Romantic Daemons in the Poetry of Blake, Shelley and Keats

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Beyond the Human

By

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CHAPTER ONE

THE DAEMON

The late Harold Bloom's final book, *The Daemon Knows: Literary Greatness and the American Sublime* (2015), prompts, with its close readings of various American authors, my present engagement with British Romanticism from the point of view of its daemonic features.[1] For me the figure of the daemon provides the means to introduce a broader exploration of Neoplatonic (and other internally-oriented) doctrines and imagery, not least those evolved by the poets themselves. The daemon intrudes, too, upon sociological matters. Orrin N. C. Wang detects a "force" in the continuing expression of Romantic revolutionary thinking: "Very few more powerful pedagogical moments exist in romantic studies than the act of connecting contemporary invocations of the left and right to a two-hundred-year-old genealogy originating in the Jacobin and anti-Jacobin conflict". Importantly, the sustained nature of this "force", which I would call daemonic, ties the study of Romanticism "to future concerns beyond and outside the scholarly world".[2] For Bloom, indeed, the daemon is an extraordinary nexus of energy, which bridges the human and "what lies beyond the human" (*The Daemon Knows*, 4). "What lies beyond the human" is that which interests me, as it clearly pertains to humankind's present predicament on earth, and "concerns beyond and outside the scholarly world". It is a matter, again, which I approach (in part) through the means of a traditional understanding of our relation to the earth, and the imagery, rather loosely termed "Neoplatonic", with which we express this relation. The revival (or re-revival) of this traditional understanding in the late eighteenth century links, in obverse ratio, with the beginning of the industrial age, the need to return to values underlining the interconnection of life forms and energies on earth, and the respect for the earth associated with a perception of the sacrality of these life forms and energies. This broadening of a perceptual horizon displaces

[1] Harold Bloom, *The Daemon Knows: Literary Greatness and the American Sublime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[2] Orrin N. C. Wang, "Ghost Theory", *Studies in Romanticism* 46, no. 2 (2007): 217-218.

the taken-for-granted centrality of humankind and its claim to terrestrial dominance. Regarding recent ways of our situating ourselves in relation to the problems of existence, a general posthumanist outlook comes remarkably close to that of key British Romantics. If the term "posthuman" brings to mind the hybridity of a Frankenstein "monster", or of a cyborg from science fiction—an extension of the human, in other words—"posthumanism" is, rather, concerned with the blindness of self-centred humanism, itself a correlative of the extreme intensification of the ills of industrialisation, and seeks to shift awareness to the importance of life beyond and outside this narrow range. Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini observe:

> In contrast to images of the cybernetic posthuman as trans- or super-human, posthumanist discourses promote neither the transcendence of the human nor the negation of humanism. Rather, critical posthumanisms engage with the humanist legacy to critique anthropocentric values and worldviews.[3]

In evoking the images and beliefs of a traditional understanding of our relation with the earth, of which the daemon acts as a pivot for me, I consider my approach to be posthumanist in its sympathies,[4] though situated within the longer perspective suggested by Clarke and Rossini: "If the limits of the human have always exercised both our thinking and our esthetic practices, then some aspects of what is now termed 'posthumanism' and 'the posthuman' go as far back as the beginning of the human itself". As Cary Wolfe puts the matter, posthumanism is a discourse "that comes both before and after humanism".[5]

From my perspective, a traditionalist approach to the posthuman would indeed involve a "transcendence of the human", though not a "negation of humanism". I think of Charles Taylor's rebuttal (as outlined by Christopher Steck) of the notion that the secular self has emerged from conceptual constraints—located in an obeisance to ideological manifestations of transcendence—into a "neutral, self-contained reality". Rather, according

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[3] Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini, Preface, in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Posthuman*, eds. Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), xiv-xv.

[4] I express an allegiance in oblique terms because a specific field of research "implies delineation or control", which I wish to avoid. See Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities", in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, eds. Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 9.

[5] See Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xxv.

to Taylor, the self is "formed and reformed through different historical constructions", where for the modern self "the eclipse of the transcendent is part of that social construction", "not a newly realized truth about the human condition". "Tacit assumptions" based on the apparent "emergence" of the secular self "discourage an option for [the] transcendent", but the contemporary self, acting within an "immanent framework" can still turn to the transcendent through literature.[6] Further, according to Clarke and Rossini, and this defines something of a goal for the present book in its engagement with the daemon and the spiritual concerns and energies surrounding it: "a current challenge for posthumanist thinking is to confront the specters of those premodern animals, gods, angels, monsters, and other real and conceptual entities that, in order to keep the human 'proper', humanist modernity had to expel".

To consider ecological views in relation to posthumanism, those expressed by Fritjof Capra are exemplary: he writes of "the notion of the embodied mind" currently being "developed in cognitive science". What is important here is that the sense of unity of body and mind embedded in this notion "transcends not only the separation of mind and body, but the separation of self and world":

> This sense of oneness with the natural world is fully borne out by the new scientific conception of life. As we understand how the roots of life reach deep into basic physics and chemistry, how the unfolding of complexity began long before the formation of the first living cells, and how life has evolved for billions of years by using again and again the same basic patterns and processes, we realize how tightly we are connected with the entire fabric of life.[7]

Mark Lussier quotes Capra on the disturbing human tendency to elevate selfhood, and the consequences of this for the environment: "The origin of our [current] dilemma lies in our tendency to create the abstractions of separate objects, including a separate self", which is only dispersed when we "overcome our Cartesian anxiety . . . [and] realize that identity, individuality, and autonomy do not imply separateness and independence".[8] As Aldo Leopold would have it, humans are part of a "biotic community", with no special privileges. And as early as the sixteenth century, at the

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[6] Christopher Steck, "Re-embedding Moral Agency: Linking Theology and Ethics in Blake", *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 41, no. 2 (2013): 337-338.

[7] Fritjof Capra, *The Hidden Connections: A Science for Sustainable Living* (New York: Anchor, 2002), 68-69.

[8] Mark Lussier, "Self-Annihilation / Inner Revolution: Blake's *Milton*, Buddhism, and Ecocriticism", *Religion & Literature* 40, no. 1 (2008): 41.

height of the European Humanist enterprise, Giordano Bruno, albeit an eccentric contrarian, could declare that "no natural intrinsic or ontological difference exists between men and beasts": "In fact, a larger difference exists among [humankind] than exists between idiotic men and horses and elephants".[9] Iain McGilchrist writes of the interdependence of right and left hemispheres of the brain, where the currently dominant left (though McGilchrist is ever wary of the terms of a reductive bifurcation) "underwrites the fragmented vision" of mechanistic reasoning, and "is both literally more limited in what it can see, and less capable of understanding what it does see than the right" (one of whose functions is to assemble into a rich and complex whole the parts perceived by the left); further, the left "is less aware of its own limitations".[10] Bearing this in mind, "we should be appropriately sceptical of the left hemisphere's vision of a mechanistic world, an atomistic society, a world in which competition is more important than collaboration; a world in which nature is a heap of resources there for our exploitation, in which only humans count, and yet humans are only machines—not even very good ones, at that; a world curiously stripped of depth, colour and value" (*Master and Emissary*, xxvi). The Romantics with whom I deal, Blake, Shelley and Keats,[11] seemed well aware of the pernicious fictions "of human nature", based on the elevation of a superficially rational aspect of the mind, and centred in the privileging of a separate self, empowered by its own sense of self-worth to exploit all around it. The antagonist against which they strove was, in Lussier's words, the "delusion of separation and alienation" (Lussier, "Self-Annihilation", 45); their goal, a freeing of consciousness from the narrow confines imposed by Enlightenment, left-brain awareness. Their daemonic means of doing so will be explored in this book.

In Bloom's *The Daemon Knows* the daemon is made manifest in the works of writers coupled by him in a suggestive manner: Whitman and Melville, Emerson and Dickinson, Hawthorne and James, Twain and Frost, Stevens and Eliot, and, finally, Faulkner and Hart Crane. At times the

[9] Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 204. For Bruno, see Giuseppe Mazzotta, "Bruno's Radical Critique of Humanism", *Annali d'Italianistica* 26 (2008): 178-179.

[10] Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), xxi.

[11] The apparent privileging of these representatives of what Marc Redfield refers to as "the Big Six canon" is not the result of unconsidered prejudice (though my familiarity with their work undoubtedly plays a role in my choice), but on account of their specific links with the daemonic. See Marc Redfield, "Aesthetics, Theory, and the Profession of Literature: Derrida and Romanticism", *Studies in Romanticism* 46, no. 2 (2007): 243.

daemon is spurred into existence by one in the couple working on the other; at other times it simply descends on its chosen author. In the course of the volume, Bloom briefly refers to daemonic lore, citing Walter Pater's *Greek Studies*, Plutarch's work on the cessation of oracles, the Cambridge Platonists, the Neoplatonists, and Plato himself (Bloom, *The Daemon Knows*, 19, 152). He also, at two points in the book, touches on the Yeatsian "Daimon", a pertinent reference in a contemporary review of matters daemonic (*The Daemon Knows*, 195, 495).[12] However, he prefers to reveal instances of daemonic enlargement in his chosen authors. What seems to be common in all his instances is the sense that the daemonic voice is supercharged, often expressing what we might call (in a Romantics context) the Burkean Sublime;[13] it seems to come from beyond the authors themselves while yet being absorbed in human matters. Bloom quotes from Thomas Weiskel's *The Romantic Sublime* (1976): "The essential claim of the sublime is that man can, in feeling and in speech, transcend the human. What, if anything, lies beyond the human—God or the gods, the daemon or Nature—is matter for great disagreement. What, if anything, defines the range of the human is scarcely less sure" (in Bloom, *The Daemon Knows*, 3-4). The current convergence of humanism and posthuman concerns (which responds in part to Weiskel's speculations) is suggested by Rosi Braidotti: "Posthumanism is the historical moment that marks the end of the opposition between Humanism and antihumanism and traces a different discursive framework, looking more affirmatively towards new alternatives".[14] As Bloom says of his selection of authors: "these writers represent our incessant effort to transcend the human without forsaking humanism" (*The Daemon Knows*, 3); this last (as well as referring to a posthuman imperative) stands as his best general account of the agency of the "daemonic". It is necessary to examine daemonic lore in a bit more detail in the present work, where both knowledge of the daemon (linked to daemonic evocation) and daemonic expression are concerned.

The daemon, however, is not a straightforward subject. In Jean-Pierre Vernant's *Mortals and Immortals*, the daemon is that small measure of

[12] Originally Yeats spelt the word "Daemon"; though I favour this spelling, I occasionally slip between "daemon" and "daimon", depending on authors' preferences.

[13] Paddy Bullard provides a useful contextualisation of the Burkean Sublime, which, refreshingly, emphasises the (albeit reactionary) statesman's humanism. See Paddy Bullard, "Burke's Aesthetic Philosophy", in *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, ed. David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 53-66.

[14] See Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 37.

divinity within humankind: "The *psuché*, which in each of us is 'ourself', has a 'daimonic' character: it is a particle of the divine in human beings".[15] Pictorius Villinganus, the sixteenth century alchemist, notes that daemon "is the name of one that doth administer help or succor unto another, and whom Pliny calleth a God". For Apuleius daemons are "media between us and the Gods", being immortal and rational, but having "passion in common with other natures subordinate to themselves". At one point in North's translation of Plutarch's life of *Caesar*, Caesar's "great daimon" ("*ho mentoi megas daimon*") is rendered in general terms as the tenor of a life: his "great prosperitie and good fortune". In a related way Jane Chance Nitzsche observes that "the Greek concept of the daemon influenced the Roman genius, so that each man was said to possess a soul (*genius* or *daemon*) born with him". (This conflation of "daemon" and "genius" is a terminological point to be borne in mind later, regarding the Romantics in the present book.) Concerning the difficulties associated with the meaning of the word "daimon", Hannu Poutiainen notes that "the genealogy of the *daimon*'s signification—'fate' in Heraclitus, 'mysterious sign' in Plato, 'malignant spirit' in the Septuagint and in Christian discourses like that of St. John Chrysostom—remains a knotted one". It is knotted in the context of this specific mingling of Christian and pagan sources, but Bloom's understanding of the office of the daemon, at least, accords with Apuleius, and is essentially that found in Plato's *Symposium*, with its sense of an entity which bridges the human and "what lies beyond the human". In Shelley's translation of this work, we find Diotima's account. She says the daemon is one who:

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[15] See Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 191. For references in the remainder of this paragraph, see Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, trans. Robert Turner (London: John Harrison, 1655), 110; Apuleius in Kathleen Raine, "Thomas Taylor, Plato and the English Romantic Movement", *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 8, no. 2 (1968): 255; North in William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2006), 331; Jane Chance Nitzsche, *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 4-5; Hannu Poutiainen, "Autoapotropaics: 'Daimon and Psuché' between Plutarch and Shakespeare", *Oxford Literary Review* 34, no. 1 (2012): 520; Iamblichus, *Iamblichus on the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*, trans. Thomas Taylor, London, 1790. Secret Doctrine Reference Series (San Diego: Wizards Bookshelf, 1984), 32. See also Angus Nicholls's detailed overview of the Platonic daemon in *Goethe's Concept of the Daemonic: After the Ancients* (Rochester, NY: Camden House 2006), 11-12.

> interprets and makes a communication between divine and human things, conveying the prayers and sacrifices of men to the Gods, and communicating the commands and directions concerning the mode of worship most pleasing to them, from Gods to men. . . . The divine nature cannot immediately communicate with what is human, but all that intercourse and converse which is conceded by the Gods to men, both whilst they sleep and when they wake, subsists through the intervention of Love; and he who is wise in the science of this intercourse is supremely happy, and participates in the daemoniacal nature; whilst he who is wise in any other science or art, remains a mere ordinary slave. These daemons are, indeed, many and various, and one of them is Love.[16]

This account tallies with Neoplatonic belief. Most subtly, Iamblichus says of the "medium" of daemons, it "unfolds into energy the invisible good of the Gods, being itself assimilated to it. . . . For it renders that which is ineffable in the good of the Gods effable, illuminates that which is formless in forms, and produces into visible reasons that which in divine good is above all reason". An autonomous supernatural medium, though, is not, of course, what interests Bloom (master of the agon of natural poetic influence).

It was different for Yeats. A self-styled "last Romantic", and, in effect, a latter-day Neoplatonist and Hermeticist, for him daemonic influx also involves a force that lies beyond conscious awareness. It is an elusive agent, sometimes revealed in dream or semi-wakeful states, or glimpsed in aesthetic creation. However, Yeats believed the daemon to be our autonomous opposite, which bore within itself the weight of all that we are not but need to become—a type of Blakean "Contrary" which completes our nature.[17] Yeats was well aware, too, that one may be deluded as to the actual presence of the daemon, as in the case of his sceptical "interaction" with the daemonic Leo Africanus.[18] In recent terms, indeed, the seemingly autonomous daemon might be viewed as an hallucination, stemming from Julian Jaynes's rationalisation of the "bicameral mind". It might also be seen as an expression of the immanence of posthuman awareness, as Ron Broglio applies this term to Keats's "Ode to Autumn", with its immersion in non-human existence: "Poetry, in this posthuman configuration, is not illuminating

[16] Being made by Percy Bysshe Shelley, this translation is of more than passing interest in this present work, as we will see. Shelley's translations from Plato are to be found in James A. Notopoulos's *The Platonism of Shelley: A Study of Platonism and the Poetic Mind* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1949), 375-511. The passage above is from pages 441-442.

[17] Yeats, *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, eds. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 367, 371.

[18] See Nicholas Meihuizen, *Yeats, Otherness and the Orient: Aesthetic and Spiritual Bearings* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018), 141-169.

and expressing one's experiences. Rather, poetry is opening up to a nonhuman phenomenology of wonder beyond fact, reason, and mimetic description".[19] Though Yeatsian credulity regarding the supernatural is often qualified by scepticism, the poet is always alert to "wonder beyond fact", to the power of daemonic influx, whatever its source. Thus Bloom and Yeats share the understanding that daemonic force comes, in some sense, from beyond the human individual, even though the Yeatsian viewpoint involves a general philosophy of spirit-mediated existence, while Bloom wishes to reveal moments of the transcendence of limited human perception through the power of the imagination.[20] Important here is the difference in kind: the daemon as autonomous impersonal force gives credence to the valency of Blake's visionary reality, for instance, while the Bloomian notion accommodates the more conventional sense of infusion of exceptional personal imaginative enthusiasm experienced from time to time by all the Romantics.

For the Romantics, imaginative commitment to the potency of transcendence (in the face of the restrictions of organised religion or contemporary rationalist complacency) is paramount. Their daemonic understanding goes back, I believe, at least as far as Homer. To contextualise this understanding (the purpose, in part, of the present chapter), is to begin to see how the Romantics integrated previously perceived wellsprings of poetic vision within their aesthetic awareness, and so imbibed a paradigm that seemed to emerge from beneath the accumulated strata of centuries to validate their inherent sense that the sacral glowed within the mundane, thus dissolving the borders of commonplace perception, and instilling, in effect, a posthumanist understanding of the world around them. We might thus say that the Romantics' daemonic awareness was informed both by learning and inherent enthusiasm, related to a general surging of psychic sensitivity

[19] See Judith Weissman's, "Vision, Madness, and Morality: Poetry and the Theory of the Bicameral Mind", *The Georgia Review* 33, no. 1 (1979): 128-140. Weissman, although she offers useful general insights, seems blind to the severe limitations of Jaynes's theory. See James W. Moore, "'They Were Noble Automatons Who Knew Not What They Did': Volition in Jaynes's *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*", *Frontiers in Psychology*, no. 12 (2021): 4. McGilchrist, however, feels Jaynes made a "breakthrough", but arrived at a conclusion opposite to what he uncovered—rather than a "breakdown" occurring, the experience of unified consciousness had been lost (*Master and Emissary*, 261-262). See Ron Broglio, "Romantic", in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Posthuman*, ed. Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 36.

[20] I believe Yeats had a deep-seated conviction of the authenticity of posthuman agency, to the understanding and service of which he devoted most of his life.

during this era. The powerful social and intellectual forces evident in the age itself, which sparked various forms of revolution, from political, to spiritual, to industrial, as has often been stated, contributed to the conditions for this surge.[21] Consider, too, McGilchrist's observation, that Romanticism is "the only term we have to refer to a philosophical, as much as cultural, revolution which heralded the beginnings of a reawareness of the power of metaphorical thought, of the limitations of classical, non-paraconsistent logic, and the adoption of non-mechanistic ways of thinking about the world, which belatedly enabled us to catch up with ideas that have been for centuries, if not millennia, current in Eastern cultures" (*Master and Emissary*, 200).[22] The intensity of the zeitgeist sometimes took its toll on the psychologies of sensitive creative artists, as in the cases of Christopher Smart, William Cowper, and, later, John Clare. Blake, considered mad by some, in fact evinced a penetrating sanity. Securely grounded in his acute understanding of human nature, he was also a highly engaged and discriminating reader of a variety of authors. In response to T. S. Eliot's perceiving "a certain meanness of culture" in Blake, Kathleen Raine observes, "A culture which embraced Plato and Plotinus, the Bible and the *Hermetica*, English science and philosophy, the tradition of Alchemy, Gibbon and Herodotus, besides the body of English poetry—not to mention his equally wide knowledge of painting—can scarcely be called mean".[23]

The Neoplatonic learning evident in Blake was enabled, to an extent,[24] by the contemporary translations of classical works by Thomas Taylor, as Kathleen Raine points out, citing his translations of Plato into English (the first), and his translations, between 1780 and 1800, of Neoplatonic Tractates by Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus and Proclus. He also wrote "a number of remarkable essays on the Orphic mythology", along with "the Neoplatonic use of those ancient myths as the natural language of metaphysical thought".

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[21] See Duncan Wu, ed., *Romanticism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), xxxii-xliv.

[22] The term "reawareness" points to previous Western familiarity with these ways of thinking: McGilchrist names Plato and the pre-Socratics, along with Plotinus, though he does not refer to the Neoplatonists as such (*Master and Emissary*, 195, 259, 293). Elsewhere, he calls Plotinus "one of the greatest of Greek philosophers". See McGilchrist, *The Matter With Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions and the Unmaking of the World* (London: Perspectiva Press, 2021), 10.

[23] See Kathleen Raine, "Blake's Debt to Antiquity", *The Sewanee Review* 71, no. 3 (1963): 449-450.

[24] See Kathleen Wheeler's, "Blake, Coleridge, and Eighteenth-Century Greek Scholarship", *The Wordsworth Circle* 30, no.2 (1999): 91, for an indication of the rich line of Greek literature (as distinct from philosophy) that was also available, and influential, in the eighteenth-century.

