

LIMINAL READINGS:
FRAMING STRATEGIES IN SELECTED ROMANTIC TEXTS

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FRAMING STRATEGIES IN SELECTED ROMANTIC TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores narrative framing strategies in five Romantic texts: Wordsworth's *The Ruined Cottage*, Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* and an episode from Chapter Six of *Biographia Literaria*, Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo*, and Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion*. Using Freud's analysis of "the uncanny" and Alice Jardine's conception of "gynesis" as key elements, the introductory chapter proposes a view of "framing" as a strategy of interpretive and narrative control aligned with culturally masculine ideals of mastery and authority, while identifying that which is represented within the frame as manifesting a strange alterity, often coded as feminine, which exceeds the terms established in the framing argument. Within this type of framing structure, Romantic anxieties about the authority of the writing subject play themselves out. The texts by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley studied here exemplify framing as a strategy to control interpretation of a polysemous interior discourse. Keats's text furnishes a counter-example, deploying the apparatus of the interpretive frame only to subvert its conventions. Barthes's distinction between texts of "pleasure" and of "bliss" contributes to an understanding of the contrast between representations of textual closure and textual openness.

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CHAPTER ONE
NARRATIVE FRAMING STRATEGIES

This project began with a riddle. At the conclusion of P.B. Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo*, the narrator questions his friend's daughter regarding the Maniac--that unnamed enigma at the centre of the poem, the man without a past. The daughter pleads for silence, but the narrator's will to know prevails: "I urged and questioned still, she told me how / All happened--" (616-17).¹ As we pause on the dash we believe that the veil is about to be lifted; we are faced with the solution to a troubling mystery. But then the anticipated gratification is withdrawn, and the poem ends with a withholding: "she told me how / All happened--but the cold world shall not know." We the poem's readers are cast as "the cold world" and thus cast *out into* the cold world--given a glimpse of a story we can come home to, only to have the door shut in our face. The experience is unsettling: there is something uncanny in this narrow avoidance of uncanniness. Freud cites Schelling's definition of "*das Unheimliche*" (the uncanny) as "the name for everything that

¹ Subsequent references to Shelley's poetry and to A. Defence of Poetry will be to *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977).

ought to have remained . . . secret and hidden but has come to light" (Freud 17: 224; elipsis in original).² The Maniac's history has almost come to light, only to be at the last moment "withdrawn from the eyes of strangers" (Freud 225)--made "*heimlich*" once more, kept behind doors.

Freud frames his discussion of the uncanny with multiple definitions of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*--self-undoing definitions through which it is discovered that "the word '*heimlich*' exhibits [a meaning] which is identical with its opposite, '*unheimlich*,'" so that "[w]hat is *heimlich* . . . comes to be *unheimlich*" (224). *Heimlich/unheimlich* is both home and not-home, like our childhood home in dreams that is both familiar and strange. Freud cites, among others, the following definitions of *heimlich*:

From the idea of "homelike", "belonging to the house", the further idea is developed of something withdrawn from the eyes of strangers, something concealed, secret. . . . *Heimlich* also has the meaning of that which is obscure, inaccessible to knowledge. . . . The notion of something hidden and dangerous . . . is still further developed, so that "heimlich" comes to have the meaning usually ascribed to "unheimlich." (225, 226)

The Maniac's story becomes associated with Maddalo's household, presided over by Maddalo's daughter: his story "belongs to the house." The Maniac--whose death is marked only by a reference to his tomb, evoked as an emblem of

² All references to Freud are to "The 'Uncanny'," which appears in Volume 17 of the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74). Subsequent references document page number only.

silence--thus represents a kind of domestic riddle, a ghost in the home. The narrative's hospitality toward the reader extends so far, and then a blind is drawn on this domestic scene. This uncanny expulsion of the reader--a seeming alteration of the laws of a system in which the story has been freely shared from narrator to reader--calls attention, like Freud's "uncanny," to something else going on in the text. This "something else" relates to the play of disclosure and repression that emerges as an effect of narrative framing. The Maniac, as the suppression of his story implies, signifies something that exceeds what is admissible within the terms of the framing narrative. The poem's forced closure draws attention to the role of the narrative frame and the frame narrator as agents of both revelation and interpretive control.

This thesis explores narrative framing strategies in five Romantic texts: Wordsworth's *The Ruined Cottage*, Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* and an episode from Chapter Six of *Biographia Literaria*, Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo*, and Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion*. With the exception of the Coleridge texts, these are extended poetic narratives in various modes: a rural history, a genteel conversation, a dream vision. Coleridge is represented by two instances of textual commentary in addition to his visionary poem, since I read the prefatory headnote to *Kubla Khan* as a fictive supplement that has a status comparable to that of the

poetic text. This choice reflects perhaps the fact that Coleridge's prose is regarded as having a critical value equal to that of his poetry; but the more appropriate explanation is that this is not intended as a genre study, but rather as a study of Romantic anxieties about interpretive control, anxieties illuminated by the framing structure these texts share.

Each text employs a substantial framing narrative to convey an interior, framed discourse, and each of these framing narratives depicts a scene of interpretation, in effect providing a "reading" of the mysterious "text" the frame encloses. These readings are performed by readers/interpreters installed within the framing narratives: Pedlar and Poet in *The Ruined Cottage*; doctors and priests (Coleridge's surrogates) in *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter Six; Coleridge the autobiographer in *Kubla Khan*; Maddalo and Julian in *Julian and Maddalo*; and the poet-dreamer in *The Fall of Hyperion*. The relationship of intratextual interpreter to framed discourse resembles in some sense the relationship of reader to text described in reception theory: Faced with a riddling, fragmentary or incoherent text, these interpreters, in Wolfgang Iser's terms, "bring into play [their] own faculty for establishing connections-- for filling in the gaps left by the text itself" (55). In other words, the framing structures in these particular texts seem to provide a literal representation of what

Tilottama Rajan terms the "supplement of reading": that process, characteristic of Romantic texts, whereby the reader is invited to achieve a meaning not actually present in the text (*Supplement 2*). The results are varied, from the Pedlar's confident location of the ruined cottage's meaning to *The Fall's* poet-narrator's bewildered encounter with the Saturnian text, but the focus on the process of interpretation--on the attempt to contain meaning--is consistent.

But the framed narratives, in their turn, effect their own version of textual commentary, reflecting in sometimes oblique ways upon the frames that attempt to confine them and to delimit their range of meaning. These framed narratives, that is, often reveal something "uncanny" at the heart of an apparently straightforward text. Wordsworth's Pedlar in *The Ruined Cottage*, for example, renders the story of Margaret as an essentially "closed" text, a text which, as Umberto Eco defines it, "seem[s] to be structured according to an inflexible project" and "aim[s] at arousing a precise response on the part of more or less precise empirical readers" (8). The Pedlar delivers his conclusion unambiguously--seeming to say, like Keats's urn, that "that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know"--and implies that the appropriate audience for Margaret's story may be defined according to specific notions of "worth"; but in doing so he sets up a disturbing

textual "gap" between Margaret's sufferings and their narrative dematerialization. As Iser observes, the creation of a consistent reading always involves the exclusion of alternative readings: the "configurative meaning" achieved through interpretation "is always accompanied by 'alien associations' that do not fit in with the illusions formed. . . . [I]n forming our illusions, we also produce at the same time a latent disturbance of these illusions" (60). It is the spectre of these excluded readings, these "alien associations," that may be said to haunt the margin of Wordsworth's text. While *The Ruined Cottage* seems to turn a blind eye to these alien guests, other Romantic texts, such as *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* with its marginal gloss, self-consciously construct the text's latent interpretive disturbance as a central part of the reader's experience. This interaction between the interpretive frame and its content--this play of confinement, exclusion, and subversion--is often figured, moreover, in gendered terms, according to a logic I will outline further on.

A frame by its very nature raises issues of discursive control. As a liminal structure, it designates the edges of what it frames, bounding and demarcating its content as a "semiotic field" (Pearson 15). Like a containing wall, a frame marks off aesthetic territory, but it does so to promote, even enable, consumption of whatever

it contains. A literary frame, like a picture frame, is part of a process of display: *here is a dream, here is a discourse, here is an image.* As I have suggested, it is part of a structure of interpretation: it guides reception of its framed material by defining it in some way-- "defining" understood as both delimiting and naming. In doing so, it calls attention to the image *as image*, reifying it. It marks its enclosed material as an aesthetic or exemplary object available for consumption, while claiming for itself as mediator some share in both the represented world of the image and the "real" world of the reader or viewer. A frame thus displays, contextualizes and mediates its framed material for the reader or viewer. It does so by *enclosing* what it frames, containing it: as John Matthews puts it, "[d]isclosure is enclosure" (27).

This conjunction of gestures, of subservience and confinement, is a factor in the strange oscillation between frame and "picture plane" to be examined in the chapters that follow. As a mechanism of presentation a frame is both central and marginal, "at once outside the reader's field of concentration and the determinant of that field, beneath one's notice yet the foundation of it" (John Matthews 26). Matthews notes the frame's identity as both "hidden understructure" and "outer ornament," a "double structure that opens the space of representation as it is covered over and closes the space of articulation as it mediates a

boundary with the outer world" (27). This doubleness recalls the oscillations of the *(Un)Heimliche* in my opening example: the conjunction of disclosure and concealment. A frame enables presentation and thus brings things to light; but it might also furnish a structure to contain something excessive, unspeakable, *unheimlich*--something forced to the textual interior in an action similar to that of repression in the psyche. In the case of Shelley's Maniac, for example, it seems he represents an alterity, an "unknown," that cannot be accommodated within the terms of the framing discourse.

The Maniac's potentially threatening relationship to that discourse, and to the "pious reader" (Preface to *Julian and Maddalo*), resembles that which Susan Wolfson posits between a question and the presumption of an answer:

To answer is to summon agents of potential closure, and in this respect, all writing, insofar as it produces forms that contain, frame, confine and bind, may serve as closure. Yet even in the fixed characters of writing . . . the event of an unanswered question retains a disruptive effect, for its presence loosens the bindings of meaning by intimating something in excess of what language can say and frame. (*Questioning Presence* 21)

Wolfson's diction implies the carceral nature of such (en)closure. What she depicts is, in effect, a prison break, and her narrative evokes the pervasive metaphor of Jameson's "prison-house of language": the renegade question has "loosen[ed] the bindings of meaning" that held it--or us--and has evaded the "agents of potential closure" set

upon it by that imperious warder, the answering faculty. This sense of the contentious relationship between question and answer describes also that between an interpretive frame, as a potentially closural "binding of meaning," and a framed discourse that may, like a persistently "questioning presence" within the text, exceed the meanings that its context permits.

The following chapters observe an incidental chronological order, but there is, in addition, a thematic symmetry to the arrangement. Wordsworth and Keats frame the discussion. In these two chapters, as indicated by their titles, I hope to suggest a dialogue between divergent modes of reading, departing from Roland Barthes's distinction between the "text of pleasure" and the "text of bliss":

Text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading. Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language. (*The Pleasure of the Text* 14)

These categories, it seems, inhere not in the text but in the mode of reading ("for there is no necessary agreement on the texts of pleasure" [14]). Barthes speaks of gaps, of edges within a text, of "certain breaks (or certain collisions)" (6) that fissure the body of the text, and it is here that the reader takes his or her pleasure.

Now, the doubling of discourse that occurs when two narratives are brought together, as in a framed narrative, exaggerates the presence of such a seam: the seam between the frame and the "picture plane." This edge between narratives creates a textual gap for the external reader to negotiate, and that is what I have done in the study that follows: explore the narrative spaces that open up between the frame and the enframed. But this readerly pleasure is doubled within the text: as I have suggested, both Wordsworth's and Keats's frame narrators function as intratextual "readers," and it is *their* modes of reading--the readings they model for us--that I have designated readings of "pleasure" and of "bliss." Where Wordsworth's Pedlar produces an answer--in a reconciling form that, in Wolfson's terms, can "contain, frame, confine, and bind"--Keats's poet-narrator participates in the proliferation of questions, enacting both the pleasures and terrors of discursive "crisis."

The Pedlar of *The Ruined Cottage* exemplifies the Wordsworthian construction of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity" (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, 756). Thus the strongly negative emotions evoked by Margaret's losses, poverty, mental decline, and death are recuperated by the Pedlar's retrospective telling and assimilated into a tranquil pattern of natural cycles, so that "silent overgrowings" (line 506) silence and knit up the cottage's

cracks.³ We might, iconoclastically, rephrase Wordsworth's dictum using another phrase from Barthes, and call the Pedlar's recuperative reading an instance of pleasure as "a bliss deflected through a pattern of conciliations" (20). The Pedlar, like a frugal housewife, stitches up the rifts in a narrative of damage, making it whole again. The effect is similar to Julian's silence at the conclusion of *Julian and Maddalo*: he unveils the disturbing tale that inhabits the cottage ruin, only to obscure it once more in silence, making it *heimlich*. The Pedlar's narrative is explicitly anti-sensational; we might even say it is subtractive: it seeks a point of insensate stillness, a "resting-place" (line 538) where even textual interaction ceases. The Pedlar enjoins his reader, in effect, to stop reading, or else to become a reader with the precisely-calibrated sensibility appropriate to his "closed" text: "Be wise and chearful, and no longer read / The forms of things with an unworthy eye" (510-11). His interlocutor is the Poet figure within the text, but the injunction seems to extend to the external reader as well, in an echo of Julian's reproof to the "cold world." The Pedlar breaks his story off at a point of fullness--a point where, paradoxically, he has emptied the text--the ruined cottage--of disturbing content.

³ All subsequent references to *The Ruined Cottage* are to *The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar*, ed. James Butler (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979).

The "text of bliss," by contrast, is a self-dismantling text, or a text of excess, that cannot be knit up into a contained or silent package. The phrase is a useful one in describing Keats's poetry as a whole, with its fetishization of language; the description is further reinforced by the poet's speculations on reading: "For Keats . . . reading results in the reader prophesying and dreaming upon the text, acts . . . akin to Barthes's 'jouissance' with its stress on pleasure and play" (Goellnicht, "Keats on Reading" 195). This "text of bliss" is allegorized, for example, in Keats's *Lamia*, a poem on the theme of veiling and unveiling. As a seductive "text" (an object of desire and interpretation), Lamia, when she becomes available to the gaze of the male reader (Lycius), approximates Barthes's description of the "marbled, iridescent text" that marks "the moment when by its very excess verbal pleasure chokes and reels into bliss" (8). Lamia's house in Corinth opens up a space of erotic pleasure within the sealed coherence of the city's culture; it, too, is an intermittent site of bliss. For the reader of *Lamia*, if not for Lycius, the poem's attraction derives at least in part from this precariousness: "It is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance" (Barthes 10).

If *Lamia* provides an example of textual bliss that anticipates the frank eroticism of some of Barthes's

hedonistic descriptions, *The Fall of Hyperion* translates textual bliss into a more complex register, focussing on the loss of selfhood that haunts the point of textual rupture, and on the impossibility, no matter how earnestly desired, of achieving the complete, present, comfortable text of pleasure. Barthes, we recall, equates the text of pleasure with "consistency of [the reader's] selfhood," and the text of bliss with its loss (14). The Pedlar in *The Ruined Cottage* performs a gesture calculated to re-stabilize the self and its certainties, while *The Fall* dramatizes openly the Romantic "radical instability of the 'self'" in its refusal of interpretive authority (Simpson ix).⁴

Where the urge in *The Ruined Cottage's* frame narrative is toward integration, that in *The Fall* is toward disintegration. *The Fall of Hyperion* subverts the ideology of framing as containment as it is so clearly rendered in *The Ruined Cottage*, by reversing the direction of reading: the inhabitant of the framed narrative, Moneta, ultimately possesses the interpreting gaze, which she directs outward

⁴ I have adopted this distinction between "pleasure" and "bliss" pragmatically, although Barthes's categories themselves are not stable: like *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, there is an oscillation between the two--a flickering of meaning: "Pleasure/Bliss: terminologically, there is always a vacillation--I stumble, I err. In any case, there will always be a margin of indecision; the distinction will not be the source of absolute classifications, the paradigm will falter, the meaning will be precarious, revocable, reversible, the discourse incomplete"; "pleasure" . . . sometimes extends to bliss, sometimes is opposed to it" (4, 19).

at the framing narrator. This reversal of the direction of the gaze corresponds to contrasting configurations of gender: Wordsworth's Pedlar speaks in a masculinist discourse, "a man speaking to men" (*Lyrical Ballads* 751), passing a narrative down through a patrilineal succession. Keats's poet-narrator, on the other hand, speaks from a subject-position deeply conflicted in terms of gender identity, and aligned more closely with a passive, "feminine" subject-position than with an Oedipal one.

These two texts offer, too, complementary models of the frame as a technology of re-vision: in both cases, textual evolution becomes a factor in understanding the belated framing narrative as an authorial strategy to gain perspective on a recalcitrant text. This revisionary process points up a rough division between two types of framing structure studied here. In the cases of *The Ruined Cottage*, *The Fall of Hyperion*, and *Kubla Khan*, the frame is chronologically supplementary: the stories of Margaret's decline and the fall of the Titans, and the vision of Kubla's palace (with its intimation of a fall to come) at one time existed (in manuscript at least) as free-standing texts, as Keats's *Hyperion* still does. The "original" text, it might be said, plays host to the frame that is superadded to it. In the cases of *Biographia Literaria* and *Julian and Maddalo*, the relationship seems to evolve inversely: the Maniac's speech and the story of the possessed servant woman

appear as exempla embedded within the host discourse of learned conversation. The distinction bears noting, although, as J. Hillis Miller demonstrates, the relationship of "guest" to "host" is radically equivocal (220); the interanimations between frame and enframed ultimately make sport of any attempt to assign priority to one intratextual voice over another, although these accidents of evolution may lead the reader to approach the text with certain expectations, with a certain sense of where, in the text, authority might lie.

Within the frame formed by Wordsworth and Keats, chapters on Coleridge and Shelley bring the connection between the narrative gaze, objectification, and gender to the fore. They do so through the representation, in each case, of a specifically linguistic disorder, troped as feminine, which then becomes the focus of an ordering male gaze. I have designated the texts examined in these chapters as "clinical" because of the diagnostic analogy that arises out of their specular structure: the embedded text is like a hysterical patient under a clinician's organizing eye, or a symptom of disturbance within the textual unconscious. *Biographia Literaria* and *Julian and Maddalo* enact this scene of clinical scrutiny most directly, in representing the scrutinizing of subjects "marked for interpretation within the order of madness" (Matlock 172).

Kubla Khan, by way of its prose framing fiction, marks the poem as a pathological document, aligning it with discourse, such as the Maniac's and the possessed servant's, that occupies a space outside the order of reason. These texts epitomize the ideology of framing as containment and control, because the degree of discursive power separating frame narrator from framed subject is so vast: the subjects under scrutiny lack even the power of reply, existing as they do on the ragged margins of language. Their fragmentation as subjects is figured by their estrangement from linguistic order. They are, in fact, no longer subjects, but objects. What Karen Swann observes of *The Ruined Cottage* applies with at least equal force to these clinical texts: "The [frame] speaker's distance from and mastery of his subject . . . is achieved by gothic means, by the depersonalization, mechanization, and ghosting of persons" (87).

This position of objectification is a specifically feminine one; even the male Maniac is gendered female by virtue of his divorce from reason and his isolation as an object of representation, and the visionary poetry of *Kubla Khan* is deeply marked by images of female powers of generation. This construction of analysis as masculine and the represented object as feminine arises out of the specular structure and, I would argue, plays a role in

"closural" readings such as that performed by Wordsworth's Pedlar. "[T]o own and activate the gaze, given our language and the structure of the unconscious, is to be in the 'masculine' position" (E. Ann Kaplan, qtd in Newman 1029), and, correlatively, "[t]he objectification of women is a result of the subjectification of man" (Kappeler 50). To take the example of the Lacanian symbolic order, "the speaking or writing subject is constitutively masculine while the silent object is feminine, and the signifier, through Lacan's privileging of the phallus as the primary signifier, is masculine while the fictive or absent referent is feminine" (Homans xii). In fact, it is impossible to speak of the play of containment, control, representation, disorder, excess and so on without, finally, speaking of the tension between positions conventionally figured as masculine and feminine--without, that is, addressing gender as a fundamental concept in the dialogue between these framed and framing fictions. I understand gender, in this context, not as biological, but rather as a relational "system of representation" (de Lauretis 5).

Alice Jardine traces the evolution of gendered representations within western culture, focussing on the identification of "woman" as "other":

The space "outside of" the conscious subject has always connoted the feminine in the history of Western thought--and any movement into alterity is a movement into that female space; any attempt to give a place to that alterity within discourse involves a putting into discourse of "woman." (114-15)

This movement into alterity is the movement of what Jardine terms "gynesis": A crisis in western narrative, beginning in the nineteenth century, has led to the exploration of "newly contoured fictional spaces, hypothetical and unmeasurable, spaces freely coded as *feminine*" that are "embedded" in the male master narratives of philosophy, religion, and history (69). While Jardine's primary concern is with "modernity," with the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, signs of this crisis as she describes it are clearly discernible within productions of the Romantic period, itself a time, as David Riede remarks, of "crisis in authority of all kinds" (3). Wolfson identifies the spirit of the Romantic age as "interrogative":

Intellectual and political historians have directed us time and again to how "Higher Criticism" of the Bible questioned scriptural authority, philosophical skepticism questioned the grounds of knowledge, and sociopolitical upheavals questioned the institutions of government. . . . The impact of [questioning as an act of] dislocation . . . is registered throughout the discourses of Romanticism. (*Questioning Presence* 18, 19)

And Tilottama Rajan, interrogating the "problematical duality of surface and depth" in Romantic discourse, argues that

the history of Romantic poetry and aesthetics can be seen as the gradual bringing to light of a counterplot within the apparently utopian narrative of Romantic desire, through the confrontation of recognitions initially hidden in the subtexts rather than the texts of works. (*Dark Interpreter* 22, 21)

Although Rajan's analysis pursues a different direction than the one I take, her figure--the "bringing to light" of

something "hidden" in the interior of the official narrative--resembles the workings of both gynesis and the *Unheimliche*.⁵ This structure is repeated, also, in the production of "alien associations" as a necessary effect of what Iser calls "the actual bringing to light" of "the subject matter of the work" in his description of the reading process (50).

I am intrigued by the aptness of these figures (of gynesis, the uncanny, the subplot, excluded meanings) as analogues to what is happening in the Romantic frame narratives I will discuss: the masterful discourse of interpretation or measurement is fissured by a kind of wild discursive "cavern *measureless* to man" that slips the frame's grasp even in the process of being displayed.⁶ The markers of conventional control remain: Kubla's walls stand, the Pedlar draws his homiletic conclusion, Julian draws the narrative blind; but somewhere on the margins of the visible the mechanisms of control are being dismantled. This sense

⁵ Freud's discussion departs from a consideration of the uncanny as an aesthetic phenomenon in a German Romantic text, "The Sand-Man" by E.T.A. Hoffmann (Freud 227).

⁶ Yu Zhang describes this gendered process of disruption in an analysis that encompasses both the "western" crisis identified by Jardine and the patriarchal structure of written Chinese. He reads the sign for "Woman" as "a potent signifier and an active agent of transformative power, . . . something that can never be locked up within the prison-house of language." He observes, further, that "[i]n her myriad metamorphoses, this rebellious spirit has plagued the patriarchal domain for centuries, disrupting its 'good order' and haunting its dream of eternal harmony" (168).

that the structure of masterful narratives can be dismantled from within becomes overt in *The Fall of Hyperion*, where Keats works an inversion of the conventions of narrative framing. In the other works it becomes apparent in a reading that goes "against the grain" of the interpretation voiced by the frame narrator.

What I attempt to sketch in this study is the process, discernible in these texts, of the gradual and almost imperceptible reversal of the balance of power. The concept of gynesis clearly recuperates the excluded, the feminine, as a powerfully subversive force: "The key master discourses in the West" have "had to confront, since the nineteenth century, a new space which refuses to stay silent within its frame of representation" (Jardine 88). This "refusal to stay silent," as I have suggested, resembles the coming to light of that which has been hidden away in the interior of discourse. For Freud, the uncanny is the return of repressed animistic beliefs or infantile complexes, notably fear of castration, fear of death, and a sense of the female genitals as uncanny, which Freud relates to the fact that the vagina is "the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings" (245), both familiar and unfamiliar. Jane Marie Todd disrupts the Freudian "frame of representation," lifting the veil on his theory of the *Unheimliche* to reveal the uncanny feature repressed by Freud's own analysis of the concept: what he fears is female power as revealed in the

(castrating) female gaze (526): "if women have been silenced, veiled, *hidden away*, it is in part because they pose a threat to men. . . . [T]he strangely familiar woman threatens to appear again" (528).⁷ This alterity that threatens to reverse the current of interpretation--to assume and transfigure the gaze--makes itself felt, within Wordsworth's, Coleridge's, and Shelley's framing fictions, in over-anxious efforts at interpretative control.

The figure who embodies this uncanny alterity seems often to double the frame narrator, as if the framed narrative were an inverting mirror. Julian, for example, notes the capacity of Maddalo's talk to "make me know myself" (line 561); and as if to demonstrate this Maddalo "shows" Julian the Maniac as a way of holding up a mirror: "I knew one like you / Who to this city came some months ago / With whom I argued in this sort, and he / Is now gone mad,--and so he answered me" (195-98). Vincent Newey calls the Maniac "the poet's dark double" ("Romantic Subjects" 134). Reading the Romantic self through the lens of Lacanian subjectivity--that subject whose "appearance is situated at moments of discord, where there is 'something

⁷ Susan Sage Heinzelman makes a similar observation when she writes that "uncanniness manifests itself when the condition of concealment is transformed into a condition of visibility. Uncanniness, then, is the condition that attaches itself, according to Freud, to that which will not remain silenced, suppressed. . . . [W]omen are excluded from the canon and marginalized as the *unheimlich*, the noncanonic, even as they are identified as the source of both the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich*" (69).

that doesn't work'" (137-38)--Newey discovers that the texts of Romanticism "call frequently in question the rootedness, coherence, and even stable reality of the self" (139). It is a similar critical position that leads me to read the Romantic narratives under consideration as, at one level, allegories of the divided self--of a self haunted by the ghost of a (linguistic) powerlessness it has displaced into the figure of another. The framed narrative becomes, in this light, an exercise in self-reading and self-writing.

Rather than calling this mode "autobiography," we might loosely appropriate Rajan's term "autonarration," which captures the fictive nature of such "transpositions of personal experience" ("Autonarration and Genotext" 150). In each of the texts studied, a narrator appears who approximates the author: in *The Ruined Cottage*, both Poet and Pedlar embody aspects of Wordsworth as a poet; in *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge is the explicit autobiographical subject, and is also figured within the interpolated narrative in like-minded members of the "clerisy"--medical men, philosophers, priests; in *Kubla Khan* the vatic poet within the poem, a clear projection of Coleridge as poet, is carefully replaced by the figure of "the Author" himself in the strategic headnote; Shelley's Julian is conventionally understood as a Shelleyan persona; and Keats's poet-narrator enacts Keats's own exploration of poetic vocation. These authorial figures are consistently

represented in contrast to figures constructed as definitively *other*--figures, often female, whose existence within the male master discourse needs to be repressed, displaced, silenced, assimilated or naturalized through skilful interpretation. These figures signify, at one level, displaced aspects of the representing self. Like the words *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, or Barthes's texts of pleasure and bliss, that stand in both scrupulous opposition and eerie proximity to one another, the antonymous figures within the framing narrative and the framed narrative face each other across a divide that proves in some lights to be a mirror.

I will conclude with a word about my use of a recurrent figure to structure my argument: this is the figure of the "domicile of the text," as J. Hillis Miller puts it (217): of the text as a home, a household, a conceptual and spatial, domestic and architectural system within which relations unfold--relations marked, as they are within a household, by gender, class, and the patriarchal structurings of the symbolic order, the social order a subject enters when, in Lacan's terms, she enters the order of language. This household is inscribed within the words "heimlich" and "unheimlich" (*Heim* = home): the text and the home are sites of concealment and revelation. Each text studied here contains a representation of an architectural structure--a (semiotic) framework--that reflects, in some

way, on the textual practices of that narrative: the cottage, the lonely farm-house and the pleasure dome, the madhouse, the temple of Saturn. There are analogies, too, either explicitly or implicitly established, between these "domiciles" and the structure of the self. The house is what Bachelard calls "the non-I that protects the I" (5). To be "at home to oneself" implies a kind of self-presence: Jardine cites Derrida's location of a metaphysics of "presence" or "being" "there in *ousia* or *parousia*, signifying 'homestead,' 'being-at-home,' and 'integral, unmediated presentness'" (128). And Keats captures the nature of self-difference in his declaration that, when overwhelmed by the identity of others, "not myself goes home to myself" and he is "an[ni]hilated" (*Letters* 1: 387).

Miller broaches the notion of "the domicile of the text" in a discussion of poetic and critical practices of consumption, during the course of which he envisions a chain of cannibalizing readings:

The poem, in my figure, is that ambiguous gift, food, host in the sense of victim, sacrifice. It is broken, divided, passed around, consumed by the critics canny and uncanny who are in that odd relation to one another of host and parasite. Any poem, however, is parasitical in its turn on earlier poems, or it contains earlier poems within itself as enclosed parasites, in another version of the perpetual reversal of parasite and host. (225)

If I assert that univocal intratextual interpretations, in the works studied here, exemplify the phallic gaze and commodify and depersonalize the text that they frame, where,

then, does this leave criticism of those works, and my own attempts to frame a persuasive reading, in particular? Perhaps the most I can do is to acknowledge my situation as yet another ghost, or guest, invading the text, another graffitist leaving her mark on the palimpsest of temporary hoardings that have been thrown up around Romantic texts for the past two hundred years. Or, more equivocally, I might invoke Roland B arthes's vaguely exonerative description of critical pleasure, when he writes,   propos of

"*commentaire*":

How can we take pleasure in a *reported* pleasure (boredom of all narratives of dreams, of parties)? How can we read criticism? Only one way: since I am here a second-degree reader, I must shift my position: instead of agreeing to be the confidant of this critical pleasure--a sure way to miss it--I can make myself its voyeur: I observe clandestinely the pleasure of others, I enter perversion; the commentary then becomes in my eyes a text, a fiction, a fissured envelope. The writer's perversity ([her] pleasure in writing is *without function*), the doubled, the trebled, the infinite perversity of the critic and of [her] reader. (17)

CHAPTER TWO

WORDSWORTH: THE TEXT OF PLEASURE

Two narratives co-habit uneasily within *The Ruined Cottage*. Wordsworth sought for years to align or to separate the narratives of Margaret's decline and of the Pedlar who tells her story, but seemed unable either to integrate them wholly, or to divide them definitively. James Butler gives the following synopsis of what is a long and involved textual history:

Begun in 1797 as a stark story of Margaret's decline and death, *The Ruined Cottage* in 1798 acquired a history of the Pedlar who narrates her tale, as well as a tranquil conclusion. Wordsworth separated the Pedlar's history from the main poem in 1799, and his sister copied the surplus Pedlar passages as an addendum to *The Ruined Cottage*. In 1802 these overflow passages became a separate poem about the Pedlar's mental development; in 1803-1804 this account of the Pedlar and the story of Margaret were recombined. (*The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar* xii)

Butler's diction betrays a perception that the two parts differ in status--between "story" and "history," between "the main poem" and the "surplus" or "addendum" it "acquires." These distinctions reflect perhaps the status of a frame: "history" has an association with truth value, with a causal anchor in past events, that "story" does not necessarily have, just as a frame exists partly in the real world of the reader or viewer, and partly in the made or

represented world of the "story" or picture plane it subserves. This formal subservience is captured in the terms "surplus" and "addendum." The term "surplus" suggests, too, Wordsworth's production of the poem as an object for consumption, his attempt to settle on a poetic sufficiency.

Jonathan Wordsworth sees in the two sections--the story of Margaret and the history of the Pedlar--"poetry of radically different kinds. Where the original poem anticipates *Michael*, the additions belong rather with *The Prelude*" (*Music of Humanity* xiii). Where the original poem relates a rural tale of suffering, the "additions" have the effect of developing the perceiving and shaping eye as a central character in the drama, much as *The Prelude* frames its embedded dramas--that of the discharged soldier, for example--as fragments significant by virtue of their influence on the autobiographer's emotional and intellectual development. The 1799 version of *The Ruined Cottage* does not contain the Pedlar's history, but does retain him in the role of narrator and include his homiletic conclusions, and so the tension noted by Butler and by Jonathan Wordsworth persists, between the Pedlar's shaping presence and the story of Margaret's death.

The framing narrative both guides, and, at the same time, destabilizes interpretation. In introducing the figure of the Pedlar-narrator into the poem, Wordsworth

provides a model of the way in which Margaret's story is to be "read." The "meaning" of the embedded narrative appears to be more determinate than if Margaret's story stood alone, in that this fictional reading demonstrates the hermeneutic work that is necessary to understand Margaret's story. The frame, in other words, marks out a path across the field of the text, points out a focus, makes a selection from among all possible readings; thus the "external" reader has, in her attempt to make sense of the story, an interpreter and guide. At the same time, however, with the addition of a frame narrative the reader has not one text to interpret, but two (at least), and must negotiate the complex relations of one to the other.

The poem's outer frame--the story of the Poet *en route* to the cottage--presents a self-conscious plea for the kind of narrative mediation such framing devices can provide. The opening lines depict, as it were, the Poet in the middle of *unframed* experience--a pathless, undifferentiated common: "Across a bare wide Common I had toiled / With languid feet which by the slipp'ry ground / Were baffled still . . ." (19-21). As Alan Liu has pointed out, the Poet's initial pedestrian situation embodies an existential predicament (325). Amidst "bare," "slippery" (that is, indistinct, undifferentiated) surroundings, he seeks a purchase such as he envisions in a half-parodic evocation of his antithesis, the dreamer

who on the soft cool moss
 Extends his careless limbs beside the root
 Of some huge oak whose aged branches make
 A twilight of their own, a dewy shade
 Where the wren warbles while the dreaming man,
 Half-conscious of that soothing melody,
 With side-long eye looks out upon the scene,
 By those impending branches made more soft,
 More soft and distant. (10-18)

While the Poet is situated squarely in the midst of an uncomfortably physical Nature--"stretched . . . On the brown earth" with insects "gathered round [his] face" and "bursting gorse . . . crackling round" (21-22, 24, 26)--the dreamer finds *surroundings* transformed into *scene*. Nature, for the dreamer, is marked as a representation, and thus deprived of its incommensurable materiality: "impending branches" frame the scene, and in so doing remove the dreamer from it; he is not in or of the scene but "looks out upon" it, additionally shielded by the supplementary indirections of a "side-long eye," half-consciousness, and the special mid-day twilight of his leafy vantage point. This removed, half-viewing, half-conscious, half-illuminated vantage point is envisioned as providing a perspective from which the scene can be mastered, and in which it no longer victimizes the perceiver. That the man "dreams" is, in the logic of the passage, a luxury arising from his physical comfort. But the implication exists also that dreaming *creates* such comforts and such prospects, producing the unreality of dewy twilight shade on a hot noonday common. Reality recedes, becoming the object of an oblique gaze.

Evan Radcliffe reads this hypothetical dreamer as associated with a careless escapism that the poem will seek to reprove (106). The Poet, from the perspective of his "[o]ther lot" of "toil" (lines 18, 19), "sees dreaming as an easeful, careless escape" (Radcliffe 106). By this light, his evocation of "the dreaming man" amounts to generic parody. The dreamer beneath a tree harks back to Dante in his dark wood and to the vision poems of Chaucer, and anticipates Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*, Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion* or the diffuse dream state of *Ode to a Nightingale*; "but *this will not* be a dream vision," the Poet seems to assert. By repudiating the dream scenario, the Poet repudiates the inward, subjective, or allegorical impulses associated with the dream vision. If the setting presents a space in which things must be viewed as unsoftened and undistanced, then this suggests that the story of Margaret belongs rather to an uncompromised realism, the "hard naturalism" praised by the editors of the *Norton Anthology* (qtd in Manning, 196) that contrasts with the "softness" of representations as viewed by a dreamer through a screen of branches. The Poet thus situates himself, not as one experiencing a personal, educational vision, but as a witness to and reporter of objective fact.

But this opening passage makes claims for the immediacy of reportage even as it constitutes an elaborate play of framing and mediation in itself. If the Pedlar

mediates between the Poet and the story of Margaret, the Poet's situation mediates between the Pedlar and the reader--a double frame. Moreover, the Poet frames the brief "story" of the dreamer in a disconcerting fashion; we are caught up in his imaginary depiction before we realize it:

far as the sight
 Could reach those many shadows lay in spots
 Determined and unmoved, with steady beams
 Of clear and pleasant sunshine interposed;
 Pleasant to him who on the soft cool moss
 Extends his careless limbs . . . (6-11)

The initial "pleasant" is proposed only to be repudiated; it is hypothetical description belonging to a fictional anti-scene, but this fact can be known only retrospectively. Thus the boundary between setting and contrasting embedded description blurs. The Poet's immediate surroundings themselves become infected by the stasis of "scenery": to be "determined and unmoved" seems a strange quality in intermittant cloud shadows--unless they appear thus in the frozen moment of a picture. Part of this setting is, in fact, borrowed from a previous performance in Wordsworth's "An Evening Walk": lines 2-5 of *The Ruined Cottage* correspond to lines 53-56 of Wordsworth's excursion into the eighteenth-century genre of locodescriptive poetry. Yet the generically formalized "An Evening Walk" has in some ways greater immediacy than the more "reportorial" *The Ruined Cottage*: where "An Evening Walk" is place-specific, addressed to the author's sister in an evocation of shared, particular memory, *The Ruined Cottage's* opening scene is a

generalized landscape represented to an anonymous reader. Alan Liu observes that in this revisionary process "the scene at Rydal Lower Falls" becomes "an arboreal enclosure with roots in Marvell, Thomson, and topographical tradition": "landscape becomes an *image* of landscape" (314). It is this representative "*image* of landscape" that the poet presents as unmediated--immediate--reality.

Once the Poet arrives at the cottage site, the ruins provide him with a focus to replace the undifferentiated heath. At this point the dreamer, previously dismissed, reappears in the figure of the Pedlar stretched upon the cottage bench.¹ Like the dreamer, the Pedlar rests at a point of mediation; his narrative organizes the landscape for the Poet, interposing a filter of representation between

¹ As noted by Evan Radcliffe, among others. With the Pedlar's appearance, according to Radcliffe, the concept of poetic "dreaming" begins to be redefined, emerging as a Wordsworthian "wise passiveness" in contrast to the "idle dream" that removes the dreamer from his surroundings (113). There is a "special, restricted sense in which the poet is truly a dreaming man" (101)--although in the course of Radcliffe's detailed explication the definition of this special kind of dreaming becomes attenuated to the point where it is both a marker of ideal humanity and also "almost inhuman (both cruel and natural)" (116). In *The Ruined Cottage*, as in *The Fall of Hyperion*, multiple definitions of "dreaming" emerge, ranging from solipsism to engagement, from an escapist to an essential pursuit. In both poems, the debate over dreaming has implications for the vocation of the poet himself: Keats represents clearly in *The Fall* his own vocational anxieties, while "In late 1797 and early 1798 . . . Wordsworth was preoccupied with the idea that he could be viewed as a mere dreamer" (Radcliffe 104). To pursue Romantic "dreaming" in the depth it requires is beyond the scope of the present work. See also Douglas B. Wilson, *The Romantic Dream*.

him and his surroundings; the resulting metaphysical comfort is reflected in the relative physical comfort of the place. The Pedlar's unsolicited story of Margaret furnishes a perspective on the structure that would otherwise remain "four naked walls / That stared upon each other" (31-32)--a human sign, but unforthcoming, inaccessible: an empty frame. Such signs recur throughout Wordsworth's poetry, rural monuments with tales to tell: Michael's sheep-fold, Hart-Leap Well, the "monumental writing" of a long-dead murderer's name (*Prelude* XI, 295), the "Seat in a Yew-Tree." The ruined cottage is thus part of a larger system wherein geography constitutes the inscription of history. To traverse the landscape is to happen upon these encrypted narratives; and *The Ruined Cottage*, like these other works, depicts the special nature of the process of decryption. These monuments anchor oral histories; some depend for interpretation on "living monuments" such as old shepherds or peddlers, and some form part of local legend. These oral histories are conveyed to the reader in many cases by the agency of a Wordsworthian listener, the poet. Such is the case in *The Ruined Cottage*. With the appearance of the Pedlar, the poem's fable of interpretation begins in earnest.

Tilottama Rajan, in *The Supplement of Reading*, addresses the "disappearance of actualization" in Romantic texts, "a phenomenon that results in the absence from

romantic writing of embodied or achieved meaning as opposed to discarnate meaning" (15). This phenomenon is "most obvious in the many texts that are fragments, where the written 'text' does not coincide with the hypothetical totality of the 'work'" (15). Rajan's description of reading--as supplementing the fragmentary text to create the "hypothetical totality of the 'work'"--suggests a tendency analogous to the Romantic "longing" for ideal wholeness that Thomas McFarland sees as correlative to a sense of the irredeemably "diasparactive," or fragmented, structure of reality: "The sense of longing--which is an inner form of the perception of reality as diasparactive--saturates Romanticism" (7). *The Ruined Cottage* does not immediately betray the "disappearance" Rajan describes, however; at its conclusion the Pedlar appears to satisfy his longing for ideal wholeness. As a completed poem, it presents an "achieved" meaning: the Pedlar tells his interlocutor exactly what to make of his version of Margaret's story, and the Poet does so. Yet at the centre of this completed poem, the ruined cottage as an architectural structure presents the kind of fragmentary text of which Rajan writes; it incarnates diasparaction, which McFarland defines as "[i]ncompleteness, fragmentation, and ruin" (5).

The ruined cottage is a text that is illegible to the Poet. The Pedlar, in explaining the ruin for the Poet, in effect provides a reading of that fragmentary text, using

the special literacy that he alone possesses. In McFarland's terms, he elaborates the hypothesis symbolized by the material ruin: "[t]he symbol, the diasparact, is the real; the whole the hypothetical" (27). The Pedlar's own explanation of this process resembles figures of the reading process provided by reception theory. "'I see around me here / Things which you cannot see'," he tells the poet, and proceeds to represent those absent things for his interlocutor (67-68). In the same fashion, the reading subject perceives more than meets the eye, bringing to the text the connections, the supplementary information, required to make of the "text" a complete "work." In the "convergence of text and reader [that] brings the literary work into existence," in Iser's terms, the reader fills in the "unwritten" portions of the text in order to recreate the world the text presents (50, 51). Later, the Pedlar explicitly likens the ruin to an aesthetic object: "often on this cottage do I muse / As on a picture, till my wiser mind / Sinks, yielding to the foolishness of grief" (117-19). That the poem invests the Pedlar's story (his "hypothesis") with a certain factual authority implies a view of reading and interpretation as processes with a limited range of motion, and of textual meaning as relatively stable.²

² The figure submerged in my choice of words, I see, is of interpretation as a traveller--like the Pedlar--cycling in a prescribed course, while meaning--like Margaret in her cottage--resides within the symbol awaiting elucidation.

Indeed, as we shall see, the Pedlar successfully instructs the Poet in "correct" methods of reading calibrated to "the purposes of wisdom" (line 509).

All signs predicate a certain absence, and are in that sense monumental, or memorial: that is, they point to something that is gone. The cottage ruin presents an extreme case: its evocation of absence for the Pedlar is, in Part I of *The Ruined Cottage*, almost overwhelming. In this first section of his narrative (lines 67-198), when his pain is least tempered, he contrasts what is, with what is not--the sign, with its discarnate meaning: "She is dead, / And nettles rot and adders sun themselves / Where we have sate together while she nurs'd / Her infant at her breast" (108-11).

His narrative in this first part largely concerns Robert's story--the circumstances of his unemployment and his slide into dissonant and erratic behaviour. Robert is said to have whistled "merry tunes / That had no mirth in them" (163-64),

and with a strange,
Amusing but uneasy novelty
He blended where he might the various tasks
Of summer, autumn, winter, and of spring. (168-71)

These descriptions of Robert's occupations suggest a breach of decorum of an almost rhetorical kind, such as a poet might commit, for example, in "indulg[ing] in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression," a tendency Wordsworth reproves in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (744). The

keynote of Robert's debility is this *inconsistency*--an inconsistency that jars with the steadiness and seasonal fitness of his earlier self. When the Pedlar pauses in his narrative, it is to reprove *himself* for a similar inconsistency with nature: the sensationalism of his tale (and he has paused on a particularly sensational figure of speech on Margaret's part: "'Every smile . . . Made my heart bleed'" [183, 185]) violates the "still season of repose and peace" (188). The Pedlar's "reading" of the ruin appears suddenly to stand on the brink of an improper excess, afflicted with "untoward[ness]," "weakness," "disquiet," "disturb[ance]," "restless[ness]" (lines 193, 194, 197, 198). He retreats, replacing narrative with "a look so mild / That for a little time it stole away / All recollection" (201-03). This state of erasure marks a gap between the poem's two sections.

When the Pedlar resumes his narrative, it is at the urging of the Poet, on whom the image of Margaret has worked a kind of fascination. If the first part of the Pedlar's narrative was motivated by a sense of embittered grief ("O Sir! the good die first, / And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust / Burn to the socket" [96-98]), in the second part he has recollected his "natural wisdom" (195) and proceeds only at the Poet's "bidding" (236), and in the name of moral improvement. In place of his repeated insistence in part one that "[s]he is dead" (103, 108), he now speaks

of Margaret as "one / By sorrow laid asleep or borne away" (370-71). This section of the narrative concludes the story of Margaret and ends with the "Reconciling Addendum" (Chandler 124), in which the Pedlar, revisiting the gesture that closed part one, revokes what is local, personal or painful in her life story, and transmutes all to the plane of the universal and the exemplary:

My Friend, enough to sorrow have you given,
 The purposes of wisdom ask no more;
 Be wise and chearful, and no longer read
 The forms of things with an unworthy eye.
 She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here.
 I well remember that those very plumes,
 Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,
 By mist and silent rain-drops silver'd o'er,
 As once I passed did to my heart convey
 So still an image of tranquillity,
 So calm and still, and looked so beautiful
 Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,
 That what we feel of sorrow and despair
 From ruin and from change, and all the grief
 The passing shews of being leave behind,
 Appeared an idle dream that could not live
 Where meditation was. I turned away
 And walked along my road in happiness. (508-525)

Margaret's story is thus presented, in the words of James Chandler, as an "example of the living natural lore that fosters genuine moral sympathy" (126). The Pedlar as teller is the hero in his own story of reading. Margaret's experience is rendered insistently at the level of text--exemplary text--so that, as Chandler points out, her life story results not in reformative action but in "a feeling that proves to be its own reward" (138).

The Pedlar's story results in another story: the Poet's (Chandler 138). In the "second creation" of his

response, the Pedlar has concretized the cottage's discarnate meaning to such a degree--performed his reading so convincingly--that the Poet seems to participate in the Pedlar's illusions:

In my own despite
I thought of that poor woman as of one
Whom I had known and loved. He had rehearsed
Her homely tale with such familiar power,
With such a<n active> countenance, an eye
So busy, that the things of which he spake
Seemed present. (206-12)

The illusion is so successful, in fact, that it implants itself as a portion of the Poet's own history. The Poet even seems to suggest that Margaret's story will have this arresting effect with or without the reader's compliance ("In my own despite . . ."). If the Pedlar, as the cottage's first reader, confers upon that ruin a fullness and meaning it could hardly begin to suggest on its own, the Poet, by contrast, as the cottage's second, mediated reader, accepts the Pedlar's reading as an achieved, monological artifact. He becomes a reader in the Pedlar's own image, as the "I" and "he" of the poem give way in the final paragraph to "we"; Pedlar and Poet make the remainder of the day's journey together, just as they are "admonished" together at the conclusion of the story of Margaret. The external reader, focalized through the Poet, is invited to do and respond likewise. The poem concludes with Pedlar and Poet reaching a "resting place," and this applies in both a physical and a metaphysical sense. Thus within the double

frame we find two different instances of reception. In the Pedlar's encounter with the ruin we witness Margaret's experience transformed from history into ideology, in a process described by Jerome McGann:

To read Wordsworth's re-telling of this pitiful story is to be led further and further from a clear sense of the historical origins and circumstantial causes of Margaret's tragedy. The place of such thoughts and such concerns is usurped, overgrown. Arnytage, poet, and reader all fix their attention on a gathering mass of sensory, and chiefly vegetable, details. Hypnotized at this sensational surface, the light of sense goes out and "The secret spirit of humanity" emerges. (83)

In the Poet's encounter with the Pedlar we see, as Marlon Ross observes, the newly made myth "passed on patrilineally from old man to young poet, from poet to reader" ("Naturalizing Gender" 407).

The Pedlar's compensatory narrative movement is both an emotional and an aesthetic response, and in this conjunction of responses resembles the working of elegy. Like Peter Sacks in *The English Elegy*, the Pedlar asserts the initially elegiac nature of all poetry, or the notion that something akin to elegy, originating in a sense of loss, underlies all poetic enterprise:

The Poets in their elegies and songs
Lamenting the departed call the groves,
They call upon the hills and streams to mourn,
And senseless rocks, nor idly; for they speak
In these their invocations with a voice
Obedient to the strong creative power
Of human passion. Sympathies there are
More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth;
That steal upon the meditative mind
And grow with thought. (73-82)

As in the opening passage, however, which delineates the distance separating *The Ruined Cottage* from the traditional dream vision, this moment of critical observation also draws a generic distinction, this time between the present poem and formal elegiac tradition. The Pedlar contrasts his own wise passiveness, when he is suffused by stealth with the sense of sympathetic Nature, to the active seeking, the aggressive "calling" of the poets. His experience of an elegiac sympathy with Nature emerges from a particular still form of *looking* ("eyeing"), rather than from invocation: "Beside yon spring I stood / And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel / One sadness, they and I" (82-84). The Pedlar's expansive gaze creates the illusion of a oneness with nature, and their union in a common loss creates a new sense of completion. This redefined elegiac completion has a function analogous to the restorative power of reading: the supplement of reading shares with elegy a "schema by which interruption and loss are followed by a figurative or aesthetic compensation" (Sacks 5).

This act of compensation, we are led to understand, cannot be undertaken by the uninitiated. Although it is open to the elements and to wandering animals, the ruined cottage is not presented as a radically "open" work in Eco's sense of a product "susceptib[le] to countless different interpretations" (49). According to the Pedlar, its reader

must observe strict guidelines. The Poet, obviously, does not possess the special competence required to tell the story himself: "The old Man said, 'I see around me here / Things which you cannot see'" (67-68). Even beyond the initial telling, we are made to understand, a special sensitivity is required to comprehend the story aright. To sorrow (as the Pedlar does only out of "foolishness" [118-19]), is to "read / The forms of things with an *unworthy* eye" (510-11, emphasis added). Appropriate value becomes an issue in the Pedlar's compensatory act; he is an expert on prices in the economy of the mind and heart. Thus he cautions his reader, the Poet, not to risk an imbalance of worth by sorrowing in excess: "enough to sorrow have you given, / The purposes of wisdom ask no more" (508-09). Remit only what is asked.³

The notion of the reader's worthiness recurs in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. The Pedlar, as the first "poet" of Margaret's life story, relates to the Poet (his audience) as poets are said to relate to their readers in the Preface: Pedlar and Poet differ not in kind but in degree, and the Pedlar models for the Poet those qualities of a "more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, . . . a greater

³ This notion of sufficiency will recur in Shelley's preface to *Julian and Maddalo*, where he suggests that the Maniac will furnish a "*sufficient* comment for the text of every heart." Again, we see the notion of the reader's experience as calibrated to the poem's purpose, and vice versa: reading as a circumscribed activity.

knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind" and possesses, in addition, "a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present" (*Lyrical Ballads* 751). If the Pedlar is "a man speaking to men," as in Wordsworth's famous definition of a poet (*Lyrical Ballads* 751), then his audience, the Poet, seems to possess by the same token that "sound and vigorous" mind required of the ideal reader (756). The poetic community--both readers and writers--is figured as homogeneous and male. This pattern recurs in the *Prelude* (Wordsworth speaking to Coleridge) and in *Michael*, where the framing narrator says:

although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same
For the delight of a few natural hearts,
And with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful Poets, who among these Hills
Will be my second self when I am gone. (34-39)

These lines, with their reference to the narrator's "second self," reinforce the notion of the homogeneity of the poetic identity, and of its patrilineal transmission. Within such a system, with its internal representation of audience, the external reader is interpellated as male likewise: an extension of the represented community.

The reading process in Wordsworth is thus gendered and, potentially, sexualized. As a male activity, reading, in *The Ruined Cottage*, runs the risk of falling prey to a kind of libertinism. "It were a wantonness," cautions the Pedlar,

and would demand
 Severe reproof, if we were men whose hearts
 Could hold vain dalliance with the misery
 Even of the dead, contented thence to draw
 A momentary pleasure never marked
 By reason, barren of all future good. (221-26)⁴

What is envisioned here in a negative light is precisely what Roland Barthes has termed "the pleasure of the text": an orgasmic, fleeting moment of irrational bliss, "perverse," to adopt Barthes's term, because without issue ("barren of all future good").⁵ In opposition to this reprehensible pleasure, the Pedlar proposes an explicitly anti-sensual mode of reception, "to virtue friendly." It is an incorporealizing mode of reading described in terms which extend the sensual vocabulary developed in the passage quoted above:

'Tis a common tale,
 By moving accidents uncharactered,
 A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed
 In bodily form, and to the grosser sense
 But ill adapted, scarcely palpable
 To him who does not think. (231-36)

Once again, the poem asserts its status as unsensational report--unsensational literally, in that it is presented as a story not of bodies but of souls. The story's power exists allegedly in the conjunction of ordinary things and a

⁴ This speech, as Karen Swann notes, is "often taken to be Wordsworth's ventriloquistic defense of his own project" (83).

⁵ "The pleasure of the text," here--equated with "irrational bliss"--does not correspond to the "text of pleasure," but rather stands in contrast to it. These distinctions are outlined further on. On the subject of Barthes's unstable categories, see p. 13n. above.

sensitive reader--again, the prescription for Poetry delivered in Wordsworth's 1802 Preface.

As Karen Swann observes, however, the Pedlar's moral tale dallies with the sensationalism it pretends to rebuke (84). Furthermore, the warning against sensational pleasure cloaks a more profound kind of narrative pleasure. We might invoke Barthes's distinction between the "text of pleasure" and the "text of bliss" (14). To conclude Margaret's story with the assertion that "[s]he sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here" (512) is to create of this story of suffering a textbook illustration of Barthes's "text of pleasure": a text "that contents, fills, grants euphoria; [a] text that comes from culture and does not break with it, [and] is linked to a comfortable practice of reading" (14). In contrast to this textual fullness (this achieved meaning, in Rajan's terms), Barthes sets up the "text of bliss." "[I]t is intermittence," he contends,

which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing . . . it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance. (10)

Margaret appears in the Pedlar's narrative in order to illustrate the stages of her disappearance; the overwhelming fact of her absence is the sole reason for her illusionary presence. More than Margaret's "goodness," perhaps, it is this "staging of an appearance-as-disappearance" which seduces the Poet into thinking of her "as one / Whom [he] had known and loved" (208-09). The gap between the present

ruin and the past domestic wholeness, which the Pedlar attempts ultimately to elide with his credo of tranquillity, provokes the further division between this ostensible reconciliation and the reader's perception (should she choose to read from a subject-position different from that which the poem assigns to her), that this act of closure is strained, and that to accept Margaret's suffering in this way is, in effect, to deny it. The Pedlar's conclusion that "she sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here" should caution us against relying on his judgement.⁶

Rajan contends that "texts become problematic at the point where they raise the question of their own reading" (*Supplement 7*). *The Ruined Cottage* is self-consciously about interpretation; it demonstrates the means by which fullness and harmony may be created out of fragmentation. But this hypothetical wholeness only exists according to the straitened method of interpretation sanctioned by the Pedlar. The interpretive control imposed upon the story of Margaret by the framing narrative is itself subject to critical interpretation. As in Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo*, an "achieved," apparently whole or complete poem

⁶ I cannot help but think of the way that Lockwood's lack of understanding is betrayed in the conclusion to *Wuthering Heights*: "I lingered round them, under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers, for the sleepers in that quiet earth" (414).

attempts to contain an alien, fragmentary text, and to assimilate that text to its own incarnate meaning.⁷ As with *Julian and Maddalo* also, however, we are tempted to resist this easy assimilation, and to seek points of resistance within the poem itself by inquiring into the relationships that underwrite these acts of narrative appropriation.

The movement of the Pedlar's narrative is to make of Margaret an immaterial being in two senses: both disembodied, and unimportant. First, although it is material circumstance that leads to her decline and death, the poem's rhetorical manoeuvres tend to etherealize her, removing her from the world of "gross" sensation and, implicitly, from the arena of history. From the assertion that Margaret's is a "tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed / In bodily form" (233-34), to the employment of the euphemisms that cloak the fact of death--"one / By sorrow laid asleep or borne away" (370-71)--the Pedlar, like the "impending branches" beneath which the dreamer lies, renders the idea of Margaret's death "more soft, / More soft and distant" (17-18). He shapes it, that is, into a non-threatening representation. His semi-elegiac method is also epitaphic, as defined in the first "Essay upon

⁷ Analysing the doubleness of *The Ruined Cottage* from a different perspective, Rajan also notes that "there is a contradiction between argument and narrative: the text includes a subtext which can be used to take it apart" (*Dark Interpreter* 22).

Epitaphs," where the character of the deceased "is not seen, no--nor ought to be seen, otherwise than as a tree through a tender haze of a luminous mist, that spiritualises and beautifies it" (*Wordsworth's Literary Criticism* 129).

Wordsworth's topographical simile recalls the framed landscape perceived by the dreamer at the beginning of *The Ruined Cottage*, aligning the epitaph with the dematerializing and aestheticizing dream envisioned there. Other figures, too, align this section of the "Essay upon Epitaphs" with the Pedlar's representation of Margaret. The "virtue" of the deceased is "clothed" in "purity and brightness" (*Wordsworth's Literary Criticism* 129), as at the disappearance of the grosser clothing of the "bodily form" (*Ruined Cottage* 235). Wordsworth, in the essay, takes pains to construct a definition of truthfulness that can accommodate the epitaph's relentlessly positive depiction of the dead. His definition culminates with a vision of this veiled and aestheticized truth as the child of an almost necrophiliac union: "it is truth hallowed by love--the joint offspring of the worth of the dead and the affections of the living!" (130). This virtuous union stands in contrast, once again, to the barren union between the "hearts" of "wanton" readers and the "misery / Even of the dead" (*Ruined Cottage* 222, 221, 223-24).

Karen Swann writes of the Pedlar that "his narrative works to transform [Margaret's] human body into an eerily

inspired simulacrum of a body--or, in more tendentious words, into a gothic spirit" (85). Swann detects in the poem's gothic tendencies the spectre of Wordsworth's engagement with the literary marketplace (84). This could be related also to Liu's analysis of Wordsworth's "vocational imagination" (332), as he describes it in his analysis of the analogical relation of the "text" and "textile" trades (325). As the products of English weavers are distributed by itinerant peddlers, so the Pedlar purveys the "text" of Margaret's story, transformed from the raw materials of her life in a weaver's cottage, into a literary artifact cut, according to Swann, to a gothic pattern, or in the fashion of Wordsworth's larger poetic credo of transcendence. If the tale is "hardly clothed / In bodily form" (233-34) (and the line break indicates that moment of exposure when Margaret's materiality is stripped away), the Pedlar supplies this material lack by investing the tale with his own significance. Thus a second form of immateriality is consequent upon the first: her existence as a subject in her own right fades in importance as her personal sufferings become absorbed into the Pedlar's impersonal, benevolent vision of continuity in Nature. At the same time as she is rendered immaterial, however, Margaret becomes, by virtue of this very disembodied-ness, productive material for the Pedlar's own narrative. A professional salesman, the Pedlar takes "the useless

fragment of a wooden bowl," the "knots of worthless stone-crop" and "[t]he unprofitable bindweed" at the cottage site (91, 310, 314), and turns them to a new and profitable use, as narrative commodities. An exaggerated--even parodic--version of this process of commodification informs *The Thorn*, whose narrator, the hypothetical "Captain of a small trading vessel" (Note to *The Thorn*), works and re-works the thorn, the pond, the hill of moss and Martha Ray's exclamations of misery into a sensational tale. *The Thorn*--particularly with the addition of the Note--self-consciously foregrounds the fabrication of the tale as an object of exchange, whereas in *The Ruined Cottage* this process is only implicit. The distinction reflects Susan Wolfson's observation that Wordsworth, when writing in a dramatic voice, shows, like Coleridge, "more willingness to pursue questions than to resolve them, as both often feel urged to do when writing *in propria persona*" (*Questioning Presence* 36).

In *The Ruined Cottage*, the Poet's consumption of the Pedlar's narrative commodities ^{is} expressed in the language of physical appetite. The thirsty Poet is welcomed by the Pedlar (a traveller temporarily transformed into a host), who points him toward a spring to quench his thirst, then satisfies the Poet's intellectual craving with the telling of his tale. By comparison with the rich tale, the "trivial" matters which temporarily interrupt the narrative

are "tasteless" (206). In a moment of self-remonstrance, the Pedlar reproves himself for "feeding on disquiet" (197); and Swann implicitly identifies the Pedlar and the Poet as eucharistic consumers of Margaret and her story: "[t]he peddler's tale would translate a woman's local and insupportable misery into food for virtuous thought" (83). The cottage offers both the material and the non-material necessities of life: shelter (from the sun) and food; the "domicile of the text" and a narrative to consume. Margaret is recollected as a host by the Pedlar, and through this recollection she becomes textualized as food for his and the Poet's interpretation. These relationships dovetail with the figure deployed by J. Hillis Miller, in "The Critic as Host," to unpack the uncanny relationships that obtain among critics and between critic (reader) and text:

The poem, in [this] figure, is that ambiguous gift, food, host in the sense of victim, sacrifice. It is broken, divided, passed around, consumed by the critics canny and uncanny who are in that odd relation to one another of host and parasite. (225)

The figure describes the endless chain of interpretive consumption.

As the two men consume the story of the woman who would once have been their host, she herself becomes transubstantiated: in Jerome McGann's words, "[t]o read Wordsworth's re-telling of this pitiful story is to be led further and further from a clear sense of the historical origins and circumstantial causes of Margaret's tragedy"

(83)--such as "the costly American war, the decline of small farming and the cottage industry in England, the system of impressment" (Swann 84). This disappearance occurs in keeping with poetry's mission of "pleasure" as outlined in Wordsworth's 1802 Preface: "the end of Poetry is to produce excitement in coexistence with an overbalance of pleasure" (*Lyrical Ballads* 755). By making a judicious selection from nature, and by filtering his representations through metrical language, the poet can (and should) remove "what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion" that he presents (*Lyrical Ballads* 751). In the case of *The Ruined Cottage*, the addition of a frame narrative imposes a further layer of selection and filtration between the reader and any unpleasantness inherent in the subject matter. Nevertheless, there remains an unsettling and persistent tension between the poem's "filters"--the Pedlar, and the Poet's metred representation of his speech--and the painful circumstances of which the poem treats.

As we shall see in other works studied further on, the subjects within the framing narrative and within the embedded narrative reproduce each other in eerie ways, much as "host" and "guest" reproduce each other in Miller's argument; and even the contrasts between them seem to point to a speaking kinship. Thus the Pedlar, even as he offers Margaret up as food for thought, is her counterpart. Where once he found her at her cottage, and she offered "cool

refreshment" (100), now the Poet finds him, and he, too, points the way to the well. This chain of physical refreshment coincides with a chain of stories: Margaret confides in the Pedlar, who confides in the Poet, who confides in the reader. This succession of stories is driven forward by an ordinary loss that can never be made good. In following this chain backward, we find that, as in Coleridge's tale of a possessed woman in *Biographia Literaria*, spaces open up in the interior of the Pedlar's master narrative: spaces that the Pedlar's homiletic conclusion seems, in the end, inadequate to repair.

The Ruined Cottage unfolds in a setting of interruption and fragmentation--both because it centres on the spectacle of the ruined cottage, and also rhetorically, as in the destabilizing shifts between frame and counter-example (struggling Poet and dreaming man) that introduce it. Within the Pedlar's narrative, an interruption in the cycles of harvest and production leads to Robert's desertion. Robert lapses, for those remaining, into a state of suspended existence: Margaret "had learn'd / No tidings of her husband: if he lived / She knew not that he lived; if he were dead / She knew not he was dead" (396-99). She is caught, as in the repetitive metrical balance of these lines, between hypothesis and negation. Her existence, contingent upon his, becomes similarly indeterminate; she is both "wife and widow" (448). This

uncertainty results in her psychic fragmentation and the cottage's dereliction. The signs of this process that remain at the time of narration are the ruin itself, the "broken wall" (60) that no longer protects, the "useless fragment of a wooden bowl" at the spring (91), Margaret's "broken arbour" (450), and the path now "broken" by the greensward (458). Margaret, as the ground and centre, as the guarantor of meaning, as the signified that once inhabited the signifying cottage, has disappeared.

In the same way that the Pedlar's narrative actions are triggered by the sense of loss he feels in Margaret's empty cottage, so her actions and ultimate disappearance result from a prior loss: the disappearance of Robert. Indeed, within the Pedlar's tale of Margaret is a further embedded narrative: Margaret's tale of Robert. The subjects in this interior narrative likewise reproduce each other: Margaret's decline echoes Robert's in several respects. Economic reversals sever him from the system (employment as a weaver) in which he held meaning; his desertion, in turn, cripples the system (marriage, domesticity) that guaranteed Margaret's meaning. His decline, like hers, is characterized by aimless wandering. Robert "would leave his home, and to the town / Without an errand would he turn his steps / Or wander here and there among the fields" (175-78); Margaret later confides to the Pedlar that "in good truth I've wandered much of late / And sometimes, to my shame I

speak, have need / Of my best prayers to bring me back again" (341-43).

When Robert leaves, the sign that seals the fact of his disappearance--the purse of gold--becomes, in a sense, the same kind of text for Margaret as the ruined cottage is for the Pedlar: a powerful signifier of absence, although the personal consequences for the "reader," in the two cases, differ greatly. We might compare the gold as text to that scene in *The Fall of Hyperion* in which the poet-narrator likens the sight of "sad Moneta's brow" to finding a "grain of gold" which excites further inquiry (I, 275, 272):⁸ gold is the trace of a story happening *somewhere else*. In *The Ruined Cottage*, the story the gold tells of is the entirely absent one of the "soldier's life" that Margaret has been spared (273).

This story is, in a sense, the innermost and most completely elided in the text. If Margaret is a widow, she is a war-widow, and the story of war is told obliquely through her loss. Thus we might frame a further implication for the poem's substitution: in Margaret's slow decline the violence of war is transferred from the site of conflict to the domestic scene; Robert's death is signified in hers. Mary Favret, tracing the "particular correspondence between war and domesticity" in Romanticism (539), notes instances

⁸ All subsequent references to Keats's poetry will be to *Complete Poems*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Cambridge: Belknap, 1982).

of such a "transfer of violence" from combatant to dying widow, when "sentimental interest in the woman left behind dovetails with a sadistic voyeurism that can only be satisfied by a female body"; the widow's "vulnerable feminine body evokes domestic sentiment, demands a restoration of domestic security and deflects our gaze from the image of the male body in pain" (546, 547). In *The Ruined Cottage*, the vulnerable female body takes upon itself the pain of the absent male body; and then it is, in turn, transubstantiated. This substitution anticipates that process, described further on, whereby Margaret's suffering body figures that of the Pedlar himself, taking on the suffering that cannot be consciously borne by the male subject. Margaret, in this role as universal sufferer, is almost Christ-like. This notion--with, in this case, Christ's roles strangely redistributed between Margaret and Robert--seems to inform the nearly Messianic vision that the Pedlar hints at when he speaks of her as one

By sorrow laid asleep or borne away,
 A human being destined to awake
 To human life, or something very near
 To human life, when he shall come again
 For whom she suffered. (371-75)

The Ruined Cottage's aggregation of narrative is somehow debilitating. Although the Pedlar, within the Poet's framing narrative, talks his way around to reconciliation, his own story testifies to the impotence of words. Just as, in *Julian and Maddalo*, the spectacle of the

Maniac strikes Maddalo and Julian dumb, and throws their debate into confusion, so Margaret's story robs those who hear it of speech. The nature of her own discourse, furthermore, is inexpressible in retrospect:

At the door arrived,
I knocked, and when I entered with the hope
Of usual greeting, Margaret looked at me
A little while, then turned her head away
Speechless, and sitting down upon a chair
Wept bitterly. *I wist not* what to do
Or *how to speak to her*. Poor wretch! at last
She rose from off her seat--and then, oh Sir!
I cannot tell how she pronounced my name:
With fervent love, and with a face of grief
Unutterably helpless, and a look
That seemed to cling upon me, she enquir'd
If I had seen her husband. As she spake
A strange surprize and fear came to my heart,
Nor had I power to answer ere she told
That he had disappeared. (245-60; emphasis added)

In a later encounter, the Pedlar can respond to her narrative only by returning her own words to herself:

when she ended I had little power
To give her comfort, and was glad to take
Such words of hope from her own mouth as serv'd
To cheer us both. . . . (275-78)

And as, when Margaret told the Pedlar her story, its pathos robbed him of power to comfort her, so, when the Pedlar passes her tale on to the Poet, the Poet is stricken in his turn with "the impotence of grief" (500): "I turned aside in weakness, nor had power / To thank him for the tale which he had told" (495-96). The implication is that Margaret's suffering is at first literally unspeakable, and this silence is passed on, through generations of telling, like the twin or shadow of the tale itself. The story is

uncanny. The simple question that is its prelude brings "a strange surprize and fear" to the listener's heart (243), arousing a sense of dread relative to a scene--Margaret in her cottage--once associated with that *heimlich* "sense of agreeable restfulness and security as in one within the four walls of his house" (222). At the same time, however, with each telling, the hardships of Margaret's life become "more soft, / More soft and distant" as the mode of discourse is progressively refined, from Margaret's first-person account of her suffering, to the Pedlar's temporally-distant oral history, to the Poet's published metrical production. Thus the uncanniness of the Pedlar's tale of Margaret is slowly digested in its progress along the chain of consumption.

To this chain of reception is added, of course, the further links of 200 years of Wordsworth readers, and the infinitely proliferating frames of commentary, of which this is one. I am painfully aware of the fact that, even in trying to recuperate Margaret's story somehow, I am colluding in the further filtration of these passions through the "intertexture" of ordinary feeling . . . not strictly and necessarily connected with the passion" (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* 755, 755n)--the intertexture, that is, of criticism and of those feelings born of satisfying--even, yes, of pleasurable--analytical acts. My critical bind surfaces in phrases such as "the Pedlar's tale of Margaret": this peculiar double genitive is the residue

of my persistent hesitation between alternatives. Do I name the interior discourse "Margaret's story," or "the Pedlar's narrative"? This dilemma poses the question: To whom does a story belong? To its subject, or its teller? The dilemma points to the double life of *The Ruined Cottage's* internal narrative: as a sequence of events, and as a scene of narrating in which the events figure as linguistic objects. The frame, in narrativizing the act of narrating itself, shifts the burden of legitimacy to the second alternative: the Pedlar's story, with the Pedlar as subject. Part of my project here, in using *The Ruined Cottage* as a pretext to narrate my own critical act, is to find a way back to Margaret's events, or at least to memorialize them by determining the progress of their dematerialization.

These twin represented stories--of the events and of their narrating--tend in opposite directions. Against the backdrop of the Pedlar's contentment and survival, the story of Margaret depicts the opposite trajectory--of unanswered questions, of failure, of death. Whereas Robert responds to the loss of his livelihood through flight, and the Pedlar responds to the loss of Margaret through philosophical narrative, Margaret cannot respond to the loss of Robert save with stasis. Imaginative activity that leads the Pedlar from "the weakness of humanity" to "natural wisdom" and "natural comfort" (194, 195, 196) becomes, in Margaret's employ, one more sign of febrile debility:

On this old Bench
 For hours she sate, and evermore her eye
 Was busy in the distance, shaping things
 Which made her heart beat quick. (454-57)

Her "reading" of experience falls into disorder, as
 emblemized in her disordered books:

her few books,
 Which, one upon the other, heretofore
 Had been piled up against the corner-panes
 In seemly order, now with stragglng leaves
 Lay scattered here and there, open or shut
 As they had chanced to fall. (404-09)

Without cultivation (proper husbandry), the "seemly order" of the books--those "things that teach as Nature teaches," as they are called in the *Prelude* (V, 231)--falls into a state of decay analogous to the garden's; the correlation is reinforced in the image of "scattered leaves." Margaret's inattention to cottage and garden denotes a neglect of matters necessary to survival. And, while it may be argued that books are not in quite that category, book ownership was a luxury for England's rural working class, and they would have treated their small libraries with reverence (Vincent 109-11). Like the garden's and the cottage's disintegration, the disintegration of the books is both a symbol of Margaret's disordered inner state, and a material index of her drift out of the social and economic order.

Margaret's identity merges with that of cottage, garden, books. Like the Maniac in Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo*, she loves the structure that is, in effect, her prison: "Yet still / She loved this wretched spot, nor would

for worlds / Have parted hence" (486-88). As a female subject, she is defined by domestic space. She does wander, but, unlike the Pedlar, to no profit. Her destination is always the same, and, again unlike the Pedlar, no new information awaits her there. To each sympathetic traveller, Margaret "repeat[s] / The same sad question" (475-76). Like Tennyson's Mariana in the mouldering moated grange, she repeats a refrain that comes to seem as much a prison as the ruin she inhabits. Mariana's refrain--"he cometh not"--and Margaret's question both turn on the absence of the male other that would complete the flagging domesticity to which they are nevertheless condemned. Ultimately, Margaret dies for want of an answer. Her death results both from Robert's physical absence and from the absence of narrative: she cannot "learn her husband's fate" (467), and until she does she cannot know what *she* is, defined in her contingency: wife or widow. Robert, as text, remains permanently illegible, and thus Margaret cannot read her own fate there. The Pedlar, on the other hand, can "walk . . . along [his] road in happiness" because he feels, ultimately, that the need for interrogation is at an end (525).

The contrast between Margaret's domestic stasis and the Pedlar's profitable progress results from what Marlon Ross calls "woman's place in Wordsworth's ideological landscape." Ross writes:

Margaret's fixation upon the spot also accentuates . . . the stationary quality of female desire in contradistinction to the progressive quality of male desire. She serves to stabilize masculine wandering, to mark for men their own progression. ("Naturalizing Gender" 407)

Karen Swann observes a "neat reciprocity between Margaret's and the peddler's orbits--when her rounds increase, his contract; when she is bound by a thread to the spot, he resumes his wandering" (85). However, as Swann notes also, it is a reciprocity "whose effects . . . devolve unequally on the woman" (86). The unmoving Margaret provides a focus in the landscape through which the Pedlar travels; and her decline provides an index for his temporal progression. Circumscribed within the cottage, Margaret becomes a site where things, people, pieces of information ~~arrive and~~ depart, appear and disappear, according to the laws of their own peculiar motion. This difference between Margaret and the Pedlar forms part of a web of gender relations that underlie the poem. As Ross implies, Margaret is the "other" in relation to whom events unfold. Bakhtin's term "chronotope" is useful in mapping the spatial dimension of these relationships. "Chronotope," as Bakhtin employs it, designates "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). Margaret anchors the defining chronotope of *The Ruined Cottage's* interior fiction, in which decay over time, within a circumscribed space, is indexed at intervals by a cyclically-circulating eye. This spatial-

temporal relationship between Margaret and those who pass through her cottage both reflects the social reality of a woman's historically limited sphere of action, and inscribes the traditional metaphysical opposition wherein "the *technē* and time have connoted the male; *physis* and space the female" (Jardine 25).

As this reciprocity between Margaret and the travellers who pass her door suggests, travel holds for Wordsworth a central figurative importance.⁹ I have suggested, above, the textual nature of geography: the history of rural England is inscribed in its monuments. The Wordsworthian traveller traverses the landscape as the eye roams a text, translating signs into narrative in a process that Iser describes as one of "anticipation and retrospection" (57). In other words, as Celeste Langan remarks, "walking and reading [in Wordsworth], it seems, are related practices of mobilization" (14). This mobilization involves ascending levels of proficiency: first, a basic literacy, which grants a power of motion across a text or a territory; and second, a more specialized competence, which might be characterized in both cases as a cultural literacy, and which allows the reader/traveller to be, for a moment, not simply in but of the text, the place.

⁹ See, for example, Alan Liu's extended meditation on the figural force of Wordsworth's 1790 itinerary in *Wordsworth: The Sense of History*; see also Celeste Langan's *Romantic Vagrancy*.

The text and the world, as sites of mobilization, have been conjoined for as long as there has been the topos of the "book of Nature." "Since the *liber naturae* is a trope," writes J. Douglas Kneale, "so also is the act of 'reading' it" (84). Wordsworth links reading and travelling explicitly in, among other places, Book Five of *The Prelude*, the book on "Books":

Where had we been, we two, beloved Friend,
If we, in lieu of wandering, as we did,
Through heights and hollows and bye spots of tales
Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will!
Had been attended, follow'd, watch'd, and noosed,
Each in his several melancholy walk . . .
(V, 233-39)

His insistence here upon the nature of this "travel"--wandering, as opposed to a constrained march--evokes an image similar to Keats's "voyage of conception":

When Man has arrived at a certain ripeness in
intellect any one grand and spiritual passage serves
him as a starting post towards all 'the two-and
thirty Pallaces' How happy is such a 'voyage of
conception,' what delicious diligent Indolence!
(*Letters* 1: 231)

But there is a more strictly moral dimension to Wordsworth's notion of wandering than Keats's sensual figure permits. Kneale notes Wordsworth's attempt, in the *Prelude*, "to discover the moral lessons encoded in nature--the 'lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain / And universal reason of mankind, / The truths of young and old'" (84). The Pedlar's "way-wandering life" (line 46) has made him familiar with "bye spots of tales / Rich with indigenous produce" (*Prelude*

V, 235-36); the natural wisdom he has thereby acquired allows him to see Margaret's life-story as another "passing shew . . . of being" (522) among many: a local "indigenous product," a marker in a universal economy. His long peripatetic education has brought him, it seems, to the stasis-in-motion of Wordsworth's "Old Man Travelling":

his step,
His gait, is one expression; every limb,
His look and bending figure, all bespeak
A man who does not move with pain, but moves
With thought. (3-7)

It seems appropriate, with this figure of "animal tranquillity and decay," to turn to another one of travel's metaphoric resonances. In conjunction with its analogy to reading--and, by extension, to the acquisition of wisdom and experience--travel figures temporal progression also; and, more specifically, progression from birth toward death. Paul de Man, in "Autobiography as De-Facement," observes that the notions of life and death, of "origin" and "tendency," are, for Wordsworth in *Essays Upon Epitaphs*, "inseparably co-relative." De Man continues:

The same itinerary, the same image of the road, appears in the text as "the lively and affecting analogies of life as a journey" interrupted, but not ended, by death. The large, overarching metaphor for this entire system is that of the sun in motion . . . (74)

This "image of the road" structures likewise the action of *The Ruined Cottage*. The Poet travels westward, in the direction of the setting sun: that is, he travels in the direction of mortality. The Pedlar, an old man and one "seen

disbursing an inheritance of stories, is "as dear" to the Poet as is "the setting sun" (line 39)--a comparison that associates the old man with the final stage in life's journey. The narrative they consume together is one of decline and death: Margaret's, her infant's and possibly Robert's, against the background of the unnamed numbers of the poor who sink under hardship. *The Ruined Cottage* is thus, like Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion* (although without the same retrospective biographical poignancy) written against the horizon of a mortality that holds it fascinated.

The Pedlar launches his narrative with an abrupt assertion of his own share in mortality:

we die, my Friend,
Nor we alone, but that which each man loved
And prized in his peculiar nook of earth
Dies with him or is changed. . . . (68-71)

The story of Margaret's death, introduced by this assertion and assimilated back into a generality at its conclusion, is thus detached from Margaret as subject and is made to assume a broader relevance. Situated in tendency between autobiography and local history--between *The Prelude* and *Michael--The Ruined Cottage* in its transferences between frame narrative and embedded narrative conflates the two. Margaret is, as suggested above, a figure in the Pedlar's self-representation, in that her life story furnishes an occasion for the display of his moral character. Perhaps we might extend this notion and say that Margaret evokes, additionally, the one thing that in autobiography can never

be represented: the death of the subject. Freud speaks of the double as uncanny, and even as "the uncanny harbinger of death" (235), and this seems to name some aspect of Margaret's relation to the Pedlar. He begins the story of her death with the assertion that "we die"; there is, additionally, the reciprocity between himself and Margaret outlined above; and his journey tends westward. In giving voice to the monument that is the ruined cottage, the Pedlar effects in a sense a communication from beyond the grave. That this illusion of communication drains the living of power attests to, in de Man's words,

the latent threat that inhabits prosopopeia, namely that by making the death speak, the symmetrical structure of the trope implies, by the same token, that the living are struck dumb, frozen in their own death. The surmise of the "Pause, Traveller!" thus acquires a sinister connotation that is not only the prefiguration of one's own mortality but our actual entry into the frozen world of the dead. (78)

And indeed it seems so in *The Ruined Cottage*. At a pause in the narrative, the Poet feels "a heartfelt chillness in [his] veins" (213), as at the prefiguration of his own mortality.

Like Shelley in *Julian and Maddalo* or Coleridge in the possessed servant episode of the *Biographia*, Wordsworth in *The Ruined Cottage* displaces onto the subject of his embedded narrative all that cannot be borne directly by the figure of the potent framing narrator: all that bespeaks loss, impotence, the unspeakable. The embedded narrative thus presents the spectacle of an alterity that stands at

the defining limit of the narrating subject's own existence. The Pedlar's narrative and perceptual mode, with its emphasis on stillness, calm, tranquillity, and silence, arrests those restless tendencies and attempts to confine them within an interpretive frame.

CHAPTER THREE

COLERIDGE: CLINICAL READING I

This chapter examines two works by Coleridge, one a fragment of narrative embedded within the larger whole of *Biographia Literaria*, the other, *Kubla Khan*, an apparently completed poem designated as a fragment by the author himself, by means of a framing headnote. In both works, Coleridge brings a diagnostic eye to bear on an uncanny discourse: the ravings of an insane woman, and the strange poem that he claims speaks itself through him during an opium reverie. The frame, in each case, is presented as explanatory; the discourse it frames is, by contrast, presented as exemplary, as an image of discourse. The relationship between frame and picture plane would seem to resemble that of self to other, of doctor to patient, of subject to object. These distinctions break down upon closer inspection, however. The rigorously diagnostic gaze proves to camouflage affinities between the clinical frame and the wierd utterance at its interior. What is at stake, in these attempts to distance frame from content, is a conception of the autobiographical self as masterful, rational and self-possessed.

Coleridge's introduction to *Biographia Literaria* simultaneously promotes his notoriety and effaces him from the work's pages:

It has been my lot to have had my name introduced both in conversation, and in print, more frequently than I find it easy to explain, whether I consider the fewness, unimportance, and limited circulation of my writings, or the retirement and distance, in which I have lived, both from the literary and political world. . . .

It will be found, that the least of what I have written concerns myself personally. I have used the narration chiefly for the purpose of giving a continuity to the work, in part for the sake of the miscellaneous reflections suggested to me by particular events, but still more as introductory to the statement of my principles in Politics, Religion, and Philosophy, and the application of the rules, deduced from philosophical principles, to poetry and criticism. (*Biographia Literaria* 1: 5)

His proliferating personal name allegedly provides one incentive for the work, and yet "the least" of this work concerns Coleridge "personally." While the phrase "MY LITERARY LIFE" is the second most prominent one on the 1817 title-page, the biographical element is made out in these opening sentences to represent, not the individual, "Coleridge," so much as a generalized idea of life as a motivating chronology, a coherent shape that can redeem a "miscellaneous" collection of writings. The autobiographical subject is at once central and marginal. This oscillation reflects the *Biographia's* status as a generic hybrid. Autobiography structures the work; but it is more than a simple matter of secondary autobiographical vehicle and primary philosophic tenor: the two conventions--

philosophy and autobiography--interpenetrate. The "reflections," "principles" and "rules" generated within the outline of the life themselves contribute to build up Coleridge's self-portrait, but not always in the straightforward way he might appear to anticipate.

A complex example of this process occurs in Chapter Six of *Biographia Literaria*, in which an embedded narrative, adduced in support of Coleridge's critique of Hartley's theory of the association of ideas, turns out to hold serious implications for Coleridge himself as a self-possessed, authoritative subject. Drawing heavily upon--at times simply translating--a previous critique by Johann Gebhard Ehrenreich Maass, Coleridge argues that Hartley's system is not tenable because its mechanical nature excludes the possibility of will, reason, and judgement; it makes the mind a site of chaos, prey to uncontrollable, unmotivated, and potentially infinite associations. "There is in truth but one state to which this theory applies at all," he concludes,

namely, that of complete light-headedness; and even to this it applies but partially, because the will, and reason are perhaps never wholly suspended. A case of this kind occurred in a Catholic town in Germany a year or two before my arrival at Göttingen, and had not then ceased to be a frequent subject of conversation . . . (1: 112)

He proceeds to tell a story with the ritualistic structure of urban legend. A young, orphaned, illiterate servant woman "was seized with a nervous fever; during which . . .

she became *possessed*, and, it appeared, by a very learned devil" (1: 112). She utters sentences in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, "coherent and intelligible each for itself, but with little or no connection with each other" (1: 112-113). In the manner of a fairy tale, the mysteriously ailing female attracts to herself hosts of wise men--although within this fairy-tale structure the nature of the "riddle" posed by her dysfunction keeps shifting. It begins as a religious problem--a case of demonic possession, "according to the asseverations of all the priests and monks of the neighbourhood" (1: 112). But the authenticity of the alleged possession is guaranteed by two contradictory assertions. On the one hand, "[t]his possession was rendered more probable by the known fact, that she was or had been an heretic" (1: 112). On the other hand, we are told further on that "[a]ll trick or conspiracy was out of the question" because "[n]ot only had the young woman ever been an harmless, simple creature; but she was evidently labouring under a nervous fever" (1: 113).

These contradictory constructions of the young woman's character occur in response to the anecdote's shifting conception of the problem. The initially religious issue evolves into a psychological one; the woman-as-clinical-victim replaces the woman-as-religious-reprobate with the appearance of the second wave of wise men: "many eminent physiologists and psychologists visited the town,

and cross-examined the case on the spot" (1: 112). These experts arrive in response to the investigations of one young doctor who, enacting the "familiar [story] of the clinician as detective," emerges as the hero of the piece (Wiltshire 218). This young doctor thus ushers in the second, psychological phase of the problem; he also initiates the anecdote's final phase, where the issue becomes one of natural philosophy. The patient herself being "incapable of returning a rational answer," this "young medical philosopher" constructs a brief clinical biography based on the testimony of others (1: 113). He discovers that she had lived as a child in the home of a pastor whose habit it was "to walk up and down a passage of his house into which the kitchen door opened, and to read to himself with a loud voice, out of his favorite books" (1: 113). The books are recovered--among them "a collection of rabbinical writings, together with several of the Greek and Latin fathers" (1: 113); the servant's sentences are traced therein; and the possession is explained as a feat of unconscious memory. "[N]o doubt could remain in any rational mind," concludes Coleridge, "concerning the true origin of the impressions made on her nervous system" (1: 113). The mystery has been solved in accordance with Hartley's theories, seemingly returning Coleridge's argument to its starting-place in a point of philosophical debate.

But a strange space opens up at this point in the *Biographia*; this detour alters the profile of the whole journey. Jerome Christensen notes a logical "slippage" within the anecdote. In an example purporting to demonstrate the flaws in associationist theory, the woman's possession turns out to be explicable "in strictly associationist terms" (*Blessed Machine* 111)--it is an example, in other words, that "reinforces the position of [Coleridge's] adversary" (111). And even at the grammatical level, as Christensen notes, Coleridge's introduction of "a case of this kind" is equivocal:

the example does not fit neatly into a formed argument: we cannot be entirely certain what 'this kind' of case is, an instance of uncontrolled delirium or a case of light-headedness which shows that the reason and will are never wholly suspended. (110)

I would extend the notion of this "grammatical slippage" (111), and see the entire anecdote as an "ungrammaticality" in Michael Riffaterre's sense of the term; as a textual anomaly, that is, where the reader finds "contradictions between a word's presuppositions and its entailments" (5). The anecdote is an uncanny "word" within the chapter. Within a predominantly commentative and philosophic discourse it belongs to a different register--the discourse of local legend: the tale "had not . . . ceased to be a frequent subject of conversation" (1: 112). As such it dialogizes the chapter, implicitly challenging the authority of the locally dominant discourse of commentary. And, as

noted above, the anecdote does not follow, either logically or grammatically, from what precedes it. This anecdote, then, does not cohere with its frame either grammatically, logically, or by virtue of a shared discursive register. Is it simply unassimilable--is it as discrete and meaningless as the woman's own utterances--or does its dialogue with the frame that surrounds it take place at a different level of textual meaning?

According to Riffaterre, the ungrammaticalities in a text manifest, in successive, disguised variations, some unstated "matrix"; they speak in the language of the unconscious, through displacement and indirection. Textual significance arises in "a hierarchy of representations imposed upon the reader . . . a bouncing from reference to reference that keeps on pushing the meaning over to a text not present in the linearity" (12). Furthermore,

[t]he text functions something like a neurosis: as the matrix is repressed, the displacement produces variants all through the text, just as suppressed symptoms break out somewhere else in the body. (19)

This paradigm of relationship among a text's parts--they share a common and suppressed referent--also resembles in some respects what Jerome Christensen identifies as the "marginal method" in *Biographia Literaria*. "What Coleridge practices," asserts Christensen, "is not mosaic composition but marginal exegesis, not philosophy but commentary" (105)--we might even say, not writing, but reading. By this reckoning, the *Biographia*--or portions of it, such as the

Hartleian critique--may be seen as a series of "annotations, linked by neither floral nor iron chain but by their equivocal reference to [a] host text" (*Blessed Machine* 110). The relation between marginalium and "host text" is, like the relation between a frame and that which is framed, one of mutual alteration. To cite Christensen once again:

. . . a structural equivocation is built into the annotative situation: an apparently single voice is doubled by the addition of the note. Once added to the margins of the text the comment makes it uncertain what the text *is*. (105)

The question that this paradigm seems to beg, in relation to the anecdote of the woman's "possession," is: if this anecdote occupies the position of a marginalium, then what is the absent text on which it comments? I do not want to reply too reductively. Riffaterre himself cautions that

Significance . . . appears to be more than or something other than the total meaning deducible from a comparison between variants of the given. That would only bring us back to the given, and it would be a reductionist procedure. Significance is, rather, the reader's praxis of the transformation, a realization that it is akin to playing, to acting out the liturgy of a ritual. (12)

Perhaps the woman's story offers a commentary on the textual creation that is "Coleridge," the unified and unifying biographical subject who is ostensibly the master of the work. As a marginal comment on the biographical enterprise of self-creation, the picture of this incoherent person opens up new perspectives on, and raises doubts about, the possibility of mastering language, and thus of the possibility of creating out of language a unified self that

can pronounce with authority on philosophical questions. In this way, the embedded anecdote alters its frame; the added commentary "makes it uncertain what the text is," to recall Christensen's words.

At this point we might ask the more general question: what is the status, within a text, of the illustrative example? At what point does an example acquire sufficient scope or potency to constitute a narrative in its own right, the interpretation of which cannot be controlled by the context of the main discourse? Or, in the words of J. Hillis Miller, "[i]s a citation an alien parasite within the body of the main text, or is the interpretive text the parasite which surrounds and strangles the citation which is its host?" (217).

Embedded within Coleridge's "autobiography," amongst the other magpie scraps and fragments, we glimpse the biography of another: of one who would seem to be, in all respects, the writer's antithesis. She is female, nameless, illiterate; where Coleridge's life-narrative provides the *Biographia* with continuity, the life-narrative of this unlettered woman illustrates *discontinuity*; where the figure of Coleridge operates synchronically, arranging the "opinions" along the chronological axis of the "life," the figure of the possessed woman operates diachronically, ostensibly intersecting with the Hartleian critique along the vertical axis shared by argument and proof. Where

Coleridge's is the work's controlling voice, the woman's is a voice out of control; where Coleridge claims to provide answers, the woman constitutes a riddle.

And yet there are compelling similarities between them, perhaps because of the insistent *symmetry* of the reversal. It is as if the story of the woman opens a window on the *Biographia*'s unconscious; as if it speaks in the language of dreamwork, through negation, and displacement, of what the conscious text does not articulate directly. We may be reminded of that class of Freud's uncanny in which the frightening element "is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (241). Thus Freud ascribes "[t]he uncanny effect of epilepsy and of madness" to the fact that the "layman sees in [these afflictions] the working of forces hitherto unsuspected in his fellow-men, but at the same time he is dimly aware of them in remote corners of his own being" (243).

Consider the relative positions of the players in this almost-incident drama. "Reason" functions as a kind of envelope; the message of the anecdote is allegedly guaranteed because the anecdote works in the context of an implicitly male community of "rational minds," as Coleridge suggests: "no doubt could remain in any rational mind concerning the true origin of the impressions made on her

nervous system" (1: 113). This community consists at one level of the writer and his readership, as the appeal to an apparently universal reason suggests. This extra-textual community is reflected within the anecdote by the community of experts that surrounds the woman. The "many eminent physiologists and psychologists" who cross-examine the case act as a kind of chorus to reflect and reinforce the pronouncement of the primary "medical philosopher" who cracks the mystery. As the young physician succeeded *then* in convincing his colleagues and the people of the town, so Coleridge will succeed *now* in convincing his reader by the same demonstration. The reader is invited to comply, not only by the force of scientific proof, but also by the tyranny of "common knowledge." What Coleridge later calls an "authenticated case . . . furnish[ing] both proof and instance" (1: 113) is in fact the product of informally disseminated conventional wisdom. It is first introduced as a persistent object of gossip. When Coleridge arrives at Göttingen, the story "ha[s] not . . . ceased to be a frequent subject of conversation" (1: 112). "Common knowledge" fills in some of the details: the maidservant's possession is "rendered more probable by the *known fact*, that she was or had been an heretic" (1: 112, emphasis added); yet it is also "known" that she had "ever been an harmless, simple creature" (1: 113). Of the pastor, one witness "knew nothing, but that he was a very good man" (1:

113)--a curious description, suggesting the groundless workings of reputation.

In addition to the disjunctions between the tale and its framing argument, strange elisions occur in the tale's telling. The "venerable" old pastor was reportedly "too indulgent" toward the girl; but this indulgence does not seem to have extended as far as providing her with the barest rudiments of an education (1: 113). The investigating physician learns that after the pastor's death his ward refused to stay in the house, although a home was offered to her there. "Anxious enquiries were then, of course, made concerning the pastor's habits," we are told, "and the solution of the phenomenon was soon obtained" (1: 113). The "solution" that comes to light is the fact of the pastor's perambulatory readings. While these explain the woman's Latin, Greek and Hebrew utterances, they do not explain her desire to flee the house. The tale's disturbing undercurrents deepen when we realize that the solution to the mystery identifies the pastor, who had "charitably taken" the girl when she was nine years old, as the same "learned devil" that "possessed" her in her fever (1: 113, 112).

The woman herself is isolated at the centre of the anecdote. She is the unreciprocating focus of religious and professional gazes, labelled by the community, shut out from her own diagnosis, from family, and from the professional,

literate, and propertied classes; she is a speaker dispossessed of her own speech, which is appropriated in the service of another's argument. She is the ultimate representative, in short, of powerlessness and exclusion. Luce Irigaray's response to Freud's lecture on "Femininity" is relevant here:

So it would be a case of you men speaking among yourselves about woman, who cannot be involved in hearing or producing a discourse that concerns the *riddle*, the logograph she represents for you. The enigma that *is* woman will therefore constitute the *target*, the *object*, the *stake*, of a masculine discourse, of a debate among men, which would not consult her, would not concern her. Which, ultimately, she is not supposed to know anything about. (13)

Yet even at this extremity of powerlessness the servant possesses a subversive force. Although language seems to speak through her, without her agency, it nevertheless emerges as a parodically subversive representation of the pompous pastor: "[s]he continued incessantly talking Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, in very pompous tones and with most distinct enunciation" (1: 112). More importantly, the woman's very presence in the *Biographia* can reverse the current of commentary, reflecting on Coleridge's critical enterprise, and infecting his critical prose itself with a kind of irrationality. There are, for example, the elisions and the logical slippage noted above. Why has Coleridge included it? Christensen finds the answer in displaced self-representation: "Although one may be tempted to associate Coleridge, the writer, with the dogged

investigator, it is actually the maidservant who in her feverish glossolalia most closely resembles the writer" (111). The connection is Coleridge's uneasy relationship with the words of others; we recall that he makes *himself* a conduit, in this chapter, for the language of J.G.E. Maass. Susan Eilenberg, too, concludes from this strange episode that the possessed woman

must have seemed to Coleridge (deeply implicated in plagiarisms even as he wrote this passage) a sinister reflection of himself. The diasparactive nature of her utterance, the failure of her learned quotations to form coherent sense, seems to mock the chaotic work in which the story is embedded. (144)

Both Coleridge *and* the woman, in other words, are "ventriloquized" by learning (Christensen 111).

A further question remains, however: if the anecdote functions, within the *Biographia*, as displaced autobiography, why has Coleridge told us of a *woman*, and an illiterate servant at that? The only potential source known to the editors of the Bollingen edition of the *Biographia* concerns a privileged boy:

A somewhat similar report, which C may have read, is told by Graf von Grävenitz "Ueber das Band zwischen Geist und Körper" *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*. . . . The Count tells of his own experience as a boy of fourteen. In a state of severe nervous disorder lasting three years he frequently spoke Greek, Hebrew, and "an unknown language" all together without having previously studied any of them. The source of C's story has not been found. (*Biographia Literaria* 1: 112n)

Whether Coleridge's story is based on von Grävenitz's story or not, the Bollingen editors' inclusion of the Count's

story as a marginal comment encourages a comparison of the two narratives. The differences between von Grävenitz's account and Coleridge's tend in one direction. They increase the distance between the subject of the possession and Coleridge himself: from male to female, from educated to uneducated. Such distancing strategies surface elsewhere: for example, Coleridge arrives at Göttingen long after the fact, and learns of the story indirectly, from an indistinct and generalized source. The widening chasm between "Coleridge" and the possessed woman points to the magnitude of the rift within the autobiographical subject himself.

Coleridge's displaced portrayal of his own relation to language is reinforced by its alliance with a female subject. The woman's gender and class contribute to our perception of her situation in a system of unequal power relations. She dramatizes, in symbolic form, a traditionally female relationship to male language. The woman in the kitchen, penetrated by words of the (Greek and Latin) fathers spoken in the passageway, reproduces this language in spite of herself, in fragmentary form, as if giving birth in the wake of a violation; and in doing so she *alters* that language, turning it into a parodic representation of itself. Within the authoritative context of the rhetorical example, her presence articulates anxieties about the institution of critical authority itself.

The anecdote reflects likewise on the autobiographical enterprise. If Coleridge occupies subject-positions that resemble both the physician's and the woman's, then the physician's biographical researches offer a compact allegory of the autobiographical process: the "self" is a riddle which another part of the "self" endeavours to resolve, to reduce to some compact and comprehensible articulation, by discovering the past that speaks itself through the mouth of the present. This past self is almost unknowable. The physician finds the trail growing quite cold: the woman's parents are dead, as is the pastor himself. Only indirect (and strangely symmetrical) relations remain: the woman's uncle, the pastor's niece. The research is arduous: only "at length" does the physician succeed in discovering where the woman's parents had lived; he discovers the pastor's niece "[w]ith great difficulty, and after much search" (1: 113). This niece, like the possessed woman, had lived with the pastor, her uncle, and "had inherited his effects"--including the books that lead to the "solution" of the mystery (1: 113). The servant woman, it might be said, is the shadow heir, the illegitimate heir; where the niece possesses the books themselves, the servant is possessed by the words, apparently against her will.

So a space opens up in the interior of this auto-biographico-philosophical work: a space of linguistic

crisis. This space manifests itself at the level of discourse as a gap in Coleridge's commentary: within the house of commentary a space opens to accommodate the *topos* of the example, and thus an alternative kind of discourse momentarily holds centre stage. This structure repeats itself within the anecdote in terms of physical space: within the house of the pastor, the kitchen represents a neglected feminine space where words are taken in and transformed. The woman's position is evidently static. The kitchen is the site of women's work; she cannot move from there to escape her host's readings in the passageway; the passageway, on the other hand, is an architectural space designed to accommodate movement from one place to another. On a larger scale, the woman remains resident in the town and becomes herself a "site" to which men travel to exercise their curiosity. Coleridge too, in the context of the anecdote, is a traveller and observer, who represents the woman as fixed and observed.

In its ability to alter, even from a position of subordination, the surrounding discourse, this feminine space in the *Biographia* manifests the workings of what Alice Jardine terms "gynesis." We recall that, according to Jardine, "[t]he key master discourses in the West-- philosophy, religion, history--have . . . had to confront, since the nineteenth century, a new space which refuses to stay silent within its frame of representation" (88). She

notes, furthermore, that "all of the words used to designate this space (now unbound)--nature, Other, matter, unconscious, madness, hylē, force--have throughout the tenure of Western philosophy carried feminine connotations" (88). In the manner Jardine describes, the woman in Coleridge's anecdote speaks out from her "frame of representation." Her irruption constitutes, like Jardine's "gynesis," "a cris[i]s in the narratives invented by men" (24). She defies the theories of religious men; and the explanatory "narrative" offered by a medical man violates, in its turn, the anti-Hartleian "narrative" offered by Coleridge.

The chapter concludes in an apocalyptic peroration.

The survival of foreign phrases in the woman's mind

contributes to make it even probable, that all thoughts are in themselves imperishable; and, that if the intelligent faculty should be rendered more comprehensive, it would require only a different and apportioned organization, *the body celestial* instead of *the body terrestrial*, to bring before every human soul the collective experience of its whole past existence. And this, this, perchance, is the dread book of judgement, in whose mysterious hieroglyphics every idle word is recorded! (1: 14)

Although Coleridge has by this point concluded the woman's story and moved on to a more general discussion, his conclusion continues a train of imagery present in the anecdote. The undying memory that is "the dread book of judgement" is represented within the chapter by the mind of the servant woman; the "mysterious hieroglyphics," by her unreadable speech. The woman is thus cast as "judge" by

this submerged comparison; this identification furthers the subversion present in the anecdote itself, where the woman, a "case" to be "cross-examined" (1: 112), turns out to represent a critique of the male institutions that have put her on trial. The form of judgement she represents is, moreover, a form of *self*-judgement: the presentation to "every human soul" of a picture of "the collective experience of its whole past existence" (1: 114). Here we have, once again, a formulation of the autobiographical act. Coleridge insists upon the integrity of the self thus examined:

Yea, in the very nature of a living spirit, it may be more possible that heaven and earth should pass away, than that a single act, a single thought, should be loosened or lost from that living chain of causes, to all whose links, conscious or unconscious, the free-will, our only absolute *self*, is co-extensive and co-present. (1: 114)

But he does so in the context of a chapter that has represented the self as divided--oscillating between examiner and examined, masterful and dispossessed--and elusive, available through indirect narratives, and only after prolonged search.

* * *

This rhetorical example of the possessed servant woman is employed, servant-like, to meet the needs of the "master discourse" (if the matrix that binds together the discursive collage that is the *Biographia* can truly be called "masterful"). The tale's status relative to the

prose that frames it is--at least in terms of magnitude--secondary, even though it possesses, as I have argued, an uncanny power of influence. I wish to turn now from prose to poetry, to a seemingly very different type of annotation. In the case of *Kubla Khan*, the relative status of discursive frame to enframed material is reversed from what we have seen in the *Biographia*, and this altered dynamic results in a different configuration of similar themes: ventriloquism, masterful discourse, the constitution of the autobiographical subject. By the addition of a headnote, Coleridge installs a narrative in the margins of this quintessentially visionary poem that renders it, too, a generic hybrid. As Judith Davidoff remarks of framing fictions: "[t]he framing fiction is in effect a narrative-maker, a genre-leveller that can turn rhetorically unlike elements into structurally similar ones" (18).

If we think of the conventional dynamic between a poem and an introductory note we might expect the poem to be primary, while the note is secondary and supplementary, existing as a subservient point of access. Details of the composition and reception of *Kubla Khan* tend to bear out this arrangement of priority: the poem predates its framing prose headnote by almost twenty years; most critical analyses, moreover, even when they arrive at divergent conclusions, begin with the assumption that *Kubla Khan* speaks reflexively at some fundamental level about poetry

and the poet--and that its form embodies the visionary poetry of which it speaks. But *Kubla Khan's* prose headnote --a belated textual addition--calls explicitly into question the poetic status that differentiates *Kubla Khan* from a work like the *Biographia*, postulating in place of "any supposed poetic merits" a new status for the poem as a "psychological curiosity" (*Kubla Khan* headnote 185n)¹ that seems designed to place it on an equal semiotic footing with exemplary case studies such as that of the possessed servant. The headnote writes a clinical narrative around the poetic fragment, and this narrative, far from merely explaining the provenance of the poem proper, becomes a powerful fiction that alters the totality of the work. At the same time, the headnote engages--in its own way and its own language--with the same issues of creativity and the role of the creator that preoccupy the poem. Thus a textual symbiosis emerges out of Coleridge's self-annotation. As Christensen observes of the marginal method:

¹ As is the case with all Coleridge's major poems, multiple versions exist. I will be referring to the 1816 headnote text, as it is the first published version, contains material omitted from some later editions, and is also chronologically the closest to *Biographia Literaria*. Jack Stillinger, in *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), annotates differences among the major versions of *Kubla Khan* extant today, including an undated manuscript fair copy and published versions from 1816, 1828, 1829, and 1834. The fair copy and 1816 are the "principle versions," according to Stillinger (74). Page and line numbers for *Kubla Khan* refer to Stillinger's edition.

The original text may presume inalienable priority, but the marginal comment always threatens the reduction of the original text to a pretext for commentary--commentary, however, which could not be where it "is" were it not for the margins provided. The marginalium is, thus, both enrichment and deprivation of its host, just as it is, equivocally, neither inside nor outside the text. (105-06)

Kubla Khan: Or, a Vision in a Dream was first published in 1816. The poem was composed in 1797 or 1798,² allegedly under the circumstances made famous by the headnote that introduced it to the reading public: a lonely farmhouse, a medicinal "anodyne," a deep sleep filled with visions, the interruption of the transcription of these visions by the arrival of the person from Porlock, and the author's unrealized intention "to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him" (186). The myth of composition is surely as "famous" as the poem. And yet as a prose preface it is perceived to have a certain detachability, as either paraphrasable "information" or extratextual authorial strategizing that might or might not attend the reception of the untranslatable poem itself. As David Perkins points out, some popular anthologies continue to print the poem without any of the textual apparatus (headnote, subtitles) that Coleridge attached to it at its first publication (97).

² Richard Holmes reviews the circumstances that could date composition anywhere between August 1797 and May 1798 (165, 167-68).

In critical terms, the importance of the note's "truthfulness" has receded over the years, as its truth-value has been gradually discredited. As "information," the note has prompted such studies as John Beer's 1963 discussion of the attempt to corroborate Coleridge's account of the time and place of composition. Beer cites accounts of similar "reveries" resembling that in which *Kubla Khan* was ostensibly composed; but he concludes ultimately that, while the circumstances narrated in the headnote are "of great interest," they are not essential to an explication of the poem proper (211).³ As an authorial strategy, the note is located by W.J. Bate, for example, in a biographical context as an instance of Coleridge's by then highly developed "habit of apology" (75) as he sought to absolve himself of the extravagant poetic hopes expressed in the poem, and to play down the extent of his opium use (77). Some more recent criticism, however, accords the headnote a more integrated role, as a textual element commensurate with the poem itself. For instance, Marjorie Levinson reads the 1816 headnote--and specifically its incorporation of an extract from "The Picture"--as a recantation of the ideological investments of the 1797/98 poem (*Romantic Fragment Poem* 108ff). David Perkins argues that the headnote "gives the poem a plot it would not otherwise have"

³ Beer continues his consideration of the note from an ethical perspective in "How Far Can We Trust Coleridge?"

(98), while Jack Stillinger sees the headnote as a text that renders fragmentary an otherwise completed work (74). I, too, see the note--attached to the poem by Coleridge at its first public appearance, and retained in subsequent editions during his lifetime--as a textual element susceptible of the same kinds of interpretation brought to bear on the poem, and one that engages with the poem in an interanimating dialogue. I will begin with a review/reading of the poem proper, then consider how the addition of the headnote, with its specific generic claims, might add to or reconfigure that reading.

The poem proceeds in two broad movements: lines 1-36 and 37-54. These sections differ in tone and content, moving from imperial third-person narrative to visionary first-person lyric.⁴ The first section, depicting Kubla's erection of a sealed and sublime world of pleasure, itself seems to divide, as Marjorie Levinson notes, into a tripartite, recognizable structure of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (*Romantic Fragment Poem* 106). Lines 1-11--embodying the thesis--construct Kubla's pleasure-grounds unproblematically: the simple, declarative sentences reflect

⁴ These sections have been identified by W.J. Bate with the "odal hymn" and personal "credo" prevalent in the "greater Romantic lyric": the first "postulates a challenge, ideal, or prototype that the poet hopes to reach or transcend," while the second expresses the poet's ambition "to match in another way--even exceed, with something more lasting--what the princes of the earth have been able to perform" (78).

the simple, declarative power of Kubla's word.⁵ The insistently passive voice of lines 6-11 (as in "So twice five miles of fertile ground / With walls and towers were girdled round" [6-7]) subserves the active verb, "decree": the command is carried out by invisible labour as if the word itself brought walls, towers, and gardens into being. This coincidence of word and thing recalls the effortless process of composition described in the headnote, "if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up . . . as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions" (185).⁶ This first stanza thus depicts a univocal and direct process of creation, a coincidence of word/action/thing effected by a solitary and powerful speaker. It has been observed that Kubla is, in Coleridge's terms, a man of "commanding genius";⁷ such men

must impress their preconceptions on the world without, in order to present them back to their own view with the satisfying degree of clearness, distinctness, and individuality. These in tranquil times are formed to exhibit a perfect poem in palace or temple or landscape-garden. . . . But alas! in times of tumult they are the men destined to come

⁵ Jack Stillinger notes the significant use of "the indicative mood and simple past tense of closure and unambiguous achievement" (*Coleridge and Textual Instability* 78)

⁶ Paul Magnuson also observes that "[t]he words of creation are immediately transformed into things, real objects, just as Purchas's words rose before Coleridge as things, but, of course, the Khan's creation is willed" (73).

⁷ John Beer discusses at length Kubla's relation to Coleridge's conceptions of "genius" in *Coleridge the Visionary*; see especially pp. 239-40.

forth as the shaping spirit of Ruin, to destroy the wisdom of ages in order to substitute the fancies of a day, and to change kings and kingdoms, as the wind shifts and shapes the clouds. (*Biographia Literaria* 1: 32-33)

Anne Mellor notes this parallel, and also borrows an additional schema from the *Biographia* to liken Kubla's creative act to that of the secondary imagination working in cooperation with the conscious will: he "has the ability to raise the primary imagination into human consciousness and to preserve its visions within a lasting artistic structure" (*English Romantic Irony* 155). However formulated, Kubla's world in this first stanza seems to exemplify a phallic order determined by patriarchal will: its mode is rational, its products conscious, public, and defined, its symbol the containing wall.

The second stanza (12-30) postulates the antithesis to this ordered world, departing from a dissonant term in the first stanza--one that infiltrates and compromises the monological vision from the outset: the "measureless" caverns (4). The "sacred river" (3, 24) and the landmarks that define its source and trajectory--fountain, chasm, caverns--represent energies that cannot be circumscribed within containing walls. Mellor identifies these energies with the primary imagination that "flows . . . like dynamic life, beneath and beyond the temporal orderings of the secondary imagination or any consciously willed structure" (*English Romantic Irony* 155-56). These energies are troped

as feminine. The sartorial etymology of "girdle," in the first stanza (7), posits the "fertile ground" (6) as a (female) body constrained by Kubla's structures, and this figure is carried through in the second stanza in the orgasmic birth of the river Alph: "And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething, / As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing, / A mighty fountain momentarily was forced. . . ." (17-19). Levinson refers to the "yonic and psychic imagery" that opposes the potentially "phallic principle" of the first stanza (*Romantic Fragment Poem* 105). This alternative creative act is depicted through figures of indirection, incompleteness, and intermixture. The chasm "slant[s]" "athwart" a cedar grove (12, 13)--an indirect trajectory that contrasts with the mathematical wholesomeness of Kubla's round, ten-mile perimeter. The hypothetical "woman wailing for her demon-lover" (16), not actually present in the scene herself, figures at once desire and lack. The fountain pulses in a cycle of interruption--"half-intermitted" (20)--and the "fragments" that attend the river's birth are likened to "chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail" (21, 22)--that is, to contrary elements suspended in confusion before the process of separation is complete. This savage energy, coded as feminine, even maternal, unleashes in turn a threat, coded as masculine, that has apparently been suppressed by Kubla in his ordered pursuit of pleasure: the "ancestral voices

prophesying war" (30). The "tumult" of the river thus anticipates the "times of tumult" that can turn the "shaping spirit" of the man of commanding genius to terrible ends (*Biographia* 1: 33).

What we have here seems, again, to represent the workings of gynesis: that *space* coded as "nature, Other, matter, unconscious, madness, hylē, force" that "refuses to stay silent within its frame of representation" (Jardine 88). But it is a representation of uncontrollable space deployed in order to be reabsorbed into the synthetic third term of a master narrative. The logic of the dialectic, or of Coleridge's theory of the imagination, constructs the poem's third stanza as the reconciliation of the polarities present in the first two stanzas:

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
 Floated midway on the waves;
 Where was heard the mingled measure
 From the fountain and the caves.
 It was a miracle of rare device,
 A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice! (31-36)

This stanza, according to Beer's complex and subtle argument, achieves "the 'miracle' in which two seemingly irreconcilable principles, are held together" (*Coleridge the Visionary* 257); "[t]he ideal is revealed for a moment; visual and auditory harmonies fuse into a single, intricate pattern" (262). This restoration of order is signified by a return to the iambic tetrameter and passive voice--"Where was heard the mingled measure" (33) of the first stanza, by the dome's shadow's location at a "midway" point, and, not

least, by the speaker's simply *telling* us that it is a miracle in which polarities meet. At the same time, his enthusiasm seems to mask certain well-founded anxieties about the stability or presence of this "ideal." Jerome McGann reminds us that "[t]he stately pleasure dome is, as all commentators have pointed out, the most precarious of structures" (98). For one thing, the dome is not present, but represented by its "shadow." For another, the "mingled measure / From the fountain and the caves" asserts, out of the blue, a characteristic in contradiction to the incantatory epithet applied twice previously--"caverns *measureless* to man" (4, 27)--thus seeming to reproduce Kubla's imposition of surface order upon inherently disordered matter: the measureless becomes measured simply by saying it is so. On the other hand, it could also be argued that the very fixity of the epithet "caverns measureless to man" marks it as unexamined wisdom, invoked, particularly in the second instance, primarily to satisfy a metrical demand (the demands of "measure"). In either reading, what is at stake is the mediating presence of the poet--as a bard either fitting his material to mnemonic contingencies, or imposing a resolution on unruly materials. James McKusick notes Coleridge's fondness for employing "epanalepsis," the use of a word "in a context that calls attention to its origin" (55). By this reckoning, the word "device" (35) in the context of lines 31-36 of *Kubla Khan*

captures the passage's multivalence, stemming as it does from Old French and Middle English terms meaning "division, partition, separation, difference," as well as "discourse" and "will" or "desire" (OED). The union of sun and ice, as an ingenious device or as the product of Kubla's own discursive devices, might be an oxymoronic contrivance, a miracle of division.

At this delicate juncture the narrative of the Khan Kubla breaks off, and a section of first-person lyric concludes the poem. The two sections of the poem together seem to manage an almost chiasmic effect: from Kubla the creator, to the generative, feminine energies of the river, to the (ostensibly) synthesizing dome, to the creative feminine energies of the "damsel with a dulcimer" (37), to the speaker himself as creator. The "threatening" fecundity of the second stanza's uncontrollable space, with its wailing, panting, and tumult, is sublimated into the song of the damsel; and the creativity of the Khan is echoed in a minor key in the poet's yearning to reproduce "that dome in air" (46).

The transition from the indicative to the conditional and subjunctive moods, between the first stanza and this last, is frequently remarked; it coincides with a movement away from a "poetry of presence" (McGann 100)-- although that designation too is suspect--and into a system of mediated representations that seems to reflect the

difficulty, even impossibility, of reproducing poetically the quasi-supernatural phenomena of the earlier stanzas. The Abyssinian maid, framed within a separate vision, functions as a kind of muse (Mellor 156, Magnuson 77); but she, not the poet, produces the original aesthetic creation, with the poet as her audience. The poet's hypothetical creation, in the final stanza, would be stimulated by an act of engaged reception:

— Could I revive within me
 Her symphony and song,
 To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
 That with music loud and long,
 I would build that dome in air,
 That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
 And all who heard should see them there. . . .
 (42-49)

This second creation is pictured as emerging through a series of events that are more obliquely related than might be apparent at first sight. The poet's music would not be the maid's music as he would revive it within himself; it would have a different content, and arise in response to the delight the maid's music would engender--or even, perhaps, in response to the delight that his *capacity* to revive the maid's music within him would engender. This music, in turn, would work upon one sense by way of another, acting through sound to evoke vision--as if the poet's word, like Kubla's, were coextensive with the thing it names. What the poet imagines his auditors responding to when they see his aural architecture, however, is not the dome, but the poet himself. They would "see" the "sunny dome" and "caves of

ice" (47), but when they speak it would be to describe the poet's appearance.

"Once Coleridge replaces Kubla, empire-builder, with the lyric 'I,'" writes Levinson, "he is compelled to respect the logic of grammar and psychology. Kubla's fate and the poet's must converge; the holocaust prophesied by the ancestral voices becomes, perforce, the dread destiny of the narrator, just as it looms for Kubla" (*Romantic Fragment Poem* 109). The poet's fate is commonly seen as linked to Kubla's in this way, following the logic that casts the poet and the Khan as rough doubles. But what is interesting in the final lines of the poem is that the language describing the "lyric 'I'" aligns him more closely with the disruptive forces of the second stanza than with the man of "commanding genius":

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drank the milk of Paradise. (49-54)

The "holy dread" that is a fit response recalls the "hol[iness]" of the savage, enchanted chasm (14); the poet's bacchante-like "flashing eyes" and "floating hair" evoke the passionate wildness of the fountain or the wailing woman, rather than the stateliness of the Khan. Even the envisioned process of his inspiration--reviving within himself, through an act of creative reception, the song of another--suggests a process of conception and gestation.

Moreover, it is the ritualistic act of containment he postulates for his *audience* that most closely resembles Kubla's: in weaving a circle around the poet they would, like Kubla, "girdle round" a potentially dangerous reproductive site. As it is, this encircling act exists only *in potentia*, as an imagined injunction, or decree.

These concluding lines enact, self-reflexively, the scene of the poem's own reception: the poet *has* built that "dome in air" (in lines 1-36), and we have seen it. In fact, a case has been made for seeing lines 37-54 as a species of "metapoem," written *after* the vision has fled (Perkins 102); these would be, then, the "scattered lines and images" Coleridge refers to in the headnote (186). If this is taken to be the case--and this reading is only possible once the reader is familiar with the narrative furnished in the framing headnote--the final stanza itself becomes a retrospective frame. Within this frame, the final words belong to the audience of the poem-within-the-poem, who frame the poet for the next succession of readers or auditors by expressing the necessity to *contain* him in his vatic state.

The headnote reproduces this containing gesture, betraying anxieties about the poem's reception--anxieties intense enough to warrant the elaboration of a substantial supplementary fiction. The vatic poet, it seems, represents some sort of scandal that motivates Coleridge to construct

this prose retaining wall. The nature of this scandal has been figured in diverse ways: the ambitions of the vatic poet have been seen to represent, for example, personal hubris (Bate 77), political radicalism (Levinson, *Fragment Poem* 112), or a defiance of human limitations (Mellor, *Romantic Irony* 157). I would locate at least part of the scandal in the poem's manifestation of gynes--of an immeasurable alterity understood in terms of gender, of standards of reason, and also of race: "To give a new language to these other spaces [of gynes] is a project filled with both promise and fear, . . . for those spaces have hitherto remained unknown, terrifying, monstrous: they are mad, unconscious, improper, non-sensical, oriental, profane" (Jardine 73). It is as if the poem cannot be trusted to speak for itself; like the possessed servant woman, it is deemed "incapable of returning a rational answer" (*Biographia* 1: 113) so that the author, like the "young medical philosopher" in the *Biographia*, must mediate, must forge meaning out of irrational discourse by reconstructing the poem's "biography."

This mediating headnote, in addition to containing the strange otherness of the poem *Kubla Khan*, also contains another poetic fragment. Coleridge cites the following lines from his own poem, "The Picture, or The Lover's Resolution":

Then all the charm
Is broken--all that phantom-world so fair

Vanishes, and a thousand circlets spread,
 And each mis-shape the other. Stay awhile,
 Poor youth! who scarcely dar'st lift up thine eyes--
 The stream will soon renew its smoothness, soon
 The visions will return! And lo! he stays,
 And soon the fragments dim of lovely forms
 Come trembling back, unite, and now once more
 The pool becomes a mirror.
 (*Kubla Khan* headnote 186)

While these lines in isolation hold out the possibility of a return of vision, in the context of "The Picture" as a whole they suggest quite the opposite. They depict a deluded youth whose contemplation of an idealized woman in the surface of a pool is disrupted by the woman herself when she scatters flowers on the water's surface. When "once more / The pool becomes a mirror," the woman is gone, having made her escape from the male gaze. The "picture" in the title is one created by the woman herself: she is an artist, a "daughter of genius" (line 170). This poetic fragment embedded in the framing headnote thus points to yet another narrative of female creativity as a disruptive force that eludes objectification by the male gaze.

One of the key functions of the headnote is to turn an apparently completed work into an incomplete fragment, in a reversal of the usual logic of supplementarity. As Stillinger remarks, "were it not for this introductory prose, we would never know that the poem was a fragment" (74). The "Author" describes his intention to "finish for himself" his interrupted vision (186); but the fact of its eternal incompleteness establishes a model for that other, as

yet potential, vision--of the "dome in air"--and seems to foredoom it, too, to incompleteness. As is typical in the case of "fragmentary" works, it is left to the reader to finish for herself or himself what has been originally "given" to the author; but to do so the reader has first to negotiate with the author's insistent myth of failure. This "myth of the lost poem" (Perkins 97) is powerful, and tends to distract attention from competing figures--for example, those that align the poet with the generative energies of the chasm--that might rescue the possibility of vision.

But even before any question of poetic vision can be broached, the headnote attempts to shift the debate to a different arena entirely: here is the first paragraph of the note as published in 1816, 1828, and 1829:

The following fragment is here published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity, and as far as the Author's own opinions are concerned, rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of any supposed poetic merits. (185n)

In resorting to this modesty topos--asserting both his incapacity and his submission to another's will--Coleridge takes his place in a rhetorical line going back at least as far as Cicero (Curtius 84): he, the author, is not worthy, but the will of a greater poet than he has brought his work before the public. Coleridge chooses a notable figure to express the self-difference implied in this disclaimer: he is divided as both judging subject and observed object in a clinical context. As a "psychological curiosity," *Kubla*

Khan is figured as symptomatic, an "ungrammaticality" in the author's functioning: it is a symptom Coleridge both manifests and diagnoses. The paragraph proposes a generic shift: from lyric poem, to case study or exemplary document. It thus introduces the poem as an object held in tension between two contesting readings and reading practices: it is caught between the lens of poetry, represented by an authoritative poet (Lord Byron), and the lens of clinical inquiry, represented by the author as he looks back at a previous self.

By hailing the reader to examine the work on psychological grounds, rather than "on the ground of any supposed *poetic* merits," Coleridge both absolves himself of conscious agency in the poem's creation, and absorbs the potentially self-sufficient aesthetic object into a larger autobiographical morass: he locates meaning, not in the poem, but in the originating psyche of which it is a sign. The effect is a contradictory one: he removes himself as poetic agent, only to resurface as the implicit subject of the entire work. The autobiographical effect resembles Coleridge's procedure in the *Biographia*, where the author's life forms a matrix in which the work's miscellaneous materials are embedded. In this double gesture--both giving and removing--he is both central and marginal, obtrusive in his modesty; he seeks to control interpretation even as he spins a fiction of loss of control.

The removal of authorial agency is a recurrent trope. It begins with Coleridge's avowed discomfort at publication, and is taken up in the narrative that follows when the author, not by choice but by prescription, succumbs to an "anodyne" dispensed from an anonymous hand;⁸ he is implicitly passive in the face of medical practice. Stillinger observes that much of the note is "straightforward clinical description, rather in the manner of an early scientist reporting an experiment that he performed on himself" (78). These occasions initiate a pattern the twin culmination of which, of course, is the miraculous composition that voices itself through him "without any sensation or consciousness of effort" and the equally fateful conclusion brought about by the arrival of the person from Porlock.

This emphatic passivity produces an image of the author as a conduit through which language speaks itself and events enact themselves. As the possessed servant woman in the *Biographia* is "ventriloquized" by learning, so the author of *Kubla Khan* is "ventriloquized" by his vision (and by all the authors and works that exhaustive source studies

⁸ There is a considerable difference in emphasis between this public narrative of events, and a note appended to the autograph MS: "This fragment with a good deal more, not recoverable, composed, in a sort of Reverie brought on by two grains of Opium, taken to check a dysentery, at a Farm House between Porlock & Linton, a quarter of a mile from Culbone Church, in the fall of the year, 1797" (Stillinger 188n).

have uncovered); so too, within the vision, the lyric poet longs to be ventriloquized by the damsel's song. This "conductivity" exists on a continuum between two poles. At one end is the positive receptivity embodied in the Eolian harp; at the other end is a terrifying loss of self-possession: hysteria.

Just as, in the servant's case, "Sheets full of her ravings were taken down from her own mouth" (*Biographia* 1: 112), so too Coleridge emphasizes in the headnote to *Kubla Khan* the fact of transcription, and its disjunction from a process of composition free from the materiality of writing: "On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved" (185). Thus Coleridge figures himself, in *Kubla Khan* as in the *Biographia*, as both the vessel of a language that speaks itself through him, and as the psychological detective who transcribes and annotates that language. The irony here is that, in contrast to the *Biographia*'s "dread book of judgement" in which every "idle word" is recorded, *Kubla Khan* constructs itself as an effect of the failure of memory and transcription.

Why does the headnote go out of its way to detail the obvious materials necessary for writing: "pen, ink, and paper"? The headnote's "myth of the lost poem" narrates the failure, not of invention, but of preservation, when the

effortlessly productive mental word is betrayed by the faltering feet of its emphatically material counterpart. Richard Holmes speculates that *Kubla Khan*, although not mentioned in Coleridge's letters or notebooks at the time of composition, and not published for many years, became one of his favourite subjects for recitation, and in this manner became known among his circle. It is possible, Holmes writes, "that Coleridge kept back the poem as one of his 'wonderful' enchantments, known by heart, and chanted in private company, but never considered for publication" (*Early Visions* 165). This speculation seems, along with clues in the headnote and poem, to point to a distinction between notions of poetry as text and poetry as incantation --poetry as a material structure (Kubla's architecture) or its counterpart "in air." It is as if *Kubla Khan*, an incantatory poem culminating in a vision of the lyric poet raising an etherial structure through song, could not make the radical shift to published text without altering its genre in some way, or without the mediation of a framing prose note. The oral production itself, the myth of the lost poem suggests, eludes containment within fixed characters: invention exceeds transcription.

The poem's narrative of the Khan Kubla also enacts this failure of transcription. The historical Kublai Khan is associated with the invention of the alphabet--indeed, he

is said to have decreed its creation.⁹ In the poem, Kubla inscribes his empire onto the territory surrounding the river Alph, which "beyond doubt . . . has something to do with the alphabet, the gift of language, or ordered speech" (Simpson 94). Kubla's mapping is single-minded; at the same time, however, the river Alph cannot be circumscribed, and it ultimately delivers up meanings ("ancestral voices prophesying war") that seem both unlooked-for and unwelcome.

It is at the moment of transcription that the dreaded "person from Porlock" interrupts the author in the solitude of the "lonely farm-house" (185), an emphatically isolated place recalling the "retirement and distance" in which Coleridge, in the *Biographia*, claims to have "lived, both from the literary and political world" (1: 5). This "person," as an active agent of interruption, anticipates the imaginary "friend" who allegedly advises Coleridge not to proceed with his theory of the imagination in Chapter 13 of the *Biographia*. Like the "person from Porlock," the "friend" interrupts Coleridge specifically in the process of

⁹ John Drew notes that in November 1802 Coleridge wrote in his notebook: "Kublai Khan ordered letters to be invented for his people" (qtd in "'Kubla Khan' and Orientalism" p. 43). Drew traces the phrase to an essay by Sir William Jones--whose research was seminal to the "Oriental Renaissance" in London at the end of the eighteenth century--which leads him to wonder: "Did Coleridge make the note because the information was new to him--or was he putting in writing . . . a phrase which was already familiar to him?" He assembles a number of pieces of possible evidence indicating that Coleridge did know of this essay before writing *Kubla Khan* (43).

transcription; as Coleridge tells us: "Thus far had the work been transcribed for the press, when I received the following letter . . ." (*Biographia Literaria* 1: 300). The oracular "dark cave of Trophonius," to which the *Biographia's* letter-writer likens the absent chapter on imagination, evokes an uncanny space similar to the "deep romantic chasm" in *Kubla Khan*. It is a space of master-narratives-in-crisis, where, for example, "what [the friend] had supposed substances were thinned away into shadows, while every where shadows were deepened into substances" (*Biographia Literaria* 1: 301).

Both the *Kubla Khan* poem and Coleridge's proposed treatise on the imagination speak a *strange language*: they are unfamiliar, excessive, uncanny, and must therefore be suppressed or displaced. Both of these excessive discourses are halted at least partially in the name of "business"¹⁰--the public, measured, economic system in which Coleridge's works are destined to circulate. Both the "person" and the "friend"--like Sara in "The Eolian Harp"--play superego to the textual id; they censor the work. As textual inventions they represent a projection of the impulse to self-censorship, and manifest, once again, Coleridge's troubled relation to his own discourse.

¹⁰ "I could add to these arguments one derived from pecuniary motives, and particularly from the probable effects on the sale of your present publication; but they would weigh little with you compared with the preceding" (*Biographia* 1: 304).

It would be simplistic to suggest that *Kubla Khan* is a "feminine" poem constrained within a "masculine" prose discourse--to liken it too straightforwardly to, in Irigaray's words, the feminine "*target, the object, the stake, of a masculine discourse, a debate among men*". (13). Rather, both poem and headnote are internally divided; both reenact the drama of "feminine" disruption and "masculine" containment. By locating the poem within a larger autobiographical context, the headnote recasts this drama as psychodrama: as an enactment of the troubled self-difference of the writing subject.

CHAPTER FOUR

SHELLEY: CLINICAL READING II

Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo*, like the incident in Chapter Six of *Biographia Literaria* and the conjoined poem and headnote that form *Kubla Khan*, employs a framing structure to turn a diagnostic gaze onto an "image of language." Maddalo and Julian, the poem's aristocratic protagonists, listen to a monologue delivered by the inmate of a madhouse, seeking to employ his ravings as evidence in a debate between idealism and cynicism. Their "urbane" conversation and debate constitute the interpretive frame that surrounds and attempts unsuccessfully to master the irrational discourse reproduced at the poem's centre. In dramatizing the failure of Maddalo and Julian's attempt to assimilate the Maniac's tormented discourse to their own rational ends, *Julian and Maddalo* raises questions about the subject-position that such a debate allots the Maniac, and about the use that ratiocentrism and phallogentrism make of their professed others, madness and the feminine.

The reader first encounters *Julian and Maddalo* by way of an outer frame: the prose preface. In contrast to Coleridge's headnote to *Kubla Khan*, which explicitly identifies the framed poem as fictive invention, or to other

prefatory statements made by Shelley himself, such as that to *Prometheus Unbound*, which locates the poem as a literary product in relation to classical and modern counterparts, the preface to *Julian and Maddalo* participates in the fictive or semi-fictive world of the poem itself. It consists of three paragraphs describing the poem's *dramatis personae*; these descriptions decrease in length and specificity from Maddalo, to Julian, to the Maniac. The preface is presented as the utterance of a fictional persona, corresponding neither to Shelley nor to Julian, but bearing a class resemblance to both. The preface-writer interpellates the reader, likewise, as a member of his and Shelley's own "relatively small class of the refined and educated" capable of understanding Maddalo, and Julian, and their philosophical concerns (Brewer 129). He provides a quantity of material and psychological information about the title characters and invites the reader to participate in his mild ironies. The preface-writer in effect outlines an interpretive code: our understanding of Maddalo and Julian's world and their debate is understood to operate within the defined set of social and philosophical meanings laid out by this initial guide.

The Maniac, on the other hand, inhabits a country for which no maps exist. Whereas the preface-writer is acquainted with information about Maddalo and Julian beyond that available in Julian's narrative, concerning the Maniac

he is as dependent as the reader on the information given in the poem--by Julian (on the basis of observation) and by Maddalo (on the basis of rumour). The preface releases the Maniac to the reader's care with no guarantees; this is all it says:

Of the Maniac I can give no information. He seems, by his own account, to have been disappointed in love. He was evidently a very cultivated and amiable person when in his right senses. His story, told at length, might be like many other stories of the same kind: the unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart. (113)

The tone is almost flippant. When he is not gesturing toward information already deducible from the poem itself, the preface-writer is dismissing as commonplace and tedious a history he does not know. This studied nonchalance might in fact give us an intimation of the Maniac's potency. That he is cast as unconscious "commentator" relegates him to a literally marginal role; at the same time, however, commentary's power to transform the text it glosses can be immense.

The poem proper begins at a point of interruption, prefiguring the narrative disruption to follow:

I rode one evening with Count Maddalo
 Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
 Of Adria towards Venice:--a bare strand
 Of hillocks, heaped from ever-shifting sand . . .
 (1-4)

The dichotomy between Julian's simultaneous freedom of movement--on horseback with his powerful Byronic friend the count--and his situation at a point of interruption--on "the

bank of land which breaks the flow / Of Adria towards Venice"--parallels Julian's role as framing narrator. As a frame, his narrative both displays and confines, and, as the poem progresses, we realize that he can as easily block narrative as convey it.

The poem's subtitle, "A Conversation," would seem, by its relation to the title, to refer to that held between Maddalo and Julian as they ride on the Lido. The ride and the conversation share a certain freedom of movement: "So, as we rode, we talked; and the swift thought, / Winging itself with laughter, lingered not, / But flew from brain to brain" (28-30). The men speak inclusively "Of all that earth has been or yet may be, / All that vain men imagine or believe, / Or hope can paint or suffering may atchieve" (43-45). Julian, the narrator, argues for the boundless potential of the human spirit, finding evidence in the sublime expanses of the landscape and the sky. He extols the Lido in this mood, yet his words harbour a counter-argument, a suggestion that desire projects infinity onto what is in fact a narrow, abandoned space of wreckage and stunted growth; the Lido is

an uninhabitable sea-side,
Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,
Abandons; and no other object breaks
The waste, but one dwarf tree and some few stakes
Broken and unrepaired, and the tide makes
A narrow space of level sand thereon . . .
I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste

The pleasure of believing what we see
 Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be.
 (7-12, 14-17)

The sunset sends Julian into further raptures, for in it he witnesses the apocalyptic marriage of heaven and earth "[d]issolved into one lake of fire" (81). At this point Maddalo, countering Julian's Shelleyan idealism with Byronic gloom,¹ points out a madhouse--"a windowless, deformed and dreary pile" (101)--silhouetted against the setting sun. Human thoughts and desires, argues Maddalo, are like madmen clustering in mindless prayer around a "rent heart" (126), and the soul is like a madhouse vesper-bell. The next morning, Julian renews the debate by pointing to Maddalo's daughter as "an *exemplum* of ontological bliss" (Newey, "Shelley Psycho-Drama" 77), "a free being not self-enchained by "sick thoughts" (169). Their debate still undecided, they travel to the madhouse to observe one final exhibit, an insane man whom Maddalo is lodging there at his own expense. They enter the apartment of the Maniac (who never becomes aware of their presence), and eavesdrop as he launches into a possessed monologue.

Thus far, the narrative is structured as a series of gazes. Maddalo and Julian objectify and transform the world around them into a series of examples and counter-examples

¹ That Maddalo and Julian represent Byron and Shelley is commonly understood. For a discussion of biographical interpretations of the poem prior to 1963, see G.M. Matthews 57-61.

in the service of a debate whose terms--idealism versus cynicism--appear to represent the poem's conceptual poles. In framing the terms of debate and marshalling their human examples, they manifest scopic mastery--the mastery of the gaze. In doing so, they occupy the "masculine" position of masterful subject. This stance is duplicated in Julian's first-person narrative control: that is, Julian's is the primary "point of view." Beth Newman notes the pervasive presence of "visual metaphors" in narratology, observing that "[s]uch terms implicitly invoke a gaze: a look that the subject(s) whose perceptions organize the story direct at the characters and acts represented." This gaze is implicitly coded as "masculine". Maddalo's infant daughter and the madhouse inmates (Maddalo's protégé specifically), on the other hand, occupy the "feminine" position of object. Within the context of Maddalo and Julian's conversation--which, the subtitle suggests, is coextensive with the poem--they operate as rhetorical examples such as might be introduced by Coleridge's phrase "a case of this kind" (*Biographia* 1: 112). The infant daughter does not speak, although her eyes, full of "deep meaning" (149) do prefigure her potential to return the gaze, as she does in the epilogue. The Maniac, although he speaks, cannot return the gaze, being unaware of his visitors' presence. Neither daughter nor Maniac has any name beyond the generic one. Julian's delight in proprietary observation is encapsulated

in his apostrophe to Italy, concerning the sunset, when he says: "it was ours / To stand on thee, beholding it" (59-60). He plants his gaze like a flag.

The style of this opening section is of a piece with the masterful stance of the protagonists: it is controlled but informal, and marked by class affiliations. Shelley claimed to be attempting in this poem something "in a different style . . . a *sermo pedestris* way of treating human nature," employing "a certain familiar style of language to express the actual way in which people talk with each other whom education and a certain refinement of sentiment have placed above the use of vulgar idioms" (*Letters* 2: 196; 2: 108). It is marked by "the easy familiarity of two articulate and literary men of aristocratic families" (Brewer 128), with all the "gentlemanly" virtues of politeness and urbanity that this implies. Kelvin Everest observes that

[t]he style is interestingly problematic for a radical poet, for it involves the danger of acceding to the ideological implications of that familiar idiom. And there is a strong possibility that Shelley was fully alert to this problem in *Julian and Maddalo*, where the single most striking rhetorical effect of the poem is the violently contrasting idiom of the maniac's soliloquy, which is set against the gentlemanly discourse of Maddalo and Julian. (79)

The Maniac's monologue is reproduced in the centre of the narrative. The speech itself retains the rhyming couplets of Julian's narrative, but lapses completely from the "urbane" style, consisting instead of short, broken

paragraphs in which thought succeeds thought according to no clear logic.

The Maniac is reputed to have gone mad after being abandoned by his lover; in the monologue he appears to address a number of absent women, or a number of aspects of the woman who has betrayed him. His manner shifts from moment to moment: he spoke, recalls Julian,

--sometimes as one who wrote and thought
 His words might move some heart that heeded not
 If sent to distant lands; and then as one
 Reproaching deeds never to be undone
 With wondering self-compassion; then his speech
 Was lost in grief, and then his words came each
 Unmodulated, cold, expressionless;
 But that from one jarred accent you might guess
 It was despair made them so uniform. (286-94)

In its patchwork of rhetorical effects, the Maniac's monologue resembles the polyglot "ravings" of Coleridge's possessed servant, which "were found to consist of sentences, coherent and intelligible each for itself, but with little or no connection with each other" (*Biographia* 1: 112-13). While the origins of the two mad discourses are located in quite different traumas, the fragmentation in each case leads to efforts to locate meaning outside the discourse: language, in each case, becomes an image of language.

When the Maniac's monologue ends, his unannounced "guests" return to Maddalo's palace, their debate forgotten; Julian soon leaves for London and the Maniac appears no more. A brief epilogue concludes the poem: Julian returns

to Venice years later; Maddalo is in Armenia, so Julian is received by Maddalo's daughter, now grown. Julian questions her about the Maniac; he learns that the lover returned, and the Maniac grew better, but that the lover then left again; the daughter is reluctant to tell more than that of the man's subsequent history. The conclusion of their interview, and of the poem, is this:

"Ask me no more [says the daughter], but let the
 Be closed and ceared over their memory silent years
 As yon mute marble where their corpses lie."
 I urged and questioned still [resumes Julian], she
 All happened--but the cold world shall not know. told me how
 (613-17)

So the narrative culminates in a suppression of narrative. This narrative withholding has been construed in divergent ways. James L. Hill, for example, sees the poem's conclusion as highly affirmative: Julian's withholding signifies for him the extreme poetic sensitivity of Julian and of Maddalo's daughter: "such understanding . . . belongs only to a few" (93). G.M. Matthews, too, sees the daughter as the ultimate sign of value in the poem: "Maddalo's child, who has been on the periphery of the story, now becomes the central figure, the only source of full understanding, comprehending and transcending the events of the past" (73). Matthews thus identifies a redemptive, substitutive relationship between the Maniac and the daughter. Newey likewise sees the daughter as a new sign in the Maniac's place, but with a negative significance: she "has herself

necessarily grown to an anxious knowledge of suffering.

. . . Julian's naive instance of human freedom has become a proof of human confinement" ("Shelleyan Psycho-Drama" 77). Others see the conclusion in the context of an indictment of Julian, and of his failure to act: given Julian's "paralysis," Earl Wasserman sees it as "an integral fulfillment of the poem . . . that it ultimately trail off anticlimactically in a kind of meaningless and prosaic indifference, without resolution" (81). And Tracy Ware asserts that "Julian's bitter reference to the 'cold world' implies that he has abandoned his earlier idealism in his change from hypocrisy to misanthropy" (122). The common element in these evaluations is the attempt, more or less explicit, to explain (away) the Maniac's disappearance as a signifier. This critical gesture echoes that first attempted by Maddalo's daughter, and then effected by Julian himself. These (attempted and achieved) narrative erasures might be paraphrased in the words of Wordsworth's Pedlar: "Be wise and chearful, and no longer read / The forms of things with an unworthy eye. / [He] sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here" (*The Ruined Cottage* 510-12).

It has been suggested that the poem's conclusion, in de-emphasizing the Maniac's story, chastens the over-curious reader and cautions her against the seduction of sensational narrative: it is "an admonition to make us consider the poem as more than a mere story," "a clue to direct the attention

of the serious reader toward finding the conceptual kernel embodied in the narrative" (Hill 84). The poem's preface suggests as much in speculating that the Maniac's "story, told at length, might be like many other stories of the same kind: the unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart" (113). Here, too, Shelley's poem echoes Wordsworth's Pedlar, who says of Margaret's suffering:

'Tis a common tale,
By moving accidents uncharactered,
A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed
In bodily form, and to the grosser sense
But ill adapted, scarcely palpable
To him who does not think. (231-36)

As noted with regard to the Pedlar's admonitions, the idea of "sufficiency" is important: the Maniac's unconnected exclamations should be "*sufficient* comment," as the preface says, discouraging excessive inquiry. Yet the epilogue explicitly foregrounds the Maniac's story as an object of curiosity; if the particulars of the Maniac's subsequent life and death are unimportant, the fact of his persistence as an object of gossip, rumour and inquiry is not. Julian may chasten the unworthy reader, in other words, but he does so only after he has depicted the scene of his *own* seduction by (or of) narrative--his own mad pursuit of the story held by a maiden loth, and his own gratification. In then suppressing the Maniac's history as he does, Julian in fact impresses the Maniac's seductive narrative power all the more firmly on the reader's awareness. He foregrounds the

Maniac, that is, as that kind of "unanswered question" which in Susan Wolfson's words "retains a disruptive effect, for its presence loosens the bindings of meaning by intimating something in excess of what language can say and frame" (*Questioning Presence* 21). Or we might describe Julian's concluding gesture by borrowing Jane Marie Todd's description of Freud's dalliance with the uncanny: "Unable to see what the veil hides, unable to reveal the *Unheimliche*, he has only managed to catch a glimpse of the truth before throwing the veil over it once again" (522).

This doubled suppression, which amounts to emphasis, is compounded by Julian's frank rejection of the reader. Wasserman notes that, beginning with the preface, the text makes "a series of strategic moves to transfer the moral burden to the reader and to incite him to come to a decision," and that, furthermore, the *reader* ultimately becomes the text to be interpreted: the Maniac is a gloss to self-interpretation (61). But this critical vision of a reciprocating text seems at odds with the narrator's unequivocally negative "interpretation" of the reader--as "cold" and implicitly incapable of understanding--voiced in the poem's final line. I agree with Marjorie Levinson that Julian's "final declaration is extremely disturbing. Julian's fear of his audience, his hostility and his detachment are entirely new elements in the poem" (*Romantic Fragment. Poem* 157).

The unsettling nature of the narrative's abrupt suspension, and the fact that it opens a rift in the narrative even at the moment it attempts to close it down, point to larger divisions opened up in the course of the poem's unfolding. *Julian and Maddalo*, like other works studied here, consists of two separate discourses inhabiting the same title: Julian's narrative, and the Maniac's monologue. The reader has hitherto been hailed to possess the masculine gaze just as Maddalo and Julian do; she has been invited into a kind of complicity with them. The poem invites the reader to accept Julian's as the primary discourse, and to regard the Maniac's monologue as a kind of exemplary accessory, embedded in the host discourse as a subservient illustration. As a rhetorical effect, in fact, the Maniac invokes his own situation as exemplary in his attempt to sway his absent interlocutor:

let none relent
 Who intend deeds too dreadful for a name
 Henceforth, if an example for the same
 They seek
 I live to shew
 How much men bear and die not! (455-60)

By the same token, Maddalo and Julian--the titular, and the only named, characters--become the poem's protagonists, and the Maniac, even when he emerges as more than one of the legion of the emblematic mad, is officially granted no more than a supporting role. And yet he exceeds this role, both within the represented world where Maddalo and Julian converse, and at the level of narrative. Before their visit

to the madhouse, the friends' talk is full of the semi-scientific language of demonstration and proof: the Maniac's "wild talk will show / How vain are [Julian's] aspiring theories," claims Maddalo, while Julian "hope[s] to prove the induction otherwise" (200-201, 202). When the mad monologue draws to a close, however, the friends "we[ep] without shame," their argument "quite forgot" (516, 520).

Just as the spectacle of the Maniac disarms the debate and renders suspect the language of logical argument, so the reproduction of his disconnected monologue within the poem breaks the urbane narrative's trajectory and seems to hasten the poem to its end. The monologue's effect, like that of the story of the possessed woman in the *Biographia*, is to dislocate the discourse that surrounds it. The narrated conversation leading up to the visit is protracted: 299 lines cover one evening and one day; after the visit, 106 lines cover a span of "many years"; the poem speeds to its truncated conclusion with a sort of desperation. Two distinct "moments" inform the poem: the fictional past in which the conversation and monologue take place, and the fictional present in which an older Julian recalls past events and reproduces the Maniac's words; and if Julian finds it impossible, in his first encounter with the Maniac, to fit him to his own argument, he finds it equally impossible to assimilate the Maniac upon "revisiting" him in recollection to write down his words. Narrative

retrospection does not bring with it, apparently, the wiser perspective of an older self. The Maniac consistently baffles attempts to "contain" him, to reduce him to the status of objectified exhibit or reified speech. To put it another way, his "illegibility" challenges the rules of a contest of interpretation in which he functions at the level of text. Charles Rzepka, reading *Julian and Maddalo* as a "revisionary conversation poem," identifies the "textualization" of the Maniac as part of a larger strategy for distancing Maddalo and Julian from the spectacle of suffering--a strategy in which demarcations between sanity and insanity contribute to the Maniac's objectification:

It is almost as though, by invoking the descriptive category ["mad"] and deploying the stage machinery of "madness", Shelley wished to establish a rationale for deliberately isolating the Maniac's auditors, for making them, in effect, "readers" of the Maniac rather than "interlocutors". As a result, what Julian and Maddalo (and we as actual readers) are forced to "guess" at becomes less a speaking subject who shares our discursive universe than a speaking "text" or poetic persona that must be interpreted--and responded to--in silence. ("Revisionary Conversation Poem" 136-37)

The Maniac's utterance approximates poetry, as both Maddalo and Julian observe:

the wild language of his grief was high,
Such as in measure were called poetry;
And I remember one remark which then
Maddalo made. He said: "Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong,
They learn in suffering what they teach in song."
(541-46)

Moreover, his speech is on numerous occasions likened to, or spoken of as, writing: he speaks of his own "sad writing"

and declares that "from my pen the words flow as I write" (340, 476). By conflating the Maniac's speech with notions of (literary) text in this way, Shelley "registers his intentions to textualise the Maniac's suffering" (Rzepka 137); but a further "ungrammaticality" appears in this process of textualization, in the lines cited above--a moment, probably common enough in poetry, in which the poem denies its poetic status. It is this: the "language of [the Maniac's] grief" as we receive it *is*, of course, "in measure," and Julian has remarked particularly on his clear recall of the Maniac's words--"I yet remember what he said / Distinctly: such impression his words made" (298-99)--in contrast to his avowed "translation" of Maddalo's words: "I recall / The sense of what [Maddalo] said, although I mar / The force of his expressions" (130-32). In insisting on the factor of measured language as a determinant of poetry, Julian anticipates Shelley's dictum that "the language of poets has ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry" (*Defence* 484). At the same time, in juxtaposing Julian's implicit assertion that the Maniac's speech is *not* in verse with the rhymed couplets that represent it, the poem disavows its own poetic devices. Perhaps this slippage need not be interrogated too closely; this is possibly one of those moments when we agree to suspend disbelief and turn a blind eye to the ruses of representation. On the other

hand, however, *Julian and Maddalo* is ostentatious in its refusal to "represent" the Maniac: the preface-writer submits him to the reader as raw, unmediated text, and Julian implicitly contrasts his translation of Maddalo with his transcription of the Maniac. This small ungrammaticality serves to remind us of the invisibility of the frame as unquestioned framework, and of Julian's as the shaping voice that subtends the entire narrative.

As they stand in the position of knowing subjects in relation to the Maniac as discursive unknown, Maddalo and Julian also stand, by extension, in the position of critics in relation to the Maniac as poetic "text." Maddalo's "reading" of the emblematic madhouse, in particular, furnishes an instance of self-conscious textual explication: "'And such,'--he cried, 'is our mortality, / And this must be the emblem and the sign / Of what should be eternal and divine!" (120-22). Each man anticipates that the textual "proof" sought within the signifying madhouse will lend itself to his own theoretical position. The terms of the friends' debate, while opposed to each other, nonetheless both exist within the same "master narrative" of philosophy. The mad utterance, however, proves to function within an alien "narrative," with no clear mechanism of translation. Like the workings of gynesis, the Maniac's discourse opens up a moment of linguistic crisis and throws the terms of the male master narrative into disarray.

* * *

Maddalo and Julian inhabit a world of connections. Shelley's preface alerts us to their irreproachable family connections: "Count Maddalo is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of great fortune"; "Julian is an Englishman of good family" (112, 113). This social continuity is echoed at the physical level in their easy relation to space: they never fail to make their travel connections, moving freely from sight to sight assisted by inconspicuous attendants. The sheer frequency of these instances is worth noting. Here are just a few:

Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men
Were waiting for us with the gondola;

As thus I spoke
Servants announced the gondola, and we
Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea
Sailed to the island where the madhouse stands;

Having said
These words we called the keeper, and he led
To an apartment opening on the sea;

. . . then we lingered not,
Although our argument was quite forgot,
But calling the attendants, went to dine
At Maddalo's.

(61-62, 211-14, 270-72, 519-22)

Like grammatical elements, these ubiquitous attendants (and Julian's care in noting them) denote transition and relation. Temporal progression is signalled as obsessively as spatial progression: the progress from the first evening, through sunset, to the next morning is meticulously marked, and of course there are temporal markers in the lines cited

above, in the referencing of movement to moments in the conversation. Once again, Bakhtin's term "chronotope" is useful in defining the effects of this meticulous mapping of space through time and time over space. The map and the clock, as devices appropriate to the chronotope of Julian's initial narrative, might emblemize the general notion of "measure"--social, philosophical, and linguistic--that characterizes this urbane framing world.

The careful, even tediously careful, narrative continuity leading up to the Maniac's speech stands in significant contrast to the speech itself and to the narrative that follows it, again testifying to the Maniac's uncanny effects not only on Maddalo and Julian within the narrative but also on the act of narrating itself. The Maniac is associated with a profoundly discontinuous space-time. If Maddalo's and Julian's is a world of connections, his is a world of missed connections, disconnections. The madhouse stands on an island, its physical isolation emblematic of the segregation of madness beyond the mainland of reason. Even its architecture appears to have resulted from unmeasured aggregation over indefinite time: it is such a building "As age to age might add, for uses vile, / A windowless, deformed and dreary pile" (100-01). The Maniac is singing in an upper cell as Maddalo and Julian enter the madhouse courtyard; his song floats down only in "fragments" (221). Temporally, he exists in a present disconnected from

the past; to Julian's inquiries about the Maniac's origins, Maddalo replies:

Of his sad history
I know but this . . . he came
To Venice a dejected man, and fame
Said he was wealthy, or he had been so. . . .
. . . he was ever talking in such sort
As you do--far more sadly--he seemed hurt,
Even as a man with his peculiar wrong,
To hear but of the oppression of the strong . . .
A Lady came with him from France, and when
She left him and returned, he wandered then
About yon lonely isles of desert sand
Till he grew wild--he had no cash or land
Remaining . . . (231-34, 236-39, 246-50)

Discussing their impressions of him later, the friends surmise that "he had store / Of friends and fortune once. . . . These were now lost" (234-5, 237). Thus the depiction of spatial and temporal discontinuity associated with the Maniac coincides with social and psychological alienation, and with material destitution and vagrancy: he "wander[s]," in contrast to Maddalo and Julian's controlled excursions. We might recall here the contrast between Margaret's aimless wandering and the Pedlar's purposeful travel in *The Ruined Cottage*.

The Maniac's speech, too, is divorced from the familiar connectives of sequential utterance. Published versions of the poem, following Shelley's instructions,² break the text of the monologue into sections, indicating

² Shelley writes to Charles Ollier, 14 May 1820: "If you print 'Julian and Maddalo,' I wish it to be printed in some unostentatious form . . . and exactly in the manner in which I send it" (*Letters* 2: 196).

breaks in the train of thought and perhaps suggesting temporal pauses in the monologue's delivery. The community of speakers implied in conversation is gone: the Maniac's interlocutor is an absent phantom, as he himself recognizes intermittently: "thou art not here . . . / Pale art thou, 'tis most true . . . but thou art gone" (395-96; ellipsis in original).

In this regard, Rzepka reads the Maniac's utterance as a "specific generic anti-type" of the first generation Romantic conversation poem, one that critically explores "the 'conversational' limitations of lyric expression" ("Revisionary Conversation Poem" 128, 133). To this end, writes Rzepka, Shelley stages "a sanitary encounter with the discourse of suffering," demonstrating in the Maniac's speech a literary mode that "paralys[es] any impulse to approach and respond to the soliloquist as a speaking subject" (133). I would point out, moreover, that the way in which this encounter is framed prohibits from the outset any intersubjective exchange: even before the Maniac's speech begins, he has been objectified in a manner that precludes response. His spectators, in the tradition of viewing the insane, have been led and admitted to the Maniac's apartment by a "keeper," having chosen a moment when Maddalo knows the inmate himself will be in a sense unavailable. He "communes with himself . . . And sees nor hears not any," in Maddalo's words (269-70). The Maniac's

eyes are "lustrous" but "glazed" (285), so that while he can exhibit the sensitivity necessary to Julian's project he cannot return the gaze Maddalo and Julian bring to bear on him. In this self-regarding blindness he recalls the trace of Margaret's cottage, "a ruined house, four naked walls / That stared upon each other" (*The Ruined Cottage* 31-32), and also resembles Moneta in *The Fall of Hyperion*, whose eyes, beaming in "blank splendor," seem "visionless entire . . . of all external things" (I, 269, 267-68). Even the madhouse in which the Maniac resides is at first described as "windowless" (101), although an "open casement" visible as Maddalo and Julian enter the room exposes him to the elements (276). As a blind object, the Maniac furnishes the ideal focus for Julian, who delights not only in looking but also in being "Unseen, uninterrupted" (554). Scopic mastery is threatened when the gaze is returned, and the Maniac poses no such threat.

In fact, the Maniac is hermetically sealed in his isolation by the enactment, upon Maddalo and Julian's arrival at the madhouse island, of a kind of ritual. The island is described primarily in terms of sound:

We disembarked. The clap of tortured hands,
Fierce yells and howlings and lamentings keen,
And laughter where complaint had merrier been,
Moans, shrieks and curses and blaspheming prayers
Accosted us. (215-20)

Madness is represented here as distorted utterance,
utterance turned to perverse ends (sad laughter,

"blaspheming prayers"). The Maniac, isolated from this cacophonous throng through a reproduction of the class system within this anti-society, appears first in a kind of "conversation" with this distorted utterance: he is represented synecdochically by "fragments of most touching melody" from "on high" that "beguile" the inmates below him into "strange silence" (221, 220, 226-27). When he ceases, "the din / Of madmen, shriek on shriek again begin[s]" (266-67), and at this point Maddalo and Julian arrange access to his apartment. Thus the "visit" to the Maniac is introduced by a miniature "framing": enchanting song flanked by shrieks of pain.

I am not the first to note that the Maniac approximates, at this point, Shelley's description of the poet in *The Defence of Poetry*:

A Poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why. (486)

At this point in the *Defence* Shelley is expounding the social and moral efficacy of poetry as he abstractly conceives it. The Maniac's role within the madhouse seems to bear out Shelley's assertions, as suggested by the fact that Julian interprets the Maniac's music as a potentially redemptive utterance: "Methinks there were / A cure of these with patience and kind care, / If music can thus move" (228-30). In Thomas McFarland's terms, Julian hypothesizes an

ideal wholeness, projected into the future, out of the diasparactive scene of fragmentary, tormented noise. Maddalo, characteristically, "takes the darker side," doing so in words that echo Julian's description of the Lido: "those are [the Maniac's] sweet strains which charm the weight / From madmen's chains, and make this Hell appear / A heaven of sacred silence, hushed to hear" (259-61). Maddalo's statement implies that the Maniac's song charms the "weight" but does not remove the chains; and the "hell" of the madhouse only temporarily "appears" a heaven, just as Julian "taste[s] / The pleasure of *believing* what [he] see[s] / Is boundless" (15-17). This exchange anticipates a series of narrative moves that will figure the Maniac as the anti-type of the Shelleyan poet.

The spell of the Maniac's music broken, Maddalo suggests that they should enter and witness his ravings: "'Let us now visit him; after this strain / He ever communes with himself again, and sees nor hears not any.' Having said / These words we called the keeper . . ." (268-71). His words imply the enactment of an habitual scene, as in the phrase "he ever" (and the word "strain" suggests, like "burden," both a melody and a painful effort). There is thus the suggestion of something almost ritualistic to the viewing: Maddalo knows the Maniac's habits, knows that moment when intersubjective dialogue is not possible, when the "show" is at its best. There is something important at

stake in this suggestion. This scene marks the transition from frame to picture plane: it is a threshold scene, corresponding to the literal threshold Maddalo and Julian cross as they "climb . . . the oozy stairs / Into an old courtyard" (219-20). By constructing the Maniac's "performance" as predictable ritual, Shelley further empties it of meaning, makes it even more "exemplary" an object. Maddalo's selection of the moment, in addition, indicates his deliberate commodification of the Maniac. It is as though the spectators calculate his absence from the domicile of the self and choose that moment for their "theft": they enter and "st[an]d behind / Stealing his accents from the envious wind / Unseen" (296-98).

In spite of its seeming incoherence, a certain progression is discernible within the Maniac's speech. He first laments the impossibility of expression: some prohibition lies upon him so that he does not dare to "speak [his] grief" or "give a human voice to [his] despair" (304, 305); his "secret groans must be unheard" (341); his woe is "incommunicable" (343); his heart is crushed by a "secret load" (346). Lines 300-382 are haunted by the destructive potential of utterance. To speak in a "human voice" would be to enter the intersubjective space of communication, to touch another mind; and to do so would be to destroy the interlocutor--to crush his listener's heart with the same load as his own (345), to cause her to "weep tears bitter as

blood" (342), to "infect the untainted breast / Of sacred nature" (352-53). A sexual metaphor--submerged, in these opening paragraphs--figures intersubjective discourse as negatively procreative: the intercourse of communication, so the Maniac fears, would engender "misery, disappointment and mistrust" that would "own [him] for their father" (314-15).

At line 380 a change occurs, or so the Maniac declares: "I must remove / A veil from my pent mind. 'Tis torn aside!" (380-81). This declaration seems to signal a transition out of the self-imposed discursive incarceration of earlier paragraphs. But, in keeping with the Maniac's demonic inversion of Shelley's conception of the poet, removal of this "veil" that pens up utterance leads to a further level of mystification. In "[a]ll high poetry," Shelley writes in *A Defence*, "[v]eil after veil may be undrawn, and the inmost naked beauty of the meaning never exposed" (500). Or the inmost horror. The veil the Maniac tears aside more closely resembles, in fact, that equivocal "painted veil which those who live / Call Life" in Shelley's sonnet "Lift not the painted veil" (1-2). Maddalo's introduction of the Maniac as an unnamed, exemplary acquaintance--"I knew one like you" (195)--resembles Shelley's evocation of an unnamed exemplary acquaintance in the Sonnet: "I knew one who had lifted it" (7). This seeker, like the Maniac, possesses a "lost" and "tender" heart, and, like him, is altered in the vain search for a

"truth" that, in the Maniac's case, seems to name both an erotic and a political longing. What the veil conceals, the sonnet's surreal mechanics suggest, are twin principles of compulsion, Fear and Hope, that jointly drive the subject "deathwards . . . to no death," to borrow a phrase from *The Fall of Hyperion*, in the "living death" that Julian pictures as the Maniac's (210). Behind a static veil, there is a principle of restless motion, like that of Life's chariot in *The Triumph of Life*.

In *Julian and Maddalo*, the veil "undrawn" at line 380 uncovers a new locus of the unspeakable in the figure of a more distinct interlocutor, seemingly the woman who has betrayed the Maniac. In the manner of a letter-writer, the Maniac rehearses her imagined response to him, evoking her "human voice" in a fragmentary tale of psychosexual horror. The exact nature of her betrayal is not named; figuratively, the lovers' bodies, like a dark version of the "inmost naked beauty of the meaning" beneath poetry's veils, are "never [fully] exposed" (*Defence* 500); in Maddalo's daughter's simile, their narrative and their corpses, at the poem's conclusion, remain equally inaccessible. In the course of the Maniac's speech, these bodies flash intermittently in fragments of signification: a lip, a grimace, castrating fingers. These diasparactive forms point to "deeds too dreadful for a name" (line 456).

At the same time, there is the suggestion that the lady's unspeakable cruelty consisted largely in *speech*. Those portions of the conflict that we can reconstruct are largely discursive; words are figured as weapons of destruction. The lover's curses are "Like self-destroying poisons" and "plagues of blistering agony" (436, 453). Her words are also implements that might be turned back on the wielder:

I thought
That thou wert she who said, "You kiss me not
Ever, I fear you do not love me now"--
In truth I loved even to my overthrow
Her, who would fain forget these words: but they
Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away. (402-07)

The Maniac is haunted not only by what the lover says to him but also by what she says of him:

when thou speakest of me, never say
"He could forgive not."

Thou wilt tell
With the grimace of hate how horrible
It was to meet my love when thine grew less

You say that I am proud--that when I speak
My lip is tortured with the wrongs which break
The spirit it expresses
(500-01, 460-62, 408-10)

The lip as the organ of both speech and erotic pleasure assumes a dreadful materiality. Lips are "tortured," as in the last instance above, or stand synecdochically for deception, as when curses act like agonizing plagues when delivered "from lips once eloquent / With love's too partial praise" (454-55). And the lady is not only a speaking subject: she also possess a wounding gaze. The eye, like

the lip, joins erotic pleasure with discursive pain. As proof of his lover's cruelty, the Maniac declares that "thou on me lookedst so, and so-- / And didst speak thus . . . and thus . . ." (458-59; ellipses in original). Like speech, eyes and lips both join subjects and divide them, and it is through figures of eye and lip that the Maniac reconstructs the history of their courtship, recalling the moment when "thy lip / Met mine first, years long past . . . thine eye kindled / With soft fire under mine" (467-69).

These dismembered body parts are uncanny. Freud observes that "[d]ismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist . . . feet which dance by themselves . . . all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them" (244). This fearful strangeness, for Freud, springs from the proximity of dismembered limbs to the infantile castration complex: they stand in a substitutive relation to the testicles and thus, by way of displacement, an unspeakable fear may be voiced. But the Maniac speaks even this fear directly:

That you had never seen me--never heard
 My voice, and more than all had ne'er endured
 The deep pollution of my loathed embrace--
 That your eyes ne'er had lied love in my face--
 That, like some maniac monk, I had torn out
 The nerves of manhood by their bleeding root
 With mine own quivering fingers, so that ne'er
 Our hearts had for a moment mingled there
 To disunite in horror--these were not
 With thee, like some suppressed and hideous thought
 Which flits athwart our musings, but can find
 No rest within a pure and gentle mind . . .
 Thou sealedst them with many a bare broad word,

And cearedst my memory o'er them,--for I heard
 And can forget not . . . (420-34)

I cite this passage at length because a number of strains in the Maniac's speech converge here. Once again, the erotic body (that "loathed embrace") is represented in conjunction with the eye and lip, with the eye as means of veiling ("lying") and the voice as the means of destroying the illusion the eye promotes. The Maniac names the fearful uncanniness of the curse as something that "ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (Freud 225), that is, as something normally repressed that evades the mechanism of repression. The nakedness of the curse is emphasized: the lover speaks in "bare broad word[s]," becoming the agent of the uncanny in thus tearing aside a veil. But the castration anxiety here functions also as a displacement of something else: in repeating the lover's curse the Maniac recalls his own fear, expressed earlier, of "fathering" horrors, and that act of engendering was envisioned as an intersubjective linguistic act. To lose the phallus, according to this association of figures, is to lose a voice. It is a prospect the Maniac both longs for and fears.

This fearful longing marks the final movement of the monologue. The Maniac complains of both an uncontrollable urge to expression and an equally powerful drive toward the silence and oblivion of death; his discourse seeks a point of self-annihilation:

How vain

Are words! [he exclaims] I thought never to speak
again,
Not even in secret,--not to my own heart--
But from my lips the unwilling accents start,
And from my pen the words flow as I write,
Dazzling my eyes with scalding tears . . . my sight
Is dim to see that characted in vain
On this unfeeling leaf which burns the brain
And eats into it . . . blotting all things fair
And wise and good which time had written there.
(473-81)

In the overdetermined language of this passage, speech and writing are one; breath and ink become scalding tears; tears in turn become the acid in a corrosive writing that engraves itself on the brain--a destructive script that overwrites the benevolent inscriptions of memory. If the Maniac represents a poet, he is a poet in whom the self-unbuilding properties of language come to the fore. If he resembles Prometheus--and this has also been suggested³--then he is a Beckettian Prometheus, subverting the structure of narrative authority only by virtue of the unspeakable impossibility of his situation. We might conceive of the Maniac's utterance as a sequence of negation within negation, as in his concluding words:

I do but hide
Under these words like embers, every spark
Of that which has consumed me--quick and dark
The grave is yawning . . . as its roof shall cover
My limbs with dust and worms under and over
So let Oblivion hide this grief . . . the air
Closes upon my accents, as despair

³ "[T]he Maniac is a *sermo pedestris* kind of Prometheus, written down to the domestic level" (G.M. Matthews 74).

Upon my heart--let death upon despair!
(503-10; ellipses in original)

With the figure of words as embers that extinguish truth rather than igniting it, the Maniac's speech completes its demonic reversal of Shelley's vision of poetry as laid out in the *Defence*, where the poet's "very words are instinct with spirit; each is as a spark, a burning atom of inextinguishable thought" (500). Words function as instruments of obliteration and concealment, rather than providing the illumination Maddalo and Julian sought in first proposing to visit the madhouse. Likewise their framing strategy--containing the Maniac's speech "scientifically, as a specimen . . . or voyeuristically, as a spectacle" (Rzepka 133)--gives way, in the centre of the poem, to a mode of framing more familiar from *The Triumph of Life*. Rather than employing the frame as a containing structure, that is, the Maniac's speech and *The Triumph of Life* reconfigure the frame as a liminal moment in a movement of supersession. In *The Triumph of Life*, each scene is erected on the vanishing traces of the preceding one, and thus the poem is structured as a deepening descent into oblivion. The Maniac's speech, too, expresses his longing for such a descent.

Rather than resembling dialogue, in which idea kindles idea in an intersubjective act of creative exchange, the Maniac's speech turns in upon itself. The Maniac feels the air "close . . . upon [his] accents," as if air baffled

speech, rather than being the very breath and medium in which it lives. It is no wonder, then, that curious disjunctions and elisions occur between these worlds of "connection" and "disconnection." The Maniac's world does not open out toward his observers; Maddalo and Julian's world defines itself by the exclusion of this "incoherent" alterity. Julian, for example, claims to dream of "reclaiming" the Maniac:

I imagined that if day by day
 I watched him, and but seldom went away,
 And studied all the beatings of his heart
 With zeal, as men study some stubborn art
 For their own good, and could by patience find
 An entrance to the caverns of his mind,
 I might reclaim him from his dark estate. (568-74)

Yet this vaguely imperialistic dream of penetration remains curiously self-seeking--the study is for the student's "own good." Such "study" maintains the Maniac in the position of object; indeed, it renders him into an aesthetic phenomenon, a "stubborn art" or difficult text, and thus retains the dynamics of the gaze. Julian's plans, moreover, carry this proviso: "If I had been an unconnected man," he writes, "I, from this moment, should have formed some plan / Never to leave sweet Venice" (547-49); "urged by [his] affairs," however, he returns to London (582). As in Coleridge's tale of the person from Porlock, or of the mysterious letter that purportedly discourages the publication of his treatise on the imagination, an external demand, here, provides an

indefinite reprieve from engagement with an excessive, unaccountable text.

As in those texts, the frightening prospect is an uncanny inwardness figured by a "cavern": the "caverns measureless to man" (*Kubla Khan* 4), the "dark cave of Trophonius" (*Biographia Literaria* I: 302), the "caverns" of the Maniac's mind (and amid innumerable additional examples we could include the "chasm" behind the painted veil in Shelley's sonnet (6), or the "cavern high and deep" of *The Triumph of Life* [313]). The figure is, of course, an archetypal one, associated with the feminine and with that uncanny, generative space, the womb. "[A] cave is--as Freud pointed out--a female place, a womb-shaped enclosure, a house of earth, secret and often sacred" (Gilbert and Gubar 93). The narrative locates the Maniac in/as this uncanny space, a move consistent with its location of him as the (implicitly feminine) unreciprocating object of the male gaze. We might recall Jardine's assertion that "the space 'outside of' the conscious subject has always connoted the feminine in the history of Western thought--and any movement into alterity is a movement into that female space" (114-15).

The Maniac in Shelley's poem is male, yet occupies a number of positions coded as female. Maddalo implies that an overly acute sense of political injustice initially made the Maniac "a dejected man" poised on the verge of insanity:

it is Julian's "utopian" theories that induce Maddalo to say "I knew one like you . . . With whom I argued in this sort, and he / Is now gone mad" (195, 197-97). As a disillusioned idealist, the Maniac fits the type of male melancholia. He characterizes himself as having devoted his youth "to justice and to love" (382). But, as the pairing of "justice" and "love" might suggest, his madness has sexual origins as well, as both the preface and Maddalo imply: an attribute of female hysteria. Like the knight in Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," the Maniac is placed in a traditionally female subject-position by being seduced, betrayed, and then abandoned. His doubled gender associations surface also in the epistolary strategies that he adopts; "sp[eaking] as one who wr[ites]" (286). His association with the castrated Abelard is clear, but he also joins a line of letter-writing heroines--from those of Ovid's *Heroides* to Eloisa--who have been "literally exiled or imprisoned or metaphorically 'shut up'--confined, cloistered, silenced," their "discourses of desire . . . repressed" (Kauffman 20).

The Maniac is further feminized when Maddalo "espouses" his cause, and turns his madhouse cell into a pleasant home which, nevertheless, he cannot leave. It is impossible that the scandal of his madness should be left at large. Maddalo recounts the story of the Maniac's incarceration: when his lover left him

he wandered then
 About yon lonely isles of desart sand
 Till he grew wild--he had no cash or land
 Remaining,--the police had brought him here--
 Some fancy took him and he would not bear
 Removal; so I fitted up for him
 Those rooms beside the sea, to please his whim,
 And sent him busts and books and urns for flowers,
 Which had adorned his life in happier hours,
 And instruments of music. (245-56)

Note the rapid elision, in this account, of the role of "the police."⁴ The Maniac learns to love his captivity, recalling Margaret in *The Ruined Cottage*, who "loved this wretched spot, nor would for worlds / Have parted hence" (487-88). Maddalo domesticates the situation by providing aesthetic amenities, and thus what begins as an episode of police discipline concludes in a genteel household scene. The Maniac's confinement by police is assimilated to culturally acceptable images of female domesticity; his incarceration is "naturalized" in a movement that renders something *unheimlich*, *heimlich* once more.

In its movement from brutality to domestication, this story of confinement seems to recapitulate, on a private level, the "ideological shift" in the treatment of madness that occurred during the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, when the asylum replaced the prison as the place of confinement for the insane. Elaine Showalter, building on Michel Foucault's

⁴ "In the draft of lines 249-50, the Maniac is brought to the madhouse first by 'soldiers,' next by 'watchmen,' and ultimately by 'the police'" (G.M. Matthews 82).

history of madness, notes, furthermore, that "it was also at this time that the dialectic of reason and unreason took on specifically sexual meanings, and that the symbolic gender of the insane person shifted from male to female" (8). The image of the hysterical woman replaced that of the melancholic man.

Given the Maniac's feminized subject-position, it is surprising that similarities between the Maniac and Maddalo's daughter have not been more often remarked. To revise my earlier models, three "conversations" are staged in the poem subtitled "A Conversation": the initial "urbane" conversation; the anti-conversation, in which the Maniac addresses phantom interlocutors and the invisible Maddalo and Julian "steal" his words from the wings; and Julian's conversation with Maddalo's daughter in the epilogue. In this last conversation, both parties speak--Julian truly "visits" with the daughter, as he did not in his so-called "visit" to the Maniac; and yet this conversation does not replicate the free exchange represented in the initial scene between Maddalo and Julian, where "swift thought[s]" flew "from brain to brain" (28, 30). Julian's final visit, like his visit to the Maniac, devolves into a one-way flow, replicating the economy of voyeurism. The daughter gives up the secret she has in keeping from the Maniac and his lover, and Julian absorbs it like an unreflective surface.

The Maniac and the daughter are initially introduced to the reader as competing examples, the ridiculous and the sublime; while the Maniac lives in a state of bondage and blindness, the daughter is "a wonder of this earth, / Where there is little of transcendent worth, / Like one of Shakespeare's women" (590-92). Yet Maniac and daughter become allies, even doubles; they share at first the role of nameless object; later, the daughter becomes custodian of the Maniac's story. Her plea to "let the silent years / Be closed and ceared over their memory / As yon mute marble where their corpses lie" (613-15) seems to imply, in her curious use of the word "yon," that she lives in the same place as the lovers' tombs: a place of silence. Hers is figured as a world separate from the "real" world of her father and his acquaintance, a world of literary representations, as Julian's reference to Shakespeare implies. As the woman who remains constant and stationary in the home while men like her father and Julian travel the globe, she represents the ideal of female confinement which the Maniac's domestication mimics.

Within the "domicile of the poem," Julian's is the "host" discourse, in which the Maniac's discourse is embedded as an exemplary object. In becoming "guests" of the Maniac, however--in making him their unwitting "host"--Maddalo and Julian perform an act of reversal that lays them open to subversion. In attempting to consume

madness (as a conversation piece) without becoming infected by a kind of madness themselves--in attempting to represent the alterity of mad discourse without altering the terms of rational narrative--Maddalo and Julian manifest what Foucault calls

that other form of madness, by which men, in an act of sovereign reason, confine their neighbours, and communicate and recognize each other through the merciless language of non-madness . . . that "other form" which relegates Reason and Madness to one side or the other of its action as things henceforth external, deaf to all exchange, and as though dead to one another. (ix)

The madhouse visit is supposed to answer the questions raised in Maddalo and Julian's conversation; instead it puts into question the very terms on which the initial argument is erected. We might refer here to Julia Kristeva's assertion that "in a culture where the speaking subjects are conceived of as masters of their speech, they have what is called a 'phallic' position. The fragmentation of language in a text calls into question the very posture of this mastery" (165).

Even before the friends enter the madhouse, we know that they will not find what they are looking for. Here is Maddalo's initial "reading" of the madhouse when it appears against the sunset:

"such . . . is our mortality,
And this must be the emblem and the sign
Of what should be eternal and divine!--
And like that black and dreary bell, the soul,
Hung in a heaven-illuminated tower, must toll
Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
Round the rent heart and pray--as madmen do

For what? they know not,--till the night of death
 As sunset that strange vision, severeth
 Our memory from itself, and us from all
 We sought and yet were baffled!" (120-29)

In a perverse way, the failure of Maddalo and Julian's quest attests to the success of Maddalo's interpretation. In his emblematic reading, the madhouse they appeal to stands at the point where searches are defeated, the very sign of bafflement. The Maniac literally inhabits this sign; he signals the fragmented self, self-unseeing. What illumination, then, can be hoped for from him?

Julian and Maddalo can be, and has been, read as a critique of Julian as narrator, with the implication that he represents certain aspects of Shelley himself. This critique is focussed at one level on Julian as a dramatic character who lacks self-awareness, who does not learn anything in the course of the poem, whose theories fail to coincide with his actions. At another level, as Kelvin Everest has noted, the critique is directed at Julian not only as an individual, but as a member of Shelley's own social class--a class whose hegemony Shelley repudiated, and yet certain of whose values had formed him, and inform his poetry.⁵

This aspect of Shelley's critique extends, I would suggest, to the very ideology of framing that has seen the

⁵ Julian is one of "Shelley's poetic doubles" who "characteristically represent conditions of limited or misdirected social awareness" (Everest 68).

Maniac's soliloquy embedded in the urbane frame of Maddalo and Julian's gentlemanly conversation. Julian's narrative re-enacts, at the level of discourse, the confinement of the Maniac. Just as the police arrest the wandering Maniac and place him within walls, so Julian attempts to contain the Maniac's "unconnected exclamations" within the reasonable limits of his own narrative. Conversely, the Maniac's speech enacts, at the level of discourse, a thwarting of narrative that corresponds to the emotional and intellectual confusion he evokes in Maddalo and Julian; this mock-lyric, mock-epistolary monologue, that is, refuses assimilation into the genre of urbane conversation in which it appears.

The Maniac represents the disenfranchized "others" who inhabit Maddalo and Julian's world. He is to them as unreason is to reason, as feminine is to masculine, as vagrancy is to established institutions--the first term subject to definition by the second term, yet exercising a dangerous power of subversion. The Maniac and his utterance represent the negation of the terms on which Maddalo and Julian's conversation depends for its very existence. Julian's ultimate suppression of the Maniac's history, although represented as both a protective and a tedium-saving gesture, is at the same time a second narrative attempt to "confine" the Maniac, he and his discourse having once already exceeded the container that was prepared to receive them. And yet this act of closure

merely opens the poem up more radically than ever; the Maniac and his story are consigned to the oblivion and silence of the tomb, to use one of the daughter's final figures, but they are also, by the same gesture, all the more deeply engraved.

CHAPTER FIVE

KEATS: THE TEXT OF BLISS

Just as Keats turned to dream narrative in *The Fall of Hyperion* in his attempt to frame the earlier *Hyperion*, so we, his readers, often turn to Keats's letters in our attempt to frame his poetry. Like a pictorial frame in contrast to the image it surrounds, the letters might seem closer to the architecture of our own world than do the poems' metrical "abstractions." The language of the letters lives somewhere between prose and poetry and thus provides a mediating language, not translating the poems but, rather, presenting a parallel text that seems to function as a kind of gloss, to offer a perspective or suggest a structure--to point a relationship between the poem's architecture of understanding and our own. At times the languages intersect, as when Keats composes a verse-letter, or when the poetry itself becomes discursive or didactic. The practice of using fragments of the letters to locate aspects of the poetry seems straightforward; it has lent itself to critical speculations of the highest order; but the relationship between these textual bodies is fluid, flexible, and non-hierarchical. I say this by way of "induction," both to frame my own reading of *The Fall*, and

to introduce within the outermost frame of that reading the notion of that moment when discourses come into contact. It is not a stable effect; there may be slippage, conflict, mutual transformation. The point of contact is also a productive and a troubling point of "faukture," to adopt Keats's word.

Keats writes to John Hamilton Reynolds, in September 1819:

I have given up *Hyperion*--there were too many Miltonic inversions in it--Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful or rather artist's humour. I wish to give myself up to other sensations. English ought to be kept up. It may be interesting to you to pick out some lines from *Hyperion* and put a mark X to the false beauty proceeding from art, and one || to the true voice of feeling. Upon my soul 'twas imagination I cannot make the distinction--Every now & then there is a Miltonic intonation--But I cannot make the division properly. (*Letters* 2: 167)

The "Hyperion" Keats refers to is both *Hyperion: A Fragment*,¹ and *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*, his "revision" of the earlier poem.¹ The first *Hyperion*, comprising Saturn's awakening, Hyperion's progress, the conference among the Titans and Apollo's deification, had been abandoned no later than April of that year; *The Fall*, incorporating a framing dream narrative, was written over the course of that summer.

¹ "Keats's remarks to Reynolds on 21 September apply to both *Hyperion* and *The Fall* (they were of course considered a single project, the later version an attempt to redo the earlier)" (*John Keats: Complete Poems* 478n). Stillinger's is the most widely-held view, although as Balachandra Rajan points out it "can be a question for dispute" (211).

I have chosen this letter as a way into *The Fall of Hyperion* primarily because of Keats's invitation to Reynolds to "pick out some lines from *Hyperion* and put a mark X to the false beauty proceeding from art, and one || to the true voice of feeling." In making this half-request, Keats appeals to a reader to complete a task that he, as writer, cannot accomplish. Moreover, he appeals for a specific kind of reading--a discriminating annotation such as he himself has performed on a text of Milton's: Beth Lau notes Keats's use of multiple "lines in the margin" (161), "marginal stroke[s]" (162) or "double lines running along [the] margin" (162) to mark passages that interest him in his 1807 edition of *Paradise Lost*. Thus Keats-reading-Milton becomes the model for Reynolds-reading-Keats. That Reynolds was supposed to distinguish Keats's true voice from his Miltonic intonations--to locate, in effect, Keats's reading of Milton within *The Fall*--reflects Keats's sense of the poem's involvement in a chain of interanimating readings.

In returning to the earlier *Hyperion*, Keats was not only re-writing, but also re-reading it. The frame narrative of *The Fall* depicts this scene of reading; the poet-narrator's observations in the temple of Saturn figure Keats's encounter with the earlier poem, which is reproduced at the centre of the text.² Multiple frames mediate the

² That *The Fall* is a poem concerned self-consciously with reading and writing is a matter almost of critical consensus. In the words of Tilottama Rajan, for instance,

external reader's experience of *The Fall's* embedded narrative. The poet's "induction" introduces the dream narrative, delivers responsibility for judging it into the hand of the external reader, and suggests that such judgement is possible only after the poet's death. Within the dream, the poet-narrator's reading of *Hyperion* is advanced through a number of metaphors such as that of his progress toward and through the temple, Moneta's "performance" of the Titans' story, and the poet-narrator's participation in its series of tableaux.

In framing the earlier *Hyperion* within a first-person narrative, Keats performs a gesture familiar to us from *The Ruined Cottage*, *Biographia Literaria*, *Kubla Khan* and *Julian and Maddalo*: the frame isolates the embedded narrative for review and reifies it as "text," ostensibly providing a measure of control over it and making it the object of the dreamer's gaze. The power relations seemingly

"the poem is engaged in reflecting on itself as an act of aesthetic perception" (*Dark Interpreter* 192). Andrew Bennett calls *The Fall* "a central inquiry into the nature of the poet-reader relationship" (152). Marjorie Levinson notes the transformative effects of this dynamic of reception: "'The Fall', whose primary task is to frame 'Hyperion', transforms that fragment from an expression into a figure, rendering *itself*, thus, a meta-representation. By the later poem's operations, 'Hyperion's' 'existence' emerges as an *idea* of existence" (*Keats's Life of Allegory* 261). Donald C. Goellnicht sees Apollo in *Hyperion* and the Poet in *The Fall of Hyperion* as paradigmatic of Keats's "pragmatics of reading": "In each case the protagonist finds himself, discovers aspects of his personality of which he was previously unaware, creates himself in the role of poet, by reading the human drama presented in the brain of Mnemosyne and Moneta respectively" ("Keats on Reading" 204).

implicit in the act of framing, however, are complicated by the fact that what appears within the frame--in the embedded *Hyperion* narrative--is the trace of Keats's original loss of control under the pressure of that poem's "egotistical sublime." *The Fall's* frame narrative cannot be subverted unwittingly by its embedded content, for, in typically self-conscious Keatsian fashion, the frame narrative subverts itself, representing the dreamer as largely passive in the face of his own dream.

The framing strategies examined in earlier chapters resemble, in crude terms, explorations of narrative mastery. The relationship between framing narrative and enframed material is initially posited, in each case, as that of subject to object. The object of observation (Maniac, possessed servant, widow) is penned within the space articulated by the frame, but ultimately dismantles attempts to contain it: Maniac, possessed woman, and Margaret reveal themselves as subjects, and thus an ostensibly masterful narrative is split dialogically. As a result, the primary narrators' control is compromised, and they and their "masterful" discourse become objects of critique. The subversion inheres in the very bid for control.

The Fall of Hyperion is analogous to these works to the extent that it represents, by means of its framing strategies, an attempt to gain perspective on a prior "text"--Keats's own *Hyperion*. Like Shelley's Julian,

Coleridge's medical men, and Wordsworth's Pedlar, Keats's poet-narrator stands at the point of the embedded narrative's first interpretation. But here the similarity ends, for where the others lay claim to some form of certainty or authority in their responses (in accordance with an unproblematical definition of framing wherein the frame unambiguously organizes the representational field³), Keats's poet-narrator begins in uncertainty only to progress toward an even more radical, and fully acknowledged, indeterminacy. It is above all in the self-consciousness of this indeterminacy that the differences between *The Fall* and the other works reside. "Subversive" reading practices--including practices exposing blind spots in the masculine gaze--are disarmed in the face of *The Fall*'s explicitly thematized lack of control over its embedded content. As we shall see, the Miltonic "virility" of *Hyperion* becomes, in *The Fall*, the focus of a self-doubting, feminized, and belated narrator, thereby reversing the dynamics of discursive authority enacted elsewhere.

The dream narrative itself begins, as Stuart Curran remarks, "from the inception of Cartesian mental process: 'Methought I stood . . .'" (218). It is interesting to note, however, that the archaic form of the verb,

³ The phrase is adapted (and extrapolated) from John T. Matthews: "Meyer Schapiro remarks that the practice of framing visual art extends from the evolution of an organized representational field" (25).

"methought," compromises the grammatical subjecthood of the poet-narrator, marking his uncertainty by casting him, for that brief, initial moment, as the indirect object of disembodied thought: the "me" in "methought" is the dative object of "thinks" (OED). Thus from the first word Keats depicts a slippage of narrative control; the *seeming* implied in "methought" introduces a note of doubt that undermines even the prolific evidence of the poet-narrator's senses: the sight of trees, the sound of fountains, the touch of the scent of roses. "Methought" suggests also Georges Poulet's description of the reading process as a kind of possession, wherein a text may be said to think itself through its reader. In the act of reading, writes Poulet,

I am thinking a thought which manifestly belongs to another mental world, which is being thought in me just as though I did not exist. . . . [S]ince every thought must have a subject to think it, this *thought* which is alien to me and yet in me, must also have in me a *subject* which is alien to me. It all happens, then, as though reading were the act by which a thought managed to bestow itself within me with a subject not myself. . . . Reading is just that: a way of giving way not only to a host of alien words, images, ideas, but also to the very alien principle which utters them and shelters them. (44, 45)

And so it is with the text of dreams also, when an unknown self reveals itself in a language both familiar and alien. This sense of the self being inhabited by a subject not oneself suggests also the structure of the uncanny: a doubleness that conflates the strange and the familiar. The word "methought" names a "*thought* which is alien to me and

yet in me." The alien subject reading itself through the poet-narrator of *The Fall* is both an earlier Keats and Keats as a subject ventriloquized by Milton.

Both reading and dreaming, thus conceived, enact Keats's chameleon sense of identity, as he expresses it to Richard Woodhouse in October 1818:

As to the poetical Character itself . . . it is not itself--it has no self--it is everything and nothing--It has no character--it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated--It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philos[oph]er delights the camelion Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity--he is continually in for--and filling some other Body--The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute--the poet has none; no identity--he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's Creatures. . . . When I am in a room with People if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself: but the identity of every one in the room begins [so] to press upon me that, I am in a very little time annihilated. (*Letters* 1: 387)

The lines suggest Keats's delight in the comprehensiveness of such a fluid identity. Keats refers elsewhere to his capacity for and delight in sympathetic identification, as when, for example, he writes that "if a Sparrow come before my Window I take part in its existance and pick about the gravel" (*Letters* 1: 186).

But there is also a more sombre aspect to Keats's credo of selflessness. Even in the letter cited above, the

exuberance of the early lines shades into something more anxious as Keats speaks of the threat of "annihilation" and of a kind of psychic homelessness.⁴ *The Fall* embodies these anxieties about poetic identity and self-difference through the character of the poet-narrator: "Thou art a dreaming thing; / A fever of thyself," as Moneta admonishes him (I, 168-69). She later questions her classification ("Art thou not of the dreamer tribe?" [I, 198]) without making an explicit retraction; the poet-narrator's identity remains in suspension. As Susan Wolfson asks:

Might *negative* capability mask an inability to understand the self in positive terms? Might a commitment to "widening speculation" and a rejection of "certain points and resting places in reasoning" tempt the curse of a perpetually liminal existence, of an "electral changing misery" such as Moneta's? (*Questioning Presence* 344).

The poem's formal gaps and divisions, its fragmentariness, the strange cohabitation of scenes, also speak of a poetry struggling with the alien voices that inhabit it.

As the dream begins, the poet-narrator's knowledge of his surroundings is fragmentary, impaired initially by the "screen" of trees. He turns to find a literal threshold:

Turning round,
I saw an arbour with a drooping roof

⁴ Aileen Ward notes "a new and painful self-awareness and with it a still more painful sense of self-division" in Keats's life in the later months of 1818. "His capacity for entering into the existence of others, once a delight to him, now became a suffocating weight on his consciousness" (219, 220).

Of trellis vines, and bells, and larger blooms,
 Like floral-censers swinging light in air . . .
 (I, 24-27)

The garden in which he finds himself is both "the paradise of Milton"⁵ and an autobiographical reprise, recalling Keats's earlier dream of a conventionalized, monological poetic landscape, as expressed, for example, in the 1815 verse letter "To George Felton Mathew":

But might I now each passing moment give
 To the coy muse, with me she would not live
 In this dark city, nor would condescend
 'Mid contradictions her delights to lend.
 Should e'er the fine-eyed maid to me be kind,
 Ah! surely it must be whene'er I find
 Some flowery spot, sequester'd, wild, romantic,
 That often must have seen a poet frantic;
 Where oaks, that erst the Druid knew, are growing,
 And flowers, the glory of one day, are blowing;
 Where the dark-leav'd laburnum's drooping clusters
 Reflect athwart the stream their yellow lustres.
 (31-42)

In the context of this very early poem, the scene, influenced by the poetry of Leigh Hunt, is part of a self-consciously "artful" poetry that shuns "contradictions" and withdraws from the world of human culture into a literary world of derivative, artificial nature. In the context of *The Fall*, at the farther side of Keats's brief career, the scene is doubly artificial, standing as the intertextual signifier of "artful" representation itself, with references both to an earlier mode in Keats's own career and to the

⁵ For example, Marjorie Levinson notes that "The narrator-poet . . . would seem to be observing the exhaustion of the Miltonic place" (*Keats's Life of Allegory* 214). See also Diane Long Hoeveler's discussion in *Romantic Androgyny* (245).

"artful or rather artist's humour" associated with the style of Milton. Any pretence that the scene might represent real countryside is abandoned in the assertion that the garden contains "trees of every clime": it is a catalogue of literary nature.

In *The Fall* this "flowery spot" is also a place of deceptive satiation: the meal of which the poet-narrator eats "deliciously," apparently satisfying an "appetite / More yearning than on earth [he] ever felt" (I, 40, 38-39), is a banquet of abandoned "refuse" (I, 30); the "full draught" (I, 46) that he drains is left over from this same feast. Thus this seeming point of origin already figures the poet-narrator's belatedness.⁶ Moreover, this world to which the *cogito* gains access is lush but undeveloped, a place of simple appetite and oral pleasure. It is both sexual and womb-like: the poet-narrator finds himself before a "wreathed doorway, on a mound / Of moss" (I, 28-29), suggesting both the body of a lover (the borrowed "delights" of the "coy muse") and the birth canal. Here, again, one of Freud's descriptions of the "uncanny" seems to identify part of the strangeness of the scene. The female genitals, according to Freud, are uncanny to "neurotic men":

This *unheimlich* place . . . is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in

⁶ On the notion of the poet-narrator's belatedness see, for example, Tilottama Rajan, *Dark Interpreter* (192), O'Neill (154), Balachandra Rajan (239).

the beginning. . . . In this case too, then, the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix 'un' . . . is the token of repression. (245)

Both systems (sexual and maternal) play a part in the poet-narrator's transition from garden to temple. But just as Moneta will not be the "coy muse" dreamed of years before, the poet-narrator's passage through the "wreathed doorway" is not the erotic idyll anticipated in the early poem. This transition occurs instead in a scene of barely-submerged violence which is, however, infrequently remarked:⁷

thereby

Stood a cool vessel of transparent juice,
Sipp'd by the wander'd bee, the which I took,
And, pledging all the mortals of the world,
And all the dead whose names are in our lips,
Drank. That full draught is parent of my theme.
No Asian poppy, nor elixir fine
Of the soon fading jealous caliphate;
No poison gender'd in close monkish cell
To thin the scarlet conclave of old men,
Could so have rapt unwilling life away.
Among the fragrant husks and berries crush'd,
Upon the grass I struggled hard against
The domineering potion; but in vain:
The cloudy swoon came on, and down I sunk
Like a Silenus on an antique vase. (I, 41-56)

The poet-narrator is *ravished* from one plane of being to another. His life is "rapt away" against his will, after a

⁷ Bloom, for example, notes that the poet completes his "feast of naturalistic communion with archetypal man" then "sinks down into a slumber within a dream" (422). Diane Long Hoeveler, more surprisingly, has this account: "After eating, the poet drinks to the presence of all the dead and of course male poets whom he claims he will confront on his mission of self-justification (44-46). After recovering his senses, the poet makes his way westward" (245).

struggle, "rapt," in this instance, conflating a number of significant meanings, from ecstatic or spiritual translation, to violent seizure, to rape. Like the poison of Keats's simile, "gender'd" in a secret cell, the poet-narrator is "gendered" by the assault, as it places him in a culturally feminine position, assaulted, overcome, and swooning. Confronting the "uncanny" woman, Keats's poet-narrator finds himself, like Shelley's Maniac, unmanned--or rather, *made woman*. His comparison of himself to "a Silenus" reinforces the sexual nature of the transformation even as it betrays, in masking, an anxiety about his evident passivity in the assault. Indeed, like the servant-woman in Coleridge's example, the poet-narrator is virtually raped by knowledge. It is the mechanics of *this* scene, rather than of the poet-narrator's later accession to "a power . . . of enormous ken / To see as a God sees" (I, 303-04), that approximates Apollo's acquisition of "knowledge enormous" in

Hyperion:

"Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
 Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,
 Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
 Creations and destroyings, all at once
 Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
 And deify me, as if some blithe wine
 Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
 And so become immortal . . ."
 Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush
 All the immortal fairness of his limbs . . .
 His very hair, his golden tresses famed,
 Kept undulation round his eager neck.
 (*Hyperion* III, 113-120, 124-25, 131-32)

Susan Wolfson notes the significance of a cancelled passage that makes explicit Apollo's feminine part in his orgasmic accession to (phallic) power, already implicit in the fluid transit of the elements of bellicose, masculine history into his brain's "wide hollows":

[Roseate and pained as a ravish'd nymph--]
 Into a hue more roseate than sweet-pain
 Gives to a ravish'd Nymph [new-r] when her warm
 tears

Gush luscious with no sob.
 (qtd in "Feminizing Keats" 319)

Unlike the poet-narrator's comparison of himself to a "Silenus," the nymph analogy in *Hyperion* is consistent with the other images in the passage, and offers no ironic contrast. *The Fall's* resistance to its own figure reflects, perhaps, the violence to which the feminized poet-narrator is subject. His "ravishment" into the realm of the poetic fathers, in contrast to Apollo's, involves not pleasure but pain.

Apollo's throes come about as a direct result of reading. "I can read / A wondrous lesson in thy silent face," he tells Mnemosyne: "Knowledge enormous makes a God of me" (III, 111-13). The poet-narrator in *The Fall* is ravished in consequence of a literal drink, but, given the similarities between the two scenes, it may be appropriate to cite Christopher Ricks's suggestion that "[f]or Keats, eating was a natural metaphor not only for love but also for reading" (180). Thus these figural sexual encounters

themselves stand, in a chain of figuration, for varieties of textual encounter.

As the poet-narrator is gendered by the assault, the poem itself is engendered: the "domineering potion" that is the agent of transformation is not only the poet-narrator's ravisher, but also the "parent" of his theme. As in Coleridge's *Biographia*, transgression results in a linguistic birth, effected ultimately, in *The Fall of Hyperion*, through Moneta's "hollow brain" and those narratives "enwombed" therein (I, 276, 277). Moneta's altar is "To be approach'd on either side by steps, / And marble balustrade, and patient travail / To count with toil the innumerable degrees" (I, 90-93), "travail" suggesting the labour of childbirth. It is significant that "Moneta" is, in Roman mythology, one of the names of Juno (counterpart of the Greek Olympian Hera). As Juno Moneta, she was the goddess of counsel; under the name "Lucina," Juno was the goddess of childbirth--"the goddess who brings to light"--and her festival, the Matronalia, was exclusive to women (*Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* 232). Moneta, as "midwife" to *The Fall*, assists at the birth of both writing and reading. She counsels the narrator in his role as poet; she also, and more explicitly, guides him in his reading, mediating between him and the "text" of the fall of Saturn.

The garden in which *The Fall's* "voyage of conception" begins (*Letters* 1: 231), is the first in a

series of narrative thresholds. It establishes one notion of "the pleasure of the text" while implying a certain immaturity, inadequacy, or danger therein; and it exposes the rifted and unstable subjectivity of the poet-narrator. The garden is succeeded by other sites, further frames. *The Fall*, to borrow John T. Matthews's term, "haunts the sites of division" (26). Like Keats's notion of the poetical character, the poet-narrator of *The Fall* has no proper place, but haunts those spaces "in between"--between the Titan and Olympian regimes, between an old poem and a new, between life and death. Andrew Bennett locates the poet-narrator at points of "faulture," borrowing Keats's own nonce word (157)--that is, at moments of disjuncture in the text. The mode of transition across or through these junctures is, literally, the "turn":

Turning round,
I saw an arbour with a drooping roof . . .
(I, 24-25)

Turning from these with awe, once more I rais'd
My eyes to fathom the space every way . . .
(I, 81-82)

Ere I could turn, Moneta cried--"These twain
Are speeding to the families of grief . . .
(I, 460-61)

Unlike Wordsworth's wandering Pedlar, Shelley's aristocrats in their riding, or Coleridge's wise men, Keats's poet-narrator stands frequently stationary while the scene alters around him, rather than travelling from one site/sight to another. His relative stasis thus reverses the dynamic of

movement/stasis that has previously defined, in part, the action of narrative framing. This reversal is consistent with *The Fall's* inversion of gender roles: the poet-narrator's stasis reflects a circumscribed feminine position. His one significant "journey" takes him further inward, into the temple of Saturn and up the steps to Moneta at the altar. The scenes that alter around him suggest also the changing of theatrical sets within the frame of a proscenium arch. This theatrical figure emerges fully further on, when the narrative of the fallen Saturn is staged within the theatre of Moneta's brain, and the poet-narrator experiences it as re-presentation.

These "turns" are, moreover, linked to a temporality that is one of *The Fall's* central concerns. Moneta, in her initial challenge to the poet-narrator, speaks the following words:

The sands of thy short life are spent this hour,
 And no hand in the universe can turn
 Thy hour glass, if these gummed leaves be burnt
 Ere thou canst mount up these immortal steps.
 (I, 114-16)

The disembodied hand, evoked by negation, recalls the Induction's reference to "this warm scribe my hand" (I, 18) that stands, synecdochically, for the finite span of the poet's life. If the turning hourglass staves off the moment of death, so too the "turning" poem is in some way a frail mechanism that marks the passage of time and defers the moment of death, when time will cease. This notion of

deferral recurs throughout *The Fall*, as in the south wind that makes "the dying man forget . . . his shroud" (I, 101), or the test whereby the poet-narrator "date[s] on / [his] doom" (I, 144-45), or Moneta's visage "deathwards progressing / To no death" (I, 260-61).

There are significant similarities between the poet-narrator's progress from frame to frame in *The Fall* and the "large Mansion of Many Apartments" that Keats, writing to John Hamilton Reynolds in May 1818, compares to human life. A similar architectural metaphor underlies both poem and letter; spatial progress through a vast building figures progress through time:

I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many Apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me--The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think--We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle--within us--we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man--of convincing ones nerves that the World is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression--whereby This Chamber of Maiden-Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open--but all dark--all leading to dark passages--We see not the ballance of good and evil. We are in a Mist--We are now in that state--We feel the "burden of the Mystery" . . . (Letters 1: 280-81)

As others have observed, the garden in *The Fall of Hyperion* resembles the "infant or thoughtless Chamber." It is succeeded by a glimpse of the pleasant wonders of the virginal, feminine "Chamber of Maiden-Thought": the stockpile of literary signs "All in a mingled heap confus'd" (I, 78)--a still-life of the "pleasant wonders" of poetic properties, gleaming, incorrupt, and inert. The poet-narrator turns from these props to discover the gradual darkening of the place: the effect of "Maian incense" spreading "Forgetfulness of every thing but bliss" (I, 103-4) is compromised by the negative inflections of a range of columns "ending in mist / Of nothing" and "black gates / . . . shut against the sunrise evermore" (I, 84-85, 85-86).

In Keats's letter, as in *The Fall*, the language of reproduction is associated with the transition from a maiden state into a knowledge of suffering: "among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man." "Breathing" (inspiration?) fathers vision in the (maiden?) subject: the outcome is a birth into, at once, awareness and confusion. The phrase "dark passages" in the letter conflates the architectural and the textual; the written passages that represent the poet-narrator's trial at the hands of Moneta explore those issues of which the letter speaks--the "giant agony of the world" (I, 157) and the uncertain balance of

good and evil--and culminate in a vision of "high tragedy / In the dark secret chambers of [Moneta's] skull" (I, 277-78). The letter's expression of psychic confusion--"We are in a Mist"--recurs in the temple's "mist of nothing" and the poet-narrator's "mind's film" (I, 146). Keats employs the same figure of speech in his letter to Reynolds cited at the outset of this chapter: "To night I am all in a mist; I scarcely know what's what" (*Letters* 2: 167). The poet-narrator's movement through the temple is thus akin to the autobiographical process as described in Keats's "Mansion of Many Apartments."⁸

The poet-narrator moves westward within this spatial/temporal structure, always with the presence of sickness and the possibility of death.⁹ In this trajectory he resembles not so much the Apollo of *Hyperion* as Hyperion himself striding toward his fall, "sloping to the threshold

⁸ Stuart M. Sperry remarks: "The change from the light and incense of the garden to the grim solemnity of the ancient sanctuary is vital to the sense of Keats's allegory. The change is that of moving from the realm of 'Flora, and old Pan' to concern with 'the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts,' or from 'the infant or thoughtless Chamber' to preoccupation with the 'burden of the Mystery'" (321). Goellnicht, too, notes that *The Fall* is "very much a poetic version of the 'Mansion of Life' letter" (*Poet-Physician* 140).

⁹ For example, his initial brush with death (I, 122-32); his existential "fever" (I, 169) and "sickness not ignoble" (I, 184); his vision of Moneta's face "bright blanch'd / By an immortal sickness which kills not . . . deathwards progressing / To no death" (I, 257-58, 260-61); and his yearning for death to release him from the vale of Saturn (I, 296-97).

of the west" in *The Fall* (II, 48), or, in *Hyperion*, "pac[ing] away the pleasant hours of ease / With stride colossal, on from hall to hall" (I, 194-95) in a couplet that sets up an equivalence between "hours" and "halls." This conflation of Apollo and Hyperion signals once again the poet-narrator's location at a point of "faulture," between orders. It captures too the coincidence of knowledge and decline, which might be arranged mythically as cause and effect: death as the "price" of vision.

The "Mansion of Many Apartments" letter is significant too because of the context that occasions the analogy. Keats is considering Wordsworth's merits, and comparing himself to the poet whom, at that time, he ranked above Milton. He writes:

I will return to Wordsworth--whether or no he has an extended vision or a circumscribed grandeur--whether he is an eagle in his nest, or on the wing--And to be more explicit and to show you how tall I stand by the giant, I will put down a simile of human life as far as I now perceive it. (*Letters* 1: 180)

As this prelude to Keats's simile makes clear, the "Mansion of Many Apartments" represents not just any life, but the life of a poet. And, to extend the simile, I would say that the successive chambers represent, not just a life of thought and exploration, but the *works* produced by that thought and exploration. Keats, who was not above a pun himself, speaks of "dark passages" and might have appreciated the double resonance of the word "stanza," with its roots in the Italian for "room" or "stopping-place."

The temple of Saturn in *The Fall*, by this reckoning, is both a representation of the complex landscape of the heart and a meta-representation of the *magnum opus* wherein that landscape is recorded. To move through the temple is both to read and to write this text.

