Introduction

In what follows I seek to articulate a romantic hermeneutics, that is, an interpretive approach to texts acknowledged as central to the canon of English Romanticism, that articulates the human relationship to artistic creation, the natural world and metaphysics. Through this methodological approach I hope to integrate philosophy with the study of English Romanticism, and delineate a coherent, inter-disciplinary corpus of intellectual ideas, all of which can be subsumed under the rubric of "Romanticism." Using this hermeneutical approach, I offer Hegel's teleological theory as an example of a romantic mythology—that is, a story that attempts to re-integrate the human subject into the natural world whilst at the same time retaining a sense of imaginative autonomy. I offer a reading of Hegel, which combines his social philosophy with his philosophy of art, and integrate the two areas of his work using an expanded understanding of his notion of recognition. What motivates the philosophical approach to English Romanticism, and the use of Hegel as an exemplar of a romantic narrative, is the conviction that the English romantic tradition is philosophically rich in ways not always appreciated by traditional commentary. I posit a connection between seemingly disparate Romanticisms such as those of Wordsworth, Coleridge and the later P.B. Shelley. All of these thinkers and artists present us with varying forms of romantic mythology, each looking to retain a contingent, autonomous subjectivity, whilst retaining a necessary connection to the empirical world. Working on this assumption, I explicate these different romantic narratives, whilst illustrating the structural features common to them all. Central to my thesis is the idea that this philosophical-narratorial template gives the critic a useful hermeneutical reading tool with which to approach texts, which, whilst subsumed under the generic category of Romanticism, offer contradictory conclusions

in their treatment of artistic creation, nature and metaphysics.[1] Of course, this is only one approach amongst many, and as such a romantic hermeneutics, that whilst not exhaustive, hopes to add to the other critical prisms through which Romanticism has been explicated as an aesthetic movement, or a substantive canon of texts.[2]

I contend that all the major canonical romantic poets covered here approach the problem of philosophical certainty through the romantic ideal that there is an intuitional assent to knowledge through *aesthetics*. Using a Hegelian approach as an interpretive guide is therefore useful in that Hegel endorses art as a way of apprehending philosophical certainty on the one hand, yet on the other places philosophy on a higher interpretive level. This means that in using Hegel we can gain a *double-awareness* of our subject matter; we see the strengths of art in its approximation of philosophical certainty, and we can critique it in terms of its relationship to speculative philosophy, which acts as an alternative narrative for attaining philosophical certainty. I aim to argue in this thesis therefore *that both the romantic poets and Hegel* share a common romantic purpose, which is explored in their romantic mythologies.

1. **A discrimination of criticisms…**

Hegel's connection to and criticism of Romanticism has previously been acknowledged by thinkers such as A.C. Bradley[3], M.H. Abrams and Morse Peckham. For example Abrams famously aligned the dialectical critical school of Yale criticism[4]with the Hegelian system of dialectics, particularly as it was initially outlined in the *Phenomenology*.

> For as Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* translated the manifold particularities of human and individual history into diverse moments of the transactions between consciousness and its alienated other, so these

> critics [the Yale school] view the manifold surface particularities of Romantic poems as generated primarily by a single submerged plot: the sustained struggle of the poet's consciousness (operating in the mode often called "imagination") to achieve "autonomy," or absolute independence from that adversary which is not itself—namely, "nature," the world of sensible objects.[5]

Abrams acknowledges the connection between modern dialectical criticism and Hegelian philosophy; however, as with the critics of the Yale school, he fails to bring in the more specific subject of recognition in the *Phenomenology*, or to even mention any connection to Hegel's *Aesthetics* and the implicit teleology of Hegel's *Aesthetics*. In this I hope to advance substantially upon previous Hegelian readings of the subject.

Peckham views Hegel's *Phenomenology* as the epitome of Romanticism, and as exhibiting the tensions inherent in modernity. He further reads the *Phenomenology* as characterising the need for cultural receptivity in order to avoid what he terms an "apocalyptic" form of negative freedom. His reading of the correlating tensions in Hegel's system and the romantic's system is characterised thus:

> The problem of what precipitated the cultural alienation [utilised by the Romantics] was most fully worked out by Hegel, whose *Phenomenology* all students of Romanticism, I am now convinced, should read—repeatedly.[…] The *Phenomenology* was at once the profoundest response to the crisis and the profoundest theory of it.[6]

This is a position that I think accurately describes the tensions that plagued both the English Romantics and Hegel, and also concurs with my idea that Hegel is the ultimate romantic thinker. Where Peckham is incorrect in his analysis however, is his contention that Hegel's system was actually *anti-metaphysical*; Peckham not only offers an early "deflationary" reading of Hegel but also reads Hegel *himself* as deflationary.[7] Peckham also claims of the tension between subject and object that permeates Romanticism:

> …to the Romantic the categories of the object cannot exhaust the attributes of the subject, nor the categories of the subject exhaust the attributes of the object. Rather, subject and object are conceived of as

> in a condition of irresolvable tension. This is Hegel, and it is, I believe, a more general explanatory formulation which subsumes both Kroeber's notion of Romanticism as commitment to temporal continuity and Adams' notion of Romanticism as an acceptance of change.[8]

Whilst I agree with Peckham that Hegel explores the "irresolvable tension" of subject and object, Peckham is incorrect to assume this was Hegel's *whole* philosophical system. As I show in the next chapter, Hegel *attempts* to find subjective autonomy through his teleological notion of *Spirit*, but remains philosophically bound to the objective world, requiring receptivity to both culture and the physical world. The romantics, and indeed Hegel, helped attune us to this irresolvable tension. Therefore, whilst I disagree with Peckham's overall reading of Hegel's system in the *Phenomenology*, which is not only deflationary, but actually postulates that Hegel himself was a deflationary anti-metaphysical philosopher, I agree with his account of the *Phenomenology* as fully addressing the aporias of the romantics. Hegel's work tackles the philosophical tensions in the work of the romantics, however Hegel himself was a metaphysical thinker who felt he had *succeeded* in transcending the aporias of the romantic poets. Therefore, Abrams and Peckham in their reception of Hegel vacillate between critical positions of absolute *autonomy* and *receptivity*—these are in fact the tensions that I argue drive the romantic corpus of writing, and I will return to them below.

Present romantic criticism, whilst offering undoubted insights into the subject matter, has been more recently predominantly historicist[9] or has treated the subject in terms of elements that in preceding criticisms were ignored or omitted; for example Ann Mellor's ironist critique of Abrams' seminal text *Natural Supernaturalism*.[10] I feel that these approaches of criticism are themselves progressivist and dialectical, and as they have progressed have given us a richer understanding of the Romantic

movement: Mellor's criticism supplements Abrams' criticism, as Jerome McGann further builds upon and supplements Mellor's *and* Abrams' criticism. This may all seem like basic commonsense; however, if we view criticism as leading us progressively to a better understanding of Romanticism, then the next stage is to supplement McGann's and Marilyn Butler's historicist awareness with a higher form of awareness, or a further *Gestalt* from within which to approach our subject matter. Whilst McGann would argue that this Hegelian approach falls into the trap of Romanticisms' self-representations,[11] I believe that in effect, and to pun on A.O. Lovejoy's historicist criticism, there has been hitherto a *discrimination of criticisms*.[12] In responding to these criticisms, as René Wellek responded to Lovejoy's argument, we can see common factors to them all.

For example, critics such as Mellor, whilst critiquing Abrams' lack of use of irony in his work, actually supplement the neo-Hegelian bent in Abrams' secular-theological approach by pointing out the reception in criticism of *absolute infinite negativity*[13] of poets such as Coleridge and Byron. These differences between different poets are inevitably present, and previous criticism has adequately heightened our awareness of these differences; what it has not done however, has adequately drawn a narrative line under *all* of these Romanticisms. It may of course be contended that there is indeed no need to discern a holistic connection, or a teleological pattern in all of these Romanticisms. However, the useful point in drawing a speculative narrative thread between *some* of these forms of Romanticism is that we develop a new interptetive approach through which to read a number of these works. This in turn can help us to better understand as critics for example, the apparent nihilistic ambiguity of a poem such as "The Triumph of Life," in light of Shelley's philosophical relationship to his predecessors, Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Furthermore, although there is an obvious Coleridge-Kant connection and later on George Eliot-young Hegelians connection, I feel poets such as Wordsworth and Shelley can be approached in new and innovative ways if reread philosophically. In short therefore, whilst previous criticism has adumbrated interpretive tensions within Romanticism and its attendant reception, it has not located what I think is a commonly recurring theme, or search, of a number of the romantics, a search for philosophical and intuitional certainty. This search, or as I sometimes term it, *struggle*, is one a number of the romantics shared with Hegel, and consequently a rereading of English Romanticism in a neo-Hegelian light can bear fruitful results.

McGann has indeed correctly acknowledged the Hegelian bent in much romantic criticism, and draws our attention to what he believes are the critical limits of this form of interpretation:

> The earliest comprehensive effort to reconcile this root conflict of impulses in Romanticism was made by Hegel in his "Introduction to the Philosophy of Art." This influential document argued that Romanticism, which is epitomized in the medium of poetry, represented a higher synthesis of two anterior forms of art: The Symbolic and the Classical. This contemplative and spiritual line—indeed, this late Christian view of art—underlies the approach taken by Abrams, as well as the many variants and derivatives which persist in contemporary criticism. Its force as criticism rests in its ability to reconcile conceptually that fundamental conflict of concepts which we have already noted in Romanticism and its scholarship alike.[14]

There are two main problems with McGann's historicist line of argument, which criticises these "Hegelian" forms of criticism as being uncritically absorbed into Romanticism's own self-representations. Firstly, McGann himself uses a critical vocabulary couched in the self-representations of Romanticism. A phrase like "Its force as criticism rest in its ability to reconcile conceptually that fundamental conflict of concepts" sounds distinctly Coleridgean itself. It is not a matter for criticism of "reconciling" to use McGann's (and Coleridge's critical vocabulary) but more a

matter of *encapsulating* the tensions and differences inherent in the romantic project as a whole. Abrams certainly doesn't *reconcile* the "conflict of concepts" in works such as *Natural Supernaturalism*. In fact, as McGann himself points out, *vis-a-vis* Mellor, Abrams largely ignores a large portion of the movement, such as much of Keats and pretty much all of Byron. The Hegelian line, which I take in this thesis, does however *encapsulate* the differing concepts adumbrated by McGann: the secularised Judaeo-Christian line deployed by Abrams, the subject of romantic irony rehearsed by Mellor and the unaccountable aspects of romantic irony, or the darker aspects of irony and scepticism, outlined by writers such as Kierkegaard, Muecke and Praz.[15] Secondly, Abrams himself also openly acknowledges the dangers of becoming absorbed into historical and ideological representations in his own analysis:

> An inveterate under-reading of the textual surface, however, turns readily into a habitual over-reading. The problem is, to what extent do these recent critical perspectives on Wordsworth [those predominantly of the Yale school of criticism] simply bring into visibility what was always, although obscurely, there, and to what extent do they project upon his poems the form of their own prepossesions?[16]

Abrams himself recognises the dangers of reading a thinker like Hegel "into" the romantic poets. McGann's historicist line, based upon the criticism of Heine in *The Romantic School* (1835), is itself supposedly dialectical. His argument is that there is an incomplete take on Romanticism, exemplified in a Lovejoyan sense, by the divergent criticisms of scholars like Mellor, Abrams and Praz that historicism helps to remedy. However, the philosophical approach I've adopted argues that the varying Romanticisms can also be read at times as corresponding aspects of the same philosophical narrative. This does not mean however that one has to subscribe to Hegel's philosophy wholesale; this is the reason for the so-called recent "deflationary" Hegel of thinkers such as Peckham, Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard. The critic may use Hegel's progressivist dialectical method as a tool for analysis, a

tool that enables the reader to better understand the rational kernel of the romantic plot as a whole, whether in a Hegelian formulation of the plot or that of the British Romantics.

