

Rowing Back

The Romantic Origins of Transpersonal Psychology

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Literary Backdrop

However one names, dates, or defines it, Romanticism transformed human consciousness. It is no accident that Wordsworth's *Prelude*, perhaps the signature work of English Romanticism, revolves around the poet's first-hand engagement with the French Revolution. Wildly enthusiastic at first yet bitterly disillusioned at last, William Wordsworth returned from France not only to England but to himself. Turning inward to seek surer spiritual ground for human hope and aspiration, the poet chronicled the saga of his own imaginative life, penning Western literature's first autobiographical epic. This Wordsworthian turn may be considered emblematic of Romanticism, a movement that—while not eschewing idealism in the political sphere—recognizes that the destiny of a people depends radically upon the spiritual state of the individual persons whom (according to the doctrines of that famous Romantic forerunner, Jean-Jacques Rousseau) any collective is supposed to serve.

That pivot toward the individual as the center of the human universe applied to the religious as well as the political imagination. The Christian mythos could no longer serve Blake or Wordsworth as it had served Dante or their own great English-language forefather, Milton. To many Romantic writers, traditional images of God or Paradise seemed outworn at best and positively pernicious at worst, impeding rather than advancing the soul's progress toward more perfect union with the divine portion of oneself and the cosmos. Rather than offering the keys to the kingdom, traditional structures of belief seemed to be iron bolts drawn across the door of the soul. Blake, his enduring debt to the Bible notwithstanding, energetically sought to shatter those bolts. Wordsworth walked to a private entrance and quietly stepped inside.

It was Wordsworth, prompted by his friend and collaborator Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who authored the historic Romantic poetic manifesto, *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1800). The *Preface* repudiates the artificial sort of diction that had

long been the poetic norm, endorsing a more natural idiom and indeed reliance upon “the language of real men.”¹ The move was not wholly without precedent (one might think of Dante’s or Petrarch’s use of Italian rather than Latin) but nonetheless marked a revolution in both style and substance. It was not so much the unrhymed blank verse itself that ushered in the sea-change (after all, *Paradise Lost* employed blank verse), but rather the more plain-spoken, quasi-colloquial idiom of many of Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s best efforts. Such would include those conversation poems² that so fluidly record the meditative flow of consciousness catalyzed by one or another occasional circumstance: Coleridge confined by injury to his lime-tree bower while friends walk his beloved Quantock Hills; Wordsworth at Tintern Abbey in the company of his sister Dorothy remembering a prior visit there.

Five years have past—five summers with the length
Of five long winters—and again I hear
These waters rolling from their mountain springs
With a sweet inland murmur. Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
Which on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion, and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here under this dark sycamore³

We readily identify the poetic subject by virtue of two correlative parameters: 1) the speaker’s well-defined location in physical space and time; and 2) the world of thought and emotion—reflections, memories, expressions of pleasure and distress, metaphysical musings—that comprise the interior world of the human subject speaking the poem. Because of these parameters, as well as the relatively natural character of his language and the direct expression of spontaneous thought and sentiment (in the *Preface*, Wordsworth famously declared that “poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling”⁴) we readily identify that speaker as a determinate historical person, the author’s own (auto)biographical self.

We recognize this person as a poet, but not one whose office defines him as a prophetic bard whose mode of experience and genre of speech is markedly foreign to more everyday or familiar idioms. (Indeed, in the *Preface* Wordsworth maintained that, with respect to all but meter, the best passages of poetry are indistinguishable from those of prose.) The same could not, however, be said of epic poets of the past. Listen, for instance, to the opening of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*:

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste

Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
 With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
 Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
 Sing Heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
 Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
 That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
 In the beginning how the Heavens and Earth
 Rose out of Chaos.⁵

The poetics of the two cited passages differ dramatically in myriad ways that illustrate critical features of the Romantic revolution of consciousness. Milton employs a distinctly elevated, vatic tone which includes a traditional invocation to the Muse; his announced topic (“Man’s first disobedience”) is generic and impersonal, and his treatment of it depends upon an established religious mythos. This is a far cry from the seemingly spontaneous personal meditation that Wordsworth phrases in relatively natural speech: “*Five years have past . . .*”

It would, however, be dead wrong to imagine that Wordsworth himself disdained Milton, elevated strains of poetry, or epic subject matter—quite the contrary. The Prospectus to Wordsworth’s *Excursion*—the poet’s unfinished philosophic poem—deliberately echoes his great poetic forefather, but does so with a difference. Like Milton, indeed in self-conscious reference to *Paradise Lost*, Wordsworth begins by broaching the grandest possible subject matter. Even so, his angle of vision reflects the more personal and psychological tenor sounded in “Tintern Abbey”:

On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life
 Musing in solitude, I oft perceive
 Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
 Accompanied by feelings of delight
 Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
 And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
 And dear remembrances⁶

A little further on, after invoking Urania, Milton’s own muse (or—“a greater Muse, if such/Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven!”⁷), Wordsworth explicitly sets aside the religious mythology that had dominated the Western imagination for the better part of two millennia:

Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir
 Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—
 I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not
 The darkest pit of lower Erebus,
 Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out

By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe
As fall upon us often when we look
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man—
My haunt, and the main region of my song.⁸

Thus does the Romantic bard herald a new historic era, one freed from the shackles of past imaginations of the divine and the human mind's relation (or non-relation) to it, pledging to discover in the precincts of the individual soul, and its engagement with the natural world, spiritual horizons every bit as vast—indeed more so—than any evoked before:

Beauty—a living Presence of the earth,
Surpassing the most fair ideal Forms
Which craft of delicate Spirits hath composed
From earth's materials—waits upon my steps;
Pitches her tents before me as I move,
An hourly neighbor. Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day.⁹

Shelley famously declared poets “the unacknowledged legislators of the world.”¹⁰ I understand him to mean that, more than priests or politicians, poets and their artistic brethren bequeath to us our operative images of God, as well as the human being and the experienced world. Poets shape our imaginations of the nature of the divine or sacral dimension of being; who we as humans are in and of ourselves; the character of the universe in which we live; and the all-important relations between these cornerstones of human existence. Wordsworth and his Romantic associates were instrumental in forging the kind of interior subjectivity or psychological consciousness characteristic of the modern human being. Wordsworth does so, however, in a manner that nests our individual human psychology—our personal thoughts and emotions—within the larger compass of an ensouled universe; a world that, even in its natural lineaments, embodies another, patently cosmic and spiritual register of intelligence. A later passage from “Tintern Abbey” provides one of innumerable examples:

For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour

Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
 The still, sad music of humanity,
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
 A motion and a spirit that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things.¹¹

When Wordsworth (and the poets that followed him) chose to write poetry—including epic poetry—in something resembling the diction we recognize as our own, he initiates the bridging of a divide that had, since the likes of Homer and the ancient Jewish prophets, separated the immortal and the mortal spheres. When the poet repeatedly speaks of divine and earthly nature in one and the same breath, when he presents the story of his own life as a kind of sacred revelation, he ushers us into a new world wherein heaven and earth, eternity and time, divine and human nature, are not dualistically split, but intimately conjoined.

Romanticism can be accounted as one of the historic origins of what in our time goes by the name of transpersonal psychology and variants thereof, including archetypal psychology and cosmology. James Hillman acknowledges as much, openly borrowing the defining idea of his psychology—soul-making—from John Keats. I would further suggest that intrinsic to that originative Romantic moment are several essential, and essentially interrelated, features worthy of special note. These are: 1) the discovery or invention of “the personal,” which may be conceived as the subjective interiority familiar to us as the characteristic expression of the individual psyche; 2) the construal of this same personal or individual subject (and their associated psychology) as a fit container of transcendent or transpersonal powers even, and indeed especially, when this subject is functioning originally and creatively outside the bounds established by traditional systems of belief and iconography; and 3) an idea of the transpersonal sourced not in that human subject which nonetheless contains it, but in a universe, or cosmos, understood to be at the same time natural *and* supernatural; simultaneously *sensible* and imbued with divine *intelligence*.

The Romantics were not the first human beings to reflect upon their own existence, or to think, feel, and daydream within a context framed by questions pertaining to human personality. Nonetheless, insofar as such modes of consciousness did not find inscription in high poetic literature—to the extent, that is, that Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s conversation poems represent truly

original types of literary expression—we may say that before these poets these casts of consciousness were not regarded as transmitting high or enduring value; mediating the relation between the prosaic and the sacral, the human and the divine.

Instead, God, or the gods, dwelt above—or below. God might issue commands, admonitions, judgments. The gods might instill a mortal with rage or grief, or lend him wisdom. In all events, He, or They, were powers that commanded the mortal soul from a realm that remained at a significant distance from its own.

It is not that one finds a plethora of gods in Wordsworth's poetry. We do, however, find constant reference (as in the cited passage from "Tintern Abbey") to a ubiquitous spiritual energy or presence sometimes unabashedly called "God," but far more often either left unnamed or addressed by phrases such as "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe."¹² It may sound as if we are dealing here with a kind of panentheism—and to a significant extent we are. And yet, perhaps, a more polytheistic inclination cannot be far from the mind of the author of "The World Is Too Much with Us," a sonnet complaining of the alienation and disenchantment characteristic of modernity. The poem, lamenting our inability to enter into the beauty of Nature, famously concludes:

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.¹³

In point of fact, Wordsworth's own early poetry is full of such glimpses of other, extraordinary orders of being. If he did not typically see or write of the gods, he did frequently encounter their natural equivalents: mysterious archetypal forces and energies at large in the cosmos; uncanny presences exciting awe and often fear, admonishing, inspiring, and shaping his open soul. This educative process constitutes the great theme of *The Prelude*, the first Book of which (*Childhood and Schooltime*) offers several signal examples of the supernatural instruction supplied by Nature.

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree . . .

the poet tells us, proceeding to recount how he, with unquiet conscience, borrowed the humble craft:

It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; for above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace¹⁴

Young Wordsworth then confidently imagines that he, the mirror image of a climber triumphantly about to summit, will quickly reach the (reflected image of the) top of the peak, the bound of the visible horizon mirrored in the water. Yet he is strangely surprised:

From behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me.¹⁵

The chastened boy cannot outstrip the apparition that has suddenly loomed, preventing him from reaching the fluid equivalent of the starry heaven. Trembling, he turns back and restores the boat to its place, but the effects of the experience continue to ripple through his impressionable soul:

After I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes

Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.¹⁶

The Prelude is filled with episodes in which “unknown modes of being” manifest in and through the poet’s experience of Nature, and thereby mold his soul. No matter that these experiences are more often troubling than joyful, or a mixture of both. “Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up/Fostered alike by beauty and by fear”¹⁷ declares the poet, acknowledging that the opposites—fear and pleasure, grief and joy, life and death, the enduring and the transient—are inextricably intertwined in the process of soul-making recorded in *The Prelude*. The unsettling row boat episode is prefaced by a similar recognition:

The mind of man is framed even like the breath
And harmony of music; there is a dark
Invisible workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, and makes them move
In one society. Ah me! that all
The terrors, all the early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes, that all
The thoughts and feelings which have been infused
Into my mind, should ever have made up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!
Thanks likewise for the means!¹⁸

While stony mountain, green vale, and wild sky remain privileged scenery, and solitary excursion a favored mode of expedition, all types of circumstance can and do provide relevant education (the poet’s encounter with a blind beggar in the streets of London furnishes one illustrious urban example). This just cited passage from Book I of *The Prelude* adumbrates a kindred section from the more elevated and self-consciously epic *Excursion*, one that continues the previously cited lines (cf. p. 48) heralding the wedding of “the discerning intellect of Man” and “this goodly universe.” Further elaborating his visionary aims, the poet declares:

By words
Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain
To noble raptures; while my voice proclaims

How exquisitely the individual Mind
 (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
 Of the whole species) to the external World
 Is fitted:—and how exquisitely too—
 Theme this but little heard of among men—
 The external World is fitted to the Mind;
 And the creation (by no lower name
 Can it be called) which they with blended might
 Accomplish: this is our high argument.¹⁹

In recognition and in deference to this “high argument,” it seems we must add one further feature to the three earlier described as constitutive of Romantic consciousness—at least the Wordsworthian variety we are exploring here—namely: 4) that one and the same divine intelligence informs and indwells both the individual soul or psyche and the material world, and that this intelligence in fact fits one to the other (the soul to the world, and the world to the soul) in such a way as to educate the soul and so aid the fullest possible realization of not only the individual human being but the linked destinies of human and earthly nature.

It will surely not escape the attention of the readers of *Archai* that this fourth and culminating feature—no loose extrapolation of this writer’s, but quite explicitly articulated by Wordsworth—expresses the root and founding premise of archetypal cosmology and indeed astrology, which thus may rightly claim Romantic ancestry.

Astrological Context: The Transpersonal Dimension

I will now proceed to some—I hope *fitting*—observations derivative of a fusion of the literary critical language so far employed in this essay with archetypal astrology’s own vocabulary. For given the great claims I have made here for the historic import of Romanticism in general, and Wordsworth in particular (the magnitude and grandiloquence of which Wordsworth himself authorizes), it is only natural to expect the correlative presence of some extraordinary astrological configuration indicative of its epochal significance.

Richard Tarnas devotes eloquent pages to Romanticism in both *The Passion of the Western Mind* and archetypal cosmology’s founding text, *Cosmos and Psyche*. In the latter, Tarnas aptly links Romanticism to the “Awakenings of Spirit and Soul” he associates with recurrent cycles of quadrangular aspects (conjunction, square, and opposition) between Uranus and Neptune.²⁰ The world transit with which he most closely identifies Romanticism proper, however—the Uranus-Neptune conjunction of 1814–29—transpires well after the originative English Romantic moment associated with Wordsworth and Coleridge. An astonishing portion of

Wordsworth's and Coleridge's most significant work (including, in 1798, the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* and the first draft of *The Prelude*; and the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, with its famous *Preface*, in 1800) was accomplished or at least drafted shortly before or right around the turn of the century; virtually all of it was done by the close of the first decade of the new century. The Uranus-Neptune conjunction beginning in 1814 may represent the era of late masterpieces of Coleridge (*Biographia Literaria*) and Blake as well as (yet more significantly) the flowering of Romanticism in the second generation English Romantic poets (Keats, Shelley, Byron) and other continental figures, but it cannot be correlated with the originative moment I am evoking here.

Another planetary aspect mentioned by Tarnas as relevant to Romanticism—the Uranus-Pluto opposition of the 1790s—does overlap with this period in question here. It is, however, less centrally identified with Romanticism per se and, while certainly a significant catalyst, could hardly be considered the primary ground of the whole intellectual historical phenomena I have been trying to sketch, especially as it does not involve the single planetary archetype most characteristic of Romanticism. I am referring to Neptune. Liz Greene writes:

Where the Uranian worldview of the Enlightenment valued human beings for their capacity to reason and to transform society through the power of the intellect, the Neptunian worldview of the Romantic Movement valued human beings for their imaginative and spiritual aspirations, emotional depth, and artistic creativity. . . . If Neptune “rules” any particular sphere of art, it is surely the art of the Romantic Movement.²¹

So then, if neither the cycle of quadratic aspects of Uranus-Neptune, nor the Uranus-Pluto opposition of the 1790s, can be seen as adequate astrological indices of the historic development I have described, does Tarnas's *Cosmos and Psyche* supply any alternative astrological contextualization?

It does.

The concluding chapter titled (quite Romantically) “Towards a New Heaven and a New Earth,” qualifies as Tarnas's own review of the methodology and chief findings of his book as he strives to place these within a still broader astrological and intellectual-historical context. This final chapter, leading off with a subsection titled “Understanding the Past, Creating the Future,” begins:

To approach the issue of future planetary alignments in the light of the evidence we have examined so far, we must first clearly grasp the limitations of the present study. For the sake of simplicity and clarity in this initial survey of archetypal correlations with planetary movements, I have restricted the focus of this book almost entirely to a few major

cycles of the outer planets. The larger astrological picture, however, is far more rich and complex, with many more interpenetrating variables. Of the three principal forms of correspondences described in this book—natal charts, personal transits, and world transits—I have focused mainly on the latter. In that category I limited the above survey to only four planetary combinations, and in those cycles to only the quadrature alignments: the conjunctions, oppositions, and squares. Cyclical alignments having a different character, such as the trine and sextile were not included. . . .

These limitations have resulted in my focusing on certain dominant themes and qualities of the periods examined while ignoring or bracketing other significant motifs that in another context I would have highlighted.²²

This whole passage is noteworthy because, despite the initiatory force and tremendous scope of *Cosmos and Psyche*, it makes clear just how limited a field of astrological and historical phenomena the book actually covers. And, with respect to the concerns of the present essay, the continuation of the passage delivers a consequential pay-off:

To give just one illustration of a category of correlations that we have so far not considered: An especially notable planetary alignment in Western cultural history, one that involved the trine aspect, was the rare “grand trine” configuration of Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto that took place approximately between 1765 and 1777, when the three outermost planets moved into an equilateral triangle, each being positioned in an angular relationship of 120 degrees with the other two. Grand trines between any three planets characteristically coincide with a particularly pronounced harmonious mutual activation and interpenetration of the three archetypal principles involved. Such a grand trine of the three outermost planets occurred only once in the modern era.²³

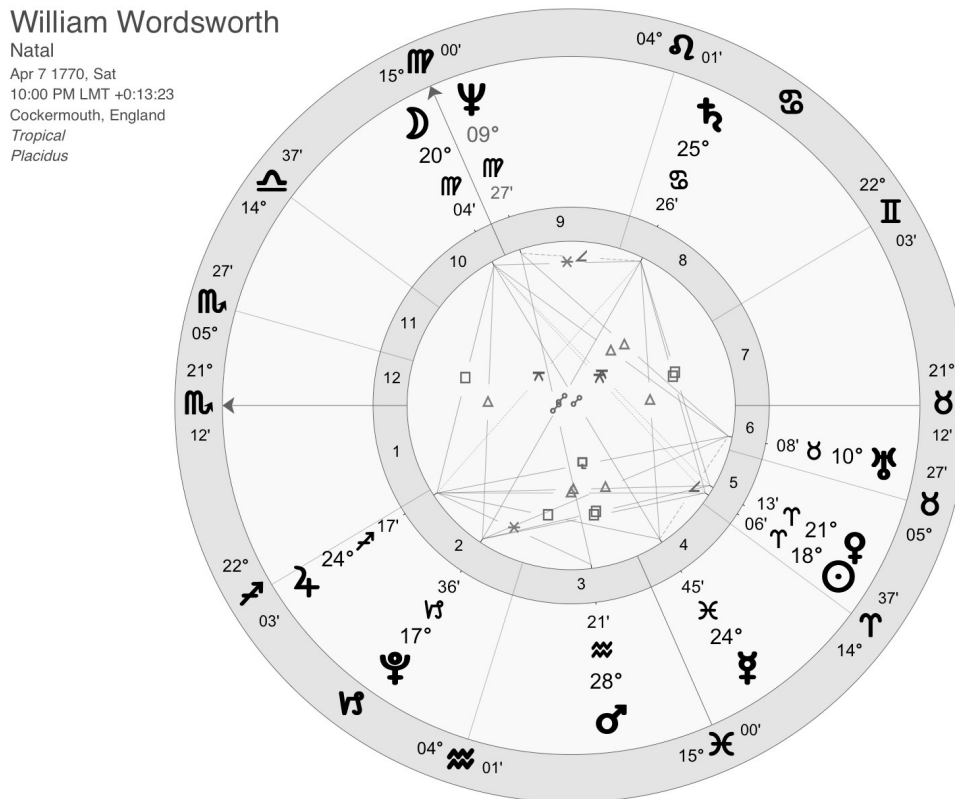
Tarnas continues to associate this rare occurrence with a number of significant, and significantly overlapping, historical phenomena: the climax of the Enlightenment; the beginning of the American Revolution; and:

. . . the great birth of Romanticism in Germany that introduced that seminal and profound cultural impulse into the European mind. From the work of Herder and Goethe in these years emerged a new conception of nature, spirit, and history—and of language and art, intellect and feeling, interiority and imagination, sensuality and spirituality; humanity and divinity. . . . In addition, virtually the entire central generation of Romantics was born during the decade of this

grand trine: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Schelling, de Staël, the Schlegel brothers, Schleiermacher, Hölderlin, Novalis.²⁴

So this grand trine may be our astrological pay dirt: the configuration providing the cosmological ground of the Romantic revolution in consciousness, including the particular Wordsworthian/Coleridgean variety at issue here. Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770 and Coleridge on October 21, 1772. The grand trine figures prominently in the natal charts of both these individuals.

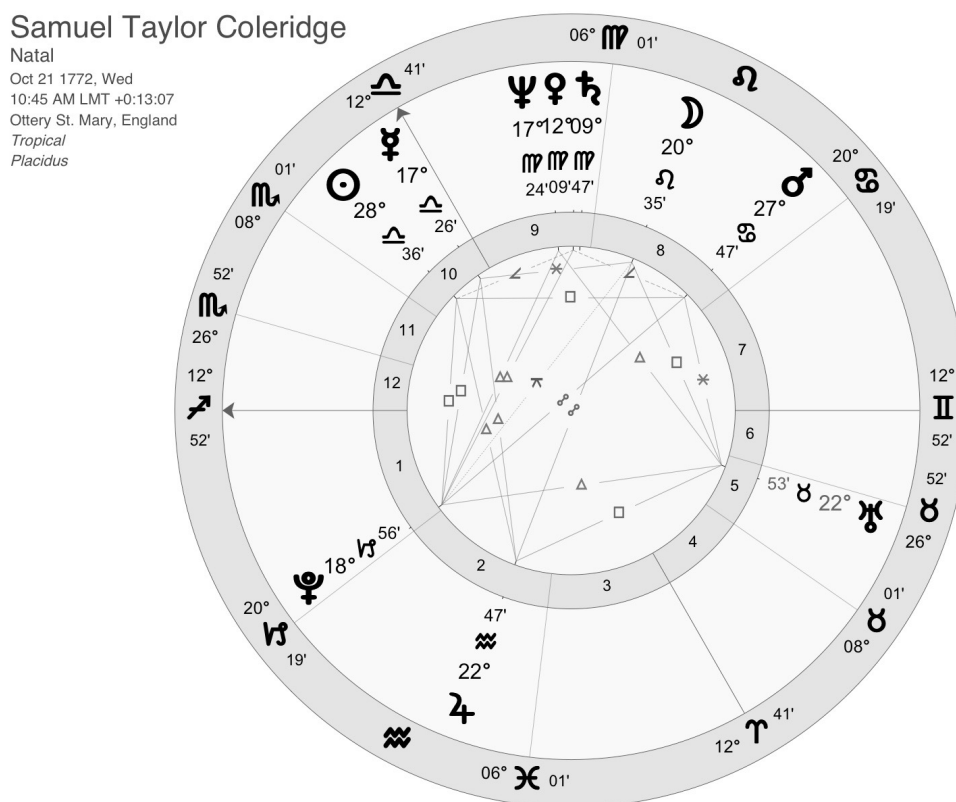
Figure 1 Birth Chart, William Wordsworth



Tarnas continues to elaborate the archetypal energies characteristic of this extraordinary aspect pattern:

The powerful confluence of brilliant creativity and the urge for freedom and change (Uranus), of imagination, spiritual aspiration, and charismatic idealism (Neptune), and of nature, evolution, instinct, and eros (Pluto) that began to enter into the world at this time and was then given artistic and philosophical form by the generation born during this period corresponds exactly to the character of a grand trine involving these planets and archetypal principles.²⁵

Figure 2 Birth Chart, Samuel Taylor Coleridge



An apt synopsis, and one that is borne out by the poetic initiatives represented in the Wordsworthian works already cited here. Indeed, passages of these works already cited provide illuminating instantiations of these archetypal principles—each in and for itself and, too, their intimate and unusually harmonious interpenetration.

The Prospectus to *The Excursion*, for instance, virtually bursts with the Promethean energy characteristic of Uranus. Not content with simply surpassing the creative magnificence of Milton and his *Paradise Lost*—the epic virtually defining the genre for English poets before him—Wordsworth, as we have seen, proposes to go still further, and liberate human creative and imaginative consciousness from the Judeo-Christian mythology that had dominated it for almost two centuries.

This “brilliant creativity” and “urge for freedom and change” of the Uranian archetype is,²⁶ however, inextricably blended with Neptunian and Plutonic registers of consciousness:

Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic Main²⁷

Such words surely evoke the imaginative enchantment and idealistic spiritual aspiration characteristic of Neptune. And yet, despite the utterly numinous and transcendent aura Wordsworth conjures here, we are nonetheless not speaking here of any otherworldly, unnatural realization:

. . . why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day.²⁸

Paradoxically, the ground of Wordsworth's millennial idealism (Uranus-Neptune) is his realism: the natural passion, the instinctual eros (Pluto) that may help consummate an alchemical marriage between "Man" (the human soul) and Nature ("this goodly universe"); between, that is, Psyche and Cosmos.

The ubiquitous blending of Uranian, Neptunian, and Plutonic energies finds especially distinct expression in the invocation of the Muse alluded to earlier:

Urania, I shall need
Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such
Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven!
For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink
Deep—and, aloft ascending, breath in worlds
To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.²⁹

As far as Uranian influences are concerned, we surely need not further elaborate when the poet himself invokes this source of "brilliant creativity" by name! And—qua Muse and imaginative power allowing the poet to hope that he might "breathe in worlds/To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil"—certainly Urania here appears in harmonious league with Neptunian inspiration and aspiration. Yet how does the poet expect to ascend to such virtually unfathomable regions of mind and spirit? "For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink/Deep" This must count as another Wordsworthian adumbration of depth psychology's understanding that the spiritual heights accessible to the psyche can only be reached when transcendental aspiration is linked with a plumbing of the darkest, most inscrutable depths of the soul—a powerfully Plutonic inflection of Neptunian themes.

The transpersonal reach of *The Excursion* can be considered intrinsic to its literary genre. The passages I have quoted from the Prospectus exhibit *The Excursion* as Wordsworth's most clearly and self-consciously *epic* poem. Tradition understands the chief task of the epic to be that of construing the relationship between human culture (typically, a particular people taken as paradigmatic for, or the vanguard of, humankind as a whole) and the superhuman or divine forces ruling the cosmos at large. Thus Milton, Wordsworth's precursor, famously pens *Paradise Lost* "to justify the way of God to men."³⁰ Such lofty, indeed prophetic, endeavors naturally requires superhuman aid: the assistance of some transpersonal agency that grants the poet access to the wellsprings of creation. Thus the typical invocation to the Muse prominent in Milton, Wordsworth's *Prospectus*, and noteworthy ancient epics (Homer launches *The Odyssey* with the lines: "Tell me, Muse, of the man of many ways. . . ."³¹) Ancient cultures that demarcate the line between the divine and the human less sharply than do Levantine or Biblical cultures display the transpersonal tenor of the epic in still another manner, often casting the hero of the saga (ancient Sumer's Gilgamesh, for instance) as no mere human being but rather a demigod.

This focus on the specifically epic character of *The Excursion* provides another means of reading the inscription of the archetypal qualities of Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto in the poem, for the concerted energy of these three planetary archetypes may well be regarded as effectively inherent in any genuinely epic accomplishment. It should be remembered that these archetypes do not merely affect the individual or collective psyche in their capacity as agencies of a world soul, the marvelous intelligence of which finds astrological representation in the world transits that form the chief topic of Tarnas's *Cosmos and Psyche*. Coincidentally, these energies manifest in and through the creative agency of historical individuals who—like the poet invoking the Muse—thereby participate in that divine intelligence. In their most positive and spiritually accomplished function, these trans-Saturnian planetary archetypes can be interpreted as the higher transpersonal modes of the capacities of knowing, feeling, and willing that Rudolf Steiner posits as constitutive of the three-fold human being; modes he names Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition.³² Without elaborating these faculties in detail here, one can say that, considered as an ensemble, they represent the *visionary* capacity of the human soul.

This term crops up frequently in discussions of Romanticism; Harold Bloom, for instance, titled his classic work on the English Romantic poets *The Visionary Company*.³³ Given what has been so far said here, this should come as no surprise: one might well expect the visionary capacity of humankind to manifest with unique power and effect when all three trans-Saturnian archetypes (the imaginative, inspirational, and intuitive faculties) enjoy a kind of unprecedented harmonic convergence. The rare event of a realized epic vision may well qualify as one characteristic expression of such a spectacular confluence, for a true epic is simultaneously a work of intuitive genius, originality, and creative breakthrough

(Uranus); an inspired vision of a new and numinously-charged relation of all things (Neptune); and the heralding of world-historical transformation, an imaginative apocalypse (Pluto).

All this may sound rather breathtakingly cataclysmic. In general, it may be questioned to what degree the transformative aims figured in Romanticism's signature artistic achievements have or have not been attained; in particular, it may be debated how completely Wordsworth himself actually achieved, even on the artistic level, his own epic ends. *The Excursion*, after all, remained very much unfinished: a mere fragment of the great "philosophic poem" that Wordsworth (in collaboration with Coleridge, who effectively turned the task over to his emotionally more stable and less metaphysically conflicted friend) so long hoped and planned to write. Be that as it may, Wordsworth did accomplish enough for us to read the essential lineaments of his epic vision, the most startling and original feature of which may well be, paradoxically enough, the intimately personal center and foundation of any epic or transpersonal attainment.

Further Poetic Background: The Greater Romantic Lyric

I began this essay with a reference to the revolutionary import of Romanticism but proceeded to speak, first of all, not of any grand salvific scheme Wordsworth or any other writer may have conceived but (an apparently rather antithetical topic!) the simplicity of the diction and correlative physical and psychological immediacy characteristic of many of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's most original poems. I have referred to these poems as "conversation poems," but M. H. Abrams, in an illuminating essay exploring the roots and protocol of the genre, rechristens it "the greater Romantic lyric." "New lyric forms are not as plentiful as blackberries," writes Abrams, "and when one turns up, it is worth critical attention."³⁴ I heartily agree, and would moreover suggest that deepening our understanding of this novel lyric kind may materially help us in our effort to elaborate the uniquely dynamic relationship between transpersonal and personal energies that functions as the internal combustion engine driving the Romantic revolution of consciousness.

According to Abrams, the greater Romantic lyric—a genre which Coleridge himself originated—grew out of a popular type of eighteenth-century poem which may be called "the local" or "loco-descriptive poem."³⁵ In reference to this pedigree, Abrams writes:

The clue to the provenience of the greater Romantic lyric is to be found in the attributes of the opening description. This landscape is not only particularized; it is in most cases precisely localized, in place, and sometimes in time as well. Critics have often remarked on Wordsworth's

scrupulosity about specifying the circumstances for his poems, but his fellow poets were often no less meticulous in giving their greater lyrics an exact locality. We have “The Eolian Harp, Composed at Clevedon, Somersetshire” (the first versions also appended to the title a date, 20 August 1795); “this Lime-Tree Bower My Prison,” with the headnote “In the June of 1797 . . . the author’s cottage . . . composed . . . in the garden bower”³⁶

Abrams continues to list several more instances, including “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey . . . July 13, 1798.”³⁷

This description amplifies the first point offered in our earlier characterization of this kind of poem: precise determination of physical site and external circumstance. Yet the origin of the second feature I mentioned earlier—the intimacy and interiority of the thoughts and feeling expressed by the speaker, and so the peculiarly subjective and psychological cast of the poem—can be traced, according to Abrams, back to the practice of a little-known poet, William Lisle Bowles, who transformed the formal conventions of the loco-descriptive poem to render the treatment of topographical features more responsive to the inner workings of the poet’s own psyche. Drawing upon Bowles’ own description of his art, Abrams summarizes Bowles’ revisioning of the local lyric in these terms:

The local poem has been lyricized. That is, Bowles’s sonnets present a determinate speaker, whom we are invited to identify with the author himself, whose responses to the local scene are a spontaneous overflow of feeling and displace the landscape as the center of poetic interest; hence the “occasional reflections” and “sentiments,” instead of being a series of impersonal *sententiae* linked to details of the setting by analogy, are mediated by the particular temperament and circumstances of the perceiving mind, and tend to compose a single curve of feelingful meditation.³⁸

The crucial literary historical point: Coleridge’s discovery of Bowles in 1789 led him to transfigure his own poetic practice and, finally, compose “The Eolian Harp” in 1795 and other pioneering instances of the genre. These poems in turn provided the formal model for what stands as the preeminent instance of the form, one Abrams believes surpasses all the Coleridgean prototypes in complexity and aesthetic orchestration: “Tintern Abbey.”

Let us return for a moment to Abrams’ description of Bowles’ innovations. This passage, headed by its short, emphaticallythetic first sentence, calls attention to an obvious yet enormously important fact I have so far neglected, one foundational to any attempt to construe the poetic basis of the distinction between transpersonal and personal orders of intelligence. For while I have highlighted the epic character of Wordsworth’s *Excursion*, one should—before

any further, more nuanced exploration—register the paramount fact that “Tintern Abbey” is not epic, but eminently lyric in character.

Abrams’ comment on Bowles conveys some of the characteristics traditionally held to define the wide-ranging genre of lyric poetry. Rather than offering any grand vision that articulates the founding myth of a people or of humankind itself, the classic lyric poem tenders a shorter and often sweeter or sadder song, one typically expressing far more personal thought and emotion. Listen, for instance, to this brief beautiful lyric:

I was so happy
believe me, I
prayed that that
night might be
doubled for us.³⁹

The greater Romantic lyric, of course, offers a far more complex train of thought and emotion than these few masterful phrases from Sappho, but the personal heart of the lyric remains inviolably intact in Coleridgean and Wordsworthian instances of the form. Here is Abrams once more on the defining features of the genre:

The speaker begins with a description of the landscape; an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape evokes a varied but integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely interwoven with the outer scene. In the course of this meditation the lyric speaker achieves an insight, faces up to a tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem.⁴⁰

This description ultimately places the accent squarely on the intensely subjective and psychological tenor of the form. At the same time, the objective point of departure, the relation to specifics of the external world, remains constitutive as well. Indeed, as Abrams notes, the epistemology underlying the poetics of the greater Romantic lyric depends upon the dialectical interplay of subjective and objective worlds, or (more simply put) the mind and nature. The interaction does not leave either term unaltered, or ultimately confirm an underlying metaphysical duality. On the contrary, the “mystery of genius in the Fine Arts,” as Coleridge himself put the matter, is:

... so to place these images [of nature] ... as to elicit from, and to superinduce upon, the forms themselves the moral reflexions to which they approximate, to make the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought, and thought nature.⁴¹

Thus two parameters—specificity of external or objective reference, and subjective interiority and psychological depth—turn out to be not (as might initially be supposed) antithetical, but rather reciprocally informative and enabling.

