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The Romantic Movement at the End of History

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The Romantic Movement at the End of History

Jerome Christensen

> We profess it in our Creed, we confess it in our lives.
> —JEREMY TAYLOR, *Holy Living* (1727)

I profess romanticism, I romantically confess. And if I choose a pretheo-retical, prerevolutionary epigraph from an eighteenth-century divine to enfranchise this essay rather than a phrase from a more timely master such as Paul de Man or M. H. Abrams, it is because I want to use Jeremy Taylor as Samuel Taylor Coleridge chronically used him: to stage a resis-tance to theory, to ward off revolutionary utterance, and to keep melan-choly at bay. In Taylor's terms, professing romanticism is what I do on each occasion of classroom teaching at Johns Hopkins University or of publishing an article in a specialized journal or a book at a university press. My creed, of course, is not to Coleridge, to Byron, or to Words-worth. I do not commit belief to what is loosely called a canon but to that discipline which the institutions of education and publication collabora-tively authorize and reproduce and which in turn certifies the felicity of my professions. If, as Taylor states, confessing is a matter of living, living ought to be imagined as that structuring activity that Anthony Giddens calls "practical consciousness": an ensemble of repetitive maneuvers, sig-nature gestures, and obsessive themes.[1] Living is for servants and for crit-

1. Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley, 1984), p. xxiii.

ics—for those who do not have *texts* in Edward Said's sense of the term but only what Coleridge calls "personalities."[2] This practical, pretextual consciousness assorts the idiosyncratic and the routinized into a compromise formation: something romantic, something like a *biographia literaria*, something which may be at odds or at evens with an institutional warrant. It depends.

I want to address how confessing romantically bears on the profession of romanticism and to argue that its bearing matters. This essay presupposes that romanticism is not an object of study—neither the glorious expression nor the deplorable symptom of a distant epoch and peculiar mentality—but a problem in identification and in practice. As a Christian divine, Jeremy Taylor sought to induce a harmony between creed and life in himself and for others. Romantic writers grandiloquently profess to wish for such a harmony (*poet* is the name that Coleridge gives to the achieved ideal), even as they prosaically confess that what our creeds profess and what our untimely lives confess do not often synchronize.

The advantages of that discrepancy clarify in the light of the "end of history" argument as it has been influentially advanced by Francis Fukuyama in his interrogatory 1989 article "The End of History?" and his recent declarative book *The End of History and the Last Man*.[3] Three features of Fukuyama's "universal history" of the triumph of liberalism are salient here (*EH*, p. 48). First, in line with his all-too-clerical affirmation of the power of ideology to make history, Fukuyama identifies the end of history not with a momentous incident or a sovereign decision but with the prescribed end of what he calls "ideological evolution," consummated in the freshly consolidated global hegemony of the liberal state. For the sake of developing a romantic argument, I am prepared to accept both aspects of that claim: that history is (or rather was) ideological contestation and that ideological conflict has ended. I conclude that if one is looking for something with the strength to challenge commercialist hegemony here at the end of history one should look for something non-ideological—whatever that may mean.

2. See Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (Baltimore, 1975), pp. 191–97, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols., vol. 7 of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, gen. ed. Kathleen Coburn (Princeton, N. J., 1983), 1:41n; hereafter abbreviated *BL*.

3. See Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (Summer 1989): 3–18 and *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1992); hereafter abbreviated *EH*.

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The second arresting feature of Fukuyama's argument is its unembarrassed repetitiveness. Fukuyama freely acknowledges Hegel as his precursor, who announced the end of history in 1806. And Hegel was not alone, probably because he was somewhat premature. Not Europe in 1806 but Europe in 1815 is the better analogy with the worldquake of 1989. The contemporary scene of imperial break-up, ethnic crack-up, and commercialist mop-up closely, even eerily, parallels the European aftermath of Waterloo, when commerce first conquered conquest. Just as 1989 found its voice in Fukuyama's celebration of "the triumph of the Western *idea*" over Soviet collectivism and of the completion of the dialectic of history in liberal society,[4] so did 1814–15 find its spokesman in the anglophiliac Benjamin Constant, who, in *The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation*, celebrated the triumph of British liberty over Napoleonic tyranny and the advent of perpetual commercial prosperity. Let us say that Fukuyama is right. Let us say that Constant and Hegel were right. What do three rights separated by 175 years add up to? Well, history. A history that is indistinguishable from posthistory because a history in which, despite the stirring spectacle of wars and revolutions, the same truth has been proven time and time again and where no real change has occurred.

Thus the third feature of Fukuyama's universal history: its relentless synchronicity. A fundamental belief in a prevailing synchronicity encourages Fukuyama, like Richard Rorty, to indulge the notion of the history of philosophy as a series of conversations with dead authors. He can imagine that he enters into intellectual exchange with Hegel and that, in his passage through *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he can come upon the chapter on lordship and bondage and recognize liberalism's glory. The "end of history" argument is an "always already" formation of considerable elasticity. Although Fukuyama begins by speaking of ideological evolution, because all change has always already occurred, he must really mean ideological elaboration. A pallid scientism, evolution imputes a kind of necessity to the discursive process, subjects change to predictability, and allows for the evidence of "real change" to be stigmatized as monstrous, anomalous, or, worse yet, anachronistic. Constant was succinct. Writing in 1814 after the abdication of the usurper, he not only trumpeted the end of the era of conquest but also announced that, under the reign of commerce, should some savage fool attempt to conquer, usurp, or dictate he would "commit a gross and disastrous anachronism."[5] Constant got it right. Only a few months after the publication of his book Bonaparte returned to France and for a hundred days anachronistically suspended the conventions by which monarcho-liberalism ruled. And therefore Constant got it wrong, for the assumption that an anachronism

4. Fukuyama, "The End of History?" p. 3.

5. Benjamin Constant, *The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation and Their Relation to Civilization*, in *Political Writings*, trans. and ed. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge, 1988), p. 55.

was a mere nothing that would expire in its appearance proved vain. Although an anachronism does not count in the way that clocks and bank-tellers count, *committing* anachronism romantically exploits lack of accountability as unrecognized possibility.[6]

Posthistorical liberalism's disdain for the anachronistic is exceeded only by a fear of it, which fuels the postmodern drive to abolish the possibility of anachronism. It is because Fredric Jameson, the best Marxist theorist of postmodernism, shares many of the evolutionary assumptions of the neoliberals (the word *revolution* does not appear in the index to his *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*) and adheres to the epochal model of tidy synchrony ("the postmodern must be characterized as a situation in which the survival, the residue, the holdover, the archaic, has finally been swept away without a trace")[7] that his utopian agenda looks less like a challenge to postmodernism than another elegant variation. Jameson's utopia is insufficiently romantic. Considered as a set of doctrines, Marxism does not trouble Fukuyama's reverie, but the emergence of Marx under the Hegelian sun, committing the romantic anachronism of *Das Kapital* in the middle of the nineteenth century, emphatically does.

