

CHAPTER X

The Concept of the Poet in the Romantic theory of poetry

Romantic literary theory owes a lot to Kant and Herder. However, excepting Coleridge, British literary criticism was less theoretical than its German counterpart. The poet-critics, like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats had their agendas determined by their peculiarly individualistic poetic practices. They developed many themes that bear concurrence with the philosophy of German romanticism but made sure that it had the stamp of their personal aesthetics. With an exaggerated emphasis on the nature of imagination and its role in creation, the writers took serious account of the philosophy of unconscious creation and the language appropriate to poetry. To form a concept of the poet would, thus, require a careful study of each of the poet-critics so that some 'converging' points in the *outlining* of the creative self could be had.

The discussion cannot begin without a brief reference to the aesthetics of Blake. The poet in the aesthetics of Blake believes in the union between the perceiving subject and a perceived object. His mind dissolves the divide between the "inside" and the "outside". It is here that we come to a creative perception which is not an escape from reality. Unlike Plato, Blake's poet takes knowledge and art as recreation. The poet applies his imaginative vision to the attainment of wisdom. He is an entity who carries the entwined cargo of wisdom and knowledge that lends a 'serenity' which knowledge without wisdom cannot impart.

Blake writes: The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it. (Keynes 1975:xvii) By stating this he emphasises the importance of tension between contraries; it is the creativity of opposites where there is no fusion but a complementary tension of apparently incompatible opposite or quadrants. The true poet, like Milton, combines the rational and the intuitive – the heaven (reason decorum, elegance) and Hell (enthusiasm, Energy) – a terrible

dichotomy to reconcile. The poet's mind is not a close-ended receptacle; rather it is an ever expanding cabinet that grasps more than whatever grips.

With imagination as the instrument of creation, the poet is fundamentally anti Lockean. The poet cannot see a thing and experience the way every body does. There is much truth in what Blake said, 'Every Eye sees differently. As the Eye, Such the object' (Keynes 1966: 456). What Blake wrote to Revd Dr. Trusler (23 Aug. 1799) is very relevant here.

I see Every thing I paint In this World, but Every body does not see alike. The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way. But to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is, so he Sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers. (793).

It is here that the Poet differs from all. The Tree is not merely a green thing to him. It is in his 'seeing' that he is memorable amidst common humanity. He has the richer perception as opposed to the classical empiricism of Locke. He becomes 'a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has greater knowledge of human nature and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them'.(Jones 1919:14) This is what we can call the 'transforming imagination'. So imagination for the romantic poet is the power to imagine a higher reality beyond the reach of the senses; also it is a unique power that helps the poet to perceive the universe in a better and satisfying way. So the romantic imagination widens the limit of experience. The emphasis is not on the Corporeal or 'Vegetative eye'; it is a 'Window concerning a Sight' (Keynes 1966:617). The poet would 'look thro' it & not with it'. (ibid) 'This World of Imagination is Infinite &

Eternal, whereas the World of Generation, or Vegetation, is Finite & Temporal. There Exist in that Eternal World the Permanent realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature.'(605) The poet is the man whose perception is obviously more than the ordinary men.

Isaiah answered: 'I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in every thing...' (Keynes 1975:xx).

This is the poet's special power to observe the infinite and the finite and it is the poet who can know and note: 'I feel that a Man may be happy in This World. And I know that This World Is a World of imagination and vision'. (Keynes 1966:793) So poets, like prophets

have each for his peculiar dower, a sense

By which he is enabled to perceive

Something unseen before (*The Prelude*, 1805, 303-5)

He is dowered with the transforming imagination which

... in truth,

Is but another name for absolute strength

And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,

And Reason in her most exalted mood. (267-70)

So it is the poet who brings the entire soul of man into activity. What the poet does best is to concentrate on the manner in which the imagination sought its object. When Coleridge said that the reader of poetry is carried forward by the pleasurable activity of the mind which is excited by the attractions of the journey itself, he is merely pointing at the electricity in the poet's mind that seizes the reader in an intensified pleasure. The Poet, for the romantics, have 'primary notions', contrary to Locke's referral to the mind

as 'empty cabinet' or a dark room or a 'closet wholly shut from light'. (Yolton 1961:129) Blake observes:

Reynolds Thinks that Man Learns all that he knows. I say on the contrary that Man Brings All that he has or can have Into the World with him. Man is Born like a Garden ready Planted & Sown. This World is too poor to produce one seed' – (Keynes1966:471).

So the creative mind operates through the synthetic and magical powers of the imagination to plant the 'seed'. In fact whenever Coleridge attempts to define poetry, he almost always turns his attention not on the finished product but on its etiology in the poet, and looks into the nature and play of the mental faculties in its composition.

The poet described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity.

... He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination' (Shawcross 1907:12).

The poet is the person who with the magical power reconciliates the opposites or discordant qualities. The poet's mind catches this generative tension and makes dissolve the individual identities to create a composite new whole.

The imagination, in creating poetry, therefore, echoes the creative principle underlying the universe. Conversely, the whole universe, both in its continuous generation in the 'the Infinite I am' and in the repetition of that act in the process of perception by individual human mind, may be said to consist, just as a great poem does, in the productive resolution of contraries and disparates. (Abrams 1953:119)

The poet in Coleridge converts all contraries reconciled in poetry into the new triadic rhythm of thesis – antithesis – synthesis. The poet needs to reconcile natural language and craft, spontaneity and deliberation – “an interpretation of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and voluntary purpose.” (Shawcross 1907:50). Coleridge believes that the poet must have the ear of a wild Arab listening in the silent Desert; he has to have the eye of a North American Indian trying to trace the footsteps of an enemy upon the leaves that lie strewn upon the forest floor; he needs to have the touch of a blind man who feels the face of a darling child. In the first of the 1813-14 lectures, Coleridge said that the common characteristic of all true poets is that ‘they write from a principle *within*, independent of everything without. The work of a true poet, in its form, its shapings, and modifications is distinguished from all other works that assume to belong to the class of poetry, as a *natural* from a *artificial* flower; or as the mimic garden of a child from an enamelled meadow.’ (Raysor 1960:212) (italics mine) He always laid a great emphasis on the art of writing poetry as an endowment from God, ‘which might be cultivated and improved, but could not be acquired.... Poet was a child of Nature, and not the creature of his own efforts.’ (63) He is the man who ‘carries the simplicity of childhood into the powers of manhood; who, with a soul unsubdued by habit, unshackled by custom, contemplates all things with the *freshness and wonder* of a child; and, connecting with it the inquisitive powers of riper years, adds, as far as he can find knowledge, admiration; and where knowledge no longer permits admiration, gladly sinks back again into the childlike feeling of devout *wonder*’. (112) (italics mine) So what is needed of the poet is to have the best of the two worlds. The creative process in the poet is the tension held between *ingenium* and *studium*; in him the divinity of genius is helped by art. Genius in the poet must have talent as its complement and implement much in the same way his imagination cannot do away with fancy. For Coleridge, the higher intellectual powers can only act through a corresponding energy of the lower. However, the true poet cannot but accentuate the dynamic depths of the *unconscious*. The poet has a supernatural afflatus – a divine *je ne sais quoi*. It can snatch and create ‘a grace beyond the reach of act’ which a master hand alone can teach. The true poet or the seer or the rishi has access to it – the beautiful and beauty making power; he inheres the ‘self-sufficing power’ – unifying, idealising and reconciling like the esemplastic

imagination. The poet's true self combines genius and understanding that foster the fairest flowers of originality. Coleridge conceptualises the true poet as having this virtue by dint of which he produces strongest impressions of novelty that rescue the stalest and most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstances of their universal admission. It is with genius that the poet is able to bring out many a vein and many a tint which escape the eye of common observation, 'thus raising to the rank of gems what had been often kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveller on the dusty high road of custom' (Shawcross 1907:121). So the poet has the unusual intensity of a modifying power, deep and quiet sensibility, good sense, 'method', simplicity and profundity.

However, poetry is Making, not Shaping. The poet's mind need not be supplied with rules for in that case it would turn into 'mechanical art' and the one common character that belongs to all true poets is that they write from a principle within and not originating in anything without. So the poet imbibes a process of orderliness where the rules evolve from within. He needs to exhibit the depth and energy of thought that is the combination of creative power and intellectual energy. He is the man with a sense of musical delight that comes from his power of imagination. Also the poet should not be his own biographer. He knows that 'the material of sensational experience must be transmuted in some mental alembic before it can emerge in poetic form. Such is the process of reconciliation of the external with the internal effected by the poet'. (Read 1947:36). It is in Shakespeare that he saw the wrestle 'as in a war embrace' of the creative power and the intellectual energy. The poet's mind reduces multitude to unity, succession to an instant and understands a poem as a quasi-natural organism. It is he who makes imagination and intelligence merge into one and dilate and flow into one current and with one voice.

In the aesthetics of Coleridge, imitation does not just involve the coexistence of two elements but it requires that they be perceived as coexisting. These two constituent elements are likeness and unlikeness or we may say sameness and difference which remain united in their apparent opposition in all genuine creation of art. For in the art of the romantic poet such a reconciliation is a major phenomenon. He imitates the

beautiful in nature – the other name for coalescence of the diverse, union of the shapely with the vital. The true romantic artist masters the *essence*, the *natura naturans* ‘which presupposes a bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul of the man’ (Shawcross 1907:257). This is Schelling’s ‘Inner Essence’. The mind of man, ‘is the very focus of all the rays of intellect which are scattered throughout the images of nature (257-8); It is the ability of the poet to superinduce upon the forms of these images the moral reflections to which they approximate and ‘to make the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought and thought nature.’ (258).

. . . . He must out of his own mind create forms according to the severe laws of the intellect, in order to generate in himself that co-ordination of freedom and law, that involution of obedience in the prescript, and of the prescript in the impulse to obey, which assimilates him to nature, and enables him to understand her, that his own spirit which has the same ground with nature, may learn her unspoken language in its main radicals, before to approaches to her endless compositions of them. (ibid).

It is thus the poet’s freedom and law within that ferret out the unheard, unspoken language for nature. Invariably, unheard melodies become sweeter. The poem grows out of an idea which is the operative principle. It is the universal in the individual or the individuality itself – the profound emanation from our *indwelling power*. The wondrous and beauteous nature is absorbed by the soul of the poet and reborn in his art as the revelation of the inner self. The poet’s imitation is the imitation of that which is within. Art is merely the mask and mantle in which the artist walks through eternity enveloped and disguised. The poet declares the magic of his inner self in art and reveals its energy for all the world to see in the complete mastery of the intractable material. It is the revelation of a sensitive and highly strung soul. Coleridge, in one his notes in *Anima Poetae*, points out the union of harmony and good sense, of perspicuity and conciseness.

Fancy is an associative process while imagination is a creative one. At the first instance, it breaks down the material and then recreates it – reorganises the everyday world of perception to raise it to the higher level of universality. In the Chap. XIV of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge quotes from the poem *Nosce Teipsum*, by the Elizabethan poet, Sir John Davies to illustrate this creative activity of the poetic imagination. The poet's own spirit transfers the human and intellectual life to the objects of sense that are essentially fixed and dead. Art is always the symbolic representation of the original experience. It is the poet's unique ability to master the art of symbolic representation. Art shows the universal while there is endless modification working in and through the particular. The poet's secondary imagination rolls the universal and the particular, the ideal and the real into one. Imagination, then, is that 'reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the reason in images of the sense, and organising (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanent and self-circulating energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and co-substantial with the truths of which they are the conductors'. (Raysor 1936:99) This power puts forth from the poet's inner being,

A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud

Enveloping the Earth –

And from the soul itself must there be sent

A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,

Of all sweet sounds the life and element! "Dejection: an Ode" (54-8)

It is the poet's creative imagination that breaks down the barriers between the matter and the mind. With the active cooperation of human volition it works on the phenomena furnished by the primary imagination. Coleridge misinterpreted the ordinary German word *Ein bildungskraft* to mean *In-eins-Bildung* which he translated into Greek as 'esemplastic' or 'coadunating' power. So the poet's imagination is a synthetic, modifying, permeative, fusing, coadunating, symbolic, holistic, assimilative, multiform,

organic and vital power. The poet is capable of expressing the 'naturegeist' through form and figure. The poet, through this 'true inward creatrix' weaves a pattern out of the farrago of the unconscious. For Coleridge, the poet is aware of the flux and reflux of the mind and his act of creation is the point of fusion of the unconscious objective world and the conscious articulate world of the poet. 'The conscious is so impressed on the unconscious as to appear in it He who combines the two is the man of genius; and for that reason he must partake of both.' (Shawcross 1907:258)

For Coleridge, the quintessence of beauty lies in the unity of the formal and the material elements of art. It is the poet's ability to produce the real delight by a harmonious fusion of form and content.

Imagine the polished golden wheel of the chariot of the sun, as the poets have described it; then the figure, and the real thing so figured, exactly coincide. There is nothing heterogeneous, nothing to abstract from: by its perfect smoothness and circularity in width, each part is ... as perfect a melody, as the whole is a complete harmony. This, we should say, is beautiful throughout. Of all 'the many' which I actually see, each and all are really reconciled into unity: while the effulgence from the whole coincides with, and seems to represent, the effulgence of delight from my own mind in the intuition of it. (233)

The instance of the golden wheel serves to show that for Coleridge there always is the predominance of form in the form-and-matter union of art. Here the influence of Winkelmann cannot be ruled out. Beauty is born out of the fullest reconciliation between the parts and the whole. It is *harmony* which subsists in composition. Coleridge believes that a complex and true beauty would crystallise if the regular form is modified by the perception of life and spontaneous action. However, the form without spirit is dead, and the spirit without form is incomprehensible and intangible. Raphael's Galatea is an admirable example of 'the balance, the perfect reconciliation, effected between these two conflicting principles of the FREE LIFE, and of the confining

FORM !' (235) The true poet needs to effect this fusion. Also, Coleridge argues that the ideal of earnest poetry is in the harmonious *melting down* of the sensual into the spiritual and the *fusion* of man as an animal into man with the power of reason and self-government. The poet infuses a logic even into the loftiest of poetry where pleasure and emotion become the unifying agents, and conscious will and understanding have their share of contribution to make in the discipline of form without which beauty would be a casualty. This brings us to 'method' which is a 'unity with progression'. It is the unpremeditated and evidently habitual arrangement of the poet's words. This poetic method is grounded on the habit of foreseeing in *each* integral, or in every sentence, the *whole* that the poet intends to communicate. The self-conscious poet from the very beginning has a clear and definite vision of the road he has to travel, and also of his destination. So there is a 'progressive transition'. The artist has to learn what Horace called 'the art of blot'. With his imagination the poet organises the sense data bringing in compression, rapidity, unity, profundity, and relevance. There are, according to Coleridge, two methods: one is the method based on the relations of the Law, the other is the method based on the relation of theory. The former is a 'progression of necessary consequents unified by an initiative derived from the interior of the intellect', and the latter is a 'progression unified by an initiative drawn from the observation of nature. (Jackson 1969:102) There is a reconciliation of the two methods in the mind of God, and to a lesser degree in the activity of the poet. The poet ought to understand that the sum total of all his intellectual excellence is good sense and method. Through good sense the genius distinguishes the various parts of the whole in terms of means, and he derives his position and characteristic from the antecedent method, or self-organising purpose. The creative imagination presents the mental antecedents of the poetic method. This antecedent can be an image or an idea obtained through the senses. It originates from without. Inspiring passion, which is the immediate and proper offspring of the mind, develops into a specific medium and gives birth to a form. The principle of method, therefore, leads to the principle of organic form in the aesthetics of creation.

Possessed with *wonder* and *freshness*, the Poet, for Wordsworth, is essentially a man speaking to men. He can only use language of real men and cannot talk in tricks,

quaintness, hieroglyphics and enigmas. There is the emphasis on the common humanity of the poet; the office of the poet is prophecy and he belongs to an order of men who are rapt, possessed, and uttering more than they know. Wordsworth was, as well, aware as other poets who have brought into greater display the elements of poetry that consists in ecstasy. Coming out of the ivory tower, the poet celebrates his individualism, which goes convincingly to democratise the concept of poetry. If Wordsworth will allow no difference of *kind* between poets and men, it must be conceded that he makes as wide as he can, the difference of *degree*. Some of us would be inclined to say that the very fact that the poet is 'habitually impelled to create', does differentiate him in kind from ordinary flesh and blood. The poet is the artist who neither writes to order nor chooses to imitate anybody. He is a law unto himself, pleased with his own volitions. His own feelings are his rock of defence, his stay and support.

So 'the poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions'(Jones 1919:21); the poet's art has its value beyond the aesthetics of 'individualism' to the aesthetics of social ends. In a letter to John Wilson, Wordsworth writes that a great Poet ought to 'rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane, pure, and permanent, in short, more consonant to nature, that is to eternal nature, and the great moving spirit of things'. (Smith 1925:7) And the poet's work is intended to humble and humanise the readers so that they may be purified and exalted. The poet should exhibit the affection present throughout the human life. The poet 'considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions, which from habit acquire the quality of intuitions;' (Jones 1919:17-8) it is thus a stimulant to right feelings and right understanding. He sees in the rustic the basic human type from which all others are derived. Men like Michael are, as Prickett points out, not the 'lowest common denominator of humanity, but the highest common factor'. (1981:232) What devolves on the poet is the responsibility to strike a consciousness among highbrow readers about their 'roots'; their 'deracinated' status has rendered them impervious to the candid way of feeling and the lucid manner of expression. The social imbalance has

placed the rich in a state where the 'deepest selves' are reprehensibly attested as 'primitivism' and fundamental nature is given a wide berth.. However, uniting pleasure, knowledge and sympathy into a unique conglomerate, the poet binds the vast empire of human society by passion and knowledge. He not only experiences a unity with the Universe, but also is obliged to promote a unity among all the human beings. Meditating, long and deep, on the nature and value of the feelings, he 'widens the sphere of human sensibility for the delight, honour, and benefit of human nature.' The poet's work is braced by the moral sense of a cohesive life. He 'thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions'. (Jones 1919:21) In the incidents of the common life, the poet traces 'the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as far as regards the manner in which he associates ideas in a state of excitement'(4). The poet, as the teacher, indoctrinates men about the right code of existence, and provides a rational gratification of the mind.

In framing models to improve the scheme

Of man's existence, and recast the world. (*Excursion* 3, 336-7).

The poet apprehends the organic unity of man and nature for his experiences are directed and regulated by the spirit of love or sympathy.

For the discerning intellect of Man,

When wedded to this goodly universe

In love and holy passion, shall find these

A simple produce of the common day. (Owen 1974:173)

Also in a letter to Charles James Fox (Jan. 14th 1801) Wordsworth believes that Mr. Fox would be able to 'perceive that they may excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good hearts, and may in some small degree enlarge our feelings of reverence for our species, and our knowledge of human nature...' (102) In fact the 'comprehensiveness' of the poet's mind can grasp the infinite complexity of pain and pleasure. Also the poet tends to make the scientific data organic to human life. This is

one aspect of the organic sensibility with which the poet is credited, though Wordsworth may not have actually meant this by the expression 'organic sensibility'. But he is aware of such an activity when he said that the poet carries sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in solitude. But the poet sings a song in which all human beings can join with him. His truth is universal, resulting as it does, from a realisation of the fundamental principles of human nature and from a perception of the essential unity between nature and man along with all other kinds of life. However, Wordsworth tries to find a collaboration between poetry and science when in a prognosis in the 1800 preface the poet is seen to carry sensation into the community of the objects conferred by science. 'If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration.' (Jones 1919:20)

Prickett sees the influence of Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric* (1783) on Wordsworth's theory of poet and poetry. He could no longer take for granted the neoclassical assumptions of a common ground between the artist and the audience. It is the reference to the *mind* that brings us to Wordsworth's bold accent on the 'new'. 'There have been greater poets than Wordsworth, but none more original. He saw new things, or he saw things in a new way'. (Bradley 1992:100) This made him to outgrow Hartleian associationism and generate the need for a massive appraisal of human values, both political and aesthetic. Prickett notes that such judgements grew his interest in prophetic figures as his mind focussed on the biblical models that remind us of Lowth's identification of the poet and prophet. 'He was fascinated by the outcast and the wanderer; pedlars and leech-gatherers became types of the poet, cut off from ordinary society by their prophetic role. From being the celebrant of common feelings, the poet has become the critic of social change'. (Prickett 1981: 233). This differentiates Wordsworth's concept of the poet from that of Schelling or De Vigny who isolates the artist from the common herd by the brilliance of his genius. Interestingly, the stress on the common humanity, as shared by the poet and the common men, and the sharing of the common language of 'low and rustic life' is a move away from the Wordsworthian emphasis on the prophetic role of the artist. This contradiction is not a confusing

conflict; it is the testament of the poet's 'mind' that works on the 'similitude in dissimilitude and dissimilitude in similitude'(Jones 1919:26).

The poet is endowed with a more than 'lively sensibility' (Jones 1919:14). This 'sensibility' could be interpreted as emotionalism that is undoubtedly related to the senses. The poet is the man who is capable of receiving the impressions through the senses and thereby experiences a state of excitement. This is the state which organically relates the senses to the inner emotions. In contrast to Coleridge, Wordsworth retained the old associationist doctrine of deriving the intuitions of the poet from his sensations and impressions. The poet in the Wordsworthian aesthetics possesses an extraordinary keen awareness of the nature and quality of the sensations.

This brings us to the *mind* of the poet and the poetic process. In fact what Wordsworth says in course of his modification of the phrase 'overflow of feelings' is worth quoting: 'it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind'.(Jones 1919:26) The poetic process, thus, progresses with recollection, contemplation, recrudescence, or renewal of original emotion (not simulacrum but kindred) and finally composition. Wellek observes that 'in many passages Wordsworth acknowledged the share of consciousness in poetic composition. In his list of the poetic faculties reflection and judgement take up the third and sixth place in what seems a hypothetical temporal order: observation and sensibility precede reflection, which defines "the value of actions, images, thoughts and feelings". Imagination, fancy, and invention precede judgement, which makes a choice between the faculties to be asserted (whether imagination or fancy) and determines the species of composition, the genre'.(1955:139) In fact in the mind of the poet the emotion remains till its accidentals or causal ingredients have been precipitated and what is left is its ideal or essential truth. Here memory is accorded a unique emphasis. And it is through such a process of 'filtering' that the poet is able to transform the personal emotion into the universal. Consciousness has little part to play at the moment of creation. There is implicit in the statement of Wordsworth regarding the rekindling of the original emotion, a suggestion that the poet should abandon himself to the resurrected passion.

True to his conception of the poet, Wordsworth himself indulged his memory in long periods of reverie, set it to travel to and fro among the past experiences of his life, and loved solitude and indolence chiefly because during the lulls of social intercourse and intellectual labour, the lost impressions were recaptured. He loved to sit in the long barren silence contemplating the submerged feelings and images in his mind and took hold of them when they rose to the surface. The poet's imagination transforms the apparent world into one which is of higher import, denoting the operations of the human mind upon those objects and processes of creation or composition that are governed by certain fixed laws. The poet first conceives the essential nature of his object and sees it in its basic reality. He strips it of all casualties and so in a way he is a philosopher. However, to exhibit this abstraction nakedly would be the work of a mere philosopher. Therefore he reclothes his idea in an individual dress which expresses the essential quality and the spirit and life of a sensual object. The creative activity carries with it a pleasure, indeed 'an overbalance of pleasure' (Jones 1919:24), as Wordsworth calls it. The poet's mind, during the process of composition, is in a state of 'enjoyment'. The poet has to communicate this 'over balance of pleasure' for, Wordsworth believes that his power of communication is extraordinarily strong.

The poet's art involves a power that jolts people out of their emotional indifference and makes them realise the nature and mystery of the world. It serves as a stimulant against 'savage torpor' and becomes a stimulus to right feelings and right kind of awareness which have a humanising effect on the reader and that obviates the false feelings from the heart such as prejudices arising from false refinement and social snobbery and vicious feelings such as hatred and malice. This anticipates, as Wellek points out, Tolstoy's *On Art*. 'The common denominator is their Rousseauism, their enmity towards urban civilization, their trust in emotional spontaneity and sincerity, their concern for the effect of literature on humanity, as an instrument of unification in a spirit of love.' (1955:141). So Wordsworth can say,

upon me bestow

A gift of genuine insight; that my Song

With star-like virtue in its place may shine,

Shedding benignant influence, and secure,
Itself, from all malevolent effect
Of those mutations that extend their sway
Throughout the nether sphere!- ... (Owen 1974:174)

Shelley, in fact, saw the reciprocal action of the poets and society upon each other. They cannot escape from a subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live, though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. When Shelley calls poetry the most unfailing herald, companion and follower of the awakening of a great people, he is advisedly careful not to commit himself on the question of whether poetry produces social change or social change produces poetry. Both are equally cause and effect of each other. The unacknowledged legislators do not represent their age by passively reflecting it but by participating in what is dynamic and progressive in it – in what Shelley's contemporaries liked to call 'the spirit of the age'. They look beyond opinion in its fixed and dead form of 'custom' and attach themselves to the new currents of feeling that are moving towards beneficial change. It is in this way that the poet 'beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germ of the flower and the fruit of latest time'(Jones 1919:124)– that he can prophesy, and by prophesying help to bring the future to pass.

Shelley's view of human virtue, as well as of the poetic imagination, is also connected with his abhorrence of the principle of *self*. To him disinterested imagination is the characteristic of the cultivated mind. He maintains that it has an intimate connection with all the arts which primarily add dignity, power, and stability to the social state of man. So the poet needs to overcome *selfishness*. If poetry is to exercise its due effect on society there must be a collaboration between the poet and the reader, both of whom have risen above *self*. The poet's art should make the *self* appear as insignificant as an atom is before the universe. It is precisely to this phenomenon that Shelley ascribes the uplifting power of tragic poetry. A true poet is under great obligation to restrain himself; he is not to create his art in the interest of *self* expression but with due regard to the betterment of

society. Poetry alone can restore sensibility compelling us to imagine ourselves empathetically. In this respect it does its work not upon morality but upon imagination as the cause of morality. Transcending historical relativity the poet's art strengthens the moral nature of man in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb. Shelley emphasised that all poetical beauty ought to be subordinated to the inculcated moral; he pointed out that metaphorical language ought to be a pleasing vehicle for useful and momentous instruction. However, the aesthetics of creation in Shelley would forbid a concept of poet that professes didactic art. With substance or idea taking precedence over 'form', Shelley considered Plato or Bacon as poets of the first order by virtue of their ideas, by the power of their language, by clear-cut imagery, and by their moral insight. The poet should know that the study of the poem has an interest of a very common and irresistible character as he should avoid system and mannerism, minimising the importance of rules for, rules that fetter one's genius and diminish the effect of conception need to be eschewed. From his preface to *Laon and Cythna*, we find that the poet needs to administer metrical language, the ethereal combinations of the fancy, the rapid and subtle transition of human passion to the creation of poetry. The poet's power consists in sympathy and that part of the imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. He commands the ability to apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feelings whether relative to external nature, or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral on the material universe as a whole.

Shelley believed in the consonance between form and spirit. We find an accurate and revealing conception of the poetic art. In Shelley's preface to *Prometheus Unbound* (1819) we find all three – the form, the spirit, and the substance of a poem duely emphasised. Shelley here observes that poetry creates but only by combination and representation. He says that a poet

is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others; and of such external influences that excite and sustain these powers; he is not one but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of nature and art; by every word and every

suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and in another, the creations, of their age. (1907:147)

Peacock and Shelley agreed, then, that poetry and other products of the imagination compete for the imaginative energy of the human mind. Shelley, however, wishes to justify poetry as the highest and the most useful expression of the imagination. He began to do so by saying that language, the arbitrary product of the imagination, can give expression to it more directly and faithfully than can materials produced by nature (the sculptor, stone, the scientist, chemicals, the economists' crops and people). In the context of the upsurge of liberty that he had discussed in "A Philosophical Review of Reform", Shelley can repeat his assertion that the "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world". (Jones 1919:163) From the utterances of the poet who is closely attuned to his own inner creative universe, his world gets a picture of the new religious, political and social order that is both the natural consequence of past history and the unuttered desire of the people.

Shelley uses the word "legislator" for the poet in a special sense. It implies an essential community between poets and the rest of the community. We must realise that Shelley is not using the term in the sense of 'law giver'. In fact, in ancient Greece, the philosophers had great influence on 'moeurs' (manners), 'lois' (laws), and 'gouvernements', an influence which was only increased by the fact that they had no 'existence politique' – they were unacknowledged. They drew up codes of laws which were then presented to the people at large for ratification. Diderot considered that philosophers influenced society by educating political leaders. Kant thought that they ought to be consulted on certain important public decisions, adding not without irony that this should be done in secret to spare the rulers any embarrassment. For all these thinkers the philosopher appeared as the agent of change and the rest of the society as passive recipients of his decision. The same pattern is evident in Rousseau's account, which alludes to Plato's 'Statesman' and draws on the examples of classical lawgivers

like Lycurgus and Moses. The 'legislateur' must formulate out of his own, virtually superhuman, wisdom a complete code of laws, which the rest of society has only to accept and obey. Such a conclusion would have been unacceptable to Shelley. Shelley did not think of a legislator as a person whose views are to be tyrannically imposed on others. In "The Triumph of Life" he explicitly condemns those who tyrannise over opinion by pretending to a divine section, like the Christian theologians--

Who rose like shadows between Man and God;
Till that eclipse, still hanging over heaven,
Was worshiped by the world o' ver which by stroke,
For the true Sun it quenched -... (289-92)

Shelley's use of the term "legislator" is nearer to its traditional use by English political writers. In this tradition a legislator is thought of as being a representative, or even a delegate of the governed, rather than a ruler or the aide of a ruler. Since 1817, Shelley had been actively involved in a movement which aimed to make the legislators of England even more directly responsible to the people as a whole. It would seem reasonable to associate his definition of poets as "unacknowledged legislators" with the democratic constitutional theories of the Reformers, rather than with the classical notion of the lawgiver on which the philosopher drew. Poets, for Shelley, do not influence society by imposing their ideas on it; the influence they possess are based on the fact that their creations are the representatives of the hopes as desires, which may also be unacknowledged, of all men. Poets do not possess the superhuman wisdom pointed by Rousseau of his lawgiver, but they are more sensitive than most people to the movement of thought and feeling that affect society as a whole. They are able to reinforce and define some of these movements by giving them expression, but it is not in their power to create them by their personal fiat; like democratic legislators, they guide the general will by expressing it.

The poet's art is concerned with inner facts. This however, does not propose that his art is unfactual or is at odds with our experience, life and the world we live in. So Shelley's poet is not socially irresponsible and does not practise a superior kind of lying. Facts

would refer to certain limited data, essentially biographical or historical. His art may ignore these data or transcend them; but it remains true to its own sense of fact. Primarily, it is responsive to the facts of mind. There is a strong tinge of neo-Platonism, particularly in the notion that the poet penetrates to the eternal realities beyond the shadowy images to which ordinary mortals are restricted. 'A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not. The grammatical forms which express the moods of time and the difference of persons, and the distinction of place, are convertible with respect to the highest poetry without injuring it as poetry.' (Jones 1919:125) Here Shelley's aspiration seems to be towards a transcendence of grammar, which he regards with suspicion because it confines feelings which had once been fresh, personal and original. This belief that the inherited structures of grammar impose their patterns of preconception on all those who employ a language will not be surprising to modern students of linguistics. Shelley, who had a properly revolutionary attitude to systems of all kinds, whether religious, political or grammatical, seems to believe that the inherited pattern blunted the poet's attempt at pure poetic achievement and diverted him from his aim to mark 'the before unapprehended relation of things' (123). Not just that the poet would elude the categories of grammar, he was also determined to avoid the confinements of fact.

A man cannot say, 'I will compose poetry'. The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. (156)

This owes a primary debt to Aristotle as Shelley never divorces the matrix of universalism from his concept of the Poet. Suggesting that poetic creation largely subscribes to the 'unconscious', Shelley resembles Schleiermacher in this regard. 'When composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious

poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the poet.' (156) Poet's imagination has attributes which are of far reaching significance. It is in the crucible of the imagination that the abstract ideas which appeal to the poet are given a reality that can be embodied in art. For Shelley, the imagination is the synthetic force which brings into harmony the outer world of sense, and the real world of Platonic idealism. So,

The functions of the poetic faculty are twofold; by one it creates new materials of knowledge, and power, and pleasure; by the other it engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good.(155)

Poetry is beautiful chiefly because of the correspondence with the ideal world which the imagination brings into it. This is the most significant aspect of Shelley's view of poetry, and it makes the inclusion of entities, not normally considered poetry, within the ambit of poetry. In the poetry of beautiful idealism, the highest kind of poetry, the poet has to transcend the limitations of particularity. Though the reflection in the water 'surpass' the truth it also 'misrepresents' it (121); in contrast, the poet achieves a higher kind of reality than what is available to the common eye. It is important to realise that although this approach specifically avoided realism and the mere collection of particulars, it never disavowed reality which it hoped to approximate as closely as possible. Realism was a distortion or at best, a limitation of reality. However, it was possible to go beyond the merely mimetic and to recreate nature through the plastic power of the imagination. Here Shelley was in accord with Plotinus and Philostratus who said that great works of art are produced not by imitation (the Aristotelian mimesis) but imagination which is a wiser creator than imitation. Although Shelley's views of a close resemblance with neo-Platonic theory (which he might have, in part, assimilated through Coleridge), the insistence on avoiding particularity, has a ring about it that reminds us of Joshua Reynolds and Dr. Johnson. It is worth recalling that Shelley's account of his training and qualifications to be a poet in the preface to *The Revolt of Islam* bears some highly specific resemblance to Imlac's dissertation on poetry

as referred in the previous chapter. Although Shelley was recounting his own experiences, the manner and the preconception of his curriculum vitae betray an obvious debt to Johnson. In the preface to *The Revolt of Islam* he writes:

It is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings in the vivid presence of which within his own mind consists at once his inspiration and his reward.(1907:3)

The poet has to be 'comprehensive'(5) in the sense that he must be 'familiar with nature'(ibid). However, Shelley's formulation is more transcendental and bases itself primarily on the creative power of the imagination; it is a more positive view, which establishes a greater claim for poetry. And yet this almost religious response to the powers of imagination is related, in part, at least to a eighteenth century belief that the poet should concern himself with the whole rather than the parts, with the species rather than the individual. Here the neo-Platonists and Dr. Johnson touch hands and Shelley takes up his individual position.

Like Sidney, Shelley's true poet should regard poetry as an ideal creation which gives us back an ideal world, a world transformed by imagination. Shelley writes:

If (poetry) creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration. It justifies the bold and true word of Tasso '*Non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddis ed it Poeta*'. ('None merits the name of creator, except God and the poet').
(Jones 1919:159)

Shelley resembles Schleiermacher on the issue of the element of *unconscious* in poetic creation as well. His art is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind and 'its birth and recurrence has no necessary connection with consciousness or will.'(160) However, the element of the unconscious should accompany what Keats has to say on the question of aesthetic discipline. Excellent rhetoric or diction was to Keats

'the Poetry' or 'Mammon' as opposed to the 'purpose' or 'God' of the poem. In a letter to Shelley he points out that a modern work must have a purpose, which may be the God, having self concentration. The artist must serve the Mammon. Keats advises Shelley to curb his magnanimity and be more of an artist, loading every rift of his subject with poetic ore. Keats may make four thousand lines of one bare circumstance and fill them with Poetry. It is to this aesthetic discipline that the poet must subscribe to. It is the penalty that the poet pays for dashing off in a hurry; the poet needs to take pain for the birth of his *child*.

Continuing with the emphasis on the splendid powers of imagination, Keatsian poetics envisages the poet as desirous of 'sweet sensation of the truth', and the 'real apprehension' that go beyond 'notional apprehension'. Possessed with 'wise passiveness' or what Keats would attribute as 'diligent indolence' it is a state of 'a complete disinterestedness of mind'. The sensations of natural beauty could stimulate the Keatsian poet into a sphere of ecstasy that empowers him to feel the 'mystery' of nature. He warms up to a spontaneous unquestioning delight in the life of nature and in the human forms, possessed as he is, with an 'intensity' and a 'fine excess' that underscore the need of a 'vision'.

1st I think Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity - it should strike the Reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a Remembrance². It touches of Beauty should never be half way thereby making the reader *breathless* instead of *content*: the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the sun come natural to him - shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence, leaving him in the Luxury of twilight - but it is easier to think what Poetry should be than to write it - and this leads me on to another axiom. That if Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all. (Cook 1990:380) (italics are mine).

It is a wholesome use of senses, an endowment of a pervading unity to the senses, a sense of spontaneity and sincerity, a sense of intensity that help evaporate all 'disagreeables' in the event of an aesthetic propinquity to beauty and truth. The poet initiates into 'fine writing' that emphasises descriptive and evocative powers where the semantic musicality is harmoniously weighed with the presence of intellect. 'The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law & precept, but by sensation & watchfulness in itself- That which is creative must create itself.' (418). With creation comes a comprehension of the mystery of human life and a 'knowledge enormous makes a God of me' (Hyperion, III, 113). There is the possible usherance of a philosophic mind and the 'gradual ripening of the intellectual powers' (Cook 1990:374) that exact a dedication towards the inexorable good of poetic truth. Knowledge carries us towards a greater whole, as Keats points out in letter no 64, that extensive knowledge assists 'by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the Mystery'.(395)

The poet has to comprehend and think into the human heart. The imagination works on the feelings and emotions generated therein and the ideas need to get themselves proved upon our pulses - 'I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination - What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth - whether it existed before or not - for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty (365). Yet elsewhere he propounds the contrary doctrine that all disagreeables must evaporate by coming into close relation with Beauty and Truth, meaning that Beauty and Truth are separate entities which must be reconciled. This validates the proposition that in the aesthetics of romanticism, imagination is the image-making force. The poet is the man with a view of the universe as one living entity; he has an ideal that believes in the complete interpenetration of matter and form; it is the fusion of subject and expression, each inherent in and saturating the other. Apollo, as the god of song and poetry, presides over the ripening of human intellect and brings it to fruition in a harvest of harmonious expression. The source of the poet's illumination, as it is the visible and the demonstrable sphere of god's activity, is the natural world. It is found as a concrete

external reflection of that unifying and ripening activity which takes place concurrently under the influence of the same power that works within the 'maturing' human soul. Evert observes:

The agency of fusion, in which all physical and spiritual elements of experience are comprehended by the poet as complementary aspects of a single harmony, is the imagination. Since this imagination perceives the world of idea to be a corrective half of the experiential whole, it is free of time and space and not bound to frame its visions within the relational limits of normal human reason. The imagination is fed by knowledge of the sense-world, whole elements it transmutes into their ideal counterparts. The imagination is therefore the mediating agency between the worlds of the mundane and the divine. Since the poets' function is mediatory, their role is variously priestly and oracular, in the immediate service of mankind and the ultimate service of the god (1965:31-2)

So, Homer's soul can look out through "renovated eyes"(12), Shakespeare's master lips "pour forth the inspiring words"(29), Spenser blow his "silver trumpet"(30), and Tasso, his "ardent Numbers"(36), as the Poet inspired by Apollo seizes his lyre for an enrapturing melody. ("Ode to Apollo"). As the poet grasps the meaning and value of his visionary experience, there arises:

A power within me of enormous ken
To see as a god sees, and take the depth
Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
Can size and shape pervade. *(Fall of Hyperion I 303-6).*

Keats believes that a poet should bear allegiance to the freedom-giving, truth-revealing, and intuitive imagination as the informing spirit of poetry and manifests an antagonism to the idea of verse coldly thought out, cut by feet and chiselled by rule, all unwarmed by the penetrative fires of feeling. So Keats believes that whereas Byron

describes what he sees, he as a poet describes what he imagines. His job is the most demanding. Poetry cannot be created without the untrammelled poetic impulse. The imagination of the poet brings him to a 'fellowship with essence' and guides him to the ultimate truth.

Imagination provides the insight into Beauty and *sensuous* delight is subjected to a transmutation that bears a discipline and a modification. Imagination is compared to Adam's dream – he 'woke and found it truth' (Cook 1990:365). Prickett's analysis is worthwhile:

The reference to Adam's 'dream' is to *Paradise Lost*, Book VIII, lines 460-90, where Adam is cast into a trance by God while he takes one of Adam's ribs to create Eve. Adam dreams of Eve, and then awakes and finds her real. As with the Knight at Arms 'alone and palely loitering' in *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, Adam's dream was more 'real' to him than his waking surroundings, and had he not found Eve on awakening, life would thenceforth have been barren and meaningless. Clearly, therefore, though Keats's 'Imagination' is in some sense Platonic, like Blake's, its function is to transform our vision of *this* world rather than point to another.' (1981:220).

This helps us to understand what he wrote to Reynolds: 'we hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us - and if we do not agree, seems to put its hand in its breeches pocket. Poetry should be great & unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul and does not startle it or amaze it with itself, but with its subject.' (Cook 1990:377) Leaving aside didacticism, the poet should have imagination as the proper organ of poetry. Here Keats, it may be noted, is under the considerable spell of Hazlitt's aesthetics. Imagination, to Hazlitt, is the plastic power. In its operation, the imagination constantly associates, and in this association it transcends any mechanical process. For Hazlitt the poet has the intuitive perception of the hidden analogy of things and has the uncanny ability to penetrate to the pith of reality to separate the essential from the nonessential. Scott lacked this creative impulse while Shakespeare's enormous associative power and

plastic imagination helped him to be the 'true maker'. The prototypical poet for Hazlitt and Keats, thus, moves beyond the given materials to render them *new* life, *new* form and *new* meaning. Novalis observes:

To make poetry is to create. All poetry must be living and individual. What an inexhaustible mass of materials is at hand for *new* individual combinations! (Furst : 1980:83)

Mere principles of association do not contribute to the poetic creation. It is the elements of human sensitivity and *freedom* that come to bear on the peculiar source of aesthetic pleasure. For both the exemplary power of imagination is sympathy, the ability to enter into another reality and share its being. Imagination is future-directed without the rankling intimidations of past and present. So Hazlitt's preoccupation with the imagination in its sympathetic dimension, futuristic orientation and its ability to create beauty, points to Keats's preoccupation with the relation between beauty and truth.

Keats recognises the moral value, something that Arnold followed in him. In the *Fall of Hyperion*, he wanted the poet to feel the giant agony of the world and to labour for mortal good and with the aid of this pain he seeks to grasp the meaning of his visionary experience. But the poet should not be confused as 'a dreaming thing'. Keats's poet cannot be the man who has elevated the 'paradise of sensations' over the mind; he cannot discard thought. On the contrary, he seeks to know and understand the ways of life in order to enrich his perception. In 'Sleep and Poetry', Keats writes:

And can I ever bid these joys farewell?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife,
Of human hearts.(122-25)

Keats was aware that the complete absorption in sensation is only a stage in the 'Mansion of Many Apartments'. It is the chamber of Maiden thought with pleasant wonders and delight. But soon it sharpens one's vision with the knowledge of the harsher reality. The poet's *mind is strengthened when his imagination is joined by the knowledge of the world*. Hence, for Keats, the world becomes "the Vale of Soul making". The poet feels the giant agony of the world and the moral appeal lies with imagination as he envisions poetry as something that soothes cares and elevates the thoughts of man. He vouches for a life against artistic isolation. The artist needs to feel his oneness with humanity. In a letter to John Taylor (April 24th, 1818), Keats writes:

I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world – some do it with their society – some with their wit – some with their benevolence – some with a sort of power of conferring pleasure and good humour on all they meet and in a thousand ways all equally dutiful to the command of Great Nature – there is but one way for me – the road lies through *application, study and thought*. I will pursue it and to that end purpose retiring for some years. I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious and a love for philosophy – were I calculated for the former I should be glad – but as I am not I shall turn all my soul to the latter.'(Cook 1990:392) (emphases mine)

So Keats's poet relates himself to Nature with affection and sympathy that are fostered by application, study and thought.

Melancholy and Beauty are related when we find Keats interpreting the spirit of the beauty of nature in terms of human emotions. The conflict he presents refers to magic and fact, sensuous and spiritual beauty, joy and melancholy. Intense pleasure cannot be distinguished from numbing pain. Like beauty, melancholy too is seen by none save by the poet. The poetic soul is one of the ornaments in the temple of melancholy. Being the

worshipper of beauty, the mood in which the poet apprehends it is one of *wakeful anguish*. The poet has to move from the luxury of sensation to a mood of unhappiness before he apprehends beauty. In Keatsian aesthetics, the poet is the revealer of beauty - the 'master passion' or spiritual passion; to him poetry cannot have a palpable design but rather has the ability to surprise us by a 'fine excess' and 'singularity' (380). This echoes Yeats's "Adam's Curse" where the poet is envisaged as a person who can take hours to compose a line and not a single moment in this 'destruction and reconstruction' game goes a begging.

The true poet is the man with the yearning passion for the principle of beauty in all things. The poet has the ability to see things in their beauty and see them in truth. This is not a beauty of form, but of spirit. It is something like a Platonic idea which reveals itself in a variety of forms. He informed Bailey that he intended to illustrate the belief that 'all our passion' as well as love are 'in their sublime creative of essential beauty' (365). The poet needs to have feeling for the 'eternal Being', the 'principle of Beauty', and the 'Memory of great Men' (390). Beauty is Absolute and real. Consequently, every other category has to be subsumed under it. The poet's quest is for the realisation of this beauty.

If Truth refers to the world of fact, Beauty, besides referring to the domain of fact, bears a reference to the transcendent world also. These two worlds have to be reconciled by the poet. The poet cannot afford to be self-complacent as he needs to combine critical faculty with the creative activity. The critical activity controls the creative exuberance and gives a form and a structure to the work of art. But this critical activity in the process is not something like obeying the formal rules. On the other hand, as Coleridge asserted, it is involved in the principles of composition. This differentiates the Keatsian approach from the neo-classical standards. The *rules* come from outside whereas the *principles* are inherent in the creative process. From the process and from its intensity, the poet becomes conscious of Beauty which may at times appear as difficult beauty, as Bosanquet argued. The process has an intensity and therein the artist realises a kind of synthesis.

A true poet is one who has nothing to teach; his mind is a thoroughfare for all thoughts; indeed, he should have no personal predilections. His principal merit should be the capacity to subdue his own personality and enter the life of the subject of his poetry. This endows the poetic mind to realise the beauty of everything. The poet's imagination initially seeks the true principle of beauty in all things. By 'principle' it means the element of beauty which his mind accepts; it rejects what is not beautiful. Then it advances to the higher principle by beauty in all things; that is to say, the stage where he can assume an attitude of absolute submission to experience, where there will be nothing that is not beautiful or not worthy of being treated poetically. With the great poet, the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration; rather, it obliterates all considerations. The truth is that poetry is double lived here on earth and its secret lies in its intricate meaning which is sensuous, intellectual, spiritual, and at the same time real and ideal. The poet need not hurry, bee-like 'buzzing here and there impatiently from a knowledge of what is to be arrived at'; he can let his leaves open like a flower and be 'passive and receptive, budding patiently under the eye of Apollo'.(379)

The poetical character 'is everything and nothing - it has no character - it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet' (419). The poet should submit to things as they are, without seeking to intellectualise them, without trying to indoctrinate the people. The poet has to accept the tensions between good and evil, and the paradoxes and contradictions of life. The poet has to negate his personality along with the time and space that condition his experiences. He has to identify himself with the characters he creates. He should be able to speak and act as they do. That is, he must be capable of negating space, time, and personality. This is an essential aspect of the dramatic tendency of his power to achieve a sympathetic identification with someone as something dearer to him than his lone self. This self-effacement was absent in Wordsworth, but prominent in Shakespeare. So for Keats, negative capability is the impersonality of great art. However, the kind of impersonality that Keats advocates, is different from that of Eliot. It is not the assimilation of the outward into the inward nor

is it the reverse. The poet has to embark on his adventure as a Proteus, transforming himself at will into varied forms. This requires not mere awareness, but a diligent indolence which can make the artistic consciousness immanent in the universe of experience. So the 'creative self' in Keatsian aesthetic is different from the Wordsworthian 'egotistical sublime' (418). Wordsworth placed his personality at the centre when Keats referred to him in the term of 'the egotistical sublime'. For Wordsworth, emotions and feelings proceeded inwards. As a result he was not capable of making all disagreeables evaporate. They evaporate because they are in close relationship with Beauty and Truth. The great artist has an imaginative openness of mind and a heightened receptivity which annihilate his identity and the identity of everyone that press upon him. What is important for the poet is the intensity of experience which rouses the imagination to a vigorous activity. The poet places value on the state of mind and emotion during an experience. He is endowed with the ability to synthesise the different states of feeling with the aid of his intuition and imagination which proceeds from the ardour of the pursuer. He can keep under his control the rational limitation and vagaries of imagination in order to safeguard the intensity of his experience and his oneness with the plenitude of life. The true poet knows the use and value of imagination. He cannot allow it to tamper or weaken the poetic vision or distort the poet's feeling of the actual. It cannot be allowed to become an arbitrary and superior standard of every thing. The poet needs an imaginative mind which is free from all prejudices and is ready to accept reality in all its variety and concreteness. The poet has a sympathetic absorption in the *essential significance* (c.f. "A fellowship with essence" *Endymion* I. 779) of the 'perceived' object. The ideal is that of disinterestedness that arises from diligent indolence and creative brooding. The poet is the man who possesses contemplation, concentration and the ability for an imaginative identification that enable him to anticipate future objects and feel interested in them.

So in the aesthetics of all the poets we have the principles of intensity, invention, fancy and imagination – qualities that stand out in their individual depth and timbre to carve out an indelible territory for a distinct concept of the poet. Their aesthetics are uniform in their interest in the relationship that the poet has with language, the extraordinary ability to add a weight of interest to the simple and the barren from the

resources of their mind, and in the *energy* that springs from within to make the insignificant things serious and even formidable. However, as Romanticism began to give way to realism from about 1830 onwards, an inevitable momentum started to bubble over from within. The Age of Realism started to enter quite unobtrusively and the *thusness* of life challenged the romantic exuberance with a new articulation and synthesis.