We may here note that an astrological interpretation of personal psychology consists of a like interpenetration and imaginative translation between exactly these two elements: biographical and circumstantial specificity, on the one hand, and inward soul understanding, on the other. And in astrology, as in Romanticism, these two interrelated elements of body and soul, sense percept and inner thought or mental image, are enveloped by—and unfold their developmental dynamics within—a transpersonal, cosmic intelligence accessible to the human spirit. Wordsworth, in his epic tonality, hails this intelligence as the “Wisdom and Spirit of the universe/Thou Soul that art the eternity of Thought.”⁴² But in the more intimate lyric vein of “Tintern Abbey,” he muses more intimately of “A presence that disturbs me with the joy/Of elevated thoughts. . . . A motion and a spirit that impels/All thinking things, all objects of all thought,/And rolls through all things.”⁴³

We have already explored somewhat the astrology of the spiritual or transpersonal octave of intelligence in relation to the trans-Saturnian archetypal ground of Wordsworth’s epic vision. Can we likewise educe some telling astrological correlates of the more personal and psychological register of his work?

Astrological Context: The Personal Dimension

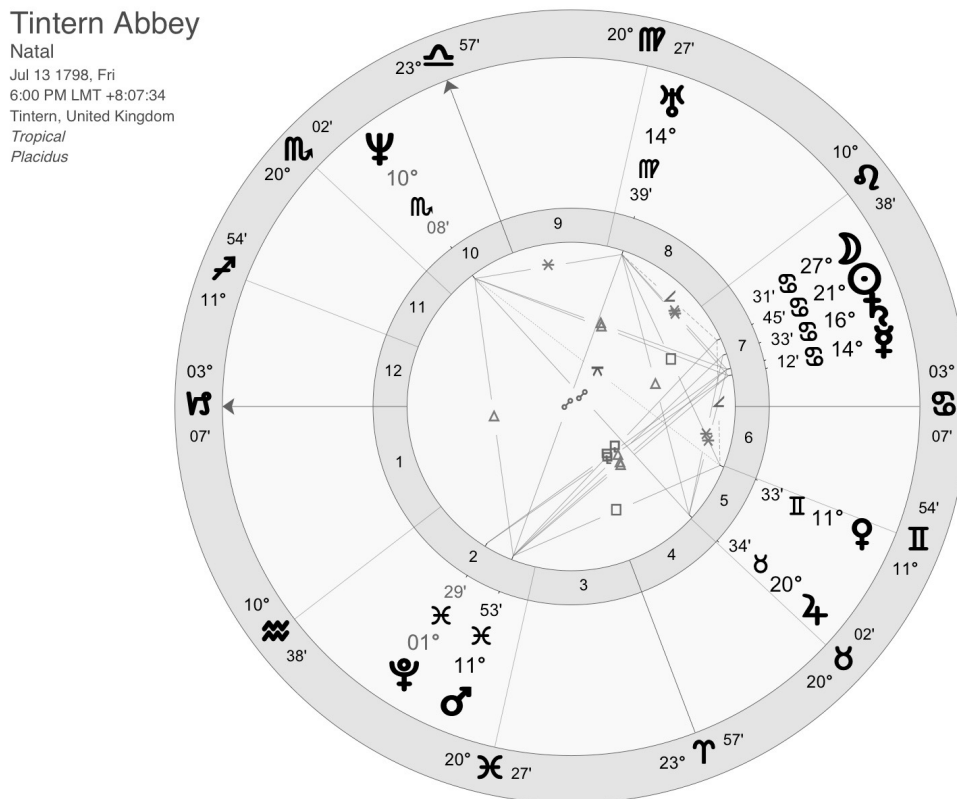
With that aim foremost in mind, the first attribute of the paradigmatically Romantic genre we have been studying stands us in good stead. We can, and will, look at Wordsworth’s natal chart for clues as to what configurations may be associated with the depth of personal subjectivity evident in his work, but the poetical analysis we have been pursuing (our inquiry into the effective force and meaning of generic forms) provides us with what well may be a more specific, and so more productive, point of departure. Given its exemplary status, its consummate embodiment of the genre of the greater Romantic lyric, we may well take “Tintern Abbey” as a case study. We know with certitude not only the date and place of composition but even the approximate time at which the whole poem was transcribed. Wordsworth himself says of “Tintern Abbey”:

No poem of mine was composed under circumstance more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening,

after a ramble of 4 or 5 days, with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol.⁴⁴

According to this account, there was a lag of some four or five days between conception and completion of “Tintern Abbey.” Even so, when we draw up a natal chart, we do so on the basis not of the date of conception or period of fetal development, but rather the moment of birth; the moment that is, that the soul exits the womb and (newly embodied) takes its first breath, initiating its consequent constant interaction with the external world. Correlatively, I take the poem’s moment of birth to be that time when the whole of it exited the womb of the poetic mind and was in fact “written down.” While we do not have the precise minute or hour if, in accord with Wordsworth’s account, we take 6:00 in the evening of July 13, 1798 as the relevant point in time, we cannot be far off from the truth, and will certainly be exact enough for our present purposes.

Figure 3 Transits, “Tintern Abbey”



Let us very briefly encapsulate what we have so far said of the poem and of the lyric genre it illustrates in order to orient our archetypal eye and prepare our view of the chart. In accord with our prior discussion, we would be looking for configurations mirroring a quintessentially lyric utterance; one that unfolds an

inner and deeply personal meditation—a soul-full reflection—yet is nonetheless anchored in its relation to concrete physical circumstances (a bodily ground) and to the pervading presence of an all-encompassing spiritual reality which—even while numinous—remains palpably immanent in nature and indeed present in and to the soul itself. Above all, the soul or individual psyche must be reckoned central: in this lyric form, transpersonal or universal truth—and, too, the effect of external nature—all filters through the portal of intensely personal thought and emotion; intimate processes of memory, reverie, and meditative reflection linked to expressions of sadness and loss, joy and aspiration.

Do we find anything in the chart that may be correlated to the intensely personal (subjective and psychological) center of “Tintern Abbey”? Even a cursory glance at the chart suggests concerted focus upon the stellium of Chaldean planets: Mercury, Saturn, the Sun, and the Moon all placed within 10° of each other. I would suggest that—symbolically speaking—this stellium in the poem’s chart epitomizes the core of Wordsworth’s personal psychology, his own unique brand of a characteristically Romantic subjectivity.⁴⁵ We may consequently further our understanding of the personal pole of Romantic sensibility by elaborating the complex archetypal resonance encoded in this potent astrological configuration.

On purely theoretical grounds, if the trans-Saturnian planets Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto form the core of the transpersonal dimension of human consciousness, it is only logical to assume that the more personal or individual sphere of consciousness would initially be delimited by the next planet in line: the outermost planet *not* Uranus, or Neptune, or Pluto. Naturally, the very term I have been using to designate that trio names the planet in question. While Saturn may not necessarily be the first planet that comes to mind when we speak of the distinctly personal register of psychology, it is indeed the deific power that—cosmologically and archetypally speaking—bounds the sphere of material or spatiotemporal existence *per se*. In so doing, Saturn establishes the basis for life as it exists in the form of discrete bodily vehicles and, coincidentally, the form of consciousness identified with such perishable vessels. Indeed it is Saturn, bearer of the sickle of death that frees the soul from the body at the end of life, which functions as the ground of our *mortal* consciousness; that is to say, our consciousness of ourselves as distinct, historical *persons* who live and (whether or not we acknowledge the fact) die. On a somewhat more metaphysical level, Saturn qualifies as the principle of difference itself—not only the difference between persons manifest in the physical separation of our bodies, but the initiating difference, too, between the immortal realm of universal spirit and mortal human life.

As we have seen, Wordsworth launches his *Excursion* by sketching the outlines of his epic vision; musing “On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,” his poem aims at a sweeping statement of the universal aims of humankind. Yet he remains keenly aware of the difference between his persona as bard and his

existence as a private and decidedly mortal person. If the second qualifies as the indispensable vehicle of the first, this does not elide the critical difference between them. Immediately after introducing his grand subject, our author writes:

And if with this
I mix more lowly matter; with the thing
Contemplated, describe the Mind and Man
Contemplating; and who, and what he was—
the transitory Being that beheld
This Vision; when and where, and how he lived;
Be not this labor useless.⁴⁶

The poet then proceeds deliberately to place this individual—this (auto)biographical consciousness which had never before been seen as a fit concomitant of epic vision—within the larger transpersonal consciousness in which it is embedded and to which it ultimately owes whatever power and authority it may possess:

If such theme
May sort with highest objects, then—dread Power!
Whose gracious favour is the primal source
Of all illumination, may my Life
Express the image of a better time.⁴⁷

Saturn thus supplies both awareness of the finitude and mortality characteristic of our own private or personal being, and (correlatively and just as crucially) the gift of *seeing ourselves* as distinct, differentiated entities, each with its own singular identity; the typically Romantic gift—or curse!—of self-consciousness.

In these capacities, Saturn qualifies as central to the intensely self-reflective brand of subjectivity characteristic of the quintessential Romantic. Even so, a single planetary archetype seldom (if ever) suffices to characterize any significant moment in the evolution of consciousness, and while Saturn may provide the energy of self-reflection so evident in Romantic poetry, it can do so effectively only because it acts in combination with another planetary archetype that both complements and counterbalances the gravity Saturn brings to any given personal situation.

Before we can begin to know or reflect upon ourselves as distinct embodied beings, we must first be and feel ourselves as such. The meaning of “consciousness” in the term “self-consciousness” presupposes the presence of the vehicle of identity or selfhood. Considered within the Romantic context we are examining, the self-reflective capacity of Saturn takes as its primary subject the intimately interwoven fabric of physical, emotional, and mental energies that comprise embodied life, and are associated with—not the slowest of the Chaldean

planets—but the fastest. It is, after all, the *lunar* function that fills the corporeal vessel of life with those varied impressions of sense that comprise the raw material of human experience; the feelings, thoughts, and impulses associated with those impressions; and, too, the *memory* (sometimes acting mechanically, sometimes more actively and imaginatively) that links one sensation or thought or image with another and so supplies the very substratum of sentient or psychosomatic existence itself.

To revert, for a moment, to astronomical and cosmological reasoning, there is good reason to see the Moon as the necessary complement to Saturn as co-creative of the sphere of the personal per se. Since Saturn and the Moon are by far the *slowest* and *fastest* of the Chaldeans (Saturn moves more than twice as slowly as Jupiter, and the Moon many times faster than Mercury), they together define the rhythmical and so psychical extremes (the book-ends, if you will) of embodied consciousness. Indeed, a neat numeric resonance connects the cycles of these planets. The month-long lunar cycle corresponds to the roughly twenty-nine years it requires for Saturn to complete one orbit around the Sun so that the Moon travels in a single day roughly the same distance Saturn traverses in a year.

It should be confessed straight out: *all* the Chaldean planets inevitably play a role, and a vital one, in the constitution of the personal or individual level of consciousness.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, by the reasoning I am advancing here, Saturn and the Moon represent, cosmologically and psychologically, both the outward and inward bounds of being and consciousness within which all other Chaldean planets operate. In their combined activity, these archetypal energies are thus jointly responsible for the extremes of both *objectivity* and *subjectivity*, as such characterize the sensory and psychical life of an embodied individual and, indeed, the *inseparability* of these evident in the inescapably psychosomatic nature of our concrete existence.

Given this truth, it should little surprise that the confluence of these objective and subjective poles of being find concise and original expression in the two reciprocally enabling features of the conversation poem (or greater Romantic lyric) mentioned earlier, namely: “1) the speaker’s well-defined location in physical space and time; and 2) the world of thought and emotion—reflections, memories, expressions of pleasure and distress, metaphysical musings—that comprise the interior world of the human subject.” I encourage the reader to contemplate the integral co-operation of Saturn and the Moon, as such constitutes these fundamental parameters of personal identity, brought first to imaginative—and so conscious—expression in the greater Romantic lyric.

The above train of reflection suggests that the emergence of the unprecedented depth of individual or personal subjectivity characteristic of Romantic consciousness must therefore be in no small measure predicated upon peculiar combinations, concentrations, and empowerment of Moon and Saturn qualities, each individually and, perhaps more importantly, conjointly. A conjunction of these planets, as in the chart of “Tintern Abbey,” surely must be

considered one of the most significant forms of such, and so—given the poem’s exemplary status—supplies relevant evidence supportive of this hypothesis. Interestingly enough, while “Tintern Abbey” is (unlike several of the most famous passages of *The Prelude*) not a moonlit passage, it does include an important literary inscription of the Moon-Saturn duo. In the poet’s address to Dorothy towards the end of the poem, Wordsworth’s closing benediction—the climax of the entire poem—begins: “Therefore let the *moon*/Shine on thee in thy *solitary* walk.”⁴⁹

The central role played by the Moon and Saturn in the constitution of Romantic consciousness is borne out, as well, by Wordsworth’s natal chart, in which context these planets are found in sextile, a planetary aspect of 60° indicative of close, reciprocally defining cooperation.⁵⁰ Nor is it irrelevant that in both Wordsworth’s natal chart and “Tintern Abbey,” Saturn is placed in Cancer, the sign ruled by the Moon—another effective blending of Saturn-Moon energies—and, at the time of “Tintern Abbey,” is strengthening in influence as it approaches its own natal position. Finally, I may also mention that another stellium including a Moon-Saturn conjunction figures prominently in the chart of Rainer Maria Rilke, one of the modern poets whose lifework most potently exemplifies the depth of personal subjectivity bequeathed by Romantic forebears.⁵¹

Such evidence, while suggestive rather than conclusive, must suffice for the present, for I want to return to the unfinished business of interpreting the whole of the stellium in Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey,” focusing now upon the two planets that join the Moon and Saturn in that powerful archetypal vortex, significantly amplifying its power and significance.

It is difficult if not impossible to carry on a coherent discussion of genres of consciousness without reference to the archetypal intelligence of the god Mercury. This is naturally all the more true when the matter at hand bespeaks Mercury’s agency so patently. We cannot, after all, neglect the paramount fact that “Tintern Abbey” is not a flesh-and-blood person but a poem, and so the written record of an act that is in essence symbolic. Correlatively, the self-consciousness we have already identified as central to Romanticism manifestly depends not only upon the capacity for self-reflection, but that of imaginative self-expression (*poiesis*) as well; the one requires the other. And whether we are speaking of Wordsworth’s masterful conversation poem or his more epic *Prelude*, the creative act embodied in the work proceeds by way of the magical medium of words, and the power (half-perceptive, half-creative, as Wordsworth tells us) they wield. The *autobiographical* dimension so essential to these quintessentially Romantic works is thus constructed not only of the reflexivity coded in the prefix “auto” and the “life” registered in the root-form “bio” but, as well, the symbol-crafting literary act recognized in the “graphic” end of the word.

If, as I have suggested, “Tintern Abbey” may be regarded as an epitome of Romantic consciousness, where then might we expect to find the planet Mercury

in it except in close collaboration—indeed conjunction—with Saturn and the Moon?

And finally—last but hardly least—the Sun itself. For if the Moon embodies personal identity while Saturn delimits and re-cognizes it, it is the Sun that supplies the reason for being in the first place, constituting the self as a purposive agency and *authorizing* its self-expression (Mercury) as a meaningful enterprise; indeed, one of central and overriding importance. We could thus summarily construe the stellium under discussion as follows: whereas the Moon-Saturn combination establishes the life of the embodied person who speaks the poem as a *subject* of conscious reflection and Mercury endows that subject with the capacity of symbolic self-expression, the Sun effectively radiates, illuminates, and *christens* the entire poetic enterprise essayed in “Tintern Abbey,” confirming that the *logos* or reason for being is to be found *here*, in the precincts of the individual mind and its life of creative imagination, not (as had traditionally been the case) elsewhere—in God in Heaven, or the redemption of sin through Christ.

And so we do arrive, finally, at the end of this analysis of that Sun-Moon-Mercury-Saturn stellium; I mean the *meaning* inherent in the ongoing life of the poem, the *light* it continues to shine on and for us, as readers; the *raison d’être* or very purpose of its existence. This poem has meant so much to so many. For the likes of Shelley and Keats (who did not know the then-unpublished *Prelude*) it was *the* great Wordsworth poem, conveying more perfectly than most any other the very essence of the Romantic spirit. Coincidentally, it is arguably the forerunner of “Mont Blanc” and “Ode to the West Wind” and Keats’ own great odes. It could be all of this because an archetypal intelligence shines in and through it, imbuing it with a significance that is at once utterly *singular* and *unique* to the incarnation (or inscription) that transpired on the evening of July 13, 1798 in Bristol and—at the same time—an undying source of spiritual life and inspiration. For such, after all, is something like the meaning of a natal Sun: it is the revelatory seed of meaning sown in the soil of the individual mind, and the light that guides the soul-making that in turn unfolds and reveals the divine word spoken in and through a person. Or a poem.

Astrological Context:

The Relation Between the Personal and the Transpersonal

I have so far offered astrological perspective on both the transpersonal and personal dimensions of Wordsworth’s poetic accomplishment. It is time to query if we cannot garner like insight into the crucial question of the dynamic *relationship* between these dimensions as such may be signified in the relevant charts. For only in exploring this issue may we address the real crux of Wordsworth’s

Romanticism, inquiring after the terms of the historical individual's participation in the cosmic or world soul.

The issue is naturally far too complex to admit of definitive analysis in the brief space allotted here. It is nonetheless possible to offer some preliminary perspectives deriving from the aspectual relations between the two chief sets of terms already examined: the transpersonal characteristics represented by Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto (especially as these are unified in the structure of the grand trine in Wordsworth's natal chart), and the personal qualities symbolized by the four Chaldeans we have discussed, most especially the Moon and Saturn, both individually and in combination with each another.

Tarnas's *Cosmos and Psyche* once more provides a highly relevant point of departure. In his discussion of the trans-Saturnian grand trine, Tarnas writes:

Remarkably, during the period when the three planets were in especially close alignment, in 1769–70, three world-historical individuals were born whose lives and influence especially embodied this archetypal confluence: Napoleon, who was born with *Mars* on the grand trine; Beethoven, who was born with *Venus* on the grand trine; and Hegel, who was born with *Mercury* on the grand trine.⁵²

Tarnas thus introduces an astrological contextualization of the topic of the relationship between transpersonal and personal elements of the soul. Although Tarnas here mentions neither Samuel Taylor Coleridge nor William Wordsworth, he well could have, for both poets boast a similarly relevant conjunction. Coleridge, inventor of the greater Romantic lyric, was born with a close conjunction between Venus and Saturn, both of which in turn are conjunct Neptune and thus are intimately involved in the grand trine. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was born with his Moon proudly joining Neptune, straddling the “heaven of heavens,” the apex of the chart—surely a fitting placement for the author of the West's first autobiographical epic.

With respect to Wordsworth's natal chart, it is further significant that the Moon appears in aspect to all three trans-Saturnians (Neptune by conjunction and Uranus and Pluto by trine), Saturn (sextile), Mercury (opposition), both the Sun and Venus (quincunx) and Jupiter (square) and so is directly connected to every planetary archetype except Mars. This fact, in conjunction with its elevated position, certainly reveals the extraordinary influence of the Moon in Wordsworth's natal chart, a personalizing influence nonetheless integrally connected to the vortex of transpersonal energies figured by the grand trine. In particular, the *mythologizing of the physical and emotional details* of embodied life and the associated *spiritualizing of personal psychology* may well be correlated to the Moon-Neptune conjunction so prominent in Wordsworth's chart.

So much for Wordsworth's natal; how do matters stand with respect to the chart of “Tintern Abbey”?

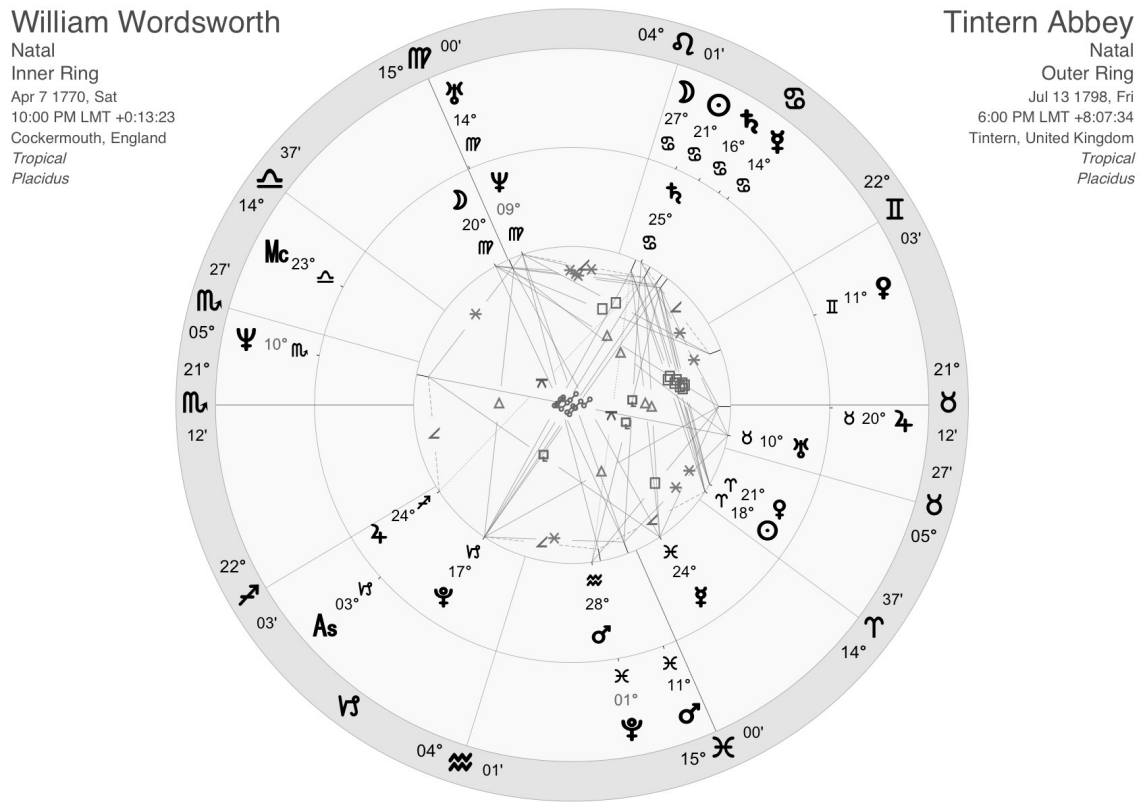
In the chart of the poem, The Sun-Moon-Mercury-Saturn stellium we have identified as the personal heart of the chart itself is part of a powerful grand trine involving Neptune, as well as Mars and (by extension of its own conjunction with Mars) Pluto. This configuration indicates a close and largely harmonious relation between personal and transpersonal energies after a fashion quite similar to that represented in Wordsworth's chart. Here, instead of a crucial Chaldean (e.g. the Moon or Saturn) conjoining Neptune and so participating in the archetypal energy of the trans-Saturnian grand trine, Neptune (and, to a lesser extent Pluto) itself functions as an indispensable part of a grand trine integrating both personal and transpersonal energies in that configuration's fundamental design. Nor is Uranus by any means left out of the picture, appearing, as it does, in close sextile to the stellium of Chaldeans as well as to Neptune.

Indeed, on account of the prevalence of trines and sextiles in "Tintern Abbey," the general pattern of the chart produces an impression of a balanced cooperation that would tend to engage personal and transpersonal dimensions of consciousness in fluid confluence and interchange. No wonder that "the power of harmony" appears, quite explicitly, as one of the work's chief themes. In one of the poem's most well-known passages, Wordsworth expresses gratitude for:

. . . that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,—
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy
 We see into the life of things.⁵³

Nor, with respect to our current theme, is the relation between Wordsworth's natal chart and the chart for "Tintern Abbey" (i.e. Wordsworth's personal transits at the moment of composition) irrelevant or uninteresting; on the contrary. In fact, at the time Wordsworth wrote the poem, transiting Uranus was on Wordsworth's Midheaven and thus in-between—and conjunct—his natal Neptune and Moon. Correlatively, the grand trines in the two charts are within orb and sextile of each other. They thus fill each other out to form a magnificent six-pointed star which we may imagine shimmering in Wordsworth's own inner sky at the moment of the poem's composition. The six-pointed star consists of an equilateral triangle pointing upward interpenetrating with one pointing downward and may thus be construed as symbolic of a perfect integral harmony of the above and below, the natural and supernatural, the ideal and the real, heaven and earth—the chief theme of Wordsworth's poetic vision.

Figure 4 Wordsworth's Personal Transits, "Tintern Abbey"



The Prelude or Poetic Conclusion

Earlier, I proposed a tentative association between the genre of the epic and transpersonal vision, on the one hand, and that of the lyric and more personal perspectives on the other. It is well worth noting that the effective balance and integration of transpersonal and personal dimensions of consciousness so remarkable in Wordsworth inevitably finds inscription in his generic originality. We have discussed his quintessentially epic *Prospectus* and his deeply lyric "Tintern Abbey," but the work most often regarded as his most consequential occupies somewhat of a middle ground. Abrams observes that the structure of *The Prelude* may be construed as an amplification of the formal model and mode of consciousness that Wordsworth first essayed in "Tintern Abbey,"⁵⁴ and thus is an epic poem built upon lyrical foundations—an effective hybridization of these seemingly contrary generic initiatives.

This formal poetic fact naturally coincides with the main theme of the poem, the "high argument" that comprises the philosophic content of Wordsworth's epic vision. Not unlike the novels of education (*Bildungsromanen*) that emerged in the Romantic era, Wordsworth's *Prelude* may be considered an epic of

individuation. As such, it remains distinguished by its depiction (and repeated invocation) of the cosmic and transpersonal intelligence that guides individual soul development, the correlative interplay of the soul and “external” nature, and the depth, breadth, and psychological precision of its rendition of the educative process of poetic soul-making comprising its original epic subject. Wordsworth provides what may be his most lucid exposition of his theme in a famous passage to which I have already alluded several times, but well worth quoting in full here:

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe—
 Thou soul that art the eternity of thought,
 That givest to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion—not in vain
 By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
 But with life and Nature, purifying thus
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying by such discipline
 Both pain and fear, until we recognize
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.⁵⁵

This passage appears in Book I of *The Prelude*, yet finds echo and dramatic instantiation in the climactic poetic episode, the account of the ascent of Mount Snowdon which begins the last (thirteenth) Book. Given the prominence of the Moon in my foregoing discussion and in Wordsworth’s chart, it should hardly be surprising that this heavenly body is once more the sovereign ruler of the scene.

The moon stood naked in the heavens at height
 Immense above my head, and on the shore
 I found myself of a huge sea of mist,
 Which meek and silent rested at my feet . . .
 The moon looked down upon this shew
 In single glory . . .⁵⁶

The episode culminates with the poet’s glimpse of an enormous chasm in the sea of mist and his hearing of the chaos of waters sounding in it, a multimedia spectacle that appears to him a vision of “The Soul, the Imagination of the whole.”⁵⁷

That it is the Moon, not the Sun, that presides over this culminating scene is only fitting, for while the Sun may symbolize the self as a radiant logos and purposive agency, the Moon—the mirroring, imaging, light-reflecting Moon—represents the more personally intimate affections of the embodied soul. It

appears as the presiding genius of Coleridge's own most wonderful greater Romantic lyric—"Frost at Midnight"—as well as other significant scenes in *The Prelude*, including the row boat episode cited earlier.

And what was it, after all, that the poet took away from that experience ("Small circles glittering idly in the moon")?⁵⁸

We can perhaps best imagine by reflecting upon our own like adventure. For reading—a poem, or indeed any work of art—is a bit like borrowing a boat. We steal somebody else's craft and make use of the vessel for our own ends. If, grasping our symbolic oars, we set out confidently expecting to attain our lofty, heaven-scraping goal, we may well be in for a surprise. For the reach of knowledge remains unendingly dwarfed by the dizzying depths of the unknown, and the archetypal cosmos—awful in magnitude—rises up again and again above and beyond the visible horizon.

Notes

¹ The phrase appears repeatedly in Wordsworth's *Preface*, in *English Romantic Writers*, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967), 320–31.

² "Conversation poems" is a term coined by critic George McLean in 1928 and originally denoting a group of eight poems by Coleridge. As discussed later in this article, M. H. Abrams employs a closely related term ("The greater Romantic lyric") to apply to a wider class of poems based on the Coleridgean prototype.

³ William Wordsworth, "Lines: Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," ll. 1–10, in *English Romantic Writers*, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967), 209–11.

⁴ Wordsworth, *Preface*, 321.

⁵ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *The Poems of John Milton*, ed. James Holly Hanford (New York: Ronald Press, 1953).

⁶ William Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Prospectus, ll. 1–7, in *English Romantic Writers*, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967), 301.

⁷ Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Prospectus, ll. 26–27, p. 300.

⁸ Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Prospectus, ll. 33–41, p. 300.

⁹ Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Prospectus, ll. 42–55, p. 300.

¹⁰ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defense of Poetry*, in *English Romantic Writers*, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967), 1087.

¹¹ Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey," ll. 88–102, p. 210.

- ¹² William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), Bk. I, l. 428, in *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 385.
- ¹³ William Wordsworth, "The World Is Too Much with Us; Late and Soon," ll. 5–14, in *English Romantic Writers*, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967), 289.
- ¹⁴ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. I, ll. 388–401, pp. 384–85.
- ¹⁵ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. I, ll. 405–12, pp. 384–85.
- ¹⁶ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. I, ll. 417–27, pp. 384–85.
- ¹⁷ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. I, ll. 301–11, pp. 384–85.
- ¹⁸ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. I, ll. 351–63, pp. 384–85.
- ¹⁹ Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Prospectus, ll. 58–71, pp. 301–02.
- ²⁰ Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View* (New York: Viking, 2006), 353–451.
- ²¹ Liz Greene, *The Astrological Neptune* (York Beach, MN: Samuel Weiser, 1996), 333, 335.
- ²² Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 455.
- ²³ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 455.
- ²⁴ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 455–56.
- ²⁵ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 456.
- ²⁶ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 456.
- ²⁷ Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Prospectus, ll. 47–55, p. 301.
- ²⁸ Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Prospectus, ll. 47–55, p. 301.
- ²⁹ Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Prospectus, ll. 25–30, p. 301.
- ³⁰ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, l. 26, p. 206.
- ³¹ Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 27.
- ³² Rudolf Steiner, *The Evolution of Consciousness* (Sussex, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1991).
- ³³ Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971).
- ³⁴ M. H. Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze: Essays on English Romanticism* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1984), 79.
- ³⁵ Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze*, 84.
- ³⁶ Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze*, 84.
- ³⁷ Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze*, 84.

³⁸ Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze*, 90.

³⁹ Sappho, *Sappho*, trans. Mary Barnard (Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1994), 65.

⁴⁰ Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze*, 77.

⁴¹ Coleridge, quoted in Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze*, 100.

⁴² Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. I, ll. 428–29, p. 395.

⁴³ Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey,” ll. 94–95; ll. 100–02, p. 210.

⁴⁴ Wordsworth, quoted in David Perkins, ed., *English Romantic Writers* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967), 209.

⁴⁵ In the next section, I look at how the stellium so central to “Tintern Abbey” interacts—and powerfully so—with Wordsworth’s natal chart and the grand trine contained therein, and so can well be understood as revelatory of the core of not just this one poem but, to a significant degree, of Wordsworth’s psychology and poetic genius in general.

⁴⁶ Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Prospectus, ll. 93–99, p. 302.

⁴⁷ Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Prospectus, ll. 99–103, p. 302.

⁴⁸ Given the profoundly aesthetic character of the chief varieties of Romantic consciousness, Venusian energies must also be reckoned as central to it. Venus does, in fact, figure prominently in both Wordsworth’s natal chart (where it is conjunct the Sun) and the chart of “Tintern Abbey” (where it is the focus of a T-square involving Uranus and Mars). Jupiter and Mars naturally play vital roles as well, but is it simply not possible to address all the Chaldean planets within the limits of this article. I take the stellium in “Tintern Abbey” as a strategic point of departure, not an exclusive frame.

⁴⁹ Emphasis added by the author. Saturn is traditionally associated with solitaires (e.g. hermits) and, more generally, solitude.

⁵⁰ The “soft” aspects of the sextile and (especially) the trine are generally taken to indicate natural cooperation of the planetary archetypes involved rather than (as in the case of the “harder” squares and oppositions) the tense—albeit often creative—friction of energies in somewise at cross-purposes with one another.

⁵¹ The most relevant ancestor in Rilke’s case would be Friedrich Hölderlin, born, like Wordsworth, in 1770 and so sharing with him the trans-Saturnian grand trine and the placement of Saturn in Cancer. Although there is no dependable chart for Hölderlin, the one provided by Astro-Databank has the Moon exactly conjunct Pluto opposite Saturn. Herman Hesse, another author of deeply personal yet spiritual subjectivity, has, like Rilke, a stellium including the Moon, Mars, and Saturn.

⁵² Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 456.

⁵³ Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey,” ll. 41–48, p. 210.

⁵⁴ Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze*, 83.

⁵⁵ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. I, ll. 428–41, pp. 385–86.

⁵⁶ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. XIII, ll. 41–44, ll. 52–53, pp. 579–80.

⁵⁷ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. XIII, l. 65, p. 580.

⁵⁸ Wordsworth, *The Prelude* Bk. I, ll. 388–401, pp. 384–85.

Birth Data and Sources

Astro-Databank (www.astro.com/astro-databank):

Samuel Taylor Coleridge. 21 October 1772, 10:45. Ottery St. Mary, England.
Source: Quoted reference to birth certificate (Rodden Rating AA).

William Wordsworth. 7 April 1770, 22:00. Cockermouth, England. Source:
Biography, autobiography (Rodden Rating: B).

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