection of earthly – as opposed to otherworldly or divine – immortality. Malthus, Pope, and ideological common sense line up against the utopian, Jacobin, revolutionary idea.

The second major poetic citation in Malthus's 1798 *Essay* is again from Pope's *Essay on Man*.[4] This last quotation has even greater force, coming as it does at the close of the last chapter of the *Essay*. Here Malthus has explicitly transformed the discourse of population into theodicy: his disquieting meditations on misery, vice, and want have led him and his readers to the obvious question of any orthodox believer – why is there this evil in the world? The Malthusian recuperation of misery makes for tough or heartening reading, depending on your disposition.

> The continual variations in the weight and in the distribution of this pressure [on man] keep alive a constant expectation of throwing it off.
>
> Hope springs eternal in the human breast,
> Man never is, but always to be blest.
>
> Evil exists in the world not to create despair but activity. We are not patiently to submit to it, but to exert ourselves to avoid it.[5]

In other words, the principle of population, and the "natural and moral evil" which "arises" from it, function as stimuli for the greater and better exercise of man's capacities.

Malthus thus arrives at his own peculiar optimism, one explicitly

based on religious orthodoxy, and he formulates this benign view via the words of Pope, lines 95–96 from the *Essay on Man*. Again, it is instructive to read Pope (unacknowledged as author again) back into his own work. The third division of the *Essay on Man* exhorts Bolingbroke and us to:

> Hope humbly then; with trembling pinions soar;
> *Wait the great teacher Death, and God adore!*
> What future bliss, he gives not thee to know,
> But gives that hope to be thy blessing now.
> *Hope springs eternal in the human breast:*
> *Man never is, but always to be blest:*
> The soul, uneasy and confined from home,
> Rests and expatiates in a life to come.
> (91–98; emphases added)

The aphoristic couplet emerges against a larger thematic backdrop: the soul of man must look to the afterlife for comfort and homecoming. Pope offers a pedagogy of Death even as Malthus later offered a pedagogy of mortality and "redundant population." Each assumes a universe stably structured and divided into heaven and earth; redemption lies elsewhere.

We are, as must be clear, very far from Shelley's liberatory and dialectical pedagogy in *The Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound*. We are far as well from the mortal negations of Keats. Malthus's easy invocation of Pope, and his unflappable calm in the face of death, suggest that Wordsworth was a keen diagnostician when in the *Essays upon Epitaphs* he defined his theories about death and personification against eighteenth-century epitaphic writing, particularly Pope's: "If my notions are right," Wordsworth asserted in the third essay, "the epitaphs of Pope cannot well be too severely condemned."[6] Yet if "Wordsworth's Pope," to invoke the title of Robert J. Griffin's book, should not be taken as the final or even the first word on Pope, neither should Malthus's Pope.[7] If Pope presents himself as an obstacle to Wordsworth, he is for Malthus (and, by extension, his readers, who implicitly know him by heart) perhaps all too assimilable.[8] More interesting than the possible alignments, ideological and theological, between Malthus and Pope is what we might call Malthus's abuse of Pope, his extraction of couplets from context and his transforming of Pope's interrogatives into declaratives. For Malthus's use of Pope points to the broader critical question of the use and abuse of poetry – how poetry is made to work, and for whom.

This is a question of enormous importance for readers and critics and

moves to the heart of romanticism and the reading experience itself. For despite humanist bromides and the equally clichéd (if, in my opinion, more engaging) romance of negation, poetry need not be on the side of either life or death; yet there is a seemingly irresistable compulsion, when reading romanticism in particular, to succumb to what Paul de Man described as equally vexed alternatives, "the recuperative and nihilistic allegories of historicism."[9] The biographies and critical surveys of Keats's life, to take only the most conspicuous example, have tended to exemplify a recuperative strategy whereby the pain of the life and the embarrassment of the early work are redeemed by the poetry of the "miraculous year," after which Keats conveniently dies, thus leaving us not to grieve but rather to savor the delicious pathos of triumph-in-defeat. In *Keats's Life of Allegory*, Marjorie Levinson has written a most astonishing critique of Keatsian hagiography; that it reads so perversely (embracing, for example, Keats's "badness" as the sign of his goodness) is in fact an index of its critical strength. Yet one does not need all the theoretical apparatus Levinson brings to bear (Sartre's progressive-regressive method, Freud's theory of narcissism, Lacan's symbolic, Marx's reification) to discover the predicament she so bracingly diagnoses. If Keats's self-abuse – his masturbatory, appropriative poetics (in her terms) – suggests just how laborious it was for him to make himself (to make a name, to make money, to make the poetry *make* him), his efforts (both his efforts and his poems, themselves efforts and effortful) also dramatize the peculiar bivalence of the process of making: what we might call, in its full etymological and Marxian connotations, the process of reification.

In the life and work of Keats we see "reification" revealed in its two-fold aspect: the process of making things (poems, books, "fine phrases") and the process of being made into a thing (the abstraction and alienation of self through the labor process under capital, according to Marx). While post-Marxist criticism almost always invokes "reification" as a term of opprobrium – consider, for example, Adorno's drumbeat against the "reification of the aesthetic" and "reified consciousness," or, to take an example from literary criticism, Jerome McGann's deployment of "reification" in *The Romantic Ideology* – the term has other, more benign and equally analytic senses which are more fully recognized in such works as Arendt's *The Human Condition* and, more recently, Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* (both of which are deeply engaged with Marx although not part of the conventional "post-Marxist" canon). Through reification the intangible enters the world, be-

comes part of the made world, part of the "human artifice," as Arendt calls it.[10] In the still-useful terms of romantic discourse, we might say that reification transforms "imagination" into artifacts which, as objective things in the world, are also sharable things. In Arendt's Heidegger-influenced account of the work of art in *The Human Condition*, she describes reification as the last movement of the process by which feeling ("its mute and inarticulate despondency") may be transformed into thought, which can then be made "fit to enter the world, to be transformed into things, to become reified" – in such artifacts as poems.[11] In characteristically sober fashion, Arendt emphasizes the cost of this transformation: "We have mentioned before that this reification and materialization, without which no thought can become a tangible thing, is always paid for, and that price is life itself."[12]

This exchange of life for work, even in such moving cases as Keats's, is best considered not as a heroic or pathetic sacrifice but rather as a feature of human making itself, common to the making of shoes, tools, poems, and even literary criticism. To identify this common aspect is not meant (or is not meant simply) to appropriate the dignity of artisanal labor for writing (of poems or of criticism); nor do I mean to equate Keats's material situation, his labors, and their terrible costs with, say, Wordsworth's. Rather, the case of poetry as reification – whether good or bad making – suggests how delicate and intimate are the operations through which human beings materialize the previously intangible and undisclosed. The various contradictions and aporias so prominent in romantic manifestos and poems (e.g. Wordsworth's invocation of men *speaking* to men in his *Preface*, itself a silent print artifact; Keats's offering of his living hand, now warm and capable, across centuries and an ocean) register both the bivalent aspect of reification and the mediating function of poetry. Or perhaps we should say that in signal poems and in the various manifestos we see poets both positing and navigating between these poles, whether identified as living breath and mute letter, speech and writing, vital thought and typeset lines, body and artifact, sentience and object, living form and achieved monument.

It is clear that the effort to sustain the animating human life in the inevitably life-consuming work governs many a romantic figuration, most notably those relying on apostrophe and prosopopeia. Autobiography and epitaph, as Paul de Man has illuminated, incorporate this doubleness in their very movements: Wordsworth's *Prelude* and his *Essays upon Epitaphs* (to use de Man's examples in "Autobiography as De-Facement") are ostentatiously committed to generating the illusion

of vital, undying presence through a figuration of perpetually sounding voice. Given my emphasis on the dialectic between individual and mass, singular consciousness and abstract population, Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* may be an even more pertinent example of this exploration of life, death, the limits of sentience and the work of poetry.

For truly, at this late date, one must read *The Triumph of Life* as a most remarkable document, a poem that neither recuperates nor decisively negates the promise of "life." The poem documents a harrowing dream vision in which the poet witnesses a Chariot of Life mow down all comers, themselves ecstatically self-forgetful as they are ground to dust. As de Man witheringly demonstrates in "Shelley Disfigured," optimistic readings of the poem fail to account for its most essential features – its self-consuming figuration, its fixation on the motif of annihilation, its ceaseless re-inauguration of questioning, its violence, its sightless and almost effaced interlocutor, Rousseau. The poem is almost inexhaustibly rich, and in fact its richness is in part a demonstration of the disturbingly prolific power of figuration; the poem also illuminates, by way of allegory, just how power – whether understood as bio-power, political power, or even poetic power – ruthlessly mobilizes the capacity of language to posit and to figure. Its centerpiece dialogue between the dreamer-poet and the root-like thing revealed to be Rousseau lends itself to a myriad of political and historical interpretations (e.g. the poem as a critique of Enlightenment, as a diagnosis of the course of Revolution and the fate of the philosophes' ideas, as a meditation on the meaning of Napoleon's career). The poem also speaks to the themes I have been here re-stating: the status of "life" as a value and the relation of poetry to that value.

For certainly the triumph of life here is at best ambiguous. Shelley tropes the progress of life through the sun, its dawns and movements, and thus he addresses the question of natality: the premise of beginnings and the new. The people on the "public way" of life are unindividuated, generic, amalgamated, likened to "numerous . . . gnats" and the "million leaves of summer's bier":

> a great stream
> Of people there was hurrying to and fro,
> Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,
>
> All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
> Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
> He was made one of the multitude, and so

Was borne amid the crowd, as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier;
Old age and youth, manhood and infancy,

Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear . . . (44–53)[13]

This mindless, hapless, passive participation in the "multitude," this status as "one of the million," acquires a specifically political valence as the poet-dreamer sees:

The million with fierce song and maniac dance

Raging round – such seemed the jubilee
As when to greet some conqueror's advance
Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea

From senate-house, and forum, and theatre . . . (110–114)

The crowd reveals itself to be a mass of imperial and not republican subjects; the Triumph of Life is itself an imperial, even Napoleonic, progress, as well as a perverse replaying of that infamous triumph of Louis xvi that so appalled Burke.

The insidiously easy absorption of the individual into the mass appears explicitly in this poem as the loss of individual physiognomy – through a tropology of effacement, in both de Man's and Shelley's rhetoric. Loss of form and face metonymically suggest an erosion of sentience:

After brief space
From every form the beauty slowly waned

From every firmest limb and fairest face
The strength and freshness fell like dust, and left
The action and the shape without the grace

Of life. (518–523)

The course of Life ensures this grinding pulverization, this deformation, this endless forgetting, this losing "of the grace / Of life." What Shelley gives us is a vision of death-in-life, indifferentiation-in-life – the very indifferentiation and non-sentience which would seem to be the hallmarks of cultural death. It would be, I think, a mistake to read the movements of Life as exclusively or even primarily tropological (as de Man does in "Shelley Disfigured"); and given Shelley's acute political

sensitivity, it would also be a mistake to assimilate this process into, say, the triumphal inhuman march of a trans- or pre-historical Nietzschean "bio-process." With its Rousseauvian interlocutor and a cameo from Napoleon (not to mention the parade of deluded philosophes, including Voltaire and other "spoilers spoiled"), this is hardly an apolitical poem; yet neither is it simply or transparently a political poem. *The Triumph of Life* asks us to consider to what extent this obliteration in and by the world manifests "Necessity" (or history as necessity) and further, to what extent human intervention, artifice broadly conceived, might alter as well as create the conditions of "Life."

Shelley's dreamer-poet seeks from Rousseau a kind of knowledge, but Rousseau cannot satisfy the dreamer's questions and the imagined pedagogical scene collapses. Beholding the crushed millions, Rousseau advises the poet:

> But follow thou, and from spectator turn
> Actor or victim in this wretchedness,
>
> And what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn
> from thee . . . (305–308)

Given the instability and unreliability of Rousseau as figured, we should wonder whether his proposed alternatives, actor or victim, are the only ones. Indeed, from the poet's perspective, to act – in the sense of making poems – might also entail one's becoming a victim: this is a quintessentially romantic predicament (indeed, as the poet-dreamer asserts, "I / have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!" [278–279]). It is instructive to compare this passage with a similar one from *Adonais*, when in the course of elegizing Keats, Shelley asks: "Of what scene/[are we] the actors or spectators?" In *The Triumph of Life*, Shelley introduces a third term, "victim," and seems through Rousseau to reject the distance, privilege, and romance of spectatorship. Indeed, Shelley's critique of these options, acting or spectating – emerging as it does in a poem concerned to explore the stakes of revolution, the possibility of the new – anticipates Hannah Arendt's objections to German Romantic notions of revolutions as episodes in the march of world-historical progress: "Politically, the fallacy of this new and typically modern philosophy is relatively simple. It consists in describing and understanding the whole realm of human action, not in terms of the actor and the agent, but from the standpoint of the spectator who watches a spectacle."[14] The poet-dreamer is both a spectator and something of an actor, inasmuch as he actively interrogates

the Rousseau-figure: his liminality becomes the position from which the poem can interrogate and sustain what increasingly seems a forced choice.

If *The Triumph of Life* brings to the fore the question of human intervention, it also solicits our attention as a meditation on the problem of the post-mortem. Within the poem, Rousseau gives a post-mortem speech that is uncanny precisely because he seems not quite dead enough. Yet what else do we ask of Shelley when we read *The Triumph of Life* (or *Prometheus Unbound* or *A Defence of Poetry*) but that he too speak to us post-mortem? In *The Triumph of Life*, what looks to be a root soon becomes an approximation of the man Rousseau, or more precisely of his voice; what looks to be grass becomes discernible as his hair. Through Rousseau Shelley enacts a kind of reverse metamorphosis (nature > man), a perverse anthropomorphism that compels us because in this case the trope is, as it were, true: that thing actually does acquire a human voice when solicited. The apostrophe works. That is, Shelley lays bare the desire animating the personification: prosopopeia is shown in this case to be a function of, as well as the means of, an urgent, imagined dialogue with the dead.

The Triumph of Life is thus a meditation on the uses of the dead both for life and for poetry; as such it encourages us to consider just how dead poets continue to be used. Again, Paul de Man offers a disturbingly lucid entry into this question, when he addresses the question of Shelley's death:

> The final test of reading in *The Triumph of Life* depends on how one reads the textuality of this event, how one disposes of Shelley's body. The challenge that is in fact present in all texts and that *The Triumph of Life* identifies, thematizes, and thus tries to avoid in the most effective way possible, is here actually carried out as the sequence of symbolic interruptions [which] is in its turn interrupted by an event that is no longer simply imaginary or symbolic. The apparent ease with which readers of *The Triumph of Life* have been able to dispose of this challenge demonstrates the inadequacy of our understanding of Shelley and, beyond him, of romanticism in general . . . For what we have done with the dead Shelley, and with all the other dead bodies that appear in romantic literature . . . is simply to bury them, to bury them in their own texts made into epitaphs and monumental graves. They have been made into statues for the benefit of future archaeologists . . . They have been transformed into historical and aesthetic objects.[15]

It is not just that Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, et al. are dead, it is how we understand them to be dead and to have died that matters. Shelley's

astonishing death – his drowning at age twenty-nine while sailing, his heart being pulled from the hot ashes by Trelawny – offers in its own right an exemplary romantic text. His sudden death forever prevented his completing, if he would have completed, *The Triumph of Life*. This poem thus becomes an inadvertent fragment, one forever sundered from its author's possible intentions. And yet I, like legions of critics, have persisted in reading the poem, despite its variants and revisions, as a more-or-less fixed text, as an artifact, as a monument of poetic and human intention. Even as I have acceded to the monumentalization of these works, then, I have continued to read them as if they, and implicitly their authors, were still alive. I have, in fact, read *The Triumph of Life*, and every other poem quoted in this book, as a kind of ascertainable communication addressed to me, and potentially to you. This book has in fact relied on a series of extended prosopopeias by which the dead have been made to speak to and sometimes for me. For all my hostility to vulgar utilitarian doctrine, I have nevertheless made use of these poems, have instrumentalized them, in a paradoxical effort to ally myself with their resistance to mere utility as a criterion of value. I would hope that the use of poetry for and in this project has not been excessively deforming or merely illustrative, as I have argued Malthus's use of Pope is. But indeed, I have made poetry work terribly hard for me in this monograph, have made it work for a critical project it may have no need of. Then again, if criticism reveals its own haunting, it is not the critic alone who decides what needs to be said.

Notes

INTRODUCTION, OR THE THING AT HAND

1 Elizabeth Bishop, "At the Fishhouses," *The Complete Poems, 1927–1979* (New York: Farrar, 1983), pp. 65–66.

2 For the distinction between "system" and "method," see in particular Michel Foucault's chapter "Classifying," in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, a translation of *Les Mots et Les Choses* (New York: Random, 1973). Foucault argues that natural history converted questions of "structure" into "character" by means of "the method" (through which the natural historian sought a description of all the features of natural things) or, alternatively, by means of "the system" (according to which the natural historian selected a few telling and consistent variables through which to categorize the visible world).

3 Consider, for example, McGann's assertion that "Imagination and poetry do not offer a relief and escape but a permanent and self-realized condition of suffering, a Romantic Agony," and his subsequent observation that "Contradictions are *undergone* in Romantic poems, necessarily, because the ideology which informs their styles involves the supreme illusion of the trans-historical privilege of poetry and the creative imagination." McGann goes on to quote Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo*, including the line, "They learn in suffering what they teach in song" (l. 546). See Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 131, 135. McGann's very terms (relief, escape, suffering, agony) are themselves, of course, saturated with romanticism – an observation, not a critique. McGann analyzes the ways in which romantic poets suffered through and in ideology; his sense of a romantic predicament is thus quite different from, although it informs, my own. As this book attests, I obviously believe in "the trans-historical privilege of poetry and the creative imagination"; I would argue that this is not an absolute privilege but rather a fragile, conditioned, and necessarily reconstructed one. It does not suffice, I think, to call such a privilege a "supreme illusion," as McGann does: as opposed to what "reality," we might ask? His own book enacts a certain kind of trans-historical dialogue, testifying to the privilege of poetry even as it critiques it.

4 For a discussion of the "residual," see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1977), esp. Chapter 8, "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent," pp. 121–127. Williams calls for an "'epochal' analysis," through which we might "seize" cultural process "as a cultural system." Williams's *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (rev. edn., Oxford University Press, 1983) offers, despite its over-reliance on the *Oxford English Dictionary*, suggestive and useful entries for many of the terms and concepts I invoke here and in my first chapter, including entries on "Literature," "Aesthetic," "Man," "Humanity," and "Romantic." That Williams provides an entry for "Literature" and none for "Poetry" – that "poetry" appears in fact as a briefly mentioned practice under the category "literature" – points us to the very question of hierarchy and categorization that so exercised Wordsworth and Shelley.

5 See Alvin Kernan, *The Death of Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

6 Homi Bhabha, "Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations," *Critical Inquiry* 23: 3 (Spring 1997): 433. Introducing the *CI* issue, "Front Lines/Border Posts," Bhabha alludes to the critical/theoretical re-orientation of the past decade ('the *long* 1990s," he calls it) in these terms: "The crossing of cultures, the grafting of genres, and the hybridity of knowledges and identifications have become the *activity* of a theoretical enterprise that negotiates a range of critical conditions with the *post* mark – poststructuralist, postfeminist, postcolonial, postmodern" (433). Against or alongside this sending forth of "post"-marks, this necessary but vexed prefixing, I would propose the romantic infinitive construction of the "ever more about to be."

7 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 1958, 1989), p. 10.

8 See McGann, *The Romantic Ideology*, esp. Chapter 4: "The Line of Coleridge and the Line of Hegel: Romantic Repetition and Romantic Reification." McGann sees these alternatives emerging within romanticism itself (Coleridge and Hegel here his representative theorists and progenitors) but also as persisting in twentieth-century critical writing, destined it would seem either to repeat (through a translation into criticism) romantic formulations or to reify romanticism such that its premises can be surgically displayed but also alienated and rigidified. I would suspect that this book succumbs especially to the lure of romantic repetition.

9 Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (New Brunswick: Routledge, 1978): "The statement can now be formulated: either literary criticism is an art, completely determined by the pre-existence of a domain, the literary works, and finally reunited with them in the discovery of their truth, and as such it has no autonomous existence; or, it is a certain form of knowledge, and has an object, which is not a given but a product of literary criticism" (p. 7). See too his comments on p. 52, when he argues for the specificity of literary works as "the object of a *specific science*."

One can't help but notice that in Macherey's drive to strip literary works of their pretensions to autonomous existence he appropriates that autonomy for criticism, thereby retaining, if displacing, the fetish of "autonomy" under the guise of "science." Perhaps by now this mania for an autonomous science of literary criticism has lost some of its force. Thanks to Laura Slatkin for directing me back to Macherey.

10 William Wordsworth, *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Additions of 1802, in Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, eds. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones, 2nd edn. (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 259.

11 Wordsworth, *Preface*, p. 259.

12 Wordsworth, *Preface*, pp. 257–258.

13 Wordsworth, *Preface*, p. 260.

14 See "Literary History and Literary Modernity" (pp. 142–165) and "Lyric and Modernity" (pp. 166–186) in Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, intro. Wlad Godzich, 2nd edn. rev. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983). De Man ends the first of these essays with the statement, "To become good literary historians, we must remember that what we usually call literary history has little or nothing to do with literature and that what we call literary interpretation – provided it is only good interpretation – is in fact literary history. If we extend this notion beyond literature, it merely confirms that the bases for historical knowledge are not empirical facts but written texts, even if these texts masquerade in the guise of wars of revolutions" (p. 165). An exemplary Satanic deconstructive conclusion, which cuts more than two ways, especially in light of de Man's writings for *Le Soir*. On the more restricted question of literary temporality, consider de Man's remarks on the term "modernity" in "Lyric and Modernity": "It designates more generally the problematical possibility of all literature's existing in the present, of being considered, or read, from a point of view that claims to share with it its own sense of a temporal present. In theory, the question of modernity could therefore be asked of any literature at any time, contemporaneous or not" (p. 166).

15 William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* ed. David V. Erdman, commentary Harold Bloom, rev. edn. (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 36.

16 Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, eds. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, vol. VII (New York: Scribner's, 1930). The phrase first appears toward the close of his jeremiad against "calculation": "We want the creative faculty to imagine that which we know; we want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine; we want the poetry of life: our calculations have outrun conception; we have eaten more than we can digest" (p. 134). The second appearance of the phrase illuminates that, for Shelley, to imagine what we know is the work of poetry: "It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know" (p. 137). The movement from perceiving to feeling, and from knowing to imagining, is the movement or transmutation that

Shelley's "poetry" accomplishes. In its registration of the sea as perceived and also felt, and of the sea as an image for something (knowledge), Bishop's poem "At the Fishhouses" orchestrates these very motifs.

1 TOWARD AN ANTHROPOLOGIC: POETRY, LITERATURE, AND THE DISCOURSE OF THE SPECIES

1 Godwin, "Of an Early Taste for Reading," *The Enquirer. Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature in a series of essays*, 1st edn. (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1797), p. 31.

2 William Wordsworth, *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 259.

3 The phrase, "laws of organic life," served as the subtitle to Erasmus Darwin's massive tome, *Zoonomia; or, The Laws of Organic Life* (London: John Johnson, 1794; third "corrected" edn., 1801). Darwin, grandfather of Charles, contributed most famously to work on evolution, reproduction, and the growth of plants – this in addition to his prodigious versifying in such works as *The Botanic Garden* (1789, 1791) and *The Temple of Nature* (1803), both of which illustrated his scientific theories. The conjunction of science and poetry in this period may be best observed in the careers of Darwin and another eminent English scientist, Humphry Davy, both of whom wrote poetry (Darwin with far more success than Davy). For an account of Darwin's political, medical, and poetic careers, see Desmond King-Hele, *Doctor of Revolution: The Life and Genius of Erasmus Darwin* (London: Faber, 1977) and *Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986). If Darwin oriented himself to the life sciences, Davy made his name as an electro-chemical experimenter, as a theoretician of matter, and as a contributor to agricultural science. For a lucid and sympathetic account of Coleridge's engagement with Davy, and more broadly with "romantic science," see Trevor H. Levere, *Poetry Realized in Nature: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Early Nineteenth-Century Science* (Cambridge University Press, 1981). Davy continued to influence the second generation of romantic writers: Mary Shelley read Davy's *A Discourse, Introductory to a Course of Lectures on Chemistry* (1802) in October 1816, just as she began the novel we now know as *Frankenstein*. Anne K. Mellor, who deftly traces Mary Shelley's serious engagement with Erasmus Darwin as well as Davy, suggests that Mary Shelley also read Percy Shelley's copy of Davy's textbook, *Elements of Chemical Philosophy* (London: 1812). See in particular Mellor's chapter, "A Feminist Critique of Science," in *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fictions, Her Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 89–114.

4 As will become clear, or at least somewhat clearer, I will be using the phrase "human sciences" in the sense familiar to Wordsworth, Godwin, Malthus et al. but will also have in mind such twentieth-century critiques of the human sciences as Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. As Alan Bewell demonstrates in *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in the Experimental Poetry* (New Haven: Yale

University Press, 1989), the question of which knowledges, disciplines, and methods might come under the rubric of the "human sciences" became particularly volatile in England by 1800. Let Foucault's statement stand as this introduction's useful caution: "The epistemological field traversed by the human sciences was not laid down in advance" (p. 344).

5 R. S. Crane, *The Idea of the Humanities; and Other Essays Critical and Historical* (University of Chicago Press, 1967), 2 vols.

6 See Bewell's Introduction, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment*, pp. 29–42, for his account of this "domestic anthropology." The Introduction also discusses the discursive and scientific paradigms that Wordsworth engaged and resisted. For another recent work on the relation of romantic poetry to other disciplinary paradigms, see Regina Hewitt, *The Possibilities of Society: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Sociological Viewpoint of English Romanticism* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997). Hewitt persuasively and imaginatively reads the romantic project as "poetic sociology." Reading backward from the institution of sociology, Hewitt proposes these poets as sociologists before the fact, as it were – describers of "ideal types," producers of "social knowledge": she reads selected poems and essays as models both of and for "learning how a coherent society can function" (p. 98). I wish to thank the anonymous first reader of this book, who alerted me to Hewitt's book and its relevance to this project.

7 Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

8 Godwin, *The Enquirer*, p. x.

9 David Bromwich, *A Choice of Inheritance: Self and Community from Edmund Burke to Robert Frost* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 1.

10 Bromwich, *A Choice of Inheritance*, p. 2.

11 Bromwich, *A Choice of Inheritance*, p. 3. That Bromwich and Williams arrive at similar diagnoses of "literature" does not, of course, mean that their critical or political projects or orientations also coincide.

12 Williams, *Marxism*, p. 47.

13 Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester, "Translator's Introduction," Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. ix.

14 Barnard and Lester, trans., *The Literary Absolute*, p. xi.

15 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus. The 1818 Text*, ed. James Rieger (University of Chicago Press, 1974, 1982), p. 154. Clearly this citation could be read, as one of my students suggested regarding Victor's earlier allusion to "The Ancient Mariner," as Mary Shelley's and not Victor's allusive turn. Yet in this moment Victor makes clear it is he who sets up the citation, he who "spontaneously" connects the Wordsworthian love of nature to Clerval's character, for which "even human sympathies were not sufficient" (p. 154). Victor, then, is conscious of the function of this passage as a mediation of Clerval; that Mary Shelley adds the note

identifying the quotation as "Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'" secures the reference as an authorized quote. As a *told* and *heard* narrative, Victor's allusion passes, as it were, unmarked – a spontaneous effusion, a poetic efflux. Yet the typography, with its quotation marks and dashes, and Mary Shelley's asterisk (*Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey") turn us away from the fiction of poetic immediacy, the ever-ready and unsourced allusion, and insist on the mediation of the letter, the authorial name, and the rhetoric of type.

16 Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 109.

17 Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 113.

18 Williams, *Marxism*, p. 45.

19 Williams, *Marxism*, p. 47.

20 Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragment*, p. 116: "Other kinds of poetry are finished and are now capable of being fully analyzed. The romantic kind of poetry is still in a state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected" (p. 32). In *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis; Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

21 David E. Wellbery, Introduction to Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, trans. Michael Metteer with Chris Cullens (Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. xiii.

