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THE AFFECTIVE DILEMMA IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH POETRY

By

Richard J. Manderfield

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Abstract

THE AFFECTIVE DILEMMA IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH POETRY

By

Richard J. Manderfield

This dissertation proposes an affective theory of
emotionality derived from the affect psychology of Silvan
Tomkins. It then reads nineteenth-century British poetry as
a participant in a culturally constructed affective
economy. This theory proposes that biological imperatives
for the preservation of the species include the imperative
for the preservation of the self through the perception of
approval from others. This inherent need for the positive
affect of approval grounds the co-operative predisposition
that is culturally actualized and organized for the adaptive
advantage of the species as a whole.

Because the mind inherently encodes all information
with the affect generated during culturally patterned
experience, all memory and perception carries affective
encoding, and literature can manipulate the recall of this
encoding into the reader's affective processes, eliciting
affective responses and participating in the affective
substantiation of selves.

In analyses of the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
William Wordsworth, Robert Browning and Arthur Symons, this
dissertation explores how poetry engages readers in the
affective economy and also how the poetry participates in

changing that economy through the century as publicly shared

affect is suppressed in favor of an affectively muted, self-

reflexive compensation.

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Introduction

In this dissertation, I will examine the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Robert Browning and Arthur Symons in the context of a psychological model derived from the affect theory of Silvan Tomkins. This theory holds that an essential, biological imperative requires the preservation of a communally created self by the unconscious perception of positive affect either on the face of others or symbolically represented in objects or ideas and directed toward one so as to be understood as approval.

In a system that is here called the affective economy, cultures organize this affective interaction is various ways, but all cultural functions, including literature, manifest the limitations of some biologically imprinted predispositions and participate in changing the system in response to changing environmental conditions.

Such a theory, while speculative and exploratory, is well suited to the reading of nineteenth-century British poetry, and is not only consistent with many current theories of the mind, but also represents a twentieth-century expression of a line of thought developed during the nineteenth century's struggle to understand the inter-relatedness of thought, feeling, and culture. Parallel to

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literature's preoccupation with these themes in the
nineteenth century is a post-Kantian, philosophical
tradition that Paul Redding argues establishes an affective
model of the mind fundamentally consistent with the recent
trends that ground the theory offered here. Tracing a line
of affective thinking through Fichte and Schelling to
Hegel, Redding concludes:

> In Hegel, therefore, we see even further aspects
> of the surprisingly contemporary-looking account
> of feeling, its embodiment and its relation to
> cognition that is common to the three major post-
> Kantians. In this respect there are illuminating
> parallels between Hegel's theory of affect and
> that found in the work of Silvan Tomkins, a
> psychologist of affect who resisted the excesses
> of cognitivism in the period of its triumph. In
> Tomkins's work, we see re-emerge something of
> what a post-Kantian psychology might look like in
> the later twentieth century. (5)

The "something" that has re-emerged in Tomkins's psychology
is Hegel's

> development and systematization of those
> suggestive ideas from Kant, Fichte, and Schelling
> linking together feeling, conceptualization, and

2

intersubjective recognition and communication

into a rich and powerful model of the mind (133).

At the heart of Tomkins's linkage of these functions is the

human affect system that is the medium of both internal

feedback and communication making affect stand, as Redding

puts it, "at the interface of the most private and public,

facing both ways" (135). The unconscious recognition of

affect, not only on the faces of people, but also in the

associational encoding of all information processed in the

brain creates a medium by which the material world is

integrated into a cultural affective system.

The reconciliation of realist and idealist thinking

that leads to this concept is part of the post-Kantian

legacy. Redding argues that "Fichte's view of the

individual mind is unintelligible without the assumption

that it exists as embodied and located in the world" (4).

Then

> Schelling's development of Fichtean ideas . . .
>
> show[s] how his attempted identification of
>
> realist and idealist ways of looking at the mind
>
> gave rise to pre-Freudian ideas about the nature
>
> of unconscious mental function grounded in
>
> feeling and subjected to its own peculiar logic.
>
> (4)

Once the mind and the material body are interdependent, the mind and other material bodies become interdependent. Redding explains that for Hegel, the "recognition of others *as* agents, which allows the reflective recognition of oneself *in* their expressions, thus becomes a *condition* of mentality *per se*" (132). Tomkins credits the recognition of facial affect with the sustenance of the human as a social being. Redding quotes Tomkins:

> Humans are among those animals whose individual survival and group reproduction rest heavily on social responsivenss, and the mutual enjoyment of each other's presence is one of the most important ways in which social interaction is rewarded and perpetuated. (135)

I extend this insight to include the encoding of all information with affective value so that not only interpersonal interaction but all interaction of the individual and the world function in affective processes.

The extension of Tomkins's affect theory to its cultural implications in this dissertation is my own extrapolation of his theory. That extension of affective recognition to objects and concepts remains consistent, however, with the "externalist" approach to the mind that Redding identifies with the work of Daniel Dennett, who

attributes the "disproportionately greater intelligence" of humans to our

> habit of *off-loading* as much as possible of our
>
> cognitive tasks into the environment itself--
>
> extruding our minds (that is, our mental
>
> projects and activities) into the surrounding
>
> world, where a host of peripheral devices we
>
> construct can store, process, and re-represent
>
> our meanings, streamlining, enhancing, and
>
> protecting the processes of transformation that
>
> *are* our thinking. (127)

The mind's use of external representation of its own functions is also, Redding points out, consistent with the post-Kantian tradition:

> The externalist position exhibits broad
>
> similarities to ideas about the nature of mind
>
> put forward almost two centuries ago by Hegel in
>
> his insistence on the dependence of individual
>
> "subjective" mind on the historically accumulated
>
> and culturally transmitted structures and
>
> processes of the "objective mind."
>
> (128)

In the following chapters, I will explore how our understanding of nineteenth-century British poetry might be

enhanced by a cultural theory built upon Tomkins's

psychology in which affective feedback, affective

communication and affective "peripheral devices" together

constitute an affective economy, culturally created and

sustained and changing in response to historical

contingencies.

Chapter 1 investigates the critical space an affect

theory would occupy and then presents a condensed

explanation of Tomkins's affect theory, including my

extensions of Tomkins's insights to the concept of an

affective economy.

The metaphor of an economy is appropriate, for I will

argue that an essential function of culture is the

organization of emotional life so that the psychic

sustenance necessary to sustain the psychic health of the

population is systematically generated and distributed.

Because positive affect is an inherent need in the

individual psyche and is only attainable by the duplication

of affect seen on the face of another, individuals must

please others in order to attain it. Cultures exploit the

individual need for interpersonal interaction by organizing

interactions so as to sustain the large populations that

are an adaptive advantage in evolutionary terms.

The communal affective system is not only similar to

an economy, but has similarities to a capitalist economy in that populations form consensuses about which behaviors deserve the reward of positive affect and, by associatively investing their collective affect in symbolic objects and concepts, they create communal affective repositories that are resources for individuals to access in exchange for the performance of prescribed behaviors. When groups of people obtain control of these symbolic concentrations of the community's positive affect, they can impose limitations on its distribution so as to privilege themselves. They achieve the greater substantiation of the self that we recognize as the prestige and greater dignity associated with the upper classes and the politically powerful. In this sense, the political can be seen to be one level of organization of the affective economy.

The ability of an affective theory to comprehend an affective economy in culture is the primary advantage that it has over the cognitively based theories that now dominate the criticism that is concerned with emotion. Allen Richardson, who is the leading voice for a criticism that recognizes feeling, works in, and recommends an emotional model drawn within the parameters of what is now called cognitive neuro-science. I suggest the a cognitive criticism faces the same shortcomings as a cognitive

psychology in that it sees emotion as a reaction to thought, leaving thought without a systematized motivation.

With the work of Antonio Demasio, who is now commonly cited in cognitivist criticism, it has been established that an impairment of the neurological functions of the mind that are responsible for emotion will disrupt the logical functions of the brain. This gives hard evidence that feeling influences thinking, but it only supports the now common-sensical assertion that there is no absolute objectivity. Until there is an identifiable pattern in the limits and potentials that feeling imposes of thought so that emotion's role becomes predictive, there is no practical application in criticism, and emotion remains a troublesome byproduct of thought.

If cognitivism is to bring emotion into criticism as more than an epiphenomenon of other processes, it will have to theorize how feeling influences other processes in some systematic way so that its influence can be discerned in the texts in interaction with other elements. Psychoanalysis proposes the family romance as such a system, but psychoanalysis has never proven to be usefully predictive at the cultural level and has been disappointing in this regard even at the individual level.

If emotion is to be seen to have a significant

cultural influence, it will have to be understood to have a crucial function that imposes limits on the other mental functions with which it negotiates. One may not choose to call the negotiating process an economy, but it will be an intersection of co-operative and competitive motivations with the essential hallmarks of an economy. Until emotion is understood to participate in a systematic way in the formation of thought, there is no need in criticism for anything more than the ideological models that are now in place. If and when cognitivism does adopt such a theory, it will be affect theory of some kind. This dissertation proposes that an affect theory is available and is useful for exploring how such a model might work as a critical tool.

The first chapter ends with an assessment of the affective condition of British literature at the end of the eighteenth century as it is evident in Fredric Bogel's analysis of the concern among writers with the "insubstantiality" they perceive in Britain's modernizing culture. I begin my consideration of affect in literature with Bogel because his analysis points to a realization that modernizing societies are changing the possibilities of feeling. I wish to argue that they perceive a change in the affective economy that I will trace through to the end

of the nineteenth century.

The conditions precipitating changes in the affective economy are those that are typically associated with modernization. Industrialization creates urbanization, concentrating populations so as to increase the threat of contagious emotion among the members of a large and suffering working class. Also, capitalist economies create a new wealthy class without the traditional ideological cover of traditional aristocracies, opening the possibilities of new resentments. These changing conditions disrupt the traditional accommodations of what I call the affective dilemma. An inevitable tension results from the fact that there is a biological imperative for the preservation of the psychic "self" that motivates individuals to duplicate the affect they perceive on the faces of others. There is, at the same time, a competing imperative requiring that this sharing of affect take place in a culturally regulated way so as to realize the adaptive advantage of socially co-operative behavior.

The affective dilemma cannot be resolved; it can only be accommodated by a negotiation of its competing imperatives. When material conditions change in modernizing cultures, traditional accommodations of the affective dilemma must change. The necessary suppression of the
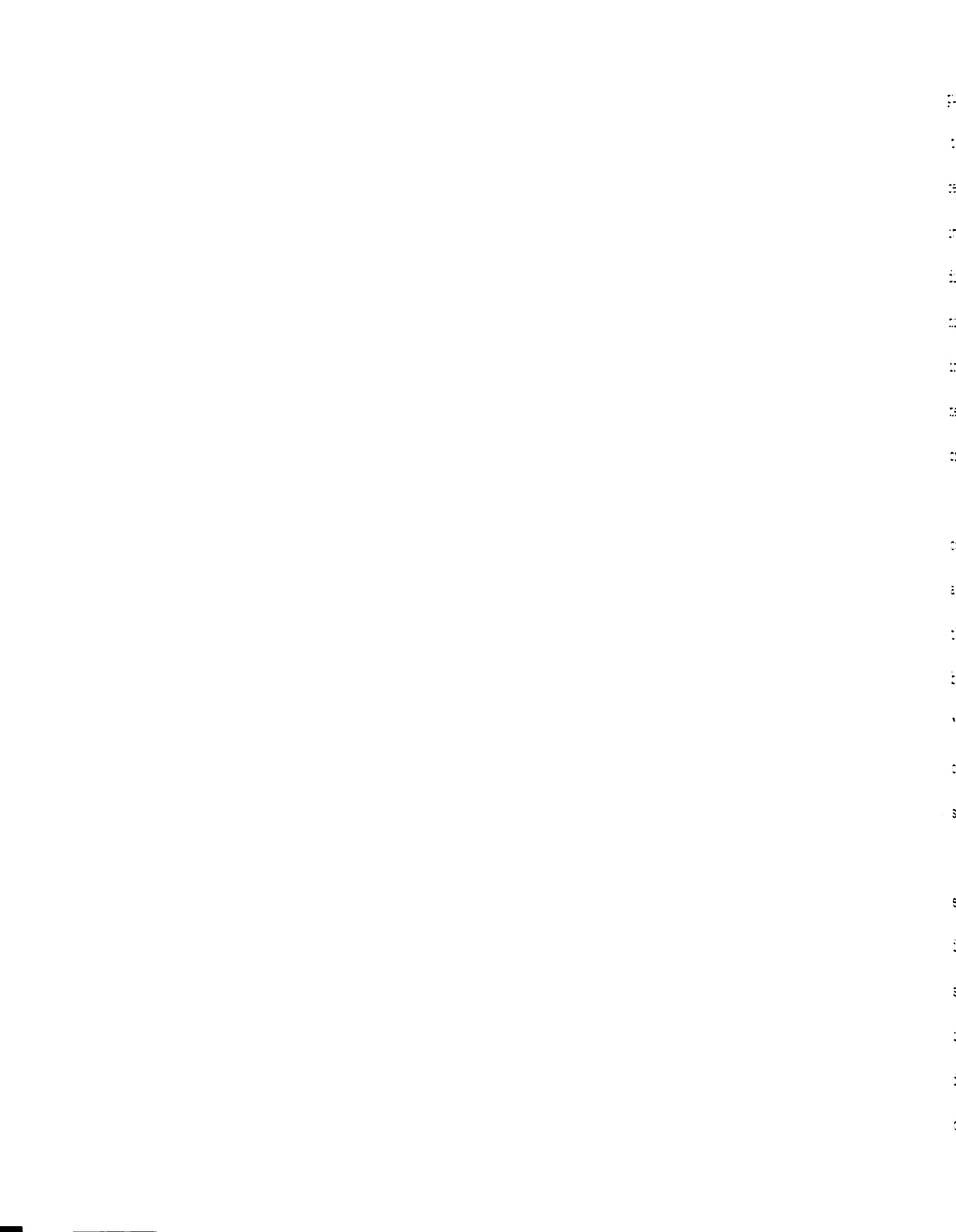
public display of emotion requires a compensatory access to the affective sustenance of selves, which in the nineteenth century is accomplished by the cultivation of an imaginative self-stimulation of affective responses. This dissertation proposes that British literature in the nineteenth century participates in a very significant way in these cultural changes, and an affect theory is necessary to bring this affective dimension into the critical discourse.

Chapter 2 analyzes three poems by Coleridge to consider how the Romantic imagination addresses the affective dilemma. In order to place Coleridge's work in the affective economy within the discourse of culture, I begin with Raymond Williams's identification of a "structure of feeling" at the ground of the nineteenth century's social concerns and his focus on Coleridge's seminal position at the inauguration of this discourse.

In the three poems considered here, Coleridge encounters both the promise and the limitations of imaginative stimulation of affect. In "The Eolian Harp" the speaker's imaginative success is a domestic problem, while in "Frost at Midnight" and "Dejection: An Ode," the imaginatively limited speakers painfully follow associative chains to memories of positive affect and then return from

imagination to community. I will close this chapter with
thoughts on the place of such an "aesthetic" criticism in
current critical practices by considering some related work
on Coleridge by Susan Wolfson.

Chapter 3 examines the affectivity of the
Wordsworthian hero; the affective skills required of
Wordsworth's readers; and an affective understanding of
Wordsworth's program of redemptive sympathy as they
represent Wordsworth's aspirations to shape a more
democratic affective economy.

Chapter 4 proposes that Robert Browning's dramatic
monologues, "My Last Duchess" and "Bishop Blougram's
Apology," be read as critiques of the affective economy.
These poems foreground the unconscious assumptions by which
people understand their places in the hierarchy of self-
substantiation. While "My Last Duchess" entertains the
nightmare scenario of an individual freed from psychic
dependence on the genuine approval of others, "Bishop
Blougram's Apology" stages a competition for affective
survival in the guise of a philosophical debate about
religious belief.

Chapter 5 considers the poems and prose of Arthur
Symons as they exemplify aestheticism's attempt to refine
an affective essence out of the culture's conventional

emotionality. I argue that Symons's conversion from

 Decadence to a mystic Symbolism is necessary as an

accommodation of the affective dilemma and contributes to

the condition of the affective economy as it is passed to

modernism.

Chapter 1

An Affective Model of the "Structure of Feeling"

In *Culture and Society,* an originative work of cultural studies, Raymond Williams begins the history of the concept of culture with some late eighteenth-century thinkers who had the sense that modernizing societies were newly neglecting some important function of communal life. The concept emerges from a new appreciation of the depth to which societies control the entirety of people's lives. From this new point of view, the function of societies is the governance not only of political relations but also private experiences. Williams follows the thoughts of writers who stress that the psychological is "a mode of human experience and activity which the progress of society seemed increasingly to deny" (39). In his discussion of the changes taking place, Williams associates this neglected mode of experience with a societal "structure of feeling" (31). There is no elaboration of what this structure is or how it operates, but it looms in the background because Williams gives it significance when he writes that "changes in convention only occur when there are radical changes in the general structure of feeling" (31).

In *Culture and Society,* Williams is trying to fill the

psychological gap in Marxism as a cultural theory. He needs to show that economic and political structures create emotional conditions in defense of the assertion that ideology creates consciousness. In the end, he simply defines emotion as politically subordinate.

Since the publication of *Culture and Society* in 1958, no adequate explanation has emerged as to the nature of the structure of feeling, and no theory has adequately placed emotion within the cultural sphere. The post-structuralist and post-modernist declaration of the "death of the subject" makes problematic the whole notion of emotion, raising questions about what a post-modern emotion might be without a self to feel it. In a critical atmosphere in which all other aspects of experience have become cultural products, there is still no provision for the structure of feeling with which Williams began the cultural investigation.

Literary studies does not yet have an adequate theory of emotional complexity. Psychological assumptions derived from the Freudian tradition may find complexity in the escapist strategies of the individual unconscious, but the emotional product is a predictable, pathological residue of maladjustment. Freud tried to theorize the near infinite complexity of human experience by internalizing complexity

in a proliferation of unconscious desires and strategies.

An alternative strategy would be to locate the complexity
in the culturally structured interactions in which evolving
organisms negotiate the satisfaction of relatively simple
desires. Because our present psychology cannot model how a
simple human motive creates complex interactions, our
critical strategies tend to displace agency onto cultural
structures of power, language or technology, and emotion
remains epiphenomenal. If emotion is merely a symptom, then
critical interest rightly looks elsewhere for literature's
significance.

The simplification of psychology is most notable in
the negative characterizations of culture that dominate
criticism. Fredric Jameson says that "History is what
hurts," suggesting that the desire for pleasure is not
significantly motivational except as it is frustrated
(102). There seems to be an assumption in some critical
discourses that culture and literature have nothing to do
with feeling good, or perhaps that Western cultures have no
right to feel good. For many in the emancipatory discourse
of literary criticism, injustice and oppression in western
cultures continue because pleasure provides an escape for
the comfortable. Jerome McGann criticizes Wordsworth for
his failure to respond with outrage to oppression after his

early participation in radical political protest (85). That viewpoint is consistent with the Freudian rewriting of the Garden of Eden myth in which a continued inability to accept the truth of their lonely isolation after the loss of blissful unity condemns humans to chronic anxieties, relieved only by a cowardly escapism into temporary pleasure purchased at the price of another's suffering.

But interest seems to be returning to emotion and its psychic structures led by discoveries that they were never really gone. Rei Terada finds theories of emotion in Jacques Derrida and Paul DeMan, among others, and suggests that emotion has always been post-structuralist. George Levine assembles essays that announce the return of the self to critical consideration, and Jenna R. Bergmann analyzes blushing in Austen's *Northanger Abbey* through the neuro-scientific insights of Antonio Domasio's "Somatic-Marker Hypothesis" (44).

These changes reflect a convergence of new insights from diverse fields that offer new ways of thinking about Williams's observation, and this dissertation will make use of some of these insights in order to suggest how we might understand culture as a structure of feeling, and the nineteenth century in British literature as a period preoccupied with modifying this structure.

Williams gives great attention to J.S. Mill and the impact his emotional crisis had on his subsequent contribution to English social theory. Mill came to his crisis when he realized that a life dedicated to social reform did not provide for his own happiness. Only in the self-conscious celebration that he found in the poetry of Wordsworth was he able to regain a coherent sense of himself and return to a concern with social issues. Mill's subsequent social theory accommodates the resolution of his personal emotional needs. He conceives of an artistic realm within the social, but separate from the political and economic, in which the community provides for the emotional well-being of its members.

Mill exemplifies Williams's assertion that concepts follow changes in the structure of feeling. Mill's political philosophy accommodates the restructuring of his emotional interactions so as to allow him to feel happiness in a changing world. Williams's major concern is the historical consequences of separating the emotional from the political or culture from society, and, in Mill, he attributes this inclination to "the normal method of intellectual organization, in minds of this kind" that tend "to deny the substance of feeling" (67). Williams asserts that Mill's intellectualism causes him to deny a quality of

his own feeling that Williams labels its "substance."

Williams's complaint is that the "substance of feeling" which is denied by Mill is only produced by a comprehensive experience of one's whole life. To segregate the emotional must inevitably produce feeling without "substance." It is in this sense that Williams insists that regarding poetry as a separate ideal sphere of feeling "makes poetry a *substitute* for feeling" (67). Williams is working from a definition of emotion which requires that to be authentic, in some undefined way, emotion must comprehend the entirety of its social situation. This is the structure of feeling: emotion's dependence on social systems. But why it is, in psychological terms, that real emotion must be comprehensive is never explained, and without that, no elaboration of the structure of feeling is possible.

The ideological utility of Williams's explanation is clear in its implication that one who does not confront the realities of political and economic injustice will only know mere "substitutes" for real and healthy emotion. Working for social reform is not one way to happiness, it is the only way. Any good feeling produced outside of one's social consciousness is without "substance." And, presumably, literature that participates in the delusional

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denial of this truth suffers the same shortcoming.

Williams, like others before and since *Culture and Society*, faces the dilemma of how social reformers are to motivate generally happy people to change social structures. The theoretical strategy has been largely to try to convince them that their happiness is a delusion and they are really miserable, as Williams explains of Mill's experience. These theorists would have us believe that in those moments when we might feel ourselves to be happy, we are only sharing Mill's delusion. This simplification of the human condition has proved unconvincing to the vast majority who experience happiness outside of social struggle and find this denial of their happiness to be an emotional extortion by a political philosophy.

A better strategy might begin with an understanding of culture as a structure of feeling in which the political is one manifestation of the generation and distribution of feeling. That a government needs to be concerned about the happiness of its people is obvious; ancient Rome manipulated the structure of feeling with bread and circuses in order to maintain a minimal allegiance to the political structure that governed. This is an example of a political power structure deferring to the deeper traditional order that regulated emotional interactions and

allowed people to satisfy needs that were not just material. In traditional societies, the happiness of the people is a function of interactive traditions constructed and sustained below the level of political power in the structure of feeling. Political systems tend to recognize the semi-autonomous nature of traditional orders.

Governance before the eighteenth century is primarily a system for the control of the material products of a society run largely by the traditional structure of feeling. By the 19th century, happiness means more than material subsistence, and democratizing populations are creating changes in the traditional structure of feeling that political philosophy is trying to comprehend. An example could be the American Revolution and its scandalous claim that the rights to life and liberty are equaled in importance by the right to the pursuit of happiness. It is the world's first conservative revolution because it is not fought for the material necessities of life but for the maintenance of a new structure of feeling, which allowed for the dissemination of dignity and emotional conditions that could not be integrated into the old political system. Mill is mistaken not in seeing separate emotional and political realms, but in underestimating the increasingly unavoidable interdependence between them. Williams makes

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the mistake of collapsing an interdependent relationship into one of identity.

In an exploration of how this theoretical gap might be filled so as to provide insights on poetry, this dissertation will extrapolate from Silvan Tomkins's affect theory to some possible consequences of that theory for the understanding of culture.

Tomkins's psychology is in the somatic line of thought of the James/Lange theory, but by locating somatic importance in affect, he picks up the subject where Charles Darwin left it in 1874 with the publication of *The Expression of Emotion in Animals and Humans*. Tomkins finds in the automatic functions of the affect system a biological explanation for much of the complexity that Freud assigned to drives (1.127) and cognitivists attribute to cognitive "appraisals." Tomkins began his affective opposition to Freud's drive-based theories with the publication of what became the introduction to the four-volume culmination of his work. This appeared, interestingly, in 1956 in the premier issue of *La Psychanalyse*, which was edited by Jacques Lacan (Tomkins 1:3). Through the 1960s and 1970s, Tomkins was the lone voice of the affective alternative to cognitivism. In its current academic applications, the word "affect" connotes

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the somatic nature of emotional response but preserves the cognitivist assumption that the body is responding to a thought.

Alan Richardson surveys recent literary criticism using cognitivist models in interesting and encouraging ways, but their cognitive viewpoint imports into criticism the affective limitations of cognitivism. Bergman's analysis of the blush that was cited earlier is in this cognitivist line of thought.

The fundamental assumptions of Tomkins's theory are evolutionary (1:150-70). Naturally selected survival adaptations genetically embedded in biology interact with environmental conditions but remain identifiable in their cultural manifestations. In Tomkins's theory, affect is the body's primary motivational system rather than a cathartic and pathological by-product (1:28-87). The other motivational systems, drive, pain, and some functions of the reticular formation, are triggered independently but rely on affective amplification in order to fulfill their functions.

The model that is proposed here is derived from the insights of Tomkins's theory, but my theory digresses from his considerably in its scope. It is clearly a materialist theory, assuming that humans are organisms and that all

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mental processes are finally electro-chemical. No claim is made for having eliminated the mystery of consciousness, only that materialist explanations continue to extend their predictive capacities, and literary studies should make use of this work.

Furthermore, the essentialist claim made here of a biological ground for human behavior is not seen to limit the significance of cultural constructionism but to facilitate it by finding its point of interdependence with that which is outside it. This model is consistent with what Edward O. Wilson calls a "gene-culture coevolution" and he adds: "Genes and culture are in fact inseverably linked" (110). Robert N. Emde acknowledges that psychological research is "in the beginnings of a genetic revolution" (6) in which "[g]enes work with the environment, and genetic expression is influenced by environmental co-actions at all levels of developmental systems, from cell to society" (6). While the sciences are embracing culture, Richardson notes that "Any account of mental life that appeals to biology . . . will strike many literary scholars as automatically suspect," and he adds: "This stock dismissal of human biology is closely related to a larger skepticism, bordering on hostility, toward science altogether" (159). This dissertation offers a

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biologically grounded theory in resistance to the current theoretical inertia.

An evolutionary model begins with the premise that natural selection has left humans with inherent motivations for the survival of the species. In order to limit the scope of this work, it is stipulated without argument that the complexities of culture do not escape this imperative and that at all levels of human experience, behavior expresses this motive. While current evolutionary theories do not require that all conditions of the organism are adaptive, they do hold that none of the conditions can obstruct adaptation. In other words, while we cannot assume that every desire of an individual is an adaptation necessary to its survival, we can assume that none of its desires can negate survival adaptations. Humans may care about some things that are not directly relevant to the survival imperative, but they cannot stop caring about those things that are.

Tomkins's affect theory greatly refines the somaticism of the James/Lange theory of 1890, which first proposed that physical changes precede thought. However, after James, the search for the mechanism of initial bodily feedback focused on internal systems whose physiological changes are too slow to account for the rapidity of

emotional fluctuations. Tomkins locates the feedback

circuitry primarily in the skin and musculature of the face

which allow for very fast and subtle visceral feedback

(3.9).

Tomkins identifies nine specific affects of which six

are innately activated and three are auxiliary to either

affects or drives (3:18-25). Each affect is a coordinated

package of physical responses primarily in the face, and

each is triggered by a particular rate of neural firing or

change in the rate of neural firing. It makes no difference

to an initial affective response what the content of the

stimulus is; the density of the neural firing caused by

signals in the efferent nervous system will trigger one of

the affects. Two of the affects are inherently positive and

rewarding, and the others are inherently negative and

punishing. The grounding and evolutionary human motivation

is to maximize positive affect and minimize negative.

Affects are readily associated with any information so that

any affect can be associated with any perception or

behavior. Tomkins remarks that this characteristic is one

of the reasons that affect has been misunderstood:

> There is literally no kind of object which has
>
> not historically been linked to one or another of
>
> the affects. Positive affect has been invested in

pain and every kind of human misery, and negative

affect has been experienced as a consequence of pleasure

and every kind of triumph of the human spirit.

(1:133)

Because the head and face are the primary sites of the

affects, each affect is labeled as a continuum between its

mild and intense manifestations with the terms by which we

identify them as emotions. For example, the anger-rage

affect includes the frown, clenched jaw and red face. The

interest-excitement affect creates the lowering of the

eyebrows and intensity of visual tracking and listening.

The enjoyment/joy affect produces the smile or laughter.

Each innate affect has an accompanying vocalization, though

Tomkins asserts that this characteristic is the most

culturally suppressed, and least apparent. Shame-

humiliation is an affect auxiliary that limits positive

affects and includes the lowering of the eyes and head.

The interest/excitement affect and the enjoyment/joy

affect are the two positive affects and are inherently

pleasurable and desirable. The other affects are inherently

negative and punishing. The three affect supplements,

shame, disgust and dissmell, are negative in that they act

to limit positive affects.

The affect system is one of the body's feedback

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systems by which the organism monitors and regulates its functions. The physical changes that affect creates are themselves picked up by sensors in muscle and skin and are fed back to the brain as stimuli that are combined with the original signal so as to amplify it. Only when an initial signal is combined with the amplifying signal from the affect in the body can it have enough intensity to compete for transmission to the limited channels of consciousness in the form that Tomkins calls a "report" (1:18). If all stimuli went to consciousness, it would be overwhelmed. The unconscious processing of affect allows only the most urgent stimuli into conscious processes.

Affect from perception, memory and cognition is assembled in the mind in what Tomkins calls the "central assembly" in response to an initial, automatic affective response to a change in the density of neural firing (1:113). The central assembly is not an organ or even a specific place in the brain but a function in which signals from memory, cognition, and the senses are matched, integrated and processed into a new affective response.

Tomkins specifies that humans remember affective experiences and recall these into affective processes. He also stresses the complexity of affective information contained in facial expression:

The total set of facial responses shared in a
dyadic relationship is also embedded in still a larger set

which includes latent and unconscious motives,

and social conventions about how directly affects

may be expressed by the face, as well as

inferences about the conscious strategy of the

other. (1:215)

I propose that the ability to associate, remember and
recall affective values is a result of the fact that all
information in the brain acquires an affective encoding by
association. As quoted earlier, Tomkins specifies that any
affect can be associated with any object. I posit that all
information is encoded with some affect, which makes us
different information matter in different ways to us.
Information is affectively encoded in association with the
affective environment in which it is processed. This
encoding gives it importance or potency as it is assembled
with other signals in the central assembly. In this sense,
affective intensity gives meaning to simple information. We
care about information to the degree that we "feel" its
affective encoding.

The amplifying feedback function of the system
accounts for the fact that a genuine smile, for example,
does make us feel better and genuine anger in our

expression will make us feel worse. In experience this
simple connection becomes complicated as will be explained
below, but the important point is that the affect system is
matched to cognition in a way that makes information matter
without a conscious apprehension of semantic meanings. We
can care in any way about any thing because any affect can
encode any information.

While the affect system can act independently of the
drives, the drives rely on affective amplification. The
best example of this is the sex drive, which relies on the
amplification of the interest and enjoyment affects to
achieve its motivational potency. The sex drive alone is a
weak motivator as is evidenced by the ease with which
sexual arousal can be extinguished by distractions or
insecurities. The social complexities of sexuality that
Freud attributed to the sex drive are actually the work of
the cultural embededness of the affective amplification of
the sex drive. The pain drive system is similarly amplified
by affect, which explains why even serious wounds can be
ignored if other conditions produce enough affect to block
pain's access to consciousness at the central assembly

The startle affect is the best example of the
automatic function of affect. In its evolutionary history,
the human body has learned that stimuli of rapidly

increasing intensity are the most likely to be an immediate threat. Therefore, when the rate of neural firing increases rapidly enough, the startle affect is triggered and we respond quickly and without cognitive intervention. An object moving quickly toward one's head, for instance, will cause one to startle, activating the rapid and orchestrated response of ducking, raising the hands, and other hormonal and muscular changes. Whatever may have occupied consciousness before is displaced by the affective intensity of the startle affect, and our attentive capacities are quickly focused on this dangerous stimulus. The other affects involve a great deal more cognitive participation and are far more culturally conditioned. I stress that all affects originate in an initial biological response because this characteristic imposes the imperatives that I will later claim can be seen in some cultural and poetic phenomena as they negotiate accommodations with these imperatives.

Tomkins began developing his theory after observing the intense facial displays of his newborn son, and in this pre- cultural responsiveness we have the clearest manifestation of the biological conditions of the affect system that become acculturated through learning. The infant's crying response, for instance, is part of the

distress-anguish affect and is triggered by "a general continuing level of non-optimal neural stimulation" (1:255). Some negative stimulus of a particular intensity, be it discomfort from the hunger drive or a tactile signal from the pain system, inherently activates the distress affect. Such a trigger will activate the muscles in the face, respiration and other systems according to genetically inherited programs and produce the crying response. The affective facial and bodily response is fed back to the brain so that it amplifies the original discomfort which then increases the affective response again. This circular system continues to a preset limit.

Positive affect is inherently rewarding, and equally automatic in the infant. The pleasure of the smile is quickly associated with the reciprocal smile of others. Paul Redding quotes Tomkins on this subject to indicate the Hegelian nature of the sociality built into his theory:

> The smiling response and the enjoyment of its
> feedback along with the feedback of concurrent
> autonomic and hypothalamic responses make
> possible a kind of human social responsiveness
> that is relatively free of drive satisfaction, of
> body site specificity of stimulation, and of
> specific motor responses other than that of the

smile itself. (135)

The satisfaction of the shared smile is produced by the internal duplication of the affect perceived on the face of the other. Extrapolating now from Tomkins, I propose that sharing positive affect with others not only gives the infant pleasure, it also activates an inherent mental predisposition for the formation of the self. In evolutionary terms, the preservation of the self is, literally, the preservation of the psychic self. Selves have existence or substance proportionate to the degree that a people feel positive affect directed toward them. Because the only source of positive affect is through the duplication of that affect perceived on the faces of others, the only source of self-preservation is the co-operative behaviors that earn the approval of others. In this way individuals are dependent on the affective cooperation of the other members of a community. The affectively constituted self and an inherent imperative to substantiate that self make humans communal beings. Contrary to notions of the self as the essence of the individual, the self is here seen as the bio-cultural phenomenon that ensures the individual's service to the collective.

Tomkins does not theorize the self in this affective

role, but he does consider the recognition of affect as central to our communal nature. Redding notes that while "Freud saw love primarily as sublimated sexual drive, Tomkins's account of love is far more Hegelian in that it is dealt with in terms of the mutual reinforcement and the mutual recognition of affect" (135). Redding quotes Tomkins: "'This dyadic interaction is inherently social inasmuch as the satisfaction of the self is at the same time the satisfaction of the other'" (135).

In the child, positive affect is first generated only by the direct perception of the same affect on the face of care-givers. However, affect in all of its forms quickly becomes associated with the experiential contingencies that accompany the recognition of the smile on the face of the other.

All information in the brain that is remembered or comes to consciousness is first encoded with the quality and potency of the affect that accompanies its processing. In effect, all information in the brain is encoded with feeling by association with the infant's experience of matching its affects to the affect perceived on the faces of others. Memories are retrieved with their affective encoding and this affect is duplicated in the mind as if it were perceived on the face of another. Affective encoding

is the intentionality or personification that perception necessarily assigns to objects.

Frances Ferguson traces the history of literary criticism's attempt to expunge the intentionalization of non-human objects but concludes finally: "Trying to have objects without intentions turns out to be having no objects at all" (122). She continues:

> Our pleasure in nature and our scientific knowledge of it are alike important for identifying not reality but reality production as an inescapable process of supplying intentional states to the very matter that we identify as incapable of having intentional states.
>
> (122)

We can imagine objects without intentionality, but the unconscious processes of the affect system ensure that we respond to them as if they were people looking back at us with human intentions.

The intentionalization of perception ensures that all behavior serves communal interests by making all interactions with the environment subject to the co-operative imperative built into the affective needs of the self. Even when not in direct interaction with humans, the need for their positive affect directs an individual's

behavioral choices. It also frees the affectively needy
individual from the necessity of being constantly in direct
interactions. Even when alone, the performance of certain
approved behaviors gives one access to the positive affect
encoded on the memories of objects and ideas.

The environment is made to be an extension of the
affect system. This is an example of Redding's assertion
that current discussions of the nature of mind "have
surprisingly overt Hegelian aspects" (127). Redding quotes
Daniel Dennett's proposed explanation of the
"disproportionately greater intelligence" of humans over
related species. Humans, Dennett stresses, have a

> habit of *off-loading* as much as possible of our
> cognitive tasks into the environment itself--
> extruding our minds (that is, our mental projects
> and activities) into the surrounding world, where
> a host of peripheral devices we construct can
> store, process, and re-represent our
> meanings, streamlining, enhancing, and protecting
> the processes of transformation that *are our*
> *thinking*. This widespread practice of off-loading
> releases us from the limitations of our animal
> brains.
> (127)

People are constantly generating positive affect through
the recall of its encoding on the material and conceptual
environment. Imagination brings images to mind so that
their affective encoding can generate an affective
response.

Imagination is the function by which the mind
constructs scenarios of possible futures so as to test them
by responding affectively to them. If a planned action is
to satisfy evolutionary needs, then planned behaviors must
be tested by the affect system in the present. In effect, a
person's body with both its inherent and learned
capabilities must be virtually present in the imagined
scenario. In order to do this, we imagine the future by
assembling images from memories and then respond to the
affective encoding we find on those memories.

The ability to plan for the long-term is an adaptive
advantage. In order to do this, the organism must be able
to make a prediction of its future affective needs in
relation to some standard that is not just the immediate
affective condition. The self is the generalized history of
the organism's affective condition. We feel that we have a
unified self, when we do, because the script of the self
carries this generalization of our affective life. We can
also access memories of the self in the past and note the

comparison to the generalized self, giving the sense of fragmented or multiple selves. The model of the self being argued here is obviously not the unified, autonomous concept associated with modern individualism and now rejected in most critical discourse. The self is more accurately the record of the organism's success in satisfying the imperative for the survival of the species. Under this model, if there is no self, there is no human being.

Because imagination stimulates an affective response, it can serve to substantiate the self by the generation of positive affect. While this is, in a sense, self-substantiation, it can be so only to the extent that direct interaction has provided the affective potency by which memories become affectively encoded. With time and use, the affective encoding of memory loses its potency if not reinforced by new associations with direct interaction. Even in the most imaginatively isolated and seemingly non-communal behavior, the individual is accessing the positive affect of some group of significant others.

People can do without the approval of those in the present only to the extent that they have memories of approval that can offset the present and provide for positive affect. Direct affective sharing is particularly

potent, but we need not be blindly obedient to those in the present. Still, the self can survive the displeasure of some only to the extent that the approval of others is available in memory to sustain the self. The misunderstanding of the ability to utilize remembered approval gives rise to the fallacy of the autonomous individual.

In Tomkins's explanation, the fundamental social motive is the sharing of positive affect. Redding quotes Tomkins's assertion that the "dyadic interaction is inherently social inasmuch as the satisfaction of the self is at the same time the satisfaction of the other" (135). I suggest that affective sharing is not only dyadic, but becomes social by the mind's categorizing function in which affective stimuli are grouped together in memory. The perception of affect becomes so mediated by cultural learning that it ceases to be meaningful to speak of a dyadic relationship, even in dyadic interactions. The affective encoding of communal objects, including the individual smile, elicits the mind's understanding of the consensus that is represented by the perceived affect and the prerequisites by which one gains access to its duplication.

I add to Tomkins's theory, then, that the encoding of

objects and thoughts with affect is proportionate to the "community" of people that we understand to be in agreement about the encoding of an object. The intensity of the affect that we recall with a memory of an object reflects the size and importance of the "affective community" that encoded the object remembered. In this way the interaction with natural objects that is so important to Romanticism especially, can be seen to be culturally generated by virtue of the individual's knowledge of the object as a symbol of communal values. When we recall an object or idea and share affect with the community symbolized by it, we join or ally ourselves affectively with that community, and by our behavior, others note this and alter their understanding of the affective communities in their own memories.

Affective communities exist only in the individual memories by which we understand which behaviors on our parts will allow us to duplicate the positive affect of others directed toward us. While there are institutions of cultural value in moral codes and laws, these are only gross generalizations of the complexity by which individuals know which behaviors give them access to positive affect.

The concept of the affective community is important

because it models how the seemingly co-operative imperative for individuals to share self-substantiating affect becomes a competitive system in which coalitions and classes form so as to gain advantage in the struggle to maximize positive affect and minimize negative affect. We need to have positive affect directed toward us, but we do not need everyone to do so. The disapproval of others can, itself, become associated with positive affect if the affective communities of which one is a member gives their approval to the act of being disapproved of by others.

I have suggested that affective communities exist in order to require a particular behavior in exchange for access to the community's positive affect. This requires that there is in the mind a function rather like a conscience that precludes us from unconsciously sharing the positive affect of affective communities whose behavioral quid pro quo we have not satisfied.

This is linked to the limitations of the potency of imagination to elicit affective responses. Imagination is a system for testing possible futures. Unconsciousness does not cede control to consciousness for extended periods of time.

I have described an affective model of a cultural "structure of feeling" as it can be seen to operate
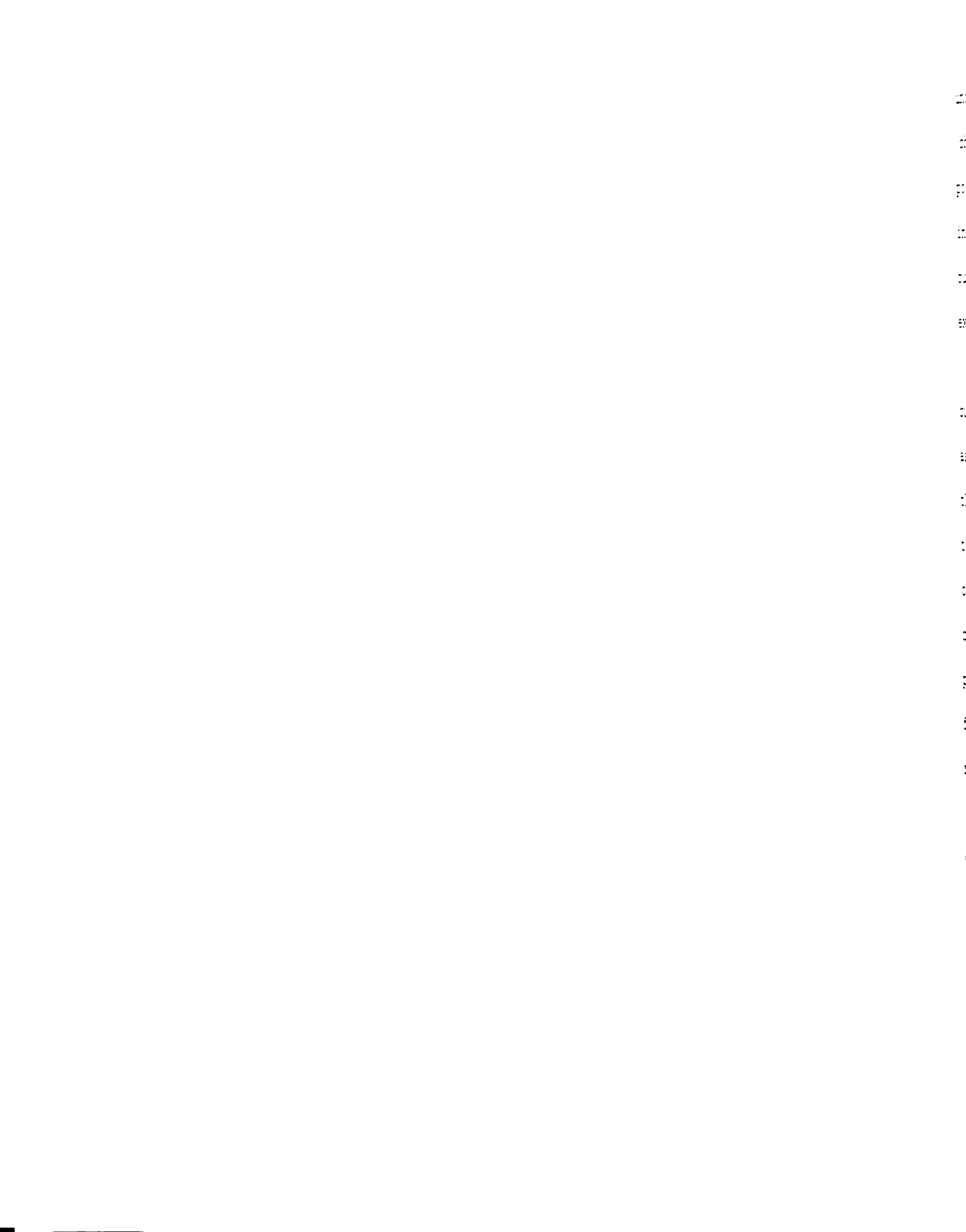
unconsciously. This model can help clarify an essential

characteristic of nineteenth-century British poetry. These

poets are not trying to simply increase the frequency or

intensity of feeling. They are trying to identify and

cultivate a type of feeling that they feel has been

excluded from modern life by modernizing societies.

When thinkers like Coleridge and Wordsworth envision a

cultural sphere separate from the political, as Williams

asserts, they do so not only to remove emotional life from

the political but to create a sphere in which to cultivate

this new mode of feeling that includes Wordsworth's "spots

of time" or the feeling qualities of the rural poor that

contrast to conventional, urban emotionality. An essential

problem in Romanticism is to understand this quality of

feeling that Wordsworth asserts is to be found in "emotion

recollected in tranquility."

Tomkins's affect theory provides an insight that can

clarify the distinction that Romanticism intuits. As

explained earlier, Tomkins specifies that when unconscious

processes amplify an affective response adequately, it

gains access to the limited circuits of consciousness and

we become conscious of it as a feeling. Tomkins addresses

the fact that affective states produce different levels of

conscious awareness, but he does not theorize affective

proceses after they come to consciousness. However, it is in this realm that imagination and thought intervene in affective amplifications, so I will again extend my own theory from his insights.

If all information processing in the brain includes the processing of the affective encoding that inevitably attaches to information, then conscious processes such as imagination and thought also participate in the development of affect. In other words, feeling as it first comes to consciousness, changes under the influence of conscious processes, and we can feel this difference. This allows for a useful distinction to be drawn between affect and emotion.

Emotions are particular, culturally prescribed affective packages that conscious cognition imposes on affect as it first comes to consciousness. Cultures create an acceptable repertoire of affective displays so as to make co-operative interactions simpler and more predictable. Without a cultural consensus to standardize affective displays, the complexity and possible intensity of individual affective combinations as they come from unconsciousness would overwhelm communication.

Affect changes after coming to consciousness because thought and imagination work with different memories than

do unconscious processes. Unconscious memory serves the need for the mind to react quickly to initial affect. To this end, unconscious cognitive processes draw on a highly generalized, accumulative memory so that the most broadly relevant affective information is processed first and is available to initiate responsive actions quickly. When this affect rises to consciousness, conscious cognition retrieves information from the short-term memory in which more detailed information of highly socialized behaviors is stored. Among this information are the scripts that direct the development of pre-emotional affect into one of the emotions in the cultural repertoire. Conscious thought finishes the socialization of pre-emotional affect, standardizing affective displays in the public realm.

This distinction is crucial, for, as I will argue below, beginning in the late eighteenth century, literature becomes preoccupied with feeling as it first comes to consciousness and before the cultural scripts of conscious memory can develop it into the conventional emotions. The literary traditions against which Romanticism rebels are marked by the attempt to produce ever more powerful emotions until the conventions begin to parody themselves. In the Preface to the 1802 *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth famously identifies the public taste for these emotional

stimulants as "this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation" (Wu 359). Instead, he recommends to the reader dissatisfied with his own poetry "that the powers of language are not so limited as he may suppose, and that it is possible that poetry may give other enjoyments, of a purer, more lasting, and more exquisite nature" (Wu 363). A refinement of feeling response is the goal.

All feeling is affect, but we can feel the difference between pre-emotional affect and the emotional product of cultural scripts. The turn to imagination in Romanticism is a strategy by which to cultivate the imaginative creation of affective stimuli. Later in the century, aestheticism will try to refine pre-emotional affect out of cultural emotion entirely.

All times have been aware of the feeling of pre-emotional affect as distinct from "normal" emotion and have sought to explain it, usually in spiritual terms. In common experience it is intuition, mood, premonition, or impulse. In extremely powerful and positive instances it can be felt as a mystic communion with non-earthly realities. When this pre-emotional affect is intensely positive, it is powerfully self-substantiating, and is the condition of euphoria or bliss that often exceeds the terminology of the emotions. This state is typically very brief because it is

quickly integrated into a cultural emotion so as to make it suitable to interaction.

Slowing or arresting the emotionalization of affect is part of the poetic project of the nineteenth century and is consistent with the larger changes in the affective economy in which public affect must be muted so as to accommodate the urbanization and democratization of society. In traditional societies, the public sharing of affect constitutes a large proportion of the positive affect that substantiates selves. As populations become dense and, in their democratic aspirations, make ever greater demands for access to the affective economy, the public generation of positive affect becomes problematic. The solution cannot be to simply suppress public affect because this leaves an essential biological imperative unsatisfied. A source of positive affect must be instituted to replace that lost in the suppression of public affect. The growth of rationality and self-reflection answer this need by turning cognition to the recall of memories so that affect is internally generated. In effect, the use of imagination allows people to be more affectively self-substantiating. This is the ability that leads to the illusion of the autonomous self. However, this strategy is of limited efficacy because the affective encoding of memory cannot provide the intensity

of direct interaction, and the encoding of memories fades with time and use.

Modernity's self-reflectiveness is an accommodation, not a resolution, of an essential tension that I will call the affective dilemma. Humans have a biological need for the positive affect that is generated by duplicating and amplifying communally generated positive affect. The cooperative systems that grow in order to facilitate this mutual generation of necessary affect are always under the threat that the appetite for shared positive affect will turn into an amplifying contagion that cannot be contained by the system. This tension is the affective dilemma. Cultures accommodate and contain the affective dilemma, but they do not resolve it.

The most obvious example of dangerous affective contagion for the nineteenth century is the French Revolution, but Jon Mee details the numerous events in British history that explain the pervasive concern with "enthusiasm" in the 1790s. This concern was warranted, he points out, because across the political spectrum there were elements who promoted emotional intensity with the view that it was a vital source of connection with something essential and true.

I have explained that individuals learn to read both

objects and concepts as symbolic representations of communal attitudes to particular behaviors so that the performance of a behavior allows one to duplicate the affect encoded on the relevant object or concept. In the case of emotions, individuals know that communal approval accrues to those who use the prescribed affective displays.

A particularly significant cultural institution is especially relevant in the affective economy and poetry of the nineteenth century. Religion and spirituality in general function as affective transactions. As affect comes to consciousness its origins are mysterious, but it feels like the product of interaction that it is. Religions are the institutions by which communities assign a personality to the mystery so that they can organize their affective economies through that symbol. Once the communal standards for the exchange of behavior and affect are encoded in the divine personality, individuals can imagine the divinity smiling at them and be substantiated by duplicating that very potent affect.

The divine personality is a potent symbol by which communal affective values can be disseminated to individual memories so as to require communal behaviors in exchange for communal affect. As the affective economy diversifies and affective communities proliferate during the nineteenth

century, the crisis of faith grows as the affective
communities symbolized by religion lose some of their
dominance in the affective economy. The secular
inclinations of poetry participate in the redistribution of
affective potency to secular objects and concepts.

Central to the affect theory proposed here is the
definition of the self as the monitor of the participation
of the individual in the preservation of the collective.
Selves have existence to the extent that individuals can
perceive, directly or imaginatively, that others are
smiling in approval of them. I have referred to the
affectively healthy self with the metaphor of "substance."
I borrow this metaphor from the work of Fredric Bogel who
writes of "insubstantiality" to describe the quality of
experience that increasingly alarms writers in the late
eighteenth century. I suggest that these writers and Bogel
perceive the muting of public affectivity and intensity and
the sense of lost meaning that results as selves find it
more difficult to find substantiating affect.

Besides producing a useful metaphor, Bogel's
*Literature and Insubstantiality in Later Eighteenth-Century
England* identifies the growing dissatisfaction with the
condition of feeling that is addressed by the nineteenth
century. His work also identifies some of the theoretical

gaps that I have proposed to fill and offers a critical

context in which to clarify how an affect theory might

address some important critical issues.

Bogel finds a preoccupation with insubstantiality in

the generations of writers just preceding those that

Williams credits with the intuition of a structure of

feeling at the foundations of culture. In affective terms,

Bogel studies the late eighteenth century's diagnosis of

the need for experience to produce a sense of the

substantiated self, and Williams studies the nineteenth

century's social adaptation to changes in substantiating

strategies. In both cases, I hope to show that an affective

economy is structuring the cultural phenomena that are

being studied and that the terms of the theory previously

sketched are useful in clarifying the questions they raise.

Bogel does not claim that a troublesome sense of

insubstantiality is new to the eighteenth century. He

contends instead that poets in the late eighteenth century

are the first to make visible the dimension of the

substantial that "is pretty clearly a permanent category of

human consciousness" (54). But the insubstantial has become

important enough that Bogel sees it contributing to the

historical transition from the religious concentration on

transcendence to "a new attitude toward commonplace

reality" (50). Even religiously committed writers "exhibit the strain that the religious imagination underwent in the later eighteenth century, a strain that signals the emergence of the modern period" (51) These writers make the insubstantial visible by reacting with a new "rhetoric of substantiality" (47). Bogel, like Williams, is grounding an historic shift in a reaction to a feeling.

Bogel is emphatic that the transition he is interested in is not explainable in the usual terms that oppose new scientific ideas to religious doctrine and institute a crisis of belief or a secularization of society. Rather, he uses the metaphor of substantiality to indicate a characteristic of experience beyond issues of logical consistency. Bogel explains:

> Faith, belief, metaphysical argument and conviction--these work to convince us of the existence and attributes of God, or indeed of man and the world, but they cannot prescribe the manner in which we shall experience them. They cannot ensure that what we believe to exist we shall also feel to be present. (53)

Bogel does not oppose thought and feeling, and skepticism does not win an intellectual debate in his assessment. Rather, the literature of the later eighteenth century

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presents a model of consciousness that "requires that we distinguish between two dimensions of experience" (53). On the one hand we determine that things of a certain kind exist, and on the other hand, we "note how substantially they present themselves, how forcefully or variously or richly they impinge on consciousness" (45). These poets are not drawn away from their devotion to the transcendent by its intellectual deficiencies. Instead, they intuit that the perception of transcendent truths leaves some essential experiential need unsatisfied.

In this distinction Bogel's analysis matches Tomkins's distinction between information in the brain and the affect necessary to give it importance. Without information affect is blind; without affect information is weak. Bogel stresses that he does not wish to make the distinction of thought and emotion. A better distinction, perhaps, is between thought (cognition) and affect.

An affective reading understands that the necessary substantiality is in the self's perception of positive affect. The insubstantial experience is so because it does not involve the positive affective response necessary to imbue it with significance even though the ideas are logically consistent and satisfying. Such an experience does not "impinge on consciousness" because its affective

encoding does not compete well in the central assembly for transmutation into a conscious report.

Bogel's descriptions of the strains on religious belief reflect the declining affective potency of the Christian myth as other concepts win communal approval. But the decline in the potency of the myth does not displace the myth as an idea. While materialist explanations may strain the religious belief and pose an intellectual contradiction, the two can coexist because they pose no fundamental contradiction for the substantiation of selves. In the affective economy, an idea is potent to the degree that it carries communal approval. Its logic does not operate affectively.

Bogel explains that the search for a rhetoric of substantiality leads the eighteenth century from the understanding of reality as a relationship between the common human realm and a transcendent realm to an understanding of reality as a relationship between aspects within the common realm. This is a disappointing transition at the time because these poets discover that within the realm of the common, there are contradictions and disharmonies between self and other much like those between the self and the transcendent other. Bogel's study finds in the rhetoric of substantiality new encounters and

understandings of contradiction and paradox, but not the

 degree of substantiality hoped for. He notes that by this

standard, the century's literary project could be judged a

failure. But the reappearance of these obstacles within the

realm of the nontranscendent raises questions for these

poets and for Bogel about the nature of the unhappiness

they feel as insubstantiality. Does the unhappiness result

from a lack of substance in the external world, or are the

insubstantiality and its unhappiness an unavoidable

condition of human nature? This question moves the subject

from ontology to psychology, and, therefore, to Freud.

Bogel notes the similarity of insubstantiality and

melancholia and investigates the Freudian notion as an

analog of insubstantiality. He finds the Freudian reading

limiting in many of the same ways as do other critics of

Freud. Psychoanalysis grounds motivation in the psychic

scaring of a primal loss and the fantasy life that escapes

it. All experience thereafter shares the escapist pathology

of its origins, and the dominance of the unconscious

ensures that all motivation thereafter is limited to this

narrative. Applied to literature, Bogel finds that

      the analogy with melancholia tends to erode the

      distinction between imagination and fantasy,

      artistic illusion and neurotic delusion. What

begins as an analogy, that is, ends as an

assimilation of one term to another, imagination to

fantasy, art to pathology.

(218)

Bogel would rather see the tensions between self and

other "as the initial or generative condition and its

derivation from loss as itself only a special case" (219).

He would prefer to begin with the assumption that

lostness, absence, and deep uncertainty about the

distinctions between self and other . . . be

experienced not just as the endpoints of a

regressive or degenerative process, individual or

cultural, but also as categories no less

primordial and no more escapable than the

clearcut fixities and sharp demarcations that a

degenerative explanation views them as

subverting. (220)

Under such an assumption, the sense of insubstantiality

results from an inherent tension between self and other,

and our discovery of inevitable unhappiness "need not be

projected into a myth of initially possessible happiness

fractured by later loss; the pattern of discovery must not

be taken for the structure of reality" (220). The Freudian

motive is not basic enough; its motivational flow chart

does not begin at the top. Freud grounds motivation not in the tension which leads to its discovery, but in the discovery itself. The problem is that the discovery is an interpretation of the tension, and Freud imposes a single interpretation of what the tension means.

Bogel does not reject the Freudian reading out of hand, but he finds the conclusion of eighteenth-century writers more convincing. Freud grounds psychology in a primal loss which presumes that there is an initial possession. The complexities of self and other then follow as a result of unconscious evasions and compensations for the loss of that which was possessed. But Bogel sees in the literature that these writers never felt in possession of external objects in the first place. The search for substantiality revealed to them that lostness is a category of experience and not a relation to particular experiences. There is no initial substantiality to be lost.

Bogel wishes to credit these writers with perceptive abilities that psychoanalysis labels illusion, and he concludes by asking how melancholia can be accommodated in the reading "without implying that later eighteenth-century writers characteristically functioned in what might be called a sublimely unconscious state?" (219). In this complaint, Bogel echoes many critics of psychoanalysis in

many fields. The same psychoanalytic predetermination of behavior that Bogel sees blocking agency in individuals blocks their collective agency in culture.

With an affect theory there is no need to ground emotional complexity and its pain in a narrative of primordial loss in the mind of the infant. Negative affect is inevitable in the normal fluctuations of the rates on neural firing that in turn trigger changes in affective responses. In fact, neural firing must fluctuate because a sustained level will trigger either the distress or anger affect in response. In Tomkins's scheme, for instance, shame "is an innate auxiliary affect and a specific inhibitor of continuing interest and enjoyment" (2:123). Any stimulus that inhibits a positive affect without completely extinguishing it will trigger the negative shame auxiliary. It may need to be clarified that having the shame affect is not the same as feeling the emotion of shame. The affect is known most often as a subtle and passing movement of mood in which interest or pleasure wanes even momentarily. The point is that the experiential tension of which Bogel speaks is a normal function of changing rates of neural firing. Cognition can intervene in these processes to maintain as positive a response as possible, but the experimentation necessary to evolutionary

success is disruptive of complacency. The seemingly
inevitable return of the negative is a motivational
necessity that will likely become associated with losses in
experience, but every negative affect is not the resurgence
of the primal loss.

Psychoanalysis reduces the complexities of the
literature to an inevitable narrative of failure as writers
attempt to compensate for an infantile experience of
traumatic loss. There is in such a reading a moral
reductionism which does not account for positive and
creative imagination. This limits our understanding of
individual texts, but just as significantly, it limits our
ability to see changes in culture's management of
emotionality. The Freudian model offers little room for
cultural diversity; what was true of interaction for
Oedipus is true of interaction today and universally so.
Freud hoped to create a cultural theory, but instead, he
universalized a cultural behavior and foreclosed on the
possibility of a theory which could accommodate the
diversity of cultural behaviors.

As a result, psychoanalysis cannot account for
psychology as a cultural phenomenon. It is significant that
while Bogel begins by noting that the sense of
insubstantiality was widespread and significant in the

eighteenth century, his conclusions about the literature

 pertain only to the thoughts of the individual writers.

They participate in the dissemination of ideas, but this is

the realm of ideas that he earlier discounts as a source of

the change in which he is interested. He begins by noting

the cultural context but narrows his conclusion in keeping

with the limitations of his psychological theory.

The cultural participation of the literature becomes

more visible within the context of an affective economy

which satisfies Bogel's stated preference for a theory in

which the complexities of perception and interaction are

psychological characteristics rather than products of

psychological trauma.

Within an affective model, the human condition is not

the individual, futile quest for the reclamation of a lost

union, but the communal nurturing of interdependent selves

within a flexible social structure. There is no communal

frustration of an individual desire for a return to a lost

substantiality, but rather an ongoing maintenance of

substantiated selves as a function of communal interaction.

Culture then becomes not merely the place in which the

individual searches for the lost object, but a place in

which a community negotiates the production and

distribution of a communal resource. The basic value that

the affective economy creates and distributes is the positive affect of approval, whether by individuals or symbols of collective approval. Such a negotiation is visible in Bogel's analysis.

Bogel's explanation of the rhetoric of substantiality must take into account that religious beliefs survived as writers turned away from the transcendent in search of more substantial experience in everyday life. The coexistence of belief in the transcendent and the conviction of its troublesome insubstantiality appears to be a contradiction. Bogel finds in the literature that many writers reconciled the contradiction by assuming a split in the nature of experience between the fact of existence and the degree of existence. Religious belief continues to establish the fact of existence even as it fails to establish an adequate degree of existence. The first way of knowing is regulated by the criterion of logical consistency; religion makes sense to these thinkers. But what is the criterion by which we know the *degree* of existence? The writers that Bogel studies assume that the feeling of insubstantiality can be addressed by a literature with more material and immediate objects and subjects. But this approach does not produce more substantial experience. So they conclude that contradiction is inevitable. Affect theory offers another

way to resolve the contradiction.

An affect theory identifies the criterion of existential degree as positive affect generated by communal approval and associated with the self. The substance of experience is directly or indirectly a function of communal approval. The value of an idea in the affective economy is the degree of cultural approval that it enjoys, not the logical consistency of the idea.

Bogel points out that atheism was very fashionable in some circles at the end of the eighteenth-century, To espouse atheism was to identify oneself among the adventurous, non-conformists and to gain approval and positive affect for doing so. At the same time, the culture maintained the value of religious belief, and it was widely understood that most skeptics maintained fundamental religious beliefs. The intellectual contradiction is not a problem in affective terms. The culture gives its approval to both religious and skeptical ideas and this makes cultural approval available to individuals who can cognitively associate the self with either idea. Their ideas may be logically contradictory, but they are not affectively contradictory. When retrieved as scripts and assembled with other stimuli in the central assembly, both ideas carry the positive affect of communal approval.

The complication arises when logical consistency itself gains communal approval, and contradiction becomes associated with negative affect in a script in memory. Then the affective contradiction neutralizes both terms in the central assembly. In order to gain the positive affect associated with the approval for logical consistency, one must refuse to embrace logically contradictory scripts; otherwise, their affects simply cancel each other. Cultures are full of contradictory myths and evaluative associations as sub-cultures compete for control of the economy. The work of cognition and the central assembly is to perceive and compare the culture's complex distribution of its collective approval. The central assembly only adds and subtracts intensities of affect carried by scripts in memory; whether or not one values logical consistency determines what scripts are in memory for retrieval.

We gain a new perspective on the work of ideology generally when we appreciate the difference between information in the brain and the competition to associate positive affect with particular information. Logical consistency is not inherently a value as it is often mistaken considered by intellectuals.

A cultural theory that includes an affective economy moves much of the complexity of self/other interactions

into the structure of cultural values--the structure of feeling. With such a theory, the real complexity of cultural values can be brought into the system. Cultures have layers of contradictory value systems created and cultivated by a multitude of subcultures both cooperative and competitive. Individuals make and break allegiances with many groups and communities within the collective. Each of these subcultures has its own evaluative distribution. The calculus by which the individual mind selects and introjects some number of these is another layer of complexity. In order to find patterns in this complexity, an affect theory looks for culture's organization of inherent affective responses in fulfillment of its self-substantiating imperative.

Bogel's book, like Williams's book, identifies a structure of feeling operating below and behind the subject of its analysis. Both document literature's response to changes at this psychological level but neither has a psychological model that can accommodate this level. Bogel and writers of the late eighteenth century identify a felt component of experience that is not explainable in traditional terms. Williams and the writers of the nineteenth century ascribe this feeling to a communal structure and look for ways to integrate it into the

political. Today, critics who are committed to cultural constructionist models are returning to the subject of emotion in the same pursuit. This dissertation hopes to make the case that Tomkins's affect theory and related ideas are the logical place to look.

Coincident with challenges to economic and political hierarchies in the nineteenth century is a challenge to the traditional distribution of the communal approval that is necessary to the substantiation of selves. Social class not only distributes wealth and power unequally: it also distributes positive affect unequally through its associations of class with individual dignity. In their democratizing sympathies, poets try to imagine how cultural practices might be adjusted so as to make the affective economy more democratic without increasing the danger of contagious affect.

The role of culture in containing emotional contagion within a social order is clarified when the emotional goal is seen to be the substantiation of selves within an affective economy. Nineteenth-century British culture faces an affective dilemma in its need to create ample positive affect for all at the same time that it contains the competition for affect, and the amplifying tendencies of affect, within its hierarchical organizing structure.

Behind the hunger of the poor and their emotional volatility in the street is the more destabilizing assault on the traditional affective economy by the bourgeoisie after the model of the American Revolution. The call for liberty is a demand for a new affective economy in which class distinctions no longer give privileged access to social respect and dignity. The appearance of concern with both emotion and social structures at the beginning of the nineteenth century reflects the social disruption spreading outward from changes in the affective economy.

The poets considered in the following chapter are challenged by their cultural situations to imagine meaningful experience within a contracting repertoire of affective interactions. The analysis here will focus on the ways in which they resist and encourage changes in the affective economies within which individuals negotiate the substantiation of their communal selves.

Chapter 2

Affective Community in the Coleridgean Imagination

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, often disparaged for his German idealism, can be seen to be the first to bring into literature the affective line of thought that Redding finds in the post-Kantians and seeks to rehabilitate. Coleridge's debt to Schelling is well known, but just as Redding finds Hegel's affectivity to have been misunderstood, the same misunderstanding can be seen in critical treatments of Schelling's influence on Coleridge.

As Tomkins's affect theory is consistent with, and illustrative of, Hegel's "intersubjective recognition" (133), so, I will argue, an affect theory modeled on Tomkins is helpful in clarifying Romantic affectivity as Coleridge brings that line of thought from Schelling into Romanticism. In the affective context, Coleridge's use of imagination is a pursuit of positive affect through access to communal resources stored in memory. In the three poems considered in this chapter, I will examine the variations of this basic pattern that occur as the conditions of the speakers vary, but in each case, the pattern is consistent: the speaker's imagination is triggered to affective sensitivity, stimulating the retrieval of affectively

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potent, communal memories, which amplify his positive

affect and make it possible for him to return to

sympathetic, direct interactions with people around him.

These poems demonstrate the place of imagination in an

affective economy both in the advantages that this presents

and in the limitations that imagination imposes. In

Coleridge's poems present, imagination is neither an

idealist escape from self nor an individualist self-

satisfaction, but an access to culturally generated

affective resources that lead him back to a living

community. I propose that an affective reading contrasts to

readings of Coleridge that focus on imagination and feeling

as individual phenomena.

David Vallins calls Coleridge "the ultimate exemplar

of Romantic psychology in most important senses we can give

to that expression" (10). He continues:

> His emphasis on the internal or subjective,
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> indeed, is reflected in his adoption of
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> Schelling's theory of a single productive process
>
> underlying all aspects of consciousness, whereby
>
> the act of perception is explained as an earlier
>
> or lower form of the imaginative power expressed
>
> in works of philosophy and art. Through this
>
> theory, the external world . . . becomes merely

another aspect of subjective experience.

(2)

Vallins assumes that Coleridge has adopted the subjectivism attributed to Schelling and that Coleridge's poetry and prose therefore

> assert the overwhelming importance of subjective
> experience as against the objective worlds
> described by natural science and empiricist
> philosophy. In so doing, however, they also
> express with unusual intensity a
> characteristically Romantic sense of alienation,
> and an associated desire to rediscover a sense of
> unity between the self and its social or physical
> environment. (2)

Clearly, Coleridge is seeking a sense of unity, but Vallins identifies the turn to Schellingian subjectivism as an escape from reality rather than as a search for the source of the sense of unity. Where Redding finds in Schelling an affective line of thought that necessitates communal experience, Vallins finds an escapist idealism and concludes:

> That the flight from alienation into ideals of
> unity plays so central a part in Coleridge's

writing, indeed, is among the factors which make it particularly representative of the psychological patterns that characterize Romanticism more generally. (3)

Vallins does not see the intersubjective significance of Schelling's subjectivism just as Redding predicts when he points out that some of Schelling's work "can seem to reflect a complete abandonment of that 'realistic' dimension of his thinking reflected in his philosophy of nature for a type of mystical platonism" (138). However, Redding's reading of Schelling, like his reading of Hegel, recommends that critics not

lose sight of the continuing connection here to [Schelling's] more realistic thought about the natural world. Schelling's focus on art, symbolism, and myth is bound up with a concern with finding the objective, material forms within which those mental processes dealt with as embodied within the organism could gain an extra-organismic or cultural form. (138).

Redding's reading of Schelling suggests that Coleridge was likely pursuing a more materialist philosophy toward the source of the communal. I will argue that an affective reading demonstrates that the turn to imagination leads to

communal experience regardless of intentions otherwise and, in Coleridge's case, imagination delivers the speaker from alienation back to community.

Using "The Eolian Harp," "Frost at Midnight" and "Dejection: an Ode," this chapter will argue that Coleridge's poetry demonstrates a consistent response to the need for positive affect. Each of these poems explores the possibilities and limitations of the imaginative satisfaction of this need and has to access what David S. Miall calls an "internal logic of feeling beyond the delineation of states of 'passion' or 'pathos'" (37).

The tension in "The Eolian Harp" stems from the speaker's facility with imaginatively stimulating his own affective responses. His self-stimulation of positive affect exemplifies the Romantic ideal of imaginative creativity but also exemplifies the destabilizing potential that makes affect a public danger. In this case, the threatened public is Sara, the wife of the speaker who does not share his exhilaration with his imaginative creativity. The contrast in what constitutes two different affective economies is clear in the juxtaposition of the first two stanzas, the first being poetically and morally conventional and the second being Coleridge's Romantic alternative. I will return to a more thorough examination

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of the conventionality of the first stanza, but first, I would like to consider the affective processes in the second passage in which the speaker celebrates his imaginative virtuosity.

In line 15 the affective shift in Coleridge's strategy begins with the personification of the eolian harp in the simile comparing it to a coy maid in the arms of her lover. The eolian harp on the windowsill sounds "Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover" whose "sweet upbraiding . . . must needs/Tempt to repeat the wrong" (15-7); the affective potency of the image overwhelms the ostensible poetic intention of modifying an aural image of the wind. This is an example of the prosopopoeia that will, late in the century, earn Romanticism criticism for its indulgence in the "pathetic fallacy." However, the feelings associated with objects is elicited by the affective encoding that allows those objects to be processed by the affect system. The image of the coy maid recalls the affective intensity of a cultural courting ritual that is associated with that phrase.

The sexual connotations of the coy maid's "sweet upbraiding" are the feature of the simile that is likely to gain attention. However, Coleridge does not need such an erotic image to describe the sound of the wind in the

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eolian harp. In fact, there is a promiscuous implication that he must mute or risk being merely vulgar. The value of a seduction ritual to the poem is its affective intensity, not its sexual suggestion. As was explained in the previous chapter, the sex drive is a rather weak and fragile motivation without the support of the interest and enjoyment affects which bring it into association with the self in ways that make it compelling and complexly cultural. Seen in terms of this psychology, the maid's coy response is most importantly part of a cultural courting ritual that negotiates the affective complement to the sexual drive.

Communities have a stake in the affective compatibility of reproductive couples because, while the sexual drive might be adequate for creating offspring in some primal ancestor of humans, the sex drive cannot create the psychologies that we recognize as human. While it is generally recognized that the development of the nuclear family was an economic accommodation of an industrializing workforce, it is often not noted that industrialization altered interactive possibilities and that changes in marriage and the family are also explainable as an accommodation of an increasing privatization of the need for positive affect. This need is the point of contention

between the speaker and Sara in "The Eolian Harp."

The visible and aural expressions of coyness are parts of an ensemble of affects that are culturally scripted so as to facilitate the affective transaction that is courting. The synesthesia of sound and sight in Coleridge's comparative figures suggests their association in affective expressions. The affective combination that most people would identify as coy involves a combination of affects that represent the complex interaction of the maid's pleasure and her awareness that her behavior is culturally marginal. The coy maid's head is turned down in the shame affect while her eyes look up to maintain the eye contact of the interest affect, and a smile, though perhaps faint, communicates approval and the enjoyment affect. It is part of the definition of the word "coy" that the shame affect in the coy expression is at least somewhat "affected," meaning that her affect is not the automatic response usually associated with emotion but is a mixed communication of automatic and conscious responses. A complicated communication is taking place in which the maid is tempting her lover to "repeat the wrong" of his caress while both know that a cultural transgression is possible.

Coyness is, then, a cultural ritualization of what on the surface appears to be the violation of cultural codes.

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If we understand the maid's behavior to be a self-serving act of individual desire, it can be dismissed as that of a morally compromised seductress enticing her lover across moral boundaries. But our immediate recognition of the coy expression and Coleridge's intention that it should contribute to his poetic image of "joyance every where" (29), indicates that it is common and culturally endorsed.

What appears a contradiction of moral values in both the maid and her lover is better understood as a negotiation of affective communities between them. Moral codes announce the affective potencies that dominant communities bring to the negotiation, but minority communities can displace them with affective intensity disproportionate to their size. Any instance of deviancy indicates that there are affective communities, however small, that are supporting the individuals who deviate.

The maid's coyness indicates that she wants more affective amplification but is withholding consent for a sexual consummation and that she has communal approval for that behavior. It is misleading to see this as primarily sexual. Coyness is primarily and intensely affective; its whole purpose is the intensification of affect without its dissipation in sexual consummation. The non-sexual essence of Coleridge's simile is clear also in the fact that the

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moral violation that is foregrounded by the coy expression
need not be a sexual one. A child caught with her hand in
the cookie jar might opt for a coy interaction if she felt
that to be affectively advantageous. The child who does so
is not seeking satisfaction of Oedipal impulses; she is
seeking an interaction of intense positive affect and has
learned a ritual script that facilitates it. To read
Coleridge's simile without this affective significance is
to miss the importance of its cultural work.

The seduction ritual also exhibits the conditions of
the affective dilemma. There is a communal constituency
for suppression of the social dangers presented by the
affective appetites of the lovers, and another constituency
that is more permissive in its recognition of the psychic
need for intense affect. The culture has authorized an
accommodation of this dilemma and the maid's coy expression
of "sweet upbraiding" signals that she has chosen that
affective transaction.

It may be noticed that the phenomenon I have analyzed
here bears some resemblance to the attraction of the
forbidden fruit. As commonly understood, it is the
violation of restrictions that produces the emotional
payoff and makes the forbidden fruit attractive. I would
argue that we are never attracted to the loss of approval.

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Instead, we choose one community of approval over another. The forbidden behavior is attractive when it earns one the approval of a more valued community of approval. The pleasure of the forbidden fruit is the expectation that the gain in approval will more than compensate for any possible loss. The coy maid is attracted by the forbidden fruit to the extent that the expected approval of the more permissive community, in which her lover is included, can be balanced against the disapproval of the larger community. Behavior is always a choice between communities, not a denial of community.

I am suggesting that the resolution of contradiction that Coleridge attributed to the unifying Spirit acting through organic form can be modeled as the psychology of the affect system. The production of joy in the face of contradiction is the evidence from which Coleridge concludes that the human mind is connected to the unifying and universal Spirit. In affective terms, this joy is explained by the fact that the affect/cognition system operates unconsciously to align the self with the most advantageous assemblage of affective communities for that individual. Behaviors seem contradictory because cultural generalizations of values can never represent the complexity of the system.

The affective conflict of the coy maid simile is
followed in the poem by the simile of the elfin world. Here
too, there is an accommodation of an affective conflict
that Coleridge wishes to resolve in favor of positive
affect. The eolian harp's "floating witchery of sound" (20)
is "As twilight elfins make, when they at eve / Voyage on
gentle gales from fairy-land" (21-2). As with the seduction
simile, this one is not purely innocent. In British
folklore, the spirit entities were responsible for much of
the disorder in common life including that caused by the
puzzling spontaneity of human emotion. These spirits are
often mischievous, inhabiting the moral gray areas where
playful enthusiasm approaches the mean spirited. These are
gray areas of the affective economy in which there are
competing affective communities of roughly equal affective
potency that makes it difficult to predict how individuals
will behave. An example is Robin Goodfellow, the Puck in
Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Puck's mischief
in the forest explains the emotional volatility of the
young lovers as their affective alliances shift
unpredictably and amplify to unreasonable proportions.

The Puck personifies the unconscious source of affect
in a way that accommodates the tension of the affective
dilemma. The elves are joyous because they are free of

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human moral restraints and punishments that would suppress
the free amplification of positive affect. This makes them
disruptive of social order in the natural world and a
recurrent annoyance for humans. Still, they are also the
personification of the "Goodfellow" who is always approving
and smiling. While they personify minor disorder, they also
signify that this disorder is the act of a fun-loving force
that likes us. This approval redeems the disorder so that
people can find some positive affect in negative
circumstances.

The spirits of English folklore do not deny suffering,
but they make available an affective transaction that aids
individuals in restraining the amplification of negative
affect. They give people an approving personality behind
negative events. Coleridge's fantasy is not an individual
escape into pleasant illusion, but an individual access to
the culturally constructed scripts that are there to
generate the positive affect that is necessary to psychic
survival. The coy maid simile is also a script by which
individuals gain access to the culture's source of positive
affect in organized ways.

Signifiers acquire and deploy potent affective
encoding by virtue of their cultural use. There is a
constant negotiation and competition between subgroups over

this encoding as each tries to maximize its access to the community's positive affect. But the use of affectively potent signifiers is not the only way in which poetry can manipulate the affective responses of readers.

Poetic form can increase affective responses by directing the unconscious mind to process stimuli in ways that strategically suppress the cognitive component of the affect/cognition interaction. Poetic content selects which affects are triggered while poetic form adjusts the participation of cognition in the processing of that affect.

In the passages of "The Eolian Harp" previously described in terms of their affective content there are three parallel formal effects that combine in the affective result. The first of these is a movement toward increasing imaginative abstraction in the poem's first two stanzas. The poem begins in the real interaction of Coleridge and Sara, moves to an imagined human interaction in the seduction simile, then to the semi-human realm of elves, and finally to the ideal, utopian realm of fairyland. As the degree of abstraction increases, there is an increase in the freedom of the imagination to select and combine affectively evocative images.

However, while increased abstraction increases the

number of objects available for recall into the affective mix, it also diminishes their affective potency because cognition exerts the control that Freud called "the reality principle." The more abstracted the image is from experience as recorded in memory, the more likely it is that cognition will retrieve the negatively encoded memories with which culture suppresses escapes into imagination. The more abstracted from experience the images become, the harder it becomes to suspend disbelief, to use Coleridge's own terms. In order to do this, the poetic movement that eases restrictions on the retrieval of affective memories must also ease the cognitive testing of the imaginative scenario. Coleridge's passage uses its second parallel effect for this purpose.

As a complement to its imaginative freedom, the poem subjects the reader to an increasing rhetorical complexity. Here is a paraphrase of the string of comparisons of Coleridge's imaginative flight in lines 13-25: the eolian harp is clasped by the window's casement and is caressed by the wind as a coy maid is embraced and caressed by her lover. The sound of the wind in the harp is like the voice of the coy maid until the breeze builds and its sound becomes like that of elves flying from fairyland where melodies are like birds hovering around flowers.

Besides the logical difficulty of so many shifting vehicles in so few lines, there are changes in the figures that further frustrate any attempt to logically follow the associative chain. Including the first stanza, the poem moves from the prosaic description of the environment of the speaker and Sara, to the similes of the coy maid and the elf that synthesize the wind's motion and its sound, to the symbolic representation of the organic source of life in the synthesis of sound and motion in the melodies in fairyland, which is, in turn, modified by the simile of the birds. Each step increases semantic and interpretive complexity until it is untenable to a reading that is also attentive to scansion. The passage is not an example of what some critics have charged is Coleridge's imaginative confusion; it is an example of Coleridge's strategic collapse of semantic cohesion in the service of the affective intensity that is the third parallel effect.

In "The Eolian Harp," affective intensity is established with the easy recognition of that intensity in the seduction ritual, one of culture's most affective. While the images become more and more imaginative, they maintain the same sense of action suspended in a tension of sheer, generative vitality, straining for realization. Fairyland is a place "Where Melodies round honey-dropping

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flowers,/Footloose and wild, like birds of Paradise,/Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untam'd wing!" (23-25). The sense of pleasurable tension is enhanced by separating the subject, Melodies, from its verbs, "pause" and "perch," by two lines. Between the coy maid's "sweet upbraiding" and the birds hovering round honey-dropping flowers, the affective intensity remains as the sexuality of the image becomes abstract.

Coleridge's rhetorical complexity frustrates the formation of cognitive scripts that might intervene as consistent affective intensity opens into the increasing imaginative freedom of fantasy. This is not a suspension of logic but a selection of affective logic that allows the mind to make the "willing suspension of disbelief." Even in the most imaginative vehicles, Coleridge works within the affective, cultural logic of his images.

The affective dilemma expresses itself in every level of interaction as the need for positive affect strains the cultural accommodation of that need. "The Eolian Harp" enacts this dilemma in Sara's displeasure with the speaker's intimation of the logical consequences of his imaginative success. The denouement of the poem's drama is in line 44 when the speaker asks:

> And what if all of animated nature

Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,

That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps,

Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,

At once the Soul of each, and God of all? (44-8)

This is the first place in the speaker's revery that Sara responds because this is the point at which he proposes that his self-cultivated euphoria is, in fact, a manifestation of the divine in human experience. As a personal imaginative enjoyment, the exercise does not trouble Sara. However, when Coleridge asks "And what if," he proposes that far-reaching consequences follow from his discovery of an imaginative access to the divine source of joy. If he is right, then promoting the practices that can elevate humans to this communion with God must surely be the moral obligation of the society as a whole. Sara is most concerned not about the theological significance of the speaker's imagination but about the practical consequences of his desire to extrapolate from his psycho-spiritualism to the political.

If we consider the poem for its autobiographical implications, then the Sara of the poem is Sara Fricker who married Coleridge in preparation for his Pantisocracy scheme at the same time that Coleridge's co-enthusiast, Robert Southey, married Sara's sister, Edith. At the time

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of the poem's composition, Sara and Coleridge are living apart from Edith and Southey because Coleridge and Southey had an angry falling-out over money and politics while trying to plan their radically egalitarian community.

In the emotional failure of Coleridge and Southey, the Pantisocracy scheme mirrors the historical pattern of other ill-fated, enthusiastic movements. Foremost at that time, of course, was the recent history of the infighting among the French Republicans that degenerates into the Reign of Terror, but as Jon Mee points out, the fear of "enthusiasm" has deep roots in Britain's history of internal civil strife and was widely associated with destructive unrest. What Sara sees in the speaker's imagination in the poem is a familiar progression in which he begins in personal affective amplification and then projects into a social theory that he expects will institutionalize that affective intensity. This progression would be neither surprising nor welcome to Sara, and the speaker's acceptance of her correction in the poem testifies to his own appreciation of the danger.

The poem ends with the speaker's rejection of the universal spirit and a humble acceptance of a traditional relation to the Christian God in which he is to limit himself to praising God in awe. This is not hypocritical.

His use of both pagan and Christian theologies begins from the same premise. What the speaker says about his fundamental belief in the Christian God is equally true of his belief in the Universal Spirit. In both concepts he knows "The Incomprehensible . . . with Faith that inly *feels*" (60). The difference between this Christian orthodoxy and Coleridge's universal spirit is the degrees of imaginative abstraction necessary for an individual to access the communal approval symbolically invested in the communal myth. This is the difference that the poem's first two stanzas enacts.

The speaker acknowledges that the Christian God is to be perceived in "awe" (59) and that this stance is appropriate for a person "wilder'd and dark" (63) as he is. He embraces Christianity for its utility as a redemptive myth by which one revalues negative affect through communal approval of heroic suffering. But while redemption is essential, it is also limited. When one looks to God with awe, one looks with the fear that is an inescapable component of awe. The speaker's access to positive affect must begin with the negative affect of fear from which the Christian affective economy promises that one will be rescued. The redemptive myth rescues him from "the fall" into amplifying negative affect, promising that his

suffering will earn enough approval to arrest the fall but not enough so that he will lose his obligatory fear when he looks in awe upon God. The contrast between the speaker's awe for God and the exuberance of the passage previously analyzed exemplifies the different transactions that can operate in the same affective economy.

At stake for Sara and the speaker is not a theological disagreement about the future of his immortal soul; it is the conduct of their lives within their society. Indeed, what would happen if this seductive ability of the imagination were disseminated across the population and all lovers were given public sanction to freely compromise moral standards on the rationale that the intensity of their interaction was a communion with the divine? Or if God's presence were associated with "idle flitting phantasies" (40) traversing "indolent and passive brain[s]" (42)? The Burkean fear of theoretically driven social disorder looms large in the poem's context, but this political fear reflects the destabilization of the discipline of cultural emotion.

"The Eolian Harp" is an explanation of the waning of Coleridge's radical politics, but it is also a nascent manifesto of a new mode of feeling and its social cultivation. "The Eolian Harp" demonstrates the imaginative

manipulation of the affective responses that initiate the development of cultural emotion. The problem in the poem is that the speaker is quite competent to self-stimulate and threatens the social order by that ability.

The poem is usually read as a confrontation of pantheism and Christianity. When spiritual belief is understood as a symbol of affective communities, however, the confrontation over religion takes place as a confrontation of two visions of the affective economy: the traditional in which dominant cultural scripts quickly co-opt the energies of pre-emotional affect into emotional categories, or the new Romantic mode of feeling in which a much larger repertoire of symbolic objects and a slowed development of pre-emotional affect into emotion produce a more intense but less acculturated affective economy.

In "The Eolian Harp," nature is an imaginative resource with which the speaker seems to have an inherent facility, but the exuberant use of that resource is communally problematic. In 1797, Coleridge's collaboration with Wordsworth begins, and in the conversation poems that follow, the problem in the poem changes. In "Frost at Midnight," the speaker does not have immediate access to imaginative stimulation. He is self-conscious about his declining ability and is more aware of the unconscious

components of affective responses. He cannot generate

positive affect from the stimuli around him, but must

return to a time in the past where potent affective

memories are still available.   .

When the poem begins, the speaker is alone with his

sleeping child on a winter night that is so still that it

"vexes meditation with its strange / And extreme

silentness" (9-10). He is discomforted by this mental

paralysis and laments that his mind fixes on a fluttering

bit of soot on the fireplace grate, which a superstition

calls a *stranger* and claims is a harbinger of a visit by a

friend. The speaker, inspired by the *stranger*, reflects on

his mind's indolent state and the fact that it "transfuses

into all its own delights" (23) so that the bit of soot on

the grate becomes "a companionable form / With which I can

hold commune. Idle thought" (19-20). The triviality of the

mind's occupation with a bit of soot reminds him of the

folklore of the *stranger* and the time in his past when he

was a schoolboy and had a "most believing superstitious

wish" (29) that made him take the *stranger's* promise of a

visitor very seriously.

When he was a boy at school, he believed in the

superstition, and in that harsh, friendless environment

typified by "the stern preceptor's face" he would dream

about fair-day in the village of his early childhood and

derive pleasure and comfort from the memory of the church-

bells that

rang

> From morn to evening all the hot fair-day,
>
> So sweetly that they stirred and haunted me
>
> With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
>
> Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
>
> (34)

He would fall asleep dreaming of these "soothing things"

and in class the next morning would still be waiting for

the promise of the *stranger* to be fulfilled by the visit of

a "Townsman, or aunt, or sister" (47). No such visits

occurred judging from the fact that the speaker turns

abruptly from his memory to his plans for a better life for

his son who, he promises, will grow up in intimate

interaction with a natural environment.

The psychology of the poem develops from the contrast

of its two harbingers of communal nurturance. In describing

the bells as "articulate sounds of things to come" the poem

contrasts the bells to the *stranger* on the grate. The bells

give him "wild pleasure" while the *stranger* has negative

associations because it never produced the visit of a

friend that could have relieved the speaker's loneliness.

The sound of the bells has a positive association because they rang in announcement of the village fair-day during which the boy enjoyed the festive communal attentions of a village celebration. The people whose attention is associated with those bells are the same that he wishes the *stranger* would bring to him in his later years in school.

The peculiar logic of "Frost at Midnight" is that the speaker's plans for his son make no mention of the need for him to have intense exposure to a loving community. Instead, while the speaker is thinking of the disappointment he suffers for believing in the *stranger*, he declares that his son "shalt learn far other lore / and in far other scenes" (55). He will have direct access to the "Great universal teacher" (68) who "shall mould / Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask" (68-9). The universal teacher will give his son an intense spirit that will always seek communion with its source. This is the spirit that the speaker lacks as he narrates the poem. His mind will not seek the essence in the objects around him, so he is not able to be moved by the "secret ministry" (1) of the frost. His son, however, will see the intentionality of the Spirit in the icicles "Quietly shining to the quiet moon" (79).

The speaker's associationism understands that

childhood happiness has attached itself to the sound of the bells so that years later that memory remains affectively potent. He assumes, however, that the happiness is a natural condition of the child's state. If the speaker made the Hegelian connection between the sound of the bells and the "intersubjective recognition" that created the pleasure, it would not make sense to assume that a natural environment by itself could enrich his son's imaginative life. Pleasure is associated with the sound of the bells, but the pleasure must first be created by the duplication of positive affect found in communal interaction. In the speaker's childraising strategy he reveals the affective limitations of the Romantic program of affective manipulation. The affective encoding of memory fades with time and use until it is no longer capable of contributing significantly to the substantiation of the self. Direct interaction, like that he had as a small child, is the more potent affect and is the source on which all affective encoding depends.

There is an intuition of the communal nature of affect in the speaker's imagination of his son's future. He attributes the advantages of rural life to the spirit in nature. In effect, he replaces the human contact in which he has no faith with the individuals' interaction with a

deity. With this he enacts the affective strategy in which individuals align themselves with the affective community that symbolizes its collective affect in the personified abstraction of a deity. In the case of the speaker's intentions for his son, the affective potential is even less than in a traditional church, for there is no real community of others in his nature religion. The lone Romantic, communing with nature is reprocessing the affective encoding of previous experience, which loses its intensity with time and use. The speaker's "self-watching subtilizing mind" (27) is the modern compensation for the need to suppress the kind of publicly shared affect that is celebrated in a village fair-day, and the speaker exemplifies the limits of imaginative self-substantiation as compensation for the modern suppression of public affect.

"Frost at Midnight" demonstrates the Romantic intention to encode natural objects with affective potency. It demonstrates also that the speaker has to return in memory to the time when he had enough positive experience to affectively encode the environment for future reuse. After he traces his own imaginative abilities to the community of his childhood, he can newly imagine the frost moving his son's imagination. At the poem's beginning, he

knows of but is unmoved as "The frost performs its secret ministry" (1). At the poem's end, he can imagine the frost through a child's eyes in a feeling interaction as "silent icicles, Quietly shining to the quiet moon" (78). The speaker begins in a muted affective state. He follows associations to the distant past in which there were potent communal experiences, and when those experiences trigger affective amplification, he returns to the present to sympathize with others.

"Dejection: An Ode" differs considerably from its origins as the "Letter to Sara Hutchinson." J. Robert Barth S.J. reviews the critical assessment of the two versions so as to contextualize his own reading. Among those critics is Reeve Parker who, as Barth reports, finds that the ode is "in effect and even perhaps in intention, a kind of therapy" (181). In explaining why Parker finds the poem to be "a much more positive poetic experience than do many other critics," Barth quotes Parker's contention that

> readers . . . have presumed a greater continuity
> than actually exists between the concerns of a
> poet like Coleridge, at the turn of the nineteenth
> century, and the characteristic preoccupation of
> many twentieth-century writers with alienation,
> self-doubt, and distrust of the artful

imagination. (182)

I would like to follow Parker's positive reading with an analysis of the affective process of the lines in which Parker locates the affirmative turn in the poem and where he finds a "'correlative to a mind that, having gone through the process of deliberately exploring the melancholy grief with which the poem opens, is winning its way to a substantial calm'" (182). Like the previous two poems considered, "Dejection: An Ode" follows the speaker's imaginative path to positive affect. The process is far more difficult and the affective reward more muted, but the pattern is the same. Unconscious affective processes are triggered. One significant difference is that in "Dejection: An Ode," at the crucial moment, the speaker does not recall images of his past so as to elicit a positive affective response. Rather, he calls up images from the theater, emphasizing more the communal nature of the resources that produce a change in his affective condition.

A turning point in the speaker's feelings occurs in the act of will with which he expels the "viper thoughts . . . Reality's dark dream!" (94-5) that have oppressed his spirit and turns to "listen to the wind" (96) in the eolian harp. He first hears in its strength a frightening, chaotic

sound "of the rushing of an host in rout, With groans of
trampled men with smarting wounds-- / At once they groan
with pain, and shudder with the cold!" (110). This passage
announces the passing of the speaker's imaginative
paralysis, but finds in the wind the negative affect of a
collapsing community. Then the wind slows and tells

> A tale of less affright
>
> And tempered with delight,
>
> As Otway's self had framed the tender lay--
>
> 'Tis of a little child
>
> Upon a lonesome wild
>
> Not far from home, but she hath lost her way,
>
> And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
>
> And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother
>
> hear. (121-25)

The delight elicited by the child's story is the first
expression of positive feeling in the poem and indicates
that the speaker's mind, which first returned to
sensitivity with a horrible association of the strong wind,
has now become capable of a positive affect. However, Barth
asks the important question: "How can a tale that tells of
the suffering of a frightened child--her moans and grief
and fear--be a cause of 'delight' for the poet, or indeed
for anyone?" (187). This is precisely the question that has

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brought the subject of sympathy a great deal of scrutiny recently from critics who find it questionable as a socially relevant act because the "delight" of the sympathizer indicts its supposedly altruistic intentions.

Barth's explanation of the speaker's delight, however, reveals the weakness in conventional psychologies that open sympathy to a critique of emotional escapism. Barth explains that through art the grief in the experience of the child "is transformed into a tale, an artistic form, which distance the listener from the actual experience, giving it shape and meaning." From this distance

> The terrifying experience is sublimated to another
>
> level of reality . . . . For myth universalizes
>
> our experiences, showing them to be part of the
>
> larger experience of mankind; and by binding us to
>
> each other through our common humanity, especially
>
> through our common experience of suffering, myth
>
> allows us to draw strength from each other. (187)

This explanation has some consistencies with the affective theory proposed here. It recognizes that evaluative transactions take place in "another level of reality" which in affective terms is unconsciousness. Barth's reading also recognizes that the speaker's pleasure is found in a perception of community that results in a mutual

substantiation that he calls "strength."

However, Barth does not explain how the "common experience of suffering . . . allows us to draw strength from each other" except to imply that there is some realization that is "binding." The idea is likely to feel right because we intuit that suffering is lonely and pleasure is communal. But Barth's psychology is a cognitivist one that assumes that there must be an idea in the mind that "allows" us to feel, so ideas that only rationalize feeling become adopted as causes of the feeling.

An affect theory explains the speaker's, and readers', delight by the fact that the story of the lost child is told so as to counter the image of her suffering with an image of nurturing community. Barth describes the child as "irretrievably lost" (187), but the poem says she is "not far from home" (123). As the child cries for her mother, the contrast between her fear and the proximity of her mother points to the existence of a nurturing community as strongly as it does to the frightened child. The image of the child's suffering elicits in the reader the sympathetic sharing of her negative affect. But the experience is "tempered with delight" by the positive affect that enters the affective assemblage in the mind by the image of her

safe return to the nurturing approval of her community. The
delight felt by the speaker is generated from the positive
affect he shares with the community that cares for the
child. I argue that there would be no delight in this story
were it only about a child "irretrievably lost" as Barth
understands. That story calls up an image of a child slowly
dying of exposure and a failure of community that leaves
her suffering unredeemed.

There is a need for the speaker to imagine a community
of others who share his sympathy for the child, but there
is no need to believe that this "universalizes our
experience." In fact, our experience tells us the opposite.
There are many people who do not care for this child, or
any child, and would not approve of us for doing so. The
idea of a common humanity is a cultural ideology that
symbolizes an affective community that is, in fact, in
competition with many others in the affective economy.
There is ample evidence that the idea of common humanity
has a limited effect on the motivations of cultures who
continue to tolerate unnecessary suffering.

It may be that the delight felt by the speaker in
"Dejection: An Ode" is attributable to his introjection of
the humanist ideology, but besides the proximity of the
child's community, there are other affective images that

build a communal context behind the child's suffering. The reference to Otway, combined with the speaker's address to the wind as "Thou actor," (108) moves the affectivity of the passage from the negativity of destruction and "frenzy" that it has when the wind is strong to the communal environment of a theater.

In his study of Coleridge's reference to Otway, David V. Erdman notes that some critics have read this passage as a parody of the complaint genre directed at Wordsworth. While he does uncover the possibility that the reference is to the overwrought qualities of Otway's emotion, he concludes that this argument is not conclusive. I suggest that a less obscure connection is more meaningful to the internal meaning of the poem.

Otway was first a playwright of popular tragedies, notably *The Orphan*, which connects his name to both the wind as actor and the lost child. The image of the child not only places her close to home, but she is on a stage and the speaker and readers are in the audience, which is an affective community mutually concerned for the welfare of the child and mutually approving of their shared sympathetic suffering with the child. The suffering of the child, or the orphan, is redeemed by the positive affect the community directs to her and as an affective community

among themselves.

The amplification of positive affect initiated in the mixed affect of the image of the lost child amplifies quickly when assembled with the image of Sara who is being addressed by the poem's speaker. The last stanza is the speaker's hopeful blessing of Sara who needs to be visited by "gentle sleep, with wings of healing" (128). While the speaker indicates that the night will remain for him an unpleasant "vigil" (126), he has achieved a considerable degree of imaginative healing.

As in "Frost at Midnight," the speaker in "Dejection: An Ode" revives his memories of the child/community interaction and then makes sympathetic, imaginative contact with people in the present and future. When understood as a function of an affective economy, an explanation of feeling in the poem does not need to repeat the ideology of common humanity in order to explain its ability to elicit positive affect..

In order to read "Dejection: An Ode" as affirmative, it is necessary to be sensitive to the mode of feeling that is being promoted. While the speaker's wishes for Sara are in the terms of conventional hyperbole: "Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice" (139), the speaker's change is better understood in the terms of pre-emotional affect.

Wishing her joy does not make him feel joy. We are told that his night will be a vigil. But that vigil will be spent with an imagination that is again producing affectively potent images in which the speaker can access positive affect.

For all of the negative affect that is found in the "Dejection: An Ode" and "Frost at Midnight," these poems chart a path to the recovery of positive affect by the stimulation of imagination and invite readers to sympathetically share that experience. In each of the three, Coleridge investigates the conditions that allow for imagination to intervene in unconsciousness so as to cultivate positive, affective amplifications. If readers also respond unconsciously to signifiers that are unconsciously encoded, there will be aesthetic responses, and an affective reading of Coleridge will share the same obstacles that aesthetic readings have recently.

Affect theory alters questions of aesthetics by making the unconscious response to objects of all kinds part of the substantiation of the self. In *Formal Charges*, Susan Wolfson argues for changes in the anti-formalist critique so as to allow for the possibility of a non-complicit aesthetic response to poetic form. The chapter that she dedicates to Coleridge focuses on his use of comparative

figures, especially simile, as does each of the analyses above.

Wolfson begins with the conviction that something important is being lost from the reading of Romantic poetry in the anti-formalist dismissal of formal aesthetics. Her attempt at a limited rehabilitation of the aesthetic encounters but does not engage the assumption at the heart of issue because to do so requires that she prove a negative. She must prove that her aesthetic pleasure is not politically complicit. While Wolfson's sincerity is compelling, her argument is logically unconvincing as any such attempt must be if it begins, as hers does, from the psychological premises of the dominant discourse. The terms of her attempt are informative of the larger critical dilemma and the relevance of Coleridge to that dilemma.

In order to establish the possibility of an aesthetic but non-complicit reading of Coleridge, Wolfson makes the case that his poetry's rhetorical self-critique is so evident that he must have intended it to undermine the theory of textual organicism that critics contend authorizes the escapist and complicit Romantic aesthetic. This is a problematic conclusion for a number of reasons.

In most of her chapter on Coleridge, Wolfson argues that his use of form is clearly self-deconstructing. If

this were true, it would discredit the entire anti-

formalist critique that is grounded on the premise that

formalism is complicit because the rhetorical

contradictions are obscured by the pleasures of an

organicist illusion. It is only by the unconscious function

of the poetry that it is able to seduce the population into

complicity in the perpetuation of an unjust social order.

If Wolfson is correct that the self-critique is

foregrounded, then it is hard to argue that it has been

deceptive for two hundred years.

Wolfson could be understood to be making the simpler

argument that the self-critique is apparent to an

ideologically informed reader whose continued aesthetic

experience is therefore not complicit because not self-

mystifying. In other words, if I am not misled by the

organicist illusion of Romantic formalism, then my

aesthetic pleasure is not self-mystifying. This is

problematic for two reasons. First, it ignores the question

of whether anyone can ever be safe from the seductions of

her own unconsciousness. Wolfson's argument that the

ideologically enlightened can be trusted with an aesthetic

response may feel right to the similarly enlightened, but

the non-complicity of her pleasure is no more assured under

the theory than is any other aesthetic pleasure. It is

reasonable to assume that her intellectual discipline may reduce the risk, but it is the pre-rational, unconscious appetite for pleasure that makes it seductive. The critique of complicity is replete with well-intentioned people who are found to be victims of their own self-serving unconscious needs. Why should it be assumed that Wolfson's pleasure is not also an expression of the insidiousness of the dominant, hegemonic power? This is the unassailable psychological assumption at the foundation of anti-formalism. Wolfson is limited to arguing that her theoretical acumen makes it highly unlikely that her pleasure is complicit, but she cannot prove this negative.

Secondly, Wolfson's confidence in rhetorical sophistication ignores that it is the poetry's social impact that is at issue. While critics may be inclined to grant an aesthetic dispensation to Wolfson as a member of critical theory's Lukácsian vanguard, it is the pleasure of the popular masses that remains important to social reformers; it is their mystification that preserves the status quo. Wolfson argues that Coleridge intended a self-critique, but it is hard to see what difference his intention makes. He remains culpable under the terms of the critique for having disseminated an escapist pleasure to the masses who were not ideologically conscious enough to
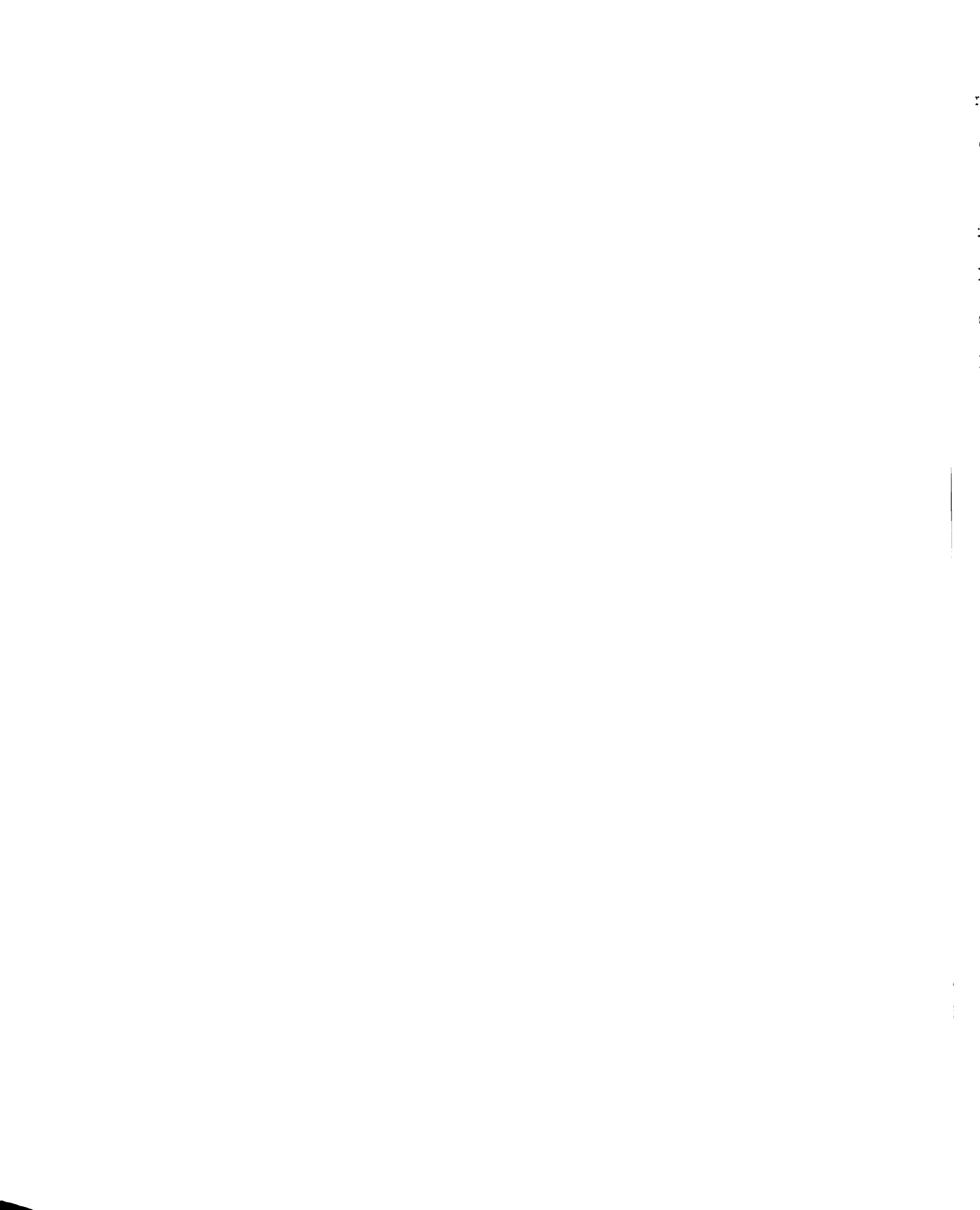
resist its seduction into complicity. His poetry remains as dangerous as ever, regardless of his intentions.

The passivist agenda of Coleridge and the Romantics is indefensible in a critical atmosphere dominated by a logically unassailable negativism. The roots of this critical hostility to the positive reading grows from a kind of post-modern reworking of theodicy. While theologians attempt to explain how a world with evil does not preclude the existence of a benevolent and omnipotent God, critical theorists try to explain the prevalence and perpetuation of social injustice in societies ostensibly committed to benevolence. The answer that is always available is that the susceptibility of humans to the pleasures of their own self-interests provides them an escape from the sacrifices required by their values. Culture becomes the mechanism of this escape, and the hostility to culture that Eric Auerbach recognized in the high-modernists extends to the pleasure that facilitates the escape in the post-modern.

The problem with this logic is not that it is untrue, but that its simplification has become habitual and exclusionary of any attempt to understand literature as a participant in a necessary cultural production of positive affect. Without a theory that comprehends the necessity of

the positive, there is no constituency for the complication of what appears to be a polemically efficient argument.

The result is that a simple logical formula finds pleasure culpable in all situations. Even the pleasure that one might take in real social progress can be found complicit by connecting the lack of more progress to pleasure's inevitable self-serving essence. Until there is utopia, there is a need to do more, and the self-serving nature of pleasure is always available as an explanation for the failure to do more.

For example, this logic underlies the recent interest in the role of sympathy in political oppression. A recent analysis of American racism by Christopher Castiglia concludes that the pleasure that abolitionists take in their social status as the sympathetic champions of suffering victims becomes a reason to covertly, and unconsciously, support the status-quo and limit the relief of the victim's suffering. Castiglia credits abolitionist sympathy for ending slavery, but finds that the sympathetic become so emotionally dependent on the prestige of their moral rectitude that they later surreptitiously condone Jim Crow. The comfortable seduction of pleasure halts the movement toward justice.

Again, I have no argument with Castiglia's conclusion

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that, in this case, the pleasure of the oppressor can be complicit; my argument is with the dominance of this approach and the result that literary criticism comes to ground its socially progressive agenda on the suppression of positive affect in the reading of literature. Castiglia acknowledges that there was a positive result from a sympathetic response, but his critique cannot help us understand how sympathy produced positive results in that case and might be cultivated in the service of further progress. Such an investigation might find that texts employed aesthetic forms to elicit positive affect which substantiated selves capable of progress. If we wish to explore this possibility, we will have much to learn from Coleridge.

Just as writers in the late eighteen-century perceived that substantiality was missing from their experience, Wolfson understands that something essential is being lost when Romantic poetry is read within these interpretive confines. In both cases, there is a reaction to the suppression of positive affect. Without an alternative model of the nature of positive affect, Wolfson can argue only that a little pleasure is not a threat; however, a little pleasure means only a little meaning, and we are again on the horns of the affective dilemma.

The political opposition to Coleridge's early thinking, including Sara Fricker's, wished to limit his ability to trigger positive affect that could threaten the social order. Coleridge's political opposition today wishes to limit his ability to trigger positive affect that does not threaten the social order. I do not propose that an affect theory can adjudicate the question of Romantic formalism's complicity, only that an affect theory justly complicates the discussion and brings it into contact with the real work of culture. Affect theory places the question of complicit pleasure in its proper context as part of an historical struggle over how the affective economy should generate and distribute the very stuff of self-preservation. In that context, the limited nature of Wolfson's ambitions for the rehabilitation of aesthetics appears as a symptom of criticism's withdrawal from engagement in the realm of culture's primary function.

In its adopted role as the cultural watchdog of complicity, literary criticism is avoiding the difficult work that Coleridge confronted when, realizing his own need for positive affect, he set out to imagine how the dissemination of this sustenance could become the primary work of culture. There is no better place to begin a reconsideration of literature's participation in this

function than in Coleridge's poetry, which as much as any other, inaugurates that study. This chapter has intended to make an exploratory attempt at that reconsideration.

Chapter 3

Wordsworth and the Leveling of the Affective Economy

When, at the bicentennial of the *Lyrical Ballads*, James A.W. Heffernan assesses the status of Wordsworth criticism, he notes the shift from William Hazlitt's characterization of Wordsworth's "leveling muse" to the political critique typified by the work of Jerome McGann, whose case against Wordsworth Heffernan summarizes as an indictment of Wordsworth's "failure to face the material facts of British life" in favor of a "harmonizing, idealizing, self-reflecting 'picture of the mind'" (237). Heffernan agrees that Hazlitt overstated the case for Wordsworth's radicalism, but he points out references to social conditions in the poems that, he argues, refute the claim that Wordsworth was avoiding these issues.

Still, it is primarily in Wordsworth's preoccupation with suffering and sympathy that Heffernan finds reason to credit Hazlitt's assertion that a "leveling muse" is at work in the poetry. Heffernan concludes that there is something significantly egalitarian at work in the poems, but he concedes that it remains "[d]ifficult if not impossible to translate into practical political reform" (247).

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Heffernan's difficulty highlights the current lack of an adequate critical theory of the interface of individual psychology and social life. Without that connection, Heffernan cannot argue that there is a politically significant effect from Wordsworth's sympathy. His intuition is easily dismissed as another "self-reflecting 'picture of the mind'" (237) as McGann claims.

In the discussion of Wordsworth that follows, I will explore how an affective psycho-cultural theory might clarify the larger social significance of Wordsworth's sympathetic program by making visible some of the phenomena that complicate McGann's critique and give substance to Heffernan's intuition. It is not my intention to argue that Wordsworth intended political consequences to follow from his work in the years after his abandonment of clearly radical politics. Rather, I will argue that an affective reading illuminates the communal nature of psychology so as to clarify how a "leveling" in the psychological might affect other spheres of life. The historicist attempt to create political consciousness by discrediting aesthetics as an escapist complicity is most problematic for leaving unexplored the interdependence of these spheres at the root of social consciousness. If we look for Wordsworth's significance in either aesthetics or politics, we will

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likely face the same conflicted conclusion as does

Heffernan. This essay proposes that in the interface of

Romantic aesthetics and Romantic ideology is a Romantic

affectology.

My thesis is that Wordsworth's poetry makes a seminal

contribution to changing the culture's affective economy to

a greater dependence on individual imagination for the

generation of positive affect. By identifying pre-emotional

affect as a separate mode of feeling, and nature as a

symbolic realm in which there is access to affective

feeling, he creates a poetry that demonstrates by example a

practical, psychological discipline for the utilization of

nature as an affective resource available to the entire

population, and tends to encourage egalitarian access to

those resources and the sympathetic organization of the

oppressed around those resources.

The elevation of nature is one of the most obvious

characteristics of Romanticism. Wordsworth's work is

heavily concentrated on understanding the associative

processes that make natural objects so potent in his own

perception. The associative heart of his psychology gives

it an affinity with the psychology proposed here that

credits the mind's affective encoding of objects and

concepts with its ability to then respond to them

affectively.

Wordsworth makes an accommodation of the affective dilemma that is consistent with the modern need to suppress the contagion of public affect and provide an alternative affective resource. Nature is promoted as a symbolic repository of communal affect that allows individual, cognitive interventions into affective processes, compensating for reduced public affect by a more private and imaginative generation of affect.

The affectivity of Wordsworth's poetry offers an alternative to what are now traditional psychological approaches. Alan Richardson observes of the "spot of time" in the story of the discharged soldier in Book IV of the *Prelude* that:

> The problems in the account of the father's death in *The Prelude* have led a number of critics to resort to psychoanalysis and speak of the event in terms of an Oedipal conflict, a resort that seems nearly inescapable if the passage is read along dramatic lines. (18)

In the passage at issue the speaker tells of a time when, at school, "The day before the holidays began, / Feverish and tired and restless, I went forth / Into the fields, impatient for the sight / Of those three horses which would

bear us home" (331). Climbing to the summit of a crag, he

watches a crossroads "With eyes intensely straining" (347)

on a windy, misty day. We get no report of the arrival of

the horses, only the news that before he had been home ten

days, his father dies:

> the event
>
> With all the sorrow which it brought, appeared
>
> A chastisememt; and when I called to mind
>
> That day so lately passed, where from the crag
>
> I looked in such anxiety of hope,
>
> With trite reflections of morality,
>
> Yet with the deepest passion, I bowed low
>
> To God who thus corrected my desires. (Wu 353-60)

He then reports that the conditions of weather and terrain

in which he had waited for the horses remained "spectacles

and sounds to which / I often would repair, and thence

would drink / As at a fountain" (368-70). This experience,

he says, is one of those that "Left a kindred power /

Implanted in my mind" (329-30) by which "our minds /

(Especially the imaginative power) / Are nourished, and

invisibly repaired" (292-94). The problem is to understand

how an apparently negative experience so encodes the

environment of its occurrence that it remains a healing one

thereafter. In other words, how does the natural

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environment of that night retain its positive associations?

Richardson reads the passage in terms of the Oedipal complex in which the pleasure of imaginative power remains in tension with repressed guilt:

> Like Oedipus, . . . the boy has arrived at a crossroads . . . and there caused his father's death through the strength and impatience of his desire; and although he speaks in terms of chastisement, the memory oddly persists as a source of strength. . . . Yet at the same time, the experience gives rise to guilt and sorrow; the illusion of imaginative power maintains itself at a considerable psychic cost. (18)

Richardson concludes that a feeling of omnipotence for having affected his father's life remains associated with the environment, but with a conflicting source of guilt.

The Freudian reading of the boy's guilt in this case rests on the assumption that the boy desires to displace the father so that he is guilty for having willed the death. However, I propose that the boy has the opposite interest. He is desperate for his father's approval. This is the reason for his "anxiety of hope" (357), and for his imagining that his father's approval will be lavish. That image amplifies the pleasure of his anticipation, but it

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also constitutes the moral transgression that he sees in his "trite reflections of morality" (358). This moral reservation reminds him that he is being arrogant to think himself worthy of such value in his father's eyes. He is chastised for his affective overreaching by the loss of his most potent source of positive affect.

The speaker has violated the culture's requirements for access to positive affect that include restrictions on exercises of imaginative self-substantiation. It is critical that the community retain control over individuals' ability to operate psychically outside of the community's cooperative order. The speaker imagines himself more approved of than is allowed and is aware of the violation as he does it. When his father dies, the lessons he has been taught about the inevitability of punishment supply the connection.

One of the problems in the account of the father's death that Richardson says leads critics to psychoanalysis is that "the memory oddly persists as a source of strength" (18) after the boy feels chastised. More precisely, I contend, it remains significant as a source of imaginative strength. The question is why does the natural environment retain positive associations with such a sorrowful real experience? Richardson's argument is that the negative

associations are repressed so that the positive can be enjoyed. My answer is that the boy feels chastised for an excessive exercise of his imaginative abilities in the realm of human interactions, and this does not extend, for him, to his relationship with the non-human. He feels that he has wrongly tried to impose his will on his relationship to his father. But this does not impugn his imaginative manipulation of the meanings he finds in natural objects. In fact, his description of nature as a source of sustenance directly follows his acceptance of God's correction.

The contrast between human and non-human realms in the speaker's mind is emphasized by the fact that while on the crag "in the deepest passion" (359), he has non-human companions. He remembers: "Upon my right hand was a single sheep, A whistling hawthorn on my left, and there, / Those two companions at my side, I watched" (344-46). These non-human entities retain the positive affect that is encoded on them while they share his passion, and they remain sustaining companions when human companions prove inadequate. The correction that he receives from God for his desire for human approval emphasizes his need for companionship in the natural world.

I agree with Richardson that "the illusion of

imaginative power maintains itself at a considerable

psychic cost" (18), but I attribute the cost to the

inevitable inadequacy of imagination to satisfy affective

needs in the long run. The speaker's experience does not so

much create a guilt that has a psychic cost as it exposes

the inadequacy of his access to positive affect through

human interaction in the first place. Wordsworth's program

aims to develop the compensatory affective resources in

nature that the poem's speaker has found and the perceptive

abilities that he displays. The spots of time in the

Prelude require an appreciation of the affectivity that is

Wordsworth's intention. That quality and its appreciation

by readers help explain the characteristics that Jack

Stillinger finds to be of historic significance in the

Lyrical Ballads.

Stillinger notes that the study of English literature

is still typically split into two parts at the publication

of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and he argues that poetry since

then has perpetuated four characteristics that are among

its innovations. Since the *Lyrical Ballads*, he concludes:

> Our poems have tended to be about ordinary people
>
> and events; the language has tended to be simpler,
>
> plainer, more conversational, more down-to-earth
>
> and concrete than it had been before; the poems

have become puzzles of ambiguity, unresolved

questions, and inconclusiveness; and, most important, the

place where the meaning is determined has

conspicuously shifted from author to the reception

side of the transaction--the individual reader.

(74)

I will argue that all of these factors contribute to making

the reader's participation more affective than emotional,

and that the characteristics that are called "ordinary,"

"simpler" and "inconclusive" are better understood as

stimuli of pre-emotional affect without accompanying

emotional scripts.

Critics, including Coleridge, have taken exception

with Wordsworth's description of his subjects and language

as ordinary. Rather, Wordsworth's more oral poetry captures

the degree to which speech relies more on affective cues to

establish affective content than do eighteenth-century

poetic conventions that tend to deliver scripts of

emotional culmination. Wordsworth's language rebels against

the literary rush to emotional completion in favor of an

invigoration of the affective process preceding that

culmination. *Lyrical Ballads* is new because it pursues this

new mode of feeling. The incertitude of the endings does

not only leave readers rationally puzzled; it leaves

cognition scrambling to resolve the mind's unconscious generation of affect into emotion. The uncertainty that Stillinger documents is not simply an intellectual puzzle; feeling is also denied an emotional completion, leaving the reader in a state of pre-emotional affect and exemplifying the changes in the affective economy in which Romanticism is a major influence.

Stillinger, referring to the ending of "Simon Lee," asserts that "[t]he reader is left hanging--feeling tricked, perhaps--trying to understand how the story connects to the feelings" (72). The scene in question is that in which Simon Lee, who was once a model of physical vitality, is now old and weakened. While trying futilely to chop through the root of a stump, he is assisted by the speaker who easily severs the root with one blow. Simon thanks him tearfully. The puzzle in the poem lies in the speaker's reaction to the event:

-I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds

With coldness still returning,

Alas! The gratitude of men

Has oftener left me mourning. (101-5)

Stillinger finds this "an extreme or irrelevant reaction to an event in which nothing more impressive has occurred than severing the root of a tree stump" (72). Simon's thanks are

out of proportion and the speaker's "mourning" seems

 inappropriate. Resolving the ambiguity requires that the

reader analyze the logic of the feelings involved. A

solution will need to intuit the logic of the affective

economy. In order to understand why the speaker mourns in

the poem, the reader must, either consciously or

unconsciously, trace the logic of the affective

significations that have passed between Simon and the

speaker.

The speaker mourns because Simon's excessive

gratitude gives evidence of the impending death of his

self. Social conventions of thanks communicate the subtle

negotiations of relative positions in the affective economy

after it is disrupted by one person doing a service for

another. Doing a service earns one the conventional show of

positive affect from the thankful person, increasing the

substantiation of the giver's self. Saying "you're welcome"

acknowledges that one has affectively advanced for having

received the thanks. Depending on subtleties of delivery

and circumstances, these conventions are manipulated to

communicate a myriad of variations in their affective

meanings, but in the poem, it is clear that Simon's thanks

reveal the desperate condition of his self. The speaker

mourns because the quality of Simon's gratitude indicates

that he is dangerously in need of positive affect. That he is so grateful indicates that Simon's self is dying along with his body. The desubstantiation of Simon's body is visible. The desubstantiation of his self is perceivable in his use of affective conventions. The speaker mourns for the death of Simon's self and its example of the precariousness of any self in such an affective economy in which the community sees the death of the self in the death of the body.

The speaker says that he has heard of people who are so unkind that they disapprove of others who do them a service. Aiding one of these unkind people and being denied one's due of positive affect in return could cause one to regret or resent that loss of self-substantiation. But the speaker says that he more often mourns when he earns the approval of thanks than when it is denied, meaning that he sympathetically shares the negative affect of those whose thanks indicate that they are below him in the hierarchy of the affective economy.

The reader must resolve the poem, as Stillinger points out. I contend that its resolution requires an affective logic, consciously or unconsciously exercised. The same conditions that Stillinger sees in *Lyrical Ballads* appear in the *Prelude*. The story of the discharged soldier in Book

IV of the 1850 *Prelude,* is an example of an emotionally

ambiguous ending requiring the reader's logic of feeling.

The speaker of the story, while walking along a rural road,

encounters a veteran who is destitute. The speaker solicits

the soldier's descriptions of his dangers and privations,

and is answered "in demeanour calm, / Conscise in answer"

(440-41) but not "solemn and sublime" (441). For much of

their time together, they are silent. The speaker leads him

to shelter for the night and then reports: "And so we

parted. Back I cast a look, / And lingered near the door a

little space; / Then sought with quiet heart my distant

home" (467-69). The speaker suspects this conclusion to be

ambiguous and addresses the reader: "He who deigns to mark

with care / By what rules governed, with what end in view /

This Work proceeds, *he* will not wish for more" (470-72).

The evidence by which to understand the growth of the

speaker's mind is in the poem.

The story begins when the speaker sees the soldier at

a distance and says, "in his very dress [the soldier]

appeared / A desolation, a simplicity / To which the

trappings of a gaudy world / Make a strange background"

(404). This is a case in which Wordsworth's description of

a common character in "ordinary" language cues readers to

respond affectively to signifiers that are more affective

than emotional and, therefore, more likely to elicit less scripted affective responses. The soldier's simplicity is made to stand out proudly from the belittled gaudy trappings of the world. The contrast of the simple and the gaudy is an affective one. The gaudy is more attractive to the eye than is the simple, not only because of the novelty of its form, but because it carries a bold intentionality, a clearer emotional script, in its affective encoding. The gaudy is attractive, when it is, because its perception makes easier the amplification of affect into emotion. Gaudiness hijacks and simplifies affective amplification, delivering the perceiver quickly to a completed but simplified and shallow emotional culmination. The description of the soldier foregrounds his simple appearance, cueing readers to respond affectively to the less affectively developed encoding that they will find in his simplicity.

The affective is foregrounded again when the soldier "Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain / Or some uneasy thought; yet still his form / Kept the same awful steadiness" (405). He is suffering either pain or unsteadiness of thought, but giving it no clear expression in bodily changes. If the speaker is to "read" the soldier's feelings, he will have to see more than the

affective displays of emotion.

In contrast to the soldier's pre-emotional affect condition, the speaker is clearly emotional when he first sees the soldier. On the road, at a distance, the soldier is only "an uncouth shape" (387). Frightened by this shape, the speaker hides himself in the shade of a tree so that he can observe the man without being seen. He confesses: "From self-blame / Not wholly free, I watched him thus; at length / Subduing my heart's specious cowardice, / I left the shady nook where I had stood, / And hailed him" (408-12). The speaker blames himself for "specious cowardice," meaning that he finds his own emotion to be somehow disingenuous, but it still directs his behavior until he can consciously intervene in his own emotion and subdue it. Seeing the soldier, his fear affect quickly amplified into an emotion, and he trusted that emotion "at length" (409) even after he felt "self-blame" (409) for doing so. The speaker's reaction is identifiable as an emotion by the degree to which it has taken a predetermined form that he recognizes as inappropriate. The speaker's emotionality contrasts with the soldier's affectivity.

The speaker registers the soldier's detachment. When addressed by the speaker, the veteran's reply "Was neither slow nor eager; but, unmoved, / And with a quiet

uncomplaining voice, / A stately air of mild indifference,

/ He told, in few plain words, a Soldier's tale" (418-21).

In telling of his life of privation and danger, the soldier

> all the while was in demeanor calm,
>
> Concise in answer; solemn and sublime
>
> He might have seemed, but that in all he said
>
> There was a strange half-absence, as of one
>
> Knowing too well the importance of his theme,
>
> But feeling it no longer. (440-45)

The soldier does not feel the solemnity or sublimity of the

emotion that is conventionally thought appropriate to the

importance of his subject. He knows that it is important,

but he has chosen not to respond with the conventionally

expected emotion. Still, he is not without feeling. When

the speaker "entreated" (454) him to seek the help he needs

from others, "He said 'My trust is in the God of heaven, /

And in the eye of him who passes me'" (459-60). He is not

concerned with conventional associations of physical well

being and happiness. He has faith that what is important in

life he will find in the faces of others. Psychological

interaction sustains him.

When the poem ends, the speaker has a quiet heart like

that of the soldier and unlike the emotionally turbulent

one with which he started. Still, there is an intensity in

his quiet-hearted condition. Before he leaves the cottage where the soldier has found shelter, the speaker stops and reports: "Back I cast a look,/ And lingered near the door a little space; / Then sought with quiet heart my distant home" (467-469). The differentiation of affect and emotion can help explain how it is that we can have intensity in tranquility and why Wordsworth cultivated this state. The complexity of the affective response is lost when co-opted by culture's simplifying emotional forms. Heightening conscious awareness of pre-emotional affect increases its contribution to self-substantiation while accommodating the social imperative for the suppression of contagious public affect.

I began this chapter with an instance of the debate over the political relevance of Wordsworth's poetry, suggesting that an affective reading addresses the concerns about the function of sympathy that are at the heart of that debate. In the poems considered thus far, there is no overt reference to sympathy. The nature of the narrator's concern for both Simon Lee and the Discharged Soldier are left in the ambiguities to be discerned by the reader. In order to situate my affective reading of Wordsworth's sympathy as close to the debate as possible, I will examine a poem that has been a frequent subject of that debate: The

Ruined Cottage.

John Rieder argues that when Jonathan Wordsworth succeeded in canonizing *The Ruined Cottage* text of Ms. D in substitution for Book I of *The Excursion*, he

> brought *The Ruined Cottage* very much into the
> center of the attempt to reevaluate the Romantic
> ideology by relocating Shelleyan accusations of
> Wordsworth's apostasy to the crucial moment of
> Wordsworth's career represented by his work on *The
> Ruined Cottage* in early 1798." (147)

The central issue in the poem is the narrator's feeling response to the suffering of Margaret. Rieder quotes Jerome McGann:

> [T]he story of Margaret produces in the narrator a
> sense of shame and humiliation before great
> suffering, and an overflow of sympathy and love
> for the sufferer rather than, as in 1793-4, a
> sense of outrage, and an overflow of angry
> judgment upon those whom Wordsworth at the time
> held accountable. (147)

This criticism, in slightly modified form, could be made against two of the texts already analyzed here in that both Simon Lee and the soldier are left painfully unsupported by a social system. But *The Ruined Cottage* enacts in much more

detail the crucial moment of sympathetic conversion that is left ambiguous in "Simon Lee" and the story of the soldier.

An affective reading understands sympathy differently. I argue that Wordsworth's poem is consistent with an affect theory, and that this reading explains aspects of Wordsworth's intentions that are missed by conventional understanding. The essential problem in the debate about Wordsworth's turn from politics to psychology is whether the reaction of his sympathetic heroes performs any ameliorative social function or is simply an psychological method of withdrawal. McGann implies that the only appropriate response for these heroes is "a sense of outrage, and an overflow of angry judgment" (147). Many critics consider that subversion can operate legitimately, and perhaps more effectively, in less obvious ways. I am proposing that the intuition of a "leveling" effect that Heffernan and other critics express is a sensitivity to the fact that the political is finally an expression of the larger negotiation of the production and dissemination of positive affect. The intuition that Wordsworth has a leveling effect is the perception that the dissemination of pleasure is, at its foundations, a political gesture. My argument is that by expanding access to positive affect, he is changing the affective system.

Sympathy is a function of the same economy of feeling, and the associationism that informs Wordsworth's thoughts about sympathy are understandable as intuitions of an affective economy. McGann's reading finds that no significant service is done for the suffering in *The Ruined Cottage*. I propose that a service is done, but its possible political ramifications must be found in affective transactions.

In the first eighteen lines of *The Ruined Cottage*, the speaker describes what early nineteenth century readers would immediately recognize as a conventionally Romantic landscape. The speaker is aware that it has the potential to give pleasure but only to one who feels differently than he does at the moment. It would be "Pleasant to him on the soft cool moss" (10), but he reports that "Other lot was mine" (19). He is toiling "Across a bare wide common" where his "limbs from very heat / Could find no rest" (20-3). He is aware that the association of the scenery with pleasantness is dependent on the way one feels when looking at it. He is also aware that he can access this association if he behaves in a particular way. The pleasant landscape is so to the man who first "Extends his careless limbs" (11) while "dreaming" (14) and "Half-conscious" (15) and then sees pleasant nature "With sidelong eye" (16).

In these lines with which Wordsworth begins framing

the story of Margaret, he describes an affective community

symbolized by a particular interpretation of a particular

landscape. The speaker is aware of a conventionalized

access to positive feeling even as he is aware of his

limited ability to access it in his current condition. We

will see that the image performs its motivational purpose

when he seeks out the shade and its "cool moss."

While the speaker's memory of pleasant associations

with the landscape does not change his disposition

entirely, it does mildly and briefly alter his affective

condition. In order to imagine the future, the speaker must

generate an image and then sympathize with the image of

himself in that future scenario. I have suggested that in

doing this, the affect system performs a testing function

on possible future behaviors. This is visible in the

speaker's description of the comfortable man lying on cool

moss in a dreamy state. With that image in his mind, the

speaker sympathetically duplicates the affect that he

imagines in the image. He explains that the man looks

through branches to the distant scenery, and that scenery

is "By those impending branches made more soft, / More soft

and distant" (17). The repetition of "more soft" reveals

that he has crossed over from a description of another's

feelings to the expression of his own. For an instant, the affect generated by his imagination displaces the affect associated with his physical discomfort and he feels the enjoyment affect of an imaginatively generated image.

The speaker cannot sustain his imaginatively altered feeling. The negative affect triggered by the pain in his body displaces the positive affect of imaginative cognition and comes to consciousness as an abrupt return to reality in the somewhat resentful declaration: "Other lot was mine" (19). With the failure of his imaginative intervention, his affect is again dominated by the affect accompanying his pain, and his description of his condition is that of negative affective communities that do not approve of him.

When he turns his attention to his own suffering, he represents it as an alienation from an indifferent, if not hostile, natural world. He says that he "toiled / With languid feet which by the slippery ground / Were baffled still" (19). Also, in lying on the earth his arm is too weak to disperse "The insect host which gathered round [his] face / And joined their murmurs to the tedious noise / Of seeds of bursting gorse that crackled round" (24). Gorse are prickly plants whose seed pods are bursting in the heat, sowing the next generation of tormenting plant life in malicious cooperation with the insect host. Nature

is being negatively intentionalized to represent the

negative affective communities that are being recalled into

his affective processes to amplify his motivation to seek

relief from the physically threatening circumstances.

While the speaker's mind recalls positively encoded

images so as to have a positive image by which to generate

a behavioral goal, he also recalls negatively encoded

images so as to amplify his motivation to escape the

conditions of his suffering. Just as the image of a

positive affective community will amplify positive stimuli

so as to increase motivation for a future goal, so also

will the image of a negative affective community amplify

motivation for the avoidance of some behaviors.

The speaker may be physically alone on the common, but

he is not alone in the mental processes that monitor his

contributions to the perpetuation of the species. His

thoughts reveal that he is immersed continually in

complicated transactions over the place of his self in the

affective economy. He calls up images of nature as both

positive and negative, assembling their affective encoding

with that of his physical condition in order to find a

communal source of positive affect that will resubstantiate

his self. The affective encoding he finds in the images

brought to mind reflects the encoding they obtained during

previous experiences.

The feelings of the speaker in *The Ruined Cottage* are influenced by his imagination, but he cannot determine his feelings by an exercise of imagination, and such a simple escapist strategy is not Wordsworth's intention. Wordsworth clearly appreciates the lessons to be learned from negative, or even traumatic, experiences and sees the negative as an essential component of growth. In the first scene, we see the speaker interacting with the culture through its affective system with only his own interests in mind. In the rest of the poem his exercise of the same affective processes come to involve others, and his interactions with the affective economy become consequential for the community. Wordsworth's perceptive discipline is not the advocacy of simple positive thinking in opposition to any negative feeling. Rather, there is a pattern in which the negative must be engaged so as to be overcome. This, I will argue, is the important characteristic of his treatment of sympathy.

The speaker moves from the discomfort of the open ground to the cool shade of a stand of trees around the ruins of an old cottage. In that comfort, he comes upon Armytage, an elder, fellow peddler and a dear friend. He reacts to this sight with "instantaneous joy" (36) and

describes the old man as "That pride of nature and of lowly life" (37) and "a friend / As dear to me as is the setting sun" (38). The speaker's feelings shift quickly from the misery of his struggle on the open ground to the physical pleasure that he takes in the comfort of the shade, which is dramatically and instantly amplified by the sight of the old man. The speaker's "instantaneous joy" is proportionate to the affective potency that Armytage has for him, which is expressed by the image of nature and all of the people of the "lowly" class. Armytage is a trigger of potent, positive response for the speaker because the speaker's memory of him is linked to a large and vital affective community of mutually approving people.

Armytage is a mentor to the younger man because his approval registers for the speaker as the approval of the many that he represents. In this Armytage fulfills the larger role of the mentor that is to teach the initiate how to participate in the affective communities of his new social circumstances. In this situation where there is only the speaker and the sleeping old man, the speaker's report of his feelings reflects that they reflect the positive affective communities he has learned to access through the older man.

To this point in the poem, we have seen the speaker

try and finally succeed in reversing his own negative affect. He has demonstrated his possession of communally constructed affective resources, both positive and negative, and, following the motivation he found there, he has displaced his negative affect with positive affect. However, his interactions with the affective economy have not yet included sharing the negative affect of another person. He has participated in the affective economy, but he has not yet acted to change that economy. Sympathy alters the economy, by giving access to people previously excluded. Armytage intuits that it is time for his student to learn the more difficult discipline of sympathy. He must become an activist in the competition of affective communities.

After greeting Armytage, the speaker relieves his thirst and then returns to his friend near the ruins. Armytage then delivers a long soliloquy beginning: "I see around me here / Things which you cannot see" (67). He laments that "Even of the good is no memorial left" (72). Armytage's point is not that the speaker cannot see that people have lived there; obviously, he can; there is a ruined cottage. Rather, for the speaker, the cottage is not a memorial because it does not trigger the recall of memories that are properly encoded with affect. Margaret's

story functions to encode the environment of the ruined cottage.

In his description of Margaret, Armytage stresses her role as a catalyst of positive affect as he recalls that

> Many a passenger
>
> Has blessed poor Margaret for her gentle looks
>
> When she upheld the cool refreshment drawn
>
> From that forsaken spring, and no one came
>
> But he was welcome, no one went away
>
> But that it seemed she loved him. (98-104)

Margaret symbolizes an affective community of mutual approval that is still potent for Armytage, though its affective potency is fading as is the "garden-ground now wild" (55). Retelling the story serves to reinvigorate the affective encoding in his memory and to implant that memory in the mind of the speaker.

The fading of the physical evidence of habitation is only symbolic of the lack of intentionalization of those objects in the mind of the speaker. Without these symbolic markers of positive, affective communities around him, the speaker's affective possibilities are limited; he is isolated, and the community is weakened.

Armytage tells the speaker the story of Margaret in order to make the natural surroundings a symbolic marker of

Margaret and the community of people like her. His purpose is to ally the speaker to the affective community of the poor. When the poem begins, the speaker has few resources by which to defend himself against his suffering. The affective community that is recalled in his memory of pleasant landscape is not affectively potent enough, and he has no other positive associations, so the negative image of hostile nature amplifies his negative affect. He cannot imagine that his suffering could align him with the supportive affective community of fellow sufferers. This is the significance of Wordsworth's sympathetic discipline.

When Armytage tells the story, Margaret has already died. It would seem reasonable, if one wanted to elicit sympathy, to tell the story of a sufferer who is still living and can more easily be identified with. But the intent of the poem is to rehabilitate a communal allegiance, not an interaction between individuals. Because she is dead, Margaret can symbolize a communal reality that is captured in the elegiac form of Armytage's story.

Elegy is a ritual in which an affective community, destabilized by the loss of a member, reaffirms its mutual approval by recommitting itself to the symbols that ground the community's affective economy. Armytage makes this point when he reflects that elegiac poets who are "Obedient

to the strong creative power / Of human passion" (78) "call upon the hills and streams to mourn, / And senseless rocks- nor idly" (75). To invoke human emotion in objects in the natural world is to intentionalize them and disseminate this image of a repopulated affective community. The solidarity of the mourning community signals mutual approval and the abiding presence of positive affect. The more who mourn, the more positive affect becomes available to all with which they can arrest the amplification of their negative affect. The objects of the natural world symbolize the reestablished affective community of mourners.

The elegiac poets remind individuals that by creating a concrete and visible symbol of their mutual approval, the social community strengthens itself as an affective community. The poet's invocation of nature to share human sorrow does not comfort because it draws the mind away from reality, but because it draws the mind to the reality of its affective needs and the environmental resources available. Any suffering is a loss of access to an affective community, but elegy is specifically a call for communal solidarity in the repair of the affective community that has loss a member.

When Armytage notes that these passionate poets "call

upon the hills and streams to mourn, / And senseless rocks—
nor idly" (75-76), he stresses that the ancient, passionate
form was successful in bringing nature to aid a suffering
population. However, he says also that while such strong
passionate invocations have value, "Sympathies there are /
More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth, / That steal
upon the meditative mind / And grow with thought" (79).
Wordsworth is recommending the suppression of passionate,
public affect and its replacement by a more private,
tranquil and meditative, affective life. He is recommending
the modernization of the affective economy.

This alteration of the culture's affective behavior is
the phenomenon that this dissertation seeks to articulate
in the psycho-cultural terms of an affect theory.
Wordsworth's position, in this poem, is that the public
passion of ancient poets was an appropriate affective
example in their time, but poets in the late eighteenth
century must create a communal affective life by other
means. In modern society, public passion is too dangerous
both for the public and for the poet. Wordsworth's plan for
a compensatory sympathy is the subject of *The Ruined
Cottage*.

In the process of telling the story of Margaret,
Armytage models how one monitors one's own affect. After

introducing his elegiac purpose, Armytage tells the first

part of the story of Margaret's suffering. He stops mid-

story to note that he has been made sad by the story, and

that this does not make sense when there is so much

"natural wisdom" (195) that should lead them to "natural

comfort" (196). The speaker notes that Armytage then

immediately returns to "Such easy cheerfulness, a look so

mild, / That for a little time it stole away / All

recollection, and that simple tale / Passed from my mind"

(201-04). This is the behavior that critics condemn as a

disregard of Margaret's suffering (Wu 289 note). However,

Armytage's ability to share the suffering of others but

then return quickly to positive affect solves an essential

problem of sympathy.

If sympathy is only the ability to duplicate in the

self the affect perceived in others, then it can only

multiply the number of people suffering. In fact, people

cannot choose to desubstantiate their selves. When we

choose pain, we choose a pain with which we can associate

positive affect. In other words, there must be a redemptive

turn available to the sympathizer by which to reclaim

positive affect after the initial sympathetic sharing of

the victim's negative affect. McGann insists that the

sympathizer's shared suffering should be transmuted to

anger on the presumption that anger is politically

effective. Anger itself is a negative affect, which is why

McGann's insistence implicitly supports the myth of

enobling anger, or that of the angry hero, which seeks to

make anger attractive by creating an affective community

that approves of the angry response to oppression.

The negative affect of the angry display is redeemed

by the mental image of communal approval for enacting

anger. If enough people praise anger, the display of the

negative affect of anger on the face can be displaced by

the positive affect that is imaginatively perceived in

one's image of oneself as the admired hero. However, such

a reversal of affective value suffers the same shortcoming

as any imaginative affective sustenance. The positive

affect that is needed to positively encode the otherwise

negative affect of anger must itself be generated by

smiling faces. A community that elevates anger faces the

contradiction that the majority of people in that community

have to forego anger so as to smile at the angry heroes in

order to make them heroic. The question that McGann needs

to answer is: How does a community that enobles anger

generate enough positive affect to substantiate its

members? The history of political change motivated by anger

argues that such a community cannot be sustained because

when anger becomes admirable, people compete for positive affect by trying to be the most angry.

The inherent tendency to duplicate the affect of others can be only a first step if sympathy is to have the creative, positive effect of building emotionally democratic communities.

In Armytage's thoughtful control of his own affective recovery, Wordsworth makes clear that the challenge for the sympathetic cohesion of communities is to provide for the sympathizer's return to positive affect after the initial sympathetic response. Negative affect will amplify until the self is destroyed unless cognition intervenes with counteracting positive affect. Armytage's cyclic sympathetic suffering and cheerful recovery is not escapist; it is unavoidable. He can choose to stop suffering by allying himself with a community that will redeem his anger, or he can return to positive affect by the system that the poem elucidates. How one returns to positive affect from the initial duplication of suffering is the important question. Early in the poem Armytage exemplifies that it can be done. In the remainder of the poem, he ushers the speaker through the process.

The affective control that allows Armytage to return to cheerfulness after telling Margaret's story contrasts to

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the speaker's lack of this same ability in the poem's early passages. The speaker's volatile affect is emphasized again, when Armytage regains his cheerfulness, and the speaker immediately duplicates his mentor's return to positive affect. He says of Margaret's story: "that simple tale / Passed from my mind" (201-04), and he felt better. The speaker is revealing the affective volatility that cultures seek to control. He was easily led into the sadness of Margaret's story, and he was easily led back to positive feeling by Armytage's appearance. This positive affect is also short-lived. His curiosity about the unfinished story of Margaret revives, and he asks Armytage to continue the story. At each step, he responds affectively to the affect he perceives and his thoughts follow that affect.

The undisciplined nature of the speaker's interests leads Armytage to consider that his desire to hear more of Margaret's sad story may be a sentimental exploitation of suffering in much the same way that a reader of a sentimental novel savors the intensity of suffering characters. If the speaker is enjoying the story, then Armytage would be participating in the degeneration of sympathy into the sentimental exploitation of the suffering of others. Armytage considers this but concludes that they

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are not among those who would enjoy a "vain dalliance with the misery / Even of the dead" (223-24). Such a sentimental exploitation is "A momentary pleasure, never marked / By reason, barren of all future good" (225-26). Furthermore, such a dalliance with Margaret's story is unlikely because hers is "a common tale / By moving accidents uncharactered . . . and to the grosser sense / But ill adapted--scarcely palpable to him who does not think" (231-36). The contrast explained here describes the emotional exploitation against which the Romantics promoted their innovations.

The innovation that is stressed is the necessity of thought to intervene in the process of sympathy. It is the lack of thought that characterizes the "vain dalliance" and is contrasted to Armytage's assessment of himself and the speaker as people who "have known that there is often found / In mournful thoughts, and always might be found, / A power to virtue friendly" (227-229). Those with a "grosser sense" (234) need the "moving accidents" (232) of the contrived and extraordinary incidents that move those who will not think "mournful thoughts." The willingness to have mournful thoughts is only possible if one has a way to redeem that negative affect, and return to positive affect.

Satisfied that Margaret's story will have the redemptive effects intended, Armytage continues telling of

the slow, progressive decay of her life after her husband's weaving is made obsolete by industrialization, and he leaves her for the army so as to obtain the enlistment bounty for his family. One child leaves, and her infant dies, but Margaret maintains to her death the futile hope that her husband will return.

Again, Armytage pauses in the story to express how she and her story have saddened him. These references to the suffering Armytage sympathetically shares with Margaret have a special meaning now because they repeat the pattern we have seen already in which Armytage moves between his sympathetic suffering and a cheerful recovery. Each time, before recovering his positive composure, he chastises himself for being unwisely sad in the presence of joy in the natural world. Armytage does not use thought to prevent his sympathetic suffering. He uses thought only to extract himself from sorrow when it is "barren of all future good." The question of this sympathy's possible influence on the larger social sphere lies in what future good can be expected from this process of shared suffering and recovery. If we see the sustenance of affective communities as an essential work of societies, then a service to those communities can be that social effect.

The virtue in sympathy is in its ability to produce a

"future good." However, how is sympathy for a dead person a future good? And if we assume, as I have here, that all motivation is for positive affect in the present, then what affective reward can there be in the present for sympathy?

In affective terms, sympathy for any suffering makes one a member of an affective community, which, in itself is a communal good because it increases the integration of individuals into co-operative groups. Unconsciously joining an affective community gives one access to the positive affect of that community in the present. In other words, sympathizing makes one a member of the affective community that shares one's concern for the sufferer and one shares the positive affect of that community in the present.

The speaker, having heard the story of Margaret, enacts the sympathetic pattern that is implied in Armytage's description. When Armytage completes the story of Margaret's decline into a lonely death, the speaker "turned aside in weakness, nor had power / To thank him for the tale which he had told" (495). The speaker's sympathetic sharing of Margaret's suffering has left him with the sense of being physically weakened. The negative affect he has duplicated from his image of Margaret has desubstantiated his self, which registers in his mind as the ebbing of life from the whole organism. The speaker is

in need of the self-redemptive skills of Armytage, and the recovery of positive affect that Armytage previously enacted is now enacted by the speaker:

> I stood, and leaning o'er the garden gate
>
>> Reviewed that woman's sufferings; and it seemed
>>
>> To comfort me while with a brother's love
>>
>> I blessed her in the impotence of grief
>>
>> At length towards the cottage I returned
>>
>> Fondly, and traced with milder interest
>>
>> That secret spirit of humanity
>>
>> Which, mid the calm oblivious tendencies
>>
>> Of Nature, mid her plants, her weeds and flowers,
>>
>> And silent overgrowings, still survived. (497)

The speaker's redemption takes place in this moment. His thoughts are focused on Margaret while he looks upon the natural environment that Armytage's story has intentionalized by its association with the caring attitude of Margaret's peers. The garden, especially, has come to symbolize Nature's participation in Margaret's generosity. So the speaker concentrates on thoughts of Margaret that are contextualized by an environment filled with the symbolic markers of the affective community with which Margaret had shared positive affect.

The suffering that the speaker has endured by his

sympathetic sharing with Margaret is replaced by comfort in

the moment that he blesses Margaret. Bestowing a blessing

gives him a positive affective response because it is the

moment that he accepts his membership in Margaret's

community. To bless is "[t]o pronounce words that confer

(or are held to confer) supernatural favor and well-being."

This one of the OED's definitions associates as cause and

effect God's favor and the sense of well-being that God's

favor imparts to the blessed. In affective terms, the

approval of God gives one a sense of well being for the

same reason that any approval does so: the approved of

person unconsciously shares the smile of those who approve

of him. The approval of God is particularly potent for

members of religious communities because, in their

memories, the image of God is invested with the positive

affect of the whole community whose consensus creates the

image. God is the religious community's most potent symbol

of its consensual values, making God's favor the most

potent symbol of the community's approval. To be favored by

God is to be smiled on by the community.

The act of blessing loses no significance when seen in

affective, secular terms. A person bestowing a blessing

acts as a member and agent of an affective community in

announcing that its cumulative favor is directed to some

person in recognition of that person's behavior.

Most important for the poem is to see that in acting as the agent of an affective community, the blessor includes himself as a member of that community, and he too duplicates the positive affect mutually shared by the community. The speaker's change from negative to positive affect--his redemption--is, then, the result of his acceptance of membership in this affective community that gives its approval to Margaret.

When the speaker blesses Margaret, he is redeemed, but he also does a communal service by joining an affective community that is specifically a resource to people in Margaret's condition. This is the "power to virtue friendly" that Armytage said would result from genuine sympathy. The speaker has aligned his psychic well-being with the community of the destitute, increasing the affective potency of that group for all of its members.

Wordsworth's discipline of the sympathetic impulse resolves the dilemma of how the sympathetic person is to avoid sympathy's degeneration into the self-service that is implied when it is called a "vain" dalliance. To be genuine, the sympathizer must maintain a commitment to the interests of the victim while also arresting his own suffering. Conscious thought keeps his recall of memory

focused on Margaret so that the positive affect that

 redeems the speaker also adds to the positive affect that

is available to the community of which Margaret is a

member.

Nature in the above sympathetic discipline symbolizes

the affective community that makes the positive affect of

Margaret's community available to the speaker. The function

of nature in an affective community depends on the brain's

affective encoding of information so that the retrieval of

information can elicit a feeling response. Spiritual

explanations explain the mysteries of the unconscious

processing of these affective potencies. I do not mean to

suggest that Wordsworth shares the materialism of this

affect theory. I do, however, suggest that the theory

allows an alternative explanation of his intuitions in

places where he leaves the participation of spiritual

forces ambiguous. The role of nature in this poem is much

less transcendent than is often claimed.

One evidence of the non-transcendent condition of

nature in the poem is the fact that nature has no

consistent character. Nature exists for the characters with

the intentionality of whichever remembered image is

functioning in their affective processes at the time. They

do not commune with a fixed, natural essence outside their

minds. In the beginning of the poem, nature is hostile and plagues the speaker. This changes when he finds Armytage in the comfort of the shade, and imagines nature sharing human pride. After the speaker's blessing of Margaret and his return to positive affect, he sees the human spirit amid Nature's "calm oblivious tendencies" (504). Nature, which has been hostile and proud, is now oblivious to human concerns.

Similar changes in nature's intentionality occur for Armytage. In an early passage he describes standing beside the spring at Margaret's cottage where he "eyed its waters till we seemed to feel / One sadness, they and I" (83-4). This is in contrast to the passage cited earlier in which Armytage compares his uneasiness of mind to nature's "image of tranquility, / So calm and still" (517). The image of tranquil nature inspires him to shed the very sadness that nature had earlier shared with him. In this last case, he specifies that he has an "image" of tranquility, emphasizing his consciousness of subjective perception.

Again, I am not arguing that Wordsworth saw no spiritual essence in nature, only that his psychology is too readily identified as a theology. Some critics of Wordsworth's mysticism begin with mystical assumptions about his philosophy and create self-fulfilling prophesies

that contribute to the image of his poetry as a mystic escape from the political. An example is found in Duncan Wu's footnotes to *The Ruined Cottage* in his anthology of Romantic poetry.

In an observation much like McGann's, Wu finds the poem's conclusion "astonishing" (289, note) for the meagerness of the consolation that it offers for the injustice and suffering that people endure. But characterizing Wordsworth's intention as a "consolation" derived from a kind of heavenly reward reveals that Wu is reading the poem with a psychological model appropriate to his Pantheistic interpretation of Nature in the poem.

Wu concludes that the poem has

> an astonishing ending, all things considered. The philosophy of consolation and, ultimately, redemption, that underlies this work asks that we regard injustice and suffering as an 'idle dream', mere shadows of a higher, and brighter, reality to come. (289, note)

There is no reference in the poem to a "reality to come." Wu is imposing on Armytage's conclusion the conventional Christian consolation of a heavenly reward. This follows from the premise that the characters are discovering a transcendent and benevolent reality in Nature, and that

they are encouraged to see the contrast between this

"heaven" and earthly suffering.

In the passage at issue, which is also cited by Rieder

as the most objectionable to recent critics, Armytage sees

tranquility in the plants around him and observes that they

> looked so beautiful
>
> Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,
>
> That what we feel of sorrow and despair
>
> From ruin and from change, and all the grief
>
> The passing shows of being leave behind,
>
> Appeared an idle dream that could not live
>
> Where meditation was. (518-24)

Wu reads "idle dream" as a reference to the sufferings of

life. But the "idle dream" refers to the "grief" that

experiences "leave behind," not to the grief that is lived

in the moment. This distinction is made repeatedly as

Armytage moves from his sympathetic sharing of suffering to

his refusal to continue suffering when there is no good to

come of it. The idle dream is the "uneasy thoughts" that

"could not live where meditation was." After we have

suffered from ruin and change there are thoughts that

perpetuate sorrow and grief unnecessarily. Wordsworth

recommends consciously intervening in the affective inertia

created when negative affect retrieves negative memories.

This is not a consolation for enduring injustice and its suffering; it is an earthly remedy for an unnecessary perpetuation of one's suffering.

Armytage is Wordsworth's example of one who has freed himself from the self-perpetuating tendencies of suffering. He neither shirks from sympathetic suffering nor dwells in it. He genuinely shares the suffering of others for as long as it produces the "power to virtue friendly" that he knows "is often found / In mournful thoughts, and always might be found" (227-28). When the virtuous potential of suffering has been attained, "the purposes of wisdom ask no more" (509), and he returns to cheerfulness wiser and stronger. Redemption follows from the communal allegiance that constitutes the virtuous power, not from a heavenly consolation.

Armytage's last statement is a summation of this process of affective manipulation. He is comparing natural images that contrast to his uneasy thoughts. He reports that the plants "did to [his] mind convey / So still an image of tranquility" (517). The ability to selectively retrieve memories gives Armytage the choice of living with the support of an affirming, affective community or living with the rejection of a condemning community. Why, he implies, should he choose to suffer with the latter?

The affective skills that Armytage exercises are not only relevant to those who sympathize with others but to anyone who suffers. Above, I suggested that early in the poem the speaker's inability to control his affect makes him an example of the limiting psychology that Wordsworth intends to address, and this makes him an excellent student for Armytage. Margaret also acts as a negative affective example in contrast to Armytage.

Margaret's unending pining for her lost husband is self-destructive. She is aware of this but is powerless to correct it. Armytage repeats Margaret's statement on this subject: "'About the fields I wander, knowing this / Only, that what I seek I cannot find, / And so I waste my time: for I am changed, And to myself' said she, 'have done much wrong, / And to this helpless infant'" (350-54). Wordsworth represents Margaret's emotional paralysis as a disease of her mind that is responsible not only for her own mental decline but for the wasting death of her child who "from its mother caught the trick of grief, / And sighed among its playthings" (410-411). Margaret is clearly a victim in the poem, but she is not blameless, and she is not one to be emulated. She refused to leave her deathly isolation at the cottage because "one torturing hope endeared, / Fast rooted at her heart" (498-90) that her husband would

return. She cannot escape the mental dominance of one memory, so what at first appears to be loyalty becomes a torturing and destructive disability.

Had Margaret the psychological skills of Armytage, she would be no less a victim, but she and her child could be expected to suffer less than they do. Margaret is a sympathetic character only because we recognize her psychological limits. She not only has the suffering of a victim, she has the disabling psychology of the helpless victim.

Wordsworth's heroes demonstrate the ability to sustain their psychic selves by being intensely affective rather than intensely emotional. The legacy of the *Lyrical Ballads* is to disseminate this affective alternative to the culture. The reader's increased responsibility for finding meaning in ambiguity cultivates a sensitivity to unconscious affective responses as an alternative to the simple recognition of emotion in the poem. The possibility of conscious, cognitive control of affective processes exemplified in the poems and cultivated in the reader encourages Wordsworth's vision of a society transformed by sympathy under this affective discipline. What Wordsworth believed to be an access to a universal essence is here understood to be the mind's participation in a communal

system of psychic sustenance. The strengths and weaknesses of Wordsworth's vision can be seen as the horns of the dilemma that he does not resolve, but for which he contributes a new accommodation.

The affective dilemma is no less significant in our time when just claims for equal participation in affective economies increase proportionately to the destructive potential of passionate public affect. Wordsworth's sympathetic program remains, at the very least, a landmark engagement with the affective processes of this dilemma.

Chapter 4

Robert Browning's Affective Critique

Isobel Armstrong begins her rereading of Victorian poetry by rescuing it from its identification as a transitional phase between Romanticism and Modernism. She credits this dismissive classification to the Modernists' anxiety about their Victorian predecessors: "The modernists are haunted by the Victorians because they are haunted by the plenitude of content which eludes them" (7), and in their suppression of the Victorian evidence of their deficiencies, Modernists have obscured the fact that "The effort to renegotiate a content to every relationship between self and the world is the Victorian poet's project" (7). Armstrong reassesses this project for its political content as it negotiates two lines of political thought beginning in C.J. Fox's radicalism and Arthur Hallam's conservatism.

However, it is difficult to see the content that Armstrong finds in the poetry of Robert Browning after she credits him with so thorough a critique of the very ground of meaning, and with an anarchic emotionality that defeats the democratizing effects that Fox attributed to poetic emotion, Armstrong identifies Robert Browning with Fox's

radical camp by virtue of his dramatic monologues, which
incorporate Fox's ideas of drama as fundamentally
democratic form. At one level, Browning's poems fulfill the
political purpose, for their "dramatic form decentres both
speaker and reader, questioning the authority of both"
(288). It "is also a post-teleological and post-Kantian
form" whose critique of language and representation
contributes by questioning "the possibility of absolute
judgment and coherent subjectivity" (289). However,
Browning's poems take the form beyond this challenge to
authority to a more essentially destabilizing status. In
"Bishop Blougram's Apology" for instance, Armstrong
recognizes that

> the inherent instability of language is
> manipulated here for ideological purposes as the
> Bishop contends for the meaning of 'belief'. But
> if we are to have a chance to 'read' a text it is
> essential to a democratic reading that language is
> not deprived of signification. In showing that we
> can and cannot 'read' the Bishop's language the
> Grotesque treads the dangerous edge of the
> democratic interpretation. (313)

Still, it is not the lack of reason in Blougram's argument
that manipulates "the inherent instability of language,"

for "many of the arguments are acute at a rational level.

It is their juxtaposition and their context of emotion

which distorts them. In order to 'read' the text 'right',

we are forced back on the reading of an emotional subtext"

(311). In fact, Armstrong finds in many of the poems of *Men
and Women*

> what seem to be two incompatible and incongruous
>
> propensities, an extreme intellectual and
>
> epistemological sophistication and an extreme
>
> commitment to the voracious power of anarchic,
>
> libidinal emotion and desire. (287-8)

While I propose that this emotional power is central to the

poem and to Browning's intention, Armstrong, considers the

emotion a problem to be overcome in the interest of a

democratic reading. She contends: "the decay of language

which . . . exposes the irrational subtext is thus of

crucial importance" (313). Armstrong see that "the

irrational subtext" is here in the service of the "Bishop's

daemonic conservatism" (312-3).

I will argue that feeling in these poems is not a

subtext but is Browning's primary interest and that the

poem's critique includes the exposure of the logic of

affect that is revealed after "the decay of language." The

dramatic monologues perform the critiques of language and

representation as Armstrong demonstrates. But the persistence of feeling after the critical deconstruction of the rational does not make feeling "anarchic" (288). This chapter will consider that the affect theory proposed here can be useful in understanding the "subtext" the analysis of which would seem to be Browning's reason for deconstructing everything else in the poem.

When a meaning is necessary for the survival of the self, the brain creates that meaning by a calculus of affective potencies and not directly by the logic of consciousness. The free-play of signifiers ends when the mind chooses the significations with the most advantageous affective potencies and generates motive energy accordingly. Browning not only considers the possibility of the affective freed from the rational, as Armstrong does, but the affective freed from its own controlling limitations.

In the early dramatic monologues, Browning creates some nightmare scenarios from the Romantic dream of the imaginatively, self-substantiating individual. When in, "The Eolian Harp," Coleridge asks "What if" his imagination were actually a perception of a greater reality behind worldly appearances, he raises a frightening possibility. That scenario is attractive to him because it would mean

that he could substantiate his self entirely from the positively encoded images that he brings to mind in imagination. He would no longer be limited to the positive affect he can gain through co-operation with others. If the unconscious mind could not distinguish between perceptions of the genuine positive affect that is directed toward one in reward for a behavior, and any representation of positive affect directed toward one could elicit the same positive affect, then individuals could substantiate themselves with representation of approval directed toward them.

In other words, if there were no understood quid pro quo requiring a co-operative behavior in exchange for the smile of approval, individuals would no longer be compelled to participate in the communal affective economy because they could self-substantiate by merely perceiving a smile and duplicating its positive affect. Carlyle worried that the ubiquity of representation was distancing people from genuine experience. But Browning wonders what would happen if the ubiquity of representation created people whose unconsciousness lost the ability to tell the difference between the genuine smile of approval and its representation in the affective encoding of objects. This is precisely the case in some of Browning's most famous

dramatic monologues.

The macabre effect of the Duke in "My Last Duchess" is attributable to his ability to duplicate positive affect by his perception of that affect in a painting. He is pathological because he needs no cultural mediation to authorize his affective response. He is, in effect, like the infant who duplicates the smile on the face of the care-giver automatically and without any of the interpersonal negotiations that constitute social life.

The two characteristics of the Duke's personality that make him bizarre are both directly attributable to the way that he perceives affect in the external world. First the lengths to which he goes in order to discipline the Duchess in her public display of affect, and second, the fact that he finds a painting of her to be eminently more satisfying than her living presence. Both of these exceed the limits of normal emotionality but make good sense as the pursuit of positive affect outside of the obligations of an affective economy. The larger part of "My Last Duchess" is occupied with the Duke's incredulity at the Duchess' subversive disordering of his affective environment. The Duchess is a Wordsworthian ideal innocently and thoughtlessly challenging an affective economy of the ancien regime just as Wordsworth intended

that it should. The Duchess responds spontaneously with joy

to nature and ordinary people and the life of the country:

"The dropping of the daylight in the West, The bough of

cherries some officious fool / Broke in the orchard for

her, the white mule / She rode with round the terrace-

(Ricks 26-9). This is a problem, for in the Duke's presence

she is "too soon made glad, / Too easily impressed; she

liked whate'er / She looked on, and her looks went

everywhere" (22-4). The result is that "all and each /

Would draw from her alike the approving speech . . . as if

she ranked / My gift of a nine-hundred years-old name /

With anybody's gift" (29-34). The Duke has allowed the

Duchess to share in the benefits of his aristocratic

status, and in exchange he expects that her smile should be

reserved to him. The significance of this assumption is its

revelation of an even deeper assumption that the system

that gives him wealth and power is built upon the

hierarchical order in which people smile on one another.

When the Duke, in his disgust at her profligate

expression of approval, asks, "Who'd stoop to blame / This

sort of trifling?" (34-5) it might first be understood to

mean that her joyful exuberance is only a trifle not to be

troubled about. But the opposite is the Duke's meaning. The

Duchess is trifling with something that is of enough

importance that it must be taken for granted. Even "if she let / Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set / Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse, / -E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose / Never to stoop" (39-43). The standards by which one understands who is to be smiled at must be unconsciously held. To make these standards conscious and a matter of negotiation is to concede their constructed nature and to invite the question as to why a nine-hundred-years-old name should regulate the emotionality in one's environment.

The importance of the affective environment finally requires that the Duke act to control it: "This grew; I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands / As if alive" (45-7). That the Duke replaces the Duchess with a painting makes clear that his interest is not simply in being rid of her. He wants and needs her smile, but the living Duchess cannot be integrated into his affective economy because she is affectively egalitarian; she does not recognize his status in the class dominated affective economy. She is useful to him only after her smile has been freed of its association with her feelings and can be reassigned an intentionality that is consistent with the affective economy that is necessary to him. The Duke's pathological obsession with his affective

environment gives the poem its macabre effect, but our recognition of that economy also allows his behavior to make sense as more than an individual pathology.

In the simplest terms, the need to be smiled at makes humans social because others will not smile at us unless we cooperate with them. However, the smile itself acquires complicated cultural referents as its associations bring extended populations into the affective environments of people who can have direct contact with only a small proportion of the population with which they need to cooperate. In other words, we must feel the need to please people who will never show us positive affect directly, so cultures intentionalize symbolic concepts and objects so that they function with affective potency in motivating abstractly cooperative behaviors. But the facility with which affect can be associatively attached to any information also makes it possible to extend associations until a person's affect takes on referents other than that person's feelings.

The Duke exemplifies this. He enjoys a painting of a person that he did not enjoy in life. In order to enjoy the positive affect of the painting, he must associate it with something other than the feelings of the living woman. The importance of the Duke's nine-hundred-years-old name

indicates that his affective economy is dominated by the interactive patterns of the social class system in which subordinates fill a symbolic role for those superior to them. The Duke turns the Duchess into a representation so that her smile can function in his aristocratic affective economy as she cannot.

For the socially dominant person, the smile of a subordinate is not dependably representative of genuine approval. Instead, members of the lower class become generalized representations of their place in the system as admirers of their superiors. Social class structures the affective economy into a hierarchy of affectively, non-negotiating groups so as to increase the affective security for the superior classes by removing the need to constantly negotiate self-substantiation with the population that is subordinate. The Duke reduces the Duchess to this role as a representation, associating her affect with a meaning other than her feelings so that she fits nicely into his affective economy.

A similar shift in the referent of an affect was explained in the previous chapter in which sympathy becomes exploitative sentiment when the negative affect of the victim becomes associated with an affective community that does not include the victim. When the sympathizers find an

affective community that supports them simply for the affectation of shared suffering, the socially ameliorative effect of sympathy is lost. The sentimental response does not require sympathizers to make an affective alliance with the victim that gives them an incentive to alleviate the victim's suffering. For the sentimental observer, the negative affect of the victim does not represent the suffering of the victim; it represents the positive affect of an affective community other than the victim's. In the case of sympathy, it is the negative affect of the victim that loses its reference to the victim's suffering. In the case of the Duke, the Duchess' smile loses its reference to her egalitarian benevolence so that it can be affectively compatible with his affective economy.

When the Duchess' smile becomes a representation and can function affectively for the Duke, it also becomes more lifelike for him, and the Duchess becomes more a flawed representation of what he believes to be her proper self. Part of the eerie quality of the Duke's monologue is its subtle linguistic transfer of life from the Duchess to the painting.

The role of Fra Pandolf in the creation of the painting exemplifies the Duke's vivification of the representation. As the Duke introduces the painting to the

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agent, he mentions that Fra Pandolf is the artist who
painted it. He then explains that he named the artist
because he anticipates that the agent will look at "that
pictured countenance" (7) and ask him "How such a glance
came there" (11). This implies that the question as to the
origin of the "glance" refers to the origin of the
representation, so the Duke names the artist. But the Duke
immediately adds "Sir, 't was not / Her husband's presence
only, called that spot / Of joy into the Duchess' cheek"
(13-15). Now the Duke seems to be answering the agent's
question as if he were asking who inspired the Duchess'
smile during the creation of the representation. We
understand now that Fra Pandolf's presence is significant
not only because he created the representation but because
his presence explains who besides the Duke inspired the
living smile. Pandolf is equally significant as creator of
both the representation and the original smile. This makes
the smile and its representation less distinguishable by
attributing the agency behind both to Pandolf. And the fact
that Pandolf easily elicits the Duchess's smile with a
trivial comment diminishes her agency in favor of his. He
becomes the agent of her affect both in life and in art,
but in his art, the Duchess's affect serves the Duke's
affective needs.

The reader is led by the Duke's language to share his transposition of reality and fiction again in the first lines of the poem in which the Duke declares: "That's my last duchess painted on the wall, / Looking as if she were alive". The Duke's sentence is grammatically constructed so as to create ambiguity as to the referent of the word "That." The caesura in the first line allows "That's my last Duchess" to be read as the identification of the living Duchess. Because "painted on the wall" is an adjectival, participial phrase, readers first respond to it as a descriptor of the living Duchess. Initially, the mind superimposes the two images and the reader imagines a woman, somehow, stuck to a wall with paint. We find the image distressing because of the negative affect encoded on the memories that are retrieved by such an image. Quickly, cognition searches for other possibilities and finds that easing its grammatical expectations changes the referent of "that" to the painting and not the living Duchess and the image is altered so as to be consistent with normal experience. However, the next line of the poem repeats the effect. Another participial phrase: "Looking as if she were alive" seems at first to refer to the living Duchess, not to the painting of the Duchess. We do not know that there is a semantic difficulty until we respond with negative

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affect to the image of the living Duchess who only looks as it she were alive. Even after the grammatical confusion is rectified, and attributed to the Duke's unorthodox use of the language, the initial, negative affective response lingers in the body.

The poem is bizarre because Browning is making readers experience the affective pathology of the Duke. The Duke responds positively to the Duchess's affect without the limiting scripts of cultural conventions. Readers also respond initially to the image of the Duchess's affect and, when that response is negative, then discover that the image to which they have responded defies all the expectations they have learned in cultural experience. For an instant, the reader holds in the mind the image of the Duchess, hanging on a wall, looking as if she were alive, but perhaps actually dead, and the reader responds affectively to this image. For that instant, the body's unconscious response to the image is unmediated by the memory recall that will discover the perceptive error. For that instant, the reader shares the affective pathology that is the Duke's full-time experience. The affect that readers feel in that instant of suspended affective development is pre-emotional affect. It is affect as it comes from unconsciousness into the conscious circuitry

that matches it in detail to of communal experience.

Contributing to the poem's containment of feeling in pre-emotional affect is the lack of conscious awareness on the part of the participants as to their own motivations or those of others. The Duchess is childlike in her affective response, smiling, like an infant, to anyone who smiles at her and naively unaware of the social conventions of the hierarchical, affective economy in which she lives. The Duke insists that his environment adapt to his unconscious affective responses. In passages examined earlier, the Duke insists that he will not ask that the Duchess to behave differently because that would be to "stoop." He has a negative affective response to her behavior and will not consider that he should intervene in this response with a cognition about cultural conventions. Both the Duke and the Duchess live, to an unconventional degree, in their pre-emotional affect, without acceding to the cultural scripts that would channel their initial affect into a more cooperative emotional form.

In "My Last Duchess," Browning investigates the pathologies of the affect system that allow a person to be freed from the co-operative imperative of the normal affective system so that the affect of others is a commodity to be accessed without reciprocal obligations. In

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"Bishop Blougram's Apology," Browning examines the affective economy in the more normal terms in which the need for positive affect creates a competition over how ideas and objects are affectively encoded. "Bishop Blougram's Apology" depicts the competition between the socially and politically superior speaker and Gigadibs, his common, middle-class auditor over who will be in the superior position in the affective economy. In the guise of a debate about religious belief, Blougram and Gigadibs reflect the larger cultural struggle over how positive affect is to be distributed in the Victorian affective economy.

The poem is an apology in the sense that Blougram defends the conduct of his life against the disparaging attack of Gigadibs, finally admitting his shortcomings but never conceding superiority to Gigadibs. While the subject is superficially the question of religious belief, Blougram perceives that he has been challenged to defend his sense of his own worth. The energy with which he responds is evidence not that he is simply narcissistic, but that he is desperate to maintain the access to positive affect that substantiates his self and gives him psychic existence.

While we never learn precisely what it is that Gigadibs has written that leads Blougram to invite him to

the dinner and conversation in which the poem is set, it is

clear that Gigadibs has at least implied publically that

the Bishop is not truly a believer in church doctrines and

is, therefore, dishonestly enjoying the privileges of his

position in the church. Blougram understands at the poem's

beginning that the moral and political questions are

grounded in some more fundamental issue of self-worth. He

tells Gigadibs: "you despise me" (Browning 13). The poem

ends with Blougram's expression of his satisfaction with

having caused Gigadibs to "discontinue--not detesting, not

/ Defaming, but at least--despising me!" (968). Blougram

claims to have changed Gigadibs' opinion of him so that

while he is still "detested" he is not "despised." The

difference is that "despies" carries the connotation of

looking down on one with contempt. To "detest" is to

dislike strongly, but there is no connotation of superior

worth. In the end, Blougram believes he has succeeded by

ensuring that while Gigadibs still dislikes him, he can no

longer look down on him. This point is reinforced in the

narrator's conclusion in which he reports Blougram's

thoughts:

> "On the whole," he thought, "I justify myself
>
> . . . .
>
> His ground was over mine and broke the first:

So, let him sit with me this many a year!" (997-1005).

In order to maintain his ground, Blougram must build a case for his self-worth in the terms of the affective economy. He must establish that more of the society's affective communities are aligned behind him than behind Gigadibs. In this way, the poem is an examination of the condition of the affective economy as Blougram's defense of himself takes place within the terms of social, and philosophical issues.

One of the assumptions of this affect theory is that individuals acquire an unconscious understanding that cultural signifiers, both objects and ideas, carry affective values that signify the community's proportionate approval or disapproval for particular behaviors. These intentionalized objects and ideas have affective potency in proportion to the number or importance of the people that one understands to be in consensus that a particular behavior will receive a particular affective response. I have called these consensual groupings affective communities. In effect, the affective values of the culture become invested in affective communities symbolized by signifiers so that behaviors involving those signifiers can extend the affective economy into behaviors not

involving direct affective exchanges. When people act or even think, they access their memory of the community's affective responses by reading it in the signifiers associated with that behavior. People are dependent, therefore, on consensus to create the affective communities that provide them with positive affective stimulation. We acquire our knowledge of affective communities unconsciously. We select from among those we have as it is advantageous to us, but we have only those that experience has given us. People are important to us to the degree that they have affective potency among our affective communities.

I have found it important to review the nature of affective communities because it sheds light on the importance that Blougram assigns to Gigadibs' opinion of him. Blougram needs not only to convince himself that he is as good as Gigadibs; he needs Gigadibs to share that conviction. After delivering what he finds a compelling argument, Blougram says to Gigadibs: "Enough; you see, I need not fear contempt. / -Except it's yours! Admire me as these may, / You don't" (431). This may be sarcastically delivered, but Blougram has invited Gigadibs to this conversation specifically for this purpose, and he pursues this end through a long and concerted effort. Gigadibs

signifies a potent affective community for Blougram because he is of the educated middle-class that is rapidly eroding the traditional affective economy in which Blougram has acquired a high place. Blougram is not the Duke in "My Last Duchess"; he cannot ignore the negative affect of those who do not approve of him. As indicated by the line previously quoted, Blougram needs Gigadibs to acknowledge Blougram's superiority. It is not enough that he knows himself to be better because, like all of us, he does not know himself to have value except as others show us that it is so. Blougram is satisfied at the poem's end because they both know that Gigadibs can no longer despise him.

Blougram makes repeated assertions of the commonsensical superiority of his life, condescendingly comparing his prestige and power to Gigadibs's life as the writer of "That lively lightsome article we took / Almost for the true Dickens" (949). However, Gigadibs refuses to concede that social status is a good and claims instead to have higher motivations than the prestige and comfort that Blougram has acquired. Blougram meets him on this point with a simile meant to undermine Gigadibs' traditionalist assumptions about his own motivations.

Blougram compares their lives with a simile of life as a sea voyage for which people must furnish their own

178

cabins. Blougram offers it as common sense that one is wise to consider the limitations of space that are inherent on a ship. He makes an analogy between Gigadibs' dedication to truth and a person showing up on the dock with furnishings that are impossible to accommodate on shipboard. leaving him with nothing of comfort for the sea voyage of life. Superficially , the intent of the simile is to make clear that Gigadibs' disdain for the worldly pleasures of comfort and public esteem is simply a mistaken idealism producing no reward. But, more importantly, Blougram's simile exposes that there is a desire for the reward of public esteem that is implicit in Gigadibs' claims of a selfless ideal.

The simile of life as a sea voyage emphasizes the context of public attention in which Gigadibs' ideal is enacted. Blougram tells him: "you can cut a figure at first / While sympathetic landsmen see you off" (127). Then he would be badly equipped because his ideal, which is an "abstract intellectual plan of life / Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws" (92) would leave him badly suited for the real conditions of life. Blougram's simile belittles the "landsmen" who do not understand the conditions of life and are impressed with Gigadibs' splendid intentions only because of their ignorance. Blougram predicts that even while suffering for being so ill prepared, Gigadibs will

claim: "I've the better notion, all agree, / Of fitting

rooms up" (137) and Blougram mockingly concludes: "You've

proved your artist-nature" (142). Gigadibs' claim to

disdain public esteem is belied by the fact that there is a

public that approves of characters who affect such disdain.

The allusion to his artist's nature mocks the Romantic

tradition of artists as a priestly, enlightened class who

represent themselves as suffering for the communal good

even as they seek fame and fortune.

Blougram is making conscious a normally unconscious

transaction of the affective economy that I refer to as a

redemptive turn or the myth of the suffering hero. Charles

Taylor refers to it as it became known in the nineteenth

century as the "ethics of belief" (404). In *Sources of the

Self*, Taylor argues that when proponents of instrumental

reason find it necessary to argue the worth of a life lived

by that philosophy, they contend that "the manly

confronting of the universe in its vast indifference,

itself frees us from our petty egoism" (410). It does so

because the contribution they make will earn them "the

gratitude of future generations" (352). Posterity's

"recognition is their great consolation" (352). I wish to

argue that the communal approval associated with "the manly

confronting of the universe" is more than a consolation.

The desire for this approval motivates the proponents of instrumental reason to take up that philosophy in the first place.

Blougram's simile of the sea voyage in which the ill prepared Gigadibs will represent his suffering as the price of his artist nature identifies the ethics of belief in Gigadibs' claim of a higher ideal, contradicting the assertion that he does not share Blougram's desire for prestige. By Blougram's standard, Gigadibs' high ideals are no more selfless than his and, furthermore, offer no reward but the admiration of a small, untrustworthy constituency characterized in the simile as the landsmen on the dock.

After the ship simile and more allusions to the prestige and comfort afforded him by his accommodation of worldly conditions, Blougram asks Gigadibs flatly: "What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too?" (149). The ship simile does not win a concession from Gigadibs. If living in the real world means being a bishop, he cannot, for he cannot believe and to be a bishop without belief would be unacceptable. Gigadibs is claiming superiority by the ethics of belief. He will accept the suffering of his higher ideal in the faith that progress will be the eventual consequence. The implication is clear that Blougram's acceptance of belief is a dishonest and cowardly

opportunism. In order to defend himself, Blougram must alter the affective associations of the concept of belief.

Blougram cannot argue that he is honest by the traditional definition of belief because he also wishes to maintain the status he has by virtue of his intellectual work. In comparing himself to Gigadibs, Blougram points out that he enjoys the comforts and prestige of his life "While writing all the same my articles / On music, poetry, the fictile vase / Found at Albano, chess, Anacreon's Greek" (913-5). This is clearly meant to compete with the "lightsome" article that Gigadibs published. He must defend his religious belief while maintaining his intellectual superiority. For this reason he acknowledges: "I too, not a fool, you please to think, / Must find believing every whit as hard" (157-8). Blougram must concede that he does not believe, but, of course, the bishop cannot be a disbeliever without exposing himself to the accusation of dishonesty, so he quickly qualifies his admission of disbelief with the proviso that he can say that he has no faith only "If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed, / Absolute and exclusive, as you say" (162-3). Blougram needs to redefine religious belief so that it can be associated with both Enlightenment thought and religious tradition while discrediting Gigadibs's claim that disbelief is the more

noble disposition.

Blougram has the solution in the guise of a thought experiment in which they both discard all dogmas of belief and stand as ideal examples of Gigadibs' disbelieving hero of disengaged, instrumental reason. Blougram predicts that in their hypothetical state of unbelief there will be some inevitable experience of spontaneous emotion that will lead to belief:

> Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
>
> A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
>
> A chorus-ending from Euripides,--
>
> And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
>
> As old and new at once as nature's self,
>
> To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
>
> Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
>
> Round the ancient idol, on his base again,--
>
> The grand Perhaps! (182-5)

Spontaneous hopes and fears enter the soul and construct there an idol of belief, but for what purpose? The pagan dance suggests a fertility rite in worship of a representation of the entity that is their source of spontaneous hopes and fears. The personified emotions seek to invoke the source of the aesthetic experience. The metaphor declares the inevitability of belief in answer to

Gigadib's skepticism, but it also fittingly represents the communal creation of a religion by the consensual organization of seemingly individual experiences of perception.

The metaphor suggests the affect system. The dancers in Blougram's metaphor are an affective community consensually intentionalizing an object so that it becomes a symbolic repository of their collective approval from which each individual can draw the affective stimulation necessary to the continued amplification of affect. The dancers look to the communally created idol for the positive affect that allows them to influence the amplification or reproduction of themselves.

While Blougram's metaphor conceives of the aesthetic response as originary, if we understand that an emotion is an affect amplified by information recalled from memory, then it is clear that the response to the aesthetic object is already a response to some "beliefs." The aesthetic object, like the idol, is a product of consensual intentionalization of the environment for the purpose of disseminating the community's affect in an organized and organizing way.

The strength of Blougram's argument is his ability to keep himself aligned with communal interests. Gigadibs, the

individual, has trouble doing this. Blougram's tactic
succeeds in deflecting Gigadibs' moral attack on the
grounds of honesty because Gigadibs must concede that
Blougram cannot be expected to have absolute belief.
However, Gigadibs then argues that if belief and disbelief
inevitable produce each other, then his commitment to
disbelief must be at least as valuable as Blougram's
commitment to belief because, he says, "where I drop the
faith / And you the doubt, that I'm as right as you?" (215-
6). Blougram counters that religious belief is obviously
the better choice because it allows one access to the
cultural resources by which to satisfy the natural desire
for public esteem. The metaphor of the pagan ritual is
intended to give naturalist support to his participation in
the church, but the image of Hopes and Fears communally
dancing around an idol also suggests the need for feeling
to have a communal organization. The communality of the
dance suggests the need for mutual approval and Blougram's
position in the church gives him access to it. Blougram has
affective resources on his side of the argument. But,
again, Blougram meets resistance from Gigadibs because if
Gigadibs concedes that prestige is superior, he has to
concede Blougram's superior worth. He refuses this
concession, claiming again that a higher ideal than

prestige sets him above Blougram.

While it is easy to dismiss Blougram's need to be admired as arrogance or even megalomania, his acceptance of self-worth as a legitimate motivational ground is on the progressive side of nineteenth-century philosophical and literary debates about the nature of the good. Maura Spiegel tracks the place of this self-consciousness in the literary treatment of virtue, beginning in the eighteenth century with Adam Smith's response to Hutcheson's insistence that virtue must be strictly selfless:

> Dr. Hutcheson was so far from allowing self-love
> to be in any case a motive of virtuous actions,
> that even a regard to the pleasure of self-
> approbation, to the comfortable applause of our
> own consciences, according to him, diminished the
> merit of a benevolent action.
>
> (241)

Hutcheson is trying to prevent approval from becoming an accepted motive of behavior. Smith's incredulity registers the increasing difficulty this produces in light of introspective psychology. He stresses the extreme that is evidenced by Hutcheson's disqualification of "even" the pleasure of self-approbation as virtuous motive. The implication is that Smith finds it difficult to understand

virtue without the approbation of others as well.

Smith's moral theory begins to incorporate self-interest into moral philosophy, but it remains a problem for narratives in the nineteenth century. Spiegel follows changes in the novels of Dickens and demonstrates the nineteenth century's slow acceptance of the inevitability of self-interest in motivation. She writes that in his early novels, "Like Hutcheson, Dickens applies a rigorous conception of selflessness or disinterestedness, not accepting Smith's dictum that self-interest can be regarded a `laudable principle of action'" (241). However, "Dickens, in the later works, is led to a larger conception of `emotional need,' a less selfless ideal of virtue, and a more self-conscious engagement with the problem of rendering them" (247). The challenge to selfless virtue reveals the extent to which introspective psychology is forcing recognition of imperatives coming from the nature of the self. Blougram is redefining belief with the same "less self-less ideal of virtue."

The growing awareness of pre-emotional affect and its unconscious source is consistent with an acknowledgment of self-interest in motivation. Browning can be expected to have been very sensitive to the debate about self-interest as a motive. The hostile reception of "Pauline" for being

morbidly self-centered is credited by Abrams et. al for

leading Browning "to write plays instead of soul-searching

narratives or lyrics" (1183), and suppressing his

publication of poems for years.

Ekbert Fass analyzes the simultaneous growth of the

dramatic monologue and psychiatry and contends that the

development of the dramatic monologue out of the greater

Romantic lyric occurs in part so as to avoid the stigma

that had become attached to the the self-revelatory

excesses that Romantic expressivism attained in the poetry

of the Spasmodics. The critical distaste for self-serving

behavior helps explain the development of the dramatic

monologue in which the analysis of pathological others is a

way of deploying Romantic introspection without the censure

that both Browning and Tennyson suffered for the self-

revelations of their early work.

Fass describes the growth of psychiatry out of the

general popularity for the analysis of psychology in the

mid-century. Interest in psychological analysis is also

consistent with the cultural suppression of public affect

in favor of affect contained within the limits of an

imaginative exercise. The intense emotionality that is

found distasteful in personal expression becomes the pre-

emotional affect of "emotion recollected [and analyzed] in

tranquility" when the reader becomes an analyst rather than an empathic sharer of the speaker's emotional intensity. The inevitable self-service that is the acquisition of positive affect must take place, and culture must direct it to cooperative purposes. The dramatic monologue can be seen to be a formal accommodation of the affective dilemma in this sense.

Gigadibs, ironically the more politically progressive of the two, is the moral traditionalist on the issue self-serving virtue because his leverage against Blougram must be his ability to align himself with the greater social good that his ideals are meant to produce in opposition to Blougram's self-service. While he cannot refute the contention that everyone has self-interests, he has no psychology by which to explain how self-interest and the interest of others can be mutually pursued. He cannot deny that he seeks pleasure, but he cannot concede that this makes him morally equivalent to Blougram. Blougram exploits this manifestation of morality's inability to resolve the affective dilemma.

To this point in the poem, Blougram has tried hard to keep control of the standard of their comparison. He concentrates on undermining what he sees as Gigadib's pretentious high ideals so as to win in their competition

by the evidence of his success in the winning of public
approval. This is not successful, however, and late in the
poem, Gigadibs remains committed to his ideals and
declares, "All special-pleading done with--truth is truth,
/ And justifies itself by undreamed ways" (807-9). Gigadibs
claims that his ideal of action cannot be judged by any
standard; rather, he has faith that it will eventually
justify itself. Gigadibs is invoking the ethics of belief,
claiming that his present suffering is acceptable because
of some unknown but presumably benevolent future
consequence. Blougram is incredulous and presses the point:
"My shade's so much more potent than your flesh. / What's
your reward, self-abnegating friend?" (932). Blougram
insists that there must be a reward in the present. The
claim for a motivating ideal in the future is not adequate.
Again, Gigadibs is without a psychology by which to explain
self-serving altruism. Gigadibs is at a disadvantage
because there is a system of feeling that is not consistent
with the cultural conventions that he embraces, and he
cannot reconcile the two. The cultural conventions only
accommodate the affective dilemma; they do not resolve it.

Blougram exposes the sense of prestige behind the
ethics of belief as the motive for Gigadib's ideals. Still,
Gigadibs will not concede that this is his motive, and he

will not recognize Blougram as the superior of the two.

Gigadibs remains committed to his ascetic ideal, so

Blougram must win by contrasting himself in these terms. If

Gigadibs finds positive affect in his image of himself as

the devotee of a high ideal, then Blougram will have to

claim ascendence by the superiority of his motivational

intensity itself:

> Stood you confessed of those exceptional
>
> And privileged great natures that dwarf mine—
>
> A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,
>
> A poet just about to print his ode,
>
> A statesman with a scheme to stop this war,
>
> An artist whose religion is his art—
>
> I should have nothing to object: such men
>
> Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,
>
> Their drugget's worth my purple, they beat me.
>
> But you,—you're just as little those as I. (932-
>
> 43)

Blougram's heroes are not admirable for their social

success or even for their communal contribution but for the

fact that they "carry the fire" of a passionate commitment

to some personal goal, and this fire infuses all of life

with some intensity of meaning. While the first three of

Blougram's examples suggest the ethics of belief in that

they make communal contributions that can be expected to earn them recognition by the community, Blougram's description foregrounds the intensity of their individual efforts before they attain public recognition so that the role of public approval in their motivation is muted or obscured. Blougram's heroes are not those who have attained to great notice but those who live in the intensity of a great and noble effort on the eve of its public recognition. His fourth example, "An artist whose religion is his art," is detached from community to such an extent that he has transcended human interaction; his efforts are relevant only to a spiritual order.

Blougram is trying now, as Gigadibs's ideal has, to detach his desire from any reward other than the sensation of its own motive energy. He is describing as an ideal the autonomous self that can imaginatively generate the positive affect needed to free it from dependence on communal resources.

Blougram admits that he does not share the motive intensity of his ideal examples; he only claims that Gigadibs does not exceed him. Still, Blougram does claim a uperiority by virtue of the more rigorous demands of his ideal. The condescension of his exclamatory address in the last line: "But you, you're just as little those as I"

implies that Gigadibs is even less like those than Blougram

 for the fact that does not even understand such a high

ideal.

Blougram has mocked Gigadibs throughout the poem for

the meagerness of his earthly rewards, implying that he was

foolish for passing up a more intense satisfaction of his

desires. Late in the poem, when Blougram is claiming

superiority as a suffering hero of intensity, he takes

pains to point out that Gigadibs' acceptance of a modest

life does not amount to heroic suffering. Instead, it is

merely sheeplike complacency and indicates Gigadibs' lack

of motive intensity. Blougram tells him:

<div style="text-align: center;">You find</div>

In this the pleasant pasture of our life

Much you don't eat because your maw objects,

Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock

Open great eyes at you and even butt,

And there upon you like your mates so well

You cannot please yourself, offending them:

Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,

You weigh your pleasure with their butts and

bleats

And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears

Restrain you, real checks since you find them so;

> Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks:
>
> And thus you graze through life with not one lie,
>
> and like it best.

I quote at length here because the passage is a mocking parody of the kind of communal negotiations that constitute the normal operation of the affective economy. Gigadibs is living an ordinarily satisfying life in the cooperative production of approval. This is the model that Gigadibs is holding as an ideal in preference to Blougram's high status and power. Blougram belittles it by comparison to his own more demanding ideal.

Blougram is incredulous that Gigadibs could be happy acquiescing to the will of others compared to him "Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill / Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with, But motioned to the velvet of the sward / By those obsequious wethers' very selves" (893). He holds up his political power for approbation on the grounds that it indicates a superior intensity of motivation. When he says that his power is something he "needs must" have, he implies that he is only seeking relief from the intensity of his own desire.

Blougram is now the one making a claim to the ethics of belief. He is the more heroically suffering of the two, not because he shares the intensity of his heroes but

because he suffers for his understanding of his own failure

to achieve that intensity. Gigadibs is ignorant of his own

failure in the face of this ideal, which means that

Blougram is more courageously facing the harsh realities of

life. In effect, Blougram suffers intensely for the

knowledge of his own lack of intense experience.

The intensity in this poem that Armstrong

characterizes as an anarchic libidinal energy, is better

understood as Blougram's desperate manipulation of the

Victorian proliferation of affective communities as the

affective economy decentralizes in the process that is

often referred to as cultural fragmentation (288).

The organizing logic of the poem is summed up by

Blougram's proud description of his argumentative strategy

in the narrator's conclusion:

> "On the whole," he thought, "I justify myself
>
> On every point where cavillers like this
>
> Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of fence,
>
> I close, he's worsted, that's enough for him.
>
> He's on the ground: if ground should break away
>
> I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet
>
> Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.
>
> His ground was over mine and broke the first:
>
> So, let him sit with me this many a year!" (995-

1005)

The ground to which Blougram refers is the assemblage of
affective communities by which he compares his worth to
those like Gigadibs who "Oppugn" his life.

Blougram knows the workings of the new, decentralized
affective economy and consciously manipulates the emotional
sensibilities that it manifests. The old clear-cut classes
of value judgments no longer apply. Instead,

> Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things,
>
> The honest thief, the tender murderer,
>
> The superstitious atheist, demirep
>
> That loves and saves her soul in new French books-
> -
>
> We watch while these in equilibrium keep
>
> The giddy line midway: one step aside,
>
> They're classed and done with. I, then keep the
>
> line. (396-401)

The advantage of keeping "the line" between clear moral
classes is that it allows one to access the affective
communities on both sides. Blougram demonstrates that it is
possible to find communal approval for behaviors that are
generally thought immoral. His ideal includes the artist
who makes his art a religion, who is a heretic and a
recluse, but also an adventurer on the frontiers of psychic

intensity. The "honest thief" holds to fundamental communal

values even as he rebels against the moral limits forced on

human appetite. Blougram's own argument for being a

disbelieving bishop is that his doubt only makes his faith

stronger. This allows him to be both the intellectual

skeptic and the keeper of communal order and sustenance.

Blougram is describing the modernizing affective

economy with its concentration on the positive affect of

novelty and the positive affect of conscious self-

stimulation. The complicated moral ground of humanism is

attractive because it offers broader access to positive

affect than did the theistic economy in which access was

"classed" into a smaller repertoire of affective

communities.

In order to take advantage of this new economy, one

must know and access the subtleties of the representational

system below the level at which values operate as a clear

moral code. In the affective economy one finds the

redemptive turn of the ethics of belief and the myth of the

heroic sufferer as these change in response to social

conditions. Blougram is well aware of the historical

instability that he is exploiting as liberal humanism has

destabilized the old affective economy without yet

replacing it:

It's through my coming in the tail of time,

Nicking the minute with a happy tact.

Had I been born three hundred years ago

They'd say, "What's strange? Blougram of course

believes;"

And seventy years since, "disbelieves of course."

But now, "He may believe; and yet, and yet

How can he?" All eyes turn with interest. (412-

418)

And in their interest is the smile of approval that is his

source of the positive affect he needs to substantiate his

self.

Bishop Blougram is a complex, cautionary example of a

mind freed by the modern proliferation of affective

communities as traditional centralization collapses and

these new communities compete to dominate the cultural

consensus that assigns affective value to representations.

The modern affective economy is fundamentally more

democratic than the traditional, theistic model, but, as

Blougram illustrates, it is not immediately or necessarily

so. While Armstrong claims Browning for Fox's radical camp,

she also concedes that Browning takes critique beyond Fox's

vision of aestheticized politics into the realm of

representation where its politics become problematic. Let

me quote again what she writes of "Bishop Blougram's Apology": "But if we are to have a chance to 'read' a text it is essential to a democratic reading that language is not deprived of signification" (313). I have tried to suggest that in Browning's poetry we need to read in signification the affective meanings not typically associated with the ideological.

Chapter 5

Arthur Symons: Affect, Emotion and Aestheticism

In the book in which Isobel Armstrong rehabilitates Victorian poetry to political significance, she follows poetry's radical and conservative political allegiances through the period. When she gets to the 1860s, she confronts the conventional critical assumption that "the so-called aesthetic movement initiated by the Pre-Raphaelites and theorized by Pater constitutes an epistemological break" (382). Armstrong's objection to this characterization is that it has led to selective treatments of the late century that subsume all of its poetry into the aesthetic project, excluding the voices who continue the political traditions that are her focus. She convincingly continues her recovery of the ideological dimensions of the poetry through early aestheticism. Her reading of the apolitical poetry, however, is grudging and finally dismissive. Aestheticism becomes in Yeats "the poetics of the privileged and aristocratic individual imagination, the cult of aura" (481). These writers "carry to extremes the strategies outlined in Hallam's much earlier account of the poetry of sensation" (480). The developments of aestheticism are "defensive moves to preserve a unique mode

of utterance for poetry in the face of a political and technological culture which largely ignored it" (480). The implication is that one can only escape the political into the emotional, a realm Armstrong equates with cultural irrelevancy.

As Armstrong pursues her ideological critique through Pater and Swinburne, she finds only less and less political relevance in the poetry until "the history of the 1890s and *fin-de-siecle* poetry seems to belong rather to the history of modernism than to that of Victorian poetry" (479). Armstrong begins her book by faulting modernism for subsuming the political into the aesthetic. Her political reading seems to invert the prejudice.

I have no argument with Armstrong's seminal and invaluable reading of the political in Victorian poetry. I suggest only that her reading exemplifies the need for a critical model that can comprehend the reality of cultural power in aestheticism. A weakness in the ideological model is that it pictures power originating and organized in the ideological realm, projecting down to organize the psychological without consideration that the psychological might exert a reciprocal influence.

This chapter presupposes that the organizing structure of interpersonal life is the affective economy and that

this economy generates the motive energy that at one

organizational level is the political, which, in turn,

exerts a reciprocal influence on the affective process. The

nature of the affect system remains as influential in the

political as the political is influential in it. While it

is true that there is no escape from the political, it is

equally true that the political cannot escape from the

affective. Political power like any other power is coveted

and wielded, finally, so as to make people feel existent.

It does this by securing advantages in the system that

distributes the currency of existent feeling: positive

affect.

An affective complement to Armstrong's political

concentration can broaden our understanding of the

aesthetic and the political as interdependent in the

poetry's engagement with the whole phenomenon of culture.

When aestheticism withdraws from political discourse, it

does not withdraw into a realm without culture even though

that is its hope. Even in the "cult of aura" aestheticism

finds the fundamental cultural struggle of which the

political is a manifestation.

According to Armstrong, Symons was so effective a

promoter of aestheticism that his Introduction to *The*

Symbolist Movement in Literature "made the work of the

nineteenth century seem the product of a shallow, positivist culture" (383). Armstrong does not intend this to be praise, but it suggests the effectiveness with which Symons made aestheticism a cultural force. In this chapter I will examine the affectivity of aestheticism as Symons develops it and passes it to Modernism. In short, I will argue that the characteristic that distinguishes aesthetic poetry from that of the early century is its concentration on one stage in the normal development of feeling from an initial affective response to a culmination in cultural emotion. Aestheticism's project is to refine pre-emotional affect out of the developmental system so as to protect it from the simplifying and muting tendencies of the emotions.

The muting of the complexity and intensity of pre-emotional affect is part of culture's function in organizing social behavior. In effect, the intensity of positive, pre-emotional affect is exchanged for the duration of the corresponding emotion. This exchange is an accommodation of the affective dilemma, not a resolution. The potency of pre-emotional affect ensures that there will be resistance to a culture's emotional regime so that adaptive experimentation continues on the margins of the social order. The need for both experimentation and social order are regulated in the tension between the comparative

affective potency of the more intense pre-emotional affect
and the more durable emotion that requires more individual
acquiescence to cultural scripts.

The qualities that Symons ascribes to Decadence all
point to the preoccupation with finding the stimuli of pre-
emotional affect: "an intense self-consciousness, a
restless curiosity in research, an over-subtilizing
refinement upon refinement, a spiritual and moral
perversity" (*Decadent Movement* 858-59).

The concentration on self follows from the necessity
of concentrating on the subtleties of one's own responses
as soon as they can be discerned and then arresting that
feeling so that it is not co-opted into a conventional
emotion. Aesthetes are connoisseurs of their own affect,
but are repelled by conventional emotions. This is the
sense in which Symons speaks of the "spiritual and moral
perversity" of Decadent writers. To turn one's attention
away from the feelings of others so as to concentrate
solely on one's own is, in conventional moral terms,
perverse and unhealthy. Symons's use of these negative
terms needs to be understood in the context of his
rejection of the conventionality that is being
transgressed.

R.K.R. Thornton documents the widespread acceptance of

the view that British culture was in a degenerate state in the late nineteenth century. Symons refers to this in "The Decadent Movement in Literature" when he justifies Decadence as a logical product of its time:

> For its very disease of form, this literature is certainly typical of a civilization grown over-luxurious, over-inquiring, too languid for the relief of action, too uncertain for any emphasis in opinion or in conduct. (859)

But "its very artificiality is a way of being true to nature: simplicity, sanity, proportion--the classic qualities--how much do we possess them in our life, our surroundings, that we should look to find them in our literature" (859). Symons is not just saying that the literature reflects its society. He is saying that the perversity in art reflects the true nature of the human. In a degenerate society, truth must be found in those places where the imposition of false behavior is breaking down and genuine vitality is emerging through the cracks. Simplicity, sanity and proportion are part of the oppressive regime. As these break down in the culture, a vital rebirth takes place in the transgressive behaviors that appear immoral only if one continues to defend the suppression of the truth.

The aesthetes know when they have found vitality rising through the cracks in the decaying conventionality by the qualities of one's feelings as Pater described them coming from genuine art: "For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake" (qtd. in Armstrong 389). In order to elicit and sustain these moments, one must find the right stimuli and be attentive to the affective response when it comes.

The focus on isolating pre-emotional affect from the normal development of emotion helps explain Symons's inclusion of writers under the Decadent label that critics have found incompatible. Joseph Bristow is especially perplexed with the comparison of Paul Verlaine and W.E. Henley. He asserts that "when, in the closing paragraph, Symons characterizes the work of Henley . . . in exactly the same terms he uses to describe Paul Verlaine's work . . . . , then something has gone awry" (69-70). Bristow stresses Henley's political conservatism as against the bohemian example of Verlaine. However, Symons makes specific reference to Henley's poems in *In Hospital* in which Henley speaks in stark, honest terms about physical sensation. There Henley writes poetry of "'The ache and throb of the body in its long nights on a tumbled bed, and as it lies on

the operating-table awaiting `the thick, sweet mystery of

chloroform'" (867). Henley's attention to the body is

important because he presents sensation to the reader's

imagination without any of the cultural scripts that would

direct one to decide how one should feel about those

sensations. Henley's poem is of interest to Symons because

it does not report that the person feeling these sensations

is sad or angry or confused about having the sensations.

Still, he is not simply a body in pain. The speaker in

Henley's poem is contrasting the night of suffering to the

"sweet mystery of chloroform" that awaits him. He is

conscious of feeling intensely, but he is not feeling an

emotion. The quality that links Henley and Verlaine is

that, with all of their dissimilarities, both are

successful in eliciting pre-emotional, affective responses.

Symons is aware when writing "The Decadent Movement"

that the new literature will be found objectionable in

England for its honest treatment of the body. He concedes

this point and tries to clarify that a particular mode of

feeling and not the desire to shock is behind Decadent

poetry. The poetry does not have to be about the body or

about suffering. He asserts that the admirable quality in

Henley's poetry is not only in his "poetry of the

disagreeable, as in *In Hospital*" (867). Henley also writes

poetry of personal romance "that is exquisitely frivolous,
daintily capricious, wayward and fugitive as the winged
remembrance of some momentary delight" (867). This poetry
of romance may not be explicitly about bodies, but it too
evokes exquisite and capricious moments of delight which
never become emotion because they are wayward and fugitive.
The delight one feels in reading the poems remains a
fugitive from the conventional world of emotional
culmination. In these poems, Henley represents the body's
initial affective responses to romance without their co-
optation into emotion, and, by doing so, he elicits the
same pre-emotional response in the reader.

All aesthetic poetry is about the body, for the
connoisseur of pre-emotional affect, whether poet or
reader, must know how that nascent response feels in the
body, and how to prevent its degeneration into emotion. The
aesthete is one who knows the difference between a body
that feels like the soul and a body that feels like a mass-
produced, cultural machine.

Bristow refers to Symons's comparison of Verlaine and
Henley in which he states that both share the achievement
of "the ideal of the Decadence: to be a disembodied voice,
and yet the voice of a human soul" (867). The use of "yet"
gives this statement a counterintuitive sense. We assume

that in order to be the voice of the soul, a voice would

have to be disembodied, yet Symons implies the opposite

when he says that it is remarkable that Henley's voice is

both disembodied and of the soul. But, if we understand

that in order to have aesthetic experience as Symons

understands it, one must become sensitive to the presence

of pre-emotional affect in one's own body, then the poet's

"voice" must know the body as an object and speak with

sensitivity of its pre-emotional affect. The point is not

just to describe feeling as it is commonly known. The value

of pre-emotional affect is that it makes known to us the

nature of the soul from which it comes. In order to be the

voice of the soul, Henley's voice speaks of the body as an

object. Even when writing about romance, Henley writes

about the responses of the body so as to manifest the life

of the soul.

Previous to this new literature, poets could only

describe feelings in their emotional forms with the limits

of those recognizable categories. The life of the soul as

it can be known in pre-emotional affect was not accessible.

The new literature evokes in the body a manifestation of

the individual soul, but in order to do so, the poet must

describe the body dispassionately as an object in order to

avoid becoming a lyric voice, limited to the expression of

emotional categories. The soul is not known in our emotions because emotions tell us mostly about culture.

Self-consciousness is necessary to know and cultivate pre-emotional affect as it is felt in the body. The other Decadent qualities that Symons specifies--"a restless curiosity in research, an over-subtilizing refinement upon refinement" (858)--are necessary to finding the stimuli that will elicit positive pre-emotional affect in the first place. Both of these phrases describe strategies for finding the novel stimuli that tend to produce a pre-emotional affective response in the reader. Research uncovers new objects and refinement narrows one's perception of a familiar object to new details.

The characteristic that most readily elicits positive pre-emotional affect is novelty. There are two positive affects: interest/excitement and enjoyment/joy. The interest affect is an inherent reward for attention to novel stimuli. It is critical in a complex, changing environment in which preparatory behavior is a crucial adaptation that the organism search continually for predictive information in the environment. The novel stimulus triggers cognitive searching for matching memories so as to contextualize the new information. If this memory search locates the novel stimuli among positively encoded

memory, this recognition triggers the positive enjoyment

affect that replaces interest affect until another novel

stimulus continues the reciprocation between the two.

Interest affect often works in concert with enjoyment

affect to amplify positive affect. The ideal stimulus of

positive pre-emotional affect is the novel stimulus that is

cognitively recognized for its positive affective encoding

without the cognitive recall of cultural scripts that

continue the development of the response into an emotional

package of responses.

The aesthetic fascination with artificiality is the

discovery of the artificial as a class of objects that

lends itself to the individual imagination. Romanticism

intentionalized nature so as to create an alternative

affective community to that of the urban environment, which

was already potently encoded. By the end of the century

Romanticism's "nature" was thoroughly encoded with

conventionalized emotional scripts. Artificial objects,

made specifically for their appearance, function

specifically to receive individual affective encoding.

Without utilitarian functions, these objects readily take

on the affect the individual associates with.

An example in Symons's poetry of the attraction of the

artificial is "Maquillage":

> The charm of rouge on fragile cheeks,
>
> Pearl-powder, and, about the eyes,
>
> > A voice of violets that speaks
> >
> > Of perfumed hours of day, and doubtful night
> >
> > Of alcoves curtained close against the light. (1-6)

As opposed to the natural colors of the complexion that have fixed associations with emotions and conventional behavior, make-up elicits the images of "doubtful night" and the curtained, darkened alcoves in which conventions hold little sway and novel stimuli are free of the cultural scripts that predetermine narrow emotional outcomes.

The need to escape from predetermined emotional patterns elevates ambiguity. In "Liber Amoris," the speaker finds that the subtle affective encoding of finely nuanced meanings has fewer of the cultural scripts that quickly co-opt affective complexity into conventionalized emotion. The speaker narrates the stages of his search to understand precisely what it is that he desires. He discovers finally with Bianca that "Man is mostly man / In that , his will being sated, he / Wills ever new variety" (66-8). He desires not fulfillment in any form. Neither Paradise where "the spirits of men burn pure" (98) nor hell "where souls endure / An equal ecstacy of fire" (99-100), is satisfying

because both of these produce a "repletion of desire"

(101). Rather, he seeks "a subtlier intense / Unsatisfied

appeal of sense, /Ever desiring, ever near / The goal of

all its hope and fear, / Ever a hair's-breadth from the

goal" (102-106). He wishes to live continually in a

condition of intense fascination with novel stimuli without

reaching the culmination of that desire. This recalls the

ideal of Browning's Bishop Blougram whose heroes are all on

the threshold of accomplishment. Bianca satisfies him

because she is "ambiguous" (73). He tells her it is her

"strange reticences, strange / Concession, your elusive

change, /The strangeness of your smile" (86-9). Her

mutability makes her a source of novel stimuli.

When Aesthetes refer to beauty as their goal, they are

naming the stimulus of the psychological reaction that they

desire to have. "Beauty" is a stimulus that elicits potent

pre-emotional affect without also scripting its co-optation

into conventional emotion. In other words, those objects or

concepts are beautiful that are affectively encoded so as

to produce a recognizable pre-emotional affective response

in the perceiver. Impressionism and Symbolism both produce

this effect, and Symons considers these classes of

Decadence in "The Decadent Movement." Impressionism, as in

the example of Henley, foregrounds and celebrates the

sensational life of the body free of emotional co-optation, eliciting in the reader a duplication of that affective quality. Impressionism describes how the body feels, free of traditional references to emotion so that cognition is not cued to follow emotional scripts. Symbolism, on the other hand, does not describe feeling so as to elicit a sympathetic response in the reader; it places images in juxtaposition so that their affective encoding is recalled into memory with as little of their semantic encoding as possible.

Armstrong describes the 1860s as a time when "the double poem begins to disappear. The *ambiguity* of the discrete word or phrase supersedes it" (385). Pater's work "produces the symbol with a disappearing referent, a sign whose meaning is behind or *beyond* the word" (385). Armstrong notes that "Symons's own poetry presents experience as a series of impressions whose referent seems almost on the point of disappearing. That juxtaposition of entities without copula which is one of the forms of modernism is approached in his work" (383). The frustration of reference allows cognition to retrieve the affective encoding from the memories that are elicited by the text without the cultural scripts that are encoded on its semantic reference. In effect, the symbol frustrates

semantic recall long enough for affective recall to aid in the amplification of affect without the referent's scriptural intervention co-opting the affective response into an emotional form.

As a counterpart to the conventional understanding of aestheticism as an "epistemological break," I suggest that a component of this break is affective. Romanticism and aestheticism share a quality of the Post-Enlightenment generally in that they are both grounded in epistemologies of feeling. They are differentiated by the fact that Romanticism's is an epistemology of cultural emotion in which the judgment about the truth value of an affect is withheld until it is developed into an emotional form. Romanticism hopes to invigorate an oppressive cultural emotionality by newly intentionalizing "Nature" as a democratic repository of communal affect. Coleridge's concern with culture and Wordsworth's concern with sympathy are exemplary. Romanticism feels the difference between pre-emotional affect and emotion, but still understands emotion as the goal.

Aestheticism's epistemology of feeling is affective; the truth value of a feeling is judged before affect is co-opted by culture's enervating emotionality. Aestheticism despairs of the Romantic dream of a revitalized

emotionality. It turns instead to the isolation of the pre-emotional state of feeling from the cultural scripts of emotionality. Pre-emotional affect is Aestheticism's antidote to modern self-consciousness that habitually intervenes in positive affect with scripts of affect controlling disillusionment. Aestheticism hopes to transcend cultural emotionality by making pre-emotional affect psychically sustaining in itself. Symons, in his Decadent poetry, follows aesthetic thought to its logical conclusions and rebels specifically against the social obligation that is the obstacle to the affective perception of reality.

Ultimately, the escape of culture that is hoped for is impossible, as the functions of the affect system are fundamentally cultural. However, the cultural systems devised by humans accommodate the imperative functions of the affect system without humans understanding accurately how the system operates. I stipulate that I use the word "successful" in the evolutionary sense in which a successful accommodation of the affective imperatives is only one that continues the existence of the species. I will follow the accommodations made by Arthur Symons so as to clarify the meaning and significance of his poetry and his legacy as a transitional figure in the development of

Modernism.

Symons is most known, as a critic, for the Symbolism he bequeaths to Modernism, primarily through his influence on T.S. Eliot. His turn to mystic Symbolism makes it easy to view his Decadent physicality as an expression of youthful and perverse sexuality. I contend, however, that Symons was honest and accurate in his insistence that his poetry was first an expression of the nature of Aestheticism. He, and all Aesthetes, are connoisseurs of pre-emotional affect. Attention to the subtle life of the body is the ground of the whole program.

It makes perfect sense, in affective terms, to attend to sexuality if one wishes to cultivate affect. As Tomkins points out, the drives work in humans by triggering a complementary affective amplification. Of the drives, sex is most dependent on affective amplification, and it is the cultural nature of that affective participation that links sex with every other aspect of social life. The sex drive is one of the most dependable triggers of intense affect. Moral questions, then and now, turn primarily on how or whether this affect becomes emotion.

The poems of *London Nights* are Symons's most notable contribution to Decadent poetry, and Bristow comments that "more than any other contribution, Symons' 'Stella Maris'

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was found truly distasteful" (74). Among these critics are some whose complaints reveal that their displeasure was not with the thought that a gentleman might, as a dalliance, enjoy an illicit sexual diversion. Symons's offence was in his estimation that his feelings about the experience were worthy of public endorsement. Bristow quotes a reviewer in the *National Observer* who opined:

> It is given to a majority of mankind at one time
>
> or another to have some such experience as Mr
>
> Symons describes, but for the most part, thank
>
> heaven! They do not gloat over them, and roll them
>
> on the tongue, and write about them in a style
>
> which recalls the cold-blooded catalogues of a
>
> semi-educated house-agent. (75)

Symons is transgressing against the standards by which culture decides who gets to feel good about what.

"Stella Maris" begins with the speaker's apostrophic address to the eponymous Stella Maris, a prostitute of his earlier acquaintance whom he asks, "Why is it I remember yet / You, of all women one has met, / In random wayfare, as one meets / The chance romances of the streets, / The Juliet of a night?" (1-5). The speaker is aware of a conflict between the behavior of his memory and the moral assumptions that

should mitigate against such a memory. He should not remember her, but he does, indicating that the experience has more significance for him than conventional assumptions would allow. As the speaker considers the assumptions in his own mind that should preclude this memory, we see that in each case those assumptions are social conventions that value feelings by their adherence to the emotional compromise in which the intensity of pre-emotional affect is exchanged for the duration of emotion offered by cultural scripts. The bargain allows the individual more security and the community the suppression of the disruptive contagion of affective intensity.

The cultural assumption that such an affair is trivial is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because the culture disseminates scripts that offer no positive affective encoding that can transform the brief intensity into emotional duration, people who have such affairs will not have experiences of emotional duration. Because the duration of a feeling is the cultural criterion of value in feeling, the memory of such an affair will not be recalled. But in Symons's poem, it was recalled, and vividly so. The speaker is aware that conventional logic asserts that such an experience does not have the potential for significance, but he does not judge his experience is wrong. Rather, he

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judges the moral convention to be wrong.

The complexity of the speaker's personal experience of culture has given him access to positive associations with this behavior that displace the negative affect that is encoded in the moral code of the larger community. The dominant moral code is consistently violated because enough opposing, minority communities exist so that their positive responses to a behavior, when assembled, overcomes the negative response of the dominant moral code. However, in assessing his own feelings, the speaker judges that some special quality in the brief experience must explain its potency and the fallacy of the cultural conventions. He feels pre-emotional affect, and tries to understand why it is culturally shunned.

The reference to Juliet in the opening lines is repeated twice more in the poem. Shakespeare's characters represent the cultural expectations that make it seem strange to the speaker that he remembers Stella Maris. It places the speaker's memory of his night with a prostitute in contrast to a cultural ideal of conventional romantic love.

The speaker's experience with Stella Maris is different from that of Romeo and Juliet in that the speaker rejects the emotional compromise, preferring the brief

intensity of the one night. Shakespeare's characters believe in the possibility of never-ending love. When they feel intensely, they imagine that this can be extended indefinitely, and they turn to the convention of marriage to realize that cultural promise. In the conventional view, the tragedy grows from the presumption that, if allowed to, Romeo and Juliet would have been happy together forever. Shakespeare's couple enact the culture's criterion for judging the value of feeling. Important feelings are those that one is driven to give duration, and cultural conventions are in place to assist. Experiences that are not important or valuable are forgotten. In the play, the small-mindedness of political interests causes the families involved to violate their own interests in helping the lovers join the community's emotional affective economy. Romeo and Juliet are frustrated conservatives. They are not wiser than their families because they love more intensely. In fact, communities have limited interest in intensity. Rather, the young lovers are wiser than their communities because they value the duration of their feelings above all else. It is emotional duration that sustains selves and is culture's primary responsibility.

The speaker in "Stella Maris" is similar to the young lovers in that his feelings while with her are as intense,

or more so, than are Romeo's while with Juliet. The speaker knows the "Rapture of the embodied soul" (49) in a night "So infinitely full of life" (59). What he does not share with them is the desire to give this feeling duration. That would require him to make the emotional compromise with the culture. In his case, that would mean never having met with Stella Maris in the first place. Having done so, however, he discovers that it is significant without the duration that the conventions insist is a necessary legitimation of feeling.

The speaker discovers in his thoughts other cultural evaluations of his behavior encoded in his environment. He notes that the return of her memory is inappropriate to the surroundings in which it returns. He addresses Stella Maris saying that he is "In so serene a pausing-place, / Where the bright pure expanse of sea, / The shadowy shore's austerity, / Seem a reproach to you and me" (8-11). Austerity requires the exclusion of pleasure in favor of a disciplined stability in which intensity does not distract attention from the stern endurance that is required by life's critical necessities. Austerity does not imply the lack of feeling, only a consistency of feeling that allows focused attention over a considerable period of time.

In specifying that this austerity is a reproach to

their pleasure, Symons acknowledges that his brief pleasure is commonly thought morally inferior to feelings that have the more socially contributive duration of an emotion. Symons uses the sea to symbolize the harsh realities of life that require austerity. Just as the sailor at sea must be austere in order to be attentive, so it is necessary to communal survival that emotional duration be preferred to brief intensity.

It is interesting that the speaker is distracted from the lighthouse light when his memory of their intense pleasure rises into his mind, demonstrating precisely the susceptibility to distraction that a naval society might discourage. An austere emotionality is socially valuable for its suppression of the volatility and mutability of pre-emotional affect. Still, her memory comes to him, indicating that there is something in that experience that has not succumbed to the co-optation of the emotional compromise.

The speaker, acknowledging that his experience has lacked the expected duration, is left to explain why it has remained important enough so as to have been spontaneously recalled. He is not concerned with the illicit nature of their sex. Rather, he is intrigued to discover that a briefly intense experience has defied conventional logic

about value in feeling. In this sense, "Stella Maris"
narrates the fundamental aesthetic discovery that there is
a mode of feeling outside of conventional emotionality in
which meaningful intensity is still possible.

Symons is not just declaring that the brief experience
has value; he is proposing a different evaluative criterion
of feeling, one that does not involve the duration of the
feeling. It needs to be stressed that remembering Stella
Maris does not constitute duration; it is a repeat of an
isolated moment. That he is surprised to remember her
indicates that he has not thought of her since their night
together. When she ceased to be an immediate stimulus for
him, she ceased to be meaningful to him. When he remembers
her, he can feel and see her body, but he expresses no
significant concern for her otherwise, and she is not
associated in any way with his life outside of that night.

The speaker's emotional detachment from Stella Maris
is the quality that critics commonly note as perverse
without appreciating how this is redeemed for Symons. The
poem is about Symons's proposal that there is an
alternative to that conventional emotional standard.
Bristow, for example, points to this lack of romantic
feeling as evidence of the fundamental perversity of
Symons's heterosexual desire. I agree, and will argue

below, that the assumption that it is possible to live in detachment from the long-term interests of others is the fundamental flaw in Decadence. But Symons's significance is not his mistaken assumptions about the function of emotionality, but his vision of an alternative to those conventions, which is the intense moment that displaces the need for the romantic feeling that Bristow values. The alternative vision enhances our understanding of aestheticism, and that vision, not his personal sexuality, is passed to Modernism.

Twice in the speaker's description of his night with Stella Maris, he places their experience in opposition to "oblivion." Her memory returns to him to affirm the value of their brief time together as a moment of existence. He describes "That nuptial night too briefly borne / To the oblivion of morn. / Ah! no oblivion, for I feel / Your lips deliriously steal / Along my neck, and fasten there" (38-42). Later he tells her: "I / Remember you thus strangely, won / An instant from oblivion. / And I remembering, would declare / That joy, not shame, is ours to share" (51-55). The intense moment defies oblivion and in doing so is the legitimate criterion by which to value their brief encounter. This is Symons's alternative to emotional duration as a measure of value in feeling. He is building a

theory in defense of pre-emotional affect that does not become emotion.

The opposition that Symons creates between the experience that rescues one from oblivion and the experience that culture promotes for its duration is critical. It allows us to appreciate that aestheticism is not an attempt to use new stimuli in order to have more or better "normal" experience. It is an attempt to promote to normalcy an experience that has always been present, but has never been sustaining.

For Symons, the moment, and its pre-emotional affect, displaces emotional duration because its intensity gives assurance of an existence in comparison with which earthly love is not significant. In the poem's conclusion, the speaker implores:

> Why should I grieve, though I forget
>
> How many another Juliet?
>
> Let us be glad to have forgot
>
> That roses fade, and loves are not,
>
> As dreams, immortal, though they seem
>
> Almost as real as a dream.
>
> It is for this I see you rise. (62-68)

In his experience with Stella Maris, she is the stimulus that elicits the dreamlike state of pre-emotional affect.

In that feeling state he knows an eternal reality. He not only does not need the emotional duration of conventional emotionality, the conventions that are signified by the allusion to Juliet are obstacles to this vision of reality. His experiences with "many another Juliet" should not cause him to grieve, although they are violations of the moral code.

In *London Nights*, Symons does not inquire deeply about the nature of the "dreams" that are discovered in his escape from culture. He is trying to foreground the value of the potency of existence that relieves the fear of oblivion. Whatever the nature of this feeling, it stands in opposition to conventional emotionality. In Symons's view, culture's insistence on emotional duration is a system of denial that only blocks access to the experiences that can make people know the reality of their place in eternity. Love, in the conventional sense, is only part of the emotional compromise that is disseminated in myths like that of Romeo and Juliet to perpetuate the status quo. He has discovered an access to the true realm of eternity in the transgressive pre-emotional moment of intensity, and in this realm, love in its earthly emotional sense is simply irrelevant. When we know that there is eternal life, we do not need the delusion that earthly connections will last

forever.

In the passage quoted above, there is a reference to
love that can confuse Symons's commitment to the feeling of
eternal existence if we are not sensitive to Symons's
proclivity for arranging sequential ideas non-sequentially
on the page. In the second couplet, he declares that they
should be glad "to have forgot" that loves are not
immortal. One might read this as an endorsement of
pretending that love is never-ending. But this delusion is
the function of the conventions that he is rejecting. It is
necessary to see that the verb here is a past infinitive,
referring to his state of mind before their night together
when he held conventional, negative feelings about the
brief affair they were about to have. He needed to forget
the inhibiting conventions of love in order to have the
experience which makes known to him the eternity that makes
love irrelevant.

The first couplet refers to his condition after that
experience, when, knowing of his own eternity, he has no
reason to grieve that he has had so many passing loves. He
does not need to remember them because the significance of
the experience is to make him aware of a reality that
transcends the concerns of this life. The dedication to
grounding one's feelings outside of culture is emphasized

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as the speaker concludes that her memory comes to him "Where calm hours weave, for such a mood / Solitude out of solitude; / For this, for this, you come to me" (70-72). Her memory affirms the wisdom of his solitude, for it is in the solitude of pre-emotional affect that he again knows the intensity that tells him of an eternal reality.

By making culture an obstacle to the individual's knowledge of his transcendent reality, Symons's aestheticism becomes anti-cultural and radically individualist. Symons is selective in acknowledging this logical consequence of his assumptions. But this underlying reality is the ground of the perversity that marks the poems of *London Nights* and marks his Symbolist legacy as well.

While the speaker in "Stella Maris" expresses some sense of social solidarity with his partner when he declares "That joy not shame, is ours to share" (55), this is undermined by the fact that the only continuing significance of that night for him is the memory of a moment of intense existence. The fact that the moment happened with another person does not significantly bind him to that person. In *The Symbolist Movement*, Symons states flatly that the saint, the lover, and the artist each have "an incommunicable ecstasy which he esteems as

his ultimate attainment, however, in his lower moments, he may serve . . . men" (326). The priority of the "incommunicable ecstacy" displaces communal responsibility.

Symons represents Decadence as a liberationist aesthetic, seeking to escape or subvert an oppressive social system. But it also tries to escape the fundamental psychological conditions that make humans social beings. While we may find in Decadent transgression a legitimate resistance to an oppressive social order, we also find in the motivation behind that resistance the reasons for its weakness as a resistance and its eventual complicity in even greater oppression. An affective theory can help clarify what differentiates the Decadent resistance to a particular culture from the Decadent aspiration for an individualist transcendence of culture entirely.

In "Stella Maris," the speaker assumes that freeing himself from the culture's co-optive system of emotional duration gives him a direct experience of real existence. Because pre-emotional affect comes to consciousness without apparent reference to anything outside of the direct perception of its eliciting object, the response is assumed to be an interaction between the self and the essence of that object. An affect theory argues that the essence that is relevant to the self has been culturally associated with

the object in unconscious memory, so that the self is

always interacting with the collective. Symons's embrace of

Mystic Symbolism needs to be understood at the level at

which the unconscious organizes the interaction of self and

collective, so I will take a moment to review the concept

of the affective community.

Decadence exists in the alliances of small affective

communities at the experimental fringes of the larger

affective consensus. These small communities exist because,

for individual reasons, their members find an intensity of

positive affect in a small community that outweighs the

negative affect of the larger community.

We know the affective shape of our environment by

learning it from the expressions of others. In Symons's

poetry his affective alliances are evident in the language

he uses in trying to describe his own pre-emotional affect.

His language betrays the communal structure of the

unconscious processes that produced the feeling. When he

wishes to evoke the reader's sense of the origin of his

memory of Stella Maris and its intense positive affect, he

describes her image rising from the sea like a Neried. The

myth is a cultural signifier with potent affective

encoding. The image of the Neried is not likely the

specific one that Symons retrieved into his unconscious

affective processes while he was with Stella Maris;
however, I am suggesting that the reversion to communally
encoded language in the effort to make a text affectively
potent mimics that use of imagery in the unconscious to do
the same. In the company of Stella Maris, his sexual drive
mechanism was amplified by the affect retrieved from his
unconscious memories of the affective communities formed
from his previous cultural experiences.

Symons accesses a communal repository of positive
affect again when he describes his pre-emotional condition
as dreamlike. "Dream" as a signifier has potency because,
as he uses it, it elicits an image that the culture has
invested with affective potency. A poet cannot communicate
or feel value without accessing the affective communities
that are held in the memories of his readers. Symons's
declaration of independence from the conventional life in
which "roses fade, and loves are not, / As dreams,
immortal" (65-6) seems feasible in the moment of self-
substantiating positive affect, but it cannot, finally, be
sustaining for him or acceptable to the community.

I have stressed the functions of the affective
community in the interdependence of individuals and
collectives because I wish to argue that Symons's critical
shift from Decadence to Symbolism is best understood as an

adjustment he makes in his alliances with the affective

communities that the culture makes available to him. His

Symbolist literary theory is a rationalization of the

affective strategies that become necessary as his Decadent

affective alliances prove insufficient, in spite of the

optimistic declarations of its superiority in *London

Nights*.

A significant shift in Symons's approach occurs with

the publication of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* in

1899. In "Stella Maris," we hear the confident declaration

that the momentary delight is enough. But between the

publication of *London Nights* in 1895 and *The Symbolist

Movement*, there is, in 1897, the collection of poems

entitled *Amoris Victima*. These poems about the suffering

that loving causes the speaker indicate that he did not

enact in his life the kind of emotional detachment that was

praised in "Stella Maris." However, the pessimistic

conclusions of *Amoris Victima* combined with the facts of

Symons's biography confirm the assertions made in "Stella

Maris" that, for Symons, earthly love is no more than

"vague nights, and days at strife"(58). The new approach to

poetry in *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* indicates

that while Symons has not lost his commitment to aesthetic

poetry, he made a larger concession to the emotional

compromise than was allowed for under Decadence.

The shift to Symbolism occurs because Decadence is an untenable accommodation of the affective economy. It cannot affectively sustain selves because it restricts itself to the meager affective resources of the far margins of the culture's affective economy. Symons's embrace of literary Symbolism retains its conscious commitment to individualism, even as it moves him closer to the cultural mainstream where he finds more affective resources.

In the Introduction to *The Symbolist Movement*, Symons states that the time during which the new literature was called Decadence was a time of waiting for critics to recognize Symbolism. But Symons and others had recognized symbolism in the literature before he labeled it Decadence. In "The Decadent Movement" in 1893, he notes that the new literature is sometimes referred to as Symbolism, which he identifies as the seeking for "the truth of spiritual things to the spiritual vision" (859). But these spiritual truths are subordinated in 1893 to his interest in the more culturally transgressive posture of Decadence. Symbolism comes to the front because Decadence fails affectively. Symons makes the famous declaration: "The interlude, half a mock-interlude, of Decadence, diverted the attention of the critics while something more serious was in preparation"

(7). The implication is that a new appreciation of a

literary technique was in preparation. But there is only

one significant characteristic in Symons's Symbolism that

is not present in Decadence as it is found in the poems of

London Nights: mysticism. Mysticism is not a literary

technique, of course; it is a concept that gives Symons an

interpretive context. Symons states in *The Symbolist*

Movement that the new writing "is all an attempt to

spiritualize literature" (8). In the Conclusion, Symons

states that it is "the doctrine of Mysticism, with which

all this symbolical literature has so much to do, of which

it is all so much the expression" (327). And "on this

theory alone does all life become worth living" (329).

Symons needs mysticism to address the diminishing

potency of pre-emotional affect. The confident denial of

oblivion is no longer tenable. In the Conclusion to *The*

Symbolist Movement, Symons states flatly that the fear of

death is the central reality in human life: "all our lives

are spent in busily forgetting death" (325). Because of this

fear, "there is a great, silent conspiracy between us to

forget death" (325). The denial is possible because we

accept happiness as a comforting illusion, but in fact

"that life should be happy or unhappy, as those words are

used, means so very little . . . Only very young people

want to be happy" (326-27). The hope of happiness does not change the fact that "it is with a kind of terror that we wake up, every now and then, to the whole knowledge of our ignorance, and to some perception of where it is leading us" (324). The conventional illusion inevitably fails, leaving us again facing our terror of the mystery of death.

In "Stella Maris," sustained happiness is made irrelevant by the moment of "the whole / Rapture of the embodied soul" (48-9), which felt so intensely existent that is defies oblivion and is the real and immortal "dream" (67) against which love is seen to be transient. At the writing of *The Symbolist Movement*, the intensity of pre-emotional affect has lapsed and oblivion again looms large. Symons now insists that "the fear of death is not . cowardice; it is, rather, an intellectual dissatisfaction with an enigma which has been presented to us" (326). In affective terms, Symons has lost a portion of the pre-emotional, positive affect that has substantiated his self, and he is subject to the desubstantiation of negative affect, which feels like and warns of the approaching death of the self. With the loss of the pre-emotional, affective intensity that is evident in *London Nights*, Symons has nothing to lose by accepting the emotional bargain with culture. He aligns himself with a conventional affective

community symbolized by mysticism that gives him access to its scripts of emotional duration in exchange for appropriate behavior on his part.

Symons explains that Symbolist mysticism reduces our fear of the mystery of death because it is "a theory of life which makes us familiar with mystery, and which seems to harmonize those instincts which make for religion, passion, and art, freeing us at once of a great bondage" (327-28). By revealing the previously "unseen reality apprehended by the consciousness" (2) in the "once terrifying eternity of things about us" (328), symbols make us "familiar with mystery." Presumably, the things about us are terrifying because conventions convince us that they have fixed and eternal meanings in comparison with which our own brief existence is so perplexing as to cause us to fear death and live tormented by that fear. When the symbol reveals the unfixed nature of meaning in our environment, "we come to look upon these things as shadows, through which we have our shadowy passage" (328). Symbolism allows us to see that the world is as "shadowy" as we think our own nature. All is equally mysterious, and we lose our fear of the mystery.

The question, then, is: Why would mystery everywhere give us less "intellectual dissatisfaction" than mystery

only in our own future? The answer, I propose, is that the sense that there is mystery everywhere is the culturally endorsed concept of mysticism that carries the potent and positive affective encoding of a sizable affective community. When Symons changes his philosophical allegiance to mysticism, he makes an unconscious alliance with a new affective community for the positive affect that it makes available to him. Mysticism feels true because its affective scripts process his positive, pre-emotional affect into a positive emotional duration.

Symons's argument reveals the mystic personification that makes the idea compatible with the unconscious affective community that produced his pre-emotional affect:

> As we realize the delight of feeling ourselves carried onward by forces which it is our wisdom to obey it is at least with a certain relief that we turn to an ancient doctrine, so much more likely to be true because it has so much the air of a dream. (328)

In his understanding, he is obeying the benevolent "forces" that control things in the mystery. I would argue that he is obeying the affective community, as he knows it in memory, that has affectively encoded the concept of mysticism. He is correct in arguing that the concept of

mysticism has made it possible for him to feel more

"delight." That is not, however, because the idea is

logically consistent with reality but because the idea

calls up conscious memories that are affectively compatible

with the unconscious memories that produced the pre-

emotional affect. With the affective encoding of mysticism,

he can process the pre-emotional affect that is stimulated

by the textual symbol into emotional duration.

Symbolism is a different accommodation of the

affective dilemma than is Decadence. In Decadence, the

moment of intensity, in reality a moment of access to

cultural affective resources, is thought to be a self-

generated, self-substantiating moment of autonomy. In

Symbolism there is no longer the Decadent faith that pre-

emotional affect will be adequate. The solution, however,

is not to abandon the split between the two affective

states and seek to reintegrate the pre-emotional with its

emotional fulfillment. Rather, Symons embraces mysticism so

that he can explain the unconscious effects of the symbol

as an interaction with a divine intentionality. In this he

gives up the entirely autonomous self, and claims that his

self is reliant only on a divinity. He covertly increases

his access to the culture's affective economy but obscures

that source with the intellectually generated image of

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supernatural forces.

Aestheticism set out to create powerfully evocative poetry by trying to isolate one stage of the affective process. I have argued that this effort fails, for there is no substitute for the duration of emotion, as muted as its intensity may be. While nineteenth-century aestheticism failed to realize the promise that it first saw in pre-emotional affect, it left its accommodation of the affective dilemma to the twentieth century.

When Symbolism is passed to Modernism it is not only the symbol as literary technique that is passed. While I cannot make an argument in support of these speculations here, I will end with the suggestion that Modernism inherits Symbolism with its separation of pre-emotional affect and emotion intact in its conscious accommodations of unconscious affective processes.

As quoted earlier, Armstrong notes that Symons's poetry "presents experience as a series of impressions whose referent seems almost on the point of disappearing. That juxtaposition of entities without copula which is one of the forms of modernism is approached in his work" (383). Symons discredits the copula so as to fragment the process of feeling in the hope of cultivating intensity. He patches his affective resources back together with mysticism as

well as he can and passes that affective accommodation to Modernism, which reasons that a fragmented way of feeling seems appropriate in a fragmented culture. Aestheticism is subsumed into modernism, and the non-aesthetic Victorians are found to be "lumpenly ethical or theological" (Armstrong 7).

Armstrong sees that the rejection of the copula in Symons's poetry is adopted by the moderns who "celebrate the elimination of content" (7), but also "are haunted by the [non-aesthetic] Victorians because they are haunted by the plenitude of content which eludes them" (7). They reject content, but are then haunted by its loss. I would clarify Armstrong's formulation by suggesting that the moderns celebrate the elimination of political and cultural content and lament the loss of emotional content. In this they enact Symons's tense accommodation: the elimination of the copula produces a strangely meaningful but still unfulfilling experience. They have avoided a political dilemma only to find the affective dilemma behind the political.

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