Immanuel Wallerstein has proposed a useful taxonomy of the dominant ways that historical change has been represented since the Enlightenment. The emergence of "normal change" in eighteenth-century Europe was answered, he argues, by the formation of three institutions: "the ideologies, the social sciences, and the movements."[8] Wallerstein identifies three ideologies: liberalism, which he calls "the natural ideology of normal change" (*USS*, p. 17); conservatism, which upholds the prerogatives of traditional arrangements; and Marxism, which imagined change "as something realized not continuously but discontinuously" and which held that the world had yet to realize the "perfect society" (*USS*, p. 17). Here is Fukuyama's scorecard: Marxism defeated, conservatism ab-

6. Wisely or not, this essay abandons the security provided by the so-called anachronism test, which contemporary historians of consequence have argued provides an important criterion for determining that the language identified with a historical agent is not the historian's own fabrication. See Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3–53, and J. G. A. Pocock, "Concept of a Language and the *metier d'historien:* Some Considerations on Practice," in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge, 1987), p. 21. These criteria are explored in the context of interpretations of the language of economics by M. Ali Khan in "On Economics and Language: A Review Article," *Journal of Economic Studies* 20, no. 3 (1993): 51–69.

7. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N. C., 1991), p. 309; hereafter abbreviated *PM*. Diane Elam takes a divergent position in her *Romancing the Postmodern* (London, 1992), where she argues that anachronism is an "inevitable" constituent of the genre she calls "postmodern romance" (pp. 68–75).

8. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 17, 16; hereafter abbreviated *USS*.

sorbed, and liberalism, "the natural ideology of normal change," triumphant.

Although that verdict has been contested by the losers, such an outcome means neither payoff nor penalty for romanticism, as Jameson indirectly acknowledges:

> I must here omit yet another series of debates, largely academic, in which the very continuity of modernism as it is here reaffirmed is itself called into question by some vaster sense of the profound continuity of romanticism, from the late eighteenth century on, of which both the modern and the postmodern will be seen as mere organic stages. [*PM*, p. 59]

This essay will more or less inhabit the space of that omission: I will settle for "largely academic," change "profound continuity" to "intermittent insistence," and discard the cliché of organic stages. The essay will proceed on the assumption that if we want to discover what possibilities for change remain open now, we might inquire into the untimely back at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when history first ended. Posthistorical historiography suggests that romanticism, which, at least in the British instance, has led a kind of phantomized political existence, crossing among professions conservative, liberal, and Marxist, may, as phantom, confess a political life that is a virtual alternative both to what rules and to what would have inverted ruler and ruled. I will be orienting myself in relation to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* for contrary reasons: written in 1815, it is decidedly a Waterloo composition with the Constantian ambition of proclaiming a new dispensation; yet because it was afflicted by near-catastrophic miscalculations in the printing office, the book was not published until 1817 and thus appeared as an anachronism, a ghost at the banquet it had set.

British romantic writing, I shall argue, does not belong with the ideologies but with what Wallerstein calls the "movements," those political associations on the run which attempted to organize spontaneous antisystemic impulses into an organized "politics of social transformation" (*USS*, p. 21). Neither sect nor school, the British romantic writers who straggled onto the scene between 1798 and 1802 formed what E. J. Hobsbawm has called a "primitive" social movement.[9] I shall later take advantage of the *re*emergence of the primitive in a post-Jacobin and post-Napoleonic Britain to suggest analogous possibilities for a posthistorical America. Matthew Arnold preferred "prematurity" to primitiveness and diagnosed it in his canonical judgment that Byron and Wordsworth "had their source in a great movement of feeling, not in a great movement of mind."[10]

9. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries* (New York, 1959), p. 151; hereafter abbreviated *PR*.

10. Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," *Essays in Criticism, First Series*, ed. Sister Thomas Marion Hoctor (Chicago, 1968), p. 13.

Arnold added mind to feeling with the aim of stopping romantic movement altogether; he was successful insofar as he can be credited with growing precocious writers into Victorian worthies, freezing them as eminent pictures at the Oxbridge exhibition. Arnold's verdict has the unintended consequence, however, of aligning primitive romanticism—turbulent feeling unsubjected by a regulative idea—with Marx's definition of communism: "Communism is for us not a stable state which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things."[11] We shall call romanticism the real movement of feeling that challenges the present state of things, including the consensus that would bury it in the past, whether by omission or by labeling it an ideology. We shall do so in the faith that what was premature then may help revive the possibility of prematurity now—if not to force the spring at least, by heralding, to quicken it.

1. Romanticism and Ideology

Not long ago Jerome McGann stigmatized romanticism as a version of what Marx called the German ideology, which "turns the world upside down and sees it from a false vantage because its own point of reference is conceptualized within a closed idealistic system."[12] McGann alludes to Marx's famous metaphor of the camera obscura: "If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down, as in a *camera obscura,* this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process" (*GI,* p. 14). Given that ideology is inversion, the critic's responsibility is clear: he must labor to turn the world right-side up and restore it to its truth.

Roughly speaking, two takes on ideology prevail. The first, shared by Fukuyama and McGann, regards ideology as a set of ideas that you and people like you hold. In this view, ideology is opinion dressed to kill. The second, Althusserian conception of ideology is as a set of representations that holds us, that *"hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects"*—concrete subjects being concrete individuals who "work all by themselves."[13] Because ideology has no history (or, as Fukuyama would have it, because its history is universal), it need have no "end" (there is no truth to restore); nonetheless, there are limits to ideology's scope, for

11. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *German Ideology, Parts I and III*, ed. R. Pascal (New York, 1947), p. 26; hereafter abbreviated *GI.*

12. Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago, 1983), p. 9.

13. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York, 1971), pp. 173, 182.

there remain "individuals" out of range of its call. Where things work, ideology is; where things do not work, ideology is not, and where ideology is not, *cause,* paradoxically, is. Or, as Lacan aphorizes (thinking of Kant, thinking of Hume) "there is cause only in something that doesn't work."[14] For Althusser *art,* as for Constant *anachronism,* names one of those things that, like an idiot boy or an ancient mariner or a female vagrant, does not work but that does somehow, occultly, *cause.*

Given Lacan's aphorism, it is notable that Marx's artful image of how ideology works does not itself work. Paul Ricoeur has observed that the "unfortunate image" of the camera obscura "is a metaphor of the reversal of images, but it proceeds as a comparison involving four terms. The ideological reversal is to the life-process as the image in perception is to the retina. . . . But what is an image on the retina" is a puzzle, for, as Ricoeur concludes, "there are images only for consciousness." There may be an image *in* itself, but because there is no image *for* itself, Marx's analogy fails to close and in so failing alludes to something like a supervisory consciousness. Ricoeur goes on to echo Althusser's charge "that the inverted image belongs to the same ideological world as the original. As a result, he claims, we must introduce a notion quite different from inversion, that of an epistemological break."[15] We may suggest that what appears as something like consciousness is a *movement* that disrupts the closure of the optical model and makes Marx's camera obscura metaphor unworkable for the systematic purposes to which Marxists have put it.

W. J. T. Mitchell has observed that "Marx's use of the camera obscura as a polemical device for ridiculing the illusions of idealist philosophy begins to look even more ungainly when we recall that Locke had also used it as a polemical device—in exactly the opposite way."[16] Ungainlier still. For if the inversion of the camera image belongs to "the same ideological world" as the original, what are we to make of the common cause of Karl Marx, avowed materialist, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, supposed idealist? Here is Coleridge's footnoted denunciation of the habits of the contemporary reading public from chapter 3 of the *Biographia:*

> For as to the devotees of the circulating libraries, I dare not compliment their *pass-time,* or rather *kill-time,* with the name of *reading.* Call it rather a sort of beggarly daydreaming, during which the mind of the dreamer furnishes for itself nothing but laziness and a little mawkish sensibility; while the whole *materiel* and imagery of the doze is supplied *ab extra* by a sort of mental *camera obscura* manufactured

14. Jacques Lacan, "The Freudian Unconscious and Ours," *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis,* trans. Alan Sheridan and ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York, 1978), p. 22.

15. Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia,* ed. George H. Taylor (New York, 1986), p. 78.

16. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago, 1986), p. 169; hereafter abbreviated *I.*

at the printing office, which *pro tempore* fixes, reflects and transmits the moving phantasms of one man's delirium, so as to people the barrenness of an hundred other brains afflicted with the same trance or suspension of all common sense and all definite purpose. [*BL*, 1:48n]

Although both Marx and Coleridge use the camera obscura to illustrate the mechanical projection of inverted images of reality, it is the so-called romantic idealist who connects the mechanism with a system of commodity production. Mitchell likewise adjusts Marx by weaning the camera obscura metaphor away from its Lockean parent, invoking instead the nineteenth-century technological context of photography in order to suture Marx's characterization of ideology with his analysis of commodity fetishism. In Mitchell's account,

> the commodity is a "fantastic" form—literally, a form produced by projected light; these forms, like the "ideas" of ideology, are both there and not there—both "perceptible and imperceptible by the senses." The difference from the images projected by the camera obscura is that the fantastic forms of the commodity are "objective character[s]" in the sense that they are projected outward, "stamped upon the product of . . . labour." The evanescent, subjective projections of ideology are imprinted and fixed the way a printing press (or photographic process) stamps the "characters" of typographic or graphic imagery. [*I*, pp. 189–90]

If Marx echoes Locke, Coleridge, who never saw a photograph, not only anticipates Marx but Mitchell as well by making the connection between ideology and commodity production in the context of an imaginary apparatus that looks like nothing so much as the apparatus of the imaginary we moderns know as the cinema. Projecting his light forward as if a light bestowed, the measure of the distance that Coleridge travels beyond Marx is the romantic's failure accurately to historicize his camera obscura, a neglect symptomatized syntactically by his failure properly to tie the transmitted movement to a stable referent. Is the "moving phantasm" an affecting ghost or the effective flicker of an image on a movie screen? If the "phantasm," an untimely and unaccountable life, is the *figure* of anachronism, Coleridge's "moving" *really* moves—and romantically commits that anachronism to the future.

Whether or not you buy such a fantastic claim, once the fantastic has been reinscribed in the Marxian mechanism (classically by Walter Benjamin or recently by Mitchell), it is difficult to see how Coleridge's "gothic" use of the camera obscura substantively differs from the "mental operation of materialist reversal and demystification," which, according to Jameson, is "alone the feature by which 'materialism' as such can be identified" (*PM*, p. 358). That may be because the image of the camera ob-

scura works *as* a camera obscura, turning upside down reality and dream, idealist and materialist, Coleridge and Marx, Jameson and Fukuyama. Althusser's lesson—which he abstracted from the *German Ideology* but which the Russian masses suffered deep time to learn—would seem to hold: the more the world is turned upside down, the more it stays the same. Such a world seems suited for Fukuyama's spin. From the perspective of universal history, once you wipe off the actors' greasepaint, all change, no matter how professedly apocalyptic, is normal change. In such a world the camera obscura's "mechanism of inversion" is not only what Mitchell calls it, "a figure for the formal pattern of revolution and counterrevolution" (*I*, p. 178), but a figure for the reduction of revolution and counterrevolution to mere formality, historical change to the elaboration of some pattern, whether simple like inversion or fractally complex. Not surprisingly, most readers find Fukuyama's moral comforting. But some are unreasonably angry at the message and suspect the messenger. And that's interesting.

2. Romantic Resistance to Transfer

In the *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge engages the relations among the mechanism of inversion, the possibility of change, and unreasonable anger in his analysis of the reception of *Lyrical Ballads*. He invokes *Macbeth* to epitomize the predicament of the readers of Wordsworth's 1800 preface, who suffer an "unquiet state of mind" and who wonder "at the perverseness of the man, who had written a long and argumentative essay to persuade them, that

Fair is foul, and foul is fair." [*BL,* 1:71–72]

Explaining his explanation, Coleridge appends a complicated footnote that diagnoses and performs the romantic movement:

In opinions of long continuance, and in which we had never before been molested by a single doubt, to be suddenly *convinced* of an *error,* is almost like being *convicted* of a fault. There is a state of mind, which is the direct antithesis of that, which takes place when we *make a bull. The bull* namely consists in the bringing together two incompatible thoughts, with the *sensation,* but without the *sense,* of their connection. The psychological condition, or that which constitutes the possibility of this state, being such disproportionate vividness of two distant thoughts, as extinguishes or obscures the consciousness of the intermediate images or conceptions, or wholly abstracts the attention from them. Thus in the well known bull, "*I was a fine child, but they changed me;*" the first conception expressed in the word "*I,*" is that of personal identity—*Ego contemplans:* the second expressed in the

word "*me*," is the visual image or object by which the mind represents to itself its past condition, or rather, its personal identity under the form in which it imagined itself previously to have existed.—Ego contemplatus. Now the change of one visual image for another involves in itself no absurdity, and becomes absurd only by its immediate juxta-position with the first thought, which is rendered possible by the whole attention being successively absorbed in each singly, so as not to notice the interjacent notion, "changed" which by its incongruity with the first thought, "*I*," constitutes the bull. Add only, that this process is facilitated by the circumstance of the words "*I*," and "*me*," being sometimes equivalent, and sometimes having a distinct meaning; sometimes, namely, signifying the act of self-consciousness, sometimes the external image in and by which the mind represents that act to itself, the result and symbol of its individuality. Now suppose the direct contrary state, and you will have a distinct sense of the connection between two conceptions, without that *sensation* of such connection which is supplied by habit. The man *feels*, as if he were standing on his head, though he cannot but *see*, that he is truly standing on his feet. This, as a painful sensation, will of course have a tendency to associate itself with the person who occasions it; even as persons, who have been by painful means restored from derangement, are known to feel an involuntary dislike towards their physician. [*BL*, 1:72–73]

Coleridge develops a correspondence between Wordsworth as physician and the reviewers of *Lyrical Ballads* as patients. Feeling as if they have been turned upside down by Wordsworth's argument, the reviewers blame the "painful sensation" associated with this revolution in feeling on the author, as patients are wont to blame even that physician who has restored them from derangement. Wordsworth's preface thus made discursive sense where there had been only outlandish poetic sensation but at the cost of transforming everyday sense into the stuff of dream—rough magic guaranteed to antagonize the custodians of conventional wisdom.[17]

Now suppose the direct contrary. Suppose that the "bull," "I was a fine child, but they changed me," anticipates Coleridge's own criticism of Wordsworth's ambitious "Immortality Ode" in the second volume of the *Biographia*. In Coleridge's acknowledged source, Maria and Richard Edgeworth's "Essay on the Irish Bull," the authors feature this resentful expostulation: "'I hate that woman,' said a gentleman, looking at one who had been his nurse, 'I hate that woman, for she changed me at nurse.'" "Change" here signifies "exchange": "our Hibernian's consciousness," the Edgeworths comment, "could not retrograde to the time when he was changed at nurse; consequently there was no continuity of identity

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17. Coleridge is picking up on Wordsworth's warning in the 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads* that readers might expect "feelings of strangeness and awkwardness" in their first encounter with the poetry (William Wordsworth, *Wordsworth: Selected Poems and Prefaces,* ed. Jack Stillinger [Boston, 1965], p. 446).

between the infant and the man who expressed his hatred of the nurse for perpetrating the fraud."[18] Coleridge queries Wordsworth's "bull" likewise. He has in mind the eighth stanza, which addresses the "six years' Darling of the pigmy size":

> Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
>   Thy Soul's immensity;
> Thou best Philosopher, who yet doest keep
> Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
> That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
> Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
>   Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
>   On whom those truths do rest,
> Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
> In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave.[19]

In "what sense is a child of that age a *philosopher?*" Coleridge later asks.

