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Diplomová práce

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Tenants in the House of Language: English Romantic Authorship

Nájemníci v domě jazyka: autorství v anglickém romantismu

Děkuji vedoucí své diplomové práce, doktorce Miroslavě Horové, za vstřícnost, cenné podněty a pečlivé úpravy.

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

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Abstract:

The thesis examines the phenomenon of Romantic authorship as a conceptual tool of literary criticism. It compares the concept of Romantic authorship, in which the authorial personality plays a crucial role in determining the meaning of a literary work of art, and various positions of the author in relation to the meaning of their text in English Romantic literature itself. The introductory theoretical chapter develops the idea that the Romantic emphasis on the authorial subject and its primacy in interpretation of a work of art is, to a certain extent, a creation of late 19th- and 20th-century criticism. The thesis then examines the authorial position in Romantic thought and connects it with contemporary debates about language and the transfer of meaning between the subject and the outer world. The case study interprets selected poems by and the autobiography of Samuel T. Coleridge against the background of the debate on language and communication, presenting a number of authorial images in which centrality of the author's self for interpretation of a literary text is problematized.

Abstrakt:

Diplomová práce zkoumá fenomén romantického autorství jakožto konceptuální nástroj literární kritiky. Srovnává koncepci romantického autorství, kde osoba autora tvoří hlavní úběžník významu literárního díla, a polohy vztahu mezi autorem a významem textu v anglických romantických dílech samotných. Úvodní teoretická kapitola rozvíjí myšlenku, že romantický důraz na autorskou osobu v interpretaci textu je do jisté míry obrazem stvořeným literární kritikou pozdního devatenáctého a dvacátého století. Práce dále zkoumá pozici autora v romantickém myšlení a usouvztažňuje ji s dobovými debatami o jazyce a přenosu významu mezi subjektem a vnějším světem. Případová studie na pozadí problematiky jazyka a komunikace interpretuje vybrané básně a autobiografii Samuela T. Coleridge s ohledem na autorskou pozici a nalézá množství obrazů autorství, kde je centralita autora pro význam a interpretaci díla zpochybněna.

Key Words: authorship, Romanticism, the Romantic author, Samuel T. Coleridge

Klíčová slova: autorství, romantismus, romantický autor, Samuel T. Coleridge

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Introduction

In his 1919 essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” T.S. Eliot famously attacks the Romantic conception of authorship. The essay is built on an opposition between author-centred literary criticism, which considers the author as a determinant of meaning in a work of art, and criticism looking for the meaning in the work of art itself and considering the author a depersonalized member of tradition. According to Eliot, contemporary literary criticism tends to assess literature as an expression of personality, perceive the author as an individual genius, appreciate authorial originality or invention, and look for the meaning of a work of art in the biography of its author. This critical approach is widely associated with Romanticism and revolves around the Romantic concept of authorship, where the author as an individual genius is understood as the source, end, and meaning of literature (or art in general). Instead, Eliot argues, the author’s personality or individual genius should not be taken into consideration in interpretation: it is only the work of art itself interpreted in the context of the poetic tradition which constitutes meaning. In a pithy phrase, according to Eliot, “No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone” (Eliot 38). On the contrary, the individual and the personal should be suppressed in the process of creation and especially in the task of criticism and replaced with an emphasis on tradition. “The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality,” states Eliot definitively (40). For Eliot, the author is a depersonalized being significant only in relation to the transcendent dynamics of tradition and ultimately secondary for the meaning of a work of art. Eliot’s position is structured in clear opposition to the Romantic tradition of criticism and conception of authorship and formulated as a revolt against Romanticism. The anti-Romantic mindset and the kind of criticism that Eliot advocates in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” centering on tradition and the work of art itself in determining its meaning became the cornerstone of New Criticism, which in mid-20th century became the dominant critical approach in the Anglo-American literary sphere. Thus, refutation of the ethos of the Romantic author became a commonplace of 20th century

criticism, not only in Anglo-American context, but also on the European continent (e.g., Barthes' "Death of the Author"¹, Foucault's "What is an Author?"²).

With this paradigm shift in mind, the question remains as to who or what is the Romantic author? And where is this figure despised by the Modernists, New Criticism, or certain strands of poststructuralism to be found? This thesis will argue that to pinpoint the Romantic author in Romanticism may be impossible. To an extent, the Romantic author as the semantic centre of a work of art as well as its only source and interpretive vantage point is an image created by critical reception, an image that in Romantic literature is quite hard to find. Andrew Bennett in *The Author* articulates my point of departure accurately: "[t]he Romantic author is ... a fiction of subsequent critical reception, a fantasy, a back-formation or 'retrojection' produced through a partial reading of Romantic poetics since in fact Romantic thinking around authorship is precisely constituted in and by conflict, paradox, instability" (Bennett 71). Interpreting chosen works by Samuel T. Coleridge on the background of contemporary debates about the relationship between the self and the external world in language, I re-examine the concept of Romantic authorship and represent it as a contested, uncertain, and conflicted area. The author in Romanticism stands at the centre of critical attention, however, that does not endow them with exclusive power over meaning of their texts, nor does it necessarily make them the vantage point of interpretation. I interpret the Romantic focus on the authorial figure as an attempt at reconciliation of the authorial self with society and the objective world. The author and their subjectivity are not thematized to be elevated above the world and rule over it, but rather to find a steady place within it.

The refutation of Romantic authorship in Modernism, New Criticism, and Poststructuralism (in fact in majority of literary criticism in the 20th century) is here understood, to an extent, as a construction of Romantic authorship. The author in Romanticism, as this thesis will illustrate, is not the stereotypical self-absorbed figure dominating the meaning and interpretation of a text, and in refuting, criticising, or rejecting this notion, critics may well have been flogging a dead horse. As Bennett points out, "in as much as the whole project of contemporary literary theory is often thought to be promulgated on the proposition of the 'death' of the (Romantic) author, it may be

¹ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" in Seán Burke (ed.) *Authorship: From Plato to Postmodernism: A Reader*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995.

² Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in Josué V. Harari (ed.) *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, London: Methuen, 1979.

said to be chasing shadows, and may itself be a will-o'-the-wisp, a chimera” (71). Or, on the other hand, if recognized as a critical construction, we may argue that the image of the Romantic author as introduced by Eliot and adopted and developed by critical voices of the 20th century, reveals more about its creators and perpetuators than about the Romantics themselves. In his study *Modernisté* (The Modernists), Martin Hilský comments on depersonalization as a pivotal theme of the Modernists in relation to the theory of creation and the position of the author in interpretation of a work of art. Confirming that the Modernists perceived Romanticism and especially the Romantic authorial position as an antithesis to their own project, Hilský argues that in many respects, there was a strong similarity between some of the aspects of the Modernist concept of authorship and the Romantic one they sought to take a decisive stand against: “Anglo-American modernism ... was, however paradoxical it seems, antiromantic and Romantic at the same time”³ (35). Even though the Modernists radically refuted the centrality of the authorial figure associated with Romanticism, the position they ended up ascribing to the author had much in common with the image of the Romantic one: seclusion from society and the market, solitariness, and radical exceptionality. I believe that it is possible to push Hilský’s argument further and invert Eliot’s anti-romantic statement: the Modernist depersonalized author is, in a sense, a fuller realization of what the Modernists understood by Romantic authorship than a sustained theoretical assessment of the focus on authorship in Romantic literature itself. It is the Modernist author’s very invisibility, the mystery surrounding the authorial position, which, in the end, brings it to the fore of attention. If the author represents the blind spot, the only inscrutable place in a mosaic of distinguishable images, the more exceptional and central this site becomes. As Bennett points out, “insistence on impersonality can easily be read in terms of its own subversion, in terms of the return, within authorial impersonality, of the self, the subjectivity of the individual author. An insistence on impersonality ... locks personality securely if paradoxically in place” (66). On the contrary, the attention paid to the authorial self in Romanticism may be perceived as an attempt to shed light on the dark corner of the subjective position so that it became a part of the mosaic. To focus on the author as a locus of subjectivity also means knowing their limits (or understanding that they have some) and delimiting their place in the external world. The dynamics of mystery and knowledge in

³ “Angloamerický modernismus ... byl, jakkoli paradoxně to zní, protiromantický i romantický zároveň.” (transl. mine).

relation to the authorial figure, its centrality and marginality, will become one of the central motives of this thesis.

In the first chapter of the thesis, I develop the idea that the concept of the Romantic author as the sole origin of a work of art and the focal point of its meaning is a construct of criticism more than a real image of the notion of authorship dominant in English Romanticism. I offer a summary of critical stances assumed towards the concept of Romantic authorship, and present a methodological frame for the rest of the thesis, which focuses on the authorial position in English Romanticism. I examine the issue of authorship in English Romanticism by interpreting selected works by Samuel T. Coleridge in relation to contemporary thought on the origin and transfer of meaning in language between subjectivity and external reality. In the second chapter, I set out to briefly map the Romantic debate on language and explain it as a consequence of the endeavour to solve the issue of the subject-object dichotomy. I argue that the aim of the Romantic focus on the subjective and the authorial was to bridge the ontological and epistemological gap between the subject and the object and to reconcile the individual with the world or society at large. In the third chapter, I interpret Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", "Love", and *Biographia Literaria* against the background of the debate on meaning in language, tracing multiple images of authorship emerging from these works, and thus presenting the authorial place in Romanticism as undecided, contested, and full of contrast. At the same time, I also map the development of Coleridge's thought as an exemplar of the development of Romantic thought in general and frame it in terms of withdrawal from subjectivism or the centrality of the self. I believe that works of other Romantic poets such as Thomas De Quincey, George Gordon Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, or John Keats would offer a different shape of a similar general pattern. They each thematize the authorial position extensively, yet they fill it with varying degrees and intensities of uncertainty. They, as well as Coleridge, oscillate between shedding light on the authorial site in their own symptomatic ways and simultaneously cloaking it with the mystery of deliberate or elaborate effacement.

1. Authorship in Romanticism vs. Romantic Authorship: Critical Debate and Methodology

There is an agreement among literary and cultural critics, historians of ideas, and philosophers that in the early modern period and especially in the 18th century, the concept of authorship has undergone a crucial transformation. As Erlend Lavik points out, “it is widely held that the ideas of Romantic authorship that took hold in the late 18th century placed high poetic value on novelty and traced the source of originality to the mind of the author” (45). The Renaissance concept of authorship connoting authority, or a guarantee of the text’s quality was gradually replaced by the notion of the author as a subject and originator of the text during the 18th (and early 19th) century. This semantic shift was associated with broader conceptual, social, and political changes, especially with the emergence of the concept of the self, the subject, the modern state, and capitalist individualism⁴. The new concept of authorship as subjectivity accountable for a given text is, among historians of the book, often associated with the emergence of copyright law, and widely understood as “propelling its expansion” (Lavik 45). From the point of view of historians of ideas, Lockean individualism and the adjacent (and relatively newly emerged) concept of personhood (or the self) decisively influenced the way in which the figure of the author was understood at this time (see Bennett 56-57). According to Bennett, “the eighteenth-century philosophical, commercial and political emphasis on individuality, with its ideology of possessive individualism and its special privileging of authorial autonomy, is bound up with a transformation in the value of the idea of originality” (58). Bennett confirms that the shift in the concept of authorship in the 18th century is bound with an emphasis on individual authorial subjectivity and on originality. One of the textual cornerstones of the turn from the classicist mimetic concept of composition towards an expressive one accentuating originality of the creative process and the authorial subjectivity is Edward Young’s 1759 *Conjectures on Original Composition*. In terms of authorship, Young differentiates between imitators, whose artistic creation consists in mechanical representation or imitation, and originals creating organically and spontaneously *ex nihilo*, or from within their creative self: “the pen of an original writer, like Armida’s wand, out of a barren waste calls a blooming spring” (Young 7). There is an unprecedented emphasis on originality, spontaneity, and subjectivity in Young’s normative categorization consisting of types of authorship on the grounds of modes of

⁴ See Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, 163.

composition. As Bennett points out, “by aligning a certain conception of authorship with originality and therefore with ‘genius’, Young insists on the true author as radically independent, autonomous, and self-creating” (Bennett 59). At the same time, the notion of genius in Romanticism began to be aligned with originality and an irrational (in some cases divine or vatic) inspiration getting hold of the poet’s mind and making them compose (see Clark, Bennett). I will argue that in the 18th- and 19th-century sources and their literary and philosophical context, ideas connected with authorship and poetic creation are, on the one hand, marked by a conceptual change in the notion of authorship in comparison to earlier eras (Renaissance), while the model of authorship they represent is plural, ambiguous, nuanced, and complex (see Bennett). However, the concept of Romantic authorship is often framed somewhat schematically by critics: through critical and historical reception, the Romantic author has, regrettably, become an ostensibly clear and unproblematized concept. The Romantic author is often assessed as a prototype of expressive approaches to creation, individual subjectivity creating original content *ex nihilo* or from within themselves, whose own self is crucial in determining the meaning of the text (see Ruthven 40). Such a model and the associated “ideology of Romantic authorship” (a concept reflecting the ideological nature of political consequences of the connection between the expressive concept of authorship and, e.g., the copyright law, the book market, or educational institutions) is often criticised and fought against. Critics and historians attack the “individual, autonomous, and inspired figure” (Haynes 291) as the centre of the ideology of Romantic authorship, warning against the Romantic author, who is to be “exorcised” from criticism (Haynes 288). This critical exorcism, however, often makes do without any assessment of Romantic ideas about authorship. The figure of the Romantic author has thus become a critical commonplace. And, as K. K. Ruthven argues, the nature of the Romantic authorial figure as critics conceive of it today was largely established in critical debates of the 20th century.

Some of the most prominent features of the Romantic author may have their roots in literary criticism of the 20th century. The Anglo-American critical context in the authorial question was largely influenced by the anti-Romantic viewpoint assumed by the Modernists. They, and namely the early works of T. S. Eliot, promoted a critical stance based on the focus on the literary work of art itself and reducing consideration of the authorial context in critical interpretation. As I have pointed out in the introduction, Eliot helped construct the image of the Romantic author as an original creator of highly subjective works whose meaning depends on their personality, all this set profoundly in opposition to his own conception of the authorial position, theory of poetic creation,

and valid interpretation. He advocated a depersonalized authorial position with only a very limited space for subjective expression and originality. In his concept of the ‘objective correlative’, he refuted the personal as a valid principle in poetic creation (see Hilský 99) and in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” he further subordinated individual originality in poetry to formal and notional continuity with the dynamics of poetic tradition (see Eliot 40). Moreover, Eliot promoted the idea that meaning of a literary work of art is to be found rather within the text as a part of the tradition itself than in the authorial context (Eliot 38). Even though Eliot later adjusted his strictly objectivist view on the author as a depersonalized blind spot and adhered to a more definite and prominent authorial image, as Hilský points out (99), his early refutation of the Romantic author (and its consequent construction) and oppositional campaign for depersonalized authorship subordinate to the dynamics of tradition turned from an avantgarde strand into a widely accepted and dominant part of critical discourse after the Second World War. In this intellectual climate, the nature of the shift from the Classicist towards the Romantic concept of authorship was analysed by Meyer H. Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, first published in 1953. Examining metaphors for models of poetic creation, Abrams argues that during the 18th century the dominant way of conceptualizing poetic creation shifted from the mimetic theory epitomizing the author as a mirror reflecting nature to the expressive theory in which the key metaphor for the author is a lamp emitting the light of meaning from within the authorial subjectivity. For the Romantics, “a work of art is essentially the internal made external,” states Abrams. According to him, for the Romantic expressive theory, the authorial subjectivity becomes crucial in determining the meaning and form of a work of art. “The primary source and subject matter of a poem, therefore, are the attributes and actions of the poet’s own mind; or if aspects of the external world, then these only as they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet’s mind” (Abrams 22). Abrams conceives of this tendency as a result of broader conceptual changes and processes, namely Locke’s individualist epistemology, Kant’s Critical project and also the Copernican revolution, which made poets realize that the world is dependent on the subject’s mind, not the other way round. Abrams’ delineation of the Romantic approach to authorship is a part of his schema of types of literary theories (mimetic, expressive, objective, pragmatic) on the grounds of their orientation. I deem the fact that Abrams’ classification of critical theories originated in the heyday of New Criticism in the USA significant. This critical climate with its origin in Modernist thought became the era of refutation (and thus construction by projection of the opposite) of the Romantic model of authorship. The school of

New Criticism was strongly inspired by Eliot's objectivism and it argued that meaning of a work of art is determined from within the work of art itself. Wellek and Warren in their vastly influential study *Theory of Literature* set out to examine literature "independently of 'extrinsic' factors" (Abrams 28). In 1946, Wimsatt and Beardsley published "Intentional Fallacy", a refutation of author-centred criticism which endeavours to determine the meaning of a work of art on the grounds of its author's intentions, which are, from Wimsatt's and Beardsley's point of view, inaccessible to the critic. New Criticism as a theory of objective orientation focuses on the work of art alone, as an enclosed, "self-sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations" (Abrams 26). In the French context, a refutation of the Romantic model of authorship emerged in the poststructuralist, historicizing strand of criticism, programmatically demasking the Romantic author as an historical, ideological construct. In his 1967 "Death of the Author", Roland Barthes identifies the author as a remnant of Enlightenment ideology, refusing to let the author have any say in the interpretation of a work of art. A part of this interpretive strand is also Michel Foucault and his famous lecture "What is an Author?" from 1969. These key anti-authorial discourses of the 20th century are concerned primarily with the creation of meaning of a text (work of art). Whether they situate the site of emergence of meaning in the work of art itself or in the reader, they all refute the importance of the author in the construction of meaning. At the same time, these critical discourses position themselves in opposition to the Romantic concept of authorship, where the meaning of a work of art is supposed to be determined by the author, their intentions, personal life, and persuasions. I will present some recent critical takes that question and contextualize this critical view on Romantic authorship.

1.1 Romantic Authorship Revisited

The popular notion of the nature of Romantic authorship represents the author as a self creating original, authentic, and inspired text from within their subjectivity, who is also the main determinant of the text's meaning and the text's legal owner. However, validity and historical accuracy of individual characteristics of the Romantic author (the emphasis on originality understood as *ex nihilo* creation, the connection with copyright law, and the notion that the author determined the meaning of their work) has been recently problematized and contextualized. The Romantic conception of authorship present in Romantic-era texts themselves, scholars like Bennett, Lavik, or Ruthven argue, seems to be more complex and ambiguous than the notion of the

Romantic author that emerged from 20th century criticism has led us to believe. The struggle against the idea of the Romantic author, however, still continues (see Haynes) without reflecting the fact that conceptions of authorship in Romanticism may have been much more nuanced. In this section, I will introduce some instances of problematizing the nature of Romantic authorship (as necessarily original, individual, subjectivist, i.e., creating *ex nihilo*, and directly connected with the emergent copyright law), presenting Bennett's nuanced view on Romantic authorship. Leader, McFarland, Saunders, and Lavik problematize the concept of the Romantic author from a historical perspective (examining key texts and relevant concepts from the Romantic era). They agree that the subjectivist image of the Romantic author is not the pivotal concept of authorship in Romanticism and that this image at least partially originated in 20th-century literary criticism and historiography. Bennett's view on the issue will present Romantic standpoints in terms of authorship as contradictory, equivocal, even paradoxical, rather than simply subjectivist. In the following chapters of this thesis, I will confirm Bennett's conclusion about the paradoxical nature of Romantic authorship, however, I will adopt a different methodology and line of argumentation. Whereas Bennett focuses on the contradiction between the Romantic emphasis on originality and the notion of inspired genius, I will concentrate on Romantic views on the relationship between the authorial subject and meaning in language, and on the refutation of the proposition that the author in Romantic thought was the main determinant of the meaning of their works.

The allegedly sudden and absolute Romantic emphasis on authorial originality has been problematized by Leader and McFarland. Questioning the widespread assumption that originality was the ultimate value in terms of authorship in Romanticism, Zachary Leader in *Revision and Romantic Authorship* examines the importance of revision for construction of Romantic authorial subjectivity. Thomas McFarland admits that there is an emphasis on originality in the concept of authorship in Romanticism, however, he points out that earlier writers "were concerned with originality... [only] not so deeply and not so insistently as were the Romantics. It is merely a note of special intensity that is sounded, not one without any cultural precedent whatever" (McFarland 450). McFarland presents a contextualized analysis of the Romantic emphasis on originality and reveals a much more nuanced and contradictory approach to originality in authorship in Romanticism. He points out that authorial originality was conceived of in relation to the poetic tradition, not as a quality of an individual talent. Thus, even in Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition*, the concept of originality "is not an isolated conception, but one that occupies a place

in the relationship of individual to tradition. Originality is seen in fact as a variant of imitation” (452). In the field of copyright studies, David Saunders in *Authorship and Copyright* examines the connection between the legal changes within the modern state underway in the emergent capitalist and individualist ideology with the semantic shift in the concept of authorship. He argues that “author was neither an aesthetic personality nor a discursive illusion, but a legal construct designed to protect the economic interests not of creators of texts but of producers and distributors” (qtd in Haynes 294). Lavik also questions the connection between the concept of the Romantic author as original individuality and the emergence of copyright law. He points out that even though the Romantic author and the ideology of Romantic authorship are despised and fought against among scholars, they remain hazy concepts. “Scholars of the arts as well as scholars of copyright law ... have for decades struggled to kill off the ideology of Romantic authorship, though it is far from clear precisely what it consists of, or why and to whom it poses such danger” (Lavik 45). His main argument is that academics (literary critics and historians of the copyright law) tend to simplify extremely complex and nuanced realities so that they make a clear and understandable connection among them, or a sense (a coherent narrative) of them. Thus, the concept of what we usually understand by the Romantic author neglects contradictions and tensions within Romantic conceptions of authorship and thereby represents a problematically simplified concept. Lavik maintains that if “Romantic authorship is such a popular and easy target of criticism, then, it is in large part because its detractors tend to attack a caricature” (53). Examining collective authorship and authorial collaboration, K. K. Ruthven points out that the ideology of Romantic authorship and its central figure, the Romantic author, “appears to be less of a nineteenth-century actuality than a twentieth-century construct designed for polemical and anti-Romantic purposes” (Ruthven 91). The Romantic author as a solitary and original genius is demasked as a strawman constructed by later literary critics and historians as a convenient antipole to their own propositions. Paraphrasing Ruthven and contextualizing the emergence of the widely accepted view on the nature of Romantic authorship in the critical debates of the 20th century, we may say that the author (as an original individual determining the meaning of their text) was born from the proclamation of his death. Bennett in *The Author: The New Critical Idiom* reassesses Romantic authorship on the grounds of historical reading, deconstructing the simplified notion of the Romantic author often accepted in literary criticism. He, too, argues that the Romantic author as an original genius and chief arbiter of the text’s meaning is a concept created and fought against by literary critics, especially of the

20th century. Bennett confirms that the author in the Romantic era is conceived of as a creative subject, however, he argues, the notion of authorship was more nuanced and less subjectivist than 20th-century criticism suggests. According to him, the interest in subjectivity in Romanticism in fact signified its subversion or downscaling of its importance: “the Romantics ... both inaugurated a certain sense of authorship and, at the same time, in the very same breath, announced the author’s imminent demise” (55). The core of Bennett’s argument focuses on the dynamics inherent in the concept of genius, which is exceptionally unclear and contradictory in Romanticism. On the one hand, here the author is associated with subjectivity and the power of individual imagination and genius, however, in the concept of genius, there is a strong sense of irrationality that undermines the power of subjectivity, or at least rids the subject of power over the meaning of the text. For the majority of the Romantics, genius does not mean the triumph of subjectivity: it is more likely to be associated with divine inspiration transcending individual capacities. According to Coleridge, crucially, genius is subject to “unconscious activity” that cannot be rationally understood and “may co-exist with wildness, idleness, folly, even with crime; but not long, believe me, with selfishness” (qtd in Bennett 65). For Shelley, poets are “the most sincerely astonished” at their literary creations, they are mere “hierophants” of “unapprehended inspiration”, who “feel not what they inspire” and whose poetry expresses “what they understand not” (qtd in Bennett 65). Keats and his ‘negative capability’ confirm that the Romantic emphasis on the subject and the creative genius inherently contain a realization of the marginality or unimportance of the subjective. In Bennett’s words, “a defining element in the Romantic invention of the modern sense of authorship is the self-creative and self-centring genius, a defining element in the notion of genius is a certain evacuation of selfhood, the genius’s own ignorance or inability or ineffectuality” (64). Thus, for Bennett, Romantic authorship is characterized by a tension between centrality and marginality of the author, their presence and absence, as the work of art radically transcends the power and understanding of its author and is left to interpretation at large, in society. It is the paradox of Romantic authorship that it, by admitting subjectivity a steady place in the creative process and by focusing on authorial subjectivity, eventually subverts the authorial self’s centrality:

While the Romantic author is seen as self-originating and original in a fundamental, radical sense, as wholly detached from social context, just the fact that she uses language, exploits certain genres, and operates within certain literary traditions and with certain conceptual and poetic conventions, determines her as an unequivocally social being. Indeed, the very gesture of

inauguration, of originality, is itself a literary convention: to be 'original' in this respect is to be precisely *unoriginal*. (Bennett 71)

This paradoxical and contradictory nature of the Romantic concept of authorship, Bennett explains, is due to a conscious refutation of the proposition of the author's centrality by situating the author in social context, tradition, and language.

1.2 Methodology

This thesis offers a similar view on Romantic authorship to the recent critical reassessment above. Trying to differentiate between the concept of authorship emerging from Romantic thought and the notion of Romantic authorship accepted among critics since the beginning of the 20th century, I am convinced that authorship in Romanticism is a more complex and contradictory set of standpoints, rather than a purely subjectivist notion of an authorial subjectivity determining the meaning of an original work of art produced exclusively from within their authentic self. The line of argumentation I follow is, nevertheless, different from Bennett's. I present the issue of Romantic authorship against the background of contemporary Romantic philosophical debates about origin and transfer of meaning in language and the position of the subjective therein. By assuming this perspective, I am (like Bennett) trying to prioritize a critical stance aware of historicity of its object of study as well as of its own historical position, and I accept the proposition that, indeed, there was some conceptual shift in the notion of authorship in the 18th century: the author is here understood as a subject. It follows that if the author is a subject creating a work of art in language, it is relevant to address the relationship between subjectivity and language while assessing the question of authorship in Romanticism. By examining Romantic authorship from the perspective of the relation between the authorial subjectivity and language, I critically address mainly the proposition often accepted by critics (e.g., Haynes, De Grazia), that the Romantic author is the determining instance of meaning of a work of art which originated in their subjectivity. This proposition is based on the notion that for the Romantics, the subject was an ontologically and epistemologically primary being establishing the transcendental grounds for existence of language, or metaphorically speaking, the master of language. For instance, Margareta De Grazia argues that the relationship between the self and language for the Romantics is a relationship of domination of the subject over language: "Socially, politically, and epistemologically enfranchised, the individual

takes possession of language,” “converting a discursive and transactional mode into a personalized and self-expressive one that makes language a convoluted allegory of consciousness” (De Grazia 8). Analysis of the philosophical debate about language and the place of the subject within it that took place at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries will show that such a relationship between the subject and language was not the only or indeed the dominant one for the Romantics. Interpreting Coleridge’s poems through the lens of the language-subject relationship, I will argue that the concept of authorship present in his works, both poetic and prose, is more complex than a purely subjectivist notion of the author as the master of language and meaning of his works. I find particular methodological inspiration in Philosophical Romanticism, a critical strand picking up the threads of German Idealism and Romanticisms, which re-thinks the relationship between art and philosophy in order to provide new insights (informed by Romantic standpoints) into philosophical questions characteristic of modernity (see Kompridis 1-3). From the point of view of Philosophical Romanticism, as Kompridis explains, philosophy can usefully inform interpretations of works of art, and literature, on the other hand, is capable of giving new insights into philosophical issues. From this perspective, it is fruitful and mutually enriching to connect literary works of art with the philosophical debates at the time of their origin. Such a connection may, by historical comparison, illuminate (and question) our own critical standpoints, as this thesis hopes to show. I will connect the philosophical problem of the subject-object dichotomy addressed by German Idealists and the Romantics and its epistemological counterpart found in debates about language and meaning with key selected works by Coleridge. The philosophical issue of the subject-object dichotomy is understood as a broad context of which the problem of language is a part. Then, the debate on the status of language, the position of the subject herein and the transfer of meaning, serves as an intellectual background against which I interpret Coleridge’s works. One of the central assumptions of Philosophical Romanticism is that even if an author does not explicitly maintain the philosophical position which serves as a context in which we interpret a work of art, it is still useful to connect these as they are a part of the same intellectual climate. In a similar tone Stanley Cavell argues that “even if a corpus of writers such as the English romantics doesn’t use a philosopher’s name, or doesn’t quote from a particular philosopher – they may still be in an engagement with the concerns of that particular writer” (Cavell 29). Wayne Deakin in *Hegel and the English Romantic Tradition* also adopts this assumption of Philosophical Romanticism, arguing that the Romantics were “partak[ing] in the discourse of thinkers such as

Kant and Hegel, even though there was little or no contact between many of the thinkers.” From his point of view, connecting works of philosophers and writers who share a discursive and ideational paradigm is a valid interpretation which can shed light on both the philosophy and literature discussed. “The English romantics were arguing within the same historical and philosophical paradigm as Kant and Hegel were, and those romantics are engaged in the process, both historical and philosophical, of a certain epoch in intellectual history” (Deakin 6). This approach does not necessarily require a strict chronological order or direct connectivity among individual texts, presupposing that tracing germs of thoughts which may be present only latently is valid, as these thoughts partake in the same historical and intellectual discursive paradigm. The critical practice of interpreting literary Romanticism through the lens of contemporary philosophy was popular also in the 20th century (see Wellek or Abrams). This approach was widely criticized in the second half of the 20th century from the historicist perspective as ahistorical and reductive: Marilyn Butler in *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* criticized Wellek and his philosophical critical method, arguing that it obscures the historical difference between the critic and their object of study, and that it reduces literature to a mere minion of big philosophical figures. Names like Kant or Hegel here become the lens through which we interpret literary Romanticism as such, which is an inaccurate and reductive assumption. In a similar vein of thought, Jerome McGann in *The Romantic Ideology* argues that criticism of the Romantics unknowingly adopts the same ideological assumptions as the Romantics themselves and fully accepts the image of the Romantics that they themselves desired to create. Criticism of Romanticism thus, from McGann’s point of view, lacks historical awareness and is not strictly speaking scientific. I agree with this critique of authors who obscure the temporal, discursive, and situational gap between their object of study and their own critical position. However, I believe that Philosophical Romanticism may be examining Romantic works of art in the context of contemporary philosophical debates and preserving critical historical awareness at the same time. Indeed, in Deakin’s words, “philosophical criticism need not be ahistorical” (6). On the contrary, approaching a literary work of art as a part of the contemporary discursive and ideational paradigm heightens the historical awareness of the critical position, which is implicitly understood as a part of a certain discursive-historical paradigm as well, and highlights the historical difference of basic intellectual concepts in comparison to the present-day point of view. Moreover, I believe it is possible to apply the philosophical method (different from early 20th-century criticism) which steers clear of subsuming literature under the heading of famous

philosophers, if philosophy and literature are conceived of as equally important parts of a shared intellectual matrix or discourse. I perceive such a historical and non-reductive philosophical method as a means of countering the particular strand of philosophical criticism previously questioned by Butler and McGann.

Thus, it is elucidating to read Coleridge, who was interested in the issues of language extensively (see Esterhammer 3), with the contemporary debate on language in mind, even though Coleridge does not maintain any of its positions permanently, nor does he engage in a discussion with every philosophical standpoint of the debate explicitly. The approach towards language implicit (and sometimes explicit) in Coleridge's literary works changes over time, and thus highlights the processual and contrastive nature of Romantic thinking. At the same time, it seems suitable to connect Coleridge's works with the debate about language on the background of the subject-object dichotomy, while examining Romantic authorship, as the literary author in Romanticism was conceived of as a subject communicating with the objective world through language. The relationship between the subject and object and the subject's position towards the linguistic structure therefore mirrors the view on authorship. Against the background of the debate on language and its relationship to the subject (which is conceived as an expression of a broader problem of the subject-object dichotomy), multiple images of authorship emerge. The debate and the variety of standpoints represented in it helps us articulate the argument that the subjectivist image of the Romantic author as the arbiter of meaning of their work of art and original creator of authentic contents spouting from their subjectivity is an oversimplification. The dynamic development of conceptions of the relationship between the self and language present in Romantic thought mirrors the multiplicity of images of literary authorship which develop and alter together with conceptions of the subject-language relationship. Even though the Romantic author is a subjectivity communicating with the world through language, the frame in which this scheme operates cannot be assessed as solely subjectivist.

2. Language and the Transfer of Meaning: the Romantic Thought Matrix

The main purpose of this chapter is to foreshadow the intellectual background against which I will then interpret Coleridge's works in the following chapter. This background consists primarily of the problem of the subject-object dichotomy in ontology, and its epistemological counterpart: the debate about language. Philosophical debates on the subject-object problem and the status of language in the ontologically divided world influenced the Romantics, not only those interested in philosophy of language like Coleridge, who systematically connected his own works with the question of language and considered the role of subject in language in his works explicitly (see Esterhammer 3), their poetic theory as well as their literary production decisively. These debates helped create the intellectual climate, the referential matrix to which the Romantics were relating and as such represent a more general conceptualization of the issue of Romantic authorship. Romantic thought conceives of the author as a creative subject, which justifies interconnecting the debate about the relationship of the self and language (on the background of the subject-object dichotomy matrix) with the concept of authorship. I believe that the fact that the Romantics were thematizing and focusing on the authorial position is, to an extent, due to re-thinking of the relationship between the subjective and the objective (as ontological and epistemological categories) in an attempt at their unity. The notion of centrality of the author in Romantic thought, where the authorial personality is the main determinant of meaning of the work of art and, at the same time, the only source of the work's origin, presupposes epistemological primacy of the subject. Analysing the contemporary debate about language connected with thoughts on creation and transfer of meaning, I argue that for the Romantics, such epistemological subjectivism is neither the only, nor the dominant approach to the issue. In other words, I argue that in Romantic thought, the author is not thematized in order to establish a subjectivist view on epistemology (language, transfer of meaning, and meaning in literature): it is necessary to shed light on the subjective in order to delimit it, find its place and reconcile it with the objective. In this chapter, I will show that it is not possible to reduce Romantic views on the subject-object dichotomy, the relationship of the subject and language, and authorship to a subjectivist stance. The debates foreshadowed in this chapter represent a complex and varied stream of thought within which we can find not only continuity, but also dissent and contradiction. Together, they help present Romanticism not as a subjectivist world-view *par excellence*, but rather as a heterogeneous,

dynamic corpus of thought characterized more by the desire to connect the subjective with the objective rather than by the unquestioned dominance of the subjective.

The first part of this chapter outlines the philosophical question of the subject-object dichotomy and its development in the Romantic era. I set out to conceptualize the subject-object dichotomy as rooted in Cartesian dualism of matter and mind, and as ingrained in the very core of Romantic theoretical preoccupations. Romantic-era philosophers saw that it was impossible to conceive of any plausible metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, or ethics, if the subject was substantially different from the object. Therefore, their aim was to synthesize those two substances into one, thus making space for a comprehensive account of the world's (and the self's) functioning. The exact nature of this synthesis, however, was not unequivocal. As such, it presents a complicated history full of passionate disagreement and contest, allowing for a claim that Romantic thinking is a thinking of contradictions. To this day, for many critics, Romanticism represents a triumph of subjectivity (see, for instance, Charles B. Guignon), whereas others detect a remarkable shift towards the objective, or towards overcoming of subjectivism in the same movement (see Frederick Beiser). In fact, as we will see, Romantic thought oscillates between these poles, being aware of both extremes' impasses, and strives to unite them in an organic whole.

In the second section of this chapter, I will argue that the key epistemological endeavour of Romantic thinkers was their re-thinking of the relationship between the subject and the objective world in language. The Romantic debate on language consists of the subjectivist and the objectivist view on language and their refutation, as well as of articulating the organicist theory of language and its limits. The Kantian view on language, which presupposes the primacy of the subjective, is challenged by the Herderian objectivist take on the issues. This linguistic objectivism is, however, subverted by an attempt to surpass the epistemological binary of the subjective and objective and uniting them into an organic whole. The Schellingean stance is later corrected by Hegel and his re-thinking of the dialectic relationship between the subject and the object. My systematization of the debate here will strive to point out the dynamic nature of Romantic thought which cannot be interpreted as strictly or exclusively subjectivist.

2.1 The Subject-Object Dualism

The depth and gravity of the subject-object dichotomy problem in Romanticism can be recognized only when traced to its origin in Descartes' thought. Cartesian *Meditations* became so crucial for

the unifying Romantic project because they postulated substantial dualism, a split between the subject and the object. Ontologically speaking, Descartes presented the world as consisting of two disjointed kinds of being: the mind (*res cogitans*) and the body (*res extensa*). These two substances, i.e., fundamental matters of which all being in the world is made, create separate realms which, being parallel to each other, are not connected in any way. As a result, humans became trapped within their own mind, alienated from the world of matter. The psychophysical problem, the question of how the human body and mind are connected into a single person from the dualistic point of view, which Descartes never really resolved, laid the basis of a problem that became crucial for the Romantic thought matrix: the dualism of subject and object. Reaching beyond ontology, Descartes' position implies that the subject cannot know the objective world due to their differing ways of being. The mind can clearly and distinctly know only itself as the matter remains obscure, of a different substance. Trying to construe a metaphysics *sub specie aeternitatis* is bound to be implausible, as there is no guarantee of the system's adequacy (if we do not choose to rely on an omnipotent God). The Cartesian legacy of the subject-object dichotomy culminated in Kant's Critical project. Claiming that the world abides by the rules of human reason (and not the other way round), Kant argued that we can know only phenomena, things as they appear to the human mind, having no access to the things themselves. Thus, Kant's position implies that "we must doubt the existence of any reality beyond our own immediate consciousness" (Beiser, *Idealism* 48). Any account of the objective world becomes a mere guess, any real knowledge of it impossible. Despite the fact that Kant insisted on the existence of things in themselves, his system does not get rid of a profound subjectivism. As Hegel pointed out, "[o]bjectivity of thought, in Kant's sense, is again ... subjective. Thoughts, according to Kant, although universal and necessary categories, are only our thoughts – separated by an impassable gulf from the thing, as it exists apart from our knowledge." True objectivity, from Hegel's point of view, means that "the thoughts, far from being merely ours, must at the same time be the real essence of the things, and of whatever is an object to us" (Hegel, *Logic* 83). To a certain extent, we might consider Hegel's position as a culmination of the Romantic endeavour in this respect.

The wake of the Copernican Revolution is often interpreted as a culmination of subjectivism. Such interpretations perceive the Romantic and Idealist climate as a golden age of thinking bordering on solipsism with a corresponding concept of authorship. The personality of the author in Romanticism is here understood as the main source of the text's meaning: Romantic

genius creates from the depths of their own imagination, which, apart from being the vantage point of the work of art, also becomes the interpretive target. According to Charles B. Guignon, for the Romantics, “[t]he ultimate metaphysical reality is the human Self, independent of and untouched by anything outside itself, in its own unbounded freedom creating realities for itself, and in no way answerable to anything outside itself” (Guignon 33-4). In this account, the Romantics believe that the shape of the world is formed by the mind and that the solution to the subject-object problem lies within the self. Such an interpretation, however, is a simplification refuted, for instance, by Frederick Beiser, who claims that post-Kantian philosophy “is not the culmination but the nemesis of the Cartesian tradition” (Beiser, *Idealism* 3). Demonstrating that Romantic philosophy is bound with German Idealism, Beiser in “The Paradox of Romantic Metaphysics” argues that the Romantics were trying to avoid the impasses of subjectivism. In fact, their aim was to bridge the gap between the subject and the object by reconciling Fichtean Idealism and Spinoza’s monism in a new, Romantic *Weltanschauung* of monistic vitalism (see Beiser, *Paradox* 228). According to them, the world was an organism composed of one substance, the ‘living force’: “[a]ll of nature then forms one huge hierarchy, which consists in the various stages of organization and development of living force” (223). The difference between the mind and the body is thus a difference in degree, not in kind, and the subject-object dichotomy is to be solved by identifying the self and nature. In Beiser’s words,

[t]he mental is simply the highest degree of organization and development of the living forces active in matter; and matter is merely the lowest degree of organization and development of the living forces present in the mind. We can therefore regard mind as highly organized and developed matter, matter as less organized and developed mind. As Schelling put the point: “Nature should be visible spirit, and spirit invisible nature” (II 56) (223).

The Romantics needed to offer a plausible principle of proving certainty of the correspondence between knowing and being, otherwise it was to be condemned as another fabulation *sub specie aeternitatis*. They were searching for an irrefutable *apriori*, if possible, an account of by what means it is possible to postulate a dynamic identity between the subject and the object, between knowing and being. This principle cannot be found in any object or in a subject *per se*, early Schelling thought: it is situated in the knowing self that unifies the subject and the object. For him, the formula ‘I know that I am’ bridges the two seemingly antithetical realms because it features the

self as the subject (knowing) as well as the object (being). In the process of thinking them, both clauses, i.e. 'I know' and 'I am', are equally and undeniably true. The German Idealists inspired by Fichte's philosophy, however, recognized that the act of self-consciousness alone cannot stand as the principle of the subject-object unity. Fichte asserted that either the argument is circular because the reflection of the self does not require any object, as it is done by the self, or there is a gap between the knowing self-subject and the known self-object, making the argument an infinite regress. As Dieter Henrich explains, the first reason why the argument is inconsistent is that it presupposes its outcome: "[a]nyone who sets reflection into motion must himself already be both the knower and the known. The subject of reflection on its own thereby satisfies the whole equation 'I = I.' Yet, reflection alone was supposed to bring about this equation" (Henrich 38). To resolve this problem, one is forced to claim that there is a difference between the self that executes the activity of knowing, and the self that is (as an object) being grasped in reflection: "If the Subject-Self is not the Self, then neither can the Self, of which we come to have knowledge, that is, the Object-Self, ever be identical with it" (38). This step, however, fails to unite the subject and the object completely; it only postpones the solution *ad infinitum*. The subject alone in the role of a unifying principle of the mind with the objective world has failed. Fichte's late reflections proved that self-consciousness, however organically shaped in the reflective act by the supposed world, has no verifiable bond with the object as such, and the Romantic intellectual climate started to orientate itself towards a search for a plausible principle of subject-object unification ingrained in the objective as much as in the subjective, which culminated in Hegel's project. This brief outline of Idealist philosophical development which influenced the English Romantics decisively (among others thanks to Coleridge's reception) demonstrates how Romantic thought transcends subjectivism, which is often ascribed to it, in search for a means of connecting the subject with the outer world, thus solving the problem of the subject-object dichotomy by reconciling the opposites. In order to connect this more general sketch of the intellectual climate at the turn of the 18th and 19th century with the issue of authorship and its re-thinking in Romanticism, I will introduce the Romantic debate about language, origin and transfer of meaning, and the position of subjectivity in the linguistic structure.

2.2 Externalization of Inwardness and Internalization of Externality

The complex question of the subject-object dichotomy had an impact on virtually every philosophical discipline. Apart from metaphysics, ontology, and ethics, it strongly influenced the 18th- and early 19th-century epistemology, especially in connection with a heightened interest in language. In fact, as a means of obtaining information from the outside, as well as a vehicle of subjective mind-contents, language became, philosophically speaking, one of the most discussed issues of the time. In this context, some theorists even speak of the ‘first linguistic turn’ (O’Neill Surber 245). For Angela Esterhammer, the Romantic context was “an environment in which both theoretical and creative writers reached an attenuated awareness of the problematic relationship between language and the world” (Esterhammer 3). I believe that language became so crucial for the Romantics, as its functioning seemed to contain the solution to the subject-object dichotomy. From their point of view, “[l]anguage is at once the medium by which subjectivity expresses itself and becomes objective, and the objective transpersonal realm that permits subjects to emerge and define themselves” (O’Neill Surber 246). On the one hand, language functions as the innermost, the most basic way of relating to oneself and to the world. We structure our thoughts and emotions within language, using it as the most precise means of self-expression and self-understanding. At the same time, individuals and their use of language help evolve and change the structure of language over time. In this sense, language is strongly connected with subjectivity. On the other hand, an individual’s linguistic abilities are always acquired (as opposed to inborn) and serve as an externalization of the self of sorts. Language is an intersubjective structure surpassing anyone’s capacities, life, or individuality. Acquisition of language is formative of individual rationality (not the other way round) and implies one’s situatedness in society. In this sense, language is objective: to a large extent, it existed in the world long before the individual learned to use it. It is the double-edged quality of language, its being a dynamic objective structure as well as a means of grasping one’s innermost subjectivity, which made it so triggering and crucial for the Romantics. The precise coordinates of the position of the self in relation to language on the epistemic mind map of the late 18th and early 19th century, however, were not unequivocally agreed on. To state that language is both, subjective and objective, and thus – voilà – the subject-object dualism, which has been troubling philosophers for centuries, is solved, would be a crude oversimplification. In the complex thought environment of which the English Romantics were a part, the status of language and its relation to the individual mind was a controversial issue. According to Jere O’Neill Surber, in the

intellectual climate whence the English Romantic ideas sprung, there were three major influential approaches to the relationship between language, the self, and the objective world.

Famously, Kant's transcendental philosophy which, for many, represented the climax of the subject-object dualism, did not consider language as worthy of any deeper scrutiny. The first post-Kantian approach to language, embodied mainly by the early Fichte, refuted Kant's dismissal of the linguistic issue; however, it continued along the transcendental lines. For Kant implicitly, and for Fichte explicitly, language falls within the empirical realm which is made possible by the existence of consciousness. As O'Neill Surber claims, "Fichte's 'transcendental view' ... maintains that language ... [is a product] of the activity of consciousness as it posits an empirical world in opposition to an empirical self... [H]e views consciousness as the 'ground for the possibility' of there being such a medium of expression" (246). Language, according to Fichte, is a secondary being whose existence and functioning are granted, transcendently conditioned by the existence of consciousness. In other words, the self as such is ontologically, and consequently epistemologically, prior to language and uses it only as a medium of expression of meaning which already exists within the depths of subjectivity. This view on language corresponds with the notion of Romantic authorship, where the authorial subjectivity is the primary source of a work of art and the site of its meaning.

The transcendental approach of parallelism between meaning (embodied in thought) and language, where thought maintains epistemological as well as ontological primacy, was immediately challenged by Herder and the German Romantic circles around him. They chose to oppose the transcendental argument directly. They developed a critique of Fichte based on the notion of the impossibility of pre-linguistic thought. "Herder viewed language ... as a diverse set of human historical and cultural practices always evolving in response to natural human needs and desires" (O'Neill Surber 247). He stressed the intersubjective and social nature of language and held that as an objective being, language maintains primacy over subjectivity. Thus, Herder ended up claiming the exact opposite of Fichte's concept of language, arguing that thought is fully liable to language to the extent that any philosophy must necessarily be a critique (in the Kantian sense) of language. In this view, objectivity gained ontological and epistemological primacy over the subject.

The third approach to language which emerged in the Romantic intellectual climate was based on Hamann's critique of Kant and was developed mainly by Schelling and early Hegel.

Hamann also opposed the notion that language is a mere device designed for expression of subjectivity. However, instead of subsuming thought under language as Herder did, Hamann chose to surpass this binary opposition and posit these two phenomena as identical. For him, language is the vehicle of thought and thinking is always linguistic. O'Neill Surber points out that according to Hamann, "[a]t the most fundamental level, language is a dynamic living organism that serves as a sort of 'spiritual storehouse' of human experience, thought, and history" (245). The organic metaphor of the unity of thought and language became one of the key features of English Romantic imagery, especially due to Coleridge's reception of Schelling, who took over and developed Hamann's ideas on language as a key moment of his idealist project. As mentioned above, in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling claims that the ultimate goal of philosophy is to bridge the gap between the subject and the object and to define their relation. According to O'Neill Surber, for Schelling "the actuality of this relation was none other than language, which he calls 'the absolute Subject - Object'" (246). After Fichte had revealed that the unity was not reachable through the functioning of self-consciousness alone, that this account eventually lacked a solid anchor in the objective realm, Schelling and some of the Romantics started to conceptualize language as identical with thought (or as thought manifested). As such, language provides the most accurate and plausible link between the binaries, as it partakes in both realms at the same time and interconnects them. Within Schelling's organic model of the universe, it was possible for the subject to reach true understanding of the world and posit its existence at the same time. Any subject was primarily an organic part of the world (a being rather than a consciousness) and as such, it was necessarily embedded in the objective through manifestations of its thought (language), influencing the objective world, and at the same time being influenced by the world in which it has grown and evolved. This notion of a dynamic, organic identity of thought and language became crucial for the English Romantic environment, as I will show in the following chapter, focusing on the on analysis of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.

The young Hegel was not as well-known as Schelling among the English Romantics. Nevertheless, his ontological and epistemological observations connected to language are an inseparable part of the Romantic thought climate, a vector in which the role of language was thought through, and, in a sense, represent its culmination or consequence. I believe, as I have argued in the methodological introduction, that it is viable and critically elucidating to trace germs of future notions within English Romantic texts in which they may be present only latently. At the

beginning of his career, Hegel shared Schelling's opinions on language to a great extent, claiming that language is "both an 'externalization of inwardness' and an 'internalization of externality'" (quoted in O'Neill Surber 248). However, after *The Phenomenology of Spirit* was published in 1807, it became clear that Hegel had departed from the Schellingian line of argumentation. From his point of view, Schelling's 'Absolute', the union of subjectivity and the objective world manifested in language, becomes, "the night in which ... all cows are black" (Hegel, *Phenomenology* 12). In other words, this unity is meaningless without a solid conceptualization of the relationship between the individual and the absolute unity. *The Phenomenology* reveals that for Hegel, this relationship is dialectical, developing, changeable, and ever-changing in time; Schelling commits the mistake of positing an a-temporal, ontologically primary being of united subject and object. In other words, Schelling's subject (as well as object) is an abstract entity separated from the life of society and social norms of the time. Hegel claims that this unity is always taking place in real time and under specific circumstances, and hence is always found in the process of becoming. In his account of the dynamic, mutually affective relationship of the subject and the object, there is a strong emphasis on *Bildung*: organic development of oneself through agency. Hegel recognizes language as a site of acting in the world through individual utterances and development caused by reaction. In other words, language can create the connection between the subject and the object because it is performative (see also Esterhammer). As O'Neill Surber argues, Hegel shows that:

language itself cannot adequately be viewed as some 'pre-existent Subject-Object,' but involves a 'performative' dimension on the part of the subject itself. To view language as a 'Subject-Object' is to treat it as itself a sort of higher-order 'object' (or 'organism,' as Schelling sometimes puts it), an approach that fails adequately to recognize that its 'life-force' is its concrete performative deployment by a 'subject.'

(250)

For Hegel, the subject-object unity is always constituted by concrete instances of the subject expressing itself in the objective realm: it is situational. In the end, the unity is found in individual interactions of a specific subject (with its concrete historical-social situatedness, class, race, and gender) and society and its norms (in given local and temporal coordinates), i.e., in dialogue with others. This dialogue is performative because it not only helps constitute the state of society, but also enables becoming, or the *Bildung* of oneself.

The point of departure of the Romantic debate on language represented by the Kantian, subjectivist view on language, which perceived language as expression of thought, was questioned by Herder who posited the primacy of the objective structure of language over subjectivity. From this opposition, the organicist theory of language as a connection of the subjective and the objective emerged. The fissure between the subject and the object, deepened by the Critical project, could not be, as mentioned above, healed only by the thinking subject itself (even if thinking takes place in language). It required some recognition on the side of the object or partaking in an objective structure without being reduced to objectivity alone. From Schelling's and Hamman's point of view, language presented the site of connection of the two seemingly disparate realms, as it embodied subjective thinking and the objective (or more precisely intersubjective) structure at the same time. For them, language was constitutive of the subject (thought emerges in interaction with the world in the linguistic structure) and from the subjective side in turn influencing the object (an individual's thoughts are communicated in language and shape their linguistic environment). For Hegel, this dialectical relationship necessarily takes place in time, through concrete performances of an individual in society. The self here does not stand for an all-encompassing transcendental presence: it becomes a historically and socially situated, discursive being created in every moment in time through action and reaction. Esterhammer, who adopts a different methodology and theoretical frame of argumentation, interprets the Romantic corpus of thought about language on the background of pragmatic theories of language of the 20th century (namely Austin and Searle). She arrives at a similar conclusion. According to her, the conception of language dominant in the English Romantic environment "fuses the two classical contexts for the understanding of language—*cognition* and *communication*" (Esterhammer 8). Language is conceived as a connection between the self and others, as the site of origin and transfer of meaning at the same time. From the pragmatic point of view, the subject is formed in a dialogue with others and Esterhammer finds the same perspective in Romantic theories: "oral speech and dialogue with other individuals stand at the center of Romantic theories of language, precisely because individual cognitive process is itself conceived as a dialogue with the otherness of external reality" (8).

The development of the debate about language that I outlined in this chapter is connected to the Romantic concept of authorship primarily by the fact that for the Romantics, the author was a subject communicating with other people in language. The dynamic changes and exchange of viewpoints that were taking place at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century in

relation to the topic of the origin and transfer of meaning in language between the subject and the object help us articulate that the concept of authorship in Romanticism cannot be reduced to one position. As I have pointed out in the first chapter, the common notion of Romantic authorship, where the author has privileged access to the meaning of their work, presupposes a deeply subjectivist standpoint epitomized by the Kantian model, where meaning originates in the mind and only then is translated into language. As well as the transcendental conception of language, the subjectivist notion of authorship is corrected and subverted in Romantic thought. The Romantic author is a subject in search of connection between the self and the world through the literary work of art, whose meaning is not embedded in the mind of the author, but originates in society, in dialogue with others.

The debate that I have mapped above (apart from being necessarily schematic) represents only the most prominent moments of the dynamic re-thinking of the question of language in Romanticism. The line of thought it follows cannot be found systematized within the oeuvre of one Romantic author: rather, it is a general frame or context in which we can identify individual positions assumed by the Romantics. The vantage point of this debate was Kantian subjectivism, postulating that meaning originates in the self. Through its negation in Herder and attempt at unification in Hamman and Schelling, it proceeded towards the position represented by Hegel's thought, which aims at the reconciliation of the individual with the world through concrete agency. Thus, the journey from subjectivism towards performative unity of the self and external reality presents a vector in which the Romantic thought advanced. However, it is important to note here that at the beginning of the 19th century, the Hegelian point of view was still in the process of articulation and negotiation. We can find a more prominent shift towards performative agency and heightened interest in societal issues in later Romantics such as George Gordon Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, or John Keats, than in William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. For the early Romantics, who helped form this vector, the issue of creation and transfer of meaning in language between the self and others was less definite –a point of debate, indeed. In the following chapter, interpreting key selected poems by Coleridge and his autobiography against the background of the development of Romantic thought on meaning in language, I present Coleridge's thought on meaning in language and related notions of authorship (as an instance of early Romantic thought *par excellence*) as fundamentally dynamic and vacillating. The case of Coleridge in this

context embodies a specific instance of withdrawal from subjectivism, which is, however, characteristic of the Romantic thought in general.

3. Case Study: Selected Works of Samuel T. Coleridge

In this chapter, I will trace the development of various images of authorship that can be identified in Coleridge's literary production, connecting them with the development of the 18th- and early 19th-century debate about language and the subject-object dichotomy foreshadowed in the previous chapter. In a sense, the development identified in Coleridge's work here epitomizes the Romantic departure from subjectivism described in the previous chapter. In conclusion, we will see that Coleridge arrived at a different refutation of subjectivism from the one prefigured by Hegelian philosophy: he adopted a more conservative world-view which was anchored in Christian morality and social norms. However, the development of the authorial position in his earlier works mirrors a more general development in this matter and helps us re-imagine Romantic thought in terms of authorship as full of contrast, change, and vacillation. As Bennett points out, for Coleridge, as well as for Romantic thought in general, the authorial figure is in the centre of attention, however, it is marginal at the same time: "[W]hat is exemplary of [Coleridge's] expression of a 'Romantic' sense of the author is the extent to which the individual, the poet or author, is figured as both at the centre of the definition of poetry and at its margins" (62). The author (here the poet) and their position in language, in relation to others, becomes a prominent topic. However, the more thematized, the more powerless the poet seems to be. The figure of the Romantic author freely expressing their feelings and dominating the meaning of their work here does not apply: the authorial images (as they are multiple) emerging from Coleridge's works problematize the notion that pre-existent thought may be expressed in language, show an awareness of how the linguistic structure shapes individual thought (rather than the other way round), strive to connect the individual and society, and recognize that their role in determining the meaning of their work is very limited.

As shown in the previous chapter, the Romantic thought-world is neither subjectivist nor objectivist: it is striving to find a new ontological and epistemological order by interconnecting these two extremes and transcending the dichotomy which has become strained at best and obsolete at worst. It follows that if the position of the self towards language as the site of connection between the subjective and the objective is uncertain, then the position and role of the author is, too. It is important to note that none of the authorial images I present in this chapter is identical with the image of Romantic genius, a disembodied, god-like author creating with the power of his imagination out of nothing and determining the meaning of his work. This image is connected with

the transcendental theory of language and it conceives of the subject as ontologically prior to language and the object, making the self and subjectivity the cornerstone of the ontological (and epistemological) order of the world. I believe that it would be schematic to assign such a subjectivist vision of authorship to the Romantics generally. Even within one oeuvre, it is possible to find multiple images of authorship and continuous rethinking of the relationship between the self and language, the subject and the object, or author and work of art. The alleged obsession of the Romantics with subjectivity is interpreted rather as rethinking the epistemological and ontological position of the subject as a part of the objective world.

In the first section, I am focusing on those views on language which do not strive to connect the subject and the object, letting one of the binaries prevail: it is the transcendental and the Herderian theory of language. Relating these positions in the debate with Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and "Love", I focus on the position of the self towards language and on images of the authorial self presented therein. I argue that it is possible to interpret these poems as refutations of the Kantian and Herderian theory of language respectively. In these poems by Coleridge, the self (and consequently the authorial self) is presented either as a prisoner of subjectivity (in "Kubla Khan") or as an inauthentic figure ruled by the objective structure of language (in "Love"). In the second section, I am focusing on the organicist, Schellingean theory of language which strives to surpass the epistemological subject-object divide and connect the binaries in an organic, dynamic whole. My interpretive object in this section is *Biographia Literaria*, where Coleridge systematically alludes to the Schellingean position. I propose two differing interpretations of the autobiography: one in which the organic creative connection between the self and the object through language seems plausible, and one in which this attempt seems to be a failure. First, I interpret *Biographia Literaria* and its background in the organicist theory of language as an attempt at unifying the two epistemologically disparate realms through performativity in autobiographical writing. The corresponding image of the author as a performer is probably closest to the image of the Romantic genius, however, it still steers clear of the profound subjectivism associated with the latter (after all, from the Schellingean point of view, the self must acknowledge the importance of going beyond the ontological binary). The performative creation of oneself is a means of interconnecting the self with the world, rather than of controlling the object from the subjective position. Subsequently, I am proposing to look at the Schellingean project from the Hegelian position (as outlined in the previous chapter), showing that we may interpret the organicist vision

of authorship as insufficient. From this point of view, the author in *Biographia Literaria* recognizes that the meaning of this self-performance in the work of art is ultimately insecure, in the power of the reader. The author thus becomes a manipulator employing various power strategies to advocate the desired meaning of their self-performance. I conclude this chapter by a short comparison of the stance towards subjectivity in *Biographia* and Coleridge's late poem "Self-Knowledge", illustrating a remarkable shift in Coleridge's intellectual position over time. Whereas early Coleridge is characterized by the open, vacillating Romantic re-thinking of the ontological structure of the world, late Coleridge adopts a more metaphysical, more overtly Christian point of view with a settled ontological and epistemological hierarchy. Representing yet another moment of thought of a prominent Romantic author, it contradicts the vision of Romanticism as purely subjectivist thought and the concept of Romantic author as the genius creating out of nothing and determining the meaning of their creations.

3.1 Prisoners and Empty Spaces

In this section, I focus on two of Coleridge's poems which articulate a sense of insecurity about the ability of language (and thus literature) to connect the ontologically divided subject and object. In "Kubla Khan" and "Love", I trace images of language as a prison of authorial subjectivity and the subject as an empty shell full of words without any authentic content. Both are early poems, composed before or around 1800 and I will argue that they are reflexive of the subject-object dilemma and the related issues of language. Focusing on and destabilizing the relationship between the individual self and the linguistic structure as a potential means of connection with the outside world, these poems may be interpreted as attempts at rethinking subjectivity in face of language (and objectivity) and thus reassessing authorship. Even though here the author is understood as a creative subject, their relationship with the objective world is problematic and of the highest importance. Thus, as I will show, the underlying notion of authorship in the poems I have chosen to analyse subverts the idea of author-genius producing original creations of the imagination and the sole source of meaning of the work, which, to a large extent, rests on the transcendental theory of language. "Kubla Khan" and "Love" help us articulate some of the main drawbacks of the transcendental and the Herderian linguistic theories. They denounce the subjectivism of the transcendental theory of language and its consequent inability to account for a connection between

the self and the objective world. On the other hand, they help us see that the Herderian conception of language denies authenticity to the subject. However, to my knowledge, Coleridge does not systematically criticize any of these theories: I use them as orientation points helping to set my analyses within contemporary context and articulate a fundamental insecurity in relation to the concept of authorship, as a relationship between the subject and the objective world through language, that we can spot in Coleridge's works. As mentioned above, Coleridge's questioning of the capacity of language to connect the subject and the object, the individual and society, is only one part of the picture. The poems analysed herein were chosen to illustrate the uncertainty about meaning in language and its function as an articulate moment of Coleridge's thought and literary production. However, it is the same thought and oeuvre that is a manifestation of a strong belief in the possibility of an organic connection between the individual and society found in art. This strategy of juxtaposing two dissenting views of authorship within one author's oeuvre supports the notion that the Romantic thought on authorship is characterized more by dynamic development, uncertainty, and oscillation rather than by a strong subjectivist position of the transcendental type. In the following section, I argue that it is possible to trace a stance in Coleridge's works which is sceptical towards the ontologically unifying potential of language, and critical of transcendental as well as objectivist theories of the language-subject relationship.

3.1.1 Anguish of the Beautiful Soul

"Kubla Khan" is often interpreted as a poem thematizing and performing the creative process. According to Humphrey House, it is a "poem about the act of poetic creation, about the 'ecstasy in imaginative fulfilment'" (306). Milne argues that the character of Kubla Khan stands for the imagination, the celebrated creative capacity of the human mind. Being the organizing principle and ruler of Xanadu, the mind, Kubla Khan may be said to embody the "triumphant positive statement on the potentialities of poetry" (House 306). Nevertheless, the poem itself problematizes the power of imagination and the position of the author as unrestrained creator. As Patricia Yaeger points out, House's interpretation "ignores the poem's fragmentation – its spatial, temporal, and verbal dislocations. Even as the poem expresses the poet's wish for a 'triumphant' totality, at the same time it repudiates the possibility of realizing such a wish" (Yaeger 98). After all, the poem is presented as a fragment of a vision in a dream that cannot be recollected fully: "with the exception

of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast” (Coleridge 102). Indeed, the images in “Kubla Khan” seem to be diffuse and disconnected. The poem opens with a stanza on the topography of Xanadu. The opening image presents a peaceful, sunny landscape. Apart from Kubla’s pleasure dome, there is the sacred river and fertile gardens in bloom:

So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree (6-9)

Then, with a sudden “But oh!”, the image transforms into a much more emotional description of a “romantic chasm” (12) whence streams a huge fountain. The second stanza is full of exclamation marks and abrupt transitions between individual images highlighting the fragmentation. The last stanza connects only loosely, featuring a subject, “I”, who was not present in the poem before, his individual vision of a “damsel with a dulcimer” (36) and her song. Finally, the image of a poet as an inspired, almost divine figure closes the poem. This looseness of connection between images, fragmentation of “Kubla Khan” and the meaning of fragmentary form in general has been interpreted as a conscious reflection on the inadequacy of language in the face of individual imagination. According to Anne Janowitz, one of the most crucial imports of the fragmentary form (which is one of the most prominent Romantic poetic forms and perhaps their most radical formal innovation) is the focus on the “theme of the inexpressibility of poetry... [on] a motif in which the poetic speaker asserts that he or she cannot express the full meaning of what they have to say” (483). The fragmentary form itself epitomizes the incompleteness of unarticulated, unexternalized thinking: it is a form adequate for “thoughts that lie too deep for words” (483). In fact, “Kubla Khan” undermines the primacy of unrestrained and freely creating imaginative power, as it reminds us that without externalization in words and objectivation in society, creations of the imagination are mere illusions and as such incommunicable. As Milne points out, “preservation of the imagination’s conceptions from the ‘flux and reflux’ threatening their destruction demands that they be built, that is, somehow embodied or externalized, thereby giving them concrete reality outside the mind” (Milne 26). The poetic persona in “Kubla Khan”, however, cannot succeed in embodying the imagination’s products into the objectivizing structure of language. If he could remember, find appropriate words, only then he would create an actual work of art. “Could I revive

within me / Her symphony and song” (41-2), the poetic persona states yearningly in the last stanza, “I would build that dome in air / That sunny dome! those caves of ice!” (45-6). The poem closes with an exalted authorial image:

His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise. (49-53)

Here the poet is depicted as an otherworldly, almost divine figure: Romantic genius indeed, the master of language whose creative power gives rise to poetry from within their soul. Despite the celebratory tone of the last lines, we know that the unrestrained, godlike genius is a mere potentiality, and, as the lines above also suggest, is viewed as both something sacred and something to be shunned and perhaps feared – certainly something to be wary of and warded off, suggested in the imperative ‘weave a circle round him thrice’. In summary, the poem suggests that articulation of one’s innermost feelings is difficult, if not impossible. Compared to the splendid pleasure domes and infinite expanses of subjectivity, the objectivizing words seem incomplete and secondary. At the same time, the unexternalized genius faces the dangers associated with the way of being of Hegel’s beautiful soul, which represents the anguish of not being able to externalize inwardness and connect with the outer world on the one hand, and not wanting to on the other. The beautiful soul “lives with the anxiety that it will stain the splendor of its innerness through action and existence. Thus, to preserve the purity of its heart, it flees from contact with actuality” (Hegel, *Phenomenology* 380). As its inwardness remains unexternalized, being of the beautiful soul is characterized by abstraction, indefiniteness bordering on nothingness. If one cannot articulate one’s thoughts or feelings in words, externalize oneself, and thus enter full, concrete being, their “burning embers gradually die out, and, as they do, the beautiful soul vanishes like a shapeless vapor dissolving into thin air” (381). Dissolution of vapour into the air reminds us of the swiftly disappearing images on the surface of water from the preface to “Kubla Khan”. From the very beginning, “Kubla Khan” is a vision never fully recollected, a poem never fully written. It embodies the yearning of the self to be externalized and objectivized in language and the disappointment of not being able to do so according to their own imagination. Flawless creations of the imaginative power produced within the mind end up imperfect and fragmentary when externalized in language. As Yaeger points out, the poem thematizes the anguish of writing, the excruciating consciousness

that “language will never say everything; it cannot produce a totality” (Yaeger 100). Nonetheless, the authorial persona of “Kubla Khan” differs from the beautiful soul in an important respect: he decides to undergo the strenuous process of externalization. The result is presented and commented on in the poem itself and in Coleridge’s preface as a fragment, as an incomplete image of the original vision; however, it is there: externalized, and available to the reader’s interpretation and reconstruction of meaning.

3.1.2 “Love”

Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” helps us articulate the counterargument to the transcendental theory of language which portends that if language were a means of articulation of a pre-linguistic self, people would be in fact prisoners of their own minds without the possibility to externalize themselves. The frustration caused by the inability of language to fully express one’s subjectivity is, however, only one moment of the problematic relationship between the self (authorial self) and language that we can find in Coleridge’s poems. The other side of this coin challenges the Herderian conception of language prioritizing the objective structure of language over subjectivity. It poses the question about how we can safeguard authenticity and originality of one’s subjectivity if the subjective is ontologically subordinated to the objective linguistic structure. Our thoughts and feelings may not be authentic and original, even though we experience them as such. Maybe the linguistic structure ensures that we only aggregate ideas which have already been thought and said, falsely believing that they were born within ourselves as products of our innermost subjectivity. In Coleridge’s “Love” (but also, e.g., in “The Ballad of the Dark Ladie”) this idea seems to be exemplified as uncanny and disturbing.

As O’Neill Surber points out, “Herder viewed language not as some concrete totality but as a diverse set of human historical and cultural practices always evolving in response to natural human needs and desires” (247). The concrete meaning of abstract entities like, for instance, love, is historically conditioned and, from Herder’s point of view, corresponding to the state of natural needs of humankind. Herderian essentialism promoting the popular language as the natural manifestation of thought as well as the final limit of subjectivity presents a model of subjectivity bereft of any extra-linguistic feeling or experience. It reduces thought to the objective linguistic structure. Thus, this model, to a certain extent, reduces the possibilities of authenticity, originality, and agency of the subject. If language changes according to the nature of society, an individual’s

capacities to change or develop the structure seem highly limited. For Herder, thought aiming at developing the structure, like abstract concepts and philosophical language, are a “confusion of the natural ‘human reason’” (247) and as such are highly problematic, as they alienate people from their essential way of experiencing language. Therefore, if the meaning of abstract concepts is already given, it is the meaning of the abstract which influences and shapes the person’s subjectivity, not the other way round. This disturbing image of human subjectivity as an empty space governed by language originating in the Herderian linguistic theory finds its expression in Coleridge’s “Love”. In its historicizing medievalism, the poem depicts the self as a void whose feelings are determined by abstract concepts. Love, something which should be a genuine feeling, enters the relationship of the two characters only through language, and in a prefabricated form: through an old song about love. The medieval aesthetics in “Love” make the scene highly stylized so that it gives the impression of an aggregate of chivalric amorous *topoi*, largely emptied of meaning. The poetic persona is sitting near a ruin (“beside the ruined tower” (8)), right next to a statue of a knight, and playing a sad love song about the chivalric past, “a ... song that suited well / that ruin,” while the moonlight illuminates his beloved beauty (23). The settings and the lovers’ actions are a series of archetypes drawn from chivalric romances, folklore, and romanticized past, all part of the immensely successful and popular Romantic medieval revival. The poem’s medievalism and exploration of romance *topoi*, however, seem to function as questioning of the authenticity of the couple’s love. The poem is titled “Love” (which is an abstract concept) and it represents a strongly romanticized picture of chivalric love on the one hand, and a couple (in the present) who fall in love on the basis of this platonic concept of love, on the other. We can never know if the couple would have fallen in love, had it not been for the concept of love which entered their relationship through the chivalric ballad:

I told her how he pined: and ah!
The deep, the low, the pleading tone
With which I sang another’s love
Interpreted my own. (29-32)

In fact, the enamoured couple find means of expressing their mutual love only in the ballad. The old song gave the objective form (linguistic expression) to the authorial persona’s love for Genevieve. Or maybe the linguistic expression of love preceded the feeling as, eventually, the old song became the vehicle of their mutual affection.

She wept with pity and delight,
She blushed with love, and virgin-shame;
And like the murmur of a dream,
I heard her breathe my name. (72-6)

Crucially, the beautiful Genevieve whispers her lover's name only after being moved by the song. In the iterative act of singing, the love between the lady and the knight in the ballad is transposed onto the lovers, who are falling in love on the grounds of their identification with the song. It is not something we might call a genuine feeling springing from mutual affection but the linguistic structure which delineates stock possibilities of love. Importantly, language here takes a particular form: the chivalric romance. Originally epitomizing the courtly culture of the Middle Ages, the chivalric romance was extensively adapted and explored by poets throughout history. David Duff argues that in Romanticism romance was already a self-reflexive and politicized form as it was used as an artistic and imaginative counterargument to Enlightenment rationalism, or it transgressed usual chivalric *topoi*. In "Love", transgression of the chivalric into the uncanny or eerie, Coleridge's frequent strategy, is not as blatant as in "The Ballad of the Dark Ladie", "Alice Du Clos", or "Christabel". However, the archetypal nature and conspicuous inauthenticity of the characters and the fact that the entire scene is narrated from the male perspective add to the limits of both the romance genre and the Romantic revival thereof in lyric form here. In fact, we are never granted access to Genevieve's thoughts: her archetypal reactions are interpreted by the male poet and on the grounds of contamination by the chivalric romance and its *topoi*. In the singularity of perspective, there is a dissonance between the idealized, strongly archetypal form and the social reality it represents. According to Erich Auerbach, who criticises medieval chivalric romances on the grounds of them fortifying the separation of styles, romances are usually set in an historically, sociologically, and politically unspecified world with strong archetypes, fairy-tale *topoi*, and supernatural elements, even though they inherently take place in a strictly hierarchical, patriarchal, class-determined society. Thus, they obscure the relation between the ideal and the ordinary. Women in romances are represented as disembodied, flat ideals without agency, rather than as worldly human beings. Coleridge's "Love" does not make an exception to this rule: Genevieve, a strong archetype on the one hand, is a tabula rasa or a mere projection screen for the male ego on the other. We might argue that "Love" renders a disturbing picture of the Herderian concept of subjectivity and language. In the poem, the nature of personal feelings is defined by abstract,

hollow words and by a traditional form which distorts social reality. It bears an unsettling message that if we are truly ontologically inferior to language, as Herder would have it, always already embedded in the objective structure of language, our innermost subjectivity is an unoriginal cliché, an imitation dissociated from social reality. In connection with authorship, the objectivist view on language threatens the same impossibility of authentic creation and indeed authentic emotional experience.

In accordance with the Copernican Revolution, the transcendental conception of the functioning of language promoted by Kant and early Fichte holds that the self, maintaining ontological primacy, is the precondition of language's existence. Language thus serves solely as a means of expression of an already fully formed self. This conception of relation between the self, language, and external reality corresponds with the notion of the omnipotent Romantic author introduced in the first chapter. On the one hand, in Coleridge's oeuvre, there are motives of this concept, as I will argue in the following section. On the other hand, I argue that at the same time, Coleridge's poetry questions the Kantian view on language. One cannot be sure whether language as an ontologically secondary structure is capable of capturing the self and its thoughts adequately. In the Kantian view, language can easily become a prison of the authorial self whose imagination creates, unrestrained, however, it cannot reify its creations on its own. Un-objectivized creation is a mere *fata morgana*. As I argued above, "Kubla Khan" expresses precisely these uncertainties.

The Herderian conception of language is a direct reaction to the transcendental project, and as such it maintains an unsurprisingly opposing stance: language as an objective structure is ontologically prior to any subject. From this point of view, individuals are born into language as a pre-existing structure in which they learn to function. Without the linguistic system, there is no fully articulated individuality: only by expressing one's emotions, the subject realizes these emotions completely. Non-linguistic thought is, according to this theory, unimaginable: language becomes the very structure of one's mind. This theory with its emphasis on the objective reduces the importance of the subject that is fully realized only after acquiring language, i.e., after it is objectivized in the social world. Along its lines, we might perceive the subject as an empty shell with no authentic individual content. There is the possibility that one's own thoughts and emotions are not completely one's own, that they were in the system of language long before one has even acquired the capacity to realize them. I argue that these doubts gain their expression in Coleridge's "Love", where the characters' authentic individuality is absorbed by formal and social traditional

structures. The form of chivalric romance becomes the means of experiencing and the only expression of the characters' feelings, while Genevieve's significant silence filled only by the male speaker's interpretations reminds us of the role of tradition and patriarchal social structures in an individual's formation.

3.2 Performers and Manipulators

So far, this chapter has shown which conceptions of language cannot work as the unifying principle of the subjective and the objective realm. Interpreting Coleridge's poems, we can find a critique of both the transcendental conception of language and the Herderian objectivist concept. The problem of the Kantian idea is that the objectivizing linguistic structure cannot encompass particularities of the individual self, thus imprisoning it and preventing it from intersubjective connection and communication. In the Herderian conception, on the other hand, the danger is that the self may turn out to be an unauthentic puppet of an essentially given linguistic system. However, I believe that at the same time, there is a differing view on language contained within Coleridge's work: a conception of language which enables a connection between the subjective and the objective world. Having demonstrated how, for Coleridge, language fails as a bridge between the two ontological realms, I will now show, focusing on *Biographia Literaria*, how language may seemingly succeed in rendering this unity. I will argue that along the lines of the organicist theory of language promoted by Schelling, the problem of uncertainty of meaning in language for Coleridge is, to a certain extent, resolved in autobiographical writing. *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge's literary autobiography, will be interpreted as a means of organically uniting the subject with objectivity through the performativity of language, specifically the bespoke performativity of writing one's life. At this moment of Coleridge's thought, the author is not a creator of subjective visions but a *performer* of the connection between the subjective and the objective.

In the following section, I will pick up the threads of the Hegelian critique aimed at the Schellingean organicist linguistic theory that insists on the dialectical nature of the relationship between the subject and the object. The organicist position arguably held by Coleridge commits the mistake of positing the performed self in autobiographical writing as an object and does not give a satisfying account of the relationship between this object and the real subject. The authorial subject and the autobiographical subject (or, from the Hegelian point of view, an object) are separated. The autobiographical subject, once written and published, becomes (as a work of art) an

object in the world, liable to misinterpretation, appropriation, and open to new meanings. From this point of view, it is possible to interpret the authorial figure as a *manipulator* skillfully foisting their desired version of themselves onto the reader. Thus, I will argue that in same text, *Biographia Literaria*, we can find an author conscious of the ultimate insecurity for the subject found in language and exercising his authority over the reader so that he might persuade them about the authenticity of his desired version of himself. Performativity here may be demasked, among other things, as a form of authorial power-play.

3.2.1 Growledge

In the first part of *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge professes his stance on the matter of the subject-object dichotomy. In the twelfth chapter, a series of borrowings from Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* leads him to enquire after an *apriori* principle enabling the subject to truly know the world and the world to really exist on its own at the same time. According to Coleridge, this principle cannot be found in the objective nor in the subjective alone, as I have demonstrated in the previous section. Nevertheless, what cannot be ensured by the two parts separately, is discovered in their unity. "[The principle] is to be found therefore neither in the object nor the subject taken separately, and consequently, as no third is conceivable, it must be found in that which is neither subject nor subject exclusively, but which is the identity of both" (Coleridge, *Biographia* 271), Coleridge asserts paraphrasing Schelling. Hamman's and Schelling's organicist theory, which was to a large extent adopted by Coleridge, maintains that neither the mind nor the world can keep ontological primacy. Claiming that thought is necessarily linguistic, and that language is the embodiment of human thought, the Schellingean epistemological theory endeavours to surpass the fissure between the subject and the object by uniting them in the act of knowing. The mind is conceived of neither as a passive recipient of the objective, nor as the imprisoned stream of ideas that cannot be expressed properly. From the organicist point of view, the unity is a dynamic process, where the mind is perceived as a creator of ideas, created in turn by the objective world. Its ideas become a part of the world, they change and live 'their own life' independently of the subject, eventually forming the mind back. This cyclic, dynamic interaction of the mind with its environment is epitomized by the image of a plant, a creation of the world, growing by virtue of the air it has helped produce. To point out that Coleridge's epistemological theory emphasizes the endeavour to unify the subject and the object in the organic process of

knowing as being, Ivor A. Richards has characterized it by the term 'growledge' which suggests that the act of knowing is, at the same time, the process of growth (see Richards 52). For Coleridge, the *a priori* principle making the organicist theory philosophically plausible is the logically irrefutable act of self-consciousness i.e., a conscious recognition of one's own being: "This principle, and so characterised manifests itself in the SUM or I AM; which I shall hereafter indiscriminately express by the words spirit, self, and self-consciousness. In this, and in this alone, the object and the subject, being and knowing, are identical, each involving and supposing the other" (272-3). Thus, presupposing that thought is linguistic, according to Coleridge it is the knowing self that unifies the subject and the object – knowing and being. The formula 'I know that I am' bridges the two seemingly antithetical realms because it features the self as the subject (knowing) and as the object (being). In the process of thinking them, both clauses, i.e. 'I know' and 'I am,' are equally and undeniably true. In the words of Steven Vine:

If knowing and being are identical in the I AM, then so are telling and showing. In the I AM, discourse (the form of knowing) does not merely "tell" of being, but produces it. The I AM, in this sense, is the ultimate in performative utterances, for it includes or posits the being of which it speaks. In the I AM, utterance passes immediately into presence: knowing passes into being, discourse into reality. (Vine 107)

Bearing in mind the linguistic structure of thinking, Vine points out that the unifying principle of active self-consciousness takes the form of a performative self-assertion enacted in language. Coleridge perceives the "heaven-descended KNOW THYSELF!" (Coleridge, *Biographia* 252) premise as the supreme principle of philosophy that must be speculative and practical at the same time: a true philosophy uniting the subject with the object can be achieved only through true dynamic knowledge of the self. Since he conceives of the unity as performative, he feels compelled to perform the knowledge of himself in an act of conscious self-assertion within the realm of language: to write himself. Only thus may his autobiography become a confirmation of his philosophy. In "Autobiography as Defacement," de Man points out that Wordsworth understands the autobiographical discourse "as a discourse of self-restoration" (de Man 925). This implies that for Wordsworth, there is a radical difference between the Wordsworth who is writing and the Wordsworth of the past. His self that is being written about is dissociated from the self that is writing. Coleridge, who comments on Wordsworth's autobiographical project in *Biographia*

extensively, attempts rather at a unity of these two selves. For him, the self that is writing must be, at the same time, the self that is created by the selfsame act of writing. With de Man, we might say that Coleridge understands autobiography as self-creation.

Coleridge's autobiography teems with self-contradictions, ambiguities, digressions, and disruptions. The "immethodical miscellany," as Coleridge refers to the work (88), certainly cannot be deemed a coherent explanation of a philosophical system, neither can it stand as a narrative of Coleridge's literary life. Since the very date of its publication, this book has elicited a heated debate about its form and, indeed, about the form of autobiographical writing in general (see Jackson 55). What should be a closed, perfected narrative or a selection of episodes from the author's life in relation to the literary, turns out to be a collection of fragments of opinions on philosophy and poetics. I believe that the form of the autobiography highlights the performative nature of Coleridge's project. The sense of fragmentation and incompleteness rendered by *Biographia Literaria* is an important part of Coleridge's philosophical argument as it underpins the processual nature of creation of oneself.

It is unusual for an autobiography to be introduced as follows: "It will be found, that the least of what I have written concerns myself personally. I have used the narration chiefly for the purpose of giving a continuity to the work..." (5). The reader of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* soon realizes that the book consists of fragments of critical notes given a semblance of an autobiographical narrative and an overview of various epistemological stances followed by an assertion of the author's 'own' (i.e., Schelling's) solution to the philosophical problem. The life story culminates at the end of volume one, where Coleridge develops his quasi-theory of imagination. The second volume illustrates the principles demonstrated in volume one on examples from literary history, applying them to poetics and literary criticism. Nothing in *Biographia* can be said to resemble a conventional autobiographical narrative: what commenced as a preface to *Sybilline Leaves* and was extended to *Biographia Literaria*, is basically a bulk of disarranged notes and commentaries. The unifying principle connecting the whole work is the performance of the author's personality. Like Giambattista Vico, who coined his autobiography from accounts of his own writings, Coleridge purports to present his life as a series of incomplete accounts of his thinking, writing, and reading; as he mentions in his notebook entry in 1803, he intends to write "my metaphysical life as my *Life & in my life*" (*Notebooks* 1515). Coleridge seldom keeps the continuity of narrative, and thus in *Biographia* almost every suspense turns into disappointment

and every argument into miscellany. When the reader becomes acquainted with some principles of Coleridge's responses to epistemological problems in chapter nine, preparing herself for a more profound explanation of the problem, she finds that the very next chapter is devoted to "digression and anecdotes, as an interlude preceding that on the nature and genesis of the imagination" (168). Finally, when the problem of subject-object disunity is about to be resolved and the argument is supposed to escalate into an account of the theory of imagination, the argumentative flow is disrupted again. Instead of an adequate explanation of Coleridge's theory, chapter 13 features a fictional letter from a friend urging the author to postpone the explication and to present it instead in an upcoming treatise on constructive philosophy (303). Coleridge is "[a]rgumentative when one would expect exposition, aphoristic when one longs for argument, the chapters also contain large amounts of material borrowed without citation, considerable chunks of prose taken from Coleridge's own writings," notes Christensen (930), arguing that Coleridge's method of writing is defined by its incompleteness. According to him, Coleridge's writing consists mainly of notes or miscellaneous thoughts connected to the texts he uses. I believe that the fragmentary form without an overarching narrative resembles the process of thinking, thus drawing attention to the actual process of writing i.e., from Coleridge's point of view, the creation of himself. According to Allport, fragments account for the fragmentary nature of life itself and serve as a reminder that every text was at some point unfinished, in the process of originating. Coleridge (as opposed to Wordsworth) did not want to distinguish between the self that is writing and the self that is being written about. Therefore, for him, an account of one's own life can never be finished and must always be fragmentary. As Kearns points out, for Coleridge "the most proper and 'complete' story that an autobiography tells is the story of its own composition" (110). From her point of view, disruption and digression in autobiographical writing show the work in its historicity and guarantee a higher degree of its authenticity: the reader is compelled to perceive the work in the process of its writing, as an authentic process of creation of the writer's self. When Coleridge writes his *Life* in his lifetime, his aim is not to account for the most important or formative events of his life so far. He is trying to embody his own 'growledge': his *bildung* when it is in progress, while the process of him developing *is* the process of writing itself. For him, autobiography is literally his life performed in writing: "the life and the work do not exist as separate entities" (Kearns 112). And at the same time, his life objectivized through the performative embodiment of his self-conscious thought works as a corroboration of Coleridge's epistemology. *Biographia Literaria*

with its fragmentary form accentuating the processual nature of creating (performing) oneself in the act of linguistically expressing one's thoughts may be interpreted as that prized instance when language does manage to bridge the ontological abyss between the subject and the object. Thus, the author as the subject and the object of the autobiographical form functions as a performer of oneself in the objective world and the artwork thus created is a connection between the subjective and the objective realm. The image of authorship as a self-performer, whose principal form of expression is autobiography and whose primary object is the author himself is probably closest to the common image of the Romantic author, and certainly typical of Coleridge. The centrality of the performative self and the consequent focus on the authorial persona in the 19th century, to an extent, became a commonplace. Writing of "autobiographization of literature" in the 19th century, Stelzig notes it was the Romantics who established autobiography as a genre of aesthetic value. The causes of the heightened interest in subjectivity and the popularity of autobiographical writing and reading in the Romantic era are manifold. Stelzig, for instance, points out growing literacy, steady increase of demand on the book market and the rise of the middle class willing to spend money on books (Stelzig 3). Mascuch perceives the rise of autobiography as a manifestation of the individualist ideology present in the culture of the emergent modern, industrializing, capitalist England. Examining the origins of autobiographical writing in the 18th century, Mascuch asserts that autobiography marks the birth of the individualist self who performs the "identity of the egocentric person who . . . mythifying himself as his own object, regards himself as his own telos" (Mascuch 9). However, if Coleridge's aim were assertion of his "egocentric person", why would he write highly impersonal autobiography, insisting that almost nothing in *Biographia* "concerns [himself] personally"? I propose that in the case of Coleridge, focus on the author (and the subjective) serves the purpose of delimiting the authorial position in relation to the external world and society. On the contrary, the motive of self-effacement present in *Biographia* and traced in the following section will be interpreted as an attempt at strengthening the authorial position of power over the meaning of the text.

3.2.2 Authorial Authority

Even within the same autobiographical text, *Biographia Literaria*, it is possible to propose a different authorial image from the one of a self-performer. There is certain naiveness in the performative model of the self and its relationship to language. It is not possible to be certain that

because the formal structure of *Biographia* emphasizes the process of its genesis, the work will be interpreted as a true account of development of Coleridge's thought. In the moment of finishing the autobiographical account and its publication, and even earlier in the process of writing, the author as a person is necessarily separated from his autobiographical self, which becomes an object. As the self that Coleridge invents in *Biographia* is, according to his theory, always discursive, it necessarily remains subject to discursive misinterpretation and open to new meanings on the part of its readership. Even though the problem of disunity of the subject and the object is seemingly solved in the auto-performative act, the work of art (as the product) is still written in language and thus liable to interpretation, misinterpretation, or oblivion. Autobiography is a temporally closed and completed unity of the subject and the object separated from the subject (by way of being and time). Once the life of oneself is externalized in words, it begins its existence as a work of art separated from the subject in real time. The real authorial self is not identical with the account and the connection between the work of art and real life is not of identity or straightforward correspondence. In this sense, the Schellingean account of language as a means of true connection between the self and society fails. In Coleridge's autobiography, language is a means of persuading the reader of the authorial figure's authenticity. I believe that the authorial image in *Biographia Literaria* may be seen not only as a performer, but also as a *manipulator*.

As in any other autobiography, in *Biographia* the language presenting the self is highly stylized and the personality is cautiously constructed in order to appear in a certain way. The final aim of this stylization is to appear authentic to the reader and persuade her to believe Coleridge's representation of himself. Coleridge achieves that by representing the authorial persona as somewhat hazy and evasive. Claiming that the autobiography concerns the author's life *per se* very little, Coleridge distances his persona and posits his 'principles in Politics, Religion, and Philosophy' (*Biographia* 5) to the fore of the readers' attention. The authorial persona often apologizes, justifies himself, and defers explanations *ad infinitum*. Represented *qua* personality only in the background, as someone who lives secluded from society, and who is not used to publishing his works but values intellect the most, the Coleridge of *Biographia* is crafted so that he gives the impression of a brilliant mind who humbly and unpretentiously deprecates his abilities. At the same time, however, such authorial position enables a smoother acceptance of the proposed theses. Kearns confirms that the main feature of *Biographia*'s persona is precisely his calculated distancing:

Coleridge establishes himself as the author who had not been fully 'present' because of the complications and misrepresentations inherent in the process of publication. Even so, these efforts to make himself present in the *Biographia* are being formed by the demands of publishers and by the demands of 'the book' (111).

The authorial persona appears to be an undistinguished personality forced into decisions and opinions by circumstances or other people. This self-stylization may be interpreted as a power-play designed to convince the reader of the authorial authenticity. The same figure may be understood as a means of exercising authorial power. Bradford Mudge also perceives self-effacement as Coleridge's principal manner of self-representation. He claims that Coleridge is, metaphorically speaking, hiding his personality behind objectivity and scholarliness of his opinions: "the unquestionable authority of philosophical 'principles' eclipses individual identity; it obscures the human behind the intellectual and stabilizes the discourse by appeal to a higher frame of reference" (33). In other words, Coleridge in his own autobiography evades elaborate analyses of his personality, opinions, or argumentation, and legitimizes himself by a scholarly discourse. This authority of science, however, is only rhetorical: most of his criticism is equivocal, his argumentation is plagiarism and when it comes to professing the core of his theory on the imagination, the author avoids the task by inserting a fake letter and postponing it indefinitely. Coleridge figuratively effaces his personality and substitutes it with a scholarly rhetoric so that he could push his arguments and persuade his readers about his views with a higher degree of authority. For instance, knowing he might be accused of plagiarism, he justifies his extensive borrowings from Schelling as follows:

It would be but a mere act of justice to myself, were I to warn my future readers, that an identity of thought, or even similarity of phrase will not be at all times a certain proof that the passage has been borrowed from Schelling, or that the conceptions were learnt from him... [F]rom the same motive of self-defence against the charge of plagiarism, many of the most striking resemblances, indeed all the main and fundamental ideas, were born and matured in my mind before I had ever seen a single page of the German Philosopher (*Biographia* 161).

Coleridge chooses to deny any intentional plagiarism on his side trying to make his readers believe that every single borrowed idea naturally originated in his own head. He enters a dialogue with the

reader feeling compelled to persuade them about the veracity and authenticity of his metaphysical life account. Critics like Kearns, Wheeler, or Catherine Wallace elaborate on the processual emphasis of *Biographia*'s formal features and claim that the *bildung* of Coleridge's self via writing the book has implications for the process of reading, too. The act of reading, as well as the act of writing, becomes a process of creation. In Wheeler's words: "[o]nce the reader accepts the role of co-creator which the Romantic poets demanded of him ... the *Biographia* becomes the growth of the reader's mind as well" (Wheeler 98). In the performative account, the reader re-creates the author himself and, on the other hand, is being created by the formative process of reading. Along these lines, Kearns argues that the plagiarism Coleridge commits and the way he justifies it is an act of self-conscious formation through reading and re-appropriation of the text: "Through the re-appropriation of these texts, Coleridge gives a lesson in the sort of reading that is necessary to construct authentic history, and that lesson is constituted in his own practice as reader who claims authority over his own texts in the act of reading them" (Kearns 124). However, this image of the reader cooperating on a favourable reading of the text and notional creation of the autobiographical subject is incomplete. If Coleridge is said to re-appropriate texts in the self-formative process, there is the possibility that readers will interpret and appropriate *Biographia* as well according to their own will. In fact, there are always inimical readers and critics who choose not to accede to the author's *amour propre*. The Hegelian perspective on the issues of author as a subject in relationship with the objective world through language would propose that the authorial person accede to the fact that the autobiographical self is an object in the world and accept responsibility for their work of art within society. The true *bildung* as a connection of the authorial subject with the objective world takes place in real society. The dynamic and ever-changing relationship between the authorial self and the objective is guaranteed only by reception, dissent with and criticism of the work of art in question. In this account the author loses power over their own creation, letting it live its own life but also letting the text as a criticized and interpreted object influence the author back. *Biographia Literaria*, however, seems to be ossifying the performative autobiographical subject so that it remains in the authorial power, not liable to interpretation and critique. Coleridge's strategy of self-effacement and employing the authority of scholarly rhetoric corroborate that the alleged autobiographical performative process and the formation by/of the reader may be interpreted as a sustained manipulation of the reader. The supposed bridging of the ontological and epistemological gap may end up as an attempt at gaining authority over the reader and conserving

the autobiographical subject without noticing it is, in fact, an object. Thus, the autobiography becomes a place of distribution of discursive power. The authorial image of *Biographia Literaria* is hence that of a manipulator inventing various strategies to maintain power over his readership in order to prevent them from a ‘misinterpretation’ of the work’s meaning, thus ultimately refusing to enter into the dialectical relationship between the subjective and the objective world. The scholarly discourse accompanied by self-effacement used in Coleridge’s autobiography is in fact a strategy of exercising the authority of the author.

Biographia Literaria may be interpreted as a realization of the subject-object unity: a performative act of writing, and consequently performing oneself in language. The authorial self is performing their identity in the acting of writing about one’s own life. However, the unifying potential of language which the organicist theory set out to prove may be in a slightly different reading of the same text understood as uncertain. In such an interpretation, in face of society (as the objective world) the performed self does not necessarily emerge as a subject (but as an object), and language remains a site of uncertainty about the self and its connection with the world. Here, the authorial self seems to be employing various strategies of exercising discursive power and authority over the potential reader, thus taking precautions against an unfavourable reading. The analysis of *Biographia Literaria* showed us that autobiography may be interpreted as a means of diminishing the power of the authorial self over the text, as it reveals that the work of art is always necessarily subject to the interpretation of the reader. From this perspective, focus on the authorial self may be interpreted as an endeavour to delineate the position of the author with respect to external reality (comprising the reader, literary tradition, and society in general). At the same time, an autobiography may present a depersonalized author. In Bennett’s words, “Romanticism allows us to understand is that ... confessionalism is not incompatible with impersonality, that autobiography can be a way of depersonalizing, of disowning, the self, just as the project of impersonality can be bound up with an expression of an intense subjectivity” (Bennett 71). The strategy of self-effacement as a way of asserting authorial authority in *Biographia* helps articulate the notion that maybe impersonality may serve as a cloak for even more intensive and manipulatory expression of the subjective and personal.

If *Biographia Literaria* with its contradictory standpoint regarding the position of the self toward language and authorship represents one stage of Coleridge’s thought, it is important to mention another intellectual position assumed by him on this matter. If Coleridge’s authorial

position (and the conception of language-subject relationship) in *Biographia* is characterized by a multiplicity of perspectives and vacillation, Coleridge in his later writings tends to a rather conservative theory of language accompanied by a more overtly Christian metaphysical and moral standpoint. As Yaeger points out, “his theory of language, especially as it is developed in his later writing, is comparatively static, the reflex of a metaphysical world-view” (92). Though Coleridge does not propose any systematic theory, his notebooks and later writings testify to a conservative turn toward the Christian worldview with a solid, metaphysical transcendental point of view. In Coleridge’s late stance in the matter of language, Yaeger confirms, meaning precedes inscription. Meaning in language is set and stable, guaranteed – not by the omnipotent self but by the omnipotent God. It is given before the process of expression and reception takes place, so it does not emerge as a unifying principle of the subjective and the objective realm: here, these two realms are united beforehand, by God’s intervention and by preservation of Christian social norms. The world is united *sub specie aeternitatis* by the divine order and hierarchy of being. Coleridge’s change of standpoint may be illustrated by the shift we can notice in the comparison of *Biographia* published in 1817 and the poem “Self-Knowledge” published seventeen year later. In the former text, knowledge of oneself was at the centre of focus through the organic ‘growldge’. In the poem from 1834, however, to truly know oneself is presented as impossible:

What is there in thee, Man, that can be known?—
Dark fluxion, all unfixable by thought,
A phantom dim of past and future wrought (6-8)

Here it is evident that for late Coleridge, the nature of oneself will never be certain and fixed, and subjectivity being a “phantom of past and future”, one should abandon such presumptuous ambitions. “Ignore thyself, and strive to know thy God!” (10) strikes the last line finishing the poem with an exclamation which, in the poem’s context, sounds like a reprehension for a sin of self-obsession and a command at the same time. Not a command to know the inscrutable God, but rather to recognize one’s proper place in the divine hierarchy of being, as well as in the social structure. From the metaphysical perspective, where the order of the universe is completely given by God, the daring ambition of the subject to manage to connect themselves with the objective world in the linguistic structure, through a literary work of art, for instance, and solve the problem of subject-object dichotomy seems like the sin of pride. “Self-Knowledge” gives the impression if not of refutation, then certainly revision of *Biographia* and earlier poems. Where the early view

on language and subject-object dichotomy seemed to be dynamically developing and open/ambiguous, there is stability and definiteness in the later standpoint given by the set Christian hierarchy of being. In the late stage, the authorial image is for Coleridge the farthest from the subjectivist notion of the Romantic author's mighty self: the author is a humble mortal whose aim is to recognize God's omnipotence and his own given place in society, inspire a moral lesson, and morally uplift. If we connect this shift in Coleridge's thought with Mascuch's argument which presents the interest in the self during the 18th and 19th century as a symptom of the emergent culture of individualism, we may conclude that Coleridge's thought in the end drifted towards a more collectively given identity anchored in the social norms, tradition, and morality. Coleridge's orientation towards objectivity, reconciliation of the subjective and the objective through agency in the world and social institutions took a different shape than in case of the later generation of the Romantics. Where Shelley's, Byron's, and to some extent Keats', strategy of reconciling the self and society (and the object with the subject) was to engage in political agency and critique from a socially minded and more liberal position, Coleridge ultimately adopted a vision of the world united with the subject by the divine hand.

In this chapter I proposed a variety of images of Romantic authorship found interpreting selected Coleridge's literary works: the authorial self imprisoned in subjectivity in "Kubla Khan" as a refutation of the transcendental theory of language, the self as an empty space governed by convention and the objective linguistic structure of "Love" in response to Herder, while in *Biographia Literaria* it was the performer connecting the subjective with the objective realm through realizing, performing oneself in language, and finally in the same text, the manipulator exercising authority of authorship over the meaning of the work of art through the paradoxical strategy of self-effacement. The heterogeneity of authorial images present in Coleridge's works helps us articulate the notion of Romantic authorship as a more disunited, varied, and complicated than the commonly used concept of the Romantic author allows. I hope it also foreshadows that the variety of authorial images corresponding to the variety of positions in intellectual debates is not an exclusively Romantic matter: it lies in the eye of the critic and, crucially, the reader, too.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the concept of Romantic authorship as a strongly subjectivist and author-based approach to literature, where the authorial subject determines the meaning of their work which is created from within their original personality, is rather a ‘retrojection’ created by leading 20th-century criticism as its opposite than the notion of authorship dominant in Romanticism. The subjectivist Romantic author and the corresponding ideology came to their full realization only after the Modernists and subsequently New Criticism in the Anglo-American space and the poststructuralists in France proclaimed their death. The English Romantics, indeed, strongly thematized the authorial position in an unprecedented way and their thought is marked by an interest in subjectivity, originality, and authenticity. There was a notable change in the concept of authorship between Classicism and Romanticism towards a more expressive approach to interpretation of literature, its creation, or its function. However, to define the Romantic concept of authorship only by profound subjectivism, unlimited stress on originality and authenticity, and centrality of the author for the meaning of a work of art, is a sweeping simplification. The Romantic relationship to the subjective dimension of authorship was more spurious, uncertain, and contradictory. For the Romantics, to re-assess the self meant to re-think it in relation to others and external reality.

I examined English Romantic interest in subjectivity in relation to authorship against the background of the issues of the subject-object dichotomy, which to a large extent characterized the thought of the time. Thus, re-assessment of the subjective was shown to be a part of a larger project whose aim was to reconcile the subject and the object, individual and society, in an organic whole. Connecting this large-scale vector with the issue of authorship, I outlined the late 18th- and early 19th-century philosophical debate on the origin and transfer of meaning in language and the position of the subject therein. The multiplicity and swift development of stances assumed in this debate showed that the Romantic concept of authorship (where the author is conceived of as a subject creating in language) is not a unified notion: rather, it helped present the issue as in the process of dynamic conceptual development and re-thinking. To analyse the shape of the Romantic notion of authorship more specifically, I interpreted selected works by Coleridge on the background of the debate on language and subjectivity. Identifying various authorial images implicitly present in “Kubla Khan”, “Love”, *Biographia Literaria*, and “Self-Knowledge”, I showed that none of them is strictly subjectivist and that they, put together in a sequence, create a development of Coleridge’s

dynamically changing thought on authorship which, in a sense, represents a more general Romantic tendency towards reconciliation of the subjective and the objective through individual agency in the objective world. The general vector of withdrawal from subjectivism towards the objective, the collective, and the societal took a particular route in Coleridge's case: it was his shift towards Christian view on social hierarchy and place of the self within. Where the analysis of "Kubla Khan" and "Love" showed the poems as refutations of subjectivist (associated with the transcendental conception of language) and objectivist (i.e., Herderian) view on the position of the self in relation to language (and thus derivatively the authorial position) respectively, *Biographia Literaria* was interpreted as an attempt to unite the subject-object binary through a Schellingean scheme of performativity in authorial self-assertion. At the same time, I offered a different interpretation of *Biographia* which, perceiving the unity incomplete from the Hegelian position, uncovers the presence of the dynamics of self-effacement as assertion of power, and self-exposure as recognition of one's limits in Coleridge's autobiography.

In the introduction to *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader*, Seán Burke, who is an advocate of the return of the author into the critical discourse, offers an interesting metaphor for the relationship between language and authorship. Are writers "masters in the house of language, or its privileged tenants?", he asks (Burke xv). The metaphorical image that his question builds is a fitting one: language is a trans-individual structure with frequented foyers and chambers hidden behind locked doors accessible only to the privileged, which flourishes only if inhabited by people. Developing Burke's metaphor and connecting it to the dynamics of effacement and focus on the authorial, we may ask whether the author is (and whether he should be conceived of as) the master of the house, who from a position of power watches over it, mends, and controls it. As in Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy*, the position of the master of the house may be the only blind spot in the work avoiding scrutiny (see Robbe-Grillet 12, 43). The master is never mentioned, they are an empty site represented by the empty chair at the table of whose presence we get to know only in hints and clues. And yet, it is exactly this empty space into which all attention concurs. This absence structures the novella's narrative, builds its central theme and ultimately, gives it its meaning. Because the site of the master is cloaked in mystery and presented as an absence, it becomes central. It becomes the site of power. Thus, in a sense, the depersonalized author obscured by objectivism, disavowal of the personal, and self-sacrifice in the name of tradition, is the master of language in their work: they are not present, and because of that they are of paramount importance; not there, yet setting the rules and holding the power over interpretation of their

work tightly in their hands. On the contrary, overt thematization of the authorial position helps delimit the scope of author's activity, setting them among other factors like the reader, reception, and criticism, and thus showing how limited the author's power over the meaning of their work eventually is. Thus, the Romantic author is rather the tenant who has, as well as others, their delimited space, a room in the house of language. Yet, it is important to note that they are a privileged tenant, indeed. They reside in exclusive chambers of society into which others will never be let.

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