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According to a recent bibliographical essay on Coleridge studies in the academy, the question of his plagiarism is a field which has "now more or less burnt itself out" (Trott 69). Another piece on Coleridge's problematic origins thus runs the risk of being rather unoriginal. On the other hand, embarrassment about this difficulty with sources is also in danger of concealing an issue of far wider importance, that of the origin in romanticism generally. Much useful work has been done in the past half-century to show that the literature we call romantic did not spring entirely out of its own creation, in the manner of Milton's Sin from his Satan's head. Rather, that auto-generation carries a complex genealogy, including the most characteristic features of the Enlightenment as well as Milton's own Protestant recreation of religious epic. Paul de Man, in his important introduction to an essay on Hölderlin and Wordsworth, emphasises that this scholarship was entirely necessary, "modifying and enriching the stilted image that one often had of the century of enlightenment". Yet, de Man continues, this illumination of romanticism's background simultaneously produces the odd effect of ensuring that "the problem of romanticism has been avoided or evaded" (47). That is, we have a clearer understanding of preromanticism, of the eighteenth century, but not of the romantic as something distinct. A sense of romanticism's chronological origins in itself conceals a broader sense of its origination, its special relationship to the problem of time and the possibility of beginnings in general.

Thus far, one could simply say that this accords with the dictionary definition of "originality" itself, that is, both the possession of an origin, a preceding point of departure, and something which is an origin, a new beginning in its own right.[1] De Man, however, shows this doubleness to be a more urgently temporal complication. Following Lovejoy's still-relevant essay "On the Discrimination of

Romanticisms", he draws attention to romanticism's tendency, on the one hand, to generate mutually contradictory definitions, and on the other, to arrogate texts over vast periods of time into itself. Not only, Lovejoy says, is it held to exemplify both the past and the future, radicalism and reaction, transcendent self-reliance and the surrender of self in natural landscapes, but theories of its "origin and age"additionally draw in the works both of Immanuel Kant and Joseph Warton, Sidney's Arcadia and Bacon's Novum organum, all the way back to Plato, St Paul and the Serpent in Eden itself (3-5). Perhaps Milton indeed continues to have a role in articulating romanticism's natal scene. Finally, this romantic operation which will reconcile nature and transcendence, the one and the many, simplicity and complexity within the contours of a single thought must also be able, in doing so, to transform the temporal relations of its own understanding, its appearance in a single place of human time. With romanticism, de Man continues, one does not not have the same relation to the past as would be involved in the interpretation of, for instance, the Medieval or Classical periods. Rather,

> it is a matter of the interpretation of a phenomenon that we can only consider from the perspective of a period of time that we have ourselves experienced. The proximity of the event on the historical plane is such that we are not yet able to view it in the form of a clarified and purified memory, such as Greece presents itself to us. We carry it within ourselves as the experience of an act in which, up to a certain point, we ourselves have participated. (49-50)

Romanticism originates the point from which there can be no origin. Its distinctive force, paradoxically, is located in its erasure of distinctiveness over time. We wish to establish a interpretative relationship with the act it represents, from a place which is particular to ourselves. But our interpretation is already the act, the same act which established the origin that must be interpreted. In this sense, because we are the origin, there can be no origin and thus no originality. To the extent we are romantics, we only posit a new beginning to allow for its

antithesis, the continuation of a state of affairs. Not only does romanticism draw its past into itself, it also lays claim to the entirety of its future. Even though it is historically illegitimate to do so, as we read romanticism we are forced to include our own intellectual milieu, our set of origins within the general suspension of origin which it constitutes. Here, de Man also recalls Jacques Derrida's theory of reading as "signature", the sequence of interpretations which joins the body of material to be interpreted. To place one's name to a reading is not merely to sign, but to countersign, to add it to the layers of alluvia which encrust and enrich the text being read. This is why Derrida is able, in Of Grammatology, to read "from Lévi-Strauss to Rousseau". Our experience of Rousseau occurs as a "discourse", "the present, living, conscious representation of a text within the experience of the person who writes or reads it", and although that representation exceeds our reading, it only exists as a representation, as an image of a network of "roots" which never touch their own ground (101). Rousseau – although this dynamic would seem to be applicable to any author whatsoever – is generated by the line of interpretations which extends from us to him, from his future – which is our present – to a posited purity of origin that never really exists. He is an origin which places origination into question, even though that questioning is constituted by the act of reading which brought it to light.

For de Man, although this phenomenon is "one of the main themes of romantic poetry", he claims to find it best exemplified in the works of Wordsworth and Hölderlin alone (50). Yet Coleridge too, as George Watson points out, follows Blake in making the lack of originality at one with the lack of the plagiaristic impulse, so that newness is another name for the most thoroughgoing reproduction of the origin (38). Distinctions, divisions are dissolved in order to generate all that can ever be radically unprecedented. But this is not merely an unthought contradiction. The passage from the notebooks Watson refers to may be complex, but it is also precisely thought and balanced:

> Those only who feel no originality, no consciousness of having received their Thoughts & opinions from immediate Inspiration, are anxious to be

> thought originals – the certainty & feeling is enough for the other, & he rejoices to find his opinions plumed & winged with the authority of venerable Forefathers.– (1: 1695 [Nov-Dec 1803])

Each opposing sense of "originality" is here successively employed, Coleridge bringing to light first one of its determinations, then the other. To be original is precisely to feel no originality, no sense of a particular origin. But to be certain that one is derivative, girded with the powers of illustrious precursors, is enough to be original in its true sense, to found a proper origin from the future. Coleridge's assignments seem bizarre: he takes from the rhetoric of romantic origins a precisely opposite conclusion, but it is one drawn from the same resources and bound by a rigorous logical entailment. We can recall here the teaching of his schoolmaster in the first chapter of the Biographia, that even the "loftiest" and "wildest" poetry has "a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more, and more fugitive causes" (1: 9). The problem of romantic origination, at its most general scale of temporality, is worked out in direct engagement with language itself, in the logic of poetic words. Or, as Kathleen Wheeler suggests, drawing directly on the properly hermeneutical framework which must here be at work, the perception of a poetic artifact is made analogous with its creation. In articulating this reproductive creation and productive repetition, "Coleridge insists that perceptual processes (such as reading) are fundamentally creative, imaginative experiences" (30).[2]

Wordsworth himself was one of the earliest to perceive this aspect of Coleridge's linguistic achievement. He begins with a remark attributed to his "philosophical Friend", "that every author, as far as he is great and at the same time original, has had the task of creatingthe taste by which he is to be enjoyed", but continues:

> The predecessors of an original Genius of a high order will have smoothed the way for all that he has in common with them; – and much he will have in common; but, for what is peculiarly his own, he will be called upon to

> clear and often to shape his own road: – he will be in the condition of Hannibal among the Alps. (408)

Coleridge must create, must form with his work the conditions for that work to come into being, but he is also created, as he occupies a landscape which has already been made. Like Hannibal, he must forge a path through the Alps, even as the spaces between those sleeping giants of his precursors are their own, inverse contours.[3] He is both original and derivative, creates as a measure of his own createdness – as in his most notorious works, quotations are cut up, rearranged, subtly modified and joined together with other unacknowledged sources to make a delicately shifting tapestry of newness. This complexity in Coleridge's articulations has been described variously, most suggestively as a "chemical compound" of texts by the editors of the Bollingen edition of the Biographia (1: cxx) or, in Thomas McFarland's words, as "composition by mosaic organization" (27). However, both these descriptions appear to be prefigured by Walter Benjamin's more general judgement, made with reference to the composition of a treatise:

> In the canonic form of the treatise the only element of an intention – and it is an educative rather than a didactic intention – is the authoritative quotation. Its method is essentially representation. Method is a digression. Representation as digression – such is the methodological nature of the treatise. The absence of an uninterrupted purposeful structure is its primary characteristic. Tirelessly the process of thinking makes new beginnings, returning in a roundabout way to its original object. … Just as mosaics preserve their majesty despite their fragmentation into capricious particles, so philosophical contemplation is not lacking in momentum. Both are made up of the distinct and the disparate; and nothing could bear more powerful testimony to the transcendent force of the sacred image and the truth itself. (28-29)

Like the mosaic, in the extremity of its perfect formation, the distinctiveness within Coleridge's work as a whole is nothing but the accumulation of disparate fragments from without. His identity can never be within himself, for he is always more than himself. Reflections from elsewhere are themselves the brilliant flash of where we are, which, as Benjamin points out, is the very condition of writing in modernity.[4] With Coleridge, as ourselves, here is never here, although strangely, its consequence is that elsewhere cannot be somewhere else either. Coleridge himself describes this constitutive externality of the inside in his well-known close reading of Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis in Chapter Fifteen of the Biographia, with its peculiar structure of self-referential performance. His analysis begins by distinguishing between "general talent determined to poetic composition by accidental motives, by an act of the will", and Shakespeare's "inspiration of a genial and productive nature" (2: 19). This distinction, between "talent" and "genius", itself alludes to a fuller explanation he has given earlier, in Chapter Two. There, we find that the former is the mere "faculty of appropriating and applying the knowledge of others", as opposed to the "self-sufficing power of absolute genius" (1: 31). Needless to say, Coleridge is not even here sufficient to himself, simply "appropriating" or "applying" a common division made by eighteenth-century thinkers, including Condillac and Kant. For Coleridge, even the identification of genius, sufficient in itself, is reliant on the labours of others. But as, in Chapter Fifteen, he goes on to clarify further this distinction between genius and talent, the parallels between this characterisation and his own productions become even more obvious:

> Imagery (even taken from nature, much more when transplanted from books, as travels, voyages, and works of natural history); affecting incidents; just thoughts; interesting personal or domestic feelings; and with these the art of their combination or intertexture in the form of a poem; may all by incessant effort be acquired as a trade, by a man of talents and much reading … But the sense of musical delight, with the power of producing it, is a gift of imagination; and this together with the power of

> reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling, may be cultivated and improved, but can never be learnt. (2: 20)

The image of the author who takes his imagery from travel books, accounts of voyages, natural histories and a whole web of half-remembered allusions is immediately familiar as the Coleridge portrayed in John Livingston Lowes's classic study of the composition of The Ancient Mariner and Kubla Khan, The Road to Xanadu (1927). Lowes too, inaugurating a certain style of critical reading, is aware of Coleridge's patchwork combinations of voluminous, assiduous reading, intricately stitched together behind every line of his poetry. However, it is precisely here that we begin to perceive a complication in the dichotomy Coleridge is so eager to emphasise. In every combination, Lowes finds, there is also a necessary moment of transformation, the passage of reflective scholarship into generative poetry. There is a complicated confusion between a derivation which absences generation, yet is, of its own movement, a transformation indicative of that "genial" power. As Lowes puts it, "to follow Coleridge through his reading is to retrace the obliterated vestiges of creation" (35).

We are beginning to see, then, that the diphasic operation of the movement of genius itself dissolves the antithesis Coleridge tries to affirm between genius and talent, even as that description is taking place. Singularity is opposed to multiplicity, even as the constitution of the singular as singular turns out to be multiple. This fissure between the One and the Many is repeated throughout Coleridge's writings, but it is certainly not the "division, amounting even to incoherence" Seamus Perry describes (1). It is far more ambitious, and has its own constitutive power. There is something strange, even magical, in that process, the almost imperceptible shift which transforms Shakespeare's Adonis running away across "dark lawns" into Venus's "eye", flashing in the night.[5] The darkness of his breaking, disconnection, is suddenly the background which illuminates a continuous flare of her powerful possession. This particular passage, Coleridge