Blake, Coleridge and Shelley all read Taylor; and Ralph Waldo Emerson called him "the best feeder of poets since Milton".[25]

I will consider an instance of Taylor's translation of pertinent material presently, to help clarify what Raine means by "the natural language of metaphysical thought". But first, Emerson's evocation of Milton must give us pause, as it was Milton's example which inspired all the British Romantics. For Thomas Greene, in *The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity* (1963), the epic language of Milton is replete with daemonic energy. Milton shows "that electric dynamism the ancients thought was divine or demonic. . . . Upon it depends, really, the humanistic awe, the *maraviglia*, for that which quickens the self but surpasses the self" (Greene, *Descent from Heaven*, 23). If Milton at times "distrusted all rhetoric or ornamentation", following a current of Puritanism "that sought to quell the demonic elements with a straight jacket of stylistic 'purity'" (*Descent from Heaven*, 381), this tendency was at variance with another within him, based on a "truer understanding of Old Testament language, with its dense orchestration of imagery, its poetic abandon, its visionary fire, not more restrained, as some Puritans thought, but less restrained than classical poetry". Greene notes that

> the implicit theory of Hebrew prophecy was inspirationalist; it denied study and rational control; it regarded the poet as a man possessed or driven by God to speak things his rational will resisted; it released the demonic powers within the word and made of it a searing, blazing, uncontrollable thing, an antisocial explosive. (Greene, *Descent from Heaven*, 382)

Blake and Shelley were both alert to this "demonic" capacity in Milton; famously, for Blake, when Milton wrote of Devils and Hell, he was "at liberty", because he was "of the Devil's party, without knowing it"; Blake's deliberately subversive observation (in its own way daemonic) was, of course, later qualified by his depiction of the descent and redemption of Milton, in Blakean-Christian terms, in his eponymous prophetic book (Raine refers to Blake's "Christian polytheism", and Bloom his "apocalyptic humanism").[26] For Shelley, Milton's Satan is "the Hero of *Paradise Lost*",

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[25] Kathleen Raine, *Defending Ancient Springs* (Ipswich: Golgonooza Press, 1985), 93-94.

[26] William Blake, *Collected Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 150 (from now on referred to as *BCW*). See Raine, *Blake and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 1:73. See Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday), 372). See Dennis M. Welch, "'Cloth'd with Human Beauty": *Milton* and Blake's Incarnational Aesthetic", *Religion and Literature* 18, no.2 (1986): 1-15. And as

the "only imaginary being who resembles in any degree" the liberating, Christ-like Prometheus, despite his "engendering in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure". Shelley perhaps offers a corrective to his father-in-law's straightforward presentation of Satan in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. Godwin ignores Satan's faults, pre-eminently his authoritarianism, and focuses on his "spirit of opposition", which "disdained to be subdued by despotic power";[27] Shelley's qualified praise acknowledges both daemonic force and the perspectival dangers attending sectarianism. Whatever the explicit statements of these two poets regarding Milton, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *Prometheus Unbound* are infused with daemonic energy, in the pattern of this great Romantic precursor. In more general terms, they saw in Milton's treatment of words what Kathleen Wheeler ascribes to the Greeks and Romantics in general: "For them, communication, especially verbal communication, involves treating words not like coins, as Socrates complained in the *Symposium*, with a fixed value to be handed passively from one person to another: words are living things and powers" ("Blake, Coleridge, and Eighteenth-Century Greek Scholarship", 92).

To recall the wider area of understanding which I have associated with the contextualisation of the daemon, Milton himself was well aware of Platonic lore; thus, he refers unabashedly to "thrice great Hermes" in *Il Penseroso* (line 88). William Hunter believes Milton's knowledge of Hermes came from Marsilio Ficino's 1471 Latin translation of the *Hermetica*, "ascribed to the legendary name of the Thrice Great Hermes".[28] Hunter notes that the various authors of the *Hermetica* "unified material from Plato and the Platonic Academy, from the Stoics, from other Greeks, from Egyptian theology, and perhaps added a little Hebrew matter" ("Milton and Thrice Great Hermes", 335). If Milton's knowledge of this work was not first-hand, general knowledge of it was widespread, and he "may have received its ideas in some recension" (331). Ficino considered the *Hermetica*

Jerome McGann wrote, Milton's texts for Blake are "works which continue to act in the world . . . either to enslave or to liberate" (Jerome McGann, *Social Values and Poetic Acts: The Historical Judgment of Literary Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 47. The same applies to Blake himself, of course, as far as "liberation" goes. The autonomous force of these works can be seen as daemonic.

[27] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 205. See William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. F. E. L. Priestley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), 1:324n35).

[28] Hunter, Wm. B., "Milton and Thrice Great Hermes", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 45, no.3 (1946): 330.

to be Christian in nature (330); Hunter feels this fact would have been important for Milton, though, again, outright Neoplatonic thought seems clearly acceptable to the speaker of *Il Penseroso*:

> Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,
> Be seen in some high lonely tower,
> Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
> With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
> The spirit of Plato, to unfold
> What worlds or what vast regions hold
> The immortal mind that hath forsook
> Her mansion in this fleshly nook; (85-92)

Milton's somewhat oblique syncretism, indeed, is not limited to his youth (as in the case of *Il Penseroso*), and informs the inspirational mode of *Paradise Lost*. Consider the beginning of Book 7:

> Descend from Heaven, Urania, by that name
> If rightly thou art called, whose voice divine
> Following, above the Olympian hill I soar,
> Above the flight of Pegasean wing.
> The meaning, not the name, I call: for thou
> Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top
> Of old Olympus dwellst; but, heav'nly born,
> Before the hills appeared, or fountain flowed,
> Thou with eternal wisdom didst converse,
> Wisdom thy sister, and with her didst play
> In presence of the Almighty Father, pleased
> With thy celestial song. (7.1-12)

Kathleen Raine, in discussing Shelley's "To a Skylark", with its phrase "unpremeditated art" (line 5), links this poem to the "celestial song" of Milton's syncretic muse, who in Book 9 of *Paradise Lost* inspires the poet's "unpremeditated verse" (line 24), and tells of a circle of Hermetic influence involving Milton and various Romantic figures: in Blake's *Milton* the lark who "leads the choir of day" (31.31) is equated with the poet himself, whose lark in *L'Allegro* sings "From his watch-tower in the skies" (line 43). And, says Raine, "Shelley is, whether he knew it or not, Blake's spiritual successor; and his skylark has its prototype in Blake's, whose "Nest is at the Gate of Los, spirit of prophecy".[29] She sees Shelley's skylark as "his tribute

[29] In *Milton*, Blake calls the skylark "a mighty Angel" (36.12). We should not forget that behind Milton's lark is Chaucer's "bisy larke, messager of day", who "Saluëth

to Milton as the defender and exemplar of the Platonic doctrine of poetic inspiration" (Raine, *Defending Ancient Springs*, 147). On the following page of the same essay on Shelley, she includes Coleridge:

> A famous passage in the *Hermetica*, certainly known to Shelley, as it was to Blake and to Coleridge, describes this power of the soul to travel wherever it will [as evinced in the skylark], to be in those very places of which it thinks; a power which no body, however fine, can possess. "Command it to fly into Heaven, and it will need no Wings, neither shall anything hinder it". (148)[30]

As will be argued in the second chapter on Shelley, the skylark is daemonic in nature, a sublime "other" which helps the poet see and feel beyond the bounds of the human, and which bears for Shelley both the informing necessity of natural existence and the richness of Hermetic tradition.