> In what sense does he *read* the "eternal deep?" . . . These would be tidings indeed; but such as would pre-suppose an immediate revelation to the inspired communicator, and require miracles to authenticate his inspiration. Children at this age give us no such information of themselves; and at what time were we dipt in the Lethe, which has produced such utter oblivion of a state so godlike? [*BL*, 2:138–39][20]

Wordsworth's embedded fiction of a Letheward hand corresponds to the Irishman's fanciful notion of a malignant hand that changed him at nurse. Coleridge's "I was a fine child, but they changed me" distills the dependence of Wordsworth's notion of change as alteration on an unreasoned synonymity with exchange as substitution. Coleridge's note thus warns the readers of the *Biographia*—Wordsworth chief among them— that Coleridge's antithetical criticism, designed to set Wordsworth's feet

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18. Maria and Richard Edgeworth, "Essay on Irish Bulls," *Tales and Novels,* 18 vols. in 9 (New York, 1836), 1:102.

19. Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," *Selected Poems and Prefaces,* p. 189; hereafter abbreviated "II."

20. That children do give us such information is the burden of Wordsworth's "We Are Seven" in *Lyrical Ballads* and of Lacan's version of the bull in "The Freudian Unconscious and Ours":

> Remember the naive failure of the simpleton's delighted attempt to grasp the little fellow who declares—*I have three brothers, Paul, Ernest and me.* But it is quite natural— first the three brothers, Paul, Ernest and I are counted, and then there is I at the level at which I am to reflect the first I, that is to say, the I who counts. [Lacan, "The Freudian Unconscious and Ours," p. 20]

Lacan takes the Edgeworths' moral, that there could be no continuity of identity, and runs with it.

back on the ground of true principle, would likely provoke the poet's "involuntary dislike," which notoriously proved to be the case.

Now suppose we mix in the quotation from *Macbeth*. As physician is to patient, so, it would seem, are the fair-fouling witches (Wordsworth) to Macbeth (reviewers), who, his world overturned, murders the king and usurps the throne. But it is a peculiarity of this matrix that analogies do not multiply symmetrically. In the analogic of Coleridge's note, Macbeth's "involuntary dislike" ought to have been directed against the hags who persuaded him that fair is foul and foul is fair, not against Duncan, the rightful king. Macbeth's "mistake" leads to the primitive violence that Constant called usurpation and that Coleridge identified as the trait of the "commanding genius." History progresses to contain that violence by preventing such mistakes, which entails rationalizing the *inversio* by means of substitution and condensation. If we take the split between witches and king as the difference between those who *know* and that one who *authorizes,* then the modern physician is *one who can authorize because he knows.* Historical progress has the hallmarks of what Freud calls "transference." Not only have "'new editions or facsimiles of the impulses and phantasies [been] aroused and made conscious during the progress of analysis; but they . . . replace some earlier person by the person of the physician.'"[21] Coleridge's note thus assesses the therapeutic possibilities of inversion in the framework of a transition from the feudal era of Macbeth to the modern moment of the professional physician—a transition that reforms the violently discontinuous change of usurpation as the normal change of remediation. History provides a new answer to the question that Macbeth puts to the doctor who comes to treat his maddened Lady: "Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?" *Macbeth*'s doctor must answer "no"; the modern psychiatrist professes "yes." But even for the latter, ministration occasionally misfires. Although the transition from usurpation to remediation would seem to be an unambiguous good, the persistence of the "involuntary dislike"—what Wordsworth calls "Obstinate questionings / Of sense and outward things" ("II," 11. 141–44)—is evidence of the holdover of untransferred affect, a movement of feeling that taints the efficiency of the *inversio*. Although the physician has the credentials to summon spirits from the vasty deep of the unconscious, he still cannot guarantee that they will heed his call.

That the professional authority of the physician remains as dubious for the modern as monarchical authority had been for Macbeth suggests to the romantic mind that despite history's progress nothing fundamental has changed. Mistaken ideologies fall as the professions rise in a pro-

21. J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* (New York, 1973), p. 457, quoting Sigmund Freud. For a subtle discussion of the rhetorical complexity of Freud's concept of transference, see Cynthia Chase, "'Transference' as Trope and Persuasion," in *Discourse in Psychoanalysis and Literature,* ed. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (New York, 1987), pp. 211–32.

cess of substitution without alteration. Progress through Coleridge's topsy-turvy note induces the same moral. Characteristically, Coleridge has shaped his footnote as a chiasmus (sensation : sense :: sense : sensation), a figure indifferent to the cause of truth but well designed to work like a camera lens to invert perception. Both physician and philosophical critic profess to cure. And maybe they do, *generally.* Yet Coleridge's sophistical mimicry of the accredited physician's therapeutic technique supplies a pretext for the outburst of individual hostility directed toward the critic as to the physician: the obtrusion of the rhetorical scheme in the production of the cure confesses a design unavowed and an expertise unshared. Like the posthistorian's mimicry of evolutionary change, such gimmicks seem to turn the world upside down only to return us to where we always were. If the camera obscura illustrates that the ideological reduces to the rhetorical, here the impression of rhetoricity figures the underwriting of the remedial by the coercive: the compulsion applied to the patient reader to choose to recognize himself as subject. That compulsion is not overt, as it is with divining witch and commanding king; it is bound up with the pretense inherent in every profession, whether credentialed or not. This pretense is the chief theme of Coleridge's many attacks on the professions.[22] For Coleridge one must always profess to profess—or, to put it in Jeremy Taylor's terms, professions inevitably confess the pretense of their claims to autonomous power. Such confession lives as the compulsion that invariably backs the bid to transfer and that may either reflect the absence of institutional support for the profession to cure (as in the case of the sophist) or it may register the dissembling of the institutional basis of the professional claims to cure (as in the case of the physician/psychiatrist). Either way, the perception of the intimate conjunction between pretense and compulsion is sufficient to trigger a hostile movement of feeling. However arduous, this particular note of Coleridge's hardly qualifies as a critique of professions; for although its rhetorical structure effectively parodies the dialectic of the cure and detonates antagonism, the intention of the note is ultimately as opaque as the

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22. For example:

> Sagacious men and *knowing* in their profession they are not ignorant that even diseases may prove convenient: they remember that Demosthenes, a state-physician, when he wished to finger a large fee from Harpalus, yet was expected by his former connections to speak out according "to the well-known tendency of his political opinions" found a *sore-throat* very serviceable; and they have learnt from their own experience how absolutely necessary in point of "selfish policy" is a certain political palsey in the head, "omnibus omnia annuens." [Coleridge, "A Letter to Edward Long Fox, M.D.," *Lectures 1795 on Politics and Religion,* ed. Lewis Patton and Peter Mann, vol. 1 of *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* pp. 326–27]

See also Coleridge, "Lectures on Revealed Religion," *Lectures 1795 on Politics and Religion,* p. 207. An important exception to this programmatic derogation occurs in Coleridge's letters home from Germany in March 1799, written after some study of the German university system, where the term *professor* is treated with uncharacteristic respect.

formal scheme of the chiasmus—which is to say, its movement of dislike appears involuntary, like an elementary sense of injustice.

Twentieth-century readers are less familiar with this discharge of affect under Coleridge's phrase "involuntary dislike" than Freud's "negative transference." Nonetheless, the concept had long inhabited the British liberal tradition under the names "negative liberty" and "the right of resistance." J. G. A. Pocock has distinguished between the republican, civic, virtue-based tradition, in which possession of real property grounded a citizen's autonomous political existence, and the liberal, juristic, rights-based tradition. In the latter the law alone confers liberty, which is a citizen's right to be safe from political interference but which presupposes no part in imperium. Legally constituted rights are acquired and exercised through the citizen's "role in the possession, conveyance, and administration of things," and because those rights are ultimately things as much as any other thing, individuals could be said to have been "invested with rights [so] that they might surrender them absolutely to the sovereign."[23] If the type of republican resistance is an act, the liberal right to resistance is a species of property, as exchangeable as any other.

According to C. B. Macpherson, nineteenth-century liberalism internalized the tension between the republican and the juristic traditions as the distinction between economic liberalism, which stresses the "maximization of utilities," and democratic liberalism, which aims at the "maximization of powers." The democratic ethic prescribes that each person cultivate his "potential for realizing some human end, [an ethic which] necessarily includes in a man's powers not only his natural capacities (his energy and skill) but also his *ability* to exert them." Rather than maximize powers, liberal society, obedient to an economic imperative, has consistently promoted a "net transfer of powers," which it executes by allowing some to deny others access to the instruments with which they might develop their natural capacities.[24]

On Macpherson's account, Freud looks like an economic liberal, concerned to maximize utility not power. When, in his essay "The Dynamics of the Transference," Freud asks how it comes about "that the transference is so pre-eminently suitable as a weapon of resistance," his aim is disarmament.[25] He divides in order to conquer. He first distinguishes positive from negative feeling and then divides positive feeling into "friendly or affectionate feelings as are capable of becoming conscious and the extensions of these in the unconscious. Of these last," Freud inevitably adds, "analysis shows that they invariably rest ultimately on an

23. Pocock, "Virtues, Rights, and Manners: A Model for Historians of Political Thought," *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essay on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 43–45.

24. C. B. Macpherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 5, 9, 10.

25. Sigmund Freud, "The Dynamics of Transference," *Therapy and Technique,* ed. Phillip Rieff (New York, 1963), pp. 113–14; hereafter abbreviated "DT."

erotic basis" ("DT," p. 112). It must be so because "to begin with we knew none but sexual objects," and only feelings that have objects are recognizable and subject to the cure. He argues that "the transference to the physician is only suited for resistance in so far as it consists in *negative* feeling or in the repressed *erotic* elements of positive feeling" ("DT," p. 112). The "or" registers an uncertainty about what exactly these negative feelings are—whether they are what they seem or whether they are "ultimately" a repressed element of something else. What the feelings *are* puzzles because what the feelings *do* is *move*. They elude inspection:

> The unconscious feelings strive to avoid the recognition which the cure demands; they seek instead for reproduction, with all the power of hallucination and the inappreciation of time characteristic of the unconscious. The patient ascribes, just as in dreams, currency and reality to what results from the awakening of his unconscious feelings; he seeks to discharge his emotions, regardless of the reality of the situation. ["DT," p. 114]

As the psychoanalyst tries to turn feelings, which move under their own power, into desires, which posit objects, random discharge becomes anger. "Involuntary dislike" is the movement by which the "unconscious feelings strive to avoid the recognition which the cure demands" and the net transfer of power which it entails.

Psychoanalysis, according to Freud, works to rid the patient of a "cliché or stereotype . . . which perpetually repeats and reproduces itself as life goes on" ("DT," p. 106). Here is the last, terrible sentence of Freud's essay:

> It is undeniable that the subjugation of the transference-manifestations provides the greatest difficulties for the psychoanalyst; but it must not be forgotten that they, and they only, render the invaluable service of making the patient's buried and forgotten love-emotions actual and manifest; for in the last resort no one can be slain *in absentia* or *in effigie*. ["DT," pp. 114–15]

To cure means to bring up occult, conspiratorial, pointlessly reproductive emotions, to recognize them, and to subject them to the guillotine of analysis, thereby adjusting the patient to the ideological world that Freud calls "real life" ("DT," p. 113).

What Freud called real life, contemporary liberalism has come to call the posthistorical. Fukuyama's universal history tries to reclaim the philosophical vagrants and neurotics of the past (for example, Hegel and Nietzsche) for the "liberal ascent" by adjusting them to a narrative that legitimates the way things are. He supplements the classical, Hobbesian definition of man as driven by the threat of scarcity, fear of death, and an insatiable desire for accumulation with a Hegelian conception of man as

motivated by a "totally non-economic drive, the struggle for recognition" (*EH,* p. 135). Hobbes is the scion of economics, Hegel the scion of the political—it is the clerical profession of a universal history to wed them. To seal the bond Fukuyama redescribes affect that is not perceptibly acquisitive as inchoate feelings that *seek,* not, as in Freud, avoid, recognition. Inexorably (epistemology is destiny), the universal "struggle for recognition" is redescribed again as a universal "*desire* for recognition" (*EH,* p. 152; emphasis added). By identifying the "totally non-economic drive" as desire, Fukuyama surreptitiously renders it as *already economic* because susceptible to the promise of satisfaction that generates those reciprocal exchanges that maximize utility. Fukuyama thus vindicates Macpherson's taxonomy of liberalisms by attempting to engineer the net transfer of power from political men and women to economic man all at once by means of a massive redescription of struggle as desire. Nifty. But without consequences. Nothing changes. Anger, outrage, involuntary dislike, and obstinate questionings persist. The power of Freud's account of human motivation inhabits his reluctant acknowledgment of the intransigence of that which resists the cure. For Freud a drive is a drive, not a desire manqué. Nothing resists Fukuyama's redescription, and, as most liberal economists will tell you, nothing is got for nothing.

If Freud circumscribes Fukuyama, Coleridge's account of his early instruction in English composition characterizes Freud. In the *Biographia* he recalls the lessons in Shakespeare and Milton that cost him so much "time and trouble to *bring up,* so as to escape [his teacher James Bowyer's] censure." Drilled in the rigorous logic of poems, Coleridge learned that "in the truly great poets . . . there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word." Diction fell under the purview of a hanging judge:

> In our own English compositions . . . he showed no mercy to phrase, metaphor, or image, unsupported by a sound sense, or where the same sense might have been conveyed with equal force and dignity in plainer words. Lute, harp, and lyre, muse, muses, and inspirations, Pegasus, Parnassus, and Hippocrene, were all an abomination to him. In fancy I can almost hear him now, exclaiming, "*Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, Muse? your Nurse's daughter, you mean! Pierian spring? Oh 'aye! the cloister-pump, I suppose!*" [*BL,* 1:9–10]

Such was learning English composition at Christ's Hospital at the end of the eighteenth century. And such is still moral education, at least according to Michael Oakeshott, who argues that

> a morality . . . is neither a system of general principles nor a code of rules, but a vernacular language. . . . What has to be learned in a moral education is not a theorem such as that good conduct is acting

fairly or being charitable, nor is it a rule such as 'always tell the truth', but how to speak the language intelligently.[26]

Because the conversational standard of the vernacular has never been simply a diction, given or found, but always a *jurisdiction,* answerable to the imperative of what Benedict Anderson has called "the revolutionary vernacularizing thrust of capitalism,"[27] which peremptorily determines native intelligence by censoring unruly, demotic speech as gibberish (a tale told by an idiot boy), there is no practical difference between moral and political education nor between political education and legal judgment. For Bowyer, as for Oakeshott, each fact is a "verdict."[28] "Certain introductions, similies, and examples," Coleridge recalls,

> were placed by name on a list of interdiction. Among the similies, there was ... the example of Alexander and Clytus, which was equally good and apt, whatever might be the theme. Was it ambition? Alexander and Clytus!—Flattery? Alexander and Clytus!—Anger? Drunkenness? Pride? Friendship? Ingratitude? Late Repentance? Still, still Alexander and Clytus! At length, the praises of agriculture having been exemplified in the sagacious observation, that had Alexander been holding the plough, he would not have run his friend Clytus through with a spear, this tried, and serviceable old friend was banished by public edict in secula seculorum. [*BL,* 1:10]

Coleridge's boyish stereotype reproduced promiscuously.[29] Because it belonged nowhere, the Alexander and Clytus topos could be discharged anywhere. Bowyer interdicted this demotic frenzy by commanding banishment. But, as Freud knows, interdiction is not transference and banishment is not slaying. Having been put away as if the thing of a child, Alexander-cum-Clytus nonetheless thrusts back into Coleridge's biographical composition, where, in the very excess of his proscriptive zeal, Coleridge involuntarily transforms judgment into stereotype and, resisting the transference he wills, tips piety into parody.

3. Romantic Politics

As Freud argues, and as my medley of writers illustrates, willful resistance to the cure involves "an inappreciation of time," which manifests itself in the refusal of the patient to meet the requirement that "he shall fit these emotions into their place in the treatment and in his life-history"

26. Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 78–79.
27. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; London, 1991), p. 75.
28. Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct,* p. 2.
29. Not least in my own writing, where, I confess, this is the third time I have pulled out this particular plum.

("DT," p. 114). As fugitive feelings resist recognition, so they resist being narrativized into the formation of an identity, whether of a person, a people, a nation, a social class, or, in the case of Coleridge, a philosophical critic. From the progressivist perspective shared by Fukuyama and McGann, inappreciation of narrative time looks like a conservative refusal to recognize history. But for the romantic, inappreciation of time is neither position nor attitude but the willful commission of anachronism, the assertion of the historical as that which could not be over because it has not yet really happened.

Coleridge said much the same thing in his unpacking of *Jacobin:*

> The word implies a man, whose affections have been warmly and deeply interested in the cause of general freedom, who has hoped all good and honourable things both *of,* and *for,* mankind. . . . Jacobin . . . affirm[s] that no man can ever become altogether an apostate to Liberty, who has at any time been sincerely and fervently attached to it. His hopes will burn like the Greek fire, hard to be extinguished, and easily rekindling. Even when he despairs of the cause, he will yet *wish,* that it had been successful. And even when private interests have warped his public character, his convictions will remain, and his wishes often rise up in rebellion against his outward actions and public avowals.[30]

Coleridge's definition unlinks emancipatory ardor from French principles.[31] Attachment to liberty means resisting the cure of historicization, being locked into synchrony with what the vernacular says can be said. Blind to the vicissitudes of parties and programs, *Jacobin* names a wish that can be fulfilled only in a future toward which, in rebellion against the way things are, the ardent soul moves.

Because *Jacobin* nonetheless imparts the taint of the foreign and ideological, I prefer the term *demotic.* The distinction between vernacular and demotic may be roughly apportioned in terms of the difference between two kinds of disturbance that troubled the social landscape of Great Britain in the 1790s and the early years of the nineteenth century: the riot and the insurrection. A riot involved the hostile, occasionally vio-

30. Coleridge, "Once a Jacobin Always a Jacobin," *Essays on His Times,* ed. David V. Erdman, 3 vols., vol. 3 of *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* 1:368.

31. This unlinking is an attempt to break with the paranoid logic of political debate in the 1790s. For reformers, radicals, and loyalists "much of the argument and rhetoric of the decade revolve[d] around the presence or absence of a link between principles and practice in France" (Mark Philp, "The Fragmented Ideology of Reform," in *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics,* ed. Philp [Cambridge, 1991], p. 59). For an interpretation of Coleridge's movements in 1798 as addressing the felt need to break this impasse, see Jerome Christensen, "Ecce Homo: Biographical Acknowledgment, the End of the French Revolution, and the Romantic Reinvention of English Verse," in *Contesting the Subject: Essays in the Postmodern Theory and Practice of Biography and Biographical Criticism,* ed. William H. Epstein (West Lafayette, Ind., 1991), pp. 53–84.

lent action of the crowd against property or authority, but the rioters observed a traditional protocol that did not, according to John Bohstedt, "normally challenge the arrangement of local power." Even in the revolutionary 1790s the authorities responded moderately because "they recognized the rioters as members of their own community."[32] The same authorities who countenanced rioting labeled Jacobin the agent of a disturbance who was unrecognizable according to the traditional norms. That agent has, by and large, remained invisible to historians. One might be inclined to blame that invisibility on the ideological investments of individual historians,[33] but the resistance to historicization inhabits the historical field, for to be an *agent* of insurrection meant and means resistance to becoming an object of study, whether by William Pitt or J. C. D. Clark. As Roger Wells has shown in exacting detail, those agents may have been actually strangers, or persons whose motives were unclear, or persons whose motives were too clear and patently ideological—or the agent might have been no "person" at all, just the occulted and anachronistic appearance of the "'grip, password, sign, countersign or travelling password,'" handed, muttered, or scrawled.[34] If, as Susan Stewart argues, "graffiti" are considered obscene because such wild autographs are "utterances out of place," the intricate oaths, furtive handshakes, and cryptic hails of insurrectionaries are signs out of time.[35] The holdover of tradesmen's rituals and memorials of failed revolutionary projects, they are, however, no more nostalgic than a Wordsworthian epitaph, for they save the place of a possible future by performing a social movement without a social vehicle. Unlike the devices of masons, such signs do not certify membership or indicate status but betoken an affiliation that is transitive

32. John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales, 1790–1810* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), p. 5.

33. The various investments are on display in Philp, *French Revolution and British Popular Politics*.

34. See Roger Wells, *Insurrection: The British Experience, 1795–1803* (Gloucester, 1983). The list comes from *PR*, p. 160.