22 Wellbery, Introduction, *Discourse Networks*, pp. xiv.

23 This promise had of course dissolved by the end of the reign of Bromwich's "literary ideal" – that is, by 1945. Indeed, Sartre's "What is Literature?" argues that "poetry" – for Sartre, surrealist practice with language-objects – has nothing to do with a program of "committed writing" – engaged practice in the world through prose, film, and radio, all of which he incorporates in his definition of "literature" (see Jean-Paul Sartre, *'What is Literature?" and Other Essays* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988], especially the section, "What is Writing?"). Sartre's enthusiasm for mass media, so different from the critique of the Frankfurt School, suggests that he understood "mediality" (to borrow a term from Kittler's translator, Wellbery) to be the route to his version of "totality." For certainly Sartre was not willing to abandon "the absolute," "totality," "literature" or "man": he instead defined "poetry," understood primarily as surrealism, out of these categories.

24 T. S. Eliot, "Wordsworth and Coleridge," Charles Eliot Norton Lecture of December 9th, 1932, *The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), p. 72.

25 The theorization of poetry may be seen as a response to its politicization and professionalization, trends supported by the founding of polemical reviews in the early decades of the nineteenth century, including the *Edinburgh Review* (founded 1802), the *Quarterly Review* (founded 1809), and Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* (founded 1808). Jon P. Klancher, in *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987) discusses the re-organization of the literary public sphere and reading

habits under the pressure of social, cultural and political conflicts. See especially his chapter "Romantic Theory and English Reading Audiences" (pp. 135–171) for an account of Coleridge's "clerisy," and "Radical Representations" (pp. 98–134) for a discussion of Shelley.

26 Eliot, "Introduction, November 4th, 1932," *The Use of Poetry*, p. 16.

27 Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 140. I would like to thank Jim Chandler for alerting me to Eliot's telling misquotation.

28 For another perspective on this phenomenon we might invoke Coleridge's lament in his *Biographia Literaria*, which reveals and in fact revels in the pathos and bathos of literary and poetic professionalization: "Hence of all trades literature at present demands the least talent or information; and of all modes of literature, the manufacturing of poems" (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. George Watson [London: Dent; Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle, 1991], p. 21). The artisanal force of such terms as "trades" and "manufacturing" stands in intriguing – and perhaps supplemental – relation to the more famous Shelleyan descriptions of poetry as a divine vocation and a species of possession.

29 Jerome Christensen, "The Romantic Movement at the End of History," *Critical Inquiry* 20:3 (Spring 1994) : 456.

30 Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 123.

31 Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 11.

32 Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 11.

33 See the ninth entry for "keeping" in *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 1, A–O (Oxford University Press, 1971): "In *Painting. orig.* The maintenance of the proper relation between the representations of nearer and more distant objects in a picture; hence, in a more general sense, 'the proper subservience of tone and colour in every part of a picture, so that the general effect is harmonious to the eye' (Fairholt); the maintenance of harmony of composition" (1530). The *OED* gives a 1715 quotation of J. Richardson as the first cite, and includes others from Goldsmith, Gilpin, Johnson, and Maria Edgeworth, all concerned with the aesthetics of proportion, especially but not exclusively in reference to painting.

34 In her revisions of 1823, Mary Shelley had Victor elaborate on his description of Henry Clerval. These additions clarify Clerval's role as a poet-function: "Henry [loved poetry and his mind was filled with the imagery and sublime sentiments of the masters of that art. A poet himself, he turned with disgust from the details of ordinary life. His own ≪soul≫ mind was all the possession that he prized. . .]" (p. 39, additions in brackets, cancellations within additions in double brackets). Here too we see the double function of poetry as fantasy (versus ordinary life) and poetry as one's own self-"possession."

35 Donna J. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 200.

36 *The Literary Absolute*, p. 48.

37 W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., "The Chicago Critics: The Fallacy of the Neoclassic Species," *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* with two preliminary essays written in collaboration with Monroe Beardsley (University of Kentucky Press, 1954), pp. 52–53.
38 Wimsatt, pp. 53–54.
39 T. S. Eliot, "Introduction, November 4th, 1932," in *The Use of Poetry*, p. 5.
40 Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 31, 31–32.
41 Thomas Love Peacock, *The Four Ages of Poetry*, in *Essays, Memoirs, Letters and Unfinished Novels*, The Halliford Edition of the Collected Works of Thomas Love Peacock, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith and C. E. Jones, vol. VIII (New York: AMS Press, 1967), p. 24.
42 Wordsworth acknowledged the competing axes of distinction in his *Preface* when he observed in a note that "I here use the word "Poetry" (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word "Prose," and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is metre" (p. 254). It is striking how ultimately unpersuasive such a theoretical liberation of poetry from metre turned out to be – the controversy over *vers libre* in the early twentieth century suggests that metre (traditionally understood) remained an untransformed and defining criterion of poetry.
43 Wordsworth, in the *Preface of 1815*, begins: "The powers requisite for the production of poetry are . . ." and proceeds to list Observation and Description, Sensibility, Reflection, Imagination and Fancy, Invention, and Judgment (pp. 26–27). He also suggests several criteria for classifying poems, the first of which appears "with reference to the powers of mind *predominant* in the production of them" (his emphasis, p. 28). See the *Preface of 1815*, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, vol. I of 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).
44 See Robert J. Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope: A Study in Literary Historiography* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) for the significance of Young's essay in terms of its construction of romantic discourse and, simultaneously, its anathematization of Pope (pp. 49–52).
45 The Enquirer, "Is Verse Essential to Poetry?" *Monthly Magazine and British Register*, July 1796: 456.
46 William Hazlitt, "On Poetry in General," in *Lectures on the English Poets and The Spirit of the Age: or Contemporary Portraits*, intro. Catherine MacDonald MacLean (London: J. M. Dent, 1960), p. 13. Hazlitt's animadversions on Addison resemble Wordsworth's on Pope as a mere versifier, for example in his damning praise of Pope in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*: "We see that Pope by the power of verse alone, has contrived to render the plainest common sense interesting, and even frequently to invest it with the appearance of passion" (*Preface*, p. 267). The extent to which "verse" signified "the Augustans" for late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century poets and critics deserves a more systematic accounting.

47 'On the Characteristics of Poetry,'' Letter, *Monthly Magazine and British Register*, August 1796 : 533.
48 'On the Characteristics of Poetry,'' 533.
49 Sir Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry*, ed. and intro. J. A. van Dorsten (Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 18, 27.
50 For an intriguing survey of the changing class origins of English writers from the Renaissance forward, see Raymond Williams, Chapter 5, ''The Social History of English Writers,'' *The Long Revolution*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper, 1961).
51 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 173.
52 Wordsworth, *Preface*, p. 157.
53 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lecture 3, *Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry* (London Philosophical Society, 1811–1812), *Lectures 1809–1819 on Literature*, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. R. A. Foakes, vol. v. I (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 217.
54 Darwin, *Zoonomia*, p. 5.
55 Wordsworth, *Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815*, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, vol. 1 of 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 84.
56 Wordsworth, *Essay Supplementary*, p. 80. To create the taste by which he was to be enjoyed, Wordsworth had to, as he put it, ''establish . . . that dominion over the spirits of readers by which they are to be humbled and humanised, in order that they may be purified and exalted'' (pp. 80–81). Here the task of humanization reveals its disciplinary aspect: humanization as humiliation.
57 Hazlitt, ''On Poetry in General,'' p. 2.
58 C. M. Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 1.
59 Bowra, 271. Arthur O. Lovejoy's essay, ''On the Discrimination of Romanticisms,'' in *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. M. H. Abrams, 2nd edn. (Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 3–24, stands as the classic statement on the difficulty of defining ''romanticism.'' As Lovejoy notes, English, French and German romanticisms are quite distinct, if in various and complex ways interrelated, movements. Lovejoy would have us abjure the term altogether, considering it like all ''large *complexes* of ideas'' too ''rough, crude, and undiscriminating'' for any rigorous intellectual historian (22). One need not endorse all points of Lovejoy's occasionally irritable argument to appreciate his discomfort with the elusiveness of such categories.
60 Hazlitt, ''On Poetry in General,'' p. 4.
61 Shelley, *Defence*, p. 109.
62 See in particular Darwin, ''On Generation,'' section 39: 6 of *Zoonomia*. Darwin describes the ''power of the imagination of the male [parent] over the form, color, and sex of the progeny'' (39. 6. 6). Intriguingly, Darwin argues that female imagination had almost no effect on fetal development and could do nothing after the placenta was formed. Nevertheless he does

allow for "the wonderful effect of imagination, both in the male and female parent" (411). On imagination as a faculty, see sections 8.1.2, 15.1.7, and 15.2.2.

63 John L. Mahoney, *The Whole Internal Universe: Imitation and the New Defense of Poetry in British Criticism 1660–1830* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985), p. 5.

64 For this phrase, see *A Defence*, in particular the great passage in Part 1 beginning, "In the youth of the world, men dance and sing and imitate natural objects . . ." (p. 111).

65 See Bewell, especially the Introduction (pp. 1–47) and Part One, "The Origin of Language" (pp. 51–105) for a survey of the Enlightenment discourse on primitivity and the origins of language.

66 See Shelley, *A Defence*, p. 109. For Wordsworth's ruminations on "the earliest poets of all nations" see his "Appendix on Poetic Diction," appended in 1802 to Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 317–318. Walter Scott informs us, after a brief discourse on Homer and his imagined editor Pisastratus, that Scottish ballads offer like Homer's epic a glimpse of "the National Muse in her cradle." See his "Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry and on the Various Collections of Britain, particularly those of Scotland" (1830), *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–1803), ed. T. F. Henderson, vol. 1 of 4 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood; New York: Scribner's, 1902), pp. 2–7; for the phrase, "National Muse," see p. 7.

67 Wordsworth, "Appendix on Poetic Diction," *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 317, 318.

68 Walter Scott, "Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry," p. 1.

69 Thomas Love Peacock, *The Four Ages of Poetry*, pp. 4–5.

70 Shelley, *Defence*, p. 110.

71 People defend poetry because they think it requires a defense. From this vantage, and with the materialist criticism of Williams in mind, it may seem obvious why poetry would need defending: it is useless (as Peacock argued), it imagined itself (correctly) as besieged by and competing with novels and popular dramas (see Wordsworth's *Preface*), its readership was fragmenting, etc. Yet a glance at any of the contemporary journals shows that poetry retained in this period an enormous cultural prestige and currency. What we have is a situation in which elite practitioners of a culturally prestigious art intuited and registered a massive discursive challenge.

72 Wordsworth, "Advertisement," *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 7.

73 Wordsworth, *Preface*, p. 243.

74 On the common commitment to utility in the works of those who would seem philosophical antagonists (such as Godwin and Malthus), see Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, trans. Mary Morris (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955). The most classic statements of utilitarian doctrine emerged, Halévy suggests, in the English responses to the French Revolution: English radicalism – with its fractious origins in the dissenting tradition, the Revolution of 1688, and Lockean theory – gradually streamlined itself into a recognizable utilitarianism: "A lengthy controversy began,

provoked by the events in France. Burke, Mackintosh, Paine, Godwin and Malthus contributed to it in works which have remained classical. Now all these men, to whatever party they might belong, Godwin no less than Burke, Malthus no less than Godwin, were supporters of the principle of utility. It is clear that the doctrine of utility was becoming the universal philosophy in England, and that reformers were forced to speak the language of utility if they wanted to make their opinions accepted or even understood by the public to which they were addressed" (pp. 153–154). That utility was still the reigning language of reform thirty years after the revolution controversy is clear in Shelley's *Defence*, which trashes the "calculating power" even as it relies on tropes of calculation and a pleasure/pain logic in the course of its progressive reformist argument.

75 John Stuart Mill's essays on Bentham and Coleridge are a later, Victorian and Utilitarian meditation on some aspects of this engagement – although Mill chose, like Hazlitt, to analyze Coleridge as a philosopher, a Transcendentalist and a Conservative, and not as a poet or an aesthetic theorist. It is striking and noteworthy, given the romantic opposition of utilitarian "reason" and poetic "imagination" (as in the opening passages of Shelley's *Defence*) and given the poets' privileging of "sympathy" and "passion" over reason, that Mill faults Bentham for a "deficiency of Imagination" and for a failure to recognize "the more complex forms of the feeling [of sympathy] – the love of *loving*, the need of a sympathising support, or of objects of admiration and reverence." See *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, intro. F. R. Leavis (Cambridge University Press, 1950), pp. 61, 68.

76 Thomas Love Peacock, *Paper Money Lyrics and other Poems* in *Poems and Plays*, The Works of Thomas Love Peacock, vol. VII, p. 104.

77 Peacock, *Paper Money Lyrics*, p. 113.

78 Peacock's *Sir Proteus, A Satirical Ballad* (1814) offers an earlier, extraordinary discourse network, taking aim at many of the same targets hit by the *Paper Money Lyrics*. Allusion and imitation in *Sir Proteus* register Peacock's urbane, and critical, fluency in the prevailing poetic discourse; moreover, he invites his readers to acknowledge their own deep familiarity with such poetic creations as Wordsworth's Alice Fell and Harry Gill: "Who knows not Alice Fell? the little orphan Alice Fell? with her cloak of duffel grey? and Harry Gill, whose teeth they chatter, chatter, chatter, chatter still? and Jack and Jill, that climbed the hill . . ." (Peacock, *Sir Proteus*, footnote 289). Allowing Wordsworth's casually but precisely invoked lines to devolve into nursery-rhyme, Peacock impishly and critically enacts the degradation of romantic primitivism into infantile "chatter." Peacock's hostility to what he saw as the faux naiveté and pseudo-barbarism of the Lake School similarly animates his great polemic, *The Four Ages of Poetry*.

79 William Wordsworth, *The Prelude; or Growth of the Poet's Mind*, 1805, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 220. Further quotations from the poem will be cited by book and line in the text.

80 Frances Ferguson, "Malthus, Godwin, Wordsworth, and the Spirit of Solitude," *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. Elaine Scarry (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 106. Ferguson's essay serves as the critical touchstone for my thinking about these matters, as the subsequent chapters will show.

81 Shelley to Peacock, January 26, 1819, "Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley: Bibliographical Note," *Essays, Memoirs, Letters & Unfinished Novels*, The Works of Thomas Love Peacock, vol. VIII, p. 501.

82 Shelley to Peacock, January 11, 1822, *Essays, Memoirs, Letters & Unfinished Novels*, p. 501. As Peacock notes in his comment on the letter, Shelley was at this time entertaining fantasies of serving at "the court of a native prince" in India. Peacock dryly informed him that "such employment was restricted to the regular service of the East India Company." Perhaps India was better spared such a figure as Shelley; or perhaps we may say that a loss for empire was a gain for Poetry.

2 DO RUSTICS THINK?: WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE, AND THE PROBLEM OF A "HUMAN DICTION"

1 William Wordsworth, *Preface*, p. 272.

2 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, p. 188.

3 See Bewell, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment*, especially the Introduction, for a redescription of Wordsworth's experimental poetry. Bewell reads the experimental poems as a critical engagement with the dissolving paradigm of moral philosophy (which term designated the human sciences even through the early nineteenth century). "Wordsworth was writing at exactly that moment when the immense field of moral philosophy, the 'science of MAN,' as Hume termed it, was about to break up into the modern disciplines of anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophical ethics, economics, history, and political science" (p. 13). I would hope that at this late date it could almost go without saying that the discourse of "Man" – and Wordsworth's invocation of "real language of men" and of "human sensibility" – could and did work to obscure and efface the critical difference in the experiences, historical situations, and possible subjectivities of such figures as, for example, an English rustic child and a North American Indian woman. Wordsworth's experiments in the margins of "Man" could be read – to list a few possibilities – as the work of a bad conscience which does not (yet) know itself, as exploitation or co-optation, as exercises in mimicry and ventriloquism, or more "naively" as a classically liberal attempt to expand the horizons of "Man." The structural asymmetry contained in and exploited by the Enlightenment category "Man" – which of course posits the Western white bourgeois male as the universal human – has been unpacked in the work of numerous theorists of difference, feminist and postcolonial.

4 Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 108.

5 Wordsworth, *Preface*, p. 247.

6 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 258.
7 See Lucien Levy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, trans. Lillian A. Clare (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966). The continuing notoriety of this book, or rather of the presumptions and concerns manifested in its title, may be seen in the ongoing dispute over the meaning of Captain Cook's death, a dispute vociferously conducted between Marshall Sahlins and Gannath Obeyesekere. In their drastically different interpretations of Hawaiian thought, Sahlins and Obeyesekere re-pose the problem of primitive mind: Did the Hawaiians *really* think Cook was the incarnation of their god, Lono, and thus sacrifice him according to ritual prescription (Sahlins's contention)? Or is the deification of Captain Cook rather an invention of colonizing anthropologists, thrilled by the romance of a white man/god so dramatically and pleasingly killed (Obeyesekere's contention)? Sahlins's most recent sally in this debate is polemically titled, *How "Natives" Think; about Captain Cook, for example* (University of Chicago Press, 1995). See Clifford Geertz's review of Sahlins in *The New York Review of Books*, 30 Nov. 1995: 4, for a summary of this debate and its larger implications for anthropology.
8 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 188.
9 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 196.
10 Coleridge, *Biographia*, pp. 196–197.
11 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 197.
12 See Coleridge, "On the Principles of Genial Criticism concerning the Fine Arts" (1814), *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, vol. II (London: Rest Fenner, 1817), pp. 219–246, for his strategic citation of ethnographically exemplary primitives (Iroquois, Dahomey, Greenlanders). Coleridge uses such peoples to establish the limits of the aesthetic absolute (since he asserts that they have yet to develop the "sense of beauty"), yet he also concedes to them their humanity. He thus arrives at an impasse: if all humans as humans have a "sense of beauty," how can these peoples – admittedly human in his essays – lack it?
13 Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 268.
14 Levi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*, p. 254.
15 Levi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*, p. 256.
16 Levi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*, p. 256.
17 Jean-Paul Sartre, "Structure and the Group's Idea of Itself," *From Groups to History*, Book 2, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, vol. I, pp. 502–503.
18 Claude Levi-Strauss, "History and Dialectic," *The Savage Mind*, p. 251.
19 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 146.
20 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 144.
21 Sartre, *Dialectical Reason*, pp. 502–503.
22 This analogy is offered in the spirit of a useful simplification; obviously the differences (philosophical, historical, national-ideological) between Coleridge's idiosyncratic Kantian commitments and Sartre's existential

dialectics would require a far more rigorous and extended reading. Yet it is remarkable to see the congruence of their rhetorics and conceptual categories: the elevation of "synthesis" in opposition to mere analysis; the use of ethnographic exempla to fortify argument; the consistent demotion of primitive, popular, or savage thought to mere practical maneuvering; the uncertainty about the historicity of this assessment of mind; and of course, the massive indebtedness of each to Kant.

23 Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, eds. and trans. Eugenia Hanfmann and Gertrude Vakar (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1962, 1979), p. 71. The adverb "actually" in this sentence should alert us to the persistence of a kind of empiricist blindness even in the work of Vygotsky, who was so attentive to the multiple modes of perceiving and structuring the world in its relations. Who decides that two objects or phenomena "actually" have no "recognizable" (that is, possible) connection? Thanks to Julia Targ for directing me to Vygotsky.

24 Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, p. 72.

25 Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, p. 73.

26 Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, p. 137.

27 Wordsworth, "We are seven," *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 66. Quotations from the poem (pp. 66–68) will hereafter be cited by line in the text.

28 Barbara Hernnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 34, 2.

29 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 190.

30 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 235.

31 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 260.

32 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 253.

33 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 235.

34 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 270.

35 Coleridge, *Biographia*, pp. 270, 258.

36 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 258.

37 Coleridge paraphrasing Wordsworth, *Biographia*, p. 253.

38 Coleridge, *Biographia*, p. 254.

39 Coleridge, Letter quoted in Introduction, *Biographia*, p. x.

40 Wordsworth, [Essay on Morals], *Wordsworth's Prose*, vol. 1 of 3, p. 103.

41 Wordsworth, *Preface*, pp. 253–254.

42 "Expostulation and Reply," *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 104. Further quotations from the poem will be cited by line in the text.

43 "The Tables Turned; an Evening Scene, on the same subject," *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 105, 106. Further quotations of the poem will be cited by line in text.

44 Wordsworth, "Advertisement," *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 8.

45 Coleridge describes the genesis of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and the division of ballad-labour, in this manner in the fourteenth chapter of the *Biographia*, p. 168. The term "domestic anthropology" is, as I have noted before, Alan Bewell's shorthand for Wordsworth's project.

46 It is interesting to note which passage of *Political Justice* became most notorious: Godwin's construction of a hypothetical scene in which he had to choose to save the life of either Fénelon (the archbishop of Cambray) or his own brother (or father). See Godwin's *Enquiry concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness*, 1798, intro. Isaac Kramnik, 3rd edn. (London and New York: Penguin, 1985), pp. 168–178. Godwin, impartial and purely rational moralist that he was (or strove to be), considers the learned archbishop more objectively worthy and discounts the affections and private sympathies which would lead one to rescue one's kin. Many readers felt this, quite rightly, to be an attack on the natural logic of sympathy. Another famous chestnut from this period is to be found in Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*: as both Paine and Wordsworth gleefully noted, Burke's extended homage to Marie Antoinette, with its aim to inspire *pitié* and horror at jabobinical excess, tended rather to fortify some Englishmen in their recoil from things chivalric, female, and French. That is, Burke tried too hard; the prose tipped into the monstrous excess he had so vigorously attacked in the sans-culottes; and instead of arousing sympathy he provided the occasion for a brilliantly disgusted response from Paine in *The Rights of Man*. These anecdotes are offered by way of illustration: in moral philosophical essays and treatises (Godwin's and Burke's), the key passages are often those which press the reader to identify and consent. They are triumphs or abysses of rhetoric and appeal rather to the affections than to the reason to which elsewhere moral philosophical inquiry pretends to adhere.

47 "Ruth," *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 179–188. All quotations of the poem will be cited by line in the text.

48 Michel de Certeau, "Ethno-Graphy: Speech or the Space of the Other: Jean de Lery" *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 219. De Certeau outlines a "hemeneutics of the other" inscribed by and through ethnographic writing, a hermeneutics which has a narrative structure organized around "The Break" and the subsequent "Work of Returning" (pp. 218–226).

49 See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988). Clifford does not invent the term but rather demonstrates that by the early twentieth century, participant observation, in the mode of fieldwork, becomes a necessary component of the anthropologist's discursive and disciplinary legitimation. See in particular the first chapter, "On Ethnographic Authority," pp. 21–54.

50 Further, we see that the rhetoric of quasi-ethnographic citation, as in Wordsworth's documentation of the magnolia and cypress, need not be restricted to materials and peoples observed "over there." Later in the poem, Wordsworth places an asterisk after his reference "to the pleasant Banks of Tone*," where Ruth later "dwell[s] alone." The asterisked note informs us, "The Tone is a River of Somersetshire at no great distance from

the Quantock Hills. These Hills, which are alluded to a few stanzas below, are extremely beautiful, and in most places richly covered with Coppice woods." Such a note invokes a tradition of topographical description and picturesque scene-making rather than taxonomy. Unlike his earlier notes to the American plants, Wordsworth here offers no Linnaean clarification of the species in the woods; nor is there a reference to an authority like Bartram. In this case, Wordsworth is his own natural historian and guide. Yet the very appearance of such a note suggests that the Banks of Tone requires an explicator; in such commentary, Wordsworth often appears as a quasi-ethnographer of his own English locales.

51 In using the phrase "ethnographic operation" I am inspired both by the writing operation detailed in De Certeau's essay, "Ethno-Graphy: Speech, or the Space of the Other: Jean de Lery," and also by the title of his second chapter, "The Historiographical Operation" (pp. 56–114).

52 Susan Stewart, *Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 75.

53 See Claude Levi-Strauss, "A Writing Lesson," in *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 298: "After eliminating all other criteria which have been put forward to distinguish between barbarism and civilization, it is tempting to retain this one at least: there are peoples with, or without, writing; the former are able to store up their past achievements and to move with ever-increasing rapidity towards the goal they have set themselves, whereas the latter, being incapable of remembering the past beyond the narrow margin of individual memory, seem bound to remain imprisoned in a fluctuating history which will always lack both a beginning and any lasting awareness of an aim."

54 Wordsworth, *Preface*, p. 241.

55 Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Routledge, 1982), p. 160.

56 See editor George Watson's notes to the *Biographia*, p. 282.

3 LITERATE SPECIES: POPULATIONS, "HUMANITIES," AND THE SPECIFIC FAILURE OF LITERATURE IN FRANKENSTEIN

1 William Godwin, "Of an Early Taste for Reading," *The Enquirer*, p. 31.

2 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 5. All quotations from the novel will hereafter be cited parenthetically in the text. Throughout the essay I will refer to Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley as "Mary Shelley" or "Shelley," though she was still Mary Godwin when she wrote *Frankenstein*.

3 William Godwin, *The Enquirer*, p. x. "The cause of political reform, and the cause of intellectual and literary refinement, are inseparably connected."

4 Frances Ferguson's essay, "Malthus, Godwin, Wordsworth, and the Spirit of Solitude," *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. Elaine Scarry (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 106–124, first stimulated my thinking about *Frankenstein* in the context of

the Malthus-Godwin debate. Ferguson delineates a "Romantic political economy" and offers a feminist critique of the logic of scarcity and its implications for consciousness; she notes that, in Malthus's *Essay,* concern about "the pressure of too many bodies registers the felt pressure of too many consciousnesses" (p. 106). Also important for its incisive reconsideration of Malthusian bodies and political economy is Catherine Gallagher's "The Body Versus the Social Body in the Works of Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew," in *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century,* eds. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 83–106.

5 Godwin, *Of Population: An Inquiry concerning the Power of increase in the Numbers of mankind being an answer to Mr. Malthus' Essay on that Subject*, 1820 (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1964), p. iii.

6 See "The Shelleys' Reading List," in *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814–1844*, vol. II, 1822–1844, eds. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 649. Shelley records reading, among other works, Godwin's *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809) on October 22 1814; *Fleetwood; or, the New Man of Feeling* in 1815; *An Enquiry concerning . . . Political Justice* (1793) in 1814 and 1817. *The Enquirer* is listed with a "?" as having been read in 1817.

7 Elizabeth Lavenza's faith in "human benevolence" (p. 81) is shattered when she thinks Justine killed her brother; the monster contrasts his natural "benevolence" (p. 137) with his "miserable life in the woods" (p. 138); his "insupportable misery" impels his declaration of "everlasting war against the species" (p. 133); rejected from fellowship, he bitterly derides the "eternal justice of man" (p. 96). For his part, Victor weighs "justice" and "selfishness": Victor considers the claims of "justice due both to him and my fellow-creatures" (p. 144); he worries that creating a female "would be an act of the most atrocious selfishness" (p. 168). Other examples of such phrases, and their crucial deployment, abound.

8 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* ed. L.G. Mitchell (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 10.

9 Peter Brooks, "Godlike Science"/Unhallowed Arts: Language, Nature, and Monstrosity," in *The Endurance of Frankenstein,* eds. George Levine and U. C. Knoepflmacher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 213.

10 Quoted in Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 159.

11 Mellor, *Mary Shelley*, p. 63.

12 See Fred Botting for a reading of the monster as a critique of aesthetic totality and as a figure of the uncanny: *Making Monstrous: Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory* (Manchester University Press, 1991). The 1974 collection of essays in *The Endurance of Frankenstein,* a watershed in *Frankenstein* criticism and in the rehabilitation of Mary Shelley the writer, contains several essays highlighting gender, family, and biography: Ellen Moers' "Female Gothic" and U. C. Knoepflmacher's "Thoughts on the Aggression of Daughters" differently discuss the novel's fascination with and horror of childbirth. See also Mellor's analysis of Victor's gendering of nature and his "usurping [of]

the female" (Chapter 6) in *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*.

13 See David Marshall's chapter "*Frankenstein*, or Rousseau's Monster: Sympathy and Speculative Eyes," in *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy* (University of Chicago Press, 1988). Alan Bewell details several Enlightenment "hypothetical histories," including Condillac's and Rousseau's, which he terms the fiction of "the primitive encounter"; he brilliantly traces the impact of such eighteenth-century anthropological fictions on Wordsworth's poetry. See his chapter "First Encounters of the Primitive Kind," in *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment*, pp. 71–105.

14 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, quoted in Marshall, p. 205.

15 I have not been able to locate this term in Sollors's *Beyond Ethnicity* or *Consent and Descent in American Culture*. The lecture series mentioned above took place in 1987 at Harvard.

16 Godwin, "Of the Sources of Genius," *The Enquirer*, p. 14.

17 See Mellor, Chapter 10, for one of the more recent discussions of scenes of "sexual education" in Shelley's works and life; also relevant are David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy*, and Alan Richardson, "From *Emile* to *Frankenstein*; The Education of Monsters," in *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780–1832* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

18 Godwin, *The Enquirer*, p. 14.

19 "Natural philosophy" is, as Mary Shelley well knew, an Anglicization of the *Naturphilosophie* typically associated with the German tradition of philosophical science – a tradition with which Coleridge, for one, was well acquainted. Victor is a philosophical scientist in the German tradition, not an English empiricist. Historians of science such as Trevor H. Levere note that the *naturphilosophie* tradition, a kind of "romantic science," persisted in England alongside the more empirically, analytically oriented work of the mainstream thinkers (see Levere, *Poetry Realized in Nature*). Coleridge believed, in fact, that men like Humphry Davy could unite the claims of empirical and philosophical "science." As the work (and reception) of Davy and Erasmus Darwin suggests, the lines between the more romantic natural philosophy and the empirical tradition of induction, analysis, and experiment were not always easily distinguishable in England. Levere's discussion of "national styles of science" and his account of the Lawrence-Abernethy debate is especially relevant to *Frankenstein*. Shelley's interest in the "principle of life" and its manipulation may be read as a displacement of the "vitalist controversy" in England to a Bavarian locale, Ingolstadt, associated with the conspiratorial Illuminatists.

20 For a discussion of Shelley's familiarity with the work of Erasmus Darwin, Humphry Davy, and Luigi Galvani, see Mellor, Chapter 5. Marilyn Butler's introduction to the Oxford World Classic edition of *Frankenstein* (1818 text) situates the novel in terms of the "schism in the life-sciences between strict materialists and those willing to share a vocabulary with the religious"

(p. xviii), with Shelley on the side of the materialist skeptic and radical scientist William Lawrence. In his debate with John Abernethy, Lawrence satirized those who proposed the existence of a "life-principle" independent of organization (p. xviii); it is this very principle which Victor claims to discover and manipulate. Butler sees Mary Shelley as more of a Peacockian satirist – a "serio-comic" novelist (p. xxi) – than I do, but her exploration of the "comic analogy" (p. xxi) of the novel provides a useful antidote to a large body of perhaps over-serious critical discussions of the novel as a polemic against masculine science and technophilic hubris. See Butler's Introduction to Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (Oxford University Press, 1994).

21 For the characterization of the novel's science as "psuedo-science," see U. C. Knoepflmacher, *The Endurance of Frankenstein*, p. 317. Butler considers Shelley's representation "detached and serio-comic" (Introduction to *Frankenstein*, p. xxi). Thomas Kuhn dates the "chemical revolution" to Lavoisier's discovery of the "oxygen theory of combustion" in the 1770s. See Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edn. (University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 56. It was in fact the chemical threshold and its relation to life that most fascinated and troubled Shelley's contemporaries Erasmus Darwin and Coleridge. Coleridge's extended essay, *Hints toward the Formation of a More Comprehensive Theory of Life* (1816; revised through the mid-1820s, published in 1848), is in part an attack on those who would look to chemistry to provide an explanation of life. Coleridge asks, "How . . . could men of strong minds and sound judgments have attempted to penetrate by the clue of chemical experiment the secret recesses, the sacred adyta of organic life, without being aware that chemistry must needs be at its extreme limits? . . . . . the failure of its enterprises will become the means of defining its absolute boundary" (*Theory of Life*, ed. Seth B. Watson, M.D. [London: John Churchill, 1848], p. 32).

22 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," in *'Race,' Writing and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 275.

23 R. S. Crane, "Shifting Definitions and Evaluations," *The Idea of the Humanities*, p. 155.

24 George Levine, Introduction, *One Culture: Essays in Science and Literature*, ed. Levine with Alan Rauch (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), p. 9.

25 In "Shifting Definitions and Evaluations," R. S. Crane traces the historical emergence, development, and interpenetration of such concepts as "humanity" and "the humanities." The humanities have encompassed different subjects in different periods (Quintilian's rhetoric, the "good arts" commended by the grammarian Aulus Gellius, the medieval trivium and quadrivium, Matthew Arnold's "culture"). Regardless of subject content, however, it is the humanities, as Crane notes, which traditionally offered the means of cultivating "humanitas": educators in antiquity assumed that the men who pursued the "good arts" "are most humanized" (p. 23).

26 See Anne McWhir, "Teaching the Monster to Read: Mary Shelley, Education, and *Frankenstein*," *The Educational Legacy of Romanticism*, ed. John Willinsky (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), for a wonderful discussion of the monster as ideologically trapped by his education, which provides him "intellectual parents" and "a sense of self only to discover that he has no right to exist" (p. 74). See also Alan Richardson's "From *Emile* to *Frankenstein*; The Education of Monsters."

27 Friedrich A. Kittler, "The Mother's Mouth," *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900*, trans. Michael Metteer with Chris Cullens (Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 29, 32. See especially the section entitled, "Learning to Read in 1800." In my turn to Kittler I elide several differences, including Kittler's focus on German discourse networks, on the mother as the new state-created pedagogue, and on the role of the new grammars and the phonetic method circa 1800. Clearly the monster has no mediating mother (alas for him); moreover he learns not from grammars but from an auralized/oralized written history. Yet his encounter with the "science of letters" (p. 114) suggests that his experience of language is always already alphabeticized; the monster's labor (and Safie's) also highlights the differing and simultaneous functions of Felix's pedagogy – the monster seeks to enter human being by accessing what seems to the residents of the cabin a closed discourse network. That the monster succeeds in acquiring words, letters, eloquence, consciousness demonstrates the monstrous productivity of Felix's pedagogic machine.

28 Kittler, *Discourse Networks*, p. 32.

29 I am alluding to Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes toward an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971). See in particular the section entitled, "Ideology Interpellates Individuals as Subjects" (pp. 170–171). Little William and the monster engage in a complex and asymmetrical "hailing" of each other. In the course of their encounter, the monster addresses the frightened William as "Child" and then as "boy"; the child, struggling violently, calls the creature "monster," "ugly wretch," and "ogre." The lethal outcome of this double interpellation baldly dramatizes Althusser's implication that "recognitions" entail violence, ideological and otherwise. As if to confirm Althusser's observation that becoming-a-subject requires subjecting oneself, we see in *Frankenstein* that the young child is fully capable of interpellating himself and does so vociferously. Althusser's essay also allows us to read Walton's earlier hailing of the "savage . . . giant" and the "European" (p. 18) as ideological and not simply "optical" (p. 18) events.

30 In the section "Species" in the chapter "The Visible Structure," Jacob writes, "Throughout the Classical period, it was primarily by their visible structure that living beings were known and investigated" (*The Logic of Life: A History of Heredity*, trans. Betty E. Spillman [Princeton University Press, 1973], p. 44). Foucault asserts, in his chapter called "Classifying": "Natural

history is nothing more than the nomination of the visible." See *The Order of Things*, p. 132.

31 Marshall brilliantly conjoins the problem of species and the "failure of sympathy" (p. 195); in many ways his reading of the monster's request and Victor's response anticipates and coincides with my own. He constellates Shelley's critique of the species-sympathy problem through Godwin, Wollstonecraft, and Rousseau. As he notes, Shelley's "story about the denial of sympathy, fellow feeling, and fellow creatures seems to draw upon Wollstonecraft's critique of the ideology of sexual difference" (p. 199).

32 See Donna J. Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*. Haraway's insistence that vision and perspective be embodied and theorized as such, as well as her call for "situated knowledges," has obvious implications for my reading of *Frankenstein*. See especially the section "The Persistence of Vision" in "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*.

33 Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), ed. Philip Appleman (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 128.

34 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 122.

35 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 29. Malthus introduces the "struggle for existence" in his review of the "savage or hunter state." We should read Malthus as much as Rousseau as a theorist of primitive encounters.

36 Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker, 2nd edn. (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 75.

37 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 94.

4 THE "ARITHMETIC OF FUTURITY": POETRY, POPULATION, AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE FUTURE

1 *Melincourt*. By the Author of Headlong Hall (London: T. Hookham, 1817), Halliford Edition of the Works of Thomas Love Peacock, vol. II, pp. 76–77.

2 Shelley's attack on the "selfish and calculating principle" (p. 135) in *A Defence of Poetry* indexes, despite Shelley's own allegiances, the pre-eminence of calculation as a figure for knowledge in this period. As Peacock and Shelley well knew, perfectibilians themselves tended to hail "calculation" – and more broadly mathematicality – when they projected infinite progress into the future. In Peacock's novel *Headlong Hall*, the "perfectibilian" Mr. Foster happily asserts that, "in process of time, moral science will be susceptible of mathematical demonstration" (*Headlong Hall* [London: T. Hookham, 1816], in The Halliford Edition of the Works of Thomas Love Peacock), pp. 8, 81. For an intriguing, if highly idiosyncratic, discussion of "mathesis," see Michel Foucault's chapter, "Representing," on the episteme of the Classical Period (approximately 1750–1900). Foucault describes this period's "establishment of Order" as the "project of a universal mathesis"; he defines "mathesis" here as "the science of calculable order," and notes that

"algebra is its universal method." The science of calculable order, together with the science of classifying – taxonomy – produces that characteristic field of knowledge in this period: the Table. Obviously the Malthusian or the perfectibilian mathesis is quite another thing than, for example, the Linnaean one, yet the prominence of algebraic "ratios" and tables in Malthusian reckoning suggests its kinship with the calculation of order in the earlier period. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 72–73.

3 For a range of nineteenth-century polemical representations of Malthus see William Hazlitt, *A Reply to the "Essay on Population" by the Rev. T. R. Malthus in a Series of Letters to which are added extracts from the 'Essay' with notes*, 1807 (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967); William Godwin, *Of Population: An Inquiry concerning the Power of increase in the Numbers of mankind being an answer to Mr. Malthus' Essay on that Subject*, 1820 (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1964); Percy Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, vol. VII of *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, eds. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (London: Scribner's, 1930), pp. 5–55; and Karl Marx, Ch. XXV, "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation," in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: Random House, The Modern Library, 1906) note 3, p. 675 following.

4 I allude to Jürgen Habermas's already classic analysis of the eighteenth-century literary public sphere, in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with assist. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press), 1992.

5 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses": "It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognize* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud, or in the 'still small voice of conscience"): 'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!'" (p. 172).

6 The continuing relevance of the opposition between utilitarian, calculating projects and imaginative, fictive ones is demonstrated in Martha Nussbaum's *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon, 1995). In this book Nussbaum proposes the "literary imagination" or "fancy" as an antidote to the poisoning of public life by rational-choice theory and scientism. To read Nussbaum's book is to see that the force of Frances Ferguson's essay is not merely historical: the confounding dialectic of Malthusian quantification and Romantic consciousness (too much consciousness? too many people? too many of the wrong kind?) clearly works in our own moment, as even a cursory reading of the newspaper reports on the 1994 U. N. Conference on Population in Cairo suggests. Nussbaum lays out the premises of utilitarianism and sketches a kind of good version of the early reform-minded utilitarians; that Nussbaum invokes Adam Smith (the Smith of *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and not of *The Wealth of Nations*) as a kind of patron for her project points to the late eighteenth-century roots of this problem in public life and imagining. Both utilitarianism and the Anglo-

American realist novel reached their full flowering, technically and effectively, in the mid-nineteenth century; what Nussbaum perhaps underplays is the mutual implication of utilitarian and literary constructions of persons in this period. That a utilitarian mathematizes and a novelist thickens and deepens the human subject does not mean, necessarily, that they do not have the same subject in view. While my focus on poetry, and on the discourse-object "poetry," provides a different basis than Nussbaum's for the discussion of "literary imagining" and "sympathy," nevertheless we share a resistance to quantification and a commitment, however vexed and vexing, to the faculty of imagination as a humanizing power.

7 For a compelling and, to my mind, unsurpassed reading of English Romanticism as the problem of the movement of self-consciousness, see Harold Bloom, "The Internalization of Quest-Romance," *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970), pp. 3–24. My invocation of "bio-power" and discursive regimes relies on Foucault, particularly the Foucault of the "power/knowledge" period.

8 On Malthus's consideration of the consciousness of his potential brides and grooms, see the passage in Chapter IV of his *Essay*: "The woman that a man of education would naturally make the object of his choice would be one brought up in the same tastes and sentiments with himself and used to the familiar intercourse of a society totally different from that to which she must be reduced by marriage. Can a man consent to place the object of his affection in a situation so discordant, probably, to her tastes and inclinations?" (p. 32). See also his remarks about the marriageable laborer: "Harder fare and harder labour he would submit to for the sake of living with the woman that he loves, but *he must feel conscious, if he thinks at all*, that should he have a large family, and any ill luck whatever, no degree of frugality, no possible exertion of his manual strength could preserve him from the heart rending sensation of seeing his children starve, or of forfeiting his independence, and being obliged to the parish for their support" (p. 35). Frances Ferguson's essay brought the first of these passages to my attention. Thus we see that Malthus in his own way acts as a consciousness-raiser. For Shelley's attempt to honor the sexual as well as soulful experience of the poor, see his denunciation of Malthus – "a writer of the present day (a priest of course, for his doctrines are those of a eunuch and a tyrant)" – in *A Philosophical View of Reform*, Chapter II, "On the Sentiment of the Necessity of Change" (p. 32). "He has the hardened insolence to propose as a remedy that the poor should be compelled . . . to abstain from sexual intercourse . . . Surely it is enough that the rich should possess to the exclusion of the poor all other luxuries and comforts . . . " (pp. 33–34).

9 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 16.

10 Karl Marx, Ch. XXV, "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation," in *Capital*, note 3, p. 675.

11 Shelley, *Philosophical View*, p. 32.

12 Shelley, *Philosophical View*, p. 34.

13 Shelley, Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald Reiman and Sharon Powers (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 135.
14 In the Critical Notes to *Shelley's Prometheus Unbound: A Variorum Edition* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959), editor Lawrence John Zillman notes that "The phrase quoted (first identified by Rosetti as being from Forsyth) is the title of Chapter xvi of Robert Forsyth's *The Principles of Moral Science* (Edinburgh, 1805)" (p. 307).
15 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 117.
16 McGann, *The Romantic Ideology*, p. viii.
17 T. S. Eliot, "Shelley and Keats," in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*: "The ideas of Shelley seem to me always to be the ideas of adolescence – as there is every reason why they should be. And an enthusiasm for Shelley seems to me also to be an affair of adolescence" (p. 80); "But some of Shelley's views I positively dislike, and that hampers my enjoyment of the poems in which they occur; and others seem to me so puerile that I cannot enjoy the poems in which they occur" (p. 82).
18 Poetry "compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know." Shelley, *Defence*, p. 137.
19 Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, trans. Mary Morris (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 23. Halévy notes that "Paley remained for half a century the acknowledged representative of the Utilitarian morality. The 'Paleyans' came to be denounced long before the 'Benthamites.'"
20 Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 67.
21 See Isaac Kramnick's Introduction to Godwin, *Political Justice*, for an account of the enormous influence of the book despite its massive length, great cost, and comparatively limited circulation (pp. 11–13). For a broader assessment of the politics and mode of reading in the 1790s, see Jon P. Klancher, "Cultural Conflict, Ideology, and the Reading Habit in the 1790s," *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), pp. 18–46. Klancher notes that Paine's *Rights of Man* (Parts 1 and 11) reached 200,000 readers (p. 27); Godwin had 3,000.
22 Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 261.
23 It was, interestingly enough, Godwin who in *Political Justice* (five years before Malthus's *Essay*) noted the existence of a "principle" that somehow "reduces" excess population; and indeed Malthus was a relatively late entrant into the vigorous eighteenth-century discussion of populousness which was one aspect of the ancients/moderns controversy. David Hume's Essay "On the Populousness of Ancient Nations" was the most important contribution to the debate. As for the increasing disproportion between growing population and its means of subsistence, Hazlitt noted that it was Robert Wallace and not Malthus who first and most precisely stated the "general principle" (see Hazlitt, *A Reply*, p. 21).
24 Hazlitt, *A Reply*, p. 22.
25 Hazlitt, *A Reply*, p. 48.
26 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 16.

27 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 16.
28 Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 783.
29 This transformation of a political problem of the nation-state into a species predicament is a move characteristic of this period: Malthus's populations are variously local/national (i.e. the immediate threat of the proliferating English poor) and global (witness his ranging from Native Americans to Swedes to China). The principle of population operates differently across national borders, as Malthus's statistics in the second edition (1803) suggest, yet the prestige of the principle arises from its seemingly irrefutable and inevitable bio-logic. For all Godwin's concern for the species, he was most committed to theorizing the individual, whom he imagines ideally to be increasingly free of any and all affiliations except those voluntarily chosen. "Man is a species of being whose excellence depends upon his individuality; and who can be neither great nor wise but in proportion as he is independent" (*Political Justice*, p. 556). Burke and Paine framed their controversy along national/international axes, with Burke proclaiming a specifically English liberty and Paine relying on the Rights of Man, transcendent and transnational. Burke's characteristic strategy was, of course, to transform the Rights of Man into a ludicrous, theoretical, and characteristically French exercise best ignored by sturdy Englishmen. The terrible tension between national liberties and human rights is elucidated in Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* and her *On Revolution*.
30 For the classic statement on the cultural politics of English Romanticism, see M. H. Abrams, "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age," *Romanticism and Consciousness*, pp. 90–118. Abrams argues, following Hazlitt, that the French Revolution was the primary referent of the age and its poems; he also demonstrates the explicitly socio-political valence of the much-invoked romantic category of "hope."
31 McGann, *Romantic Ideology*, p. 131.
32 Shelley's ceaseless referencing of the French Revolution throughout his œuvre, and his conviction that it was *the* political, intellectual, and moral crux of the age, resembles – with all respect given to difference – the invocation of "the sixties" (that phantasmogoric yet seemingly obvious referent) by successive generations of progressives and radicals. The stunning collapse of liberal, not to mention radical, influence in the U.S. public sphere, particularly evident in the 1980s, was certainly the occasion for – and perhaps a symptom of – the mourning-and-melancholia of the left.
33 Since Reiman and Powers include the barest of excerpts of the poem, I here use Mary Shelley's text of *The Revolt* from *The First Collected Edition*, 1839. The poem was first called "Laon and Cythna" and featured Laon and Cythna as an explicitly incestuous duo; the incest-motif contributed to the withdrawal of the poem from sale and was, in Shelley's revision, written out and obscured. For the complete text of the poem as it was finally published, see *The Revolt of Islam*, in *John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley: Complete Poetical Works* (New York: Random, n.d.), pp. 33–176.

34 Shelley, *Philosophical View*, p. 13.

35 Other readings of this choice of "revolt" suggest themselves: after all, the liberatory struggle in the poem ultimately fails – as such it may be merely a "revolt" (minor, incomplete) as opposed to a successful and permanent "revolution." Also it may be that Shelley wished to mute the incendiary politics of the poem, which was criticized by none other than Godwin; a "revolt" may have seemed less provocative than "revolution." For a lucid, critical, and politically engaged review of the radical transformation of the term "revolution" in the modern period (i.e. in the late eighteenth century and after), see Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York and London: Penguin, 1990), esp. pp. 28–35. Shelley exploited many uses of the term "revolution" in other works, notably *A Defence of Poetry*; there he invoked the cyclic revolutions of the ages of man as an analogy for the eternal return of poetic and political promise. Also relevant to this lexical constellation is Shelley's use of the term "reform," for example in the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* and of course in his *Philosophical View of Reform*. "Reform," poetically considered, may be the most concise word for Shelley's project, which involved the imagining of new linguistic and ideational "forms" through poetry.

36 Shelley, Preface to *Revolt*, p. 34.

37 Shelley, Preface to *Revolt*, p. 34.

38 My reading thus follows the general contours of M. H. Abrams's argument in "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age": that confronted with the French example, English poets produced a series of "apocalypses of the imagination," revelations designed to produce a redeemed world. Abrams emphasizes the roots of the English apocalypse in the dissenting tradition; like the radical dissenting Christians (and unlike their radical French contemporaries) these poets, however atheistic they may have been, invoked and transformed the old Christian themes of renovating the earth and regenerating man. See Abrams, pp. 93–98.

39 Shelley, Preface to *Revolt*, p. 35.

40 Shelley, Preface to *Revolt*, p. 36.

41 Shelley, Preface to *Revolt*, p. 36, note 2.

42 The full stanza from Gray's *Elegy* reads: "Can storied urn or animated bust / Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath? / Can Honor's voice provoke the silent dust, / Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?" The editors of the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*, third edn., helpfully note both the urn and the bust; of the urn, note 4 says, "Funeral urn with descriptive epitaph." Wordsworth, in his first *Essay upon Epitaphs*, declared that "It scarcely need be said, that an Epitaph presupposes a Monument, upon which it is to be engraven" (Wordsworth, *Prose* vol. 1, p. 28). Following Wordsworth, and mindful of Gray's *Elegy* and Keats's *Ode*, we might conclude that an urn presupposes an epitaph. Shelley's urn refuses to write the epitaph for the future.

43 See Paulo Freire for a dissection of the Scylla and Charybdis of revolutionary education, "verbalism" and "activism," esp. ch. 2 in *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed. His observations are relevant to any radical praxis, whether oriented to critical literacy, sexual education, or other modes of political education.

44 Benjamin, "Thesis on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, p. 263. Criticizing a historicism that relies on a concept of time as "homogenous empty time," a historicism concerned only to establish "causal connections[s] between various moments in history," Benjamin calls for a method through which the historian would "establish . . . a conception of the present as the 'time of the now,' which is shot through with chips of Messianic time" (pp. 261, 263).

45 Benjamin, "Philosophy of History," p. 261.

46 For an account of this recurring revolutionary recourse to "Necessity," and a related critique of the Hegelian logic of the inevitable movement of world-spirit, see Arendt, *On Revolution*, esp. pp. 47–58. Arendt describes the invocation of "Necessity" or "the bio-process" as a kind of intellectual spell cast by (and upon) Hegel and Marx and other thinkers and actors who implicitly followed the French and not the American model of revolution. "Politically, the fallacy of this new and typically modern philosophy is relatively simple. It consists in describing and understanding the whole realm of human action, not in terms of the actor and the agent, but from the standpoint of the spectator who watches a spectacle" (p. 52). "The magic spell which historical necessity has cast over the minds of men since the beginning of the nineteenth century gained in potency by the October Revolution, which for our century has had the same profound meaningfulness of first crystallizing the best of men's hopes and then realizing the full measure of their despair that the French Revolution had for its contemporaries" (p. 57).

47 Walter Benjamin, "Philosophy of History," p. 255.

48 Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 769.

49 Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 776.

50 Hazlitt, *A Reply to the "Essay on Population" by T. R. Malthus*, p. 38.

51 Hazlitt, *A Reply*, p. 246–247.

52 Hazlitt, *A Reply*, p. 101 note.

53 I am here partially relying on Heidegger's distinction between earth (the "sheltering agent") and world (the humanly worked *habitus*) and on Arendt's meditation on these categories in *The Human Condition*. See in particular Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings*, ed. and introd. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper 1977), pp. 143–188. Considering a temple as a work of art, Heidegger asserts that it "illuminates . . . that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the *earth*" (p. 169). He later elaborates: "The world is the self-opening openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people. The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing" (p. 172). Despite the notorious abstruseness of Heidegger's lexicon and thought, and his

rather ominous triumphalism on behalf of so-called "historical peoples" and their destinies, nevertheless he provides extremely useful distinctions for elucidating the simultaneous and complex movement in Shelley's work between a longing for sheltering in and by the earth and a commitment to "worlding the world," as Heidegger says, to assertive action both political and poetical. Heidegger argues that the work of art itself, in its very nature, displays and occasionally resolves this conflict.

54 See, for example, Arendt on Marx's revisioning of revolution, in *On Revolution*, p. 64: "Thus the role of revolution was no longer to liberate men from the oppression of their fellow men, let alone to found freedom, but to liberate the life process of society from the fetters of scarcity so that it could swell into a stream of abundance. Not freedom but abundance became now the aim of revolution."

55 Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," p. 172.

56 *Prometheus Unbound*, in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, eds. Donald Reiman and Sharon Powers (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 136. All quotations will hereafter be cited by act, scene, and line in the text.

57 Hume and Robert Wallace were the most famous disputants over the comparative populousness of the ancients versus the moderns, with Wallace deciding, with reservations, for the ancients in response to Hume's boldly pro-modern argument on behalf of both modern systems of government and their correspondingly superior (in both numbers and quality) populations. See David Hume, "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations," *The Philosophical Works*, ed. Thomas Hill Green and Thomas Hodge Grose, vol. III, repr. London 1882 (Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964) 4 vols., pp. 381–442; Robert Wallace, *A Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind, in ancient and modern times: in which the superior populousness of antiquity is maintained . . .* , 2nd edn., Edinburgh, 1809 (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1969). Neither Hume nor Wallace disputed that populousness was a good. Such claims as Wallace's "the earth might have been better peopled [in ancient times] . . . than it is at present" (p. 11) suggest how this debate emerged within the context of conjectural history, with its usual topoi – the flood, the age of barbarism, the advent of agriculture, etc. Malthus's genius was, in part, to incorporate this tradition of conjectural history into his *Essay* while further mathematizing its rhetoric and politicizing its stakes, thus making disputes over population a matter for public policy, government intervention, and the incipient social sciences as well as a topic to be pursued by moral philosophers and intellectual historians. Frances Ferguson and Catherine Gallagher are especially illuminating on the discursive transformations Malthusianism presumed and wrought, and what kinds of bodies and regimes were imagined and made possible by this discursive and disciplinary re-orientation.

58 See Jerome McGann, Chapter 4, "The Line of Coleridge and the Line of Hegel: Romantic Repetition and Romantic Reification," in *The Romantic Ideology*.

59 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 45–46.

60 That the *Defence* was not published until 1840 opens up a whole field of consideration: the "time" of the *Defence* includes its moment of composition (1821 in Pisa) and its long reception history; it also includes its own "futurity." For a summary of the publication history and manuscript variants of the *Defence*, see Reiman's and Powers's notes, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 479.

61 Aristotle, *The Poetics*, IX, Loeb Classical Library no. 199, p. 35. My clarification is in brackets.

62 Susan Stewart, "Preface to a Lyric History," in *The Uses of Literary History*, ed. Marshall Brown (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 199–200.

63 See David Duff, *Romance and Revolution: Shelley and the Politics of a Genre* (Cambridge University Press, 1994). See especially his chapter, "The French Revolution and the Politics of Romance" (pp. 8–53). For an analysis and comparison of so-called "Godwinian novels" and their jacobinical commitments, see Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: the rational fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, and Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

64 Stewart, "Lyric History," p. 209.

65 Peacock, *Melincourt*, pp. 384–386.

66 Peacock, *Melincourt*, p. 421

67 Peacock, *The Four Ages of Poetry*, in *Essays, Memoirs, Letters and Unfinished Novels*, vol. 8 of The Halliford Edition of the Collected Works . . . (New York: AMS Press, 1967), p. 24. "A poet in our times is a semi-barbarian in a civilized community. He lives in the days that are past" (p. 20); ". . . intellectual power and intellectual acquisition have turned themselves into other and better channels . . ." (p. 24).

68 Franco Moretti, "The Soul and the Harpy: Reflections on the Aims and Methods of Literary Historiography," in *Signs Taken for Wonders: essays in the sociology of literary forms*, trans. Susan Fischer et al. (London and New York: Verso, 1988), p. 7.

5 DEAD POETS AND OTHER ROMANTIC POPULATIONS: IMMORTALITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

1 For the rest of this essay I will refer to this poem as the Immortality Ode. The poem was, apparently, Allen Ginsberg's "favorite poem of all," according to David Remnick's "Postscript: Kaddish," *The New Yorker*, 21 April 1997, p. 78. For one classic statement on the meaning of the poem, see Lionel Trilling's "The Immortality Ode," included in *The Liberal Imagination*, pp. 129–153 and reprinted in *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. M. H. Abrams, pp. 149–169. That every study of Wordsworth has to confront this Ode makes any review of the criticism an almost prohibitive task: thus I demur.

2 I rely on Reiman's and Powers's edition of "Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude," in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, pp. 69–87. All quotations from the poem will be cited by line in text.

3 William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, ed. Allison et al., 3rd edn. (New York: Norton, 1983), pp. 551–555. All quotations from the poem will be cited by line in the text.

4 In reading "Alastor" as, in part, an attack on Wordsworthian panaceas, I am influenced by Marilyn Butler's reading of this poem in *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries*. Among the more compelling and internally consistent readings of "Alastor" is Timothy Clark's chapter on the poem in *Embodying Revolution: The Figure of the Poet in Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989). Emphasizing the links between autobiography, introspection, and revolution, Clark makes the case that in "Alastor" "Shelley adapted the hero of sensibility into a figure who functions as part of his exploration of poetic identity as it relates to philosophical questions of the power of mind" (p. 96). I am more concerned, as will become obvious, to register the dispersion of Wordsworth, the "poet-function," and the immortality complex throughout this and other poems, than to offer an integrated and integrative reading of this single poem; nevertheless I think my readings – of "Alastor" and the other poems cited here – are not excessively partial, contingent, or strained.

5 Shelley's positing of Wordsworth as both particular and representative continues to chime with twentieth-century critical representations of romanticism. For two recent essays salutarily contesting the centrality of Wordsworth, and his "representative" status, see James K. Chandler, "Representative Men, Spirits of the Age, and Other Romantic Types," which deploys Hazlitt against those who would, like M. H. Abrams, overzealously subsume the age under the sign of Wordsworth, and Marilyn Butler, "Plotting the Revolution: The Political Narratives of Romantic Poetry and Criticism," which devilishly imagines the consequences for English literary history had Wordsworth been guillotined in revolutionary France. Both essays appear in the "Romanticism without Wordsworth" section of *Romantic Revolutions: Criticism and Theory*, ed. Kenneth R. Johnston et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

6 "To Wordsworth," *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 88.

7 Robert Browning's "The Lost Leader" similarly posits Wordsworth as an exemplary, if regrettable poetic "renegado" who sold out the liberal cause "[j]ust for a handful of silver . . . [j]ust for a riband to stick in his coat." The poem clearly hearkens back to Shelley's polemical representations of Wordsworth. On the invention and consolidation of the "legend of Wordsworth as renegado," as poetic and political turncoat, see James K. Chandler, "'Wordsworth' after Waterloo," *The Age of William Wordsworth: Critical Essays on the Romantic Tradition*, eds. Kenneth R. Johnston and Gene Ruoff (New Brunswick: Rutgers), pp. 84–111. Chandler demonstrates that the liberal critique of Wordsworth's career rested on a two-fold misapprehension: first, *contra* Shelley, Hazlitt, and Browning (and, in fact, most twentieth-century critics until Chandler's *Wordsworth's Second Nature*), Chan-

dler argues that Wordsworth shifted rightward between 1795 and 1797, not during or after the so-called "golden decade" of 1797–1807, by which time he had already made his muted peace with Burke; and second, Wordsworth's politics looked particularly reactionary, and newly so, only in light of the re-awakening of reformist fervor in England after the decisive defeat of Napoleon in 1815. Not Wordsworth so much as the times had changed between 1798 and 1815. Thanks to Jim Chandler for directing me back to Browning's poem.

8 Chandler, "'Wordsworth' after Waterloo," especially pp. 90–98.

9 "This historical significance is no matter of accident; for the graveyard poets, by generalizing the subject matter of elegy and freeing it from the confines of merely occasional verse, bridged the transition between the elegy proper, which flourished so rank in the seventeenth and early in the eighteenth century, and the melancholy of nascent Romanticism both in England and on the Continent." John W. Draper, *The Funeral Elegy and the Rise of English Romanticism*, 1929 (New York: Phaeton, 1967), p. 4. On the amazing and significant success of English graveyard school poetry in France, see John McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment: Changing Attitudes to Death among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-century France* (Oxford University Press, 1981), esp. Chapter 10, "Graveyards: Patriotism, Poetry, and Grim Realities." Young's *Night Thoughts* was particularly embraced after excerpts were translated and published in 1760; McManners notes that "Robespierre had a copy in his pocket during his days in power, and his victim Camille Desmoulins read a page on the way to the guillotine – 'Tu veux mourir donc deux fois?'"

10 Macfarlane's essay appears as the fifth chapter in *Mortality and Immortality: the anthropology and archaeology of death*, eds. S.C. Humphreys and Helen King (London, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1981), pp. 249–260. E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541–1871: A reconstruction* (with contributions by Ronald Lee and Jim Oeppen) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981) provides an exhaustive demographic documentation and interpretation of English mortality and natality over a four-hundred-year period as well as a useful introductory essay on problems of method, such as how to extrapolate from Anglican registers of baptisms and burials to a reasonably accurate accounting of births and deaths. Here we see quite clearly how the culture/nature divide not only distorts but indeed establishes the archive.

11 Macfarlane, "Death and the Demographic Transition," *Mortality and Immortality*, p. 252.

12 This chapter thus draws on several recent studies of Romantic mortality, the culture of death, and the poetics thereof, including Esther Schor, *Bearing the Dead: The British Culture of Mourning from the Enlightenment to Victoria* (Princeton University Press, 1994), Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), and Alan Bewell's chapters on the "History of Death" in

Wordsworth and the Enlightenment. Schor offers a cultural-historical account of the poetics and politics of mourning; her emphasis on the discourse of sentiment and the contested status of moral spectatorship in Burke and Wordsworth are salutary contributions to and revisions of psychologically-oriented accounts of mourning-in-poems; her readings mark a historicizing departure from the more pervasive deconstructive de-codings of Wordsworth's *Essays upon Epitaphs*. Different though these accounts are, Schor, Bewell, and Scodel all describe this period as one in which the culture and representation of mourning was transformed – a transformation which can be variously understood, e.g. with reference to the dispersion of Enlightenment theorizing (as Bewell argues) or to the declining emphasis on the public (versus the privately felt) meaning of the dead (as Scodel emphasizes). More relevant to my emphasis on immortality vis-à-vis revolution – "revolution" understood as the possibility of new imagining as well as the possibility of radical rupture in thought and politics – are those projects that document the historical transformations of the idea of death and immortality in France. John McManners's *Death and the Enlightenment* is an especially important guide to this topic. His account of the politics of death and immortality in France has inflected my account of a less-documented (because less publicly contested and violently staged) immortality controversy in England. Finally, the extensive and influential writings on Wordsworth's epitaphics would include, in addition to Schor's, Scodel's, and Bewell's books, also Paul de Man's intricate deconstruction of the first *Essay upon Epitaphs* in "Autobiography as De-Facement," *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 67–82.

13 See Arendt's "Prologue," *The Human Condition*, pp. 1–11, in particular her invocation of "the most general condition of human existence: birth and death, natality and mortality" (p. 8). Writing in the aftermath of the Sputnik launch and more broadly in the context of post-atomic dread, Arendt engages herself most directly with the ways in which scientific and technological progress might release man from the earth, itself one of the conditions of human existence in her account: "The most radical change in the human condition we can imagine would be an emigration of men from the earth to some other planet" (p. 10).

14 Currently available editions of the central texts for these conjectures – the texts Malthus explicitly engaged in his essay *On Population* – are Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, trans. June Barraclough (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1955), and William Godwin, *Political Justice* (1793, 1798).

15 Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 776.

16 Arendt, *On Revolution*: "Only where this pathos of novelty is present and where novelty is connected with the idea of freedom are we entitled to speak of revolution" (p. 34).

17 Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 9.

18 Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 247.

19 Arendt, *Human Condition*, pp. 177–178.
20 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie: Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos*, trans. Daniel Russell (Boston: Beacon, 1971), pp. 111–112.
21 Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 11.
22 Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion, Etc.," l. 495 in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 406. Further quotations from the poem will be cited by line in the text.
23 Thomas Love Peacock, *The Four Ages of Poetry*, p. 4. "The first, or iron age of poetry, is that in which rude bards celebrate in rough numbers the exploits of ruder chiefs" (p. 3).
24 This is to emphasize that the immortality -effect of poetry depends neither on the fixity of its content nor on the mode of its composition and transmission.
25 In Chapter XII of his *Essay*, 1798, Malthus criticizes those philosophers who "introduce a species of immortality of their own, not only completely contradictory to every law of philosophical probability, but in itself in the highest degree, narrow, partial, and unjust" (p. 85).
26 I am, of course, alluding to Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology*, which in its powerful critique of romantic displacements tends to assimilate poetry to ideology, thus locking romantic poetry into a prison-house perhaps more symptomatic of post-Althusserian criticism than of "poetry" or "romanticism."
27 Wordsworth, *Essay upon Epitaphs*, I, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, vol. II, p. 57.
28 Informing this essay and some aspects of my textual conjunctions and readings, here as in my previous chapter, is Frances Ferguson's deeply suggestive account of a "Romantic political economy." Ferguson shows how Malthus's *Essay*, ostensibly about the pressure of too many bodies, is equally and perhaps more profoundly concerned to theorize the pressure of "too many consciousnesses." So too this double pressure shapes and informs the will-to-solitude, or what we might call the claims of autonomous consciousness, so characteristic of that poetry we now call "romantic." As Ferguson writes, "Malthus's *Essay*, instead of being a response to the pressure of too many bodies, registers the felt pressure of too many consciousnesses, and his specter of overpopulation represents what might be called a Romantic political economy, much as the sense of psychic crowding that William Wordsworth's descriptions of London in Book 7 of *The Prelude* represents a Romantic poetic consciousness. For Malthus and Wordsworth both, a Romantic consciousness emerges in reaction to the proliferation of other consciousnesses – for example, women's – on the individual. Solitude comes to be cultivated as a space for consciousness in which the individual is not answerable to others, and the waste landscape becomes the site of value because one can make it a peopled solitude, anthropomorphizing rocks and stones and trees, without encountering the pressures of a competing consciousness" (p. 106).

29 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 78.

30 Godwin's 1820 treatise *Of Population* beat a rhetorical retreat from the visionary fervor of the 1790s that had conditioned both the writing of and the response to *Political Justice*: "My bitterest enemy will hardly be able to find in this volume the author of the Enquiry concerning Political Justice. I have scarcely allowed myself to recollect the beautiful visions (if they shall turn out to be visions), which enchanted my soul, and animated my pen, while writing that work" (Preface to *Of Population*, p. x).

31 Godwin made related arguments against population terror in 1820 but emphasized then the danger of human degeneration; by 1820, of course, he knew his primary antagonist on this question was Malthus: "So far from having to frighten ourselves with the idea of an overwhelming population, have we not rather to fear that we are sinking by degrees into a degenerate race, which in the lapse of time may be swept from the globe? The earth itself is probably not immortal, and why should its puny inhabitants? All these, to be sure, are questions of mere possibilities, but they are as probable and as demonstrable, as the possibilities of Mr. Malthus" (*Of Population*, p. 288).

32 Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 770.

33 Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 771 note.

34 Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 774.

35 Godwin, *Political Justice*, pp. 144–145.

36 "Malthus, despite the fact that he writes to discourage population increase, figures reproduction as a mathematical process, the inevitable and essentially unvarying production of numbers from ratios of other numbers. Against this vision of the immortality of a mathematical body that replicates itself of necessity, Godwin sets one that argues the power of consciousness to intervene" (Ferguson, "Malthus, Godwin," pp. 111–112).

37 Malthus revised and softened the extremely controversial theodicy that concluded his 1798 essay. The notorious Chapter XIX of the 1798 essay argued that since "the sorrows of life were necessary to soften and humanize the human heart," the evils of population were best understood as ultimate goods in God's plan, goads to "the improvement of the human faculties, and the moral amelioration of mankind." By the second edition of 1803, Malthus ended his essay with a less obviously moralizing chapter concerning "our rational expectations respecting the future improvement of society." See *Parallel Chapters from the First and Second Editions of An Essay on the Principle of Population by T. R. Malthus 1798:1803* (New York: Macmillan, 1895), pp. xix and 75. Mary Poovey has recently argued for the major impact of Malthusian moral arithmetic in the transition from conjectural history to political economy. And indeed, as she observes, when Malthus abandoned the explicit theodicy after 1798 he did not at all intend to dissociate science from morality; yet contemporaries saw the omission of the theodicy and the simultaneous stuffing of subsequent editions with numbers, facts, and tables as a sign of the decisive break between systematic

knowledge and Christian faith. See Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: problems of knowledge in the sciences of wealth and society* (University of Chicago Press, 1998), especially the introduction and Chapter Six (pp. 264–306).

38 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 78.
39 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 61.
40 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 62.
41 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 82.
42 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 62. Malthus may have had any number of discoveries on his mind, among them Humphry Davy's discovery of several chemical elements and his electrico-galvanic researches; experiments in animal magnetism; or Franklin's work in electricity.
43 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 61.
44 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 65.
45 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 94.
46 Hazlitt, *A Reply*, p. 48.
47 Hazlitt, *A Reply*, p. 254.
48 I take both the phrase "structure of feeling" and the concept of the "residual" (determined against the emergent and the dominant) from Raymond Williams's discussion in *Marxism and Literature*. Williams's "structure of feeling" is notoriously vague but nevertheless points to the emotional valences that ideas and beliefs carry; more powerfully his analysis suggests that feeling both *has* a structure (is not merely personal or evanescent although it is intensely and personally experienced) and is *part* of the material structure, not an epiphenomenon. At issue here is not whether ideas or practices or beliefs were objectively residual but rather that their persistence could be described as such (with a tone of knowing irony, of course) by Malthus. Malthus suggests that, by their own standards of philosophic enlightenment, Condorcet's and Godwin's conjectures must be understood as anachronistic. For Malthus, conventional in his pieties, this anachronism reveals not that revelation is out-dated or superseded by Enlightenment but rather that the timeless Christian truths manifest themselves in spectral forms and traces even in such apparently hostile, anti- or post-Christian treatises.
49 Malthus, *Essay*, pp. 84–85.
50 William Godwin, *Essay on Sepulchres: or, A Proposal for Erecting some Memorial of the Illustrious Dead in all Ages on the Spot where their remains have been interred* (London: W. Miller, 1809), p. 8.
51 Godwin, *Sepulchres*, p. 10.
52 Godwin, *Sepulchres*, p. 105.
53 See, for example, the wonderful collection *Mortality and Immortality: the anthropology and archaeology of death*. Particularly relevant to this chapter are Humphreys' "Introduction: comparative perspectives on death" (pp. 1–14) and the aforementioned A. MacFarlane, "Death and the Demographic Transition: a note on English evidence on death 1500–1750" (pp. 249–260). Another exemplary collection, rich in its cross-cultural materials, is *Death*

and the Regeneration of Life, eds. Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry (Cambridge University Press, 1982).

54 As Alan Bewell observes, ". . . when Wordsworth began to write intensively on the subject of death, in 1798, there already existed a recognizable Enlightenment discourse that saw death and the afterlife as ideas that had their origin in the empirical body and the grave" (p. 194).

55 See, for example, Wordsworth's mention of the "still seclusion of a Turkish cemetery," which he praises over the "busy, noisy, unclean, and almost grassless church-yard of a large town" in England (*Essay upon Epitaphs* I, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, vol. II, p. 54). This cultural comparison is characteristic of Wordsworth's quasi-anthropological investigation of death, burial, and remembrance in the first *Essay upon Epitaphs*.

56 *Essay upon Epitaphs* I, *The Prose Works*, vol. II, p. 49.

57 See Bewell, "The History of Death," *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment*, pp. 187–217 for an extended reading of several *Lyrical Ballads* through the *Essays upon Epitaphs*.

58 Wordsworth, *Preface*, pp. 247–248.

59 Bewell, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment*: "Wordsworth's famous dictum that we are naturally unable 'to admit the notion of death as a state applicable' to our being (PW 4: 463) represents a radical departure from Enlightenment thought, which had assumed that the idea of immortality, like the idea of death itself, was too sophisticated for the primitive mind and developed later. For Wordsworth, the notion of immortality, our first religious idea, is derived not from the grave, but from life; rather than providing us with the symbolic materials for an idea of afterlife, our empirical knowledge of the dead robs us of this belief, leaving poetry the task of finding a linguistic means to recover from this mortal theft. The history of death is thus a dialectic, built upon the conflict between ideas of immortality, drawn from the continuities of nature, and our empirical knowledge of the dead" (pp. 194–195).

60 Wordsworth, *Essay upon Epitaphs* I, *Prose Works*, vol. II, pp. 51–52.

61 In her Introduction to *Bearing the Dead*, Esther Schor suggestively distinguishes her work from those psycho-logically and psycho-analytically oriented "critics of textual mourning" who, "using a therapeutic critical paradigm derived from Freud's 1917 'Mourning and Melancholia,' have focused on elegiac lyrics" (p. 3). Schor believes such readings implicitly privatize and pathologize mourning. She offers instead a reading of mourning "as a phenomenon of far greater extension and duration than an individual's traumatic grief; as a force that constitutes communities and makes it possible to conceptualize history" (p. 4). While Schor doesn't say so, her methodological and ethical commitments also lead her to select textual objects beyond the range of the elegiac lyric: moral philosophical essays by Burke, Paine, Wordsworth; the long poem (Wordsworth's *Excursion*); and the cultural text that was the death of Princess Charlotte on 5 November 1817.

62 A further explication of this allusive network would allow me to discuss the dispersion of "natality" – whether nostalgic, reconstructed, abandoned, critical – throughout this poetic field. In "Frost at Midnight" Coleridge moves from his infant's "cradled" slumber to recollections of his own vexed boyhood: in school, "already had I dreamt / Of my sweet birthplace." Coleridge's boyhood stands more as a memory of lost natality than as a font of Wordsworthian intimations. Nostalgic children tend to inspire a particular pathos. One feels they are prematurely aged; that children's longing often takes the form of nostalgia should modify any sentimentalism we may retain about the timelessness and innocence of childhood. One notices that, whereas Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" modulates into a loving prophecy for his son ("But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze . . ."), Wordsworth's Ode modulates into a benediction for the self, its obstinate questionings, and the generalized "human heart." Coleridge, that is, retains his longing and transforms it into parental and projective hope; Wordsworth seems to consume his longing, to station himself in time through the benedictive assents and affirmations of his last stanza. As Burke and Paine well knew, natality as the promise of the new plays out differently in the intergenerational field – *between* subjects, *between* generations – than in the intrasubjective field (or, we might say, works out differently in politics from phenomenology or psychology). The question of my beginning again, my reviving myself, my recovering a capacity to act, is quite another thing than, say, the question of yours.

63 See Trilling, "The Immortality Ode," p. 151; Frances Ferguson, *Language as Counter-Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 100; Bewell, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment*, p. 219. For a great example of new-historicist demystification in all its rancor and glory, see Marjorie Levinson, Chapter 3, "The Intimations Ode: a timely utterance," *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 1986): ". . . the Intimations Ode carries out its repudiation of politics on two levels, the level of argument and the level of style" (p. 81); ". . . a dominant motive of the Ode is to expose the fallacy of these analogical assumptions [between, for example, light and reason] which had governed Enlightenment thought and Revolutionary action" (p. 99).

64 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 13.

65 For one account of the compositional history of the poem, see Bewell, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment*, p. 220. And indeed, Wordsworth considered the enabling myth of the fifth stanza to be the "Archimedean point whereon to rest his machine" (Bewell's quotation, 220). Marjorie Levinson offers her own account of the "timeliness" of the poem and the meaning of its staggered compositional moments (stanzas 1–4 completed March 27 1802, stanzas 5–9 undertaken not until March 1804) in *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems*, see especially pp. 83–99.

66 Shelley's move to allegory is itself a critical displacement: displacement as criticism. Allegory requires interpretation; it presumes mediation.

Announcing his poem as an "allegorical situation," Shelley alerts us to the kind of reading experience we should have. There will be no easy transparency. Wordsworth's Ode is, we might say, mythopoeic, whereas Shelley 's "Alastor" is mythographic, to invoke a distinction Marilyn Butler has re-vivified. For an early version of Butler's powerful argument about the role of mythography in second-generation romantic writing (particularly that of Peacock), see "Myth and mythmaking in the Shelley circle," in *Shelley Revalued: Essays from the Gregynog Conference*, ed. Kelvin Everest (Barnes and Noble, 1983), 1–19. Butler criticizes models of reading dependent on Blakean poetics and argues that mythography, not the usually privileged "mythopoeia" (*pace* Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*), dominated the writing of such poets as Peacock, Hunt, Shelley, and (though not in this "circle") Keats. Butler argues as well that mythographic writing indexed these poets' philosophical skepticism (see pp. 5–6).

67 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 11.

68 The poem is untitled and its lines unnumbered in the 1816 volume *Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude: and Other Poems by Percey Bysshe Shelley*, 1816 (London: Reeves and Turner, 1885), pp. 61–63. In Mary Shelley's 1839 edition of Shelley's poem, it appears under the rubric, "Early Poems 1814, 1815" with the title, "On Death."

69 For two signal essays that discuss prosopopoeia, apostrophe, and the impasse of death, see Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement" (pp. 67–82) and "Shelley Disfigured" (pp. 93–124), *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); see also Cynthia Chase, "'Viewless Wings': Intertextual Interpretation of Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale,'" *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, eds. Chaviva Hosek and Patricia Parker (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 208–225.

70 "Ode to Liberty," *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, pp. 229–236. Further quotations from the poem will be cited by line in the text.

71 At this point a more extended analysis of the mutual implication of "generations" and "immortality" would be necessary: the political valence of immortality may be said to coincide with the values ascribed to "generations." Paine, for example, mounted his argument against Burke through a critique of Burke's homage to the binding of generations one to the other: "Every age and generation must be free to act for itself, *in all cases*, as the ages and generations which preceded it," Paine argued in *The Rights of Man*, intro. Eric Foner (London: Penguin, 1984). "The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave, is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies" (pp. 41–42). Paine vests each generation with the same capacity to initiate, the same political agency and access to rights: "The Rights of Man are the rights of all generations of men, and cannot be monopolized by any" (p. 208). Godwin's speculations about a nearly immortal generation of enlightened citizens is a variation on the theme of generations: like Paine he understood the prestige of "generations" (and of the "generation"-motif-as-continuity and thus inherently conservative) to be a primary difficulty for

radical thought. Again, the central passage on the crux of generations, for Wordsworth as for Paine, is Burke's ingenious transformation of social contract theory in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790): "Society is indeed a contract . . . It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born" (p. 96).

72 For the texts of these poems I rely on *Hyperion. A Fragment*, pp. 117–142 and *The Fall of Hyperion. A Dream*, pp. 198–213, in *John Keats: Selected Poems*, ed. John Barnard (London: Penguin, 1988). Quotations from the poem will be cited by book and line in the text.

73 My emphasis here on pain and mortality and – most broadly in this concluding sequence, the pathos of human making – relies on my reading of Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (Oxford University Press, 1985). See in particular Chapter 3, "Pain and Imagining" (pp. 161–180) and Chapter 5, "The Interior Structure of the Artifact" (pp. 278–326).

74 Milton's Satan also persists in believing himself not decisively overthrown, not definitively cast out. Keats's emphasis on the self-experience of his gods may reveal another kind of debt to Milton than the stylistic one usually noted.

75 Apollo's figuring himself as having drunk a "bright elixir peerless" is a variation of the Keatsian figure of drinking oneself into a new state, sometimes ecstatic, more often a deathlike oblivion. Oblivion is itself a repeatedly ambiguated state in Keats – one thinks of the first stanza of the "Ode to a Nightingale," in which the poet feels "as though of hemlock I had drunk" and yet soon wishes for "a beaker full of the warm South": the double-sided drinking figure might be read as an investigation into the contradictions of romantic internalization itself. The conjunction of death-wish and drink appears again, to be warded off, in the "Ode on Melancholy": "No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist / Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine . . ."

76 Of course, this reading anachronistically heroizes and distorts a position Shelley, Byron, and Wordsworth variously inhabited – the dismay at being misread, un- or under-recognized; Keats's more obviously impeded and posthumous career presents another question, one that Marjorie Levinson has so incisively posed regarding Keats – just who can afford to be alienated, and on what terms? See Levinson, *Keats's Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1988).

77 John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale," *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 660–662. Further quotations will be cited by line in text.

78 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 18–19.

79 Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, intro. Gregory Zilboorg, biog. introd. Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 53. The German is translated in the note as, "To bear the burden of

existence," Schiller, *Die Braut von Messina*, I, p. 8.

80 Roland Barthes, "The Great Family of Man," *Mythologies*, sel. and trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Farrar, 1972), p. 101.

81 Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: "Biology is truly a land of unlimited possibilities. We may expect it to give us the most surprising information and we cannot guess what answers it will return in a few dozen years to the questions we have put to it" (p. 73). Such a conviction echoes Condorcet's, Godwin's, and Franklin's – rationalists all.

EPILOGUE, OR IMMORTALITY INTERMINABLE: THE USE OF POETRY FOR LIFE

1 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 64.

2 Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Man" *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* pp. 424–425. Further quotations from the poem will be cited by line in the text.

3 The recent work of J. Paul Hunter, which emphasizes the disjunctive and even critically destabilizing force of the couplet, argues that we should abstain from prematurely categorizing the couplet, and particularly Pope's couplet, as a conservative, closed, consolidating form. See Hunter, "Form as Meaning: Pope and the Ideology of the Couplet," *The Eighteenth Century* 37 (1996) : 257–270.

4 The only other poetic quotations I have been able to discover in the *Essay* are Malthus's invocation of Milton in Chapter 18: "It cannot be considered an unimproving exercise of the human mind to endeavor to 'Vindicate the ways of God to man' if we proceed with a proper distrust of our own understandings . . ." (p. 116) and his description of Nature in the terms that Shakespeare ("[o]ur immortal Bard") used of Cleopatra: "Custom cannot stale/Her infinite variety" (p. 125). That each of these quotations appears in the final two chapters – in the theodicy chapters dedicated to salvaging the immortality question for religion – suggests how poetry can be made to work, can even index, a depoliticizing movement.

5 Malthus, *Essay*, p. 130.

6 Wordsworth, *Essay upon Epitaphs*, III, *Prose Works* II, p. 80.

7 Robert J. Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope: A Study in Literary Historiography* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). Griffin makes a powerful case both for the centrality of Pope, or rather of a polemically invoked "Pope," for so-called "romantic" self-definition and for re-thinking romanticism itself such that it becomes part of the long eighteenth century, not the inauguration of modernity. Griffin states one aspect of his thesis thus: ". . . the element 'Pope' in Romantic literary history is a symptom of a repression of the historical Pope, a body of texts that might admit alternative constructions" (p. 135).

8 On Wordsworth's powerful ambivalence toward Pope, see Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope*, pp. 88–110. Griffin argues, persuasively, that this ambivalence in fact constituted Wordsworth's poetic commitments: not Milton but

Pope is Wordsworth's primary Oedipal antagonist and source of anxiety.

9 Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, p. 122.

10 Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 173. Arendt is following Heidegger's distinction between "earth" and "world," between the natural given and the human (and thus humanly transformed) home.

11 Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 168. "In the case of art works, reification is more than mere transformation; it is transfiguration, a veritable metamorphosis in which it is as though the course of nature which wills that all fire burn to ashes is reverted and even dust can burst into flames. Works of art are thought things, but this does not prevent their being things. The thought process by itself no more produces and fabricates tangible things, such as books, paintings, sculptures, or compositions, than usage by itself produces and fabricates housing and furniture. The reification which occurs in writing something down, painting an image, modeling a figure, or composing a melody is of course related to the thought which preceded it, but what actually makes the thought a reality and fabricates things of thought is the same workmanship which, through the primordial instrument of human hands, builds the other durable things of the human artifice" (pp. 168–169).

12 Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 169.

13 Shelley, *The Triumph of Life*, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 456. Further quotations from the poem will be cited by line in the text.

14 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 53.

15 De Man, "Shelley Disfigured," *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, p. 121. While de Man continues to direct our attention to the rhetorical uses and abuses of romanticism, more recent scholarship has emphasized the historicity of romantic preoccupations. For two magisterial works which analyze and theorize the cultural and historical situations of literature in this period, see James Chandler, *England in 1819: the politics of literary culture and the case of romantic historicism* (University of Chicago Press, 1998), and Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: the romantic novel and the British Empire* (Princeton University Press, 1997). The scope and conceptual sophistication of these books make them indispensable for any accounting of literary culture as well as of the Enlightenment underpinnings of historicism and cultural nationalism. I regret that I came to these books too late to reckon fully with either in this project.

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