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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ROMANTIC SUBJECT

The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations.

—David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*

The point of excess for the imagination . . . is like an abyss in which it fears to lose itself.

—Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*

Coleridge and the “Psycho-analytical”

“The first step to knowledge,” Coleridge writes, “. . . is to dare commune with our very and permanent self.”¹ This daring turn to discover the quintessential self is a quintessentially Romantic gesture. The self that Romanticism came to know, however, turned out to be anything but “permanent,” or was permanent in ways it had not at first anticipated. Let us start with this book’s conceptual origin, an excerpt from an 1805 entry in Coleridge’s notebooks:

Among the numerous examples of confusion of Heathen & Christian Mythology in the Poets of the 15th Century (pleasing inasmuch as they prove how intimately the works of Homer & Virgil &c were *worked* in & *scripturalized* in their *minds*—I. was taught this hour, the other the next—or both together &

by the same man with the same countenance, with the same seriousness and zeal, at the same early age—and in a time when Authority was all in all—and what was publicly *taught* of Aristotle, was individually & perhaps more generally, *felt* of Homer in the various broken reflections of him throughout the Latin Poets & all men of Education & in the original & the echoing series of the other Greek Poets to the Politicians, & c & c,—indeed, it requires a strong imagination as well as an accurate psycho-analytical understanding in order to be able to conceive the *possibility*, & to picture out the reality, of the *passion* of those Times for Jupiter, Apollo & c & the nature of the *Faith* (for a Faith it was—it vanished indeed at the Cock-crowing of a deliberate Question, in *most* men; but in the ordinary unchecked stream of Thought it moved on, as naturally as Contraband & Legal Goods in the same Vessel, when no Revenue Officers are on the Track.) (CN 2:2670)

It seems apt that the first appearance of the term “psycho-analytical” in the English language should come in a passage concerned with two issues: faith and the present’s ability to read the past. Coleridge alludes to how Renaissance poets (he goes on to cite Ariosto), ‘con-fusing’ the “Heathen & Christian” as part of the same “mythology,” “*worked in & scripturalized*” Homer or Virgil. That is to say, they treated ancient poetry as a form of belief, not as religious doctrine, but because it expressed the nature of faith itself. Poetry was a fundamental expression of how “Jupiter, Apollo & c” were daily merely present in the minds and imaginations of the ancients. Faith was not a question of the gods’ existence, but of a passion *for* the gods. Or rather, there was no question of faith itself; it simply *was*. Only with the dawn (“cock-Crowing”) of Enlightenment in the Renaissance was the question (“a deliberate Question”) posed. At this point, Coleridge claims, faith “vanished,” and, the passage suggests, poetry was called upon to speak for the reality of the gods that the ancients took for granted as surely as Christianity spoke for the existence of God.

But a schism emerged. The Renaissance made Aristotle the paradigm of its scientific mind and took Homer and Virgil as its literary paradigms. Philosophy and science found themselves in the singular intellect of Aristotle, whereas literature had to find itself through the rather more intuitive paths of feeling, as the “broken reflections” or “echoes” of multiple personalities. This division of labor between “what was publicly *taught* of Aristotle” and what “was individually . . . *felt* of Homer” generated binaries around which the public sphere took shape: outside and

inside, public and private, social and individual, mind and heart, cognition and feeling, sense and sensibility.

Yet faith never really vanished. It moved on “in the ordinary unchecked stream of Thought,” “as naturally as Contraband & Legal Goods in the same Vessel [of thought that contains philosophy and science], when no Revenue Officers are on the Track.” In *Biographia Literaria* (1817) Coleridge, aligning poetry with myth and belief, speaks of the “poetic faith” that comes from a “willing suspension of disbelief” (*BL* 2:6). This formulation treats the psychology of faith as desire and illusion as well as hope and certainty. Coleridge is not talking about the delusions of ideology’s social *mythos*, although the 1805 passage suggests that the “deliberate Question” of rationality stakes its own belief claims on reality. Rather, Coleridge addresses the human capacity *to* believe, especially what we do not necessarily know to exist or to be true, what in *Biographia* he examines as the “supernatural,” like the preternatural reality that must be accounted for in “The Ruined Cottage.” This psychology of faith constitutes an *other* register of cognition that goes underground. This is not the Freudian unconscious *per se*, the depth or interior of a repressed or buried psychic half-life. Rather, it is a “Contraband” reality buried within the everyday, in the “ordinary unchecked stream of Thought,” a shadow economy within reason, the unseen part of its operations. It is thus also “naturally” or semiotically part of the “same Vessel” as reason, consciousness, the visible. Poetry speaks of and from this Hades (in “Ode to a Nightingale” Keats will say that the work of poetry is always borne “Lethe-wards” [*KP* 4]), where the dead, never really dead, continue to wander in a forgetting that, as Freud will remind us, is its own form of remembering.

The resilience of this other form of memory, Coleridge seems to say, comes from its being “*felt*” rather than seen, from its resistance to enlightenment’s demand for visibility. Its transmission from past to present is thus different from reason’s ‘public’ education, and its knowledge and historical form elude official expression. For one thing, faith is felt “individually,” invoking in Coleridge’s time the post-Revolutionary specter of a knowledge that might counter the status quo. Faith is truly radical, that is, because of its psychological dimension. It cannot be located in the origins or ends of identity but rather makes itself felt throughout history, an other trajectory of feeling that transmits itself as “broken reflection” and “echoes.” This body of feeling registers thought’s cognition as it is, to paraphrase Wordsworth in “Tintern Abbey,” felt along the pulses before it passes into the purer mind. Yet, as Coleridge suggests, thought can never overcome or set feeling aside. Rather, feeling

is the psychosomatic body of cognition integral to thought. And to apprehend this body, the passage calls upon an *other* way to “conceive the *possibility*”—as opposed to ‘explain the meaning’—of “the *passion* of those Times.” Again, the point is not to understand reality itself but to comprehend one’s passion *for* this reality, knowledge’s human dimension. This “requires a strong imagination as well as an accurate psycho-analytical understanding.” One invokes the Enlightenment precision of reason, while the other invokes a Romantic faith in imagination. But the “psycho-analytical” con-fuses the psyche with reason, introducing the psychological as a third component between imagination and reason. This third thing is like the “tertium aliquid” of the Coleridgean dialectic in *Biographia Literaria*, “an inter-penetration of . . . counteracting powers, partaking of both” (*BL* 1:300). Psychology is the reciprocity of understanding between imagination and the analytical, but as mimesis—“to picture out the reality” of things—and phantasy—“to conceive the possibility” of that reality. That is, psychology *conceives* or *imagines* how the mind *makes* reality.

Coleridge’s Romantic response to Renaissance poetry’s response to faith, then, questions how one believes in what one thinks and writes as essential marks of the human. Speaking of German idealism’s rethinking of the Cartesian *cogito*, Slavoj Žižek addresses the human “symbolic (re)constitution” of the world’s “natural environs,” the ongoing “construction of a symbolic universe that the subject projects onto reality as a kind of substitute-formation, destined to recompense us for the loss of the immediate, pre-symbolic real.” Žižek calls this (re)constitution of the real through the “symbolic virtual environs” of subjectivity the “founding gesture of ‘humanization.’”² He links this gesture to psychoanalysis, which comprehends that subjectivity is always a “substitute-formation.” Attempting to correct such formations when they turn pathological—that is, when they get out of synch with the reality to which they correspond—psychoanalysis strikes at the very heart of subjectivity itself. Always a projection of its own symbolic nature onto the real, subjectivity is always at some level implicitly pathological. The work of writing and the Symbolic, where the human meets the real and reason meets its phantasy, is thus the pathology of being that requires, interminably, the cure of writing’s pathology, the pathology of writing’s cure—Derrida’s *pharmakon*. The work of thought and writing in Coleridge’s notebook entry betrays this mark of humanization as the “substitute-formation” of subjectivity itself, a psychology that can never step outside itself because it has become its own ‘work,’ the pathology of thought that makes thought possible. The moment the psychoanalytical emerges, that is, it becomes immediately symptomatic.

It seems equally fitting, then, that it should emerge in Romanticism as if unawares, like the Ancient Mariner's act of faith in blessing the water snakes "unawares," as if through the missed encounter of its own cognition and signification. For to suspend one's disbelief in a reality that literature and its mythological nature makes felt is also to *be suspended by* this disbelief in feeling, caught in a struggle of faith that by its nature can never be resolved. "Poetic faith" is the struggle that makes itself felt as the possibility of faith. In this *suspension* we find what I shall call the *absent* psychosomatic body of our subjectivity that psychoanalysis emerges to account for. Let us turn finally to what is perhaps the passage's most maddening transition: "I. was taught this hour, the other the next—or both together & by the same man with the same countenance, with the same seriousness and zeal, at the same early age—& in a time when Authority was all in all." The "same man with the same countenance" seems to be Coleridge himself, but could be any number of figures named or unnamed (perhaps one of Coleridge's earlier teachers) con-fused into the singular persona of Coleridge as speaker. The passive "was taught," however, dispels the "infinite I AM" (*BL* 1:304) of Coleridge's primary imagination into the multiple personalities of the subject and his cognates. The passage seems to anthropomorphize history itself as the allegory of how literature transmits knowledge as a matter of faith to its subjects, through which process the subject is meant to find himself. Without beginnings or ends, however, this history is instead the process of its own making, which explains the passage's anxiety about origins. Between the simultaneous movement forward from the "original" through its "echoing series" and backward from later "broken reflections" to this original, origins vanish, except insofar as the past makes itself *felt* in the present. The stable "I" goes missing, displaced by a subject "in-process/on trial," constituted by the psychology waged between his "accurate psycho-analytical understanding" and "strong imagination" of things.

This process also accounts for the passage's strange temporality. "This hour, the other the next" is the uncanny meeting of the past and present in the present's understanding of a past it *feels* but cannot *know* definitively, or rather can only feel *that* it knows with some certainty. This "both together" produces the synchronic "same countenance" of past and present in the strange time of psychoanalysis. Dominick La Capra argues that psychoanalysis makes sense as neither an Aristotelian diachronic temporality nor synchronic atemporality, but "is understood both in stabilizing terms . . . and in more disconcerting ways."³ Whereas the scientific mind moves consciously, progressively, deliberately, the literary mind moves intuitively, repetitively, and is more difficult to locate within the public sphere. This is the temporality of transference, which con-fuses

the identities of who analyzes and is analyzed. One both reads the past and is read by the past, both reads the past and reflects upon one's ability *to* read the past. Within this transference, the present can only "conceive" the "times" of the past as part of an indefinite and interminable future. The passage's circuit of representation returns to a past that catches us in its future, where we are required to suspend our disbelief in what Coleridge is saying. Coleridge's notebook entry evokes the "psycho-analytical understanding" it incidentally expounds, generating meaning as a pathology beyond understanding, where thought requires an equally "strong imagination."⁴ Between the writing that finds thought and the one that loses it we find the strange subjectivity of cognition itself, registered as the psychosomatic effects of thought's struggle to find itself. Yet this struggle pursues its goal through its *feeling* dissemination through an interminable future in which the form of thought, of which writing is both an essential and incidental expression, is determined by the ongoing nature of thought's process.

Psychoanalysis emerges, then, as if against its will, as a resistance to itself. For the remainder of this chapter I want to explore this resistant emergence in a specific history of philosophy, which in turn calls for Romantic poetry's invention of psychoanalysis. For it is in philosophy's meditation on the work of reason within philosophy itself as it reflects upon the rationality of the scientific mind that philosophy then turns upon an *analysis* of reason to which Romantic poetry will respond. This intervention of philosophy into science comes at a time when the sciences, as David Knight notes, still "lacked sharp and natural frontiers," and disciplinary boundaries were as yet indistinct. Instead, "the realm of science, governed by reason," was distinguished from "practice, or rule of thumb; and apostles of science hoped to replace habit by reason in the affairs of life."⁵ Science sought to regulate the habit or practice of eighteenth-century experience. How the mind rationalized experience, however, could exceed this systematization. In *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke says that the white page of the mind gathers all its "materials of Reason and Knowledge" from "*Experience*."⁶ Hume, however, finds himself "*pretending* . . . to explain the principles of human nature." In the Abstract to *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1740), he "promises to draw no conclusions but where he is *authorized* by experience," although experience will have to do because "we can never arrive at the ultimate principles."⁷ His later *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) continues with the "most determined scepticism" (xiv) to argue more locally for an "ordering and distinguishing . . . of the operations of the mind": "And if we can go no farther than this mental geography, . . . it is at least a satisfaction to go so far."⁸ If Locke is somewhat

uneasy, Hume is openly ambivalent about reason's ability to organize the mind's empiricism. Between *rationalism*, which guarantees the *cogito's* order, and *empiricism*, which by attempting to explain how reason functions must confront what exceeds reason, there is a great divide that Kant will attempt to bridge in his critical philosophy, so influential upon Coleridge's and Romanticism's own thought.

In many ways the apotheosis of Western philosophy's struggle to come to terms with this divide is Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics. For Nietzsche, Socrates represents the kind of authority that philosophy would claim for reason, "the unshakeable faith that thought, using the thread of causality, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of *correcting* it" (BT 95). Nietzsche is reacting against the spirit of scientific positivism in the later nineteenth century, by which time science had become rather more institutionalized and a clinical concern with the mind's functioning had produced an ethos of mental hygiene, of minds properly understood and thus properly located within the public sphere. Knowing the ruse of this proper management all too well, Nietzsche rejects rationalism as a "sublime metaphysical illusion" and argues instead that "it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*" (95, 52). What emerges in the trajectory from Hume's "determined scepticism" to Nietzsche's "sublime metaphysical illusion," is a Coleridgean "willing suspension of disbelief" in the mind's empiricism, a "poetic faith" in the phantasy of reason as the guarantor of the mind's ontological and thus of its epistemological moorings. In *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge turns from eighteenth-century British empiricism in Locke, Hume, and Hartley, among others, toward German philosophy, through which he attempts to recover a metaphysics of subjectivity that rationalism had yielded to empiricist/associationist models of the mind.

Between associationism and metaphysics, however, intercedes the psychoanalytical practice of Coleridge's inquiry, which remains troubled by what in these models still exceeds reason's perception. There are, as I suggested in the Introduction, numerous historicocultural reasons for the emergence of the "psycho-analytical": the rise of an interest in the neuroscientific, the psychological, and the psychiatric, all of which in one way or another reflect a fallout from various philosophical, political, and social revolutions in post-Enlightenment thought and culture. This chapter's present concern is to trace within this matrix of forces a certain phenomenology of the philosophical *cogito* as it confronts the imagination of its own reason. This phenomenology, focused in Romanticism's own struggles with philosophy's truth-value, its ability to reconstitute the world in human terms, reproduces an Enlightenment crisis of reason in a

Romantic body of philosophical thought that leaves this body, in a word whose importance will emerge more clearly as this study unfolds, *mesmerized* as much as it is *ordered* by reason. That is to say, one particular form of this excess is the body of knowledge and of knowing that was mesmerism. As we shall see in Chapter Three's more in-depth exploration of his notebook writings, Coleridge was fascinated by the psychosomatic, and thus with mesmerism as it evoked the psychosomatics of subjectivity. Thus in many ways mesmerism haunts the unconscious of the 1805 passage cited above as the specter of an unthought body of cognition that challenges metaphysical explanation. Between the real and the unreal, the seen and the unseen, psychoanalysis emerges to question, not reality itself, but *how* we believe in it, especially when that reality makes itself known via other means than common sense. At the core of this crisis of empiricism is a scene of mesmeric crisis, the mesmerizing of reason by its own phantasy.

One can thus trace from around the time of Mesmer to the end of the nineteenth century a parallel genealogy that both supplements and unsettles the scientific evolution toward Freudian psychoanalysis. This trajectory reads the psychic dynamism of mesmerism, particularly its resistance to rational explanation, recircuited through a philosophical concern for the subject in Romanticism. Mesmeric transference signifies a post-Enlightenment, post-Kantian consciousness unsettled by the unconscious as a radically disruptive rather than transcendental force, both a transpsychical phenomenon and a symptom of Romantic consciousness. Eventually we shall read this disruption in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the most immediate precursors in philosophy of Freudian psychoanalysis. Beyond this in subsequent chapters, however, we shall read what philosophy eventually confronts in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in Romanticism's radical reimagining of this body of thought. Romantic poetry stages a confrontation with the psychosomatics of reason that produces psychoanalysis. That is, it uses an aesthetic economy to re-stage the subject that science could not broach intellectually, because it lacked the conceptual means to do so, and would not broach systematically, because this subject's unconscious threatened science's inherent rationalism.

John Barrell argues that the period's political imagination fed off the law's protean nature, a pathology that equally informs Romanticism's obsession with imagination and its cognates. As Barrell notes,

aesthetics was anxious to pass the concept [of imagination] over to psychiatry; for when the imagination slipped the lead of the will or judgment, often when "heated" by the overwhelming

power of the passions, it became “disordered,” and produced elaborate structures of ideas associated on accidental rather than on substantial grounds. The relation between insanity and the imagination had been a subject of a famous dispute in the late 1750s . . .⁹

I would like to elaborate on these insights within the context of a certain array of philosophical texts from Locke to Nietzsche that trace the genealogy of a struggle with reason. We can then read this struggle within the specific terrain of Romantic poetry, which poetry, rather than ‘passing off the concept of imagination to psychiatry,’ was all too familiar with the imagination’s radically unsettling impact on the subject and her mind, mesmerism being the most challenging precedent for this impact. Like concepts of the imagination themselves in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the psychoanalytical becomes a signifier of what lies arbitrarily *between* the science or philosophy and the literary. The “permanent self” that speaks back to Coleridge and to the broader unfolding of Romanticism within which he is situated, and that speaks to us in turn, is a subject we cannot presume to know, but with whom we “dare to commune.”

The Enlightened Imagination

In general terms, Enlightenment rationalism sees the mind as a type of inductive associative mechanism through which the external world both expresses and buttresses the integrity of the subject. Perception is the representation in the mind of sense impressions as ideas. These ideas were then rationalized in increasingly complex ways so as to produce the revelations of a subject presumed to know—that is, to inculcate principles of belief, opinion, and conduct through which the social order could cohere. Or at least Enlightenment positivism thought so. What the mind might do with its representations was a matter of some speculation, for Enlightenment thinking was unable to accommodate entirely within its rationalist empiricism the work of the imagination, which comes to signify, like empiricism itself, the radical contingency of the mind’s functioning.¹⁰ In his chapter “Of the Association of Ideas,” added to the fourth edition of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1700), Locke argues that associationism creates “a natural Correspondence and Connection one with another.” Yet this process also generates autonomous mental processes threatening the subject’s conscious personality:

This wrong Connexion [sic] in our Minds of *Ideas* in themselves, loose and independent one of another, has such an influence, and is of so great a force to set us awry in our Actions, as well Moral as natural, Passions, Reasonings, and Notions themselves, that, perhaps, there is not any one thing that deserves more to be looked after.

Like Johnson, Locke associates the aberrancy of empiricism with madness and the imagination's "violence."¹¹ He expresses a general eighteenth-century desire to pathologize the imagination for raising disturbing moral and ethical questions about the social subject. Imagination evokes an internal functioning that unsettles this subject's external constructedness, which requires that much more "all the Light we can let in upon our own Minds" to illuminate what is "Dark to our selves."¹² As Henri Ellenberger writes, this eighteenth-century "mental hygiene [is] based on the training of the will and the subordination of passions to reason."¹³

For Locke dreams were a particularly disturbing threat to this hygiene because they threatened the soul's permanence. A subject is "sensible" of her soul only through waking reflection, Locke argues. There is "no Reason . . . to believe, that the *Soul thinks before the Senses have furnish'd it with Ideas*": "For if we take away all Consciousness of our Actions and Sensations . . . it will be hard to know wherein to place personal Identity." The soul had to be protected at all costs because ultimately for Locke it reveals to us the rationality of God's plan: "'Tis true, we have sometimes instances of Perception, whilst we are *asleep*, and retain the memory of those *Thoughts*: but how *extravagant* and incoherent for the most part they are; how little conformable to the Perfection and Order of a rational Being, those who are acquainted with Dreams, need not be told." Locke is careful to limit reason and understanding: "We shall not have much Reason to complain of the narrowness of our Minds, if we will but employ them about what may be of use to us; for of that they are very capable."¹⁴

Such mental hygiene thus also became essential to protecting social order. Locke was greatly influenced by Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), who writes against Hobbes's vision of a purely materialistic society. Cooper was anxious to let "certain humors in mankind . . . have vent": "as there are strange ferments in the blood, which in many bodies occasion an extraordinary discharge; so in reason, too, there are heterogeneous particles which must be thrown off by fermentation." Cooper fears the "contagion of enthusiasm" that might result from an uncontrolled *sympathy*, and so prescribes that the "only way to save

men's sense, or preserve wit at all in the world, is to give liberty to wit" in the interchange between subjects.¹⁵ This sympathy would function, as James Engell writes, as "an instrument of virtue and as an act of the imagination permitting the self to identify with others," a moral sympathy that anticipates Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *Wealth of Nations* (1776), in which Smith, in a curious inversion of Hobbesian self-interest through the transference between subjects, "will be more likely to prevail if he can interest [his brethren's] self-love in his favour."¹⁶ As Julia Wright argues, sympathy can also be read within later medical concepts of the nervous body, as in the writings of William Cullen (1710–1790), John Brown's *The Elements of Medicine* (1780), or Thomas Trotter's *A View of the Nervous Temperament* (1807), "particularly as they relate to philosophical constructions of sensibility and emerging organicist notions of the place of the individual within the nation."¹⁷ These notions play off the idea of a nervous economy that achieves equilibrium through its ability to self-regulate disease and pathology, and are in concert with the empirical balancing act of Locke's associationism. Read forward to Romantic theories of the imagination, as we shall see, this sympathetic dynamism suggests a metatransference beyond perception, integrating mind with the external world in a kind of mutual relevance.

But although Locke articulates an intellectual utilitarianism that continues well into the Victorian period, his writings are also symptomatic of what this utility masks. Cathy Caruth argues that Locke's scrupulous rationality, which reads in the association of ideas the soul's formation, disguises a traumatic lack of self, the "textual 'trauma' [in Locke's writings] that is displaced in the neurosis of empiricism": the fact that "associative substitutions are displaced versions of the attempt to establish a unified self-consciousness."¹⁸ Writing after Locke, Hume sees this neurosis as empiricism's norm. If, paradoxically, sympathy also posits a subject displaced by metaphysical agency, then Hume rejects any metaphysics of identity by paring down the subject to a reductive associationist logic tied to experience:

... [T]here is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is deriv'd; and consequently there is no such idea. . . . [M]ankind . . . are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement.

Identity exists by the “action of the imagination” tied to memory, which “does not so much *produce* as *discover* personal identity, by showing us the relation of cause and effect among our different perceptions” and so remains faithful to the “correspondent impressions” that produced it.¹⁹ Imagination, on the other hand, “is not restrained to the same order and form with the original impressions.” Contrary to Hobbes’s notion of imagination as “decaying sense,” Hume’s imagination is “the vivacity of our ideas,” a type of *jouissance* of associationism from which “memory, senses, and understanding are . . . all . . . founded.” It internalizes the bodily changes of sensory perception to create an “easy transition of the imagination from one situation of the body to another” and toward some “*common end* or purpose,” and it restores psychic equilibrium when the will threatens to overtake the *cogito*.²⁰

But the tenuous empirical syntax of this imaginary ontology also evokes anxiety in Hume’s writing. Through the imagination we

feign the continued existence of the perception of our senses, to remove the interruption; and run into the notion of a *soul*, and *self*, and *substance*, to disguise the variation. . . . [W]e may further observe, that where we do not give rise to such a fiction, our propensity to confound identity with relation is so great, that we are apt to imagine something unknown and mysterious, connecting the parts, beside their relation.²¹

Because identity and the soul are fictional rather than essential, imagination also produces a psychic inertia protecting identity from sensory decomposition, a kind of death drive of associationism. The imagination’s autonomy, associated with the will, unsettles Humean empiricism to suggest the mind’s less rational functioning, its capacity to mis-recognize itself:

Nothing is more free than the imagination of man; and though it cannot exceed that original stock of ideas, furnished by the internal and external senses, it has unlimited power of mixing, compounding, separating, and dividing these ideas, in all the varieties of fiction and vision. It can feign a train of events, with all the appearance of reality, ascribe to them a particular time and place, conceive them as existent, and paint them out to itself with every circumstance, that belongs to any historical fact, which it believes with the greatest certainty. . . . We can, in our conception, join the head of a man to the body of a horse; but it is not in our power to believe, that such an animal has ever really existed.

Because the psychology of imagination can effect a type of physiological deconstruction that distorts reality and loses site of the *cogito's* anthropological form, Hume must distinguish between the discipline of belief, the habitual and customary work performed on associationism, and the volatility of fiction, which constitutes associationism's irregularity and caprice. That both involve imagination means that ultimately it must be superseded by belief, "the vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object, . . . what the imagination alone is never able to attain."²²

Hume's psychological dynamism, threatening to displace the univocal subject, is a paradigmatic expression of eighteenth-century anxiety about the enlightened subject, a key feature of the Romantic aesthetics of identity:

The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor *identity* in different; whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity. The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is compos'd.²³

Here, the mind's associationist logic is reinscribed at the site where empiricism falters and where the psyche is staged beyond consciousness. The dramatic reality of these scenes holds no cognitive value for Hume, but he nonetheless places us in a proto-Freudian theater of the mind to offer, like Freud's dreamwork, an "example of the processes occurring in the deeper, unconscious layers of the mind, which differ considerably from the familiar normal processes of thought." Once the "preconscious material of thought" has been condensed and its "psychical emphasis" displaced, it is "translated into visual images or *dramatized*, and completed by a deceptive *secondary revision*" (SE 20:45). This psychic dramaturgy parallels yet exceeds consciousness. Like Hume, Freud is skeptical of this psychic performativity by framing it within a "deceptive" secondary process. We apprehend the mind's original performance, then, through a structure overdetermined by the heterogeneity of inaccessible unconscious material. In order to make the structure at all comprehensible, this material must be repressed. Repression, then, negatively recuperates empiricism's fear of association by placing limits on the mind's potentially uncontrollable functioning. Repression and repetition in the

psychic apparatus reproduce in the free associationism of psychoanalysis Hume's fear that "we are apt to imagine something unknown and mysterious, connecting the parts, beside their relation."

Hume marks a key moment in the shift from the Enlightenment to Romanticism, for in the above passages his skepticism produces logical conclusions that seem to exceed their own utterance, a sort of hysterical rationalism whose symptoms betray the psychoanalysis stirring within philosophy's unconscious. That is, the writing is not itself hysterical; rather it so obviously (and paradoxically) persists in the certainty of its skepticism, that it inevitably calls upon a psycho-analytical understanding of which it remains as yet unenlightened, an other writing that is the uncanny double of enlightenment thought. Yet within this suspended psychoanalysis the idea of imagination begins to emerge as a mobile figure for the unconscious, which signifies both the negativity and potentiality of the *cogito*. On one hand, an expanded imagination merely extends Enlightenment positivism into Romanticism by further assimilating the mind's disjointed faculties. Like sympathy, imagination "brings the whole man together—heart, soul, body, brain, and feelings—and it establishes the individual's place in society" with other men.²⁴ Imagination's unifying power leaves no aspect of mind unaccounted for; what had been pathologized was now transcendentalized as 'secret' or 'obscure' (Wordsworth's "hiding places of man's power" in *The Prelude*). On the other hand, this idealism betrays a curiosity about the unconscious and thus about its own unconscious. As Andrea Henderson argues, imagination marks the subject's "core" as "the center of movement or circulation, a place of dangerous fluidity." Curiosity about this center, I would argue, is symptomatic of how Romantic organicism represses what it is unwilling to confront about itself, what David Farrell Krell calls the *contagion* of idealism.²⁵ If, as Engell argues, Romanticism "overturn[ed] an abstract and mechanistic formalism found in the first half of the [eighteenth] century," and if self-understanding became central to this project, the "dominant prescription [of which] is poetic and aesthetic," it was only inevitable that imagination, upon which so much came to depend as an agency of Romantic self-understanding, would become a site of some overdetermination.²⁶

Kant's Imagination

A key figure in this overdetermination is Kant. The ability "to imagine something unknown" beyond empiricism's contingency is the focus of Kant's metaphysics of Reason. For Kant, Hume "was one of those geographers of human reason who have imagined that they have sufficiently

disposed of such questions [about what lies beyond the horizon of all the possible objects of our knowledge] by setting them outside the horizon of human reason" (CR 606). For Kant, however, all that we can know with certainty is what constitutes this horizon beyond. As Gilles Deleuze argues of Kant's transcendental method, if "a final end is a being which possesses the reason for existence in itself," then "[t]he only one who can be is the one who can develop a concept of ends; only man as rational being can find the end of his existence in himself." What we can know, that is, is a reason that "posits nothing other than itself," a reason enclosed by its own 'pure' unfolding.²⁷ But to describe this unfolding, Kant evokes a reason that struggles to define its own boundaries, the empiricism of a reason challenged to know itself in space and time.

Enlightenment reason struggles to order the determinism of sense data in order to guarantee reciprocity between the world within and the world without, an externally constructed subject commensurate with his own sense perceptions. Romanticism refashions external constructedness by social forces, as in Locke and Hume, as internal constructedness by past and present trauma and thus by an unconscious whose psychic determinism both discloses and conceals identity. Romanticism, that is, confronts empiricism's traumatic lack of self as an internal phenomenon. Yet it does so through Kant, to whom Coleridge turns, as we shall see in the next section, in order to critique empiricism's passivity. That Coleridge appropriates Reason's transcendental nature by conflating it with imagination's more radically creative nature places Kant at the cusp between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Kantian reason addresses the systematization or architectonic of an internal constructedness lacking in the external constructedness that troubles empiricism. The psychology of empiricism presents challenges to Kant, to be sure, but by shifting crucially from the phenomenal to the noumenal, to the ground or conditions of existence that form the matrix of the phenomenal, Kant is able to move past empiricism's ground in experience to Reason as the ground of experience, if not to know the in-itself, at least to intuit the categories by which the mind structures experience. As Schopenhauer will argue, Kant's idealism attempts "to pass beyond the phenomenal appearance to that which appears" (*WWR* 2:177).

Kant's interest in the psychology of reason's creativity seems at first negligent. At the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant allows that empirical psychology must have "some sort of place (although as an episode only) in metaphysics" (CR 664). He places this psychology beside applied philosophy, "the *a priori* principles of which are contained in pure philosophy." But the applied is "not to be confounded with" the pure, so that psychology does not infect the contemplative. Nonetheless, Kant

studies how the mind creates rather than just passively receives the phenomenal world through the categories, and so cannot avoid being as much a psychologist of the imagination as its metaphysician. In the “Transcendental Analytic” of his first Critique, Kant distinguishes two modes of imagination. The reproductive or empirical imagination unifies manifold impressions derived from perception into singular images or ideas. What realizes this “synthesis of apprehension” as “the affinity of all appearances” is the productive imagination, which is for Kant “the transcendental function of imagination” (133, 146). This function is “grounded *a priori* on rules” that obey the logic of the categories to then impose upon ideas the “formal and pure condition of sensibility” through the understanding’s concepts or “schema” (145, 182). That the productive subsumes the reproductive imagination, reason subsuming the understanding, or what one might call the ‘pure’ subsuming the ‘empirical,’ insures that empiricism remains under the control of the “abiding and unchanging ‘I’” (146), which Kant calls “pure apperception” and Coleridge will call the “infinite I AM.” “Thus the order and regularity in the appearances, which we entitle *nature*, we ourselves introduce” (147) through the understanding, which profits from the synthesizing work of imagination, a profit that ultimately accrues to reason.

That a synthesis of imagination must take place between the pure and the empirical, the ideal and the real, however, means that Kant ends up producing conscious and unconscious versions of imagination. Kant famously states that “pure reason leaves everything to the understanding—the understanding [alone] applying immediately to the objects of intuition, or rather to their synthesis in the imagination” (318). The “*schema* of sensible concepts [is] . . . a monogram . . . of pure *a priori* imagination, through which . . . images themselves become possible” (183). But moving past imagination, the “schematism of our understanding . . . is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze” (183). By abandoning “everything to the understanding,” Kant still dissociates the pure “I” of reason from its self-understanding, its head from its body, as it were. And this rift begins at the most fundamental stage of reason in the sensibility of perception, where an imagination “subjected to the laws of association” is dissociated from one that is “productive and exerting an activity of its own” (C7 1:86).

Not until his exploration of the sublime in the *Critique of Judgement* (1790) does Kant seem to broach the psychology of this interiority, one that “constantly divides us from ourselves, splits us in two.”²⁸ The sublime is “to be found in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by its presence provokes, a representation of

limitlessness,” as distinct from the beautiful, which “consists in limitation” (1:90). Where in aesthetic judgements about the beautiful the mind is in “*restful* contemplation” (1:107), in apprehending the sublime, the mind is in constant flux. The sublime evokes the psychosomatic body of reason as “a feeling of displeasure, arising from the inadequacy of imagination in the aesthetical estimation of magnitude to attain to its estimation by reason” (1:106). Whereas the perception of natural beauty “conveys a finality in its form making the object appear, as it were, preadapted to our power of judgement,” the sublime is an “outrage on the imagination” (1:91). It wreaks havoc on the work of synthesis by which imagination renders up the objects of perception for understanding’s comprehension under the transcendental authority of reason. Yet by invading the realm of the noumenal, where reason addresses itself to itself, the imagination, by contemplating the nonobject of sublime apprehension, makes reason confront its own unconscious. Or as Kant writes, “[t]he point of excess for the imagination (toward which it is driven in the apprehension of the intuition) is like an abyss in which it fears to lose itself” (1:107). As the imagination reaches beyond conscious empiricism toward the purely psychical or unconscious—understood as the ‘purely’ rational—its ability to represent itself and thus to fulfill the Kantian categorical imperative of rational understanding falters.

Deleuze, of course, reads the third Critique as the “foundation of Romanticism”²⁹ because it uncovers the negativity of a dynamism suppressed in the orderly functioning between imagination, understanding, and reason in the first two Critiques: Kant figuring himself as a post-Kantian for Romanticism’s sake. This is certainly a tempting view. Whereas for “the beautiful in nature we must seek a ground external to ourselves,” for the sublime we must seek for “one merely in ourselves and the attitude of mind that introduces sublimity into the representation of nature.” The sublime infects the psychic domain of Kant’s internal constructedness, opening the subject to the abyss of the interior. Yet does he just as quickly repress this option in the next sentence, which “entirely separates the ideas of the sublime from that of a finality of *nature*, and makes the theory of the sublime a mere appendage to the aesthetic estimate of the finality of nature” (*CJ* 1:93)? By making the sublime merely supplementary (“a mere appendage”), Kant reinvoles the transcendental guarantee of reason in the first two Critiques as if to stave off Deleuze’s incipient Romanticism.

Making the sublime supplementary, however, also implicitly marks an excessiveness that returns in Kant’s own *corpus*. Written late in his career, Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) both fears and is fascinated by unconscious facets of the imagination that skew

the work of reason and thus exceed Kant's ability to systematize them.³⁰ Marshall Brown argues that in eighteenth-century Germany science often engaged imaginatively with phenomena such as mesmerism that existed between empiricism and metaphysics, even though philosophy largely expelled this enthusiasm from within itself as the pathology of its own rationalism. The repression of discourses such as mesmerism, then, took a subtler philosophical form than in France, where the aristocracy and then the Revolution both forced a political disengagement from all things threatening to the social body. Brown outlines a number of psychological sources that both transmitted and transformed Kant's ideas, so that the trajectory from "the *Critique of Pure Reason* to a growing interest in abnormal or paranormal behaviour and psychic states" is not as discontinuous as one might think. Kant knew, or knew of, many of these psychologists and read them, although he condemned "the enthusiastic excesses of mesmerism."³¹

To rationalize this excess, Kant distinguishes between physiological anthropology, or "what Nature makes of man" (the determinism of memory, neurophysiology, etc.), and pragmatic anthropology, or "what man makes, can, or should make of himself as a freely acting being" (A 3). Part of his way of setting aside the former in favor of the latter, "understood as *knowledge of the world*" (4), is to categorize and thus pathologize the mind's aberrant cognition—dreams, madness, hypochondria, mania, fantasy, the visionary, etc.—as if to contain its threat to man's rational health. Distinguishing between the productive or "poetical" and reproductive or "merely recollective" faculties, for example, Kant argues that imagination is never wholly creative "because it does not have the power to produce a sense impression which has never before occurred to our senses" (56–57). Here the performance anxiety of Hume's psychic theater returns as Kant reins in associationism's volatile autonomy. The anxiety is especially acute when Kant revisits the issue of genius, which the third *Critique* defines as "the exemplary originality of the natural endowments of an individual in *free* employment of his cognitive faculties" (C7 1:181). In the *Anthropology* genius is the "[o]riginality (nonimitative production) of the imagination . . . when it harmonizes with notions" of "a rational being," that is, with the "form of man" (A 62).³² In the later work Kant immediately contains the psychology of the free movement of cognition described in the third *Critique*, however, by separating genius from fanaticism, or when imagination is not in harmony with man's anthropology. Fanaticism "may border on genius," as when it can "spring up unexpectedly like poetic inspiration (*furor poeticus*)"; as a "facile but uncontrolled flood of ideas," however, it "affects reason" (98). Naming

what genius *is* according to what it threatens *to become* locates the subject within an organic structure of rational being that pathologizes aspects of the imagination but also implicitly includes this pathology as part of the structure's integrity.

Kant's fear of fanaticism, echoing Cooper's earlier panic about enthusiasm and Coleridge's later warning about *Schwärmerei* in *Biographia Literaria* (indeed, in Coleridge's own description of genius), is of an effusion or free association of ideas that 'swarms' the mind, as in dreams.³³ Fanaticism is thus linked to dreams as a way of invoking the hygiene of pure reason from the first Critique. The physiological anthropology of dreams in Kant's late text, however, recuperates the threat of physiological deconstruction that Kant confronts in empiricism. For Kant the dream is a type of vitalistic or physiological mechanism important to the survival of the subject: "[d]reaming seems to belong so necessarily to sleeping that sleeping and dying would be just the same thing, if the dream were not added as a natural, though involuntary, agitation of the inner vital organs by means of the imagination." Kant recounts the personal case history of playing, falling asleep, and then immediately awakening, having dreamed that he was on the point of drowning: "[t]his was probably caused by the reduction of the breathing activity of the chest muscles, . . . and consequently, with the reduction of breathing, the action of the heart is impeded so that the imagination of the dream tries to restore the rate of breathing again" (A 82).

I would note two important shifts here. First, whereas the productive imagination of the first Critique synthesizes perception and apprehension in the service of understanding and reason, here the dream evokes Kant's psychosomatic body as the embodied, empirical form of reason returning in Kant's critical method. To be sure, Kant links imagination to the subject's vitality and thus to the survival of the *anthropos*. This survival is not without its discontinuities, however, as when dreams dramatize "difficulties and perilous situations, because such ideas excite the powers of the soul more than when everything goes along as we wish and will" (A 82).³⁴ Moreover, Kant introduces personal narrative and the psychology of self-writing into the discourse of philosophy, so that the psychoanalytical momentarily emerges to displace philosophy—or rather more potently, to submit philosophy to self-examination.

Both at the level of the text's psychology and of its letter, the work of the literary imagination, as evoked through dreams and psychosomatic symptoms, emerges in post-Enlightenment thought as a Romanticism that will emerge more forcefully as part of a larger effort to account for an incipient psychoanalysis in philosophy that it becomes the business of

Romanticism to explore. Moving beyond Locke's behaviorism and Hume's skepticism, Kant foregrounds, although ultimately resists, radicalizing Romanticism's turn inward as a psychoanalytical issue concerned with what the mind cannot know about itself. The psychosomatic and the dream suggest a transference between mind and body, between consciousness and the unconscious, that accounts for identity's radical discontinuity, as in the sublime. The psychosomatic itself is both an imaginative response to and effect of this discontinuity because it signals the imagination's unconscious. Hume fears the imagination's ability to return ideas to their original state as immediate impressions, so as to convince the mind that these impressions are sensorily real: the mind ends up with a body of its own, and this body has a mind of its own. For a later psychoanalysis, the hysterical symptom was the physiological manifestation of a repressed psychological state, a site where the body quite literally had a mind of its own that Freudian psychoanalysis emerged in the first instance to cure. Before Freud, however, this body, while the object of some fear and loathing, was equally the site of desire and fascination.

Mesmerism, Psychoanalysis, and the Absent Psychosomatic Body

The tension between a rational Kant and one interested in the "mysterious vitality" of the world, especially via phenomena such as mesmerism, exposes within the post-Enlightenment imagination a fatal suture between reason and the psychosomatics of its cognates—what I will call the absent psychosomatic body of reason. Mesmerism becomes a crucial focus of our study at this point, both because of its simultaneously legitimate and occult influence on eighteenth-century thought and culture and beyond, and because in the imaginary of psychoanalysis that this book explores, mesmerism marks the cultural genesis of a psychoanalytical practice from which Romantic psychoanalysis will take its cue. The immediate characteristics of mesmerism would not, however, make this kinship apparent. Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) posited a "universally distributed and continuous fluid . . . of an incomparably rarefied nature." This fluid "fills and connects all bodies, celestial, earthly, and animate," like the "mutual influence" between magnets (hence the alternate name 'animal magnetism' for Mesmer's practice). When unevenly distributed, it was thought to produce bodily disease, cured by the magnetizer's channeling the fluid in individuals or in groups in order to restore its equilibrium and thus to eliminate "nervous disorders directly and other disorders indirectly." Arguing that in animal magnetism