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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Virginia R. Webb entitled "A Comparative Study of Romantic Critical Theory and Phenomenological Critical Theory." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ROMANTIC CRITICAL THEORY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL CRITICAL THEORY

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Virginia R. Webb

August 1979

1397243

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable guidance and suggestions of my thesis director, Dr. Nancy Goslee, and the further assistance of my committee members. I am grateful for the patience and encouragement of my friends, who continue to provide necessary comic relief and help me to keep a proper perspective. I especially want to thank my family and further acknowledge my brother, David Webb, and Forrest Scogin, whose probing minds are always an inspiration.

ABSTRACT

Although the methods of phenomenology have been employed by criticism only in the twentieth century, the critical theory of these phenomenological critics is remarkably similar to romantic critical theory. The concepts of phenomenological philosophy that are applicable to aesthetics and to literary criticism are (1) a rejection of pure science, (2) an emphasis on pre-reflective consciousness, and (3) a rejection of Descartes's subject-object dichotomy.

Drawing on these tenets from phenomenology, this new school of phenomenological literary critics (sometimes referred to as the Geneva school or critics of consciousness) can be compared to the romantics in terms of their critical theory. Using Gaston Bachelard, Marcel Raymond, Albert Béguin, and Jean-Pierre Richard from the phenomenological school and William Wordsworth, Percy B. Shelley, S. T. Coleridge, and John Keats in the romantic period, a point by point comparison of their critical theories demonstrates the numerous similarities.

Both the phenomenologists and the romantics view literature as creation rather than just a reflection of nature, thus rejecting the mimetic theory of art that originated with Plato. The two groups agree further in considering literature as an expression of the poet's assimilating

consciousness (a distinct difference from twentieth century formalist criticism that considers the work of literature as an object independent of its author). The phenomenologists and romantics also agree on the necessity of including an analysis of the poet's consciousness in their criticism since literature is the product of that creative consciousness. Both groups are particularly interested in the creative process, and they posit similar theories of creativity to describe the act of composing poetry. The two groups consider poetry to include both thought and spontaneity--i.e., synthesizing passion and reason. The creative process also represents a synthesis of subject and object--a primary concept in phenomenology.

With its renewed emphasis on the writer of a work of literature, the phenomenological method of criticism effectively draws on a number of other disciplines and demonstrates a marked similarity to the romantic tradition.

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INTRODUCTION

While much twentieth century formalist criticism in America has turned away from emphasis on the writer and the writer's consciousness and has concentrated on the work of literature in an attempt to produce a more precise and objective formal aesthetic, criticism on the continent has taken a very different turn. A group of predominantly French and Swiss critics drawing on the tenets and beliefs associated with the philosophical movement known as phenomenology have posited a system of poetics whose primary concerns in criticism are the author's consciousness and the act of creativity that takes place in the consciousness. The editors of one anthology observe that:

> In the first half of the twentieth century, the perceptions of the phenomena of "reality" became the concern of phenomenological philosophy and psychology. In the second half of the twentieth century the phenomena of the fictive world, the perceptions within that world, the very process of reading and the understanding of consciousness (the author's and the critic's) have become the subject matter of literary criticism as well.[1]

While phenomenology is a relatively recent school of philosophical thought and its principles have only lately been applied to aesthetics and criticism, much of what is said about creativity and the concepts of art and literature

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[1] A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature, ed. Guerin et al., 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979), p. 263.

seems to echo the beliefs of the English romantics in the 1800's as they write about the poet or artist, his imagination and creativity, and the function of poetry and criticism. As the product of an age in which the mind and its processes are open to extensive study and analysis from the field of psychology, the phenomenological critics use a different set of terms to define and describe the aesthetics of writing than do the romantics, yet the two groups seem to be proceeding from the same premises and addressing the same concerns. Hillis Miller, who refers to the group of phenomenological critics as the "Geneva school," proposes that the roots of their criticism may be traced back to ideas found in Romanticism:

> The members of the Geneva school share common sources in earlier criticism. Their work stems directly from that of the critics of the Nouvelle Revue Française, . . . and the filiation may be extended behind them through Proust to mid-nineteenth-century writers like Pater and Ruskin, and so back to romantic criticism. . . . The presuppositions of the criticism of the Geneva school may therefore be defined as a unique version of attitudes toward literature and criticism which are our heritage from romanticism.[2]

Thus, a connection between the phenomenological critics of the twentieth century and the romantics of the nineteenth century is hinted at but never developed or pursued. Sarah Lawall further distinguishes this group of

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[2]Hillis Miller, "The Geneva School: The Criticism of Marcel Raymond, Albert Béguin, Georges Poulet, Jean Rousset, Jean-Pierre Richard and Jean Starobinski," Critical Quarterly, 8, No. 4 (1966), 305.

Geneva critics as sharing "the existential view of literature as a mental act" which has led them to "develop personal, subjective criticism closely related to the development of literary history after Romanticism."[3] A comparison is again pointed out, but is lacking in specific support. It is the purpose of this study to make a point by point comparison of selected critics from the two schools in order to establish the close relationship of thought in romantic critical theory and in phenomenological criticism and philosophy. Such an examination of the two ideologies will also serve to clarify the crucial points on which the romantics and the phenomenologists differ. The three major ideas posited in both romantic and phenomenological critical theory that will be examined are: (1) the theory of literature as creation and also as expression, (2) the resulting emphasis on the writer of the work as an essential component of the criticism of a work, and (3) the theory of creativity as a process combining intellect and feeling and relying to a great extent on intuition, thus rejecting a purely scientific way of responding to the world.

In order to compare phenomenological critics and the romantics effectively, it will first be necessary to define the school of phenomenological literary critics and briefly

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[3]Sarah Lawall, Critics of Consciousness: The Existential Structures of Literature (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 3.

explain their associations with the earlier German school of philosophy known as phenomenology. The school of phenomenological critics is a rather amorphous and ill-defined group, so attempts to classify such critics can lead to frustrating complexities. Each editor who compiles their works and strives to categorize these critics uses a different term to describe the group, which in turn determines a different composition of the group. Hillis Miller says that the Geneva school includes Marcel Raymond, Albert Béguin, Georges Poulet, Jean Rousset, Jean-Pierre Richard, and Jean Starobinski, citing their various affiliations with the University of Geneva (with the exceptions of Georges Poulet and Jean-Pierre Richard) as a common denominator and unifying factor.[4] Laurent LeSage calls this same group the "French New Critics," pointing to the unanimous attention to the work itself--that is to the work and the author so far as he is involved in the work. He asserts their indirect debt to Existential philosophy and includes those that Miller includes: Raymond, Béguin, Poulet, Rousset, Richard, and Starobinski, as well as the following additional critics: Gaston Bachelard, Roland Barthes, Maurice Blanchot, Robert Champigny, