

## CRITICAL CONDITIONS: COLERIDGE, “COMMON SENSE,” AND THE LITERATURE OF SELF-EXPERIMENT

BY NOEL B. JACKSON

In the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, William Wordsworth famously wrote of the tendency of his poems to evoke feelings of “more than common pleasure” in the reader. It is with the aim of delivering such pleasures that Wordsworth urges the reader to judge “by his own feelings genuinely,” against what the poet took to be a prevailing tendency to decide on the basis of “what will probably be the judgment of others.”<sup>1</sup> Few remarks serve as a better reminder of how fully Wordsworth was committed to refining and reforming common laws of judgment and understanding. In this aim, of course, the poet finds common cause with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who insisted throughout his life on the necessity of elevating common sense through philosophical thought and rigorous self-reflection: “it is the two-fold function of philosophy,” Coleridge wrote in the *Biographia Literaria*, “to reconcile reason with common sense, and to elevate common sense into reason.”<sup>2</sup> Yet consult, in that same volume, Coleridge’s critique of Wordsworth’s use of common language, and you have a notion of how much more openly sworn was the former to maintaining the distinction (whose formulation we owe to William Hazlitt) between “genius” and “common sense.”<sup>3</sup> If Wordsworth purports to ground his own reform of common judgment in the language, scenes, and affections of common life, by all accounts Coleridge—poet of the supernatural, theorist of the clerisy, and vigorous advocate of grounding opinion in philosophical thought—would seem far more committed to a thoroughgoing critique of existing common sense.

To the extent that Wordsworth in particular seems committed to reforming common sense while retaining a strong and explicit connection to it, the issues that his work raises might be compared to problems raised a century later by Antonio Gramsci. In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci lamented the antagonism that typically obtained between mental and manual laborers, and sought accordingly to reduce the conflict between the “philosophy of the intellectuals” and

that popular conception of the world that he named “common sense.” By way of resolving this conflict, Gramsci conceives a dialectical approach, at once critical of “common sense” and deeply dependent on it, with more than a passing resemblance to Wordsworth’s poetics: as Gramsci argues, “A philosophy of praxis . . . must be a criticism of ‘common sense,’ basing itself initially, however, on common sense” in order to demonstrate that philosophy itself is the task “of renovating and making ‘critical’ an already existing activity.”<sup>4</sup> While Wordsworth and Gramsci may share a commitment to reconciling common sense with the critical exercise of reason or self-reflection, Wordsworth’s request that the reader consult his feelings over against the judgment of others would appear to put the genius of the poet or philosopher above or at least prior to the common sense of the people, and thus sharply distinguish his own vision from Gramsci’s call for a revolutionary critical philosophy. Indeed, Hazlitt himself, far from seeing Wordsworth as a defender of common sense, asserts in the second of his essays on the subject that the poet’s egotistical genius is wholly opposed to it.<sup>5</sup> Where Gramsci imagines a philosophy of praxis as a critique at once aimed at “common sense” and based on it, both Wordsworth and Coleridge locate the source for the truest commonality not in the multitude but in the individual’s capacity for self-reflection, which they regard as crucial both to the revelation and the renovation of common sense.

Ironically, it is on account of the view that self-reflection might serve as the basis for the truest commonality that critics, from Hazlitt down to the present, have been prone to read the Romantics as having least to do with common sense precisely where these poets are most actively engaged in the task of renovating and reforming it. The transformation that Harold Bloom, many years ago, named the “Copernican Revolution” of Wordsworth’s poetry—“the evanescence of any subject but subjectivity, the loss of what a poem is ‘about’”—persists as a model for understanding the period, perhaps especially in criticism that takes such acute inwardness as a displacement or occlusion of historical reality.<sup>6</sup> If the early Romantics too presumptuously aimed to fit the mind and the world, as Wordsworth put it in the “Prospectus” to *The Recluse*, many historicist readings of this period have taken the opposite approach, attempting rigorously to extract the self-consciousness of Romantic lyric from its social and political engagements.<sup>7</sup>

Yet what is most obviously overlooked in the identification of inwardness with historical occlusion is an understanding of the historicity of inwardness itself, or the social contexts of self-contem-

plation. Critics have so far failed to register, for instance, how fully the writers of this period conceive self-reflection as an activity designed to reveal general, and even universal, laws of mankind. In fact, this activity was frequently conceived as a means of addressing some of the most pressing questions confronting the emergent human sciences. In the preface to the *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau raised some of these questions: “What experiments would be necessary to achieve knowledge of natural man? And what are the means for making these experiments in the midst of society?”<sup>8</sup> While complicated by Rousseau’s assumption that man had forsaken his natural state, such questions nonetheless capture the chief difficulty generally facing the human sciences in the moment of their emergence—the problem, that is, of how to determine the basis for commonality among humans in the first place. One approach to Rousseau’s problem—indeed, that which we most often associate with human science—was to turn human subjects into experimental objects. An alternative to this approach, however, was to make of oneself an experiment of a similar kind. Of this self-experimental approach Coleridge provides an instructive example in an early notebook entry: “Seem to have made up my mind to write my metaphysical works, as *my Life*, & *in my Life*—intermixed with all the other events/or history of the mind and fortunes of S. T. Coleridge.”<sup>9</sup> In his 1803 entry, Coleridge pledges to a mode of philosophizing that finds its truths, its method, and its evidentiary foundation in “S. T. Coleridge” himself. As in the canonical Romantic lyric, Coleridge’s entry seems to admit no subject but subjectivity, and no metaphysics but that which his own life supplies.

I want to pursue in this essay some of the experimental means for acquiring, through practices of self-observation, knowledge about humankind “in the midst of society,” and to focus on the literary form in which I believe these practices to be concentrated: the experimental lyric. I focus on Coleridge in this context not only because of the range of his experimentation (in philosophy, natural philosophy, and medicine, to name a few fields), but also because of his insistence on attentive self-observation. It is Coleridge, after all, who in a letter records having performed “a multitude of little experiments on my own sensations and on my senses” in the course of his studies; far from representing an aberrant component of his work, such pursuits were utterly central to it.<sup>10</sup> Whereas René Descartes famously vowed to “turn away all [his] senses” the better to know himself, for Coleridge

inwardness is necessarily an aesthetic in the broadest sense of that term—a form of sensuous cognition integrally related to the process of self-discovery.<sup>11</sup> Following Coleridge, then, I want to ask what kind of knowledge we acquire when we attend to our own sensations, and further ask how, through experimental self-observation, early Romantic literary culture sought to reform common sense.

We speak regularly of literary experiment, of course, and often credit the Romantics with having pioneered the concept of literary experimentation in the first place—a usage perhaps best reflected in Romantic scholarship by the title of Mary Jacobus's study, *Tradition and Experiment in Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads (1798)*.<sup>12</sup> While such a description generally refers (as it does in Jacobus's study) to the innovation of the work rather than to any experimental protocols per se, I will contend that the experimental lyric has a fuller—and more fully literal—connection to philosophic and scientific experimentation in this period.<sup>13</sup> As I will argue, the experimental lyric at once addresses and attempts to resolve the question of how, through self-observation, one determines the basis for common sense. Inasmuch as such poems depict and frequently seek to promote the activity of self-observation, then, the experimental lyric raises in a different register questions more familiarly associated in this period with the philosophical discourse of autonomy—with a “Copernican Revolution” that is associated most closely with Immanuel Kant. The Romantic literary experiment thus emerges as an unique instantiation of the discourse of autonomy, both an expression of and an effort to overcome the most difficult question raised by that discourse: how does one acquire a standpoint for making judgments that are shared and at the same time individual? In stretching the bounds of convention, the experimental poem is meant to promote self-reflection upon the basis for one's attachment to those conventions in the first place. On account of its explicit or implied emphasis on self-reflection, however, the experimental lyric invites charges of solipsism precisely where it seeks to get beyond it. Thus, the problem that such texts bring to the fore is the difficulty of invoking a “common sense,” or normative basis of assent, as the preexisting foundation for aesthetic, ethical, or political relations.

While much recent historicist work has gone no farther than to identify inwardness with political escapism *tout court*, or else more charitably viewed it as something the Romantics themselves managed to get beyond, my own approach sees the Romantic literary experiment as seeking paradoxically to realize the social uses of solipsism—

if only by revealing in especially clear terms its own categorical negation.<sup>14</sup> In Coleridge's work especially, one discerns an experimental aesthetics in which common sense is realized neither through the formal character of the reflective judgment nor through the universality of sense-perception. Rather, I suggest that Coleridge paradoxically sets the condition for invoking common sense as the seeming violation of commonsensical perception. The activity of embodied self-reflection, both depicted in and required by such experiments, is thus of a uniquely self-canceling kind, calling into question the self-sufficiency and integrity of the individual precisely where it seems most to assert it. My essay tracks such experimentation from its formulation in Romantic aesthetic theory to contexts in moral philosophy and medicine. From a consideration of the inevitably aesthetic (both sensory and literary) dimension of experimental self-observation, I turn to Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," a lyric in which the social uses of self-observation are most tellingly explored. While Coleridge's lyric reflects an awareness that there is neither relief from self-consciousness nor an easy way of invoking community, the poem imagines autonomy not as the endowment of the isolated, elevated individual, but rather as the capacity for imagining the conditions of a common sense that is imperceptible but no less integral to subjectivity in the first place. Far from effecting an aestheticized flight from politics, Coleridge's literary experimentation seeks rather to reconceive the aesthetic as a basis for imagining profoundly altered conditions for judgment and for communities based on the same.

#### I. AUTONOMY, EMBODIMENT, EXPERIMENT

In his 1803 notebook entry, Coleridge expresses a wish simultaneously to embody the work of metaphysics "in my Life" and to textualize his own life "as" a form of metaphysical inquiry. Kathleen Coburn is therefore correct to remark in her gloss on that entry that Coleridge offers "[t]he first hint of the *Biographia Literaria*, and an important elucidation of its form" (CN, 1:1515n). Beyond that "hint," however, Coleridge gestures towards a momentous revolution in modern philosophical thought. Underlying Coleridge's decision to write his metaphysics in, and as, his life is a shift occurring in this period towards the role of the self as a legitimate source for such discoveries, and for the universal validity of principles so derived. It is a story, in short, of autonomy. Coleridge implicitly posits the autonomous self as the favored basis for metaphysical truth and as the

normative source for such discoveries. In terms familiar to us from Michel Foucault, Coleridge establishes himself as at once the transcendental subject and empirical object of knowledge that marks the founding moment of modernity and the introduction of Man.<sup>15</sup>

When Coleridge pledges to ground metaphysics in his life, and Foucault writes of the rupture that brought forth “Man” as the subject and object of knowledge, both are clearly invoking the authority of Kant. As is well known, what makes Kant so important to the history of philosophy is his argument that the universal laws of judgment, understanding, and morality must be the laws of the agent’s own will. It is thus with Kant that what Christine Korsgaard has called “the sources of normativity,” or the basis for the claims that morality makes upon us, receives a radically new grounding.<sup>16</sup> Like his philosophical mentor, Coleridge is clearly sworn to the notion that the laws of philosophy must be self-derived; as he puts it in a letter of 1796, “My philosophical opinions are blended with, or deduced from, my feelings” (*CL*, 1:41).

Such remarks are familiar to us in part because they so closely resemble statements made about the normative basis of aesthetic judgment in this period as well. When Wordsworth, for instance, requests that the reader “decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgment of others,” his remark can be read in terms of the Kantian argument that the normative basis for aesthetic judgment, as for ethical behavior, must be autonomously derived (*LB*, 270). Certainly Wordsworth’s request bears considerable resemblance to Kant’s appeal to autonomy over against an earlier model (one which Korsgaard herself associates with David Hume) of “reflective endorsement.”<sup>17</sup> Using Korsgaard’s terms, we can say that the Romantic revolution in aesthetic thought was to have forsaken such a model of “reflective endorsement” for one in which the self-reflection of the autonomous agent determines the normativity of feeling. In one sense, then, Wordsworth’s request, like Coleridge’s notebook entry, registers what has made the Romantic period, both in its British and German variants, so generally associated with the emergence of the autonomous modern subject.<sup>18</sup>

But Wordsworth’s plea to the reader to “abide independently by his own feelings” (*LB*, 270) bears a dimension unfamiliar to Kant, for whom truly aesthetic judgments are distinct from judgments made on the basis of feeling. It is true that Kant begins the *Critique of Judgment* by defining an aesthetic judgment as one based on the feeling of pleasure, thus distinguishing aesthetic response from

theoretical cognition. Yet Kant repeatedly insists that in order for aesthetic judgments to claim any universal validity they must have their basis for determination in the faculty of reflection and not in mere sensuous response. So independent is the judgment of taste from mere sensuous gratification, in fact, that Kant can insist that “aesthetical art, as the art of beauty, has for [its] standard the reflective judgment and not sensation.”<sup>19</sup> Thus as many critics have argued, Kant’s aesthetic emerges peculiarly as an *anaesthetic*, a theory of aesthetic pleasure paradoxically divorced from sensuous pleasure of any kind.<sup>20</sup> As much as Wordsworth’s plea to the reader to “decide by his own feelings genuinely” (like Coleridge’s claim to deduce his philosophical opinions from the same source) echoes Kant’s argument about the autonomy of judgment, in this crucial particular they are quite distinct. Both in Wordsworth’s preface and in many other works of the British Romantic period, the emphasis on kinesthetic as well as affective feeling suggests a crucial distinction between Kantian and British Romantic aesthetics—even among those British writers, such as Coleridge, most obviously influenced by Kant’s thought.<sup>21</sup> In fact, this distinction has just begun to be asserted by a number of critics investigating the embodied basis of imagination in British Romanticism. Yet these same critics have tended to bypass the normative question central to the third *Critique*: namely, how aesthetic feeling can lay claim to what Kant called “subjective universal validity” at all (*CJ*, 49).<sup>22</sup>

Far from resolving the chief problem of Kantian aesthetics, in fact, those testimonies to the embodied character of aesthetic judgment further complicate it. For Kant, the principle condition for the “subjective universal validity” of aesthetic judgment is precisely its status as disinterested and reflective, that is its nonreliance on organic sensation. The assumption of Kant’s aesthetics, moreover, is that self-reflection yields common laws of judgment. And in the third *Critique*, Kant ascribes these laws to the *sensus communis aestheticus*, to “common sense” (*CJ*, 135–38). Yet what is the possibility for common sense when the senses themselves are the organs of judgment? What are the experiments necessary to illuminate the laws of common sense? And how does one establish the criteria for making such judgments?

As we are now in a position to see, the questions that British Romantic aesthetics raises for the fate of “subjective universal validity” indicate the need for a specifically aesthetic variation on Rousseau’s problem. Such questions, I submit, receive an early and

especially powerful formulation in the Romantic period—not least, indeed, by Wordsworth, who famously labeled his poems “experiments” in the advertisement to the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, and continued to think of them as such throughout his career (*LB*, 7). Yet Wordsworth is far from the only writer of the period to have arrived at such a conception of aesthetic experiment, or to have understood its stakes. For Kant, as we have seen, the judgment of taste is normative, that is, it claims to be valid for all. Yet the problem that Kant poses for aesthetic judgment is how a subjective response can at once resist being subsumed under *a priori* laws and yet still satisfy the conditions of universal validity. Thus Kant remarks parenthetically, “we cannot determine *a priori* what object is or is not according to taste; that we must find out by experiment” (*CJ*, 28). For want of a general standard against which to evaluate works of art, one needs to arrive at a judgment of taste for each individual work. For Kant as well as for Wordsworth, moreover, such trials are to be “considered as experiments” designed to test the normative claims of taste (*LB*, 7). The question of experimentation is thus raised in Kant’s work precisely where the autonomy of judgment becomes an issue. And literary experiment is the name that is given in this period to the object that confronts, expresses, or attempts to resolve this issue in aesthetic form.

For Edmund Burke, the most pressing problems of aesthetic common sense were solved simply by referring to the universality of flesh and blood. As most people share the same senses, Burke argued, so “the whole ground-work of Taste is common to all.”<sup>23</sup> I confess that I share with Kant, as well as with those literary critics recently concerned with vindicating him, a sense of the inadequacy of such a conclusion.<sup>24</sup> Yet we are mistaken to assume that Burke’s is the only position available to an empiricist aesthetics. An alternative approach to the empirical demonstration of common sense, for instance, is suggested by Thomas Reid, to whom I will turn below. And Coleridge and Wordsworth further differ from Burke in seeing the problem as more constructively approached through techniques of self-reflection designed, as in Kant, to yield common sense. It is because aesthetic judgment supposes, and indeed requires, an act of self-observation—because thinking *for* oneself (*Selbstdenken*, the condition of possibility for critique) necessitates thinking *of* oneself—that the history of aesthetics intersects most compellingly with “the invention of autonomy” in this period. Whereas Kant sought to distance his own use of “common sense” from the external senses, however (ascribing it instead to “the effect resulting from the free

play of cognitive powers" [*CJ*, 74]), Coleridge—and I believe he is closer to Reid in this respect—regards common sense as dependent for its manifestation, and frequently for its very foundation, on the senses themselves.<sup>25</sup> It is on account of this strongly empirical approach to "common sense" that the experimental character of British Romantic, and especially Coleridgean aesthetics, finds a relevant context in the practice of scientific self-experimentation. To understand how self-experiment became a crucial component of literary evaluation, then, we must attend to its earliest manifestation in the fields of natural and moral philosophy.

## II. TECHNIQUES OF THE SELF-OBSERVER

As several historians of science have argued in recent years, the experiment—defined broadly as posing "a specific question about nature which the experimental outcome is designed to answer"—was the product of a complex shift occurring through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not fully codified in any modern sense until the age of Newton.<sup>26</sup> Not long after this time, the procedures of collecting, testing, and verifying sensations in an experimental context were analogized with the practices of reading and aesthetic evaluation, and the literary text began to develop a rhetoric and a set of protocols for investigating the principles of—as well as commanding—critical judgment by similarly experimental means. Aesthetic evaluation and scientific self-experimentation were united primarily through criteria that these two pursuits shared. If the first of these criteria was the obvious necessity of appealing to the sensations of the experimental subject, the second condition was that the experience be subject to replication, both in terms of its communicability to a broad range of readers, and, increasingly with the Romantic writers, in terms of its capacity to be reread with the same or a greater degree of pleasure. Just as natural philosophical and medical research put vivacity among the key criteria of evidence, and made the replication of experiment crucial to the determination of its veracity, so too it was largely upon the basis of the vivacity and reproducibility of sensations that aesthetic judgments were made.

It is on account of its resolutely antidualist approach to common sense that Romantic literary experimentation not only suggests the most thorny problems raised by the third *Critique*, but also their concrete instantiation in the practices of scientific self-experiment. The story of how the body became an instrument and a legitimate source of critical judgment in aesthetics, and how literature in turn

was conceptualized as an experiment designed to test claims of taste, properly begins with the use of the body as an instrument of knowledge in natural philosophy. In his essay "Self-Evidence," Simon Schaffer has demonstrated how crucial this practice was to satisfying basic criteria for establishing matters of fact in eighteenth-century science.<sup>27</sup> Schaffer's essay narrates a struggle over the normative foundations for what would count as evidence in the first place. Signaling his departure from Ian Hacking's definition of evidence as consisting "in one thing pointing beyond itself," Schaffer highlights instead the vividness of evidence, or the immediate sensuous appeal of the fact itself.<sup>28</sup> It was because vividness was such an important criterion of natural philosophical research, Schaffer contends, that self-experiment was crucial not only in establishing matters of fact, but, in numerous instances throughout the eighteenth century, in estimating the value of the experimental theory itself.<sup>29</sup>

Schaffer's narrative concludes with Coleridge and the dawn of the Romantic period, at a stage at which he believes the culture of self-experimentation to have departed significantly from the principles on which it was originally established. Other critics have extended this history, however, discerning in the self-experimentation of figures such as Humphry Davy and Johann Ritter a literal embodiment of Romanticism's most cherished premises.<sup>30</sup> What Stuart Strickland has called "the ideology of Romantic science," namely its insistence upon "the mutual implication of self-knowledge and knowledge of nature," clearly holds as true for Coleridge as it does, in Strickland's essay, for Ritter.<sup>31</sup> A friend and pupil of Davy and an avid reader of Ritter's work, Coleridge was the very model of a self-experimental ideal. Like Ritter, moreover, whose death at the age of 34 was precipitated by frequent self-experimentation, Coleridge's researches were conducted at a price. In the letter to Thomas Poole from which I have already quoted, Coleridge wrote of the ruinous effects of his frequent self-experimentation, and of his turn to opium and alcohol as a consequence: "In the course of these studies, I tried a multitude of little experiments on my own sensations and on my senses, and some of these (too often repeated) I have reason to believe did injury to my nervous system" (*CL*, 2:731).

Notwithstanding the occasional complaint, Coleridge was deeply steeped in a philosophic and scientific tradition that believed sensuous vivacity to be a crucial criterion for the legitimacy of evidence and the veracity of a truth-claim. Though Coleridge was critical of those who mistook the "sensualized Understanding" for "the true

principles of an Experimental Philosophy—that is, Philosophy suggesting and dictating Experiments,” and therefore insisted upon approaching self-experimentation from the direction of philosophy and not the other way around, it is important to remember that these philosophical pursuits were themselves described and commonly understood as forms of sensuous self-experimentation. Thus, “feelings,” as Coleridge put it in his letter, remained in a real sense the source of “philosophical opinions.”<sup>32</sup> As early as 1711, Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics* likened the science of the mind to the “practice and art of surgery”—and then promptly added that the obvious difference is that instead of having the “meek patient” before us, “we have each of us ourselves to practise on.” Anticipating by nearly a century the metaphor that Wordsworth would later immortalize, Shaftesbury remarks that the activity of self-exploration is thus better likened to “the business of self-dissection.”<sup>33</sup>

### III. THOMAS REID AND THE *SENSUS COMMUNIS*

Shaftesbury’s analogy between self-observation and self-experimentation is a typical example of the tendency of moral philosophers at once to assert the relationship between these practices and to draw attention to the fictionality of that relationship. In fact, self-experiment in philosophical writings was much more often an analogical than an actual procedure. In *The Rhetoric of Empiricism*, Jules Law has shown that empiricist writing more frequently mimics than seeks faithfully to duplicate the procedures of natural philosophy. Its much remarked upon emulation of natural philosophical method is less uncritically positivist than has been asserted: as Law argues, “empiricism does not proceed so much by experiment as by examples and analogies *presented as reproducible experiments*. Thus classical empiricism offers us example and analogy (and thus rhetoric) precisely in the place where modern empiricism would expect experimental procedures.”<sup>34</sup>

However, Law does not discuss the philosopher who did seek to bring a genuinely experimental moral philosophy into alliance with the tenets of common sense, namely Reid. Not only did Reid’s pupil, Dugald Stewart, credit his mentor with being the first to apply the experimental methods of Baconian induction to the science of the mind, still more recently, philosophers of science have credited Reid with being “the first major British philosopher to take Newton’s opinions on induction, causality, and hypotheses seriously.”<sup>35</sup> The very title of Reid’s first major work, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*,

on the *Principles of Common Sense* (1764), underscores how fully “common sense” is meant to serve as the presupposed ground of inquiry. Yet there are moments in Reid’s text where what one critic has called the author’s “aggressive hyper-inductivism” causes him further to inquire into the foundations of “common sense” itself, even at the risk of raising doubts as to the sturdiness of those foundations.<sup>36</sup> Reid thus offers an example of a strong empiricism which, unsettling the very commonality it would assert, reflects an emergent tension and apparent conflict between inwardness and “common sense.”

As is well known, Reid’s philosophy is expressly meant to correct the damaging conclusions of philosophers, George Berkeley and Hume foremost, who mistake the images of external objects for the objects themselves, thus falling into positions either of idealism or skepticism. In his experiments, however, Reid seeks paradoxically to disprove these positions by invoking in the reader perceptual effects most likely to confirm them—effects, as he writes, “most contrary to the common rules of vision.”<sup>37</sup> That we do not “see things always in their true place and position” Reid is more than willing to grant (*I*, 151); yet our firm belief in their “true place” is one of the most basic and incontrovertible laws of our physical and mental constitution. In support of this hypothesis, Reid gives a series of experiments that require one to observe an object at varying distances, and from perspectives or through media (such as pinholes in a card) that will produce a duplicate or even triplicate visual image of the object. The simplest of these experiments requires one to observe a candle or similar object at a distance, obtrude a finger into your line of vision, and then focus alternately on the finger or the candle. In this act of attention, Reid points out, the other object will appear as two.

Though doublevision is easily produced through such exercises, Reid argues, it is not, under normal circumstances of vision, present to the mind, for the simple reason that no such doubling appears in the world. To adopt the terms of Reid’s important distinction, the experience of doublevision is a sensation, but not a perception, in having for its object only the feeling itself. It is in falsely conflating sensation and perception, Reid argues, and in thus mistaking the chimera of sensation for indications of a chimerical real, that the errors of metaphysics have been perpetuated. Therefore it is only by separating these synthesized components of our perception that we may understand how the very synthetic character of consciousness conforms to constant and recognizable laws of nature. Experiment, in Reid’s understanding, thus relies on a two-stage process in which one

first dislodges common sense—violates the common rules of perception—in order to reaffirm it. Reid's experiments call for the violation of "the common rules of vision" so as to bring home to the reader how common in fact these rules are. In experimentally demonstrating the bifurcation of the visual field—a peculiarity of sensation not so much overcome as *overlooked* in everyday perception—his experiments are designed to avoid the trap into which he believed the metaphysicians to have fallen.

Yet one must note how Reid's experimental procedures seem to jeopardize the conclusions to which his experiments are supposed to lead. His technique of experimentally replicating an aberrant sensation in order to affirm a basic truth about "common-sense" perception obviously requires one to attend to a sensation that would otherwise go unnoticed. Yet in turning the attention to this new sensation—in converting sensation into perception, in Reid's own terms—there is a greater likelihood that the perception will remain in the brain, and thus through habit or custom determine future perceptions.<sup>38</sup> Is the phenomenon of doublevision a sensation which, once perceived, will render common-sense vision itself aberrant? And if not, by what covert laws does this sensation manage to escape notice? The questions to which Reid's experiments inevitably give rise explain why the only scholars to attend at any length to Reid's account of doublevision acknowledge its conceivable "outrage against the common sense which it was the general purpose of his philosophy to confirm."<sup>39</sup> Experimental self-observation in Reid's work can be seen as alternately supporting and unsettling the foundations of "common sense," exposing the synthetic character of reality even while it purports to establish it as normative. In so revealing the aberrance of our natural (though occulted) sensations, such experiments open the possibility that our common sense is the result not of a natural order but is rather the product of a prior act of construction.<sup>40</sup> The mental operations on which Reid stakes his experimental demonstration of common sense thus conceivably endanger as much as they confirm those essential laws of belief.

#### IV. MAPS OF MISREADING

As Reid's examples make clear, experiments designed to explain the laws of belief that structure common-sense perception aim precisely to disrupt common sense in order to better understand its occulted processes. Through the momentary violation of vision, in other words, the experiment is designed to call attention to the

otherwise imperceptible conditions that make seeing possible in the first place. Reid's commitment to the easy reproducibility of these procedures further explains why such experiments involve the most common objects. Thus it may not surprise us to learn that the object most frequently invoked in records of self-experiment is the book itself. In the *Inquiry*, for example, Reid bids the reader to "look upon any familiar object, such as a book, at different distances and in different positions" (I, 96), in support of the most commonsensical claims (here, that the same object will appear differently to the eye).

Yet if we take seriously Law's contention that empiricist thought engages dialectically with the relation of perception to language, we will see that the experimental use of the book also serves as an occasion to examine and compare the exercise of innate faculties and acquired traits. Through the use of the book in scenes of experimental self-observation, in other words, issues of psycho-physiological perception slide ineffably into issues of cultural and even aesthetic perception, and these are revealed to be fundamentally related registers of cognition. The importance of the book in the experimental scene is not only due to the fact that it is a familiar object, but also that reading is a process occurring—in the case of those Britons of the polite ranks to whom such texts were written—without a conscious act of reflection upon the conditions that make that activity possible. By making an alteration in perception precipitate a failure of reading, then, such experiments estrange the common activities of seeing and reading in order to call attention to the internal conditions that make these activities possible—or impossible—in the first place.

For an example of what I mean, consider the following passage from a medical text of the late eighteenth century, Alexander Monro's *Three Treatises on the Brain, the Eye, and the Ear* (1797). A member of an influential medical dynasty (his father, Monro *primus*, was Edinburgh University's first Professor of Anatomy) and himself a practitioner of self-experimentation, Monro *secundus* offers this easily reproducible experiment with visual perception:

In a closet, lighted by a small single window, I sat on a chair, with my back to the window, and fixed a Book, with Small Print, on the opposite wall. I then brought my Eyes so near the Book, that the Letters became indistinct. I then made an Exertion to read, without contracting the Orbicularis; or, I opened the Eyelids wide, by acting with the Attollens Palpebram Superiorem; or, I held the Upper and Under Eyelids with my fingers at a distance from each other, and then repeated my effort to read the Book; but found I could not do it.<sup>41</sup>

I think that one needn't be able to identify the "Attollens Palpebram Superiorem" in order to conduct the sort of experiment that Monro describes here—and of course this is partly the issue. In its appeal to objects of immediate accessibility and qualitative indistinguishability (the only criterion for the book itself, after all, is that it have small print), it is a form of experiment committed to easy replication and therefore to a publicness fitted to what Steven Shapin has determined as "the audience for science" in eighteenth-century Scotland, an audience consisting mostly in landholders with little or no formal background in science.<sup>42</sup>

Like Monro, Coleridge (who was at least minimally familiar with the physician's work) was invested in conducting experiments designed to illuminate familiar structures of perception.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, like Monro's, Coleridge's experiments frequently employ the book as an experimental object, and reading as an activity to be disrupted through a perceptual alteration. Consider the following experiment, recorded in a notebook entry of 1803:

Morning/Just rolled bits of paper, many fine little bits of wick, some tallow, & the soap together/the whole flame equal in size to half a dozen Candles did not give the Light of one/& the letters of the Book looked by the unsteady Flame, just as thro' Tears, or in dizziness. <Every line of every Letter dislocated into angles/or like the mica in crumbly Stones.> (CN, 1:1771)

Coleridge's inference from this experiment, that motion "is presence and absence rapidly alternating" in our consciousness, has its roots in his reading of Kant and will be worked out at greater length in the *Biographia Literaria*.<sup>44</sup> In a style more richly sensuous than Monro's, Coleridge records the perceptual effects produced through his experimental use of the book—effects which, as he argues, occur in us constantly without our awareness. As in Reid's experiments, Coleridge calls attention to the presence of two discrete phenomena—"presence and absence rapidly alternating"—that we experience under normal circumstances as unified. His experiment attempts to disrupt in order to more adequately apprehend an overlooked phenomenon of consciousness.

It will be clear that such experimental uses of the book are designed to produce an aesthetic experience even if the text itself is not considered more narrowly aesthetic or literary per se. Moreover, such experiments ask, for scientific purposes, questions just as central to eighteenth-century aesthetics: what are the conditions for reading,

and for construing that activity as a common sense? While for Reid the experiment provides an example of how metaphysicians fall into error, for Coleridge the activity of experimental reading becomes a subject not exclusively for scientific reflection, but rather for aesthetic perception itself. Through the use of the book, Coleridge indicates, in terms we often associate with Kantian thought, how the project of philosophy effectuates and completes itself in the aesthetic domain.<sup>45</sup> It is in defamiliarizing the activity of reading that one is allowed to experience a simulation of the many conditions—of physiology, psychology, and environment—that make a conventionally aesthetic experience possible. Perhaps it is that the failure to read the book under controlled conditions will persuade us, as Reid’s experiments are clearly meant to do, of the triumph of common sense when such conditions obtain. But to say as much is to underestimate the degree to which the failure of reading is a highly ambivalent phenomenon, at once an enabling and disabling condition for the assertion of a *sensus communis* in the first place.

In fact, I want to argue that a version of the scenario I have just described functions crucially in Coleridge’s “Frost at Midnight.” I refer to lines in this acclaimed conversation poem, where the speaker recollects the visions that sustained him during his childhood in the city. As is well known, that poem tracks the speaker’s thought as it ranges from the present-tense observation of the fluttering “stranger” in the fireplace grate, to recollections of his childhood triggered by his observation of the “stranger,” and then in the final movement of the poem to an anticipation of Hartley’s future development away from the city and its harmful influence (“F,” 26).<sup>46</sup> The scene that I want to call experimental occurs in the second of these movements, when as a child he gazed at the grate, day-dreaming

till the soothing things, I dreamt,  
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!  
And so I brooded all the following morn,  
Awed by the stern preceptor’s face, mine eye  
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book.

(“F,” 34–38)

The failure of reading in this passage is obviously also a scene of failed pedagogy. Yet it is not the simulation of attention in “mock study” that makes this scene of instruction a failure. In fact, Coleridge does not depict a state of inattention so much as one of excessive attention, figured by the “unclosed lids” and “[f]ixed” gaze of the

speaker (“F,” 27, 37). The child’s attention is fixed so exclusively on the hope “to see the *stranger’s* face” (“F,” 41), however, that his mind neither rests upon the book nor upon his own sensations. It is this high degree of concentration, coupled with a “most believing mind” (“F,” 24), that makes the book appear to swim. The attention fixes on the immediate objects of perception only insofar as they portend of “things to come” (“F,” 33).

Analyses of “Frost at Midnight” have tended to read this episode as significant only insofar as it represents a “before” to the “before and after” portraits that the poem most obviously offers.<sup>47</sup> Thus in most critical readings of the poem, the scene of failed instruction is itself considered instructive only as a cue to recognizing that the pedagogical experience therein depicted is to be redeemed in the future. In his sensitive reading of Coleridge’s poem, for instance, Reeve Parker has argued that the significant movement of the poem tracks “from the willful and superstitious solipsism of a depressed sensibility . . . to the apprehension of a regenerate companionship” in Hartley and the world of nature.<sup>48</sup> Following the logic of Parker’s argument, we can say that the boy’s superstitious cast of mind prefigures the solipsistic “musings” of the speaker in the opening of the poem (“F,” 6), and thus both represent states of mind that must be replaced by the apprehension of a companionship founded upon a more substantial basis. The knowledge that comforts the speaker, therefore, is the possibility that his son “shalt learn far other lore, / And in far other scenes!” (“F,” 50–51). Not surprisingly, we learn that this new and more effective lore will entail, through interaction with nature, a stronger and more permanent relationship to objects of sense: “so shalt thou see and hear / The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible / Of that eternal language, which thy God / Utters” (“F,” 58–61). The education that the child will receive will redeem the failed education that is imaged in the speaker’s “swimming book.” Coleridge thus invokes the scene of failed reading to express his anticipation of a future that Hartley himself will come to embody.

Described in this manner, “Frost at Midnight” offers a straightforwardly diachronic solution to the problem it presents: the sound education that was wanting in Coleridge himself will be realized in Hartley, who will come to have a more solid grounding in common sense. The poem reaches its conclusion when the speaker’s consciousness reflects an awareness of this “regenerate companionship,” in Parker’s words, and so learns to rejoice in it. Parker is certainly correct to discern the most significant movement in the poem as one

of consciousness towards this apprehension. Yet “Frost at Midnight” is also, and just as obviously, an exploration of the mechanisms of consciousness. Coleridge’s poem, in other words, is not solely designed to record a moment of consciousness; just as crucially, it is intended to shed light on the mental operations that account for this state of consciousness. In a symbiosis typical of the age—think of Wordsworth’s daffodils poem—the activity of the mind not only constitutes the action of the poem (the movement from superstition to substantial belief, as Parker describes it in the case of “Frost at Midnight”), but the action of the poem also seeks to explain something about the activity of the mind.

“Frost at Midnight” provides an exemplary instance of such reciprocity between internal and external action in often keeping this double purpose in view. For example, the celebrated lines in which the speaker finds a “companionable form” in the fluttering stranger evince both a consciousness of their likeness and a commentary on the nature of the comparison itself (“F,” 19). As a simple instance of analogical thinking, the speaker’s comparison is described as a “toy of Thought” (“F,” 23) not unlike that which Reid excoriates in his philosophical contemporaries. In the earliest published version of the poem, Coleridge is even more explicit in calling such analogies “curious toys / Of the self-watching subtilizing mind.”<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the peculiar construction of the lines in which Coleridge introduces the comparison between himself and the “stranger”—“*Methinks*, its motion in this hush of nature / Gives it dim sympathies with *me who live*” (“F,” 17–18)—at once suggests and linguistically reproduces such a state of “self-watching.”<sup>50</sup>

In Parker’s reading of the poem, and in many readings since, it is precisely this state of “self-watching” that represents the tyranny of the solipsistic mentality over the consciousness of regenerate companionship. Indeed, there has been considerable critical consensus that the poem depicts the process by which one overcomes self-consciousness, or at least attempts to do so.<sup>51</sup> Yet this interpretation fails to account for why Coleridge’s poem would itself be represented as a toy of the self-watching mind, a reflection on the activity of self-reflection itself—why, in other words, the narrative of socialization that Parker rightly describes as central to the poem is itself embedded within an account of the poet’s own mental activity. A more adequate interpretation would read “Frost at Midnight” as a meditation on the very conditions of self-consciousness, or the processes by which one reflects upon the “film” (as the “stranger” is first intro-

duced in the poem) that structures consciousness in the first place (“F,” 15). As in those experiments involving the failure of reading, the speaker’s self-exploration is meant to illuminate the conditions of perception, mental bearing, and environment that make a common sense possible. It is undeniable that, by the turn to Hartley in the final movement of the poem, Coleridge wishes to indicate the ultimate necessity of socializing these “[a]bstruser musings” (“F,” 6). Yet while, on the one hand, “Frost at Midnight” seems to advocate abandoning the preoccupations of the “self-watching subtilizing mind” for the consciousness of a regenerate companionship, on the other, the poem suggests that it is only within and through such self-observation that one may establish those more permanent connections in the first place.<sup>52</sup>

My argument, then, is that it is not by overcoming so much as by intensifying self-consciousness that the speaker of “Frost at Midnight” comes to experience a “companionable form” in Hartley. The revelation of a “common sense” or shared purpose with his son depends paradoxically upon the speaker’s thoroughgoing turn inward to his own senses. Yet this dialectic bears little resemblance to the journey in and through self-consciousness once described by critics such as Geoffrey Hartman and Harold Bloom, and rather far more closely resembles those experiments in which, by the seeming violation of “common sense,” one experiences the conditions for imagining a *sensus communis* in the first place. In fact, Coleridge explicitly invokes “common sense” in lines revised for the *Poetical Register* of 1808–1809 (not published until 1812). Coleridge represents such toys of thought as momentary disruptions of “common sense” by the living spirit which projects itself into “all things,”

sometimes with deep faith,  
 And sometimes with a wilful playfulness  
 That stealing pardon from our common sense  
 Smiles, as self-scornful, to disarm the scorn  
 For those wild reliques of our childish Thought,  
 That flit about, oft go, and oft return  
 Not uninvited.<sup>53</sup>

Coleridge’s lines draw an explicit parallel between these “reliques” of childish thought and the “superstitious wish” of his childhood, but without the opprobrium that critics often believe to be attached to these incidents.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the motions of the “self-watching subtilizing mind” that first seem inimical to the apprehension of a “companionable form” are instead revealed as crucial to that apprehension. As in

those experiments where reading breaks down in order to reveal the conditions that make reading itself possible, Coleridge demonstrates how one violates common sense in order to reveal a new basis for imagining a *sensus communis* in the first place. In Coleridge's dialectical approach, common sense is debilitated and rejuvenated—renovated and made “critical,” in Gramsci's terms—in the same stroke.

I have been suggesting that “Frost at Midnight” not only depicts scenes of experimental self-observation, but that it devotes those scenes towards exploring how common sense comes into view as well as the ground upon which it might be asserted. While generally not regarded as an explicitly experimental work, the poem does offer a template for understanding how such experiments are carried out.<sup>55</sup> But there is another sense in which we can read the experimental scene of Coleridge's poem, namely as a reading lesson itself. The references to books and reading serve as a reminder, should any be needed, of how clearly “Frost at Midnight” is intended to be an allegory about the reading experience: in Coleridge's account of the “swimming book,” that is, we read an appeal to how one might best approach the book presently in hand. Yet if we follow the experimental logic of the poem, the reading that “Frost at Midnight” prescribes will be found to be of a highly unusual kind. It is not uncommon for the literature of the period to insist upon a state of fixed attention that would inhibit the “mock study” that Coleridge describes. In the dedicatory preface to *The Deserted Village*, for instance, Oliver Goldsmith declared that “I want [the reader's] unfatigued attention,” and indeed most writing on the subject—Wordsworth's included—makes similarly stringent demands on its readership.<sup>56</sup> Yet Coleridge may gesture to a use for that experience of “mock study” that does not devalue but rather functions as the very condition of valuation. In its appeal to the activity of readerly self-observation, “Frost at Midnight” gives a different kind of support to the more modern notion that the strong reading is necessarily a misreading.<sup>57</sup>

#### V. SOLIPSIISM AND SOCIALITY

The conditions that Reid elaborates for the illumination of common sense—the activity of attentive self-observation, resulting in the violation of commonsensical perception—have proven similar to those which Coleridge imagines as the condition of a regenerate apprehension of community in “Frost at Midnight.” In both cases, self-observation is meant to lead beyond itself to the firm faith in a common sense. Yet I have been arguing that we can best understand

"Frost at Midnight" and other poems of this kind not as efforts to overcome self-consciousness so much as attempts to dramatize the conditions that must obtain in order to apprehend a common sense in the first place. As in "Tintern Abbey," a poem whose indebtedness to "Frost at Midnight" is well known, Coleridge's conversation lyrics often culminate in a moment of virtual conversation or address to an otherwise absent audience. Yet the critical view that the speaker of these poems turns to another, out of a need of the imperial consciousness at once to extend and secure its domain—a reading to which "Frost at Midnight," like "Tintern Abbey," would appear particularly vulnerable—seems to me fundamentally mistaken.<sup>58</sup> For these conversation poems imagine conversation itself neither as the product of overcoming self-consciousness nor as the extension of its powers; rather, such poems conceive community as the very medium of self-consciousness (its "film," in Coleridge's idiom), as a constitutive outside that structures perception imperceptibly from within. The revelation of a *sensus communis* (an aesthetic or social community) in these poems thus depends crucially upon the seeming violation of a common sense (a normative structure of perception) that erroneously trusts to the integrity and self-sufficiency of one's perceptions in the first place.

The apprehension of commonality in these poems is arrived at by such circuitous means, then, in part because these experiments entail solitary acts of self-contemplation. The processes that Reid and Monro elaborate for acts of experimental self-reflection, and which Coleridge and Wordsworth develop for aesthetic experience, set the conditions of judgment not only in a state of altered perception, but conceive such acts of judgment as taking place, at least figuratively, in privacy. Coleridge's representation of the scene of self-observation in the opening lines of "Frost at Midnight"—of a "solitude, which suits / Abstruser musings" ("F," 5–6)—thus anticipates a still more insistent depiction of lyrical solitude, John Stuart Mill's "What is Poetry?," which famously defines poetry as "feeling confessing itself to itself, in moments of solitude" and compares lyric utterance to "the lament of a prisoner in a solitary cell, ourselves listening, unseen in the next."<sup>59</sup>

It is obvious that Mill's account produces a *reductio ad absurdum* of autonomy figured by the image of the poet's total (though arguably unwilling) self-enclosure. Indeed, neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth were free of a similar tendency to valorize that condition as the normative model of subjectivity. In 1801, for instance, Coleridge writes about his wife, Sara Hutchinson, whom he suspects of having "an habitual absence of reality in her affections":

Sara's . . . coldness perhaps & paralysis in all *tangible* ideas and sensations—all that forms *real Self*—hence . . . she creates her own self in a field of Vision & Hearing, at a distance, by her own ears & eyes—& hence becomes the willing Slave of the Ears & Eyes of others.—Nothing affects her with pain or pleasure as it is but only as other people will *say it is*. (CN, 1:979)

Coleridge attempts to distinguish between the thoughts and sensations constitutive of “real Self” and those which, having their point of reference “at a distance” from oneself, have their source more in the “Ears & Eyes of others.”<sup>60</sup> Where Sara’s perceptions are intelligible only in relation “to some distinct separate, visible part of some other Body,” he insists that his richness of “tangible sensations” is necessarily present in “the Life of the whole man” (CN, 1:979). As an obvious assertion of perceptual autonomy over what Korsgaard names the method of “reflective endorsement” (which locates the normativity of a given claim in the probable response of others), Coleridge’s entry bears a strong resemblance to Wordsworth’s contemporaneous assertion of the autonomy of aesthetic judgment, over against that reflective mode of criticism that the poet so excoriates in the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*.

There is not much to surprise us in Coleridge’s conclusion that “real Self”—that is, autonomous subjectivity—is preferable to the reflective self that he attributes to Sara. Nor can or should we overlook the obvious sexism of Coleridge’s remark, not only as it privileges his own perception (and identifies it as masculine), but as it raises the more troubling question of whether autonomy is an ideal that is universal in theory but exclusive in practice. In showing how the discourse of autonomy can lapse into an egregious sexism, that is, Coleridge’s entry also indicates how persistently this discourse produces a universal ideal whose very parameters are implicitly defined by criteria such as gender or class, for instance, which include an elect few and exclude others. Nor does Coleridge provide the only instance of this problematic assertion. One can trace a similar expression of this contradiction in Wordsworth’s caveat to his assertion of the autonomy of aesthetic judgment: “[A]n accurate taste in poetry . . . is an acquired talent, which can only be produced by severe thought, and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition” (LB, 8). Though Wordsworth, having appealed to the reader’s feelings over against “our preestablished codes of decision” only sentences before, is fully capable of perceiving the difficult position he has struck with respect to the autonomy of

judgment, he is less able to escape this difficulty. His effort to resolve the contradiction necessitates the impossible task of persuading “the most inexperienced reader” of the inaccuracy of his or her own judgment without actually disqualifying the judgment itself (*LB*, 8).

Neither in their writings nor in their poetic careers did Wordsworth or Coleridge manage to provide a fully satisfactory account of how a radical inwardness might square with the demand that poetry be read by an audience of more than one; nor, I think, have such difficulties proved easier to resolve today. To see the full force of this problem expressed, however, one could do worse than to turn to an overtly experimental poem such as Wordsworth’s “Simon Lee.” That poem reverses the trajectory of “Frost at Midnight,” at first invoking and then repudiating a straightforward community through sympathy with the eponymous figure. “Simon Lee” courts only to reject an unreflective sympathetic response, and then insists, in the poem’s famous apostrophe, that it is only the reader who takes pains to “think,” (79) who will be able to make meaning of the incident. Romantic experiments such as these demand that the reader turn inward and thus reproduce the condition of inwardness that is so often their implied subject. Implicitly or explicitly, they refuse the self-evidence of the *sensus communis*, complicating the notion that one may invoke a preexisting community of taste, sympathy, or doctrine as the ground for aesthetic, ethical, or political relations. In so insisting on the priority of inwardness, however, such experiments expose the limitations of the very category of individuality that supposedly underwrites them. Thus, one apprehends the conditions of possibility for a common sense, when through introspection the normative presuppositions of consciousness are found to be in error.

While historicist readings of Romanticism frequently discern a political dimension of lyric emerging largely despite its self-conscious subject (in both senses of that word), I am more inclined to see these poems as questioning the notion that consciousness is truly private at all, and thus as efforts to articulate the ground for politics in the first place.<sup>61</sup> In “Frost at Midnight,” the speaker’s solitude initially appears to be a condition for the ensuing meditation, with Hartley’s presence barely more than an afterthought. Through the course of the poem, however, it becomes increasingly clear how central Hartley’s presence is to the speaker’s thoughts. The meditation that first seemed to depend so much upon isolated subjectivity turns out to have depended all along upon the presence that fills up “the interspersed vacancies / And momentary pauses of the thought” (“F,” 46–47).

Through self-reflection, in other words, the speaker becomes aware of the intervening medium of a “stranger” that is revealed to be the essential supplement to his own consciousness. Whereas “Simon Lee” more explicitly violates the *sensus communis* as a means of establishing—or at least establishing the need for—a new basis for community, “Frost at Midnight” moves towards the speaker’s apprehension that his isolated consciousness is neither thoroughly isolated nor truly his at all. The standpoint of autonomy in such poems is not that of isolated, elevated selfhood so much as it is the capacity for revealing and transforming the conditions for imagining community in the first place.

#### VI. CONCLUSION: THE *EXPERIMENTUM CRUCIS*

In his review of Stewart’s *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid*, Francis Jeffrey punctured the ambitions of so many would-be Newtons who had claimed to have reduced the study of mind to a science. The general charge of Jeffrey’s argument is that the much touted analogy between natural and moral philosophy is ultimately false. In contrast to the former, Jeffrey maintained, moral philosophy allows us to observe but not to alter the operations of mind: “we cannot subject them to experiment, or alter their nature by any process of investigation.” It is on account of this paucity of psychological inquiry that the Whiggish Jeffrey is led to conclusions quite opposite to the so-called “Whig interpretation of history”: “In reality, it does not appear that any great advancement in the knowledge of the operations of the mind is to be expected . . . or that the condition of mankind is likely to derive any great benefit from the cultivation of this interesting but abstracted study.”<sup>62</sup>

Yet having bluntly asserted that the philosophy of mind was incapable of experimentally establishing the principles of common sense, and thus that this branch of study was unlikely ever to materially benefit the world, Jeffrey capitulates on this point only paragraphs later. The key to proving or disproving an epistemological common sense, he suggests, might be obtained through an analysis of altered states of consciousness: “The phenomena of Dreaming and of Delirium . . . appear to afford a sort of *experimentum crucis*, to demonstrate that a real external existence is not necessary to produce sensation and perception in the human mind.”<sup>63</sup> An unregenerate skeptic, Jeffrey saw the case against Hume as far from closed, and thus calls for a new direction in psychological research. Yet Jeffrey’s remark also serves as a reminder of how far the writers of his own

generation pursued this new direction of inquiry and explored the possible consequences of such an *experimentum crucis* in imaginative as well as scientific form. For evidence of such experiments we might turn, as has Jennifer Ford in her recent study, to Coleridge's reflections on dreaming as a mental state suspended between mind and body; to Davy's record of his own self-experimentation with nitrous oxide and other gases; or somewhat later in the nineteenth century, to the experimental record of dreaming and delirium offered up by that most famous epigone of the early Romantics, Thomas de Quincey. De Quincey's wish that his *Confessions* would be "useful and instructive" is well known, as is his frequent insistence that his considerable experimentation with opium makes him well-qualified to speak as an expert on the subject.<sup>64</sup> What De Quincey self-consciously suggests is how the literature of this period might count, both in ways that we have long explored and ways that we have just begun to register, as a contribution to the theory and history of knowledge.

Yet there is another sense in which De Quincey might offer an *experimentum crucis*—not for the science of mind, however, but for aesthetic judgment itself. For De Quincey's narrative of dreaming and delirium exploits more rigorously than any Romantic period text the fundamental similarity between the practices of self-experimentation and the formal conditions of aesthetic judgment. I have traced in these pages how the activity of experimental self-observation frequently produces a distortion of common sense—an experience of doublevision, a relic of childish thought—as the condition of invoking a *sensus communis*. Such narratives as the *Confessions*, with its anxious opening address "To the Reader," embody this experimental act and so compel its readers to encounter it in similarly embodied form. Underlying De Quincey's pleading and his nervous sensitivity to reproach in those pages, perhaps, is the recognition that the critical judgment is subject to the same distortions. The *Confessions* thus brings the rule of aesthetic judgment into contact with the cognitive procedures that it mimes.

I am interested in De Quincey as a limit-case for aesthetic judgment, however, only as he may raise in especially clear terms a question often raised in this period concerning the social form of aesthetic experience. When Kant attempts in the third *Critique* to explain why "the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good," he attributes this correspondence to the normative disinterestedness of both morality and aesthetics, and thereby highlights their mutual "elevation above the mere sensibility to pleasure received through

sense" (*CJ*, 198–99). The freedom of the subject from his or her senses may indeed be the shortest way to realizing that principle of "similitude in dissimilitude" which Wordsworth identified not only as central to aesthetics but to sexual and ethical relations as well (*LB*, 265). But there is little to prevent the possibility that such communion remains either a mere projection of the self onto the other, or the simplistic inference of my own likeness from yours. To maintain a conception of sympathy as the capacity to "put [oneself] in the place of another and of many others," after all, presupposes a rigid differentiation between self and other that can be seen as dooming in advance such an effort, however well-intentioned.<sup>65</sup>

There is an alternative to this scheme, however, which is suggested not so much by the flesh-and-blood universalism of Burke as by the activity of self-observation that is required by the literary experiment. Such works conceive a common sense not founded on the non-sensuous recognition of the self in the other, but rather upon a moment of self-communion that forces the sensuous encounter with one's otherness. In the experimental aesthetics of Romanticism, I believe, we may begin to grasp the import of a gnomic statement from Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*: "Art is the historicophilosophical truth of a solipsism that is untrue-in-itself."<sup>66</sup> I take Adorno to mean that the untruth of solipsism, inasmuch as it is disclosed in art, is neither revealed through any overt commitment to intersubjectivity, nor through the coalescence of the object and the subject, but rather is disclosed as an effect of inwardness—by which means art provides, at least in theory, the conditions for making "critical" consciousness itself. Where a condition of critical judgment is the self-observation of one's own "critical condition," so to speak, the task of an experimental art may be to estrange one's immediate relation to the manifold conditions that make possible one's reading, one's standard of taste, or one's conception of autonomous selfhood in the first place—and in the distortion of "common sense" produced thereby, to indicate the possibility for radically transforming those conditions. If the literature of Romanticism does not itself fulfill that role, it leaves at least a map of misreading towards its possible realization. For the Romantics, after all, it is not simply that in reading we read ourselves, but that in reading we read ourselves as changed.

*Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

## NOTES

For assistance with this essay, I would like to thank Bill Brown, Jim Chandler, Elaine Hadley, Saree Makdisi, Larry Rothfield, and the members of the British Romantic and Victorian Cultures Workshop at the University of Chicago.

<sup>1</sup> William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London: Routledge, 1968), 241–42, 270. Hereafter abbreviated *LB* and cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>2</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 2 vols., ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983), 1:270. See also Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1983), 172.

<sup>3</sup> I refer to chap. 17 of the *Biographia Literaria*, 2:40–57; and to William Hazlitt's essays (originally published in *Table Talk*): "On Genius and Common Sense," in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, 21 vols, ed. P. P. Howe (London: J. M. Dent, 1930–34), 8:31–50.

<sup>4</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International, 1971), 330–31.

<sup>5</sup> As Hazlitt writes of Wordsworth, "His genius is the effect of his individual character. . . . If there had been no other being in the universe, Mr. Wordsworth's poetry would have been just what it is" (Hazlitt, "On Genius and Common Sense," in *Collected Works*, 8:44).

<sup>6</sup> Bloom, "The Internalization of Quest-Romance," in *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970), 8. In his "Romanticism and 'Anti-Self-consciousness,'" Geoffrey Hartman put the matter in similar terms: "Subjectivity—even solipsism—becomes the subject of poems which *qua* poetry seek to transmute it." *Romanticism and Consciousness*, 53.

<sup>7</sup> Jerome McGann's tart pronouncement that, in Wordsworth's most memorable lyrics, the poet "lost the world merely to gain his own immortal soul" stands as an exemplary instance of the dichotomous logic that underwrites much of this criticism. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983), 88.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, in *The First and Second Discourses*, trans. Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's, 1964), 93.

<sup>9</sup> *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 5 vols, ed. Kathleen Coburn (New York: Bollingen, 1957–2002), vol. 1, entry no. 1515. Hereafter abbreviated *CN* and cited parenthetically by volume and entry number.

<sup>10</sup> *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 6 vols, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956–1971), 2:731. Hereafter abbreviated *CL* and cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

<sup>11</sup> I refer to the famous opening sentence of René Descartes's third *Meditation*: "I shall now close my eyes, stop up my ears, turn away all my senses . . . and thus communing with my inner self, I shall try to make myself, little by little, better known and more familiar to myself." Descartes, *Discourse on Method and The Meditations*, trans. F. E. Sutcliffe (New York: Penguin, 1968), 113. In an appendix to *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, revised from a 27 July 1826 letter to Edward Coleridge (*CL*, 6:593–601), Coleridge puns on the German word for sensation or feeling (*Empfindung*, "i.e. an *inward finding*"), insisting that "all sensibility is a self-finding." Coleridge, *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, ed. John Colmer (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), 180; see also *CN*, 3:3605 n.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment in Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads (1798)* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975).

<sup>13</sup> In *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in the Experimental Poetry* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989), Alan Bewell has explored in similar terms the affinities between Romantic poetry and human science. While Bewell focuses on the role of the literary experiment as an inquiry designed to yield knowledge about others, however, my own approach insists on seeing experimental self-reflection as the most important context for understanding the form and unique force of Romantic literary experimentation.

<sup>14</sup> For a critical approach that sees Romanticism as getting beyond lyric solipsism, see Tilottama Rajan, "Romanticism and the Death of Lyrical Consciousness," in *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, ed. Chaviva Hosek and Patricia Parker (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985), 194–207.

<sup>15</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1970), 318–28.

<sup>16</sup> Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, ed. Onora O'Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> In fact, Korsgaard argues that Immanuel Kant's moral theory does not depart from so much as reformulate the reflective model from the perspective of the autonomous moral agent. On "reflective endorsement" in Hume, see Korsgaard, 49–66.

<sup>18</sup> On the philosophical origins of autonomy in this period, see J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), esp. 483–507; Schneewind, "Autonomy, Obligation, and Virtue: an Overview of Kant's Moral Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), 309–41; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989), 363–90. On autonomy in Romantic period literature, see especially William Jewett, *Fatal Autonomy: Romantic Drama and the Rhetoric of Agency* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1997); Frederick Garber, *The Autonomy of the Self from Richardson to Huysmans* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982), 92–149.

<sup>19</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), 149. Hereafter abbreviated *CJ* and cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>20</sup> Though Friedrich Nietzsche was surely among the first to raise such an objection, the most influential variations on this theme have come from the writings of the Frankfurt school and those influenced by it. See, for instance, Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1997), 9–15, 90–92. For similar views, see Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 13–28, 70–100; and Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62.3 (1992), 3–41. For a useful resistance to this by now commonplace view, however, see Anthony J. Cascardi's insistence that Kant "remains unwaveringly committed to the idea that feeling is anchored in the organism" in his *Consequences of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 253.

<sup>21</sup> In the *Notebooks*, Coleridge averred that Kant was "a wretched Psychologist" (*CN*, 1:1717). It is not, however, likely that Kant—no friend to psychology—would have objected to this characterization.

<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, Coleridge has been central to this critical work. See, for instance, Jennifer Ford, *Coleridge and Dreaming: Romanticism, Dreams, and the*

*Medical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998); David Vallins, *Coleridge and the Psychology of Imagination* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000); and Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), esp. 39–65. Of course, the embodied basis of thought has long been a topic in criticism on the influence of David Hartley on Coleridge, of which the best account remains Jerome Christensen, *Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981).

<sup>23</sup> Edmund Burke, "Introduction on Taste," *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1968), 23.

<sup>24</sup> See Kant on the inadequacy of psychological explanations of aesthetic judgment (*CJ*, 18–19), and Frances Ferguson's provocative critique of empiricist aesthetics in her *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), esp. 55–96. Luc Ferry, in *Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age*, trans. Robert Loiza (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), describes the particular problem well: "Among the empiricists. . . intersubjectivity is reduced to a purely material principle, to the idea of a psychic and organic structure common to a species of individuals" (85).

<sup>25</sup> For an account of Coleridge, which, like mine, stresses the poet's mutual indebtedness to Kant and Thomas Reid, see Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge's Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1983), 27–57.

<sup>26</sup> I take this definition of experiment from Peter Dear, *Discipline and Experience: The Mathematical Way in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995), 21. See also Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1985).

<sup>27</sup> Schaffer, "Self-Evidence," in *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion Across the Disciplines*, ed. James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson, and Harry Harootunian (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1994), 56–91.

<sup>28</sup> Schaffer, "Self-Evidence," 57. Though he makes no mention of the fact, Schaffer's account of the evidential context of vividness attributes to eighteenth-century natural philosophy a straightforward version of David Hume's influential claim that all beliefs, opinions, and judgments are convictions derived from and determined by the "vivacity" of perception attached to any given notion. See, for instance, the following passage from Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978): "every kind of opinion or judgment, which amounts not to knowledge, is deriv'd entirely from the force and vivacity of the perception, and . . . these qualities constitute in the mind, what we call the BELIEF of the existence of any object" (153).

<sup>29</sup> The literature on self-experimentation is generally confined to discussions of individual cases, but for general discussion see, in addition to Schaffer's essay, "Self-Evidence," see Lawrence K. Altman, *Who Goes First? The Story of Self-Experimentation in Medicine* (New York: Random House, 1986), the sole book-length treatment of the topic.

<sup>30</sup> On Humphry Davy and the activities of the Pneumatic Institute, see F. F. Cartwright, *The English Pioneers of Anaesthesia* (Bristol: John Wright & Sons, 1952), 181–240; Suzanne R. Hoover, "Coleridge, Humphry Davy, and Some Early Experiments with a Consciousness-Altering Drug," *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* 81 (1978): 9–27; and Jan Golinski, *Science as Public Culture: Chemistry*

and *Enlightenment in Britain, 1780–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), 166–75. On Johann Ritter, see Stuart Strickland, “The Ideology of Self-Knowledge and the Practice of Self-Experimentation,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31 (1998): 453–71.

<sup>31</sup> Strickland, 453.

<sup>32</sup> Coleridge, *Notebooks*, quoted in Trevor J. Levere, *Poetry Realized in Nature: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Early Nineteenth-Century Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), 87. See also *The Friend*, essay no. 9: “With [Bacon], therefore, as with us, an idea is an experiment proposed, an experiment is an idea realized.” Coleridge, *The Friend*, 2 vols., ed. Barbara E. Rooke (Princeton: Bollingen, 1969), 1:489.

<sup>33</sup> Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, quoted in Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998), 148. I refer in this sentence, of course, to Wordsworth’s famous comparison between analytical thinking and medical barbarism in “The Tables Turned”: “Our meddling intellect / Misshapes the beauteous form of things /—We murder to dissect” (*LB*, 106).

<sup>34</sup> Jules Law, *The Rhetoric of Empiricism: Language and Perception from Locke to I. A. Richards* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993), 7.

<sup>35</sup> Dugald Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid, D. D.*, in *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, 11 vols., ed. William Hamilton, 2nd ed., (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877), 10:258. For perspectives on Reid’s science, see L. L. Laudan, “Thomas Reid and the Newtonian Turn of British Methodological Thought,” in *The Methodological Heritage of Newton*, ed. Robert E. Butts and John W. David (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1970), 106; and Richard Olson, *Scottish Philosophy and British Physics, 1750–1880: A Study in the Foundations of the Victorian Scientific Style* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975), 26–54.

<sup>36</sup> John Bender, “Enlightenment Fiction and the Scientific Hypothesis,” *Representations* 61 (Winter, 1998), 7.

<sup>37</sup> Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, ed. Timothy J. Duggan (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970), 155. Hereafter abbreviated *I* and cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>38</sup> Reid himself supplies the strongest formulation for the role of attention as an aid to memory when he remarks that “in proportion as the attention is more or less turned to a sensation, or diverted from it, that sensation is more or less perceived and remembered” (*I*, 46). For an account of attention in its later emergence as at once a socially useful and a dangerously absorbed act, see Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 1–79.

<sup>39</sup> Duggan and Richard Taylor, “On Seeing Double,” revised and reprinted in Duggan’s introduction to Reid’s *Inquiry*, 13–16. Michael J. Morgan discusses briefly the question of doublevision in *Molyneux’s Question: Vision, Touch, and the Philosophy of Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), 118–24.

<sup>40</sup> Peter J. Diamond discusses, in somewhat similar terms as mine, the tension between inductive, experimental principles, and moral, pedagogic ends in his “Rhetoric and Philosophy in the Social Thought of Thomas Reid,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 15 (1991): 57–80.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Monro, *Three Treatises on the Brain, the Eye, and the Ear* (Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute, 1797), 133–34. On the Monros, see Rex E. Wright St. Clair, *Doctors Monro: A Medical Saga* (London: Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1964).

<sup>42</sup> Shapin, “The Audience for Science in Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh,” *History of Science* 12 (1974): 95–121.

<sup>43</sup> On Coleridge’s acquaintance with the work of Monro’s circle, see Ian Wylie, *Young Coleridge and the Philosophers of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 128.

<sup>44</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 1:116–28; for commentary, see also CN, 1:1771n.

<sup>45</sup> See CJ, 7–15; see also Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1988).

<sup>46</sup> “Frost at Midnight” in *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 2 vols., ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912), 1:241. Hereafter cited parenthetically by line number and abbreviated “F,” except in the case of alternate versions of the poem, which will be cited by page number in endnotes.

<sup>47</sup> A notable exception is Ford, who emphasizes the depiction of “productive day-dreaming” in these lines (89–90). Ford does not, however, address the significance of these lines for the poem as a whole.

<sup>48</sup> Reeve Parker, *Coleridge’s Meditative Art* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), 127.

<sup>49</sup> 241, 1798 version.

<sup>50</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>51</sup> See, for instance, Michael G. Sundell’s claim that the poem dramatizes the effort to “rise above self-consciousness,” in “The Theme of Self-Realization in ‘Frost at Midnight,’” *Studies in Romanticism* 7 (1967): 37. Paul Magnuson, in *Coleridge’s Nightmare Poetry* (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1974), emphasizes the speaker’s effort—ultimately unsuccessful—to “overcome his isolation” (29), and like Parker, sees Coleridge as attempting to strike a diachronic resolution to this problem. David S. Miall’s “The Displacement of Emotions: The Case of ‘Frost at Midnight,’” *The Wordsworth Circle* 20 (Spring, 1989): 97–102, adopts psychoanalytic language to similar effect, describing the action of the poem as “a turning away from the emotion of the self which is the central and motivating cause of the poem” (102).

<sup>52</sup> Clearly, Coleridge shares with a long tradition of English religious poetry an emphasis on inwardness as the most effective means of being near God or of understanding God’s purpose; to this extent his poem might usefully be compared to the work of a poet such as George Herbert who similarly insisted upon the necessity of spiritual self-reflection. Yet Coleridge’s insistence upon the autonomous derivation of morality clearly distinguishes his own experimental narrative from, for instance, the record of God’s “sad experiment” on human will in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (10.967). Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 429. While “Frost at Midnight” imagines for Hartley an upbringing in the light of God, it produces the conditions for this apprehension out of the speaker’s own “self-watching” reflections.

<sup>53</sup> 241, 1812 version.

<sup>54</sup> 241, 1812 version.

<sup>55</sup> The notion that “Frost at Midnight” is metascientific, in the strong sense of that term, is in keeping with M. H. Abrams’s remark that Coleridge’s philosophy of nature “was not science, nor anti-science, but metascience,” an investigation into the procedures and aims of science in the first place. Abrams, “Coleridge’s ‘A Light in Sound’: Science, Metascience, and Poetic Imagination,” *The Correspondent Breeze: Essays on English Romanticism* (New York: Norton, 1984), 190. See also Levere, “Coleridge and Metascience,” chap. 4, 82–121.

<sup>56</sup> See Oliver Goldsmith’s dedicatory preface to Sir Joshua Reynolds in “Dedication to Sir Joshua Reynolds,” *The Deserted Village: A Poem* (1770; reprint, London: N. Douglas, 1927), vi. For Wordsworth’s famous remarks on the necessity of an “exertion of a co-operating power in the mind of the Reader,” see his “Essay, Supplementary to the Preface,” in *Selected Prose*, ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), 409. See also John Keats’s sonnet, “If By Dull Rhymes Our English Must Be Chain’d,” which urges the reader to “see what may be gained / By ear industrious, and attention meet.” John Keats, *Complete Poems*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), 278.

<sup>57</sup> I refer, of course, to the work of Harold Bloom, whose study of the psychology of literary influence, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), supplies the title of this section.

<sup>58</sup> The *locus classicus* for this interpretation of “Tintern Abbey” is found in Margaret Homans’s *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë, and Emily Dickinson* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), 12–40. See also McGann, *The Romantic Ideology*, 87–88; and John Barrell, “The Uses of Dorothy: ‘The Language of the Sense’ in ‘Tintern Abbey,’” *Poetry, Language, and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1988), 137–67. My objection to this reading runs closely to Ferguson’s argument in *Solitude and the Sublime* that Dorothy’s appearance in the poem marks “the unraveling of the imposition of solitude on the scene,” the moment the speaker acknowledges “that the self is already socialized” (126–27).

<sup>59</sup> John Stuart Mill, “What is Poetry?” in *Essays on Poetry*, ed. F. Parvin Sharpless (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1976), 12, 14.

<sup>60</sup> Kerry McSweeney discusses this entry in his *The Language of the Senses: Sensory-Perceptual Dynamics in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Thoreau, Whitman, and Dickinson* (Montreal: McGill Univ. Press, 1998), 8–9. McSweeney is not so much interested in the issue of autonomy in this passage, however, as he is in the priority of the sense of touch over hearing and sight; on which, see also Raimonda Modiano, “Coleridge’s Views on Touch and Other Senses,” *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* 81 (1978): 28–41.

<sup>61</sup> In his study of “The Politics of ‘Frost at Midnight,’” Magnuson remarks provocatively on the political ambivalence of privacy in this period. See *Reading Public Romanticism* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1998), 67–94.

<sup>62</sup> Francis Jeffrey, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review* (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), 488, 487.

<sup>63</sup> Jeffrey, 491.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas De Quincey: “on a subject so important to us all as happiness, we should listen with pleasure to any man’s experience or experiments. . . . But I, who have taken happiness, both in a solid and a liquid shape. . . . I (it will be admitted) must surely know what happiness is, if any body does” (*Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, ed. Alethea Hayter [New York: Penguin, 1972], 92–93). See also De Quincey, 75.

<sup>65</sup> I quote here from Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Defence of Poetry," in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: Norton, 1977), 488.

<sup>66</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 42. I am particularly indebted to Seyla Benhabib's account of autonomy in Adorno's work as "the capacity of the subject to let itself go, to deliver itself over to that which is not itself." *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundation of Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986), 210. It should go without saying, however, that I do not share to the same extent her skepticism with regard to the possibility of the aesthetic to ground the normative standpoint of a critical theory; thus, neither do I share her sense of Adorno's failure in this regard. See also Cascardi, *Consequences of Enlightenment*; and Robert Kaufman, "Red Kant: The Persistence of the Third Critique in Adorno and Jameson," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 682–724.