says, "gives us the liveliest image of succession with the feeling of simultaneousness" (Biographia 2: 25), a sensation at the heart of the poetic structure of reality. It also, crucially, is concerned with temporality. Shakespeare's "musical delight" is additionally a reference to his sense of poetic timing, or metre. Successive syllables are articulated over time, but relate to each other in such a way that they immediately, simultaneously distort, reverse, or cause time to transform itself into something which is not temporal. The characteristic feature of poetic genius lies between the elsewhere in time and the timeless time of the poem. We can see – and hear – this better by re-reading the passage from Venus and Adonis Coleridge has just referred to, although this time even more closely than he does:

> With this he breaketh from the sweet embrace
> Of those fair arms which bound him to her breast,
> And homeward through the dark lawns runs apace,
> Leaves love upon her back, deeply distressed.
> Look how a bright star shooteth from the sky,
> So glides he in the night from Venus' eye, (811-16)

Immediately, we can identify several technical features within this stanza which spell out the complex effect Coleridge is attempting to delineate. There is, first of all, an obvious opposition between the opening quatrain and concluding couplet. That quatrain describes Adonis's flight as a running from an absent Venus, which then suddenly shifts in the couplet to an image wholly created from her perspective. Imagistic sense is, however, prosodically reinforced, as the dissected rhyme words of the opening abab scheme – embrace,breast, apace, distressed – enact a brokenness healed in the final cc of the rhyming couplet: sky, eye. At the same time, rhyme is reproduced by metre, as the underlying, neutral iambic pentameter, maintained throughout the quatrain, undergoes radical modifications in the final couplet. The rising rhythm of each line's opening iamb, drifting away ("with thìs", "of thòse"), is suddenly reversed, returned, brought back in the

trochee which initiates the last two lines: "loòk how". This is also accomplished by a grammatical shift, what was merely indicative now imperative. But the metrical modifications do not stop there, as the first reversed foot is almost immediately followed by another one, star bearing a heavy stress too against the expected light one. Not only does this create the successive pattern of trochee, iamb, trochee, iamb, then concluding iamb in "Loòk how | a brìght | stàr shoot | eth fròm | the sky", it also, momentarily and magically, makes "bright star" into a spondee, two strong stresses together, sucking its energy out of the following "shooteth", now a pyrrhic, with no stressed syllables at all. That "bright star" of "Venus' eye" is also central to the effect of Shakespeare's transforming image, yet, as a metrical foot, it is both created by a metre and not allowed for by that metre. It is, quite literally, a time out of time, the timing of the poem, yet indispensible to that time's effect. Paul Hamilton's perceptive linking of Coleridgean poetic theory to the innovations of Gerard Manley Hopkins here bears fruit, as the mounting of one rhythm upon another – enforced by the logic of language itself – produces an effect which is heard, but heard in the mode of impossibility, as something disallowed by those very laws of language, insofar as they are expressed in the canons of metrical scansion.[6]

In Coleridge's perception of Shakespeare, it is this incalculable difficulty of calculation with which we are most concerned. One mode of operation, apparently incompatible with, or at least external to, another, turns out to be the basis of its constitution, as at the same time the relationship between the two is transformed to the extent that the identity or origination of the entire operation is fundamentally altered. Lovejoy's challenge to romanticism is also met, on both its counts. Coleridge at once expands his critique far beyond its own apparent temporal bounds, and uses that expansion to articulate together those opposites of singularity and multiplicity, time and eternity as a common, romantic insight. We can be helped further in specifying this by expanding our own temporal range fully once more, and returning to Derrida's thinking of beginnings, out of Coleridge's time, yet closely concerned with his time's effect. "Qual Quelle: Valéry's Sources"(1971) is also concerned with the problem of the origin, and of

origination in its paradoxical temporality. Paul Valéry's article, "In Praise of Water" (1935), extolling the virtues of Perrier, is naturally concerned with water's natural source, welling up from the ground. This is its familiar, obvious and obviously natural, meaning: in French, point d'eau, the point where earth turns to water and water returns to the earth, in Latin, *origo fontium*: the origin of the source of water. Yet, suddenly, there is a complication, another articulation when we least expect it. As Derrida says, the supposedly proper meaning can only be regarded as a familiar one "if we already know, or believe that we already know, what we are thinking when we say that the source is the *origin,* of a body of water" (279-80). That is to say, the source's proper, original meaning, is that of "origin", *origo fontium* as it starts in nature. And the meaning of "origin"? Well, that signifies "source". The meaning of "origin" does not begin at the proper origin, *origo fontium*, *point d'eau* (as Derrida says, water's *point* may well be its absence: in French, as is the case with *pas*, it may function as a negation), but somewhere else, at the place to which it gives rise. And so, this line of Derridean argument comes to its strangest conclusion:

> Proper meaning derives from derivation. The proper meaning or the primal meaning (of the word *source,* for example) is no longer simply the source, but the deported effect of a turn of speech, a return or detour. It is secondary in relation to that to which it seems to give birth, measuring a separation and a departure from it. The source itself is the effect of that (for) whose origin it passes. (280)

In general, therefore, when we seek the meaning of what comes first, our sources, it may actually turn out that it has already been produced, always already been produced, by what they then inspired. Let us be absolutely clear about this, for the full value of each element in this bizarre equation is not at all susceptible to reduction or qualification. The origin really comes first, but nevertheless, it is still entirely derivative of that which comes after it and also relies upon it.

Such a state of affairs might seem strange, even frightening, but it should not surprise us, for it also appears in another of Coleridge's European sources. He

began reading Giambattista Vico's New Science on 2nd May, 1825, having been lent a copy by an itinerant Italian visitor, Gioacchino de' Prati.[7] His notebook entries from that date reveal his principal concern with the text, which was to compare its assertion of a universal Biblical history, that put the competing chronological claims of the Hebrews above those of Egyptians, Chinese and Assyrians, with his own accumulations of evidence. Only the Hebrews had a true sense of themselves, ordained by God. The remaining, Gentile nations were subject to poetic distortions in and of their wild, dark origins. A letter to de' Prati on 14th May, thanking him for the loan, reveals the full extent of Coleridge's sympathy with the New Science, as he admits it anticipates him "twenty times successively" in its first volume alone (Letters 454). These influences however, do not lie entirely within those musings on chronologies in the notebook entries referring explicitly to Vico, but are also found in those around them, and their poetic sensations of time.[8] Entry 5240, from September 1825, is concerned with the problem of a proper succession. The educated, sophisticated Anglican clergymen of Coleridge's day proceed from their abstracted understanding, only then "descend[ing]" or "thicken[ing]" to hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, touching and feeling. This process must be "reverse[d]", but only so that they can begin at the point from which they must reach the place they were at the start (that is, to begin with physical sensations and work from there to their initial, abstract thoughts). This problem of doctrinal correctness, however, is described by Coleridge not in theological, but rhetorical terms. Because these "young Clergy" plan "what they shall do before they have learnt what they are", they are guilty of a "Hysteron Proteron", the rhetorical figure where (to quote from a modern handbook of rhetorical terms) "syntax or sense [is placed] out of [its] normal logical or temporal order" (Lanham 89). Doing before being, these clergy are logically disarranged, hystera protera in their own right (4: 5240 f27). Alternatively put, they are "the most ruinous of prolepses", defining the future, that which they should become, as something in the present or past, the point at which they started. It is here, in the space between these two figures, that Coleridge gives the strange logic of the source another turn:

They overlay what they antedate – and accelerate by abortion. *Be!* When this is secured, then be *useful*. Nature herself gives the lesson – There is a uterine previous & indispensible to the atmospheric life – The Mother's Breath must vitalize the Blood & teach it its thousandfold channels, & till Life becomes a *Habit*, a Lesson passively learnt by heart, the Mother's Life is the Life of the Child. Its Brain is nourished by the Heart, in stillness and meek subjection to the Blood which is the Life. When this is perfected, … then comes the Birth into outward & all-common Light – and then the Lungs begin to play, and the Brain to act on the Heart, & to control the organs of motion & speech – & ascends a legitimate throne, & reigns there as long as it is still quietly sustained and nourished by the Blood from the central Spring – In the Heart it began, by the Heart it must be continued – let it but be the Heart that was in Christ! For in it is Life, and the *Life* is the *Light* of Men.– (4: 5240 f27v)

In this passage's fabric of obstetric analogies, the "uterine" names the state before birth of which it is the containing fluid. As an entry earlier in 1825 emphasises, this life before life is as essential to "the atmospheric life", between birth and death, as that is to our "future Life", or afterlife (4: 5187 f93). It is the source of life, the passage from "Mother's Breath" to mother's blood to "Mother's Life"and "the Life of the Child". But as life's source, it is also a derivation of life's end, and so another prolepsis. The start of life, atmospheric emergence from uterine source, is also a reversal. As it is learnt "by heart", the transmission from heart to brain becomes one from brain to heart. In its emergence into air, life flows backwards. Yet it is still "nourished by the Blood from the central Spring", which is now the "heart" of Christ, the "Life" of Christ that is life everlasting. Life is the result of its origin, and that origin stems from its end. The uterine life, or life before life, is also the life after life, or Christ's eternal life. This paradox, however, is not so much Christian and individual, as national and Viconian. The New Science makes clear "that the nature of everything born or made betrays the crudeness of its origin"(109; §361). The course of a nation, the nature of that nation, lies in its nativity. Thus, the Muses divined (from the Latin divinari) as

they "contemplat[ed] God under the aspect of his providence", which was then the wisdom of the pre-Homeric, theological poets as they "founded the humanity of Greece", followed by that of leaders of men who
benefitted, "ordered" and "governed" the lives of humans, finally ending in metaphysics, which "seeks its proofs not in the external world but within the modifications of the mind of him who meditates it" (111; §365). Nature, and man in nature, are divine, which is to say they are constituted under the aspect of a God who projects the good of man. As the line of Vico's argument concludes, for the first men,

> metaphysics was their poetry, a faculty born with them (for they were furnished by nature with these senses and imaginations); born of their ignorance of causes, for ignorance, the mother of wonder, made everything wonderful to men who were ignorant of everything. Their poetry was at first divine, because … they imagined the causes of the things they felt and wondered at to be gods. (116; §375)

God then is man's end, the organising principle toward which humanity's efforts are directed. But as such, he is posited as man's start, the genetic origin which directs our efforts. The consequence of this is an originary prolepsis, a starting place that foretells the future. As with Coleridge's creative uterine fountain, Viconian poetry makes itself out of an originary twist or reversal. Its initial, vertiginous assignment of cause comes, in Vico's chronology, a century after the Flood, when thunder first resumes and men assign to it their own natures, making it into a violent, physically forceful Jove (117-18; §377):

> the first people, simple and rough, invented the gods "from terror of present power". Thus it was fear which created gods in the world; not fear awakened in men by other men, but fear awakened in men by themselves. Along with this origin of idolatry is demonstrated likewise the origin of divination, which was brought into the world at the same birth. (120; §382)

Men make God from their own fear of God. That is, they are afraid of something which they have made of a result of that fear. God exists on the basis of a terror whose result makes it impossible for it to be that basis. This bizarre generation, Coleridge's "Obstetrication of Ideas" (Notebooks 4: 5240 f28), is indeed a strange "birth". That moment of nativity, or generation, the origin of life, becomes a moment outside life, the "New Birth" of the Christian Moravians which Coleridge holds as exemplary of this process, brilliant and instantaneous under the mundanity and succession of existence. This is a "form of Time in which the negation of Time, its transcendency to Time, can be revealed". In Christian terms, we are experiencing a "Moment" that is "opus operatum et perfectum" (4: 5240 f28), the sacramental description of a self-sufficient "work done and perfected", a time which is sacramental time, at once endless and invisible, temporal and infinite.

There is something of this difficult complication in Coleridge's 1811 poem Limbo, a state

> …where Time and weary Space
> Fettered from flight, with night-mare sense of fleeing,
> Strive for their last crepuscular half-being;—
> Lank Space, and scytheless Time with branny hands
> Barren and soundless as the measuring sands,
> Not mark'd by flit of Shades,—unmeaning they
> As moonlight on the dial of the day! (2-8)

This is Coleridge's poetry as temporally destructive, and so destructive of itself as poetry. Time and space are not annihilated or transformed, but merely distended, limp, blunt and indistinct. Yet even as it describes this condition, the verse is sharp and poised, holding these organising forms of the universe at a pitch of nightmarish terror. Their "flight" balances out its alliterated condition along the stresses of the second line of the passage, caught desperately between itself as "fettered" at the start and "fleeing" at the end. Assonance makes semantic

opposites phonemic co-ordinates, held tight in desperate, musically perfect tension. The deaf and "barren … sands" are entirely evacuated, though all the time reverberating to their rhythmic, "measuring" thud. Time's timing itself in an infinite recession is another impossible shift in relationships that is the measure of its organisation from its own outside. In this case, the rhymes and metre are already those of John Donne, and in particular his To Mr T.W. ('Haste thee harsh verse'), to which Coleridge referred during its composition.[9]There, again, metre is at once "lame" and limping, but also rough, "harsh" and destructive of time with its terrifying speed. In Coleridge's "crepuscular" being, or apparent twilight darkness, we hear Donne's corpuscular corruption and compression of language, broken fragments of words from elsewhere.[10] Like Coleridge, Donne considers that "hell is but privation" (To Mr T.W. 9), a subtraction or evacuation that does not posit anything at all, yet at the same time desires the bodily and corrruptive, intensifying absence into lines of flesh.

From that outside, however, the place Coleridge occupies on the inside is transformed again. His striking image, of that deathly non-meaning as "moonlight on the dial of the day", a sun-dial blinded by moonlight, appears again five years later in The Statesman's Manual(1816), as the ignorance "of those inward means of grace, without which the language of the Scriptures, in the most faithful translation and in the purest and plainest English, must nevertheless continue to be a dead language: a sun-dial by moonlight" (57). Grace here stands for the inner transformation of that on the basis of which it is impossible, the pattern we have met repeatedly in Coleridge of a combination of elements which produces a result impossible within their terms. The drawing of blank fragments from the outside is already the inside's fragmentary generation of itself: sharp, hard and productive. In the earlier poem, grace is accomplished by the "Old Man" of "Human Time" who succeeds Limbo. He looks steadily, but is blind, observes the unmeaning moon with his own lunar countenance, finally "gazes still,—his eyeless face all eye;—" (16). Harold Bloom, critic of romanticism and sometime colleague of Derrida, correctly identifies this as one of the key moments of Coleridgean difficulty, and specifies precisely its paradox by observing that "as he

gazes moonward he is one moon reflecting light upon another, Human Time receiving and giving again to a symbolic Eternity" (Bloom 229).[11] Moon reflects moon, and blankness covers blankness. Each element can only be illuminated by the reflection of another, lambent body. But from their combination, a multiplication of darkness, that light is nevertheless produced, as relations of time are made over into eternity, by means of poetic grace. It is just as Vico describes "the origin of poetry", confirmed eternally in poetic origination, "that its proper material is the credible impossibility. It is impossible that bodies should be minds, yet it was believed that the thundering sky was Jove. And nothing is dearer to poets than singing the marvels wrought by sorceresses by means of incantations" (120; §383). Poetry is precise, and precisely structured, as Coleridge has shown us repeatedly. But at the same time, and under the same condition, it is entirely magical: an incantation or a miracle, performed by grace.

