

(ed.), *Wordsworth's Poets* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 48-51.

Cowper's invocation of 'sympathy' here, notionally attached to the idea of association of feelings with remembered sounds, extends to a larger theme of susceptible selfhood developed through links of natural compassion and benevolence; see also *The Task*, IV, 333-40, VI, 321-47, and compare e.g. David Hartley, *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations* (1749), Book II Sect. VI: 'Of the Regard due to the Pleasures and Pains of Sympathy in forming the Rule of Life', and Adam Smith, *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (1759), Chap. I: 'Of Sympathy'. For David Hume's 'natural history of the passions' in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), his simplified version of the first book of the *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), see Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion; Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford, Cal., 1996), Chap. 1; and more generally, Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity; The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York, 2004), esp. sub-sections 1 and 2. For the history of musical sympathy see e.g. Daniel K.L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 114-25, and on some theoretical aspects, Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 354-9.

Wordsworth's development of these ideas of sympathy and the vicarious imagination was extended and profound. The outline of 'the strong creative power / Of human passion' first made public in Book I of *The Excursion* (1814), and its base in the 'Sympathies there are / More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth, / That steal upon the meditative mind, / And grow with thought' (480-4), can be traced back to the earliest drafts of *The Ruined Cottage* and *The Pedlar*; see James Butler (ed.), *'The Ruined Cottage' and 'The Pedlar'* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1979), pp. 49, 289 (MS. D, 1799); 416 (MS. E, 1803-4); 417 (MS. M, 1804), etc. Particularly suggestive are passages from the Addendum to MS B (1798), tracing a general progression in the individual heart from 'quiet sympathies with things that hold / An inarticulate language' (p. 261) through the power of compassion and love to an enlarged and boundless living spirit (p. 271); and here again there is to be a philosophic humanity able to resist sentimentalism, one searchingly tested by the narrative of Margaret and her sufferings. For the deep complexity of this theme see e.g. David Bromwich, *Disowned by Memory; Wordsworth's Poetry of the 1790s* (Chicago, 1998), Chap. 1: 'Alienation and Belonging to Humanity', an extended reading of 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' (1796-8); J. Douglas Kneale, *Romantic Aversions; Aftermaths of Classicism in Wordsworth and Coleridge* (Liverpool, 1999), Chap. 3: "'Thou one dear Vale!': Wordsworth and the Sympathies of Rhetoric' (pp. 50-70); and see also F.R. Leavis, 'Revaluations (VI): Wordsworth', *Scrutiny*, III (1934), 234-57, esp. pp. 250 ff.

For contradiction within the project of sympathy see Richard Bourke, *Romantic Discourse and Political Modernity; Wordsworth, The Intellectual and Cultural Critique* (Hemel Hempstead, 1993), 'The Interior as the Outside of Suffering' (pp. 105-34), esp. pp. 121-8; see also here David Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination; The Poetry of Displacement* (New York, 1987), Chap. 6: 'Poets, Paupers and Peripatetics: The Politics of Sympathy'. For Wordsworthian employments of 'sympathy' as a public idea see *The Prose Works*, ed. W.J.B. Owen and J.W. Smyser (Oxford, 1974), I, p. 176. For

contrast between the sympathetic imagination and its (perhaps) separately autonomous counterpart elsewhere in Wordsworth's practice see Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814* (New Haven, 1964), pp. 238-42, and the testimony of *The Prelude* (1805-6), XI ('Imagination, how impaired and restored'), especially 258-79, and in XII the interplay of contrasts between e.g. 44-68 and 264-78 (Mark L. Reed [ed.], *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* [2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991], I, pp. 301, 305-6, 310-11). Some perhaps similar contrast may be implied by the 'aspect more sublime' of 'Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey' (1798), 36-49 (James Butler and Karen Green [eds], *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800* [Ithaca, N.Y., 1992], p. 117; on which see James B. Twitchell, 'Wordsworth and Wright: The Natural Sublime', in his *Romantic Horizons; Aspects of the Sublime in English Poetry and Painting, 1770-1850* (Columbia, Mo., 1983), Chap. 2 (pp. 60-84).

Hardest to draw accurately is the comparison with George Crabbe, entrenched in an older view within which self-effacement and accurate description reveal the tasks of sympathy within strict moral bounds: 'Alas! sufferings real, evident, continually before us, have not effects very serious or lasting, even in the minds of the more reflecting and compassionate; nor indeed does it seem right that the pain caused by sympathy should serve for more than a stimulus to benevolence' (Preface to *The Borough: A Poem, in Twenty-Four Letters* [1810]); leading on two years later to this: 'I must allow that the effect of Poetry should be to lift the mind from the painful realities of actual existence, from its every-day concerns, and its perpetually-occurring vexations, and to give it repose by substituting objects in their place which it may contemplate with some degree of interest and satisfaction'; but then leading on immediately to this: 'but what is there in all this which may not be effected by a fair representation of existing character? nay, by a faithful delineation of those painful realities, those every-day concerns, and those perpetually-occurring vexations themselves, provided they be not (which is hardly to be supposed) the very concerns and distresses of the Reader? for when it is admitted that they have no particular relation to him, but are the troubles and anxieties of other men, they excite and interest his feelings as the imaginary exploits, adventures, and perils of romance;--they soothe his mind, and keep the curiosity pleasantly awake, they appear to have enough of reality to engage his sympathy, but possess not interest sufficient to create painful sensations' (Preface to *Tales* [1812]). Further also see Jerome J. McGann, 'The Anachronism of George Crabbe', *ELH*, 48 (1981), 555-572; reprinted in his *The Beauty of Inflections; Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford, 1985), and J.H. Prynne, *Field Notes: 'The Solitary Reaper' and Others* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 42-3, 61-2, 81, etc.

This Burkean prudence over keeping a distance as the painful gap which sympathy must warily bridge (compassion fatigue, aversion) stands in contrast with what may seem the whole-heartedness of Wordsworth's own stance; but consider the intricate drafting dilemmas of *The Ruined Cottage* over 1798-1804, where the Pedlar-figure is described (MS. E) thus:

He had no painful pressure from without
Which made him turn aside from wretchedness
With coward fears. He could afford to suffer
With them whom he saw suffer. Hence it was

That in our best experience he was rich,
 And in the wisdom of our daily life:
 For hence minutely in his various rounds
 He had observ'd the progress and decay
 Of many minds, of minds and bodies too ...

(*The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar*, ed. James Butler, p. 410); and yet this idealised susceptibility is finally pruned out of a poem (for its residue in MS. B see pp. 46, 48) in which vicarious emotional suffering is near-muted by the burdens placed upon it. Consider too how Coleridge recognises in Wordsworth 'a meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility; a sympathy with man as man', but adds the immediate qualification that this sympathy is as by contemplation from without rather than by direct projective self-identification (*Biographia Literaria* [1817], Chap. 22; see also Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* [Oxford, 1999], pp. 273-4, and David Bromwich. *Disowned by Memory*, p. 19: 'Sympathy, on this understanding of it, is intense in proportion to its distance from its object'; and see Chap. 1, entire).

2. Any impression made on another can neither be the cause nor object of sensation to me. The impressions or idea left in my mind by this sensation, and afterwards excited either by seeing [an object] in the same state, or by any other means[,] is properly an idea of memory. This idea necessarily refers to some previous impressions in my own mind, and can only exist in consequence of that impression: it cannot be derived from any impression made on another. I do not *remember* the feelings of any one but myself. . . . On the other hand if I wish to anticipate my own future feelings, whatever these may be, I must do so by means of the same faculty, by which I conceive of those of others, whether past or future. I have no distinct or separate faculty on which the events and feelings of my future being are impressed beforehand. . . . I can only abstract myself from my present being and take an interest in my future being in the same sense and manner, in which I can go out of myself entirely and enter into the minds and feelings of others. In short there neither is nor can be any principle belonging to the individual which antecedently gives him the same sort of connection with his future being that he has with his past, or that reflects the impressions of his future feelings backwards with the same kind of consciousness that his past feelings are transmitted forwards through the channels of memory.

[William Hazlitt], from *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action: Being an Argument in Favour of the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind* (London, 1805) [first published anonymously], pp. 112-4. As Hazlitt summarises this view at the start, 'The imagination, by means of which alone I can anticipate future objects, or be interested in them, must carry me out of myself into the feelings of others by one and the same process by which I am

thrown forward as it were into my future being, and interested in it. I could not love myself, if I were not capable of loving others' (p. 3). This claim concerning the interests of the sympathetic imagination mounts a radical argument against an existing consensus, asserting that rather than memory of the past it is the indeterminate future of human social existence that mobilises projective sympathy, just as for Hazlitt the field of action within which imagination has its sway is not (principally) the retrospective aesthetics of memory and landscape but the personal, social and political domains of ethical choice and shared participation. For an instance of the consensus see Thomas Reid, 'On the Self' (22 Oct 1748), text edited from MS. in Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* [1785], ed. Derek R. Brookes (Edinburgh, 1997), pp. 316-8, and René van Woudenberg, 'Reid on Memory and the Identity of Persons' in Terence Cuneo and René van Woudenberg (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid* (Cambridge, 2004), 204-21; also Noel B. Jackson, 'Critical Conditions: Coleridge, "Common Sense," and the Literature of Self-Experiment', *ELH*, 70 (2004), 117-49. See further David Bromwich, *Hazlitt; The Mind of a Critic* (New York, 1983), pp. 46-57; also John Whale, 'Hazlitt and the Limits of the Sympathetic Imagination', in his *Imagination Under Pressure, 1789-1832; Aesthetics, Politics and Utility* (Cambridge, 2000), Chap. 4, where the claim is advanced that for Hazlitt in certain contexts 'imagination becomes a means of silently inculcating a conservative ideology' (p. 119).

Shelley's brief Preface (dated December 14, 1815) to *Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude, and Other Poems* (first published 1816) presents the allegory of the youthful poet disappointed by the isolation of ardent idealism without human object: 'They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt.' This passage, not quite consonant with the poem which it introduces, may in turn have influenced Keats in *The Fall of Hyperion*, a reconstruction (composed July-December 1819) of the earlier *Hyperion* (composed Autumn 1818 - April 1819); compare *Fall of Hyperion*, I, 147-59 and see Michael O'Neill, 'Writing and History in *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*: Keats (2)', in his *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford, 1997), Chap. 8 (pp. 210-34). For more on *Alastor* see Earl R. Wasserman, *Shelley; A Critical Reading* (Baltimore, Md, 1971), pp. 15-46; Stuart Sperry, *Shelley's Major Verse; The Narrative and Dramatic Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), Chap 2; Andrew M. Cooper, "'Things Not As They Were": The Phenomenology of *Alastor*', in his *Doubt and Identity in Romantic Poetry* (New Haven, 1988), Chap. 8; Timothy Clark, *Embodying Revolution; The Figure of the Poet in Shelley* (Oxford, 1989), Chap. 4.

Shelley's changing ideas about sympathy bear distinctive aspects in that his

notion of feeling for others is both, as a particular relationship, implicitly (often explicitly) sexual, and as a general scheme, fiercely politicised. Thus in his brief fragmentary essay 'On Love' of c.1818: 'We are born into the world, and there is something within us, which from the instant that we live, more and more thirsts after its likeness' (Donald H. Reiman [ed.], *Shelley and His Circle, 1773-1822*, Vol. VI [Cambridge, Mass., 1973], pp. 633-47 (p. 634); and see Wasserman, *Shelley*, pp. 21-8. Yet when direct human sympathy is thwarted, *then* the heart's affection is dispersed in rapture towards the beauty of 'the flowers, the grass, the waters and the sky' (p. 635); this is a transfer of affect in reverse direction from Wordsworth's 'Love of Nature leading to love of Mankind' (heading to Book VIII, 1804-5 *Prelude*; compare 'My present Theme / is to retrace the way that led me on / Through nature to the love of human Kind', ll. 586-8, though the way is complex and the retracing also). Likewise in his virulent blast against Malthus in 'A Philosophical View of Reform' (c.1819-20) the focus is upon a republican idea of community and its foundation in unrestricted, fully expressed sexual partnership (*Shelley and His Circle*, VI, pp. 945-1065 [pp. 1023-7]). For the 18th-century origins of the basic notions see Roy R. Male, Jr, 'Shelley and the Doctrine of Sympathy', *University of Texas Studies in English*, XXIX (1950), 183-203.

In these radical contexts Wordsworth's own radicalism takes on a variant line of boldness. Imagination is nourished and supported by memory, which in turn enables the narratives of poetic self-discovery and endurance: focussed upon the forms of primal nature it is effectively pre-sexual. Occasionally it is the prospect of being thrown forward into a future being which promotes an explicitly pluperfect mode (future in the past), such as the public road in *The Prelude* (1804-5), XII, 145 ff, 'when its disappearing line / Seen daily afar off, on one bare steep / Beyond the limits where my feet had trod, / Was like a guide into eternity, / At least to things unknown and without bound' (148-52); but once again the prospect is more visionary than social and populous (compare e.g. also XII, 116-26; also 'Stepping Westward', first published, 1807). Compare, here, Jeffrey C. Robinson, 'Leigh Hunt and the Poetics and Politics of the Fancy', in Nicholas Roe (ed.), *Leigh Hunt; Life, Poetics, Politics* (London, 2003), esp. pp. 161-3, and (more severe) Jerome McGann, *Byron and Wordsworth; The Annual Byron Lecture, given in the University of Nottingham on 27 May 1998* (Nottingham, 1999), esp. 37-44.

3. The night was winter in his roughest mood;
 The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon
 Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
 And where the woods fence off the northern blast, 60
 The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
 And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
 Without a cloud, and white without a speck
 The dazzling splendour of the scene below.
 Again the harmony comes o'er the vale; 65
 And through the trees I view th'embattled tow'r
 Whence all the music. I again perceive
 The soothing influence of the wafted strains,

And settle in soft musings as I tread
 The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms, 70
 Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.
 The roof, though moveable through all its length
 As the wind sways it, has yet well suffic'd,
 And, intercepting in their silent fall
 The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me. 75
 No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.

William Cowper, from 'The Winter Walk at Noon', Book VI of *The Task, A Poem, in Six Books* (London, 1785), lines 57-76. The pathos of *softness* here fancies that the pathway beneath the shifting canopy of leaves has been kept free of the dazzling snow, to shelter an unhindered, ambulatory pensiveness, still prompted by the reconciling inflow (harmony, influence) of the distant church-bells: a kind of natural providentialism ('a path for me'), again gently but insistently self-ironic. See also Richard Feingold, *Nature and Society; Later Eighteenth Century Uses of the Pastoral and Georgic* (Hassocks, 1978), and his *Moralized Song; The Character of Augustan Lyricism* (New Brunswick and London, 1989), together with D. Griffin, 'Redefining Georgic: Cowper's *Task*', *ELH*, 57 (1990), 865-79, and Marshall Brown, *Preromanticism* (Stanford, Cal., 1991), Chap. 4.

The more radically formative encounter with the strains of music outlined at the opening of the 1798-99 *Prelude* demonstrates the shift of affect from receptiveness to empowerment; see *The Prelude, 1798-1799*, ed. Stephen Parrish (Ithaca, N.Y., 1977), First Part, ll. 67-80 (pp. 44-5), and Anthony John Harding, 'Imaginative Animism in Wordsworth's 1798-1799

Prelude', in his *The Reception of Myth in English Romanticism* (Columbia, Mo., 1995), pp. 74-81.

4. The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all humane Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.

S.T. Coleridge, from *Biographia Literaria; Or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions* (2 vols, London, 1817), the conclusion to Chapter 13: 'On the Imagination, or Esemplastic Power'; text ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (2 vols, London, 1983), I, pp. 304-5; see also Introduction, pp. xcvi-civ (fancy and imagination), and Chapter 5: 'On the Law of Association' (I, pp. 89-105). Coleridge complicates everything by reserving the imagination's primary form to the creative power of God in person, so that human imagination must be secondary even in its highest and most original creative aspects: thus, all human imagination is at very best secondary in that one regard. For Coleridge on imagination vs. fancy in Wordsworth, see *Biog. Lit.*, II, p. 151 (Chap. 22). For historical background see James Engell, *The Creative Imagination; Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), esp. pp. 328-66; for conceptual framework see Forest Pyle, *The Ideology of Imagination; Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism* (Stanford, 1995), esp. Chap. 1. For analysis consult Thomas McFarland, *Originality and Imagination* (Baltimore and London, 1985), Chap. 5: 'The Poetic Working of Secondary Imagination', and James K. Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature; A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago, 1984), pp. 260-65; and see Ann Matheson, 'The Influence of Cowper's *The Task* on Coleridge's Conversation Poems', in Donald Sultana (ed.), *New Approaches to Coleridge; Biographical and Critical Essays* (London, 1981). For 'a rapid and superficial' review see T.S. Eliot, 'Wordsworth and Coleridge' (1932), in his *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism; Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (London, 1933), Chap. IV; for Hazlitt's 'scathing attack' on the *Biographia*, see again John Whale, *Imagination Under Pressure*, pp. 124-9.

For Shelley on the sympathetic imagination see 'A Defence of Poetry; or, Remarks Suggested by an Essay Entitled "The Four Ages of Poetry"' (1821), esp. paras 13, 17, etc.

Wordsworth did not himself so strongly drive this distinction between fancy and imagination; compare *The Prelude* (1804-5), VIII, 583-94, and also XIII, 289-306 (where deliberateness of constructed images is not set lower than 'the involuntary sympathy / Of our internal being'). As he comments in the revised Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* of 1815: 'Yet it is not the less true that Fancy, as she is an active, is also, under her own laws and in her own spirit, a creative faculty', even though he here tacitly concedes that fancy's workings are generally at a less ambitiously elevated level than those of the full imagination (*Prose Works*, III, pp. 36-7, 49-51). See also again Robinson, 'Leigh Hunt and the Poetics and Politics of the Fancy', pp. 156-79.

Coleridge comes to view fancy as disempowered by the implicit weakness of its motives and linkages; compare also (e.g.) his 'On the Grounds of Morals and Religion, and the Discipline of the Mind Requisite for a True Understanding of the Same' (1818); text in B.E. Rooke (ed.), *The Friend* (2 vols, London, 1969), I, esp. pp. 428-9; but it is worth noting how Cowper both acknowledges the recurrently timid strain in his scenes of fancy and also carries this weakness as a reproach and a burden, without boast but also not self-deceived. This is maybe the central task of *The Task*, to chart with the old traditional instruments these ironies of the mind in nature. See further, William Hazlitt, 'On Thompson and Cowper', in *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818); *Complete Works*, ed. P.P. Howe (21 vols, London, 1930-4), V, pp. 85-104.

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PDF file created on 20 August 2007