CRITICAL THEORIES IN EIGHTEENTH - CENTURY ENGLAND.

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A THESIS

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Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden.

T.S. Eliot.

So the mistake, it may be argued, is theirs, and our conception . . . is right. This would be so if, to understand the spirit of an age, it sufficed to know its real and hidden forces and not its illusions, its fancies, and its errors. But for the history of civilisation every delusion or opinion of an epoch has the value of an important fact.

J. Huizinga.

PREFACE

This thesis began life as an attempt to relate the main critical theories of the eighteenth century to those of the first Romantic poets, and possibly to find reason in this for the rise of criticism as a significant part of literature. This plan, through the shortness of time, has been artificially truncated. The period 1781-1798, from the publication of Johnson's Lives of the Poets to the first edition of the Lyrical Ballads, which is probably most crucial, has had to be ignored. Of course, the progress of critical ideas in toto is not regular, so that many relatively advanced works have been omitted too, though being early in a chronological sense. Most significant of these are Kames' Elements of Criticism (1762), Dugald Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind (1792), and Alexander Gerard's An Essay on Taste (1759). It is by such people as these, particularly the first two, that the process of defining subjectivity, and fixing its terminology was perfected. It would seem that from the precision of their findings, Wordsworth and Coleridge were able to formulate theories specifically of poetry and its place in life.

It remains, therefore, to justify the value of the thesis as it stands, as having, nevertheless, an internal coherence. This has been done by the choice of Johnson as a

pivotal figure. From an understanding of his opinions it is easy to see all the signs of Romanticism, together with much that is neo-classical, and very much that is derived from strictly English eighteenth century sources.

Further to this, concurrent with the growing refinement of neo-classicism which undoubtedly marked the age,[1] ran a reaction to the early neo-classicism of Pope. This reaction took, in the main, two forms: through the theoretical development of the imagination, and of the passions. The distinction between the "fancy" and the "imagination" became apparent before it was rationalised as such by Coleridge, and there were good reasons, first for the predominance of the "fancy" and then for its evident insufficiency, and its ultimate defeat by its suppressed counterpart, the imagination.

The passions, too, became a popular source of poetry, and the Romantic poets' insistence on this in their work besides the faculty of imagination, provides a link between the period I am dealing with in most detail, and the theories of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

This thesis is partly constructed on the simple premise that because many critics mentioned several criteria in almost the same sentence, it is important to investigate the

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[1] See for example B.H. Bronson, "When was Neo-classicism?" in Studies in Criticism and Aesthetics 1660-1800, ed. Anderson and Shea, (Minneapolis, 1967), pp. 13-36.

nature of these criteria. On this head, the movement of the critical theories around the quality of the Sublime has been included, as it is, possibly, neo-classicism apart, the single most characteristic interest of the time. It passes out of currency, however, with the Romantics, as a question central to critical theory. Its importance to this study is that it reflects broadly the movements of the times, and depends ultimately on the theory of the passions, and is not itself depended upon.

The logical connection of the occasionally disparate ideas dealt with in this work is partly a result of the fact that the ideas themselves were combined most succesfully by the Romantics, and neither fully defined nor combined by the critics with whom I have dealt in most detail. It is part of my whole point to stress that pre-Romantic theorists were not often able to make a theory which logically cohered, but usually resorted to a single-minded interest in one artifically separated ingredient.

Though I did not set out to do so, I have found myself trespassing into philosophical grounds, and it has been necessary to simplify these points. In connection with this, I have also found myself referring to twentieth century problems on the nature of reality, and in a sense, the investigation of the terms of the origin of these problems is the most important theme "discover'd not devis'd" in the whole work.

* * *

My thanks go to Dr. W.J.B. Owen, who has supervised this work, for his patience and help with this thesis from its outset. The many discussions I have had with him have been immensely enjoyable and profitable. I would also like to make acknowledgement of assistance and discussion twelve months long, from Mr. Bert Watson and Mr. Chris Searle. It may be that amici fures temporis, but in this case it was fruitfully stolen. My thanks also go to my fiancee, Miss Rosemarie Bier, who typed the work.

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CHAPTER I

I am going to begin with a passage from Dr. Johnson, but before doing so, it would seem to be necessary to put him in his place in the present scheme. Without doubt one of the major critics in the period under consideration, his work will be used pervasively, and he will not have such a large section as many lesser critics, devoted entirely to himself. One reason for this is perhaps best expressed by M. H. Abrams:

> Johnson's total point of view is often misinterpreted because he usually argues to the single point or document at issue, by an appeal to only so much of the general principle as the case requires. [1]

Because Johnson argues in a strictly witty manner and can formulate a generality to make only so much of it apply to the case in point, it is extremely difficult to isolate the generality from its context. I would go so far as to say that Johnson's generalities do not always exist fully outside their context. For this reason, then, it may be best to re-use them in a general context, and try to take out only what is needed. The Dictionary is by no means a definitive document; it is often representative but sometimes idiosyncratic.

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[1] M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York, 1958), p. 40.

Johnson's knowledge is wide, but is not available in any single manifesto[2], which physical difficulty is another valid reason for not attempting to do composite justice to his opinions.

A third reason for not having a sole section on Dr. Johnson is that in the contradictions we find in his thought are a good indication of the general dilemma of the century. His insights into the limitations of his times' theories, and his stubborn retention of rigidly moralistic criteria are equally useful points of reference.

There might have been due justification in making Johnson a pivotal figure, but as my interest is mainly in what ideas were current in the eighteenth century, and not ultimately in Dr. Johnson, the method chosen should be the best.

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An excellent place to start is at a point when Johnson is wearing his neoclassicist's cap. In the "Life of Pope"[3] Johnson is able to apply his own strict neo-classicist terms to a neo-classicist as strict as himself.

> Pope had, in proportions very nicely adjusted to each other, all the quantities that constitute genius. He had Invention, by which new trains

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[2] Notice, however, The Critical Opinions of Samuel Johnson, ed. W.E. Brown, (New York, 1961).

[3] S. Johnson, "Life of Pope" in Lives of the Poets (London, 1925), Vol. II.

> of events are formed, and new scenes of imagery displayed, as in The Rape of the Lock; and by which extrinsic and adventitious embellishments and illustrations are connected with a known subject, as in the Essay on Criticism. He had Imagination, which strongly impresses on the writer's mind, and enables him to convey to the reader, the various forms of nature, incidents of life, and energies of passion, as in his Eloisa, Windsor Forest, and the Ethic Epistles. He had Judgement, which selects from life or nature what the present purpose requires, and by separating the essence of things from its concomitants, often makes the representation more powerful than the reality: and he had the colours of language always before him, ready to decorate his matter with every grace of elegant expression, as when he accomodates his diction to the wonderful multiplicity of Homer's sentiments and descriptions. [4]

This passage is one of the clearest accounts Johnson gives of the ingredients of poetic genius, and is interesting in addition because it would seem to imply an explanation of the creative process. It is noteworthy at once that "imagination" occupies a third part of the total nature of the poet, and though apparently not the first sequentially it is convenient to clarify Johnson's views on this faculty before going any further.

Johnson himself was consistently praised, at least by Boswell, for the possession of this faculty of imagination:

> His mind was so full of imagery, that he might have been perpetually a poet . . . In him were united a most logical head with a most fertile imagination, which gave him an extraordinary advantage in arguing. [5]

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[4] Ibid., II, 228-29.

[5] J. Boswell, Life of Johnson (London, 1965), pp. 1401-402.

However, Johnson is famous, probably unjustly, for his condemnation of the faculty of imagination, and the nature of his condemnation will become clearer, if only because it is not a blanket condemnation.

> "Disorders of intellect," answered Imlac, "happen much more often than superficial observers will easily believe. Perhaps, if we speak with rigorous exactness, no human mind is in its right state. There is no man whose imagination does not sometimes predominate over his reason, who can regulate his attention wholly by his will, and whose ideas will come and go at his command. No man will be found in whose mind airy notions do not sometimes tyrannise, and force him to hope or fear beyond the limits of sober probability. All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity, but while this power is such as we can controll and repress, it is not visible to others, nor considered as any depravation of the mental faculties: it is not pronounced madness but when it becomes ungovernable, and apparently influences speech or action." [6]

The tone of this passage is one which regards imagination as a faculty to be watched very carefully indeed, and to be constantly curbed, "controlled" and even "repressed". The power of reason is evidently the part of the mind which "regulates" the imagination, if aided by the conscious will. On the other hand, Johnson was ready to grant a fuller task to the imagination, as in the following passage which looks forward to Coleridge, however indistinctly:

> Imagination, a licentious and vagrant faculty, unsusceptible of limitations, and impatient of restraint, has always endeavoured to baffle the

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[6] S. Johnson, Prose and Poetry, ed. Mona Wilson (London, 1963), pp. 595-96.

> logician, to perplex the confines of distinction, and burst the enclosures of regularity. There is, therefore, scarcely any species of writing, of which we can tell what is its essence, and what are its constituents; every new genius produces some innovation, which when invented and approved, subverts the rules which the practice of foregoing authors had established. [7]

Here then, is the other aspect to the 'licentious faculty'. While this account of innovation still includes the necessity for general, presumably public "approval", and asserts a kind of radical, Burkeian Toryism, the imagery is nevertheless of "perplexing" confines, and of "bursting" enclosures. Johnson, in a radical mood, is here attempting to allow for originality in thought and in composition - "there is . . . scarcely any species of writing, of which we can tell what is its essence, and what are its constituents". In doing so, he is compelled to use the term "imagination" in a sense which is close to the Coleridgean sense in which an image could reduce a previous multitude to an unity, and by exhibiting its own logic in opposition to strict logic. Compare S.T. Coleridge's claim that "nothing can permanently please which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise".[8] In turn, compare the phrasing of Coleridge's remark above, with another of Johnson's, this time from the "Preface to Shakespeare". "Nothing can please

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[7] S Johnson, Rambler no. 125, in Eighteenth - Century Critical Essays, ed. S. Elledge, (Ithaca, 1961), Vol. II, pp. 615-6.

[8] Coleridge, Biographia Literia, (London, 1965), Chap. XIII, p. 172.

many, and please long, but just representations of human nature".[9] The comparison between Johnson and Coleridge can be taken just so far, in that they were both searching for the "seminal principle" [10] in literature, but Johnson was determined to find it in "nature", in reality. Nevertheless each in his own way (Johnson being more contradictory) was able to refer to "imagination" as the essential faculty in this task. In this Johnson's thought was representative of a stage in the thought of the period as a whole, and it is now time to investigate more closely what he meant by the term, as well as the kind of importance he placed on it.

In order to do this, it is best to return to the passage from the "Life of Pope" with which this section was begun. To return, in fact, specifically to the first of the faculties of a poet; invention. "Invention" appears in Johnson's Dictionary of 1755, defined as follows: there are three meanings:

> 1. To discover; to find out; to excogitate; to produce something not made before.
> 2. To forge; to contrive falsely; to fabricate.
> 3. To feign; to make by the imagination. [11]

It will be noted straightaway that the faculty of the imagination appears even in this term which in the "Life"

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[9] S. Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare", in Rasselas Poems and Selected Prose, ed. B.H. Bronson, (New York, 1958), p

[10] S.T. Coleridge, op. cit., p. 52.

[11] S. Johnson, Dictionary 8th ed., (London, 1799).

(1781) is separated from it. The circular nature of Johnson's definitions has been cited as one of the main faults in the Dictionary, but it seems as though the business of definition was likewise the main purpose and problem of the Dictionary. W.J. Bate says that only one previous English Dictionary, that

> by Benjamin Martin, consistently tried to make distinctions between the various senses in which a word is used; and this, which appeared in 1749, was influenced by Johnson's own plan of two years before. [12]

In the Preface Johnson is clearly torn between a wish to fix the language, and an appreciation of the impossiblity of this. He ends that section with this honest lament:

> I am not yet so lost in lexicography, as to forget that words are the daughters of earth and that things are the sons of heaven. Language is only the instrument of science, and words are but the signs of ideas: I wish, however, that the instrument might be less apt to decay, and that signs might be permanent, like the things which they denote. [13]

It is outside the scope of this study to estimate to what extent Johnson's views shifted or clarified between the writing of the Dictionary in 1747-1755 and the writing of the Lives in 1779-1781. From the two examples before us here (the three definitions of "invention" in the Dictionary and the passage from the "Life of Pope") it is clear that some kind of struggle

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[12] W.J. Bate, The Achievement of S. Johnson (New York, 1961), p. 24.

[13] S. Johnson, Rasselas, pp. 215-16.

to separate and categorise is going on in both. Suffice it to say, then, that clarification was difficult, and that the reconciliation of one definition with others was even more so. It is possible to say that, in the more rigorously correct definitions of the "Life of Pope", Johnson was attaining this rigidity and correctness of thought at the expense of his intuitive response. In this again, Johnson is the archetype of the century's dilemma.

The definitions of "invention" are interesting, in that the first meaning seems to be the correct, strict one. The list of synonyms after the number one is not, in fact, a list of synonyms at all. "To find out", and to "produce something not made before" are not similar. The meaning of "discover" is close to Pope's maxim that the rules are "discover'd, not devis'd"[14]. Once again, the difference between them is pretty well analogous to the difference between the two aspects of imagination quoted on pp. four and five. The purpose of reiterating this identical confusion is to proceed farther and to point out that definitions two and three are extensions of the meanings "excogitate" and "produce" in the primary definition. Not only are they extensions, but they express the application of a kind of moral judgement on the possible meanings of the word "invention". Even supposing

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[14] A. Pope, Poems, ed. John Butt, (London, 1963), l. 88.

that the third definition ("to feign; to make by the imagination") is morally neutral, the difference between forging and feigning depends on either the ability to detect it from the result, or on the honesty of the inventor. Here we see, I suppose, the beginnings of a loss of contact between the creator and the reader/critic, and again a similar position to S.T. Coleridge's when faced with products of true imagination and false imagination. It is the counterfeit peach sixty years early. Some kind of check or test is required by Johnson and the eighteenth century as a whole.

The place of the faculty of imagination as expressed in the "Life of Pope" is, however, not only[a] creative one. It is in a sense, an executive faculty. It "strongly impresses on the writer's mind" and is creative in this sense, but it also "enables (the writer) to convey to the reader" certain things. Johnson hurries over the vaguely creative sense in which he has used it, and concentrates on what it conveys: "the various forms of nature, incidents of life, and energies of passion." The Dictionary definition of "imagination" clarifies the distinction a little further. The following quotation is incomplete, because many illustrative quotations are sufficiently repetitive as to be unnecessary here:

> 1. Fancy; the power of forming ideal pictures: the power of representing things absent to one's self or others.
>
> "Imagination is of three kinds: joined with belief of that which is to come: joined with the memory of that which is past; and of things present, or as if they were present: for I comprehend in this imagination feigned and at pleasure as if one should

> imagine such a man to be in the vestments of a pope, or to have wings." - Bacon.
> 2. Conception; image in the mind; idea.
> 3. Contrivance; scheme.
> 4. An unsolid or fanciful opinion: "We are apt to think that space, in itself, is actually boundless; to which imagination the idea of space, of itself, leads us." - Locke. [15]

I shall not consider the third meaning at all.

Johnson's definitions do not entirely coincide with Bacon's, as Bacon is largely concerned to stress the way in which mental operations are all conducted in present time or rather in a kind of mental time. This recalls the distinction between calendar and mental time of Proust and early twentieth century novelists.[16] Johnson, however, concentrates on the nature of the imagination as the faculty which makes "images". Indeed, it seems as though "the image" is a concept about which he is a good deal clearer than he is about the concept of imagination, and in part he bases his concept of the latter on the former as far as he possibly can. The definition of image is as follows:

> 1. Any corporeal representation, generally used of statues; a statue; a picture.
> 2. An idol; a false God.
> 3. A copy; representation; a likeness.
> 4. Semblance; show; appearence.
> 5. An idea; a representation of anything to the mind; a picture drawn in the fancy; (then follow two illustrative quotations. The third is as follows:)

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[15] S. Johnson, op. cit.

[16] See S. Becket, Proust (New York, 1931), "When the calendar of facts runs parallel to the calendar of feelings, realisation takes place." p. 4.

> "When we speak of a figure of a thousand angles, we may have a clear idea of the number one thousand angles; but the image, or sensible idea, we cannot distinguish by fancy from the image of a figure that has nine hundred angles." - Watts.

It is clear from the first three and possibly even the fourth definition above, that Johnson associated the word "image" with very definitely three dimensional objects. The fifth definition, the most important for our purposes, shows Johnson's tendency to conceptualize, and to conceptualize at the same time as having a very material notion of the act of conceptualization. An idea and an image can be much the same thing. Hence, it is no surprise when the definition of an idea shows the same equation:

> Idea: Mental image: "Whatever the mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or the understanding, that I call idea." - Locke.

The purpose of an assemblage of so many lengthy definitions is to show that Johnson tended to equate an image, that is a "mental picture" or a "thing absent", with an idea, or a concept or abstract notion. Now as Johnson was very aware, the imagination could frequently conjure up "things absent" when they were absent for the very good reason that they did not exist and exceeded the bounds of probability. It was an easy step for an imagination to become "an unsolid or fanciful opinion" when the images comprising it became "sensible ideas" (Watts). Johnson's tendency to equate two concepts which even on his terms were not strictly equivalent was a source of continual confusion to him. In order to clarify this further, it is necessary to lay the blame firmly where it belongs, on the

shoulders of John Locke.

The whole question of Locke's influence on Johnson and on the eighteenth century is a very wide topic, about which I confess I know very little. It must suffice to explain what seem to be the essentials, and to suggest certain books and articles which would form the basis for further investigation on this topic.[17]

Locke's hypothesis that material objects existed, but that consistency of perception was nearly impossible, nevertheless did not prevent him from establishing to his and his century's satisfaction, that a clear correspondence between the subjective and the objective existed in the mind of man. As W.K. Wright has expressed it:

> Locke's thought does not seem to be that the mind forms complex ideas arbitrarily or capriciously. When the mind functions correctly, it produces ideas that correspond to the external world as it actually exists, apart from the mind itself.[18]

It is plain that, in contrast again to the experience of Proust, Beckett and others, it was easy for Locke to believe that the mind normally functioned well enough to provide an

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[17] Jean H. Hagstrum, "The Nature of Dr. Johnson's Rationalism", Journal of English Literary History, XVII (1950), 191-205.

R.R. Kaul, "Dr. Johnson on Matter and Mind", Johnsonian Studies, ed. M. Wahba, (Cairo, 1962), pp. 101-108.

Kenneth MacLean, John Locke and English Literature of the Eighteenth Century (New Haven, Connecticut, 1936).

[18] W.K. Wright, A History of Modern Philosophy (New York, 1941), p. 149.

accurate correspondence between matter and mind. Wright clarifies for us the problem which Locke did not apparently grasp.

> Locke, as we see, uses the word "substance" in at least three different senses; sometimes it is any independently existing physical or spiritual object; at other times it is our complex idea of such an object; again it is the unknown substratum in which the observable qualities of the object inhere. Locke is often guilty of using the same term indifferently as an idea and the independent entity to which the idea refers. 19

If then in Locke, the idea is wrongly confused with the object, the consistent corresponcence between "idea" and "object" has to be maintained, but with an evident epistemological danger of their not corresponding. When, therefore, that "licentious" part of the mind begins to become active, it absolutely must be repressed and controlled. Hence the apparently unwarrantable link in Johnson of an over-active imagination with madness.

This then, is a fairly complete exposition of the concept of imagination in the eighteenth century as exemplified by the quotation initially from the "Life of Pope". The identification of the concepts of "image" and "idea" led to the position where an image could extend no further in meaning or reference than to an "idea"; in turn an idea had to be the exact correspondent of the material world, and this indirect reference of an "image" to "reality" could only be maintained by the constant, recurrent test of an external faculty. This faculty

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19 Ibid., pp. 151-152.

is the third mentioned by Johnson in the passage from the "Life of Pope", which he calls "judgement".

The faculty of"judgement" in the "Life of Pope", it will be observed, selects:

> from life or nature what the present purpose requires, and by separating the essence of things from its concomitants, often makes the representation more powerful than the reality.

The closeness of this definition to Locke's quoted by Johnson in the Dictionary would seem to substantiate that Johnson was thinking in Locke's terms when writing the passage in the "Life of Pope". The definition is taken from the second meaning of "wit", glossed as "Imagination; quickness of fancy" and is the fourth illustrative quotation:

> Wit, lying most in the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures in the fancy. Judgement, on the contrary, lies in separating carefully one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude.

It is the judgement which keeps a check on the essence of things as perceived by the mind. This essence by definition, is the reality, the important part of "life or nature", and it is Locke's and Johnson's weakness to admit to a principle of "pleasures of the imagination" not logically consistent with what they believed to be true and real.

CHAPTER II

Pope, generally accepted to be the greatest poet of the Augustan period, is nevertheless in a curious position as a literary theorist. In contrast with his unfortunate opponent Dennis, his statements on criticism are smooth and persuasive but old-fashioned and even unsatisfactory. That Dennis' theories were to a degree unsatisfactory too, I hope to show later, but at least his arguments are fairly tenable on their own terms, which Pope's are not.

Pope, in his capacity of law-giver, resorts to certain statements which, while having a kind of local logic, do not hold good outside their home paragraph. The following line, for instance, shows a strange lack of perception:

> Be not the First by whom the New are tried,
> Nor yet the last to lay the Old aside. [1]

If this advice were followed, it would effectively preclude change, yet it does not state that change is generally inadvisable, and in fact seems to be supporting the usual Tory concept of slow, organic change.

Pope's technique is not a critical or argumentative one, but is basically poetic. He argues by assertion, and

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[1] A. Pope, "Essay on Criticism" in Poems, ed. John Butt, (London, 1963), ll. 335-36.

assertion which is expressed artistically; and it is with difficulty that any strict general application can be made. Pope is entirely seduced, and expects his reader to be seduced too, by the undoubted beauty and "Poeticality" of his work. Take a short passage from An Essay on Man in which the same assertive technique is employed in a work similar to the Essay on Criticism in that Pope's powers are employed in proving a logical and semi-philosophical argument: Pope is arguing that it is just as well for mankind that he can only hear through his normal sense of hearing and not perceive at an intenser level:

> Why has not Man a microscopic eye?
> For this plain reason, Man is not a fly.
> Say what the use, were finer optics given,
> T' inspect a mite, not comprehend the heav'n?
> Or touch, if tremblingly alive all o'er,
> To smart and agonize at ev'ry pore?
> Or quick effluvia darting thro' the brain,
> Die of a rose in aromatic pain?

Here, we are too busy admiring Pope's conception in the last couplet of an appreciation of the exquisite perfume of the rose through a heightened sense, to question his contention that it would be too much to bear. Pope uses the nice point that exquisite pleasure is sometimes painful, but cheats in using this special case as a general example and cheats again by tempting us to imagine from within our present arrange-

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[2] A. Pope, Essay on Man, ibid., ll. 193-200.

ment of perceptions what an exceptionly[1] beautiful perfume would be like if smelled. He ignores the fact that presumably this would be a quite normal state of affairs and that the emotive return would be no greater. Philosophically, therefore, his point has much less weight than his poetic assertion[1] of it.

Similarly in an Essay on Criticism we are invited time and time again to transfer our appreciation of the truth of his metaphor to its implied exact counterpart in argument. This division of "argument" and "expression" is normally a false one, but its validity in this case is to Pope's detriment.[3]

The following passage from an Essay on Criticism with its two main metaphors, is a good example:

> For Wit and Judgement often are at strife,
> Tho' meant each other's Aid, like Man and Wife.
> 'Tis more to guide than spur the Muse's Steed;
> Restrain his Fury, than provoke his Speed;
> The winged courser, like a gen'rous Horse,
> Shows most true Mettle when you check his course.[4]

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[3] It is noticeable that Dr. Johnson criticised Pope for just this inaccurate transference, though he did not place a general emphasis on this fault with regard to Pope as much as with Addison and Gray. In the "Life of Addison" (Lives, Everyman op. cit. Vol. I, p. 352, under the section 'his poetry' leading onto 'The "Campaign"') Johnson is here calling for a general exactitude in similes and finds fault with Pope for the lines: " The well-sung woes will soothe my pensive ghost;/ He best can paint them who shall feel them most." and adds severely, "Martial exploits may be painted; perhaps woes may be painted; but they are surely not painted by being well-sung: it is not easy to paint in song, or to sing in colours."

[4] A. Pope, Essay on Criticism op. cit., ll. 82-87.

The purpose here is to face the reader with what appears to be a self-evident opinion, and this rises to a local climax in the last couplet where it is indeed self-evident that a horse shows more "mettle" by being reigned in. It is easy to overlook Pope's lack of distinction between "mettle" as a literary criterion and whatever horsy criterion of worth he has in mind.

Let us relate this essentially subjective, assertive technique, to what we understand to be Pope's critical position in the Essay. It is fair to say that Pope believes that genius in the poet and taste in the critic, stem from the same source, and certainly suggests that those who compose properly are best equipped to judge:

> Both must alike from Heav'n derive their Light,
> These born to Judge, as well as those to Write.
> Let such teach others who themselves excell,
> And censure freely who have written well. [5]

Pope's line of argument rests heavily on ancient authority, and the list of critics discussed in Part III of the Essay on Criticism is a fairly standard one, relying on ancient, neo-classical, or humanist writers. Aristotle, Horace, Dionysius, Petronius, Quintilian, Longinus, Erasmus, Vida, Boilean, and Roscommon.

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[5] Ibid., ll. 13-16.

This deference to authority is naturally connected with a constant reference to "the Rules" of writing, which are, in turn based on the famous criterion of nature "By her just Standard, which is still the same".[6] So far, granted a full understanding of the criterion of "nature" to which the Augustans felt they could refer unanimously, Pope's position is consistent, and therefore acceptable. Where he begins to betray an incomplete understanding of his own theory, is when he approaches the problem of changing conventions - as in the couplet quoted before (p.15 of this study) beginning "Be not the First by whom the New are tried". Pope's difficulty is either to establish a Rule by which the other Rules may be broken, or admit to a different principle of excellence altogether. Instead he tries to avoid doing either properly.

Pope places his faith in the authority of Longinus, who is, in a famous line "himself the great Sublime he draws". As is usual throughout the whole century, Longinus' attribute and contribution to criticism is that he is:

> An ardent Judge, who Zealous in his Trust,
> With Warmth gives Sentence, yet is always Just. [7]

This too is not evidently inconsistent, but it is

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[6] Ibid., l. 69.

[7] Ibid., ll. 677- 78.

when, in an earlier passage, Pope has to account for the limits within which the "warmth" may be allowed to transgress the Rules in the interests of "Poetic fire" he finds some difficulty. As the note in the Twickenham edition states, Pope refers to a belief (as yet unexamined until Burke)

> that there is a criticism by taste as well as by rules, that the success of a work of art may depend upon a quality difficult to define, a je ne sais quoi. [8]

It must be allowable for a poet or critic to maintain that the success of a work of art has an undefinable source, and Pope, for a while continues this argument which is acceptable:

> Musick resembles Poetry, in each
> Are nameless Graces which no Methods teach. [9]

Pope hovers between the attempt to formulate a new standard for the "nameless Graces", and a belief in the inclusiveness of the rules. This belief in the inclusiveness of the Rules results in Pope's making the "nameless Graces" contradictory to the rules. They should transcend but are only allowed momentarily to do so. Pope is content with slick imprecision such as the following:

> Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,

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[8] Ibid., n. to ll. 141 - 180.

[9] Ibid., ll. 143-44.

And rise to Faults true Criticks dare not mend. [10]

He then makes a more precise and forward-looking statement, which is similar to remarks made much later in the century: poets may

> snatch a grace beyond the Reach of Art,
> Which, without passing thro' the Judgement, gains
> The Heart, and all its End at once attains. [11]

Pope is, in fact, here prepared to by-pass the important external criterion, but he can give no rule-of-thumb for doing so, only presumably an internal conviction of rectitude on the part of the poet. This, however, because of his reverence for authority and true poets, he cannot allow to stand for more than a few lines.

> But tho' the Ancients thus their rules invade,
> (As Kings dispense with Laws Themselves have made),
> Moderns, beware! Or if you must offend
> Against the Precept, ne'er transgress its End,
> Let it be seldom, and compell'd by need,
> And have, at least, Their Precedent to plead. [12]

In addition Pope goes on to account for irregularities in Homer, which he does by means of an argument which can only be called circular. Pope argues that because we know Homer to be a great poet, if ever we suspect that his work

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[10] Ibid., ll. 152- 53.
[11] Ibid., ll. 155-57.
[12] Ibid., ll. 161-66.

is bad or irregular, this is because we cannot see what Homer is doing. Once again, Pope resorts to arguing by metaphor, and uses a very weak one of "A prudent Chief" (l. 175 ff.). He concludes: Those oft are Stratagems which Errors seem,
Nor is it Homer nods, but We that Dream. [13]

Though Pope is attempting to free poetry from rigid criticism by reference to set rules, we find that he is logically unable to substitute anything consistent for this except unconditional reverence for authority or a poetic instinct which is virtually impossible for the moderns to allow themselves. The Essay on Criticism illustrates a feeling growing throughout the eighteenth century, that the moderns were constrained to exercise their Judgements to a greater degree than the ancients, in order to do what the ancients did naturally. Conversely, they found that this did not work as well as it ought to have done, and sought the guidance of the ancients in the field where disregard of the Rules of correctness seemed most rewarding. Longinus was, of course, this authority, and more will be said of him later. Now, however, it is better to deal with Pope's opponent Dennis, who is faced with a very similar task to Pope, but approaches it in an entirely different way. Dennis, of course, also has a good deal to say about Longinus.

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[13] Ibid., ll. 179-180.

CHAPTER III

Dennis, made an outlandish, staring, reddening[1] caricature for most of us by Pope, is in many ways an alien figure in his chronological context of the early Augustan period.[2]

One of Pope's continual grudges against Dennis is significant to this study here. Dennis seems to have been one of the earliest English examples of a specialised literary critic, and though he wrote plays they were neither then nor now very well received. Pope apparently disapproved of this phenomenon:

> Some have at first for Wits, then Poets past,
> Turn'd Criticks next, and prov'd plain Fools at last; [3]

Dennis, then is an early example of literary specialisation, a parasite from Grub Street, and, if you will, a forerunner of the literary ant-heap described in Gissing's New Grub Street. (1891)

Dennis, in contrast to Pope, shows a greater awareness of the problems before the poets of his day, and a greater honesty in solving those problems. In consequence, many of his ideas resemble those of Wordsworth and Coleridge, though

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[1] Pope, Essay on Criticism, in Works, ed. J. Butt, (London, 1963), ll. 585-87.

[2] According to Scott Elledge, (Eighteenth Century Critical Essays, ed. Scott Elledge, (Ithaca, 1961), Vol. I, p. 512.), Dennis contributed little new to criticism after 1704.

[3] Essay on Criticism, op. cit., ll. 36-37 and note. See also Dick Minim, Idler, nos. 60-61, Scott Elledge, op. cit., pp. 637-644, Vol. II.

more primitively expressed. Paradoxically, Dennis' purpose as stated in his The Grounds of Criticism is much the same as Pope's.[4] Dennis is making "an attempt to restore and re-establish the noblest art"[5] and in doing so to "discover the nature of poetry in general".[6] His method for going about it, however, is entirely different from Pope's. Dennis is ready to re-codify the rules if necessary, and is more effectively aware of the fact of a difference in intellectual climate between the ancients and the moderns. For instance, a Christian poet has, for Dennis, a head start over any heathen, however great. However, this is to anticipate.

Dennis' definition, from which his argument procedes, is a typically rapid one:

> Poetry, then, is an art by which a poet excites passion (and for that very cause entertains sense) in order to satisfy and prove, to delight and reform, the mind, and so to make mankind happier and better.[7]

From this point, he concentrates on the pleasure principle, saying that poetry has a subordinate end - to please, and a final end - to instruct, "but poetry, unless it is transporting, is abominable".[8] Dennis is the first

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[4] Dennis, The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, (1704) in Critical Works, ed. E.N. Hooker, (Baltimore, 1939), pp. 325-74.

[5] Ibid., p. 334.

[6] Ibid., p. 334.

[7] Ibid., p. 336.

[8] Ibid., p. 336.

theorist in Britain to base his theory of poetry almost solely on emotion. His is such an early example of this, and at the same time so free from rationalist habits of thought that it has seemed better to deal with him by himself. His theory of the passions is far less limited than those of more common theorists. He goes so far as to say that "we are moved by pleasure, which is happiness, to do everything we do".[9] There are two sorts of passion, vulgar passion and enthusiastic passion, and on this distinction turn Dennis' arguments and all his Romantic implications. In this distinction too, we find the reason that Dennis was so ahead of his time because of his analytic eagerness.

A useful kind of comparison can be made here with an earlier essay entitled The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, published in 1701, which is a curious mixture of confusion and over-simplification. In these two essays, he gives definitions of both vulgar and enthusiastic passion, and they would seem to differ. The reason for this difference and Dennis' subsequent muddle may be made clearer by a reference to the fact that Dennis has been seen as anticipating Wordsworth's theories of poetry.[10] Dennis prefers, like Wordsworth,

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[9] Dennis, Critical Works, ed. E.N. Hooker, (Baltimore, 1939-1943), p. 337.

[10] See W.J.B. Owen, "Wordsworth's "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads", in Anglistica, Vol. IX, (Copenhagen, 1957), pp. 64-65. Dr. Owen assumes a similarity and discusses the likelihood of Wordsworth having read Dennis before 1803.

vulgar passion, because: "all men are capable of being moved by the vulgar and a poet writes to all".[11] Such a view is acceptable when one considers Dennis' definition of vulgar passion in the later essay: it is "that which is moved by the objects themselves or by the ideas in the ordinary course of life".[12]

In the same essay, Dennis defines enthusiastic passion as follows:

> enthusiastic passion "is a passion which is moved by the ideas in contemplation, or the meditation of things that belong not to common life". 13

The conjunction "or" is a little dubious in the above quotation, because it is not entirely certain whether Dennis intends the second clause merely to explain the first more fully, or to state a second alternative. Perhaps he meant it to be a bipartite definition, but in the sense along which his essay took him, it is a reiteration <u>because</u> things in contemplation are not the same to the mind as they are in everyday circumstances, as he admits (see page 29). This definition is important, because Dennis in this later essay seems to be opening up a greater distinction between the vulgar passions and the enthusiastic, than he did in the earlier by what appears at

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11 Dennis, <u>Works</u>, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 339.

12 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 338.

13 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 338.

first to be a minor shift of emphasis. This shift of emphasis leads him, in the later essay, to the suspicion of a detrimental reflection on the vulgar passions.

The definitions in the earlier essay are as follows:

> I call that ordinary passion, whose cause is clearly comprehended by him who feels it, whether it be admiration, terror, or joy; and I call the very same passions enthusiasms, when their cause is not clearly comprehended by him who feels them. [14]

That Dennis can call by the same name in an attempt, presumably, to clarify further the earlier essay, such apparently different concepts as these, is strange. In the one case, the identical emotions are distinguished by the amount of knowledge the moved person has of the cause. In the earlier essay Dennis is content without any irritable reaching after fact and reason, to be in ignorance about the causes of enthusiastic passion. He is, indeed, trying to prove that "a sacred subject is as susceptible of ordinary passions as a profane one can be, and more susceptible of the enthusiastic."[15]

However, he is content that all passions are the same in the mind and therefore presumably equally available to all.

> That enthusiasm moves, is plain to sense; why, then, it moved the writer: but if it moved the writer, it moved him while he was thinking. Now what can move a man while he is thinking

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[14] Ibid., p. 216.

[15] Ibid., p. 216.

> but the thoughts that are in his mind. In short, enthusiasm as well as ordinary passions must proceed from the thoughts, as the passions of all reasonable creatures must certainly do; but the reason why we know not the causes of enthusiastic as well as of ordinary passions, is because we are not so used to them, and because they proceed from thoughts, that latently and unobserved by us carry passion along with them. . . . What sort of Passions these are, that thus, unknown to us, flow from these Thoughts? to him I answer, That the same sort of Passions flow from the thoughts, that would from the Things of which those thoughts are ideas. [16]

Notice that Dennis assumes a communication with things distinct from and closer than Locke's "idea". The unknown thing, if known, would be responded to in a like manner, and the enthusiasms would proceed:

> from the thoughts from which they naturally flow, as being the thoughts or images of things that carry those passions along with them. [17]

Therefore the passions may be taken as a test of their truthfulness to whatever is considered most important in the human condition. This passage from Dennis has often been compared with a passage from Wordsworth's "Preface" to the second edition of the Lyrical Ballads, (ll. 130-140).[18] The close relation in each passage between thought and feeling is their common ground, though in Dennis the exact relation between the

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[16] Hooker, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 217.

[17] Ibid., pp. 217-18.

[18] Owen, op. cit.

thing which caused the emotion, is not apprehended.

In the later essay, however, Dennis' emphasis has shifted, and the nature of the total effect on the mind made by vulgar passions on the one hand, and by enthusiastic passions on the other, is now entirely different.

He admits, for example, that even those things in common life are altered by the very act of contemplation:

> I desire the reader to observe that ideas in meditation are often very different from what ideas of the same objects are in the course of common conversation. [19]

Vulgar passions may be preferable for democratic reasons, but "the enthusiastic are more subtle, and thousands have no feeling and no notion of them at all."[20]

In the category of enthusiastic passion, Dennis places the complex idea of religion. It is here that he disagrees with Longinus who has figured largely as the authority for Dennis' assertion that passion is at the basis of poetry. Dennis consciously makes his argument a Christian extension of Longinus' theories. Dennis shows by

> his (i.e. Longinus') authority that religious ideas are the most proper to give greatness and sublimity to a discourse. And this I shall show first by his examples, and secondly by his precepts. [21]

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[19] Dennis, Works, op. cit., p. 339.

[20] Ibid., p. 339.

[21] Ibid., p. 357.

Dennis places a good deal of importance on the concept of infinity implicit in the concept of God. He applies Longinus' idea of terror as a source of the Sublime, and applies it to God.

> nothing is so terrible as the wrath of Infinite Power, because nothing is so unavoidable as the vengeance designed by it. 22

By introducing the concept of God as the highest subject for sublime poetry, Dennis is uniting his two desiderata of pleasure and instruction, and significantly for the future, seems to base this in enthusiastic passion[23], and to make his criterion of recollection even more crucial. He is forced, throughout the later essay, by a logical necessity, to make emotions emanating from conception in the mind the source of poetry. His opinions on conceptual thought have altered so much, that, far from lack of clarity being a concomitant of enthusiastic passion, it is most present in a product of enthusiastic passion. The shift is most significant in that the thought, to the thinker, carries within itself a proof of its own truth

> Greatness of thought supposes elevation, they being synonymous terms; and, secondly, the enthusiasm or the pathetic as Longinus calls it follows of course; for if a man is not strongly moved by great thoughts, he does not sufficiently and effectively conceive them. 24

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22 Ibid., p. 362.

23 Ibid., pp. 361-62.

24 Ibid., p. 359.

For Dennis, it would appear that, granted the initial state of contemplation, conception, i.e. complete intellectual understanding, is simultaneous with and even dependant upon, a passionate and imaginative apprehension of the particular idea. It is possible to see reasons here for Coleridge's enthusiasm for Dennis too. It is important to realise that Dennis supports his contention that ideas of religion are the best source of poetry, by reasons which are more psychological than religious.

For Dennis, it would also seem, that the imagination is a faculty which is very closely connected with the vital passionate and apprehensive process. Though he does not use the word "imagination" frequently, he does so in the following passage, and it is possible to see that Dennis is using it in a fuller, but less strict, sense than the Johnsonian one of "the process of image - ing".

> the soul never takes the alarm from anything so soon as it does from the senses, especially those two noble ones of the eye and the ear, by reason of the strict affinity which they have with the imagination. [25]

Dennis specifically opposes the faculty of imagination to the faculty of reflection, which means much the same as "judgement" in the sense that both Pope and Johnson used it. The imagination is "fired"[26] by the agitation of the passions,

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[25] Ibid., p. 362.

[26] Ibid., p. 363. Another alternative may be that for Dennis the "imagination" is simply "pictures in the mind", but this does not effectively alter the use he makes of this faculty, when combined with passion.

and

> the warmer the imagination is, the less able we are to reflect. [27]

As a part of the general trend of this later essay away from the ideas expressed in the Advancement and Reformation, the above quotation contradicts an opinion in the earlier essay: "Poetical enthusiasm is a passion guided by judgement . . . That it ought to be guided by judgement is indubitable. For otherwise it would be madness, not poetical passion."[28] Judgement is a "guide" however, not a check to imagination, as in Johnson, and this reminds one of Coleridge's use of the term: "a supervening act of the will and judgement, consciously and for the forseen purpose of pleasure."[29]

It is clear then, that for Dennis the heated imagination was essential to a complete conception of an idea, which excluded reflection because then "the soul has leisure to reflect upon the deceit."[30] Dr. Johnson, apparently, had a good deal of respect for Dennis' criticism, but surely would not have approved of the culminating idea:

> When the imagination is so inflamed as to render the soul utterly incapable of reflecting, there is no difference between the images and the things themselves, as we may see, for example, by men in raging fevers. [31]

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[27] Ibid., p. 363.

[28] Ibid., p. 217.

[29] Coleridge, Biographia Literia (London, 1965), chap. XVIII, p. 206.

[30] Dennis, Works, op. cit., p. 362.

[31] Ibid., p. 363.

Dennis believes in allowing the imagination its full scope, because only at the highest point of such a process, can we achieve true knowledge of the reality. Dennis does not seem to be aware of the implications of his example, but it is clear that for him, "there is no difference between the images and things themselves" both logically and actually.

The final important point which Dennis makes clear, completes his exposition of the passionate cause and test of art which became to a large extent the accepted view of the century, and has also a strong connection with certain Romantic poetic theories. This final section shows Dennis' views on poetic language, and in many ways illustrates the most unsatisfactory part of the whole theory which Dennis opens up. The rough and imprecise notion is that poetry is the natural product and the natural expression of intense emotion. Dennis' method here, is just pure assertion, as was that of most eighteenth century critics on this matter.

> For as the thoughts produce the spirit or the passion, the spirit produces and makes the expression, which is known by experience to all who are poets; for never any one while he was rapt with enthusiasm or ordinary passion wanted either words or harmony, as is self-evident to all who consider that the expression conveys and shows the spirit, and consequently must be produced by it. [32]

Compare this with modern critical cynicism such as the following: "Personal sincerity has no place in literature,

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[32] Ibid., p. 359.

because personal sincerity as such is inarticulate."[33] It is easy to contradict Dennis, because he contradicts himself, but certain it is that the contradictory idea that poetry was the natural language of passion became a commonplace during the following century:[34]

> But as passion which is the disorder of the soul, produces harmony, which is agreement, so harmony, which is concord, augments and propogates passion, which is discord. [35]

In his views on poetry as being the natural language, Dennis clearly distinguishes between poetry (that expression activated by passion) and verse. It is clear that Dennis believes, like Wordsworth, that the versification of any natural expression must only control the passion expressed. Harmony both produces, and is produced by, passion and clearly Dennis' conception of harmony involves a more direct and simpler kind of versification from some theories in the century, such as of verse as decoration or as the sugar on the didactic pill.[36]

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[33] N. Frye, Fables of Identity (New York, 1963), pp. 124-25.

[34] See of course, Wordsworth's real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, and "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings", in the "Preface" of 1800. See Owen, op. cit., 11. See also the Appendix on poetic diction, and Owen's comments on it.

[35] Dennis, Works, op. cit., p. 365.

[36] Dr. Owen has cited a comparison between this extract from Dennis, and Wordsworth's "Preface" 11. 293-94. Wordsworth mentions the incongruousness resulting from the poet interweaving "any foreign splendour of his own with that which the passion naturally suggests".

Dennis, it is clear from the difference between these two essays considered here, moved towards a position where thought and passion united to give the person concerned a clear insight into truth, even perhaps a kind of mystical union with its religious subject. His logic is much less conventionally structured than that of practically any other critic in his century, and in his prose, one feels the urgency of personal statement and the confidence (or rashness) of a man willing to be led by the processes in his own mind. Perhaps the reason for his theories being ignored by most of the major writers and theorists before Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge except for Johnson[37], was that Dennis seems to be attempting a comprehension of Locke's "real essence". This, according to Locke, was impossible to know. Note that Dennis' epistemology is confused in the passage quoted in the n.16. The directness of Dennis' advocated poetic experience was too much for a century which believed in the kind of self-consulting mind made clear in this quotation by Pope, and the comment by W.K. Wimsatt Jnr. :

> "'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none
> Go just alike, yet each believes his own."
> . . . The difference between our judgments and our watches, if noted at all, may be a pleasant epistemological joke for a person who questions the existence of a judgment which is taken out like a watch and consulted

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[37] Boswell, Life of Johnson (London, 1953), p. 745. Johnson thought Dennis' collected works would sell; Davies did not, and his word as a bookseller (see p. 276) should carry some weight.

by another judgment. [38]

Dennis' directness was too glib and untrustworthy for Wordsworth, never mind the eighteenth century. Wordsworth gets over the epistemological question by positing a different view of the true response of the passions. Compare as on page 25 "Preface", (ll. 130-140) with Dennis (ed. Hooker, I, p. 217.) cited by Dr. Owen. All the passionate responses we experience, according to Wordsworth, are not equally true or at least, equally important. During the process of recollection, the mind can decide on the relative importance of the experience. The difficult process of honesty and the training of feelings to correspond at last "mechanically and blindly" results in a process where:

> we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments of such a nature, and in such a connection with each other, that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened and his affections strengthened and purified. [39]

Wordsworth depends on a constant check of the subject on the object. "I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject."[40]

Nevertheless, Dennis contributed an enthusiasm for the Sublime, and for the pathetic theory of poetry, to eighteenth century culture. Perhaps because of his neglect of Locke he

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[38] W.K. Wimsatt Jnr., "The Structure of Romantic Imagery" in English Romantic Poets, ed. M.H. Abrams, (New York, 1960), p. 26.

[39] Wordsworth, "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads in Owen, op. cit., ll. 137-140.

[40] Ibid., ll. 205-06.

expressed a theory of poetry and attained a union of subject and object, which was not fully attempted until the more general rejection of Locke by the Romantic poets.

CHAPTER IV

Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination was first published in 1744. Johnson in 1772, said he could not read it through.[1] In 1776 he said, "Akenside was a superior poet both to Gray and Mason"[2], but his final opinion is probably that expressed in the Lives of the Poets that the Odes were dull and the Pleasures of the Imagination" raised expectations that were not very amply satisfied".[3] It seems undeniable that this production of Akenside's youth was his finest, and it is useful for my purposes in that it epitomises a view of poetry in which the imagination has an important but qualified part to play. As a fair example of what was later to be described as mechanical poetry, the Pleasures of the Imagination is especially useful.

The Pleasures of the Imagination is significant in that it proposes for its design an intention, besides of instructing, of pleasing the reader mainly by stimulating the exercise of his "fancy". As Akenside explains this term, men, in exercising the fancy, seek means:

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[1] J. Boswell, Life of Johnson (London, 1953), p. 437.

[2] Ibid., p. 740.

[3] S. Johnson, "Life of Akenside", in Lives of the Poets (London, 1925), Vol. II, p. 374.

> to recall the delightful perceptions (images in the mind) afford, independent of the objects which originally produced them.[4]

The use of the word "object" is particularly useful in a discussion dealing with the emergence of the subject/object distinction which has absorbed the twentieth century particularly. Akenside, despite the subjective pleasures implied in his sentence quoted above, has no apprehensions of the difficulties involved. He has, in fact, evolved a flawless system in which the subject and object correspond exactly. At the same time, the qualities which by the end of the century were agreed to reside in the subject, for Akenside resided still in the object. Akenside relies on Addison's classifications of the qualities causing delight as greatness, novelty, and beauty[5]:

> into these we may analyse every object, however complex, which, properly speaking, is delightful to the imagination.[6]

He speaks confidently of:

> that various and complicated resemblance existing between several parts of the material and immaterial worlds, which is the foundation of metaphor and wit.[7]

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[4] M. Akenside, "The Design", Pleasures of the Imagination, in Poetical Works (London, 1857), p. 1.

[5] J. Addison, Spectator no. 412, Monday, June 23, 1712. (London, 1945), p. 279.

[6] Akenside, op. cit., p. 2.

[7] Ibid., p. 3.

Akenside states that an appreciation of the objective qualities result in subjective delight, and that the nature of this appreciation is a kind of imitation. This kind of imitation, Akenside distinguishes quite clearly from the strict kind of imitation exemplified best by sculpture or painting, and which is itself a source of pleasure. The more sophisticated kind of imitation consists in bringing back to remembrance "the external appearances which were admired in nature . . . by signs universally established and understood".[8] As language is a different medium of imitation from, say, painting, with fewer imitative capabilities, it became "an unlimited representative of every species and mode of being".[9] It is at this point that the powers of language might be found to assert themselves, with results untruthful to the objects or modes themselves. Akenside, however, never considers this difficulty, being apparently confident that the language, with the arts as a whole, had become "correct and deliberate".[10] What appears to disturb him just a little, is apparently that the imagination might continue to extend itself "beyond the peculiar objects of the imaginative powers".[11]

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[8] Ibid., p. 1.

[9] Ibid., p. 2.

[10] Ibid., p. 1. See chapter V on passionate poetry for the common, restrictive view of language.

[11] Ibid., p. 1.

The answer to this problem is that the poet must concern himself with the imitation of reality, of the objects themselves:

> their primary intention was only to express the objects of imagination, and as they still abound chiefly in ideas of that class, they of course retain their original character. [12]

The pleasures of the imagination, therefore, consist in the mind observing in itself the operation of images which serve to unite the material and immaterial worlds, insofar as this union operates towards strong moral conclusions:

> to unite the moral excellencies of life in the same point of view with the mere external objects of good taste; thus recommending them in common to our natural propensity for admiring what is beautiful and lovely. [13]

In other words, we enjoy what is moral, not only because of its morality but because a moral object depicted by poetry will automatically possess certain other aesthetic qualities to which we respond with delight, according to the standards of taste.

The moral purpose which Akenside apparently believed to be inherent in his method, was unfortunately lacking, in Dr. Johnson's opinion. Johnson's criticisms of the poem are

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[12] Ibid., p. 2.

[13] Ibid., p. 4.

simply that Akenside concentrates too much on what he set out to do; for Johnson the pleasures of the imagination are irresponsible, and the very connections on which Akenside based his poem, insufficient or even non-existent:

> The reader wanders through the gay diffusion, sometimes amazed, and sometimes delighted, but, after many turnings in the flowery labyrinth, comes out as he went in. He remarked little, and laid hold on nothing. [14]

Johnson even castigates the accuracy of Akenside's language as pedantry in the line: "Planets to absolve/ The fated rounds of Time".[15] W.K. Wimsatt Jnr. makes the point that there were two concurrent views on the scientific exactitude of language in the eighteenth century. The one followed Sprat's maxim of an equality of words to things. The other view maintained the need for a context, and allowance of shades of meaning. As Wimsatt says:

> They could scarcely use a language which, intending to embrace not merely mathematical ideas but the whole wealth of human experience, yet looked like algebra and was constructed on principles that attempted to be equally abstract. [16]

Johnson, according to Wimsatt's thesis, uses almost entirely the latter method, although he often used scientific words with strict, technical accuracy. My point is that

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[14] Johnson, Lives, op. cit., II, p. 374.

[15] Pleasures of the Imagination, I, ll. 194-95, misquoted by Johnson.

[16] W.K. Wimsatt Jnr., Philosophic Words: A Study of Style and Meaning in the Rambler and Dictionary of S. Johnson, (New Haven, 1948), pp. 11-12.

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Akenside, on the other eschews the metaphoric in a belief that the scientifically accurate word has poetic value, because of its non-associative nature. The difference between Akenside and Johnson's view of language, as epitomised in Johnson's criticisms in the "Life", shows a clear difference of verbal theory, while their epistemologies remain much the same.

Necessarily, then, Johnson's moral connections are of a different, deeper kind than those Akenside was able to maintain at his superficial level earlier in the century. Most of the critics in the century were faced with the difficulties of conceptual thought, which Swift had foreseen as early as 1697, when he wrote of the

> sublime and refined Point of Felicity, called, the Possession of being well deceived; [17]

and of man as being not "animal rationale but animal capax rationis".[18] As the century drew to a close, the formulation of a total view of the human condition became more difficult partly because of the inaccuracy of Locke's assumptions of the mental processes. Also, the introspective interests arising from (we must surmise) a sense of this inaccuracy, register attempts to confirm more exactly

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[17] J. Swift, Tale of a Tub in Works, ed. R. Quintana, (New York, 1958), p. 343.

[18] See also: "I do not hate Mankind, it is vous autres who hate them because you would have them reasonable Animals and are Angry for being disappointed." Letter to Pope in Correspondence, ed. H. Williams, (Oxford, 1963), III, p. 118.

Locke's theories. This soon became a fairly common shift of emphasis. Once the emphasis was placed on the individual's responsibility to perceive for himself, the brake was, so to speak, released. The logic of the process is such that it was inevitable that the position is reversed in modern times completely. It is possible to say that the twentieth century is not using nature as the test of art, but using art as the agent of nature.

That Akenside himself became partly aware of the beginning of subjective domination is possibly indicated by his preface to the four book version of the Pleasure of Imagination in the process of revision by Akenside at his death in 1770. This preface was included in Dyson's edition of 1772.

In the "General Argument",[19] Akenside distinguishes between the delight obtained from natural objects, and that obtained from works of art. The nature of the attraction of works of art is the kind of abstraction of qualities such as "truth, of virtue and vice" which were then popular. The word "imitation" no longer occurs, and it would seem that both "nature" and "art" are equally effective objects of pleasure. The purpose is to "determine the character of a perfect taste".[20]

The important reservation which appears in this

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[19] Akenside, Works, op. cit., p. 83.

[20] Ibid., p. 84.

"General Argument" is that:

> there are certain particular men whose imagination is endowed with powers, and susceptible of pleasures, which the generality of mankind never participate.(sic) [21]

Akenside decides to ignore these particular men or poets ("destined to excel in one or other of the arts already mentioned"[22]), and in his poem to cater for the general audience who will never be poets.

This admission that a warm imagination may perceive things not commonly perceived, is obvious to us. It illustrates the familiar trend of the possibility of a widening gulf between common knowledge, and the higher ("truer"?) knowledge available only to a few men. The omission of such a reservation in the original preface, however, may be important, since when it is being suggested that the original "Argument" is over-simplified, in spite of its contemporary popularity.

The original Pleasures of the Imagination is a useful example of what must have been considered "modern" in 1744. It bears evidence of the popular, complacent, philosophy of Shaftesbury, and is highly mechanistic in its whole outlook. The passage best illustrating the poetising of strict scientific language referred to above, is that in Bk. II, ll. 103-135, praising Newton's optical discoveries in the rainbow, in the

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[21] Ibid., p. 84.

[22] Ibid., p. 84.

joy that Someone had invented a natural prism.

From a study of the Argument, and from what we have said earlier, it is possible to establish two facts. That the agreement that aesthetic qualities were in the object, and that the motions of the mind corresponded to these to produce a pleasure, which was an analogue of truth, was the basis of the view of imagination as expressed in Akenside's poem. It is also plain that the full admission of the non-correspondence of the imaginative faculty would create havoc with this system. It would disrupt the social function of poetry and even disrupt the unity of that society. Above all, it would mean the failure of correspondence between the truth of morality, the truth of science, and the truth of the imagination, unless the criterion of judgement could be exerted as in Johnson, or the imagination become inclusive, as in Coleridge.

Akenside mentions in his list of "properties quite foreign to the imagination, . . . circumstances proper to awaken and engage the passions".[23] He admits the supremacy of the passions in a work of genius, though presumably

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[23] Ibid., p. 2.

they are subordinate to the imagination. The passions and the imagination are often complementary to one another in poetic theory, as we saw in the chapter on Dennis. As the century wore on, however, the separation stated by Akenside here became at times a commonplace; at least a great deal more emphasis on the passions as the test of art came about, to the detriment of the position of imagination. The imagination became simply that part of the mind which was delighted and warmed by the passions. Until the concept of the imagination was allowed freedom from its epistemological function, yet was seen to be intimately connected with truth, it could not form the basis of any poetic theory. As the imagination was the intellectual faculty which most evidently kept us from single vision and Newton's sleep[24] by perceiving a truth of its own, it was an obvious choice for an essential position in a new definition of the creative act, and made external judgement irrelevant. Its combination with passion was renewed. Meantime, however, the passions continued their isolated task in poetic theory, bringing, by their isolation, their own problems.

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[24] "May God us keep/From Single vision and Newton's sleep!" William Blake, Complete Poetry and Prose, ed. G. Keynes, (London, 1961), p. 862. Letter to Thomas Butts, 22nd, November, 1802.

CHAPTER V

Dennis' work seems to have been closer to Romantic theories than that of many critics alive at the same time, or later. Thomson's work for example, is often quoted as an interesting example of pre-Wordsworthian nature poetry, as indeed it is. Equally obviously, neither Thomson's purpose nor methods could be described as transcendental, symbolic, or realistic in the way that Wordsworth's could.

Thomson, however, in the Preface to the second edition of Winter[1] airs many views which undoubtedly are symptomatic of the future development of poetry. His tone and choice of language, however, are very dated, and it is important to see exactly how forward-looking Thomson is not.

It is noticeable that the tone of his preface is partially defensive in that he sees his task in writing Winter and in prefacing it, as important in restoring poetry to its former state. He is apparently replying[2] to Peacock-

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[1] It was published in 1726, but was deleted when the collected edition of The Seasons came out in 1730.

[2] Thomson's reasons for writing the "Preface", and even the poem itself, are probably to be found not in any direct attacks on poetry, but in the general, material tendencies of the age: he wrote of the "sordid turn" to "Gain instead of Glory". (Letter to Aaron Hill, May 11th., 1763 in Letters and Documents, ed. A.D. McKillop, (Lawrence, 1958), pp. 105-6.)

like attacks on the nature of poetry itself and maintains the distinction between the art itself, and the quality of the modern examples of it. This distinction was implicit since Sir William Temple's controversy with Wootten and Boyle about the Ancients and Moderns. Thomson's attitude is evident in the "Preface" in that he initiates a kind of primitivism, at least a belief that the greatness of barbarous poetry is lacking in modern productions.

Thomson's cure is to revive the greatness of the subjects for poetry, and proposes one which is "great" and "serious" and can, all at once:

> amuse the fancy, enlighten the head, and warm the heart. [3]

This he contrasts with the:

> unaffecting fancies, little glittering prettinesses, mixed turns of wit and expression, which are as widely different from native poetry as buffoonery is from the perfection of human thinking. [4]

The subject Thomson chooses is what he describes as "nature":

> I know no subject more elevating, more amusing; more ready to awake the poetical enthusiasm, the philosophical reflection, and the moral sentiment, than the works of nature. [5]

Thomson makes claims for this subject on the usual lines of pleasure and instruction. However, it is easy to see that Thomson was not prepared to take this theory

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[3] J. Thomson, The Poems of James Thomson, ed. J. Logie Robertson, (London, 1963), p. 240.

[4] Ibid., p. 240.

[5] Ibid., pp. 240-41.

to its limits - his "rapture" is not of the kind that both "the writer and the reader feels unwarranted by reason or followed by repentant disgust".[6] He refers also to the "ancient truth and purity"[7] to which poetry will be restored, and at the end of his eulogy to nature, he observes that:

> there is no thinking of these things without breaking into poetry; which is, by-the-by, a plain and undeniable argument of their superior excellence.

In his evident belief that poetry with a great "natural" subject will again support and teach his contemporary society, Thomson is expressing a fairly strict neo-classicist view. In his belief that poetry is the "natural" result of an emotional response to a "natural" environment, Thomson initiates an offshoot of poetic theory which occupied some of the best minds of the century. To support his argument, Thomson links this response with the quality of "the Sublime" already well established, via Boileau's translation of Longinus, via Pope, and via Dennis. Thomson is content to cite the Book of Job, and a passage from Vergil's Georgics as examples of sublime products of a "natural" environment.

Though Thomson's preface may seem to advocate

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[6] Ibid., p. 240.

[7] Ibid., p. 240.

natural values which will strengthen contemporary manners and morals, the emphasis is not as complete as one might expect. Indeed, the success of Thomson's poem results mainly from the reconciliation of bucolic and urban values such as Defoe evidently held. The account of the development of society in "Autumn" clearly bears this out: the "sad barbarian" is gradually fed, clothed and made content by the blessing of Industry who

> pointed out
> Where lavish Nature the directing hand [8]
> Of Art demanded.

Men form a society and Thomson is prepared to contradict the words of his preface to the following extent in praising it:

> Hence every form of cultivated life
> In order set, protected, and inspired
> Into perfection wrought. Uniting all,
> Society grew numerous, high, polite,
> And happy. Nurse of art, the city reared
> In beauteous pride her tower-encircled head; [9]
> * * *

Though Thomson may have found it possible to reconcile his urban and bucolic values in marking a beginning to the trend towards primitivism in the eighteenth century, as that trend developed, others did not.

It is difficult to account for this primitivist

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[8] Thomson, "Autumn", ll. 74-76.

[9] Ibid., ll. 109-114. cf. obvious contrast with the opening lines of Bk. I of The Prelude.

school of thought during the century. It is clear that, despite many short accounts of the "bards" and primitive poets, and of the glory of primitive poems themselves, the sources for this kind of information are rarely cited by the eighteenth century critics themselves.[10] Lois Whitney[11] has attempted to trace whatever basis may have existed, particularly with reference to James MacPherson, the composer of Ossian's poems. All Whitney has managed to do is to give a convincing account of how such intelligent men could have dared so much on the basis of sheer hypothesis. Whitney concentrates on the Scottish circles of thought, and on the French authorities to which they had access (particularly Montesquieu's L'Esprit des Lois . Hume, for example, assisted Montesquien in the Edinburgh edition of 1750[12]). It is difficult to know to what extent Scottish national pride contributed to this concentration of such a

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[10] This was pointed out to me by Dr. Owen. It would also seem after conversations with Dr. Fritz of the History Department at McMaster, that little serious antiquarian work (let alone professional historical research) was done at all during the century. Gibbon, the only historian in the strict sense of the word, in the century, celebrates in the Decline and Fall the civilised virtues of antiquity, not its primitive aspects.

[11] L. Whitney, "English Primitivistic Theories of Epic Origin", in Modern Philology, Vol.XXI, no. 4, (1923-1924), pp. 337-378.

[12] Ibid., p. 350.

subject in such an area. It is clear from Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides[13] just why Scotland should have become so popular a country to visit from the middle of the century on:

> we might there contemplate a system of life almost totally different from what we had been accustomed to see; and, to find simplicity and wildness, and all the circumstances of remote time or place, so near to our native great island, was an object within the reach of reasonable curiosity.[14]

The pride of educated Scots, it is possible to surmise, was to see the barbarity of their national past condoned by contemporary literary theory. Scottish sceptics of Blair's claims for Ossian, Hume being the most notable, seem to have kept quiet by and large, and MacPherson's Preface to Ossian emphasises the coincidence of the divisions of nationality in his adherents and critics.

For those who were not Scottish, the enthusiasm for primitivism is linked with the enthusiasm for the sublime. The belief of most writers on the sublime until Kant, as Monk points out[15], tended towards the view that sublimity was a quality inherent in the object. The sublime was most

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[13] J. Boswell, Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides (London, 1930).

[14] Ibid., p. 167.

[15] Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII Century England (Ann Arbor, 1960), p. 9. "The growth of aesthetic toward a subjective point of view reaches its fulness in Kant."

acceptably seen in what was real i.e., natural scenery; and examples of non-real or improbable sublime objects, such as Milton's presentation of Sin and Death, are rare. The sublime in literature allowed a transcendance of the rules (felt to be present but limiting) and was felt to be the result of warm passions. Furthermore, as sublime nature was seen in practice to evoke these passions, the connection of the theory of the sublime, and of primitivist theories of literature came about quite naturally. The theories of the sublime and of primitive, passionate poetry are almost always co-present in criticism of this period. Also, it would seem that the "passionate" theory developed in importance, and eventually seems to have supplanted the theory of the sublime in its position of primary importance to poetry. The sublime, for example, is a primary source of enthusiastic passion in Dennis' view, whereas for Wordsworth, the quality of the sublime is outside Wordsworth's distinction between simple and complex emotions, a quarry of symbolism. According to the index to the Everyman edition of Biographia Literaria[16] there is neither a reference to Longinus nor to the Sublime in the whole work.

In the middle years of the century an interest in

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16 S.T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (London, 1956),

primitivism came to a popular climax, and indeed the 1760s seem to have been the most important decade. Among other publications, this decade saw the complete publication of Ossian's poems (1765), of Blair's defence of it (1763)[17], and of Percy's Reliques[18], - the three publications I intend to deal with mainly here. The nature of primitivist theory in the eighteenth century is in itself field for a full study; suffice it to say, that for my purposes, primitivism in this period is based on a supposition that all primitive societies were more or less identical, and that poetry of warm passions and imagination was a product of it.[19] Few critics were able to make the conscious distinction that Hurd made in 1762 in proving that Gothic manners were as distinct and equally valuable a part in poetry as Classic. He mentions

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[17] Hugh Blair, A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the son of Fingal, quotations are from Scott-Elledge, Vol. II, pp. 848-860.

[18] Percy, Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (London, 1765).

[19] See Blair, for instance: "It is probable too that an extensive search would discover a certain degree of resemblance among all the most ancient poetical productions, from whatsoever country they have proceeded. In a similar state of manners, similar objects and passions operating upon the imaginations of men will stamp their productions with the same general character." Blair, A Critical Dissertation, op. cit., p. 850.

"the rude sketches . . . in the old romancers":

> And it is but looking into any of them to be convinced that the gallantry, which inspirited the feudal times, was of a nature to furnish the poet with finer scenes and subjects of description in every view, than the simple and uncontrolled barbarity of the Grecian. [20]

Percy's Reliques, published in 1765, contains several little essays in the nine books. These, though chronologically later than Blair's defence of Ossian (1763), are in fact not so advanced in theory. Percy makes it plain that he was not too keen to publish the ballads in the first place, and is hard pressed to account for his own interest in such light-weight things:

> To prepare it for the press has been the amusement of now and then a vacant hour amid the leisure and retirement of rural life, and hath only served as a relaxation from graver studies. [21]

In the Dedication to Elizabeth, Countess of Northumberland, however, Percy's most important claim for his collection can be seen. He apologises for the "barbarous productions of unpolished ages", but claims that the impropriety of offering this to the Countess will disappear when presented:

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[20] Hurd, Letters on Chivalry, (1762), letter VI, in English Critical Essays, ed. Edmund D. Jones, (London, 1947), p. 313.

[21] Percy, op. cit., Vol. I, p. xiv.

> not as labours of art, but as effusions of nature, shewing the first efforts of ancient genius, and exhibiting the customs and opinions of remote ages. [22]

The purposes of such an exhibition, and the interest and instruction therefrom, is as follows:

> No active or comprehensive mind can forbear some attention to the reliques of antiquity: It is prompted by natural curiosity to survey the progress of life and manners, and to inquire by what gradations barbarity was civilized, grossness refined, and ignorance instructed. [23]

In other words, these ballads are not published by Percy with a specifically literary purpose, but with one in which the literary interest is defined in moral and social terms. We cannot find in Percy any firm basis for what could be called a primitivistic creed. Percy, as it will appear, seeks for a confirmation of Augustan values in his ballads.

Percy's standards of scholarship are fairly high without being meticulous. He acknowledges assistance scrupulously and gives a general list of manuscripts and collections as sources. His arrangement of his material is consonant with his didactic aim:

> Accordingly such specimens of ancient poetry have been selected as either shew the gradation of our language, exhibit the progress of popular opinions, display the peculiar manners and customs of former ages, or throw light on our earlier classical poets. [24]

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[22] Ibid., Vol. I, pp. vi-vii.

[23] Ibid., Vol. I, pp. vi-vii.

[24] Ibid., p. ix.

In accordance with this plan, each volume of the Reliques is divided into three series, each independent, each arranged mostly in a chronological order so that "the gradual improvement" of poetry could be more easily traced.

Granted then, that Percy's interests are mainly sociological, or at least that he only allows them to be mainly sociological, he nevertheless touches on the literary aspects of his collection. In Volume III, Book I, Percy has written an introductory essay entitled: "On the Ancient Metrical Romances." The emphasis of this is almost entirely historical, except towards the end of the essay, where he criticises the "antiquaries" for rejecting the Romances "because founded on fictitious or popular subjects"[25], in favour of "dull and insipid rhimists"[26] who deformed morality:

> Should the public encourage the revival of some of those ancient Epic songs of chivalry, they would frequently see the rich ore of an Ariosto or a Tasso, tho' buried it may be among the rubbish and dross of barbarous times. [27]

Percy continues by summarising the argument of the romance epic Sir Lybius and makes the following interesting comment:

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[25] Ibid., Vol. III, Bk. I, p. ix.

[26] Ibid., Vol. III, Bk. I, p. ix.

[27] Ibid., Vol. III, Bk. I, p. ix.

> (it is) as regular in its conduct as any of the finest poems of classical antiquity. If the execution, particularly as diction and sentiments, were but equal to the plan, it would be a capital performance; [28]

As the working definition of an epic he quotes from "Discours sur la Poésie Epique" prefixed to Télémaque, which is as thorough going a neo-classical authority as one could have (p. xiii). Plain it is, then, that Percy demanded even from his Romances strictly neo-classical values. Significantly also, he does find them in qualified form in his Romances. For his most gracious recognition of the artistic values of his collection, we have to return to the Preface:

> In a polished age, like the present, I am sensible that many of these reliques of antiquity will require great allowances to be made for them. Yet have they, for the most part, a pleasing simplicity, and many artless graces, which in the opinion of no mean critics, have been thought to compensate for the want of higher beauties, and if they do not dazzle the imagination, are frequently found to interest the heart. [29]

It is clear here that Percy is using imagination in the strict, limited sense discussed in an earlier chapter. Also, he seems to find the poetic faculty in this sense to be antipathetic to the passions. A clearer example of

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[28] Ibid., p. xvi.

[29] Percy, ibid., Vol. I, Bk. I, p. x.

the use of the unemotional concept of the imagination could not be found.

The last essay of Percy's to be dealt with here is his "Essay on the Ancient Minstrels" heading the first Book of Vol. I. This is clearly primitivistic in its scope and implications, but again shows Percy's attempts to impose his own values on his material. In fact, for a sheer theory which seems to have been advanced to support certain eighteenth century assumptions on the social function of poetry, this theory shows an annoying disinclination to fit its designer's purpose. Both the theory itself, and the troublesome implications to which it led Percy, are important to this study. Above all, Percy's essay attempts to deal with the important question raised by the theory of the primitive origins of poetry - the place of the poet in society. In turn this relates to the theory of passion as the test of art, and the realisation of values seen in society itself.

Percy's historical approach claims that the Minstrels who wrote the ballads in his collection "seem to have been the genuine successors of the ancient Bards, who united the Arts of Poetry and Music"[30]. Like most adherents to this kind of literary theory, Percy does not cite any Bards by name, nor their products.

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[30] Ibid., Vol. I, Bk. I, p. xv.

Inherent in Percy's thought is the notion of growing specialisation and separation of tasks, as the nature of the audience changed. With Christianity came a wider spread of literacy, with the result that,

> Poets and their art were held among (men) in that rude admiration, which is ever shown by ignorant people to such as excell them in intellectual accomplishments. When the Saxons were converted to Christianity, in proportion as letters prevailed among them, this rude admiration began to abate, and poetry was no longer a peculiar profession. [31]

The poet as a cultivator or inculcator of morality becomes unnecessary as each man is capable of writing his own poetry, owing to the availability of culture and knowledge as subjects. Nevertheless, there was an inevitable gradation of culture, and therefore a need for a Minstrel. Percy's distinction between Poet and Minstrel is quite explicit:

"The Poet and the Minstrel became two persons"[32] and the poet becomes the retired meditator, who nevertheless, is judged by Percy to have had popular acceptance:

> Many of the most popular rhimes were composed amidst the leisure and retirement of monasteries. [33]

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[31] Ibid., p. xv.

[32] Ibid., p. xv.

The exact place of poet and minstrel is not defined any further, but it would seem fair to deduce that the productions of the Minstrel had immediate popular acclaim, and while the popularity of the poet's productions was not assured, though likely, it was only obtained indirectly. It is not a far step from Percy's idea of the Poet to make him write in seclusion for his own satisfaction.

In Percy's theories there are really two contradictory notions of retirement - that of the poet mentioned above, but also that of the minstrel in an earlier state of society:

> the civilising of nations has begun from the South: the North would therefore be the last civilised, and the old manners would longest subsist there. With the manners, the old poetry that painted these manners would remain likewise. [34]

Poems:

> in the northern dialect, abound with antique words and phrases, are extremely incorrect, and run into the utmost licence of metre; they have also a romantic wildness, and are in the true spirit of chivalry. [35]

This kind of retirement on the scale of a complete social unit, contrasts with the later development (within any given social unit) of the secluded, cloistered poet.

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[34] Ibid., pp. xxi-xii.

[35] Ibid., p. xxii.

Significantly, it is the productions of the earlier writers which Percy chooses to publish as worth the study of his contemporaries, and it is also these, and not the "insipid"[36], and "low or subordinate correctness"[37] of the later ballad mongers which he praises for being effusions of nature and genius. Percy's primitivism is heavily qualified by eighteenth century assumptions, if it can be called primitivism at all.

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Foremost in the question of primitivism in the eighteenth century, was the publication of the poems of Ossian, son of Fingal, in 1765. The question of the authenticity of these was soon raised, and satisfied for many people on the negative side by Johnson's exposure of both MacPherson's threats and his refusal to produce manuscripts he claimed to have. However, as MacPherson's Preface to the second edition shows, the two sides had broken down roughly on the basis of the nationality of the debaters.

On the Scottish side, was a fairly distinguished critic, who Johnson thought had been deceived[38], named Hugh Blair. Blair was Professor of Rhetoric at Edinburgh for

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[36] Ibid., p. xxiii.

[37] Ibid., p. xxiii.

[38] Boswell, Life of Johnson (London, 1965), p. 578.

some years, and published A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal[39] in 1763. Whitney[40] makes it fairly likely that MacPherson and Blair were both part of the important Scottish circle out of which most of the major literary and philosophical publications from that country and in that century were to come. Whitney also shows that the question of primitive origins to poetry enjoyed a thorough treatment in this circle.

Blair's defence of MacPherson's poems is in effect a defence of their validity as poetry, and shows some rather interesting statements on the theory of primitivism. The problems Blair finds himself beset with, centre round the theory of social perfectability which is implicit in his work. This idea of the gradual improvement of the human lot, due to man's own efforts, also includes quite naturally the gradual improvement of the poet's art, as it reflects the manners and state of the times. This contradicts, fairly obviously, the quasi-Christian idea of a Golden Age from which man has degenerated, and continues to degenerate unless he can recapture primitive innocence with the help of the poet. Blair refuses to reject either idea and in

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[39] Blair, op. cit.

[40] L. Whitney, "English Primitivistic Theories of Epic Origin", op. cit.

fact embraces each quite enthusiastically. Unlike Percy, he embraces each equally, and tries to make poetry something which it is not, in his attempts to maintain its importance. This, it is tentatively suggested, is the opposite of what the Romantics were doing, in that they were more willing to repudiate, or distort their view of, society or reality than poetry.

Important among Blair's preconceptions is his notion of language. The exact correspondence of words to things called for in Sprat's History of the Royal Society, was referred to in the third book of Gulliver's Travels. In the third book is mentioned a project for carrying objects about and "leaving out Verbs and Participles; because in Reality all things imaginable are but Nouns".[41] This notion is basically Locke's, for he apparently regarded the naming of "mixed modes" or a certain kind of combination of ideas not logically connected, as completely arbitrary. To define the mixture of the complex ideas (ideas not similar, but logically connected) in a "mixed mode" such as a murder is nearly impossible; instead, we are satisfied with giving it an arbitrary name to the idea of the thing in our mind, and language must not alter the clarity of our

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[41] J. Swift, Gulliver's Travels, ed. John Hayward, (London, 1963), p. 181.

conceptions. Association was at the basis of our knowledge of the world, and the accuracy of this process had to be preserved, even to the extent of suppressing the associative nature of language as well as that associative nature of the imagination which led away from real experience. Blair, as a Professor of Rhetoric, and apparently lacking the ability to think for himself,[42] is heir to this theory of language. His account of the progress of language in a society is as follows:

> In the progress of society the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy than to sprightliness and sublimity. As the world advances, the understanding gains ground upon the imagination; the understanding is more exercised; the imagination, less. [43]

Blair, is therefore forced to state more explicitly than Percy, his way out of the dilemma created by the antipathy of the imagination and the reason. The following extracts make his position clearer. He states that in primitive societies:

> besides the power of a warm imagination to suggest lively images, the want of proper

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[42] See Whitney's quotation from John Hill's, An Account of the Life and Writings of Hugh Blair, in "English Primitivistic Theories of Epic Origin", op. cit., p. 347.

[43] Blair, A Dissertation, op. cit., p. 849.

> and precise terms for the ideas they would express obliged them to have recourse to circumlocution, metaphor, comparison, and all those substituted forms of expression which give a poetical air to language. [44]

Note that the phrase "a poetical air" seems to be nearly synonymous with the phrase " a false appearence of poetry" or some such. Exactly what Blair terms truly poetical is difficult to decide, if as he would imply that passion is the effective part of poetry, but that passion produces imprecision of thought, which is not true poetry at all. The most concise statement of his position is contained in the following two sentences, in which copiousness is equated with correctness, and so on:

> Human nature is pruned according to method and rule. Language advances from sterility to copiousness, and at the same time, from fervor and enthusiasm to correctness and precision. [45]

Having abandoned the faculty of imagination, Blair has to try to make poetry out of correct copiousness, and chooses the method to which Johnson was perhaps referring in the "Life of Milton" when he was discussing the part of versification in poetry in the fullest sense of the word.

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[44] Ibid., p. 849.

[45] Ibid., p. 849.

Johnson accounts for the value of versification under the rather lame heading of music, which embellishes what he calls "poetry as a mental operation".[46] Blair, in fact, mentions in some detail, the way in which he believes this can be done.

In continuing his point about correctness, Blair remarks that:

> very few general terms or abstract ideas are to be met with in the whole collection of Ossian's works. The ideas of men at first were all particular. They had not words to express general conceptions. These were the consequence of more profound reflection and longer acquaintance with the arts of thought and of speech. Ossian, accordingly almost never expresses himself in the abstract.[47]

Blair continues, and mentions at least some of the abstracts he expects to be included in properly copious poetry:

> A public, a community, the universe, were conceptions beyond his sphere. Even a mountain, a sea, or a lake which he had occasion to mention, though only in a simile, are for the most part particularized . . .

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[46] Samuel Johnson, Lives of the Poets, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 68.

[47] Blair, op. cit., p. 857.

> For the same reasons personification is a poetical figure not very common with Ossian. Inanimate objects, such as winds, trees, flowers, he sometimes personifies with great beauty. But the personifications which are so familiar to later poets of fame, Time, Terror, Virtue and the rest of that class, were unknown to our Celtic bard. [48]

It seems clear here that Blair makes an important distinction between the poetry which expresses its own emotive/poetic fact, and the poetry which "stands for" certain abstract ideas. In his remarks on personification as a "figure" of poetry, Blair demands a kind of standard "image" which can be referred to and greeted familiarly, despite its new context. The kind of abstraction he referred to, is also notable in that it is strongly linked to precise philosophical or theological concepts of the time. Blair was able to refer here to a kind of habit his century had of intellectually capitalising almost any abstract noun. As Bernard Bronson has put it:

> To generalize was, in fact, to be civilised, and in poetry, no matter how intensely one might feel, it was not decent to autobiographize. Hence the crucial importance and intense satisfaction found in personified abstraction. The device enabled one to particularize in socially, intellectually and aesthetically acceptable forms. The mores of the time demanded that they keep their private concerns

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[48] Ibid., p. 857.

> in the background; their intellectual preoccupations demanded that they should raise these interests to the level of generalization; and personification allowed them to recapture the most valuable part of the immediacy of personal statement. [49]

This quotation illustrates the point I am trying to make: that the passionate view of poetry had to accomodate itself to certain poetic formulae which are ultimately extensions of social and epistemological criteria. Fulfilling a basic epistemological need for clarity and straightforwardness, the adherents of the pathetic criterion of poetry attempted not only to "keep their private concerns in the background" but even to channel their private concerns according to a public or unified criterion. To find and to sympathise with any contemporary example is no easy task, but it appears that Geoffrey Tillotson has isolated a good case.[50] He quotes Johnson from the "Life of Congreve", who says that: "If I were required to select from the whole mass of English poetry the most poetical paragraph, I know not what I could prefer to an exclamation in The Mourning Bride." The passage quoted by Johnson is full of exclamations of "'Tis dreadful!" and "Hark!", and the main block consists

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[49] B.H. Bronson, "Personification Reconsidered", in New Light on Dr. Johnson, ed. F.W. Hilles, (New Haven, 1959), pp. 224-25.

[50] G. Tillotson, "Imlac and the Business of a Poet", in Studies in Criticism and Aesthetics 1660-1800, ed. Anderson and Shea, (Minneapolis, 1967), pp. 304-5 and note.

of unremarkable verse such as the following:

> It strikes an awe
> And terror on my aching sight; the tombs
> And monumental caves of death look cold,
> And shoot a chilness to my trembling heart.

As Tillotson says in his note "We now dislike poetry that says 'I feel'", but it is fairly plain that for the passionate theory of poetry at the time, it was essential for an uncomplicated statement of direct emotion to be made.

It seems fairly probable that the Romantic Poets were very much heir to this kind of view of passionate poetry, though they modified it for their own purposes. Wordsworth, it would seem, depended in his poetry on a response in his readers that was highly sophisticated in its simplicity. Dr. Owen has pointed out a comparison in methods between passages in Troilus and Cressida IV, iv, 42-48 and The Prelude IX, 726-727,[51] in each case the purpose of the poet is to evoke pain. Wordsworth in contrast to Shakespeare, merely uses the abstract noun (i.e. "pain") and expects the reader to respond accurately. The confident psychology of Wordsworth's method is perhaps the result of the findings of the passionate trend in poetry.

However, here it is sufficient to assess the nature of what we have discovered to be the significant trends of

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[51] Quoted by W.J.B. Owen, "Wordsworth's "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads" in Anglistica (Copenhagen, 1957), p. 29.

the interest in primitive and passionate poetry in the earlier part of the eighteenth century. The fairly common insistence at the time on the overriding importance of passion in poetry, is sufficient answer to the 'Age of Reason' theory so long current, though the kind of passion enjoyed is qualified, and qualified in a sense by reason. The eighteenth century reader wanted evidence of emotional involvement on his poet's part. Johnson's view of the metaphysical poets is explicit here:

> they were not successful in representing or moving the affections . . . they had no regard to that uniformity of sentiment which enables us to conceive and to excite the pains and pleasures of other minds: they never inquired what, on any occasion, they should have said or done, but wrote rather as beholders than partakers of human nature; as beings looking upon good and evil, impassive and at leisure; as Epicurean deities, making remarks on the actions of men, and the vicissitudes of life, without interest and without emotion. [52]

Furthermore, he wanted it to be an involvement to which he could respond.

The interest in primitive and passionate poetry was a strong, concurrent reaction to the insipidity and over-correctness of the poetry of the times. Bound throughout the century, to cast one eye on the generally agreed standard of nature and its rules 'discover'd not devised' the critics and theorists investigated the nature of 'primitive'

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[52] S. Johnson, "Life of Cowley" in Lives, op. cit., I, p. 12.

poems, modern poets such as Gray translated much primitive work, and a lot of educated men advanced hypothetical accounts of the environmental influences on the primitive poets. The place accorded to the modern poet in society also seemed sadly different from that of the ancient bard. The modern poet was required democratically to speak to everyman, yet was also required to have a superior genius for his didactic and pleasurable work. As the prominence of subjective values became inevitable during the century, and the relativity of truth was partially acknowledged, the genius of the poet became incompatible with common acceptance. In this way, the passionate theorists are important, because of their adherence to old values in the face of modern theories which were not fully understood to be leading to relativism.

A result of this problem is that most of these men approached the question with a desire to prove their preconceptions, and were more prepared, to our way of thinking, to allow their proofs to be a distortion of fact. The training of their responses was, in other words, doomed to ultimate and fairly rapid failure.

The complete absorption in the emotion raised by art, which the eighteenth century reader seemed to demand, was difficult to achieve from the outset because of their mistrust of language as a distorter of truth. In an attempt to reduce the influence of language, which they evidently felt, to a mini-

mum, an uncomplicated kind of passion, the abstraction of passion, resulted, and the poetic device of personification came about as an objective correlative. The training of responses on a personal and social level in the direction of abstraction of thought and correctness of language, when applied to primitivist theory, gradually resulted in one inescapable conclusion. That the difference between "primitive" and "modern" societies which was at first believed to be a difference in degree only, was at last seen to be, disastrously, a difference in kind. The antipathy between the passionate imagination, and abstract understanding becomes clarified, with the resulting discomfiture of "modern" poetry. Furthermore, as Dennis had shown, complete union of subject and object could only properly be attained through passionate imagination.

As it was, "modern" poetry evolved together with a trained response, to produce a kind of art which does not move us today. The uncomplicated, though strong, response was required mostly to satisfy a desire for the new psychological realism- for the outward signs that Locke's theories of the proper functioning of the mind corresponded with fact. Johnson therefore calls for "sentiments to which every bosom returns and echo"[53] and Partridge in Tom Jones is laughed at

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[53] S. Johnson, "Life of Gray" in Lives, op. cit., II, p. 392.

when he does not appreciate the art of Garrick's reaction to Hamlet's Ghost[54], despite the emotional effect it has on him.

The part played by the study of primitive and passionate theories of poetry in the early eighteenth century in this thesis is to illustrate the rise and fall of certain momentarily satisfying theories of art, in the attempt to adjust to the subject/object split opened unobtrusively by Locke. It would take many more theses to decide the precise link between this false start and the much more influential conclusions provided by the Romantic poets, insofar as they were doing the same things. The trained responses of the eighteenth century could only be trained for so long, with the resultant Romantic "Revolution". It is possible, however, that the Romantics were thinking on almost the same terms as their immediate predecessors, and that, as has been stated earlier, Johnson and Coleridge were in an important sense, attempting the same things. The growing distrust of reason in the later eighteenth century is a critical commonplace; the establishment of passion _per se_ as an expression of truth, the investigation of it in "primitive" writings, and the nature of its partial failure should throw a great deal of light on one of the materials of Romantic poetry.

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[54] H. Fielding, _Tom Jones_ (New York, 1961), Bk. XVI, chap. V, p. 759. "The same passions which succeeded each other in Hamlet succeeding likewise in him."

CHAPTER VI

The standard work on this subject is by Samuel H. Monk,[1] from which I do not intend to depart much, except in matters of emphasis. Most of the remarks in this chapter will centre finally on Burke's Enquiry,[2] as this seems to have been perhaps the most single influential work on the subject published during the century. In itself, the Enquiry contains many aspects of a changing aesthetic, and its implications rather than its main thesis, show the work to be pivotal in the development of ideas towards full Romantic theories.

A study of the Sublime in the eighteenth century is important because of what it lent to Romantic theory, and not so much because of very much direct contribution. Monk's study has been invaluable because it has shown that the Sublime reflects the general trend of critical theory to transfer qualities from the object to the subject. Monk maintains that Kant's Critique of Judgment establishes the subjectivity of all aesthetic experience. Monk paraphrases thus:

It can only be said that objects of nature

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1 S.H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England, (Ann Arbor, 1960).

2 E. Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, ed. J.T. Boulton, (London, 1958).

> awaken the feeling of sublimity by the reaction of the mind to the object. [3]

We know of Coleridge's debt to Kant in general, yet we also know that he criticises the use of the sublime for its own sake, as in, for example, Mrs. Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho.[4]

Wordsworth, however, referred constantly to the quality of the Sublime, but it is clear that his interest in it is not for the stimulation of certain emotions for their own sake. The famous passage in Bk. VI of The Prelude contains most of the familiar features of the Sublime landscape:

> The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> And in the narrow rent at every turn
> Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
> As if a voice were in them, a sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light-
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end. [5]

Wordsworth's purpose here is, in effect, an illustration of the power of the imagination to reveal

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[3] Monk, The Sublime, op. cit. p. 7.

[4] See Critical Review, XI, Second series (1794), pp. 361-372. Quoted by Monk, op. cit. p. 220.

[5] Wordsworth, The Prelude, Bk. VI, 624-640, in Poetical Works, ed. E. de Selincourt, (London, 1950).

the invisible world and to realise symbolically his assertion that: "Our destiny, our being's heart and home/ Is with infinitude."[6] His method of evoking this depends on the quality of perpetual power in the objects contained in his descriptions, as is evident from certain lines omitted which do not consist with this imagery of perpetual motion and kinetic energy. The landscape is, as has been said, typical of the Sublime landscape. Wordsworth's interest is clearly on the transcendent reality which the subject perceives in the object, on the accuracy of the subject's imaginative interpretation of the creation, and also on the cosmic and moral implications which this has for the individual. It would seem, then, that Wordsworth is able to depend upon an acceptable version of the Sublime in order to express his more fundamental, introspective points than those Burke was seen to make.

Monk gives a definitive account of the rise of the Sublime in England. He makes it clear that Peri Hupsous by Dionysius Longinus is mainly a work on rhetoric, and dealt with the Sublime style. However, the qualities of Sublimity which this style expressed soon took the interest of the eighteenth century theorists. Boileau translated Longinus in 1674, and most critics seem to agree that his influence and importance is negligible before this date. It is

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[6] Ibid., ll. 604-05.

[7] See Burke, Enquiry, op. cit., Part II, Sect. v, pp. 64-71: "I know nothing sublime which is not some modification of power."

interesting that as Monk says:

> Longinus did ride into fame on the crest of the controversy between the Ancients and the Moderns. [8]

It seems likely that, to judge from Pope's Essay on Criticism,[9] Longinus was that ideal thing, the golden mean. By virtue of the fact that he was an Ancient, Longinus reconciled many critics of both parties, and in his stress on the strength of the individual to defy convention, provided, as Monk says, the locus classicus for individualism.[10]

In addition, another of Longinus' attributes, which Gibbon apparently noticed, was the value of his criticism in an interpretive and impressionistic response to literature. Longinus himself, as distinct from the interest in aesthetics which his study had generated, had his heyday in about 1738.

The nature of the Sublime was found by no means easy to define, but there seems to have been fairly general concurrence about the kind of place where it resided, though even in this its characteristics changed superficially. The Greek word "hupsous" originally meant "lofty", but gained a wider, metaphorical meaning with use. Finally, to express the new, fuller meaning which a new context had given the original word, the Gallicism "sublime" was coined.

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[8] Monk, op. cit. p. 26.

[9] See chap. II.

[10] Monk, op. cit. p. 27.

"Hupsous" was first translated as "sublime" in 1698. Traces of the earlier meaning of "lofty" can be seen in the comparatively early attribution of sublimity to Raphael.[11] By the end of the century Michaelangelo had displaced him as the sublimest artist, and we may take it that the preference for certain antithetical qualities of either artist may indicate superficially the progress of the Sublime. The work of each artist shows what may fairly be described as "loftiness", but Raphael's figures are pre-eminently smooth, balanced, and the paintings constructed by what Pater called: "the transformation of meek scholarship into genius."[12] Michaelangelo's works are generally rugged, tense,muscular, and, to use a misused word, "elemental". The gloom and vagueness of the later Sublime scene, in the case of verse, contrasts noticeably with the comparative brightness of earlier, consciously sublime productions. The movement away from idealised moral loftiness of a scholastic sort, towards the realisation in rugged terms of, perhaps, new ideals, may be representative of the overall shift of emphasis.

The quality of vagueness,mentioned above, is one of the most useful points of departure for a closer

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[11] See Pope, Essay on Criticism, l. 704, in Works, ed. J. Butt (London, 1963).

[12] Walter Pater, Raphael, an address delivered at Oxford, on August 2nd., 1892, in Modern Eloquence, ed., T.B. Reed, (Philadelphia, 1901) Vol. IX, p. 940.

investigation of the Sublime. It is this quality of vagueness which provides the source for the impressionistic kind of approach to art for which the Sublime was a vehicle. "The Book of Job", for example, is often cited as a superb instance of the Sublime. As a piece of consciously artistic prose, "The Book of Job" depends for effect mainly on the assumption of the infinite power of God, and man's lack of knowledge of His individual purposes. Satan, for example, by putting God on his mettle, seems to cast dramatic doubts on the consistency of God's moral purpose. Furthermore, God's insistence on the free-will of man to either preserve or abandon his integrity, places a good deal of importance on the correct interpretation of God's purposes. The continued assault of Job's faith by well-meaning but mis-led friends exacerbates this point.

The imagery which acts consistently throughout the book, expresses the vagueness of God's power, which in turn accentuates the helplessness of man before the Creation:

> Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding . . . When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. 13

Recall also the famous line: "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said . . ."

Through an insistence on these qualities of vagueness

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13 "Book of Job", the Authorised Version of The Bible, Chap. 38, vss. 4 & 7.

and power, the aestheticians of the Sublime were able to make available an ambiguity in art which acted as a corrective to too much clarity. As Burke boldly states: "a clear idea is ... another name for a little idea."[14] This ambiguity or vagueness allowed a personal response to the fundamental quality of power felt to be behind the Sublime. There is here, perhaps, a faint premonition of transcendentalism. It is easy to see in Burke's Enquiry how this vagueness or powerfulness was a direct reaction against the over-simplification of that mechanical philosophy which was still worrying Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798 and 1817. Yet this ambiguity is not a true ambiguity in the sense of having two clear meanings. Burke expected a uniform response to it, and it is seen to be one thing, capable of only one interpretation.

Before going any farther along this track, it must be shown that an involuntary confusion has arisen in Burke's usually clear mind. In the section on 'fitness', Burke is attempting to contradict both the neo-classical rules of proportion, and also the rational defences of their general and eternal fitness. Owing to this very defence of neo-classical values by rationalist logic, the two became inseparably linked. It is clear that by advocating a disregard of proportion, and a sensitive response to art, Burke says that we should: "make the imagination revolt against reason."[15]

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[14] Burke, Enquiry, op. cit., II, iv, 63.

By the end of the century, therefore, neither reason nor neo-classicism could be rejected without the other.

Burke, like Johnson in a way, felt compelled to rationalise his intuitive responses which seemed to contradict whatever epistemology he evidently accepted consciously. Though Monk makes it plain that Burke's main achievement was to ignore previous critical opinions on his subject, and largely to ignore Hartley's associationist philosophy, he also states that Burke's theory of the workings of the mind are largely based on Locke's findings.[16] Blake seems, in his brusque way, to have agreed:

> Burke's Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful is founded on the opinions of Newton and Locke... I read Burke's treatise when I was very young... I felt the same contempt and abhorrence then that I do now. They (Bacon, Locke, Burke, and Reynolds) mock inspiration and Vision. [17]

It would seem from the important word "mock", that, in Blake's opinion, Burke and most followers of Locke could not provide a satisfactory explanation for inspiration and vision. They only provided poor substitutes which burlesqued the genuine article.

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[15] Burke, Enquiry, op. cit. III, vii, 109.

[16] Monk, The Sublime, op. cit. p. 96n. See also Burke, Enquiry, op. cit. "the senses are the great originals of all our ideas", and cf. Locke, Essay on Human Understanding, ed., J.W. Yolton, (London, 1961), II, i, 3. Burke does depart from Locke, however, in his distincion between "positive pleasure" and "delight" (i.e. the removal of pain) I, iv, 36-7.

[17] W. Blake, Complete Poetry and Prose, ed. G. Keynes, (London, 1961), p. 809.

Burke's explanation of what he means by the term "imagination" is a very useful and clear example of his restriction by Locke. In mentioning that: " the mind of man posseses a sort of creative power of its own."[18] Burke opens the way towards a Romantic conception of the term. He distinguishes the term "imagination and its synonyms of wit, fancy, and invention, from "judgement"on the basis of Locke's distinction. (This, presumably, quoted by Johnson in the Dictionary, dealt with above in chap. I, p. 14). Furthermore, Burke assumes that man's mind will search naturally for resemblances not distinctions, from the pleasure it gives him:

> when two distinct objects have a resemblance, we are struck, we attend to them, we are pleased because by making resemblances we produce new images, we unite, we create, we enlarge our stock. [19]

This,in the form of words in which it is expressed, and in the insistence on resemblances, might look forward a great deal more than it does to Wordsworth's ideas on imagination as expressed, for example, in the "Preface" of 1815. The process for Wordsworth, is:

> Carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from itsome of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to re-act upon the mind which hath performed the process, like a new existence. [20]

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[18] Burke, op. cit., "Introduction on Taste", p. 16.

[19] Ibid. p. 18.

[20] Wordsworth, op. cit. p. 754.

Wordsworth apparently dares to alter by this power of imagination, the essence of the object as it appears in the mind, and Burke does not. From the following quotation, it will appear that Wordsworth was distinguishing between his truer sense of the imagination, and Burke's:

> Imagination, in the sense of the word as giving title to a class of the following poems (i.e. those of the edition to which this was a Preface), has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects. [21]

Compare this accusation with Burke's definition of imagination:

> Since the imagination is only the representative of the senses, it can only be pleased or displeased with the images from the same principle on which the sense is pleased or displeased with the realities. [22]

It can be seen once again, in Burke's study of the Sublime, as elsewhere in the thought of the century, whether in Akenside or Johnson or Blair, that the "imagination" had to be kept as the "fancy" in the Romantic sense by virtue of its close interconnection with Locke's epistemology. The imagination could not be allowed to alter the essence of the mind's idea of the object. To do this was to disturb one's true interpretation of perception. As will appear in the concluding chapter of this study, Wordsworth was free to use his imagination on a different principle from that on which his senses operated, because of the insight into the essential meaning of the object given him by his passions and reflections.

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[21] Wordsworth, op. cit., p. 753.

For Burke however, as for most people in his century, the faculty of the imagination was bound, gagged, and blindfolded by the needs of Locke's psychology. For the point of his "Introduction on Taste" is that all men: "are nearly equal"[23] in this faculty of seeing resemblances. Burke had to find a way round the limitation of Locke's rationalism without rejecting it. It is in this light that I see his and his century's attachment to the Sublime, and in this Burke has naturally certain similarities to Dennis.

It is clear that Burke, just like Akenside, was seeking a subjective analogue to objective truth. Unlike Akenside, he was not satisfied with any such analogue that the imagination could provide.[24] Burke, like Dennis, bases his work on the assumption that the passions are the test of an art's truth.[25] Burke does not go so far, in fact, as Dennis, because "Sir Longinus Tremendous" stated that conceptual thought, when united with passion, provides the fullest idea of truth. For Burke, however, the question of conceptual thought does not arise. It is this specialisation of aesthetic experience which characterises

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[22] Burke, op. cit. p. 17.

[23] Ibid. p. 18.

[24] Burke's latest editor, J.T. Boulton, notes a point of departure from Akenside which might seem to stress the opportunity for imaginative freedom that Burke's Enquiry might have given but did not. Cf. Akenside, Pleasures of the Imagination , in Poetical Works, (London, 1857), I, 360-76, with Burke, op. cit. III, ix, 110.

later sublime theory and eventually doomed it, tying it to a dependence upon Locke's epistemology and passive theories of knowledge. Burke and Dennis concur in the importance of the passions in their theories, and both agree that"reflection", as Dennis calls it, is a bad thing. Burke's assumptions of the truth of his aesthetic is most significant. He has referred throughout to a principle in nature. At the beginning of part four, Burke takes a pause for breath, and considers he has gone as far as he can go into the cause and effect relationship in the "general system of things":

> I do not pretend that I shall ever be able to explain, why certain affections of the body produce such a distinct emotion of mind, and no other; or why the body is at all affected by the mind, or the mind by the body. A little thought will show this to be impossible... That great chain of causes, which linking one another even to the throne of God himself, can never be unravelled by any industry of ours. When we go but one step beyond the immediately sensible qualities of things,we go out of our depth... So that when I speak of cause and efficient cause, I only mean, certain affections of the mind, that cause certain changes in the body; or certain powers and properties in bodies, that work a change in the mind. [26]

It would seem that Burke therefore assumes a uniformity of emotional response in his audience, and is not too disturbed about his lack of ability to provide ultimate proof. It is the fact of uniformity which Burke is

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[25] Dennis, Crtiical Works, ed. E.N. Hooker, (Baltimore, 1939), I, 359.

[26] Burke, op. cit. IV, i, 129-130.

concerned to stress, and upon the establishment of this his aesthetic stands or falls as an acceptable system. It is important to note that he does not advance any satisfactory reason for the existence of an essentially true relationship between subject and object, as Dennis was able to do by the insistence on the place of ideas of infinity in art, together with our imaginative and passionate response to it. Burke can only rely ultimately on his assumption that the passionate response to the Sublime in art or nature was more uniform than our response by the imagination or the intellct. Objects or incidents arouse in us terror and relief that we are actually in no danger. Already, Burke's task is to prove a relation between the emotion and the reason for the emotion in ourselves, rather than a relationship between the object which produces the emotion, and ourselves. In this way, though the cult of the Sublime depends on the Passions,it cannot attempt to do much more than assume a direct connection between the subject and ultimate truth. It was this connection between the detailed psychology of the subject and the ultimate truth of its reaction to experience, which the Romantics were attempting to establish. The inability of the Sublime to supply this connection, may account for its degeneration into a fad. Furthermore, the assumption of the unanimity of response asa natural law broke down,

brought about by a Romantic tendency to see an"all-in-each", or by Hume's practically unobtainable relativism, (see p.94). Above all, when Wordsworth refined his response to the Sublime, and connected it to his subjectively based moral purpose, then the Sublime in the specialised, isolated sense in which the eighteenth century critics tried to establish their system of truth, had to come to an end. Once given a higher objective "meaning", the Sublime as such was no longer the same thing, nor served the same purpose.

The main intention of Burke's work is to diminish the importance of conceptual thought in art, insofar as it was unemotional and fanciful. This he justifies by the authority of the uniform response of his audience, and the claim that this will reveal the omniscient hand of the Creator.[27]

Burke's opinion is that by raising an obscurely powerful idea, the poet can raise a higher emotion than by a clear one:

> There are reasons in nature why the obscure idea, when properly conveyed, should be more affecting than the clear. [28]

The purpose of language to Locke, was to: "make known one man's thoughts or ideas to another."[29] but Burke, while accepting this theory, has to make words more affective by going against their purpose.

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[27] Ibid. I, xix, 52-3.

[28] Ibid. II, iv, 60.

[29] Locke, Essay, op. cit. III, x, 23.

Sensible images, just because of their intellectual attraction, distracted from the emotional impact of a situation. As Burke added in his revisions included in the second edition, evidently to make clearer his assertions:

> Indeed so little does poetry depend for its effect on the power of raising sensible images, that I am convinced it would lose a very considerable part of its energy, if this were the necessary result of all description. Because that union of affecting words which is the most powerful of all poetical instruments, would frequently lose its force along with its propriety and consistency, if the sensible images were always excited. [30]

The passionate response was an end in itself, because it provided a uniform test of truth (but with the evident danger of the subject's non-connection with any trustworthy truth in any group of objects, at the worst because he had no conceptual understanding of that which he responded to.)

Burke has some difficulty in explaining to us how words affect us passionately if they truly stand for ideas[31] and in this lies the dilemma of his subject.

The Sublime appeared most promisingly at the beginning of the century to break the rules and provide a new foundation for emotional response in literature. With the coming of the Romantics, however, a more satisfying method of identification and involvement was conceived. The achievement of the Romantic poets was to find a link

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[30] Burke, op. cit. V, v, 170.

[31] Ibid. V, v, 175.

between themselves and nature, (the objects to which they most readily responded), and some kind of transcendent truth. They sacrificed the companionship of the disproved general acceptance theory to do so, within limits.

The Sublime, for the purposes of the first generation Romantics, proved itself unworkable as a complete artistic formula, partly because of the need to cramp the imagination, but mainly because of the resulting corollary of a blind but uniform passionate response. The lack of connection between emotion and idea is implicit in the last paragraph but one of the Enquiry:

> Now, as there is a moving tone of voice, an impassioned countenance, an agitated gesture, which affect independently of the things about which they are exerted, so there are words, and certain dispositions of words, which being peculiarly devoted to passionate subjects, and always used by those who are under the influence of any passion; they touch and move us more than those which far more clearly and distinctly express the subject matter. [32]

Thus a study of the Sublime is most valuable in describing the kind of dilemma which the century was trying to solve. Though the theory of the Sublime solved nothing in itself, it contributed to other theories a stock response, a wealth of psychological discovery, and a knowledge of its own failure to provide a general test of truth.

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[32] Ibid. V, v, 175.

CHAPTER VII

As I said in Chapter I, "it was Locke's and Johnson's weakness to admit to a principle of 'pleasures of the imagination' not logically consistent with what they believed to be true and real." Unable at first to formulate any overall theory of poetry, except insofar as it referred to "nature" in the sense of which Pope's work is the epitome, the critics I have dealt with attempted in the main to formulate theories based on the fundamental nature of one ingredient of poetry. The essential belief in what A. O. Lovejoy has called "Uniformitarianism"[1] still involved, as I said before, that some concept of "nature" was being used as the test of art. The breakdown of this increasingly impossible method has resulted now in art being the agent of "nature". This we see, for instance, in films such as "Blow Up" and "Shoot loud, louder, I don't understand!" The main character in the first film is a photographer who becomes involved in a murder; in the last scene he is a spectator of a make-believe tennis match, and is forced to avoid public embarrassment by picking up a tennis ball which we the audience and he know not to exist, thus acquiescing in the madness of the society which has produced him. This view of the artist as the last refuge of "nature", is made even more precarious in the second film. During the course of the film, the artist finds increasing difficulty in separating his dreams from reality, and comes to rely more and more on a mad uncle whom nobody but the artist can understand. Finally, the uncle blows himself up with explosives and

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[1]See A. O. Lovejoy, Essays in the History of Ideas, Baltimore, 1948).

the artist's position is more equivocal than before. In these two films are expressed two variations on the modern theme: the artist forced to reject his vision of "nature" by the behaviour of the society which his art must, in some sense, reflect; or the artist gradually losing contact with that source of comfort (in this case, his uncle) which enabled him to make distinction between illusion and reality. This, then, is the modern position to which the eighteenth century can be seen to be moving, though still at some distance from it.

In eighteenth century theory, the Sublime, the imagination, and the passions, all took their turn as the centre of theories of poetry which are separated by their nature. Indeed, all these qualities often appear together in any one theory, wherever the emphasis is placed, but their co-presence does not in many cases indicate a logical connection between the three. The separation of qualities which is explicit in Akenside's "General Argument", referred to in chapter IV, is perhaps a special case, but the mechanistic philosophy behind it seems to have pervaded the thought of the century:

> Besides this, the imitative arts, especially poetry, owe much of their effect to a similar exhibition of properties quite foreign to the imagination, insomuch that in every line of the most applauded poems we meet with either ideas drawn from external senses, or truths discovered to the understanding, or illustrations of contrivance and final causes, or, above all the rest, with circumstances proper to awaken and engage the passions.[2]

These qualities of art are in themselves not connected logically

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[2]Akenside, Poetical Works, (London, 1857), p. 2.

by Akenside, nor by anyone as far as we can tell, except insofar as they exist side by side. However, the growing feeling, again implicit in Akenside, that these qualities, though residing in the object, were connected by the mental processes, led inevitably to the simple discovery that perhaps the poet's mental processes may work better than those of other people. They may even work differently. Certain popular theories delineated in this thesis are each an attempt to find one straightforward standard of reference, available to all men. The nature of these attempts and failures is important to an understanding of the origins of the twentieth century dilemma of amorphous relativism, where even the establishment of a constant factor (for Einstein it was light) is precarious. Relativism was, of course, Hume's answer to the immediate problems of his time:

> Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character (of a "true" judge); and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty.[3]

In this theory of (practically unobtainable) relativism, Hume's position is the reversal of the concept of objective truth to which Pope managed to adhere. The three trends of thought dealt with in this thesis, imagination, passion, and the Sublime, represent the main attempts to find an artistic refutation of relativism before the nature and problems of relativism were fully realised. All three trends presented, in their single-minded way, an apprenticeship to Romanticism.