35. Susan Stewart, "*Ceci Tuera Cela:* Graffiti as Crime and Art," in *Life after Postmodernism: Essays on Value and Culture*, ed. John Fekete (New York, 1987), p. 169. Stewart stands in for a vast range of research in cultural studies on the capacity for resistance in contemporary popular culture, most of it indebted to the paradigmatic work done at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and responsive to the intellectual initiatives of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. For a fine critical account of the history and controversies surrounding the theory and practice of cultural studies, see Jim McGuigan, *Cultural Populism* (London, 1992), especially his chapter, "Trajectories of Cultural Populism," pp. 45–85. In its antieconomism and its insistence that even in its apparently most arcane mannerisms romantic writing is "ordinary," this essay is a species of cultural populism in McGuigan's terms. Indeed, although this is not the occasion to negotiate the bearings of, say, Dick Hebdige's and Dave Laing's competing accounts, in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979) and *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* (1985), of the political implications of 1970s punk for my argument, I shall use the relative obscurity of a footnote to hazard the anachronistic claim, in the spirit of Williams, that in the long view cultural populism is romanticism.

but not transferable, illegible according to what, in the advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), Wordsworth called "pre-established codes of decision."[36] Insurrectionaries can be distinguished from rioters by consciousness, by regional origin, by class, or by anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from rioters as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of resistance, a step that is only conditioned by their symbolic resourcefulness. Demotic utterances challenge traditional systems of social control not with pikes and pistols but with the uncanny repetition of stereotypes circulating without respect to region or kind, resisting protocols of recognition but soliciting acknowledgment of one stranger by another, of United Irishman by United Briton, of United Briton by Yorkshire weaver, of Yorkshire weaver by Lake poet.

The propagation of demotic utterances identifies a species of what Hobsbawm has called "primitive social movements," which historically had been characterized by a ritualistic formalism of ceremonies and symbolism. In the nineteenth century two kinds of organizations shared these features: "secret revolutionary societies and orders . . . and trade unions and friendly societies" (*PR*, p. 153). As "primitive" suggests, Hobsbawm (whose study appeared in 1959, well before history expired) consigns such archaic groups to a prepolitical stage of development. In the prepolitical (to adapt the Marx of the *Eighteenth Brumaire*), form exceeded content; in the revolutions to follow, Hobsbawm implies, the content will exceed the form. The problem that Hobsbawm never confronts—the problem that dogs every engagement with insurrectionary Great Britain after the coronation of Bonaparte—is the *return* of the prepolitical, a formalism that, because it recurs, cannot be branded as primitive and that, because it is involuntary, cannot be stigmatized as sentimental. The return of the prepolitical or (to romantically equivocate Raymond Williams's famous distinction) the *emergence of the residual* is romantic formalism on the move.[37] Because practiced without good reason in the aftermath of utopian dreams, that movement might be called the politics of hope.

Hobsbawm is inclined to criticize British repressiveness of the postrevolutionary era not for its reactionary ferocity but for its redundancy, for he concludes that "the belief of early 19th-century British governments in the necessarily subversive nature of initiations and secret oaths, was mistaken. The outsiders against which the ritual brotherhood guarded its secrets were not only the bourgeois' and not always the government's." Yet he adds:

> Only insofar as all working men's organizations by virtue of their class membership, were likely to engage in activities frowned upon

36. Wordsworth, advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), *Selected Poems and Prefaces*, p. 443.

37. See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 121–27.

by employers or the authorities, did the initiation and oath bind their members specifically against these. There was thus no initial distinction between, as it were, legitimately and unnecessarily secret societies, but only between the fraternal activities in which their members were ritually bound to show solidarity, some of which might be acceptable to the law while others were not. [*PR,* pp. 158–59].

The government's evident overreaction testified not only to a class bias but also to the fact that the initial *in*distinction between the legitimately and the unnecessarily secret societies that was induced by transitive repetition of stereotypes constituted a shared volatility of purpose which *was* insurrectionary without regard to ideology.

That explains why Coleridge's poetry of the late 1790s, which in its supernatural, preternatural, and conversational modes resonates with suggestions of omens and signals ("Frost at Midnight"), strange visitations and conspiratorial understandings ("Christabel"), mysterious symbolism ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"), insistent metrical schemes and arbitrary anachronisms (choose your favorite), did nothing to diminish his reputation for radicalism. It explains why such blatantly bullish ballads of Wordsworth as "We Are Seven," "Simon Lee," "The Idiot Boy," and "The Thorn" could, despite a lack of revolutionary content, seem unsettling, as Coleridge canonically attests in chapter 17 of the *Biographia Literaria.* The production of stereotypes ("Oh misery! oh misery! / Oh woe is me! oh misery!") that initiated strangers into imagined communities unaccountable to the nation-state was dangerous and was branded as such by the Whiggish *Edinburgh Review.* In its inaugural issue of October 1802, which appeared four years after *Lyrical Ballads* but at a time when, as Wells demonstrates, insurrectionary activity had strongly revived,[38] the *Edinburgh* both adopted the Enlightenment pose of debunker of conspiratorial theories of the French Revolution and yet succumbed to making hysterically sarcastic charges of sect and conspiracy in its review of the activities of the Lake poets. The issue was not Jacobinism—despite half-hearted attempts, Francis Jeffrey would ultimately agree with the contemporary practitioners of ideology critique that none was detectable—but a kind of insistent formalism, which, because its ideological mission was inapparent, seemed the pretext for a secret bond that could only be defended against by condemning it as "sectual" (Jeffrey's favored ploy) or sexual (the Freudian recourse).

The Edgeworths' "Essay on Irish Bulls" may be taken as another example of the way the legitimately and the unnecessarily secret could be confused. In the bull the joke is always on the Irishman, and the Edgeworths are at pains to argue that he is victimized by the prejudice that the bull represents. Yet the Edgeworths' project, to prove that the bull is not a "species of blunder *peculiar* to Ireland," was finally motivated less

38. See Wells, *Insurrection,* pp. 220–52.

by a desire to rescue the Irish from English laughter than to dissipate the English suspicion that there is some kind of essential character or form of thought that binds the Irish together, rejects English reason, and is unassimilable to polite society.[39]

The "depeculiarization" of Irish speech, which meant translating the demotic into the vernacular (both Maria Edgeworth's and Walter Scott's glossaries prosecute the same end), carried forward the Enlightenment project of homogenizing mankind in the guise of the bourgeoisie and, as Mitchell has argued, of restricting character to what can be stamped on a commodity. Yet that strategy could only be partially effective, for insurrectionary signs solicited acknowledgement while eluding recognition by mobilizing borrowed and disposable stereotypes.[40] The difference between the character of the commodity and the character of the demotic is the difference between a trademark, copyrightable and subject to exchange, and what Marx in the *German Ideology* called a "form of activity." The difference is between using a printing press and being one. That difference can be illustrated by George Cruikshank's demotic "The New Man of the Industrial Future," which is both the figure of a figure capable of reproducing stereotypes and a stereotype that I reproduce:
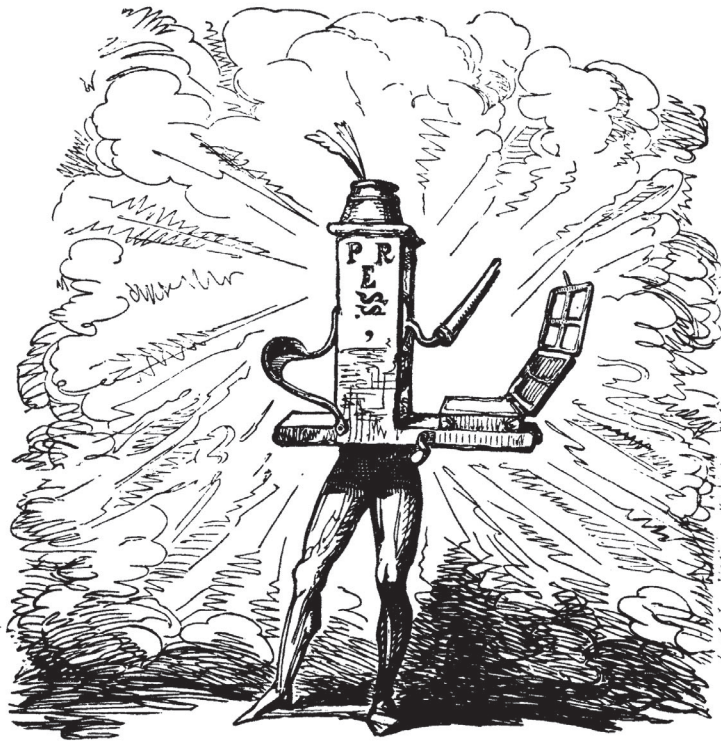
Illus. George Cruikshank from William Hone, *The Political Showman—At Home! Exhibiting His Cabinet of Curiosities and Creatures—All Alive!* (London, 1821)