In situating the *Hyperion* fragment within this temple--so that the narrator, as reader, literally tours the work--Keats had some notable models before him. In the Preface to *The Excursion*, published in 1814, Wordsworth lays out his plan for that "long and laborious Work," *The Recluse*, of which only a portion was ever completed. Expressing the relationship between his "preparatory poem" (*The Prelude*) and the larger poem, Wordsworth writes:

the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other, if [the author] may so express himself, as the ante-chapel has to the body of a gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices. (*Prose Works of William Wordsworth* 3: 6-7)

Coleridge, in Chapter 13 of *Biographia Literaria* ("On the Imagination") offers a contrasting architectural vision. Rather than the stately and organically-evolving edifice envisioned by Wordsworth, Coleridge evokes a place of terror and, more specifically, of bizarre and chaotic semiosis. In the persona of a "friend," Coleridge writes:

The effect on my *feelings* [upon reading the chapter on the Imagination] . . . I cannot better represent, than by supposing myself to have known only our light airy modern chapels of ease, and then for the first time to have been placed, and left alone, in one of our largest Gothic cathedrals in a gusty moonlight night of autumn. 'Now in glimmer, and now in gloom;' often in palpable darkness not without a chilly sensation of terror; then suddenly emerging into broad yet visionary lights with coloured shadows, of fantastic shapes yet all decked with holy insignia and mystic symbols; and ever and anon coming out full upon pictures and stone-work images of great men, with countenances and an expression, the most dissimilar to all I had been in the habit of connecting with those names. Those whom I had been taught to venerate as almost super-human in magnitude of intellect, I found perched in little fret-work niches, as grotesque dwarfs; while the grotesques, in my hitherto belief, stood guarding the high altar with all the characters of Apotheosis. In short, what I had supposed substances were thinned away into shadows, while every where shadows were deepened into substances:

If substance may be call'd what shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either!

MILTON

(*Biographia Literaria* 301)¹⁰

Both Wordsworth and Coleridge consider the role of the reader in this process of "edification." Wordsworth's simile, with its attention to "proper arrangement," sees architecture as a principle that will allow the reader to organize the poet's work in a culturally familiar pattern.

¹⁰ The *Biographia* appeared in July 1817. Aileen Ward notes of Keats's conversation with Benjamin Bailey that summer that "they talked of a hundred things--Syriac etymologies and Newton's theory of light, for instance, Coleridge's ideas on the imagination, Hazlitt's essays, Reynolds' decision to enter the law, and their dislike of literary ladies" (128). In an adjacent passage, Ward observes that Bailey had turned Keats's attention more closely to Milton and to Wordsworth's *Excursion*, which Keats "had evidently been rereading . . . more thoughtfully during his work on *Endymion* that summer" (129).

His model is the gothic church as a text subject to consistent readings.¹¹ This model is consistent with what Barthes terms the "text of pleasure": "the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading" (14). A similar model underlies Coleridge's mock-letter, but his subject is the violation of familiar semiotic systems: the initial contrast between the lucid "modern" and the benighted gothic gives way to a description of a distorted structure that seems to come straight from nightmare. The structure seems to be full of meaning ("all decked with holy insignia and mystic symbols") yet inaccessible; it violates the reader's every expectation. In this it resembles Barthes's "text of bliss":

the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language. (14)

¹¹ "To the Middle Ages art was didactic. All that it was necessary that men should know . . . [was] taught them by the windows of the church or by the statues in the porch. The pathetic name of *Biblia pauperum* given by the printers of the fifteenth century to one of their earliest books, might well have been given to the church. . . . Its great figures, so spiritual in conception, seemed to bear speaking witness to the truth of the Church's teaching. The countless statues, disposed in scholarly design, were a symbol of the marvellous order that through the genius of St. Thomas Aquinas reigned in the world of thought" (Mâle, vii).

This "state of loss" evokes the state of psychic and emotional confusion that coincides with the darkening of the Chamber of Maiden Thought: "at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open--but all dark--all leading to dark passages--We see not the ballance of good and evil. We are all in a Mist. . . ." Whether the text being read is an iconoclastic philosophical treatise, or, more fundamentally, "the heart and nature of Man," the architectural metaphor captures that crisis moment that contains both danger and opportunity, both "gloom" and "glimmer," the blindness (when "We see not the ballance of good and evil") that comes with insight (the "sharpening [of] one's vision").

A model of the poet (and by association his works) as temple appears in Keats's own earlier verse, in the "Lines on Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair" (January 1818):

O, what a mad endeavour
 Worketh he
 Who, to thy sacred and ennobled hearse,
 Would offer a burnt sacrifice of verse
 And melody.
 How heavenward thou soundedst,
 Live temple of sweet noise;
 And discord unconfoundedst-- (6-13)

That this "sweet noise" unconfounds discord implies that "Milton" is working as a "text of pleasure"--an awesome but unproblematical monument, a legible system of signs. The same sense of awe informs *The Fall's* poet-narrator's approach to the Miltonic *Hyperion*; but the temple which *houses* that textual monument more closely resembles the "text of bliss" in its gaps and its unsettling shifts. If

The Fall's temple of Saturn resembles another architectural structure in Keats's oeuvre, it might be the "Enchanted Castle" envisioned in the verse epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds ("Dear Reynolds, as last night I lay in bed"). In this poem, Keats describes Claude's *The Enchanted Castle* as "a Merlin's hall, a dream"--a chaotic patchwork constructed by temperamentally and temporally distant architects out of many "juts of aged stone / Founded with many a mason-devil's groan" (34, 45-46). This building such "As age to age might add" (*Julian and Maddalo* 100) is intended as a comic example of disordered imagination, but the poem's humour is uneasy at best. The verse epistle concludes by voicing the same uncanny trepidation expressed in Keats's description of the "Mansion" of human life:

Dear Reynolds, I have a mysterious tale
 And cannot speak it. . . .
 I was at home
 And should have been most happy-- . . .
 But I saw too distinct into the core
 Of an eternal fierce destruction,
 And so from happiness I was far gone.
 (86-87, 92-93, 96-98)

Home "should" be the place of happiness; but here, as in the "Mansion of Many Apartments," to see "too distinct into the core" or to "sharpen . . . one's vision into the heart and nature of Man" renders the self *unheimlich*: takes it "far" from *heimisch* happiness to a dark threshold within the self, towards things normally hidden from sight. Barthes equates pleasure with consistency of selfhood and bliss with loss of selfhood (14); the fragmented structure both of *The Fall*,

and of the temple it depicts, reflect the "faultured" self of the poet-narrator.

The temple's signification shifts throughout the poem; meanings alter as the reader travels through the text in a movement described by Wolfgang Iser:

each intentional sentence correlative opens up a particular horizon, which is modified, if not completely changed, by succeeding sentences. While these expectations arouse interest in what is to come, the subsequent modification of them will also have a retrospective effect on what has already been read. (53-54)

In *The Fall*, however, even in this process of retrospective revision that Iser describes, there are "intentional sentence correlatives" that simply cannot be assimilated to one another, where multiple significations exist side by side. A figure (such as the temple itself) might be subject to multiple definitions that overlap but are not coextensive.

Moneta offers two conflicting explanations for the temple's existence. According to one explanation, the temple is a unique textual trace of a vanished narrative:

"This temple sad and lone
Is all spar'd from the thunder of a war
Foughten long since by giant hierarchy
Against rebellion . . ."
(I, 221-24)

This figure emphasizes the role of reading in the belated framing narrative, as an almost archeological process of reconstructing meaning. Earlier, Moneta had spoken of the

temple, not as a ruined remnant, but rather as a compensatory structure:

Every creature hath its home;
 Every sole man hath days of joy and pain,
 Whether his labours be sublime or low--
 The pain alone; the joy alone; distinct:
 Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
 Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve.
 Therefore, that happiness be somewhat shar'd,
 Such things as thou art are admitted oft
 Into like gardens thou didst pass erewhile,
 And suffer'd in these temples . . . (I, 171-80)

The phrase "these temples" implies a series, and seems to identify this particular temple as a personal construct (i.e. that is why the poet-narrator is there alone). In this sense it evokes Keats's description of the reading process as a form of individual (self-)creation: "Now it appears to me that almost any Man may like the Spider spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel" (*Letters* 1: 231). Donald Goellnicht compares this construction of reading to Barthes's "hyphology" and notes in the same letter the related concept of "diverse Journeys," wherein each reader of a text will shape her or his own "unique pattern or direction" ("Keats on Reading" 199). The function of the temple as an individual construct is to compensate for a kind of "homelessness"--a figure for a state of "perplexity" in the root sense: of misery caused by being unable to "make the division properly" (*Letters* 2: 167). As in the verse epistle to Reynolds, "home" and "happiness" are associated in the lines cited above (I, 171; 177). The dreamer's

insight into suffering bars him from this "happy home" of uncomplicated self-presence.

Keats's sense of the poetical character as a site where boundaries (such as those between subjects) dissolve extends to a state where every thing bears the trace of its opposite--where Melancholy has her "sovrain shrine" in the "very temple of Delight" (*Ode on Melancholy* 26, 25). Or where, for that matter, distinctions such as that between "poet" and "dreamer" may be interrogated but not resolved. Moneta's contention that "every creature hath its home" recalls Keats's phrase "not myself goes home to myself": the distinction is drawn between the self-identical, the situated, the content, and the self-different, the vagrant, the perplexed. If this second class includes the chameleon poet, then the first includes, according to Keats's famous distinction, the poet of the "wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone" (*Letters* 1: 387). Psychic homelessness and perplexity, even though they conduct to suffering, are clearly valorized as the conditions necessary for true poetic sympathy. For example, in seeking to distinguish himself as a poet from that class of "dreamers" who "vex" the world (I, 199; 202), the poet-narrator imagines his antagonists asleep inside their homes: he calls upon Apollo with his "misty pestilence to creep / Into the dwellings, through the door crannies, / Of all mock lyrists, large self worshippers, / And careless hectorers in

proud bad verse" (I, 205-08). In this brief, incidental figure Keats seems to equate the safety of a permanent dwelling with a kind of self-satisfied blindness that precludes sympathetic identification with creatures beyond the "haven" of the self. Whereas the doors in the "Mansion of Many Apartments" are set open, the doors of these "large self worshippers" are evidently tightly closed. The closed door is the token of *Heimlichkeit*; the open door allows vision at the same time as it courts the dangers of the *Unheimliche*.

The temple--both as a scene of reading, and as the indexical sign of the events of the *Hyperion* narrative--is a site of trial. Keats cites his own earlier work and offers it for examination, yet within the framing narrative the dynamics of observation and judgement reverse; the poet's surrogate within the text becomes himself an object of scrutiny and judgement. The poet-narrator is challenged, denounced, and forced to prove himself on pain of death. As Susan Wolfson writes, Keats "tests the basic principles of his 'poetical Character,' by submitting a figure of the authorial self to a series of challenges to his claim to identity as a poet" (*Questioning Presence* 344). Moneta's initial challenge looks forward to the poet-narrator's vision and harks back to the Induction:

"If thou canst not ascend
These steps, die on that marble where thou art.
Thy flesh, near cousin to the common dust,
Will parch for lack of nutriment--thy bones

Will wither in few years, and vanish so
 That not the quickest eye could find a grain
 Of what thou now art on that pavement cold."
 (I, 107-13)

The image of the searching eye is linked clearly to the practice of reading later in the canto, when the poet-narrator compares "strain[ing] out [his] eyes" (I, 273) in search of gold to witnessing the story that Moneta remembers. Implicit in Moneta's challenge is the danger that the poet-narrator will leave no textual trace--that his poetry will not survive his bodily death, a possibility he hazards in the Induction. If he proves unfit to scale poetic heights, his punishment will be illegibility.

As this scene suggests, Moneta is the agent of judgement at this site of trial. Simultaneously an agent of Saturn--"Sole priestess of his desolation" (I, 227)--and an aspect of the poet-narrator himself,¹² she mediates between frame (the poet-narrator in the temple) and picture-plane (the story of the Titans). She is the hinge upon which the relation between frame and picture-plane inverts itself.¹³ Daniel Watkins cites K.K. Ruthven in equating Moneta with

¹² Sperry, for example, notes Moneta's role as "the supreme embodiment of the poetic conscience" (313). Diane Long Hoeveler sees Moneta as a manifestation, like Keats's "Psyche," of the muse as "fetish": "Both 'women' are primarily troped as the feminine aspect within the poet/hero, and both are seen as vital to the poet/quester's mission of self-knowledge" (238).

¹³ In this she resembles Maddalo's daughter in *Julian and Maddalo*, who both represents her father in his absence and speaks for the disenfranchized Maniac.

the goddess of money, noting the etymology of her name, and the poet-narrator's "twinge" of "avarice" at the sight of her face (156). I would see her, rather, as a more generalized marker of *currency*--that which permits exchange among systems, between unlike things. Moneta passes current in both the mortal and immortal worlds; in her, contemporary and mythological time exist concurrently, as she mediates the contemporary poet-narrator's exploration of his mythological subject. In this she resembles Derrida's *passe-partout* (matte, border and skeleton key; literally, "passes everywhere"); she embodies that which situates "[b]etween the outside and the inside, between the external and the internal edge-line, the framer and the framed, form and content, signifier and signified" (Derrida 12).

Situated at this liminal point of permeation, she reads in two directions; she acts as a translator, in the multiple senses of the word. She "translates" the poet-narrator in the religious sense, transporting him in seeming body to the country of the gods (in much the same way that he is "rapt" from the garden). And she manifests and interprets *Hyperion* to the poet-narrator of *The Fall* ("So Saturn sat / When he had lost his realms" I, 301-02). Thus she provides a vehicle for bridging the divergent registers, and more divergent projects, represented by *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*. She figures, simultaneously, Keats's interpretation of the earlier work and his anticipation of

the judgement which that work (signifying the Tradition, and Keats's efforts to join that visionary company) will pass upon him.

In other acts of translation she renders one language into another:

"Mortal, that thou may'st understand aright,
I humanize my sayings to thine ear,
Making comparisons of earthly things;
Or thou might'st better listen to the wind,
Whose language is to thee a barren noise,
Though it blows legend-laden through the trees"
(II, 1-6)

In rendering "barren noise" into signifying words she is closer to process than character, representing the workings of linguistic embodiment: the "mother tongue" of the Induction, birthing meaning from barrenness. The metaphor of the "legend-laden" wind recalls an earlier description of Thea's lament:

As when, upon a tranced summer night,
Forests, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night, without a noise,
Save from one gradual solitary gust,
Swelling upon the silence; dying off;
As if the ebbing air had but one wave;
So came these words, and went . . .
(I, 372-78)

A gust in a forest of dreaming trees: it is an immensely inarticulable event; and even Moneta's and the poet-narrator's renderings leave the "trace of translation," as when Thea speaks "Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue / Would come in this-like accenting; how frail / To that large utterance of the early Gods!" (I, 351-53).

Even given these perceived limitations, the poet-narrator sees Moneta's as the maternal body that promises to bring rich things to birth. His yearning "ache . . . to see what things the hollow brain / Behind enwombed" (I, 276-77) is compared to what he would feel "As [he] had found / A grain of gold upon a mountain's side, / and twing'd with avarice strain'd out [his] eyes / To search its sullen entrails rich with ore" (I, 271-74). The image suggests a bizarre kind of birth (rifling "sullen entrails"). In the geological, "faultured" body of poetry thus conceived, the reader becomes miner. Reading is figured as difficult, taxing: a labour.

The textual trace--the grain of gold--that triggers this "avarice" for meaning is the vision of Moneta's face. In keeping with the nature of his interactions with Moneta to this point, the poet-narrator is both repelled and attracted. He is repelled by the vision of a death that is present but held forever in suspension--"deathwards progressing / To no death was that visage" (I, 260-61)--at the same time as he is attracted, even comforted, by the blindness of her eyes:

But for her eyes I should have fled away.
 They held me back, with a benignant light,
 Soft mitigated by divinest lids
 Half closed, and visionless entire they seem'd
 Of all external things--they saw me not,
 But in blank splendor beam'd like the mild moon,
 Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not
 What eyes are upward cast. (I, 264-71)

This *blankness*, this textual gap, is what impels the poet-narrator, as reader, forward.

At this moment Moneta resembles Margaret's cottage in Wordsworth's *The Ruined Cottage*: a central signifier, a trace of and a housing for the embedded narrative to come, but mute--"a ruined house, four naked walls / That stared upon each other" (*Ruined Cottage* 31-32). Like Margaret herself, Moneta has been left "sole priestess" of a "desolation" brought about by war and by the departure of male authority, of the temple's/the cottage's central signified. The unforthcoming sign by its very inwardness, by this signifying absence, excites the reader's desire. The sight of Moneta's blindness makes the poet-narrator ache to penetrate that mystery. It is a moment of masculine desire; at the same time, his lips become "devout" (I, 292) where before his utterance had been "sacreligious" (I, 140). These inflections occur in a scene of transition where the poet-narrator appears to assume the gaze--he reads *Hyperion*--rather than being its object. I say "appears," for the visual potency that comes upon him--"there grew / A power within me of enormous ken, / To see as a God sees" (I, 302-4)--is equivocal and fades, eventually forcing him back upon his "own weak mortality" (I, 389).

At the moment of the poet-narrator's desire, Moneta, who has to this point been "reading" him--questioning, challenging, classifying, judging, deciphering his fear of

her veils (I, 255)--now becomes the stage whereon his understanding of the story of the Titans is performed.

Barthes writes:

On the stage of the text, no footlights: there is not, behind the text, someone active (the writer) and out front someone passive (the reader); there is not a subject and an object. The text supersedes grammatical attitudes: it is the undifferentiated eye which an excessive author (Angelus Silesius) describes: "The eye by which I see God is the same eye by which He sees me." (16)

The poet-narrator's access to vision situates him on the stage of the *Hyperion* text; he reads through Moneta's inward eye the narrative inscribed in her memory.

We have long been prepared for this journey into the skull. The movement through the temple, as an autobiographical gesture (the "Mansion of Many Apartments") has equivalents to a cerebral journey. As Goellnicht demonstrates, the journeys to the interior in both *The Fall* and the letter are informed by Keats's knowledge, gained as a medical student, of the physical "architecture of the brain" (*Poet-Physician* 141). The symmetrical staircases flanking the altar anticipate "those streams that pulse beside the throat" (I, 125): even as the poet-narrator strives to ascend the first, a "palsied chill" ascends the second (I, 122). The altar's "soft smoke," "white fragrant curtains," and clouds of "forgetfulness" (I, 105, 106, 104) approximate the "mind's film" (I, 146) of which the poet-narrator seeks to divest himself. The narrative itself lurches and circles like a mind in fever, reflecting

Moneta's admonishment to the poet-narrator: "Thou art a dreaming thing; / A fever of thyself" (I, 168-169). This textual febrility manifests itself in such things as the poem's proliferating thresholds, conflicting explanations for the existence of Saturn's temple(s), and the abrupt emotional shifts that define the poet-narrator's encounters with Moneta. As Michael O'Neill asserts: "'[T]he wide hollows of my brain' become the implicit setting of *The Fall*. Such hollows are further internalised in *The Fall of Hyperion* as an inwardness the poem longs for and fears" (160). By the very nature of the dream, we are already within the poet-narrator's brain; this outer frame redoubles when we enter the theatre of Moneta's mind.

As mediator between Titanic myth and introspective narrator--between *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*--Moneta mediates between two poetic modes. Marjorie Levinson summarizes the critical table used often to organize the relationship between the two: "'Hyperion's mode is typically characterized as objective, dramatic, Miltonic, and Greek, while 'The Fall' is described as subjective, lyrical, Dantesque, and Romantic" (*The Romantic Fragment Poem* 167). To this list I would add--as Levinson does--the categories "masculine" and "feminine," while recognizing the problematic potential of the designations. Levinson notes that *Hyperion* "was widely described as Keats's singularly virile poem" and that *The Fall*, "by contrast, [is] a

distinctively female discourse," given not only "the obvious time-space, linear-circular, external-internal, narrative-lyric, objective-subjective differences" but also the "distinctly sexualized intertextuality" (*Keats's Life of Allegory* 216). The phallic *Hyperion*, that is, is located in the interior of the fissured, feminine text of *The Fall*. Moneta is figured as powerful in herself, associated with inscription, reading, reproduction; but this (foster) mother¹⁴ is also figured explicitly as an agent of the Father ("sole priestess of his desolation").

When the poet-narrator does at last approach the sunken vale of Saturn, it is to confront an epitome of the male master narrative: the patriarch deposed in the perpetual Oedipal struggle yet retaining an "unchangeable attribute," "postured motionless, / Like sculpture builded up upon the grave / Of [his] own power" with a woman's hair as a "mat for [his] feet" (I, 382-84, 381). At first, what the poet-narrator sees appears to be a static scene--"what first I thought an image huge, / Like to the image pedestal'd so high / In Saturn's temple" (I, 298-300)--quite separate from him as viewer, and isolated beneath a frame of "gloomy boughs" (I, 297). Moneta, the agent of his reading, provides a textual gloss: "So Saturn sat / When he had lost

¹⁴ Apollo is her "dear foster child" (I, 286); i.e. she is the simulacrum of a mother to this motherless child; the relationship extends, by analogy between *Hyperion* and *The Fall*, to the poet-narrator as the "replacement" of Apollo.

his realms" (I, 301-02). Like a magic key, this slight interpretive gesture completes the poet-narrator's education in masterful reading; he gains a "power . . . of enormous ken" (I, 303) and claims: "The lofty theme / At those few words hung vast before my mind, / With half unravel'd web" (I, 306-08).

As a metaphor for the reading process this "half unravel'd web" suggests a text that offers the reader a vast imaginative scope. It recalls Keats's evocation of the reading process in his letter of February 1818, when he writes:

the points of leaves and twigs on which the Spider begins her work are few and she fills the Air with a beautiful circuiting: man should be content with as few points to tip with the fine Webb of his Soul and weave a tapestry empyrean . . . (*Letters* 1: 232)

Goellnicht reads this simile as a celebration of "literary openness" in the sense employed by Wolfgang Iser and Umberto

Eco:

it is . . . plausible that the few solid points forming the foundation of the web are the text itself (which for the reader acts as a stimulating sensation) from which the reader builds his or her own "tapestry empyrean," reconstructs or re-creates the text according to his or her own imaginative vision. Rather than being a fixed, closed entity, the text, acted upon by the reader, becomes a flowing texture, a fluid textile, a tapestry or tissue of sensations and speculations . . . ("*Keats on Reading*" 197)

Indeed, the poet-narrator has dealt throughout with textual "gaps," and has on a small scale woven completed patterns out of synedochal, perceptual fragments. In the garden he

imagines fountains from sound (I, 22-23) and roses from scent (I, 23-24); he has read Moneta in the same way, interpreting earnestness in stirring gauze (I, 217) and the shedding of tears in a tone of voice (I, 220-21). The image of the *Hyperion* narrative as a "web," especially given the simile's intertextual antecedents, seems to promise a text in which the reader has room to wander imaginatively. The related sense of reciprocity, of sympathetic identification between reader and text, is furthered by the poet-narrator's description of response: "Then came the griev'd voice of Mnemosyne, / And griev'd I harken'd" (I, 331-32).

But the congenial, flexible text disappears some lines later. When the poet-narrator enters a state of arrest, as if infected with Saturn's stasis, it seems like a ghastly parody of Keats's credo of sympathetic identification. Rather than leading to a process of self-creation, the reading process now conducts to a state that is "deathwards progressing / To no death," to recall the description of Moneta's face:

Without stay or prop
 But my own weak mortality, I bore
 The load of this eternal quietude . . .
 And every day methought I grew
 More gaunt and ghostly. Oftentimes I pray'd
 Intense, that death would take me from the vale
 And all its burthens. (I, 398-90, 395-98)

Metatextually, Keats is surveying at this moment his Miltonic self. To recur to a phrase from his letter on the poetical character: he revisits the Miltonic body he had

attempted to inhabit, and a project whose strong Miltonic identity had "begun so to press upon him" that the earlier poem was eventually annihilated. The poem here enacts the oppressive effects of being ventriloquized by another's voice. The scene evokes Poulet's notion of reading as an invasion by an alien subject, but, unlike Poulet's model, the host self is eclipsed by its parasite. This kind of text is "domineering," rather than open.

Even in decline, Saturn's "strong identity" (*Hyperion* I, 114) casts a transfixing spell that lasts for some time. When Saturn speaks, however, he introduces a generic dissonance not present in *Hyperion*; he is "feeble," less like a god than "some old man of the earth" (I, 440). Nevertheless, the poet-narrator's encounter with Saturn's image leaves him exhausted and fearful, to the point where he contemplates withdrawing from his own dream and leaving his reader to continue without him:

And she spake on,
As ye may read who can unwearied pass
Onward from the antichamber of this dream,
Where even at the open doors awhile
I must delay, and glean my memory
Of her high phrase: perhaps no further dare.
(I, 463-68)

This curious gesture, which fractures our sense of continuity between the narrator and his narrative (the dreamer and his dream), delivers the poem once again into a radical openness, emblemized in Thea's "stretch[ing] her white arm through the hollow dark, / Pointing some whither"

(I, 455-56). Whatever Thea points to is not identified within the text and so the gesture, like the "ethereal finger-pointings" Keats speaks of in his letter on reading (1: 231), conducts the reader to a place outside the text. The "open doors" of the next canto (I, 466), when broached, conduct to yet further progress without arrival, as Hyperion continues the movement initiated in Canto I, "sloping to the threshold of the west" (II, 48). The poem's final line, "on he flared" (II, 61), suspends the poem's "pre-liminary" motion in mid-flight, echoing Thea's pointing arm.

Thus the fragment concludes in a series of dynamic edges that deliver the reader (and the poet-narrator, the reader within the text) from the fixity of the vale of Saturn. If the embedded *Hyperion* fragment approximates an attempt to speak in the borrowed voice of literary tradition, the faulted narrative that surrounds it speaks of the impossibility of doing so. Between the two positions arises that edge that Barthes speaks of as constitutive of the text of bliss:

Two edges are created: an obedient, conformist, plagiarizing edge (the language is to be copied in its canonical state, as it has been established by schooling, good usage, literature, culture), and *another edge*, mobile, blank (ready to assume any contours), which is never anything but the site of its effect: the place where the death of language is glimpsed. These two edges, *the compromise they bring about*, are necessary. Neither culture nor its destruction is erotic; it is the seam between them, the fault, the flaw, which becomes so. (6-7)

This literary erotics emerges, however, within the horizon of yet another edge--"mobile, blank"--that haunts the margins of *The Fall*: the death of the poet, and that moment when all that has been faultured, self-creating or negatively capable becomes knowable.

CONCLUSION

In considering this selection of "diversely fram'd" narratives, I have posited one view of "framing" as a strategy of interpretive and narrative control aligned with culturally masculine ideals of mastery, authority, and analysis, while identifying that which is represented within the frame as "other," as a repressed or suppressed element often coded as feminine which "refuses to stay silent within its frame of representation" (Jardine 88). The texts by Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley studied here epitomize this structural dynamic, while *The Fall of Hyperion*, which marks the turning point in my own narrative, deploys the apparatus of the frame only to turn its conventions inside out. I have rehearsed this argument about the gender of writerly authority, however, in the context of a study of four canonical, male authors, and this strategy might require some explanation.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their now classic study *The Madwoman in the Attic*, develop their "feminist poetics" against the background of a tradition in which authorship is troped as radically male, steeped in "imagery of succession, of paternity, of hierarchy" (5): With God the Father, author of the Book of Nature--and the Book of

Judgement--as prototype, the male author in Western society "is simultaneously, like his divine counterpart, a father, a master or ruler, and an owner: the spiritual type of a patriarch" (7). This broadly-based definition of authorship figures the objects of the male author's writing as his creatures, and thus women occupy, within literary as within general culture, the position of object. Gilbert and Gubar's language in the following statement captures women's position as both the grammatical object of the male verb, and the human object of male judgement:

As a creation "penned" by man, . . . woman has been "penned up" or "penned in." As a sort of "sentence" man has spoken, she has herself been "sentenced": fated, jailed, for he has both "indited" her and "indicted" her. As a thought he has "framed," she has been both "framed" (enclosed) in his texts, glyphs, graphics, and "framed up" (found guilty, wanting) in his cosmologies. (13)

The similarity between this description and the situation of, for example, Coleridge's possessed servant woman--labouring under the sentences passed down from the Greek and Latin fathers and subject to judgement by the community's male authorities--bears out the position of Romantic texts such as the *Biographia* within this patrilineal tradition of authorship. *The Madwoman in the Attic* explores the way in which nineteenth-century women writers, thus hemmed in, sought to evade these patriarchal constraints through the representation of female anxieties about social and literary confinement (xii). The present study has sought to uncover

some of the pressures this tradition of confinement exerts within the male-authored texts that participate in it.

Gilbert and Gubar take pains to point out that figures of enclosure in male-authored texts serve different aesthetic and philosophical projects than those in female-authored texts, distinguishing "between, on the one hand, that which is both metaphysical and metaphorical [in men's texts], and on the other hand, that which is social and actual" in women's texts (86). But if, pairing anglo-American feminism with French, we consider the movement Gilbert and Gubar identify as manifesting that "crisis in legitimation" in male narratives announced by Jardine, then we might read at least some images of confinement in male-authored texts as likewise marked by concerns with the subject-position of women and the related role of that which is coded as "feminine" in literary tradition. This concern, to be sure, in some texts takes the form of a sense of threat; in others, however, it manifests itself as a more sympathetic interrogation of the effects of repressive constructions of authority. David Clark argues for William Blake's awareness of, and objection to, "the fatal complicity between the assertive, classificatory idiom of Western ways of knowing and being; with its emphasis on the containment of the Other and the absolute sublation of contrariety, and the calculated distribution of power and knowledge within any given social formation or institution"

(165), contrasting Blake's representations of Urizenic "exclusionary acts" to his alternative use of "the frame as a border, neither entirely inside nor outside" (207). This awareness of the simultaneous dominance and brittleness of exclusionary, patriarchal "Western ways of knowing" informs other Romantic texts as well. The texts studied here manifest a range of responses to this awareness, from *The Ruined Cottage's* attempts to seal, in Yu Zhang's words, a "rift in the discourse of domestication" (160), to *The Fall's* anxious exploration of those uncanny spaces that threaten the stability of the Romantic male poet's "strong identity, [his] real self" (*Hyperion* I, 114).

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