A STUDY OF THE CHANGING CONCEPT OF IMAGINATION IN PRE-ROMANTIC CRITICISM

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ABSTRACT

It is a well-known fact of literary history, that between the Renaissance and the Romantic period, a radical change took place in the manner in which poets and literary critics conceived of the faculty and function of imagination and its role in the poetic process. Put briefly and over-simply, it was a change from a concept of imagination as a begetter of visual images, an instrument of dreams, fiction, and poetic diversion, to one in which this faculty came to be considered as not only a creative one, but also an 'organ of truth', so to speak, whose visions, insights, and illuminations possessed unquestioned validity.

This paper attempts to trace the historical steps by which this change occurred, and to examine the major differences between the way the imagination was conceived of in Romantic theory and criticism, as compared with prevailing conceptions among earlier theorists.

I believe this change in the concept of the poetic imagination to be an important distinguishing characteristic between the poetry of the English Romantics and that of Renaissance and Neoclassicism. In my focus on seminal writers whose views helped bring about this change, I have kept in mind the two-fold question: What is poetry? What is its relation to reality?

Three distinct answers emerge in this historical search. Briefly stated, a view of Renaissance poetry emerges which sees poetry as being 'fictional' in nature. The Renaissance theorist does not

conceive of the imagination as a faculty which portrays reality. In Neoclassic theory, the poet and critic are seen to refer poetry directly to the reason, rather than to the imaginative faculty. They attempt to portray empirical truth in their poetry. In doing so, imagination becomes "the dress of thought", the faculty of "adornment".

In Romantic theory, on the other hand, one sees emerging a new concept of imagination. Here, the poet and critic believe that poetry refers directly to the imagination. Consequently, the imaginative faculty becomes, in Romanticism, the most vital agent in poetic composition, thought to be capable of presenting truth of a much higher nature than that which could be ascertained through the exercise of reason and the senses. It becomes the only sure way of arriving at truth.

These three distinct views of the nature of poetry and its relation to reality characterize English literary criticism between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and have a direct bearing on the developing concept of the faculty and function of imagination. They provide valuable insights into the way imagination was seen to operate; consequently, they form the foundation on which I build my case for imagination's changing role.

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INTRODUCTION

Boswell: "Then, Sir, what is poetry?"

Johnson: "Why, Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all know what light is; but it is not easy to tell what it is.

A study of the changing concept of the faculty and function of imagination in English literary criticism is a study of the various attempts by poets and critics to explain the nature of poetry in terms of the mental processes involved in its creation. One of the earliest attempts by any critic to give a full account of Elizabethan literary theory was made by Philip Sidney. In his treatise, A Defence of Poetry, Sidney states:

> Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in the word [mimesis]--that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth--to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture--with this end, to teach and delight.[1]

Sidney understood the nature of poetry to be fictional. This was the view shared by Bacon and by Renaissance theorists in general who conceived of poetry as the product of the imagination, that is, a product

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[1] Sir Philip Sidney, A Defence of Poetry, ed. Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: University Press, 1973), p. 25.

of "fiction". The exercise of imagination, in Renaissance theory, could never depict reality. Only through the exercise of reason could man arrive at truth. Poetry was far removed from truth.

Renaissance theorists valued the imagination, but they never thought that it represented, let alone comprehended, the 'truth of things'. The poet "nothing affirms", Sidney's criticism echoes.[2] One finds a similar view in Bacon's critical theory: poetry constitutes nothing more than pleasurable fiction.

With the influence of Hobbes on the development of Neoclassical thought, poetry came to be understood as having a direct relation to reality. The substance of poetry came to be regarded as truth, that is, the truth which derives from the workings of reason and the judgment. For the Neoclassical theorist, poetry was not the product of the imagination; rather, it referred directly to the reason. Consequently, his view of imagination was that it provided poetry with its ornaments which, though pleasurable and helpful, were not of the essence of poetry. Within the scope of such a theory, the imaginative faculty is an adorning, rather than a truth-giving one.

It is with the emergence of Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the other major Romantic poets, that one sees a change in the attitude toward the faculty and function of imagination. This faculty now begins to assume new and major proportions in the composition of poetry and its relation to reality. The substance of poetry comes to

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[2] A Defence of Poetry, p. 52.

be regarded as truth, but truth of a higher form than that which derives from the perception of the senses and the workings of the discursive intellect. Insight and imagination become inseparable. Poetry, because it is the product of imagination, is now thought to be capable of presenting reality of a higher validity than empirical reality. The power of imagination is now considered to be a higher power than that of the discursive reason or of the senses.

One sees in Romantic criticism a concept of imagination that is in many respects revolutionary. One of its most striking features is the belief in the power of imagination to transform anew the world and all that it contains. This new world constitutes for the Romantic poet an important kind of truth. Here one sees the Romantic as standing on new ground: imagination and truth are being brought into closer harmony than ever before. Whereas in pre-Romantic criticism the imagination was commonly held to be merely a picture-making faculty, in Romanticism it is being conceived of as the power of the human mind to fashion its own vision of reality through the exercise of poetic powers. These powers are born, not of ratiocination, but of inspired imagination. Therefore, since Romantic poetry is the product of imagination, it constitutes a higher form of truth than that ascertained through reason or the senses. For the Romantic theorist and poet, reason of itself is not enough; it needs the stimulus of "young imagination" to "elevate the more-than-reasoning Mind".[3]

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[3]William Wordsworth, "Miscellaneous Sonnets", in Wordsworth's Poetical Works, eds. E. De Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), Vol. 3, Sonnet XXV, p. 20.

Romantic criticism views the poetic imagination as a collaborator with the Godhead in recreating the world. This implies, in Coleridge's literary theory, that the poet possesses the power within his own mind to bring order and shape into the confusing world of raw sensation. The poetic imagination--an echo of the infinite I Am--takes the perceptions of sensory experience and recreates them into other forms. This creative activity of the poetic imagination, because it partakes of the Divine power, assumes, then, an essential connection with life, with the truth of things. This is a tremendous claim, not confined to Coleridge, but held in varying degrees by Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and others.

Blake speaks with apocalyptic certainty about the divinity of the imagination, and holds the view that through the exercise of this faculty, man's spiritual nature is realized. Neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth take the concept of imagination that far. However, it does assume for them prime importance. They, too, believe that through this creative activity, this power like unto God's, man can find meaning for his existence. It is the very task of poetry to explain life's mysteries.

These poets are alike in rejecting Locke's theory of mind. For Blake "mental things" alone are real. Coleridge expressly rejects Locke's theory also, but for different reasons. Mind, for Coleridge, is not passive; it is made in God's image. Therefore, any system built on the passiveness of mind must, in his view, be a false system.

What the Romantics are doing is preparing the way for the restoration of a supremacy of spirit which Locke's philosophy and Newton's Science had denied. Things of the spirit concern the Romantics. They believe that through imagination and inspired insight, this world can be interpreted and presented in their poetry.

Through visible things, Blake reaches a transcendent state of 'eternity'. His whole attention is turned toward an ideal, spiritual world. Coleridge and Wordsworth are fully aware of the "inanimate, cold world" in which objects "as objects, are essentially fixed and dead".[4] But they believe that the poet's task is to bring to life the known and the familiar, to "give the charm of novelty to things of every day".[5]

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[4]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1934), Ch. Xlll, p. 160.

[5]Ibid., Ch. XlV, p. 161.

I

Prevailing Renaissance Views

One of the earliest works of English literary criticism is Sidney's A Defence of Poetry. This treatise, one of the first on the part of any Renaissance critic to argue on the side of poetry against those in his time who stressed its dangers, affords invaluable insights into the way imagination was thought to function in Renaissance poetry.

Sidney puts forth very seriously his claim for poetry as being "the first light-giver to ignorance".[1] Among the Romans, he states, the poet was held to be a "prophet"; among the Greeks, a "maker". Poetry, confirms Sidney, bears analogy with the works of the heavenly Maker:

> . . . who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings--with no small arguments to the credulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, since our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it.[2]

Proceeding as it does from an enlightened intellect, and aiming to recover something of that which was lost in man's accursed Fall, poetry, in Sidney's view, bears analogy with the works of the

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[1] A Defence of Poetry, p. 18.

[2] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

divine Creator.

The English have met with the Greeks, states Sidney, in calling the poet a "maker". Yet, one asks, in what manner does the Renaissance poet create? He does so, in Sidney's theory of poetry, by improving on nature:

> The physician weigheth the nature of man's body, and the nature of things helpful or hurtful unto it. And the metaphysic, though it be in the second and abstract notions, and therefore be counted supernatural, yet doth he indeed build upon the depth of nature. Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like . . .[3]

Sidney's point is this: the poet, through "the force of a divine breath", brings forth things far surpassing nature's doings. At first sight, this may appear to be a championing of imagination, an even somewhat innovative theory--one which anticipates the concept of the creative imagination developed centuries later by Coleridge. It must be noted at this point, however, that one ought not read into Sidney's theory any greater role for the poetic imagination than that which remains implicit in his definition of poetry in general:

> Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in the word [mimesis]--that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth--to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture--with this end, to teach and delight.[4]

It must be emphasized that when Sidney uses the term "creator", he

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[3] A Defence of Poetry, p. 23.

[4] Ibid., p. 25.

means it in the sense implied in this definition. The poet's art is the art of "imitation", the "feigning" of notable images of virtues and vices, for the express purpose of "teaching delightfully". On this point Sidney's Defence stands firm. Right poets are those who imitate both to delight and teach and to move men to goodness.

Does Sidney tell us that his poetic creation is a form of truth? "Now, for the poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth".[5] Although the poet may extend nature's bounds through the force of his wit, he makes no demands for the truth of his poetic creation. There is not the intimation here that the poet creates what he believes to be the real world, such as one finds in Romantic theory. On the contrary, the effect remains fictional invention and is to be accepted as such:

> The poet never maketh any circles about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true what he writes. He citeth not authorities of other histories, but even for his entry calleth the sweet Muses to inspire into him a good invention; in truth, not labouring to tell you what is or is not, but what should or should not be. And therefore, though he recount things not true, yet because he telleth them not for true, he lieth not. . .[6]

It must be pointed out that implicit in Sidney's theory is the view that poetry must have a moral aim. Consequently, poetry must be audience-oriented. It must aim to achieve definite responses in the reader--moral betterment, in other words. This view of poetry has its

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[5] A Defence of Poetry, p. 52.

[6] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

origin in the classical theory of rhetoric where, in Horace's Ars Poetica, to use one example, the reader often receives a clear statement that the poet's aim is to teach and to please, as well as to move the audience. Thus Sidney was voicing the sentiments of his contemporaries when he wrote of "ever-praiseworthy Poesy. . . full of virtue-breeding delightfulness, and void of no gift that ought to be in the noble name of learning".[7] As an instructor in the way of virtue, the poet excelled both the historian and the philosopher by "setting out virtue in her best colours"; by not only "furnishing the mind with knowledge, but in setting it forward to that which deserveth to be called and accounted good".[8]

The moral aim was considered to be part of poetry's essential requirements. A still more generalized Renaissance doctrine implicit in Sidney's Defence, and one more significant to the concept of imagination in Renaissance criticism, is the view of the poet as "maker". "Lifted up with the vigour of his own invention", Sidney writes, the poet "doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature".[9] This is none other than the Aristotelian concept of ideal imitation. Art finishes the job when nature fails. Or, as Sidney puts it:

> Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as diverse poets have done; neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful

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[7] A Defence of Poetry, p. 74.

[8] Ibid., p. 38.

> trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden.[10]

In exceeding nature's bounds, then, the poet "goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit".[11] By this activity of "freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit", as Sidney expresses it here, the poetic imagination brings forth forms such as never were in nature. This notion is inherent in Shakespeare's A MidSummer-Night's Dream, one might observe:

> And as imagination bodies forth
> The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.[12]

By exercising his powers of invention so as to delight the reader, the poet fulfills the very end of poetry in Renaissance theory.

Such poetic theory makes no allowance for interaction between the poet and the object of his perception, as does Romantic theory. Renaissance poetry is content to contemplate the human pageant in a manner that satisfies the taste of its audience. Such a concept of the imagination and its relation to reality seems strikingly different from that of the Romantic poet for whom the imaginative faculty came to mean an agent of profound and penetrating insight, a "synthetic and

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[10] A Defence of Poetry, p. 24.

[11] Ibid.

[12] William Shakespeare, A MidSummer-Night's Dream, ed. A. Wilson Verity (4th ed., Cambridge: University Press, 1894), V. i, 60-61.

magical power", as Coleridge expressed it, through which the artist unified into an organic whole the diverse elements of the universe. Sidney never took the notion of the imagination that far. Although his poet offered a "golden world", the result was still fictional:

> And therefore, as in history, looking for truth, they may go away full fraught with falsehood, so in poesy, looking but for fiction, they shall use the narration but as an imaginative ground-plot of a profitable invention.[13]

To speak of a concept of imagination in Renaissance literature as portrayed in Sidney's criticism, then, is to interpret imagination as an agent, a 'contriver', through the exercise of which a poet conjured up his poem out of his storehouse of mental images. One sees the poet as a poet of invention.

Imagination is certainly given an important role in Renaissance poetic theory, one must add. When, for instance, "with the force of a divine breath" the poet brings forth things far surpassing nature, he appears almost to anticipate the role which the Romantic poet attributed to imagination. One must caution, however, that when Sidney speaks of the imagination, he is closer to the Aristotelian concept of 'imitation' than to the Romantic concept of 'imagination'. Imitation for Sidney, as it was for Aristotle, constituted the art of 'becoming', the art of going beyond what nature had achieved. But it was still a world of fiction which was created. Sidney never went so far as to intimate

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[13] A Defence of Poetry, p. 53.

that what the poet portrayed was anything more than invention. "The poet never maketh any circles about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true what he writes". Imagination merely "bodies forth" the form of things unknown, and these forms, made incarnate by the poet's pen, were not to be interpreted as visions of a higher truth. The poet nothing affirms, Sidney's criticism echoed. If, in the exercise of his wit, the poet exceeded nature for the express purpose of achieving delight, one accepted his product for what he conceived it to be, a work of imagination, a product of fiction--a work of pleasurable imitation ranging as wide as the poetic imagination carried it--nothing more.

Likewise, Bacon, in his Advancement of Learning, referred to poetry as "feigned history". In his view, the events of ordinary history did not of themselves contain a sufficient degree of greatness or moral certitude to satisfy man's longing for transcendence, so "poesy feigns acts and events greater and more heroical",[14] enduing them "with more rareness, and more unexpected and alternative variations" than that found in nature.

Poetry's aim in Bacon's theory of knowledge was to "feign" a more perfect order. This brought pleasure, and fulfilled man's desire for what Bacon referred to as "magnanimity, morality and delectation", because the human understanding, of its very nature,

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[14]Francis Bacon, Advancement of Learning, Book II, in The Works of Francis Bacon, eds. James Spedding, Robert L. Ellis, and Douglas D. Heath (Boston: Taggard and Thompson, 1968), Vol. Vl, p. 203.

[15]Ibid.

stated Bacon in his discussion of the four classes of Idols, craves more order and regularity than it finds in the world and, therefore, fabricates it:

> The human understanding is of its own nature prone to suppose the existence of more order and regularity in the world than it finds. And though there be many things in nature which are singular and unmatched, yet it devises for them parallels and conjugates and relatives which do not exist.[16]

In the Baconian context, the poet may be seen to be "an ingenious liar". Indeed, in one of his essays, "Of Truth", Bacon stated:

> A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure. Doth any man doubt, that if there were taken out of men's minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like, but it would leave the minds of a number of men poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition and unpleasing to themselves? One of the Fathers, in great severity, called poesy vinum daemonum [devil's-wine], because it filleth the imagination; and yet it is but with the shadow of a lie. But it is not the lie that passeth through the mind, but the lie that sinketh in and settleth in it, that doth the hurt. . .[17]

Bacon's theory of knowledge would include poetry among those Idols which have found their way into men's minds, and which represent "worlds of their own creation after an unreal and scenic fiction".[18] It springs from the imagination, a faculty which Bacon described in these terms:

> . . . this Janus of Imagination hath differing faces; for the face towards Reason hath the print of Truth, but the face towards Action hath the print of Good; which nevertheless are faces, Quales decet esse sororum [sister-faces].[19]

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[16] "Aphorisms", in The Works of Francis Bacon, Vol. Vlll, p. 79.

[17] "Essays or Counsels", in The Works, Vol. Xll, 82.

[18] "Aphorisms", Vlll, 78.

[19] Advancement of Learning, Vl, p. 258.

Acting as a nuncias between the intellectual and the appetitive soul of man, imagination is seen to serve both. But is it a reliable agent, one asks? Bacon paints it as a two-faced figure, looking at the same time toward reason and toward action. It cannot be depended upon to portray truth. Indeed, the imagination may at pleasure "make unlawful matches and divorces of things" precisely because it is not tied to the laws of matter. Reason alone can give assurance of reality: the imagination merely "submits the show of things" to the desires of the mind.

In Baconian criticism, the imaginative faculty is seen to be an untrustworthy agent. Divorced from reason, it forms relatives and parallels where none exist. Bacon considers this faculty to be as falsely pernicious as the inhabitants of Plato's Cave. For, far from resembling a clear and equal glass, the mind of man which begets imaginations more truly resembles an enchanted glass, full of superstitions and impostures:

> . . . the spirit of man (according as it is meted out to different individuals) is in fact a thing variable and full of perturbation, and governed as it were by chance.[20]

In the same vein, he also writes:

> . . . generally, let every student of nature take this as a rule--that whatever his mind seizes and dwells upon with peculiar satisfaction is to be held in suspicion.[21]

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[20]"Aphorisms", in The Works of Francis Bacon, Vlll, 77.

[21]Ibid., 86.

Such a view offers striking contrast to Wordsworth's thinking, as expressed in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800), wherein he speaks of having

> . . . a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it which are equally inherent and indestructible. . .[22]

Such qualities are in direct relation to truth, in Wordsworth's view of poetry. The true province of the poet, he later relates, is not to grope about in the external world for an assurance that an object is sublime or beautiful, but to look into his own mind for this knowledge.

The Baconian concept of poetry, in a more positive context, does raise man's spirit and make it aware of a more perfect order than that found in the imperfect order of things. This has reference to man's search for a more perfect "moral order", or, as Sidney defines it, a "more exact goodness". Poetry supplies the shadows where the substance is not to be found, and in so doing, raises man's mind toward good deeds. One must rightly conclude from Bacon's theory of knowledge, however, that poetry offers nothing more than fictional satisfactions. It is not to be taken seriously.

Poetry is feigned history, in other words, a pleasure or play of the imagination, not a work or duty. It springs from that "Janus of

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[22]William Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800), in The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, eds. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), Vol. 1, p. 130.

imagination", that two-faced agent depicted by Bacon to be an agent of deception. One is not surprised, therefore, at Bacon's mild warning in Book II of the Advancement of Learning that ". . . it is not good to stay too long in the theatre".[23]

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[23] Advancement of Learning in The Works of Francis Bacon, Vl, 206.

II

Seventeenth-Century Influences

The imagination, although it was held to be the source of all that was fruitful in seventeenth-century criticism, was thought to need the check of judgment so that the poet did not fall into the trap of over-luxuriance. One reason for this restraint upon the imagination may be attributed to an age-old association of imagination with the non-rational part of man. Imaginative phantasies were long considered to have been begotten by the passions, or that 'natural' part of man. Subject even to the devil's promptings, imagination was regarded as a faculty to be controlled. Milton, in his Paradise Lost, for example, depicts Eve's temptation by Satan through a dream:

> Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve;
> Assaying by his devilish art to reach
> The organs of her fancy, and with them forge
> Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams. . .[1]

Milton makes no distinction between imagination and fancy, nor do most writers of his time. One thing is clear, however: imagination is no more valid an organ of truth in Milton's view than in Bacon's theory of poetry. It is a whimsical, capricious faculty, waking up when reason goes to sleep, and, unchecked by reason, imitating her by

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[1] John Milton, Paradise Lost in James Holly Hanford, ed., The Poems of John Milton (2nd ed., New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1953), lV, 800-3.

"misjoining shapes".[2]

The imaginative faculty is no more capable of depicting reality for Milton than dreams are. In this regard he appears to be close to the psychological temper of his age which often held that the imaginative faculty could be a delusive, if not a dangerous one. Critics have indeed attested to a certain distrust of imagination in the intellectual background of the seventeenth century. It was an age wherein scientific truth constituted the greatest goal to be attained in prose; an age wherein the imaginative faculty, traditionally allied with the passions and with the making of 'images', was often regarded with suspicion. Without the check imposed by the judgment, imagination could lead the poet into endless digressions and toward an over-abundance of imagery. It could also lead to a lack of discernment between that which was fitting to be said, and that which ought to be passed over, as one eighteenth-century writer expressed it:

> When the Imagination and Invention are so busy, Reason and Judgment are seldom allowed Time enough to examine the Justness of a Sentiment and the Conclusiveness of an Argument. Many of our own Poets, the most celebrated for their Ingenuity, have been very incorrect and injudicious, as well as irreligious and immoral, in their Sentiments. They seem to have studied rather to say fine things than just ones, and have often shown their Fancy at the Expense of their Understanding, which is buying Reputation at a very extravagant Price.[3]

One begins to detect amid seventeenth-century emphases,

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[2] Paradise Lost, V, 111.

[3] Weekly Miscellany (Sept. 28, 1734), in Gentleman's Magazine, lV (Sept. 1734), 499, and quoted by Donald F. Bond, "'Distrust' of Imagination in English Neo-Classicism" in Philological Quarterly, XlV, 1, January 1935.

particularly the new Scientific mentality of which Bacon was a herald, imagination's low profile. Studies in literary criticism point to sufficient evidence of the critics' warnings of the ills of too great a license in the use of this faculty. True, the criticism came down more heavily on imaginative license in intellectual literature such as philosophy, science, and the more serious prose writings, than in poetry. Yet, truth was fast coming to be regarded as the exclusive possession of science. Therefore, because the poetic imagination was not considered to be the organ of truth, and since its fruits were held to be false and chimerical and not to be taken seriously, poets were often regarded as makers of "sugared trifles".

Sprat's brief attention to poetry in his History of the Royal Society gives certain credence to one's suspicions that the seventeenth century did little to enhance the status of poetry, and consequently of the poetic imagination. Sprat's expressed opinion of the poets was that they were a pleasant but an unprofitable sort of men who might well benefit from the new philosophy of his day. He was quite strong in denouncing the wit and fables and religions of the ancient world which had, in his opinion, outlived their usefulness as sources of poetic imagery:

> They have already serv'd the Poets long enough; and it is now high time to dismiss them; especially seeing they have this peculiar imperfection, that they were only Fictions at first; whereas Truth is never so well express'd or amplify'd as by those Ornaments which are True and Real in themselves.[4]

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[4]Thomas Sprat, History of the Royal Society, eds. Jackson I. Cope and Harold Whitmore Jones (St. Louis: Washington University Studies, 1959), Chap. XXXV, p. 414.

Having postulated the works of nature as one of the best and most fruitful soils for the growth of wit, Sprat advocated for the poets the use of experiments in acquiring natural knowledge in the manner set by Bacon who, Sprat wrote, "was abundantly recompenc'd. . . by a vast Treasure of admirable Imaginations which it afforded him, wherewith to express and adorn his thoughts. . ." [5] The very motto of the Royal Society itself, "On the word of No One", gives evidence of an increasing skepticism in pure a priori reasoning and traditional beliefs--symptomatic of the gradual change taking place in seventeenth-century attitudes toward man, the world and the universe. The medieval synthesis, that "circle of perfection" from which man had for so long deduced his aesthetics and his ethics, was beginning to be broken, and a mechanistic world responsive to nature's laws was beginning to replace the animate, orderly world of sixteenth-century inheritance. The geocosm-microcosm analogy which had inspired the imagination of poets for centuries was losing its hold. Science was proving that things were not what they seemed to be. The telescope, one of the most significant of seventeenth-century inventions, for example, was discovering new stars in the heavens. Surely this new knowledge of the real nature of a universe which for so long had remained mysterious was not without its effect upon literature. As one critic expressed it: The mathematical diagram more and more was taking the place of the full image with all its varieties and suggestions of content, "and the world was becoming a larger, a surer, a clearer, but also a less varied

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[5] History of the Royal Society, p. 416.

and less mysterious place".[6]

Evidence of this seeming disproportion between the old and new cosmology is reflected, for instance, in John Donne's poems, particularly in "The first Anniversary":

> And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
> The Element of fire is quite put out;
> The Sun is lost, and th' earth, and no man's wit
> Can well direct him where to looke for it.[7]

The new currents of thought resulting from the teachings of Copernicus, Gilbert, Galileo, Descartes and Newton were soon to be reflected in poetry and in the concept of the poetic imagination. Already in the poetry of Donne and the metaphysicals, something of their influence can be seen. For one thing, the swirl of conflicting forces intensified the 'intellectualism' implicit in their poetry. Especially in the poetry of Donne does the poetic imagination draw upon an ever-widening field of experience and this he communicated with a great deal of emotion. One notices, however, that this emotion is always subservient to the logical faculty which predominates in his poems. The expression of thought is paramount, rather than, say, creative fancy. One could infer that metaphysical poetry is determined logically; its emotion arises from a joy in the triumph of reason, rather than any other inherent quality.

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[6]Helen C. White, The Metaphysical Poets: A Study in Religious Experience (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1956), p. 39.

[7]John Donne, "The first Anniversary", in The Poems of John Donne, ed., Herbert J. C. Grierson (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), I, 205-8.

In general, the seventeenth century may be conceived to have been an age which, in its philosophical quest for truth, arrived at the certainty that truth could best be expressed mathematically. As for the faculty of imagination, it was not seen as a faculty operating within truth's domain. In fact, several influences at work in the seventeenth century seemed to create a somewhat hardening of attitudes against the poetic imagination. Bacon, we may recall, had already disassociated literature from science, relegating poetry to the unreal world of fancy, and positing truth and reality in science's domain. "Render to faith the things that are faith's", he had heralded. The Royal Society furthered this quest for mathematical certainty, declaring a veritable war on the poetic imagination:

> The Poets began of old to impose the deceit. They, to make all things look more venerable than they were, devis'd a thousand false chimeras; on every Field, River, Grove, and Cove, they bestow'd a Fantasm of their own making: With these they amaz'd the world. . .[8]

Setting out to rid itself of what it considered the errors inherited from antiquity, the Society resolved to restore the truths that had lain neglected. They did this by attempting "to separate the knowledge of Nature, from the colours of Rhetorick, the devices of Fancy, or the delightful deceit of Fables".[9] In their efforts to establish a language and style of precise denotation that could best serve

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[8] History of the Royal Society, p. 340.

[9] Ibid., p. 62.

science, the Society stripped imagination of metaphor, all in the name of the new philosophy which, declared Sprat, had nothing in common with the "thousand false chimeras" on which the poets had bestowed a phantasy of their own making. Who can fathom, warned Sprat, how much uncertainty these "specious Tropes and Figures" have created in the field of knowledge. "Of all the studies of men, nothing may be sooner obtain'd, than this vicious abundance of Phrase, this trick of Metaphors. . . which makes so great a noise. . ."[10]

This growing disposition to accept the scientific world picture as the only true one was reinforced by Cartesian philosophy which set up criteria for truth that made the mathematical properties of objects the only real ones. Poetry, however, springs from other modes of knowing; thus, the Cartesian spirit had little in common with the poetic spirit. The poets who followed Descartes could not be regarded as writing with the conviction that what they imagined was true, when the poetic imagination was thought to be incapable of producing anything more valid than a fanciful invention. The purpose of poetry, it was thought, was to convey pleasures, to depict pleasant pictures and agreeable visions. The poetic imagination, because it was not thought to be conformable to reason, could hardly be taken seriously. All it could be expected to do was to cater to delight, to provide embellishments which might be agreeable to the fancy. These fantasies, however, were recognized by the judgment as having no relation with reality. The poets wrote with a sense that their constructions were not true.

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[10] History of the Royal Society, p. 112.

One might again say that the exercise of the poetic imagination produced "ingenious lies".

In Hobbes's criticism, however, one notices that the criterion of truth is invoked. In his Answer to Davenant, the truth of passion is stated as being preferable to the truth of fact. Hobbes dissents from those who thought that "the Beauty of a Poeme consisteth in the exorbitancy of the fiction. For as truth is the bound of Historicall, so the Resemblance of truth is the utmost limit of Poetical Liberty".[11] The faculty of imagination is depicted somewhat like an antenna whereby new ideas can reach the mind; it is like an explorer, swiftly ranging over the materials of memory and forming new combinations:

> Whereby the Fancy, when any worke of Art is to be performed, finds her materials at hand and prepared for use, and needs no more than a swift motion over them, that what she wants, and is there to be had, may not lye too long unespied.[12]

Nevertheless, Hobbes insists on control, and on the necessity of the judgment to check the exorbitancy of the imaginative faculty. This insistence constitutes his chief contribution to the aesthetics of Neo-classicism:

> . . . Judgment the severer Sister busieth her selfe in grave and rigide examination of all the parts of Nature, and in registring by Letters, their order, causes, uses, differences and resemblances. . .[13]

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[11] "The Answer of Mr. Hobbes to Sir William D'Avenant's Preface Before Gondibert", in David F. Gladish, ed., Sir William Davenant's Gondibert (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 51.

[12] Ibid., p. 49.

[13] Ibid.

Hobbes speaks of "imagery discreetly ordered". Reason is assuredly at the center; imagination is but a "decaying sense". In the Leviathan, (Chapter 2) he uses the term in this context--one which became fairly common among English theorists:

> . . . after the object is removed, or the eye shut, we still retain an image of the thing seen, though more obscure than when we see it. And this is it, the Latins call imagination, from the image made in seeing; and apply the same, though improperly, to all the other senses. But the Greeks call it fancy; which signifies appearance, and is as proper to one sense, as to another. Imagination therefore is nothing but decaying sense, and is found in men, and many other living creatures. . .[14]

In Hobbes's scheme of things, the poet's aim is "To know well and know much". Reason is at the center; without its check, the imaginative faculty is scarcely commendable. While not in active rebellion against judgment, imagination must nonetheless remain subject to judgment's control. It is only in the train of imaginations regulated that a writer can put his thoughts in fresh and persuasive terms. Guided and controlled by the judgment, the imaginative faculty at work in poetry is a desirable quality. Hobbes considers it to be a highly useful faculty in the poet's makeup. One sees his praise of "controlled" imagination in the preface to his translation of the Odyssey (1675):

> For in Fancie [imagination] consisteth the Sublimity of a Poet, which is that Poetical Fury which the Readers for the most part call for. It flies abroad swiftly to fetch in both Matter and

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[14] Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. Michael Oakeshott (7th pr., London: Collier-MacMillan Ltd., 1970), p. 23.

> Words; but if there be not Discretion at home to distinguish which are fit to be used and which not. . . their delight and grace is lost. But if they be discreetly used, they are greater ornaments of a Poem by much than any other.[15]

Hobbes states clearly that it is the "Judgment" which "begets the strength and structure" of a poem. "Fancy begets the ornaments".[16] Imagination gives embellishment: this is the point he makes in his account of the poetic imagination in his Answer to Davenant. Poetry, then, since it ought to be a representative of reality having truth as its substance, cannot refer to the imagination; it refers, rather, to reason or judgment. On this critical foundation Hobbes helps build the Neo-classical theory of the poetic imagination and its relation to reality. Nowhere is there in Hobbes's theory a suggestion of a creative faculty of imagination in the "Romantic" sense of that word. Hobbes sees imagination as serving a rhetorical purpose. Its main function is to dress thought in attractive language. As a form of memory, it can enable the writer to render, out of his storehouse of images, new and pleasant ideas. In the act of composition, the poet turns over these images stored in the memory somewhat like a spaniel ranging the field until he finds a scent. Dryden, we recall, in his preface to "Annus Mirabilis" (The Wonders of the Year 1666), holds a similar view of imagination:

> The composition of all persons is, or ought to be, of wit, and wit in the poet . . . is no other than the faculty of imagination

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[15] Quoted from Donald F. Bond, "Psychology of the Imagination", in A Journal of English Literary History, lV, December 1937, p. 260.

[16] Hobbes, Answer to D'Avenant, p. 49.

> in the writer, which, like a nimble spaniel, beats over and ranges thro' the field of memory, till it springs the quarry it hunted after.[17]

The Neo-classic poet was not expected to be original. He was encouraged to sing in perfect full tone if he wished to profit or to please, in conformity with the Horatian dictum: Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae.

In Locke's theory of knowledge, there emerged a concept of mind which portrayed the poetic imagination as a passive receiver of ready-made images. The mind mirrored what the senses provided. It was not seen to be actively at work, fashioning its own experiences, such as one finds in the criticism of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Intimations of the Romantic concept of imagination may only validly be inferred whenever one discovers prevailing concepts of the mind as an active power, rather than a passive receiving agent.

Such a concept has its origin in Plotinian philosophy. From time to time in the course of literary criticism, echoes of this philosophy emerge, remotely anticipating Romantic theories of imagination. It is a concept wherein man's "inner sense" is highlighted:

> All that one sees as a spectacle is still external; one must bring the vision within and see no longer in that mode of separation but as we know ourselves; thus a man filled with a god--possessed by the Apollo or by one of the Muses--need no longer look outside for his vision of the divine being; it is but finding the strength to see divinity within. . . . . to see the divine as something external is to be

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[17] John Dryden, Preface to "Annus Mirabilis" in The Works of John Dryden, eds., Edward Niles Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg, Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), Vol. 1, p. 53.

> outside of it; to become it is to be most truly in beauty! since sight deals with the external there can here be no vision unless in the sense of identification with the object. And this identification amounts to a self-knowing, a self-consciousness. . .[10]

The mind's analogy, in Plotinian philosophy, is that of a lamp projecting a radiance out of its storehouse to the objects of sense. Within the mind's activity an intellectual imagination plays its part, transforming those objects of visible sense:

> . . . the quester. . . is lifted and sees, never knowing how; the vision floods the eyes with light, but it is not a light showing some other object, the light is itself the vision. . . With this he himself becomes identical.[19]

This analogy of the perceiving mind is echoed by the Romantic poets. Wordsworth, in his Prelude, speaks of an auxiliary light, coming from his "mind", bestowing new splendour on the setting sun. Coleridge echoes somewhat similar thoughts in Chapter XV of his Biographia Literaria when he speaks of the human and intellectual life that is transferred to images from the poet's own spirit. So too, in Plotinian philosophy, is the power and activity of imagination a unifying, transforming one.

With Plotinus, the essence or character of an object is not in the material; rather, it is in the designer even before it enters the object, and it is there by virtue of his imagination. The beauty,

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[18] Plotinus, The Enneads, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1956), V, 8, 431-2.

[19] Ibid., Vl, 7, 590.

already comprehended in the artist's imagination, goes out of him, into the object. The arts, in Plotinian philosophy, do not merely copy the visible world. "They give no bare reproduction of the thing seen but go back to the Reason-Principles from which Nature itself derives".[20] In this philosophy, the higher imagination, operating as an important part of the rational soul, is seen to possess, blend, and harmonize. It is capable of reducing multiplicity to unity. "Poised toward that unity", states Plotinus, the "divine souls always move".[21] Wordsworth and Coleridge echo a similar belief in the power of imagination, not only to "reduce multitude into unity of effect" but also to enable the poet to become one with the objects of his contemplation. This unifying power of the rational soul is dealt with in Plotinian philosophy:

> In proportion to the truth with which the knowing faculty knows, it comes to identification with the object of its knowledge.[22]

The importance of Plotinian thought, therefore, and its subsequent influence on the evolving concept of imagination, ought not be underestimated. Far from being a deceiving faculty, imagination is seen to be pre-eminently a truthful and truth-seeking one. It is the divine vision within, the "inner light" which enables man, not only to perceive the God-reflecting unity of natural objects, but also to

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[20] The Enneads, V, 8, 423.

[21] Ibid., Vl, 9, 621.

[22] Ibid., III, 8, 244.

possess that very unity.

Plotinian philosophy influenced seventeenth-century thought, particularly the thinking of the Cambridge Platonists, a small group which, although its center was at Cambridge, cannot be confined to there, and whom we may rightly identify as the English Platonists. These men, although not especially interested in aesthetics, nevertheless challenged, in their philosophy, Hobbes's concept of the mind and, consequently, of the imagination. Hobbes's concept of the mind was that of a passive receiver of sensory impressions. The English Platonists, on the other hand, believed the mind to be creative and active in perception.

"The human mind", wrote Ralph Cudworth, "hath a power of forming ideas and conceptions, not only of what actually is, but also of things which never were". Cudworth goes on to describe wisdom as "the breath (or vigor) of the power of God. . . a clear mirror (or looking-glass) of his active energy".[23]

In objecting to the doctrine of pure materialism propounded by Hobbes, the English Platonists emphasized divine intelligence as the ultimate reality. "The Spirit of man is the candle of the Lord", stressed Benjamin Whichcote; reason is lux illuminate et lux illuminans; it is the divine candle that gives light because it is lighted.[24]

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[23] Ralph Cudworth, True Intellectual System, V, in Gerald R. Cragg, ed., The Cambridge Platonists (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 197-8.

[24] Whichcote frequently quoted this text from Proverbs XX, 27, to justify the sufficiency of reason. It is quoted here from his Third Letter to Anthony Tuckney in The Cambridge Platonists, p. 44.

So too does Nathanael Culverwell set out to expound this favourite analogy of the English Platonists in his treatise, An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature. "We shall see. . . how the understanding of man is the candle of the Lord",[25] Culverwell states at the beginning of his treatise.

In their choice of the projecting light as an analogy of the perceiving mind, the English Platonists echoed Plotinus. A glance at the classical references quoted in their works reveals that they quoted from Plotinus even more freely than they did from Plato. The reason, one notes, is closely related to their concern to portray a spiritual interpretation of reality, and to their belief that man "need no longer look outside for his vision of the divine being", as Plotinus had said, but find the strength "to see divinity within".

As in the English Platonists, so also in the Romantic writers does the perceiving mind frequently receive the comparison to a lamp projecting light. Figures of the soul as "fountain" or "overflowing stream" become familiar ones in Romantic poetry, and are echoes of Neoplatonism and more especially, of Plotinian philosophy, the archtype of mind as "projector".

It is within the philosophy of English Platonism, then, that one recognizes in the seventeenth century a notion of intuitive

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[25]Nathanael Culverwell, The Light of Nature, in Cragg, The Cambridge Platonists, p. 60.

reason which bears analogy with the Romantic concept of imagination. However, it would be misleading to suggest that the English Platonists actually propounded a concept of imagination that was in any way a "Romantic" concept. They may have helped prepare the ground for the later view of imagination, but there is nothing in their writings to imply that they considered imagination to be anything more than a faculty of literary invention and an unreliable one at that. To place the English Platonists within the psychological context of their time, one sees that they actually understood imagination to be a misleading faculty, as John Smith indicates in his Discourses:

> We must shut the eye of sense, and open that brighter eye of our understandings, that other eye of the soul. . .
> . . . . . .
> Our own imaginative powers which are perpetually attending the highest acts of our souls, will be breathing a gross dew upon the pure glass of our understandings, and so sully and besmear it, that we cannot see the image of the Divinity sincerely in it.[26]

On philosophical grounds, it was commonplace for any seventeenth-century writer to distrust imagination and to regard it as "gross dew upon the pure glass of our understandings". Smith was not alone in believing it to be a faculty born of the senses and therefore a creator of phantasies, rather than an organ of truth. Whichcote spoke in a similar vein when he stated that " by sense, imagination and brutish affection, we can only maintain acquaintance with this outward and

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[26]John Smith, Discourses, I, in Gerald R. Cragg, The Cambridge Platonists, pp. 86-90.

lower world".[27] Man's proper business resides "in the things of the mind", Whichcote continued. Therefore he can arrive at truth only by using those higher faculties of reason and understanding.

One could say here that Milton, also, shared with the Platonists the view that the law of God is written upon man's heart and that reason alone constitutes the godlike principle in man, exercising a moral control. The senses were very important for Milton, but reason constituted the highest faculty. In the absence of reason, imagination came out to play and dance. We recall Adam's remark to Eve in Paradise Lost:

> Evil into the mind of god or man
> May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
> No spot or blame behind; which give me hope
> That which in sleep thou didst abhor to dream,
> Waking thou never wilt consent to do.[28]

Fancy and imagination were truly untrustworthy faculties. Satan whispered into Eve's ear while she was alseep because he knew that imagination was her most vulnerable faculty:

> For Understanding ruled not, and the Will
> Heard not her lore, both in subjection now
> To sensual Appetite, who from beneath
> Usurping over sovran Reason claimed
> Superior sway. . .[29]

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[27] Benjamin Whichcote, "The Work of Reason", in Gerald R. Cragg, The Cambridge Platonists , p. 64.

[28] John Milton, Paradise Lost, in James Holly Hanford, ed., The Poems of John Milton (2nd ed., New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1953), V, 117-21.

[29] Ibid., IX, 1127-31.

Imagination, then, as understood in the seventeenth century's use of that term, was a misleading faculty. Locke would have nothing to do with it. He had little to say directly about the imagination; however, what he did say about poetry in general was of a disparaging nature. In the third chapter of his Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), he dismisses figurative language as having been invented for no other reason than to perpetrate wrong ideas, excite the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment.

Metaphor and simile were frequently assailed because they were regarded as forms of falsehood and deception. Sprat's History gives witness to the efforts of the Royal Society to banish poetic language as "embellishments", "ornaments of speech" employed in open defiance against reason.

Control of the imaginative faculty seemed essential. In setting up their standards, theorists did not wish that imagination be given complete license, but that it work in conjunction with judgment:

> It makes for discoveries and soars above reason, but never clashes or runs against it. Fancy leaps and frisks, and away she's gone, while reason rattles the chains and follows after. Reason must consent and ratify whatever by fancy is attempted in its absence, or else all is null and void.[30]

Generally, in the Neoclassical poetry of the late seventeenth century and onwards, imagination's role was to provide embellishment to thought. Thus imagination was distinguished from the primary faculty,

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[30] Thomas Rymer, The Tragedies of the Last Age (1678), in Spingarn, II, 185, as quoted by Donald Bond in "'Distrust' of Imagination in English Neo-Classicism", Philological Quarterly, XlV, 1, January 1935.

the reason, which must ever be on guard to control the wild-ranging imaginative faculty. The Romantics will, in some respects, reverse this. They will speak of reason, but a reason activated, energized, and illuminated by imagination. Nevertheless, the most imaginative poets of the seventeenth century, even though imagination was downplayed, often wrote genuine poetry, even by Romantic standards. Milton, whatever he may have thought of the imagination, produced in Paradise Lost a highly imaginative work. Among eighteenth century poets, who combined a didacticism with conscious delight, stands Pope. While he may have considered the discursive element in poetry to be primary, he nevertheless was capable of using language with such skill and imagination that his lines are a delight to read.

One may conclude of the seventeenth-century poet, however, that he aimed "to please", in the manner set forth by Sidney; that is, he aimed "to teach goodness and to delight the learners".[31] Within Neoclassic theory, furthermore, Hobbes would enshrine for more than a century the belief that "judgment begets the strength and structure; and Fancy begets the Ornaments of a Poeme".[32] This concept of imagination, namely, the facility to reproduce images, to provide poetry with its rhetoric, its pleasing externals, would in time be challenged, for within the scope of such a theory, the imaginative faculty was an adorning, not a truthful or a truthbearing one. Not even in English Platonism,

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[31]Sidney's Defence , p. 48.

[32]Hobbes's Answer to D'Avenant, p. 49.

whose concept of the "inner light" bears direct analogy with Romantic theorists, do we proceed to any assurance of imaginative truth beyond that of the "fictional". Imagination, as seventeenth and eighteenth-century theorists conceived it, operated in a manner somewhat distinct from, and always in subordination to, the "reason". One does not look to the imagination as a channel of truth in Neo-classic theory any more than one did in Renaissance theory. Such a concept has yet to emerge.

III

"The Pleasures of the Imagination"

Sprat, in his History of the Royal Society (1667), had voiced an objective that was common among seventeenth-century theorists, namely, to make poetry resemble prose, in order to achieve "a close, naked, natural way of speaking", and thus bring "all things as near the Mathematical plainness" as possible.[1] It was indeed an age of reform in prose, when simplicity and plainness of style seemed most desirable. This is not to say that the workings of the imagination, though suspect amid prose's "mathematical plainness", could be dispensed with in poetry. Fancy (imagination) still provided the "ornaments" of a poem. However, there seemed to have been general agreement that the judgment should work together with the imagination. The poet should instruct, as well as please, and without the restraint imposed by the judgment he could be led into certain irregularities of thought and sentiment. A complaint of certain critics was that many poets "seemed to have studied rather to say fine things than just ones", as stated earlier.

An examination of English Neoclassic literature shows the critic, and often the poet, to be very much more concerned with "how" he said something, rather than with "what" he said, the aim being to achieve, in the words of Pope, "what oft was Thought, but ne'er so well

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[1] History of the Royal Society, p. 113.

expressed". The dominant concept of language was that of 'dress', the dress of thought. Words were like outer accouterments which one could put on without altering the body underneath. It was a cloven concept. Between the words, and what words said, there existed a division. Such a concept of language would undergo a change in Romanticism. Language, the "dress of thought" for the Neoclassics would become the very "incarnation of thought" in Romantic theory.

A pivotal figure to consider in terms of this transition, and in terms of the evolutionary concept of imagination, is Joseph Addison. His views on "The Pleasures of the Imagination", published in the Spectator papers in 1712, prompted both poet and reader to take a closer look at poetry, not only for its clear and exact ideas, but also for the emotional association aroused by its imagery. They were alerted to see at work in poetry the power of "words", which, said Addison,

> . . . when well chosen, have so great a Force in them, that a Description often gives us more lively Ideas than the Sight of Things themselves. The Reader finds a Scene drawn in stronger Colours, and painted more to the Life in his Imagination, by the help of Words, than by an actual Survey of the Scene which they describe.[2]

Addison is applying Locke's theory of the association of ideas to literary criticism, and is asking the reader to consider the emotional association which imagery arouses. What he is saying to his reader is this: through its power of association, there is scarcely any limit to where imagination can lead us:

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[2]Joseph Addison, The Spectator, ed., Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), Vol. III, No. 416, p. 560.

> . . . We may observe, that any single circumstance of what we have formerly seen often raises up a whole Scene of Imagery, and awakens numberless Ideas that before slept in the Imagination; such a particular Smell, or Colour is able to fill the Mind, on a sudden, with the Picture of the Fields or Gardens where we first met with it, and to bring up into View all the Variety of Images that once attended it. Our Imagination takes the Hint, and leads us unexpectedly into Cities or Theatres, Plains or Meadows. We may further observe, when the Fancy thus reflects on the Scenes that have past in it formerly, those, which were at first pleasant to behold appear more so upon Reflection, and that the Memory heightens the Delightfulness of the Original.[3]

Imagination is being allied with memory, as in Hobbes's theory. Imaginative experience, as Addison states in No. 411 of "The Pleasures of the Imagination", arises from the sense of sight, and once received, these images are retained in the memory. One has but to open the eye and the scene enters. The image imprints itself on the imagination with little thought.

A basic assumption here is that the workings of the imagination are pleasurable. Addison speaks of Primary pleasures of the imagination as being those which proceed directly from objects before the eyes; Secondary pleasures are those which flow from the ideas of those objects when later they are recalled to memory. More explicitly, Primary pleasures proceed from the sight of that which is "Great, Uncommon, or Beautiful" (No. 412). In effect, Addison is saying that man's imagination, desiring to be filled with an object, grasps at anything that is too big for its capacity. "A spacious Horizon is an Image of Liberty", we read in Paper No. 412. If, on the contrary, the mind is confined

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[3] The Spectator, Vol. III, No. 417, p. 562.

within a narrow compass, it becomes pent up. Nothing more than the sight of the new or the uncommon fills the soul, and nothing more than the sight of beauty fills the spirit, diffusing "a secret Satisfaction and complacency through the Imagination". The cause of such pleasure resides with the Godhead, the

> Supreme Author of our Being who has so formed the Soul of Man, that nothing but himself can be its last, adequate, and proper Happiness. Because, therefore, a great Part of our Happiness must arise from the Contemplation of his Being, that he might give our Souls a just Relish of such a Contemplation, he has made them naturally delight in the Apprehension of what is Great or Unlimited. . .[4]

Addison next defines the Secondary pleasures of the imagination, that is, those pleasures which arise from the mind's contemplation of those images when they are later recalled (No. 416). It is from the affinity of ideas arising from the original objects with the ideas representing them, that these pleasures derive. This, he states, is what makes pleasant the various kinds of wit, for example. Pleasures of the imagination proceed from ideas raised by "words":

> It may be here worth our while to Examine, how it comes to pass that several Readers, who are all acquainted with the same language, and know the Meaning of the Words they read, should nevertheless have a different Relish of the same Descriptions. We find one transported with a Passage, which another runs over with Coldness and Indifference, or finding the Representation extremely natural, where another can perceive nothing of Likeness and Conformity. This different Taste must proceed, either from the Perfection of Imagination in one more than in another, or from the different Ideas that several Readers affix to the same Words. For, to have a true Relish, and form a right Judgment of a Description, a Man should be born

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[4] The Spectator, III, No. 413, p. 545.

> with a good Imagination, and must have well weighed the Force and Energy that lie in the several Words of a Language, so as to be able to distinguish which are most significant and expressive of their proper Ideas, and what additional Strength and Beauty they are capable of receiving from Conjunction with others. . .[5]

Not only poets and critics, but readers as well, will be prompted by Addison's theory to set as much store by the connotation of words as by their denotation. His explanation for the difference among readers' responses arises, he states, from the fact that a passage arouses in the readers different associations.

Here he is applying the principle of association to the readers' emotions, as well as their ideas. He is thereby establishing a framework which accounts for differences in 'taste', something to which he gives an important role in aesthetic judgments.

Taste, Addison defines, is that faculty of the soul which discerns the beauties of an author with pleasure, and the imperfections with dislike.[6] Although he proceeds to show how the faculty can be cultivated, Addison admits that taste must in some measure "be born with us". To have a true relish, and form a good judgment of a description, he states earlier, a man should be born with a good imagination. One sees here that imagination and taste are being made part of that inner sense whereby the mind is impressed (even though passively) with the forms of greatness, goodness and beauty. By stressing the power of imagination to refine taste, Addison is touching on a subject

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[5] The Spectator, III, No. 416, p. 561.

[6] Ibid., No. 409, p. 528.

that will receive the attention of succeeding theorists who will set out to prove that there is something in the judgment of literature which is not subject merely to pure reason, but which can be ascertained 'intuitively'; and intuition involves the feelings as well as the imagination.

Of special mention by Addison were those representations of objects which "raise a secret ferment" in the mind of the reader and which work "with violence upon his passions". The two leading passions which the more serious poetry endeavours to stir up in us, he continued to state, are "Terror and Pity". From whence do these feelings in response to the situation proceed?

> . . . when we read of Torments, Wounds, Deaths, and the like dismal Accidents, our Pleasure does not flow so properly from the Grief which such melancholly Descriptions give us, as from the secret Comparison which we make between our selves and the Person who suffers. Such Representations teach us to set a just Value upon our own Conditions, and make us prize our good Fortune which exempts us from the like Calamities. This is, however, such a kind of Pleasure as we are not capable of receiving, when we see a Person actually lying under the Tortures that we meet with in a Description; because, in this Case, the Object presses too close upon our Senses, and bears so hard upon us, that it does not give us time or leisure to reflect on our selves. Our Thoughts are so intent upon the Miseries of the Sufferer, that we cannot turn them upon our own Happiness. Whereas, on the contrary, we consider the Misfortunes we read in History or Poetry, either as past, or as fictitious, so that the Reflection upon our selves rises in us insensibly, and over-bears the Sorrow we conceive for the Sufferings of the Afflicted.[7]

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[7] The Spectator, III, 418, pp. 568-69.

One sees that in Addison's criticism, the feelings are given a new emphasis, and are consequently being raised to a new dignity.

It would be misleading to read a full-blown, Romantic theory of imagination in Addison. He is still sufficiently close to Lockian epistemology not to escape the notion that imagination merely provides the embellishments to poetry:

> The Fancy must be warm, to retain the print of those Images it hath received from outward Objects; and the Judgment discerning, to know what Expressions are most proper to cloath and adorn them to her best Advantage.[8]

In Addison's theory, the imaginative faculty is no source of higher illumination, as it is seen to be in Romantic theory. Rather, it is used to combine images of sensation together in order to form new ideas. Nevertheless, in certain respects, Addison may be seen as standing at the head of a movement toward Romanticism. He believed, for instance, that "words" possessed an imaginative power:

> Words, when well chosen, have so great Force in them, that a Description often gives us more lively Ideas than the Sight of Things themselves. The Reader finds a Scene drawn in stronger Colours, and painted more to the Life in his Imagination, by the help of Words, than by an actual Survey of the Scene which they describe. In this Case the Poet seems to get the better of Nature; he takes, indeed, the Landskip after her, but gives it more vigorous Touches, heightens its Beauty, and so enlivens the whole Piece, that the Images, which flow from the Objects themselves, appear weak and faint, in Comparison of those that come from the Expressions.[9]

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[8] The Spectator, III, 416, p. 561.

[9] Ibid.

This belief of Addison in the imaginative power of words looks forward to Wordsworth's belief that language constitutes the medium "through which, in poetry, the heart is to be affected".[10]

Another "forward-looking" hint in Addison's criticism is his belief in the ability of the poet to "mend and perfect Nature". The poet, he states, has the "modelling of Nature" in his own hands. In his paper No. 419, he refers to the poet's special ability to "lose sight of Nature" entirely, and entertain his readers' imaginations with a "Fairie way of Writing", as Dryden called it. Only the poet who has a particular "Cast of Fancy" and an imagination naturally fruitful and superstitious, states Addison, will excel at this type of writing, one which portrays fairies, witches, magicians, demons, and departed spirits and the like--creations of the poet's imagination. In this Addison is implying that such farfetched material, while not conformable to right reason or good sense, is nevertheless legitimate material for poetry. It raises, he says, "a pleasing kind of Horrour in the Mind of the Reader".

One could almost detect in Addison's concept of the imagination, a creative, rather than a passive power. Indeed, imagination does have "something in it like Creation", he states in his final paper on "The Pleasures of the Imagination" (No. 421).

> It bestows a kind of Existence, and draws up to the Reader's View, several Objects which are not to be found in Being. It

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[10] William Wordsworth, "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" (1815), eds. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, The Prose Works of William Wordsworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), Vol. III, p. 82.

> makes Additions to Nature, and gives a greater variety to God's Works. In a word, it is able to beautifie and adorn the most illustrious Scenes in the Universe, or to fill the Mind with more glorious Shows and Apparitions, than can be found in any Part of it.[11]

It is as though the world of imaginative experience is capable of constituting a new world, an existence of its own. In portraying the imagination as an autonomous faculty, Addison is treading a new path. Although he adheres to the traditional view that judgment must work along with the imagination, nowhere do we find, in his criticism, the warnings that the imagination must remain a faithful servant of reason. "This talent of affecting the Imagination. . . is the very Life and highest Perfection of Poetry", he states in paper No. 421.

Having not only the circle of nature for its province, imagination goes forth to create new worlds, even showing us fairies, witches, magicians, and demons which have no existence other than that which the poet bestows upon them. Far from condemning such writing (we recall Sprat's denouncement of the 'false world of spirits and chimeras'), Addison's theory is that "we have all heard so many pleasing Relations in favour of them, that we do not care for seeing through the Falsehood, and willingly give our selves up to so agreeable an Imposture".[12]

One must credit Addison's papers on "The Pleasures of the Imagination" as constituting the first work ever written on imagination

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[11] The Spectator, III, 421, p. 579.

[12] Ibid., 419, pp. 571-2.

as a wholly autonomous subject. These papers may be regarded as a gateway to aesthetics. The emergence of aesthetics does have a bearing on the evolving concept of imagination in pre-Romantic criticism. Art is beginning to be looked upon as something more than a form of discourse.

The importance of 'taste' in aesthetic judgments as anticipated in Addison and developed earlier by Shaftesbury, helped to prepare the groundwork for Romanticism, because it included an intuitive response to literature, an imaginative and emotional response, both in the poet and in the reader.

Francis Hutcheson, a disciple of Shaftesbury, likewise views the imagination as one of the noble "inner senses". These internal senses contemplate the ideas which the external senses convey to the mind. Hutcheson owes his psychology, as does Addison, to Locke:

> Let it be observ'd here once for all that an internal Sense no more presupposes an innate Idea, or Principle of Knowledge, than the external. Both are natural Powers of Perception, or Determinations of the Mind to receive necessarily certain Ideas from the Presence of Objects. The Internal Sense is, a passive Power of receiving Ideas of Beauty from all Objects in which there is Uniformity amidst Variety.[13]

The finer senses imply a passivity in the subject; they contemplate the ideas which the external senses convey to the mind. To

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[13]Francis Hutcheson, An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (4th ed., London: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1969), p. 80.

have a greater capacity of receiving pleasant ideas is to have a finer taste. Hutcheson is one of the many writers in the eighteenth century, most of whom were philosophers, who begin to theorize about aesthetics.

Alexander Gerard follows Hutcheson in regarding 'taste' as an inner sense. Taste derives its origin from certain powers natural to the mind, states Gerard, but these powers cannot realize their full perfection

> . . . unless they be assisted by proper culture. Taste consists chiefly in the improvements of these principles which are commonly called the power of imagination, and are considered by modern philosophers as internal or reflex senses, supplying us with finer and more delicate perceptions, than any which can be properly referred to our external organs.[14]

Those internal senses from which taste is formed, Gerard proceeds to state, derive from the imagination, the faculty which exhibits ideas of many objects which we never perceived, the conception of which, therefore, cannot be attended with remembrance, in his opinion.[15] When memory has lost the real bonds of union among ideas, fancy, by its associating powers, confers upon them new ties.

Imagination in Gerard is an associative power, binding together images of sensation to form new ones. "Sensations, emotions and affections are, by its power, associated with others. . ."[16] It is from the operations of imagination the sentiments of taste arise.

Again, one notices that the notion of imagination is that of

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[14]Alexander Gerard, An Essay on Taste (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1970), pp. 1-2.

[15]Ibid., p. 157.

[16]Ibid., p. 166.

a passive reflector of images. It is the "vigour of the associating principles which renders genius quick and comprehensive"[17], Gerard states.

One sees in the views of Addison, Hutcheson and Gerard, growing emphasis upon aesthetics. Whether he realized it or not, the eighteenth-century aesthetician was slowly coming into his own. For any radical change in the view of imagination, however, one must look to writers whose philosophical tradition differed from that of Hobbes and Locke. Important as imagination is seen to be among eighteenth century theorists, it is still seen as a passive reflector of images.

For the first time in literary history, however, 'taste' is being viewed as a sub-division of the imaginative faculty. This so-called "School of Taste" (of which Shaftesbury was the leading proponent) began to emphasize a spontaneous rather than a purely rational response to art and literature. In thus emphasizing intuitive, rather than discursive, reason, and in creating a valid role for the feelings, other theorists in mid-eighteenth century would begin a redefinition of the Neoclassic principles, standards and rules. A slow but definite shift would be made away from the sanctions of reason, truth and nature, to new and varied qualities which would appeal to the imagination of both reader and poet. It would be a shift away from authority, tradition, and formalism, in the direction of originality and the creative imagination. In this slow but definite change, Addison's

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[17] An Essay on Taste. p. 172.

criticism played an important part in certain respects. In examining the imagination as an autonomous faculty, one which constituted "the very Life and highest Perfection of Poetry", he set the mood for a theorizing about imagination which would occupy writers for decades. In other respects, however, he still remained close to the dominant, Neoclassic view--one in which poetry conformed to standards of good sense, and in which the imagination, which provided the "embellishment" to sense, remained subject to reason's control.

IV

A Growing Emphasis on "Feeling" and "Sensibility"

Locke's philosophy helped set standards for conformity to 'truth' which characterized much of the poetry of the early and middle eighteenth century. A comparison of certain representative poems of the century with those of previous centuries attests to the influence on literature and on literary criticism of the empirical, rationalistic thinking of Locke and his followers, particularly in their setting of standards for the voice of "common experience" to be heard. One might compare Pope's Essay on Man with Dante's Inferno or with Milton's Paradise Lost, for example, and be tempted to conclude that the Neo-classic poet tended to regard poetry as a superior refinement on the persuasive art of oratory. He concerned himself primarily with "verbal wit".

Wit was closely allied with imagination in Locke's theory of knowledge. It meant for him, as it did for Hobbes and for Dryden, a certain "quickness of parts", whereby ideas, that is to say, the contents of the storehouse of memory, were brought forth. Locke was quick to point out, in this regard, that the products of wit please men because they see its beauty at first sight and no labour of thought is needed to examine it for any degree of truth, and it is evidence of truth alone, in Locke's theory of knowledge, which makes for human certainty,

not clearness of fancy. Men who have a great deal of wit are not known for their clear judgment, states Locke.

One may infer from his theory that the only way to arrive at truth is by exorcising the phantasies of imagination. Basil Willey, in his book, The Seventeenth Century Background, makes an interesting comparison between Locke and Milton which reveals, whatever the ideas they may have held in common, a difference in tone and aim, reflecting the difference between Renaissance and Augustan thinking:

> . . . It is wholly in the cool element of prose that Locke lives and moves. The passionate sense of life as perilous, glorious or tragic which inspired Milton to prophecy, whether in prose or in verse, has all departed; instead, there is a feeling of severity, of confidence in the rationality of the universe, in the virtuousness of man, in the stability of society, and in the deliverance of enlightened common sense...[1]

The new philosophy was not without its influence on the Neoclassic critic and poet, and while not disparaging the imagination and its function, subjected it to the rigorous control of the judgment. Hobbes's insistence on the control of judgment over the exorbitancy of imagination or fancy as set forth in his Answer to Davenant particularly influenced rationalistic aesthetic theory. Adhering strongly to the principles of decorum, Neoclassic criticism may be seen to look suspect on poetic displays of passion and feeling, encouraging direct, verifiable comment upon men and manners and upon universal nature. Neoclassic poetry impresses us as being public and occasional, presented in a

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[1]Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962, pp. 267-8.

language "fitted for discourse and nearest prose", as Dryden would have it. It echoed, in practice, Boileau's dictum that "plainness and naturalness" should prevail, aiming at "sense". The poet endeavoured to write as an interpreter of nature and as a legislator of mankind. As an interpreter, he was more concerned with conveying the familiar aspects of life rather than the abstract or the unknown. If his imaginative or fanciful inventions prevailed over the reason, then they were not to be trusted.

Willey's book does much to show that the whole philosophical movement, on which Locke was the greatest influence, "told against poetry and the poetic imagination. It relegated the mind's shaping power to an inferior status".[2] What this cold philosophy did, in Willey's opinion, was to "destroy. . . the union or heart and head, the synthesis of thought and feeling, out of which major poetry seems to be born".[3]

One cannot reduce the eighteenth century to a formula; however, it seems to have demonstrated a greater unity of character than most centuries. The careful historian sees within it, nonetheless, a mixture of diverse elements. While poetry, prose, and drama came to rely more and more on objective truth, there is evidence of a counter-balancing movement, one that is rooted in the subjective or intuitive

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[2]Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, p. 291.

[3]Ibid., p. 294.

tradition. Out of this movement, the Romantic concept of the imagination would evolve.

Already, we have observed how Platonism (or neo-Platonism) continued to survive into the seventeenth century through the English Platonists. The evangelical movements in religion were also united under a common allegiance: truth for them was guaranteed by that "inner light" or intuitive reason and moral sense, and was not dependent upon empirical experience. This, too, was another of those elements out of which Romantic theory would emerge.

Even though this is so, it is also true to say that Romantic theory would derive a great deal from the empiricist tradition. Wordsworth's theory of imagination, for example, would be rooted in his belief in the value of "sensory perception". Poetry must begin with a careful observation of the visible world. Imagination must attend with care to the reports of the senses--on this he founded his concept of imagination. Wordsworth also believed that the influence of nature came partly through the senses. In some ways Romanticism would constitute an attempt to harmonize the Empiricist and the Platonic traditions, as difficult as this may appear to be.

As the eighteenth century progressed, then, the concept of imagination and how it functioned underwent a slow but definite change. Locke's world, wherein atoms constituted the only reality, was to give way to a world where 'feelings", 'benevolence', and 'sentiment' were beginning to be operative in poetic composition. The inherent formalism of an age of rules was beginning to motivate the poet to enhance the value of natural goodness afforded by the

spontaneous expression of feelings, as opposed to conventions. Beauty, truth, and goodness were beginning to overtake conformity to discursive reason and decorum as primary values.

This shift in aesthetical values which seems to characterize the second half of the eighteenth century is part of an evolving process. It is a shift toward an intuitive response to literature. Under its influence, theorists are beginning to study new ways of interpreting the imaginative faculty.

Ernest Lee Tuveson in his book, The Imagination as a Means of Grace, deals in a comprehensive manner with some of these evolutionary changes in the concept of imagination in eighteenth century thought, particularly in the light of Locke's theory of knowledge. Concepts of the perceiving mind undoubtedly underwent a change as Locke's theories began to shed new light on how the mind receives and deals with sensations, and how these sensations are related to truth. One result of this new thinking may be seen in the apparent, even if gradual, laying aside of the classical tradition. Artists are now beginning to work in response to a set of conceptions about man, the way he thinks, and the effect of experience on the psyche--responses which in some ways were radically different from those which had previously held sway. Locke in his epistemology, stresses Tuveson, did something that not even Newton had done:

> . . . he taught them new ways of thinking, in the literal sense of that phrase. He inaugurated or made necessary a rethinking of every aspect of the personality; soul, conscience, reason, imagination, even immortality itself. All these concepts were destined to undergo metamorphoses as

> theories of how the mind receives sensations, how it deals with them, and how it is related to truth were transformed.[4]

One must look to Shaftesbury as a watershed figure in this transition period. A disciple of the Cambridge Platonists, Shaftesbury objected strongly to the views of Hobbes, whose influence was still being felt in Shaftesbury's day. Hobbes's theory negated any form of spiritual interpretation of the universe. Such an atmosphere was uncongenial to the arts, a subject which concerned Shaftesbury. One can see in his philosophy the desire to offset any purely mechanical interpretation of the universe, and an effort to provide the basis for truth, goodness, and beauty.

Shaftesbury rejected the idea that the human mind was a passive receptacle of ideas which join together by association. He saw the mind as being analogous to the Mind of the divine Creator, and therefore a mind that was creative and active:

> What is it you admire but mind, or the effects of mind? Tis mind alone which forms. All which is void of mind is horrid, and matter formless is deformity itself.[5]

Just as the workings of the human mind are comparable to the divine Mind, so too are the works of art comparable to the workings of nature, in Shaftesbury's view, because both are brought into existence by a divine, creative energy. Theocles's invocation of nature in Shaftesbury's philosophical treatise, The Moralists, reveals the

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[4]Ernest Lee Tuveson, The Imagination as a Means of Grace (New York: Gordonian Press, 1974), pp. 5-6.

[5]Anthony Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc., ed. John M. Robertson (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1963), Vol. II, p. 132.

author's beliefs in the creative power of nature:

> O glorious nature! supremely fair and sovereignly good! all-loving and all-lovely, all divine! . . . . . .
> O mighty Nature! wise substitute of providence! impowered creatress! Or thou impowering Deity, supreme creator! Thee I invoke and thee alone adore . . . . . .
> I sing of Nature's order in created beings, and celebrate the beauties which resolve in thee, the source and principle of all beauty and perfection.
> . . . . . .
> "Yet since by thee, O sovereign mind, I have been formed such as I am, intelligent and rational, since the peculiar dignity of my nature is to know and contemplate thee, permit that with due freedom I exert those faculties with which thou hast adorned me. . . be thou my assistant and guide me in this pursuit, whilst I venture thus to tread the labyrinth of wide Nature and endeavour to trace thee in thy works.[6]

The active principle in man, analogous to the forming power in nature is, in Shaftesbury's philosophy, imagination--an agent of reason. In his Advice to an Author, he refers to the poet who possesses such an imagination as one who,

> . . . as a real master, or architect in the kind, can describe both men and manners, and give to an action its just body and proportion. . . . . .
> Such a poet is indeed a second Maker; a just Prometheus under Jove. Like that sovereign artist or universal plastic nature, he forms a whole, coherent and proportioned in itself, with due subjection and subordinancy of constituent parts.[7]

Such a claim for a creative imagination, as is here implied, runs counter to Hobbes's analogy of imagination and memory--"decaying sense". Addison dealt with the faculty of imagination as a source of aesthetic pleasure. One notices that Shaftesbury's Moralists, as well

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[6] Shaftesbury, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc. Vol. II, pp. 98-99.

[7] Shaftesbury, "Advice to an Author", in Characteristics, Vol. 1, p. 135-6, and quoted by R. L. Brett in The Third Earl of Shaftesbury (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1951), p. 105.

as his complete Characteristics were published one year prior to Addison's papers "On the Pleasures of the Imagination" (1712). It is likely that Addison read Shaftesbury and was influenced by him. However, Addison does not take the concept of imagination beyond that of 'appreciation'. It is in Shaftesbury that one sees a breakthrough: imagination is portrayed as a faculty of creation, a power analogous to the divine Power itself. This power puts man in harmony with nature, God, the beautiful and the true--all are One. Man is born with a natural appetite for these ultimates of goodness, beauty and truth. Shaftesbury sometimes uses the word "taste" to refer to this innate sense, the cultivation of which, he affirms in his Miscellanies, must be consciously carried out: "A legitimate and just taste can neither be begotten, made, conceived, or produced without the antecedent labour and pains of criticism."[8]

This stress on man's intuitive, moral sense in eighteenth-century criticism is significant, and runs counter to Lockian epistemology. What is happening is that the problem of 'standards' is being reduced to a basic subjectivism. By enhancing beauty, truth, and goodness as desirable goals, man's emotional response to literature is being enhanced. The imagination is thus becoming a primary force. The poet is becoming indeed "a just Prometheus under Jove"; he is assuming a role that bears relation to the divine Maker.

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[8]Shaftesbury, Miscellanies, III, Ch. 2, in Characteristics, II, p. 257.

It must be remembered that Shaftesbury was primarily a moral philosopher, yet his views helped shape literary ideals. In emphasizing man's emotional response to poetry, and in stressing the imagination as the elevating force toward lofty serenity, he linked judgment with the feelings and emotions, anticipating Wordsworth's concept of the "feeling intellect". In Shaftesbury's criticism the Neoclassic idea of the man of cultivated taste and the Romantic notion of the man of feeling become closely allied. Furthermore, his stress on the idea of "innate endowment" borders closely on later concepts concerning "genius".

Shaftesbury's doctrine emphasizes man's natural, altruistic instincts and indicates the harmony that can exist between the emotions of the poet and the scenes of nature which surround him. His enthusiasm, as it applied to the arts, helped lead poets to a new enthusiasm for nature, to which the works of James Thomson, Joseph Warton and others give testimony.

It is in these and other aspects that Shaftesbury anticipates the theories of the Romanticist. One cannot overlook the fact that,

> . . . in an epoch of dry matter-of-fact thinking, he soothed the imagination of his readers with a music which appealed to the emotions, and which set vibrating the presageful echo of future voices.[9]

Despite those echoes of "future voices" in Shaftesbury's criticism, one sees that his aesthetical theories remain largely within

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[9]Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, A History of English Literature (rev. edn., London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1957), p. 793.

the framework of the Neoclassic principles of decorum and of conscious craftsmanship. The faculty of reason, not of imagination, remains paramount. What is significant in his aesthetics is his emphasis on man's instincts, emotions and sensibilities; it is this which helps pave the way for a growing emphasis on these factors in literary criticism. In terms of a developing concept of imagination, the gradual transformation of these principles is highly significant.

Certain other critical positions receive emphasis as the eighteenth century moves toward its second half. In 1759 Edward Young's Conjectures on Original Composition made a strong case for "originality" even while recognizing the value of the mimetic theory:

> . . . imitation must be the lot (and often an honorable lot it is) of most writers. If there is a famine of invention in the land, like Joseph's brethren, we must travel far for food; we must visit the remote and rich ancients. But an inventive genius may safely stay at home; that, like the widow's cruse, is divinely replenished from within, and affords us a miraculous delight. Whether our own genius be such or not, we diligently should inquire, that we may not go begging with gold in our purse; for there is a mine in man which must be deeply dug ere we can conjecture its contents.[10]

Even more persuasive than Edward Young's Conjectures, however, was Sir Joshua Reynold's counterbalancing Discourses (1769-70), which helped keep alive the traditional mimetic approach to literature:

> To derive all from native power, to owe nothing to another, is the praise which men, who do not much think on what they

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[10] Edward Young, "Conjectures on Original Composition"in England and Germany ed. Martin William Steinke (U.S: Folcroft Library Editions, 1977), p. 54.

> are saying, bestow sometimes upon others, and sometimes on themselves . . . . . We cannot suppose that any one can really mean to exclude all imitation of others. A position so wild would scarce deserve a serious answer; for it is apparent, if we were forbid to make use of the advantage which our predecessors afford us, the art would be always to begin, and consequently remain in its infant state, and it is a common observation that no art was ever invented and carried to perfection at the same time.[11]

It has already been observed that most critics of the seventeenth century had accepted Aristotle's doctrine of mimesis, in that they regarded poetry as an imitation of nature. In showing how the poet's mind worked, Hobbes had portrayed the imagination at work as a mere agent of association which formed images from sense impressions stored in the memory. Shaftesbury followed most of his contemporaries in recognizing and accepting the imitative concept of poetry; however, he did not consider it to be merely an exercise in literal copying, not in the manner of some. "Tis not enough to show us merely faces, which may be called men's; every face must be a certain man's".[12]

As indicated, much of what the Neoclassic critic believed about the nature of poetry and its relation to reality emanated from the Aristotelian concept of literature. The poet, in this context, is a "maker", endowed with powers of invention capable of giving a

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[11] Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourses on Art, ed. Stephen O. Mitchell (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), p. 73.

[12] Shaftesbury, Advice to an Author, I, 132, quoted in R. L. Brett, The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, p. 103.

more complete picture of life than even nature renders, because the poet can improve on nature, as seen in Sidney's discussion on poetic theory in his Defence of Poetry. Likewise, Pope's reference to the fairest form of things, to "nature methodiz'd", strikes a keynote in Neoclassic criticism. To "follow nature" constituted a categorical imperative. "Unerring nature" constituted that

> One, clear, unchang'd, and Universal Light,
> Life, Force, and Beauty, must to all impart,
> At once the Source and End, and Test of Art.[13]

In this climate of opinion there is no suggestion that the poet should attempt to portray photographic realism; rather, his aim is to hold the mirror up to "la belle nature". This is the sense in which we speak of the mimetic concept of poetry: it is a concept of 'imitation' which found vogue in English literature after the discovery of Aristotle's Poetics in the sixteenth century and which remained central among the critical views of literary theorists well into the eighteenth century.

We have recognized "new voices" being heard in this century, placing stress on genius and on imagination more so than on imitation. William Duff's An Essay on Original Genius (1767) is one of the many treatises written on this subject. In it he glorifies the imaginative faculty, speaking of genius as proceeding from the copious effusions of a plastic imagination:

Poetry, of all the liberal Arts, affords the most extensive

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[13] Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Criticism", in E. Audra and Aubrey Williams, Pastoral Poetry and an Essay on Criticism (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1961), p. 247.

> scope for the display of a Genius truly Original. . . . . Smooth versification and harmonious numbers will no more make genuine Poetry, than the atoms of a skeleton put together can make an animated and living figure. To produce either, a certain vital spirit must be infused; and in Poetry, this vital Spirit is Invention.[14]

It is not to be wondered at that we hear echoes in Duff of the age-old alliance of imagination and judgment; of imagination being subordinate to judgment. He warns, on one occasion, that unregulated imagination may throw glaring colours on objects that possess no intrinsic excellence and so mislead the mind. Duff makes a contribution to an understanding of imagination in an age that is beginning to adopt principles concerning the association of ideas and the development of a notion of intuitive, sentimental or 'sympathetic' imagination.

One may not discount these new voices being heard in the second half of the eighteenth century, however. When one looks at the work of William Collins, for instance, one sees sufficient evidence of an imaginative fusion at work in him which sets him apart from the poets of his day. Of the gifted bard, Collins writes:

> Young Fancy thus to me Divinest Name,
> To whom, prepar'd and bath'd in Heav'n,
> The Cest of amplest Pow'r is giv'n;
> To few the God-like Gift assigns,
> To gird their blest prophetic Loins. . .[15]

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[14] William Duff, An Essay on Original Genius (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1970), pp. 124-5.

[15] William Collins, "Ode on the Poetical Character", ed. Edmund Blunden, The Poems of William Collins (U.S: Folcroft Library Editions, 1973), p. 82.

In his "Ode on the Poetic Character", Collins is quite emphatic in his view that poetry is essentially imaginative, divine in origin, and wild and impassioned in its method and insight. He believes that poetry should be freely imagined and passionately felt. Collins's critical bent inclines him in the direction of the Romantic, rather than the Classic theory of poetry. Although we may regard his total output as scant, we must not overlook his influence in the embodiment of a type of poetry that depicts a lyrical grace, and one in which rhapsody and wonder are being made to appear essential elements.

The fact that Collins later found favour with the Romantics establishes him as a kindred spirit. His style is full of emotional apostrophe. With the Wartons and Gray, Collins may be truly said to belong to a new school of poetry, one wherein the allegory and the sublime ode are elevated to be among the highest achievements of the poetic imagination. In poetic personification they reign supreme in their time, and, as Joseph Warton reminds us in The Adventurer:

> It is the peculiar privilege of poetry, not only to place material objects in the most amiable attitudes, and to clothe them in the most graceful dress, but also to give life and motion to immaterial beings; and form, and colour, and actions, even to abstract ideas; to embody the virtues, the vices, and the passions; and to bring before our eyes, as on a stage, every faculty of the human mind.[16]

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[16] Joseph Warton, Adventurer (No. 57) in Samuel Johnson, The Rambler and The Idler, John Hawkesworth, The Adventurer, and Mr. Town, The Connoisseur (London: William P. Nimmo, 1877), p. 113.

This change which one notices in the second half of the eighteenth century which surfaced in the works of Shaftesbury, Thomson, Collins and others, marks a gradual yet deepening contrast between the age of Pope and the age of Wordsworth, and testifies to an evolving change in the concept of imagination--a change which springs from a growing faith in man's instinctive, emotional nature; in what Shaftesbury referred to as man's "moral sense". It can be seen in the gradual rise in importance of poetic feelings and inspirations. It is being reflected in the gradual laying aside of traditional restraints upon imagination in favour of a poetry which can be freely imagined and passionately expressed.

V

The Faculty and Function of the Imagination in Romantic Criticism

"One Power alone makes a Poet -
Imagination The Divine Vision"[1]

There could be no more complete break with the Neoclassic tradition nor a more radical appraisal of the imagination than one finds in William Blake. Although the impact of his message was a minor one in his time, he is nevertheless a force in the revolt against the eighteenth century's concept of reason with all of its implications for poetry. The intellectual life of the century had been shaped largely by Locke and Newton, whose views constituted an affront to Blake's most deeply-held convictions about the mind of man and the world of nature. "Newtonian science was quite acceptable to Blake", as Northrop Frye expressed it, "as long as it dealt with the automatism of nature as the 'floor' and not the ceiling of experience".[2]

In Blake's short tracts, "There is no Natural Religion" and "All Religions are One", he challenges Locke's arguments. Man is not a natural organ, subject to sense, states Blake. His desires are not limited by his perceptions. Rather, man "perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover. . . The desire of man being

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[1] William Blake, "Annotations to Wordsworth's Poems" (1815), ed. David V. Erdman, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake (3rd pr., New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), p. 654.

[2] Northrop Frye, "Blake's Introduction to Experience", in Northrop Frye, ed., Blake (Englewood Cliffs, N. J: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 29.

Infinite the possession is Infinite & himself Infinite".[3] Blake insists that man's mind is not limited to sense perceptions:

> This life's dim Windows of the Soul
> Distorts the Heavens from Pole to Pole
> And leads you to Believe a Lie
> When you see with not thro the Eye
> That was born in a night to perish in a night
> When the Soul slept in the beams of Light[4]

Man's mind has the power to transcend sensory experience and arrive at the truths of his spiritual endowment. Locke's intellectual structure for the mind left little room for ascertaining this spiritual meaning which, for Blake, lies behind this world of visible appearances. The ability to recognize this spiritual significance in the visible universe and embody it in vision constituted for him the faculty of the human imagination--the endowment of the poet of genius.

Poetic genius Blake defines in this manner: he is

> . . . the true Man, and. . . the body or outward form of Man is derived from the Poetic Genius. . . . . .
> No man can think or write or speak from his heart, but he must intend truth. . . . . .
> The true Man is the source he being the Poetic Genius.[5]

It is the poetic imagination which produces for Blake everything that is real. Imagination is a divine power, uncovering the reality which lies concealed behind the mask of visible objects. The familiar world merely 'hints' at what really is; poetic genius reveals the spiritual

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[3]William Blake, "There is No Natural Religion", ed. David V. Erdman, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, pp. 1-2.

[4]Blake, "The Everlasting Gospels", Poetry and Prose, p.512.

[5]Blake, "All Religions are One", Poetry and Prose, p. 2.

significance which remains concealed. It is the poet who has the vision to enable us

> To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour. . .[6]

Nature for Blake does not exist until the poetic imagination creates it. Human imagination is that Logos, that "impregnating Word" which brings all to birth. All is chaos, darkness, meaninglessness, until the informing Word of Imagination goes forth into the deep, subduing chaos into order, conferring reality upon it, rendering it comprehensible, bestowing upon it life itself. Imagination unifies time and space, so that all times are 'now', and all spaces are 'here', as Northrop Frye states in his views on Blake. "Thus the imagination, by making concrete and visible a hidden creative power, repeats the Incarnation".[7]

In a very real sense, one sees an apotheosis of imagination in Blake. None of the Romantics would carry the notion of imagination that far. In his Annotations to Berkeley's Siris (1744), he defines imagination as not only the human, eternal body in every man, but also "the Divine Body in Every Man", the "all in Man, The Divine Image".[8] Similarly, in his Annotations to Wordsworth's Poems (1815), he states: "One Power alone makes a Poet - Imagination, The Divine Vision".[9]

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[6] Blake, "Auguries of Innocence", Poetry and Prose, p. 481.

[7] Northrop Frye, "Blake's Introduction to Experience", Blake, p. 26.

[8] Blake, "Annotations to Berkeley's Siris", Poetry and Prose, p. 652.

[9] "Annotations to Wordsworth's Poems", Poetry and Prose, p. 654.

Imagination, in Blake's view of poetry, is the Divine Vision "not of The World nor of Man nor from Man as he is a Natural Man but only as he is a Spiritual Man. Imagination has nothing to do with Memory".[10] Blake makes a comparison between imagination and memory in "A Vision of the Last Judgment", a work which he classifies as "Vision" rather than "Fable or Allegory" which would constitute for him a distinct and inferior kind of poetry:

> Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists. Really & Unchangeably. Fable or Allegory is formed by the daughters of Memory. Imagination is Surrounded by the daughters of Inspiration . . . . . This World of Imagination is the World of Eternity, it is the Divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body. . . There Exists . . . that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature.[11]

It is not the visible world which is Blake's special concern; rather, it is the invisible, eternal power behind it of which visible things are mere symbols, and this 'invisible' world draws forth his highest powers of imagination. Also, Blake believes that the poet is the only true man; not only that, every man is a poet, or would be, he states, if his vitality and creative power had not been cramped and deadened by civilization, conventional religion, and science. Man must, therefore, throw off all "mind-forged manacles" if he is to fulfill himself, in Blake's view. He can only do this by exercising the

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[10] "Annotations to Wordsworth's Poems (1815), Poetry and Prose, p. 655.

[11] Blake, "A Vision of the Last Judgment", Poetry and Prose, pp. 544-5.

power of imagination, the Divine Vision.

It was Blake's belief in imagination, coupled with his passion for freedom, his illimitable vision, and his fascination with the supernatural, which make him, in retrospect, a herald of the new age, and one of the loudest voices raised in his time in favour of the Romantic theory of literary criticism. Denouncing the rationalistic creeds which Newton and Locke held out to him, Blake exalted instead the inward guides of energy, love, and imagination.

Blake was a visionary, not a philosopher, however. It remained for Coleridge, possessing greater powers of philosophical analysis, to challenge in intellectual terms the theory of imagination as understood in eighteenth-century thought, and to give fullest expression to the theory of the poetic imagination which we now classify as a Romantic theory.

> If then I know myself only through myself, it is contradictory to require any other predicate of self, but that of self-consciousness. . .[12]

Coleridge's early speculations about the imagination arise, he relates in the Biographia Literaria, from first hearing Wordsworth read his own poetry. Coleridge was then in his twenty-fourth year, that is, in 1795/6. He then saw a quality in Wordsworth's poetry which he recognized as differing greatly from the eighteenth-century poets and from his contemporaries in general. This difference, as he expresses it in the early chapters of his Biographia, which made such an impression on his feelings and on his judgment

> . . . was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops.[13]

This 'excellence' of Wordsworth in being able to give "the charm of novelty to things of every day"[14] was one which Coleridge no sooner felt than he sought to understand. In Chapter lV of the Biographia Coleridge reveals that he devoted much thought to analyzing the quality of this power, being convinced that it was a power higher

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[12]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1934), Ch. Xll, p. 145.

[13]Ibid., Ch. lV, p. 45.

[14]Ibid., Ch. XlV, p. 161.

than that which was reflected in eighteenth century pootry as a whole. He recognized it as the power of Imagination, a faculty distinct from Fancy "instead of being, according to the general belief, either names with one meaning, or, at furthest, the lower and higher degrees of one and the same power".[15]

The distinction Coleridge goes on to make between imagination and fancy was a distinction, states Basil Willey in his book, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, not merely between two kinds of poetry, but "an aspect of the antithesis between two world-views: the mechanical and the 'dynamic', the dead and the living".[16] One might say here that Coleridge recognized a power inherent in the workings of imagination which were 'dynamic', 'creative', 'vitally alive', as opposed to the Neoclassic theory of associationism. Indeed, subsequent chapters of the Biographia (Chapters V-Vll) attest to his early rejection of the doctrine of associationism as developed from Hobbes to Hartley:

> In association then consists the whole mechanism of the reproduction of impressions, in the Aristotelian psychology. It is the universal law of the passive fancy and mechanical memory; that which supplies to all other faculties their objects, to all thought the elements of its materials.[17]

Those years between 1796 and 1801 bear witness to a radical change in Coleridge's thought. From being a follower of Hartley, and a

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[15] Biographia Literaria, Ch. lV, p. 45.

[16] Basil Willey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972), p. 191.

[17] Biographia Literaria, Ch. V, p. 54.

materialist, he became convinced that the whole empiricist tradition was wrong in the manner in which it conceived of the human mind and its operations. The empiricists' perception of mental processes in terms of matter in motion carved out a theory of mind as being 'passive' in nature. Coleridge saw this theory of the passive mind as having its origin in Newtonian science. In a letter to Thomas Poole in March, 1801, he denounced it:

> Newton was a mere materialist. Mind, in his system, is always passive - a lazy Looker-on on an external world. If the mind be not passive, if it be indeed made in God's Image, and that, too, in the sublimest sense, the Image of the Creator, there is ground for suspicion that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false, as a system.[18]

Coleridge was by then convinced that "association depends in a much greater degree on the recurrence of resembling states of feeling than on the train of ideas". In a letter to Robert Southey, two years later, he stated:

> I almost think that ideas never recall ideas, as far as they are ideas, any more than leaves in a forest create each other's motion. The breeze it is that runs through them--it is the soul, the state of feeling. . .[19]

Associationism, for Coleridge, could not account for the mental processes involved in imagination and in perception. Neither could "matter in motion" account for our concept of nature.

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[18] Samuel Taylor Coleridge in The Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, intr. Kathleen Raine (London: The Grey Walls Press, 1950), p. 108.

[19] The Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, p. 129.

It is in Chapters Xll-Xlll of his Biographia Literaria that Coleridge establishes a metaphysical basis for his theory of the imagination--the faculty which, for him, was vitally involved in every act of human perception. The starting point, in his philosophy, is in self-consciousness; "I AM". In other words, his basic assumption is that intelligence is a "self-development, not a quality supervening to a substance".[20] The real implication is this: The human mind, because it is made in the likeness of God, is truly creative. Just as God made the world out of chaos and breathed upon it order and form, so does the human mind, made in His image, have the power to impart order and form to the materials of sensory perception. The human mind creates the world which it perceives. Between mind and nature, there exists a vital bond.

The mind of the artist at work in imitating nature, therefore, does not "painfully copy Nature", but is aware that "the essence must be mastered--the natura naturans, and this presupposes a bond between Nature in this higher sense and the soul of man". Coleridge continues:

> . . . Dare I say that genius must act on the feeling that body is but a striving to become mind--that it is mind, in its essence. As in every work of art the conscious is so impressed on the unconscious as to appear in it, . . . so is man the genius that links the two.[21]

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[20] Biographia Literaria, Ch. Xll, p. 148.

[21] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Poesy or Art" (1818) in Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor (Folcroft: the Folcroft Press, Inc., 1969), pp. 208-9.

This power, and this alone, which enables man to relate the world of mind and the world of nature is, in Coleridge's theory, Imagination. In Chapter Xlll of the Biographia, he attempts to define it:

> The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I Am. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the Mind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are fixed and dead.[22]

The primary Imagination, then, is involved in every act of human perception. It is the creative faculty by which we create the intelligent world as we know it. What Coleridge is saying is that the world of raw sensation is without shape or form; any notions we perceive through the senses of colour and texture and shape are combined into an intelligent whole through the operation of the primary imagination. For example, when we look at a tree, we do not have separate sensations of colour and shape and immediately involve ourselves in a discursive act to arrive at the knowledge of "tree". Rather, when we apprehend "tree", we have recreated a mental entity or mental reality out of the discrete sensations of experience. When we can say, "tree", we have already exercised the primary Imagination, in Coleridge's view of things.

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[22] Biographia Literaria, Ch. Xlll, pp. 159-60.

Through the interaction of subject and object, owing to that close bond which Coleridge sees to exist between mind and nature, the primary Imagination gives us--The World. Imagination is the Logos; it imitates the creativeness of God. Man is in a sense, a miniature creator because in God man has his being.

To a mind that has no faculty of imagination in Coleridge's view, all would remain chaotic; meaningless in shape and colour. It is the primary Imagination which bestows order and shape. (The infant, in a sense, creates his world).

The secondary Imagination, in Coleridge's theory, is none other than the 'poetic' imagination, which takes the creative perceptions of the primary Imagination and "dissolves, diffuses and dissipates" them, in order to "recreate". Like the primary, the secondary Imagination is a creative faculty; as Coleridge states, it is "essentially vital", operating in a manner that confers new life, shape and unity on the flux of everyday images. It gives the "charm of novelty to things of every day".[23] In its activity, this poetic Imagination modifies objects by "reducing multitude to unity" by transferring to them a human and intellectual life from the poet's own spirit; by struggling, as Coleridge expresses it, "to idealize and to unify". What is implied here is that the poet creates reality. He attempts to show us what is really real. Poetry, then, if truly imagination, is truth-bearing.

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[23] Biographia Literaria, Ch. XIV, p. 161.

The basis of such a claim lies in the fact that the secondary Imagination is an echo of the primary, and because the primary reveals what is true, it follows that the secondary or poetic Imagination recreates that which is equally true. On this Coleridge builds his whole concept of poetry.

One must recognize, at this point, that in Coleridge's theory, 'feelings' are an important inherent quality of the poetic imagination. It was the "synthesis of thought and feeling" which first drew him toward an analysis of the power behind Wordsworth's poetic excellence. He addressed himself to this point in a letter to Richard Sharp in 1804:

> . . . Wordsworth is a poet, a most original poet. . . He is himself and, I dare affirm that, he will hereafter be admitted as the first and greatest philosophical poet, the only man who has effected a complete and constant synthesis of thought and feeling and combined them with poetic forms, with the music of pleasurable passion. . .[24]

Coleridge's conviction about the importance of feeling had been voiced three years earlier in a letter to Thomas Poole:

> My opinion is thus: that deep thinking is attainable only by a man of deep feeling, and that all truth is a species of revelation. The more I understand of Sir Isaac Newton's works, the more boldly I dare utter to my own mind, and therefore to you, that I believe the souls of five hundred Isaac Newtons would go to the making up of a Shakespeare or a Milton. . .[25]

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[24] The Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, p. 142.

[25] Ibid., p. 108.

Coleridge's philosophy and poetry are closely related. "No man was ever a great poet without being at the same time a profound philosopher", he states, "for poetry is the blossom and fragrance of all human knowledge, human thought, passions, emotions, and language". His comments on "The Education of Children" highlight his belief that the human imagination has been bestowed on mankind by a benevolent Providence as a means to human betterment:

> In the imagination of man exist the seeds of all moral and scientific improvement. . . The imagination is the distinguishing characteristic of man as a progressive being; and I repeat that it ought to be carefully guided and strengthened as the indispensable means and instrument of continued amelioration and refinement.[26]

Coleridge speaks about the imagination in its most comprehensive sense, extending its range to embrace, not only the poetic faculty, but the initiatives of philosophy as well. The ultimate object of poetry and philosophy he sees as being the same: the transmission and dramatization of 'truth'. A poet must indeed be a profound metaphysician, possessing an "active, self-forming, self-realizing mind" (a theory which offers striking contrast to that perceived by Locke). In Coleridge's theory of mind there is need for the development of the inner sense:

> One man's consciousness extends only to the pleasant or unpleasant sensations caused in him by external impressions; another enlarges his inner sense to a consciousness of forms

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[26]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Education of Children", in Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor (Folcroft, P.A: The Folcroft Press, Inc., 1969), p. 195.

> and quantity; a third in addition to the image is conscious of the conception or notion of the thing; a fourth attains to a notion of his notions . . . he reflects on his own reflections; and thus we may say without impropriety, that the one possesses more or less inner sense, than the other.[27]

What are the implications of these remarks on the 'inner sense' for poetry? They are these: the poet must be more than 'merely aware'. He must be 'at one' with the object of his perceptions. He must bring about a "coalescence", as Coleridge expresses it, between himself and the object he perceives.

How does the poet, one may ask, develop these powers of imagination which will effect this coalescence? Coleridge would say: by discovering the powers of "growth and production". In The Statesman's Manual he speaks of this power as he knows it operating within himself:

> . . . I feel an awe, as there were before my eyes the same power as that of the reason--the same power in a lower dignity, and therefore a symbol established in the truth of things. I feel it alike, whether I contemplate a single tree or flower, or meditate on vegetation throughout the world, as one of the great organs of the life of nature. Lo! with the rising sun it commences its outward life and enters into open communion with all the elements, at once assimilating them to itself and to each other. . . Lo! how upholding the ceaseless plastic motions of the parts in the profoundest rest of the whole it becomes the visible organismus of the entire silent or elementary life of nature.[28]

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[27] Biographia Literaria, Ch. Xll, p. 135.

[28] Coleridge, The Statesman's Manual, Appendix B, quoted in I. A. Richard, Coleridge on Imagination (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1950), pp. 52-53.

One sees from Coleridge's theory that the powers of the human mind, both in perceiving and in shaping, are the powers of imagination. In exercising these powers, the poet "diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends and (as it were) fuses each into each, by that synthetic and magical power of imagination".[29] Nothing is static or fixed in this process. The unity which is achieved is an organic unity. Just as a plant assimilates diverse elements of earth and air, so too does the 'synthetic' power of imagination reconcile opposite or discordant qualities, states Coleridge. And just as the various parts of the growing plant achieve an inter-relation, one part with the other, to become a living whole, so also does a poem achieve organic unity when its various parts are inter-related in and through the unifying process of imagination. It is in this reconciliation of diverse elements, a characteristic achievement of the poet of genius, that Shakespeare's plays drew forth Coleridge's great praise. [Shakespeare] possessed the power of "reducing multitude into unity of effect", he states. Among diverse elements he achieved reconciliation:

> Possessed by the spirit, not possessing it... Shakespeare first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely, till knowledge, become habitual and intuitive, wedded itself to his habitual feelings, and at length gave birth to that stupendous power, by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his class. . .[30]

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[29] Biographia Literaria, Ch. XlV, p. 166.

[30] Ibid., XV, 172.

The foregoing illustration reinforces Coleridge's expressed views (in Chapter XV of the Biographia) that images, "however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet".[31] Images must be modified by a predominant passion. A human and intellectual life must somehow be imparted to those images from the poet's own spirit, in the manner in which Shakespeare, out of the power of his mind, created his characters. They were drawn, observes Coleridge, not from "mere observation", but from "meditation".

This is the sense, then, in which one understands Coleridge's analogy of organic growth with reference to the imaginative process. It is a process which shapes a poem from within. In this process, there is no room for mention of "decorum of parts", a real concern of Neoclassic poetic thought. One recalls Dryden's translation of Boileau, wherein Dryden spoke of the necessity of each object being fixed in due place, because he considered that a perfect whole is achieved only by joining all the pieces. The unity which Coleridge is postulating is an organic unity. The various parts of a poem are brought together in living relationship. The process is a self-evolving one; it is not a unity imposed from without--such would constitute for him a mechanical process. Rather, poetic initiative must come from "within".

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[31] Biographia Literaria, XV, 169.

It would be comparatively easy, says Coleridge, for a poet to go about the world with notebook in hand, carefully jotting down sights and sounds. With practice, such a poet might acquire a considerable facility in representing his observations. But this is not the observation of a 'mind'. Nature can only confirm our observations; it is the mind that generates them. The unconscious mind is the most highly significant region, the most mysterious source which the poet must tap.

It is this power which Coleridge observed in Sir Joshua Reynold's poetry, a work which he praised in 1819, using its merits to voice his reaction against the mechanism implicit in some of the major poetry of his time:

> I am happy to see and feel that men are craving for a better diet than the wretched trash they have been fed with for the last century; that they will be taught that which is sound must come out of themselves, and that they cannot find good with their eyes or with their ears or with their hands, that they will not discover them in the crucible or bring them out of a machine, but must look into the living soul which God has made His image, in order to learn, even in fragments, what that power is by which we are to execute the delegated power entrusted to us by Him.[32]

This "very living soul which God has made His image" is the power of imagination from which the poet projects passion and life into the inanimate world and transforms it. This transforming power Coleridge recognizes as the same as that of reason.

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[32]Quoted by J. R. De J. Jackman in Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 88.

In eighteenth-century critical theory, it was thought that the perceiving mind reflected the external world. Imagination consisted in the presenting of selected and ordered images of life. In Coleridge one sees a reversal. He offers a theory of imagination which is analogous with the highest workings of the human mind: an imagination which is both living and growing, generating and producing its own form; one whose rules are not those of the Neoclassical rules of invention, but rather the rules of growth and production.

One might wonder about the motivating forces which inspired Coleridge with the desire to redefine the concept of the poetic imagination, and to such an extent. Abrams, in his book, The Mirror and the Lamp, regards Coleridge's objectives to be an essential part of the nineteenth century critic's attempt to revitalize the material and mechanical universe which had emerged from the philosophy of Descartes and Hobbes. Abrams says that it was Coleridge's attempt

> . . . to overcome the sense of man's alienation from the world by healing the cleavage between subject and object, between the vital, purposeful, value-filled world of private experience and the dead postulated world of extension, quantity, and motion. To establish that man shares his own life with nature was to reanimate the dead universe of the materialists, and at the same time most effectively to tie man back into his milieu.[33]

Coleridge seems to have seen the need to emphasize the spiritual dimension, as a counter-reaction to the sensationalist view of an external world, as Abrams suggests. From his own intense sense of the

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[33]Meyer H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 218.

"inner life" came his belief that imagination, working with intuition, is more likely than is the analytical reason to discover the mysteries of spiritual reality.

In Coleridge's doctrine of the imagination, one finds philosophical background for the Romantic's unshaken conviction that poets, in the words of Shelley, "are the unacknowledged legislators of the world".[34] His explication of the nature and function of the imaginative faculty undoubtedly forms the ideological foundation of Romantic poetry.

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[34]Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry", in Shelley's Poetry and Prose, ed., Donald H. Reiman (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), p. 508.

> I had been taught to reverence a Power
> That is the very quality and shape
> And image of right reason. . .[35]

Wordsworth does not give a precise disquisition on the subject of the imagination, as does Coleridge. Wordsworth's concept is almost religious, when compared with the more philosophical and psychological views held by Coleridge. In most respects, however, both writers' views run along similar lines. With much that Coleridge says about the faculty of imagination Wordsworth finds agreement, especially with Coleridge's distinction between imagination and fancy. However, Wordsworth makes no distinction between primary and secondary imagination as does Coleridge.

Imagination for Wordsworth is the most important gift a poet can possess. It is the faculty which enables him, out of his everyday experiences, to see and to create. At times he refers to it as "vision", the insight into the real world which the senses, of themselves, are incapable of apprehending. Like Coleridge, he views its activity as that of a God-like process. At work even in the smallest child, it operates in a manner that enables him to create his own world:

> For feeling has to him imparted strength,
> And powerful in all sentiments of grief,
> Of exultation, fear, and joy, his mind
> Even as an agent of the one great mind,
> Creates, Creator, and receiver both
> Working, but in alliance with the works
> Which it beholds. . .[36]

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[35] William Wordsworth, The Prelude (1805), ed. Ernest De Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), Bk. Xll, 24-26.

[36] Ibid., II, 269-75.

Imagination grows to maturity within the poet, making him what he is. Accompanied by special insights, it enables him to create--to see into the very life of things. It is, says Wordsworth in his autobiographical poem, The Prelude:

> . . . but another name for absolute strength
> And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
> And reason in her most exalted mood.[37]

The rational mind is being endowed here with a new dimension. It is being understood as capable of inspired insights. Wordsworth is not relegating reason to an inferior position; for him, inspired insight is itself rational. His view of the reason as an intuitive faculty constitutes "reason in her most exalted mood", that inner light

> . . . when the light of sense
> Goes out in flashes that have shown to us
> The invisible world. . .[38]

He recognizes that reason alone is incapable of enabling man to grasp the highest kind of truth. Reason needs the stimulus of "young imagination". For Wordsworth it is the imagination and feeling combined with reason that "forward reason's all too scrupulous march". Or, as he writes elsewhere: imagination is that sacred power assigned

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[37] The Prelude (1805), XIII, 168-70.

[38] Ibid., VI, 534-36.

to "elevate the more than reasoning Mind".[39]

Equally important in Wordsworth's theory of the imagination are feelings which work with imagination to "energize" the reason. Feelings are as necessary to reason as is the imagination. Without imaginative feelings, the practical understanding is of little avail. The important role which he gives to the feelings can be seen in his Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800) wherein he offers what he believes to be the difference between his poems and those of his day. The difference, he states, is this: ". . . it is the feeling therein developed which gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling".[40]

Wordsworth states as his objective in Lyrical Ballads to keep his reader "in the company of flesh and blood". In doing so he portrays what he believes to be the poet's aim, namely, "to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes", even to "confound and identify his own feelings with theirs."[41]

He bears witness in The Prelude to the fact that his own growth in wisdom occurred only when his head ceased to dominate his heart; when he began to embrace "those sweet counsels between head and heart" from whence genuine knowledge proceeds. The passions and feelings are what vitalize the reason, endowing the poet with inspired insights

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[39]Wordsworth, "Miscellaneous Sonnets", in The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, eds. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), Sonnet XXXV, Vol. 3, p. 20.

[40]Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800), in The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, eds. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), Vol. I, p. 130.

[41]Ibid., p. 128.

into a world which the senses alone are incapable of discovering. Wordsworth is thus leading the reaction in his time of "feeling" against "fancy". From a concept of poetry as mimesis, he renders one of expression--the impassioned product of the poet's mind and heart; one in which he sees the visible world with the fresh wonder of the child and with the mature understanding of the adult, as his poem The Prelude relates.

The experience of such feeling in the poet's work presupposes a like power of sensibility in his reader. Wordsworth alerts his reader to this response in his Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800):

> I have one request to make of my Reader, which is, that in judging these Poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by the reflection upon which will probably be the judgment of others.[42]

Elsewhere, in his Essay Supplementary to the Preface (Poems, 1815), in commenting on "taste", he writes:

> . . . without the exertion of a co-operating power in the mind of the reader, there can be no adequate sympathy . . . without this auxiliary impulse, elevated or profound, passion cannot exist.[43]

In his aim to restore the vital bond which must exist between a poet's heart and voice, Wordsworth, in his Preface to Lyrical Ballads, emphasizes the necessity for the poet's adoption of a language of feeling

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[42]Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800), in The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, Vol. I, p. 154.

[43]Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface" (1815), in Wordsworth's Literary Criticism, ed. Nowell C. Smith (London: The Folcroft Press Inc., 1970), p. 197.

rather than versified expression unsupported by a human emotional response. In explaining his own style in Lyrical Ballads he writes:

> . . . in these Poems I propose to myself to imitate, and as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men . . . . I wish to keep my Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by doing so I shall interest him. . . There will be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction: I have taken much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it; this I have done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men. . .[44]

In the Appendix to the Preface, he iterates his claim for a genuine language of poetry relating to common life, and gives from among various poets examples wherein "the language of passion [was] wrested from its proper use".[45]

A commonly accepted belief among eighteenth-century poets was that language must be the dress of thought. Wordsworth is demanding of language much more. The analogy is not "what the garb is to the body but what the body is to the soul".[46] "If words . . . be not an incarnation of the thoughts but only a clothing for it", Wordsworth states, "then surely they prove an ill gift". For him, words hold, above all external powers, a dominion over thoughts. Words constitute "the medium through which, in poetry, the heart is to be affected".[47]

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[44] Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800), The Prose Works, Vol. 1, p. 150.

[45] Appendix to Preface to Lyrical Ballads, The Prose Works, I, 164.

[46] "Essay upon Epitaphs", III, The Prose Works, II, 84.

[47] "Essay Supplementary to the Preface" (1815), The Prose Works, III, 82.

Wordsworth demands of poetry a vital union between thought, feeling, and expression, and it is this union which he accomplishes in his own poetic works, as reflected particularly in the concluding book of The Prelude. A striking example is his description of the peak of Mount Snowdon one warm, misty, summer's night. As he relates, the moon stood naked in the heavens; the headland waters roared in the distance. Nature seemed to transform everything in the spell of the moment. The mist seemed to become "a silent sea"; the hills upheaved "dusky backs"; the Atlantic dwindled, "appearing to give up its Majesty". And on all this, the moon looked down in single glory. Later, in silent meditation upon the scene long after it had passed, Wordsworth states that it became for him "The perfect image of a mighty Mind/ Of one that feeds upon infinity".[48]

In other words, there is a power, which nature thrusts forth upon the senses, a power which is the very counterpart of inspired reason. Through the workings of this imaginative power, the poet is able to "hold communion with the invisible world".[49] In this union, the boundaries of individual limits are dissolved and an imaginative unification of subject and object ensues. Of such minds, he writes, they are truly

> . . . from the Deity
> For they are Powers, and hence the highest bliss

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[48] The Prelude (1805), Bk. XIII, pp. 69-70.

[49] Ibid., 105.

> That can be known is theirs, the consciousness
> Of whom they are habitually infused
> Through every image, and through every thought,
> And all impressions. . .[50]

In The Prelude, as well as in his other poems, one is made increasingly aware of the intimate relationship which he sees to exist between man and nature. His belief is that in nature, man finds the perfect model for his own creative acts. The Prelude never ceases to emphasize this important link: poetry and nature are inseparably bound. Nature, in effect, infuses poetry with passion. This is the energy, springing as it does from nature, which Wordsworth believes a poet should incorporate into his works.

One cannot help but notice the constant reference to imagination's being a "power" in Wordsworth's criticism. The constant reference to imaginative power implies that the creative mind is an active agent, operating on matter and transforming it. Such a concept of mind is in opposition to the views of many major theorists in the eighteenth century who held the view that the imagination produced images, that is, ideas of sense impressions faithfully remembered. Those views could well be represented in the statement of William Taylor in his English Synonyms Discriminated (1813) wherein he stated that imagination "is the power of depicting" by which a man "can distinctly copy in ideas the impression of sense". Imagination in this context as held by Taylor and by the

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[50] The Prelude (1805), Bk. XIII, 106-111.

majority of Neoclassic critics, would constitute for Wordsworth nothing more than a mode of memory. In his theory, the active operation of the creative mind is paramount:

> Imagination. . . has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects; but is a word of higher import, denoting operations of the mind upon those objects, and processes of creation or of composition, governed by certain fixed laws.[51]

Observation must be charged with feeling, in other words. From this source the creative energy emanates. A poet's experience with natural phenomena must be vitalized by a personal response to such phenomena; the eye and the heart must interact. On this principle, Wordsworth's concept of imagination rests:

> . . . now all eye
> And now all ear; but ever with the heart
> Employ'd, and the majestic intellect. . .[52]

Analogous to this perfect balance between mind and heart, there exists a corresponding balance between the mind of man and nature, a correspondence which permeates his poetic theory. He sees nature as the beneficient giver of "that energy by which truth is seen". It is charged with passion and with life. In the presence of nature, Wordsworth stands, a sensitive, creative soul. In her endless variety he perceives "a motion and a spirit that impels All thinking things, all objects of all thought/ And rolls through all things. . .[53]

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[51] "Preface to the Edition of 1815", in The Prose Works, III, 30-31.

[52] The Prelude (1805), XI, 143-45.

[53] "Tintern Abbey", in The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944), Vol. II, p. 262.

It is these qualities of nature, namely, her power, passion and harmony, which become for Wordsworth the very features of the human imagination. Just as nature is capable of transformation, as if acted upon by some "mighty Mind", so also the poet, by the power of inspired insight which is none other than "reason in her most exalted mood", invests what he sees and feels with a substance and a life, and at the same time fuses elements of the most different nature together into one harmonious whole. This latter quality, namely, the vital unity which he perceives in the natural world, occupies an important link with the yearning in the mind of the poet for transcendent unity. Wordsworth believes that just as in nature nothing is defined into "absolute independent singleness", so also in the creative act of imaginative transformation, a unification occurs. This is the unifying process which characterizes many of Wordsworth's own poems. It is this fusion of substances which is at the heart of the unifying action in his whole concept of the poetic imagination.

Another feature of the imaginative process in his criticism centers in his belief that man can arrive, through the contemplation of natural objects, at eternal, universal truths. We may recall that the eighteenth-century empirical tradition which Wordsworth inherited was wont to regard poetry as an "ingenious lie", to borrow Bonhour's phrase. The poetic ideal was 'imitation'. In Wordsworthian poetry, we recognize a new dimension: there is a truth, not of science, but of the imagination:

> The Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in solitude: the Poet,

> singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion.[54]

The poet is a prophet of truth. Poet and prophet become connected in a mighty scheme of truth, each perceiving something never seen before. Inspired by a sense of mystery and possessed of a deeper insight than most men, the poet probes into the very nature of things in order to discover meanings hidden from ordinary intelligence. Such probings go far beyond that of physical objects; they explore the inner world of spirit.

Similar views of the poet's prophetic role are shared by Shelley, whose A Defence of Poetry constitutes one of the clearest statements of Romantic poetic theory. For Shelley, the poet

> . . . not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time. Not that I assert poets to be prophets, in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events: such is the pretense of superstition which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry. A Poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one. . .[55]

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[54] Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1850), The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, Vol. I, p. 141.

[55] Shelley, A Defence of Poetry, in Shelley's Poetry and Prose, pp. 482-3.

Because poetry is for Shelley "the expression of the Imagination", it becomes "the very image of life in its eternal truth".[56] He proceeds to describe it as "the light of life; the source of whatever of beautiful, or generous, or true can have place in an evil time".[57]

Central to Shelley's theory is his belief that 'love' is all; and that it is the imagination which enables man to transcend his own nature in order to identify with the beautiful and the good. He exacts of the poet an intense and comprehensive imagination so that he may better put himself in the place of others so that their pleasures and pains "become his own", because poetry, indeed, is the "great instrument of moral good".

Shelley makes a sharper distinction between imagination and reason than does Wordsworth for whom imagination became "reason in her most exalted mood". Shelley sees reason as somewhat on a lower plane: "Reason is to Imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance".[58] Reason, in contradistinction to Wordsworth, acts as an instrument for the imagination. It is an instrument of analysis, whereas imagination is the instrument of synthesis. Poetry, then, is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind, states Shelley:

> . . . A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry". The greatest

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[56] Shelley, A Defence of Poetry, p. 485.

[57] Ibid., p. 493.

[58] Ibid., p. 480.

> poet even cannot say it: for the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness: this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure.[59]

Although Shelley's mind moves in a way unlike the other Romantic poets, he attaches as great an importance to the poetic imagination, which possesses for him, as it does for Coleridge and Wordsworth, the power "to create anew the universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by iteration".[60] This is none other than the quality Coleridge highlights in Wordsworth's poetry, that of giving "the charm of novelty to the things of every day".

Shelley makes a distinction between the philosopher and the poet when he says that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world", the "mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present. . ."[61] Such assertion confirms Shelley's belief in the power and ability of poetic intuition to point the direction in which the world is moving. "What were Virtue, Love, Patriotism, Friendship. . .if Poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from these eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar . . . "[62]

One sees the Romantic poets running counter to their predecessors; standing opposed to a poetry that acts as a vehicle for discursive

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[59] A Defence of Poetry pp. 503-4.

[60] Ibid., pp. 505-6.

[61] Ibid., p. 508.

[62] Ibid., p. 503.

reasoning. More in the spirit of the English Platonists, they stand firm on the side of Godlike insight and direct, intuitive apprehension, looking with disdain on those who are fed, as they see it, by the letter rather than by the spirit of things.

In Wordsworth's theory, reason alone is not enough; it must be supported by imagination and energized by feeling in its search for truth. Of itself,

> Our meddling intellect
> Misshapes the beauteous form of things:-
> We murder to dissect.[63]

An aspect one must not overlook in Wordsworth's theory which brings him in line with the empiricist tradition which he inherited, is the important role the senses play in his poetic theory. Wordsworth believes that poetry must begin with careful observation of the visible world. In this respect he has been anticipated by such poets as James Thomson and Joseph Warton, but none more than Wordsworth were so consistently preoccupied with exploiting the world of sensory perception. In this connection, Wordsworth himself remarked of the poetry between the publication of Paradise Lost and The Seasons that

> . . . it does not contain a single new image of external nature; and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the Poet had been steadily fixed upon his subject, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination.[64]

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[63]Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned", in William Wordsworth Selected Poems and Prefaces, ed., Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 107.

[64]Wordsworth, "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" (1815), The Prose Works, Vol. lll, p. 73.

Observation alone is not enough. Wordsworth believes that poetry demands a receptive heart, as well as an observant eye. The poet must indeed observe, but he must infuse these observations with his own feelings. It is feelings, not observation alone, which constitute for Wordsworth the true begetter of poetry. It is observation vitalized by the power of emotional response, on this his theory of imagination rests.

One sees in the Romantic concept a theory of imagination that is strikingly different from that of Augustan mentality, and yet, having certain similarities with the empiricist tradition. For instance, Wordsworth believes, even more so than did the Augustans, that poetry imitates nature. In Wordsworth's belief, though, this imitation is not of a nature fixed and static; it is the imitation of a dynamic nature, infused with the feelings and emotions of the poet's own mind. To the known and familiar landscape, as a result, the Romantic brings a fresh perspective. To the ordinary events of every day he gives "the charm of novelty"--the fashioning of his own creative power. This, then, is the quality which, one may conclude, characterizes Romantic poetry, this very quality which Coleridge himself recognized in Wordsworth as being a distinguishing quality among the poets of their day, this

> union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all, the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops.[65]

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[65]Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, Ch. lV, p. 45.

CONCLUSION

It was the seventeenth century that gave literary theory psychological direction. In the views of Hobbes and Locke, concepts of the human mind and of the poetic imagination were analyzed, and their applications were to have far-reaching effects on the development of poetic theory. In this climate of strict empiricism, wherein all knowledge derives from sensory experience, the faculty of imagination came to serve a rhetorical rather than a logical purpose.

Against Hobbes's empiricism, the English Platonists sought to develop an idealist philosophy which envisioned the mind as an active agent. These writers stressed that man's reason is innate, not a mere product of sensory experience. Although they were not particularly interested in aesthetics, the English Platonists exercised an influence on men like Shaftesbury and Akenside, who came to believe that the poet was somewhat like a divine Maker, "a just Prometheus under Jove". This active principle which writers like Shaftesbury ascribed to the poet's mind heralded what we now refer to as the Romantic concept of imagination.

Although the view of imagination conceived of by Romantic poets and critics may appear to be revolutionary in nature, it had been prepared for in many respects. Intimations of this concept occurred throughout the history of literary criticism whenever there evolved poetic criteria that were "subjective" rather than exclusively "objective" in value; whenever literary criticism made room for man's feelings and emotions as sources of poetic power; whenever the restraint on imagination

was placed aside in favour of a poetry that could be freely imagined and passionately felt; whenever the imaginative faculty ceased to operate as a 'picture-making' one and became an 'organ of truth'.

Although literary movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries depict a gradual acceleration in imagination's importance in poetic composition, the notion of this faculty, as perceived by the major Romantic critics and poets, is in many respects entirely new. Nowhere in the history of literary criticism does one witness such desire on the part of poets to project, from their own minds, passion and life into the universe and to share so intimately with nature. Nowhere does one observe so obviously that the poet considers himself to be the unifying center of this universe, having intuitive insights into reality.

In imagination, the Romantic poets believed their creative powers resided. To curb the imagination would be to deny something innate to their whole being. It would be to curb the mind's most vital faculty--that "living power and prime agent of all human perception".

One must conclude that with the emergence of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and others, the faculty and function of imagination in literary theory assumed major proportions. For the first time, its nature and function were given a literary base.

With the Romantics, there emerged a type of poetry that was completely new. Writing from a heightened consciousness of their own powers, a group of poets emerged who set out to fashion new worlds out of their own minds, and they believed them to be valid worlds. They

also believed that in exercising those imaginative powers, they created life and added to the sum of living experience. Not wishing to be passive observers in a world which they believed to be in a constant process of creation, they made themselves into active agents, and endeavoured to convince men of the invisible reality which lay concealed behind the visible scene.

As C. M. Bowra relates in his book, The Romantic Imagination, these poets:

> . . . far from thinking that the imagination deals with the non-existent, . . . insist that it reveals an important kind of truth. They believe that when it is at work it sees things to which the ordinary intelligence is blind and that it is intimately connected with a special insight or perception or intuition. Indeed, imagination and insight are in fact inseparable and form for all practical purposes a single faculty. Insight both awakes the imagination to work and is in turn sharpened by it when it is at work. This is the assumption on which the Romantics wrote poetry. It means that, when their creative gifts are engaged, they are inspired by their sense of the mystery of things to probe it with a peculiar insight and to shape their discoveries into imaginative forms. . . .
> . . . . . .
> They combine imagination and truth because their creations are inspired and controlled by a peculiar insight.[66]

The Romantics believed that their business was to create--to create anew the universe, in the words of Shelley, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by iteration. To do this, they were convinced that reason was not enough. It needed "young imagination" to forward reason's "else too scrupulous march".

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[66] C. M. Bowra, The Romantic Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 7.

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