What of the other Romantics in relation to Milton? For Coleridge, "Sublimity is the pre-eminent characteristic of the *Paradise Lost*. . . . The fallen angels are human passions, invested with dramatic reality", an observation which points to the daemonic link between the more-than-human "sublime" and the all-too-human "passions".[31] An apposite Miltonic connection is made by Gregory Leadbetter, in *Coleridge and the Daemonic Imagination*, between Coleridge's image of himself as a "library-cormorant" and Satan, in *Paradise Lost*, who "on the Tree of Life . . . Sat like a cormorant", an indirect acknowledgement of daemonic influence.[32] I return to the nature of Coleridgean daemonism as discussed by Leadbetter in subsequent paragraphs of the present chapter.

Wordsworth, in the sonnet, "London, 1802", exclaimed of Milton: "Thy soul was like a Star and dwelt apart".[33] David Erdman equates Wordsworth's passionately Republican feelings regarding Milton at this time with Blake's,

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in hir song the morwe gray" ("The Knightes Tale", 1491-1492). The lineage would be important for Blake.

[30] For the quotation, see Hermes, *The Divine Pymander* (San Francisco: Wizard, 1985) 10.122.

[31] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Lectures on Literature: 1808-1819*, vol.5 ed. Reginald A. Foakes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 427.

[32] Gregory Leadbetter, *Coleridge and the Daemonic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), 75-76. In "The Devil's Thoughts" Coleridge, in light-hearted vein, refers to himself as a "cormorant", "Sitting", notably, "on the Tree of Knowledge", not "Life".

[33] William Wordsworth, *Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, rev. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 193, line 9.

who, in his eponymous epic, called on Milton to engage in "Mental War".[34] In his sonnet, Wordsworth brings to mind the Republicans "who called Milton friend", announcing through them his own allegiance: "The later Sidney, Marvel, Harrington, / Young Vane". Through Milton, says Erdman, Wordsworth thus "called for the living presence of the Commonwealth men of Britain" ("Milton!", 2).

Keats also announced his allegiance to Milton: "I am convinced more and more every day that . . . a fine writer is the most genuine Being in the World. Shakespeare and the *Paradise Lost* every day become greater wonders to me".[35] In the minor ode, "On Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair", Keats almost makes of Milton a Shelleyan skylark, "sounding" "heavenward":

> How heavenward thou soundest,
> Live temple of sweet noise,
> And discord unconfoundest,
> Giving delight new joys,
> And pleasure nobler pinions! (11-15)

The awareness of the sublimity of the Miltonic influence is perhaps best captured at the conclusion of this ode, when the "bright hair" of the poet is "coupled" unexpectedly with his "name":

> Sudden it came,
> And I was startled, when I caught thy name
> Coupled so unaware,
> Yet, at the moment, temperate was my blood.
> Methought I had beheld it from the Flood. (33-42)

Keats's receptive consciousness, calm and "temperate", is suddenly enlightened about what it perceives, and seems to encompass an immense span of time in an instant, so enlarged does it feel in the presence of "the simplest vassal of thy power".[36]

As Jerome McGann points out, Byron too, despite his distaste for Miltonic blank verse, was heavily influenced by Milton in terms of awareness of the complex mingling of good and evil in characters: "The mixed character of Byron's Lucifer makes him a fitting inheritor of that line of post-Miltonic criticism which liked to sympathize with the demon's

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[34] David Erdman, "Milton! Thou Shoulds't Be Living", *The Wordsworth Circle* 19, no.1 (1988): 2. 2-8.
[35] John Keats, *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 281. From a letter to J. H. Reynolds, of 24 August 1819.
[36] John Keats, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Miriam Allott (London: Longman, 1977), 293-294, lines 1-15. (From now on referred to as *KCP*.)

grandeur or power of suffering".[37] On a personal level, too, Byron felt aligned with Milton, enemy of hypocrisy and champion of freedom of thought. Like Milton, he too had "fallen on evil days" and "evil tongues". In Milton the relevant passage occurs a few lines after the already quoted appeal to the expansive otherness of Urania, from Book 7 of *Paradise Lost*:

> Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,
> More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged
> To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,
> On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues;
> In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,
> And solitude; yet not alone, while thou
> Visitst my slumbers nightly, or when morn
> Purples the east: still govern thou my song,
> Urania, and fit audience find, though few. (7.23-31)

Byron alludes to this passage in the "Dedication" to *Don Juan*, excoriating the hypocrisy of his erstwhile revolutionary elders, Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and elevating Milton, by comparison, as moral and authorial exemplar (this last especially regarding sublimity—that quality which transports "beyond the human"):

> If, fallen in evil days on evil tongues,
> Milton appealed to the Avenger, Time,
> If Time, the Avenger, execrates his wrongs,
> And makes the word "Miltonic" mean "*sublime*",
> *He* deign'd not to belie his soul in songs,
> Nor turn his very talent to a crime;
> *He* did not loathe the Sire to laud the Son,
> But closed the tyrant-hater he begun. (73-80)

Byron continues with a savage indignation:

> Think'st thou, could he—the blind Old Man—arise,
> Like Samuel from the grave, to freeze once more
> The blood of monarchs with his prophecies,
> Or be alive again—again all hoar
> With time and trials, and those helpless eyes,
> And heartless daughters—worn—and pale—and poor;
> Would *he* adore a sultan? *he* obey
> The intellectual eunuch Castlereagh? (81-88)

[37] Jerome McGann, *Byron and Romanticism*, ed. James Soderholm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

Here he exemplifies and thus literally recalls the "searing, blazing" prophetic voice of the Old Testament that Thomas Greene associates with Milton.

To move from Milton and extend discussion beyond the strict limits of British Romanticism, I note that Angus Nicholls, in his lucid *Goethe's Concept of the Daemonic: After the Ancients*, examines in careful and extended detail Goethe's fascination with the daemonic, which the poet links with "key philosophical debates concerning the relationship between human subjectivity, reason and nature", in a manner far more acceptable in eighteenth and nineteenth century Germany than it ever would be in England.[38] Nicholls, in a sense, demystifies the daemon, situating it within "part of a long literary-philosophical dialogue that begins, as Goethe himself acknowledged, with the ancients, and that resurfaced in Germany during Goethe's lifetime" (*Goethe's Daemonic*, 3). English daemonic expression was never centralised in a single figure of the stature and influence of Goethe, and was not so rigorously philosophised, as we will see, though, again, inspired in part by Taylor's translations of Plato and key Neoplatonists. In fact, Goethe's philosophical speculations, often epistolary, were barely known in England. As René Wellek notes, "We cannot escape the conclusion that personal, epistolary, and literary relations between the two groups [English and German Romantics] were extremely tenuous". He continues, however:

> But lack of historical contact does not, of course, preclude similarities and even deep affinities. . . . As partial explanation one can point to common antecedents in history: e.g., the very general similarity between the thought of Wordsworth and Coleridge and that of Schelling and thus generally of the German Romantics is marked even before Coleridge had read Schelling. It is due to the common background in the tradition of Neoplatonism, in mysticism such as Boehme's, and in varieties of pietism. Rousseau and hence Goethe's *Werther* supply the common ancestry for the two groups in eighteenth-century sensibility and sentimentality.[39]

Among the "deep affinities" (which also points to a distinction) is one noted by Geoffrey Hartman. He discusses two ballads, one by Wordsworth ("The Danish Boy") and one by Goethe ("Des Erlkönig"), in the light of the

[38] Nicholls notes that "no previous book in the history of Goethe scholarship has undertaken a detailed analysis and excavation of the classical philosophical heritage that precedes Goethe's use of this concept [the daemonic]" (*Goethe's Daemonic*, 10).

[39] René Wellek, "German and English Romanticism: A Confrontation", *Studies in Romanticism* 4, no.1 (1964): 41.

"demonic"—more in its popular sense of menacing force, though not unrelated to the philosophical "daemon"—and makes the interesting observation that the English poet was immersed in a ballad culture, while the German had to reconstruct one, giving him a freer hand in matters daemonic, along with a programmatic view in terms of "rebuilding culture" as reflected in balladry.[40] And as far as this confident programmatic approach is concerned, Hartman asks us to "compare the tradition that goes from Wordsworth to Keats. It is deeply uncertain of the 'character' or 'identity' of the poet. What kind of labor is imaginative labor? The charge that poetry is an ignoble or idle dreaming—'Thou art a dreaming thing; / A fever of thyself' [from Keats's *Fall of Hyperion*, 1.168-169]—is never far from the English consciousness. But Goethe's labor is cut out for him. Could anyone be more productive than this demiurge who works at catching culture up; who builds Bildung with devilish energy of purpose? What a supremely confident maker!" ("Wordsworth and Goethe", 408). It could be that this English "uncertainty" about "identity" marks the difference between "confident" Goethean theorizing on the daemon and a more retiring English proclivity to regard theory as intellectually over-determined in the face of experience. Even Coleridge, the exception in England, perhaps, when it comes to Romantic immersion in philosophical thought (particularly that which inspired Goethe), according to Leadbetter, in "the way he couples the daemonic with the transnatural" is "idiosyncratic and provisional, not part of a consistently applied terminology (as it is, say, for Goethe)".[41]

It is also interesting to bear in mind, however, as Lore Metzger notes in her essay, "Modifications of Genre: A Feminist Critique of 'Christabel' and 'Die Braut von Korinth'",[42] that Goethe and Coleridge (like Goethe and Wordsworth—mutatis mutandis) were linked in "claiming the ballad form for serious poetry" and were thus involved "in transgressing boundaries that separated high from low art as well as proper from improper gender roles" ("Modifications", 85). The "vampires" in the two works, in addition, bear a

[40] Geoffrey Hartman, "Wordsworth and Goethe in Literary History", *New Literary History* 6, no.2 (1975): 407-408).

[41] Leadbetter, *Coleridge and the Daemonic*, 2. I discuss the "transnatural" in a bit more detail below. Leadbetter, quoting Seamus Perry, also notes that "the standing of Plato in the eighteenth century [in Britain] was rather low, precisely because of Platonism's associations with visionary or mystic abstraction" (in *Coleridge and the Daemonic*, 26), another indication of the ascendancy of conservative British common-sense over the speculations of philosophy.

[42] Lore Metzger, "Modifications of Genre: A Feminist Critique of 'Christabel' and 'Die Braut von Korinth'", in *Borderwork: Feminist Engagements with Comparative Literature*, Margaret R. Higennot, Shari Benstock and Celeste Schenk, eds. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1994), 81-99.

daemonic ambiguity: "they are both attractive and disruptive, both desirable and terrifying, leading the reader both to empathize with their subversive energy and to fear their demonic entrapment" ("Modifications", 99). Metzger speculates that Geraldine in "Christabel" "probably owes her beautiful looks and seductive demeanor to Goethe's 'bride'" ("Modifications", 94). Of course, this brand of daemonism taps into the current fascination with the dubious figures of Gothic fiction, popularised, for instance, by M. G. Lewis, in *The Monk*.[43] Shelley and Byron were no strangers to the attractions of the Gothic, but were more influenced by the deeper manifestations of daemonic expression in Goethe's works, such as *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and *Faust II*, whose resonances can be felt in *Alastor*, *Manfred* and the Prometheus poems, to cite obvious examples.

Goethe's initial interest in the irrational nature of the daemon in the 1770s (introduced by Georg Hamann with his translations of Plato, and Johann Gottfried Herder—part of a "polemic against eighteenth-century German rationalism" (*Goethe's Daemonic*, 16-18)), predated that shown by English Romantics in the wake of Thomas Taylor's translations of the 1780s and 1790s. Goethe's later, more philosophical approach to the daemon, was largely based on his reaction to Schelling's "world-soul", with its implication of an unconscious "remainder" in both self and world, inaccessible to understanding (*Goethe's Daemonic*, 111). The connection of the daemon with an unconscious aspect of ourselves gives Plato a modern resonance, appreciated by Goethe (*Goethe's Daemonic*, 222). Nicholls provides a very clear overview of the daemon in Plato, where subtle shifts of emphasis are in evidence; he includes a discussion of Socrates's "daimonion", or daemonic voice, which apparently guided the philosopher at certain moments in his life. Nicholls's overview aligns with what has already been pointed out above regarding Platonic and Neoplatonic understanding of the daemon, though he warns that "one of the major themes of the daemonic is the indeterminacy of non-rational or numinous experience", an indeterminacy which attaches to the term "daemon" itself (*Goethe's Daemonic*, 15). Thus, he qualifies the general view expressed by Diotima in *The Symposium*, that the daemon bridges the natural and the divine on behalf of humanity, with further instances of daemonic discussion in Plato, notably from *Phaedrus* and *The Apology* (*Goethe's Daemonic*, 33). These bear other, human-centred connotations, and are seen to accommodate Goethe's subsequent assimilation of ideas from, for instance, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant and, again, Schelling, where Platonic longing for the transcendent "forms" (involving

[43] See Peter D. Grudin, *The Demon-Lover: The Theme of Demoniality in English and Continental Fiction of the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (New York: Garland, 1987), 101-103.

daemonic mediation), is displaced, in Goethe's "Weimar Klassik" period,[44] by a longing for the natural world, stemming from within the individual, and mediated by myth, narrative and images (*Goethe's Daemonic*, 26).

The difference between Platonic daemons and Goethe's earlier *Sturm und Drang* conception of the daemon is summarised by Nicholls:

> While in classical philosophy daemons were seen as intermediaries between gods and human beings, during the *Sturm und Drang* period the daemonic individual became something like the modern conception of genius. . . . This daemonic genius is the subject who produces original art works through an indwelling *Kraft* [force] that is seen as being natural and organic, thereby overcoming the split between human subjects and nature. (*Goethe's Daemonic*, 219)

Also at issue, then, is the question of the provenance of the daemon—does it emerge from within the self, or does it descend from without? According to Nicholls, the later Goethe's understanding would, in terms of limitations on human understanding imposed both by self and nature, see the daemon as a force from within and as an obstructing force from without. However, as Nicholls points out, Goethe's most famous pronouncement on the daemon was made late in life, and in its suggestion of human empowerment reveals a strong connection with the understanding of the daemon expressed in the present book, where that which is "beyond the human" is in clear evidence:

> Any productivity of the highest kind . . . every invention, every great idea that brings fruit and has consequences is not subject to any individual and is above all earthly power. Man must regard such things as unexpected gifts from above, as pure children of God, which he must receive and venerate with joyful gratitude. It is akin to the daemonic, which overpoweringly does as it pleases and to which he surrenders unconsciously, while he believes that he is acting on his own initiative. In such cases, man is often seen as an instrument of a higher world government, as a vessel deemed worthy of receiving divine influence. (In *Goethe's Daemonic*, 127-128. My translation)

The fact that Goethe was known to English authors through his most famous fictional works, such as *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and *Faust*

[44] Weimar Classicism was "concerned with establishing a progressive, modern program of aesthetics that endeavored to adapt classical notions of form to modern subject matter and in particular, to late-eighteenth-century understanding of subjectivity" (Nicholls, *Goethe's Daemonic*, 124). Despite its name, it thus reacted against the strictures of the classical Enlightenment.

II (the latter of which was translated in part by Shelley[45] and possibly Coleridge[46]), does, again, make him a pertinent source of inspiration for these writers as far as daemonic expression goes. Consider the following passage from Werther:

> From the inaccessible mountains over the wasteland where none has set foot, to the end of the unknown ocean, the spirit of the eternal creator blows, and rejoices in every particle of dust that hears it and exists. Oh, back then, how often did I long, as with the wings of the crane flying over me, to reach the shore of the unmeasured sea, to drink from the foaming cup of the infinite that swelling bliss of life, and just for a moment, in the limited strength of my bosom, to feel a drop of the bliss of the being that produces everything in and through itself. (In *Goethe's Daemonic*, 145-146. My translation)

But to indicate Goethe's swerve from the original Platonic conceptions of the daemon, Nicholls writes of the above: "The *Sehnsucht* [longing, desire] presented here cannot be equated with a Platonic longing for the forms of existence. Unlike the winged soul of the philosopher presented in Plato's *Phaedrus*, a soul that strives to leave the corporeal world in order to find the realm of the *eide* [transcendent forms], Werther only wants to grow wings in order to better investigate the earth, not the heavens" (*Goethe's Daemonic*, 146).

Nevertheless, as are Blake, Shelley and Keats, Goethe is at the same time keenly aware of an informing "infinite" Being "that produces everything in

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[45] And Shelley's more extensive knowledge of Goethe is suggested, for instance, by his familiarity with the doctrine of "elective affinity", taken from Goethe's eponymous novel, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (*The Elective Affinities*) of 1809. See E. B. Murray, "'Elective Affinity' in *The Revolt of Islam*", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 67, no.4 (1968): 570.

[46] *Faustus, Translated by Samuel Taylor Coleridge from the German of Goethe*, ed. by Frederick Burwick and James McKusick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), has been objected to by reviewers as being overconfidently ascribed to Coleridge, "links in the chain of evidence remaining circumstantial". See J. C. C. Mays "*Faustus* on the Table at Highgate" *The Wordsworth Circle* 43, no.3 (2012): 125. With the rather bland translation in view, I would tend to agree with Mays. Richard Holmes, in *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: Flamingo, 1999), 367n. (before the 2007 controversy), wrote, echoing the prevailing view: "The loss of Coleridge's version of *Faust*, which would surely have been spectacular, had a curiously suspending effect on Goethe's reputation in Victorian England. Shelley (who said that only Coleridge could do it justice) translated fragments of the drama in 1822 in Italy, which were published by Leigh Hunt in *The Liberal*; and Coleridge in turn said he admired these 'very much'. But full translation did not appear until the late 1820s, by which time it was heavily bowdlerized"). Whatever the case, Coleridge was obviously very familiar with *Faustus*.

and through itself". And apart from such obvious influences of a perception of what is beyond the human—apart, too, from Shelley's translations of clearly daemonic scenes from *Faust* (the "Walpurgis Night" and the "Prologue in Heaven")—as Frederick Burwick points out, the influence in Shelley of Goethean perception as explored in *Faust* is also apparent in the poems to Jane Williams and *The Triumph of Life*.[47] However, once more, Goethe's theoretical speculations on the subject of the daemon (often through his letters) could not have been known to Blake, Shelley or Keats; any influence he exerted was through poetic, dramatic expression.

I have already drawn attention to Gregory Leadbetter's *Coleridge and the Daemonic Imagination*. Although Coleridge is not one of the Romantics to be considered in detail in the present book, it is instructive, in view of the poet's keen interest in the translations of Taylor,[48] along with his fascination in the same philosophers as fascinated Goethe, briefly to look at his relation to the daemon as examined by Leadbetter. Building on an inspired reading of a somewhat opaque and neglected 1812 notebook entry by the poet, Leadbetter convincingly uses the reference to "Daimon" in the entry to indicate Coleridge's ability to unify the contraries of a Judeo-Christian Fall and a spiritual ascent in a continuum of spiritual becoming (*Coleridge and the Daemonic*, 11). Like Schelling and Goethe, indeed, Coleridge was aware of the areas of existence (natural and personal) impervious to conscious thought, considered daemonic and "transnatural" by the poet—for Coleridge the latter term implied that which is beyond natural cause and effect, but it "also carries an imputation of moral deviation within the very fabric of its imaginative power".[49] Countenancing such a notion transgressed the values of the pietism of both Unitarians (whom the poet for a time followed) and Anglicans, who considered it to be a form of "superstition" in the face of the divine revelation afforded by Christianity.

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[47] Frederick Burwick, "Origins of Evil", in *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Michael O'Neill, Anthony Howe and Madeleine Callaghan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 465-477.

[48] Leadbetter quotes from a 1796 letter to Thelwall: "Metaphysics and Poetry, and 'Facts of mind'—(i.e. Accounts of all the strange phantasms that ever possessed your philosophy-dreamers from Tauth, the Egyptian to Taylor, the English Pagan) are my darling Studies" (in *Coleridge and the Daemonic*, 26).

[49] *Coleridge and the Daemonic*, 154-155. Regarding that which is "beyond nature" ("transnatural" in its broadest sense), Leadbetter quotes from Coleridge's *Marginalia*, vol.1, 585: "In all Living there is ever an aliquid suppositum, which can never be lifted up into the intelligible" (in *Coleridge and the Daemonic*, 29).

The notebook entry is to be found in volume 3 of *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*.[50] Leadbetter reveals in it the thinly masked names of women with whom Coleridge was involved, and who may have prompted sexual feelings in him. The following weakly-encoded sentence appears in the notebook: "Thus, it was thiw *Gift tuum*/ and so thiw Yram + ettolrach". The sentence is decoded by Leadbetter: "Thus, it was with *Gift tuum*/ [possibly Dorothy Wordsworth, "gift" in Greek being "doron", and the poet once before, in etymological bent, having referred to Dorothy Wordsworth as "Theou Doron", "Gift of God"] and so with Mary and Charlotte" (15).[51] A first reading of the passage (here presented in part) might suggest the writer's sense of shame associated with sexual longing:

> One of the strangest and most painful Peculiarities of my Nature (unless others have the same, and like me, hide it from the same inexplicable feeling of causeless shame and sense of a sort of guilt, joined with the apprehension of being feared and shrunk from as a something transnatural) I will here record. . . .
>
> It consists in a sudden second sight of some hidden Vice, past, present, or to come, of the person or persons with whom I am about to form a close intimacy—which never deters me but rather (as all these transnaturals) urge me on, just like the feeling of an Eddy-Torrent to a swimmer. . . . Thus, it was thiw *Gift tuum*/ and so thiw Yram + ettolrach.
>
> These occasional acts of the Εγο νουμενος [Ego noumenos, or personal spirit] = repetitions or semblances of the original *Fall* of Man—hence shame and power—to leave the appointed Station and become Δαιμων [Daimon].

However, in a careful analysis of it, Leadbetter uncovers the above-mentioned link between Fall and ascent—in that consciousness of sin leads to self-awareness and the development of Reason, or, for Coleridge, a higher faculty of consciousness that perceives spiritual truth "beyond the evidence of the senses" (9). One might add, with Nicholls's analysis of the Platonic daemon in mind, that erotic desire is a forerunner or analogue of the philosophical desire for the "transcendent forms" underlying material nature. Not expressed in so many words by Coleridge (apprehension of

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[50] *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol.3, ed. Kathleen Coburn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 4166.

[51] Mary was the wife of John Morgan, the poet's friend. Charlotte Brent was Mary's sister, who lived with the family while Coleridge was "deliciously nursed and cosseted" by them in 1807, and later (after painful indiscretions committed with the ladies had been forgiven, or at least understood) in 1811. See Holmes, *Darker Reflections*, 111-112 and 259-260.

"hidden Vice" is more the occasion for a *frisson* of transgressive pleasure),[52] this linkage is yet seen in a poem such as "The Eolian Harp".[53]

Leadbetter says of this poem, "Coleridge's eroticization of its central event—a moment of liberating metaphysical transgression—is rarely discussed". He thinks of the "desultory breeze" in the poem, "caress[ing]" the harp, which "Like some coy Maid half-yielding to her Lover", "pours such sweet upbraidings, as must needs / Tempt to repeat the wrong!" (32). Coleridge is attracted by the transgressiveness at the same time as its spiritual aspect is revealed, as in the passage from the notebook. A perhaps unconscious tapping into Platonic allegory is expressed.

Coleridge's sense of shame in the notebook, a sense of shame absent in Plato when it comes to erotic love, is also related to the guilt he feels regarding his fascination with metaphysical thought (including the works of Taylor). As Leadbetter notes, "Throughout his life, Coleridge knew that his 'Metaphysical reason' carried Luciferan associations" (20). And yet a type of daemonic liberty is also implied in the notebook entry, in Coleridge's qualifying his "guilt" and "shame" as being "inexplicable" and "causeless": "the radical implication is, therefore, that he does not consider his visionary transgressions to be *truly* shaming, or guilty, notwithstanding the fact that they may breach faith with 'God'—in the form of religion—and leave him socially isolated" (10). Standing outside society, as the individual of genius always must (11), he is imaginatively free (disburdened of the well-meaning but circumscriptive moralizing of friends such as Lamb and Wordsworth) to express the daemonism apparent in, for instance, the *Ancient Mariner*, "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel"; it is a complex, ambiguous daemonism, however, which—however indicative of spiritual growth (219-220)—is never free of the sense of danger and thrill associated with transgression, and thus differs for the most part from the daemonism manifested in Blake, Shelley and Keats, as we will see.

Important for Coleridge in helping to free his awareness from Establishment constraints, Thomas Taylor, according to Raine, brought back into contemporary British awareness knowledge of the "first principles of mind" found in poetry, embedded in Platonic tradition, and as fundamental in its operations as mathematics, which will always be the basis of "calculations of a certain kind, without which buildings would not stand or

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[52] Leadbetter refers to the "profound tension" in Coleridge for at once being attracted to the transnatural and at the same time being aware of the antipathy this causes in others. This tension nevertheless "implies" for him a "pleasurable *frisson*" (*Coleridge and the Daemonic*, 9).

[53] *The Complete Poetical Work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 100-102.

aeroplanes fly". This tradition thus refers to a wider sphere of influence beyond human control: it is "in the nature of things".[54] The self-educated Taylor, however, has often been subjected to the snobbish aspersions of the "learned", even in recent decades. For instance, Joseph Childers in a 1998 review of books on nineteenth century literature, considers the republication of Taylor's 1792 translation of Plotinus's *An Essay on the Beautiful* as "not likely to establish Taylor's reputation as translator or Neoplatonist—which never really existed in any grand way even for the Romantics". Almost in the same breath, he scolds Jonathan Wordsworth for his "completely uncritical" notion regarding the "ultimate truth" embedded in Platonism, apparently not realising the "completely uncritical" nature of his own statement, which so cavalierly dismisses any possible grounds for such a claim.[55] Leo Catana, however, mounts a spirited defence of Taylor.[56] Catana unmasks the Lutheran roots of the prejudices levelled against Neoplatonism, and hence against Taylor himself, for promoting such "charlatanism", as the reviewer James Mill put it (Catana, "Thomas Taylor's Dissent", 197). Mill's view, which led to the side-lining of Taylor amongst the orthodox, so to speak, was influential throughout the nineteenth century.

Works related to Taylor's were also available at the time; Stuart Curran, in *Shelley's Annus Mirabilis*, refers to Augustus Wilhelm Schlegel's *Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (1815), with its understanding of the archetypal nature of Prometheus.[57] Curran also lists Baron de Saint-Croix's *Recherches Historiques et Critiques sur les Mystères de Paganisme* (1784) and Boccaccio's *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium* (1360), which had been in circulation over the centuries, and which was read by Wordsworth and Coleridge as something of an Italian primer, of all things![58] A veritable catalogue follows: Francis Bacon's *The Wisedome of the Ancients* (1619), Alexander Ross's *Mystagogus Poeticus; or, The Muses Interpreter: Explaining the Historicall Mysteries, and Mysticall Histories of the Ancient Greek and Latine Poets* (1653), and John Turner's *An Attempt Towards an Explanation of the Theology and Mythology of the Ancient Pagans* (1687). Timothy

[54] Kathleen Raine, 1968, "Thomas Taylor, Plato, and the English Romantic Movement", in *The Sewanee Review* 76, no.2 (1968): 230.
[55] See Joseph W. Childers, "Recent Studies in the Nineteenth Century", in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 38, no.4 (1998): 763.
[56] Leo Catana, "Thomas Taylor's Dissent from Some 18th-Century Views on Platonic Philosophy: The Ethical and Theological Context", in *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition,* no. 7 (2013): 180-220.
[57] Stuart Curran, *Shelley's Annus Mirabilis: The Maturing of an Epic Vision* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1975), 35.
[58] Alan G. Hill, "Wordsworth, Boccaccio, and the Pagan Gods of Antiquity", *Review of English Studies*, no. 45 (1994): 32.