39. Edgeworth and Edgeworth, "Essay on Irish Bulls," p. 100.
40. "Where no other organization existed, as after the defeat of a revolutionary movement, masonic lodges were very likely to become the refuge of the rebels" (*PR*, p. 163).

The difference between the commodity and the demotic can be further elucidated by a romanticized Marx (I have substituted *resistance* for *subsistence*):

> The way in which men produce their means of [resistance] depends first of all on the nature of the actual means they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. [*GI*, p. 7]

Excepting that by "actual means" Marx means material conditions and we mean symbolic conditions, this passage captures the way insurrectionaries work with the stereotypes they have on hand, repeating them in a transitive form of activity that binds men and women together in an insurrectionary mode of life, prepolitical but hopeful.

What was truly peculiar to the insurrectionaries was this form of activity. Hobsbawm comments that "the fantastic nomenclature of the brotherhoods was totally non-utilitarian unlike later revolutionary organizations which have normally attempted to pick names indicative of their ideology or programme" (*PR*, p. 166). "Non-utilitarian" should not be translated as aesthetic. That the nomenclature was nonutilitarian simply means that it, like the bull, did no work. Because it did no work, professed nothing, it was therefore without value. It could not be inverted or transferred, synthesized or evolved. But because it *did* not work it *remains* a cause in the way that Lacan speaks of cause—a cause untransferred to history's narrative and therefore untouched by history's end.

Rather like the strange creatures captured in the Burgess Shale, which were mistaken by their discoverer and recently reinterpreted by H. B. Whittington. For the evolutionary model embraced by Fukuyama, Jameson, and Hobsbawm, which moves confidently from the archaic to the postmodern, from the prepolitical to the posthistorical, I would substitute one closer to that proposed by the romantic paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould in *Wonderful Life*. There Gould meditates on the implications of the scandal that Whittington's reconstruction of the residue of anomalous multicellular creatures visited on evolutionary biology's faith in the "cone of increasing diversity." He urges the application of the thought experiment called "replaying life's tape" as a means to adjudge the necessity of the way things have turned out. In the cases of the defunct genera *Sidneyia, Marrella,* and *Opabinia,* replaying life's tape argues for the contingency of their extinction and therefore the contingency of all that followed.[41] Replaying life's tape confesses the same contingency

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41. See Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* (New York, 1989), pp. 45–52.

in the failure of demotic forms of social life, of romantic movements. But replaying the tape is only a thought experiment with organisms that cannot be revived by Gould's song. Because the resources of the demos were and are symbolic, no such barrier cuts the path between then and now. The demotic cause lives just because it did not succeed; the romantic movement is inescapably anachronistic because it is the politics of the future and always will be until something better comes along. And as contingent analogies between phrases of address (grips, passwords, meters, motifs, commonplaces) bound each to each in transient but strong commonalities then, so now *as* then. Sensitive to the strength of willful analogy in forging a common cause, I ask you to acknowledge that Coleridge's cliché of the Jacobin's "Greek fire" marks the demotic heat in Wordsworth's contemporary reference to those "embers" in which there is "something that doth live" ("II," 11. 130–31) and threads through the political unconscious to link that insurrectionary glow by analogy with the volcanic *Prometheus Unbound,* with the fantastically explosive *Don Juan,* as well as with the fire next time of the Greek Revolution or, perhaps, the 1992 insurrection in L.A.

In *City of Quartz,* his superb rendering of the postmodern end zone of Los Angeles, Mike Davis recalls one memorable instance:

> during a [civil rights] protest at a local whites-only drive-in restaurant, when the timely arrival of Black gang members saved [activists] from a mauling by white hotrodders. The gang was the legendary Slausons, . . . [who] became a crucial social base for the rise of the local Black Liberation movement. The turning-point . . . was the festival of the oppressed in August 1965 that the Black community called a rebellion and the white media a riot. Although the 'riot commission' headed by old-guard Republicans supported Chief Parker's so-called 'riff-raff theory' that the August events were the work of a small criminal minority, subsequent research . . . proved that up to 75,000 people took part in the uprising, mostly from the stolid Black working class. For gang members it was 'The Last Great Rumble', as formerly hostile groups forgot old grudges and cheered each other on against the LAPD and the National Guard. . . . Old enemies, like the Slausons and the Gladiators . . . flash[ed] smiles and high signs as they broke through Parker's invincible 'blue line'.[42]

From the thin red line poised against uprisings of ragged Yorkshiremen in 1802 to the thin blue line in L.A. in 1965—and again in 1992. It is no doubt irresponsible of Davis to embellish his account of a Watts Rebellion, which lacked any recognizable ideology, with such Jacobin stereotypes as the "festival of the oppressed"; and it is no doubt irresponsible and inappreciative of time, that is, romantic, to stereotype uprisings in differ-

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42. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London, 1990), p. 297.

ent lands and different epochs in order to draw analogies with no workable plan in view except to suggest that although we may have seen the end of history, we have certainly not seen the last rumble.[43] Or the last romantic movement.

In Arnold's time the notion of romantic expectancy was a sentimental idealism; in the 1960s it sounded revolutionary; in the 1970s and 1980s things soured as stern-lipped academics, fortified for history's long haul by strong doses of Marx, denounced romantic hope as an ideological refuge embraced by apostates to the true cause. Now that the long haul has been aborted and Marx's beautiful theory withers, the romantic movement marks time as the reviving possibility of change that is not merely normal, its historicity the willful commission of anachronism after anachronism linked by bold analogy. By promiscuously replicating stereotypes that resist recognition and transfer, the romantic movement rejects the imperial epochalism of the posthistorical as the sign of the naturalization of injustice. At one point in his writings on ideology and literature, Raymond Williams wisely warns against what he calls premature historicization. Until there is justice, all historicization is premature. Until there is justice the untimely slogan of romantic politics will not be "always historicize" but "now and again anachronize."

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43. Harold Meyerson remarks on the explosive archaism of contemporary Los Angeles: "L.A. has come to resemble those premodern cities where the working class lacked both unions and parties, where fear was a constant of daily life and the riot a routine feature of politics" (Harold Meyerson, "Falling Down: L. A., City without Politics," *The New Republic*, 3 May 1993, p. 14).