Romantic Poetologies: Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity in early Anglo-German Romanticism

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Abstract

This thesis reads seminal texts such as Wordsworth's prose, *Lyrical Ballads*, *The Prelude*, and *The Excursion* alongside Coleridge's poetic theory and practice and Novalis, Tieck and Friedrich Schlegel's philosophical novels and fragments, as 'poetologies'. My initial research aim is to test how successfully Wordsworth can be read as part of this Anglo-German comparative framework, from which criticism has tended to exclude him. This is done through demonstrating the centrality of irony and drama to the philosophical character of Wordsworth's poetry. Drawing on the theory of the *Frühromantiker*, I demonstrate that Wordsworth's revisionary habit and his use of ballads and epitaphs shape a poetics constantly 'in the process of becoming' (F. Schlegel), the vehicle of the poet's aspirations to dramatize a potentially infinite self-consciousness. Secondly, my thesis investigates the ways of reading these seminal texts which give us a clearer idea of how Romantic writers internally situate their own work through their use of contrasting genres. This investigation expands to examine how the collaborative, interdisciplinary ventures proposed by Romantic writers elaborate the concept of 'poetology' as a practicable theory. This leads to my final research aim: to make apparent that these methodologies result in the *Mischgedicht*, the 'mixed poem' which Schlegel theorizes as the ultimate incarnation of modern, 'Romantic' literature. The thesis concludes by drawing theories, methodologies and texts together and making sense of that ultimate continuity sought by the Romantic project. I do this by turning to the poetologizing of immortality (which supersedes death as a Romantic preoccupation) and arguing that to poetologize immortality – to poeticize and philosophize it simultaneously – is *the* test-case for producing the infinite from the finite. I suggest the necessity felt by Romantic writers to achieve this transformation in order to legitimate the permeable philosophical poetry and poetic philosophy – 'poetologies' – which made it possible.

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And for my niece, Zahra Hassan, whose daily dramatizing keeps us all going.

Chapter 1. 'What is a Poet?': a poetological approach

Irony

This thesis seeks to address some of the most pressing questions early Romantic writers and thinkers find themselves asking. In one version of his famous 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth asks, 'What is a Poet?' An apparently simple enough question and furnished with an equally simple answer – 'a Man speaking to men' – the implications of this inquiry are actually far more complex, and I shall begin to work through these as my argument progresses. To begin with, however, I hope my graduation from considering what a Romantic poet is to defining the concept of poetology might be justified as both a technical necessity as well as a structural one: the drive behind my argument is that we cannot hope to have as rich an understanding of the methods employed by Wordsworth and other leading Romantic thinker-writers if we do not recognize the nature of the relationship between – if not always unity of – poetic theory, methodology and practice.

The word 'poetology' is not a term that always refers to study of the Romantic period. It is one that has been picked up in German criticism to refer to a type of literature which explores methods of arriving at knowledge. It has gained currency through the work of Joseph Vogl, whose phrase, 'poetologies of knowledge' has come to indicate the ways in which diverse disciplines such as poetry and science contribute towards new methods of knowledge. With this emphasis on reflexivity, it is unsurprising that it has become a term in usage when considering modern cultural and social scientific discourses of knowledge. What is more surprising, perhaps, is that in the United States and in contemporary British performance poetry it has also come to mean the study and practice of spoken poetic expression by some. My first encounter with the term was through 'Anglo-German Poetologies Around 1800', an invigorating research colloquium hosted by the Centre for Anglo-German Cultural Relations at Queen Mary, University of London (2007-9). This seminar series was concerned with the study of early Romantic intersection of poetic and philosophical theory (particularly theories of life and the self), and much of the material presented and discussed in and beyond this space

provided a stimulus for my own consideration of issues explored in this thesis.[1] Poetology, then, is clearly a term that is flexible in its definition. In using it to consider the nature and interrelation of seminal early Romantic texts in England and Germany, I am arguing that such flexibility should be upheld when considering literary and philosophical theories and modes of texts production that are as diverse and collaborative as those of early Romantics. Poetology is a word that is suited to comparative studies – particularly those seeking to address how literature engenders modes of knowledge – because it seeks to bridge gaps between 'literary' and 'non-literary' discourses. Strictly speaking, the only etymological definition of the word 'poetology' would have it as a study or science of poetry/literature. This thesis argues that early Romantic writers' understanding of 'poetry' and 'science' were broad enough to translate the terms as 'literature' and 'knowledge' respectively. Thus, poetology according to both its etymological roots and Romantic appropriation of those root-terms is any literature theorizing knowledge, and we have only to cast a cursory glance over the manifestos produced by not only early but also 'second-generation' Romantics to see how poetry engenders privileged forms of knowledge. For Wordsworth, 'poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge', and he follows Aristotle in asserting that 'Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing', thus negating the need for systematic philosophical discourse; for Schlegel, philosophy has achieved all it can by itself, and now must unite with poetry; Coleridge famously states that the poet can 'bring the whole soul of man into activity'; and for Novalis it is a renovating source that affords one with a fresher perspective of the world. But there are also bridges between early and later Romanticism: Shelley, like Novalis, reads poets as 'priests' or 'hierophants', who are also 'the unacknowledged legislators of the world' – a term that attaches undeniable importance to the poet's understanding of how the world ought to be governed, even if actual legislation eludes the poet's remit; and Keats is reminiscent of Schlegel when theorizing examples of

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[1] See *Poetologien des Wissens um 1800*, ed. by Joseph Vogl (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1999). For an example of its usage in contemporary performance/sound poetry, see Doreen King, *The Poetology of Bob Cobbing* (Shrewsbury: Feather Books, 2003). Further information on the seminar series, 'Anglo-German Poetologies Around 1800' can be found at http://www.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/research/anglogerman/events/colloq.shtml.

poetry, art and literary criticism as characterizing the great tendencies of his age.[2]

Poetology is defined in this thesis as the broader type of work that early German and English writers sought actively to produce. It is not a method of writing, nor is it a category. Rather, poetology is a name given to the desired production – and this includes theorizing – of Romantic literature. I am defining poetology as a term that denotes an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to the Romantic text. I am not, however, suggesting that 'poetology' can be translated merely as 'poetic theory', because for the Romantic writer, theory and poetic practice cannot – must not – be wholly separated. Poetology is more than an umbrella term, though; within it one might find Romantic manifesto, methodology, and that final production, the *Mischgedicht*. Although I am not arguing for a conscious synchronization or collaboration between say, Wordsworth and Friedrich Schlegel, I am arguing

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[2] See the 1850 text of William Wordsworth, 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*', in *The Prose Works*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), i, p.167 and p.163. In citing the 'Preface' I have opted throughout to use the Oxford edition of Wordsworth's prose rather than the Cornell Wordsworth edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, as I believe it remains the richer of the two: the parallel texts of the 1800 and 1850 versions of the 'Preface' in Owen and Smyser's edition make for a more transparent and rewarding reading of Wordsworth's revisions. All subsequent references to the text will be footnoted as '*Prose Works*, i' with page numbers for the 1800 and 1850 texts in parentheses. Where there is a reference to 1850 but not to 1800, I refer to a revision/addition made by 1802, thus falling roughly within the early period of my focus. For a version of the 1802 'Preface', see William Wordsworth, *The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.595-615. For Schlegel on the interdependence of the two disciplines, see Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans. by Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1971), *Ideas*, 108: 'Whatever can be done while poetry and philosophy are separated has been done and accomplished. So, the time has come to unite the two'. (p.251). See also Friedrich Wilhelm Schlegel, *Literary Notebooks, 1797-1801*, ed. by Hans Eichner (London: Athlone Press, 1957), 330, p.48, in which Schlegel states that a prophet is a poetic philosopher and a philosophical poet. For more on Coleridge and the role of poetry in bringing the whole soul of man into activity, see below. See Chapter 6 for a detailed consideration of Novalis on the renovating and prophetic powers of the poet. For Shelley on poets as 'hierophants' and 'legislators' in 'A Defence of Poetry', see, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Neil Fraistat and Donald Reiman, 2nd edn (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002): 'Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.' (p.535). see also Shelley, *Poetry and Prose*, p.531: 'It [poetry] is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge'. For Schlegel on the great 'tendencies of the age' as the French Revolution, Fichte's *Theory of Knowledge*, and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, see *Athenaeum Fragments*, 216, in *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.190. See also Keats' letter to Benjamin Robert Haydon dated 10 January 1818, in *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), i: 'I am convinced that there are three things to rejoice at in this Age—The Excursion Your Pictures, and Hazlitt's depth of Taste.' (p.203).

that such an approach is common within the constraints of geographical space – that is, a literary circle convening and operating in a particular locale – but also within a point in time across spatial distances, the time known in England as early first-generation Romanticism and in Germany as *Frühromantik*. So, one aspect of early Romanticism this thesis seeks to engage with is the Anglo-German Romantic framework, and how this might be re-defined by its inclusion of Wordsworth. That is, my initial research question is as follows: how can reading Wordsworth within such a framework enable us to arrive at a better understanding of his philosophical poetry? This means that existing focus on reading conscious connections between seminal English and German texts of this period does not address adequately the similarities between the broader aims of writers as apparently diverse as Wordsworth and Novalis. The thrust of existing Anglo-German scholarship has tended largely to be towards reading Coleridge's poetic fragments and his *Biographia Literaria* as models of Schlegelian theory. In order to begin to understand why such a critical approach is reductive, we need to examine further what poetology entails.

Poetology as both theory and practice necessitates a re-evaluation of existing aesthetic, literary, and philosophical principles. One such principle is irony, which has become centralized from the late 1970s onwards in the work of scholars such as Peter Conrad, Anne K. Mellor, David Simpson and Kathleen Wheeler.[3] Conrad's *Shandyism: the Character of Romantic Irony* is predicated on reading Romantic irony through the lens of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, in which Schlegel and his immediate circle show great interest. Schlegel reads *Tristram Shandy* as one of the novels that characterized the impossibility of a linear narrative; the process of arriving at a narrative of one's self is as fraught and chaotic as understanding that self, and, as such, is constantly subject to interruption. Shandy is, like the eponymous narrator of Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste*, an embodiment of the modern narrator and author for whom self-consciousness is always a process of becoming. As a

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[3] See Peter Conrad, *Shandyism: the character of Romantic irony* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978); Anne K. Mellor, *English Romantic Irony* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1980); David Simpson, *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry* (London: Macmillan Press, 1979); Kathleen Wheeler's *Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's Biographia Literaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) and *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: The Romantic Ironists and Goethe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

reminder of the prevalence of Sternean irony in Romantic thought – particularly in writing narratives of the self, wherein I believe lies its real value – *Shandyism* has taken its place within a movement redirecting studies to Romantic irony. However, Conrad's study does not quite get a handle on some of the complexities of irony in seminal Romantic texts – its title is somewhat misleading, since its focus tends to be firmly on the shift from classicism to Romanticism, rather than the 'character of Romantic irony' as we might wish to understand it, and Schlegel and his contemporary Jean Paul Richter make their appearance far too late in the study. Consequently, Conrad's study has perhaps been more pertinent to readers of Sterne than those seeking to understand better the theory and uses of irony in leading Romantic texts.

Anne K. Mellor's *English Romantic Irony* has been more instructive in setting out the centrality of irony in Romantic textual practice. As the title suggests, her study is focused on reading the presentation of irony in English texts, though the nature of this irony takes us back to the post-Kantian theory of F. Schlegel. Like Conrad, Mellor has reminded us that irony for Romantic writers (neither Conrad nor Mellor particularly emphasizes chosen authors as *thinkers*) is born out of an understanding that narrative is chaos; just as there is no 'absolute' or order in the world, so there is no ordered linearity in literary narrative of either the self or world. Mellor's study came at a point in Romantic scholarship when irony was becoming recognized as a legitimate focal point for study. However, perhaps it was published too shortly after David Simpson's *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry* to engage meaningfully with its predecessor. Although Mellor does something very different from Simpson, one cannot help but wonder how some inclusion of Wordsworth in her consideration might have shaped her conclusions; would, for example, Coleridge have been as neatly separated from Keatsian irony as one finds in *English Romantic Poetry*? Mellor places Coleridge in a crisis category shared by Lewis Carroll – that of the Christian writer struggling to reconcile a literary ironic practice with a theological belief in absolutes. This has its obvious merits: Coleridge's literary and philosophical ambitions are nothing if not conciliatory at times. However, to suggest that his are a poetics and intellectual discourse always in crisis is to toe a rather conservative line of

argument, and one that was beginning to seem dated even in 1980 when Mellor's study was published. This argument, initiated most prominently by M. H. Abrams and adopted and adapted through the 1960s and 1970s most notably by Harold Bloom and Geoffrey Hartman and their followers, suggests that the big players of first-generation English Romantics – effectively, Wordsworth and Coleridge, with Bloom's indefatigable pursuit of Blake still existing in a sphere and perhaps a class of its own – operate on a poetics of crisis. From the category of Abrams' 'greater Romantic lyric' to the 'supernatural poems' of Coleridge, the traditional heavyweights of Romanticism have insisted on dividing the canonical 'big six' Romantics by first- and second-generation poets. This is no longer the case. In the last three decades or so, Romantic scholarship has moved on from notions of 'canonical' writers (the 'canon', if there is one, is expanding all the time) and definitive readings of seminal texts. Even those texts themselves no longer represent a constant – thanks to the growth of editions such as the Cornell Wordsworth series we have access now to a greater number of published and manuscript versions of texts than in the age of Abrams et al, making a definitive text harder to place. To put it another way, as students and scholars of Romanticism we are finding the increasing need for generosity in our approach to familiar texts. As such, we are constantly moving closer to early Romanticism in a practical way; through the collapse of individual theoretical and critical frameworks, we have been moving beyond critical absolutes in a way that makes the continued study of irony all the more pertinent.

If such a statement sounds itself quasi-Romantic in its claims, it may be because it is: it is not a case of criticism being pushed through the lens of the art, rather that the very art concerns itself with the nature of criticism. To say that we are approaching texts with more critical generosity now than ever before is not to seek resolutely a 'Romantic' colouring over our reading of this period, it is simply to acknowledge that the authors of the texts we are examining prefigure many of our '-isms' in some way or other, and concern themselves with the limitations of those individual frameworks. Many of the conclusions this thesis comes to address this, either directly or indirectly. Chapters 2 and 5, for example, examine the use of dreams, fairy tales, romance and the *Nachtseite* in order to understand better the roles of history

and consciousness in shaping the self in a way that pre-dates Freudian reading, Marxism, post-structuralism or Historicism. So it is with feminism: one of the wider aims of this thesis is to suggest that our understanding of authorship in early English and German Romanticism is advanced greatly by an appreciation of the ways in which these circles blur gendered distinctions of writing. Though it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study to consider the richness of women's writing in this period, I hope that some of the readings produced might stimulate further consideration of how gender affects practical collaboration and text production in this period. In a sense, Romantic scholarship is only just catching up with the Romantics, and the foundations for such study have been in place roughly since this transitional period from overt theoretical '-isms' to plurality in interpretation.[4]

From this period two scholars emerge most prominently in relation to Anglo-German irony. In seminal works such as *Irony and Authority* and *Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's Biographia Literaria*, David Simpson and Kathleen Wheeler have, respectively, tended to read irony as the principal framework within which leading early Romantic writers operate. While this critical approach has been highly influential for any work considering comparative Romantic approaches and Romantic methodology, there are two main drawbacks to confining Anglo-German Romanticism to such rigidity. The first is the danger that the comparative reading becomes *too* invested in this framework so as not to allow for consideration of texts which fall outside of its thematic or formal make-up. This is especially the case with Wheeler's work, which draws close parallels between Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* and the *Fragmente* and literary practice (e.g. Schlegel's novel, *Lucinde*) of the *Frühromantiker*. This is highly instructive insofar as it has enlightened readers on the formal and theoretical cross-currents between Coleridge and German Romanticism. But it has been too narrow, I am suggesting, in that it has not allowed for Wordsworth to be read as a conscious

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[4] I am situating my work within this body of criticism that accounts for plurality. Recently, scholars such as Simon Jarvis and Stephen Gill have become interested in reading Wordsworth in ways that are both established and strikingly fresh. Jarvis' *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) takes an old theme – Wordsworth's intellectual influences – and produces new readings that account for the poet as a thinker. See also Gill's *Wordsworth's Revisitings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), in which he re-addresses Wordsworth's lifelong revisionary habit.

and active ironist, committed to producing a synthesis of poetry and philosophical concerns (Wheeler's work focuses on *poetry* and *philosophy* as disciplines). Another drawback of reading English poetry in light of German literary theory is the risk we run of underestimating the originality and concurrence of any thinker-writers: to suggest that study of Anglo-German Romanticism comprises largely consideration of how Coleridge's work follows thematic and formal patterns theorized by Schlegel and his Jena circle is to read the work of the former as ultimately derivative, thus falling into the all-too familiar pattern of attempting to source Coleridge's work, rather than provide any fresh perspective on the uses of irony to achieve his literary and philosophical aims.[5]

The second drawback is more evident in work following David Simpson's line of enquiry, namely that irony becomes a way of reading Romantic self-reflexivity – which is essential to get on terms with for any reading of Romanticism – but often does not advance beyond that as a dramatized mode of writing. For Simpson, irony remains largely in the realm of theory; Romantic writers seek to challenge readers' cognitive and epistemological claims by encouraging them to 'question the meaning'[6] of the text. Yet, irony is bound up with so many other theoretical and methodological concerns of poet-thinkers such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, the Schlegels and Novalis, that to preclude drama, collaborative authorship, and interdisciplinarity from consideration of it is to do a great disservice to the complexity of early Anglo-German Romanticism.

Philosophie

It is only in the last few decades that scholarship in general has begun to recognize gradually the legitimacy of Romantic philosophical thought; as with

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[5] That is not to overlook the great debt that anyone studying Coleridge's writing owes to the critical and biographical work done by the likes of Kathleen Wheeler, Kathleen Coburn, E. L. Griggs, and the various editors of the Princeton Collected Coleridge editions, as well as the classic meticulous research into source material for the supernatural poetry, such as John Livingston Hughes' *The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927) and Arthur H. Nethercot's *The Road to Tryermaine: a study of the history, background and purposes of Coleridge's "Christabel"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939).

[6] Simpson, *Irony and Authority*, p.xii.

the rehabilitation of Shelley's reputation in the 1960s as a major poet, far removed from the ineffectual 'Ariel' that dominated the consciousness of the nineteenth-century general reader, commentators have begun to focus on the philosophical premises that underlie the work of Novalis. Until recently, Novalis was read in a similar way to the romanticized mythopoeia surrounding Keats and Shelley. However, as with these two poets, Novalis' own constructions of the self were not picked up as readily. This is still a problem in Anglophone scholarship, where there has been a tendency to focus on his mysticism (see Frederick Hiebel's *Novalis: German Poet – European Thinker – Christian Mystic*);[7] of course, as with Shelley, these portrayals are formed from the posthumous legacy that biographers have shaped. In Novalis' case, this has been down to misreading or misappropriation of Ludwig Tieck's brief biography of his friend, appended to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.[8] Such portrayals depend on an appreciation of the *concept* of 'Romanticizing', rather than the (often pejorative) connotations the word has for readers today. Far from being an idealization, romanticizing refers to that which finds the poetic and the ideal situated very much within the real and commonplace. Romanticizing for Novalis, Schlegel and their circle turns to philosophizing, precisely because it seeks to mediate idealism and fantasy, not perpetuate them. It is on this concept of romanticizing that so much hinges in terms of Anglo-German Romantic poetologies; though *The Prelude*'s reputation as a foundational philosophical poem is firmly established, *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* struggles for the same recognition, despite the fact that it (along with other central works by Novalis, as I demonstrate in the concluding chapter of this thesis) operates along strikingly similar lines. By 'the same recognition' I do not suggest an aesthetic re-evaluation that would necessarily find Novalis'

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[7] Frederick Hiebel, *Novalis: German Poet – European Thinker – Christian Mystic*, 2nd edn, rev., *University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures*, 10 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959). Hiebel's study does situate Novalis as a thinker, but tends to place this on equal footing with his mysticism – while the mysticism is important to understanding Novalis' poetry (and therefore his poetology), I am arguing that centralizing or over-emphasizing it has placed the poet-thinker as more of a mythmaker than serious thinker.

[8] See especially Novalis, *Henry of Ofterdingen: a Romance from the German of Novalis* (Cambridge, MA: John Owen, 1842), p.xvi for Tieck's comments on Novalis' tendency to see the supernatural and fantastical in the everyday, so that 'everyday life surrounded him like a supernatural story'. The implications of this are read in the concluding chapter, where I argue that this is precisely one of the things that drives Novalis as a serious philosophical poet.

poetry as any more (or less) meritorious than that of Wordsworth. Rather, I am referring to the reader's recognition of the two as philosophical poets broadly sharing poetological approaches. This, I hope, becomes clearer in the chapters that follow.

Arguably, some of this neglect in Anglophone scholarship is due to issues of accessibility: translators have historically tended to opt for focusing on what they see as Novalis' 'poetry' and overlooking what have been presented as fragmentary (and fragmented) attempts at 'philosophy'. As a result, there has been a polarization in presenting his literary theory and practice and only recently has this begun to be reconciled. A brief glance at the chronology of translation of major works will make this apparent. Compare, for example, the 1842 *Henry of Ofterdingen: a Romance from the German of Novalis*, Ralph Manheim's *The Novices at Sais* (1949) and Charles E. Passage's *Hymns to the Night and Other Selected Writings* (1960) with Margaret Mahoney Stoljar's translations in *Philosophical Writings* (1997), Jane Kneller's *Fichte Studies* (2003), and David Wood's important *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, and *The Birth of Novalis: Friedrich von Hardenberg's Journal of 1797, with Selected Letters and Documents* (both published in 2007), and the traditional preponderance of perceived poetic over philosophical is clear.[9] It is only in the last two decades that interest in Novalis as a thinker has really taken off in Anglophone scholarship.

By identifying the relationship between poetry and philosophy in the work of Novalis and Wordsworth, then, I am following up influential work by commentators such as Kathleen Wheeler, Manfred Frank and Frederick Beiser on the unity of poetry and philosophy in Romanticism. However, where Wheeler reads this mainly in relation to Coleridge and Schlegel (and to an extent, Richter), and Beiser reads this generally as occurring within German

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[9] Originally published in 1949, Manheim's translation has recently been reprinted – see *The Novices at Sais*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: Archipelago Books, 2005); *Hymns to the Night and Other Selected Writings*, trans. by Charles E. Passage (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960); *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. by Margaret Mahoney Stoljar (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997); *Fichte Studies*, trans. by Jane Kneller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, trans. and ed. by David W. Wood (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007); and *The Birth of Novalis: Friedrich von Hardenberg's Journal of 1797, with Selected Letters and Documents*, trans. and ed. by Bruce Donehower (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2007)

Romanticism, I suggest that Wordsworth and Novalis also belong to this type of literary production, broadly defined here as poetologizing. In the Introduction to his recent translation of Novalis' *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, David Wood explicates Manfred Frank's influential reading of the Romantic endeavour to unite poetry and philosophy within a discourse that might be understood primarily as philosophical. German Romantics sought to incorporate poetics into philosophy, Wood notes, because existing philosophical enquiry did not stretch far enough without poetics. Concepts such as the Ego, the Infinite and the Absolute could not be understood by the prevalent philosophical discourses of Kant and Fichte, because they needed the language of art and poetry, discourses that fell outside of systematic strictures. However, Wood notes that Manfred Frank insists they sought to remain within the bounds of philosophical discourse: 'Thus, although the early German Romantics sought to transform philosophy to include poetics, they still endeavoured to remain within the margins of philosophy.'[10] This is the process I am calling poetology, the expansion of philosophical discourse to allow for poetics. By extension, however, it might also be understood as the expansion of literary and aesthetic discourse to allow for philosophy, and it is one of the arguments of this thesis that the preponderance of one over the other cannot accurately be determined if we are to extend our examination beyond the texts we see as belonging to either category. That is, in order to get a sense for the concept of the 'Romantic project' we must look beyond either poetry or philosophy as it was established in the 1790s, and understand the drive toward 'philosophical poetry' and 'poetic philosophy' as being interchangeable at various points. The second research question I seek to investigate, therefore, is how do these ways of reading Romantic texts give us a clearer idea of how Romantic writers situated their own work?

An understanding of the philosophical and critical climate that Romantic writers find themselves thinking and writing in is paramount to any consideration of what they brought to bear upon it. There are a number of invaluable studies of German intellectual history up to and around the

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[10] See Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, p.xxiii. See also Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. by Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2004).

Frühromantik period available to the English reader, and it is not within the scope of this thesis to consider this background in the detail and depth that would be needed in order to add constructively to the work of scholars such as Karl Ameriks, Ernst Behler Frederick Beiser, Andrew Bowie, Hans Eichner, and Manfred Frank (whose seminal *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism* has been translated into English in the last decade by Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, and has made possible Millán-Zaibert's own recent contribution to the study of this period, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy*), to name a few.[11] Nevertheless, some knowledge is needed if we are to appreciate the literary and poetological directions taken by early thinker-writers in Germany, e.g. to understand why irony transcends literary device and becomes as much philosophical as it is aesthetic (as I have suggested above), a clearer picture of post-Kantian notions such as the 'Ego' and the 'Absolute' become necessary.

The philosophical story from Kant to Schlegel and his circle is neither a short nor simple narrative. At the risk of sounding reductive, however, I shall attempt to plot it out as basically as possible for the present discussion. German Idealism has been thought to continue from a Cartesian standpoint. *Cogito ergo sum* has been held as the philosophical starting point – in modern terms, anyway – for a consciousness that invents the world. In short, subjectivism is the inherited ruling principle. In degrees, however, Idealist thinkers gradually moved away from such a stance, beginning with Kant, whose early work can be situated within it at times. Kant's shift away from

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[11] For important introductory and background material, see especially: *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. by Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ernst Behler's *Frühromantik* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992) and his *German Romantic Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); numerous works authored or edited by Frederick Beiser, including *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), *German Idealism: the Struggle Against Subjectivism 1781-1801* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), and *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Andrew Bowie's *Introduction to German Philosophy: From Kant to Habermas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) and *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Manfred Frank's *The Subject and the Text: Essays on Literary Theory and Philosophy*, trans. by Helen Atkins, and ed. by Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); See also *German Philosophy after Kant*, ed. By Anthony O'Hear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008).

subjectivism was, however, not enough for his successors, and his systematic approach to the self's relation to the world was still seen as being too rigid. Kant's philosophy did not allow for the fluidity that would characterize Romantic writing. The next major player in German Idealism was Fichte, who moved away from Kantian systematization. However, Novalis and Schlegel, the philosophical leaders of the Jena circle, found themselves breaking with him, too, because he did not move away from subjectivism enough. For the early Romantics, Fichte erred by maintaining the idea that the consciousness was still at the centre of the knowable world. Fichte was unable to shake off the tenacity of the absolute 'Ego', something that Novalis' *Fichte-Studien* would play with in an attempt to de-centre the self further. This goes some way towards explaining Schlegel's theory of the infinitely perfectible (and, so, never perfected) and Wordsworthian practice of infinite revision. What is meant by this is that the negation of the 'absolute' self-consciousness finds its literary analogue in the practice of not only the fragment form, but also constant textual revisions to writing of the self. Wordsworth's writing and re-writing through revision, by this account, becomes central to his understanding that a definitive consciousness of 'self' cannot ever be arrived at (see Chapter 4 for my discussion of *The Prelude* as a poetological text).

I am concerned here with briefly situating the *Frühromantiker* within the German Idealist tradition they – to some extent – inherited and adapted. Frederick Beiser's relatively recent study, *German Idealism: the Struggle Against Subjectivism 1781-1801*, is instructive for its critical re-evaluation of what that adaptation entails. Beiser argues against a critical tradition that asserts that German Idealism from Kant to Hegel follows Cartesian thought and seeks to read this history of philosophy as teleological. That is, he is arguing against a tradition that suggests Kant follows Descartes' subjectivism and that subsequent thinkers are attempting to reach a 'universal spirit' a la Hegel or an 'Absolute Ego'. Beiser argues that German Idealism was a move away from subjectivism that had the self 'invent' the world through consciousness. Rather, these subject/object distinctions are collapsed in German Idealist philosophy. Thus, I am suggesting each move in this direction signals a step towards understanding Romantic poetological writing, whose ultimate end is to represent a self-consciousness that is constantly

deferred or *inter*rupted (this is more often the case than it being *dis*rupted, as it has been conventionally suggested).

The term 'poetologizing' is broad, though, and reconciliation of disciplines and genres is only one aspect of it. Poetology also connotes a collaborative literary production, and this is integral to understanding how interdisciplinarity in Romantic writing functions. In the following chapters, particularly Chapters 2 and 3, I argue that in order to understand the philosophical poem, getting on terms with the collaborative methods of early Romantic writing is crucial; Chapters 3 and 5, for example, argue that the way in which *Lyrical Ballads* is read as a collaborative venture impacts profoundly on our understanding of not only that volume in its 1798 and 1800 editions, but also *The Prelude*, *The Excursion*, and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* as much as his supernatural poetry.[12] That is, *Lyrical Ballads* marks the beginning of interdisciplinary poetry in its reconciliation of poetry and philosophy for both Coleridge and Wordsworth, enabling us to consider how philosophical poetry is engendered partly by collaborative venture.[13] These chapters, therefore, address my third research question: how do collaborative ventures in early Anglo-German Romanticism elaborate the concept of poetology as a practicable theory?

It is thus building on the second chapter, which examines the terms *Sympoesie* and *Symphilosophie*, arguing that they are central to comprehending the relationship between collaborative and intergeneric text-production, culminating in the philosophical literature envisaged by early

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[12] Although *Biographia Literaria* falls outside of the scope of my focus on early Romanticism, I shall draw on it when relevant for considering Coleridge's own retrospective assessment of his collaboration with Wordsworth.

[13] For Coleridge, Wordsworth's production of a projected epic philosophical poem was understood to be enough of a collaborative venture for him to assess *The Excursion* as a failure to meet his own criteria for such a project. See Coleridge's disapproving letter to Wordsworth dated 30 May 1815 in *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by E. L. Griggs, 6 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956-71), iv, pp.574-5. What is striking here is the stake that Coleridge clearly feels he had in Wordsworth's project for a philosophical poem, expressed as it is by his appropriation of the project as collaborative: Coleridge's disappointment lies not with what is in the poem itself (not in this case, anyway – that would come later with his critique in *Biographia Literaria*), but in what it does *not* contain. I have suggested above that 'philosophical poetry' and 'poetic philosophy' are to an extent interchangeable terms for thinking about how Romantic writers situate their own texts. What is meant by 'poetic philosophy' in this respect is philosophical discourse that accommodates poetry. This is in contrast to Coleridge's conception of the *Recluse* project, because that conception seeks almost to ventriloquize various philosophies through a poetic mouthpiece, rather than demonstrate philosophy's dependence on poetic discourse.

Romantics in England and Germany. This philosophical poetry, ultimately the exemplary Romantic literature, finds full expression in the *Mischgedicht* – the 'mixed poem'. The fifth chapter gives itself over to considering this curious concept of Friedrich Schlegel's, examining how far the concept of poetologizing is taken into practice. That is, my final main research question is: how far do the concept of poetologizing and the practice of collaborative text production result in the Romantic *Mischgedicht*? The final chapter seeks to draw these elements – theory, methodology and text – together and make sense of both continuity in and the continuity of the Romantic project. I do this by turning to the poetologizing of immortality (which, by far, supersedes death as a Romantic preoccupation) and arguing that to poetologize immortality – to poeticize and philosophize it simultaneously – is to produce from the finite the infinite. I suggest the necessity for Romantic thinker-writers (particularly for Wordsworth and Novalis) to make sense of this in order to make their envisaged projects of permeable philosophical poetry and poetic philosophy cohere.

'the successive satiation of all forms and substances'

Some further words about terminology are needed in order to elucidate the treatment of Romantic theory and practice regarding genre and mixing. I am using the term 'intergeneric' to describe the ideal Romantic project, the *Mischgedicht*. Though it is a term used primarily in biology to mean the plant or animal species produced by crossing different genera, I am applying it here in a literary sense, for the reason that the existing terms 'interdisciplinarity' and 'hybridity' are not quite adequate in conveying either the scope or the depth of the Romantic project. 'Interdisciplinarity', for one, is exclusive in that it focuses on the mixing of *disciplines*, rather than genres and sub-genres as Friedrich Schlegel, the chief architect of the *Mischgedicht*, intends.[14]

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[14] Though it is the case that Schlegel most notably uses the term *Mischgedicht* and leads the theorization of it within the circle, a closer consideration of Novalis in the following chapters (particularly the second chapter) will show up the ways in which Novalis is just as committed to the *Mischgedicht* before and during the Jena period. Indeed, the very transition of his literary and public 'self' from Friedrich von Hardenberg to 'Novalis' highlights his early concern with forging an identity mediating between ancient and new, tradition and innovation; the name 'Novalis' was taken from an old family name (de Novali), but is also

'Hybridity' is, on the other hand, a little too broad to indicate the innovative nature of what Romanticism is to early writers and thinkers. I am using the term intergeneric partly to emphasise the affinity between 'genre' as category and 'genre' as species – Schlegel himself frequently uses the word *die Gattung* rather than *das Genre* when treating the subject of genre in his theoretical prose and fragments. As [*die*] *Gattung* relates to race, gender, taxonomic categories, or genre, Schlegel's preference for it over the rather limited [*das*] *Genre* is certainly revealing. Such an alignment suggests Schlegel's accentuation of not only the shared etymology of both categories of classification (the Latin *genus*, and Greek *genos*) but also, therefore, its impact on any understanding of Romantic attempts at *Mischung*. Genre itself becomes interdisciplinary for Schlegel et al as they cross literary with scientific terminology in theorizing *romantische Poesie*, or *Universalpoesie*.

Intergeneric, then, might be understood as a term that suggests not only the mixing of genres, but of *types*, in the broadest sense of the word, so that categories [*Gattungen*] themselves become universalised. By this it is meant that distinctions of forms, genres and disciplines all become collapsed; they are simply types, and the goal of the Romantic writer is to produce from these types a singular type:

> Universality is the successive satiation of all forms and substances. Universality can attain harmony only through the conjunction of poetry and philosophy; and even the greatest, most universal works of isolated poetry and philosophy seem to lack this final synthesis.[15]

This is *Universalpoesie* in its essence. The 'conjunction of poetry and philosophy', for Schlegel, is primarily where the synthesis begins. Although it is often expressed as an ideal goal for Romantic 'poetry', I am arguing for a more generous interpretation of universality that would see this unity as a first step toward the desired *Universalpoesie*. By this account, *Universalpoesie*

etymologically connected to the Latin word for 'new'. In his edition of Novalis' early journal extracts and letters Bruce Donehower also emphasizes the name as being indicative of a desire to cross boundaries. Though these are traditionally in a territorial sense – as a 'clearer of new land' – Donehower connects this to the desire to transgress existing disciplinary boundaries. He continues this by discussing the 'relentless urge to synthesis' that is obvious in *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, noting Manfred Frank's view that Hardenberg did not suffer with the notion of a double life and actually always wanted to synthesise the poetry and mysticism with work and science – see *The Birth of Novalis*, pp.6-8.

[15] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments, Athenaeum Fragments,* 451, p.240.

could be read as a literature that supersedes the category of discipline itself. This is the 'successive satiation of all forms and substances' expressed by Schlegel in the fragment above. The word 'satiation' is interesting here, as it implies that universality as a concept (and, subsequently, *Universalpoesie* as the embodiment in practice of that concept) is necessary; without it there is a deficiency, a sort of malnourishment in even the most outstanding 'isolated' work of either poetry or philosophy. Perhaps one reason that commentators have generally focused almost exclusively on poetry and philosophy as the desired disciplines for mixing is that they crop up most often in Schlegel's fragments when unity and genre-mixing are discussed. Even in the quoted fragment, the 'final synthesis' necessary to a Romantic text is wanting without the union of these two. However, the fragment does not suggest that a union of poetry and philosophy is the only pre-requisite for a synthesized literature, and a greater understanding of what *Poesie* and *Philosophie* mean to Schlegel and his circle might go some way to illuminating just how original and ambitious the early German conception of a '*romantische*' project or text really was.

It is, therefore, another aim of this thesis to investigate how *Poesie* and *Philosophie* are understood primarily by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. In part, I hope to demonstrate that for these two thinker-writers these were much broader terms than understood in either Germany or England in the 1790s. This has, of course, often been the point at which comparisons to Coleridge arise in Anglo-German Romanticism. A very prominent argument of Kathleen Wheeler's *Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's Biographia Literaria* is that its text is in its structure a conscious imitation of the sort of literature F. Schlegel theorizes in his fragments and practises with his 1799 semi-autobiographical novel *Lucinde*: a *Mischgedicht*, the result of the theory of *Universalpoesie*. Wheeler's study is important for the connections it makes between German literature and the *Biographia*, and in terms of grasping the intergeneric its real value can be seen to lie in its discussion of the unity of poetry and philosophy for Coleridge. However, it must be taken as a starting-point for reading parallels between German and English Romantic theory and projects, as its conception of 'poetry' and 'philosophy' does not quite push these connections far enough. It is assumed that (as with Schlegel), for

Coleridge, 'poetry' means poetry and 'philosophy' means philosophy. In such a case it is understandable to focus on the unity of poetry and philosophy in the *Biographia* and other theoretical prose as a mirror of Schlegelian fragments and theory. However, closer readings of the major texts themselves yield much that suggests that these terms are not so limited. Indeed, as shall be discussed below, even terms that might be thought of as interchangeable, such as *Dichtung* and *Poesie*, are far more complex. Thus, understanding of terminology and of categories/genres/types etc. is another core issue facing any scholar of German Romanticism. The principal way in which to approach study of these broad terms is, I argue, to consider them poetologically. That is, to suggest that one way of defining Romantic poetology (or rather, poetologies: for, just as there is no one 'Romanticism', there is no one 'poetology') is to say that it is a process of universalization, of expansion of categories and types. As will be seen below and in later chapters, expansion and then universalization, or 'reciprocal elevation and debasement', of terms is one way in which Novalis defines 'romanticizing'. By this account, then, on the most basic level poetology is the process of romanticizing.

Although I do not quite read 'poetology' and 'romanticization' as interchangeable terms, an understanding of the latter will nevertheless furnish us with a grasp of (and thus more fruitful discussion of) the former. To say Romantic thinker-writers place a greater emphasis on self-reflexivity in literary production, for example, is now generally accepted and taken for granted by scholarship; very few would argue, I think, against the notion that a drive toward self-consciousness is a primary ontological and philosophical preoccupation in English and German Romantic writing. However, self-reflexivity in a poetological sense becomes central to understanding the process of romanticizing, precisely because of the way in which the intergeneric shapes this drive; not only is poetry epistemological (even if this means, as Andrew Bennett has recently argued in relation to Wordsworth, that poetry reveals itself as a sort of science of ignorance as well as of knowledge)[16], but producing great poetry is inextricably connected to producing great philosophy, and vice versa. Both Coleridge and Schlegel

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[16] For more on this poetics of ignorance in relation to *Lyrical Ballads*, see Chapter 3.

write about this poetry-philosophy chiasmus. Yet, when they do so it is not as a simple mixture [*Vermischung*]; rather it is what I elaborate below as an intergeneric process of fusion [*Verschmelzung*]. This *Verschmelzung* is poetological, in that it allows for this chiasmic interdependence. Poetry is assimilated into the language of philosophy and philosophy is poeticized. For Coleridge, this is because criticism of poetry must be subject to philosophical scrutiny; not only are poetry and philosophy brought together, but literary criticism also takes its place in poetologizing. For Schlegel, too, the critic is on a par with writer and reader when it comes to generating meaning – for him, 'The critic is a reader who ruminates. Therefore, he ought to have more than one stomach'.[17] Reading is a democratic process whereby the critic is a kind of reader, with neither one seen as superior to the other.

Verschmelzung, which we might translate as 'fusion' or 'assimilation' is essential to the Coleridgean poetic vocation, as well as the Schlegelian one (by implication, this extends to the philosophical vocation too). In Chapter XIV of the second volume of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge makes his famous claim of the poetic vocation:

> The poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone, and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination.[18]

To bring the 'whole soul of man into activity' is to manage this assimilative quality that makes up a poet. Part of this quality itself is outlined here by Coleridge; the poet's success is dependent upon the ability to use the 'synthetic' power of imagination to moderate and unify discordant faculties. Thus, imagination has as much to do with intellectual capacity for Coleridge as it has to do with creative power. In a move similar to the *Frühromantiker* rejection of the Kantian or Fichtean imagination, Coleridge is reclaiming the ideal imagination as a poetological mixing-ground; the poet's imagination is

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[17] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, *Critical Fragments, 27*, p.145.
[18] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, 2 vols, *Collected Works*, 16 vols, ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), ii. pp.15-16.

superior to that of the common man because of its capacity for synthesizing. Despite the organicism suggested by the phrase '*ideal* perfection' (which Coleridge constantly struggled against as much as he strived for), the extract indicates that Coleridge is venturing beyond systematization here: it is the poet, not the philosopher, to whom this galvanizing quality is attributed, and such a choice on the part of the *Biographia Literaria*'s polymathic persona may show up a tacit acknowledgment of philosophy's debt to poetry, the result of which is a poetological approach to the production of texts.

Mischung

When understood as the literary manifestation of poetological theory the *Mischgedicht* – Romantic poetry in its exemplary mode and the umbrella term I am using for the practice of Romantic theory (under which the various categories of theory and writing are considered) – is both illuminating and problematic. The term itself eludes simple explication, and its literal translation, 'mixed poem', remains ambiguous as well as insufficient in encapsulating its complexity. Friedrich Schlegel uses the word *Mischgedicht* once in his Notebooks, but makes several references to the concept of mixing existing genres and disciplines in what he theorizes as Romantic writing. These references, however, do not always correlate with one another; what is sometimes described as a 'mixing' of genres [*Vermischung*] is, at other times, a deeper, 'fusing' process [*Verschmelzung*]. This leads to the question of whether or not these terms are interchangeable for Schlegel. And if not, what significance does each of the words have for the theory of the *Mischgedicht*? *Mischung* is undoubtedly used more frequently in his fragments. However, here it stands mainly to describe the mixing of genres, rather than disciplines:

> Does mimetic prose not differ from idyllic or satirical prose? – In the mimetic, idyllic and satirical modes of poetry, metre is not essential, because these modes themselves are not rigorous. Romantic prose is a mixture of these three, like a novel of three genres. If the idyllic prevails it is a sentimental novel, if the satirical it is comic, if the progressive prevails it is a philosophical novel. However, all these extremes are lacking because the essence of the novel itself, namely

the mixture, is destroyed in them. <So it is not at all a novel. This overbalance is in opposition to political totality.>[19]

[Ist die mimische Prosa nicht noch verschieden von der Idyll[ischen] und Satir[ischen]? – In der mim[ischen] Idyll[ischen] Sat[irischen] Dichtart ist das Metrum nicht wesentlich, weil diese Dichtarten selbst nicht rigoristisch sind. Die romantische Prosa ist eine Mischung dieser dreien, wie der Roman der 3 Gattungen. Ueberwiegt das Idyll[ische] so ists ein sentimentaler Roman, das Sat[irische] so ists ein komischer, das Progressive so ists ein philos[ophischer] Roman. Aber alle diese Extreme sind fehlerhaft weil dadurch das Wesen des Romans selbst nämlich die Mischung zerstört wird <eben darum schon. Es ist also dann gar kein Roman. Dieβ Uebergewicht ist gegen die politische Totalität.>][20]

In the Notebook entry quoted above, the '*Mischung*' relates to the three principal types of poetry as well as prose (broadly categorized as the *Roman*); the mimetic, idyllic, and satiric, each of which is destructive to the concept of Romantic literature if stood alone. The *Mischung*, then, is here clearly a breakdown of existing *literary* generic boundaries. Schlegel takes this one step further by politicizing this process: for him, the dominance of any one genre stands in opposition to 'political totality', which is meant by Schlegel to refer to universality, or democratization. Thus, generic dominance negates the democratization that he envisages poetry as enabling.

However, Schlegel's theory frequently extends this amalgamating approach to existing *disciplinary* boundaries too, and explication of this similarly occurs using the keywords of the generic *Mischung*. Another notebook entry on the theory of the *Mischgedicht* introduces the second key verb *verschmelzen*:

All constituent parts must be fused in the novel so that the learned reader, who is not poet, philosopher nor philologist, can conceive of them all. In this respect, the romantic style is the absolute antithesis of the critical style, in which all accumulated constituent parts are cut off and isolated. So, the critical style is virtually satirical. –

[Alle Bestandtheile müβten im Roman so verschmolzen sein, das der gebildete Kenner der weder classischer P[oet] noch Philos[oph] noch Philol[og] ist alles fassen kann. In dieser Rücksicht ist der kritische

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[19] My translation: where I have primarily consulted the text in German I provide both original and my translation. Otherwise, I cite the translation I have consulted and draw attention to the German where it is deemed particularly significant for the discussion to do so.

[20] Schlegel, *Literary Notebooks,* 20, p.21.

> Styl die absolute Antithese des romantischen, den im kritischen müssen alle Bildungsbestandtheile abgeschnitten classisch und isoliert sein. Der kritische Stil ist also gradezu satirisch. −][21]

So, the *Kenner*, the learned author, recognizes that the *Roman* cannot accommodate a single discipline; a writer who specializes in any one discipline − whether poetry, philosophy, or philology − fails to conceptualize the modern literature. Schlegel goes on to say that this is what makes the critical style the *Antithese* of the Romantic style of writing, his reason being that critical writing isolates and compartmentalizes literary types. In other words, it maintains disciplinary and generic boundaries. This antithesis set up by Schlegel introduces the dominant subject/object dichotomy that he seeks to explode. Romantic writing is the writing of self-consciousness, the ontological necessity following failed systematic theories, and to that end it must make sense of this inadequate dichotomy. The critical style is satirical and classical precisely because, in needing a clearly identified object towards which to direct its focus, it stylistically holds to some notion of system or framework. In the satirical mode, there is no doubt as to which roles are played by whom; the author commands the reader's attention, directing it towards the definable object of satire in a way that echoes the individual roles of various genres. Here, philosophy, poetry, and the sciences are all distinguished from one another as they, presumably, each enjoy self-sufficient status.

Romantic writing, however, cannot create in isolation, nor can it perpetuate a clear subject/object distinction; Schlegel's *Kritische Fragmente* of this period make this ambiguity of roles clear as evidenced by 112, in which Schlegel sets out his distinctions between the 'analytic' writer and the 'synthetic' writer. As we shall see in the second and third chapters, the synthetic writer is Schlegel's ideal, as he or she 'doesn't try to make any particular impression on him [the reader], but enters with him into the sacred relationship of deepest symphilosophy or sympoetry.'[22] The 'sacred relationship' here described is one which includes the reader in not only reception of the text, but also production of the text itself. With no definable roles, reader, writer, and critic are placed on an equal footing that allows −

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[21] Schlegel, *Literary Notebooks*, 185, p.36.
[22] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments, Critical Fragments,* 112, pp. 156-7.

requires – each to generate the literary text. This concern with the very production of literature sets Romantic writing apart from dominant contemporary modes of writing for Schlegel; 'symphilosophy' and 'sympoetry' as embodied in the *Mischgedicht* depend on a democratization of literary processes, so that writing no longer belongs within an entirely art-oriented context. If we think back to Entry 20 of the *Literary Notebooks*, we might see that such a democratization of the reading and interpretation of texts avoids an 'overbalance' of one element of authority over others, just as a genuine *Verschelzmung* of genres prevents the dominance of any one.

Rather, literary production in a poetological framework resists and replaces systematization; taking it out of this restrictive framework allows it to develop into the post-Kantian, post-Fichtean theory of self-consciousness that Romanticism seeks to express. Though he initiated a departure from the insufficient Kantian theory of the self-world relationship, Fichte failed to explicate adequately the relationship of the self in the world, mainly through maintaining subject/object distinctions. Romantic (literary) theory, on the other hand, is a theory of mediation and participation – perhaps seen most clearly in works of Novalis, such as *Glaube und Liebe* [*Faith and Love*], *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, *Die Christenheit oder Europa* [*Christianity, or Europe*], and *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* [*The Novices at Sais*][23] – and the interchangeability of roles between author, reader, and critic validates this possibility. As shall become clearer in the following chapters, I am arguing that the final or 'absolute' meaning is deferred through the collaborative process. More than a literary theory, then, the *Mischgedicht* emerges in early Romantic theory as a conception of genre through which to realize the literary and philosophical ambitions of a post-Enlightenment age. Schlegel and his collaborators' criteria for this 'modern' genre are indeed ambitious, and this ambitiousness goes some way in explaining the ambiguous and sometimes apparently contradictory theory behind it. Irony becomes central here, and it is the *Mischgedicht* that, along with drama, ensures that it is more than a literary

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[23] Though I have in general provided the English translations before the original German when quoting directly from the texts, I name the titles of texts themselves in their original language and provide translated titles in square brackets. This is in order to prevent confusion as to which translation is being referred and to maintain focus on the original texts as we find them.

technique, and instead a mode of writing (and re-writing) in itself. The flexibility in the *Mischgedicht*'s relationship between author and reader is predicated on a fluidity that aims to eradicate boundaries. The breakdown of these boundaries – whether generic or disciplinary – ultimately contributes to the same infinity which makes drama an exemplary vehicle for expressing the otherwise ineffable self. The fragmentary writing itself is a literal repetition of the dramatic parabasis that irony comes to stand for in the theory of Schlegel and Jean Paul Richter.[24]

'in the state of becoming'

Schlegel's much-discussed theory of a universal and progressive Romantic poetry naturally gives shape to the envisaged *Mischgedicht* – the poetics of democratic participation is also the poetics of progress, though, paradoxically, infinitely so:

> Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry…It tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature…The romantic kind of 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…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 or should be romantic.[25]

Perhaps the single most famous Schlegelian statement on the Romantic manifesto, this fragment is particularly interesting when considered in the context of the *Mischgedicht*; Schlegel presents it as being 'progressive', a word suggesting an eventual goal. Yet, the chief characteristic of Romantic poetry (or literature) is that it has no end as a goal. In fact, far from being perfected, it should 'forever be becoming'. This is indicative of an ever embryonic mode of writing and suggests that Romantic literature needs to be a starting point from which to generate several representations of an infinite drive towards self-consciousness. A foreseeable end, then, is contrary to Romantic intentions, and the *Mischgedicht* accommodates such ambitions.

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[24] See Chapter 4 for parabasis and its relationship to drama.
[25] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, *Athenaeum Fragments,* 116, p.175.

Through it, the concept of *Potenzirung* – or intensification – is better understood.[26] For both Schlegel and Novalis, *Potenzirung* is a stage of intensifying the everyday (what Novalis equates with 'romanticizing') into the poetic. This process mirrors the philosophical intentions of the writing in that it represents the endless drive towards self-expression (a consideration of which is developed in the concluding chapter), itself forever 'in the state of becoming'.

Novalis' famous fragment is central to any discussion of intensification and is the most reflective of Romanticism's many explications of its processes:

> The world must be romanticized. Then one will again find the original sense. Romanticizing is nothing more than a qualitative involution. In this operation the lower self is identified with a better self. In the same manner we are such a qualitative series of powers. This operation is still completely unknown. When I give the commonplace a higher meaning, the customary a mysterious appearance, the known the dignity of the unknown, the finite the illusion of the infinite, I romanticize it. The operation is the converse for the higher, unknown, mystical and infinite; through this connection it becomes logarithimized. It receives a customary expression. Romantic philosophy. *Lingua romana*. Reciprocal elevation and debasement.[27]

Aside from its obvious implications for an infinite, progressive poetic discourse (which is discussed in greater detail in the concluding chapter), the fragment quoted above is also important for the interdisciplinary possibilities it sets up. As an 'operation' romanticizing is 'a qualitative involution', 'logarithimized'; the language of mathematics is the language of romantic poetry. The two are interchangeable and, when one is used to express the other, it serves to understand better Romantic philosophy. This Romantic philosophy, then, is partly the theorizing of interdisciplinarity itself, the idea

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[26] *Potenzirung* is the word Novalis uses for intensification. Novalis' process is predominantly philosophical intensification, which ultimately suggests a relationship with the process of romanticization in Novalis' thought. As I am demonstrating here, romanticization for Novalis is a process whereby higher orders or powers and lower orders or powers are negotiated. Such a negotiation of two extremes necessitates an inherent polarity in the first place – whether that is of high and low, infinite and finite, commonplace and extraordinary – and reinforces the current of German idealism running through Novalis' inherited philosophy. In particular, it brings to mind Schelling's 'intensification' or 'potentiation' of nature, which makes possible his *Naturphilosophie*, according to which increasing degrees of *Potenzirung* produce greater development and organization in nature.

[27] See Novalis, *Sketches*, 105, in Frederick C. Beiser, ed., *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.85.

that one disciplinary discourse can be used to arrive at a better understanding of another. Encapsulating these various discourses is the *lingua romana*, the modern, universal Romantic language. This *lingua romana* is to language what the *Mischgedicht* is to existing generic and disciplinary frameworks, a fulfilment of the 'republican speech' that Schlegel credits poetry with being, 'Poetry is republican speech: a speech which is its own law and end unto itself, and in which all the parts are free citizens and have the right to vote.'[28] The republican speech is the practice of the breakdown of specific roles in the production of literary texts. 'All the parts are free citizens and have the right to vote' because they have been created by a democratic process between the author and reader (with each also being a critic). Elsewhere, Schlegel clearly uses the words 'author' and 'creator' synonymously, further consolidating the open, infinite nature of Romantic literature.[29] Of course, it follows that 'poetry' itself is subject to such broadening, and no longer comes to signify solely the metrically structured writing that it has classically been associated with. Being true to its republican nature means that poetry is representative of modern writing; however, the names under which it appears resist a straightforward analysis. A consideration of the significance of the terminology used by Schlegel and Novalis – in particular the words '*Dichtung*' and '*Poesie*' – is necessary to understand fully the radical nature of the *Frühromantik* manifesto.

Dichtung or Poesie?

The discussion of the *Mischgedicht* was opened up by the problematic nature of German-English translation of the theory of *Frühromantik*, and I would like to return to this in more detail here in relation to the *Dichtung*/*Poesie* question. Added to this is the fact that, in order to arrive at a better understanding of the reasons behind the choice of one word over another by Schlegel, we must probe into etymologies. The word Schlegel usually favours in the primary theoretical pieces – namely the various *Fragmente* and the Notebook entries – on the modern literature (or *Mischgedicht*) is *Poesie*. In

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[28] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, *Critical Fragments*, 65, p. 65.
[29] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, *Critical Fragment*s, '68. How many authors are there among writers? Author means creator', p.151.

fact, in the Notebook fragments the word *Dichtung* (or *Gedicht*) does not appear at all, suggesting that it is far from interchangeable with *Poesie*, despite the standard translation of both into English being 'poetry'. Yet, the *Mischgedicht* takes its name from this root. Here, a consideration of how significant the choice of *Poesie* is becomes central to the *Mischgedicht*, as does the question of whether or not the two words represent discourses on two different levels, a consideration which leads us back to the centrality of the ancient/modern debate in early Schlegelian theory.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century – and certainly by the 1790s when the *Frühromantiker* were writing – the word *Dichtung* had come to be the standard German word for poetry, with *Poesie* going *out* of fashion.[30] As with its English counterpart, 'poesy', *Poesie* was a comparatively traditional word for discussing poetry, and the modern – and Germanized – *Dichtung* had entered mainstream usage. The most influential pre-Grimm German dictionary of the day, J. C. Adelung's *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart* (1793-1801), defines *Poesie* as the following:

> Die Poesīe, (dreysylbig,) *plur.* die Poesīen, (viersylbig,) aus dem Griech. und Lat. *Poesis.* 1) Die Fertigkeit, ein Gedicht zu verfertigen, ohne Plural; die Dichtkunst, welches jetzt in der anständigern Sprechart üblicher ist. 2) Ein Gedicht; auch nur noch im gemeinen Leben.[31]

So, before and during the time Schlegel is writing, *Poesie* is primarily the skill, or proficiency [*Fertigkeit*] for composing a *Gedicht*, which is understood to be poetry, and thus *Poesie* equates with the process of composition, less than with the end literary result itself. The implications of the word *Fertigkeit* itself are interesting; *Fertigkeit* has etymological connections to the word for something complete [*fertig*], and this context is important for

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[30] See Friedrich Kluge (ed.), *An Etymological Dictionary of the German Language*, 4th edn, trans. by John Francis Davis (London: George Bell & Sons, 1891) - dichten²*swV.* 'ein sprachliches Kunstwerk verfassen' (< 9. Jh.). Mhd. *tihten*, ahd. *dihtōn*, mndd. *dichten*, mndl. *dichten* 'den Text eines Schriftstucks verfassen, dichten', sind wie afr.*dichta* 'abfassen', ae. *dihtan* 'anordnen', anord. *dikta* 'etwas auf Latein abfassen' entlehnt aus 1. *dictāre* 'etwas zum Aufschreiben vorsagen', einem Intensivum zu 1. *dīcere* 'sagen'. *Dichter* belegt seit dem 12. Jh., ist zunächst kein häufiges Wort (mhd. *tihter*, *tichtœre*); erst seit es im 18. Jh. Als Verdeutschung von *Poet* durch gesetz wird, hat es im Deutschen einen fest Platz. Abstraktum: *Dichtung*; Kollektivum: *Gedicht*.

[31] Johann Christoph Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart*, 4 vols (Leipzig: J. G. I. Breitkopf, 1793-1801), iii, p.799.

comparison/contrast with Romantic theory. Adelung's choice of *Fertigkeit* for skill or proficiency over another word e.g. *Fähigkeit* (also translated as capability or skill) may suggest that not only is composition of poetry a process, but a perfectible process, one that can certainly be completed. This stands in stark contrast to Schlegel's idea of a fragmentary, progressive poetry that is forever 'in the state of becoming', suggesting that Schlegel's decision to revert to using *Poesie* as the standard word for poetry is a decision to return to the classical roots of the word. However, Schlegel develops the concept and *Poesie* comes to signify both the composition and end result of poetry. If Adelung (re)presents the classical view that *Poesie* denotes the completion of the poem [*Gedicht*], Schlegel's adoption of the word can be seen as taking the concept beyond literature; *Poesie* now comes to signify something with wider resonance than was hitherto thought – the *Frühromantiker* theorize *Poesie* as poetological and thus the reversion to the etymologically classical word means a conscious shift away from the contemporary German understanding of the apparently limited word *Gedicht*.

To recapitulate, then, in using the word *Poesie* Schlegel and Novalis innovate in three main ways. Firstly, they are making the concept of a poetological literature more democratic, more universal; relating back to the Greek/Latin root of *poesis* is one way in which it is possible to recover something of what has since been lost in general understanding of creativity, the *lingua romana* Novalis was to allude to in his famous fragment on 'romanticizing' (see also the fifth and sixth chapters for more on this); Romantic *Poesie* is democratic because it focuses on creation through participation, a pre-requisite of which is writing outside established boundaries. Secondly, the adoption of *Poesie* represents a move away from contemporary associations of the *Gedicht* which were too limited to accommodate poetological writing. Finally, and importantly, Schlegel is challenging the assumption (represented by Adelung) that modern literature, *Poesie*, can be a completed process, thus enabling *Poesie* to signify

simultaneously both a state of composition and the ongoing result of that process.[32]

Adelung's 1793 *Wörterbuch* entry for *Dichtung* defines it as primarily, 'in der weitesten Bedeutung, wie Dichtkunst'[33] – poetry in the broadest sense. *Dichtung* is thus the word that Schlegel effectively replaces with his concept of *Poesie*. Yet *Poesie* itself is often used synonymously with the word *Roman* in Schlegel's fragments. Throughout the Notebooks the driving idea behind the *Mischgedicht* of *Verschmelzung* – the integration of genres, forms, and disciplines – can be seen through the etymologically complex word, *der Roman*. It is this word that most obviously drives Schlegel's theory of a reconciliation of the ancient and modern in literature, and it is this word that becomes central to further consideration of the *Mischgedicht*.

Der Roman, die romantische

The following fragment may help to shed some light on the relationship between *die Poesie* and *der Roman*:

> As preliminary practice towards Romantic poetry, satirical, idyllic and mimetic types are excellent. Satire is predisposed towards comment on moral, scientific, social and civic development. – That which is arabian, romantic, and absolutely marvellous is also preliminary practice towards the novel. <All types of poetry are chosen from the three classical types. These constituent parts are then bound together towards a progressive unity.>

> [Als Vorübung zur Rom[antischen] P[oesie] außer der Sat[irischen] auch Idyll[ische] und die mim[ische] vorzüglich. – Die Satire ist sehr empfänglich für Aeußerung der sittlichen, wissenschaftlichen, gesellschaftlichen, bürgerlichen Bildung. – Das arabische, romantische, absolute Wunderbare auch eine Vorübung zum Roman. <Alle Dichtarten, die drei alten classischen ausgenommen. Diese Bestandtheile dann zu einer progressive Einheit verknüpft.>][34]

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[32] This relationship between the state of composition and the writing that forms the ongoing result of that composition is introduced in the third chapter, and expounded further in the fourth chapter, wherein it is argued that Wordsworth's *Prelude* is a key demonstration of such Romantic practice of *Poesie* in the Schlegelian sense. I argue that, as a seminal Romantic poetological text, *The Prelude* encourages us to reconsider the significance of Wordsworth's lifelong revisionary habit across his entire corpus in light of his dependence upon the use of Romantic irony in self-representation and philosophical poetry.

[33] Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart*, i, p.1479.

[34] Schlegel, *Literary Notebooks*, 65, p.25.

Here, Schlegel sets romantic poetry and literature [*die Romantische Poesie*] as being apart from existing forms of satirical, idyllic, and mimetic writing, going on to say that the novel [*der Roman*] is directly linked to the romantic, here defined as the exotic or, literally, marvellous. The word 'arabische' is difficult to translate: it literally means 'Arabian', but Schlegel is taking the word to stand for a more generalized eclecticism that is antithetical to the everyday. The word 'romantic' correlates to both the *Roman*, the literary genre of the novel, and the '*romantische*', the properties or characteristics of that genre.[35] However, if we refer to Entry 823 of the *Literary Notebooks*, we can see that the *Roman* consists of a *Verschmelzung* of Romantic poetry and prose, 'Die Poesie und Prosa soll im R[oman] nicht bloβ vermischt sondern auch verschmolzen werden'[36]. The *Roman* is thus seen as the exemplary genre of the *Mischgedicht*, the modern literary text that not only mixes but fuses poetry and prose to make each form in itself indistinct. This in turn leads to the question of whether or not *Poesie* and *der Roman* are actually interchangeable terms; Schlegel's separation of *Poesie* and *Prosa* at times is, at other points, eradicated by his referring to modern literature using the word *Roman*.

Turning to Novalis' theory of interdisciplinarity – which I have highlighted as the 'intergeneric' above – in modern, Romantic writing, we see a similar generosity in characterizing the novel, 'ROMANTICISM. Shouldn't the novel include all sorts of styles, bound together in a varying order, and animated by a common spirit?'[37] In placing his entry on the novel under the heading 'ROMANTICISM', Novalis holds the novel up as the primary genre of modern literature. However, as with Schlegel, this genre is dependent upon the conscious move away from subscription to any one discernible genre.

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[35] For more on the etymology of 'Roman' and for early German usage of it see Hans Eichner's chapter, entitled 'Germany / Romantisch – Romantik – Romantiker' in *"Romantic" and its Cognates: The European History of a Word*, ed. by Hans Eichner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), pp.98-156. As the title makes apparent, Eichner's volume aims to uncover the history of the usage of the word 'Romantic' in Europe. As such, it remains a useful reference for those wishing to trace the word's pre-Romantic roots as well as an insightful critical commentary on how it progressed through the various stages of Romanticism. More recently, Larry H. Peer has been among those to review the etymology of the word in order to produce comparative readings of European Romanticism – see *(Roman)ticism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008).
[36] ['Poetry and prose should not only be mixed in the novel, but fused.'] Schlegel, *Literary Notebooks*, 823, p.94.
[37] Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 169, p.26.

Novalis' theory similarly steps outside of its critical genre in presenting itself in the form of a rhetorical question. As with the *Fichte-Studien*, the tone here is playful and aims to engage in a critical dialogue with other thinkers. But, Schlegel, not Fichte, is the writer with whom Novalis is communicating, and the tone is suitably Schlegelian here. What is perhaps more true to Novalis' theory is the 'common spirit', found so often in the fragments; in *Über Goethe*, no. 465 (1798) Novalis writes,

> Journals are actually the first books to be written in common. Writing in company is an interesting symptom giving us an inkling of a great development in authorship. Perhaps one day people will write, think and act as a mass. Entire communities, even nations, will undertake One Work.[38]

Such collaborative leanings bring to mind Schlegel's fragments on *Sympoesie* and *Symphilosophie*, those envisaged literary and philosophical undertakings of joint authorship and the basis for discussion of Romantic literary practice in the following chapter. The commonality of such endeavours reminds us of how closely these thinker-writers operated when producing poetological texts. It encourages us to make connections between the theory and practice of early Romanticism in a way that confirms its primary aim as delivering intergeneric texts through authorship that is, either directly or indirectly, collaborative. Returning to Entry 169 for *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, then, we see that that the heading 'ROMANTICISM' presents a 'common spirit' as including the commonality of both literature (whether it is *Poesie*, *Roman*, or *Philosophie*) and its production. The common spirit is the communal spirit, and this is made clear through the consideration that the writer, reader and critic of 'Romantic' poetologies will recognize the intergeneric as the 'common spirit' precisely because those poetologies are authored communally. As we shall see in exploration of the uses of irony and of the ironic relationship in Wordsworth and Coleridge, the successful mixing of genres in *Sympoesie / Symphilosophie* depends upon more generous notions of authorship than have hitherto been afforded to texts.

Novalis' fragment on the relationship between the novel and romanticism, then, is indicative of the ways in which the novel – *der Roman* –

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[38] Wheeler, *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism*, pp.106-7.

comes to represent the exemplary, all-embracing process of the *Mischgedicht*. The crux of the *Poesie* versus *Roman* dilemma is this: the *Roman* is intrinsically romantic – and so Romantic – precisely because it enables mixing of the kind that *Universalpoesie* (or the *Mischgedicht*) requires. The novel is thus broadened to accommodate such a poetological text, and so joins the term *Poesie* in its expansion of genres. So, while the terms *Roman* and *Poesie* are not quite interchangeable they are nevertheless both part of the same umbrella concept that is poetology. Further exposition of this can be found in another fragment of *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*:

> Nothing is more Romantic than what we commonly call world and destiny. We live in a colossal novel (writ *large* and *small*). Contemplation of surrounding events. Romantic orientation, examination, and treatment of human life.[39]

To be living in 'a colossal novel' is akin to be romanticizing the world for Novalis. That is, philosophizing it to the extent that one's orientation within it might be understood. For Novalis, the 'examination' and 'treatment of human life' is at the heart of the Romantic endeavour; what makes such 'treatment of human life' and the world Romantic is the poetologizing that both writers and readers bring to bear upon texts. As I shall demonstrate in the following chapters, such an approach is common to both the Wordsworth-Coleridge circle in the late 1790s and the Jena circle of roughly the same time period. Wordsworth's ideal poet is the ordinary man who can bring an extraordinary perspective to bear on precisely what Novalis terms the 'treatment of human life'. For the Wordsworth writing the 'Preface' to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* it is in 'low and rustic life' that extended treatment of humanity is found, but this is not to overlook the several 'Wordsworths' of *The Prelude*, for whom sustained evaluation of urban life is every bit as critical in the poetologist's 'treatment of human life'. To what end scrutiny and romanticization of both rustic and urban life aspire forms the basis of the third and fourth chapters of this thesis, respectively.

The division between Wordsworth and the other thinker-writers I consider in this study might seem a little fractured: after all, it is one argument

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[39] Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 44, p.155.

of this thesis that Wordsworth be included in a framework which he is outside of at present, so the separation might initially seem odd. Such a contention is understandable, yet I hope my methodology might shed some light on its own processes by justifying extended reading of some of Wordsworth's major works (for the sake of retaining focus I have had to limit my scope to *Lyrical Ballads* and associated poems and the major contributions to *The Recluse* project, namely *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*)[40] as timely re-evaluations in their own right. Nevertheless, the case for reading Wordsworth comparatively is strong indeed and my concluding chapter herein aims to show the ways in which we might read major philosophical works by Novalis and Wordsworth alongside them in order to arrive at a better understanding of the early Romantic tendency to situate an infinite quest for self-consciousness within literature of immortality. The 'Romantic orientation' finds itself in its most active and successful stage when it anchors its orientation within this discourse of the infinite; in Novalis' words, philosophy is 'homesickness' for the Romantic writer. Poetological writing aspires, thus, to enable one to orientate oneself within the world, to attain what might be attainable of self-consciousness. To 'live in a colossal novel' is to live in the world, certainly, but it is also to live in a state of romanticizing, a state in which *Mischung* and *Verschmelzung* take place. This happens in writing the fictional self – the fairy tale such as *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, for example, the dreamscapes of Tieck or Coleridge, or the *Mischgedicht* novels of Friedrich and Dorothea Schlegel – or the rewriting of the infinite 'I', such as Wordsworth's London. As I will demonstrate throughout this thesis, any stage that is a *Mischgedicht* – urban, rural or psychological – is a 'colossal novel' within which the poetologist strives to uncover an orientation towards 'home'.

Mischgedicht

For the present discussion, a little more needs to be said about usage of the word *Mischgedicht*. Although it is referenced indirectly much more frequently

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[40] Though publication dates for both *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* fall outside of the period known in either English or German literary history as 'early' Romanticism, their inclusion here is justified on the grounds that the conception of, and initial work on, the *Recluse* project dates back to this period.

than directly by Schlegel, it has been picked up by commentators, particularly more recently. Of these, David Duff's use of the term has been one of the more important examples of how the concept of the *Mischgedicht* can lead to a better understanding of the Romantic treatment of genre. In *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre*, Duff highlights the importance of re-evaluating our understanding of genre in the Romantic period, reminding us that the origins of the term 'Romantic' itself are bound up with genre, meaning, 'Ideas about genre are inseparable from Romanticism'.[41] Following work on Romantic genre theory by commentators such as Stuart Curran, Duff's reading challenges what he identifies as the 'anti-generic hypothesis'. By 'anti-generic' it is meant that Romantic writers were opposed to genre or that they were interested in genre only so far as they were able to 'transcend' or 'dissolve' it.[42] My own reading of the respective literary circles surrounding Wordsworth and Schlegel leads me to situate my work within the responses to such an 'anti-generic hypothesis'; any consideration of early Anglo-German Romantic attitudes towards genre – a basic understanding of which is a pre-requisite for appreciating the poetological seriousness and legitimacy of writers in the Wordsworth and Schlegel circles – is also indebted to the scholarship of Thomas McFarland and Marjorie Levinson, whose seminal work on, for example, the fragment as an emergent poetic form and its relationship to the ruin has opened up pathways for considering part of what makes Romantic text production so innovative.[43]

So, although I am arguing that Romantic poetologies are based on a permeability of generic boundaries, I am not defining the *Mischgedicht* or Romantic poetologies as equating with abandonment of genre nor simply

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[41] David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.1.
[42] See Introduction in *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre*, particularly p.1. See also, Stuart Curran's *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) for a study specific to British Romanticism, particularly the first chapter, pp.3-13.
[43] See Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.14-57 for a historicist reading of the relationship between ruin and 'Tintern Abbey'; see also her study on the fragment form, *The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), and Thomas McFarland, *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Modalities of Fragmentation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981). See Anne Janowitz, 'Coleridge's 1816 Volume: Fragment as Rubric', in *Studies in Romanticism*, 24, 1 (1985), pp.21-39, and Anne Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), especially pp.92-144 for discussion of the relationship between form and ruin in *The Prelude*.

blurring of all genres into one 'super-genre'. Rather, the *Mischgedicht* suggests permeability that enables mixing of genres. It is not, therefore, a new genre that emerges from Romantic text production: rather, it is a new conceptualization of genre theory in Romantic text production itself. This is what 'poetology' denotes and what it includes is irony, dramatic narrative and literature of mediation (this last being the *Mischgedicht*). Owing to its mediatory nature, then, I suggest the *Mischgedicht* might also serve as a useful umbrella term for the diversity in form and genre that Duff notes Romantic writers successfully manage to achieve.[44]

So far I have based my consideration mainly on the conception of genre and discipline, yet this is also inextricably connected to form: the *Roman* is not the *Gedicht*, because they are separated by form, certainly, but they also carry generic connotations. For Schlegel, the Romantic novel is characterized as something very distinct from contemporary understanding of the word *Roman*. Some further explication of form itself is needed in order to understand better the Romantic literary project. As with genre, any serious treatment of form in the early Romantic period needs to take into account not only the formal innovations initiated by the writers but also the ways in which old forms and modes are taken up for poetologies. Among these I shall be looking at poetry, prose and aphorisms/fragments. Of these, the ballad, lyric, novel, the short story in the form of the literary fairy tale [*Märchen*] – which is both a form and a genre – and the philosophical fragment will be considered. What has become interesting about considering Romantic uses of form in relatively modern scholarship is just how much writers and thinkers of this period invest in the print culture of their day in order to re-galvanize oral literary forms. The fashionable antiquarianism of the eighteenth-century ballad has been documented well, and the fragment has long been a rich focal point for readers wishing to break away from the classic view of Romanticism as relying on itself operating in neat cycles: the Judeo-Christian structure makes persuasive connections between the Milton-complex held by major Romantics and their own attempts at epic (of which Wordsworth's *Recluse* is always the foremost example), but it overlooks the extent to which

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[44] Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre*, p.2.

Romanticism is concerned with mediation on a grander scale. Philosophically, Wordsworth and company attempt something far more audacious than Milton's *Paradise Lost*, because they seek to effect new ways to mediate conceptions of the self. In poetic terms Milton is certainly the model for writers as apparently different as Shelley, Blake, Keats, Coleridge and Wordsworth, who seek to write an epic in which the 'I' would become the primary creator. With this in mind it is important to consider that even familiar forms such as Wordsworth's Miltonic *Prospectus* to *The Recluse*, written in the style of high epic are driven by an ironic mode of writing and rewriting – the linear narrative of beginning and end collapses to give way to an infinite re-presentation of the 'self'. Even in its most conservative incarnations, Romantic use of form is looking to negotiate its predecessors and forge a new path for itself. So, Wordsworth's 'high argument' as set out in his *Prospectus* does not seek to surpass Milton on strictly poetic grounds. On the contrary, he is making a formal decision, by which part of the originality and success of his poetic project lies in the ability to pursue 'Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime' through established forms of prose or rhyme. It is now to these things 'unattempted' – in the case of Romantic writers, poetologies and sympoetologies – that I turn.

Chapter 2. 'in fairy tales and poetry / One sees the world's true histories':
Sympoesie – Symphilosophie

> If in communicating a thought, one fluctuates between absolute comprehension and absolute incomprehension, then this process might already be termed a philosophical friendship. For it's no different with ourselves. Is the life of a thinking human being anything else than a continuous inner symphilosophy?[45]

'a philosophical friendship

Written by Friedrich Schlegel for Novalis' collection of fragments, *Blütenstaub*, and published in the Schlegels' *Athenaeum* in 1798 the fragment quoted above raises three main points of interest and importance regarding the concepts of *Sympoesie* and *Symphilosophie* as theorized and practiced by Schlegel and his circle. Firstly, the concept of collaboration is central to these literary and intellectual practices. Collaboration is one of the components at the heart of *Sympoesie* and *Symphilosophie*, but here it becomes more evident in the way in which texts are *presented* and disseminated. Of just four contributions by Schlegel to *Blütenstaub* (which is otherwise mainly authored by Novalis, with a few fragments from August Wilhelm Schlegel and Schleiermacher), this fragment addresses the complexity of Romantic text production, by situating collaborative enterprise alongside paradoxical or opposing thoughts within one's own mind. Secondly, then, *Symphilosophie* – either internal or external – strives to reconcile heterogeneity. Thirdly and lastly, the fluctuation between 'absolute comprehension and absolute incomprehension' brings us back to *Universalpoesie*, the poetry whose progressiveness negates any one absolute prevailing over another. Bringing his focus to the heart of *Unverständlichkeit*, Schlegel makes it clear *Sympoesie* and *Symphilosophie* are concepts which enable the right kind of 'philosophical friendship'.

This 'philosophical friendship' is the basis for the relationship between writer, reader, and critic envisaged by Schlegel and his circle. However, it is also the basis of that circle itself. Consisting chiefly of Friedrich Schlegel, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) and Ludwig Tieck from the late 1790s through to the early 1800s (and, to a lesser extent,

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[45] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.160.

Schleiermacher), the *Frühromantiker* were actively producing collaborative and interdisciplinary literature under the broad category of *romantische Poesie*, which will be outlined here as philosophical literature.[46] As seen in the introductory chapter, terms such as *der Roman* or *die Poesie* cover literary, political, and scientific discourses well beyond the formal limits and conventions of a 'novel' or 'poem'. Part of what allows a traversing of formal and disciplinary boundaries in a variety of ways is the very process of collaborative venture, evidenced by the practice of the *Frühromantiker* in producing theory. This is embedded in the theory itself, as in the Schlegel fragment above.

In the first chapter, I highlighted the *Mischgedicht* as one of the terms central to an understanding of *Frühromantik* theory and practice. The *Mischgedicht* within the Schlegel circle is intergeneric, I have argued, because it opens up textual possibilities by allowing writers and readers to negotiate formal limitations. It does this, not by collapsing *genre* itself, but by collapsing the strictures of any one genre. Therefore, the result is not to do away with genre altogether, but rather a heightened interest in it is revealed, meaning that early German Romantic theory is partly genre theory. But genre theory is in turn pushed further to accommodate interdisciplinarity. Such text production is symphilosophical or sympoetic because it fluctuates between absolute boundaries and definitions and between what in the self and world is comprehensible and what is not. It also depends upon collaborative endeavour, in reminding the reader that a 'philosophical friendship' is formed through communicating poetologies of the infinite and incomprehensible. In the following chapters I shall attempt to set out and consider some of the important ways in which symphilosophical and sympoetic intellectual and creative exchange leads to collaborative, intergeneric literary practice in early English Romanticism, too. This applies to some extent to the wider circles in which Wordsworth and Coleridge moved, but for the sake of retaining focus I will be considering the circle consisting of Dorothy, Mary and William Wordsworth, Coleridge and Sara Hutchinson, in which early works come to

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[46] The period of the most interesting and influential political writings is designated by Frederick Beiser as being from 1797 to 1802, and this is also roughly the most active period of collaboration within the circle – see *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, p.xi.

fruition. Where relevant and of particular importance for the text under consideration, I will turn to those who are at some time or other 'external' or 'extended' members of that circle, such as Henry Crabb Robinson or Charles Lamb. Any consideration of the 'philosophical friendship' the ironist thinker-writer attempts to forge in this early period would be left wanting if considerable effort wasn't made to discuss critics, of which Wordsworth and Coleridge were never short. Rather than repeat material that others have so ably researched, compiled and documented at length, my interest in the role played by literary critics extends further than citing. All texts operate and function through the nexus of writing, reading, and critiquing, but early Romantic poetologies are among the first to insist that this nexus be kept in mind when theorizing and writing.

Schlegel's assertion, for example, that 'The critic is a reader who ruminates. Therefore, he ought to have more than one stomach' is a tongue-in-cheek reminder that the best kind of reading produces rumination. Characteristically, he plays the word for maximum laughs by punning on 'ruminate' to suggest that a critic ought 'to have more than one stomach'. The logological play is typically Schlegelian, but, importantly, it informs us beyond his sense of humour; Schlegel's play on 'ruminate' introduces biological discourse, suggesting the act of reading is an active process, akin to a process of digestion. This play draws attention to his interest in mixing disciplines, but it communicates clearly his insistence on both reader and critic entering into the 'philosophical friendship' a writer establishes through producing a text; neither critic nor reader is detached from authorship. To read is to ruminate, in both senses of the word and to do this means to partake in generation of meaning. In this the writer is matched by his or her critic or reader – each is positioned as author to some extent.

As such, the *Mischgedicht* is predicated on collaboration and mediation. The relationship between writer and reader or critic is collaborative, certainly, but it is mediatory too; Schlegel's ideal reader or critic completes a process of negotiation initiated by the Romantic writer. A fragment that will become pertinent for discussion of the importance of mediation in the intergeneric and collaborative Romantic work, the *Mischgedicht*, in the fifth chapter is from Schlegel's *Ideen* (1800): 'Join the

extremes and you will find the true middle'.[47] Here, we find that joining the 'two extremes' is akin to presenting a reconciliation of some sort (what I argue is a mediation in disciplinary, generic, thematic and chronological terms). Finding the 'true middle' through negotiating polarities is, of course, the method of philosophizing and poeticizing that Novalis names 'romanticizing', as we saw in the first chapter. In consideration of that fragment, I noted the interchangeability of the language of one discipline for another: thus 'logarithmizing' holds as much weight as a poetic process as it does a mathematical one. As a number that marks the value of raising a base number, a logarithm is a vehicle for intensification in mathematics. Poetically, too, the word has currency for a Romantic thinker-writer. A logarithm in both mathematical and poetic discourses for Novalis is primarily a mediator for romanticizing, but this negotiation again depends upon entering an ironic relationship with the reader, whereby one type of discourse will be readily accepted in place of another, so that each has its own currency but all the while contributing to the process of romanticization.

Novalis uses mathematical discourse to a similar end in Entry 290 of *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, the first part of which facilitates an understanding of his use of mathematics as a mediator:

> THEORY OF MAN. The developed and the undeveloped, raw character can be eccentric and common. Developed and structured are identical. Even the most ordinary character can be infinitely developed. His infinity, in contrast to the developed eccentric character's infinity, *is of the lowest order*. / ONTOLOGY. Infinities behave like finitenesses, with which they *alternate*. Finiteness is the *integral* of the one (small) infinity – and the differential of the other (large) infinity – which is *one and the same thing*.[48]

The language of calculus is used to mediate between the developed and undeveloped – either one can be 'infinitely developed', according to Novalis, even 'the most ordinary character'. By using integrals and differentials he is able to show how infinity and the finite alternate. This is similar to the logarithmizing discussed above, and what it means in essence is that even the lowest or most commonplace object or thing (or, in this case, the most

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[47] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.248.
[48] Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, p.43. For more on the infinite potential for development of man, see also Entry 293, p.444.

undeveloped person) can be made to be raised infinitely. The integral and differential of calculus function as the logarithm to show the dynamism of the finite becoming infinite; in this case the implications for this are that a person is constantly intellectually and poetologically perfectible, but not perfected because the concept of infinity is always in a state of flux. In this way, Novalis' use of mathematical language to describe poetologies finds a reflective origin in mathematical discourse used to formulate a theory of the ideal person, the potential writer and reader of those poetologies.

Entry 286 is also of relevance when considering the Romantic drive towards reconciliation: 'PHILOSOPHY. Product of the harmony between subject and object – their chemical mixture, their mechanical contact etc.'[49] Here we see another reminder by Novalis that to de-centre conception of the absolute 'I' – the subject that still creates the external world according to Fichte – is to strive towards a certain 'harmony' between what is conventionally perceived as 'subject' and 'object'. By this account, philosophy's end is to reconcile a striving towards understanding the self with the understanding that this striving leads to no absolute selfhood. Harmony between the self and object in this sense is the product of a philosophical pursuit for negating the 'Absolute'. This 'harmony' is also one in chemical and mechanical senses, meaning that Novalis is also suggesting that philosophical enquiry has a bearing on scientific discourses: a mechanical harmony between self and world would seem to project that romantic philosophy needs to extend its perimeters beyond the empirical knowledge of the self reaching out and sensing or perceiving the world. If we take Entry 286 in this regard we see Novalis essentially stating why the Lockean vein of empiricism has failed. The 'chemical mixture' Novalis brings up is more problematic, due to the broad possibilities of what might be meant by 'chemical'. On the other hand, this broadness indicates that Novalis is deliberately evading a narrow definition in favour of a chemical mixture in the most basic sense, that of harmonizing the self and world in their substantial and structural make up. If philosophy is the product of a chemical harmony, we might assume that Novalis is arguing for a re-orientation in the way we

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[49] Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, p.42.

perceive the world in its physical and chemical construction, a point that becomes central to understanding the philosophical poetry of works such as *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Hymnen an die Nacht*, in which orientation within the world – and so the drive towards 'home' – depends very much upon an acute awareness of the external world in its geological, biological and chemical senses.

'the world's true histories'

So far I have introduced the concepts of *Sympoesie* and *Symphilosophie* (and, so, the intergeneric) in terms of their formal, generic and disciplinary qualities. However, they are not just terms that relate to the form of the text, but also to ideas *within* the text. This is the *Mischgedicht*, of which more follows in the penultimate chapter; there, the concept is anchored more firmly in textual readings in relation to the several other integral terms surrounding it that were considered in the first chapter. For now it is enough to follow the exposition provided in the previous chapter by taking the *Mischgedicht* to mean the 'mixed poem' – that final incarnation of the intergeneric, the Romantic poem. The fifth chapter will explore several central examples of *Mischgedichte*, texts which are both formally and conceptually intergeneric. Among these, Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) is prominent for its presentation of history as historicized. The unfinished novel is a semi-autobiographical account of the growth of a young poet, Heinrich, and it comprises prose, lyric poetry, hymns, mythology, fairy tale and history. But in its medieval setting it *is* simultaneously a tapestry of fictional histories – a history of Heinrich the individual and a commentary on an imagined point in human history before Novalis' own 'modern' age. The contemporary narrative is historicized by its medieval setting but also, crucially, by its narrator's meta-discursive meditations on the tendencies of that age. While these are discussed at greater length in the chapter devoted to the *Mischgedicht*, my purpose in briefly outlining them here is to elucidate historicization as a central Romantic pursuit. There are several points within the novel upon which a reader might draw in order to illustrate this. Presently, however, I wish to look beyond the narrative as we have it in published form, to a

fragment by Novalis, which – according to Ludwig Tieck – was intended for inclusion within the finished novel. Published posthumously by Tieck with his version of how *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* was to end, the poem stands as a succinct manifesto for the novel:

> Wenn nicht mehr Zahlen und Figuren
> Sind Schlüssel aller Kreaturen,
> Wenn die, so singen oder küssen
> Mehr als die Tiefgelehrten wissen,
> Wenn sich die Welt ins freie Leben
> Und in die Welt wird zurückgegeben,
> Wenn dann sich wieder Licht und Schatten
> Zu echter Klarheit wieder gatten
> Und man in Märchen und Gedichten
> Erkennt die wahren Weltgeschichten,
> Dann fliegt vor einem geheimen Wort
> Das ganze verkehrte Wesen fort.

Stanley Applebaum's literal translation of this poem is as follows:

> When numbers and figures no longer
> Are keys to everything created,
> When those who sing or kiss
> Know more than the learned scholars,
> When the world returns to a free life
> And to the world,
> When then once more light and shadow
> Will couple to produce genuine clarity,
> And people will recognize that the true histories of the world
> Lie in fairy tales and poems,
> Then at a single secret word
> This whole wrongheaded existence will fly away.[50]

From Applebaum's faithful translation (which he deliberately avoids poeticizing[51]) we can see that the poem looks beyond the present age to a future where poetry and fairy tales – *die Märchen* – reveal '*die wahren Weltgeschichten*', the 'true histories of the world'. In this projected image of the future, then, ontological truth as understood and recorded into histories is to be found. So, this poem is important for what it reveals about Novalis' thoughts on the functions and value of history – history as a broad discipline and/or narrative form (I do not think Novalis is making a distinction between

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[50] *Great German Poems of the Romantic Era*, ed. and trans. by Stanley Applebaum (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1995), pp.68-69.
[51] Applebaum, *Great German Poems*, p.iv.

the literary or the scientific here) is valuable for what it might help us recover of ourselves, and it is to be documented in fairy tales and poetry, *Märchen* and *Dichtung/Poesie*.

As I suggested above, the novel itself is an ongoing historicization as well as metadiscursive exposition of this historicizing tendency; Heinrich the young poet participates in the creation of fairy tales and poetry – the stuff that histories are made of – at the same moment in which the narrative reflects on the age in broader times. The poem, then, is an important extension of the unfinished novel in that it is both a continuation of the text and a neat commentary reflecting on the role of the *Mischgedicht* in Romantic conceptions of history. One of the principal statements that *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* sets out to make is concerning the necessity of poetic composition and dissemination. In the novel, poetry is not just a way for Heinrich to recover a mysterious identity that seems to beckon him quite literally from his dreams, but also a way for him to take his place in the world. Paradoxically, *Märchen* and *Poesie* serve to socialize the young Heinrich, who has never ventured beyond his birthplace until he journeys with his mother back to her maternal home to meet his grandparents. This journey turns out to be fateful in the exposure it gives Heinrich to poetry, song and folk and fairy tales, the very elements that enable him to make sense of his history as well as the histories and stories that his own depend on.

For the word *Weltgeschichten* owes its meaning in this context to 'stories of the world' as much as 'histories of the world', and Novalis is re-establishing conceptual links between the two meanings of the word *Geschichte*, much as Schlegel is seen to do with, for example, *die Gattung*. The appropriation of story for writing – and rewriting – history is another example of the intergeneric; Novalis is not simply substituting one definition for the other. He is revealing the latent relationship between the purported fact of history and the supposed fictionality and fantasy of poems and fairy tales. In doing so, he is forging the same epistemological connections that Schlegel had done a few years prior to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* with his semi-autobiographical novel, *Lucinde*. In this respect, Coleridge is also doing something similar (albeit in a more covert manner) in his *Biographia Literaria* almost two decades later. As it will be seen in the fifth chapter of this thesis,

Heinrich is also semi-autobiographical in its pursuit of truth through fantasy or fictionality, but it is his overt emphasis on history that always gives Novalis the optimal standpoint for his brand of romanticizing.

However, as the poem champions an epistemology predicated on love and aesthetics over intellectual rationality ('Wenn die, so singen oder küssen / Mehr als die Tiefgelehrten wissen'), it might be a worthwhile exercise to consider it in its poetic context. By this I mean that, though Applebaum's is a masterful translation of the literal words, it is perhaps profitable to consider the poem in relation to metre and rhyme. The following version does not intend to provide an ideal representation of this – the rhyme scheme has been altered, for one – and nor does it seek to be held up to poetic scrutiny. The purpose of my translation, rather, is to reiterate the importance of the poetic in Heinrich-Novalis' epistemology – that is, poetology:

> When numbers and figures no more
> Are the key to all created things,
> When those who kiss or those who sing
> Know more than those of learned lore
> When the world returns to a life free
> And the world to itself returns
> When light and shadow again in turns
> Will couple towards true clarity
> And in fairy tales and poetry
> One sees the world's true histories,
> Then, at a single word of mystery,
> Away this inverted existence will fly.

This translation of the poem champions the essence of the verse as song, seeking to recover some of the oral culture that is at the heart of the novel; Heinrich's world and poetic vocation unravel partly through singing merchants' folk tales and, later, balladeering courtly troubadours. These *Gedichte* appear early on in the novel and they serve as a poetological compass for the young man, complementing his dream of the elusive blue flower at the very beginning of the novel. This dream, together with the poet Klingsohr's fairy tale in chapter nine of the unfinished novel, represents the all-important category of *Märchen*, and together they envelop the *Gedichten* within the novel. Though the word is often translated as 'fairy tales', *Märchen* also defines folk tales in a broader sense. Klingsohr, who is the father of

Mathilde, Heinrich's love-interest, narrates a beguiling *Märchen* that certainly falls into the category of fairy tale, with its allegorical and fantastical figures. In this respect it is more akin to Goethe's *Fairy Tale* (with which it is in dialogue) than, for example, his friend Ludwig Tieck's *The Fair Eckbert*, which seems to operate along the lines of the Grimm brothers' more famous *Märchen* in its sinister unravelling of the *heimlich* aspect of human nature and experience. *Der blonde Eckbert* [*The Fair Eckbert*] taps into the very fundamental ontological questions we face by projecting a familiar, routine solitary existence onto a shadowy, uncanny truth in his own history that unfolds through story-telling. Eckbert discovers that his relationship with his wife, Bertha, is so familiar and resonant of another time in his life precisely because she was known to him in a previous life. As the truth of his identity and his life unfolds at the end of the narrative Tieck's protagonist discovers that the life he has known in conscious adulthood has actually been a veneer underneath which lurks a history that has always been hinted at.

Yet, the tale is certainly closer to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* than it might seem. This uncanny sense of the familiar within the unknown and vice versa is a version of Novalis' light and shadow. For Eckbert this only 'couples' through story-telling and for Tieck the secret essence of this story – and the relating of this relationship to history – can best be conveyed through the fairy tale; at the heart of *Der blonde Eckbert* is a Romantic recovery of 'die wahren Weltgeschichten', 'the world's true histories' through the history of the individual. For Tieck there is no distinction between the two – the uncanny is central to all human existence and the fairy tale is integral to decoding this. In fact, Tieck's understanding of the role played by the fairy tale in human consciousness extends to his romanticized assessment of Novalis' life in his edition of his friend's posthumously-published works, in which biography bridges the gap between life and fairy tale. As with Schlegel's fragment for Novalis' *Blüthenstaub*, such collaborative endeavour highlights a 'philosophical friendship' – *Sympoesie / Symphilosophie* – in its very practice, as well as its content.

'a continuous inner symphilosophy'

Tieck's characterization also hints at Schlegel's *Universalpoesie*. In the old woman we see manifest the forms of Walther – Eckbert's only friend – and Hugo, his companion after Eckbert's murder of Walther. Walther is the only visitor to Eckbert's castle, and the story takes a turn when Eckbert's wife, Bertha relates her history in detail to Walther and Eckbert one night. While Eckbert is familiar with this story, Walther is hearing it for the first time, and after narrating it Bertha is later troubled to remember that Walther mentioned her old dog by name although she had not revealed it while telling her story. It is this strange realization that reinforces Eckbert's sense of foreboding when a troubled Bertha relates it to him, and causes him to shoot and kill Walther, quite suddenly and without fully realizing why. With Walther gone, Eckbert is left friendless again, until he meets Hugo. At the end of the narrative, Eckbert sees 'Walther', who then transforms into 'Hugo' and then finally into the old woman whom Bertha had known in the past. It is thus revealed that 'Walther' knew the details of Bertha's former life as 'he' was, in fact, the old woman to whom Bertha was bound, and who returns as 'Hugo' in expectation of what is due to her. Upon revealing her true identity, she then delivers the final blow to Eckbert by imparting to him, 'Und Bertha war deine Schwester': Eckbert's recently deceased wife was, in truth, his sister.

Such complex and disturbing details allow for two important things in the tale. Firstly, they bring a kind of order to an otherwise non-rational world in which chance encounters turn into confidences, reliable friends become strangers, and actions as momentous as shooting dead the only society one has are decided upon for no logical reason; after hearing Bertha's anxious doubts, Eckbert *intuits* that there is something alien about Walther, yet he does not *know* what that something is. His decision to kill Walther while out hunting is a sudden, unselfconscious one, much like Coleridge's Mariner shooting the albatross. Yet Tieck's protagonist appears to act on a psychological impulse that is in some way comprehensible to the reader, even if it is not so for Eckbert himself; we can understand why Eckbert feels the compulsion – even if we do not know the source of that compulsion – in a way that is not afforded to us when reading Coleridge's *Rime*. Yet both return to a version of

Schlegelian *Unverständlichkeit* in the importance that they place on intuition and the non-ratiocinative faculties. A certain prescience in Romantic writing manifests itself in the implications of such a discourse; both Tieck and Coleridge are negotiating a precursor of the dialogue the as-yet 'undiscovered' Freudian unconscious entailed.[52] Psychoanalytical/psychological readings of Romantic texts, particularly of Coleridge's 'supernatural' poems, have appeared in abundance since Freud, but to my mind the important thing to keep sight of is the shared interest in the *Märchen* of Tieck and Novalis and the supernatural poems of Coleridge in telling stories about stories and histories: the protagonists of the *Märchen* and poems in question are fundamentally concerned with uncovering, understanding and/or narrating their own stories and selves. In the most ambitious and exemplary case – that of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* – this concern is taken beyond histories and stories, *Geschichte,* into drama of the self. Heinrich's true quest as presented by Novalis is the quest to uncover enough of his identity to realize that this identity is constantly in flux and that any hold on understanding one's own narrative depends upon becoming a participant in it, incomprehensibility and all.

It is this *Unverständlichkeit* which illuminates the second function of the non-linearity in *Der blonde Eckbert* in relation to characterization. If we return to the fragment quoted at the opening of this chapter, we see that this constant fluctuation between 'absolute comprehension and absolute incomprehension' characterizes the 'continuous inner symphilosophy' that is central to communicating philosophical literature. In this case, this fluctuation comes from the relationship between intuition and the uncanny, but it also originates from the *unverständlich* presentation of identity in the text. Identities are conflated in Tieck's *Märchen* so that the old woman takes on simultaneous forms at various points in the narrative (of course, her unknown appearance and protean qualities are already hinted at by Bertha, who recalls

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[52] Although my argument here concerns itself with poetry and *Märchen*, a broader look at the foundations of the Freudian unconscious would need to consider also the Romantic philosophical and psychological foundations of the unconscious. For a recent study on this, see Matt Ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling , Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Ffytche's study identifies the roots of Freudian psychoanalysis and modern theories of individuality in Romantic theory of the unconscious.

in her story that she was never sure of what her old companion looked like).[53]
This refusal to present a discernible identity is compatible with the
championing of a philosophical drive that necessarily reconciles the
fluctuation between absolute comprehension and incomprehension. The
comprehension here springs from the conscious awareness that a single, fixed
'identity' is not definable. Tieck's story maps out a psychological landscape in
which several figures and relationships are distorted and conflated until the
very notion of a 'self' is destabilized.[54] The reader's reward when facing
incomprehension of this deliberately confusing narrative topography is that
she enters into the 'philosophical friendship' of *Sympoesie / Symphilosophie*
with the writer; in *Der blonde Eckbert* Tieck does not seek to present a story
in which (and through which) resolutions might be achieved. Rather, he
endeavours to unsettle the reader by presenting several gaps within it – for
example, was the meeting of Eckbert and Bertha in adulthood a union of
chance or fate? – and by leaving them unanswered. As such, the tale has no
real 'conclusion' beyond Eckbert discovering the truth of Bertha's and the old
woman's identities. However, of course, this truth is not a conclusion because
the very notion of identity has undergone a shift.

Perhaps one of the most significant things about *Der blonde Eckbert* in
relation to Schlegel's *Symphilosophie* for the present discussion is the
rhetorical question he poses: 'Is the life of a thinking human being anything
else than a continuous inner symphilosophy?' If the poetic figures I have
drawn on here – Eckbert, the Ancient Mariner, Christabel and Heinrich – are
all considered together it will be seen that their common feature is that their
defining actions are predicated on a distinct lack of conscious thought.
Eckbert and the Mariner kill without conscious reason, Christabel does not
appear to act on independent thought at all, instead moving in various
unselfconscious or subconscious states of being (prayer, dream, trance,
possession), and even Heinrich von Ofterdingen's actions are compassed by
dreams, myths and fairy tales. Of these figures, all but Heinrich are excluded

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[53] *German Literary Fairy Tales*, ed. by Frank G. Ryder and Robert M. Browning (New York: Continuum, 1983), pp.34-35.
[54] Such displacement positions it on a level with Coleridge's fairy tale of displaced and usurped identities, 'Christabel', which is examined in further detail in this respect in the fifth chapter herein.

from this all-important 'continuous inner symphilosophy' by virtue of the fact that none among them is presented as 'a thinking human being'. Though they are intermediaries that enable the writer and reader to enter into a philosophical friendship they do not in themselves represent rational or independent thought. However, even this is not quite the decisive factor splitting Heinrich off from the others, for rationality and philosophizing are not for the *poetic figure* within the fairy tale or philosophical poem, but for the *reader*. What determines whether or not an 'inner symphilosophy' is present within the figure is that figure's relationship to poetic composition: it is of no use merely to think, the Romantic writer appears to suggest, one must also compose. Heinrich is spared the fate of either a Hamlet or a Mariner because he is able to reconcile an epistemology developed through experiencing poetry with one developed through creating it. Heinrich is a poet because he reconciles his quest for answers – that yearning for comprehension – with his intuitions and poetic faith in *Unverständlichkeit*. By reconciling philosophy (and history) with poetry Heinrich successfully undertakes a poetological quest in which neither the compulsion towards knowledge nor the impulse to compose is diminished. He is no longer merely a poetic figure or a fairy tale hero, he manipulates his own consciousness and orientation within the world through composing poems and fairy tales and through a genuine desire that this composition should become an ontological compass: Heinrich is a poetologist because he knows that he cannot entirely *know* himself or the world, and that absolute knowledge must give way to a poetics/philosophy of intuition and sympathy. By accepting the deferral of the absolute, Heinrich is able to become an actor in his own narrative.

'like one that hath been stunned'

In Heinrich's world, as extremes are mediated and history is created rather than merely interpreted, light and shadow mingle and 'couple' in order to present a clearer truth which rejuvenates the beholder's vision. Tieck's and Coleridge's dramatic explorations of *Märchen* and *Gedichte,* on the other hand, dwell more on the *Nachtseite,* the darker side of human experience and

history.[55] In the *Märchen* and *Gedichte* of Tieck and the poetry of Coleridge, the *Nachtseite* is certainly seen in the causes of the pivotal action – inexplicable and impulsive murders, bodily and psychological usurpation, strange doppelgängers, supernatural forces, and troubling dreams are just some of these – but perhaps more interesting than these is the *result* in each text, and the similarities between these. As with 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel', the conclusion of *Der blonde Eckbert* sees the protagonist gain in some knowledge and/or wisdom. The *Nachtseite* explored through these texts is in the effect that this knowledge or wisdom has. For Coleridge's Mariner this becomes a moral imprisonment of sorts that costs him his consciousness and free will – having shot the albatross, he is punished and his utterance remains within the control of an external agency:

> Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
> With a woeful agony,
> Which forced me to begin my tale;
> And then it left me free.
>
> Since then, at an uncertain hour,
> That agony returns:
> And till my ghastly tale is told,
> This heart within me burns.
>
> I pass, like night, from land to land;
> I have strange power of speech:
> The moment that his face I see,
> I know the man that must hear me:
> To him my tale I teach.[56]

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[55] As Monika Schmitz-Emans makes clear in her exploration of the *Nachtseite*, 'Night-sides of existence: Madness, dream, etc.' in *Romantic Prose Fiction*, ed. by Gerald Gillespie, Manfred Engel, Bernard Dieterle (Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing, 2008) pp.139-167: 'The word »Nachtseite« (night-side) originally has an astronomical meaning: it refers to those parts of a planet's surface which are turned away from the sun', (p.139). However, Schmitz-Emans notes, G. H. Schubert extends this meaning to a metaphorical dark- or night-side in which the darker aspects of human existence are revealed/explored in his *Aspects of the Night-side of Science* [*Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Wissenschaft*] (1808). Though this usage of the term comes after the period in which the texts I am considering here appear, I am following other commentators on the *Nachtseite* in seeing it as useful to apply retrospectively to early Romantic fascination with what we now know as the darker aspects of experience and consciousness, for example, dreams, nightmares, madness, the unconscious/subconscious and possession. See also Carol Tully's Introduction in *Romantic Fairy Tales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2007), pp.vii-xx, and William Gray, *Fantasy, Myth and the Measure of Truth: Tales of Pullman, Lewis, Tolkien, MacDonald and Hoffmann* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp.10-24.

[56] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poetical Works,* 3 vols, *Collected Works*, 16 vols, ed. by J. C. C. Mays (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2001), i, *: Poems (Reading Text): Part 1*, (ll.578-

The Mariner has learnt a lesson; following his ordeal at sea, he knows he erred in shooting the albatross, and to harm a creature of God is to sin grievously. However, this tale and its moral are not entirely his to teach. Instead, he becomes a vehicle for his own narrative, and in doing so he becomes in part a spectator to his own suffering. However, this is not the ideal *spectator ab extra* that Coleridge, Wordsworth and the *Frühromantiker* value so much as ironists; rather, the Mariner's spectatorship is a mechanical fate devoid of control over his utterance. Similarly, Christabel's usurpation is bound up by the loss of her conscious utterance, making both figures *only* spectators and not conscious actors in their own respective narratives.[57]

The Mariner's comparison of his movement from land to land as being 'like night' is interesting for its emphasis on the darker human experience as occurring like, or during, the night. Though in this context the night is used as effective imagery to convey the Mariner's solitary, unnoticed travels, it also highlights just how shadowy his presence has become. The Mariner's existence is cursed and the night empathically points towards this enforced solitude lived on the outskirts of sociability and community. In this way, Christabel is also disowned by her father at the end of the second part of the poem, having been usurped in bodily, emotional and filial presence by Geraldine and thereby ousted from her domestic community. Her state of being is thus also a shadowy one, in which the limits of community are exposed as the reality for those whose 'strange powers of speech' are emptied of consciousness. This comprehension of one's alienation from a former familiarity is common to Tieck's Eckbert along with Coleridge's figures;

590). All references to Coleridge's poetry are from this edition, unless otherwise stated. All subsequent line references are given parenthetically in the main text. I quote the 1834 version of the poem as it is the more frequently cited version. However, line references refer to both versions and I quote the 1798 text where there is a significant difference between the two versions.

[57] For the *Frühromantiker* in theory and for Coleridge and Wordsworth in implicit practice, the ironic-dramatic narrator is the one who historicizes. This is the exemplary narrator, who is also an actor or character(s). The Mariner fails in this respect because he is a spectator and not an active body – in noting that he 'does not act but is continually acted upon', Wordsworth astutely pointed out the importance of the dramatic for the *Lyrical Ballads* volume. What is perhaps unfair in this account is the refusal to acknowledge that Coleridge was grappling with the difficulties of such narrative; Coleridge was exploring the complexities that taking on a dramatic persona entailed, and his insights into the difficulty of mediation certainly do ring true to his purpose in portraying the 'romantic' and 'supernatural' in his *Lyrical Ballads*.

Tieck's protagonist has always lived in an unsociable way with only Walther (and later Hugo) and his wife Bertha for company. So, when Bertha is revealed as his sister and Walther and Hugo as the shape-shifting old woman from whom Bertha has run, the world Eckbert has hitherto known is engulfed by a strange, traumatic knowledge that he has always been a condemned man. History overshadows this 'pale' melancholy man from the very beginning of the narrative, as he chooses solitude over sociability.

But the *Nachtseite* is not just explored in relation to protagonists; the Wedding-Guest of Coleridge's *Rime*, too, is changed by the Mariner's narrative. Having listened to the story and heard its moral – 'He prayeth best, who loveth best / All things both great and small' (ll.614-615) – the Wedding-Guest apparently turns away with a newfound wisdom. However:

> He went like one that hath been stunned,
> And is of sense forlorn:
> A sadder and a wiser man,
> He rose the morrow morn.
>   (ll.622-625)

Knowledge and wisdom have not enlightened the Wedding-Guest; rather, the effect of the Mariner's tale (and, we might assume, the circumstances in which it must always be communicated) has left him exposed to the darker aspects of human experience. Indeed, the word 'stunned' suggests a kind of trauma, and perhaps this is puzzling if it is remembered that Christabel's face 'Grows sad and soft' when she awakens from her trance following her fearful experience with Geraldine, and that the 'dull, hollow confusion'[58] felt by the dying Eckbert follows the traumatic revelations of inadvertent incest and the truth about Walther and Hugo. With these latter two examples, there is a clear connection between personal experience and trauma – but in the case of the Wedding-Guest this feeling akin to being 'stunned' is a result of a second-hand experience to which he is an unwitting auditor in the first place; the trauma does not, significantly, arise from the kind of empathy that Wordsworthian irony explores, and which become prominent in the next two chapters. Rather, it is indirect exposure to the *Nachtseite* – the nightmarish tale of the Mariner's experiences – that triggers an inversion of empathy in the

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[58] *German Literary Fairy Tales*, p.46.

Wedding-Guest. The Mariner's tale awakens in him the consciousness of the possible relationship between the personal human experience and the universal one.

The Wedding-Guest is a 'sadder and a wiser man' because he is now conscious of the universality of the narrator's moral: one implication, at least, seems to be that if it can happen to one person, it can happen to anyone. Such thinking seems to belong more to a distorted version of the eighteenth-century dominant moral psychology that Romanticism seeks to re-evaluate and refashion into a genuine empathy. Like Adam Smith's sympathizer, the Wedding-Guest is able (or, rather, he is forced) to figure himself imaginatively in the place of the sufferer. Crucially, however, he does not succeed in remaining an 'impartial spectator' to this suffering, as it seems to breed in him a fear of possible personal loss. This inverted reminder of community – and possible exclusion from it – is what eventually connects the Wedding-Guest to Christabel, the Mariner and Eckbert. None of these figures is able to distance the self from this fear – Coleridge and Tieck seem to suggest that they fail as ironists because they fixate on how the individual nightmare might become universal, and not on how the universal nightmare might enter the individual's empathetic consciousness with necessary distance. That is, the relationship between part and whole, self and external, is sacrificed for the solipsism of the part or self, whereas the ironist ought always to endeavour to understand all suffering and trauma through a *release* from solipsism. And this is always achieved through *creation* of narrative and conscious utterance, not just indirect participation in it.

This distinction between activity and passivity, however, is less clear in the use of the dream in these texts. As it will be seen in the discussion of the *Mischgedicht* in chapter five, the dream is a fertile ground for *Verschmelzung* – or fusion – of many kinds; the intergeneric Romantic text finds its fullest expression in *Mischgedichte*, of which many employ the poetological use of the dreamscape. For the present discussion I am interested in how the presentation of the dream impacts upon poetological exploration of the *Nachtseite* in the texts discussed above. As the *Nachtseite* is clearly associated with the nightmare experience, it might seem odd to think of the dream as being central to it, if it is not remembered that both dream and

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nightmare are on equal footing as grounds for *Verschmelzung*. Heinrich, Christabel, the Ancient Mariner and Eckbert all experience dreams and/or trance-like states at crucial points of their narratives, but Heinrich's dream-experience differs from those of the others in relation to the control of the narrative that it enables him to take. Heinrich's dream of the blue flower is a spur for poetic composition, for activity. This is in contrast to the others, for whom the dream or trance is at the limits of conscious activity, and very quickly slips into the subconscious or unselfconscious realms of cognition and/or activity. When this happens, the dream – *der Traum* – becomes bound up with the trauma – *das Trauma* – experienced. By using romance and fantasy, Tieck and Coleridge appear to be formulating the types of connections between passivity and trauma that Freud would later theorize in terms of repression and neuroses. However, I am not suggesting that a Freudian reading of these texts will necessarily yield more fruitful responses to them – indeed, there are so many fundamental differences between Romantic theorizing on the dream and Freudian analysis of them that such a reading would be counter-intuitive in many senses.

'to escape the round of the ever-recurrent commonplace'

Tieck's other famous fairy tale about possession, *Der Runenberg*, also takes the usurpation of a stable identity and uses it as a vehicle for exploring the instability of genre. As with *Der blonde Eckbert*, the protagonist of this tale, Christian, is consumed by a stranger knowledge which is threatening to overshadow his conceptions of reality and normality throughout the tale. Christian is a young man who has escaped his birthplace in order to live as a hunter in the mountains. His father is a gardener and he is expected to follow in these footsteps; however, at the beginning of the story we are told that he has left his native village, in order 'to escape from the round of the ever-recurrent commonplace'.[59] Such a description appears to place Christian firmly within the same category as Novalis' and Wordsworth's wanderers. Like these characters, Christian prizes an experience outside of known perimeters. However, there is a key difference between him and Novalis' and

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[59] *German Literary Fairy Tales*, p.81

Wordsworth's figures, and this is that Christian seeks to 'escape' the commonplace, whereas figures from *The Excursion*, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* or *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* seek to *transform* the commonplace. As I shall show in the chapters that follow, this is true of the narrators of Wordsworth's 'lyrical ballads', too, and is also in evidence in the literary theory of these writers as well as Schlegel and Richter. This difference, then, might provide us with an initial point from which to determine how Tieck's tale differs from his *Der blonde Eckbert* and his contemporaries' figurations of the solitary wanderer and how it fits into the patterns of activity and passivity I have already established. That is, how it sits with *Der blonde Eckbert* and Coleridge's 'lyrical ballads' of the 1790s.

Like the Mariner, Christabel or Eckbert, Christian is a figure who is always on the borders of knowledge or articulation; he is certain that there is something that he does not know and this haunts him as it haunts Eckbert throughout their respective narratives, until the moments of clarity appear in the form of some bodily or psychological usurpation. Eckbert is tortured by the shadows of Bertha's past, which bear down on him through a shape-shifting old woman, and Christian's determination to escape the *heimlich* leads him to a lifelong struggle with the *unheimlich*, prefiguring in a way our post-Freudian understanding of how the two meanings converge. The *heimlich* has become comparable to the *unheimlich* in its secretiveness, but for Christian experience of such convergence comes too late. His consciousness and subsequent conscious utterance are restricted by his experience with this *Nachtseite*, as were Christabel's and the Mariner's; his departure from home leads him to a lonely existence in the mountains where he meets a stranger who tells him of the Runenberg, the sublime mountain where, according to legend, one can find all that one's heart desires. Christian, having heard of this strange place before, embarks on an arduous journey there and finds a strange female figure with a tablet bejewelled with many coloured precious stones, which she leaves behind with Christian after vanishing. Christian loses consciousness at some point during his journey back but when he recovers he finds he no longer has the tablet. From this point onwards his consciousness is blighted by the memory of this tablet and the eroticized figure, both of which, he believes, hold the key to the knowledge he desires.

To begin with, the story *suggests* a poetological struggle akin to Novalis' Heinrich, whose quest is also predicated on a search for the ineffable. We see parallels between Christian and the narrator of *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* in their respective mountainous wanderings, and if Wordsworth's Wanderer were not already a product of a natural education, we might have added him to these too. Reading on, however, it becomes clear that Christian's is not a poetological journey, nor is it bound up with the spirituality of *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais'* narrator or the quasi-Methodist piety of Wordsworth's Wanderer. The protagonist of *Der Runenberg* is on a quest for neither spiritual nor intellectual enlightenment, and this might go some way to indicating why his solitary sojourn in the mountains fails to provide him the fulfilment he seeks. In fleeing the commonplace rather than altering its representation via a poetic sensibility, he has contravened a major poetological standard; he longs for an experience outside of the commonplace, but seeks it in the fantastical when it ought to be sought out in an altered *perception* of that same quotidian experience. Christian does not undertake a poetological pursuit because he seeks a poeticized experience purely outside of himself – he fails to internalize in the way that Heinrich or a Wordsworthian narrator does and instead seeks solipsism rather than a type of solitude conducive to observation of the external.[60] He is the fictionalized equivalent of Jean Paul Richter's poetic nihilists (see below), who seek to negate the real in favour of fantastical desires, and this is what ultimately draws him to the Runenberg and to his downfall. Tieck escapes the fate of the poetic nihilist by documenting Christian's downfall in this manner. His narrative makes it clear that there is no real poetological depth to Christian's thirst for experience, and this is accentuated by his obsession with – to the point of possession by – the bejewelled tablet. The lust for the tablet and the female figure become conflated in his mind, though he is temporarily redeemed by his chancing upon a village that reminds him of his native village, and fills him with an 'indescribably sweet nostalgia'.[61] This nostalgia is the first substantial sign of

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[60] Also see Wordsworth's justification as a poet in the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, in which he speaks of looking 'steadily' at his 'subject' prior to poetic composition, and Novalis' fragments on poetic genius as being predicated on an ability to romanticize the external world through observation, which are focused on in greater detail in the concluding chapter.

[61] *German Literary Fairy Tales*, p.89.

affinity with the early-Romantic poetological hero, yet it still does not amount to the kind of homesickness that leads to a poetological quest. Christian feels the impiety of his former desires as a kind of shame and the scenes of domesticity, innocence and piety in and around the village church draw him automatically. He sees Elizabeth, to whom he develops an instant attraction, and is effortlessly integrated into her family life as the gardener he sought to avoid becoming. The narrative very rapidly moves through a seemingly inevitable marriage between Elizabeth and Christian and in no time they are settled with children and are prospering in the village. Tieck moves through these pleasant and convenient details swiftly and the narrative only slows down once more when the old possession takes hold of Christian.

Before this happens, however, Christian is prompted to return to his native village in search of his parents after reflecting on his new domestic happiness. The reader discovers that Christian and his father are bound together by a mysterious, rare flower; in a passage that is reminiscent of the blue flower that both triggers Heinrich's quest and the memory of a dream his father once had, Christian's father is convinced that he will meet his son again because he saw a flower he had long yearned to see. The flower acts as a tie between the father and son. However, Tieck's flower motif also serves to reinforce the fact that Christian had turned away from such communion with nature in favour of a barren solitude among the mountains, one which has produced in him strange and unnatural desires which have not left him despite domestic bliss.[62] Like Coleridge's Mariner, he fails to find a 'harmony between subject and object'. For the Mariner this failure occurs as a result of viewing himself as being at so far a remove from the Albatross that he neglects to think about the bond of sympathy and fellowship with the external world – which is in one sense what Novalis' harmony is referring to – he is severing. For Christian the harmony is disrupted by his desire to escape the 'commonplace' life as a gardener: artificial as it might be the garden is a ground for cultivation that Christian has rejected capriciously. It is not for the love of the mountains that he leaves his home and this is clear from the outset

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[62] For more on the significance of the plant world in the tale, see Gordon Birrell, *The Boundless Present: Space and time in the Literary Fairy Tales of Novalis and Tieck* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pp.103-115.

of the tale, which finds Christian lamenting his solitary life.[63] Rather, he is driven by a reckless desire to escape familiarity – like Wordsworth's earlier, animal self of 'Tintern Abbey', Christian acts 'more like a man / Flying from something that he dreads, than one / Who sought the thing he loved'. Eventually, his temporary moments of solace in domestic and filial duties are not enough to save him; despite the apparent comfort in life with his wife and his father, the old greed for the mysterious tablet and its inherent solipsism overcomes him, and manifests itself in his obsession with money left to his keeping by a stranger. The stranger – who, by definition, has no identity – represents the eventual fate of Christian, who will return to his wife in an unrecognizable state, only to disappear again. The final sentence of the story – 'The unhappy wanderer was never seen again'[64] – becomes a grim reminder of the fate of solipsism: Christian loses his identity as well as his claim to community, becoming an anonymous wanderer.

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[63] In his solitude, Christian is more akin to the version of Wordsworth Francis Jeffrey would later seek to write off in his review of *The Excursion* as solipsistic: 'Long habits of seclusion, and an excessive ambition of originality, can alone account for the disproportion which seems to exist between this author's taste and his genius; or for the devotion with which he has sacrificed so many precious gifts at the shrine of those paltry idols which he has set up for himself among his lakes and mountains.' – Francis Jeffrey, 'On Wordsworth's *Excursion*', in *Edinburgh Review*, 24, 47, November 1814, pp.1-30, in *On the Lake Poets*, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth (Washington, D.C.: Woodstock, 1998), p.3. Jeffrey's attack (which is here similar to Keats' accusation of Wordsworth's 'egotistical sublime') is predicated, in this instance, on his reading of Wordsworth's solitude being a bar to his poetic genius. In other words, he is prevented by his solipsism from creating a successful narrative. Though my readings of Wordsworth's perceived solipsism and *The Excursion* argue that this is a fundamental error in contemporary perceptions of the poet's major work, I find it useful to draw attention to Christian as a contemporary figuration of the solipsistic figure barring his own poetological potential. For criticism of Wordsworth's perceived solipsism in *Lyrical Ballads*, see Charles Burney's 'Review of Lyrical Ballads' in *The Monthly Review*, XXIX (June 1799). Reprinted in Elsie Smith, *An Estimate of William Wordsworth: By his Contemporaries 1793-1822* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1932), pp.34-37: 'Lines written near Tintern Abbey. - The reflections of no common mind; poetical, beautiful, and philosophical: but somewhat tinctured with gloomy, narrow, and unsociable ideas of seclusion from the commerce of the world: as if men were born to live in woods and wilds, unconnected with each other… So much genius and originality are discovered in this publication, that we wish to see another from the same hand, written on more elevated subjects and in a more cheerful disposition', p.37. Although Wordsworth's idea of solitude has been misread as a sort of regression into a Rousseauistic state of original man, in which men are 'unconnected with each other', it is interesting to see Burney's political and philosophical concerns here, as well as the shrewdness of a review which highlights the philosophical thinking of Wordsworth's poetry.
[64] *German Literary Fairy Tales*, p.101.

'as many definitions of poetry as readers and listeners'

I have, so far, highlighted some directions in which Romantic theory of the intergeneric seeks to advance itself, and some directions in which I hope to pursue my own readings; I have outlined the importance of *Sympoesie* and *Symphilosophie* as both internal collaborations that mediate opposing states of comprehension, and as broader tendencies that see individual writers each value the creative, poetic impulse over passivity. In doing so, I have endeavoured to show the connections between different Romantic writers in relation to their poetological uses of history, *Märchen* and *Gedichte*. That is, I have begun to show how an emergent Romantic *Mischgedicht* is predicated on historicization of narrative through fairy tales, poetry and the dream. This is continued in the chapters that follow, in which elaboration on the centrality of irony and drama allows for further, more comprehensive readings of the kind of text Romantic thinkers and writers sought to produce. For now, though, it is important to return to some more of the theoretical works in which these aims are couched, and to trace in them the overtly collaborative spirit of Romantic text production. In order to do so, history – and the need to historicize – must once again be a starting point.

In the discussion that has followed Schlegel's definition of 'a philosophical friendship', the fluctuation between two cognitive absolutes has been charted in some central Romantic folk and fairy tales. The purpose of this has been to understand better some of the importance Novalis claims for these, and this in turn is a crucial exercise because these claims have implications reaching further than the literary type. I began reading these *Märchen* and *Gedichte* above by suggesting that they reveal the Romantic need to historicize – what now needs to be established is, firstly, precisely why this need is so acutely felt by several thinkers and writers, and secondly, what bearing this has on their poetologizing. In other words, I am addressing two of my primary research questions by continuing to investigate how Romantic literary theory enables writers to situate their poetologies, and then to consider how collaborative ventures render these poetologies practicable.

It is here that the intersection of poetry and philosophy that was outlined in the previous chapter becomes pivotal to an understanding of the

philosophical conditions that galvanized the collaborative theory and practice of the *Frühromantiker*. Philosophy after Kant and Fichtean Idealism enabled the collapse of the subject/object distinction to form a vacuum out of which a new consideration of the 'I' could begin to emerge. This, in turn, had wider repercussions for distinction: it recognized the sort of permeable boundaries that allowed for Schlegel's generous assessment of the ideal literature as a sort of *Universalpoesie*. It was these same conditions that invited the broader shift in aesthetics that drove collaborative practice of this. Beyond Schlegel's immediate circle, Jean Paul Richter is also seen to set out a theory of poetics extensively formulated on the basis of this shift that allowed for permeable boundaries. Richter's assertion that, '*Nothing can actually* be defined except a definition itself'[65] opens his major work of poetic theory, *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (1804) [*School for Aesthetics*], making clear his intention to place a re-evaluation of the taxonomic shift aesthetic theory undergoes in this period at the fore of the work. Richter does this by examining the classic polarization between mimetic poetry and fantastical poetry. The intention to clear a mediatory pathway between these – a pathway to accommodate the modern, Romantic poetry – is also made clear in the first Course, 'On Poetry in General', noting that 'nothing brings out better the individuality of men than the effect which poetry has on them. Hence, there will be just as many definitions of poetry as readers and listeners'.[66] As well as elucidating the decision to resist hitherto dominant forms of categorization in poetic theory, such a statement also seeks to announce that the author is concerned with perspective as an authoritative principle at work in poetry. Jean Paul is outlining here an essential tenet of Romantic irony; by suggesting that the shift in perspective from writer to reader/listener connotes a potential shift in meaning he is decentralizing authorship. Based on this logic, if a definition of poetry is subjective because its affective and intellectual impact varies from each individual reader/listener, then each work of poetry (the term, again, being rather more inclusive and generous than contemporary understanding of

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[65] Jean Paul Richter, *Horn of Oberon: Jean Paul Richter's School for Aesthetics*, trans. by Margaret R. Hale (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), p.15.
[66] Richter, *School for Aesthetics*, p.15.

it), too, is subject to the same principle. This concept of Romantic irony is explored further below and, in relation to its practice, in the following chapter.

For now, the concern is with the presentation and uses of history and how Romantic writers and thinkers perceive historicization. Richter outlines Aristotelian theory of poetic imitation as 'negatively the best', because it precludes the 'two extremes' of poetic nihilism and poetic materialism. For Richter, nihilism is dangerous because it equates with a loss of the sense of history that poets must have. By rejecting imitation nihilists move to the extreme opposite by indulging in 'free play in the void', by which Richter means to suggest that nihilism seeks to annihilate existing poetic (and representational) foundations. It is a 'lawless, capricious spirit of the present age' that impels poets of his day to pursue an egotism that will overcome the subject itself by rejecting mimesis.[67] It follows, then, that such annihilation overwrites history, and when history becomes unimportant to an historian, 'religion and patriotism are lost, and the arbitrariness of egotism must stumble at last on the hard, sharp commandments of reality. Then egotism prefers to flee into the desert of fantasy, where it finds no law to follow except its own narrower and pettier ones for the construction of rhyme and assonance.'[68] Richter finds a relationship between religion and history that Novalis found in *Christianity, or Europe* [*Die Christenheit oder Europa*] a few years before. In his essay, Novalis argues that the essence of Christianity has been lost in the modern age; a historical sense of the religion is necessary in order to recover this spirit of the religion. Novalis sees the Reformation as a crucial turning point in the history of the religion, as it marks the moment that the written text of the Bible – the 'dead letter' – becomes commonplace. When this happens philology destroys the spoken communication by virtue of which the religion has survived, as it begins to distort the spirit of the religion.[69] For Novalis, an appreciation of the history of Europe and of the religion is essential for preserving Christianity in its poetic, spiritual and political senses, because Christianity is a mediator between old and new. As for Richter, Novalis'

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[67] Richter, *School for Aesthetics*, p.15.
[68] Richter, *School for Aesthetics*, p.16.
[69] See *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, p.66. The significance of the dead letter and its hindrance to mediatory communication and irony is explored in the concluding chapter, wherein it is argued that the ability to rewrite, re-envision and revise both experience and poetry is central to the Romantic thinker-writer.

appreciation for a sense of history derives (in part at least) from the fact that any mediation between ancient and modern must be done through a thorough understanding of the past. History is that pre-requisite for historicization; it is the initial reference point from which the Romantic writer can begin to generate its infinite definitions and references, and this is no tautology that Novalis and Richter are peddling. It is, rather, a timely reminder that what should be obvious is in fact in desperate need of reiteration for contemporary readers.

Going back to Richter's original statement on the many definitions of poetry it is interesting to note that he includes both readers and listeners, the latter bringing his reader back to the orality which we have seen to preoccupy Novalis, Tieck and Coleridge in their presentations of *Mischgedichte*. Richter reminds us that poetry is as much heard as it is read, and in doing so he is retreading the reconciliatory path between ancient and modern that Schlegel began to theorize in the previous decade. Given that this drive underlying Jean Paul's poetic theory is so similar in crucial respects to that of Novalis, it is perhaps a little surprising to see that he categorizes the poet-thinker as a 'neighbor' of the poetic nihilists. Richter classifies Novalis, broadly, with those poets whose poetic faculties are immature and who know little of external things and so are more concerned with presenting 'a poet or painter or other artist as hero', concluding that 'They would rather give us a poet than a poem'.[70] Interestingly, this view of Novalis' approach to presenting the poet as a necessary externalization of the quest for selfhood is positioned against Tieck's posthumous biography of Novalis, in which the poet is valorized and becomes part of the romance he once wrote. On the one hand Richter calls for a separation of the poet and his poem and on the other hand we see Tieck constructing a poet out of his very poetic landscape. Yet, perhaps surprisingly, it is Tieck who has a greater handle on how the fictionality of selfhood informs the poet's presentation of fiction and history, as I have argued.

Nevertheless, though Richter might be a little short-sighted in not seeing clearly enough the affinity between himself and Novalis on theoretical grounds (and thus missing the significance of Novalis' poetic practice), we

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[70] See Richter, *School for Aesthetics*, pp.17-18.

may take his comments on how nihilism detracts from superior poetry on board; after all, Richter's argument does appreciate that a fusion of natural knowledge through observation and genuine poetic imagination is necessary for genuine poetry. In other words, real poetry is born out of a Wordsworthian ability to 'look steadily' at one's subject, or a Novalis-like understanding that 'the world must be romanticized' by allowing one's own keen knowledge and understanding of the external world to take on a renewed appearance through one's imaginative re-visioning. In placing Novalis' poetry with egotistical poetic nihilism, Jean Paul misses a critical trick by underplaying the importance of the poet-narrator internalizing experience. He does not quite get on terms with the significance of a Heinrich von Ofterdingen, for example, for whom a poetic or spiritual journey is aligned to a historical consciousness. The presentation of the poet-figure in this novel is as poetological as Richter would ideally have it, because his recovery from internal crisis – the dream of the Blue Flower and its possible signification – is charted via a universalizing experience that sees him relate his own history and sense of being to history in a broader sense. The internalization of Heinrich and his companions constantly leads to historicization, preventing them from falling into the way of what Richter identifies as poetic nihilism.

The poetic materialists, on the other hand, confuse an 'aping' of nature with poetic imitation of nature, according to Richter.[71] We might see poetic imitation of nature as the term he uses for the poet's ability to represent nature with an imaginative or spiritual inflection, seeing as it is neither the 'lawless' and 'capricious' fancy of the nihilists nor the meticulous – but decidedly unpoetic – mirroring of nature. Rather, it is the kind of imaginative rendering of nature and the external world that had already been theorized since the previous decade and that had set the poetic practice of English Romanticism as well as the German *Märchen* and *Gedichte* into motion. Richter's *School for Aesthetics*, then, is more a commentary on existing contemporary theory and practice than an original piece of aesthetic or poetic theory.[72] It functions

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[71] Richter, *School for Aesthetics*, p.20.
[72] See also Chapter 4 herein, in which Wordsworth's roughly contemporaneous denunciation of poetic aping of nature in the example of the fashionable London panorama in his *Prelude(s)* is explored. The chapter argues that Wordsworth also seeks to mediate between

more as a piece of literary criticism, and this is perhaps clearer when we remember that the definition of a literary tradition dominated by two distinct tendencies – one of internalization and the other of mimesis – is roughly the trajectory mapped out in scholarship a century and a half later by M. H. Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp*.[73] Whereas Abrams' study introduced Anglo-German Romanticism as a negotiation of this trajectory through the motifs of the mirror and lamp, Richter, writing of his contemporaries, sets these two tendencies out as either nihilism or materialism. Nevertheless, what prevails is a sense of Richter's engagement with his contemporaries through literary criticism. The fact that he is producing criticism within the format of aesthetic or poetic theory is also interesting as it enables us to trace very palpably the kind of mixing of literary criticism and theory that Schlegel advocates in his fragments, and which were highlighted in the first chapter. Such active and acute scholarship certainly looks to be engaging proactively with the concept of merging authorship and criticism. Richter's text is poetological because it is commenting on the literary functions and processes it is using.

'that wonderful plant of love and caprice'

Early Romantic-period women's writing in Germany is harder to trace in terms of literary circles; as Gesa Dane has put it, 'anyone concerned to discover the truth about women writers in Germany around 1800 needs to resolve some thorny problems of literary historiography'.[74] Dane highlights the fact that this is partly down to a question of which writers are to be included (the better known Dorothea Veit-Schlegel, Caroline Schlegel, Bettina von Arnim, Rahel Varnhagen-Levin, and Karoline von Günderrode, or lesser-known figures such as Benedikte Naubert and Sophie Mereau?), and what sort of relationships are to be traced. Dane notes that some of these writers were connected through friendship, but that 'some were bound only by critical

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two aesthetic extremes – that of mechanical imitation on the one hand and Gothicized sensationalism on the other – and this is accentuated in Books VI-VIII of *The Prelude*.
[73] M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953).
[74] Gesa Dane, 'Women Writers and Romanticism' in *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, ed. by Nicholas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.133.

distance or even total rejection'. While it is difficult to argue that writing the history of these writers is considerably more complex than that of the male *Frühromantiker* – and, I would add, this 'thorny problem' is made all the thornier for Anglophone scholars, for whom access to these writers' works is critically narrower – I am inclined to deviate somewhat from Dane's view that the five better-known women writers named above, 'unlike the men, belonged to no school or group with a defined literary programme'.[75] Dane suggests that they were 'linked' with leading literary circles but did not interact with each other significantly outside of these groupings. Again, I agree that the women writers did not produce any definable manifesto or statement in the way that the male *Frühromantiker* did, but I am suggesting that figures such as Caroline Schlegel and Dorothea Veit (and, through the wider salon culture, Henriette Herz and Rahel Varnhagen-Levin) did belong very much to that circle and produced *romantische Poesie* according to the theory of the *Mischgedicht*.

The question of circles also needs to be addressed, as the women writers I have highlighted here are exemplary of the kind of active, practical collaboration in cultural and intellectual discourses that this chapter began by discussing. That is, the collaborative discourses that lead to text production in Romantic circles – of which women writers are an integral part – are a plurality of the sort of 'philosophical friendship' that Schlegel identified as belonging within the 'thinking human being'. For the *Frühromantiker*, a literary circle is a collaborative and pluralized *Sympoesie* / *Symphilosophie*, and one in which their ironic and dramatic poetologizing is practicable in the first instance. By this I mean that multiplicity in discourse becomes a means

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[75] Dane, 'Women Writers and Romanticism', p.133. The difficulty of access in Anglophone scholarship I have mentioned persists. Much of the rich source material we might use to gauge women's involvement in literary circles of this period is still in German. Consequently, the most insightful criticism has generally been in German, though this is something that will hopefully shift as further translations of seminal works and correspondence appear, such as the Schlegel Translation Series' *Florentin* and *Camilla*. As recent electronic work on the 'Bluestocking' women writers, such as Elizabeth Fay's 'The Bluestocking Archive' [http://www.faculty.umb.edu/elizabeth_fay/archive2.html] and Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz's National Portrait Gallery exhibition, 'Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings' (2008) have shown, moves towards digitizing and disseminating written and visual resources provide further opportunities for scholarship and resources on women's writing, such as Douglas W. Stott's ongoing translation project at www.carolineschelling.com. Stott's resource is currently focused on Caroline Schelling's letters and literary reviews, the former especially reaffirming that often the best example of women's literary and intellectual contributions in this period slip under the radar as they remain uncodified by publication.

through which to explore the 'continuous inner symphilosophy' that gives rise to dramatic ontological enquiry; the various individuals generating poetological discourses within a circle become a vehicle for exploring how various 'selves' generate ironic-dramatic narratives within the individual's mind. Thus, the literary circle identifies a 'philosophical friendship' within a part as well as its corresponding whole. Indeed, the circle is the first instance in which these thinker-writers become aware of the complex narratives that make up the part.

Looking at this circle as a poetological body, we might become more aware of just how far the individual work is deemed to be communal, either through active collaboration in publishing, such as the joint authorship of the Schlegels' fragments, or through discourse and debate. Though the publications of many of these women writers are often seen by readers such as Gesa Dane as being at a remove from their male contemporaries and their manifestos, it is in this latter sense – in practical conversation – that women writers emerge as *thinkers* in their own right and as participants in an exemplary philosophical friendship that moves beyond the dominant print culture. Friedrich Schlegel's admiration of Caroline Schlegel's intellect, and her influence upon his own intellectual development, has been noted by his editors, critics and biographers enough times[76], but less attention has been given in Anglophone criticism to his own acknowledgement of the several feminine influences upon his semi-autobiographical protagonist of *Lucinde*, Julius. That *Lucinde* is in part a candid exploration – and celebration – of his apparently scandalous affair with Dorothea Mendelssohn-Veit has been established.[77] But it is also a philosophical novel which is primarily concerned with how love and friendship drive the protagonist's poetic and intellectual growth. As an exploration of the relationship between the various types of companionship that might engender poetologies, *Lucinde* is analogous in many respects to *The Prelude*. However, Schlegel's novel is also an attempt to

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[76] See, for example, Gisela Horn, *Romantische Frauen: Caroline Michaelis-Böhmer-Schlegel-Schelling, Dorothea Mendelssohn-Veit-Schlegel, Sophie Schubert-Mereau-Brentano* (Rudolstadt: Hain, 1996), and Bertha Meyer, *Salon Sketches: Biographical Sketches of the Salons of the Emancipation* (New York: Bloch, 1938). See also *Lucinde and the Fragments*, pp.10-11.
[77] See *Lucinde and the Fragments* for a more detailed look at the context and publication of *Lucinde*, pp.3-39.

set out the characteristics of different types of love and to understand the relationship between erotic and intellectual love and friendship, and it is thus a departure from any major model within Wordsworth's philosophical poem with the exception, perhaps, of the semi-autobiographical 'Julia and Vaudracour' passage. The celebration of eroticism that outraged contemporary readers upon publication is, then, actually far removed from a one-dimensional reading of the novel as a celebration of a *single* love affair. I am suggesting that the eroticism in the text is driven, like everything else in the narrative, by the notion of 'philosophical friendship', both within the individual and between individuals. And this is where the presentation of women within the narrative is of particular interest for the present discussion.

As a novel predicated on polarities, *Lucinde* immediately opens itself up to scrutiny as an erotically charged series of confessions, since one of the major polarities it concerns itself with is sexual polarity. With statements on the nature of sexual love such as, 'The fire of love is inextinguishable, and even under the deepest heap of ashes there are still some sparks aglow'[78], it appears that Schlegel is defiantly positioning the love between his fictional persona Julius and Lucinde, the fictional Dorothea Veit, as one that will endure in its sexual potency. The novel outlines ideal love between the sexes as a meeting and reconciliation of male-female relations and the other oppositions it is concerned with: men are refined but women are of nature; men are philosophers and women are naturally inclined to the poetic; masculinity is associated with light and activity, whereas femininity is associated with the night and passivity. The simple argument of Schlegel's thesis on sexual love and friendship is as follows: men are rational – too rational – and need women to balance them out. Friendship between two men is always purely philosophical, but a man needs a woman in order to become complete (for men, like poetry, are in the state of becoming for Schlegel). So far, so Platonic.

Where Schlegel deviates from the Platonic ideal is in his insistence that male relations with other males are restricted to friendship: philosophy plus philosophy equals philosophy. In other words, such a union is purely

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[78] *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.61.

intellectual and falls short of the spiritual love and friendship needed to 'become' a man.[79] Schlegel's theory of a new 'religion of love' [*Liebesreligion*] is predicated on love and friendship that are both intellectual and spiritual, which can only be achieved by a genuine union of the sexes. The eroticism of the novel, then, presents its lust as not for carnal pleasure but as a thirst for 'becoming' a fuller person [*Mensch*]. Knowing that *Menschheit* is the true state of Manhood for Schlegel and that it depends upon an unfettered mediation of sexual boundaries enables us to make better sense of the voluptuous excess of Schlegel's prose:

> That is how the first germ of that wonderful plant of love and caprice was conceived. And as freely as it sprouted, I thought, should it also grow and run wild; and never, from a base love of order and frugality, will I prune its living fullness of superfluous leaves and branches.[80]

A genuine union of the sexes is 'that wonderful plant of love and caprice' because it enables the male protagonist to become more attuned to the nature he has grown distant from through intellectual cultivation – the sexual excess that was dismissed as 'pornographic' by contemporary and nineteenth-century critics is in actuality intended to stand as a reminder of the 'living fullness' arising from the arbitration of polarities, of which sexual polarity is the starkest.[81] The eroticism of *Lucinde* is a reaffirmation of the intergeneric in Romantic poetologies: that need to mediate and reconcile the gendered boundaries of poetry and philosophy, as well as the need to think, discourse and write freely in collaboration with others. The supposed libertinism of the novel is nothing more than the 'republican speech' which Schlegel has identified poetry with, meaning that the feminine influence upon the masculine intellect and imagination is championed even when it remains undocumented or unacknowledged in publication. It is a wonder that feminist criticism has not seized upon this aspect of Schlegel's poetology, as it

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[79] For more on this and Schlegel's various stages of manhood, see Peter Firchow's introduction in *Lucinde and the Fragments*. See also Dorothea Mendelssohn-Veit-Schlegel, *Florentin. A Novel*. Translated, annotated, and introduced by Edwina Lawler and Ruth Richardson, Schlegel Translations (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1988), pp.xxiii-xxiv.
[80] *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.64.
[81] For more on the negative reception of *Lucinde*, see *Florentin*, pp.cv-cvii. The editors provide excerpts of reviews from critics as diverse as Schiller, Goethe, Hegel, Heine, Dilthey and Haym. Somewhat surprisingly, Tieck is also among those who commented negatively on his friend's novel, and Schleiermacher stands out as its most notable defender.

certainly appears to be fertile ground for debate on all sides: whether *Lucinde* posits a conservative male fantasy of the passive feminine ideal or a genuine attempt to even out the sexual and intellectual inequalities the Jena circle knew too well, the novel remains fresh for Anglophone scholarly pursuit of women in *Frühromantik* theory.

That the theory is predicated on sexual and intellectual practice between Dorothea and Friedrich lends credibility to it as a serious attempt to write the self as striving for consciousness. That it posits this self as being constantly and actively in a state of becoming through mediation of polarities and various versions of a 'self' makes it a poetological narrative in the vein of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* or 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. Novalis' novel also champions the genuine union of Heinrich and Mathilde as necessary to the protagonist's quest for selfhood and poetic vocation (this is also the case in his 'Hyacinth and Rosebud' ['Hyazinth und Rosenblüten'], the tale within *The Novices at Sais*, which presents a love/self-consciousness chiasmus, in which Hyazinth must attain self-consciousness before he can settle, though that self-consciousness can only be attained through a spiritual journey that leads once more to his love, Rosenblüten). This is the case in women's writing, too: *Florentin* is a *Mischgedicht* in the vein of *Lucinde*, in which part of Florentin's education is one of love, and Sophie Tieck's fairy tale, *The Old Man in the Cave*, provides a notable point of comparison to the poems and *Märchen* discussed above, in that the ultimate discovery for the protagonist is, not one of absolute knowledge as 'the most noble goal of humanity', but of love.[82] Interestingly, Ludwig Tieck's protagonists might also be placed within such a structure: if *Der Runenberg* follows any such gendered theory, its 'hero' Christian fails to achieve self-consciousness in part because he pursues solitude in the place of love and society, and *Der blonde Eckbert* presents us with a much more disturbing portrait of love and friendship – one that has led to the incestuous relationship between Bertha and

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[82] See Sophie Tieck Bernhardi von Knorring, *The Old Man in the Cave*, in *The Queen's Mirror: Fairy Tales by German Women, 1780-1900*, ed. and trans. by Shawn C. Jarvis and Jeanine Blackwell (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), pp.77-87. The desire of Tieck's protagonist for absolute self-knowledge is proved to be misguided and to lead only to unhappiness, whereas the true path to self-consciousness and to finding his place within the world is only through genuine love.

Eckbert being read as narcissism.[83] 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' sends a clear message about excommunication: the cursed Mariner stands on the threshold of the wedding feast detaining the wedding-guest, but he never crosses the threshold. The conclusion of the poem makes clear his exclusion from company and the subsequent denial of self-consciousness, but the very stage for the drama of his narrative from the outset – the threshold of the wedding feast – immediately sets out his isolation from a conventional matrimonial union. Coleridge's stance on gendered relationships with respect to self-consciousness in 'Christabel' is the most beguiling of all, perhaps because its hold on any one identity – regardless of gender – is so precarious from the outset. The only relationship the reader can expect to take at face value is the one between Christabel and the absent knight who is her lover, because that is the relationship the reader is given the least information about. It therefore comes across as a stock convention – the absent lover is a 'plot device' through which Christabel finds a means to transgress her domestic boundaries. He is also, of course, an archetype of the Gothic romance that Coleridge is gently parodying in the opening of the poem. Other relationships within the poem are harder to fix a definition on, because the poem sets out to render problematic the nature of identity partly through the ambiguity of relationships. This problematizing becomes a focal point for my reading of the poem in the fifth chapter, in which I set out to decode some of the main relationships between the figures by tracing the core relationship between Christabel and her dead mother.

'For thou art with me, here … my dearest Friend'

I have thus far established the concepts of *Sympoesie* and *Symphilosophie* as indicating the production of texts that are both intergeneric and collaborative, and have outlined ways in which *Märchen* are central to Romantic poetologies; *Märchen* and writings on the supernatural have both proven

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[83] See Gail Finney, 'Self-Reflexive Siblings: Incest as Narcissism in Tieck, Wagner, and Thomas Mann' in *The German Quarterly*, 56, 2 (1983), pp.243-256. Finney's article reads the incest theme as an expression of an anxiety regarding solipsism. I am suggesting that the 'sameness' of Bertha and Eckbert poses a problem for identity – the two are, in a sense, each other's doppelgangers and so act as a barrier to getting a hold on a stable identity.

invaluable for historicizing the self (or, as is most often the case, 'selves') and, thus, for making sense of how one's histories might enable one to make one's place in the world more intelligible. They are also ideal for mediating the realms of systematic intellectual or philosophical enquiry and intellectual or artistic passivity: Romantic writings on fairy tales, the *Nachtseite*, and the supernatural enable writers to 'find the true middle' that Romanticism, according to the Jena *Frühromantiker*, aspires towards. As I have shown, this is a concern shared in Coleridge's supernatural 'lyrical ballads' (this is taken up again in the fifth chapter), and the following chapters seek also to make sense of Wordsworth's attempts at mediation in pursuit of similar goals. I have introduced the significance of gendered discourse in Schlegel's *Lucinde* with a view to reading the novel as a similar negotiation of polarities, but one which brings us back to the collaboration inherent in poetological thinking, discourse, and writing. Gender matters, I have argued, because it holds the key to understanding Schlegel's concept of *Menschheit*, that state of increased self-consciousness. But it also matters beyond making sense of Romantic *Liebesreligion* as we know it, because it redirects us to the fact that philosophical and poetic discourses for these writers are gendered and so a genuine poetological endeavour is partially dependent upon intellectual and sexual collaboration between men and women. Schlegel certainly blurs the line of distinction between eroticism and intellectualism, but beyond him, too, there exists a core emphasis on the importance of love in the drive to self-consciousness – a kind of philosophized *Liebesreligion* – in Romantic poetological writing. As I have demonstrated, Novalis, Tieck and Coleridge place significant emphasis on the unity of the sexes as engendering successfully mediated (and, so, poetological) texts.

One thing that emerges from the collaborative production of these texts is, then, that such unifying of *sexual* polarities – which is not in itself remotely unconventional – is made notable by the writers' insistence on collaborations between the *genders*. That is, the ideological construct of gendered spheres is, if not quite challenged, then stirred up to accommodate a philosophically genuine mediation of what we know biologically as sexual distinctions. This means that, by giving free intellectual discourse and conviviality between the sexes – genuine sympoetic and symphilosophical

friendships – pride of place in their poetological methodology, early Romantic writers see the literary circle as a central sphere of text production. This also holds true for the Wordsworth-Coleridge circle, in which the three core permanent members of the coterie (that is, other than Wordsworth and Coleridge) are women. Though Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Hutchinson-Wordsworth and Sara Hutchinson were unpublished as writers, they remain central to the sympoetic and symphilosophical impulses driving their male collaborators. Dorothy's influence as travelling companion and documenter of much of the source material from which William would draw upon freely in his poetry has been appreciated by scholars charting sources and origins for the poet's work. The artefactual presence of Mary and Sara, too, has garnered some recognition; the two are often noted and credited along with Dorothy Wordsworth as amanuenses and transcribers for Wordsworth. And, of course, Sara Hutchinson's 'role' as feminine ideal and poetic muse reaches such mythical status within Coleridge's own writing that her literary presence within the circle cannot be overlooked.

However, what is often under-emphasized is the point that these women are active collaborators in the generation of texts through poetic and intellectual discourses, and, thus, authors of sympoetic and symphilosophical poetologies. Dorothy's apparent 'cameo' in 'Tintern Abbey', for example, is anything but: contrary to influential readings such as those by John Barrell and Harold Bloom, the 'Dorothy' of the poem is no mere repository for the thoughts of the latest incarnation of the 'I' constructed by 'Wordsworth', but a critical presence in the production of the text.[84] Dorothy appears at the end of the poem as a final affirmation of the reflected reader; she is representative of a merging of the subject-poet's 'I' and the otherwise distant object-reader. By becoming the vehicle for disseminating the poet's re-writing and re-visiting of

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[84] See Johm Barrell, *Poetry, Language and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp.137-167. Barrell's close reading of the poem argues for a gendered division in Wordsworth's language whereby the 'use' of Dorothy is to validate his 'polite, male poetics' (see especially pp.160-167). See Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: a Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp.137-140; Bloom reads the poem, rather conventionally, as a crisis point in which Wordsworth's own mortality as man and poet is the overarching concern.. See also Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp.28-29. Hartman's brief reading also figures Dorothy as a repository for the poet's thoughts, though it is a little more generous in its allowance for Dorothy's future mind as a concern for the poet.

the scene, Dorothy becomes the figure who enables mediation of subject-object divisions (which form the basis for much of my reading of Wordsworth in the following chapter) and as such she plays a vital role in authoring the poem. But she is more than an ironic device. The 'Dorothy' of the poem serves as mediator between poet and reader, but also between one version of 'Wordsworth' and another. She is monumentalizing the poet's successful re-writing of his 'self', certainly, but she is also partaking in that success through the poet's admission that his experience is a shared one. Though it is quite a long passage (almost one third of the entire poem), I think it is worth quoting the entire section that addresses Dorothy. Firstly, this is precisely because it is such a significant and lengthy section: the address to Dorothy is the 'third Act' of the poem, that denouement or ironic realization wherein the poet finds the best possible resolution by looking simultaneously back and forward. It is by no means an ideal or certain resolution – as readers of the poem have pointed out, Wordsworth's language is fixed very much on the conditional throughout the poem – but, crucially, it is a successful mediation of the many 'selves' the poet has located by this point in time and an acceptance of the future 'selves' that will find philosophical and poetic impetus in this present moment. What can largely be overlooked, however, is the role attributed to Dorothy in this denouement, which is partly my interest in quoting the section in full. Secondly, then, the section is important as a coherent whole because it makes clear that Dorothy is *not* a mere repository or monument to Wordsworth's egotism, but a sympoetic (and symphilosophical) presence in this mediation:

> Nor perchance,
> If I were not thus taught, should I the more
> Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
> For thou art with me here upon the banks
> Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
> My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
> The language of my former heart, and read
> My former pleasures in the shooting lights
> Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
> May I behold in thee what I was once,
> My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
> Knowing that Nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,

Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance--
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence--wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love--oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!
                                    (ll.112-160)

The first thing that I find striking about this passage is the repetition of the word 'Friend'; for a poem that is so obviously weighing up its sense of loss and gain, of past and present – what Hartman has called a 'vacillating calculus of loss and gain'[85] – the conclusion of 'Tintern Abbey' is decidedly rooted in the notion of this friendship that has engendered thinking as well as poetic memorialisation of that thinking,. That is, poetological friendship.

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[85] Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry*, p.27.

As I have suggested above, Dorothy is not presented here as a repository or a pale shadow of the poet's inchoate former self. What Wordsworth means, I am arguing, when he says that he can 'catch' his former self in Dorothy's voice or eyes, is not that he sees a 'self' that he has moved on from, as is so often suggested by readings of this poem. Instead, it is more significant that the repetition of the word 'Friend' – an anchor of decisiveness weighing down the conditional and the undecided in the poem – expounds the collaborative nature of the thinking that has led to the composition of the poem. To catch his former self in Dorothy, then, is in part to recover some of this past self through her, but it also acknowledges the dependence of the poet upon Dorothy for finding and documenting futures 'selves'. The opening lines of the section make it clear that Wordsworth is finding in Dorothy's company the intellectual, moral, emotional and creative support that he has spent much of the 'second act' of the poem attributing to nature. That is, even if he 'were not thus taught' [by his natural education], he would not entirely suffer as a poet, because of Dorothy's presence. Sympoetic collaboration can succeed even where nature might leave one wanting somewhat.

The implication seems to be, then, thus: even if the poet lacked the insights and hope that time and nature have afforded him since his previous visit to the site, the poetological friendship that Dorothy provides would still carry enough weight to give his poem the impetus towards the mediatory resolution it comes to. Though this is not a perfect or secure conclusion, it is solidified by Dorothy's presence, which gives the poem a sense of certainty that is lacking elsewhere. The 'Wordsworth' of this poem needs 'Dorothy' in order to be able to look forward to future re-writing and re-visioning. To 'behold' in her what he 'was once' is not as simple as seeing his immature former self reflected back at him, it is to find in Dorothy a sort of vital archive, not entirely dissimilar to the kind of living archive he finds in her journal writing. Dorothy is no mausoleum for a lost self or a monument to her brother's poetic ego, she is a living poetic source whose very company initiates the engendering of poetic composition that her prose writing is far more often hailed for. What I mean is that, once again, we find that collaborative discourse and thought precedes the collaborative *writing* practice; before Wordsworth's or Coleridge's writing, there were often journal

entries of Dorothy, but we must not forget that these prose writings themselves are documents of collaborative oral sympoetic/symphilosophical practices. We might think of these collaborative poetological writings as sympoetologies: by definition, the shared practice of producing poetologies.

My interest in quoting the rest of the section is to reinforce my argument that Dorothy's role is neither that of perfunctory amanuensis nor window to the past. The conclusion of the poem suggests quite strongly that Dorothy's presence is enabling the necessary mediation between past, present and future 'selves' that Wordsworth is attempting to write and re-write; it looks to the future, choosing to end in a prayer that anticipates a time when Dorothy's 'wild ecstasies shall be matured / Into a sober pleasure', such as the kind we are led to believe that the 'Wordsworth' of the present is at this point experiencing. This can, of course, draw criticism of egotism on Wordsworth's part that sees him asserting a type of critical and poetic superiority over the 'Dorothy' of the present. Given that the first and second sections of the poem have demonstrated at length that 'Wordsworth' has moved beyond the 'glad animal movements' which characterized his earlier encounters with, and relationship to, nature and which he is now associating with 'Dorothy', this may well be so. However, Wordsworth's tendency to be selective in his estimation of who is best qualified to instruct in leading an exemplary life in nature and society is not limited to 'Tintern Abbey'; after all, *The Recluse* was envisaged as a poetological meditation on such qualification, and what fragments Wordsworth did produce of the project all point to the conclusion that the way to such qualification is neither easy to pave nor comprehend. Indeed, Wordsworth's entire poetological project is concerned with the impossibility of absolute conclusions, which is worth remembering when thinking about the conclusion of 'Tintern Abbey'; if the poet does not seem so charitable when considering Dorothy's maturation, it should be noted that his own capacity to apprehend his poetological vocation is constantly in play throughout the poem and beyond. And this is no different at the poem's conclusion: a verdict on the superiority of one over the other is necessarily abandoned in favour of a reiteration of the sympoetic collaboration that has engendered the poem's central concerns. The enduring image for both figures in the poem should ultimately be, according to the conclusion, that they 'stood

together' at this site of recollection and re-visioning. Moreover, Wordsworth's final identification with his present 'self' is that of a hopeful 'worshipper of nature' looking forward, and, thus, one who is for now on a par with both the Dorothy of the present and the reader as an inchoate 'self' still in the process of becoming.

'…we have learnt / A different lore'

In Coleridge's sympoetic works, too, we see poetic endeavour outside of the act of composition: 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison', for example, principally laments not the loss of indulging in walking in company with friends, but the loss of a potential sympoetic moment – a result of the sort of poetological friendship the poem sketches out at length in its envisioning of vicarious pleasures – that the excursion might have engendered. Indeed, the very genre of 'conversational' poetry that Coleridge fashions for himself during the coterie years (and which is sympoetically developed into the autobiographical meditative lyric by Wordsworth) is driven by *Sympoesie*, or poetological friendship. 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison' might be the clearest example of the influence of the circle, but it conforms to Coleridge's tendency toward poetological verse produced in these collaborative years. It is not surprising that a poetic genre identified as 'conversational' should be sympoetic in its production: the 'conversations' Coleridge constructs within these poems (and from which these poems are constructed) are almost always fundamentally concerned with the poetic/philosophical vocation of various members of the Wordsworth-Hutchinson-Coleridge circle. The first poem to initiate this 'conversational' category, 'The Eolian Harp', pre-dates the literary circle (the poem was originally composed in 1795 with the title 'Effusion XXXV'); however, as the most sophisticated of his early 'Effusions', it does begin to explore the poetological concerns that would feature overwhelmingly in his collaborative writings, what I have above suggested might be thought of as the sympoetological.

Generically, the poem is as ambitious as one might expect from a *Mischgedicht*: it moves through various types of poem, without really committing to any one of those types. It engages directly with some of the

theological and philosophical dilemmas that Coleridge found pressing during the period in which it was written – however fraught that engagement might be – but it is clear from the opening lines of the poem that it is (ostensibly, at least) a poem about the romance of his new relationship with Sara Fricker, to whom he would soon be married. The central motif is used in various ways to illustrate Coleridge's attempt at binding these two very diverse aspects together: the instrument plays over the breeze in a way that provokes, at different points, comparisons to 'some coy maid half-yielding to her Lover' (l.15) and the workings of a pantheistic nature on the individual.[86] The incongruity of domestic and theological fixity and intellectual non-conformity (which I shall elaborate on in the fifth chapter) produces within the poem an instability that is not quite characteristic of the ironic poetologist of later work, who is comfortably aware of the fluctuation between comprehension and incomprehension. Instead, we find Coleridge deferring a realization of the uneasiness he feels at mediating these difficulties of comprehension through the generic and linguistic make-up of the poem. As I have outlined, the poem appears to be both a philosophical meditation and a love poem. Yet, the interesting thing to note about the use of the harp motif in both instances is that it allows Coleridge to change the direction the poem is taking without any satisfying conclusion. The love poem we begin to read in the opening verse paragraph almost disappears immediately after the use of 'that simplest Lute' to produce its sexual comparison to the 'coy maid':

> And now its strings
> Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
> Over delicious surges sink and rise,
> Such a soft floating witchery of sound
> As twilight Elfins make, when they at eve
> Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
> Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers
> Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
> Nor pause nor perch, hovering on untamed wings.
> (ll.17-25)

Following the heavily sexual imagery, the shift from the romantic love poem to the romance ensures that the poem is protected from charges of indelicacy,

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[86] See also the inclusion of the 'one life' passage, added in 1803.

certainly, but it is otherwise puzzling as to why it should undergo a generic transition that leaves the original love poem unconsummated. That is to say, by this point the harp metaphor has dissolved into the 'soft floating witchery' of romance in a way that makes clear the intangibility and ephemerality with which the poem is more concerned; the romance of 'Elfins' and 'Fairy-Land' reveals the inadequacy of the conventional love poem for Coleridge as it shows up the greater interest he is taking in interior thoughts rather than that which is physical.

However, this romance, too, is abandoned immediately after the lines quoted above in favour of a brief dalliance with the eighteenth-century prospect poem that Coleridge had already experimented with in the early 1790s. This genre is taken up primarily to allow for the introduction of the philosophical meditations that come to the poet:

> And thus, my love! as on the midway slope
> Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon
> Whilst thro' my half-closed eye-lids I behold
> The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,
> And tranquil muse upon tranquility;
>   (ll.34-38)

Yet, once again, the reason behind the shift from one generic affiliation to another is not all that clear, nor is it an easy transition: in moving beyond the momentary fancy that gives rise to the romance, it might be expected that Coleridge would return to the presence of Sara Fricker and lead the love poem to a conclusion. Instead, he seems to suggest that the romance inspires another kind of internalization: the Coleridge of the poem has moved from a state of passive contentedness in his domestic stability to a passive sort of reverie that leaves behind the love and domestic felicity hitherto fixed upon as the apparent subject of the poem. Yet, this passivity proves inadequate for the serious kind of philosophical musing that poetological writing requires, and this, too, is discarded for a theological resolution that 'Sara' apparently provokes. Having used the discourse of lover, poet and philosopher so far, Coleridge now takes on the language of the conversion narrative, wherein Sara's reproachful eye reminds him of his current situation. The deferral of philosophical musing to divine authority proves to be no kind of resolution at

all, as I shall argue in the fifth chapter. For the purposes of assessing the poem in sympoetological terms, though, it is important to point out that the poem is intergeneric, but it is not poetological: it accepts an 'easy' and firm resolution, albeit uneasily, and its argument at the conclusion implies that this resolution is now to put an end to the search for the incomprehensible in philosophy, whereas the reader is left unconvinced by the various generic and tonal shifts in the poem that reveal a restlessness on the poet's part.

Part of this poetological failure arises from the unfortunate and rather forced casting of 'Sara Fricker' in the role of lover and muse in 'The Eolian Harp', since it acts as a stimulus only to turn *away* from such thinking and writing and, instead, encourages passivity in the 'Coleridge' of the poem (of which more follows in my continued reading of the poem in the fifth chapter). In a sense, then, the poem is not as 'conversational' as we initially might think: it consists of a love poem in which 'Sara' is projected as an embodiment of the domestic stability that Coleridge would later search for, perhaps more honestly and certainly more painfully, in Sara Hutchinson's 'Asra'; but this Sara is not a sympoetic collaborator, and the ensuing poem is more of a monologue than a conversation.[87] She is, perhaps, closer to the harp image in that she is a symbol rather than an active figure or companion. As a stimulus both to uncovering and glossing over the friction between religious and philosophical, passive and active, intellectual and matrimonial 'Sara' emerges as an archetypal lover and muse rather than a personality. The fact that she fails as a poetological muse through her apparent redirection of Coleridge's thoughts to safer topics indicates the instability of the poem as a whole in relation to sympoetology.

To conclude, I shall turn to a very different kind of 'conversational' poem, indeed the first poem within this category to label itself thus, 'The Nightingale'. The poem was first published in the 1798 first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* under the title, 'The Nightingale; A Conversational Poem. Written in April, 1798' and documents precisely those sympoetic moments that we saw

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[87] For a retrospective and poignant composition on the casting of 'Asra' in Coleridge's sympoetologies, see especially 'The Day Dream' in which Sara Hutchinson is both lover/muse and part of the wider stability afforded to Coleridge through the Wordsworth household. Although this was probably composed in 1802 before 'A Letter to Sara Hutchinson' and 'Dejection: an Ode', it was published much later in 1828, at a time when Coleridge had lost hope of much stability and sympoetry within the circle.

denied to the poet in 'The Eolian Harp'. 'The Nightingale' is concerned, above all, with the shared, collaborative experience of walking and conversing and the sympoetological potential of this experience is found reflected in the poet's projection of nature. Coleridge rejects the image of the nightingale as a 'melancholy' bird, arguing that it is a human tendency to project one's own melancholy onto the bird's singing, for, 'In nature there is nothing melancholy' (ll.15). Such projection is an entirely human conceit:

> And many a poet echoes the conceit,
> Poet, who hath been building up the rhyme
> When he had better far have stretched his limbs
> Beside a brook in mossy forest-dell
> By sun or Moon-light, to the influxes
> Of shapes and sounds and shifting elements
> Surrendering his whole spirit, of his song
> And of his fame forgetful! so his fame
> Should share in Nature's immortality,
> A venerable thing! and so his song
> Should make all Nature lovelier, and itself
> Be lov'd, like Nature!
> (ll.23-34)

It is a mistake, Coleridge is arguing here, to project one's emotional state onto one's conception of nature and allow it to become poetic convention. Coleridge's prescient rejection of this literary cliché that Ruskin would later identify as 'pathetic fallacy' is predicated on a belief in the reciprocity between nature and poetic appreciation of it: to represent nature as faithfully as possible is to share in its immortality. So, the point Coleridge is making is that egotism leads to the danger of the poet producing a faithless representation of nature. This is as disagreeable to Coleridge as egotistical poetic nihilism is to Jean Paul Richter, since both have their foundations in the de-socialized, de-historicized self.

The self that Coleridge is constructing in 'The Nightingale' is both socialized and able to situate himself within a sympoetic community, the members of which – here named as the Wordsworths – have collectively learnt 'A different lore' (l.40). The poetological success of 'The Nightingale' depends upon its recognition of this collective experience, and within nature, too, there is a sense of collectivity over the solitary. In the place of the conventional image of the solitary, melancholy bird Coleridge turns his

thoughts to a spot housing several nightingales, and none of these sings in isolation:

> They answer and provoke each other's songs –
> With skirmish and capricious passagings,
> And murmurs musical and swift jug jug
> And one low piping Sound more sweet than all –
> Stirring the air with such an harmony,
> That should you close your eyes, you might almost
> Forget it was not day!
>   (ll.58-64)

The singing of the nightingales is described in sympoetic terms: each sings its own song, but this individual song is in dialogue with those of others. Through answering and provoking each other's melodies the nightingales are in a sympoetic state, which then becomes the model for the sympoetological writings of the thinker-writers hearing them. Bearing in mind that Coleridge has clearly stated that a poet ought to allow nature to project its workings onto poetry and not vice versa, we can infer from this description of the nightingales that the poet's intention is to suggest that the sympoetry of nature inspires the sympoetry of the circle. This is clearer still in the uniform 'Choral minstrelsy' that they burst into some lines further down from this section. This chorus is then compared to 'one quick and sudden Gale' over 'An hundred airy harps' (ll.80-82). However, this time the Eolian harp motif is used to describe an active process of creation, suggesting that the 'different lore' to which Coleridge refers is sympoetry.

As I have demonstrated through my readings of various sympoetological writings within both the Jena and the Wordsworth-Coleridge circles, this collective experience that is central to collaborative endeavour occurs, in the first instance, in discourse. This means that the writing composed and/or published within these circles tells only half the story, if even that. For, in the case of both groups of thinker-writers, the majority of *writing* is produced by their male members, whereas those writings themselves reveal upon closer reading that the basis upon which they were produced is largely sympoetological. Thus, the apparent gulf between the salon culture of the Jena circle and the peripatetic practices of the Wordsworth-Coleridge coterie is bridged somewhat: though the women of the

former inherited the formal Jewish Emancipation/Enlightenment tendency to group together within, rather than outside of, homes, they are joined to the latter through the tendency towards active, collaborative discourse. In both England and Germany, the first years of the early Romantic period place an emphasis on collaborative endeavour between the genders, which separates them from earlier Enlightenment/eighteenth-century salons or coteries. For example, the early literary and intellectual circles in which Dorothea, the daughter of Moses Mendelssohn, grew up were necessarily selective, comprising mainly of the Jewish thinkers and artists who were denied access to the more conventional academic circles; racially, religiously, and culturally, they were essentially formed as a selective group whose enterprise and intellectual and/or creative brilliance later opened up their membership, but they were not in the first instance conceived of as being a porous and diverse circle. Moreover, Dorothea's educational and artistic formation [*Bildung*] was unusual: she, like Anna Letitia Aikin-Barbauld, was in the somewhat privileged position of being the daughter of an intellectual teacher/leader.[88] Similarly, the notable circles or 'groupings' within eighteenth-century England in which women played an integral role were either consciously gendered spheres, such as the 'Bluestockings', or predominantly male informal circles within which women operated on a gendered basis, such as Mary Wollstonecraft within the Godwin-Blake circle. Of the 'canonical' Romantic women writers, those who wrote and published actively as poets or writers outside of moral or social philosophy, such as Mary Darby-Robinson, often operated independently or at some distance to established circles.[89]

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[88] There are differences between the two, of course: While Aikin-Barbauld was brought up within a Dissenting institution that was an alternative to Oxford and Cambridge, Dorothea was brought up in an atmosphere that provided an alternative to the academic institution altogether. The point in drawing the comparison here is to identify the 'pre-Romantic' tendency in both countries towards gendered spheres. For more on Dorothea's early life and education, see the introduction to *Florentin*, which also contextualizes Dorothea's consciousness of her own *Bildung* and her social/cultural identity as a German Jew. For more on Aikin-Barbauld's early life at Warrington Academy, see Anne Janowitz, *Women Romantic Poets: Anna Barbauld and Mary Robinson* (Devon: Northcote, 2004), pp.13-26. For more on the German Jewish Enlightenment, see *"The Spirit of Poesy": Essays on Jewish and German Literature and Thought in Honor of Géza von Molnár*, ed. by Richard Block and Peter Fenves (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2000)

[89] By those involved in social and moral philosophical writing I mean predominantly those seeking to use poetry as a rhetorical tool in the first instance, such as Hannah More, Ann Yearsley (nee Cromartie, also known as 'Lactilla', the milkwoman-poet), Helen Maria Williams at times, and even the later 'Mrs Barbauld'; as leading female figures in writings on

I have also identified another aspect of *Sympoesie* and *Symphilosophie* that is implicit within collaboratively produced Romantic texts, that of the relationship between writers and readers; if, in the first instance, the 'authorship' of a text is de-centred by more than one writer producing a text, then that text is already subject to an opening up of authorship in reading, since its discursive collaborators were also its first readers and critics. By its very nature, the sympoetological text is produced by the blurring of distinctions between writer, reader and critic, with these roles often performed simultaneously by various members within the literary circle. What this means is that the subject/object distinctions that remain philosophically thorny for the early Romantics gain another literary dimension, and it is this that I wish to examine more closely in the following chapter, which considers what it means to read Wordsworth as a Romantic ironist.

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the French Revolution and abolitionism, the poetry of these women took on a politicized and public rhetoric that, though not wholly dissociated from Romantic writing, did not quite share in the more ambitious personal claims their male counterparts would make at the turn of the century. In the case of Mary Robinson, the majority of her interaction with other literary circles and individuals occurred within London. As such, her involvement in organized structures (beyond the ill-fated sentimentalist Della Cruscans) was comparatively fluid and unregimented. For more on Mary Robinson's influence on early writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge and her own ballads and lyrical poems, see Janowitz, *Women Romantic Poets*. The picture emerging from Janowitz's short but incisive critical biography is that of a woman writer more often than not producing literature from her negative involvement in circles, whether social or intellectual. The result is a Mary Robinson who, perhaps true to a Schlegelian conception of the Romantic writer, is found to be constantly reinventing her literary 'selves'. Robinson is a figure worthy of closer critical attention in this respect: she is very much the Romantic writer, though denied the sympoetic connections she often sought.

Chapter 3. 'It is no tale; but should you *think*, / Perhaps a tale you'll make it': Wordsworth as Romantic ironist in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798 & 1800), *Peter Bell* and *Benjamin the Waggoner*

> A project is the subjective embryo of a developing object. A perfect project should be at once completely subjective and completely objective, should be an indivisible and living individual…what is essential is to be able to idealize and realize objects immediately and simultaneously: to complete them and in part carry them out within oneself. Since transcendental is precisely whatever relates to the joining or separating of the ideal and the real, one might very well say that the feeling for fragments and projects is the transcendental element of the historical spirit.[90]

'something of a dramatic form'

Wordsworth's aspiration to deliver philosophical poetry through *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) can, above all, be seen as achieved through the deployment of two dominant forms of the literary strategy of irony: comic-ironic humour and ironic revision/dramatization. The first of these is humour, which shall be my starting point for discussing *Lyrical Ballads*, the volume of poetry in which Wordsworth most fully explored the comic-ironic tone for philosophical speculation. This type of irony shows the poet as moral spectator of the human drama of the everyday (however, as we shall see, this spectator is never impartial, but always more attuned to human suffering than the moral philosophy of Wordsworth's day would allow). The second form of irony shows a shift from mere spectator to moral actor. What this means is that humour – amongst other things – enables Wordsworth to find a springboard from which he is able to move from examining the everyday subject (human or natural) to participating in the drama that he finds inherent in being. This drama of being is then related by the poet through the drama of recollecting and revising in composition. In this chapter, I shall argue that this is a necessary shift for Wordsworth in order to achieve his ambition of becoming a philosophical poet. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, this notion of the philosophical poet is part of a wider early Anglo-German Romantic framework: the (sym)poetological thinker-writer.

Beginning by considering humour and its dramatic implications in

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[90] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, *Atheneaum Fragments*, 22, p.164.

Lyrical Ballads, I then move on to exploring the relationship between this volume and *Peter Bell*. I argue that *Peter Bell* must be considered to some extent as an extension of *Lyrical Ballads* if we are to understand how humour impacts upon Wordsworth's moral philosophy. Having established this connection, I shall then begin to draw connections between these two publications and *Benjamin the Waggoner*. It is another argument of this chapter that *Benjamin the Waggoner*, rather than a work of fancy as it was generally presented and received, uses play, humour and the 'biographical' narrative voice to show the importance of acting and spectating simultaneously, thus making it a more important work than it is generally considered. The poem's conclusion, in particular, reiterates the drama of recollection and poetic composition, as the 'Wordsworth' of the narrative voice considers what moral lesson Benjamin's story might leave with the reader: it is argued that the result is, like many of the 'lyrical ballads', a reinforcement of the moral philosophy that might be uncovered from the poetry arising from human drama rather than a didactic tale about the perils of excessive drinking and the merriment of the 'low' classes. My consideration of the poem concludes by examining the significance of the poet's own voice in the narrative. This, then, prompts a reminder of further connections between the poem and *Lyrical Ballads'* 'Tintern Abbey' in relation to the plurality of the 'Wordsworths' created by the poet. Following my reading of how stories and histories intersect in Romantic biographies in the previous chapter, it will be seen once again that the autobiographical 'self' is historicized and pluralized through English Romantic writing and re-writing of the story of the 'selves' that one is continually shaping.

This, in turn, leads onto the second form of irony: as 'Tintern Abbey' shows, the use of drama to displace or diffuse a central authorial voice into those of several characters is a technique that Wordsworth was contemporaneously experimenting with in what would become the *Recluse* fragments, such as 'The Pedlar' and 'The Ruined Cottage'. This practice of diffusion – later misunderstood and criticized as 'a species of ventriloquism'[91]

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[91] *Biographia Literaria*, i, p.135. Coleridge's attack on this 'ventriloquism' arises mainly from his critique of *The Excursion*, and is representative of work which was antithetical to true drama - see p.135n.

by Coleridge – connects the experimental drama of *Lyrical Ballads* to the more systematically theorized *Excursion*, in the 'Preface' of which Wordsworth directly acknowledges his debt to drama, stating, 'the intervention of Characters speaking is employed, and something of a dramatic form adopted'.[92] In between these two works (and, in the case of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* publication, alongside them), Wordsworth arrives at the task of self-representation with *The Prelude*. In the following chapter, I begin to look at the dramatic implications for Wordsworth's own creation of his 'self' in the poem's central three Books, with particular reference to his depiction of London. Here, I shall argue, Wordsworth utilizes the dramatic potential for irony in order to resolve the aesthetic, moral, and imaginative crises he faces in Books VI-VIII of *The Prelude*. The theatricality and diversity of London enable him to fashion – and repair – a 'self' out of drama itself. This recovery is achieved, it shall be argued, by an understanding that for Wordsworth, as for Schlegel and his collaborators, 'Irony is permanent parabasis'.[93] This self-creation is explored further in the discussion of the *Mischgedicht* – the 'mixed poem' that Romantic literary theory strives to produce – in the fifth chapter. Along with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Friedrich Schlegel, and Novalis are seen to create 'selves' through this ideal literature, which is correspondent to the ironic, dramatic poem or novel that is always in the 'state of becoming'. Thus, Wordsworth's use of interruption in his writing (and rewriting) of the self allows itself to be read alongside Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, and Schlegel's *Lucinde*. This infinite literary production of a literature that is itself infinite is then aligned with writings on immortality in the sixth and final chapter, which seeks to examine the relationship between infinity and immortality. Dramatic diffusion of a 'self' again becomes central to this exploration of the relationship between drama and irony.

Although a generally neglected area of criticism, Wordsworth's use of humour and comedy in *Lyrical Ballads* has been explored briefly in the work of a handful of critics: the first serious re-evaluation of Wordsworth's

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[92] *Prose Works*, iii, pp.5-6.
[93] [*Die Ironie ist eine permanente Parekbase*]. A fuller discussion of Schlegel's famous dictum follows in the next chapter.

treatment of comedy was by John E. Jordan,[94] who noted the critical tendency to dismiss humour in Wordsworth's poetry, 'Generally, speaking, we take Wordsworth too seriously.'[95] Jordan's essay sought to re-assess the reader's perception of the type of humour the poet uses, achieving this through a predominantly biographical approach; several anecdotes are drawn upon from memoirs and letters to display the dominance of humour in Wordsworth's life, subsequently illuminating much of his subtle humour, as it 'crops out in mirth, gaiety, gamboling playfulness, and quirkish wit.'[96] Jordan's work on Wordsworth's humour touched on the ironic tone of *Lyrical Ballads*, providing grounding for the important work of others, including John F. Danby, R. F. Storch, Mary Jacobus, Richard Gravil, and Mark Storey.[97] However, despite the centrality of comic and ironic tones in poems such as 'Simon Lee', 'The Thorn', and 'The Idiot Boy', there has been no major recent work on Wordsworthian irony, with treatment of this subject largely tending to isolate itself from the wider theory and philosophy of his poetry, despite the suggestiveness of reconciling poetry with truth in Wordsworth's critical prose.

What I propose to argue here is, firstly, that Wordsworth's ironic tone is integral to reading both the prefatory material and the poetic production of both 1798 and 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*. Such a reading, then, re-examines the actual nature of the poetic 'experiment' of the project offered by Wordsworth and Coleridge; far from reading the inherent irony of poems such as 'Simon Lee', 'The Idiot Boy', and, in the sixth chapter, 'Christabel', as isolated experiments with humour, I identify them as belonging to as much a

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[94] See John E. Jordan, 'Wordsworth's Humor', in *PMLA*, 73, 1 (1958), 81-93.
[95] Jordan, 'Wordsworth's Humor', p.81.
[96] Jordan, 'Wordsworth's Humor', p.81.
[97] See John F. Danby, *The Simple Wordsworth: Studies in the Poems 1797-1807* (London: Routledge, 1960) Danby writes: 'It is unfortunate that Wordsworth's irony has not been much remarked. If irony, however, can mean perspective and the co-presence of alternatives, the refusal to impose on the reader a pre-digested life-view, the insistence on the contrary that the reader should enter, himself, as full partner in the final judgement on the facts set before him – then Wordsworth is a superb ironist in *Lyrical Ballads*', pp.37-8. I propose to extend Danby's view here to read Wordsworth as an ironist in Book VII of *The Prelude*, as well as in his writings on immortality and epitaphs; R. F. Storch, 'Wordsworth's Experimental Ballads: The Radical Uses of Intelligence and Comedy' in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 11, 4 (1971), pp.621-639; Mary Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment in Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads (1798)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); Mark Storey, *Poetry & Humour from Cowper to Clough* (London: Macmillan, 1979), particularly, pp.19-42; and Richard Gravil, '*Lyrical Ballads* (1798): Wordsworth as ironist', in *Critical Quarterly*, 24, 4 (1982), pp.39-57.

philosophical tendency toward irony as a literary one. In this chapter, irony is set out as the mode of writing that invites reader participation in the production of literary texts, and it does so by de-centring the conventional notions of authority. So, one real innovation of the *Lyrical Ballads* 'experiment', it is suggested here, is the use of the ballad form to reject explicitly the conventional role of the didactic or omniscient narrator of a linear tale, in favour of the ironic speaker who invites the reader to 'make a tale' of what is offered: an 'anti-tale' related through an 'anti-ballad', in other words. The other real major innovation of the project, the mediatory possibilities of this kind of poetry, is examined in more detail in the fifth chapter, which reads the aspired Romantic literature as the *Mischgedicht*.

The second argument I wish to introduce here is that Wordsworth sets up with the *Lyrical Ballads* a relationship between drama and irony that he follows through in his other major project, *The Recluse*, of which we have *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* in publication. Though 'Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey' seems at first glance a little anomalous in a volume of 'lyrical ballads', with the poem Wordsworth introduces a sort of prelude to his *Prelude* not only by writing his self, but rather by *rewriting* his self, partaking in the very revisionary process that the entire project is concerned with. With poems such as 'The Brothers' and 'The Thorn', Wordsworth's use of drama is primarily to the philosophical end that *The Recluse* was striving toward. So much so, in fact, that, in its philosophical use of epitaph, 'The Brothers' is clearly in dialogue with much of *The Excursion*. One of the wider implications of my argument, therefore, is that a linear reading of Wordsworth's corpus is not practicable; *Lyrical Ballads* cannot be read as a complete project at a remove from *The Recluse* fragments, and so each chapter that follows is intended to address, firstly, an ongoing relationship between drama and irony in Wordsworth, and, secondly, how this relationship intersects the literary theory and production of the *Frühromantiker*.

'an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure'

Wordsworth's 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* can be taken as the most systematic early 'manifesto' of his philosophical poetry; here, pleasure plays a

key part in Wordsworth's theory of poetic purpose, though he is particular in his separation of pleasure and '*reasoning*', explicitly rejecting 'a systematic defence of the theory, upon which the poems were written'[98], thus refusing to offer a predominantly ratiocinative defence of an aesthetic that necessarily relies on both a common human sensibility, as well as an individual aesthetic sense. Wordsworth is aware of the subjectivity of pleasure, acknowledging that his volume will not appeal to the tastes of all. However, he places this within a unifying common sense of language; the poet readily recognises *Lyrical Ballads* as 'an experiment' through which poetic pleasure is imparted using 'the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation'.[99] However, alongside the poet's responsibility to give his reader pleasure, Wordsworth is equally keen to emphasize the importance of purpose and truth, stating that each poem in *Lyrical Ballads* 'has a worthy purpose'.[100] This 'purpose' is presented in the 1800 text as the aim 'to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature',[101] thus directly linked to truth in its attempt to reveal a deeper insight into common human experiences. In other words, the 'worthy purpose' is to evoke sympathy as well as to give pleasure, and to raise awareness in the reader of the relationship between individual pleasure and a universal sympathy. Although I am not suggesting that Wordsworth is consciously offering his thought in opposition to a Kantian incarnation of *sensus communis*, there is nevertheless a rupture in his 'Preface' between a philosophical system which assumes a 'common sense' in aesthetics and the subjectivity of poetics, and such a rupture does reveal the inadequacy of the Kantian formation of *sensus communis*.[102]

   With his introduction of sympathy, it might be suggested that

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[98] *Prose Works*, i, (1800: p.140; 1850: 141).
[99] *Prose Works*, i, (1800: p.138; 1850: p.139).
[100] For a recent reading of how far this 'worthy purpose' is epistemological, see Andrew Bennett, 'Wordsworth's Poetic Ignorance', in *Wordsworth's Poetry Theory: Knowledge, Experience, Language*, ed. by Alexander Regier and Stefan H. Uhlig (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), p.22-23: Bennett considers the statement on 'worthy purpose' in the 'Preface', reading it as a statement on the *unselfconscious* production of poetry, in that the poet's meditation is so trained to formulate purpose with the poetry that conscious application of purpose is redundant. Thus, the poet's claim is not so much to knowledge, but rather to ignorance.
[101] *Prose Works*, i, (1800: p.146).
[102] For Kant on *sensus communis* in aesthetics, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), p.160.

Wordsworth seems to follow directly from Enlightenment moral philosophy of the eighteenth century with statements such as, 'we have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure';[103] however, it is important to note how his treatment of sympathy in relation to pleasure is a significant departure from that associated with the dominant moral theorist, Adam Smith, whose *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) posited morality as arising from a sympathy, or 'fellow-feeling', which precedes pleasure, yet is ultimately governed by the pursuit of pleasure or sorrow of the self.[104] Smith's idea of sympathy, then, in a way, reduces it to being symptomatic of the self's drive towards pleasure. Conversely, Wordsworth is more interested in showing that 'wherever we sympathize with pain it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure'; the poet's responsibility is to produce 'an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure',[105] not to reduce one or the other to being a by-product of sympathy. Whereas Smith's idea of sympathy necessarily requires individuals to figure themselves imaginatively as suffering in the place of another, Wordsworth's sympathy is informed by a certain detached ironic awareness of a relationship between pain and pleasure that the poet takes on and transforms from dialectic to equilibrium. Paradoxically, it is this detachment that perpetuates a greater release from the solipsism that permeates Smith's moral discourse, and allows Wordsworth's narrators to retain a deeper philosophical involvement in their subject, unimpeded as it is by constant recourse to the self. Whether this is Wordsworth's own 'self' of *The Prelude*, whose detachment in London enables him to regain a capacity for sympathising with fellow man, or *The Excursion*'s ironic Wanderer, who is able to go from narrating one tale of human suffering to another without risking any intensity of sympathy to be diminished, Wordsworth's narrators' capacity for sympathy is dependent on their capacity for the sort of ironic detachment theorized by Schlegel and his contemporaries.[106]

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[103] *Prose Works*, i, (1850: pp.163 & 165).

[104] Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: A. Millar, 1759), p.3.

[105] *Prose Works*, i, (1850: p.165).

[106] As Schlegel's conception of irony as 'permanent parabasis' is, again, central to understanding Romantic theory in Wordsworth's poetic practice, detailed discussion of this must necessarily be deferred until the following chapters. Nevertheless, this idea of irony as parabasis, or interruption of the self's own narrative appears as an undercurrent to my

To begin with, an affinity between Schlegel's view of a literary 'project' and Wordsworth's particular poetic 'projects' of 1798 and 1800 might be read. In the fragment quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Schlegel sees the ideal project as 'both subjective and objective'. To an extent, Schlegel is collapsing distinctions between subjectivity and objectivity by asserting that a 'perfect' project must be both subjective and objective – in the case of a literary project, this might be understood to refer to the narrator of a poem or novel, and so, the ideal narrator would be objective enough to maintain a distance from his or her tale, but subjective enough to maintain a sympathetic interest in its subjects. Yet Wordsworthian sympathy is not solely the moral or psychological curiosity found in Smith's discourse – the capacity for irony must be found prior to any realization of 'fellow-feeling' or sympathy, indicating that sympathy was as much a philosophical concern for Wordsworth as it was for his German contemporaries. As we have seen in the previous chapter, for example, one condition on which Heinrich's poetological success hinges is his sympathetic development. The theorized Romantic work of art is what is seen as 'indivisible' and 'living'; the transcendental work of art is that which is able to fuse the real and the ideal. For Wordsworth the 'real' in a 'lyrical ballad' can only be the 'real language of men', since language – primarily spoken, not written – is the medium through which such art is conventionally transmitted. However, in a marriage of oral tradition and print culture, the 'real' necessarily becomes the 'ideal', too. So, Wordsworth's depictions of rustic life and language are consciously concerned both with recovering the philosophical realities of human life and suffering, and with the drama and ironic self-reflexivity that is necessitated by such an attempt. The seemingly paradoxical idea of a literary project that strives for truth or verisimilitude through dramatic interjection is negotiated, I am arguing here, in Wordsworth's own theory and poetic practice. The implications this has for autobiographical projects or writing a 'self' come into focus below and in the fourth and fifth chapters – for now I wish to return to *Lyrical Ballads*.

With *Lyrical Ballads*, we see that in presenting this 'truth, not

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consideration of irony in *Lyrical Ballads*, *Benjamin the Waggoner*, and *Peter Bell*.

individual and local, but general and operative', as the desired end for all philosophical poetry, and immediately following it with his assertion that the only restriction of a poet is 'to give immediate pleasure',[107] Wordsworth thus sets up a dialectical theory which can best be reconciled through irony; on the one hand, pleasure exists as the poet's greatest responsibility and restriction, whereas on the other, utility is the end of philosophical poetry, with an implicit morality that must necessarily relate to the gravity of human suffering. This mediating function of irony is what is often missed by commentators on Wordsworth's poetry; even Coleridge in his respective roles as collaborator and critic of *Lyrical Ballads* undermines Wordsworth's commitment to reconciling 'truth' and pleasure in that volume and elsewhere. In Chapter XXII of his *Biographia Literaria*, he offers this as one of his criticisms of Wordsworth's poetic theory; though he does not take issue with the choice of a Pedlar as protagonist of *The Excursion* as vehemently as Francis Jeffrey had,[108] he does attack what he sees as the precedence morality and truth take over pleasure:

> First, because 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*.[109]

As a general criticism of Wordsworth's poetry – and, thus, an alternative poetic theory – there is clearly much in this statement that is of interest. For the critic Coleridge, the communication of truth and pleasure in poetry in the first instance appear to be mutually exclusive (though I shall argue below that the poet Coleridge, too, found a reconciliation of both through irony in the 'Christabels' of 1798 and 1816), and Wordsworth has erred in prioritising truth delivered through moral philosophy. What Coleridge's distinctions between truth and pleasure do not account for, though, is Wordsworth's

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[107] *Prose Works*, i, (1850: p.163).
[108] Coleridge, rather generously on this occasion, limits his disapproval of Wordsworth's choice of protagonist to asking incredulously, 'Is there one word for instance, attributed to the pedlar in THE EXCURSION, characteristic of a pedlar?' – see *Biographia Literaria*, i, p. 134.
[109] *Biographia Literaria*, i, p.130.

reconciliation of the moral and aesthetic functions of poetry. If we are to take his treatment of sympathy as the central moral concern underpinning philosophical poetry, then the category of a moral philosophy so distinct from poetic pleasure itself is collapsed. Wordsworth's narrators are not the Smithean impartial spectators they might initially be taken for; the voices that make up *Lyrical Ballads* are, conversely, as active in the creation and transmission of the ballad as the reader is expected to be. The implications this has for Wordsworth's narrative of his 'selves' are taken up for consideration in the following chapter. I shall argue that the representative crises in *The Prelude*'s Books VI-VIII make it impossible for Wordsworth to remain an impartial spectator, with London proving the catalyst for active participation in the dramatization of 'self'. In the case of *Lyrical Ballads*, however, impartial spectatorship is collapsed in one way through the irony that pervades the seemingly comic verse of the volume.

Moreover, Coleridge's insistence on pleasure taking precedence over truth in poetry seems to suggest that *The Excursion* has not yet achieved that synthesis of truth and pleasure that the ideal poet-philosopher (or, in his own words, the philosophical poet) strives for:

> Now till the blessed time shall come, when truth itself shall be pleasure, and both shall be so united, as to be distinguishable in words only, not in feeling, it will remain the poet's office to proceed upon that state of association, which actually exists as *general*; instead of attempting first to *make* it what it ought to be, and then to let the pleasure follow. But here is unfortunately a small *Hysteron-Proteron*.[110]

For Coleridge, the preponderance of moral philosophy in *The Excursion* produces a sort of '*Hysteron-Proteron*', in that it is contrary to poetic purpose. Yet, if we take the unification of truth and pleasure to mean the synthesis of poetry and philosophy, we might suggest that *The Excursion* is closer to the synthesized philosophical poem that Wordsworth and Coleridge both conceived of in their respective ways.[111] A comparison might be drawn between this and the following lines from *The Prelude*:

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[110] *Biographia Literaria*, i, p.130.
[111] Kathleen Wheeler's *Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's* Biographia Literaria is particularly instructive in its consideration of how the unification of truth and pleasure is tantamount to a synthesis of poetry and philosophy for Coleridge – see pp.121-7.

> Many are our joys
> In youth, but oh! what happiness to live
> When every hour brings palpable access
> Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,
> And sorrow is not there!
>   (1850: II, 284-288; 1805: II, 303-307)[112]

Whereas Coleridge's synthesis is a projection toward a future development in the philosophical poet's career, the lines quoted here suggest that a similar synthesis of cognition (if Wordsworth's 'knowledge' is understood to equate with the 'truth' that Coleridge's philosopher is concerned with), and pleasure – or 'delight' – has been at work in the mind of a past 'self' of the philosophical poet. The implications that tracing the childhood 'self' have for the development of the ironist-poet are considered in greater detail in the concluding chapter, where it shall be argued that the repetition in the ironist's philosophical poem aims to recover, fundamentally, a capacity for comprehending a dramatized ontology that originates in the child. For the present discussion, I quote these lines to suggest that Coleridge's critique of Wordsworth's poetry does not quite get on terms with just how similar Wordsworth's conception of the philosophical poem is to his own, and that this produces some fundamental misreading of not only *The Excursion*, but also his co-project, *Lyrical Ballads*.[113]

The 'alive and critical' reader

As Stephen M. Parrish has noted, Wordsworth's theory of poetic pleasure is inextricably bound with form and metre, thus this insistence on pleasure implicitly necessitates the adoption of the seemingly 'light' ballad form,

> Pleasure, it is clear, lay at the heart of the "sublime notion of Poetry" that Wordsworth was endeavoring to present. At once a psychological,

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[112] All references to the 1850 text are from *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen, *The Cornell Wordsworth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), and all references to the 1805 text are from *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. by Mark L. Reed, *The Cornell Wordsworth*, 2 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Hereafter, all references appear parenthetically in the main text, abbreviated as either '1850' or '1805'. The 1850 reference is provided first, as its Cornell publication precedes that of the 1805 text.

[113] However, to suggest that Coleridge is responsible for the critical tendency to misread Wordsworth's work would, of course, be reductive; rather, the extent to which his critique of Wordsworth's poetry contributes to a reading of his own poetic theory and practice is what is principally of interest here.

esthetic, almost an epistemological term, pleasure was the "grand elementary principle" of man's nature, the distinctive achievement of poetic art, and something like an instrument of truth. And a main source of pleasure in poetic art was meter, as Wordsworth has already made clear in his "general summary" of 1800.[114]

In addition to providing an important defence of Wordsworth's views on metre – often in contention with then-existing scholarship which tended to read the poet's views in his 1800 'Preface' as disparaging – Parrish notes the crucial relationship between metre, form, and the place the concept of pleasure held in Wordsworth's poetic theory. However, the view that pleasure was 'almost an epistemological term' does not adequately highlight the dialectical thinking in *Lyrical Ballads*, often couched as it is in an ironic/comic tone. Instead, a closer reading of Wordsworth as an ironist can show that pleasure *is* an 'epistemological term', often induced and explored by Wordsworth simultaneously with philosophically searching questions on responses to human pain and suffering.[115]

Wordsworth's comic irony is predicated on this incongruity of moral, philosophical poetry and the lightness of traditional balladry, and nowhere is this more clear than in 'Simon Lee' and 'The Idiot Boy', both of which employ the use of a deceptively light tone in order to subvert ironically the ballad form and evoke self-consciousness in the reader, a key aim of Romantic irony, as summarised by David Simpson's influential *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry*. I have referred to Simpson in Chapter 1, but it is worth quoting his pithy summary of Romantic irony here:

> The situation as I see it is that, if a writer says 'X', then we question the meaning of what he says both as we receive it into our own codes and canons of significance and as it relates to the context of the rest of his utterances, their moods and voices. This double focus is likely to produce a paradox of the hermeneutic sort; how are we to be sure where one begins and the other ends? This is Romantic irony.[116]

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[114] Stephen M. Parrish, *The Art of the Lyrical Ballads* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) p.21.

[115] Jordan's discussion of Wordsworth's humour takes into account this characteristic fusion of the comic and the pathetic: 'Indeed, Wordsworth's most typical humor is something which might be called a joyous parody of life. It approaches caricature, but its intention is only faintly satiric… It is closely allied to plain good humor, and grows out of an excess of animal spirits. Life, it seems to imply, is a comedy to the man who both thinks and feels, and a note of pathos only enriches and humanizes the comedy.' (p.86).

[116] Simpson, *Irony and Authority*, p.xii.

As well as supporting Wordsworth's own dismissal of a systematic poetic theory, and emphasising the need for readers to think and decide on a 'meaning' for themselves, Simpson's definition is certainly indicative of the way in which Wordsworth immediately envisaged the *Lyrical Ballads* as challenging 'pre-established codes of decision'[117] - Wordsworth presents a direct challenge to the contemporary reading public's 'degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation'[118], by presenting heightened drama from everyday situations. Indeed, irony through drama can be pinpointed as the very 'double focus' which Simpson only refers to in more general terms. In the case of 'Simon Lee', the reader's expectation of a ballad is completely ironically reversed, with a refusal to offer a story at all,[119]

> My gentle reader, I perceive
> How patiently you've waited,
> And I'm afraid that you expect
> Some tale will be related.
>
> O reader! had you in your mind
> Such stores as silent thought can bring,
> O gentle reader! you would find
> A tale in every thing.
>
> What more I have to say is short,
> I hope you'll kindly take it;
> It is no tale; but should you think,
> Perhaps a tale you'll make it.[120]

Relating this back to Simpson's definition of Romantic irony, it can be seen that Wordsworth's narrative standpoints of *Lyrical Ballads* fundamentally posit an epistemology founded on the ironist's desire to challenge readers' perceptions. Wordsworth here forces the reader to 'question the meaning' with a direct invitation to *think* about what he is presenting, without the need for the expected 'outrageous stimulation'. However, the use of the ballad form to subvert the convention of narrative is only one way in which irony presents

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[117] 'Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads*' (1798), in *Prose Works, i*, p.136.
[118] *Prose Works*, i, (1800: p.150; 1850: p.151).
[119] See Gravil, 'Wordsworth as ironist', p.50.
[120] William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green, *The Cornell Wordsworth* (London: Cornell University Press, 1992), ll.69-80. Further line references appear in the main text. All poetry is quoted from this edition, unless stated otherwise.

itself in the poem; a further irony is present in the ambiguity of the content of the poem. As Gravil has noted, Wordsworth's skill as an ironist hinges on the way in which he forces the reader to think about what is said and what is meant, 'Generic confidence gives way to bewilderment as we wonder what kind of poem this is intended to be: is it supposed to be funny? is it *in fact* funny?'[121] Here, the irony lies in the inability to arrive confidently at a definite answer to this question; humour is used deceptively – and consistently at the reader's expense – with the sole purpose of making the reader think about and re-evaluate convention and 'pre-established codes of decision'.

This is considerably accentuated in the 1820 revised text; here, there is no doubt about the poet's intention to challenge the reader's pre-conceptions. In his discussion of the editing of the opening stanzas, Mark Storey notes now the revisions soften the 1798 poem's comic tones and accentuated absurdities, while still abstaining from sentimentalism.[122] While the 1798 text may highlight the comic build-up to the 'anti-tale', the 1832 revisions are nevertheless important in their reiteration of the philosophy which underpins the irony in what Wordsworth is making his reader confront:

> What more I have to say is short,
> And you must kindly take it:
> It is no tale; but, should you *think*,
> Perhaps a tale you'll make it.
> > (ll. 69-72)

1798's gently ironic 'I hope you'll kindly take it' has become a more confident expectation on the poet's part, 'And you must kindly take it'; Wordsworth is here extending the original irony by reversing the emphasis of the reader's expectations of the poet, the irony eradicating the initial seemingly condescending tone of the latter text. Similarly, the italicized '*think*' may appear condescending; however, Wordsworth is again penetrating the literal, and his real target can be seen as the poetry and taste which does not require the reader to think, renewing his 1790s attack on hollow sentimentalism and convention. Thus, he retains the mood of the 1798 poem, while more openly acknowledging the passing of the fashionable Gothic and

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[121] Gravil, 'Wordsworth as ironist', p.50.
[122] See Storey, *Poetry & Humour from Cowper to Clough*, pp.34-5.

sentimental ballads of the 1790s.[123] Most importantly, however, Wordsworth's narrator reinforces the poet's attempts to place the reader at the centre of the process of generating meaning. As with Schlegel's ideal reader, the reader of a 'lyrical ballad' (as opposed to the Gothic ballad on which some of these examples are parodied) is as much a subject of the poet's expectations as vice versa,

> The analytic writer observes the reader as he is; and accordingly he makes his calculations and sets up his machines in order to make the proper impression on him. The synthetic writer constructs and creates a reader as he should be; he doesn't imagine him calm and dead, but alive and critical. He allows whatever he has created to take shape gradually before the reader's eyes, or else he tempts him to discover it himself. He doesn't try to make any particular impression on him, but enters with him into the sacred relationship of deepest symphilosophy or sympoetry.[124]

Schlegel's analytic/synthetic distinction would be recognizable to a contemporary reader as a take on Kant's division of judgments as either analytic or synthetic in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. According to Kant, an analytic judgment is a self-contained one, because it is based on logical fact, whereas a synthetic judgment is true by definition, because it synthesizes the various elements Kant believes make up our experiences. By adopting Kant's terminology Schlegel is pushing this dichotomy further to suggest that authorship, too, can fall under two categories, either challenged or unchallenged. Schlegel's playful adaptation of these terms is used to ridicule the 'analytic' that means the writer remains unchallenged as author, but also that the reader remains unchallenged intellectually or creatively, since she is

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[123] When discussing the gothic, Wordsworthian scholarship has generally extensively focused on the 'Preface's disparaging comments on German gothic literature. For an original and contextual reading of the complexity of Wordsworth's attitude towards the gothic, see Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.90-126. Gamer rehabilitates the importance of the gothic in positively influencing the poet's work, suggesting that the critique of the gothic was apposite and contextual, and concluding that the 'Preface' should be read, as 'strategic rather than wholesale rejection of gothic sensationalism, as "defence" of the first volume of *Lyrical Ballads* rather than as manifesto, as response to reviewer criticism rather than revolution against it.' (p.126). Gamer's emphasis on Wordsworth's complex – sometimes implicitly bordering on ambivalent – reaction to gothic literature is particularly important for my discussion of Wordsworth's ironic challenges to contemporary expectations of the reading experience. See also Robert Miles' more recent *Romantic Misfits* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), in which the position of the Gothic and its influence on canonical writings (including *Lyrical Ballads*) is re-evaluated, see pp.62-97.
[124] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, *Critical Fragments*, 112, pp.156-7.

spoon-fed 'the proper impression'. The 'synthetic' mode of writing, on the other hand, is superior because it ensures that the writer's monopoly on authorship is challenged through the intellectual stimulation of the 'critical' reader. Schlegel's joke – using Kant's terminology to undermine Kant's own system – works to a serious purpose by revealing the impossibility of limiting judgments to the 'I'; any judgment made by the self is reflected in the reception of that judgment. That is, the concepts of 'symphilosophy' and 'sympoetry' demonstrate that anything projected by a writer is reflected by the reader. So, in its Schlegelian incarnation, the distinction between the 'analytic' and 'synthetic' writers naturally extends to the reader, meaning that there are also two classes of reader; 'symphilosophy' and 'sympoetry', then, are not only terms that relate to a relationship of collaboration between writers, but also between writer(s) and the reader. I am arguing here that Wordsworth, too, makes similar distinctions, and that these distinctions are less implicit than might initially be thought. In Schlegelian terms, then, Wordsworth's 'analytic' writer would be the author of Gothic sensationalism – *Lenore*'s Gottfried Bürger, for instance – to his own 'synthetic' writer. The prevalent 'analytic' writer of the 1790s is concerned with a mechanical literary production that has established and continues to nourish the masses' cognitive 'codes of decision'. Though it is Schlegel's conception of this breed of writer that might seem more overtly opposed to mechanical philosophical production in the vein of Kantian or Fichtean systems, Wordsworth, too, is rejecting systemization, whether it is literary, moral, or philosophical.[125] The

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[125] It is worth reiterating that a contemporary criticism of Wordsworth's philosophical poetry was that it all contributed to a curiously calculated – and yet inscrutable – 'system'. For example, Francis Jeffrey's famously critical review of *The Excursion* opens with a reference to Wordsworth's poetic corpus: 'This will never do. It bears no doubt the stamp of the author's heart and fancy; but unfortunately not half so visibly as that of his peculiar system. His former poems were intended to recommend that system, and to bespeak favour for it by their individual merit; - but this, we suspect, must be recommended by the system – and can only expect to succeed where it has been previously established.' – See Francis Jeffrey, 'On Wordsworth's *Excursion*', in *Edinburgh Review*, 24, 47, November 1814, 1-30, in *On the Lake Poets*, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth (Washington, D.C.: Woodstock, 1998), p.1. Jeffrey's attack probably follows Wordsworth's famous architectural metaphor of *The Recluse* as 'a Gothic church' but overlooks his subsequent assertion that, 'It is not the Author's intention formally to announce a system; it was more animating to him to proceed in a different course; and if he shall succeed in conveying to the mind clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings, the Reader will have no difficulty in extracting the system for himself', as well as his earlier explicit refutation of a 'systematic defense' of the theory on which *Lyrical Ballads* are predicated .

writer producing a hybrid text that is predicated on irony is not only rejecting 'system' or division of 'genre', but is also automatically defined as a 'synthetic' writer in that he or she is predominantly engaged in not only the synthesis of genres and disciplines, but also of roles; in envisaging the reader as 'alive and critical' Schlegel is expounding a primary concern of the *Fragmente* as a whole, that of interchangeability between writer, reader, and critic.[126] In allowing 'whatever he has created to take shape gradually before the reader's eyes' the Romantic writer is, thus, acknowledging that production of a 'text' and authorship of it are by no means interchangeable – they are, conversely, two distinct categories within *Sympoesie* and *Symphilosophie*.[127]

The Romantic ironist, then, emerges as the writer who assumes the reader's complicity in reading and creating a 'text', whether primarily poetic or philosophical. Irony is the aesthetic and philosophical principle operating on a conscious level for both writer and the ideal reader (the cultured reader, or *gebildete Kenner*). However, the extent to which it might also operate on an unselfconscious level of writing has been questioned; Kathleen Wheeler's seminal study of *Biographia Literaria* seeks, in part, to question how far irony might be conscious in the work of the German Romantic ironists and of

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[126] See once again Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.143-159. In particular, see *Critical Fragments*, 27 'The critic is a reader who ruminates. Therefore, he ought to have more than one stomach.' (p.147); and 65 'Poetry is republican speech: a speech which is its own law and end unto itself, and in which all the parts are free citizens and have the right to vote.' (p.150). The far-reaching implications of this 'republican speech' for the poet-philosopher are further considered in relation to Novalis and Coleridge in the fifth chapter.

[127] Arguably, the use of 'synthetic' is taken even further by Novalis in *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, Entry 63, titled 'THEORY OF PERSON', in which Novalis uses the term to equate with genius:

'A truly *synthetic* person, is a person who is many people simultaneously – a genius. Every person is the seed of an *infinite genius*. They may be divided into numerous people, and yet still be one. The true analysis of the person as such, brings forth people – the *person* can only be isolated, split and divided into people. A person is a *harmony* – not a mixture, not a motion – not *substance*, like the "*soul*". Spirit and person are one.. (force is the cause.).

'Every personal expression belongs to a specific person. All expressions – of the person at once belong to the nonspecific (universal) personality and to one or several specific personalities.

'E.g. an expression, as a *human being*, *citizen*, *family man*, and a *writer*, all at the same time.' (p10). Novalis' theory of a synthetic identity, then, is one which encompasses all aspects of person- or selfhood. The true genius is one who can be a synthetic person, a term that is itself attributed to the ironist. To be a 'synthetic' person is to have enough of a handle on identity to know that identity or selfhood necessarily throws up several perspectives from which one must sympathize simultaneously. That is, to take a decidedly anti-Fichtean stance on the 'ego'. The nature of 'genius' for Novalis is thus complementary to the views of genius within the writing and thinking of Schlegel and Wordsworth: to master a plurality in roles or perspectives – to achieve and exercise ironic distance – is to arrive at the heart of genius.

Coleridge.[128] Using the central concepts of irony and metaphor, Wheeler's comparative study suggests, quite rightly I think, that discerning the difference between the conscious and unconscious ironic activity of the ironic writer is a difficulty scholarship faces.[129] This question remains pertinent and extends to the case of Wordsworth; in a recent essay on *Lyrical Ballads* Andrew Bennett has argued persuasively that the prefatory material to that volume uncovers what he calls a 'poetics of ignorance'.[130] According to such a reading, Wordsworth is championing a poetics that minimizes its own epistemological claims; knowledge, then, is an end that is *sought* through philosophical poetry, but certainly not what is *claimed*. The poet shares a certain amount of ignorance with the reader, Bennett's reading suggests, because his work aims to determine how far poetry *can* encompass knowledge.

But it is Wordsworth's implied relationship with the reader that expounds the poet's understanding of irony as a mode of writing; Bennett argues that, in appealing to a select class of readers who will apprehend the limits of any epistemological claim that can be made, Wordsworth is actually privileging ignorance. And this is what makes the defamiliarization of the quotidian possible: poetry is a sort of 'ignorance machine' because it defamiliarizes what we know and by doing so it reveals what we do not know.[131] I would add to this by suggesting that the discovery of ignorance and knowledge is constantly at play in the Romantic poem; irony assumes knowledge of the writer's methods, but ignorance of the final meaning – or indeed of the text as anything but a fragmentary *Universalpoesie* – which is always deferred. Although he does not give this poetics of ignorance the name of irony, Bennett's reading of Romantic *methods* seems more penetrative than Wheeler's in this respect, as it seeks to establish the degree to which the Romantic writer *intends* for poetry to be epistemological.

'He shouts from nobody knows where'

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[128] See Chapter 4 of Kathleen Wheeler's *Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's* Biographia Literaria, pp.59-80.
[129] Wheeler, *Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's* Biographia Literaria, p.59.
[130] See Andrew Bennett, 'Wordsworth's Poetic Ignorance', pp.19-35.
[131] See Andrew Bennett, 'Wordsworth's Poetic Ignorance', p.22.

Turning to 'The Idiot Boy', a seemingly incongruous fusion of a light and comic tone and a darker irony similar to 'Simon Lee' in its design is found, which forces readers to rethink their preconceptions of both poetic subject matter and purpose. As with 'Simon Lee', Wordsworth's subversion of readers' expectations partly rests on many ironic techniques; before, the reader is aware that this is a parodic mock-epic – at the centre of which is an 'idiot boy' as the 'hero' – the poem is presented in the manner of a typical gothic ballad,

> 'Tis eight o'clock, - a clear March night,
> The moon is up - the sky is blue,
> The owlet in the moonlight air,
> He shouts from nobody knows where;
> He lengthens out his lonely shout,
> Halloo! halloo! a long halloo!
> (ll.1-6)

The opening stanza here includes all the atmospheric details one might expect from a poem catering for a 'degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation': the scene is a night-time one, the moon is mentioned, as is an owl with a 'lonely shout', suggestive of isolation.

However, the details are all wrong. This opening description of the atmosphere avoids any implication of the sinister or supernatural - indeed, the insouciance of 'He shouts from nobody knows where' brilliantly denies any adherence to the conventions of the ballad tradition. In this it joins Coleridge's 'Christabel' in thwarting reader expectation:

> 'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
> And the owls have awakened the crowing cock ;
> Tu--whit !-- -- Tu--whoo !
> And hark, again! the crowing cock,
> How drowsily it crew.
> (ll.1-5)

In contrast to Wordsworth's poem, Coleridge's opening presents an immediate hint of the supernatural to the reader, with the simultaneous presence of the cock and owl blurring any distinctions of connotations of night and day (whilst still maintaining, ''Tis the middle of the night', thus displacing the poem); however, a few stanzas on, Coleridge, too, begins to

play gently with the reader by subverting the familiar aspects of the gothic ballad:

> Is the night chilly and dark ?
> The night is chilly, but not dark.
> The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
> It covers but not hides the sky.
> The moon is behind, and at the full ;
> And yet she looks both small and dull.
> (ll. 14-19)

Coleridge's skilful rhetorical questioning here operates in a similar way to Wordsworth's 1832 revisions to 'Simon Lee' – instead of patronising the reader, the repetition and questioning seek to establish a greater consciousness on the reader's part of her involvement with the text. As Susan Wolfson has noted in her essay on the function of rhetorical questioning in *Lyrical Ballads*, 'the speaker as questioner, instead of remaining the traditionally anonymous rehearser of the ballad, becomes a dramatic participant in the action and situation of the poem'.[132] Here, Wolfson is highlighting an important aspect of Wordsworth's ironic techniques that are designed to re-evaluate the reader's engagement with the text, something which is vital in order to convey the poet's philosophy. The narrator is a character who necessarily dramatizes Johnny's tale through questioning, rather than merely rehearsing, which facilitates our understanding of where the poet intends the search for 'knowledge' to lie. It is certainly not with the narrator (who knows nothing of Johnny's adventures through the night); rather the reader is expected to partake in the 'anti-tale' by questioning the questioner. The irony, then, serves a dual function: the first is to ridicule the taste for 'outrageous stimulation' and the second is to mock the analytical writer who goes through the motions for such a passive reading public by reiterating the impossibility of arriving at a stock or definite conclusion. The poetics of ignorance that plays out in 'Simon Lee' from the point of view of the popular reader is now doubled to include the narrator who is expected to claim objectivity. As I shall show below, this is taken a step further in 'The Thorn' with Wordsworth shuttling between the narrator's claims of ignorance and his desire to reclaim narrative

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[132] Susan J. Wolfson, 'The Speaker as Questioner in *Lyrical Ballads*' in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 77, 4 (October 1978), pp.546-568, p.548.

authority.

The ridicule of the uncultivated reader (that of the analytic writer) is apparent in the next stanza of 'The Idiot Boy', which effectively explodes the mock-Gothic atmospheric solitude and isolation of the first, with Wordsworth's introduction of human presence and action,

> - Why bustle thus about your door,
> What means this bustle, Betty Foy?
> Why are you in this mighty fret?
> And why on horseback have you set
> Him whom you love, your idiot boy?
> (ll.7-11)

Having thus disrupted his narrative with action – accentuated by the repetition of 'bustle' – Wordsworth introduces the domesticity and maternal love with which the ballad is partly concerned, and from which the humour and pathos will simultaneously be extracted. As Mary Jacobus has noted, all Betty's fuss and 'bustle' is over 'the most unlikely ballad hero one could imagine, her idiot son',[133] and with this another kind of irony is introduced, as the poet reassesses conventional subject matter. As Gravil has noted, 'Subnormality is a popular theme in sensational writing: guaranteed to chill. The discomfort aroused by treating the theme comically is purely intentional, and is increased by the element of satire on excessive feelings.'[134] Here, it is again possible to see the link between irony and Wordsworth's handling of sympathy; Gravil's reference to 'excessive feelings' introduces the false sentimentalism that was often inextricable from gothic literature, and Wordsworth consciously draws attention to it.

The poem never mocks Johnny nor his mother, and the lines quoted in the previous paragraph as well as the conclusion to the poem make clear that the poet's – and his ideal reader's – sympathies lie with the maternal sentiments of the mother and the naïve hero of the poem. Though Wordsworth is sending up the conventional archetype of the hero, there is nothing insincere about his positioning of Johnny as a deserving protagonist; by giving Johnny the last word on his own 'adventure' Wordsworth reminds us that the

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[133] Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment*, p.251.
[134] Gravil, 'Wordsworth as ironist', p.51.

narrator's ignorance shows up the flaw in thinking that one can ever get a handle on 'the whole story'. Despite semi-hysterical imaginings of the possible dangers Johnny may be facing alone while his mother searches frantically for him – with Gothic favourites such as the 'horseman-ghost', encounters with 'goblins' and potential death by drowning offered up – the narrator is perpetually at a loss as to how to account for the missing Johnny and his pony:

> Oh reader! now that I might tell
> What Johnny and his horse are doing!
> What they've been doing all this time,
> Oh could I put it into rhyme,
> A most delightful tale pursuing!
> <div align="right">(ll.322-326)</div>

Eventually, however, the muses evade the narrator and the clever cutting back and forth from speculation to Betty Foy's frantic search for her son reinforce what is philosophically at stake here: the relationship between the sympathy for Susan Gale that drives Betty to send Johnny to the doctor and the sympathy that empowers Susan Gale to move beyond her hypochondria, and the maternal love that drives Betty's actions. The figures within the poem are heroic, Wordsworth is arguing, because they act out of genuine concern.

The 'tale' that the narrator is ostensibly so concerned with pursuing is quashed by the philosophical depth Wordsworth insists on giving the poem. As such, it becomes an 'anti-tale' in which, like 'Simon Lee', details and objective truths are consciously evaded. Johnny very appropriately gets the last spoken words of the poem and his reply to Betty's, the narrator's and the reader's interrogation is suitably apt:

> For while they all were travelling home,
> Cried Betty, 'Tell us, Johnny, do,
> Where all this long night you have been,
> What you have heard, what you have seen,
> And Johnny, mind you tell us true.'
>
> Now Johnny all night long had heard
> The owls in tuneful concert strive;
> No doubt too he the moon had seen;
> For in the moonlight he had been
> From eight o'clock till five.

And thus to Betty's question, he
Made answer, like a traveller bold,
(His very words I give to you,)
'The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo,
And the sun did shine so cold.'
- Thus answered Johnny in his glory,
And that was all his travel's story.
(ll.447-463)

Johnny turns out in the end to embody the ironic spirit of *Lyrical Ballads*, however inadvertently. His 'travel's story' – consisting of hooting cocks and cold sunshine – signifies an endearing naivety outside the limits of logic and language. However, it also directs the reader to the absurdity of imposing logical strictures on philosophical poetry; there is nothing surreal or absurd within the poem, yet it defies the kind of logic that a passive reader might bring to bear on the text all the same by operating outside of the sphere of systematization or rationality. Johnny's confusion of night and day, hot and cold, light and dark, cock and owl and crow and hoot sees an imaginative, intellectual and sensory repudiation of what the reader expects. Though he is lacking the self-conscious and cultivated detachment from binary oppositions of the ironist, he is privileged with an insight that the analytic writer's readers may still be struggling to grasp. That is, Johnny's 'story' strips away the sensationalism and the supernatural that so many narrators of the ballad have come to rely on, and in doing so he unwittingly makes the most genuine claim to being a narrator in the poem: Johnny becomes the most authoritative commentator on his adventures because he epitomizes the impossibility of producing a linear and logical narrative. Wordsworth's poetological aim – to give his readers philosophical truth and poetic pleasure – is achieved by conveying playfully that a story or history cannot be understood or transmitted in either objective or subjective entirety.

It is useful here to compare the poem with 'Simon Lee's' pejorative handling of a multifaceted sympathy that – like Blake's pity – is negative due to the comparatively excessive gratitude it evokes. As Storey observes,

As with 'Goody Blake', 'Simon Lee' works towards that conclusion, whose complexity is rolled up into the inscrutable ball of those last four lines, an oblique undermining of the social philosophy so many

readers might have expected.[135]

Storey goes on to quote these last four lines of the poem:

> - I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
> With coldness still returning;
> Alas! the gratitude of men
> Has oftener left me mourning.
>   (ll. 101-4)

These lines, delivered with devastating simplicity, epitomize Wordsworth as a philosophical ironist, as he uses irony throughout to generate more questions than answers in order to make the reader think, the irony here enabling the power of the poet's philosophical thinking to transcend the initial didacticism. It might also be useful to consider how it enables Wordsworth to express his personal concerns over his own privileged status.[136]

In 'The Idiot Boy', he prevents his own narrative from becoming mired within this sentimentalism, undercutting it by unaffected, reciprocal sympathetic engagement between characters. Thus, Susan Gale is roused into action at the end of the poem by a genuine concern for Betty and Johnny, causing her to overcome her own hypochondria, as she considers another's distress, 'And as her mind grew worse and worse, / Her body it grew better' (ll. 425-6). Paul Hamilton has commented on 'an uncomfortably close parallel between the reader and Johnny' as being 'part of the poem's ironic mischief', saying that 'the sympathetic reader is only consciously re-enacting the idiot boy's unconscious evasion of the rational censorship which normally rules our

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[135] Storey, *Poetry & Humour from Cowper to Clough*, p.33.

[136] See David Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination: The Poetry of Displacement* (London: Methuen, 1987), pp.150-1 - Simpson discusses the character of Simon Lee as being inspired by Christopher Tricky, a neighbour of Wordsworth's at Alfoxden, and at whose expense the Wordsworths benefited from staying there. Simpson's observation of Wordsworth's unease at belonging to the class that benefited at the expense of men like Tricky parallels the precarious balance between sympathy and detachment found in his anonymous narrators. Part of his ironic humour derives from an attempt to confront these difficult truths as much as making his reader do so. In this case, Wordsworth takes great care to place the poet and reader on the same footing, at the very same time that he gently plays with the reader's expectations. The irony, therefore, is just as important to the poet and his processes as to the finished poetry and the pleasure or discomfort that the reader will variously derive from it. Simpson's reading also highlights the contextual complexity missed in Jordan's discussion of the protagonist: 'There is no suggestion that he has been exploited and cast aside: not only is his master dead, but no successor lives in the hall of Ivor. He has his little plot of ground, he is just too feeble to tend it properly.' - see John E. Jordan, *Why the* Lyrical Ballads? *The Background, Writing, and Character of Wordsworth's 1798 Lyrical Ballads* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p.154.

perceptions. Johnny becomes the reader's humbling approach to a natural intimacy of Wordsworthian richness.'[137] I would like to extend this to include another parallel between the reader and Susan, suggesting that her 'recovery' prefigures the reader's 'recovery' from the 'almost savage torpor'[138] of both her everyday perception and the imagination addled by gothic excess. Wordsworth has here not only supplanted the gothic sentimentalism of the contemporary ballad with a philosophical human sympathy, he has challenged the reader's understanding of 'meaning'. As with Schlegel's reader, then, the 'alive and critical Wordsworthian reader responds to the text in a way that mirrors the responses of poetic characters or figures in terms of generation of meaning.

'In truth you'd find it hard to say'

Wordsworth's dramatic irony becomes even more crucial in his re-evaluation of sympathy in 'The Thorn'. The poem has been seen as inviting the reader 'to perform a 'heuristic' function, to build up for ourselves a balanced case, but there is a prior process of selection and intentionalising going on right from the start of the captain's narration which we would be gravely in error to read as the truth'.[139] This unselfconscious intentionality of the narrator helps to understand one level on which the irony works; namely, that of Wordsworth's use of drama to acknowledge the conflict between subjectivity and objectivity within narrative, and so the ultimate unreliability of the narrator. However, another level of irony can be added here with a consideration of how Wordsworth not only explores consciousness, but also the complications arising from the chief poetic purpose of imparting pleasure, as theorized by his 'Preface'. Both this and the Note to 'The Thorn' (1800) clearly emphasize the technical function of metrical verse with reference to pleasure; however, the Note then confuses this by challenging explicitly the literal meaning of the poem itself, again making the reading experience both emotive and intellectual. As will be seen in the Wanderer's relationship with sympathy, Wordsworth provides the reader with the tools to *feel* and enter into the poem

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[137] Paul Hamilton, *Wordsworth* (Sussex: Harvester, 1986), p.59.
[138] *Prose Works*, i, (1800: p.128; 1850: p.129).
[139] Simpson, *Irony and Authority*, p.104.

whilst retaining the ironic detachment necessary to *think* and view meaning objectively.

However, as Mary Jacobus has accurately identified, this does not mean that the poem is predominantly concerned with tracing how the mind operates.[140] Jacobus' emphasis on the distance between Martha Ray's suffering and the narrator's reliance on gossip and rumours once again accentuates the complexity of Wordsworth's philosophical thinking; on the one hand, the poem is the most explicit handling of the difficulties of representation in narrative in the *Lyrical Ballads* volume (a concern that becomes paramount in *The Prelude*'s ironic depiction of London). On the other, it is equally concerned with *reception*, with the dramatic form deliberately and actively inviting the reader to question the reliability of the narrative. This is achieved by a process of affirmation through negation, with the narrator presenting not only his own views, but also making assumptions about the listener/reader's concurrence with these,

> There is a thorn; it looks so old,
> In truth you'd find it hard to say,
> How it could ever have been young,
> It looks so old and grey.
> <div align="center">(ll. 1-4)</div>

What seems at first a colloquial introduction to a local legend becomes immediately striking upon a second reading as anticipatory of the intentional tautology and repetition that follows throughout the entire poem; by drawing attention to the changed appearance of the thorn, the narrator invites the reader to think actively about the story as belonging to the past, and thus one which requires perception arising from two consciousnesses, past and present. Not only does this set the tone for the rest of the poem, it also comes closer to prefiguring Wordsworth's use of dual consciousness to represent memory and

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[140] See Parrish, *The Art of the Lyrical Ballads*, p.99 – 'It was intended to be a psychological study, a poem about the way the mind works.' For an opposing argument, see Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment*, p.248 – Jacobus rejects Parrish's reading of the poem as a dramatic monologue exploring the sea-captain's psychology, suggesting instead that the main focus of 'The Thorn' is its exploration of the difficulty in comprehending suffering. See also Gravil, p.54 – 'The one great fact in this poem, incidentally, is that of the giant suffering of the woman. 'I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject', says Wordsworth in the Preface. Which is something the captain and the villagers fear to do. While on one level the poem is an ironic enquiry into the working of the human mind (the narrator's and the reader's), on another it is a stark presentation of isolated pain.'

the instability of representation itself in *The Prelude*.

This striking detail was initially attacked and underestimated as 'prolixity' and 'garrulity' by contemporary criticism.[141] Among modern criticism, Raymond Havens' *The Mind of a Poet* has followed suit in undermining the importance of Wordsworth's irony, referring to the poet's use of topographical and atmospheric details in poems such as 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill', 'Simon Lee', 'The Idiot Boy', and 'The Thorn' as 'this prolix, anxious adherence to reality, this dwelling upon unessential details'.[142] Havens also extends his charge of prolixity to the geographical details in *The Prelude*, overlooking what is, in fact, an essential realization of the poet's craft as an ironist. In *The Prelude*, heavily-revised descriptions may seem prolix, until the reader realizes that the nature of the poem – one that traces memory and (re)presents at several stages in later life – demands an awareness of how memory for details operates and what function it could possibly play in understanding, or altering, consciousness. The tendency to misread Wordsworth's philosophical irony in this way is often perpetuated by the view that his poetry fell into a steady decline. Even readings perceptive of Wordsworth's use of irony, such as William Galperin's discussion of *The Excursion* open with an all-too familiar dissatisfaction with the poem. Galperin asserts, 'In a way criticism has been right to accord this terminal status with *The Excursion*, since the poem, very clearly, is determined to beleaguer - to be a difficult poem - rather than to satisfy.'[143] But how much more difficult is *The Excursion* than *The Prelude*? Certainly, to contemporary readers unfamiliar with the unpublished *Prelude*, it may well have seemed so. However, Galperin seems to speak for modern readers as well, reiterating a generally weak argument for not reading the poem in any detail that would

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[141] See in particular Robert Southey's scathing review, in which he writes of 'The Thorn': 'The author should have recollected that he who personates tiresome loquacity, becomes tiresome himself.' – 'Review of *Lyrical Ballads*', *Critical Review*, XXIV (October 1798). Reprinted in Elsie Smith, *An Estimate of William Wordsworth: By his Contemporaries 1793-1822* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1932), pp.30-32; p.31. Coleridge later repeated this view in his *Biographia Literaria*, 'But in a poem, still less a lyric poem… it is not possible to imitate truly a dull and garrulous discourser, without repeating the effects of dulness and garrulity.' - *Biographia Literaria*, i, p.49.

[142] Raymond Dexter Havens, *The Mind of a Poet: A Study of Wordsworth's Thought* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), p.12.

[143] William Galperin, *Revision and Authority in Wordsworth: The Interpretation of a Career* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), p.29.

afford it a higher critical status. *The Excursion* can seem, at times, to be significantly more lugubrious than *The Prelude*, but for the modern reader who has the benefit of access to Wordsworth's entire corpus, it should be no more intrinsically 'difficult' than either an epic philosophical work, such as *The Prelude*, or the shorter – though no less challenging – 'Immortality Ode'. By focusing on providing a defence for why *The Excursion* should be read, such criticism undermines the continuity in Wordsworth's thought, with studies of his poetic aims largely limiting themselves to a discussion of the 'Preface'.

In order to understand the significance of this continuity in Wordsworth's use of irony in his philosophical poetry, it is useful to return to 'The Thorn', and consider sympathy, and the role of a dramatic, detached narrator. *Tradition and Experiment* has been seminal in highlighting the ways in which Wordsworth simultaneously engaged with ballad tradition and departed from it. However, one aspect of Jacobus' study has met with little attention from recent scholarship – while the influence of Percy's *Reliques*,[144] and the poetry of both Cowper and Burns (and, in the case of his comic experiments, Bürger) has been much reiterated and examined, I would like to draw attention briefly to the influence of evangelical literature and hymnody in *Lyrical Ballads* and beyond. As Jacobus notes, Wordsworth's 'lyric writing is essentially doctrinal, and in this it owes something to the hymns of an evangelical period.'[145] Jacobus goes on to explore the way in which

> Wordsworth's celebration of nature relies on the same heartfelt simplicity, but Watts' evangelical fervour has been replaced by doctrine of a more personal and subtly imagined kind. What both poets share is their concern to make belief accessible - to carry it out of the church or the book and into the heart.[146]

This adaptation of Watts' 'evangelical fervour' for philosophical poetic

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[144] However, in relation to Percy, the case for its direct influence on *Lyrical Ballads* may be overstated somewhat; see Robert Woof, *Towards Tintern Abbey: A Bicentenary Celebration of* 'Lyrical Ballads', *1798* (Grasmere: The Wordsworth Trust, 1998), p.1 – Woof opens by quoting Wordsworth's acknowledgement of Percy's work on the English ballad in 1815; however, he points out that, 'Arguably, Wordsworth's knowledge of traditional ballads increased *after* 1798, for, after his arrival in Hamburg in September that year, one of the few books he purchased from a bookseller there was Percy's *Reliques*.'
[145] Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment*, pp.91-2.
[146] Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment*, p.93.

purpose accounts, I argue, for much to do with Wordsworth's treatment of sympathy. It is a primarily mediatory poetics that negotiates the implications of oral forms of poetry and moral philosophy (whether these are in doctrinal or balladic forms) within print culture and production; Wordsworth is attempting to reconcile philosophical, poetic and theological heritage with the need for a modern poetics based on education and reorientation rather than sermonizing. It is the poet's view of sympathy as upheld by both thinking and feeling that allows him best to portray the pleasure-pain dialectic necessary to philosophical poetry, and it finds in the evangelical tradition of 'affectionate religion' a predecessor, uniting as it did the importance of heart and mind.[147] In many ways, the influence of the Watts tradition of 'affectionate religion' reaches its Wordsworthian incarnation in *The Excursion*, with the dramatic detachment supplanting black humour as the principal ironic technique. Contrary to the view that Wordsworth's experimentation with the dramatic medium ceased with the *Lyrical Ballads*,[148] I explore the sustained interest in sympathy and dramatic irony in the following chapters. In the next chapter this will be done by considering Wordsworth's reception of drama and spectacle itself in Books VI-VIII of *The Prelude*, and then in the concluding chapter I shall show how drama plays a central role to understanding how *The Excursion* shows continuity with Wordsworth's earlier major works, including the Immortality Ode.

The spirit of an 'affectionate religion' that seems to preside over Wordsworthian sympathy is strikingly similar to that of Novalis, as the concluding chapter aims to show. The narrators of *Lyrical Ballads* learn as well as the eponymous hero of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* or the student of *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* that the path to self-consciousness – to finding oneself at home in the world – necessitates a cultivation of sympathy for what is external

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[147] The phrase 'affectionate religion' is taken from Isabel Rivers' discussion of Watts, Doddridge and the evangelical tradition. See *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), i, pp.164-204.

[148] See Parrish, *The Art of the Lyrical Ballads*, p.134. Parrish here undermines the dramatic ironic strategies employed by Wordsworth in later poetry, commenting that 'It is ironic, however, that Wordsworth should have gained his greatest dramatic success by abandoning the ballad form in which his dramatic experiments had been cast. It is no less ironic that having gained the success he should have begun to move away not only from the experimental techniques but from the dramatic method in general.'

to oneself, to the extent that one does not feel divided from the 'object' to perceive it as such. The narrator of 'The Thorn' is denied this ironic detachment that simultaneously celebrates involvement in the 'object' as the self. With this denial, therefore, comes the inability to sympathize, according to Wordsworth: the 'narrator' is far too invested in a narrative of which he knows very little factually. However, it is Wordsworth's exaggeration and manipulation of the unreliability of any one narrator and the difficulty of presenting a tale to the reader that revisits the grounds that 'Simon Lee' and 'The Idiot Boy' tread; 'The Thorn' is also an 'anti-tale' because it operates wilfully on the kind of poetics of ignorance seen in those poems.

By doing away with the epistemological claims and objectivity that a narrator of a ballad conventionally expects to make, the old sea captain reveals his narrative instability, reiterating constantly his own ignorance. In doing so, he embodies Wordsworth's most sophisticated dramatization of *Unverständlichkeit* and *Sympoesie* of all *Lyrical Ballads'* narrators. 'The Thorn' is sympoetic since it imagines an 'alive and critical' reader who will enter with poet and narrator into the generation of meaning. Wordsworth undercuts the garrulity and sensationalist curiosity of the old sea captain's narrative by extending his reader's critical, emotional and intellectual input – Martha Ray may have given birth to a living child. Equally, she may not have. Supposing she did give birth to a child that was not stillborn, the narrator then skips forward by questioning what might have become of the child. Without successfully establishing whether or not the child was born alive he then goes on to ponder that it is difficult to say whether Martha Ray killed the child or not. Having left this, too, unresolved he jumps ahead of himself and forfeits any epistemological claims he might ordinarily hold as narrator (and local gossip) by wondering *how* the mother might have killed her child. Every claim to 'knowledge' or information about Martha Ray and her baby made by the narrator is predicated on speculation and the conflation of others' narratives into his own. As such, these claims are rendered absurd in almost comic fashion; though the poem contains little in the way of comedy (aside perhaps from the black humour of the rhymes 'cinder' and 'tinder' to describe the physiological effects of her lover's rejection of her), the ludicrous and self-defeating efforts of the narrator are held up mockingly by the poet as a

reminder of the limits of knowledge that we can make claim to.

The enduring poetological legacy of the poem lies partially in reminding us that the reader may succeed sympoetically where the narrator has failed, and that this can be achieved through embracing the incomprehensibility of an absolute meaning or objectivity. The 'alive and critical', cultivated reader who is more attuned to bringing her own emotional, moral and intellectual faculties to bear on the 'anti-tale' of Martha Ray is eventually the reader Wordsworth is aiming to shape with 'The Thorn'. The incomprehensibility here – arising from the instability of narrative itself as much as events or (his)stories narrated – echoes that of the *Märchen* and poems considered in the previous chapter, to an extent. Though 'The Thorn' pushes its metadiscursive agenda a little further than Coleridge's 'lyrical ballads' or Tieck's *Märchen*, the poem is ultimately tied to that sympoetic and symphilosophical writing, because it questions any claims one might make to a definitive or absolute story. Martha Ray's story is unknown to the old sea-captain, yet the urge to tell it remains irresistible to him nonetheless. Like Coleridge's Mariner or Christabel, the narrator of 'The Thorn' is caught between the struggle to tell a story and his inability to comprehend his own narrative. Although he does not come directly under the influence of the supernatural in the way Coleridge's protagonists do, he is very much afflicted by the workings of superstition and the gothic upon his mind; the narrator, Wordsworth seems to suggest, fails in creating successfully a poetological narrative because of his decision to let the supernatural impede his faculties of rationality or sympathy. He does not choose to narrate an epitaphic tale of a fellow neighbour as a means to memorializing that individual in the way that the narrator of 'The Brothers', for example, wishes to do. Thus, such a narrative of the deceased is ultimately unacceptable for Wordsworth's poetological aims, rooted as they are in sympathy for one's fellows; according to the poet, the primary function of story-telling that is not autobiographical is for that narrative to serve as a means to memorialize, to 'Epitomize the life', as he would later describe epitaphic narration in 'The Excursion'.[149]

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[149] See Chapter 6 for more on the poetological functions of irony and the epitaph in Wordsworth's writings.

'a polyhedric Peter'

The use of comedy, irony and the treatment of the grotesque in *Lyrical Ballads* perhaps reaches its most surreal with *Peter Bell*, another poem composed in 1798 as a 'lyrical ballad', yet remaining unpublished until 1819. The Fenwick Note to *Peter Bell* makes it clear that Wordsworth originally intended the poem to feature in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.[150] This alone might not qualify it as a 'lyrical ballad' – rather, what centralises it in discussion of Wordsworth's irony is the moral philosophy taken to be at its core by contemporaries. The poem was notably parodied by John Hamilton Reynolds in April 1819, before the appearance of Wordsworth's original, and later and more famously by Shelley with 'Peter Bell the Third'. In both its title and subject matter Reynolds' poem makes no distinction between *Peter Bell* and *Lyrical Ballads*; titled 'Peter Bell; a Lyrical Ballad', the poem operates more as a parody of the perceived garrulity and moral philosophy of *Lyrical Ballads* than of *Peter Bell*. Indeed, the title is conspicuous in its conflation of *Peter Bell* with several of the poems published two decades earlier. Although the relationships the parody sketches between various individual poems of *Lyrical Ballads* is reductive, what is interesting about Reynolds' approach is that he does draw on several poems from the volume, creating a sort of a meta-hybrid text in his poem, a *Mischgedicht* of a *Mischgedicht*. As a parody, though, this might also be seen as the point at which Reynolds' poem fails: how far is it possible, we might well ask, to parody poetry that is itself part-parodic and always metadiscursive? Reynolds essentially produces the same misreading that many reviewers of *Lyrical Ballads* produced upon publication in 1798, overlooking this metadiscursive nature of Wordsworth's experimental ballads. In satirically titling his poem 'a Lyrical Ballad', Reynolds is quite right in drawing on the continuity between Wordsworth's earlier work and later work, but by missing the ironic nature of the poetry, his parody becomes somewhat ineffectual.

Shelley's parody has more of the polished self-reflexivity of the original *Mischgedicht*; rather than jokingly assuming the identity of an exaggeration of the Wordsworthian poet (as Reynolds does with his satirical

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[150] See Wordsworth's Dedication to Southey, in Cornell *Lyrical Ballads*, pp.41-42.

footnotes and the epigram declaring, 'I do affirm that I am the REAL SIMON PURE'), Shelley's 'Miching Mallecho' seeks to underscore mischievously what it sees as the bloated moral didacticism of the original. His Peter Bell is 'the Third' – a projected successor and *reformer*, not imitator, of the previous two. In calling Reynolds' poem 'the antenatal Peter', Shelley is presumably not only commenting on the poem's publication as preceding Wordsworth's, but also suggesting that there is something necessarily undeveloped about Reynolds' parody because of this. The 'antenatal' Peter poem never really emerges from its inchoate, foetal status, Shelley implies, while his own poem follows and addresses Wordsworth's 'real' Peter Bell. We might ask, then, what the implications of a postnatal Peter are. On the one hand there is a parody of Reynolds' parody, which itself tends to overlook the ironic or satiric tones of its target(s). On the other hand, there is an implied maturation in themes both political and moral in this third incarnation of Peter Bell. However, 'Miching Mallecho' assumes a curious position in relation to his direct narrative predecessor; he is not, like Reynolds, an exaggerated imitator, but nor is he overlooking the relationship between his and Wordsworth's poem. In fact, the relationship is emphasized in order to highlight the moral and political distance Shelley feels from the 'Predevote'.

The 'Dedication' to 'Peter Bell the Third', however, plays on the poem's engendering of parody in order to appropriate it. Shelley's Mallecho notes that, 'Peter is a polyhedric Peter, or a Peter with many sides. He changes colours like a chameleon, and his coat like a snake. He is a Proteus of a Peter.'[151] Of course, there is a double understanding of 'Peter' at play here; Shelley goes on to make it clear that 'Peter' is being discussed interchangeably with Wordsworth the poet, once 'sublime' 'and now dull–o so dull!' Yet, interestingly, the understanding of *Peter Bell* the poem, too, is as a multifaceted text. Though Shelley may not appreciate the inherent irony of the poem, this prefatory prose on the poem makes clear his understanding of what is at stake poetologically. That is to say, Shelley seizes on Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* as a poetic moment in which to demonstrate how the latter's poetology is indubitably at odds with his own. In order to achieve this,

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[151] Shelley, *Poetry and Prose*, p.340.

though, he appropriates the text for his own poetic ends, and in doing so further establishes it as a *Mischgedicht*, by suggesting a necessary accretion of the text. Though Shelley's hyperbolic structural parallels between various Peter Bells and the Iliad are ironic, he shows his intention that 'Peter Bell the Third' should not only join directly after Wordsworth's, but that it should also constitute the final comment on Peter Bell,

> I have violated no rule of syntax in beginning my composition with a conjunction; the full stop which closes the poem continued by me being, like the full stops at the end of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, a full stop of a very qualified import.[152]

Shelley's appropriation of the poem looks to be founded on a principle of generosity regarding authorship: it is perfectly acceptable for him to begin his poem *in medias res* because the poem is a continuation.[153] Though slightly more aggressive in its reasons for appropriating, Shelley nevertheless recognizes the poem as lending itself to what I am interpreting as Schlegel's *Sympoesie*. Such a reading of the concept has further-reaching implications for the Peter Bell parodies, I am suggesting, because the poem – as with many other 'lyrical ballads' – invites participation. Shelley may not be Wordsworth's 'ideal' reader, but he *is* a reader, and is therefore given the power of authorship and/or authority in some measure.

This is perhaps a less desirable outcome of *Sympoesie* for Wordsworth, whose theoretical prose suggests that the ideal reader will extrapolate from his poetry a morality and philosophy that is not at odds with his own. However, the poem legitimates the parodies it spawns; poetologically, it speaks directly for reader participation in the same way as 'The Idiot Boy':

> Is it the shadow of the moon?

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[152] Shelley, *Poetry and Prose*, p.341.
[153] Not to mention, of course, the mirroring of Wordsworth's own structural decision to begin the poem with a stanza from about a third-way through the narrative:

> All by the moonlight river side
> It gave three miserable groans
> ''Tis come then to a pretty pass',
> Said Peter to the groaning Ass,
> 'But I will bang your bones'.
>
> (ll.1-4)

> Is it the shadow of the cloud?
> Is it a gallows there pourtrayed?
> Is Peter of himself afraid?
> Is it a coffin or a shroud?
>
> Is it a fiend, that to a stake
> Of red-hot fire himself is tethering?
> Some solitary ward or cell,
> Where lies a damned soul in hell,
> Ten thousand miles from all his brethren?
>
> Is it some party in a parlour
> Crammed, just as they on earth were cramm'd,
> Some sipping punch, some sipping tea,
> But, as you by their faces see,
> All silent and all damn'd?
>
> 'Tis no such thing, I do assure you,
> Which Peter sees in the clear flood.
> It is no ugly apprehension
> Of eyes and ears, 'tis no invention;
> It is a thing of flesh and blood.
>   (1798: ll.531-550)[154]

As with 'The Idiot Boy', 'Peter Bell' here plays with the reader's Gothic imaginings or expectations, before asserting plainly the fleshly reality of the corpse. The workings of the supernatural are clearly refuted at this point, including Peter's fears and paranoia (which later grow more significantly). The greatest form of damnation from the narrator's perspective, however, appears to be a type of exclusion from communitarian life that is reminiscent of the sort suffered by Coleridge's Mariner: 'Some solitary ward or cell, / Where lies a damned soul in hell, / Ten thousand miles from all his brethren?' These lines, along with the following stanza, seem to suggest that 'hell' in the narrator's conception is a state of isolation. The prospect of being 'crammed' with others and yet perpetually 'silent' is as hellish and damned as being 'Ten thousand miles' from society, and this moral and social exclusion is the fate suffered by those who fail to develop sympathy, the quality we now take to be empathy. Both Peter and the Mariner fail empathetically towards the Ass and Albatross respectively; though Peter's general morality is elaborated clearly as

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[154] See Cornell *Lyrical Ballads*, p.91 for the 1819 revisions. Interestingly, the final stanza quoted here (ll.546-550) is omitted in the later version, but the rhetorical imaginings the narrator delights in are increased.

being 'wicked', his redemption is more complicated than the crude workings of the fears of the supernatural upon the ignorant mind that Shelley and his contemporaries denounced.[155]

As with the hypochondriac Susan Gale, Peter Bell's symptoms are psychosomatic and his recovery is triggered by his empathetic awakening toward the Ass, firstly, and secondly toward Robin, the lamenting son of the deceased man. The pain that seizes Peter after he takes pity upon the Ass and rides it back to its owner's house appears to be a psychosomatic reaction to his stirring conscience:

> He thought – he could not help but think –
> Of that poor beast, that faithful Ass,
> And once again those ugly pains
> Across his liver, heart and reins,
> Just like a weaver's shuttle pass.
>   (ll.871-875)

The first time that Peter feels these 'ugly pains' is when he drags the corpse out of the river (ll.661-665) and, as he looks upon the Ass with the realization that it is the corpse of the Ass's master, 'all those ugly pains encreased' (l.662), suggesting a direct correlation between the responsibility he feels toward recovering the corpse and pity of the Ass, and a physiological reaction to these unknown sentiments. Far from a supernatural visitation, it is the momentous dawning of empathy for fellow man and beast that haunts Peter on the journey back to the deceased man's home, as he hears the boy's sad song:

> But soon as Peter saw the Ass
> His road all on a sudden change
> And turn right upwards from the hollow,
> That lamentable noise to follow,
> It wrought in him conviction strange.
>
> A sober and a firm belief
> Is in the heart of Peter Bell
> That something to him will befall,
> Some visitation worse than all,
> Which ever till this night befell.

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[155] See *The Romantics Reviewed, II*, pp.538-39 for Hunt's review. Both Hunt and Shelley take up the last stanza I have quoted above to disagree with what they see as morality founded on religious bigotry and predestination, Hunt doing so in his review and Shelley using it as his epigraph.

<center>(ll.786-785)</center>

Far more ominous than supernatural workings or fear upon his mind, these empathetic associations shock Peter as much as any Gothicism might excite the imaginatively challenged reader. Yet, these lines rouse the reader to recognize the intrinsic sympathy at work here. Peter is, in a way, hearing a version of the 'still, sad music of humanity' that the adult 'Wordsworth' of 'Tintern Abbey' credits time with affording him, the sad wisdom of the Ancient Mariner's Wedding-Guest, the 'mourning' of 'Simon Lee's narrator, or the anxiety that rouses Susan Gale. In all cases, a kind of bittersweet sympathy is at work here, a wisdom gained through a somewhat disturbing apprehension (and at times comprehension) of the double-edged nature of sympathy itself.

Benjamin, The Waggoner

So far, I have endeavoured to show how Wordsworth's use of humour in the early poetry of *Lyrical Ballads* and the associated *Peter Bell* have striven to develop a poetics of sympathy as a distinct revision of – and antidote to – conventional moral philosophy. I have considered the relationship between the ironic tone and the ironic mode of writing – that is, the relationship between humour and dramatic interjection – in Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* and argued that an understanding of Wordsworth as an ironist is central to an understanding of his poetic practice. To conclude this chapter, I will now extract these claims further by showing more clearly how they have a bearing on Wordsworth's poetological pursuit, through reading another poem published in 1819 very shortly after *Peter Bell – The Waggoner*.[156] Pitched by Wordsworth himself as a work of fancy – not, crucially, of imagination – *The Waggoner* was subsequently appreciated by some of Wordsworth's friends

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[156] My discussion of the poem considers both the 1806 manuscript (MS. 1) of the poem titled *Benjamin the Waggoner* and its revised and published first edition of 1819, titled *The Waggoner* as found in William Wordsworth, *Benjamin the Waggoner*, ed. by Paul F. Betz, *The Cornell Wordsworth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981). Therefore, I shall distinguish between each version of the poem by referring to the former as *Benjamin the Waggoner* and the latter as *The Waggoner*. For the title of this chapter, I have opted to refer to the poem as *Benjamin the Waggoner*, as this was the more familiar working title for Wordsworth and his circle, and so takes into account the processes of composition it underwent, which is predominantly my interest in the poem here.

and literary circles as a playful poem.[157] In some ways, critical attention to the poem in relation to Wordsworth's other major works has been lacking; *The Waggoner* is seen – at best – as a fine example of Wordsworth's use of humour, but the poet's own presentation of the poem as fanciful and playful has, by and large, stuck, meaning that commentary on it has not really reached the depth that its thematic (and, to an extent, stylistic) predecessors of *Lyrical Ballads* have.[158]

However, the poem we know as *The Waggoner* plays a greater part in understanding Wordsworth's corpus than perhaps contemporary admirers of it may have realized. In the poem, Wordsworth is certainly playing with conventions of satire, most obviously the mock-heroic genre, which he had experimented with in poetry as seemingly discrete as 'The Idiot Boy' and Books V and VII of *The Prelude*. Like Johnny, the Infant Prodigy or the city of London, Benjamin is the subject of satirical poetry. However, unlike those seeking to create the Infant prodigy or to perpetuate a fantastical reconstruction of London, neither Johnny nor Benjamin is the subject of the satire. *The Waggoner* is different in its treatment of satire, because it extends itself beyond that genre. It is, like 'The Idiot Boy', a poem that frequently steps outside of its conventional limitations in order to reposition its generic sympathies. *The Waggoner* is Wordsworth's most extended treatment of the mock-heroic.[159] Yet, just as we begin to read it as a playful mock-heroic tale complete with tongue-in-cheek references to our 'Hero' Benjamin, it progressively becomes clearer that the poet-narrator is presenting Benjamin as a hero in his own way. Rather than become a poster-boy for the perils of irresponsible drinking, as a Hogarth might satirically have had him be or a

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[157] An apt example of this is Henry Crabb Robinson calling the poem 'purely fanciful'. According to Crabb Robinson, the poem has 'far less meaning' than *Peter Bell*. The constant parallels between *Peter Bell* and *Benjamin the Waggoner* – Charles Lamb also saw the poems as connected, something that Wordsworth reiterated when he dedicated *The Waggoner* to Lamb in 1819 after the latter's appreciation of *Peter Bell* – are important because they connect the poem to *Lyrical Ballads*. However, I am also suggesting that this relationship between the three publications is both more complex than perhaps contemporary readers realized and rewarding for the present discussion of the centrality of irony in Wordsworth's poetics. For a more detailed look at the responses quoted and referred to here and for more on reception of the poem, see Betz's Introduction in *Benjamin the Waggoner*, especially pp.17-23.
[158] Even discussion dedicated to Wordsworth's use of comedy and humour, such as Jordan's 'Wordsworth's Humor' tend to dismiss the poem as affecting to be anything more than a mock-heroic comedy – Jordan see pp.87-88.
[159] For more on this see Betz's Introduction in *Benjamin the Waggoner*, especially p.4.

Hannah More might morally have chastised him as in preceding generations, Wordsworth's Benjamin follows his rustic predecessors in *Lyrical Ballads* in becoming a genuine hero in Wordsworth's 'treatment of human life', to take Novalis' phrase.

The evolution of the poem from *Benjamin the Waggoner* in 1806 to *The Waggoner* published in 1819 is important for uncovering a transition in Wordsworth's use of irony as well as understanding better his continuing commitment to what Schlegel and Novalis theorize as *Sympoesie*. I hope that my consideration of the poem will help to contribute towards a greater appreciation of the role irony played in immortalizing. This will, in turn, enable us to see why writing of the self and the epitaphic poetologies of *The Recluse* fragments are so concerned with immortality and memorializing. When both the 1806 and 1819 versions are read in parallel they show just how strong the continuity between *Lyrical Ballads* and the *Recluse* fragments is. In diction and tone the poem belongs to the *Lyrical Ballads* tradition, which is unsurprising, given that it was being worked on and revised alongside *Peter Bell*. However, by the time it reaches the finished published form in 1819 it has become a more descriptive poem, showing a commitment to the longer poems whilst retaining the subject matter and ironic tone of *Lyrical Ballads*. So, *Benjamin the Waggoner* shows its affinity with *Lyrical Ballads*, but *The Waggoner* has moved this along, taking the irony and moral philosophy of the volume and developing some ironic distance and connecting it to Wordsworth's more descriptive lyrics. The result is that both *The Waggoner* and *Benjamin the Waggoner* are more complex than often thought. As I have said, contemporaries such as Henry Crabb Robinson followed Wordsworth's lead in calling it a poem of fancy and thinking it less poetically serious than *Peter Bell*. In fact, however, *The Waggoner* represents a shift from ballads to the ironic narrative lyric of self-representation, and it thus emerges as an important poem: this shift from ballad form to lyric and the shift from a narrator who is anonymous or apparently impartial – however much that impartiality is shown up as false or redundant, as in 'The Idiot Boy' or 'The Thorn' – to one who is personally invested in the story with recourse to biographical detail that touches on the subject's life. Such a poem, then, exposes and explores what many of the poems of *Lyrical Ballads* slyly argued

in their technique. That is, *Benjamin the Waggoner* documents a significant move towards Wordsworth's production of narrative that relinquishes even the most superficial claim to objectivity, but also reinforces the vanity of viewing the subject as external 'other'.

Unlike many of the 'lyrical ballads' that dramatize their subjects from the point of view of an external narrator, we are encouraged to believe that the narrator of *Benjamin the Waggoner* is a version of Wordsworth himself; with playful references to Dove Cottage as the former inn that now houses the 'Poet' we know to be Wordsworth, 'A simple water drinking Bard' (1806 & 1819: l.60),[160] Wordsworth establishes the intersection of Benjamin's life with his own domesticity. The comedy is produced from the explanation of the way in which this intersection is presented:

> For at the bottom of the Brow
> Where once the Dove and Olive-bough
> Offered a greeting of good Ale
> To all who entered Grasmere Vale
> And tempted him who must depart
> To leave it with a joyful heart,
> There where the Dove and Olive-bough
> Once hung, a Poet harbours now –
> A simple water drinking Bard.
> Then why need Ben be on his guard?
> He [?amb]les by, secure and bold –
> Yet thinking on the times of old
> It seems that all looks wond'rous cold.
> He shrugs his shoulders, shakes his head,
> And for the honest Folks within
> It is a doubt with Benjamin
> Whether they be alive or dead.
> (1806:ll.52-68)

Having established Benjamin as 'one of much infirmity' (1806 & 1819: l.51) and one who needs divine protection from 'mishap' (1806 & 1819: l.46), the narrator-poet goes on to explain the potential danger the protagonist could face as being an ale-house. The heroic introduction of the toiling 'Benjamin the Waggoner' and his trusty horses is ironized by the revelation that his Achilles heel might be a public house. Knowing that this has since become a home for a poet with simpler drinking preferences, Benjamin is able to pass

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[160] In 1819: 'A simple water-drinking Bard'.

unthreatened by the temptation to stop by and get drunk. However, we are reminded that the spectre of the past looms over Benjamin as he thinks of 'times of old'; Wordsworth magnifies the humour of a heroic figure whose one vice is drinking by contrasting his precarious situation of an imminent adventure with his own fictional self who is so safe in his domesticity that he could be dead for all Benjamin knows. Wordsworth effaces his 'self' even as he projects it into the narrative: he is there, but he is almost not there. This intersection, then, reminds us of both poet and narrator as liminal figures skirting the action of the tale, but it also makes clear that some version of 'Wordsworth' has invested in Benjamin's story and cannot remain detached from it: Benjamin is not the simple 'object' of the narrative, but a figure who inhabits the same temporal and spatial sphere as the poet/narrator.

The 1819 revisions to this section, though subtle, are significant and it is worth quoting the 1819 version of the passage:

> For, at the bottom of the Brow
> Where once the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH
> Offered a greeting of good ale
> To all who entered Grasmere Vale;
> And called on him who must depart
> To leave it with a joyful heart; -
> There, where the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH
> Once hung, a Poet harbours now, –
> A simple water-drinking Bard;
> Why need our Hero then (though frail
> His best resolves) be on his guard?
> He marches by, secure and bold –
> Yet, while he thinks on times of old,
> It seems that all looks wond'rous cold;
> He shrugs his shoulders – shakes his head –
> And, for the honest folk within,
> It is a doubt with Benjamin
> Whether they be alive or dead!
>   (1819: ll.52-69

In these revisions we see that the mock-heroic humour has been extended further: 'Ben' is now referred to as 'our Hero', the name of the former public house has become a name in capital letters that emphasize its status as both written legend and as a legendary place from 'times of old', and Benjamin the 'Hero' no longer ambles by in a nondescript fashion, but now 'marches' past

his former nemesis.[161] The mock-mythologizing of Benjamin's struggle against the temptation is clearly heightened in the language of 'The Waggoner'. Perhaps less obvious is the way in which the text's typographical revisions lend themselves to this purpose; Wordsworth's revisions transform the poem in terms of diction and tone, but they also draw attention to how the poem is *read*; the punctuation draws attention to the fact that it is a product of print culture, thus distancing it further from the oral tradition *Lyrical Ballads* was ostensibly steeped in. *Benjamin the Waggoner* reads much like a 'lyrical ballad', despite the fact that it is not a ballad in formal terms – the passage quoted above is typical of the way punctuation is used relatively sparingly in the 1806 text to echo the light, bouncy pace of the comic poems in *Lyrical Ballads*. Like Benjamin, everything ambles along without much typographical disruption for the most part. *The Waggoner*, however, tells another story. Or rather, it tells its story in a different manner; the 1806 version of the above passage uses eleven punctuation marks in total, compared to the twenty punctuation marks of 1819. Almost doubling the number of the first version, the latter text transforms the typography of the poem, turning it from a jaunty, evenly-paced text to one that is self-consciously pausing, fragmenting and interrupting itself. The increase in dashes and commas and the introduction of parentheses all serve to draw attention to the fact that this is a poem which will abandon the notion of objective and 'complete' narration in favour of a narrative that will punctuate its own story with pauses and revisions.[162] In Schlegelian terms, it refuses to be a *Gedicht*, that perfectible poem that can be completed, but *Poesie* that simply creates and re-creates (for more on this see the first chapter herein).

For a poem that makes moves to blur the distinctions between the narrator as spectator and the narrator as player *and* poet, such subtle

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[161] The references to Benjamin as a 'Hero' or 'Conqueror' become more frequent in 1819 (see also the change from 'good Benjamin' (1806: 1.94) to 'the Conqueror' (1819: 101), showing that the poet is playing up the mock-heroic aspects of the poem in a way similar to 'The Idiot Boy', thus indicating that *The Waggoner* is a connective between *Lyrical Ballads* and later work.

[162] For more on Wordsworth's use of punctuation and its significance for the poet's fragmentation, see Alexander Regier's *Fracture and Fragmentation in British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.95-118. Regier is particularly interested in the use of the parenthesis to fragment Wordsworth's narrative in *The Prelude*, but I think a similar case can be made for *The Waggoner*, as the fragmentation of the text reveals the instability of the uninterrupted narrative.

typographical shifts are important. In order to focus my discussion of the poem I will limit myself to two further sections of the text for the remainder of the chapter. The first of these is the 'Rock of Names' passage found in 1806, but omitted in 1819, and the second is a very brief comment on the implications of the conclusion of the poem. Both of these, I argue, continue to inform our understanding of the poem as transitional in both the use of irony and writing of the self.

The 'Rock of Names' passage is a particularly poignant section of the 1806 poem:

> Ah! dearest Spot! dear Rock of Names
> From which our Pair thus slaked their flames!
> Ah! deem not this light strain unjust
> To thee and to thy precious trust,
> That file which gentle, brave, and good,
> The [?de]ar in friendship and in blood,
> The hands of those I love the best
> Committed to thy faithful breast!
> No, long as I've a genial feeling
> Or one that stands in need of healing
> I will preserve thy rightful power
> Inviolate till life's final hour.
> A[?ll take with kind]ness then as said
> With a fond heart through playfull head,
> And thou thy record duly keep
> Long after they are laid asleep.
>   (ll.496-511)

The last two lines of the passage suggest that its inclusion is somewhat redundant for Wordsworth, as the rock will 'duly keep' the records of the inscribed names. However, as I shall argue in the final chapter of this thesis, this is not so; the physical memorial is not in itself adequate as an epitaph. Rather, epitaphic narrative – whether verbal or written – is what ensures memorialisation (and thus immortality) for Wordsworth. Why, then, is this written epitaphic narrative omitted from the published version? The passage sketches out the period in Wordsworth's literary career that I have argued in the previous chapter as being his most fruitful collaborative period. That is, it presents a sympoetological moment in the poet's biography. It was removed, ostensibly, to improve the smooth narration of Benjamin's tale. Yet, for a poem that becomes progressively more punctuated and interrupted, this reason

seems unsatisfactory in itself. It is easy to suggest that its omission is a natural result of souring personal relations between Wordsworth and Coleridge, and the breakdown of the circle. However, I am more interested in the fact that the omission limits the intersection of 'Wordsworth' and Benjamin, ensuring that the poem maintains some distance from writing of the self, even if it borders both *Lyrical Ballads* and the autobiographical writing. I am suggesting that the 'Rock of Names' passage makes clear that Wordsworth is working on the elegiac, epitaphic philosophical poetry and the ironic-dramatic philosophy side by side, but that he hesitates to let one subsume the other in *The Waggoner*. Even though the two types of poetry overlap in both the 1806 and 1819 texts, by 1819 he has decided that the biographical, memorializing poetry that the passage represents belongs to the drama of recollection and composition, rather than the ironic-dramatic poems of *Lyrical Ballads* with which *The Waggoner* is more closely affiliated; the elegiac strains of 'a fond heart' cannot adequately be expressed in a poem that results from a 'playfull head'. The passage is incongruous in this poem, not because it disrupts the act of reading, but because it disturbs the poet's own misgivings of incorporating biographical epitaph into 'light strain' even as he commits it therein. So, the omission is an exercise in autobiographical restraint in this instance, but this restraint is necessary in order to maintain the integrity of that autobiographical writing.

The conclusion of the poem, however, hints at the *universal* importance of memorializing, reminding us that some biographical investment of the narrator-poet in the story remains, and once again affirming that there is no clear-cut distinction between the writing of self and the memorializing and dramatizing of another. The poet-narrator's fond and playful memory of Benjamin becomes an epitaph for the waggoner; the self narrating the story of another self effaces the distance between the two in its summation through epitaph. The tricky question of how far the poet's biography can impose on the story of the waggoner is negotiated by turning Benjamin into a genuine hero. The anonymous multitudes who suffer through their travels without his protection draw attention to the importance attached to the waggoner. Thus, the poem's final comment is not on the poet-narrator's self, but on how to memorialize a self.

I have suggested that in *Benjamin the Waggoner*/*The Waggoner* we see a palpable shift from the universalizing moral philosophy of *Lyrical Ballads* to a more dynamic self-reflexivity that is closer to 'Tintern Abbey' and the moral episodes of *The Prelude* (this is particularly the case with Book VII). In making clear the biographical connections between Wordsworth and the poem's narrator, the poet is shifting from the drama of characters and unreliable narrators to the drama of the 'I' and its personal experiences. He has not refracted or split this 'I' as in *The Prelude*, but the poem is a space in which he acknowledges the inherent drama of the recollection and composition of the experiences of the 'I'. Curiously, therefore, *The Waggoner* further undermines a neat linear chronology of Wordsworth's work (the implications this has for reading Wordsworth are explored further in the following chapter). Indeed, it shows that two unifying factors in Wordsworth's major poetry outside of *The Recluse* are irony in narrative and the inherent drama of narrative and composition. These unifying factors, in turn, are the very same that connect this poetry to that of the *Recluse* project. So, a linear reading of Wordsworth's poetry – a codified 'system' a la Francis Jeffrey or Geoffrey Hartman – is too neat and ordered to work, but continuity across the Wordsworth corpus reveals a sustained commitment to both irony and drama. Such a commitment to ironic revision through revisioning is apparent in major work as early as 'Tintern Abbey', but the importance of *Benjamin the Waggoner*/*The Waggoner* lies partly in seeing how this is sustained; by working and reworking the poem, Wordsworth is showing a need to write and rewrite the self in a way that is similar to *The Prelude*. As with 'Tintern Abbey', then, this poem shows a move toward becoming a dramatic character narrating the self a la *The Prelude*, rather than a dramatic self emerging through the narration of others' tales.

Chapter 4. 'Irony is permanent parabasis': 'Wordsworth's' dramatic voice in *The Prelude(s)*, 1805 & 1850

> But though the picture weary out the eye,
> By nature an unmanageable sight,
> It is not wholly so to him who looks
> In steadiness, who hath among least things
> An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts
> As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
> (VII: 1850: ll.731-6; 1805: ll.708-13)

Parabasis

At first glance, the two dominant ways in which drama features within Wordsworth's major poetry seem opposed to one another. On the one hand, there is the dramatic diffusion of voices, narratives and characters from *Lyrical Ballads* to *The Excursion*; instead of a central authorial voice (such as the one found in the 'egotistical' poetry of *The Prelude*), the narrative is delegated to an external voice or character. In the case of *Lyrical Ballads* this is achieved through anonymous narrators who subjectively interpose a seemingly straightforward, linear tale. With *The Excursion*, Wordsworth's reliance on drama is clearer still; the poem's Preface acknowledges the dramatic style and use of characters within the poem.[163] On the other hand, and perhaps less obviously, there is the poet's dependence on drama in his seemingly 'egotistical' poetry. Wordsworth's often-documented preoccupation with how best to represent the visual world joins the latter category of poetic use of drama, most noticeably in *The Prelude*'s Books VI-VIII. While the poem's depiction of London has often been highlighted as a point of imaginative crisis for the poet, it also marks a pivotal moment in the resolution of a wider crisis. The relationship between the London book and Books VI and VIII is central to this resolution, and to the realization of 'Wordsworth's' dramatic voice. Distinct from the dramatic diffusion of

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[163] As noted on above (see n.91 herein), this characterization was criticized by Coleridge as 'a species of ventriloquism', with Coleridge focusing on the weakness of attributing the Pedlar with such unlikely words, before continuing: 'un undue predilection for the *dramatic* form… presents a species of ventriloquism, where two are represented as talking, while in truth one man only speaks.' (*Biographia Literaria*, i, pp.134-5). What Coleridge misses here, though, is the significance of drama as a means to diffuse narrative voice (see also Francis Jeffrey, 'On Wordsworth's *Excursion'*, pp.29-30). This is a theme I shall return to in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

narrative voices and characterization employed in other major works – explored further in the two chapters that follow – Wordsworth's use of drama here is centred upon the creation and representation of the 'self'. The central positioning of Book VII shows up a crisis in this representation, a rupture between two ways of seeing/experiencing nature[164], the dominant aesthetic categories of the late eighteenth-century: the sublime and the panoramic beautiful. The natural sublime impedes Wordsworth's imagination in a way that makes it impossible for him to describe the external world, exemplified by the Simplon Pass and Ravine of Arve episodes of VI. By Book VIII, the beginning of the resolution of this impediment is evident through the panoramic view of Grasmere Fair atop Helvellyn, and the treatment of spectacles and theatricality in Book VII is central to this, as Wordsworth moves from the obstructive sublime to a traditional, ordered natural panorama.

I argue here that the centrality of Book VII in the poem accentuates its critical position in the common creation of a new, reparative aesthetic and philosophical category. This I understand to be Romantic irony, underpinning which are drama and other existing forms of irony.[165] When Schlegel refers to irony as 'permanent parabasis' he highlights a crucial element of Romantic irony. The dramatic potential for Romantic irony is implicit within the concept of parabasis. Parabasis, here understood as conscious interruption of one's own narrative (though it may also relate to conscious interruption by other narrators/characters, as discussed elsewhere in the thesis in relation to *Lyrical Ballads*), is aligned with irony in this tendency to punctuate the narrative or text. In *The Prelude*, this is seen as the main function of Wordsworth's extensive revisionary habit. This suggests that Wordsworth was, like the Jena *Frühromantiker*, engaged in rehabilitating the philosophical value of irony through literature, specifically through the production of the 'philosophical

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[164] See David Simpson, *Wordsworth and the Figurings of the Real* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), p.xi - 'Many of Wordsworth's poems are concerned with the variations, whether momentary or habitual, between how people 'see' things.'

[165] For an early discussion of the significance of German Romantic irony, see Peter Firchow's Introduction in *Lucinde and the Fragments*, especially pp.29-30. Firchow is among the earliest modern Anglophone scholars to produce a critical edition of Schlegel's *Fragments*, and his Introduction discusses the interrelationship of irony and parabasis in Schlegel's conception. See also Wheeler, *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism*, pp.3-4. Though my conclusions differ at times from those that Wheeler draws, her seminal work on Anglo-German Romantic irony – primarily via Coleridge – remains important for any work in this area.

poem'. So, Wordsworth's rejection of Coleridge's rigorous projections for this type of poetry – insistent as they seemed on a *philosophical model for poetry* – does not equate with a failed or abandoned project. Rather, Wordsworth's treatment of the philosophical poem is strikingly similar to German poet-philosopher contemporaries, in that it calls for philosophy to delegate some authority to poetry, not vice versa. In other words, it is philosophical poetry that Wordsworth aims to write, not poetic philosophy.[166]

The poet's most striking use of irony in Book VII – alongside the revisionist dual consciousness employed throughout the poem[167] – is seen in the ironic creation of an urban analogue to the sublime experience, encountered most notably in the previous Book with the Ravine of Arve passage. This provides him with one of his most fruitful imaginative possibilities as a philosophical poet and ironist; a dramatic response to spectacles in the city enables the poet to utilise the seemingly negative, alienating experiences of the city to find a versified unity in the anarchic diversity he describes. Though Wordsworth – in his capacity as both spectator and retrospective poet – is certainly resistant to the excess and vices of the city, manifest in its spectacles and theatricalizing, he nevertheless recognizes their poetic and philosophical value. In the following discussion I shall argue that his successful manipulation of spectacle is achieved through dramatic interruption of his own narrative. This is framed by his handling of two popular contemporary spectacles, the panorama and phantasmagoria. As I shall demonstrate below, these are denigrated for their mimetic and/or sensationalist properties, making them visual analogues to the Gothic and unnaturally refined types of literature denounced in the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*. They are, therefore, visual counterparts of the 'analytic' writing that Schlegel criticized in theory and Wordsworth in practice; the panorama and phantasmagoria are akin to 'analytic' ways of seeing and, so, they seek to

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[166] See Chapter 1, n.13 for more on this. However, it would not only be unfair, but also short-sighted to dismiss wholesale Coleridge's literary theory or practice, as discussed in the second chapter of this thesis.

[167] See Simpson, *Wordsworth and the Figurings of the Real*, p.xviii - 'In many of Wordsworth's poems, the 'first sight' produces either confusion or misreading, and must be corrected by the second look. It becomes important, then, that we live in a society which allows us *time* for the second time.' Although the conclusions I come to are sometimes in contention with his, Simpson's terms are nevertheless a valuable starting point for my discussion of irony in Book VII.

inspire pre-conditioned aesthetic responses from their audiences. As spectacles they dominate over the poet's senses and imagination, threatening to overturn his ability to process mentally, and subsequently poeticize, the London experience. Adapted as modes of visualizing, however, they restore the poetic imagination, enabling Wordsworth to alternate his narrative perspective between the solitary condescension of overviews of the city, and dizzying accounts of walking the streets. Thus, what emerges from the manipulation of 'analytic' ways of seeing is a 'synthetic' and ironic dramatization of London, much like the 'synthetic' writing produced in *Lyrical Ballads*, as seen in the previous chapter. Through considering Book VII in relation to its position between two natural examples of the chaotic sublime and the panoramic beautiful, I aim to show how these descriptions of the poet in the midst of barely contained crowds – the daily 'hubbub' of the metropolis – and the narrative mastery over this chaos, are enabled through irony – here equated with parabasis. My argument is therefore presented by reading the text on two levels, structural and thematic. What unites this manifestation of irony with the former one of dual consciousness is the fact that they are both concerned with 'ways of seeing', with Wordsworth able to explore their potential for ways of *showing*.

The title of this chapter comes from Friedrich Schlegel's famous fragment stating, 'Die Ironie ist eine permanente Parekbase' [*Irony is permanent parabasis*].[168] For Wordsworth, too, irony appears to be permanent parabasis. In fact, parabasis is the crux of Book VII. However, I believe his parabasis – or dramatic interruption – throughout *The Prelude* has been misread as a *disruption*, and, in the case of London, a failure to account for that experience.[169] Much of Wordsworth's experimentation with the dramatic voice demonstrates irony as parabasis, though, as noted above, *The Prelude*

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[168] *Philosophische Lehrjahre I*, in Friedrich Wilhelm Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. by Ernst Behler, Anstett and Eichner, 35 vols (Munich: Schoningh, 1958-), xviii, p.85.
[169] This appears to be the dominant tendency, following Geoffrey Hartman's reading of *The Prelude* in *Wordsworth's Poetry*. Though it is a work of undoubted importance, I think reluctance to break away from its view that Wordsworth's narrative is prone to constant unwitting diversions and disruptions (see especially pp.218-236) overlooks the poet's revisionary impulse as a modern mode of writing itself. In reconsidering Hartman's insistence that the poet is 'waylaid' during Book VII's narrative, I hope to show how Wordsworth's aesthetics accounts for his self-reflexivity, i.e. how irony forms the revisionary habit.

stands out with its purpose of creating the 'self'.[170] The present concern is with *permanent* parabasis, a Schlegelian innovation in the theory of irony and a practical concern for Wordsworth in creating the 'self' and finding 'Wordsworth's' dramatic voice. *The Prelude* consists of permanent parabasis; for example, each of the 'spots of time', episodes with the solitaries, and effusions/revisions are instances of conscious interruptions of the linear (and thus not always chronological) narrative of the poem. Paul de Man's discussion of the paradox inherent in the concept of 'permanent parabasis' is interesting here.[171] De Man takes up previous commentators' observations that permanence appears to contradict the idea of parabasis (a single interruption or turn in rhetoric/register), and that this is the point of Schlegel's theory of irony. This can be extended, quite usefully I think, to Wordsworth's own revisionary poetic practice of dual consciousness, which *depends* upon permanent parabasis, the ability to interrupt one's own narrative in order to revise it. This is as much philosophical as it is poetic – irony becomes a necessary mode of writing, not just a literary device invoked for a certain purpose.

Of course, cross-cultural parabasis itself is not specifically a Romantic technique in literature and drama, and Schlegel and his contemporaries are not alone in drawing their examples from the Elizabethan stage and beyond. The introductory material of Goethe's *Faust* (such as the address to the audience) may have been influenced to some degree by the examples of parabasis he found in Shakespeare (and others), whom he greatly admired, as much as the Greek chorus.[172] Though it is speculative to suggest that Wordsworth's own handling of Bartholomew Fair was influenced by Ben Jonson's play, he would nevertheless have been conscious of the dramatic – and dramatized –

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[170] Though it may be more clearly seen in certain *Lyrical Ballads* – notably 'Simon Lee', 'The Thorn', 'The Idiot Boy', and 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill' – this is done through an anonymous narrator, rather than any recognizable version of 'Wordsworth' as we might imagine him. These shall be read in the following chapter, within the context of the *Mischgedicht*.

[171] See his *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. by Andrzej Warminski (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp.178-99.

[172] See Goethe's and Herder's efforts to re-evaluate German literature and nationalism through readings of Shakespeare: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Shakespeare: A Tribute' (1771) in *Essays on Art and Literature, Goethe's Collected Works*, trans. by Ellen & Ernest H. von Nardroff (New York: Suhrkamp, 1986), iii; see also Herder, 'Shakespeare' (1773) in *Selected Writings on Aesthetics, trans. by Gregory Moore* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)

possibilities of the event. It is these possibilities that distinguish Wordsworth's use of parabasis in the formation of an ironic mode of writing; the key difference between this and earlier examples of parabasis in drama is that in Romantic theory and literature it now reflects the 'I', which then takes on a dramatic role rather than the drama producing the 'I'.[173] The represented 'self' externalizes its sense of being and drama, like philosophy, becomes a means to recovering self-consciousness through art. So, whilst acknowledging its debt to it, the Romantic use of drama subverts previous efforts at self-reflexivity in drama, and it is this that makes Book VII especially interesting for any discussion of parabasis.

If the 'self' of autobiographical poetry is constantly subject to revision until the notion of a single, stable identity itself is subverted, it comes to embody the Schlegelian conception of modern literature and its author(s) as forever 'in the state of becoming'. What this means in the widest context of Anglo-German Romantic irony is that Wordsworth's mode of writing may be located not only among his contemporary thinker-writers, but also among the writings of those opposed to his apparent egotism. As the dramatic application of irony to the narrative of philosophical poetry, the use of parabasis means that Wordsworth's poetry may not, after all, be at such a far remove from, for example, the Keatsian 'poetical Character'. Though that concept was introduced by Keats in critical response to Wordsworth's poetic practice, Book VII of *The Prelude* can be seen to establish its author, even in an autobiographical work, as the 'most unpoetical of creatures', the ironist-poet.[174]

'…the NE PLUS ULTRA of optical delusion'

I began by suggesting that Book VII is pivotal to the resolution of a visual and imaginative crisis and it is to the visual scene/object I wish to return now in order to argue that Wordsworth dramatizes his reception of spectacles, and so

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[173] This is also the case when we consider more prominent examples of parabasis punctuating writing of the self, such as Diderot's *Jacques the Fatalist* or Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, both of which Schlegel sees as exemplary ironic texts – see *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.29.

[174] See his letter to Richard Woodhouse, dated 27 October, 1818, in *Letters*, ed. by Rollins, i, p.387.

rescues the senses and imagination from an excess of sensory stimuli that London presents him with. Sandwiched between the respective sublime and panoramic experiences of nature as Book VII is, it is dramatic parabasis that allows the chaotic urban landscape to become comprehensible in some form to Wordsworth. Wordsworth takes both the natural sublime of Book VI and the panoramic totalizing of Book VIII as models on which to project dramatically his narrative. As with the *Lyrical Ballads*' critique of the popular gothic genre in contemporary literature, Book VII continues with a critique of contemporary popular entertainment, this time in the visual forms of the panorama and phantasmagoria.[175] And again, as with the gothic parodies of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth subverts conventions of the popular and/or sensational to reveal their instabilities and in turn produce 'philosophical poetry'. Unlike arguments developing Geoffrey Hartman's, like Neil Hertz's, which have Wordsworth's writing here in crisis, struggling against a sublime aesthetics it cannot abandon, my reading has him confidently critiquing public theatricality of a kind he can stand back from and dramatically entertain in his own writing as one aesthetic posture among others he can adapt before moving on to another.

Before I turn to Wordsworth's treatment of these in Book VII, it is useful to consider how the spectacles themselves were presented. Both exploded onto the London entertainment scene towards the end of the century and were hailed as visual phenomena, the panorama paradoxically seen as both masterful artistic imitation of nature, and a new way of perceiving nature itself – what would be considered in David Simpson's terms to be both the 'first sight' and 'second look'.[176] The panorama (one of those 'spectacles

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[175] For a reading of the possible interrelationship between these two spectacles themselves in Romantic London, see Iain McCalman, 'Mystagogues of revolution: Cagliostro, Loutherbourg and Romantic London', in *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840*, ed. by James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.177-203. McCalman's essay stands out in a relatively under-researched area of scholarship on these two forms of spectacles.

[176] For a reading of the technological implications of the panorama and the concept of visual 'reality' in modernity, see Peter Otto's article, 'Between the Virtual and the Actual: Robert Barker's Panorama of London and the Multiplication of the Real in late eighteenth-century London', in *Romanticism on the Net*, 47 (2007), [http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2007/v/n46/016130ar.html]. Otto's article is a useful rehabilitation of the dominant critical tendency: 'In contemporary criticism the panorama is routinely associated with the modern attempt to contain everything within a single view or picture.' (3). For an in-depth contextual discussion of the contemporary critical and popular

within doors' discussed early on in the Book) was at the height of its popularity at the end of the eighteenth century. The illusory nature of the 360-degree painting so deplored by the poet here was, in fact, celebrated by many spectators, who praised its 'realism'. As typical subjects of panoramic painting included natural landscapes, cityscapes, and artefactual ruins within which one could immerse one's self, it is perhaps unsurprising that Wordsworth denigrates these as mere imitations. The phantasmagoria was also marketed as both a unique scientific and aesthetic innovation. This spectacle was born out of magic-lantern shows circulating around Europe earlier in the century, with the phantasmagoria light show performed in 1790s Vienna, typically involving eerie supernatural imagery such as ghosts and skeletons, accompanied by music.[177]

Relatively few contemporary accounts of the phantasmagoria are available to us; however, the opening paragraph of a pamphlet from 1805 is typical in its reiteration of wider marketing strategies, highlighting such spectacles as typical of an enlightened age.[178] The exhibitors' astonishing claims for their show include promises of entertainment encompassing the fields of 'STATUARY, PAINTING, MUSIC, ACOUSTICS, MECHANICS, OPTICS, and AEROSTATICS',[179] using

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reception of the early panorama, including Barker's marketing of his exhibitions, see Markman Ellis, ''Spectacles within doors': Panoramas of London in the 1790s', in *Romanticism*, 14 2 (2008), pp.133-148. Ellis' discussion stands out among recent scholarship on the panorama, by focusing on the presentation and reception of the panorama, a focus made more important by the fact that no original panorama remains today.

[177] Though generally under-researched, the history of the phantasmagoria and related light shows is traced in Mervyn Heard's *Phantasmagoria: The Secret Life of the Magic Lantern* (Hastings: The Projection Box, 2006), and Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[178] Schirmer and Scholl, *Sketch of the Performances; and a short account of the ORIGIN, HISTORY, and EXPLANATION of the Ergascopia, Phantasmagoria, Pantascopia, Mesoscopia, &c. And the Invisible Girl* (London: Warde & Betham, 1805), p.6. There is also a gendered discourse operating within such marketing strategies that works along the targeting of classes in the opening paragraph of the pamphlet: 'In less civilized and enlightened ages, and countries, the study of the Polite Arts and Sciences was as much impeded by grave *pedantry* and *dogmatism* --- as it was degraded by impudent *charlatanism* and *mysticity*. However, in proportion as Arts and Sciences have triumphed over *quacks* and *pedants* of all descriptions, they have been courteously received by the Polite World, and they now begin to enliven the cabinets and studies, and even the toilets, of all people of fashion.' The reference to 'toilets', typically feminine spaces, suggests that the phantasmagoria was deemed suitable for 'Polite' women as well as gentlemen. It is useful to compare such self-presentation to marketing of the panorama, which, as Markman Ellis reiterates, has been commented on by scholars in relation to its suitability for women, who required no aesthetic education in order to appreciate the spectacles – see Ellis, 'Spectacles within doors', p.142.

[179] Schirmer and Scholl, p.6.

far different and most difficult scientific construction, such as would have done honour to Sir Isaac Newton himself. All the learned professors in the difficult science of Optics, who saw them produced on the continent, readily confessed, that these *Ergoscopic* Phantoms produce the NE PLUS ULTRA of optical delusion, on the human vision.[180]

But such promotion betrays its own popular nature by investing in the very 'optical delusion' it seeks to denounce, a fact not lost on Wordsworth in his ironic linguistically-phantasmagoric account of Bartholomew Fair, in which the poet can be seen to be attacking the claims made by exhibitors of offering a sublime or epistemological experience. In the poet's eyes, such spectacles only cater for the city's appetite for sensationalism and illusion, and I return to these claims and Wordsworth's response to them below in my discussion of Bartholomew Fair. Wordsworth's critique of the panorama is similarly based on a denunciation of distortion and illusion:

> At leisure, then, I viewed, from day to day,
> The spectacles within doors, birds and beasts
> Of every nature, and strange plants convened
> From every clime; and, next, those sights that ape
> The absolute presence of reality,
> Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land,
> And what earth is, and what she has to shew.
> I do not here allude to subtlest craft,
> By means refined attaining purest ends,
> But imitations, fondly made in plain
> Confession of man's weakness and his loves.
> (1850: ll.229-239; 1805: ll.244-255)

This denigration of the imitative spectacle by the poet continues to attract attention as epitomizing the poet's dissatisfaction with 'those Spectacles within doors' that embody the falseness of the city. Ross King's reading of Book VII of *The Prelude*, for example, was one of the first to explore fully Wordsworth's distrust of a constructed means of representation, and remains insightful in many respects. King's association of visual and linguistic representation is useful in understanding the depiction of London as a poetic crisis point:

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[180] Schirmer and Scholl, p.20.

Wordsworth's panorama may likewise be understood as a figure which reflects a prior original, in this case "Nature's circumambient scenery" (257). As such the panorama is a secondary inscription which mimics and purports to simulate nature but, like the carpenter's painting, confuses itself with and thereby threatens the real thing, the scene of nature. This threat is not confined to a painted scene like the panorama but exists in linguistic representation as well.[181]

Here, King goes to the heart of Wordsworth's criticism of the panorama spectacle, as well as the poet's perceptions of the challenges it presents to his own representative role. However, it seems to me that King's reading of the *function* of the panorama in Book VII misses the mark somewhat with its suggestion that Wordsworth attempts – and fails – to gain an all-embracing view, placing his reading in line with those noted by Peter Otto:

> The introduction of the panorama is in some respects ironic here, for these exhibitions purport to accomplish what Wordsworth himself attempts but ultimately fails to execute in Book Seventh, namely, a panoptic view, in his case one of the city of London.[182]

The irony is read as something purely external, and is typical of a general tendency of critics like King to underestimate the role of poet as ironist, seen even in the case of *Lyrical Ballads*, where Wordsworth's irony has been, to an extent, recognized as a consciously employed literary strategy. When that work is discussed in relation to Wordsworth's later poetry, it is often marked by its difference to the later work, a move seen as punctuated by 'curious ironies that make up the history of *Lyrical Ballads*',[183] with the irony generated by the poet himself in the texts rarely examined. Irony is seen as something operating outside of Wordsworth's design as a poet, as

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[181]   Ross King, 'Wordsworth, Panoramas, and the Prospect of London', in *Studies in Romanticism*, 32, 1 (1993), pp.57-73, p.64.

[182]   King, p.57. This reading of the poet's handling of the panorama as being a failure to achieve an all-embracing perspective of the city is also present in Theresa Kelley's important study of the sublime and beautiful in Wordsworth's poetry, *Wordsworth's Revisionary Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp.109-110. Though I am often in agreement with Kelley's reading, particularly her reading of the ever-shifting aesthetics of Wordsworth from sublimity to the beautiful and back again (p.92), her insistence on Book VII as a failure of expression seems symptomatic of a critical reliance on Hartman's reading of Wordsworth. For example, Kelley's assertion that, 'What he [Wordsworth] attempts but cannot achieve in this book without making himself monstrous is a manageable perspective on London, one that would allow him to read what he sees. Instead, London offers an "endless stream of men and moving things," which he can at best catalogue' (p.109), overlooks the reparative function of shifting perspectives within the Book.

[183]   See Stephen M. Parrish, *The Art of the Lyrical Ballads*, pp.134-5.

symptomatic of his waning poetic thinking, and his supposed move away from experimentation with dramatic poetry. However, it would be simplistic to suggest here that Wordsworth attempted to emulate, without a trace of irony, the panoramic view that he denounced, as this would not account for his description of Bartholomew Fair. Wordsworth's purpose in recreating the panoramic Bartholomew Fair enables him to reject the notion of an all-embracing view of the anarchic city (as imitated by contemporary panorama exhibitions) whilst still maintaining the distance from the Fair that irony/parabasis necessitates.

'the endless stream of men and moving things'

What Wordsworth attempts to create in Book VII is an ironic urban analogue to the natural sublime, and his passage highlighting the aesthetic, imaginative, and sensory failure of the panorama is consciously enveloped in the language of sublimity, both within and outside of the book. It is no coincidence that the height of the poet's representative and imaginative 'crisis' should be presented at the centre of the entire poem, less still that it follows from the natural sublimity of the Alps experience of Book VI, and precedes the natural alternative to the panorama of Grasmere Fair that opens the eighth book. Irony here consists in the recognition of doubling and repetition, which the poet then extends in his poeticized simulation of a sublime experience. Hence, the description of the city as an 'endless stream of men and moving things' (1850: l.151; 1805: l.158) echoes the infinity of the dynamic natural universe, 'the sick sight / And giddy prospect of the raving stream' (1850: ll.632-3; 1805: ll.564-5). Owing to the rhetorical function it serves, this emphatic application of the language of the natural sublime to the urban experience is not in itself interesting until its place within Book VII itself is considered; here, another redoubling of the language of sublimity can be found, with the failure of the panorama situated between the lines describing the 'endless stream of men', and the dizzying account of Bartholomew Fair, though this time the language relates to a sensory excess, not the 'usurpation' from which 'the light of sense / goes out' (VI, 1850: ll.600-1; 1805: ll.534-5), and it is this refiguring of sublimity that is interesting.

The 1850 revisions to the 'endless stream of men' passage condense it considerably, dispensing with 1805's ll.158-171, including the not-entirely tautological 'illimitable walk' (1805: l.159) – although both 'endless' and 'illimitable' indicate infinity, I suggest the omission of the latter word is significant in that it is indicative of direction, thus directly antithetical to the language of sublimity so necessary to Wordsworth's ironic (re)presentation of representation.[184] Instead, the endlessness of the city is now accentuated by a rapidly accumulating list of a mounting sensory assault, 'the quick dance / Of colours, lights, and forms; the deafening [1805 'Babel'] din' (1850: ll.154-5; 1805: ll.156-7):

> Rise up, thou monstrous anthill on the plain
> Of a too busy world! Before me flow,
> Thou endless stream of men and moving things!
> Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes –
> With wonder heightened, or sublimed by awe –
> On strangers, of all ages; the quick dance
> Of colours, lights, and forms; the deafening din;
> The comers and the goers face to face,
> Face after face; the string of dazzling wares,
> Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,
> And all the tradesmen's honours overhead;
> Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page
> With letters huge inscribed from top to toe;
> Stationed above the door, like guardian saints,
> There, allegoric shapes, female or male,
> Or physiognomies of real men
> (1850: ll.149-164)

Wordsworth's narrative is here broken up and heavily punctuated, which could easily be read as acknowledgement of the breakdown of linguistic representation, under pressure from external stimuli. However, in eliminating

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[184] Simon Jarvis' *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song* stands out in recent scholarship not only for its rehabilitation of Book VII as meriting lengthy critical attention, but also Wordsworth's thinking in relation to his poetry. For a discussion of infinity in relation to these lines and the London experience in general, see pp.137-152. Jarvis points out that the word 'illimitable' suggests the poet's sense that 'one can never in truth *arrive* anywhere, and thus that one can never in fact *go* anywhere either' (p.140). I would add to this by suggesting that the 1850 omission of this word indicates Wordsworth's reluctance to commit to commenting on the logical progression of any kind of 'walk' altogether, so that by the 1850 text notions of circularity and infinity are preserved. In these early lines, written to make clear the tone of the Book (and nature of the city) as a whole, the omission of the reference to walking itself may also be indicative of Wordsworth's intention of shifting fluidly from street-level to bird's-eye views of the metropolis, an intention that might be played down were walking to be seen as the primary means of observation.

the expository elements of narrative and reducing it to the largely descriptive, Wordsworth is addressing the success of imagination as much as admitting the limitations of language. David Simpson is among those who have commented on the significance of Wordsworth's urban critique, arguing that a rural environment was essential to the success of the poetic imagination, as it alone afforded the poet with the time necessary for the 'second look', 'This environment had to be rural (indeed marginal), sparsely populated by both natural objects and other people, and governed by a subsistence rather than a surplus economy.'[185] He rightly identifies the importance of the 'second look' in Wordsworth's philosophy of perception and imagination. However, taking the rural as the sole space that engenders this 'second look' undermines the distinction between the poet's own 'second look' and his presentation of it. It is true of *The Prelude* as a whole that much of Wordsworth's irony lies in being able to create this 'second look' through revision, and, in the case of Book VII, through a conscious urban reconstruction of the natural sublime experience encountered elsewhere in the poem. The 'second look' in this way becomes possible for the reader, even when the temporal and geographical restrictions Wordsworth's philosophy ordinarily eschews are in place. The poet has already corrected the 'improper figurations'[186] of the initial perception, by acknowledging and re-working them through the poetry itself, and nowhere is this more manifest than in his portrayal of London.

While 'imagination' has become an unfashionable focus for Wordsworthian criticism, I find much in John Whale's *Imagination Under Pressure, 1789-1832* that re-evaluates the reactive potential for the celebrated faculty, reinstating it as both multifaceted and topical. Whale's insistence on viewing imagination as 'a reflex or a reaction to an epistemological, cultural, or representational crisis rather than always invoking its hegemonic control or potential'[187] is complementary to the way in which I view it as operating in Wordsworth's representation and ironic manipulation of the phantasmagoria. Similarly, Whale's emphasis on the paradoxical nature of imagination – 'even when imagination is shown or seen to fail… it maintains a necessary and vital

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[185] See, David Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination*, pp.59-60.
[186] Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination*, p.60.
[187] See John Whale, *Imagination Under Pressure, 1789-1832: Aesthetics, Politics and Utility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p.11.

presence'[188] – persuasively sums up the success of Wordsworth's narrative, rescuing it from the status of mere 'catalogue', to which it has been relegated by even the most astute critics.[189] Wordsworth the revisionary poet is not merely listing the sensory overload here – instead this torrent of words records the sights, sounds, and motion of the city as a phantasmagoria itself, so that this excess of the metropolis might be manipulated linguistically in order to invigorate and perpetuate the narrative. This is done to the point that the spectacular nature of London is no longer resisted.[190] Rather, the possibility of theatricalizing an experience that might otherwise be defeated by spectacle presents itself to the poet, and anticipates the Book's climactic Bartholomew Fair account.

'Upon some showman's platform'

This importance of theatricality in response to spectacle in Wordsworth's exploration of representation has largely been critically undermined. Even where theatrically has been commented on, there is a tendency to follow in the kind of mode of thinking that has resulted in focus on the 'anti-theatricality' of the Romantics.[191] This is the case even in readings that otherwise

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[188] Whale, p.2.

[189] Again, scholarship has been too quick to follow Hartman's assessment that Book VII has little of interest, other than the Maid of Buttermere and Blind Beggar passages (*Wordsworth's Poetry*, p.235).

[190] Ultimately, my reading here is therefore in contention with those such as William Galperin's: 'book 7 is largely about the resistance of spectacle (or of the tyranny of the eye, as Wordsworth later describes it) in the experience of spectacle.' – see *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p.118. Though Galperin's study is valuable for the sustained consideration it gives to the Romantic response to modes of visuality, his reading of Wordsworth's response to spectacles does not account for how those spectacles ultimately frame the poet's narrative. More recently, re-evaluations of Wordsworth's London experience are emerging. See, for example, Eugene Stelzig, 'Wordsworth's Invigorating Hell: London in Book 7 of The Prelude (1805)', in *Romanticism and the City*, ed. by Larry Peer (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp.181-196. On the Bartholomew Fair passage, Stelzig writes: 'Wordsworth's antipathy to the infernal urban spectacle and his disgust with the outrageous festivities are presented with a gusto that makes the description of it a satirical tour de force' (p.184). While I concur with Stelzig's fundamental argument – that London provides the poet with a renewed imaginative impetus for narrative – I disagree that Book VII is wholly satirical, or that the energy of the narrative comes from its satirical force. Rather, I shall argue here that Book VII is an *ironic* triumph.

[191] Though there have been notable exceptions to this tendency and the importance of the theatre has gradually gained the attention of scholars. For a reading of the inherent theatricality in Wordsworth's public persona, see Judith Pascoe's *Romantic Theatricality: Gender, Poetry, and Spectatorship* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp.194-228.

rehabilitate Book VII as a success of imagination, such as Stuart Allen's essay, 'The centrality of the theatre to his vision of London also disrupts any confirmation of a stable identity that is predicated on a disinterested and objective perspective or prospect.'[192] Allen's re-evaluation of the complexity behind what received wisdom sees as the poet's desire for organic unity is accurate. However, in suggesting Wordsworth seeks a 'stable identity', it undermines the function of parabasis, the constant, and conscious, interruption of writing of the 'self'. Like Hartman, Allen reads the chaotic narrative as being disrupted by external stimuli. For reasons outlined above and expounded below I find this view, though influential, unsatisfactory; I do not think it is easy to account for the poet's revisionary habit without reading irony (in this form, parabasis) as central to his ultimate goal, that drive towards self-consciousness. Additionally, this view does not account for the objectivity Wordsworth ultimately manages to create through his ironic representation of the panorama and phantasmagoria. The poet's overtly ironic treatment of 'objective perspective or prospect' when faced with spectacle, cannot be overlooked:

> For once, the Muse's help will we implore,
> And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings,
> Above the press and danger of the crowd,
> Upon some showman's platform.
> (1850: ll.682-85; 1805: ll.656-659)

Though the poet has already demonstrated the failure of the panorama as a spectacle, he nevertheless recognizes its potential for dramatization in his poetic representation of London. As with the phantasmagoria, a spectacle that would otherwise threaten his vision – and so representation of the city – is successfully adapted to negotiate the chaos of the Fair. Wordsworth's tone is

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For a reading of revolutionary politics and theatricality see Mary Jacobus, *Romanticism, Writing and Sexual Difference: Essays on* The Prelude (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 'That Great Stage where Senators Perform': Macbeth and the Politics of Romantic Theatre, pp. 33-68 – although this has not been my focus Jacobus' important readings have been influential in forming my own. See also Frederick Burwick's *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) for a recent study of the self-conscious anti-illusionism of Romantic theatre. Burwick's study of audience participation in the illusion of the theatre is particularly interesting when considering the mutuality of irony.
[192] See Stuart Allen, 'Metropolitan Wordsworth: Allegory as Affirmation and Critique in *The Prelude*', in *Romanticism on the Net*, 40, (2005), [http://www.erudit.org/revue/RON/2005/v/n40/012461ar.html].

ironic here; the elevated position he assumes is wholly imagined. And in assuming this imagined vantage-point, he demonstrates his ability to contain a vision of a spectacle 'that lays, / If any spectacle on earth can do, / The whole creative powers of man asleep!' (1850: ll.679-681; 1805: ll.653-655), by ironically applying the panorama's principles to the phantasmagoria-like experience of Bartholomew Fair in order to emphasize the impossibility of containing the sensory excess of the city.

The poet can therefore escape the sublimity of the scene. This is significant, as the phantasmagoria and the technological light shows it spawned were themselves predicated on a type of sensationalist imitation of the sublime experience; as Marina Warner has noted, 'The intrinsic subject-matter of phantasmagoria turned to spectral illusion, morbid, frequently macabre, supernatural, fit to inspire terror and dread, those qualities of the sublime.'[193] However, Wordsworth's narrative aims to expose this as delusional and as a visual extension of the gothic literature that his *Lyrical Ballads* critiqued. For, despite the attempt at marketing them as sensory stimulants to a sublime experience, their own recourse to sensationalism divests the shows of this imaginative status.[194] Much like gothic literature, the 'terror and dread' they inspire amounts to nothing but the oft-quoted 'craving for extraordinary incident' to which 'the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves,'[195] and Wordsworth deconstructs the pseudo-epistemological claims of both panorama and phantasmagoria by following the ironic panoramic viewpoint quoted above with,

What a shock[196]
For eyes and ears! What anarchy and din,
Barbarian and infernal, - a phantasma
Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound!
(1850: ll.685-8; 1805: ll.659-662)

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[193] Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, p.148. For a discussion of the contemporary associations of Barker's panorama and the sublime experience, see Ellis, p.135.
[194] This is the mechanics of parabasis, a moment in which a 'character' in a Greek drama, the Chorus, is used to interrupt critically and comment on the limitations of 'character' in the main protagonists. Parabasis makes Wordsworth both spectator/narrator and character, making him function as the traditional Chorus. Though his interruptions are not comic, they are often wry and critical, as he becomes both writer and critic of his previous self and the external world.
[195] *Prose Works*, i (1800: p.150; 1850: 151).
[196] 1805: hell.

The word 'phantasma' here is the vital connection between the attack on the Fair and the wider spectacle of the city of which it is representative. Significantly, this was an 1816 revision from the 1805 original text, where Wordsworth used ''tis a dream'[197]; the difference between a 'dream' and a 'phantasma' immediately externalizes – and gothicizes – the subject under attack.

As mentioned above, the phantasmagoria was marketed as being at once a scientific, artistic, epistemological, and imaginative breakthrough.[198] In her innovative study of the uncanny in the eighteenth century, Terry Castle traces the history of phantasmagoria as,

> a way of approaching a larger topic, namely, the history of the imagination. For since its invention, the term *phantasmagoria*, like one of Freud's ambiguous primary words, has shifted meaning in an interesting way. From an initial connection with something external and public (and artificially produced "spectral" illusion), the word has now come to refer to something wholly internal or subjective: the phantasmic imagery of the mind. This metaphoric shift bespeaks, I think, a very significant transformation in human consciousness over the past two centuries – what I have called elsewhere the spectralization or "ghostifying" of mental space.[199]

I am suggesting here that Wordsworth was conscious of this duality of the spectacle, and sought to maintain a distinction between the external and internal, thus prefiguring this transformation that Castle notes. The irony is elucidated by the conscious revision the poet makes to his own perception with the word 'phantasma', thus allowing him to represent the spectacle itself as purely extrinsic to the imagination. By (re)presenting the phantasmagoric experience of the Fair as subject to the imagination, as another 'character' which his poetry can adapt, the poet is thus able to refute the connotations of sublimity claimed by the producers and audiences of the mimetic spectacles of the city, both panoramas and phantasmagoria. Were these claims to be

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[197] See *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* (Cornell), p.727 for the transcription and revision details.
[198] Warner also notes this contemporary emphasis on epistemology, p.151 - 'Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artist-showmen, like Robertson and Horner, were moving on all fronts to expand the knowledge and scope of human faculties.'
[199] Terry Castle, 'Phantasmagoria and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie', in *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.140-167, p.142.

successful, then popular entertainment would have vulgarized and put into crisis the imaginative core of Wordsworth's experience, the very task of claiming a high poetic vocation for an experience that is aligned with such sensationalist amusement. However, by adapting panoramas and phantasmagoria as other characters with which he can appear on stage, the poet evades the very terms of this crisis created for him by criticism from that of Geoffrey Hartman onwards. Plainly stated, he is able to order linguistically the sensory excess, and to bring a unity to the disparity he perceives. Thus, the poetic imagination is preserved from the external 'sights that ape / The absolute presence of reality' (1850: ll.232-3; 1805: ll.248-9) through its poetic power to dramatize them.

'…a pause, a contrast, a point of departure…'

Although Bartholomew Fair is singled out here as the climactic example of parabasis in Book VII, it is worth emphasizing the structure of the Book itself – as a series of spectacles or 'scenes' strung together. Stood alone, each of these 'scenes' replace the 'blank confusion' of the natural sublime that Wordsworth has hitherto described by their incomprehensibility. However, when read together as they are presented, they can be seen as the most striking exposition of 'permanent parabasis' in the entire poem. Shifting scenes offered in rapid succession impart to the reader some of the 'dizzying' incomprehensibility of the sensory experience of London. And in doing so, they also provide Wordsworth the opportunity to communicate the philosophical incomprehensibility [*Unverständlichkeit*] that is really signified in his treatment of various manifestations of sublimity. The permanence of the parabasis is perhaps most clearly seen in Book VII's overall *mise-en-scène*; with each scene Wordsworth gives the reader a conscious interruption of a linear narrative, seamlessly moving from such seemingly disparate passages as descriptions of sensory overload, to the (1850) 'genius' of Burke effusion, theatre, the blind Beggar, the Maid of Buttermere, etc. What these – importantly – seek to reinforce is the sheer diversity of the London experience, nowhere else more pronounced; among the things the poet is confronted with are commerce, politics, spectacle, leisure, urban topography,

racial diversity, the gendered exploitation of individual tragedy for urban entertainment, and social alienation. With such diversity of subject matter, the poet's task of representation can only be attempted through a permanent parabasis, in this case a series of overwhelming scenes that, on the crudest level, seem to align the very experience of being with a phantasmagoric spectacle. The irony – that *permanente Parekbase* – though, is what saves the experience from being reduced to this most basic level, and instead enables the poet to experience his being as interrupted, not disrupted. Poetic expertise rather than poetic crisis is on display here.

I would suggest here that, along with the sublime, the inclusion of the grotesque in Book VII needs to be accounted for. The way in which I intend to do this is by reading – and so, in a sense, 'viewing' – the individual 'scenes' that Wordsworth presents as part of a global attempt to convey parabasis. The grotesque elements are very interestingly positioned throughout the book as reminders of London as a sort of sensory and imaginative pandemonium, as they are woven into episodes that may be seen as more traditionally 'Wordsworthian', those specific passages on individuals who may remain nameless but are by no means without identity for the poet. So, the 'Maid of Buttermere' and the 'blind Beggar' make their appearances between shifting scenes describing the grotesquery of the massive spectacle that is the city. Unusually for *The Prelude* (and, barring the sonnets, most of Wordsworth's poetry – and certainly his philosophical poetry), Wordsworth's 1850 text includes a cameo of a named and well-known public figure in the form of Burke. While this passage undoubtedly has a profound bearing on the direction the poet's revised text takes, I refer to his appearance as a 'cameo' because it, too, adheres to the general format of the Book; as with the Maid and the Beggar Burke's passage is sandwiched between passages and/or descriptions of the general grotesquery found in London. This zooming in and out between the general and the particular echoes the poet's adoption of the alternating panoramic view and the phantasmagoric street-level claustrophobia and chaos throughout the book. However, with respect to positioning, I think it may also be useful to read it in relation to the connection between the grotesque and the sublime. Although I am briefly drawing on

Victor Hugo's theory here,[200] there is much in Wordsworth's favoured presentation of a pleasure-pain dialectic that advocates the fusion of seemingly incongruous elements in order to produce philosophical poetry.[201] In this respect, reading the grotesque as a necessary companion (if not quite the complete contrast) to the sublime becomes plausible, and perhaps profitable. [202]

Continuing the Romantic tendency to disperse philosophical/theoretical writing into poetic and dramatic Prefaces, Hugo theorizes the grotesque as being the 'counterpart' of the sublime, the significance of which is expounded below. He also writes, 'Now, the grotesque may act as a pause, a contrast, a point of departure from which we can approach what is beautiful with fresher and keener powers of perception.'[203] What is immediately striking here is the idea of the grotesque as being a 'pause', as well as a 'contrast'; in Book VII the grotesque can be seen as functioning in both these roles. Wordsworth appreciates this mutuality with the result that the grotesquery of Bartholomew Fair acts as an impetus for his apprehension of the urban sublime and its eventual ordering of the beauty of Grasmere Fair. As for the 'pause', there may be reason to suggest that this is a variation of the parabasis that is generated by the grotesque. I mentioned above that the episodes of the individual and the general – the mobs, the mass of unknown entities that indulge in, and become, the spectacles of

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[200] Victor Hugo, *The Essential Victor Hugo*, ed. and trans. by E. H. and A. M. Blackmore (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 'Preface' to *Cromwell*, p.27.

[201] This is read elsewhere in the thesis through his use of black humour in *Lyrical Ballads*. My argument there is that Wordsworth unites two principal poetic aims (theorized in the Preface to the volume as providing pleasure and conveying philosophical truth) through his humorous treatment of unpleasant – and sometimes potentially grotesque – subject matter. Such 'experimental' poetry, then, was not just an attempt to take up the lowbrow and often sensationalized themes of popular literature, such as the supernatural folklore of 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill', or the gothic adventures of a social outcast, an 'Idiot Boy'; rather, the poet aimed to rehabilitate the subjects of these poems as worthy of philosophical consideration as opposed to mere literary curiosities for a reading public obsessed with the sensational. It is in this sense, I think, that Wordsworth wished to present his work in a common language.

[202] William Hazlitt also theorizes the grotesque as a tendency of English literature and drama, 'Our literature is, in a word, Gothic and grotesque' – see *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth; Delivered at the Surrey Institution*, 2nd edn (London: John Warren, 1821), p.36. Although Hazlitt largely sees the Elizabethan age as characterized in this way, his text broadly situates all English drama and literature in opposition to French 'models', (p.37), thus suggesting considerably more substantial connections between it and the art of Germany, connections that extend to his own age. In this way, Hazlitt's writing picks up the cross-cultural efforts of Goethe and Herder in 'appropriating' Shakespeare.

[203] Hugo, p.27.

Wordsworth's London – are presented as alternating 'scenes'. These scenes of spectacles overtly invoke the grotesque in its various manifestations, culminating towards the end of the Book in the climactic human phantasmagoria of Bartholomew Fair, which renders 'The whole creative powers of man asleep!' This alternation would suggest that each example of the grotesque does indeed constitute a 'pause', a conscious interruption of the philosophical narrative by the dramatic. So, the grotesque now comes to have two points of significance when reading Wordsworth's London experience, the first of which is as a 'contrast', a counterpart of the sublime, always on the other side of it. Wordsworth's depiction of the grotesque sheds further light on his understanding and representation of sublimity in Book VII, with greater implications for the centrality of the visual in Books VI and VIII, something I shall return to further below. For now I wish to turn to the second point of significance, the 'pause' or parabasis that the grotesque can be seen as. As the other side of the sublime, the grotesque is often found alongside Wordsworth's descriptions of 'sublimity' as we know it, and, as I have suggested, together these form the conscious interruptions of the philosophical poetry that constantly punctuate Book VII. The grotesque now comes to exemplify permanent parabasis.

'dramas of living men'

As the description of the dizzying 'endless stream of men and moving things' upon and around the 'monstrous ant-hill' (1850: l.149) gives way to the (antithetically) restrained description of the 'life-like' – but, crucially, lifeless – panoramas and various other 'spectacles within doors', this again shifts to the general spectacle:

> Add to these exhibitions mute and still,
> Others of wider scope, where living men,
> Music and shifting pantomimic scenes,
> Diversified the allurement. [204]
>   (VII, 1850: ll.260-263)

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[204] 1805: 'Together joined their multifarious aid / To heighten the allurement' (284-5).

These instances of 'pantomimic scenes' anticipate the later grotesquery of the Fair; here, too, are giants, dwarves, contortionists and other entertainers performing 'Amid the uproar of the rabblement' (1850: l.273; 1805: l.296). Theatre, the designated arena for spectacle itself has been taken over by the masses, of which the revisionary poet is able to recognize his former self as being a part. Though this is certainly not an impassioned mob reacting on incitation, Wordsworth's description of the audience as 'rabblement' is striking for its implication that interiority and designation are not able to prevent the spectacle from becoming dangerously close to the riots and 'chaos' on the streets. The dismissal of domesticity in an earlier passage of the book saw Wordsworth as a self-proclaimed 'idler' content to live in a house without the need of a home in London. This goes one step further by threatening to overturn the claims that interiority can usually lay to security in containment. There is no distinction between inside and outside; spectacle infiltrates all spaces of the city to the point where it defines it.

Despite this loss of order, however, neither former nor present incarnation of the poet feels threatened in acknowledging a part in this audience; the Wordsworth of the poem 'took his seat' among others and the revisionary poet notes this without the condemnatory checks that he otherwise places on his former self. This seems initially puzzling given that the kind of entertainment offered (and accepted) here resembles that of Bartholomew Fair in its presentation of what he later labels 'freaks of nature'. However, there is a crucial difference as seen in the example Wordsworth gives of Jack the Giant-killer:

> Lo!
> He dons his coat of darkness: on the stage
> Walks, and achieves his wonders from the eye
> Of living Mortal covert, as the moon
> Hid in her 'vacant interlunar cave'.
> Delusion bold! And how can it be wrought?
> The garb he wears is black as death, the word
> *'Invisible'* flames forth upon his chest.
>   (1850: ll.280-287; 1805: ll.303-310)

Plainly, the situation is too ludicrous as to pose any sensory or imaginative threat; it is therefore unlike experiences such as Bartholomew Fair, which

subsequently required irony to manipulate the effects of a version of the sublime. There is a clear stage upon which 'Jack' walks and the illusion of his invisibility is derisively labelled a 'Delusion', made only too ridiculous by the word '*Invisible*' emblazoned across his coat. The spectacle is so contrived and pantomimic in the modern sense of the word that the poet is able to satirize the scene, with no need for the irony with which Bartholomew Fair is later negotiated. The grotesquery here is a pause – parabasis – instrumental to making sense of the 'dramas of living men' that frame Wordsworth's philosophical passages of the fate of the individual among these in the city.

One such drama is the fictionalized biography of the Maid of Buttermere, an 'artless daughter of the hills' (1850: l.300; 1805: l.325), who was tricked into the 'cruel mockery' of a bigamous marriage in 1802.[205] Wordsworth's handling of this biography is necessarily offered through a dramatic filter, as he comments on the staging of her story in Sadler's Wells. The Maid – a Mary Robinson of the Lakes – is just one of the many figures whose lives are dramatized in, and by, the City. However, the prevalence of this tendency does not mean that the gravity of her situation is lost on Wordsworth; even in a space that engenders spectacles from the everyday, this 'too serious theme for that place' stands out as incongruously as the mental deficiency of a Johnny in a sensationalized gothic ballad or the story of an infirm Simon Lee told in a light-hearted tone. The key difference between those earlier dramatizations and these stories, though, is that the former had already been manipulated by the poet: they were versions of the popular literature and entertainment critiqued in his Preface to the volume and consciously mediated by irony. Cases such as that of the Maid of Buttermere, however, are real situations and selves exploited, distorted for a dramatic purpose. As outlined above, this is where the staging of the Maid's tale is a departure from Romantic use of drama; Wordsworth is content to take a self and dramatize it. However, he is less comfortable with the conscious staging of a subject in which the need to understand the 'real' self gets lost. So, in the play based on the Maid's story the real story is sacrificed as it becomes secondary to the drama. Wordsworth's response to this is to recreate the

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[205] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. by M. H. Abrams, Stephen Gill and Jonathan Wordsworth (New York: Norton, 1979), p.242, n. 5.

Maid's 'self' and story in a way that retains the emphasis on her humanity. This is done by bringing her mortality to the fore through reclaiming her biography as an epitaph:

> thy image rose again,
> Maiden[206] of Buttermere! She lives in peace
> Upon the spot where she was born and reared;
> Without contamination doth she live
> In quietness, without anxiety:
> (1850: ll.319-323; 1805: ll.350-354)

Unlike the spectacles of London, which are deliberately thrust upon the poet's sense, the image of the Maid is summoned up in his mind with other 'sundry forms', part of a mental montage of solitaries that assist Wordsworth in making sense of the metropolitan experience. As with many of the figures, the Maid of Buttermere can best be commemorated through epitaph; as soon as her image appears to the poet, he associates it with her death. Though Mary Robinson lived on and recovered from this personal misfortune, Wordsworth rewrites her story with an epitaph. In doing so, he both draws attention to her as an individual and places her – and so Book VII – within a universal framework. Amidst all the excess and grotesquery of London, Wordsworth seems determined to tell the reader, that universalizing vision of humanity that permeates his philosophical poetry can be found. The Maid could equally have been placed in the *Lyrical Ballads*, or indeed that great catalogue of epitaphs, *The Excursion*. Yet, her inclusion here reinforces the importance of reclaiming reality from false spectacle. For Wordsworth, her story ends far away from the staged 'biography'; in this epitaph she is returned to her homeland, living free from the 'contamination' of London's excess, and thus she is able to *live* in death. Wordsworth's insistence on the effacement of death as a boundary or end ensures that the Maid lives through commemoration, a theme I shall return to in the concluding chapter. In this way, his own dalliance with the vulgar and the grotesque is also justified to some extent, though he remains uneasy with his reliance on 'low' culture and art in order to produce his own elevated poetry.

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[206] 1805: Mary.

The unnaturalness of this parodying of the Maid's life for the sake of entertainment is echoed with the artifice of the child described directly after the Maid of Buttermere passage. The child is 'foremost of the scenes / Which yet survive in memory' (1850: ll.334-335).[207] The child – and the scene itself – is connected in the poet's mind to Mary Robinson; Wordsworth presents the child in its artificial surroundings as a sort of displaced 'alien' that would have been loved had he been amongst nature:

> The Boy[208] had been
> The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on
> In whatsoever place, but seemed in this
> A sort of alien scattered from the clouds.
>   (1850: ll.347-350; 1805: ll.375-378)

Somewhere in Wordsworth's own native Lakes is confirmed as the desired place further down the passage, when he makes a direct connection between this child and the Maid of Buttermere's dead child. At the same time, the child is necessarily divorced – both in the poet's memory and in morality – from his mother; his innocence endures among the dissolute pleasure-seekers in one of London's vice-ridden theatrical and red-light districts, 'Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged / Amid the fiery furnace' (1850: ll.369-370; 1805: ll.398-399), but the mother does not survive in the memory. She fades from the scene in the poet's mind, the momentary thought of her instead giving rise to associations with the general 'public vice' of prostitution, itself described as 'spectacle'. The morality here may be conservative, but I think this passage is made interesting by the fact that it does show a moral aspect to hitherto aesthetic categories. For Wordsworth, the grotesque is not only to be found in a satirical Hogarth etching or the conscious spectacle of Bartholomew Fair – disturbingly, it may also be discovered more commonly in the corruption of what is natural or innocent. In this scene, it is not only the artifice of the mother's 'false tints' (which the poet sets against the 'rose' of the child's cheek) and the 'glare / From play-house lustres', it is the moral vice that they

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[207] In 1805, the description of the child and his mother is ll.364-367:
>   Those days are now
> My theme, and 'mid the numerous scenes which they
> Have left behind them, foremost I am crossed
> Here by remembrance of two figures[.]

[208] 1805: boy.

suggest wherein the grotesque lies. Like that other example of nature perverted, the Infant Prodigy, the child in London is exposed to the grotesquery of artifice and its moral consequences.

'foolishness and madness in parade'

The next scene of the Book sees a kind of interlude in Wordsworth's catalogue of metropolitan grotesques as he comes to deal with theatre itself. Whereas spectacles have been denigrated by the poet thus far, youthful indulgence in theatre itself is remembered fondly, 'Enchanting age and sweet! Romantic almost' (1850: ll.441-442; 1805: ll.474-475). Following on directly from depictions of the vice surrounding the world of the theatre, this may seem unusual until one considers the nature of the artifice in question here; as with the episode of Jack the Giant Killer, the poet is at ease at the theatre because the artifice is self-conscious and does not attempt to conceal itself. Wordsworth is not threatened by spectacles on the stage; they may be mocked for the lengths to which they go in order to maintain an impossible illusion (as is Jack's 'invisibility'), but the poet is all too aware of the audience's – including his own – participation in such illusions. Unlike the pseudo-sublimity of the phantasmagoria or panorama – which thrives on its spectators' reactions to the 'ne plus ultra' delusional reproduction of natural or supernatural phenomena – theatre makes no claims to reality, nor does it make such gruelling demands on its audience's imagination. This relationship between actors and spectators mirrors that of ironist and reader; the ironist-writer or actor on a stage may present seemingly absurd scenarios, but these are validated by a certain understanding on the audience's or reader's part, what Coleridge later called 'that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith'.[209] Though Coleridge is writing of the supernatural elements of *Lyrical Ballads*, his famous defence is, perhaps, unsurprisingly, commonly understood in a dramatic context. This may be partly due to the self-reflexivity that Frederick Burwick identifies in his *Romantic Drama* – the actor-spectator (and, by extension, the author/reader) relationship depends on an awareness of the distinctions between illusion and

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[209] *Biographia Literaria*, ii, p.6.

delusion that both Wordsworth and Coleridge make.[210] Despite this common tendency between the latter's literary theory and the former's poetic practice, Coleridge fails, in his discussion of *The Excursion*, to account for Wordsworth's careful handling of these categories of fictionality. Akin to the charge of 'ventriloquism' in its critical short-sightedness, Coleridge's critique of Wordsworth's dramatic poetry does not account for the practical application of the irony that he himself theorizes.[211]

In this passage, the physicality of the actors is described in similar terms to those of the other performers – figures on the stage bounce, leap and paw their way through performances, 'striving to outstrip each other', but the effect is not a display of the grotesque. Instead, this passage takes centre-stage in the Book as a justification for the pleasure taken in theatre by the youthful poet. Here, at the centre of the London account and sandwiched by denunciation of the city's spectacles of the everyday, is Wordsworth's acknowledgement of his debt to drama. The passage dealing with the theatre as a space of spectacle is consciously offered as self-indulgence in memory, and so it is necessarily restrained in its praise of this pleasure; the mind is compared to a sportive kitten at play, reacting almost instinctively to external stimuli. In this imagery the passage expresses the pleasurable passivity found in *The Kitten and Falling Leaves* (comp. 1804, pub. 1807). At the conclusion of the poem, Wordsworth acknowledges the divide between his rational, experiential thought and the innocent passivity of the kitten and infant, his only hope being that every now and then he, too, can 'gambol with Life's falling Leaf' in this way. This conclusion to *The Kitten and Falling Leaves* is significant in that it illuminates the Book VII passage as a positive reflection on passivity and spectatorship, one of few in the entire Book.

However, the Wordsworthian determination to make the highest poetic use of the 'lowest' stimuli prevents him from recollecting these memories in

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[210] *Biographia Literaria*, ii, p.134.
[211] In dramatic criticism, this form of irony finds a counterpart in the subtle 'judicious understanding' between actors and audience in comic drama, as identified by Charles Lamb in his essay 'Stage Illusion' – see *The Complete Works of Charles Lamb: Containing His Letters, Essays, Poems, Etc.* (Philadelphia: William T. Amies, 1879), pp.434-435. Lamb's argument for the necessity of breaking through illusion in order to maintain audiences' participation not only mirrors Coleridge's theory of 'willing suspension of disbelief', it also perpetuates the applicability of dramatic to literary irony and vice versa.

mere self-indulgence. Instead, the theatre is used to introduce the poet's appreciation of Shakespeare (implied in 1805 and clearly stated in 1850: ll.475-485). These pleasures, Wordsworth suggests, would have had little lasting beneficial value had it not been for the literary and dramatic genius of Shakespeare, inextricable from reflection on them. Far more than reminiscence of youth, then, the centrality of theatre here serves to introduce the next major philosophical passage – the appreciation of Burke – by shifting attention from the spectacles of entertainment to those of the legal and political arenas. As ever, Shakespeare provides grounding for Romanticism's nationalising efforts. Invoking his ghost enables the poet to validate the uses of the dramatic within high art that strives toward a national identity through individual consciousness. For Romantic thinker-writers – English and German – Shakespeare is emblematic of both the universal and individual human, his genius lying in a reconciliation of the two, and Wordsworth's connection between 'low' art/entertainment and artistic genius reminds the reader of the wider significance of this passage; as uncomfortable as he may be with his poetic recourse to popular culture and entertainment, Wordsworth is determined to find a higher purpose. The content of Book VII, then, seems to suggest that grotesquery, both physical and moral, can always find a purer aesthetic application when aligned with poetic genius.

This is reinforced in the next 'scenes' by what may be referred to as the conscious 'dramas of living men' in courtrooms, pulpits, and Parliament, where theatricality and rhetoric become so entwined into the discourse of each respective stage that it is no longer possible to distinguish between drama and the 'real'.[212] The dramatic address to Burke in the 1850 version, however, is the poet's attempt to do just this. While the rhetoric of the MPs and of Pitt is ironically connected to *Henry V*, Wordsworth introduces Burke as a force that can penetrate mere rhetoric in order to arrive at great philosophical and political truths. The mock awe with which 'tongue-favoured men' are described – 'Silence! hush! / This is no trifler, no short-flighted wit' (1850:

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[212] Mary Jacobus has noted how these various examples of rhetoric and oratory have been placed by the poet under the category of popular entertainment – see 'That Great Stage where Senators Perform': Macbeth and the Politics of Romantic Theatre, pp. 33-68. I suggest these spectacles indicate a point in the narrative of Book VII where drama and spectacle become indistinguishable, and the two terms may be understood as interchangeable more freely in this instance.

ll.498-499; 1805: ll.529-530) – reveals the insubstantiality of rhetoric (however powerful) that does not strive for a philosophical end when it turns suddenly to the 'Genius of Burke'. Wordsworth's response to the much-debated role of eloquence in oratory is clearly driven by this need to demarcate it from spectacle; the 'specious wonders' (1850: l.513) that entertain and seduce impressionable audiences ultimately fail because they are founded on eloquence alone. The 'genius' of Burke, however, lies in his ability to utilize eloquence for philosophical purpose – his skilful rhetoric affects the passions as well as any of the other 'tongue-favoured men', but the key difference here is that Burke is remembered primarily for the wisdom underlying his eloquence. As an 1850 revision (first introduced in 1832), the passage (ll.512-543) is a significant instance of parabasis; the revisionary poet interrupts his memory of London with the Burke effusion, but that effusion, too, is an interruption of the 1805 'self'. Along with the satirical look of the dramatic preacher (whose sermon also borrows heavily from a literary and dramatic tradition) in the following verse paragraph (1850: ll.544-572; 1805: ll.544-566), parabasis here enables the poet to document the corruption of eloquence, a considerably more sinister aspect of the drama of everyday life. In versifying this Wordsworth uses irony and drama to encourage the reader to take that 'second look' so important to Romantic striving for self-consciousness.

Having elaborated on these 'few conspicuous marks' (1850: l.573; 1805: l.567), the poet then returns to the general, emphasizing that these are just individual examples from a vast catalogue of human folly and vice. In 1805, this allows the poet to launch directly into 'the foolishness, and madness in parade' (1850: l.594; 1805: l.589) apparent all over the city:

> How often in the overflowing streets
> Have I gone forwards with the crowd, and said
> Unto myself, 'The face of every one
> That passes by me is a mystery.'
> Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
> By thoughts of what, and whither, when, and how,
> Until the shapes before my eyes became
> A second-sight procession, such as glides
> Over still mountains, or appears in dreams,
> And all the ballast of familiar life –

The present, and the past, hope, fear, all stays,
All laws of acting, thinking, speaking man –
Went from me, neither knowing me, nor known.
                    (1805: ll.595-607)

This parade of madness and excess that becomes emblematic of the city as a whole not only anticipates the climactic account of Bartholomew Fair, it also serves as another connector between Books VI and VII, and both of these effects are achieved through the language of sublimity (though without the grotesque that later accompanies the ironic manipulation of the sublime). The reference to the 'second sight procession' is indicative of the visual scene experienced as a phantasmagoria, in its implications of a ghostly, often morbid, spectacle. However, the effect of the 'procession' here is also similar to that of the phantasmagoria in the eerie 'spectralization' – to borrow Terry Castle's term again – of spectacle. The chaotic external objects are internalized until distinctions between world and self become blurred and all seems to be replaced by the kind of 'blank desertion' described earlier in the poem. In its original incarnation, the procession (of spectral horsemen in *An Evening Walk*) is a supernatural and ghostly phenomenon experienced in a natural setting, thus violating the natural visual and visionary experience.[213] Intersecting the sensory and the imaginative in this way, the 'second-sight procession' takes on new significance in Book VII as it comes to exemplify the continuous preoccupation with spectacle and visuality running from Books VI to VIII. This process of defamiliarization taking place here, though, differs from the Alps experience of Book VI, whereby the blankness – the usurpation of imaginative thought – is caused by the unfamiliar (in that case, Mont Blanc) becoming familiar.[214] In the crowd the very face of another person becomes a 'mystery', an interesting contrast to a previous observation following an urban experience that 'The face of every neighbour whom I met / Was like[215] a volume to me' (IV, 1850: ll.67-68; 1805: ll.58-59).

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[213] For a reading of the spectral horsemen myth in *An Evening Walk* and this passage, see W. J. B. Owen, '"A second-sight procession" in Wordsworth's London', in *Notes and Queries*, 16, 1 (1969), pp.49-50.

[214] This dynamic relationship between the two sides of the *heimlich*, the homely and the mysterious is discussed at length in the concluding chapter, where it is argued – through readings of central texts by Novalis and Wordsworth – that this concept is central to understanding the process of 'romanticizing' in Anglo-German literature and philosophy.

[215] 1805: as.

Wordsworth's repeated emphasis on the legibility (or indeed illegibility) of a face reinforces this notion of defamiliarization. In a city where all sights and labels have been reduced to signs to be read the crucial 'sign' of the living face becomes illegible.[216]

For Wordsworth the catalyst here for all of this is the utter loss of hope for communication with those around him. The poet is once again confronted by the city's power to disarm both sense and imagination through sheer excess. However, the overall debilitating effect of this 'second-sight procession' is understated in 1850 by cutting lines 604-607; the omission of these lines seems to emphasize the account of the Fair as the climax of the overload, so that this 'moving pageant' – though spectacular in its nature – is not sublime. It also allows for an accentuated transition to the description of the blind Beggar. In the 1850 version, an additional passage of the individual that endures in the poet's mind amidst the 'foolishness and madness in parade' is the image of a father with a sickly child. This passage (1850: ll.602-618) continues the tendency to zoom into and out of individual scenes in the poet's mind. The episode is remembered as one of those moments that may counter the chaos of the city, with the man seeming like a model for Wordsworth himself in his detachment from the madness surrounding him. It is interesting that the father is so consumed by love for his child that, 'Of those who passed, and me who looked at him, / He took no heed'; such detachment is what the poet himself is not able to exercise entirely comfortably at this point in the narrative. After all, the Wordsworth in both 1805 and 1850 *Preludes* is so profoundly affected by involuntarily alienation that he is not yet afforded the kind of ironic detachment *The Excursion's* Wanderer, various narrators of *Lyrical Ballads*, or indeed his later poetic 'self' (as initiated by the ironic dramatization of Bartholomew Fair) achieve. In revising the narratives, the poet becomes self-reflexive, but the 'self' – or 'selves' – traced at this point in the poem are, like the literature they inhabit, in the state of becoming. Thus, this simple figure who is unaffected by the excess of the city remains as a

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[216] Following Thomas Weiskel's study of the sublime through twentieth-century theory of semiotics and psychoanalysis, Neil Hertz has commented on Book VII as being full of signs to be read – see his *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p.56. See also Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

lingering snapshot in the memory – a model for the young poet overwhelmed by anonymity. In this respect, the father functions in much the same way as the blind Beggar (who is himself an incarnation of *Resolution and Independence*'s Leech Gatherer).[217]

Yet the blind Beggar signifies more. As well as a model of detachment, both sensory and social, he is representative of epistemology itself; the piece of paper on which his story is written is, to the 'Wordsworths' of 1805 and 1850, emblematic of all we can know about self and world:

> Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round
> As with the might of waters; an apt type
> This label seemed of the utmost we can know,
> Both of ourselves and of the universe;
> And, on the shape of that unmoving man,
> His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,
> As if admonished from another world.
> (1850: ll.643-649)[218]

The Beggar's story is referred to as a 'spectacle', but this is far removed from the spectacles that have hitherto punctuated the poet's journey through the city; unlike those, the Beggar displaying his story is not contributing to the overall chaotic theatricality of London, but is instead set apart from it in doing so. Wordsworth's insistence that the story is 'an apt type' or 'emblem' of all that we can and do know of self and the world seems a rather astonishing statement to make. After all, the Beggar is, we are reminded in 1850, 'a sight not rare' (l.638). However, I would suggest that this claim stems from the externalization of the Beggar's story; his words are read by all but himself and the attraction for Wordsworth is that this is a – perhaps extreme – version of a

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[217] That the passage of the father with the sickly babe was originally composed as part of Book VIII (1805: ll.840-859) seems to confirm this; as Book VII was composed after Book VIII, the transposition of this 'scene' strengthens the suggestion that the revisionary poet intended to highlight this detachment as a way of contrasting his own conflicted state of alienation. It is also more in line with the poet's approach to VIII, 1850 in its minimalizing of episodes or 'scenes' of individuals, and thus the minimalizing of characterization.

[218] In 1805, lines 616-623:
> My mind did at this spectacle turn round
> As with the might of waters, and it seemed
> To me that in this label was a type
> Or emblem of the utmost that we know
> Both of ourselves and of the universe,
> And on the shape of this unmoving man,
> His fixed face and sightless eyes, I looked,
> As if admonished from another world.

self externalized through writing. Both the poet and the Beggar strive to tell stories about an ultimately unrealized, or unrealizable 'self'.[219] In contrast to Hertz's reading into the beggar of Wordsworth's crisis of self-expression, we can see another figure in his continual drama of self-characterization.

'As parts, but with a feeling of the whole'

I began by suggesting that underlying Wordsworth's revisionary habit is a modern reparative aesthetic, widely theorized by the *Frühromantiker* as Romantic irony. One way in which this aesthetic is effected in Wordsworth's poetry is through parabasis, which takes on new significance in Book VII, as it enables the poet to construct a new way of seeing and therefore of showing; the chaos of the sensory and imaginative overload presented by London fails to overturn Wordsworth's ability to produce philosophical poetry precisely because of the poet's tendency to interrupt his own narrative through irony. I have also argued that Book VII's narrative is driven primarily by various spectacles and the dramatic possibilities they offer the poet, the climax of which is reached in the account of Bartholomew Fair. Here, two dominant forms of entertainment, the panorama and phantasmagoria, are utilized to create an ironic counter to an urban sublime experience. Along the way the role of the grotesque has been explored as another counterpart of the sublime. The grotesque is central to Wordsworth's narrative, enabling him to shift focus from the general to individual spectacle, once again interrupting continuity in order to dramatize difference. It also marks the difficulty the 'self' within the poem has in making sense of the spectacle he is assaulted with. I would like to conclude by turning again to the two modes of visualizing I began with and, by considering their significance in the transition from Book VI to Book VIII, explore the wider framework within which Wordsworth's aesthetics is operating.

There is a notable shift from the natural sublime in Book VI to the beautiful panorama of Book VIII's Grasmere Fair, enabled by the dramatized spectacles of the city in Book VII. London itself, like the ironic mode of

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[219] See also Galperin, *The Return of the Visible*, p.121: '…what makes Wordsworth's spectacle – or the spectacle of the blind beggar – so special and so prescient is precisely its ability to foreground, and paradoxically to see through, blindness.'

writing by which it is represented, is a stage for mediation.[220] Here, the inadequacy of the simulated panorama and phantasmagoria as ways of seeing is established. As aesthetic experience, both fail due to their recourse to simulating either the beautiful or sublime in nature. The panorama purports to present audiences with an all-embracing view, but fails because it is little more than a mimetic, static rendering of the world, either beautiful or sublime. The phantasmagoria and associated spectacles, on the other hand, are inadequate because the excess they present to the senses threatens the imagination, the creative faculty essential to poetic living and production; the result of this is not a sublime experience, as its promoters hoped to persuade spectators, but rather a sensationalized dramatic counterpart to the 'low' literary culture deplored by the philosophical poet. The aversion the 'Wordsworths' of both *Preludes* feel towards these spectacles – and other forms of 'low' culture – is mediated by the revisionary poet's ironic manipulation of these to articulate his own 'high' literature and aesthetics. These poetic productions must negotiate a way between familiar and unfamiliar, natural and urban sublimity, inherited traditions of the natural prospect and the technological innovations of the imitative panorama; as a high 'crisis' point, London provides the most fruitful sustained opportunity to confront these extremes.

The resolution reached in Book VIII's Grasmere Fair indicates a step forward in the transition from chaotic sublimity to the panoramic beautiful. This all-embracing concept of the beautiful, though, is not limited to visuality. The concluding verse paragraph of Book VII makes it clear that this is experienced through an internal harmony that may sustain one even in the midst of the spectacle and grotesquery of the city. However, the 1850 text also echoes the description of the sublime landscape of Book VI; the 'everlasting streams and woods' (VII, 1850: l.745) that, when reflected upon, enable the poet to transpose meditation (and so a sense of home) from one environment to another are reminiscent of the 'woods decaying, never to be decayed' (VI, 1850: l.625; 1805: l.557), further strengthening the connection Wordsworth

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[220] The function of *drama* as mediator is explored in greater depth in the concluding chapter of the thesis, with a particular focus on mediation between boundaries of life and death, arguing for the necessity of dramatic diffusion of identity in order to arrive at self-consciousness.

sought to make between the Books. The clearest indication of the interconnection of VI-VIII, however, comes in that most Romantic concept, the fragmented sense of being:

> Oh, blank confusion! true epitome
> Of what the mighty City is herself
> To thousands upon thousands of her sons,
> Living amid the same perpetual whirl
> Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
> To one identity, by differences
> That have no law, no meaning, and no end –
> Oppression, under which even highest minds
> Must labour, whence the strongest are not free.
> But though the picture weary out the eye,
> By nature an unmanageable sight,
> It is not wholly so to him who looks
> In steadiness, who hath among least things
> An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts
> As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
> (1850: ll.722-736; 1805: ll.696-712)

This relationship between part and whole is repeated again in the Preface to *The Excursion* in relation to the poem's position within the *Recluse* project. There, Wordsworth sets the poem as simultaneously a fragment and a complete poem in itself, and the experience of being is no different, as discussed elsewhere in the thesis. The significance here, though, is that the London experience is shown to be surmountable; perhaps it is not all-embraceable, but nor is it all-consuming either. And so, in presenting them in this way, as 'scenes' of an ever-shifting picture, Wordsworth enables himself and his reader to retain awareness of this part-whole relationship. It is some sense of this relationship that I aim to uncover in the discussion that follows.

Turning briefly to the Ravine of Arve passage it is possible to see how this part-whole relationship is echoed in the sublime landscape:

> The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> And in the narrow rent at every turn[221]
> Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side

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[221] 1805: 'And everywhere along the hollow rent'.

As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light –
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end
                    (1850: ll.624-640; 1805: ll.556-572)

Each aspect of the landscape represents to the poet 'workings of one mind', a feature inextricably connected with eternity. Imposing an infinite vision on an otherwise finite, eroding atmosphere enables the poet to begin to uncover a sense of the part-whole relationship that is identified as being so important amidst the tumult of the city. However, it is not until Book VII that the revisionary poet can fully appreciate the significance of this relationship. The 'blank confusion' passage quoted above follows on directly from the end of the Bartholomew Fair description; in this sense it is a sort of coda to both Fair and Book, a reaffirmation of the ironist's success in containing the chaotic spectacle through theatricalizing it and a look ahead at the philosophical poet's ongoing task of endeavouring to look 'In steadiness'. It is also a look back, though, at how dramatic manipulation of the threat of the sublime experience, characterized here by a reduction of parts to a chaotic whole, enables an eventual triumph of that very relationship. As such, the poet coming to the end of his reflections on London is able to recover and decode this equation that was hinted at in the Ravine of Arve. The external world is no longer an incomprehensible mass of signs that amount to 'workings of one mind'. The *Unverständlichkeit* that would otherwise overturn the poet's mind is instead mediated by an ironic mode of writing which strives to see all parts 'As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.' By doing so, the poet finds impetus for motion – and so poetic production – where he had previously been left transfixed. No longer gazing on a 'soulless image' such as Mont Blanc nor facing the 'dizzying' Ravine, Wordsworth apprehends spectacle afresh.

    By the conclusion of Book VII the need for 'order and relation' (1850: l.761; 1805: l.730) in perception is thus made clear, paving the way for the panorama of Grasmere Fair. Wordsworth has already begun the

revisionary mode of writing here in his re-imagining of London. In declaring that, 'The Spirit of Nature was upon me there' (1850: l.766; 1805: l.736), the poet is anticipating Book VIII's reflections of residence in London as an uncontaminated time.[222] The metropolis may be full of vices, but these do not impede the poet's ability to find, 'Through meagre lines and colours, and the press / Of self-destroying, transitory things, / Composure, and ennobling Harmony' (1850: ll.769-771; 1805: ll.739-741). This considerable revision to the majority of the Book, throughout which the 'Wordsworth' of both versions of the poem's London is apparently constantly threatened by effacement of the barrier between self and external spectacle, ensures that the reduction of all 'to one identity' is not absolute.

This becomes apparent when the narrative segues into the account of Grasmere Fair that opens the eighth Book. As with the metropolitan fair, Wordsworth achieves an imagined panoramic view of this Fair (though the gathering here is distinguished from the rabble of the former as 'a little family of men' [1850 & 1805: l.7]). Unlike the previous fair, however, Grasmere does not strive to be objective in the sense of being detached; Wordsworth narrates the action as one who is atop Helvellyn, yet immediately eradicates this distance by zooming in on individual, identifiable figures. Moreover, if the 'ancient wedded pair' of 1850 (l.46) refers to him and Mary Wordsworth it would appear he has gone a step further in including himself in this scene; as with London he is both spectator and dramatic character within the spectacle. However, this time the duality of his role is voluntary; unlike London, the poet is at home here at Grasmere and so does not feel the need to perceive himself to be at the centre of the landscape. London threatened to reduce the poet to being a part of the spectacle, a threat with which Wordsworth dealt by becoming a dramatic character through parabasis, which in turn enabled ironic dramatization of the spectacle itself. The poet has achieved the detachment so desired in the previous Book – so much so, in fact, that by the 1850 version, several passages that presented individual episodes in 1805 have been omitted altogether from the poem.

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[222] This 'anticipation' is, of course, structural – as VIII was composed first, the conclusion of VII itself is the poet's meta-discursive commentary on the interrelationship of the two Books.

As much of the eighth Book was composed *before* Book VII (though, significantly, *not* the Grasmere Fair description), there is further reason to suggest that the London book is a more pronounced example of both intermediary experience and parabasis – Wordsworth's intention for Book VII as illustrative of the experiences that enabled the transformation evident in Book VIII results in the specific structure discussed above. Additionally, though, Book VIII complements the interrelationship of the books in its 1850 text. The first major portion of the 1805 text to be omitted is ll.64-119. The passage in question details two examples of rural 'spectacle' that the poet remembers witnessing by chance as a child, having strayed 'far from home'. Both of these are introduced to illustrate the early love felt by the poet for shepherds, a community of men who come to emblematize man in the mind of the poet. Attempts at revising these lines having failed, however, Wordsworth omitted them from the later text and it is not too difficult for a reader familiar with *The Excursion* to guess why this may be the case. As an enthusiastic reader of that later poem, I would hesitate to label Wordsworth's descriptive tendencies 'prolix' as previous reviewers and commentators have, but it does seem that these particular lines are somewhat indulgent given that they detract from his point here; that the poet felt, even as a child, great love for man is evident enough throughout Book VIII and individual scenes are not needed as they were in London to highlight this. For part of the argument Wordsworth is putting across here is that London itself was instrumental in helping him come to such realization. On the face of it, early appreciation of the beauty in nature aided him during his residence there:

> With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel
> In that enormous City's turbulent world
> Of men and things, what benefit I owed
> To thee, and those domains of rural peace,
> Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
> Was opened.
>   (1850: ll.70-75)

But the following words are somewhat revealing in their insistence that the natural landscape was 'more exquisitely fair' than any enchanted or exotic landscape, be it found in mythology or travel literature. While the superiority of the natural landscape is not called into question here, a look

back at the early lines of Book VII that detail the boy-Wordsworth's fascination with a fantasy version of London suggests that the allure of romance was nevertheless strong,

> There was a time when whatso'er is feigned
> Of airy palaces, and gardens built
> By Genii of romance; or hath in grave
> Authentic history been set forth…
> …
>   … fell short, far short,
> Of what my fond simplicity believed
> And thought of London – held me by a chain
> Less strong of wonder and obscure delight.
>   (1850: ll.77-87; 1805: ll.81-91)

So much so that the disenchantment that follows such romantic notions results in the most Wordsworthian conclusion,

> Those bold imaginations in due time
> Had vanished, leaving others in their stead:
> And now I looked upon the living scene;
> Familiarly perused it; oftentimes,
> In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased
> Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
> Paid to the object by prescriptive right.
>   (1850: ll.142-148[223])

These lines seem to confirm that romance – here the product of boyish fancy – has already been overcome during the poet's residence in London. To take up romance again in order to deconstruct it in Book VIII, therefore, is to acknowledge yet another aspect of the reparative function of London; if the metropolis (along with the residence in revolutionary Paris) left the poet disenchanted with respect to community, it also compensated for this in some measure by reaffirming the value of the 'living scene', rural or urban, by

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[223] In 1805, lines 136-144:
> These fond imaginations, of themselves
> Had long before given way in season due,
> Leaving a throng of others in their stead;
> And now I looked upon the real scene,
> Familiarly perused it day by day,
> With keen and lively pleasure even there
> Where disappointment was the strongest, pleased
> Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
> Paid to the object by prescriptive right,
> A thing that ought to be.

stripping away false ideals of perfectible beauty. Having experienced the grotesque and the sublime in turns throughout London, the notion of beauty itself is reconsidered in terms of the real. In other words, it is approached with 'fresher and keener powers of perception'.

Disenchantment, then, is ultimately a positive thing for Wordsworth. On the one hand, the child-Wordsworth felt the sublime power of nature (the much-discussed notion of being 'fostered alike by beauty and fear' seeming to epitomize this). This was carried through to his adult life, where the landscape continued to impose on the poetic mind, a few of the most striking images of which are relayed in Book VI. On the other hand, romance born out of a fancy that placed emphasis on the beautiful or the fantastic would have threatened the poetic imagination were it not for an ironist's ability to refigure these aesthetic categories according to the 'living scene' – nowhere more alive than in London. Insofar as it is a counterpart to the beautiful, the falsity of romance aligns it with the grotesque. London is the space in which all of these aesthetic categories can co-exist simultaneously and provide stimulus to the poetic impulse, transforming the city into a sort of topographical *Mischgedicht*: a space which provokes the poet to exercise an ironic mode of literary production. Like that modern, Romantic literature, which is the subject of the following chapter, the city appears to be without boundaries. Though Book VII's navigator finds it difficult to escape the claustrophobia of the streets to find a 'sequestered nook', the revisionary poet of the next Book remembers it as 'enormous' (1850: l.71), and later – and significantly when 'unity of man' is found therein – 'huge' (1850: l.666)[224]. This seemingly limitless capacity of the city becomes clear to the reader by the end of Book VIII when the poet turns yet once more to reflections on the metropolis. Having considered landscapes of fantasy and mythology, Wordsworth turns to that original seat of romance in a final, striking revision of his perceptions. Adding to the sublimity and grotesquery catalogued in Book VII, he now finds a moral and philosophical beauty in the 'unity of man' (1850: l.668; 1805: l.827) to match the beautiful perceived by the eye. In a chiasmic turn, love of nature leads to man largely because love of man enables appreciation

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[224] In 1805 the city is described as 'huge' in both cases.

of nature with that 'fresher' perception effected through the revisionary mode of writing, one which strives to be in the state of becoming, both part and whole.

'Thus moderated, thus composed'

I have focused in this chapter on the implications Wordsworth's revisionary habits have for his aesthetics. My consideration of this has been necessarily constrained to Book VII in order to examine effectively, and with focus, the extent to which the poet's ironic practice impacted upon his philosophical poetry. Although this has thus been at the expense of considering the effects of the French Revolution and the intellectual development charted in *The Prelude* in the Books following VIII, I have intended my approach here – as is the case with the approach the thesis as a whole takes – to be foundational. That is, I have sought to identify why London remains a high point for the argument of the poem in a way that I believe has not yet been adequately explored. Moreover, I have sought to re-evaluate the critical consensus that Wordsworth in London is a poet in crisis. I have argued that reading Wordsworth as an ironist is central to understanding his philosophical poetry – his poetology – with the intention that my methodology provides scope for further consideration of the poet's corpus, and this includes building on the important scholarship of the later Books of *The Prelude* that exists.[225] Being necessarily selective here, I have focused on the relatively under-researched Book VII and its relationship to Wordsworth's handling of aesthetic categories in Books VI and VIII. However, I would like to conclude the present chapter by looking ahead to the 'conclusion' of the poem itself.

The Prelude begins to work definitively towards its conclusion – which identifies itself as more of a beginning to *The Recluse*, and so a fragment, in any case – in the penultimate Book (1805: XII; 1850: XIII). By a definitive move towards concluding I mean that the narrative points we associate as moments of climax or 'crisis' – the Alps, London, and the French Revolution – have come to pass, giving way to what we might call the 'third

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[225] See in particular James Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984) for a study of Wordsworth's intellectual and political crisis points.

look', the reflection, revision and revisioning of those events.[226] I will argue that this 'third look' culminates in the passage recounting the climbing of Snowdon, itself a strategically positioned conclusion that interrupts a linear chronology. Crucially, however, this metareflective 'third look' is reinforced at the beginning of Book IX as the natural segue from VIII's recovery; IX opens with comparisons of the narrative to a river that 'Turns, and will measure back his course' and to the traveller who 'is tempted to review / The region left behind him' (1850: ll.5-12; 1805: ll.5-9), thus phasing in the 'third look' as the agenda for the third and final section of the poem. Significantly, the latter comparison of the narrative to the traveller is a late – 1832 – revision, again projecting the importance Wordsworth himself places on ironic writing and re-writing of the self, which is thus constantly historicized because it is subject to constant re-evaluation. Wordsworth's earlier repudiations of book learning/philosophizing and radical politics in V, VI, VII and the French Revolution Books are reasserted in the opening of the penultimate Book, with the reparative aesthetic and moral lessons taught by the central Books being championed instead; as with VI, VII, and VIII (and the earlier 'lyrical ballads') these lessons are learnt by retaining an ability to look past the 'busy dance / Of things that pass away' (1850: ll.30-31; 1805: ll.34-35) and 'to seek / In man, and in the frame of social life, / Whate'er there is desirable and good / Of kindred permanence, unchanged in form / And function' (1850: ll.34-37: 1805: ll.39-42).[227] This might be read as a logical if not explicit reference to the triumph of the poetological narrative in London over the city's sensory and moral chaos, which was also described as a furious dance of the transience that threatened the poet's sense of 'kindred permanence'. Reading these lines in this way enables us to see just how decisive the apparent crisis point of London is for Wordsworth's long-term recovery and poetological growth, as it reinforces the ability to overcome a

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[226] As I have stated above and elsewhere in this thesis, I am borrowing, and building on, David Simpson's phrase for Wordsworth's ironic revision of narrated events, the 'second look'. I am also, once again, indebted to James Chandler's emphasis on Wordsworth's 'first' and 'second' nature.

[227] For more on the significance of the ascent of Snowdon for Wordsworth's moral recovery, see Adam Potkay's very recent *Wordsworth's Ethics* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), pp.121-147. Potkay's study is a timely reminder of the importance of the moral implications of the poet's aesthetic re-evaluation and restored imaginative faculties.

counter-productive solipsism to become a socialized, historicized (and historicizing) and political individual capable of creating narrative. The emerging picture of the 'selves' Wordsworth is able to create by this point, then, is one that is very similar to that of the creators of sympoetological narrative in Chapter 2, who are successful because they are able to write and re-write their stories and histories actively.

> Thus moderated, thus composed, I found
> Once more in Man an object of delight,
> Of pure imagination, and of love;
> And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged,
> Again I took the intellectual eye
> For my instructor, studious more to see
> Great truths, than touch and handle little ones.
> Knowledge was given accordingly; my trust
> Became more firm in feelings that had stood
> The test of such a trial; clearer far
> My sense of excellence – of right and wrong;
> The promise of the present time retired
> Into its true proportion; sanguine schemes.
> Ambitious projects, pleased me less; I sought
> For present good in life's familiar face,
> And built thereon my hopes of good to come.
> (1850: ll.48-63; 1805: ll.53-68)

The passage quoted above is a concise and timely reminder of the reflective methodology driving *Lyrical Ballads*, as seen in the previous chapter. The emphasis on thought and wisdom gained through a mind 'moderated' and 'composed' reinforces the rejections of abstract political and intellectual systems. Wordsworth implies that he has recovered enough through his poetic education to hope sincerely for future good, but also to recognize 'present good' in the familiar world. The poet has, it seems, almost come home. This continues to inform the metareflective 'third look' for the rest of the Book, which itself concludes with a sympoetological validation of Wordsworth's vocation: he turns to Coleridge's assessment of *Salisbury Plain* as a 'case study' which prefigures the famous justification for the *Recluse* project at the very end of *The Prelude*. Its presence at the end of this Book points the way forward to the Snowdon passage, which is the climax of the poem, as it links it to a relationship not yet matured into a sympoetological friendship such as the type the end of the poem recounts; Wordsworth is clear

in pointing out that Coleridge's assessment of *Salisbury Plain* was made at a time when they were 'as strangers', not fully acquainted as friends and fellow poets. Coleridge was at this point engaged in a critical dialogue with Wordsworth but not yet an active collaborative one. In order to enable entering into a sympoetological friendship, Wordsworth would first need to reach the climax of his narrative of the 'self', the ascent of Snowdon. This climax would thus enable a closer account of the sympoetological debts owed to the circle (again, see Chapter 2 for more on the concept of the 'philosophical friendship'), a way to bring his personal 'history' and the collective, sympoetological history to its 'appointed close' (1805: l.270; 1850: l.303).

The ascent of Snowdon represents the decisive moment in the narrative in which Wordsworth is able to surmount the aesthetic crises that the sublime has hitherto presented in the poem. Having worked towards a mediation of the urban sublime through irony, the central Books present an opportunity to re-evaluate both the sublime and the beautiful. However, whereas the latter is evident in Book VIII, it is not until Snowdon that a fuller appraisal of the poet's handling of the sublime in nature emerges. The ascent is presented as a struggle for physical exertion, certainly, but the sublimity of the natural world in this experience is tempered by the restoration of the poetological faculties – the ability to take both second and third look and to engender a poetic narrative of one's history as both personal *and* socialized. It is thus a very different experience from the crossing of the Alps. Whereas Book VI saw the 'light of sense' go out and a usurpation by Mont Blanc of the poetic imagination, Snowdon represents both a metaphorical and visual inversion of this experience; climbing up the mountain in quiet determination with his walking companion and their guide, Wordsworth describes a sudden illumination of the ground, 'instantly a light upon the turf / Fell like a flash' (1805: ll.39-40; 1850: 38-9). The flash-like light is that provided by the moon and it occasions the remarkable climax of the ascent. However, as Alexander Regier points out, the passage is every bit as fractured as the rest of the

poem.[228] The same self-disruptions and doubts pervade the ascent of Snowdon, and I am suggesting that this makes it less of a resolution and more of a resolve to continue writing his 'selves'. As Regier sums up, 'After thirteen books, the 'growth' of the poet's mind still has to be described parenthetically'.[229] Snowdon, is important, then, not because it represents a climax or closure that sees the poet gain that sought-after self-consciousness, but because the myth of that absolute closure is acknowledged. It is a 'conclusion' of sorts because it marks the aesthetic and moral recovery that London partially enabled – the imagination and senses are no longer usurped upon by the natural sublime as they were in Mont Blanc – but also because it ushers in the 'third look' that enables the re-writing of the selves.

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[228] See Regier on the Ascent of Snowdon, in *Fracture and Fragmentation*, pp.114-118. Regier's reading is in contention with Alan Liu's suggestion that Snowdon represents a moment of 'Absolute Knowledge' for the poet, arguing instead that it represents the impossibility of closure (p.116). Regier's reading is based on the 1805 text, not the 1850.
[229] Regier, *Fracture and Fragmentation*, p.118.

Chapter 5. '… as in a sort of interregnum': Mediation and the *Mischgedicht* in Romantic poetry

> It is only because of the weakness of our organs, and of our self-reflection, that we do not see into a fairy world. All fairy tales are only dreams of that home that is everywhere and nowhere. The higher powers in us that once, as genius, executed our will, are now muses that refreshen us with sweet memories during this dreary journey. (Novalis, *Sketches*)[230]

Lyrics and ballads

The ways in which the *Lyrical Ballads* volume specifically sets out to redefine readers' expectations of both the lyric mode and the ballad form has been noted by various scholars of Wordsworth's poetics.[231] More specifically, it is the *cultured* reader who is targeted in Wordsworth's campaign to speak to others in a common, everyman's language.[232] Rather than reading this as a kind of snobbishness on the poet's part, it may be profitable to read within it a sort of parallel to Friedrich Schlegel's 'gebildete Kenner' (see Chapter 1 for more on this); whereas this label had previously referred to the learned author, the one who might be engaged in a poetological literary production, I think it could equally apply to the learned or cultured *reader* of poetry and philosophy. In this context, then, Schlegel's Notebook entry fragment might be understood as suggesting that, as well as the poetologizing writer, it is also the reader who creates meaning through engaging with the text – in this case, the reader is a participant in the fusion, or *Verschmelzung*, of poetic genres, modes, and styles. As seen in the third chapter, such expectations of reader participation formed the basis for Romantic irony, with conventional roles of

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[230] See Beiser, *Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, pp.85-86.

[231] Once again, it is useful to turn to Mary Jacobus' seminal *Tradition and Experiment*, pp.1-11. Jacobus' argument for Wordsworth's debt to poetic tradition and predecessors in his quest to forge an original poetic identity remains undoubtedly influential for any study of the volume and partly informs my discussion of Romantic negotiation of the ancient-modern dialectic. This mix of tradition and experiment not only addresses Romantic anxieties of originality, it also concerns itself with the kind of literary production that could transmit writers' 'modern' manifestos. As I intend to argue in this chapter, the 'lyrical ballad' becomes an early form of exemplary Romantic literature in that it actively seeks to bridge this gap between past and present, oral and print culture. For an influential study of Wordsworth's emphasis on the art of poetic composition, see also Stephen M. Parrish, *The Art of the Lyrical Ballads*.

[232] See E. J. Clery, *The rise of supernatural fiction, 1762-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.173.

reader, writer, and critic becoming interchangeable in that the writer's notion of authorship becomes somewhat decentralized from the figure of the writer. To this form of participation through irony is added that of participation through appreciation of the centrality of interdisciplinarity to modern discourse.

As London became a topographical *Mischgedicht* in Books VII and VIII of *The Prelude*, a physical space in which heterogeneity might be unified to a degree by the poem's narrative, so it also came to represent a space that might inspire revisionary attention to different literary genres; the city invokes – simultaneously, it seems – satire, epic, and romance. In other words, genres corresponding to the three broad categories Schlegel attempts to bring together in his literary *Mischung*: the satiric, mimetic, and idyllic. As each of these alone is destructive for Schlegel's Romantic poetry, so they proved inadequate for Wordsworth's poetic expression of the metropolitan *Mischgedicht* that is London. Again, irony (manifest in the revisionary habit) became central to Wordsworth's narrative *Mischung*. As I have shown in the previous chapter London opened the *Mischgedicht* up for consideration as a ground for *Verschmelzung*, in terms of both topography and subject matter, and this was achieved, in part at least, by acknowledging the generic possibilities offered by the city for versification. What I now wish to return to is Wordsworth's earlier experiment in generic mixing, the 'lyrical ballads' of 1798, a collection that might be seen as a ground for typographical *Verschmelzung*.

Returning to Mary Jacobus' central focus of tradition and experimentalism in *Lyrical Ballads*, we see that with this publication Wordsworth set about engaging in the kind of negotiation of old and new that Schlegel and his contemporaries extensively theorized and practised. Though this is partly down to the fact that any author seeking to claim originality is akin to Hannibal crossing the Alps[233], a large driving factor for Wordsworth with this work, I am suggesting, is the conscious evaluation of what future literature of the past (here seen as that belonging to the oral tradition) might

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[233] See Jacobus' treatment of this comparison Wordsworth draws in his 1815 'Essay Supplementary to the Preface', in *Tradition and Experiment*, p.1.

have in his contemporary print culture.[234] The recovery of the ballad form and antiquarianism, though not new to Romantic poetic theory and practice – as shown by the vast source material drawn from earlier in the eighteenth-century – took on a new significance in the literature of Wordsworth and his contemporaries in that it made little attempt to imitate or catalogue existing literature, such as Chatterton's imitations or Percy's *Reliques*. Rather, underpinning these writings was the very theory that proposed *Universalpoesie*, a modern literature that might consider generic and temporal boundaries to be as permeable as those of disciplines and authorship. The *Mischgedicht* in both its German and English Romantic incarnations was the aspired product of this methodology of *Sympoesie* and *Symphilosophie*. For Coleridge the *Symphilosophie* might later have taken a life of its own, independent of Wordsworth's *Recluse*, but with the *Lyrical Ballads* we see the drive towards a collaborative *Mischgedicht* in its initial stages, however much each poet would later attempt to forge distinctions between his work and the work of the other.

Much has been said about the collaborative nature of the project.[235] Perhaps, however, Mary Jacobus' assessment most succinctly summarizes the value of it for this discussion: 'The relationship, in fact, provides the best possible illustration of Wordsworth's later theory about the poet's twofold debt to other writers. For all that they gave one another, the most important

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[234] For a reading situating the volume within a print culture poetics see Alan D. Boehm, 'The "1798 Lyrical Ballads" and the Poetics of Late Eighteenth-Century Book Production', *ELH* , 63, 2 (1996), pp. 453-487. See also Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), whose dialectical reading of the Romantic lyric is partly concerned with 'the rhetoric of an unrelieved tension between what came before and what will come after.' (p.1).

[235] See for example Paul Magnuson's *Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). For more on the *conflicts* of this collaborative venture, see again Parrish, *The Art of the Lyrical Ballads* (especially the Preface and pp.34-70). For more on this and on the conflict both Wordsworth and Coleridge felt between adopting the Gothic ballad genre and rejecting its politics, see Michael Gamer's chapter on *Lyrical Ballads* in his *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*, pp.90-126. For a reading of the relationship in terms of literary property between the two poets' work of this period, see Susan Eilenberg's *Strange Power of Speech: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Literary Possession* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), particularly her discussion of displacement and ventriloquy in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (pp.31-59) and the implications of replacing 'Christabel' with 'Michael' (pp.87-107). See also Coleridge's own account of the production of the volume and his later view of the differences between the two poets, in his *Biographia Literaria*, which was taken up by me in the second and third chapters.

effect of the partnership was to make each more fully himself.'[236] This is certainly illuminating when considering how Coleridge's 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' became the poems that they did. Originally conceived as part of the poet's meditations on the philosophical origins of evil, his collaborative project with Wordsworth enabled Coleridge to push generic, thematic, and temporal boundaries. As the third chapter of this thesis argued, Romantic attempts to challenge what Wordsworth calls readers' 'pre-established codes of decision' are dependent on the use of irony. As a mediator of boundaries, irony is also the mode of writing that makes effective Novalis' *Potenzirung*, or intensification, the poetic process whereby the everyday or commonplace occurrence or phenomenon is given a renewed perspective, thus a new significance for both reader and author.[237] This re-awakening, whether seen as from a 'slumber' or from a 'savage torpor', is what is of interest in this chapter, and I wish to read 'Christabel' as a *Mischgedicht* that consciously attempts to redefine 'pre-established codes of decision'.

Some of the rationale underpinning this decision to read the poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth as engaging in a constant dialogue with the other stems from the poets' assessment of the collaborative endeavour of *Lyrical Ballads*, which has begun to receive renewed critical notice. In his introduction to the (fairly recent) Routledge Classics edition of the text, Nicholas Roe points out that Norman Fruman and Stephen Parrish have challenged the idea of Wordsworth's agreement to the account Coleridge gives in his *Biographia Literaria* of the latter's task to produce poems about 'places and characters supernatural, or at least romantic' and the former's to find incidents from everyday life. Roe astutely argues that Wordsworth did not ever confirm this statement, but that he did not deny it either.[238] I would like to add to this that the texts produced by both poets point towards the kind

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[236]Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment*, p.6.

[237]Though the close parallels between Wordsworth's and Novalis' theoretical prose and poetic practice are read in detail in the final chapter, it is worth keeping in mind here Novalis' short fragment on this fructifying property of poetry: 'All poetry interrupts our usual condition – our everyday life; almost like slumber, it renews us, and so keeps active our feelings for life' –Sketches, 196, in *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, p.86.

[238] See Wordsworth & Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), pp.11-12.

of conscious sympoetology I have identified in the second chapter of this thesis; one of the things I am arguing about the *Lyrical Ballads* project in terms of collaboration is that these two types of poetry converge in Romantic poetologies. By its very definition, the supernatural 'or at least romantic' poem is the one that romanticizes. Yet, as we know, to 'romanticize' in both English and German early Romanticism is to give the ordinary a colouring of the extraordinary, or to consider it by taking that all-important 'second look' identified by David Simpson (see Chapters 3 and 4 for more on this). Romanticizing – what Novalis calls *Potenzirung* – is what joins Coleridge's supernatural poems with Wordsworth's 'natural' poems. The *Lyrical Ballads* volume is therefore an active work of *Potenzirung*, whether Wordsworth or Coleridge realized it in these terms or not. The argument that follows in this chapter is that *Lyrical Ballads* as a whole volume is a *Mischgedicht* because its primary aim is to mediate: between old and new, between real and supernatural, between oral and print, between modern and antiquarian, and between 'high' poetry and 'low' culture. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, such mediation between 'high' and 'low' culture has been consistently significant for Wordsworth's poetic practice, which I think is itself an interpretation of the kind of 'reciprocal elevation and debasement' Novalis saw romanticizing to be.

'Goody Blake and Harry Gill' is of particular interest to discussion of the collaborative nature of *Lyrical Ballads*. The question of whether or not the work of each poet was divided on this project into the commonplace and the 'supernatural, or at least romantic' is complicated by this poem. A genuine ballad (which echoes the black humour, tone and moral philosophy of sympathy of poems such as 'The Idiot Boy', 'The Thorn', and 'Simon Lee'), 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill' is also – like 'Peter Bell' – Coleridgean in its use of the supernatural to explore moral philosophy. As with 'Peter Bell', the grotesque finds some anchor in this poem, arising mainly in the shape of morality, rather than conventional aesthetics. Wordsworth paints a picture of moral grotesquerie in the character of Harry Gill, rather than in the unnatural and unnerving humour of his constant 'chattering': as with the experience in London, the grotesque is not in appearance but in what that appearance

signifies of morality and social attitudes. Indeed, this is what makes the description of his former pre-curse state so significant,

> Oh! what's the matter? what's the matter?
> What is't that ails young Harry Gill?
> That evermore his teeth they chatter,
> Chatter, chatter, chatter still.
> Of waistcoats Harry has no lack,
> Good duffle grey, and flannel fine;
> He has a blanket on his back,
> And coats enough to smother nine.
>
> In March, December, and in July,
> 'Tis all the same with Harry Gill;
> The neighbours tell, and tell you truly,
> His teeth they chatter, chatter still.
> At night, at morning, and at noon,
> 'Tis all the same with Harry Gill;
> Beneath the sun, beneath the moon,
> His teeth they chatter, chatter still.
>
> Young Harry was a lusty drover,
> And who so stout of limb as he?
> His cheeks were red as ruddy clover,
> His voice was like the voice of three.
> Auld Goody Blake was old and poor,
> Ill fed she was, and thinly clad,
> And any man who passed her door,
> Might see how poor a hut she had.
> (1798: ll.1-24)

The stark contrast between the Harry Gill with cheeks 'as red as ruddy clover' and the absurdly 'chattering' Harry Gill of the present moment may remind us of the parallel between the young Simon Lee – 'A running huntsman merry' – and the aged and feeble man with 'swoln and thick' ankles who struggles to chop 'A stump of rotten wood'. However, the effect of these descriptions could not be more different. Whereas the contrast in 'Simon Lee' succeeds in evoking pathos at the thought of this once-lively figure struck down by infirmity and poverty, the absurdity of a 'young' Harry Gill with constantly chattering teeth paints a darkly comic picture. In the opening stanza of the poem, Wordsworth's playfulness becomes more evident in the repetition of the word 'chatter' as well as in the rhetorical questioning, both of which reference the tone of 'The Idiot Boy' and 'Christabel'. But it is in the second

stanza that the surreal nature of this playfulness is elaborated: Wordsworth chooses to bring together incongruous seasons and, like Coleridge, the oppositions of day and night, sun and moon. Harry Gill's teeth chatter through summer as well as winter, through day and through the night, and regardless of how many layers he is wrapped up in. Linearity and logic are dismissed from the outset and the central concern with 'What's the matter?' is immediately the focus of the poem – the narrator's off-hand tone indicates that sympathy clearly does not lie with young Harry Gill and the question is posed as a way into the real matter of the ballad, the contrast between this young and once 'lusty' figure and 'auld' Goody Blake.

The poem parallels several others in the *Lyrical Ballads* project, certainly – yet, of all the ones discussed above, 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill' is perhaps the most simply expressed in terms of both punctuation and diction.[239] It is a poem about the collision of rich and poor, landowner and peasant, young and old, a poem of oppositions. What Wordsworth does with these oppositions is what leads to the surreal image of a young man with ceaselessly chattering teeth through all seasons: in her poverty Goody Blake is forced to steal twigs from Harry's hedge in order to light a fire in her modest hut. Upon catching her in the act of stealing, Harry Gill restrains her rather 'fiercely', prompting the old Goody Blake to lay a curse upon him that will render any fire or comfort of his useless. The cold Harry Gill is condemned to live out forever the consequence of his refusal to empathize with the poor, and it is this point that is driven home by the oppositions of comfort and poverty. The landowner's negligence towards the poor is bad enough, but the inability to empathize with suffering is what really takes effect here. The moral of Wordsworth's tale – told so simply through highlighting incongruity line by line, clause by clause – seems to be that where there is no meeting or genuine mediation of social polarities suffering will continue. Such a moral points

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[239] Wordsworth himself states in his 'Preface' that this poem was one of the 'rudest of this collection', *Prose Works*, i (1800: p.178). Such an assessment goes some way to explaining the consciously intended effect of 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill' on the reader; Wordsworth clearly intended this to sit apart from others in his volume in its expression, and the deliberate 'rudeness' of its language and typographical form is indicative of Wordsworth's pared-down efforts at purging the supernatural ballad of its sensationalist elements through parody. The simplicity of something that is playing for shocks and cheap thrills, on the one hand, and the rejection of systematic moral philosophy on the other, combine to jolt the reader from her comfort zone.

towards the urgency of negotiating extreme social conditions, and it is the artifact of the poem, the 'lyrical ballad' that enables this democratization. It reminds us that reconciliation is vital, because without it the totality of authority – in stark contrast to *die politische Totalität* that Schlegel equates with universality (see Chapter 1 for more on this) – threatens to dominate. Democratization, in the sense of reader participation in engendering meaning, also becomes central to reading 'Christabel', to which I now turn.

'that home that is everywhere and nowhere'

In an essay on 'Christabel', Karen Swann begins by observing Geraldine's initial presentation of herself as an equal to Christabel's nobility.[240] As Swann notes here, Geraldine's story offers no specific answer to the questions Christabel asks her. Rather, it serves to reinforce the central paradox of the poem, namely that of the *heimlich*, the simultaneously familiar and unknown. Geraldine is just like Christabel, her story insists, yet she must necessarily remain a stranger to both Christabel and the reader. Swann uses discussion of Christabel's readiness to identify herself with this stranger to introduce her argument that the poem, 'both dramatizes and provokes hysteria. The poem explores the possessing force of certain bodies – Geraldine's, of course, but also bodies of literary convention, which I am calling "genres"'.[241] This mention of genre is especially important to my discussion of the *Mischgedicht* here; the transgression – and therefore eradication – of boundaries occurs on a literary level as well as a literal one, and Coleridge does indeed present the 'body' of the poem as reflecting the identities of its two female figures in its lack of fixity. As with the poem's other gothic themes, Coleridge's doubling takes the familiar Romantic trope and subverts it – there is, for example, no mysterious haunting, nor mistaken identity among the characters, no *doppelgängers*. In fact, the identity of individuals does not seem to be a concern *within* the narrative of the poem; Christabel does not wonder about the truth in Geraldine's reply, nor does she seem to question her further. Instead, she invites the stranger to spend the night in the castle with her, based

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[240] Karen Swann, '"Christabel": The Wandering Mother and the Enigma of Form', *Studies in Romanticism*, 23 (1984), pp.533-47, p.533.
[241] Swann, p.534.

only on the facts that Geraldine is in need and that her 'sire is of a noble line' (l.79). This lack of concern with individual identity is bound up with the question of generic boundaries; the poem seems to suggest instantly that a straightforward 'truth' or 'meaning' is to be denied to the poetic figure, narrator, reader, and critic. In other words, identity equates with genre in its ambiguity here.

More specifically, Christabel, along with the reader, participates in the 'republican speech' that Schlegel identified poetry to be. The language of 'Christabel' is a variation of the Romantic language identified by Novalis as the *lingua romana*, and the resulting form of poetry/literature is the *Mischgedicht*. As discussed in Chapter 1, the language of Romanticism – this *lingua romana* – is primarily the language of interdisciplinarity. In 'Christabel' the reader finds a similar collapse of literary genres and, in the content, of identities. The poem defies categorization, with the reader left wondering if it is a fairy tale? A gothic parody? A medievalist ballad? The poem is, in fact, a mixture of existing literary genres, and can be seen as a response to various literary and philosophical ambitions recorded by Coleridge in the 1790s.[242] Coleridge's Notebook entries read as fragmented counterparts to Novalis' interdisciplinary *Das Allgemeine Brouillon* or, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*; both works clearly represent a desire to unify disciplinary genres as symptomatic of a modern, Romantic drive towards an 'absolute' that is, paradoxically, necessarily always in the process of completion. However, the poet-thinkers have more in common than this apparently surface comparison. Both Coleridge and Novalis provide, through their literary fictions, expositions of these seemingly idealistic philosophical aims. A way in which they seek to achieve this is through historicizing, and 'Christabel' is just one such example; the poem *is* a fairy tale, it *is* a gothic parody, and so a poeticized reconstruction of an ideal history. The historicization of an individual's – Christabel's – ontological and epistemological experience is used to invite the reader to participate in the

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[242] See, for example, *The Notebooks*, 4 vols, *Collected Works*, 16 vols, ed. by Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957-90), i: 1*794-1804*, Entry 161 for the projected epic meditation: 'The Origin of Evil, an Epic Poem'.

poet's expression of human experience as being fragmented, forever 'in the state of becoming'.

In suggesting that a primary aim of 'Christabel' is to historicize Romantic theory in an attempt to reconcile past and present for a feasible philosophy, I am reading the poem – and the *Mischgedicht* in general – not as an ideal, but rather an essential literary form. As historicists, Romantic writers seek to make sense of the ancient/modern literary debate of their day – what might be usefully considered as Jacobus' tradition and experiment – and, more importantly, to advance this debate in a way that could be compatible with their philosophical aims. These aims, being centred on the opening up of literary genres as well as of the modes of literary production (as discussed in the first and second chapters), necessarily involve mediation. In terms of literary production, this mediation perpetuates the favoured 'republican speech' of Romantic theory, joint authorship and the intergeneric, democratizing the literary process. This is taken one step further in Romantic theory, though, as interdisciplinarity plays an additional part in the rationale behind the *Mischgedicht* in that it actively seeks to produce a literature of self-consciousness – ultimately, poetology. It does this, I have suggested above, by recognizing the need to reassess existing subject/object distinctions. Though inspired by the philosophical preoccupations of the day, thinkers like Novalis ultimately take this project to apply to genre itself, and the *Mischgedicht* is one term Schlegel uses to refer to his 'progressive' literature.

In both its formal status as a published fragment and its thematic concern with the ineffability of being and knowing, 'Christabel' provides an unsurprising model for this progressive and democratic poetry. It is, after all, a ballad that tells an incomplete story; a dark fairy tale in which dreams, nightmares, and reality become indistinguishable; a poem that deals with love and duty (be it between parents and their offspring, old friends, or peers), but does this so ambiguously as to resist all generic connotations of morality. Above all, though, 'Christabel' is a poem that explores the gaps between knowledge, experience, and articulation, and it is this philosophical concern that generates the thematic layering. The poem is not 'about' any one thing; indeed, it suggests that it cannot be so, because to 'complete' the poem – in either compositional or critical terms – would be to negate the argument it

makes in relation to the inadequacy of language. Although much has been said about the Romantic concern with the inadequacy of language (so much so that, in Coleridge's case, this has generally become little more than an alternating play between indictment and sympathetic, but weak, defence of his perceived inability to complete literary projects), scholars have been reticent when it comes to engaging with the poem's philosophical premise. Instead, 'Christabel' is too often read as an unintentional fragment, a testimony to the waning creative powers of a potentially brilliant poet.[243]

But not enough is made of the uses and presentation of history in 'Christabel'. If it were, the poem could emerge as an example of the Romantic project of finding a way to express the inexpressible. Coleridge's medievalism could be read in line with that of contemporary Romantic theorists and writers, were the liminality related to the wider project of theorizing poetry. Part of what drives the poem's elimination of boundaries is its concern with the function of dreams. A dark fairytale in which that which is dreamlike is not easily separated from that which is real, the poem seems to comment on the dream as a space that celebrates ambiguity. This is certainly the case for Novalis, I think, whose writings often use the dream as both a catalyst for clarification and as a stimulant for necessary ambiguity. For Novalis in his *Sketches* the dream is a revivifying occurrence that better equips the senses to penetrate the everyday. In the fragment quoted at the beginning of this

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[243] Here I am addressing the most influential indictment of Coleridge's intellectual legacy, *Coleridge: The Damaged Archangel* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1972). Fruman's study has sought to reassess the reticence with which scholars have approached Coleridge's contributions to the many disciplines in which he engaged. Fruman's research has challenged cherished notions of Coleridge's indisputable originality and remains important in that it encourages Coleridgean scholarship to reposition itself when considering the poet-thinker's approach to fact and fiction. What it does not do, however, in its preoccupation with challenging the veracity and originality of Coleridge's writings and statements, is adequately account for the inherent *voracity* that is the real crux of the issue here: Romantic interdisciplinarity does not push for originality in all its production, nor does it insist on being taken at face value by the reader. On the contrary, the centrality of irony places the reader within that very sphere of production, enabling – encouraging – her to claim some authority to the text. No small part of this is achieved through a very conscious attempt to reconcile familiar terrain, or tradition, with originality through a text that aims to be all-encompassing, whilst remaining simultaneously conscious of its fragmentary nature. Thus, a text such as the *Biographia Literaria* – which Fruman treats as a primary offender in his case against Coleridge's originality – demands to be read and assessed along with other contributions to the Romantic project of interdisciplinarity that consciously challenge veracity or authenticity as the predominant concern for literary production. Among these, I am counting *Lyrical Ballads*, *Fragmente*, *Lucinde*, and the *Recluse* project – all *Mischgedichte* which depend on their reader's rejection of linearity, generic and disciplinary boundary, or discernible/conclusive 'fact' or 'truth'.

chapter, he goes further in elucidating the relationship between the everyday 'real' and the dream space by suggesting that 'all fairy tales are only dreams of that home that is everywhere and nowhere'. This again indicates the dream is a space that transcends boundaries, but it also highlights the fairy tale as a literary medium for communicating this.

'And nothing else saw she thereby'

Portents are found in the familiar guise of dreams at crucial points in the narrative; Christabel's restless dreams of her absent lover lead her to step out of the domesticity of the castle and into the woods where she first encounters Geraldine, and the following events are later symbolized in the Bard Bracy's dream of the serpent suffocating the dove. However, perhaps more crucially, these seemingly straightforward uses of the dream are then complicated by the exploration of dream-like sensations, which punctuate the gaps between Christabel's experience and attempts at comprehension and articulation. These descriptions seem to problematize the actual dreams within the poem as they themselves step out of the realm of the descriptive – that is, they transcend the perceived boundaries of the conventional folk tale or ballad as they come to accentuate the narrator's relationship with the reader as opposed to with the figures within the poem. The revelation that Christabel wakes up and greets Geraldine 'With such Perplexity of Mind / As Dreams too lively leave behind' (ll. 385-386) is now a matter for the reader to decode actively as opposed to ingest as part of an omniscient narrative. Similarly, Geraldine's account of her trance-like state, like that of Coleridge's Mariner, becomes unclear in how far it might be a nightmare, rather than a trance, 'For I have lain entranc'd, I wis' (l.92).[244] Geraldine's account differs from the Mariner's, however, in that the reader becomes conscious that it may not in fact be encrypted by an apparent aporia associated with knowledge or articulation. Or rather, the reader is *made* conscious of this possibility through emotional/hysterical interjections that hint at more sinister goings-on, such as, 'O shield her! shield sweet

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[244] See 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner': 'How long in that same fit I lay, / I have not to declare' (1798: 393-4; 1834: 398-9).

Christabel' (l.254).[245] As well as undermining the detachment usually associated with the ballad narrator, such outbursts direct the reader's attention to the very gaps she should aim to fill, and, in turn, to the smaller details that hint at Geraldine's nature as a supernatural being. Geraldine's inability to cross the threshold of the protected abode and failure to praise the Virgin are both instances of the kind of details that would ordinarily be *absent* from the ballad; after all, they are included for the benefit of the reader's understanding, having no bearing on Christabel's actions. Instead, Christabel remains unaware that something is amiss and carries Geraldine over the threshold, accepting that she is able both to narrate the story of her ordeal and walk to the castle (which, we are told, is a 'furlong' from the woods where Christabel finds her) but is then too weary to speak a few words or cross a few steps:

> The Lady sank, belike thro' Pain,
> And Christabel with Might and Main
> Lifted her up, a weary Weight,
> Over the Threshold of the Gate:
> Then the Lady rose again,
> And mov'd as She were not in Pain.
> (ll.129-134)

The reader also notices that Christabel fails to question how Geraldine, having been carried over the threshold, then walks with a light and easy step once inside the castle, 'as She were not in Pain'. The supernatural portents continue with the pair crossing the fireplace. The dying brands suddenly spark up as Geraldine passes yet Christabel notices nothing once she sees Geraldine's bewitching eyes, 'And Christabel saw the Lady's Eye / And nothing else saw she thereby (ll.160-161). This description seems to suggest that Christabel is taken by Geraldine's eye suddenly, not necessarily struck on first appearance, and the mastiff bitch's moaning further confirms that Geraldine's supernatural power is now at its strongest.

Though portents of the supernatural are commonplace to the point of being clichéd in the gothic genre that instructs his poem, Coleridge's handling

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[245] That this line is a later revision of July 1817 seems to suggest that Coleridge's editing sought to emphasise the moral/hysterical intervention of the narrator, thus further complicating the expected distance between narrator and characters/events within the narrative. See Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, i, p.491n

of these ingredients of the gothic differs in that he uses them to an ironic, not sensational, end; the omens are presented to the reader, but not to the character, and the narrative does not seek to shock, but rather to unnerve the reader's 'pre-established codes of decision'. In this it is much closer to the *Lyrical Ballads* volume it was originally conceived as being a part of; in rejecting the poem for that publication, Wordsworth perhaps neglected to draw important parallels between it and his own brilliant effort at parodying the gothic genre in 'The Idiot Boy'. As with 'Christabel', 'The Idiot Boy' employs narrative irony to reconfigure readers' generic expectations.

However, a crucial difference between the two collaborators' treatment of the gothic fashion brings consideration back to the dream as an epistemological space: Wordsworth's experiments with irony in poems such as 'Simon Lee' and 'The Idiot Boy' are grounded in the encouraging of his reader to re-evaluate what she perceives to be present within her *conscious* apprehensions. This is the case even in the lyrics that fall outside of these experiments – the conclusion of the 'Immortality Ode' finds its speaker with 'Thoughts that lie too deep for tears', a state of conflict between knowledge and articulation/expression that Christabel is arguably in after her night with Geraldine in the castle. Though there are very clear differences between the two texts in terms of content and argument the Ode's line might be contrasted with Christabel's epistemological struggle that 'dreams too lively leave behind'. Where Wordsworth is concerned with the conscious state, Coleridge presents this aporia through the dream. In uniting the fairy tale and the dream the poet considers the familiar problem of the inexpressible homesickness along very similar lines to Novalis' search for 'that home that is everywhere and nowhere'. In Christabel's case, the dreams disorientate her in one sense, in that she has lost her ability to articulate her experience as Geraldine's spell has bound her 'utterance'. But the extent of Christabel's *knowledge* of what has come to pass between her and Geraldine upon the strange lady's entering her abode is also unclear.

'for what she knew she could not tell'

The relationship between homesickness and inexpressibility forms the basis for the fundamental actions in both 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. With both of these poems Coleridge's narrative explores how domesticity and hospitality are overturned or interrupted – in the case of the latter poem, by the actions of the Mariner himself. What is of interest is that in both poems the cause of such subversion is never known or expressed.[246] Geraldine binds Christabel's speech and action with a mysterious spell and the Mariner shoots the albatross, which, we are told, has previously been a companion on the ship. In either case neither poetic figure nor reader can comprehend the cause behind the pivotal action:

> At length did cross an Albatross,
> Thorough the fog it came;
> As if it had been a Christian soul,
> We hailed it in God's name.
>
> It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
> And round and round it flew.
> The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
> The helmsman steered us through!
>
> And a good south wind sprung up behind;
> The Albatross did follow,
> And every day, for food or play,
> Came to the mariner's hollo!
>
> In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
> It perched for vespers nine;
> While all the night, through fog-smoke
>   white,
> Glimmered the white moon-shine.
>
> "God save thee, ancient Mariner!
> From the fiends, that plague thee thus!–
> Why look'st thou so?"–With my cross-bow
> I shot the Albatross.
>   (1834: ll.63-82; 1798: ll.61-80)

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[246] Even for very recent readings of Coleridge's supernatural poetry, the gaps between experience, utterance and knowledge figure prominently; for Gregory Leadbetter, much of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner's 'imaginative charge exists in this tension between experience and explanation' – see his recent *Coleridge and the Daemonic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.164.

When recounting the act, the Mariner's face becomes visibly disturbed by the recollection, prompting the Wedding-Guest to question what troubles him, and his reply – that he shot the bird – is the only information the Wedding-Guest is given regarding the act. The reader of the 1834 poem, however, is told by the gloss of an unknown narrator (ll.79-82) that '*The ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen*'.

The crucial adverb 'inhospitably' prompts further connections between the poem and 'Christabel', in that a violation of hospitality (whether in terms of giving or receiving it) is inextricably linked to the *heimlich*. For Christabel, Geraldine's abuse of her hospitality results in an alienation of the homely within familiar domestic surroundings – she very literally becomes a stranger in her own home and even her father shuns her in favour of Geraldine, believing, ironically enough, that Christabel's strange behaviour in her possessed state demonstrates an inhospitable disposition toward the 'guest'. Though falling at her father's feet and begging him to turn Geraldine away, Christabel cannot say why she wishes him to do so, 'For what she knew, she could not tell / O'ermaster'd by the mighty Spell' (ll.619-620). The narrator prompts the reader to consider the love Leoline has for both his deceased wife and the daughter who is a living reminder of his union with her. However, as with much of the narrative of the poem, this reminder is for the readers and does not change the actions of the figure:

> And would'st thou wrong thy only Child,
> Her Child and thine!
>
> Within the Baron's Heart and Brain
> If Thoughts, like these, had any Share,
> They only swell'd his Rage and Pain,
> And did but work Confusion there,
> His Heart was cleft with Pain and Rage,
> His Cheeks they quiver'd, his Eyes were wild,
> Dishonour'd thus in his old Age;
> Dishonour'd by his only Child,
> And all his Hospitality
> To the wrong'd Daughter of his Friend
> By more than woman's Jealousy,
> Brought thus to a disgraceful End–
> He roll'd his Eye with stern Regard
> Upon the gentle Minstrel Bard,
> And said in tones abrupt, austere–

Why, Bracy! dost thou loiter here?
I bade thee hence! the bard obey'd;
And turning from his own sweet Maid,
The aged Knight, Sir Leoline,
Led forth the Lady Geraldine!
                    (ll.634-655)

In Leoline's mind, his daughter's jealousy violates his hospitality toward the daughter of his old friend, Sir Roland de Vaux, causing him to turn from her in anger and accept Geraldine in her place. The strong implication here is that Leoline is allowing Geraldine to complete her usurpation of Christabel's place – 'Whom her Father loves so well' (l.24) – both physically and emotionally, leaving the daughter's fate uncertain. However the poem might have turned out on completion is perhaps a less fruitful line of enquiry to pursue, seeing as Coleridge *did* publish and present the poem in fragment form. In doing so, it might be accepted that he was more concerned with the reader's reception of what was published rather than how the events of the narrative were to be resolved, more of which is considered below in relation to 'Kubla Khan' and the publication of the volume as a whole.

What is significant about the 'ending' of the narrative of events as the reader has it, I think, is the connection the narrator reinforces between Christabel and her mother throughout Part I. At each pivotal moment of the poem's narrative this relationship is invoked: when the mastiff bitch moans in the second stanza, portending the supernatural and possibly seeing the mother's 'shroud' just as Christabel is about to step beyond the domestic boundary into the woods; as Christabel offers Geraldine a wine 'of virtuous powers' that her mother made; and the eerie union between the two women after Geraldine binds Christabel's speech, which is compared to the image of a mother holding her sleeping child. The first instance might be read as a straightforward example of a portent. But in a poem where nothing – not even what is real and what is dream or trance – is straightforward, it seems that the mention of the dead mother is significant here because it comes at the point where Christabel is about to perform one of only three major actions she performs in the poem (stepping out of the forest to pray, offering Geraldine her hospitality, and offering Geraldine the strange wine). As Coleridge's Mariner, whom Wordsworth faulted for his passivity, Christabel appears to be

acted upon more than acting of her own accord, and so any action of hers is pivotal. Moreover, this first action of stepping physically outside of the domestic realm not only triggers but also parallels the act that will displace her from it, i.e. inviting Geraldine to stay at the castle. The second and third instances where the mother is mentioned in Part I are of even greater interest in that they might hold the key to understanding the strange usurpation that takes place at the end of Part II.

Christabel's revelation about her relationship with her dead mother, 'She died the hour, that I was born' (l.197) becomes important because it makes clear the fact that the mother and daughter have never inhabited the same domestic space simultaneously, other than at the moment of Christabel's birth. This illuminates the usurpation, effected by Geraldine, of both Christabel *and* her deceased mother. Christabel herself has never met her mother, whose presence within the castle is perceived only as a guardian spirit, and so Geraldine's usurpation of this role, '"Off, wandering Mother! Peak and pine! / I have power to bid thee flee"' (ll.205-206), is understandable, as it enables her to penetrate the protective charms that separate her from Christabel. In being cast in this grotesquely pseudo-maternal role both before and after her night with Christabel, Geraldine comes to signify a usurpation and subsequent subversion of maternal domesticity. Bearing in mind this close association of Christabel with the maternal role throughout pivotal points in the narrative, the concluding action of Leoline turning away from Christabel and becoming enchanted by Geraldine perhaps becomes more comprehensible, in that we see that it is not merely the actual daughter being substituted, and therefore a reading of Leoline's choice as incestuous – in which the daughter-substitute Geraldine becomes a potential sexual partner to whom Leoline appears to offer domesticity – is complicated by the fact that Geraldine usurps mother *and* daughter.[247] This usurpation is taken to the point that Christabel's own body appears to undergo an unwilling physiological transference, whereby she takes on Geraldine's most undesirable physical attributes (which have only been revealed to her, and

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[247] See also Leadbetter, *Coleridge and the Daemonic Imagination*, pp.215-6. Leadbetter reads the ambiguity of the distinctions between Geraldine and the dead mother as 'one of the most suggestive aspects of the doubling of vision that occurs throughout the poem.' (p.215).

even then presented to her through her enchanted state), whilst Geraldine herself manages to imbibe Christabel's own wide-eyed innocence, as she looks on at her while Leoline offers his aid:

> He kiss'd her Forehead as he spake,
> And Geraldine in maiden wise,
> Casting down her large bright Eyes,
> With blushing Cheek and Courtesy fine
> She turn'd her from Sir Leoline;
> Softly gathering up her Train,
> That o'er her Right Arm fell again;
> And folded her arms across her Chest,
> And couch'd her Head upon her Breast,
> And look'd askance at Christabel –
> Jesu, Maria, shield her well!
>
> A Snake's small Eye blinks dull and shy,
> And the Lady's Eyes they shrunk in her Head,
> Each shrunk up to a Serpent's Eye,
> And with somewhat of Malice, and more of Dread
> At Christabel she look'd askance! –
> One moment – and the Sight was fled!
> But Christabel in dizzy Trance,
> Stumbling on the unsteady Ground –
> Shudder'd aloud, with a hissing Sound;
> And Geraldine again turn'd round,
> And like a Thing, that sought Relief,
> Full of Wonder and full of Grief,
> She roll'd her large bright Eyes divine
> Wildly on Sir Leoline.
>
> The Maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,
> She nothing sees – no sight but one!
> The Maid, devoid of Guile and Sin,
> I know not how, in fearful wise
> So deeply had she drunken in
> That Look, those shrunken serpent Eyes,
> That all her Features were resign'd
> To this sole Image in her Mind:
> And passively did imitate
> That Look of dull and treacherous Hate,
> And thus she stood, in dizzy Trance,
> Still picturing that Look askance,
> With forc'd unconscious Sympathy
> Full before her Father's View –
> As far as such a Look could be,
> In Eyes so innocent and blue!
> (ll.572-612)

This description of 'large bright Eyes' is the only kind of information the reader is given regarding Geraldine's eyes. The only mention made before this point to her eyes is their *effect* on Christabel, not appearance of them, 'And Christabel saw the lady's Eye, / And nothing else saw she thereby'. These lines indicate direct eye contact between the two women, but they do not intimate to the reader that there is any real similarity at this point between them. Following the possession of Christabel, however, the Conclusion to Part I makes it clear that a change has occurred in Christabel's eyes, 'And both blue Eyes more bright than clear' (ll.290); though not changed in appearance, her experience has literally appeared to cloud her vision. With the binding of her utterance has come a disorientation not only in her view of the world, but also in her very sense of being and Christabel is from this point no longer within the safety of the *heimlich*. With the loss of utterance comes the loss of the homely, and with it possibly her very identity.[248]

This seems to be affirmed by the fact that Christabel emits an involuntary hissing sound, a seemingly serpent-like sound that leads directly from the description of Geraldine's 'shrunken serpent eyes'. The very expression on her face, the reader is told, 'passively did imitate / That look of dull and treacherous hate'; the centrality of Christabel's passivity here highlights something deeper than enchantment and bodily usurpation, though, as Christabel seems to be mirroring what she alone sees in Geraldine. Geraldine's 'treacherous' abuse of hospitality is imprinted not only on Christabel's mind as an unutterable image, but is also reflected on her facial expression. The narrator tells of how 'her thoughts are gone' – though this is a reaffirmation of the Conclusion to Part I rather than a revelation. That 'her thoughts are gone' is confirmed at this point is significant in that it confirms the complete usurpation by Geraldine of her physical and psychological being, a usurpation that enables that of her domestic fixity, the *heimlich*. This usurpation is, of course, anticipated ironically by Bard Bracy's allegorical

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[248] This might be seen as a reclamation by the poet of his own sense of a loss or failure of utterance – the poet is in real danger of failing to express through language and so is in danger of losing the homely. This constant danger shrouds any sense of a single, knowable identity or selfhood, thus necessitating a refraction of the self and a subsequent division into selves. Christabel's fate, Coleridge is suggesting, is one with which we must all concern ourselves, because it is one which reveals what is at stake poetically and ontologically: in other words, the poem is a fundamental poetological enquiry.

dream of the serpent crushing the dove in the woods. Though a seemingly simple allegory that echoes (though acted as a warning when first appearing to Bracy) the events of the previous night, its positioning at this point within the narrative is vital as it confirms the usurpation that is about to reach completion in this exchange between the two women.[249]

'higher colors and shadows'

As with 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* often uses the dream space as (and for) an exploration of the limits of human knowledge, and the uncertainty of whether what has passed is 'real' or not. The novel opens with its protagonist reflecting on a mysterious stranger's words. Heinrich himself is unsure of whether these words have come to him in a dream or a trance, 'I have never felt like this before; it seems as if I had a dream just then, or as if slumber had carried me into another world' [*So ist mir noch nie zu Muthe gewesen: es ist, als hatt' ich vorhin geträumt, oder ich wäre in eine andere Welt hinüber geschlummert*].[250] The initial reflection jolts, in turn, another recollection, this time certainly of a dream he has had. This dream is notable even before it introduces the novel's central recurring motif of the blue flower, as it emphasises the notion of wandering that becomes so crucial to the young poet's experiences. In the dream Heinrich chances upon the blue flower as he wanders into a cave on a cliff, a way of experiencing nature that is championed in greater detail not only later on in the novel, but also in his philosophical fragments and his beguiling prose-poem *Die Lehrlinge zu Säis*. Although the significance of mineralogy and the subterranean in that work is discussed at greater length in the concluding chapter, a brief comparison may be drawn here between the two works in the emphasis they place on the seemingly paradoxical notion of wandering within that which is circumscribed; both Heinrich and the narrator

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[249] See also Eilenberg, *Strange Power of Speech*, p.99: 'Christabel's passive imitation of her guest is the most dramatic instance of the confusion of the two characters, who have switched and shared roles from the beginning. For another reading of doubling within the poem, see Paul Magnuson, *Coleridge's Nightmare Poetry* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974), pp.101-4.

[250] Novalis, *Henry von Ofterdingen*, trans. by Palmer Hilty (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1990), p. 15.

of *Die Lehrlinge zu Säis* are travelling toward a fixed goal, albeit through a circuitous path, and this seems, to an extent, to mirror the novel's concern with finding an order through seemingly chaotic or less conventional means.[251] Bearing this intention in mind enables a reading of Novalis' work as conscious *Mischgedicht*, a work that strives toward poetic composition through heterogeneity. Heinrich's varied experiences of nature combine with his learning and culture to equip him to become a poet, making the novel itself a metadiscourse on the education of the Romantic poet. The gap between such a work and Romantic autobiography that professes to trace the author's own poetic education is thus considerably closed, and becomes the subject of more detailed consideration below.

The early discussion of dreams within the novel's first chapter becomes a dialogue between Heinrich and his father on the value of dreams, with two facets of the dream emerging. The first comes in the father commenting that 'Dreams are spindrift'. The reason he gives for this opinion is important for consideration of the role of the dream space in the *Mischgedicht*, 'In the age we live in there is no longer any direct intercourse with heaven'.[252] This revision and idealization of a past is remarkably similar to that found in Novalis' *Die Christenheit oder Europa*. The historicizing found in both these texts serves to advocate a time when distinctions between the material and immaterial worlds were (and will again be) absent. In finding within the dream space a possibility for such mediation Novalis lends his novel that philosophical weight that charges of mysticism have undermined. As with a political work such as *Die Christenheit*, reconciliation and mediation are presented as essential to managing diversification that might otherwise threaten to engulf the subject, a point that is reinforced in the second chapter of the novel by the narrator's words on a mediating age that may well have been joined by the 'Wordsworth' of *The Prelude*'s London in its condemnation of chaotic diversity. The language in which the novel's narrator deplores luxury and dissipation in modernity itself seems at one with Wordsworth's own prose commentary on rustic versus metropolitan life, the

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[251] See Hilty's Introduction to *Henry von Ofterdingen*, especially pp.6-8. My interest in citing Hilty here is to highlight Hilty's salutary consideration of the philosophical seriousness of Novalis' use of the mystical or fantastical.

[252] *Henry von Ofterdingen*, p.18.

Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. Though the medieval framework of the novel does not quite allow for such a clear demarcation between urban and country life, the narrator's reverence for a lost '*idyllic* [original emphasis] poverty' parallels the Preface's attempt at idealizing an austere, rustic life, deploring the luxury and sensation that gives rise to vice in the city. *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*'s narrator is opposed to modernity because it seems to have engendered a similar luxury, one that is at the expense of a genuine veneration for one's limited possessions.[253]

Furthermore, the narrator's comments on a transitional period penetrate the narrative of fiction and become again a metadiscourse on the novel's own project, 'During every period of transition higher spiritual powers appear to want to break through as in a sort of interregnum'. The age in which Heinrich lives, and thus the age in which the events chronicled in the novel take place, is an age of mediation between old and new, a *Romantic* age:

> And just as on the surface of our dwelling place the districts richest in natural resources above and below ground lie between the wild and inhospitable primeval mountains and the boundless plains, so between the rough and crude times of barbarism and the modern age abounding in wealth, art, and knowledge there was a reflective and romantic period concealing a higher form under its simple garment. Who does not like to walk in the twilight, when the light of day and the darkness of night are shattered by each other and fused into higher colors and shadows? And so we immerse ourselves willingly in the years when Henry lived and went to meet new experiences with an eager heart.[254]

In comparing this 'romantic period' to twilight, the narrator describes a chronological reconciliation as a fusion – a *Verschmelzung*– through metaphor of a natural act of *Verschmelzung*, that of night and day, and the 'higher colors and shadows' thus produced are akin to the *Potenzirung* or intensification in intuition and apprehension that the *lingua romana* is to produce. This heightened experience of the everyday is to be achieved, Novalis' narrator suggests, only through reconciliation, whether of two ages or two extremes.

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[253] *Henry von Ofterdingen*, pp.24-25. See also *The Excursion*'s narrator, the Poet/Author, on the Wanderer, who has been raised in 'The keen, the wholesome air of poverty' (II: ll.305-306). Both texts share an emphasis on an almost pious austerity that becomes the basis for their protagonists' ability to eschew excess in favour of assessing the value of morals over materiality.
[254] *Henry von Ofterdingen*, p.25.

The second function of the dream comes in the form of Heinrich's counter-argument to his father's assertion that dreams in the present age have no value for the waking life. Heinrich's defence of the dream rests on its ability to tear at the veil separating the conscious mind and the 'inner life'. According to this argument, the dream might be confused and seemingly lacking in logic and linearity – but therein lies its value:

> Dreams seem to me to be a defense against the regularity and routine of life, a playground where the hobbled imagination is freed and revived and where it jumbles together all the pictures of life and interrupts the constant soberness of grown-ups by means of a merry child's play.[255]

Two things emerge from this answer: the first is that the dream is clearly essential to the *Mischgedicht* because it, too, is an ideal space for *Verschmelzung*. The dream delights in fusing incongruent images and ideas together and in eliminating distinctions, whether they are linear, chronological, or ratiocinative. The second is that the dream does *delight* in doing so. In describing it as a playground for 'merry child's play', Heinrich-Novalis is not trivializing the dream, but rather reinforcing the need for playfulness in poetic and philosophical thinking that is close to Schlegel's or Richter's irony as well as the tone he adopts in his own *Fichte-Studien*, a playfulness that is also shared by Coleridge, and perhaps more unusually, by Wordsworth too.[256]

'the right to a charming confusion'

It is possible to see this tendency toward playfulness in poetic and philosophical thinking as acutely in Schlegel's philosophical novel, *Lucinde*,

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[255] *Henry von Ofterdingen*, p.19.

[256] See Chapter 3 for more on Wordsworth's use of humour to inject playfulness into the philosophical crux of *Lyrical Ballads*. The main difference between Wordsworth's and his contemporaries' use of playfulness and play in his *Mischgedichte* is perhaps that Wordsworth does not use the dreamscape to reject linear narrative, but rather to *interrupt* a seemingly straightforward narrative. In such cases as 'Simon Lee', for example, the humour is used to dismiss the notion that a ballad is only ever lowbrow entertainment for the masses. Rather, Wordsworth reinvents the ballad as a poetological literature in which the reader is encouraged to consider the everyday in a renewed light. The 'right' to a 'confusion' – if not quite as charming as Schlegel theorizes below – is maintained by the refusal to feed popular and vulgar expectations.

as in Novalis' defence of the dream. Published in 1799 to great controversy over the alleged eroticism of the novel, *Lucinde* became notorious for its semi-autobiographical account of Schlegel's own love affair with Dorothea Veit. Since then, it has been largely overlooked in favour of his *Fragmente*, but the novel is important, I think, for understanding not only how he envisages the *Mischgedicht* as working formally (as with *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Biographia Literaria*, this exemplary *Roman* freely mixes poetry, prose, letters, biography and dramatic dialogue), but also just how central the *Mischgedicht* is to Schlegel's theory of romantic literature. *Lucinde* was projected as the first in a series of four philosophical novels, but it remains the only published fragment of this plan.

The protagonist and narrator of *Lucinde*, Julius, takes the above-mentioned assertion of the necessity of playfulness one step further in that he incorporates playfulness both within the dream and outside of it. For Julius, the dream recounted in the opening letter of the novel is an allegory of his love affair with the recipient of the letters, Lucinde. In the dream itself, Julius appears to apply this *Verschmelzung* to his conception of Lucinde herself; Lucinde appears in all forms of femininity to Julius – as a girl, as a young woman, and as a mother with her child – and each of these forms correlates to those that she is subsequently shown in later on in the novel. The *Verschmelzung* here is representative of both ironic subject and object; just as Romantic creation of the self necessitates representation of various 'selves', so biography also takes various selves as constituent of one's being. In short, it is as representative of any 'self' as possible.

The overt eroticism of the lovers' interaction in the dream garden, is presented within the context of play and playfulness. Reciprocal love – intellectual, spiritual and physical – is presented by Julius as being driven by the concept of play, in that even the most passionate sensuality must be tempered; speaking of the sexual union of the two lovers within the dream, the narrator says,

> Wit and rapture alternated between us and became the common pulse of our united life and we embraced each other with as much wantonness as religion. I begged you that for once, you might give yourself completely over to frenzy, and I implored you to be

insatiable. Still, I listened with cool composure for every faint sign of bliss, so that not a single trace might escape me and leave a gap in our harmony. I didn't simply enjoy but felt and enjoyed the enjoyment itself.[257]

Wit here appears to be defined as the self-reflexivity that allows Julius to reflect within the very act, to enjoy 'the enjoyment itself'; so, as with 'irony' Schlegelian 'Wit' takes the firmly established aesthetic concept and attaches to it a detached self-reflexivity as its chief value. In this sense, a sort of conscious parabasis occurs at the point of action, before narrative or recollection even take place, intimating to the reader that Wit is later centralized in 'An Allegory of Impudence' for its reflective value. Rather than the active properties associated with a cultured or satirical 'Wit', Schlegel's concept is championed for its passivity. Wit enables reflection – it is the part of the self that is removed from action at all times, proving an antithesis even to sexual 'rapture'. When these antitheses meet in the lovers' union the result is not merely physical desire 'to break the tormenting thorn of yearning' [*den quälenden Stachel der Sehnsucht zu brechen*], but, rather, 'a romantic confusion' [*eine romantische Verwirrung*], or 'wonderful mixture of the most various memories and yearnings' [*ein wundersames Gemisch von den verschiedensten Errinerungen und Sehnsuchten*]. As the antithesis to action and intensity, Wit allows for the sort of *Potenzirung* or Wordsworthian tranquillity that the production of the *Mischgedicht* necessitates.[258]

Subsequent conversations that Julius recounts in his letters to Lucinde build on this initial suggestion that play is foundational to the novel, both in its depiction of love and of the narrator's ironic interactions with the reader. Of the narrator, we might say that he can be referred to as Julius-Schlegel, being as he is a fictionalized 'version' of Schlegel. Though it is a philosophical novel, Julius-Schlegel hints from the outset that the philosophy

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[257] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.44.
[258] In his earlier *Critical Fragments*, 56, Schlegel writes, 'Wit is logical sociability': see Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.149. This is an interesting point of reference for the treatment of Wit in *Lucinde*: in being 'logical sociability', Wit is immediately raised to the status of philosophical dialogue, yet the notion of 'sociability' undercuts the systematization one might expect from logic; Wit, instead, emerges as the result of the sort of conviviality I have elsewhere discussed as 'philosophical friendship' (see Chapter 2 herein). In this way, Wit is born out of society, whether that is society in love or in friendship. Thus, the account of eroticism between Julius and Lucinde is primarily an elucidation of the conditions in which Wit negotiates actions and facilitates poetological reflection.

therein is not concerned with systems or ideologies as they are known to the reader. His assertion that "'Even if this world isn't the best or the most useful, still I know it's the most beautiful'" suggests that the Enlightenment's tendency to pit optimistic against pessimistic systems of thought, and Kantian preoccupation with utility and morality are far removed from the novel's own philosophical claims, which appear here to be centred around an individualist spirituality through love. Abstract concepts are removed from the narrator's mind at the point of the dream:

> I felt that everything lived eternally and that even death was only an amiable deception. But, actually, I didn't think about this very much – at least I wasn't particularly disposed to classify and analyze abstract concepts.[259]

Yet, this is not to say that Schlegel is dismissing concern with such 'abstract concepts'. Quite the opposite, in fact; Schlegel is reiterating the distance between experience and the knowledge that comes with reflection of it. In a rather Wordsworthian (but characteristically Schlegelian, too) turn, the narrator punctuates the recollection with the conscious realization that, in actual fact, the 'abstract concepts' that intimate immortality to him are a product of recollection. With this reminder, Schlegel introduces the centrality of the concept of passivity:

> It was an illusion, my dear friend; everything was an illusion except that a moment ago I stood by the window and did nothing, and that now I am sitting here and doing something, a something which is perhaps only a little more, or even a little less than doing nothing.[260]

The relationship between this 'something' and doing nothing might be seen as, among other things, a Schlegelian version of Wordsworth's 'emotion recollected in tranquillity', that meditative reflection that can only be achieved through interruption and conscious revision of the original thought or feeling. Julius can now revise his narrative through recollection – in fact, as with Wordsworth's narrative 'selves', he has little choice. Directly following his account of the dream this becomes apparent when he says that his own recollections were interrupted. Julius wants to recount not only his love affair

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[259] *Lucinde and the Fragments*, pp.43-44.
[260] *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.45.

with Lucinde, but also an account of his own life prior to meeting her. The inability to write this account systematically is called an interruption 'by chance', yet Julius seizes on this playfully to suggest that he will mould this opportunity to write a narrative that resists order and systemization anyway:

> No purpose, however, is more purposeful for myself and for this work, for my love for it and for its own structure, than to destroy at the very outset all that part we call "order," remove it, and claim explicitly and affirm actually the right to a charming confusion.[261]

This is as metadiscursive as Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, and the reader is presented again with the methodology most conducive to producing the *Mischgedicht*. Order is resisted in the writing of a self, because it would suggest the creation of a conclusive selfhood or identity. Julius-Schlegel's consciousness of 'self' (or 'selves, as the case proves to be) is, like the dream or its recollection, and, like the novel within which it is represented, always subject to parabasis. As with 'Christabel' or *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, then, *Lucinde* utilizes the dream space to suggest that underlying all passivity is creative re-fashioning or appropriation, whether it is the passivity of 'Christabel' which gives way to generic and bodily usurpation by Geraldine and to the reader's re-fashioning of narrative and consequent appropriation of meaning, or the passive meditation of the poet, which allows for re-creation of various selfhoods. As with Coleridge's fictional 'letter' from a friend in his *Biographia Literaria*, or his 'visitor' from Porlock, we might understand parabasis for Julius-Schlegel as meaning a delegation of the very narrative; such a reading would suggest strongly that the third-person narrative adopted in the 'Apprenticeship for Manhood' section is actually Julius stepping away from 'himself' as he switches to a third-person narrative in order to tell his story.[262]

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[261] *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.45.
[262] Dreamscapes and play (both as a concept and as a narrative technique) pervade the fragment, with further intimations of their importance for the four complete novels it might have become present. This is especially so in the dream allegory in which this project is explicitly outlined, 'Allegory of Impudence' – see pp.53-63, in *Lucinde and the Fragments*.

'Thoughts so all unlike each other'

A reconciliation of two extremes such as the types shown in the works of Novalis and Schlegel is not unlike the one suggested by the Conclusion to Part II of 'Christabel':

> A little Child, a limber Elf,
> Singing, dancing to itself,
> A faery Thing with red round Cheeks
> That always finds, and never seeks,
> Makes such a Vision to the Sight
> As fills a Father's Eyes with Light;
> And Pleasures flow in so thick and fast
> Upon his Heart, that he at last
> Must needs express his Love's Excess
> With Words of unmeant Bitterness.
> Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
> Thoughts so all unlike each other;
> To mutter and mock a broken Charm,
> To dally with Wrong that does no Harm
> Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty
> At each wild Word to feel within,
> A sweet Recoil of Love and Pity.
> And what, if in a World of Sin
> (O sorrow and shame! should this be true!)
> Such Giddiness of Heart and Brain
> Comes seldom save from Rage and Pain,
> So talks as it's most us'd to do.
> (ll. 656-677)

Coleridge's enigmatic coda is the only 'conclusion' that we have in the published text of the unfinished fragment, but it may serve as a conclusion for the purposes of a discussion on the poem as a *Mischgedicht*. The 'Thoughts so all unlike each other' are certainly relating to opposing emotional reactions, but they also stand for the *Mischgedicht* project; as a metadiscursive, self-reflexive type of literary production the *Mischgedicht* steps out of its own narrative framework in order to address its philosophical concerns. With 'Christabel' these need to be understood through consideration of two contexts, the 1797 context in which it was *conceived* and begun, and the 1816 volume in which it was *published* as a fragment.

I have considered in the second chapter how Ludwig Tieck's *Märchen* use the instability of bodies to destabilize our understanding of generic bodies or boundaries, and I have continued to pursue this in the present chapter by

tracing similar patterns of bodily usurpation in Coleridge's fairy tales and *Mischgedichte* of the supernatural. In the second chapter I argued that these texts, when grouped together, allow us to read a preoccupation with the *Nachtseite* and that this in turn sheds light on the use of the dream in poetological texts, an argument that has been shown to have important implications for reading the *Mischgedicht*. The relationship between the *Nachtseite*, *Märchen* and *Symphilosophie / Sympoesie* was set out therein and has been followed up in the present discussion. The second chapter tended to focus on explicating this relationship in terms of reading *Sympoesie / Symphilosophie* as collaborative writings or intersecting patterns of authorship, an approach which was then shown to highlight the relationship between the second component of *Sympoesie / Symphilosophie*, the intergeneric. So far I have read 'Christabel' largely as a 'lyrical ballad' by virtue of its collaborative origins and a justification of its place in that volume has been argued on grounds of authorship as well as its ironic mode of writing. However, these focus on the 1790s context of its conception, whereas it is also important and rewarding for its assessment as a *Mischgedicht* for it to be placed within its publishing context. 'Christabel' as we have it was published in 1816 along with 'Kubla Khan' and 'The Pains of Sleep'. 'Kubla Khan', like 'Christabel', steps out of its own narrative framework to reflect on its philosophical processes. Coleridge presents not only the poem as a *Mischgedicht*, but also its intriguing Preface.

To say this particular text is poetological because of its metadiscursive nature is not enough; any preface to a work one has authored will attempt to illuminate or explicate the sources, methods and aims of one's work. What makes it poetological is that it seeks actively to make connections between poetic theory and practice. The fact that it does this through defamiliarizing both the poem it is prefacing and the concept of a preface makes it even more beguiling. 'Kubla Khan' is a *Mischgedicht* because it takes this poetologizing aim and executes it through the mixing of genres, subject matter and through its mediation of time and space. 'Kubla Khan' is a poem but it is offered as 'a psychological curiosity' in a preface that falls into the realm of literary biography. The fantastical within the poem is trumped by the fantasy of the circumstances of its composition as presented by Coleridge; the myth of the

visitor from Porlock and the 'lost' lines of the verse threaten to overshadow the myth of Kubla and his 'stately pleasure-dome'. This exercise in literary self-construction is a fine example of Schlegel's paradoxical assertion that 'A sizeable proportion of autobiographers are actually autopseudists.'[263] To say that Coleridge's autobiographical sketch in the Preface to 'Kubla Khan' shows him to be an 'autopseudist' is to suggest that his fiction is a self-conscious construct and that this construct enables him to address the processes as well as aims of poetological writing. This is because the word 'autopseudist' encourages us to consider the fiction intrinsic to biography of any kind, particularly autobiography; constructing – and reconstructing – the self holds up the very concept of selfhood or identity to scrutiny. Selfhood, it suggests, is something that an awareness of is achieved through literary and philosophical means – a poetological process. The term 'autopseudist' in this context is thus not a pejorative term because it recognizes the importance of self-reflexivity. Had Schlegel or Coleridge endeavored in a pseudo-autobiographical venture, they might have failed in their philosophical aims, but the prefix 'auto' reminds us that it is the necessity of invention of self that they are highlighting, rather than a fiction or untruth peddled as fact.

'Kubla Khan' itself, though not a *Märchen* in any recognizable sense, is more close to 'Christabel' than it might initially seem. In this text we see the 'thoughts so all unlike each other' take precedence over the details of the narrative. The poem is a *Mischgedicht* because it is concerned – first and foremost – with mediation and reconciliation. In both form and content it is a hybrid; the varying meter from four-beat to five-beat (and back again) seems to confirm mediation between his ballads and conversational poetry of the 1790s. Coleridge veers from the 'revamped' loco-descriptive poems such as 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' – poems which romanticize a familiar landscape by approaching it afresh – in his description of Kubla Khan's grounds and location of his pleasure-dome to the supernatural ballads – which romanticize by presenting the effect of the uncanny on community or domesticity – in the descriptions of the stranger details of the scene. 'Kubla Khan' is thus intergeneric on a formal level; it aims to reconcile supernatural

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[263] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, *Athenaeum Fragments,* 196, p.188.

ballad and descriptive-meditative lyric. It is also self-consciously intergeneric in its source material, and this encompasses both Preface and poem. Much has been made of the various sources on which 'Kubla Khan' draws – both indirectly and directly – and it is not my purpose to reiterate these references in any painstaking detail, but to draw attention to the fact that they point the way towards a self-aware *Mischgedicht*. The fiction of the 'Vision in a Dream' offered as a subtitle to the poem is never really one that Coleridge expects to be received at face-value when it so clearly references familiar works of Milton, Ovid, Plato and Collins, to name a few. To say that these references (sometimes lines almost replicated with only minor alterations) composed themselves – 'without any sensation or consciousness of effort'[264] – is too bold a claim for even Coleridge to make without some reliance on an ironic author-reader relationship. Schlegel's term 'synthetic writer' as that type of writer who produces literature that is both intergeneric and collaborative is in evidence here: like his *Lyrical Ballads* collaborator, Wordsworth, Coleridge is again demonstrating a commitment to the kind of 'synthetic' writing that volume initiated in both poets' works. Here, the notion of collaboration extends beyond that which occurs between two writers to include the collaboration between writer and reader for a joint authorship of – and so authority over – texts. Once again, we see *Sympoesie* in practical evidence, that tacit move beyond Kantian distinctions of analytic and synthetic judgments, operating on the ironic understanding that what is presented by the writer is reflected and re-worked in the mind of the reader.[265]

The poem also suggests that spatial and temporal boundaries are reconcilable: the scope of Coleridge's 'Xanadu' and its several associations surpass by far any one topographical or temporal region. 'Xanadu' – like Wordsworth's 'London' – becomes itself a *Mischgedicht*, a ground for *Verschmelzung*. The 'recovery' of 'Xanadu' as a 'Vision in a Dream' further accentuates the connections of the dream or dreamscape to the *Mischgedicht* that I have been making here and elsewhere in the thesis. In fact, they are amplified in Coleridge's suggestion that the dreamscape *Mischgedicht* is

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[264] Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, p.511.
[265] See Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, *Critical Fragments*, 112, pp.156-7, and Chapter 3 herein for more on the synthetic writer versus the analytic writer and the impact of these concepts on *Lyrical Ballads*.

evoked through a dream-process. As with the *Lyrical Ballads* volume, 'Kubla Khan' too is an 'experiment' in poetic method, what Schlegel termed broadly as *Symphilosophie*/*Sympoesie*; it may be presented ingenuously as an account of subconscious activity – 'a psychological curiosity'[266] – but it is certainly calculated in its theoretical and philosophical reach. Like 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', the poem and its Preface both seek to validate the dream-space as a legitimate ground for intergeneric literary practice.

Furthermore, like *Lyrical Ballads* and *The Prelude*, the poem is an experiment in deducing how the topographical might have a bearing on the typographical; the metrical variations of 'Kubla Khan' lead the reader through as much 'meandering through a mazy motion' as the landscape. As argued above, the form of the poem seeks to reconcile the two seemingly very different styles of poetry we have come to associate with Coleridge's most famous output of the 1790s: the meditative, quasi-loco-descriptive lyric and the antiquarian supernatural ballad. What this reconciliation does, then, is suggest that these styles are not so dissimilar as to preclude any mixing, after all. The poem embraces what is symphilosophical and sympoetic about both 'types' by producing the intergeneric lyric, the self-proclaimed Romantic poem: when that 'savage place' (l.14), the 'deep romantic chasm' (l.12) is referred to, Coleridge is also drawing attention to the apparent violence with which two seemingly incongruous forms or ideas are yoked together by their propensity for *Verschmelzung*. From 'stately pleasure-dome' (l.2) to 'chasm' (l.17) to 'mighty fountain' (l.19) and 'cavern' (l.27) and back to 'sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice' (l.36), Coleridge is presenting various topographical constituents of a single mixing-ground, a *Mischgedicht*. As Wordsworth's 'London' was a *Mischgedicht* for all the people, places and genres that both child and adult 'Wordsworths' could conceive, 'Xanadu' is a topographical *Mischgedicht* that enables generic mixing of all kinds. It is volcanic and glacial, landscaped with woods and yet fantastical, five-beat verse and ballad, 'exotic' and yet English, and simultaneously both ancient

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[266] Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, p.511.

and 'romantic'. Above all, it is both autobiographical and fictive in its scope: it is a *Mischgedicht* and utterly poetological in its execution.[267]

'Desire with loathing strangely mixed'

The third poem in the 1816 'Christabel' volume also makes its poetological concerns clear; 'The Pains of Sleep' is a poem that is even more pronounced in its autobiographical basis than 'Kubla Khan' and it revisits the question of reconciling incongruous ideas, emotions and states of mind. It is also – significantly – a poem that was written in some draft form long before publication; a version was sent in a letter to Southey on September 11, 1803 and then to Thomas Poole on October 3, 1803. If we return to the Conclusion to the published 'Christabel' fragment (first drafted in 1801), we see that the impulse 'to dally with Wrong that does no Harm' takes a darker turn in this painfully personal lyric about nightmares trespassing into the waking, conscious *Nachtseite*. 'The Pains of Sleep' is about the impact of guilty fantasies upon the dreamscape and vice versa, and at the philosophical crux of the poem is, on the one hand, the long-held preoccupation of Coleridge to theorize and then poeticize the origins and nature of evil and, on the other hand, a life-long struggle to reconcile religious submission with philosophical enquiry. These are the same stimuli that prompted his initial poetic forays into the *Nachtseite* with the ballads of the 1790s, and references to it in his Notebooks in relation to those ballads is frequent; it is difficult not to think of references to 'Christabel' and dreams as part of a single, wider project at a time when Coleridge was mulling over several literary projects and schemes of diverse nature. These Notebook entries twin 'Christabel' with 'The Rime of

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[267] Coleridge's off-hand presentation of 'Kubla Khan' as 'a psychological curiosity' also indicates his intention that the poem be read both alongside 'Christabel' and as a fictionalized poetology; clearly, the poem is presented for its '*poetic* merits' as much as its psychological inquiry, but Coleridge's characteristically exaggerated modesty slyly points to the importance of the latter. Its metadiscursive reflection on the process of poetologizing achieves the kind of ironic distance that Schlegel saw as being characteristically Romantic and which Paul Hamilton has usefully called 'meta-romanticism': see his *Metaromanticism: Aesthetics, Literature, Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). I am arguing here that 'Christabel' and 'Kubla Khan' demand to be read alongside each other because they are aspiring to make that crossover from poetry to poetology; the psychological curiosity inherent to both texts and their prefatory materials elaborates the sympoetological relationship between the inquisitive reader and the writer of fragments.

the Ancient Mariner' in terms of their philosophical impetuses, making the connections between these two *Mischgedichte* ever more vivid.

However, they also point towards a certain direction in which Coleridge was taking his major contributions to *Lyrical Ballads*. 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' make evident Coleridge's dedication to writing poetry that is primarily philosophical: the poems arise from questions about knowledge and the articulation of what is known and what cannot be known. Such questions, we have seen, provoke explorations of guilt and the loss of innocence, autonomy and/or utterance. In turn, these inspire one or several conflicts of theme, emotion, or idea. In 'Christabel' the loss of autonomy brings about a confusion in the protagonist regarding her very orientation in the world, the loss of domesticity unfixing her identity. With the Mariner, we see a similar problem arise from his experiences and subsequent narrative(s) of them. The Mariner's story confirms to the reader that his place in the world is certainly questionable, as he is relegated to a life of travelling 'like night, from land to land' telling a story over which he appears to have little control. The Mariner is excommunicated; he longs for 'goodly company' but is in actuality left wanting company or community of any sort. He haunts the wedding feast, but he cannot enter the communal celebrations. Thanks to his 'strange powers of speech' he has no shortage of listeners, but he is forever denied someone with whom to commune.

'The Pains of Sleep', too, is connected to these poetological texts in that it seeks to understand and articulate the distances between knowledge and experience. Here, though, we are presented with the reverse of the prospect of dallying with harmless wrong which was discussed in the Conclusion to the 'Christabel' fragment; in this poem there is no easy or harmless reconciliation between desire and action. Instead, desire is 'strangely mixed' with 'loathing' to produce a nightmare of both the subconscious and the conscious minds. The violence with which these emotional and psychological extremes are mixed together is ultimately destructive for the poet's state of mind, unlike the fusion of extremes seen in 'Kubla Khan', which give way to poetic fertility. Yet 'The Pains of Sleep' is deliberately connected to the *Mischgedichte* with which it is published as well as 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', with which it shares some of its philosophical preoccupations. For one thing, it

shares its metre and form with the Conclusion to 'Christabel': though the results of attempting to mediate between desire and action (as in this poem) or between desire and consequence (as in 'Christabel') are decidedly different, Coleridge chooses to compose the poem in four-beat rhyming couplets. This decision stands out in the Conclusion to 'Christabel' as it firmly indicates a verse that is connected theoretically with the rest of the poem, but removed from the *narrative* (and connotations) of the ballad. In fact, just as the Conclusion was a 'coda' to the poem, 'The Pains of Sleep' might be seen as a kind of coda to the poetological works with which it is affiliated through form and publication.

Just like 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' it deals with the loss of autonomy in a state of passivity: perhaps more problematically for Coleridge, the passivity for his tormented persona arises from prayer. The implication for this is that he has 'No wish conceived, no thought expressed! / Only a *sense* of supplication' (ll.8-9). The scenario is familiar to the reader of 'Christabel', the narrative of which makes clear that one of the few actions of the protagonist is to pray actively – an action that could be seen to lead her to Geraldine, setting the wheels of her loss and alienation in motion. The narrator also notes that Christabel gives herself over to a prayer-like state, whereby the protection and blessings over saints are given to the meek and good. However, prayer (or meditation) in itself is not problematic for Coleridge. In 'The Pains of Sleep', though, what is an issue is the attempt to relinquish both desire and thought – 'Coleridge' makes an attempt to conceive no wish or conscious thought, and this proves to be harder when faced with physical and psychological pain. The italicized '*sense*' in '*sense* of supplication' contrasts the sensory (in this respect, spiritual rather than physiological) experience with emotional and intellectual activity: the apprehensions of the 'Coleridge' of this poem are voluntarily divided in prayer, and the sensory takes precedence in prayer. However, this gives way to conflict when the passivity of such a state is overridden by guilt and pain:

> But yester-night I pray'd aloud
> In anguish and in agony,
> Up-starting from the fiendish crowd
> Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me:

A lurid light, a trampling throng,
Sense of intolerable wrong,
And whom I scorn'd, those only strong!
Thirst of revenge, the powerless will
Still baffled, and yet burning still!
Desire with loathing strangely mixed
On wild or hateful objects fixed.
                    (ll.14-24)

The irreconcilable nature of this conflict between desire and loathing is what maps out the *Nachtseite* in 'The Pains of Sleep' – they are mixed, but 'strangely' so, and their intermingling does not suggest the sort of intimacy of *Universalpoesie*, or the 'charming confusion' presented by Schlegel. As in 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', dalliance with the *Nachtseite* 'Sadden'd and stunn'd the coming day' (l.34) after repeated nightmares of the conscious mind. The guilt and pain felt by 'Coleridge' in this poem are caused in part by his debilitating addiction to opium, though he stated in the letter to Southey with which he sent the draft that he was taking only prescription medication and had 'abandoned all opiates except Ether'.

The more considerable guilt and its ensuing pain, however, appears to arise from the inability of the tormented 'I' to reconcile the various elements of 'the fiendish crowd / Of shapes and thoughts' that haunt his psychological state. In this respect the treatment of guilt in 'The Pains of Sleep' parallels that in Coleridge's earlier, overtly political work such as 'Fears in Solitude' or 'France: an Ode'. 'Fears in Solitude' is a particularly interesting contrast to 'The Pains of Sleep', as it concerns itself with a public, collective guilt, rather than a private one. Coleridge's anxieties are born out of a nation's tyranny and subsequent injustices towards other nations and peoples, and the thoughts of 'uproar' and 'strife' that infringe upon his private meditations are a result of this consciousness:

We have offended, Oh! my countrymen!
We have offended very grievously,
And have been tyrannous. From east to west
A groan of accusation pierces Heaven!
The wretched plead against us; multitudes
Countless and vehement, the Sons of God,
Our Brethren! Like a cloud that travels on,
Steam'd up from Cairo's swamps of pestilence,
Ev'n so, my Countrymen! have we gone forth

And borne to distant tribes slavery and pangs,
And, deadlier far, our vices, whose deep taint
With slow perdition murders the whole man,
His body and his soul!
                    (ll.42-54)

If the poet 'brings the whole soul of man into activity', then the tyrant and his supporters (both active and passive) cast the 'whole man', body and soul, into 'perdition'. Yet Coleridge is very much the poet here and that too the poet directing his rhetoric against tyranny and those who practise it: he has escaped the personal taint of a guilt brought upon a nation by its oppression and subjugation of others by retaining some necessary detachment from it. Though it does not prove him insincere, the private meditations with which the poem begins remind us that Coleridge is sufficiently detached from the unrest to find 'a meditative joy' through 'many feelings, many thoughts'. In other words, he is a man who is privately successful in reconciling the conflicts within his own mind – like Wordsworth's exemplary Wanderer (and, to an extent, Wordsworth's later 'Wordsworth' of the *Preludes*), he is free from troubles of his own, save those which arise from others' sufferings and so can '*afford* to suffer'. The Coleridge of 'Fears in Solitude' is an ironist and this detachment is what enables him to empathize more acutely with suffering. Like the narrators of Wordsworth's contemporaneous 'lyrical ballads', Coleridge is developing an ironic – a decidedly Romantic – moral philosophy in his meditative verse by engaging an unencumbered 'I' into the business of vicarious suffering (which, I have argued, is one way to look at Wordsworth's desired end in his *Prelude(s)* and other *Recluse* fragments). But 'The Pains of Sleep' tells a very different story in respect of guilt and suffering. Coleridge's 'I' is not at all sufficiently unencumbered and the poem documents a failure of Coleridge's persona to become wholly the ironic poet engaged in poetological reflection. I am not suggesting the poem itself is a failure, but as a *Mischgedicht* it does fall short of its poetological peers: its value, perhaps, lies more in its illustration of what makes those other texts so triumphant in bringing together 'Thoughts so all unlike each other'. It is a kind of coda to the poetological texts preceding it, but one which bears witness to the inherent struggle sometimes felt by Coleridge to bring his whole soul into poetic activity.

'These shapings of the unregenerate mind'

Such a failure at the sort of meta-narrative ability I have been highlighting as belonging under the term 'Romantic irony' is hinted at in both 'The Eolian Harp' and its later, darker counterpart, the masterful 'Dejection' Ode (1802). Though the latter is considered in greater detail in the following chapter, alongside the 'Immortality' Ode with which it is in dialogue, I mention it as the counterpart of 'The Eolian Harp', because of the claims to failure both highlight in spite of their clear poetic merits. On the surface, 'The Eolian Harp' is a poem about a man who is contented enough to dismiss whatever bubbles may appear 'On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring' (l.57) in favour of 'The Incomprehensible' (l.59) divinity of a God through whom he has gained peace, romantic felicity and domestic fixity.[268] The claim goes something like this: ultimately, it doesn't matter what fanciful, ambitious or – and this is at the crux of the poem either way – irreconcilable thoughts enter the poet's head as he idly meditates, because his domesticity owes itself to religious and matrimonial commitments (and, consequently, stability). But there is more than just the one problem here, and perhaps the first place to begin is to question whether marriage and religion give him his sense of fixedness, or whether his desire to be fixed leads him to marriage and religion.[269] To cast too long a shadow of doubt over Coleridge's belief in these institutions would be cynicism, easily refutable by either biography or his corpus. However, to position his *belief* in either (or both) against his alienating *experience* of them is to invite consideration of how comfortably these sat together and where they belong in his considerable writings of community and exclusion from it. The circumstances of his marriage to Sara Fricker have been detailed enough by biographers and it is not my purpose to reiterate what has already been so efficiently and painstakingly presented by others.[270] However, it is important to remember that the marriage was

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[268] For more on the domestic aspects of the poem, see Chapter 2 of this thesis.

[269] Paul Hamilton's important study of Coleridge's philosophy stands out among fairly recent scholarship in that it addresses in detail this difficulty Coleridge experienced in reconciling Christian theology with his various philosophical commitments – see his *Coleridge and German Philosophy: The Poet in the Land of Logic* (London: Continuum, 2007).

[270] See Rosemary Ashton, *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997). For a sympathetic, if conventional, look at Coleridge's early life, see Richard Holmes' *Coleridge: Early Visions: 1772-1804* (London: Flamingo, 1995),

ultimately a means to realizing a political philosophy. It is also important to remember that this political philosophy, Pantisocracy, was to be a decisive turn *away* from conventional theism for Coleridge (his sonnet on 'Pantiscocracy' has, ostensibly anyway, more in common with the dark romance and possession of the *Mischgedichte* I have discussed above than with the meditative lyrics of this early period that find solace in notions of nationhood, Christianity, and brotherhood) in his search for community. Certainly, the ill-fated scheme was too utopian even by the standards of the idealism of the early 1790s, but Coleridge invested a potentially risky marriage as well as a belief that was incompatible with orthodox Christianity for the sake of fixity within its political philosophy.

So, 'The Eolian Harp' and 'Dejection: An Ode' are antitheses in one sense but also counterparts in that they both profess to mark the passing of something in relation to poetic production, whereas actually both emerge from similar conditions: the dilemmas that result from the impossibility of reconciling discordant elements. Poetologically, they are self-reflexive (and both are indeed successes in terms of *Mischung*), but the earlier poem fails to mediate successfully between the discordant elements at its core. For all its harmony – structural, acoustic and thematic – 'The Eolian Harp' is essentially a poem about the impossibility of certain reconciliations and conclusions. In Schlegelian terms it would perhaps be seen as a failure to join two extremes in order to find 'the true middle'. In accepting the 'Incomprehensible', it accepts *Unverständlichkeit* as the prevailing epistemological pathway; a poetics of sublimity as well as a poetics of wilful theological ignorance is thus embraced. This incomprehensibility Coleridge embraces at the end of the poem becomes fundamental to understanding the drive of the poem –

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especially the fourth chapter. Holmes' biography is reluctant to take risks in reviewing its subject, and, as a result, his reading of Coleridge perhaps appeals more to the general reader of biography than to the critic of Coleridge's work. However, his biographical accounts of Coleridge in this work and its sequel, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections: 1804-1834* (London: Flamingo, 1999), are the collective result of very careful reading and research as well as a labour of love, and the insight into Coleridge's early life and preoccupations afforded to the reader by his biographical approach make it a rewarding read. Rosemary Ashton's critical biography of Coleridge is in many ways more incisive and balanced. It is a work designed to aid the Coleridgean scholar for whom biography has a bearing on literary criticism. Though it does not devote as much discussion to Coleridge's early life in the way that Holmes' work conscientiously does so, his intellectual and political affiliations are appraised efficiently and insightfully.

philosophy is not rejected. Rather, a poetological decision is taken whereby the need for comprehensibility (and comprehension) is deferred, much like the belief in the efficacy of philosophical systems which is deferred to theological sublimity. This is a consciously uneasy and contradictory resolution to the poem, though, rather than a genuine subscription to the ironic incomprehensibility that would drive his explorations of the *Nachtseite*. Coleridge is not able to mediate the theological and philosophical polarities driving his meditations. It might be useful to note here Schlegel's equivalent of the Coleridge 'whole soul' brought into activity:

> A really free and cultivated person ought to be able to attune himself at will to being philosophical or philological, critical or poetical, historical or rhetorical, ancient or modern: quite arbitrarily, just as one tunes an instrument, at any time and to any degree.[271]

Like Coleridge's expectations of the poet in ideal perfection, Schlegel outlines some tall orders for the poetological person(a); Schlegel's familiar reader will, however, be inclined to take some of this as the confidently exaggerated and playful tone that pervades his earlier work. Generally speaking, the *Critical Fragments* are not as accomplished as the *Athenaeum Fragments* or *Ideas*, but that is not to say that they are insincere or that they should not be regarded as useful for our present purposes; on the contrary, I have endeavoured throughout to show how the *Critical Fragments* might be used to illuminate some of the more original theoretical thinking Schlegel was developing and polishing around the time that English Romanticism was yet to produce a poetic or theoretical 'manifesto'. The tone may be easy to the point of hyperbole, yet it is in keeping with the expectations of the ironic poet-thinker of the *Mischgedicht*, who can move from one generic or disciplinary discourse to another with the ease of will. My interest in quoting the fragment here is to suggest that the resolution Coleridge seeks in 'The Eolian Harp' may be – like this fragment – a little too neat in its expectations to be fully credible. In fact, the 'Coleridge' of this poem is too trapped within the conventional motif of the instrument itself: like his later Mariner or Christabel, this 'Coleridge' is passive. He is too content in his inactivity to have the instrument play over

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[271] *Critical Fragments*, 55, in *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.149.

him to consider the alternative motif Schlegel suggests – that of the instrument tuned by poetic-philosophical man. In choosing the Aeolian harp for his central image Coleridge is choosing an instrument that creates arbitrarily, whereas Schlegel suggests above that arbitrariness is something that, paradoxically, is worked at: the result of a 'cultivated' process. In this respect, we can surmise that the passivity invited by the Aeolian harp image is far from the narrative-generating Wit of *Lucinde* or the roughly corresponding tranquillity that engenders the Wordsworthian lyric:

> Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
> And many idle flitting phantasies,
> Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
> As wild and various, as the random gales
> That swell or flutter on this subject Lute!
> And what if all of animated nature
> Be but organic harps diversely fram'd,
> That tremble into thought as o'er them sweeps,
> Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
> At once the Soul of each, and God of All?
>   (ll.39-48)

I am suggesting that we know this because this tension between fixity/community, wilful passivity and philosophical pursuit takes a darker turn in 'Dejection: An Ode'. Like 'The Eolian Harp', 'Dejection' is ultimately concerned with the inability to mediate successfully in order to find a 'true middle'. But the poem is even more self-reflexive than its earlier counterpart, as it does not make any pretence of an achieved thematic harmony. The structural and elemental harmonies (the latter achieved through acknowledging the conflict therein) so noted by Abrams and critics writing in his wake, such as John Beer, self-consciously mock the discordant elements of the poet's life.[272] The crafting of the text from an autobiographically explicit love-poem to a public (and publishable) poem about 'dejection' shows it to be a prime example of poetologizing at its strongest. Such a transition banishes, then, the notion that the poem is 'about' lamenting a loss. It is elegiac, certainly, but only insofar as it might demonstrate rather triumphantly its successes and its ironic victory over its failures. Poetologically, it is a

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[272] See M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p.67. for a consideration of the relationship between joy and the 'optical, acoustical, meteorological and marital'. See, John Beer, *Coleridge the Visionary* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), p.163.

considerably more sophisticated meditation on the inability to mediate than
'The Eolian Harp'.

Chapter 6. 'The world must be romanticized': writing immortality as infinity

> Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point whereon to rest his machine. Who has not felt the same aspirations as regards the world of his own mind? Having to wield some of its elements when I was impelled to write this Poem on the 'Immortality of the soul' I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a Poet.[273]

'Sufficient foundation in humanity'

Wordsworth's Note on the 'Immortality Ode' (1802) explicates a type of poetics in which the value of both philosophy and theology are maintained; at the same time the Platonic myth of pre-existence – anamnesis – is used as the basis for the purely *poetic* handling of the innately human intimation of 'a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit'[274] within the poet, the *philosophical* content of the poem is authorized by the blurred distinction between poetry and philosophy. Here, Wordsworth makes it clear that a systematic pursuit of truth arrived at through any one philosophical or theological standpoint is not his aim. Rather, he is at work attempting a *poetological* process whereby poetry and philosophy are assimilated into a single discourse which concerns itself with the poet-ironist's self-imposed task of leading the drive towards self-consciousness; the 'Ode' embodies his job description for the aspiring philosophical poet in the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* – 'truth, not individual and local, but general and operative' is the desired end.[275] In this instance, 'truth' is defined as that which leads to self-consciousness, and bears little resemblance to the doctrinal or pedagogic notions of truth that Wordsworth seeks to dispel. Yet this poetologizing is rarely focused on by readers of the 'Ode' and, consequently, the relationship it bears to a wider Romantic attempt at synthesizing literature and philosophy is overlooked.[276] However, the 'Ode'

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[273] William Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems 1800-1807*, ed. by Jared Curtis, *The Cornell Wordsworth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p.428. All subsequent references to the poem are from this edition, and all further line references to poetry appear parenthetically in the main text.

[274] *Poems, in Two Volumes*, p.428.

[275] See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of the 'Preface' and its implications for reading Wordsworth's philosophical poetry.

[276] Geoffrey Hartman's reading of the 'Ode' rightly acknowledges the wilful ambiguities of the poem, and recognizes the need to read outside the 'Ode' itself in order to grasp the wider

is characteristic of a Romantic *Zeitgeist* concerned with such a synthesis, in dialogue with the Jena theorists' concepts of *Sympoesie*, *Symphilosophie*, and *Poëtisirung*,

Taken as a whole, the Note itself is undermined in significance if considered solely by its own formal status; much more than an explanatory 'note', it is, rather, a prose analogue to the verse, which draws attention to this poetologizing process. Taking Wordsworth's prose as an authoritative theory is usually made problematic by the fact that he himself rejected a systematic poetic theory, preferring his reader to derive 'meaning' immanently from the poetry itself.[277] This has led to Wordsworth's philosophical thought being neglected by commentators, with the result that he is at best viewed as a philosophical poet engaged in dialogue with Coleridge, but not as a philosopher in the company of his collaborator, or the German Romantic ironists. However, the Note on the 'Ode' merits closer consideration for its continuous intellectual engagement with not only the poem itself, but also Wordsworth's epitaphic poetry of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) (with a particular focus on 'The Brothers', the 'Lucy' poems, and 'We are Seven'), and later *Essays upon Epitaphs*, the first of which was published in Coleridge's *Friend* in 1810, and later reprinted as a Note to *The Excursion* (1814).[278] What I propose to argue, firstly, is that through both his poetry and prose of epitaphs and immortality, it is possible to read a continuous commitment to a poetologizing process which consolidates Wordsworth's position as a thinker and writer attempting a synthesis of philosophy and poetry in order to arrive at a theory of an infinite drive towards self-consciousness. Secondly, I wish to read this as being in dialogue with Novalis' writing and theory on immortality

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concepts at work here – see *Wordsworth's Poetry*, p.276. However, Hartman's discussion, in isolating *The Excursion* from this framework, overlooks a key aspect of continuity in Wordsworth's poetological projections. His reading of *The Excursion* (pp.292-323) concerns itself with emphasizing the poet's supposed flight from the visionary, thus undermining the extent to which epitaph and elegy serve as an entry to reading the poet as a thinker. More recently, Paul Hamilton has placed the 'Ode' in the philosophical context of his contemporaries, see *Coleridge and German Philosophy: The Poet in the Land of Logic*, pp.10-12. Hamilton reads the 'Ode' as an essential part of a dialectic between Coleridge's and Wordsworth's philosophical ambitions and argues that, 'Poetry and philosophy are each other's extension. They are on the stage, at the same time, in dramatic dialogue' (p.12). This approach, with its emphasis on synthesis and collaboration, has been influential in forming my own argument here.

[277] See 'Preface' to *The Excursion*, in *Prose Works*, iii, p.6.

[278] *Prose Works*, ii, p.45.

and the grave. Although I do not make the claim that either philosopher-poet was *consciously* aware of the other's work – a claim that would be wholly unfounded – I do argue a case for reading Wordsworth within a comparative framework that allows us to make better sense of sympoetologies *across* early English and German Romanticism. To this end, I shall conclude by considering the implications for writing immortality as infinity that Coleridge's poetic dialogue with Wordsworth's 'Ode' stimulates. Finally, I will show how Wordsworth's place within this sympoetological framework is consolidated by his use of irony in his presentation of self-consciousness in these writings on immortality, the grave, and epitaphs. I shall reiterate my argument that Wordsworth's debts to drama and irony, which run throughout several of his major works, are suggestive of reading him as a sympoetological writer and thinker in the company of Coleridge, Schlegel, Novalis and Tieck. By the end of this chapter, then, I hope to have demonstrated that Wordsworth's and Novalis' writings on immortality are more closely affiliated with the poetry and prose read in Chapters 1-5 than might be thought, and that these writings reveal a shared striving towards 'Romantic' poetry (or, *Universalpoesie*) as a negation of both philosophical and literary 'absolutes'. This chapter, therefore, will conclude my exploration of the principal research aims I set out in Chapter 1. Namely, to consider how Wordsworth's placement within an Anglo-German Romantic poetological framework can stimulate readings of generally under-researched, yet central, aspects of his poetic theory, methodology and practice; how reading romantic texts as poetological enables a clearer understanding of how these writers situate their own work; and how poetologies are practised through collaborative (what I have called sympoetological) ventures.[279]

  The Note itself is characterized by a certain ironic language, with the poet neither confirming nor denying an adherence to any one philosophical opinion on immortality; the Platonic version is offered as a palpable example, yet Wordsworth is careful to acquit himself of Coleridgean accusations of

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[279] Having addressed conclusively my final research question of how far poetologizing and collaborative venture result in the *Mischgedicht* in the preceding chapter, I shall not return to it directly here. However, I reiterate that many of the important writings considered in the present chapter (such as 'Dejection: An Ode', Novalis' and Schlegel's fragments and *The Recluse*) have been presented as *Mischgedichte* throughout the thesis, and so the question runs implicitly through some of the readings herein.

affirmation of a decidedly un-Christian spiritual ideology. Indeed, Wordsworth's Note reads like an ironic prose dialogue in which several positions are offered in succession, connected only by the suggestion of the universal appeal of the sense of immortality. A self-universe chiasmus is presented, as any discussion of the validity of the concept of immortality is enveloped within general claims of human experience, which is presented as transcending the particular. Thus, Wordsworth begins with the child's earliest experience, 'a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit', and ends with the universalizing 'sufficient foundation in humanity' that validates the theme.

Within this universal philosophy, the particular is interestingly offered in suitably ambiguous terms, with the poetological potential of both Christian orthodoxy and Platonism emphasized. Although the child's imagining is 'far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith as more than an element in our instincts of immortality', Wordsworth emphasizes that it is not in conflict with religious belief, 'tho' the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of Man presents an analogy in its favour.'[280] This doubles as a defence of not only his poem against criticism on poetic and scriptural grounds, such as Coleridge's famous disapproval of Wordsworth's handling of the grave, but also his decision as a thinker to draw attention to and reinterpret the imaginative recesses between faith and fact. A few sentences on, the philosopher turns ironist, as he now presents his poem as a non-literal Platonic idea and forces the reader to think again about any 'meaning' or system that may be offered here.

The Christian theology is then presented as a logical starting point for the development of Platonic anamnesis, 'Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations, and among all persons acquainted with classic literature is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy.'[281] A closer look at the way this development is documented elucidates the process of drawing the universal from the particular, with the word 'notion' immediately drawing attention to the negation of a systematically derived doctrine. Instead, 'notion' is offered as a vague philosophical term, neither concrete as an explicable concept, nor a belief that

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[280]*Poems, in Two Volumes*, p.428.
[281]*Poems, in Two Volumes*, p.428.

one necessarily subscribes to. Additionally, Wordsworth seeks to find in his sources 'sufficient foundation in humanity', a seemingly casual phrase which, upon reflection, reads as a single approach to his entire corpus. Later objections to a literal reading of Wordsworth's application of mythology, such as Coleridge's famous attack in the *Biographia Literaria*[282], are anticipated here, and the literal itself is reduced as Wordsworth's striving towards a universalized starting-point for comprehending and representing the self, the ultimate 'I', is posited as the chief aim of the poem, and, implicitly, of poetry that presents itself as intrinsically philosophical. This is the 'best use' – Wordsworth makes no reference to any concern with the 'correct' use – of source material for poetic purpose, and it is this use that 'authorizes' him to mark the transition from the particular to the general.

'The little Actor'

In its attempts to reconfigure the everyday and make intelligible (insofar as it may be made intelligible) the relation that the everyday or familiar – the ultimate encapsulation of the knowable understood as the external world – bears with the imaginative, poetic self, the 'Ode' is joined by much of Novalis' poetological writing. Several shorter fragments, along with *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, *Die Christenheit oder Europa*, and *Hymnen an die Nacht* can be read in line with the 'Ode', and other central Wordsworthian works in their exploration of self-consciousness as achieved through consideration of immortality. The concept of the imaginative, poetic self is a myriad one, variously diffused through writings on genius, the child, and the visionary imagination, with the Child of the 'Ode' – the 'best Philosopher' – presented as a progenitor of the adult philosopher-poet, prefiguring both the ironic creator of the dramatic self, and the visionary seer who is charged with the task of eventually uniting this individuating process with the universal. The Child is presented as a Philosopher predominantly due to the inexhaustible capacity for dramatizing ontological enquiry and the self that will become central to the adult's vocation:

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[282] See *Biographia Literaria,* ii, pp.138-141.

> See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
> Some fragment from his dream of human life,
> Shap'd by himself with newly-learned art;
>   A wedding or a festival,
>   A mourning or a funeral;
>   And this hath now his heart,
>   And unto this he frames his song:
>   Then will he fit his tongue
> To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
>   But it will not be long
>   Ere this be thrown aside,
>   And with new joy and pride
> The little Actor cons another part,
> Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
> With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
> That Life brings with her in her Equipage;
>   As if his whole vocation
>   Were endless imitation.
>   (ll.90-107)

The Child is here presented in clearly dramatic terms, although, paradoxically, this language of artifice and drama is used to describe an innate and natural ability to diffuse his experience of being; the 'little Actor', then, is valued for his capacity for naturalizing the dramatic process through *unselfconscious* diffusion of identity.[283] What distinguishes this instance of drama from the artifice with which the adult views the dramatic is the loss of the unselfconscious element, one aspect of the lost 'visionary gleam' the poem elegizes. The recovery of any visionary power in adulthood will, conversely, depend on the individual's capacity for reflection, and any successful restoration of self-identity through drama can only be achieved with the ironist's conscious awareness of this process.

The mature poet as ironist, as I have demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 3, can sympathize with the child's ability to *sympathize*, to place itself

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[283] For a brief but illuminating discussion of the loss elegized by Wordsworth in the 'Ode', see James Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature*, pp.79-81. Chandler's reading of the poem goes against that of Abrams in that it produces the argument that Wordsworth was not attacking central notions of 'custom' or 'habit'. My interest in citing Chandler here lies predominantly in what he has to say about the relationship between the child and the future self at the end of the eighth stanza: Chandler argues that 'the depth to which the weight of custom sinks is what insures that some part of ourselves remains out of our reach, beyond our intellectual tampering' (pp.80-1). Chandler is suggesting custom enables the irretrievability of what I have called the unselfconscious element that is lost in adulthood; to my mind, the primary implication of this argument is that this eventuality is desirable, because it enables the adult to realize that the 'self' is ineffable, which in turn stimulates the ironic diffusion of selfhood into several 'selves'.

effortlessly in various imagined situations; the similarity being that both the ironist-poet and the child present these imagined situations as no different to the everyday conception of 'reality', the events themselves distinguished instead – as theorized in the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* – by the feelings giving importance to them, not vice versa. Nevertheless, this intensity of vision is mediated by the child's ability to feel detached from (or, rather, unencumbered by) any one situation, thus ensuring it effortlessly 'cons another part'. The child's detachment anticipates the unencumbered ironist-poet of later adulthood; however, this is as yet achieved only unselfconsciously, and thus must necessarily be relegated to the status of 'endless imitation' from the adult's point of view. This idea of the child's 'vocation' as consisting of 'imitation' echoes the Preface's view of the poetic vocation as being to some extent a 'mechanical' reproduction. Where the child's epistemology is circumscribed chiefly by a lack of self-consciousness, the poet is encumbered by language and the need for an appropriate medium through which to convey consciousness; the common similarity they share is the value in drama and detachment as a means to intensity. This 'best Philosopher' anticipates *The Excursion*'s exemplary adult visionary, the Wanderer, through the way in which he is able to assimilate his self and his experience of being into a series of imagined situations and identities, the paradox being that this is dependent upon detachment from any one of those identities. The Wanderer, we are told, 'could afford to suffer / With those whom he saw suffer',[284] and this capacity is brought on by an ability to invoke sympathy for others through the imaginative condition, a point I shall return to.

This evolution of the imaginative (thus essentially poetic) faculty from childhood to intellectual maturity is expressed by Novalis in strikingly similar terminology,

> The first human being is a seer. To him everything appears to be a spirit. What are children but the first human beings? The fresh vision

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[284] William Wordsworth,*The Excursion*, ed. by Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye, and David Garcia, *The Cornell Wordsworth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), ll.399-400. All subsequent references to *The Excursion* are from this edition, and all further line references appear parenthetically in the main text.

of a child is more fanciful than the presentiment of the most resolute seer.[285]

In relation to the sensory and imaginative, it is interesting to see how part of this fragment has been translated elsewhere; Margaret Mahoney Stoljar has translated the German *Blick* as 'gaze' instead of 'vision', and *überschwenglicher*, or 'effusive', is offered as 'brimming with emotion', as opposed to Beiser's 'fanciful'.[286] Aside from reiterating the obvious difficulties of translation, these choices also respectively privilege the sensory or imaginative emphasis of Novalis' fragment. By using the word 'fanciful', Beiser makes a distinction between emotion (as translated in Stoljar) and imagination. Beiser's emphasis on imagination makes the child a more poetic figure – *poesis* in the sense of actively creating – and links to the 'fresh vision'. The child here is characterized as a prophetic figure experiencing these visions, whereas in the Stoljar, the vitality of the child's participation lies in the *sensory*, rather than imaginary realm. Both 'brimming with emotion' and 'fanciful' can be seen as translatable for the German, and I think the important thing to note is the *creative* result – in either emotion or imagination – of the early sensory experience.

Novalis' child is also a progenitor of the mature visionary poet-philosopher; the child creates from perceptions and an imaginative processing of those then shapes the way in which the child perceives the external. Novalis privileges – or encumbers – the child with the status of 'seer' in terms that Coleridge might have found as astonishing and difficult to get on terms with as Wordsworth's child-philosopher. However, like Wordsworth, Novalis credits the child with a truly creative faculty that is later only recovered through the drama of reconstruction. For both writers, memory will become represented as inextricably linked to ironic re-writing. In writings of immortality, representation of memory and its functions in the drive to self-consciousness is achieved through anamnesis and the imagery of palimpsests.

Both Novalis' and Wordsworth's recognition of the way in which the functionality of an unreliable memory may be recovered through an alteration in its uses and processes leads to the palimpsest serving as a connective image

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[285] Novalis, *Sketches*, 194, in *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, p.85.
[286] See Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, p.67.

to poetry of immortality and epitaph. Anamnesis and epitaph both relate to a past, however fictionalized or reconfigured in the poet's mind it may be. The palimpsest, though, ensures that this past is rewritable; when standing alone, mythologizing, cosmogonizing, or physical memorials are all too entrenched in a certain past to provide anything more than 'intimations' of immortality. A literary immortality bound up with an ongoing drive towards self-consciousness, represented through spiritual immortality, is the preoccupation here, and only a means of conveying this as on-going adequately represents the idea that human consciousness or identity is at any stage inchoate and subject to revision and rewriting. So, the child, the 'little Actor' who adopts and discards identities in an imitative manner, transcends mimicry, with drama aligned with the palimpsest in its self-renewing operations.

The alkahest

The opening of *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* explores this transcended imitative experience through the presentation of both mind and nature as palimpsests – sites for writing and re-writing – and through reading the latter, the seer will penetrate the purely sensory experience. Of the relation between the individual and the external world, Novalis writes, 'It is as though an alkahest had been poured over the senses of man'[287] – this initially seems evocative of the palimpsest, yet this 'alkahest' acts as a hindrance to comprehending the 'magic writing' that manifests itself in the natural world. The external world is a palimpsest in that it is presented as being written over by various mysterious signs, underlying which is the true ontological discovery the seer aspires to make. The mind of man mirrors nature in its capacity for being written (and rewritten) upon; what saves the poet's experience from being a merely mimetic one, though, is this process of vision and revision. The mind is constantly creating from what it perceives – but if what it perceives is in itself encoded and needs deciphering, any process of perception is simultaneously both sensory and imaginative from the very outset. This experience is also

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[287] Novalis, *The Novices of Sais*, p.3. The alchemical term 'alkahest' refers to a hypothetical universal solvent with the power to dissolve all other substances. Novalis' use of the term is typical in that it is indicative of the ways in which he is seeking to establish intergeneric connections. For more on Novalis' intergeneric terminology, see Chapters 1, 2 and 5 herein.

found in 'Tintern Abbey's (1798) ironic revisioning, where to perceive is to 'half-create', and where each re-writing of the past is a stage in decoding.[288]

Similarly, in the 'Ode', 'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting' (l.58); birth itself acts as the alkahest over the palimpsest of the mind, endowing it with a renewed capacity to perceive the external, create and to re-create from these sense perceptions. Seemingly contrary to the Platonic anamnesis that the poem takes its central philosophical cue from, these 'obstinate questionings' (l.144) that strive to restore the original visionary powers of the mind include the use of the senses. However, the sensory is compensation for loss of the visionary, and is thus not adequate in itself. Here, the intimations of immortality come as 'Perpetual benedictions' (l.137), driving the child's pursuit towards an original state of being, as described previously:

> Not in entire forgetfulness,
>   And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
>   From God who is our home:
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
>   Upon the growing Boy,
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
>   He sees it in his joy;
> The Youth, who daily farther from the East
>   Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
>   And by the vision splendid
>   Is on his way attended;
> At length the Man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.
>   (ll.62-76)

This passage once again finds a parallel in Novalis, for whom, as we have seen in previous chapters, 'Philosophy is really homesickness – *the desire to*

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[288] For Wordsworth, the language of poetry has also suffered the influences of another type of 'alkahest' – the dual alkahest of poetic diction and metre. Wordsworth argues in his 'Appendix on Poetic Diction' (1802) that the original language of poets did not require metre and was actually much closer to the common spoken language of men. It is tempting to see this as yet another justification for the *Lyrical Ballads* volume – and in one respect it is just that – but I think there is something more significant at play here, particularly in relation to the alkahest and its effect on perception. It is my feeling that Wordsworth is driving at the infinity of the poetic source itself: words. By emphasizing the source as infinite he is able to develop the core of his palimpsestic poetry.

be everywhere at home'.[289] Poetry, too, joins in this search for a lost sense of the *heimlich*. Anticipating Freud's later famous definition of the word in his discussion of the uncanny,[290] both Wordsworth and Novalis fuse the homely and the hidden in their poetologizing. Again, although I do not wish to impose a distinctly Freudian reading on the work of either writer, I find the connections made between the homely and the unfamiliar a useful way to approach the passage quoted above. Daniel W. Ross has read the 'Ode' (in line with much of the poet's other major work) as a Freudian revelation of the struggle towards the primal – defined as maternal – origin, and of the subsequent failure of memory as compensation for loss of the original self.[291] Ross argues that the uncanny here relates to the conflict between the two selves and the child is a threat to the present self. While the links between the maternal and the sense of home are convincing, I find the interpretation of the child as the uncanny figure a limiting one; by reducing the poeticized return to an original state of being to the status of fantasy arising from repressed anxieties, the reader runs the risk of overlooking the philosophical value of tracing 'home'.

Although these postulated intimations 'fade into the common day' with time, they nevertheless leave behind their memory, the faculty which Ross reads as the problem disguised as a solution.[292] This may certainly seem the case through a close (and immanent) reading of the poem; however, it fails to acknowledge the way in which memory plays a central role in the ironic re-writing of the past, as well as the present, a capacity for which holds the key to synthesizing poetry and philosophy. Memories of a former glory are certainly mixed blessings, but the opportunities they provide for reconfiguration are of vital importance to the philosophical poet. An 'alkahest' over the senses is thus, in a way, essentially regenerative, as it alters both the functions and the properties of perception. With the synthesis of the sensory and imaginative comes the potential for genius, the semi-recovered adult counterpart to the child-seer:

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[289]Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, p.155.
[290] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, 24 vols, (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), xvii, p.224.
[291] Daniel W. Ross, 'Seeking a Way Home: The Uncanny in Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode"', in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 32, 4 (1992), pp.625-643.
[292]Ross, p.630.

> …genius consists in the capacity to treat imaginary objects as if they were real, and real objects as if they were imagined. So the talent for representation, for exact observation, for the purposeful description of what has been observed, is different from genius. Without this talent, one's vision is incomplete, one is but half a genius, one can have a disposition towards genius, but lacking that talent one will never develop into a genius. Without genius we would none of us exist at all. Genius is necessary to everything. But what we call genius – is the genius of genius.[293]

As with the child, the merging of the real and the imaginary is essential to the way in which representation takes place. The dramatic-ironic figure, outlined above, returns to discussion here in the reiteration of the importance of close observation. Wordsworth's almost contemporaneous comments on the poet's vocation – which serve the best purpose of a manifesto of his poetry in this period – also emphasize the importance of close observation, 'I have endeavoured to look steadily at my subject',[294] as well as the capacity to refigure imaginatively 'reality', as outlined by Novalis' fragment:

> The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to [chuse incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting] by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement.[295]

The 'language really used by men' has been commented on often enough, and I do not intend to add to readings of the Preface's theory of poetic language; my interest in quoting the passage fully here lies in the equal importance placed on language and transfiguring the everyday. To give representation of the everyday 'a certain colouring of imagination' is precisely 'to treat imaginary objects as if they were real, and real objects as if they were

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[293] Novalis, *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (1797), 22, in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism,* p.86.
[294] *Prose Works*, i, (1800: p.132; 1850: p.133).
[295] *Prose Works*, i, (1850: pp.123-5).

imagined', and this is the compensation received for the loss of that original 'fresh vision of a child' celebrated by Novalis.

Ludwig Tieck's comment on this ability of Novalis to reverse the sense of reality, in his posthumous brief Life of the poet is worth returning to,

> It became natural for him to regard what was most usual and nearest to him, as full of marvels, and the strange and supernatural as the usual and common-place. Thus everyday life surrounded him like a supernatural story; and that region, which most men can only conceive as something distant and incomprehensible, seemed to him like a beloved home.[296]

As a biographical comment – moreover, a posthumous account written by a friend –this could easily be dismissed as romanticized reminiscence of a writer who lived through the ideals of his art. However, Tieck's comments on Novalis and everyday life are valuable for the role biography plays in *Poëtisirung*, and *Potenzirung*, both of which relate to an intensified fictionalization of life and the familiar. It is hardly surprising that these concepts, related as they are to *Symphilosophie* and *Sympoesie*, should find a significant place in wider writing of the Jena Romanticists, fictional or otherwise. The nature of fiction is elevated in this process to meet an intensified reality – a *Romanticized* one – with the gap between the two closed by consciously rewriting/recreating the latter. Novalis' own most penetrating fragment on this process is worth quoting fully here once more, as it further elucidates the aims his poetologizing shares in common with Wordsworth:

> The world must be romanticized. Then one will again find the original sense. Romanticizing is nothing more than a qualitative involution. In this operation the lower self is identified with a better self. In the same manner we are such a qualitative series of powers. This operation is still completely unknown. When I give the commonplace a higher meaning, the customary a mysterious appearance, the known the dignity of the unknown, the finite the illusion of the infinite, I romanticize it. The operation is the converse for the higher, unknown, mystical and infinite; through this connection it becomes logarithimized. It receives a customary expression. Romantic philosophy. *Lingua romana*. Reciprocal elevation and debasement.[297]

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[296] See Novalis, *Henry of Ofterdingen*, p.xvi. See Chapter 2 of this thesis for more on the significance of romanticizing.
[297] *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, p.85. See also Chapter 1 herein for a fuller consideration of Novalis' concept of 'romanticizing'.

Indeed, this is one of the most comprehensive reflections 'romanticism' makes on its own processes, keeping in line with other writings on the 'commonplace' or everyday; it is also useful as theory with which to approach *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais'* mysticism and emphasis on the child and the wanderer in relation to immortality.

'Various are the roads of man'

Novalis does, in fact, extend visionary childhood intimations even further in *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, with the mysterious child figure placed at the centre of the piece. As a prose-poem, *Die Lehrlinge* takes on a much more active role in synthesizing poetry and philosophy than the shorter fragments. However, this is not solely formal; the piece contains the fullest expression of the writer's emphasis on childhood experience. The teacher's childhood is described early on in the fragment as one which depended on a close communion with nature through observation, and a youth spent wandering in a pursuit of self-consciousness, and in this it is joined by the Wanderer figure of Wordsworth's *Excursion*. As with the 'Ode's Child, the first lesson of the teacher as a child is imitative, 'He looked up at the stars and copied their paths and positions in the sand',[298] though not in the dramatic sense. The child is soon attuned to the noumenal, and begins to wander in a natural education:

> He listened closely to his spirit and thoughts. He knew not whither his yearnings led him. When he grew older, he roamed the earth, saw distant lands and seas, new skies, strange stars, unknown plants, beasts, men, went down into caverns, saw how the earth was built in shelves and multicoloured layers, and pressed clay into strange rock forms. Everywhere he found the familiar, only strangely mixed and coupled, and thus strange things often ordered themselves within him.[299]

Here, the process of 'romanticizing' begins, with the child able to assimilate the unknown and familiarize it from within; the analogy of the logarithm is useful in conveying what could easily be dismissed as mysticism in a language of logic. Novalis' description of romanticizing paradoxically

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[298]*The Novices of Sais*, p.7.
[299]*The Novices of Sais*, p.7.

becomes more familiar and comprehensible to the reader in its admission of the necessity of incomprehensibility [*die Unverständlichkeit*]; appropriately, this is again expressed through the example of language,

> I heard a voice say from afar that the incomprehensible is solely the result of incomprehension, which seeks what it has and therefore can never make further discoveries. We do not understand speech, because speech does not understand itself, nor wish to; the true Sanskrit would speak in order to speak, because speech is its delight and essence.[300]

In this way, an unfamiliar world becomes more habitable due to this awareness of the incomprehensible. Furthermore, this *Unverständlichkeit* is not limited to human epistemology; it is intrinsic to both the external world and the medium – language, whether written or spoken – used to convey it. However, the adult seer recognizes the necessity of the incomprehensible best through language, whereas it is already graspable to the child as an intuition before the encumbrance of language, 'or shades of the prison-house' appear – here interpreted as the vain striving for unimpeded intelligibility.

Similarly, Wordsworth's exemplary protagonist gains an education which privileges self-discovery:

> But by the native vigour of his mind,
> By his habitual wanderings out of doors,
> By loneliness, and goodness, and by kind works,
> Whate'er in docile childhood or in youth
> He had imbibed of fear or darker thought
> Was melted all away: so true was this
> That sometimes his religion seemed to me
> Self-taught, as of a dreamer in the woods;
> Who to the model of his own pure heart
> Framed his belief as grace divine inspired,
> Or human reason dictated with awe.
> (I, 433-443)

Although the conflict between the significance of the geographical and culturally-specific education that the Wanderer receives and the concept of wandering itself is discussed in more detail below, it is interesting to note the parallel with Novalis; his religious affirmation in childhood is 'Self-taught' as a result of 'his habitual wanderings out of doors'. Theology is again fused

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[300]*The Novices of Sais*, p.5.

with philosophy and epistemological enquiry, so that, in a 'romanticizing' move, Wordsworth is equating religion with ontological discovery. Thus, an education comprising 'human reason' and natural discovery is on equal ground as one of 'grace divine'.

However, the very first sentence of *Die Lehrlinge*, 'Various are the roads of man', presents an intriguing paradox inherent in both texts; while both *Die Lehrlinge*'s teacher and Wordsworth's Wanderer are depicted as having an exemplary education for the prophetic figure instructing man, the prototypical value of this is called into question when it is considered that it is unique to the figures it is attributed to. This is particularly puzzling in the case of the Wanderer:

> Unoccupied by sorrow of its own
> His heart lay open; and, by Nature tuned
> And constant disposition of his thoughts
> To sympathy with Man, he was alive
> To all that was enjoyed where'er he went;
> And all that was endured; for in himself
> Happy, and quiet in his chearfulness,
> He had no painful pressure from without
> That made him turn aside from wretchedness
> With coward fears. He could *afford* to suffer
> With those whom he saw suffer.
> (I, 390-400)

The revelation that 'He could *afford* to suffer' is generally seized on by commentators of this passage, and justifiably so; the idea of being able to '*afford* to suffer' is beguiling in itself, and steadily becomes more astonishing when contextualized by examples of the Wanderer's reactions to the suffering of others. In terms of understanding dramatic displacement in relation to the Wanderer's ironic detachment (which the absence of 'painful pressure from without' strongly implies) from the suffering of others', the assertion that 'His heart lay open' is immediately open to question, and we are invited to consider whether or not the Wanderer's ability to feel sympathy for others makes him, in turn, more accessible. This leaves readers wondering how far it is possible to emulate this idealized figure, and whether or not Wordsworth

actually intends them to try.[301] That the Wanderer himself states early on in Book I, "I see around me here / Things which you cannot see"' (I, 501-2) is strongly indicative of an epistemological and spiritual enrichment that is inextricable from the geographical, cultural and social background of the Wanderer.

This in turn draws attention to the ambiguity of a 'Wanderer' who can simultaneously claim any form of attachment to a certain geographical or social climate, a paradox which is useful to approach using Anne Janowitz' terms for the poetic voice in lyric tradition; although Janowitz' study focuses on lyric poetry, I would like to suggest that her dialectical terms for the narrative voice, 'traditional and voluntaristic', 'embedded and unencumbered selves'[302] can be applied to the Wanderer and beyond. Discussing Wordsworth and *Lyrical Ballads*, Janowitz writes,

> One of the most powerful images of this unencumbered self is the solitary reader and writer; the self who is constructed as a mental space of voluntary choices inhabiting the realm of poetic artifice, neither embodied nor localised, though capable of surveying and understanding a locality[303]

In the case of the Wanderer, this is particularly interesting, as he is presented as being both; on the one hand, 'unencumbered', he assumes the position that ought to belong to the Poet. On the other hand, returning to the description of his upbringing in Book I, and the fact that he serves as the only medium through which the Poet – and, by implication, the reader – can penetrate the local geographical, social, and cultural environment, the Wanderer becomes, to an extent, 'customary', or 'embedded'.

With Novalis, this is complicated by the fact that the teacher – though explicitly intended as a figure who leads by example and education – is aware that the knowledge sought by his disciples may not necessarily be attained through imitating his own course. The lesson of the opening sentence here becomes increasingly important in comprehending the role of wandering.

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[301] David Simpson discusses the question of how far it is possible to emulate the Wanderer, concluding that it seems unlikely, as Wordsworth strives to show that the social, economic, geographical factors that produced his personality and philosophy seem to be receding - see *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination*, p.202.
[302] See Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, pp.34-5.
[303] Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p.18.

Having described the education and experience of the teacher, the narrator turns to his own experience, which differs from the others in that he does *not* wander and retrieve natural objects. Instead, he remains where he is and thinks, a mode of learning that the teacher is sympathetic to, 'With me it has never been as with the teacher. Everything leads me back into myself.'[304] In the same passage, the narrator makes reference to ordinary perception as being clouded by divinity and mysterious images; the seer has already begun to break through what Wordsworth refers to as the 'pre-established codes of decision', the habitual modes of perceiving the external world. However, this penetration of the 'strange figures…which seem to belong to that great cipher which we discern written everywhere'[305] is as yet inchoate, and belongs more to the 'Ode's 'shadowy recollections', than to the birthright of the 'clouds of glory'. Novalis' ultimate exploration in this prose-poem – that of a return to or recovery of 'home' – necessitates a rehabilitation of the secret; as with Wordsworth, the two extremes of the *heimlich* meet in the *Potenzirung*.

So, the significance of the wandering prophetic figure is maintained in both Novalis' and Wordsworth's poetologized search for 'home' (here synonymous with self-consciousness or recovery of that original 'I'), and this is expressed through the language of infinity, or immortality. The 'Ode' highlights immortality as its primary concern through its title, but the real implication the poem makes is one of *infinity*, and this is understood as being tantamount to the former concept. The real value of the notion of immortality for both poets is the opportunity it provides for explicating an otherwise inexpressible journey to self-consciousness, with its connotations of cyclical beginnings and ends which the poet-philosopher can rewrite through irony. However, I do not suggest this as a critical imposition on Romanticism in the sense that Abrams influentially posited in his *Natural Supernaturalism*. Rather, I am interested in reading these works as being in dialogue with one another, as well as part of a wider collaborative effort; returning to Friedrich Schlegel it is useful to consider no. 43 of his *Athenaeum Fragment*, as I think it is still the most succinct summary of this insistence on cyclicality:

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[304] *The Novices of Sais*, p.13.
[305] *The Novices of Sais*, p.3.

'Philosophy is still moving too much in a straight line; it's not yet cyclical enough'.[306]

'The Sublime attractions of the grave'

For the poet or philosopher of immortality this insistence on cyclicality is the crux; the distinction between infinity and immortality is lost in the overall purpose of synthesizing philosophy and literature, in order to create the 'modern' literature which the Jena writers theorized extensively as the *Mischgedicht*, and which has been largely understood by Wordsworthian (and, to an extent, Coleridgean) criticism through the unfinished *Recluse* project. *The Recluse* is generally acknowledged as a collaborative project between Wordsworth and Coleridge, yet further comment beyond this usually collapses into discussion over how far it can be attributed to either writer, with few readers focusing on the importance both Wordsworth and Coleridge attached in both theory and practice (which, though often at odds with one another, are nevertheless of equal interest and importance) to the process here discussed as poetologizing. Fewer still have read this in line with German pre-1800 Romantic theory. But the evolution of this theory can be seen in collaborative work on *Lyrical Ballads*, as I have demonstrated, as well as the *Recluse* project and beyond, and immortality/infinity best expresses Friedrich Schlegel's writing on the 'modern' literature/mythology that was to be produced. It is worth quoting Schlegel's most famous fragment on the matter, *Athenaeum Fragment* 116, once more:

> Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry…It tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature…The romantic kind of 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…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 or should be romantic.[307]

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[306] Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.166.
[307]*Lucinde and the Fragments*, p.175. See Chapter 1 of this thesis for a more detailed consideration of Schlegel's conception of 'Romantic' poetry.

More literally, this 'state of becoming' is expressed by *The Excursion*'s Wanderer, whose philosophy of sympathy for fellow man is exemplary precisely because it achieves an ironic detachment simultaneous with complete and unaffected sympathy for others' suffering. He can therefore relate an anecdote of another's suffering with 'chearfulness', before moving onto another story, verbal epitaph, or even place.

This infinite capacity for providing epitaphs for the dead also belongs to the Pastor, whom the Wanderer requests to:

> Epitomize the life; pronounce, You can,
> Authentic epitaphs on some of these
> Who from their lowly mansions hither brought,
> Beneath this turf lie mouldering at our feet.
> (V, 652-5)

Immortality finds its anchor in the epitaphic poetic mode's potential for memorializing. Both the Wanderer and the Pastor are exemplary figures because they do not merely narrate, they also historicize and commemorate through their narratives.[308] The stark division between the 'mouldering' dead and the living is negotiated by the potential for oral (and imaginative) revivification. Death is presented as an opportunity to utilize the faculty of memory and the process of re-visioning, not seen as an end. We can return to Novalis' explanation of romanticizing as a process of bridging the gap between the infinite and the finite, and read it alongside *Pollen* [*Blüthenstaub*], no. 14,

> Life is the beginning of death. Life is for the sake of death. Death is at the same time an ending and beginning, a parting and closer reunion with the self. Through death reduction is completed.[309]

Revivification of the entombed dead through an oral tradition of relating epitaphic stories – epitomizing the life – enables this 'closer reunion with the self'. The natural analogy of the 'reduction' [*Reduktzion*] to a state of spiritual purification (or, self-consciousness) finds a literary analogue in the ironic process of writing and rewriting the self. In both its preservation of memory

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[308] For more on this capacity for historicizing, see Chapter 2.
[309] *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, p.11.

and its self-renewing function the spoken epitaph equates with the palimpsest of the mind.

The Wanderer's initially disconcerting choice of the word 'mouldering' seems contrary to both the orthodox Christian doctrine of spiritual immortality and the more evangelical spirituality that he otherwise advocates. But this physical reminder of death further reinforces what is at stake in terms of literary and philosophical immortality, and again, if read alongside Novalis' comments on the value of remembering the dead, elucidates the epitaphic memory's role in identifying selfhood and a concept of home:

> Man lives, and continues to live, only through the idea, through the memory of his existence. For the time being there is no other means of spiritual activity in this world. Hence it is a duty to think of the dead. It is the only way to remain in communion with them. In no other way is God himself present to us through faith.[310]

To think of the dead is to think of the fact, the physicality of death; only then can any memorial – written, spoken, or artifactual – stand, and both Wordsworth and Novalis recognize the memorial as a pre-requisite for the universalizing sympathy that allows an insight into the individual.

The grave does also hold other unique attractions for both writers in terms of its relationship with the maternal home, the womb. If philosophy equates with homesickness, the way in which one can recover a sense of home through immortality or infinity is to reconfigure the finite, the final, as the primal – in this way, the womb becomes linked to the grave, so that both concepts of beginning and end are annihilated. Novalis' 'Hymns to the Night' [*Hymnen an die Nacht*] are largely concerned with this process of eliminating the finite, and making the concept of immortality in the face of the truth of a physical death more accessible. Indeed, the first of the *Hymnen* explicitly acknowledges the encumbrance of a physical state of being, 'Consume my body with spirit-fire that I may ethereally commingle more intensely with thee and that the bridal night may last then forever.'[311] The second in the sequence elaborates on the significance of the night, 'Apportioned to the Light was its

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[310] *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, pp.15-16.
[311] *Hymns to the Night*, p.4.

time, but timeless and spaceless is the Night's dominion.'[312] Night expands into infinity, and, represented now as the unending, resembles the grave with which the Hymns are inextricably bound up. The following two Hymns are more lucid still in the possibilities for immortality that the physical grave holds. The third Hymn is predominantly concerned with relating the poet's sense of loss and desolation at the graveside, followed by a visionary intimation of spiritual rebirth at the site of the physical memorial:

> Fled was earthly splendor, and with it my grief. Condensed, sadness flowed away into a new and unfathomable world. Thou Night-inspiration, slumber of heaven, didst come over me: the region gently rose aloft and over the region hovered my released and newborn spirit. The mound became a cloud of dust and through the cloud I beheld the transfigured features of my Beloved. In her eyes reposed eternity…[313]

Charles Passage points out that this Hymn can be contextualized by Novalis' diary entry of May 13, 1797, which recounts the poet's experience at Sophie's graveside. However, manuscript evidence suggests that it was not written immediately after this experience, but rather in the spring of 1799, and the earliest mention of the poems is in a letter to Friedrich Schlegel, dated Jan 31, 1800.[314] This lapse of time between experience and commemoration is significant in that it allows us to see the uses of memory in practice; the visionary, immortalizing experience recounted in the Hymn is the product of a re-visioning which romanticizes the commonplace and makes the finite and physical infinite.

In referring to the grave as 'the dark womb of the mound',[315] the fourth of the *Hymnen* makes its clearest comments on the elimination of boundaries between life and death, and corresponds to *The Excursion*'s Churchyard books; the Churchyard of tombs, within which the Pastor relates the several verbal epitaphs on the dead buried there, engage in a process of making the finite infinite. Within this womb-like Churchyard, each story is akin to a birth – and consequently, re-birth – brought about by the re-visioning of memory. The Wanderer's detachment (which insists on moving from story

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[312] *Hymns to the Night*, p.4.
[313] *Hymns to the Night*, p.5.
[314] See *Hymns to the Night*, p.x.
[315] *Hymns to the Night*, p.6.

to story with equally sympathetic sentiments) is matched somewhat by the Pastor, and, like Novalis' *Hymnen*, works to eliminate the distinction in the reader's perception between life and death in favour of the cyclical. The spiritually vivifying potential of the earthly tomb or the subterranean can also, in Novalis' case, be read in line with the teacher's childhood education in *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*. In the passage quoted above, the child 'went down into caverns, saw how the earth was built in shelves and multicoloured layers, and pressed clay into strange rock forms'; these caverns can be seen not only as proleptic of the comfort of the graves – what the Wanderer terms the 'Sublime attractions of the grave' (IV, 239) – but also the return to the maternal or *heimlich*.

The child of the 'Ode' has not yet lost this connection with the primal *heimlich* womb, and thus is capable of intuitions of these 'Sublime attractions of the grave':

> Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
> On whom those truths do rest,
> Which we are toiling all our lives to find;
> Thou, over whom thy Immortality
> Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
> A presence which is not to be put by;
> To whom the grave
> Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
> Of day or the warm light.
> A place of thought where we in waiting lie
> (ll.114-120)

The attempt to recover something of this peaceful experience of the grave as a place for meditation for the living is recounted in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal; in an entry dated 29 April, 1802, Dorothy writes of lying in a trench beside William in order to hear 'the *peaceful* sounds of the earth'.[316] Again, an attempt to eliminate the physicality of death and to create instead continuity in being between the living and the dead can be seen in both poetry and the prose which theorizes it. But this continuity comes with implications for the epitaph that is dependent upon a physical memorial.

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[316] Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, ed. by Pamela Woof (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.92.

'in the remembrance of his fellows'

The first of the *Essays upon Epitaphs* begins with the observation, 'It need scarcely be said, that an Epitaph presupposes a Monument, upon which it is to be engraven',[317] thus introducing the physicality of memorial that seems at odds with the Wanderer's revivification of the tomb monuments through verbal epitaphs, as well as Novalis' concept of immortality, which is predicated on an intellectual commemoration of the dead. However, this does indeed correlate with immortality being inextricably bound to a concept of infinity that renews itself through revision and rewriting. In works which deal with the written inscription or epitaph, both Wordsworth and Novalis privilege the self-renewing functions of the memory over the entrenched or tangible memorial. In the case of Novalis, this is extended to philology in *Die Christenheit*. In his imaginative take on the history of the Christian religion, Novalis highlights Luther's introduction of the Bible as a fully accessible – and authoritative – text into the vernacular as a corruption,

> Luther generally treated Christianity in an arbitrary manner, misunderstood its spirit, and introduced another law and another religion, namely the universal authority of the Bible. In this manner, another alien, earthly science – philology – interfered with religious concerns, and its corrosive influence has been unmistakable ever since.[318]

This is followed by the assertion that, 'This decision was fatal for the religious sense, since nothing destroys its sensibility as much as the dead letter', further accentuating the 'corrosive influence' of that which is entrenched and so cannot be rewritten or re-visioned. So, a version of the older, medieval Christianity is being elegized, but that version itself is an ironic rendering of theology, with history acting as the palimpsest this time. Philology threatens the renewable spirituality that is at the essence of the religion, thus threatening the innate intimation of immortality or infinity. Novalis condemns the 'dead letter' – his criticism here is based on the elevation of the Bible as supreme authority, claiming that the 'esoteric' quality of the Bible has been subjected to philological consideration at the expense of the 'religious sense'. As with

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[317] *Prose Works*, ii, p.49.
[318] *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, p.66.

Wordsworth's poetologizing of Platonic philosophy and traditional Christian theology regarding immortality, Novalis poetologizes the spiritual value of the Bible. In his criticism of philological evaluation of Christianity, Novalis echoes the Note on the 'Ode' in its ironic dismissal of a literal application of Platonic anamnesis. The insistence on reconciling ancient and modern in theology concludes the essay,

> Christianity must again become alive and active, and again form a visible church without regard to national boundaries. Once again it must receive into its bosom all hungry souls and become the mediator of the old and new world.[319]

Christianity – synonymous with spirituality and philosophy here – must become vital in its practice, and the only way in which this can be enabled is in an elimination of boundaries. The religion as 'mediator' is similar in purpose to the Wanderer, or figure of the poet at the graveside, who provides the link between the dead and living, and philology equates with physicality in its negation of the possibilities of reconciliation and renewal.

The 'mediator' – as either concept or specific poet-philosopher figure – reinforces the *act* of remembering, and Wordsworth's binding of intimations of immortality with the desire to be remembered by others corresponds to the concept of mediation:

> And, verily, without the consciousness of a principle of immortality in the human soul, Man could never have awakened in him the desire to live in the remembrance of his fellows: mere love, or the yearning of kind towards kind, could not have produced it.[320]

Immortality serves a very specific function in the human imagination from early childhood, and without it, Wordsworth's conception of community would remain inchoate. It is this intellectual commemoration, with its insistence on the unending in spite of physical monument or states of being, that triumphs over the material rationalizing of the adult narrator of 'We Are Seven'. The child's adamant refusal to acknowledge that a physical death can obliterate existence arises from a negation of boundaries. The child relates the accounts of her departed siblings, and, though they are epitaphs for the dead,

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[319]*The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, p.79.
[320]*Prose Works*, ii, p.50.

these are distinguished from the 'dead letter' or inscription in their *active* functions, which ensure commemoration.

This significance of the mind as memorial can also be seen in *The Brothers*, with the Priest's observation:

> In our church-yard
> Is neither epitaph nor monument,
> Tomb-stone nor name, only the turf we tread,
> And a few natural graves.
> (ll.12-15)

The community of Ennerdale thrives on a more vital epitaph – the spoken and intellectual one – and the Priest is therefore confused by the lingering presence of Leonard (who he fails to recognize and takes as a stranger) over the unmarked grave. The significance of the dead in the memory of the living is enhanced by the implications it has here for the *heimlich*. Leonard's return after many years to his native land, attempts to recapture a sense of former domesticity in both spiritual and geographical terms:

> 'Twas one well known to him in former days,
> A Shepherd-lad: who ere his thirteenth year
> Had changed his calling, with the mariners
> A fellow-mariner, and so had fared
> Through twenty seasons; but he had been reared
> Among the mountains, and he in his heart
> Was half a Shepherd on the stormy seas.
> (ll.37-43)

Leonard has been away from his native Ennerdale for so long that he has become inadvertently ostracized by the symbol of the community – the Priest no longer recognizes him – and alienated by his own sense of displacement. This loss of the *heimlich* makes Leonard's own place ambiguous, and places him with the Wanderer, but only in that he is now a liminal figure; although not the uncanny figure that Setzer reads in the Wanderer,[321] Leonard is nevertheless uprooted both geographically and psychologically. The poem's conclusion confirms this, as he returns to his new life as a Mariner, leaving Ennerdale forever. Leonard too becomes a traveller, a wanderer – however, he

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[321] See Sharon Setzer, 'Wordsworth's Wanderer, the Epitaph and the Uncanny', in *Genre*, 24, 4 (1991), pp.361-379.

differs from *The Excursion*'s protagonist considerably, as the story related is his own, the loss his own. With his revelatory letter to the Priest at the end of the poem the reader is left with the sense that the only way he can overcome the dual loss of his brother and his sense of 'home' is to allow his memory to stand as epitaph for the dead.

The dead, too, could share this fate of dispossession and alienation if not remembered, and the epitaphic mode of the 'Lucy' poems is concerned with preventing this. As Hartman has noted, 'Lucy is a boundary being…She reminds us of the traditional mythical person who lives, ontologically, an intermediate life, or mediates various realms of existence'.[322] This, I suggest is a triumph of the poem, the crucial point here being that Lucy *lives*. This is further enhanced by the fact that she lives through the mind – and consciousness – of the narrator,

> Wordsworth's Lucy, however, is an intermediate modality of consciousness rather than an intermediate being. She is seen entirely from within the poet, so that this modality may be the poet's own, and Lucy the "inner maiden".[323]

It does not matter that she is an 'intermediate modality of consciousness'; in fact, this retains the link between the dead and the living, and consolidates the epitaphic potential of memory. Hartman's view that the 'Lucy' poems, along with the Boy of Winander passage are predominantly concerned with the poet confronting death in the self as well as the other, 'The poet who stands at the child's grave knows that consciousness is always *of* death, a confrontation of the self with a buried self',[324] is negotiated by the fact that the death is obliterated as an end. Infinity is instead offered in the form of immortality, which magnifies the self-universe chiasmus, whereby the individual and particular are achieved through the other. I remain unconvinced, however, by the suggestion that the Boy of Winander passage may posit the superiority of a physical death over one of a former self, or 'consciousness of nature' – I do not think Wordsworth presents the adult's consciousness as one reborn, rather one that is *altered* (and alterable), and in any case, always driven by the

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[322]*Wordsworth's Poetry*, p.158.
[323]*Wordsworth's Poetry*, p.158.
[324] See *Wordsworth's Poetry*, pp.21-22.

recovery of the potential of the child – 'the little Actor' – to diffuse its self-identity and consciousness. The transition from the imaginative to the 'philosophic' mind is thus collapsed to an extent, by the fact that a recovery of the *heimlich*, or self-consciousness, presents both imaginative and philosophic as being on a continuum.

This reading of the narrator's consciousness of death and finality as bearing over legitimate epitaphic or poetic memorializing is better understood in relation to 'We are Seven', in which the poet satirizes the narrator's incomprehension of the remembrance of the dead. As with the narrator of 'Anecdote for Fathers', we find in the narrator of 'We are Seven' an adult who has lost the prescience of the child; in the case of the latter poem, this is all the more damaging to the adult's consciousness because it restricts that consciousness to the present time and material world. The little girl – who is so insistent that, having been one of seven children, she remains one of seven – is holding onto her innate intimations of immortality unselfconsciously. While the narrator insists she is wrong because she counts deceased and departed siblings among those living and resident at the dwelling, Wordsworth shows up such narrow logic as being precisely what is wrong within the poem. The preoccupation with those who are living (and, specifically, who are living presently at the house of the girl) means that the narrator's glaringly obvious oversight becomes apparent to the reader: the children are seven in number because the little girl has allowed them to remain seven in her memory. Through the child's mental and oral epitaphs death has not obliterated any one of them. Thus, the seemingly morbid image of the child sitting and occupying herself – and even eating – beside the grave of her siblings is transformed into a critical reminder of the living presence of the memorial:

> "Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
> The little maid replied,
> "Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
> And they are side by side.
>
> "My stockings there I often knit,
> My kerchief there I hem;
> And there upon the ground I sit,
> And sing a song to them.

> "And often after sunset, sir,
> When it is light and fair,
> I take my little porringer,
> And eat my supper there.
>   (ll.37-48)

As with 'The Brothers' or Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht*, we find that the grave and/or written epitaph are insufficient for the purposes of memorialization. The girl's act of reproducing an unselfconscious psychological memorial for her siblings by sitting at their graveside renders the narrator's concern with logic and materiality absurd.

Indeed, it reveals the first stanza as an utterly ironic refutation of where such concern with materiality can lead one. The narrator begins the poem by asserting rather arrogantly:

> A simple child, dear brother Jim,
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death?

The assumption being made here by the narrator is that a child's perception of life and the world is essentially ego-centric: since the child feels only life within itself, it cannot possibly know of death in any serious way since it is alien to its experience of being. Such a figure, then, lacks knowledge of what is not material and inherent to its physical experiences. As such, the narrator undervalues the child's *psychical* experiences, too. As Wordsworth pointed out, this opening stanza was provided by Coleridge – yet, to read it in relation to the rest of the poem is to read a seamless sympoetological text, in which the refutation of materiality and empiricism as the only epistemological models is practised consistently.[325]

'I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!'

A more complex sympoetological dialogue between Coleridge and Wordsworth plays out in Coleridge's response to the Immortality Ode. In the

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[325] See Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, pp.515-516.

previous chapter I read 'Dejection: An Ode' as a poetological success that referred itself back to 'The Eolian Harp' in its treatment of creative failure. I shall now conclude my study by reading it in its *sympoetological* framework, by exploring what the poem, as a response to Wordsworth's 'Ode', reveals about Coleridge's indebtedness to collaborative endeavour. For these purposes, 'A Letter to ----- [Sara Hutchinson]' may be counted alongside 'Dejection' – indeed, the former, unpublished version of the poem more frequently draws directly on the sympoetologies preceding and surrounding its composition. 'A Letter to ----- [Sara Hutchinson]' is a *Mischgedicht*; both its form and content present the mediation and 'mixing' of genres of the 'conversational' poetry and ballads of the 1790s. 'A Letter' is self-consciously private in its choice of form, whereas 'Dejection' is an ode that traverses the boundary of private and public; in transforming a letter of private romantic and creative loss into an ode on dejection, Coleridge is poetologizing his struggle over private matters by transposing them onto a dialogue with the literary circle. So, the final version of the poem, 'Dejection: An Ode', is at once that private letter to Sara Hutchinson and the rest of the Wordsworth circle and public affirmation that the poet in crisis can overturn his 'dejection' through such dialogue. The poem eventually becomes a testament to the need for sympoetological dialogue and it does this by negotiating the generic expectations of both private and public forms. Like 'The Eolian Harp', it succeeds in throwing up many perspectives of poet and poem: the 'Coleridge' of 'Dejection' is a poet in crisis, a philosopher who has become entangled in his 'abstruse research', and a man who is suffering romantic disappointment and ill health. This means that the poem is necessarily meta-narrative, philosophical and autobiographical. But it is also an 'Ode', which undercuts our expectations of how far it can be autobiographical – the private 'self' is being written and dramatized for a public stage.

Moreover, it is positioning its dramatization in response to Wordsworth's Immortality 'Ode', and this dialogue is crucial in distinguishing it from 'The Eolian Harp'. As I have suggested in previous chapters, 'The Eolian Harp' fails poetologically because it is unable to mediate the polarities it establishes. Perhaps more significant for the purposes of this discussion is the poem's sympoetic failure I identified in Chapter 2. One of the major

successes of 'Dejection' is that it mediates the polarities it sets up, certainly, but another is that it does so by establishing sympoetological discourse. And this is the case even in 'A Letter': the poem very clearly casts Sara Hutchinson as one within a circle. Thus, mention of Coleridge's romantic attachment to Hutchinson becomes inextricable from his intellectual and creative attachment to the circle:

> O dearest Sara! In this heartless mood
>
> All this long Eve so balmy and serene
> Have I been gazing on the Western Sky
> And its peculiar Tint of yellow Green:
> And still I gaze – and with how blank an eye!
> And those thin Clouds above, in flakes and bars,
> That give away their motion to the Stars;
> Those Stars, that glide behind them and between,
> Now sparking, now bedimm'd, but always seen;
> Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
> In its own cloudless, starless Lake of Blue,
> A Boat becalm'd! dear William's Sky-Canoe!
> I see them all, so excellently fair,
> I *see*, not *feel*, how beautiful they are!
>
> My genial Spirits fail –
> And what can these avail
> To lift the smoth-ring weight from off my breast?
> It were a vain Endeavour,
> Tho' I should gaze for ever
> On that green Light, that lingers in the West –
> I may not hope from outward Forms to win
> The Passion and the Life, whose Fountains are within!
> Those lifeless Shapes, around, blow, above,
> O dearest Sara! what can they impart?
> Even when the gentle Thought, that thou, my Love,
> Art gazing now, like me
> And see'st the Heaven, I see,
> Sweet Thought it is – yet feebly stirs my Heart.
>
> <div align="center">(ll.30-57</div>

There are at least two things of interest about Coleridge's introduction of Sara through an address to her from the second to fourth stanzas. The first is that the address to her makes a connection between the night-scene Coleridge is looking upon and Wordsworth's poetry, and the second is that this connection is used to draw upon a shared moment in which Coleridge and Sara are 'collaborating', in a sense. The initial address to Sara creates an opportunity

for Coleridge to give utterance to his intellectual and creative dejection; by referencing Wordsworth's 'Peter Bell' and 'Ode', he draws attention to his inability to experience the poetic impulse of feeling or thinking beyond the sensory. 'I *see*, not *feel* how beautiful they are!' identifies the weak spot in Wordsworth's own poem of poetic/imaginative crisis and insists that there is no 'timely utterance' that will give relief to Coleridge's present sense of loss. To experience the sensory devoid of any fresh imaginative impulse is to stumble poetically in the most fundamental terms (see above for Wordsworth's and Novalis' arguments for the importance of penetrating the sensory). Nevertheless, in referencing Wordsworth he creates from this ruin a sense of the immortality of sympoetology; Coleridge's own hopes for imaginative relief may be dying, but the shared experience of collaboration that engendered *Peter Bell* and the 'lyrical ballads' of that period is extended beyond the chronological period by the opening up of a dialogue between Wordsworth's meditation on immortality and Coleridge's own apparently finite poetics. In doing so, Coleridge is slyly perpetuating an infinite literature through memorializing the moment. As we have seen with Wordsworth, then, Coleridge is championing the immortality of the work through elegizing the loss of the collaborative moment.

Moreover, he persists in reading the troubling visual experience as a kind of collaboration; by imagining that Sara is seeing the same scene he sees, Coleridge creates, even in his despair, a kind of sympoetological, shared moment. Although this is clearly an unsatisfactory substitute for recovering his 'genial Spirits' – only stirring him 'feebly' – the poet in crisis becomes the poetologizing figure of the collaborative peak of the 1790s. The success of recreating the vicarious sympoetological moment does not match that of 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison', perhaps, but it does reveal that the drive towards a poetics of immortality (and thus infinity) is very much alive here. As with the poetry of the early collaborative period, then, the shared experiences of the circle can still engender poetological narrative. Indeed, it is partly this imagined collaborative moment that drives the poem's metareflection. Wordsworth's 'Sky-Canoe' is connected to the *Lyrical Ballads* project that initiated this sympoetological creation of narrative. As such, it is given pride of place in this elegiac narrative. The fact that it is then

connected through Sara to the sometime romantic and domestic stability Coleridge experienced indicates just how wide the poem casts its net.

Both of these instances are practised sympoetologically in a text that self-consciously declares its inability to do so, thus negating its own momentary autobiographical claims in a manner reminiscent of 'Kubla Khan' and the poetry of the 1790s considered in the previous chapter. Such under-cutting of claims to autobiographical 'truths' or veracity is not dissimilar to the ways in which *Biographia Literaria* would later seek to create a fictionalized 'self'. Both 'A Letter' and 'Dejection' take up sympoetology as their central premise. The success of the poem as a composition shows that the failure of the poet's 'genial Spirits' as a theme is secondary to the real loss that is elegized by the poem, that of the collaborative friendship afforded to Coleridge during that period in which he found his formative poetic activity take shape. The poem, then – in both of its incarnations – deals with death and the repudiation of the finite in true Coleridgean fashion; it takes the notion of finite poetic activity and it uses it to create a type of meta-poetology, whereby the theme of loss is trumped in formal terms. In Chapter 1 I suggested that Wordsworth seeks to best Milton in form by attempting a more audacious project with his *Recluse*, and I see Coleridge's choice of the ode form as a similar statement on the collaborative response. By offering an ode for an ode Coleridge is responding to Wordsworth in a dialogue of equal footing. As with Wordsworth's public 'Ode' on private despair, both 'Dejection' and 'A Letter' are *Mischgedichte* that seek to refashion generic expectations of the public ode form and private epistle.

Throughout this thesis, I have traced the relationship between writer and critical reader as an ironic one; I have argued that autobiographical 'truth' claims in early Romantic writing are always predicated on this ironic relationship, which ensures a degree of complicity between writer and reader, whereby the reader enters into a 'philosophical friendship' with the writer. My understanding of this has been as a sympoetological relationship that sees the production and authorship of texts as collaborative. Across Chapters 2 to 5 I have read this collaborative aspect as operating between writer and reader, but also between writers. Sympoetology has been identified as the type of literary and philosophical production that results from convivial discourse within

coteries as much as from a conscious collaborative enterprise such as the *Athenaeum* or *Lyrical Ballads*. Throughout this chapter, I have argued that prominent early Romantic writings produced during (and beyond) the most productive sympoetological years have sought to equate writings on immortality, elegy and memorializing with the infinity they have come to associate with 'Romantic' poetologies. That is, neither Wordsworth nor Novalis seeks to theorize a literal belief in immortality. Rather, the negation of death in the poetological writings of each shows a need for deferral of an absolute to an infinite drive. So, the doctrine – whether philosophical or theological – is ultimately overturned by poetic writing and re-writing (and what is often in Wordsworth's case, particularly, envisioning and re-visioning through a literal series of revisions, as seen in Chapter 4). As with sympoetological discourse, irony is at the crux of this endeavour; infinite re-writing of the self and its position in relation to the world is ironic because it refuses to occupy a single position. The ironist is necessarily detached from any single perspective, instead dramatizing the notion of 'selfhood' into a series of 'selves' which are constantly re-written. Thus, writings on immortality plot a journey towards self-consciousness as being necessarily infinite: if a conception of a 'self' is impossible to arrive at, consciousness of a 'self' must always be deferred. The poet must take up the philosopher's mantle in order for either to remain relevant, thus the philosophical negation of an absolute is partially subsumed by a poetic negation of the finite. Though he does not theorize it, Wordsworth practices a version of the *Universalpoesie* set out by the *Frühromantiker*, and I have suggested here that Coleridge's 'Dejection' plays on a similar rejection of the finite. Coleridge's bottom line, therefore – that joy can move him to hope and pray for his loved ones – can better be read as his last word on the lost sympoetology he is elegizing: though his own poetologizing faculties have apparently come under threat in a way that might be harder to recover from than the 'Wordsworth' of the 'Immortality Ode', the success of his endeavour is cemented in his immortalizing of the type of shared poetologies that have driven circles as apparently diverse as his and the Jena circle. In the final moments of the poem he appears to confer upon others blessings from which he claims he is

excluded, but in doing so he is reminding us that the pursuit of poetic immortality through an infinite poetics is still very much an active one.

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