Butler has also been critical of the philosophical perspective; however her criticism is aimed at the more general nature of this approach. She argues that the historicist approach is a more coherent line of enquiry than the philosophical line—whereas I believe that both lines of enquiry are *not mutually exclusive in the first place*. She specifically criticises Wellek for using the philosophical method in his analysis of Romanticism:

> Wellek's concern with Romanticism is less heady and intuitive than Bloom's. His is essentially the approach of the philosopher, who is trained to consider his subject's arguments ahistorically, as a series of propositions disinterestedly reaching after truth. […] Another [solecism of philosophical criticism] is an inclination to take the most coherent expositor of an intellectual position—who for the Romantics might be Hartley, say, or Rousseau, Godwin, Kant or Coleridge—and use his formulation to interpret the work of an entire group of writers. The very existence of a coherent 'Romantic movement' arises perhaps from some such intellectual manoeuvre.[17]

This is of course a criticism that could be levelled at my own research, which is an exposition of the British Romantic movement using a Hegelian lens. However, philosophical criticism need not be ahistorical; and indeed Hegelian criticism relies on an historical awareness in order to fulfil its dialectical kernel. Therefore, Butler is firstly wrong in her assumption that philosophical criticism and historical criticism are mutually exclusive. Moreover, the use of a "coherent expositor of an intellectual position" such as in this case Hegel, to interpret an entire group of writers is a hyperbolic formulation. One may use Kant, Hegel *and* Coleridge as exemplars of varying intellectual positions, at a given time in history, and one is therefore using coherent (or incoherent) but different positions in order to aid criticism in shining light upon particular poetic manoeuvres. Once again, the historicist method and the

philosophical method are not mutually exclusive as Butler claims. Stanley Cavell has countered this kind of historicist reasoning by his own defence of combining philosophical methodology and literary criticism of the Romantics:

> The fact that these texts do not undertake to quote and refute particular passages from Kant's writing would not for me be enough to show that, on a reasonable view of argument, they are not in argument with his philosophy. This too depends on what you understand Kant to have accomplished (what you think the name *Kant*, means) and on what you understand to be the cause of the kind of writing in which romantics have expressed themselves.[18]

This is closest to my own position in analysing the English Romantics with the aid of Hegel's philosophy. I also believe that the kind of writing, (or more precisely discourse) in which the "romantics have expressed themselves" partakes in the discourse of thinkers such as Kant and Hegel, even though there was little or no contact between many of the thinkers. The English Romantics were arguing within the same historical and philosophical paradigm as Kant and Hegel, and are engaged in the process, *both* historical and philosophical, of a certain epoch in history. It is therefore presupposed in this thesis that using the philosophical assumptions of a thinker such as Hegel is a legitimate academic line of enquiry, which can help substantially in our understanding of the English romantics.

The English romantics' reception of philosophy has been adequately charted in previous research[19], and one should remember here that I am not claiming that Wordsworth, Coleridge, or Shelley had a satisfactory knowledge of Hegel, or were heavily influenced by Hegel's theories. My aim, as I claimed above, is to use the work of Hegel in order to draw a narrative/interpretive connection between a number of canonical romantic poets and to illustrate how their poetic struggle towards gaining intuitional insights broadly matched Hegel's.

2. Why "philosophical romanticism"?

"Philosophical romanticism" is a way of addressing the world, which on the one hand looks towards rejuvenating the experiences and philosophy of the romantics whilst at the same time examining the present world in new and exciting ways. The term denotes a series of contemporary writings by philosophers who are using the techniques of traditional Romanticism, with a view to re-inheriting and re-orienting them towards an analysis of contemporary global society. These writers tend to interrogate issues such as the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy, the individual and society, and humanity's overall adaptation to the dynamics of modernity. This group also adapts traditional romantic concepts such as irony, metaphysics, individualism and imaginative autonomy into a modern context. Key thinkers in this group include Rorty, Cavell, Pippin, Bernstein, Bowie, Eldridge and Beiser.

For the purpose of this thesis I use "philosophical romanticism" in order to reread the English Romantics whilst at the same time approaching their work through the prism of contemporary philosophical criticism. The relationship between the philosophical preoccupations of the romantics and the present has never been so pertinent. According to Bowie:

> My contention is, therefore, that it is possible to tell a different story about the relationship of Idealism and early Romanticism to subsequent philosophy, which shows that very few of their concerns have really disappeared from the agenda of philosophy. This is already evident if one looks at the role of aesthetic theory in the philosophy of the period with contemporary eyes. That Richard Rorty should now regard philosophy as a kind of literature, because he does not think it possible to establish a privileged role in relation to other ways of articulating the world, is not fortuitous. Such a notion has nothing surprising about it for a romantic thinker, and is not alien to Schelling's *STI* [System of Transcendental Philosophy], which sees art as able to show what philosophy cannot say.[20]

This correlation between the contemporary philosophical scene and the scene of the original romantics is central to my thesis as a whole. The question of whether art is

able to say what philosophy cannot say, is also one that becomes more pertinent when we reread English Romanticism with the double awareness enabled by applying Hegel's own philosophical system to the romantic movement towards what I term "aesthetic recognition": a struggle towards an intuitive recognition of themselves within and as part of the external world in and through the medium of art. This raises the question of the relationship between art and philosophy, and is one that is answered differently by Hegel and the romantics, even though both experience the same philosophical tensions. Bowie goes on to write of the philosophical tensions experienced by romantics and idealists:

> There is, then, an essential tension in Idealist and Romantic thought which resides in the uneasy *coexistence* of the (Idealist) desire to be able to *say* what it is in thinking that is unlimited, with an accompanying (Romantic) sense of the impossibility of saying it, an impossibility which seems to make the philosophical enterprise of grasping the absolute itself questionable. The Romantic attachment to art can be seen as deriving from an awareness of the need to respond to this tension.[21]

As Bowie claims, Richard Rorty, as a philosophical romantic, has stressed a new trend in modern thought towards the use of literature in saying what cannot be said in philosophy, as has Cavell and, even if from a Marxist perspective, has Terry Eagleton.[22]

Interestingly however, the English romantics also responded to this tension in different ways as a sub-group of writers. For example, Wordsworth's response was very different from that of Shelley and Coleridge, although it was premised upon the same philosophical recognitive search for an absolute intuition or *aesthetic aesthesis*. Wordsworth expresses the idealist desire to "say what it is in thinking that is unlimited" through the vehicle of his poetry—whereas Coleridge and Shelley both respond to the same tension with a stronger negativity, or *infinite absolute negativity*.

Wordsworth, I contend, is much closer to the Hegelian position than Coleridge or Shelley—however his response is aesthetic whereas Hegel's is philosophical.

Other areas of interest in more recent philosophical romanticism are *imaginative autonomy* and *receptivity*—two areas which are also key to my thesis as a whole—and areas which I believe are perhaps more accurate in analysing the aporias inherent in romantic philosophy than a simple subject/object distinction. Nikolas Kompridis has said of the impetus towards receptivity in modern philosophical romanticism:

> For philosophical romantics, thinking about receptivity in this way [letting oneself be determined by extant present actualities] also invites a reconsideration of our inherited conceptions of agency. The more we emphasise the positive role of receptivity, the more we stress the embodied nature of human agency, and its historical and cultural dependencies, the less likely are we to make mistake mastery for agency. We will come to see agency as a matter of what we let ourselves be affected by rather than a matter of exercising control over what we encounter.[23]

This sense of receptivity, or letting oneself be determined is indeed central to my own reading of a number of examples of English Romanticism, and also ties in with a gradual orientation towards *embodiment* that I also argue is implicit in the struggle towards *aesthetic recognition* of some of the English romantics. This struggle for recognition takes a different form for Hegel, in both his social and aesthetic theories, but I argue corporeality is central to both. Thus, rereading both Hegel and a number of the English romantics through the prism of philosophical romanticism not only gives us a shared sense of their mutual bent towards an absolute intuition, but also a strong sense of their unconscious reliance upon receptivity to the external world and to the body. As my thesis progresses, the phenomenological relationship to the body of the poet's romantic imagination becomes more distinct, and what I term the 'romantic fantasy of disembodiment' comes to the fore. This tension between romantic imaginative autonomy and receptivity is a key driving factor behind the tensions

alluded to by Bowie, and one that is now openly not only acknowledged, but embraced by modern philosophical romantics such as Kompridis, Seel and Kolb.[24]

3. Romantic embodiment

The sense of receptivity and embodiment in traditional Romanticism and idealism, more discernible upon reflection through the prism of philosophical romanticism, has also been examined by Jay Bernstein, in his analysis of perhaps the idealist *par excellence*: Fichte. He has recently introduced materialism into Fichte's philosophy of right and programme of mutual recognition, emblematised by the notion of the *summons*. In so doing, Bernstein is also enabling us to take the first step in re-approaching idealism in terms of embodiment:

> …to posit oneself as one among others presupposes being an embodied being among other embodied beings who can mutually influence one another casually and intentionally. Self-consciousness is thus just as much inter-bodily as intersubjectively constituted.[25]

These philosophical "embodied recognitions," although touched upon by thinkers such as Hegel and Fichte, were as such not really acknowledged as they ran counter to the self-representations of idealist philosophy. However, through the critical prism of philosophical romanticism, we can read these tensions in the overall idealist philosophical programme, as we can read parallel tensions in the work of the romantic poets.

Moreover, and more specifically in terms of Hegelian idealism, writers such as Stephen Houlgate have also pointed to the implicit materialism in which his idealism abounds. When writing about Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* Houlgate claims:

> For Hegel, the self that feels itself in sensibility is the very one that in humans produces an abstract conception of itself: the "sentient self" is *itself* "that which in spirit is the I" (*was im Geiste das Ich ist*). This means that, since sensation is necessarily embodied, human consciousness, thought and spirit—in their very freedom and autonomy—must also be embodied. The human capacity to abstract in

> thought from its body and its immediate sensations and let itself be guided by reason must itself be rooted *in* and made possible *by* our organic, animal body.[26]

Houlgate goes on to examine Hegel's ideas on thought as our ultimate instantiation of autonomy, and the correspondent realisation of a symbiotic relationship to our sensuous body in order to enter into the conceptualisations of thought; or in short, the requirement of organic embodiment and receptivity:

> Thought also understands itself to be *fully* free and self-determining: it knows that its fundamental logical categories are generated spontaneously by itself (and not abstracted from sensuous experience), and it knows that the way to discover the truth about things in the world is not through observation alone but through its own autonomous rational activity. In its most sophisticated form, however, thought is also aware that, even when it is silent and inward, its consummate freedom is dependent upon names and thus, ultimately, on the ability to use *spoken* signs: it knows that "we *think* in names." Such thought understands, therefore, that it is fully free, self-determining, *embodied* thought. Consequently, it realises that its concepts serve to clarify and render comprehensible what is given in sensation and intuition, that its free rational activity thus requires the aid of imagination and memory, and, indeed, that such activity is made possible by the organic structure of the human body.[27]

Any free and rational thought will ultimately remain dependent upon receptivity to the organic human body and *a fortiori* the organic world at large. Therefore, whilst discussing the Romanticism of Hegel and the English romantics I will keep as a presupposition in my thesis an acknowledgment of what I term the *symbiotic alterity*[28] of imaginative autonomy and receptivity to the external world; one which at times these romantic thinkers will attempt to transcend, either through poetic disclosures of being or through speculative idealism, and at times displace into other forms such as organicism or absolute idealism. A lack of awareness (or acknowledgement) of this *symbiotic alterity* of receptivity and autonomy is what leads Coleridge to his despair in canonical poems such as "Dejection" and "Constancy," whilst a partial acknowledgement leads P.B. Shelley from the visionary hope and despair of

"Alastor" to the autonomous hope of "Adonais" and the final breakdown of "The Triumph of Life."

In the concluding chapter I argue for the *displaced* role of corporeal embodiment in Romanticism, arguing from a hermeneutical-phenomenological perspective that romantics such as Hegel, Coleridge, Wordsworth and P.B. Shelley develop narratives based upon romantic mythologies of *disembodiment*. However, we gain a deepened critical appreciation of these narratives when reread in terms of the relationship between the mind and corporeality.

4. Chapter breakdown

The thesis is broken down into five chapters. The first chapter explores in detail the relationship between Hegel, his theory of recognition and Romanticism as a theory, especially German Romanticism. I examine Hegel's theory of recognition in terms of a vacillation between receptivity and imaginative autonomy, before showing how Hegel's philosophy remains within the *symbiotic alterity* of receptivity and autonomy. I go on to argue that this same *symbiotic alterity* is at work in, and is the driving creative force of, romantic aesthetics. In Chapter Two I examine four canonical works of Coleridge, and show how Coleridge attempts imaginative autonomy, only to finally realise, by the time of his poem "Constancy to an Ideal Object", the futility of this attempt, and the requirement of receptivity to external processes. In Chapter Three I examine the work of Wordsworth, and show how Wordsworth uses an aesthetic approach to the Hegelian movement toward *Absolute Spirit*. I also describe what I term Wordsworth's own *organic concrete universal* conceptualisation of the universe, arrived at through the medium of aesthetics—as opposed to reason in the case of Hegel's *concrete universal*. Chapter Four examines both the early and latter work of P.B. Shelley and elaborates upon Shelley's own philosophical struggle to go beyond

the organicism of Wordsworth to a state of *pure imaginative autonomy*. This progress is traced from "Alastor" through to "The Triumph of life" by which time Shelley fully realises the inability of the romantic imagination to transcend the contingency and historicity of the world, and leads to Shelley's own aporetic experience of romantic irony. In Chapter Five I examine the ironist state of romantic knowledge, reached by P.B. Shelley and opposed to the romantic metaphysics of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Read from the standpoint of contemporary philosophical romanticism, I argue that the contingent and ultimately embodied nature of knowledge is further explored and critiqued by Mary Shelley, in her novel *Frankenstein*.

5. Methodolgy

The main body of this thesis attempts to offer a philosophical mode of interpretation, opting for a neo-Hegelian rubric through which to reread some major works English Romanticism. This however does not mean that the thesis argues for a *supersession* of existing approaches, rather it seeks to compliment these approaches by offering a distinct framework that draws upon philosophical romanticism. The proposed philosophical romantic reading is one among the other "discrimination of criticisms."

Further, it is important to acknowledge that Hegel is an enormously complex philosoher whose legacy is contested.[29] With respect to the argument presented here, it is worth noting that in the *Science of Logic* (1812-1816) the dialectical nature of reason arguably places a higher emphasis on an autonomy of pure spirit which is by no means as receptive as it appears in *The Phenomenology*. For example, Hegel writes in the first preface to the *Logic*:

> In this fashion have I tried to portray *consciousness* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Consciousness is spirit as a concrete, self-aware knowledge—to be sure, a knowledge bound to externality, but the progression of this subject matter, like the development of all

> natural and spiritual life, rests exclusively on the nature of the *pure essentialities* that constitute the content of the logic. Consciousness, as spirit which on the way of manifesting itself frees itself from its immediacy and external concretion, attains to the pure knowledge that takes these same pure essentialities for its subject matter as they are in and for themselves. They are pure thoughts, spirit that thinks its essence. Their self-movement is their spiritual life and is that through which science constitutes itself, and of which it is the exposition.[30]

One can see this as an instance of a philosophical movement away from the receptivity to the historical world and the timeliness of culture, which can be found in the *Phenomenolgy* and which I emphaise on my reading, arguing against an essentialist conception of autonomy which paralells the the romantic fantasy of disembodiment, and outlining instead a movement between receptivity and autonomy. This is a tension which be found in Hegel's own thought, and as Bowie argues, is never fully resolved by Hegel himself:

> We are therefore left with a tension, which has influenced Hegel's effect on modern thought ever since, between his radically modern sense of thought as being reliant solely on our social practices and their intersubjective justification, rather than on some immediate form of empirical access to the truth, and his systematic urge, which points back to earlier forms of metaphysics as the expression of the *universalia ante rem*.[31]

Further contradictions and developments in Hegel's actual use of recognition as a tool in his overall philosophical system have also been indicated by Axel Honneth. In appropriating Hegel's model of mutual recognition (*Anerkennung*) for a dynamic, modern ethical theory, Honneth outlines how Hegel's theory of recognition mutates from an Aristotelian conception only to be superseded by a theory of consciousness that subsumes intersubjectively negotiated human relations beneath the *Ousia* of *Spirit*, thus fundamentally changing the structure of Hegel's romantic "plot."

> Hegel no longer uses it [nature] to designate the constitution of reality as a whole, but only of the realm of reality that is opposed to spirit as its other—that is, prehuman, physical nature. Of course, at the same time that the concept of nature was thus restricted, the category 'spirit' or that of 'consciousness' increasingly took over the task of characterizing exactly

> that structural principle according to which the social lifeworld is demarcated from natural reality. Here, for the first time, the sphere of ethical life is thus freed up for the categorical definitions and distinctions that are taken from the process of Spirit's reflection. The place occupied by Aristotelian natural teleology, which still had a complete hold on the *System of Ethical Life*, gradually comes to be taken by a philosophical theory of consciousness.[32]

Hegel of course clings to his central ideal of the ethical construction of the state, however his theory has moved from a naturalistic-communitarian theory to a metaphysical-ethical theory. This also illustrates a Hegelian vacillation between a deeper receptivity to 'natural' processes and teleology and an attempt to transcend these with the metaphysical architectonic of *Absolute Spirit*.

These actual contradictions, as stated, are inherent in both the *oeuvre* of Hegel and the English romantics, and actually go some way towards substantiating my thesis that there is at times a *play* at work in these various romantic "plots" between receptivity and autonomy. Crucially, neither Hegel nor the romantics can "fix" this dialectical issue so to speak, but utilise different conceptual apparatus to deal with this problematic, and have therefore many complexities in their overall corpus, which transpire partly as a logical outcome of a broader vacillation between receptivity and autonomy.

As for vacillations in the romantic poets discussed here, I acknowledge in Chapter Five for example, that Wordsworth's own large *oeuvre* countenances a much darker metaphysical doubt in works such as the five "Lucy" poems. Additionally, political vacillations in Wordsworth are encountered in the *earlier* versions of *The Salisbury Plain* poems (1795) or on an imaginative and personal note in "Elegiac stanzas: suggested by a picture of Peele Castle, in a storm, painted by Sir George Beaumont" (1807). Further, the series of *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822) also displays a much more

orthodox political and religious bent, similar to the religious switch to Trinitarianism of the older Coleridge, discussed in Chapter Three.[33]

Furthermore, the poems I have selected aptly illustrate the philosophical problematic with which my thesis is concerned, and given their centrality to the canons of the poets concerned, serve their purpose as exemplary texts. This once again *does not mean* that all of the poems of these poets address this philosophical issue, but that there is evidence for this engagement in poems central to the canons of the respective poets. Moreoever, other poems within the respective *oeuvre* of each poet are not implicitly weaker upon my reading, in not dealing with these philosophical isssues; I offer these poems as examples of a particulrarised philosophical discourse that I argue permeates central ares of English Romanticism—however this is not a unitary definiton of the multifarious term "English Romanticism." This philosophical aspect of Romanticism is one that is a single problematic that does not necessarily run though all of the various romanticisms, but which at certain times seems central to the work of a number of key romantic thinkers. Further research in this vein would possibly be beneficial in addressing the work of the other of the "big six" English romantics, Blake, Keats and Byron, and may of course yield far different results.[34]

The editions of the poems I have used are the editions as cited in scholarly volumes, and I have not chosen to note any variant versions unless they affect the philosophical reading, for which I use each poem as an illustrative example. For example, when reading Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode" I have used the two- volume Bollingen variorum text edited by J.C.C. Mays (2001) partly because of the revisions the poet made to the text between 1802 and 1817. However, I have once again only noted any changes that bear light on my philosophical reading, or that help to

illustrate what I argue are Coleridge's recognitive displacements in the poem, such as those between Wordsworth (Edmund) and Sara, who both function in a philosophical sense for the hopes of Coleridge the poet. I have used this series for all of the Coleridge poems quoted here and also for the *Biographia Literaria*.

Wordsworth's *Prelude* has its own editorial and philological challenges, and there are actually 17 manuscripts in the Wordsworth library at Grasmere. Having examined variant texts, including earlier fragments such as MS JJ, I have found again that the philosophical reading still holds weight, although it is clear that by the first published version of MS E in 1850, (wherein there are also over 60 changes exercised by his executors) Wordsworth was avowedly a more conservative thinker, and that the earlier versions more clearly reflect his nascent philosophical considerations and his dialogues, metaphysical, personal and political, with Coleridge. This is the reason for my selection of the earlier two-book and thirteen book versions of the poem. For all of my readings of Wordsworth I have used the new three-volume Cornell edition of Wordsworth's poems, (taken from the 21-volume Cornell edition), edited by Jared Curtis: *The Poems of William Wordsworth: Collected Reading Texts from the Cornell Wordsworth* (2008-09).

The generally accepted scholarly edition of Shelley's poetry is the current four volume edition edited by Kelvin Everest et al., the most recent volume of this edition was *Volume Three*, published in 2011. This volume covers Shelley's work up until the Autumn of 1820. Unfortunately, the final volume (the forthcoming *Volume Four*) contains both "Adonais" and "The Triumph of Life," composed in 1821 and 1822 respectively. For the following scholarly reasons I have therefore used *The Norton Critical Edition* (2002), edited by Donald Reiman and Neil Fraistat for the texts of these two poems.

Firstly, there is no surviving fair-copy MS of Adonais. There is available the first edition, of what Shelley wrote to Ollier "is beautifully printed, & what is of more consequence, correctly..."[35] furthermore, there is Mary Shelley's version of 1839, that contains 3 minor verbal changes at lines: 72, 143 and 252. The version in the Norton Critical Edition incorporates these three minor (1839) changes, which again do not affect my philosophical reading of the text.

With regards to the more complex debate regarding the extant MS of "The Triumph of Life" in the Bodleian Library, Donald Reiman engaged in a major discussion of the efficacy of different readings of the MS in 1960/1965 with G.M. Matthews. Matthews published a newly authoritative version in *Studia Neophilologica*, 32:2 (1960): pp. 270-309. The version in the *Critical Edition* is taken from Reiman's (1965) version, revised in light of editorial discussions with Matthews himself in 1967 and more importantly a joint analysis of the text by Reiman and Matthews at the Bodleian library in August 1971. There was also later scholarly work incorporated by Donald and Helene Reiman in 1986. This is therefore presently recognized as the most authoritative version, and is the version from the Norton text that I have used for my own analysis.

These readings hopefully bear fruit in light of their own philosophical basis, in comparison to more philologically literary-critical approaches.[36] My hope is that the use of this philosophical methodology will bear fruits for future scholars of Romanticism, and help extend the already expanding and interdisciplinary area of "philosophical Romanticism," whilst using a neo-Hegelian praxis in which to frame fruitful and adventitious readings of English Romanticism. Finally, reading the poems as instances of a wider philosophical praxis, one which perhaps the poets were not even themselves conscious of (one remembers here Hegel's own famous comment on

the owl of Minerva flying at dusk; or perhaps his maxim that every man is a child of his time) but which we can see more clearly retrospectively does not preclude other readings that view the poems as a dialogue for example between Wordsworth and Coleridge on their own poetic and personal experiences, or their relationship to the French Revolution. These variant readings may indeed sit comfortably with the idea of a dialectical praxis operating at a philosophical level and one that perhaps, as "children of their time," the poets were not directly conscious of.

Notes

1. See for example the work discussed below by critics such as Mellor, Abrams and Praz, whereby different senses of the term Romanticism come to the surface and tend to problematise a unitary theory of the subject. Mellor for example, concentrates on ironic aspects of the subject, in books such as *English Romantic Irony* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), whereas Abrams provides a more unified, secular-Judaic narratorial reading in *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971). Praz however, concentrates on darker aspects of the subject in *The Romantic Agony* (London: Oxford Paperbacks, 1978).
2. I must acknowledge the importance of different critical (and philosophical) reception of Romanticism, which is facilitated when engaging in the "close reading" methodology engaged in for example by critics such as Simon Jarvis and Keston Sutherland, which give enlightening philosophical readings. In addition, the work of Michael O' Neil and Nancy Moore Goslee, which opens up space for additional interpretation of the work of the romantics. The methodology I have employed in this research relies on scholarly publications, without employing the close analysis of variant manuscripts and notebook versions.

   My own approach aims to examine these authoritative scholarly texts in light of them as instances of various romantic mythologies or plots; other such

"plots" being those of Hegel and, upon my reading of autonomy and receptivity, thinkers such as Kant. For examples of close textual readings of Wordsworth see Keston Sutherland, "Happiness in Writing," *World Picture 3: Happiness*, Summer, 2009: (www.worldpicturejournal.com) and Simon Jarvis, *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For examples of close readings of Shelley see Nancy Moore Goslee, "Dispersoning Emily: Drafting as Plot in *Epipsychidion*," *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 42, (1993): pp. 104-19 and Michael O' Neil, "Shelley's Lyric Art," in P.B. Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose A Norton Criticial Edition*, 2nd edition, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: Norton, 2002).

3. A.C. Bradley's essay on Wordsworth is generally regarded as the first Hegelian reading of Wordsworth, see "Wordsworth" in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909).
4. By the Yale school of criticism I include the seminal Yale critics Bloom, de Man and Hartman.
5. M.H. Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze: Essays in English Romanticism* (New York: Norton, 1964), pp. 151-52.
6. Morse Peckham, "On Romanticism: Introduction," *Studies in Romanticism*, 9:4 (1970: Fall), p. 218.
7. "Deflationary" readings of Hegel are readings or uses of Hegel's work that remove the metaphysical basis of Hegel's thought, in order to re-apply it to a contemporary context. Most recently, deflationary readings of Hegel have been offered by Pippin, Brandom and Pinkard. Peckham's reading of Hegel is also deflationary, in fact more so; Peckham actually reads the *actual historical* Hegel himself as constructing a system that whilst demonstrating how metaphysical systems are constructed, (and in so doing preceding modern transcendental phenomenology) is objectively anti-metaphysical.
8. Peckham, p. 219.
9. In particular, two important examples of the new-historicist take on Romanticism are Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) and for a more theoretical discussion: Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983).
10. See above, Mellor, *English Romantic Irony*.
11. Central to McGann's thesis in *The Romantic Ideology* is the idea that criticism of the romantics has itself fallen into the self-representations of the romantics and has therefore operated without an acute historicist awareness that would provide the criticism with a more objective and critical stance, rather than duplicating the ideological assumptions of the original romantics. The methodology of "philosophical romanticism" would not therefore sit well with McGann's historicist approach.
12. Lovejoy famously wrote his article on the discriminations of Romanticisms as a historicist critique of the critical attempts to formulate a unified theory of Romanticism. Wellek famously responded to this with a theory of Romanticism that argued for common characteristics such as symbol, myth and pastoral imagery common to all Romanticism. See A.O. Lovejoy "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms" *PMLA*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Jun., 1924): pp. 229-253 and R. Wellek "'The Concept of "Romanticism" in Literary History II.

The Unity of European Romanticism." *Comparative Literature,* Vol.1, no.2 (Spring, 1949): pp. 147-172.

13. Mellor actually writes in *English Romantic Irony* "Most modern commentators on irony have ignored the enthusiastic creativity inherent in Schlegel's concept of romantic irony. Perhaps they have been overly influenced by Hegel's description of irony as "infinite absolute negativity," which Kierkegaard endorsed in *The Concept of Irony* (1841). […] Even D.C. Muecke's excellent analysis of romantic irony in *The Compass of Irony* subtly shifts the emotional emphasis of Schlegel's concept from celebration to desperation." p. 23.
14. McGann, p. 32.
15. See McGann's discussion of these differing critical conceptualisations of Romanticism on pp. 21-31 of *The Romantic Ideology*.
16. Abrams, p. 155.
17. Butler, p. 185.
18. Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 29.
19. Previous studies of the canonical British romantic reception of philosophy, (particularly German idealism) have included, on Wordsworth's knowledge of philosophy, both Continental and British: Melvin Rader, *Wordsworth: A Philosophical Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) and for detailed speculations on Wordsworth's connection to Schelling's idealism, E.D. Hirsch, *Wordsworth and Schelling" a typological study of Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960). Eldridge also discusses philosophical influences in Wordsworth in "Internal Transcendentalism: Wordsworth and a "New Condition of Philosophy" in *The Persistence of Romanticism: Essays in Philosophy and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 102-126. Simon Jarvis also offers a stimulating philosophical account of Wordsworth's major work in *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Amongst the numerous accounts of Coleridge's reception of German idealism see, Bishop C. Hunt, Jr., "Coleridge and the Endeavour of Philosophy" *PMLA*, Vol. 91, No. 5, (Oct., 1976): pp. 829-839, Thomas McFarland, "A Complex Dialogue: Coleridge's Doctrine of Polarity and its European Contexts" in Walter B. Crawford, (ed.) *Reading Coleridge: Approaches and Applications* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1979), and Jonathan Wordsworth, "The Infinite I AM: Coleridge and the Ascent of Being," in Richard Gravil, Lucy Newlyn and Nicholas Roe (ed.) *Coleridge's Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 22-52. For a more detailed discussion of Coleridge's relationship to Kant and Schelling see, Tim Milnes, "Through the Looking Glass: Coleridge and Post-Kantian Philosophy," *Comparative Literature,* Fall, 1999: pp. 125-147. Coleridge's relationship to Hegel is discussed in Ayon Roy, "The Spectre of Hegel in Coleridge's Biographia Literaria," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, April, 2007: pp. 279-304. For detailed biographical discussion of P.B. Shelley's reception of philosophy throughout his career see the excellent biography, Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (London: Harper Collins, 1974). For a good discussion of philosophical influences, including materialism, empiricism and neoplatonism on "Mont Blanc" see I.J. Kapstein, "The Meaning of Shelley's 'Mont Blanc,'" *PMLA*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (Dec., 1947): pp. 1046-1060. Further discussion of general philosophical influences

on Shelley can be found in Frederick L. Jones, "Shelley's 'On Life'," *PMLA*, vol. 62, No. 3 (Sep., 1947): pp. 774-783, and Earl Wasserman "Speculations on Metaphysics: The Intellectual Philosophy" in *Shelley: A Critical Reading*, (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University, 1971), pp. 131-153. Abrams' seminal work, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971) provides detailed analysis of the Hegelian connection to Romanticism (both German and British). The book also draws a number of comparisons between the German idealist tradition in general and the British romantic movement; however it does not go into any detail about Hegel's own *Aesthetics* or the idea that there is a movement towards recognition that can be discerned both in Hegel's work and in Romanticism.

20. Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* 2nd edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 54.
21. Bowie, p. 81.
22. See especially, Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (London: Penguin, 2003).
23. In Nikolas Kompridis (ed.) *Philosophical Romanticism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 5.
24. See all three writers' contributions to Kompridis (ed.) *Philosophical Romanticism*, as well as other contributions by Beiser, Pippin and Bernstein in the same volume.
25. Jay Bernstein, "Recognition and Embodiment (Fichte's Materialism)" in Espen Hammer (ed.) *German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 184.
26. Stephen Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and history* 2nd edition (London: Blackwell, 2005), p. 169.
27. Houlgate, p. 179.
28. The terms symbiosis and alterity may in ordinary usage appear incompatible. For example, alterity is usually used when there is a state of otherness that has to be taken into account; Levinas makes this point with regards to consciousness and Derrida uses it in this sense too. By flagging a symbiosis however we are presupposing two things in an organic (and possibly even antagonistic) relation. However, in my usage Coleridge for example constantly posits a standpoint of autonomy and this is quickly reduced to a state of alterity as he acknowledges the need for example of the external world, culture, timeliness etc. This relationship is also symbiotic in that the relationship to the other is in effect *organic*. This is something that Coleridge constantly rejects as part of his poetic procedure and then re-affirms. For example, and as I discuss in Chapter Three, Coleridge's use of a marriage trope in "Dejection". The organic (and symbiotic) relationship is something that in a Cavellian sense Coleridge fails to fully acknowledge, but it is always *implicit* in his ontology. Wordsworth on the other hand, whilst experiencing the same tension, and whilst recognising (acknowledging) a relationship of his imaginative mind to the otherness of the empirical world, gradually embraces this organic trope, and so realises the symbiotic relationship between his mind and the external world. This is why I argue that the correct phraseology for this tension and dynamic is "symbiotic alterity." The relationship in many romantic thinkers is one of alterity, whilst at an even deeper (organic) level it is in fact a symbiotic (synthetic) one, hence these thinkers, at least at a

conscious level, experience an alterity which is in terms of ontology, symbiotic.

29. See Katerina Deligiorgi "Introduction" in Katerina Deligiorgi (ed.) *Hegel: New Directions* (Chesham: Acumen, 2006), pp. 1-9.
30. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 10.
31. Bowie, p. 151.
32. Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), p. 27.
33. Other romantics such as F.W. Schlegel also became more conservative in later years; Schlegel himself became Catholic in 1808 and edited an anti-Napoleonic newspaper in his later years in Austria.
34. I do however reference Byron's attitude as being one of "Absolute infinite negativity" in Chapter Four when discussing Shelley's treatment of the *One* in "Adonais." This is due to Byron's ironic stance in relation to the idealist Shelley.
35. P.B. Shelley, (Letters, II, 311). Quoted in *P.B. Shelley's Poetry and Prose A Norton Critical Edition*, 2nd edition, p. 408.
36. I must acknowledge in turn however that philological readings and philosophical readings are of course not mutually exclusive and this is explored in Simon Jarvis' excellent study *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song*, where Jarvis argues that Wordsworth's philosophy is worked out through the syntactical structures of his poetry, and is based upon a close analytical reading of the poems under consideration.