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[3]Hume, Works, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, (London, 1875), III, 278-79.

Wordsworth's similarities with John Dennis, and also his differences, have already been related to the central problem, (see chapter III). Wordsworth was unwilling to admit to a position where man is an absurd being, an étranger, cut off not only from fellow men, but also from any coherent force for truth. The real essence of anything, according to Locke, was impossible to know, and even the apparent essence could only be expressed by a general word.[4] Truth "is viewed by him as merely implying the agreement of ideas with one another, not with external reality."[5] As Basil Willey has shown in his useful study of Wordsworth's relation to Locke:

> Wordsworth was the kind of poet who could only have appeared at the end of the eighteenth century, when mythologies were exploded, and a belief in the visible universe as the body of which God was the soul alone remained.[6]

Willey's point is that Wordsworth felt habitually compelled to create a unity of himself with the object where he does not find it, and that this continual one way process was one which, in Willey's words, turned him into: "a mountain of stone."[7] Willey evidently assumes that Wordsworth believed the material world to be inanimate and dead, and this is a helpful clarification of the issue.

Wordsworth's connections with eighteenth century theory are principally through his views on passion. Dr. Owen differentiates between

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[4]See Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding, (London, 1961), III, iii, 12.

[5]W. K. Wright, A History of Modern Philosophy, (New York, 1941), p. 158.

[6]B. Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, (London, 1962), p. 268.

[7]Ibid., p. 275.

the two meanings of the word "feelings"; one is a basically passive response to the senses, and the other: "as if feeling were a stimulating agent entering the mind."[8] The ambiguity is probably inherent, Dr. Owen states. Basically, however, Wordsworth's feelings are his primary means of circuiting Locke's epistemology, although it is difficult (because of the ambiguity mentioned above) to use them to account for the original reasons for the poet's initial stimulation. In other words, one can only account for the creative process, not the epistemological one in Wordsworth. In the stimulation which is the creative origin of poetry, then, the feelings are not alone but connected with a faculty of reflection, referred to in the useful "Preface" of 1815. It will be remembered that Dennis advocated that the passions carry away a reader or a poet, because if they do not: "the soul has leisure to reflect on the deceit."[9] Dennis is evidently concerned that the test of realism should be avoided, but Wordsworth depends on just this test. Only by reflection and the passage of time can the importance of one's first feelings relative to other feelings, be assessed:

> Reflection, -- which makes the poet acquainted with the value of actions, images, thoughts, and feelings; and assists the sensibility in perceiving their connection with each other.[10]

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[8] W. J. B. Owen, "Wordsworth's 'Preface' to Lyrical Ballads" in Anglistica, (Copenhagen, 1957) IX, p. 41 and note.

[9] Dennis, The Critical Works, ed. E. N. Hooker, (Baltimore, 1939), p. 362.

[10] Wordsworth, Works, ed. E. de Selincourt, (London, 1950), p. 752.

Presumably, to Wordsworth, all feelings are true in some degree or other, but have to be trained by the process of conditioning one's habits of writing so that one knows when a particular emotion relates to a vital truth. See again the "Preface" of 1800, ll. 130-140. As Dr. Owen states, this process is eventually automatic, because the unimportant feelings "perish of starvation".[11]

We find that, connected with his debt to eighteenth century theories of passion, are Wordsworth's primitivistic assumptions. In particular, the Appendix to the "Preface" of 1802 is concerned with the belief of the task of the poet to reverse the mistakes of impure poets who wrote "ambitious of the fame of Poets."[12] The mistake of these poets, according to Wordsworth, was that they had taken over the expressions of passion and "frequently applied them to feelings and thoughts with which they had no natural connection whatsoever."[13] Wordsworth goes on to assert that the poets, by doing this, trained the responses of their audience away from an appreciation of the true, natural connection between events, and objects, and the expression of them.

It is noticeable that Percy also implied that thought of profit influences the productions of the second generation of poets, just as Thomson's accusations of the materialism of society possibly informed

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[11]Owen, op. cit., p. 42n.

[12]Wordsworth, "Appendix" in Owen, op. cit., l. 12.

[13]Ibid., ll. 16-17.

his "Preface" to Winter.

It is important, however, that, unlike Blair and Percy, Wordsworth no longer believed the general language of modern poetry to be more correct than that of primitive productions. To the example drawn from Cowper's verses in the Appendix, Wordsworth applies the phrase "vicious poetic diction."[14] The difference between Blair, perhaps the most typical spokesman of the eighteenth-century primitivists, and Wordsworth, was that for Blair the advancement of modern society had gone too far for correction and perhaps even had advantages which off-set to some degree the loss of natural passion. For Wordsworth, the advancement of modernity was a retrograde step which had to be retraced, by a creative return to "natural" values.

Itself involved in the process of creation, is the "combining power" of the imagination. This faculty dares to alter the outward forms of things, in that it analyses and synthesises simultaneously certain aspects of one or more objects. Wordsworth's reference to "Resolution and Independence" in the 1815 "Preface" has been cited before, (chapter VI, with reference to Burke's response to Locke's posited "real essence"). It seems enough to extend the claim made there that Wordsworth dared to alter Locke's essence of things as they were expressed in material forms and appeared as an "idea" or "image" in the mind. Wordsworth's contact with real essence is through passion and reflection, into which process he would also add the imagination. The imagination combines aspects

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[14] Ibid., ll. 145-6.

of external objects to create a new essence in them in response to the understanding of this essence gained through passion and reflection.

By rejecting Locke thus finally, yet accepting the doctrine of material deadness which Locke implies, Wordsworth achieved his union of subject and object. His method depended on plainness, and on stripping down both the object for his observation,[15] and the poetry in which he expressed it. Wordsworth's attainment of a unity between subject and object in his poetry, amounts to an adaptation of Locke's theories, in that he always has them in mind as a starting point to be dissolved, particularly by his imagination. In a sense, the tension between Locke's ideas and Wordsworth's own provides one of the sources of his effect on the reader, because of the creative tight-rope Wordsworth was forced to walk. In a sense too, this tension produced transcendentalism. As M. H. Abrams wrote:

> To establish that man shares his own life with nature was to re-animate the dead universe of the materialists, and at the same time most effectively to tie man back into his milieu.[16]

In a sense, the Romantic poets represented the last desperate effort of the eighteenth century to establish a test of universal truth to poetry.

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[15] See Wordsworth, "Preface" of 1815, in Works, op. cit., p. 752, on "observation": the poet must "observe with ~~a~~ accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer."

[16] M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp. (New York, 1958), p. 65.

They were able to do this by a process of synthesis which embraced the main elements present in eighteenth century critical theory. Again, in a sense, they were able to do this by a process which neither made judgment an external faculty, nor which ignored it, but made their collaboration of passion and imagination into its own justification in the experience of the reader. This is clearly what Johnson wanted, as I have tried to show by his remarks on passion and the test of the feelings of his own bosom which he applied. He would not in theory allow his intellectual faculty of imagination to provide its own laws complementary to his passions, because it confounded the intellectual faculty which he most depended upon -- Locke's reason.

It is plain that the Romantic poets were able to combine an intellectual faculty with the passions, and with the material world:

> The poet's heart and intellect should be combined, intimately combined and unified with the great appearances of nature, and not merely held in solution and loose mixture with them . . . Bowles has indeed the sensibility of a poet, but he has not the passion of a great poet . . . he has no native passion because he is not a thinker.[17]

This is a comparatively early theory of Coleridge's (1802) but shows quite clearly his characteristic theoretical blending of passion and thought. He and Wordsworth commonly stated the imagination to be the combining power, but it would seem that there are two types of combination going on. The combining power of the imagination only seems to work properly when the imagination itself is combined with passion. The

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[17]S. T. Coleridge. Letters, ed. E.L. Griggs, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), II, 864. To W. Sotheby, September 10th, 1802.

Romantics never had to disregard the implications of Dennis' example of the man in a fever, because of the dialectical self-control of the two faculties of passion and imagination. Coleridge, in his statements on metre, traced it to

> the balance in the mind effected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion.[18]

Clearly Coleridge is trying to relate this theory of versification to the creative act it expresses. He finds a place for "judgement", but only insofar as it aids the essential meaning of the imagination: the "balance of antagonists" in the poet's mind quoted above are organised by:

> a supervening act of the will and judgement, consciously and for the foreseen purpose of pleasure. . . . Now these two conditions must be reconciled and co-present. There must not only be a partnership, but a union; an interpenetration of passion and will, of spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose.[19]

In this then, it is clear that the judgement is only applied insofar as it can decide how best to express what the imagination and will together, have conceived. In turn, the judgement is also fired by the imagination and passion of the conception in the poet's mind, and is combined with them.

It is important to realise Coleridge's stress on the reconciliation of subject and object:

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[18] Coleridge, Biog. Lit. op. cit., Chapter XVIII, p. 206.

[19] Ibid., p. 206.

> All knowledge rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject.[20]

It is also clear that he refers to a kind of realism clearly different from Locke's:

> The realism common to all mankind is far elder and lies infinitely deeper than this hypothetical explanation of the origin of our perceptions, an explanation skimmed from the mere surface of mechanical philosophy.[21]

Coleridge's rejection of Locke's epistemology in favour of a deeper realism is equivalent in a more complex and deeper form to what Johnson was trying to do, when using the passions as the sole form of identification between the objective work of art and the subjective reader. Johnson, of course, was having to do this without rejecting the rational type of mind made to seem the only right one by an epistemology he was in the process of rejecting. No wonder that:

> celestial wisdom calms the mind,
> And makes the happiness She does not find.[22]

It would seem then, that Coleridge had succeeded in rejecting the mechanical habit of mind partly as a result of the evident practical failure of the 18th century trends depicted in this paper to produce affecting art of a mechanical and conceptual nature. Furthermore, he was able to do so, while retaining the same main critical terms, passion,

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[20] Ibid., Chapter XII, p. 144.

[21] Ibid., p. 148.

[22] Johnson, "The Vanity of Human Wishes" in Rasselas, Poems and Selected Prose, ed. B. H. Bronson, (New York, 1958), ll. 367-8.

imagination, and judgement. In a sense, Coleridge was attempting, like most of the 18th century, to find a kind of truth which would be real. His realism is, as he said "deeper", but it is realism neverless. For Coleridge, the complete relativism to which Locke's ideas led him (and Locke's ideas were perhaps themselves the products of the inherent split between subject and object) were to be avoided in literature, because Locke's theories ignored a major part of man's and the world's nature, of which true art is the expression:

> By his abuse of the word "idea" Locke seems to say: "that the sun, the rain, the manure, and so on had made the wheat, had made the barley . . . If for this you substitute the assertion that a grain of wheat might remain for ever and be perfectly useless and to all purposes non-apparent, had it not been that the congenial sunshine and proper soil called it forth -- everything in Locke would be perfectly rational".[23]

Of course, Coleridge had to make concessions which limited his realistic successors in a different way from that in which it had limited his predecessors, realistic in a different way:

> That illusion, contradistinguished from delusion, that negative faith which simply permits the images presented to work by their own force, without either denial or affirmation of their real existence by the judgement, is rendered impossible by their immediate neighbourhood to words and facts of known and absolute truth.[24]

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[23]Coleridge, Philosophical Lectures pp. 378-9 quoted by Abrams, op. cit., p. 172.

[24]Coleridge, Biog. Lit. Chapter XXII p. 256.

In a sense, it is the limitations of any philosophy which make it significant, because the limitations are never so coherent as the philosophy itself, only potentially so. It is the limitations of the artistic philosophy of the 18th century which has been the subject of this paper, and which the Romantics attempted to solve. They attempted to make a coherent philosophy out of the limitations of the old, and succeeded in making limitations of their own, especially as they decided in favour of a dialectical objectivity.[25] In a sense, both the 18th century's abortive attempt at unifying their points of reference, and the 20th century's relativism have been different attempts to solve the very problems with which Romantics were faced. All three epochs were or are faced with a growing complexity of activities, and a stress both on individualism and on the individual's right to interpret events and phenomena for himself. All these forces now add up to a world of apparently formless behaviour which the artist cannot imitate, simply because his work, by definition, involves the imposition of a form. The only other alternative to silence is to impose his own form on the world; according to his nature, he will expect the world to take heed or to ignore him.

The rise in criticism partially depicted in these pages was a result of attempts by men committed to a search for truth in literature and bound to establish some kind of validity for that kind of truth. Advocates for the right of literature to express or discover truth have always had to act in their capacity as defenders, perhaps since Plato,

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[25] "Without contraries is no progression" Blake, Complete Poetry and Prose ed. G. Keynes, (London, 1961) p. 181. This statement, though not necessarily expressing an objective position, nevertheless is a clearly dialectical statement, and is taken from a work whose title at least tends to suggest objectivity: "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell."

and in England since Stephen Gosson's School of Abuse (1579). To a degree, then, and only to a degree, the specific effect in our period of scientific discovery or "materialism" on literature can be mitigated, and seen itself as a symptom of the deeper problem.

The local problems brought by the gradual realisation that the truth art expressed was no longer universal or even universally available are simple enough to list.

Firstly, one problem was the question of the relationship of language to truth, and the clearest statements of this, based on Locke's ideas, are in chapter VI on the Sublime and chapter V on passionate poetry, as are the social questions this inevitably raised. Language was required, not partly to make truth by virtue of its expression, but required to express it in the most direct way. In contrast to the views of the advocates of a directly expressive language (to which Wordsworth was heir), we have the view of language as being witty or fanciful in function, and the difference in practice between the latter two, is largely a difference in epistemological responsibility, as Johnson's remarks on Akenside indicate. (see chapter IV).

The relationship of the poet to his audience is necessarily connected with the gradual realisation of the ability of the mind to make its own truth, and lead, in effect, to the Romantic poets openly acknowledging this and making a virtue of it. This problem is implicit in Dennis (chapter III) and again in the chapter on the passionate theories of poetry. (chapter V). The poet as versifier and confirmer of acceptable truths, or as didactic delighter of the fancy, was not reconcilable with the growing realization of the individual powers of the mind, nor with the notion, implicit in Romantic theory, that each man is responsible for

making his own truth.

Together with this realisation, comes an inevitable distrust, for the first time in English literature, of what man's mind (man's collective mind especially) has made. This distrust perhaps now occupies the foremost place in twentieth century problems. Ultimately, it has been the purpose of this study to trace in this special field the rise of this distrust, thought it is latent at times, and even veiled by an air of confidence and complacence. At the same time, an attempt has been made at an objective critical study of those elements in eighteenth century literature which contributed most to the poetic theories of the Romantic pioneers, Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Criticism in this period, then, is itself the product of what it was attempting to solve. As both the medicine for, and the symptom of, an awareness that truth has many facets, criticism in itself was, I suppose, doomed at best to extinction in the case of success, or to a kind of perpetual labour in the case of failure.

In giving what I believe to be a modern slant to this study, I hope I have made it into an acceptable interpretation of certain ideas in the 18th century.

As I was always told even at school to end with an apt quotation whenever possible, it would seem proper to choose one from Burke, whose realization of the relativity of truth transcends even the minuteness of his investigation in the Enquiry. Anyone taking a post-graduate degree must believe in the importance of his task, though his modesty is secure in the knowledge of the unimportance of his conclusions:

> nothing tends more to the corruption of science than to suffer it to stagnate. These waters must be troubled before they can exert their virtues. A man who works beyond the surface of things, though he may be wrong himself, yet he clears the way for others, and may chance to make even his errors subservient to the cause of truth.[26]

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[26] Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, ed. J. T. Boulton. (London, 1958), p. 54.

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