In this way, Coleridge's discovery of the problem of origination is the realisation of that origin in poetry. The possibility and the impossibility of his poetry in general, its existence at a certain point in time, and a point which may be perceived, is co-determinate with the origin of the poem, the means by which its language comes into being as a matter of poetics. If we are to advance our understanding of both, Coleridge's romantic horizon is one which we will have to continue to trace. And if that horizon turns out to be oriented towards its own future, if we must think de Man, Derrida and ourselves along with him, as an essential part of his movement, then that will be part of our task as well.

Endnotes

1 See OED s discussion of "original", in particular the contrast between that which pertains to "the earliest stage of something", looks back to the ultimate derivation ("Original", def. 1a), and that which is "not derivative or dependent", and thus depends only upon itself ("Original", def. 4).

2 One might also usefully trace this in terms of the development between two critical positions taken by Tilottama Rajan, as her description in 1980 of 'the Romantic evasion of the temporality of art' as 'an act of bad faith' (20) becomes,

by 1990, the identification in those same romantic writers of ‘a negative hermeneutic in which the act of reading supplies something absent from and in contradiction to the textual surface’ (5). Time is the distance over which the origin comes into itself as the form of its wandering derivation. The faith must be proleptic, but is not necessarily bad.

3 See Jacobus 1.

4 A version of this paper was originally given at the Centre for Modern French Thought at Sussex University, concerning itself more directly with the way in which that thought has a characteristically exorbitant identity, constituting itself from the externality of (most often) German thinking. In this sense, Coleridge might be described as a modern French thinker.

5 William Shakespeare, Venus and Adonis 811-816, qtd. in Coleridge, Biographia Literaria 2: 25.

6 See Hamilton 154; see also Hopkins’s own description of Milton’s "fiction [in the choruses of Samson Agonistes] of counterpointing the heard rhythm (which is the same as the mounted rhythm) upon a standard rhythm which is never heard but only counted and therefore really does not exist" (letter to Robert Bridges, 21st August 1877, Hopkins 45-46). As one might expect from the dichotomy Coleridge draws between them, Shakespeare’s effect here is the precise opposite of Milton’s, as it is the mounted, spondaic-pyrrhic rhythm we hear in the mode of impossibility.

7 See Whalley.

8 See Kooy for a discussion of Coleridge’s thinking of the development of ideas in history. Coleridge’s poetic – as opposed to historiographical – logic is more concerned, however, with the future than the past, with the transcendental, and not the existential.

9 See Coleridge, Notebooks 3: 4073 f145v-f149.

10 Strictly speaking, of course, a false etymology, as crepuscular is descended from the Latin crepuscul-um, and corpuscular comes fromcorpuscul-um (any

more ancient joining of the two remains indistinct – to me at least). However, their affinity remains poetically true.

11 It is worth pointing out that Bloom's reading is predicated on E.H. Coleridge's dating of the poem to 1817. Thus, the Biographia Literaria and Statesman's Manual, which had seemed to make up its origins, now turn out to be its effects. All three texts are transformed, but still seem strange, ghostly in their relation to one another.

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First Response

There is much that is resonant and suggestive about this essay to recommend its publication. The piece has a strong sense of argumentative purpose and locates Coleridge's treatment of origin in the wider context of critical debate about the genesis of romanticism and post-structuralism's critique of the very concept of 'origin'. In this respect, Coleridge's poetics are prescient, both anticipating and amalgamating the theoretical approaches of Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida.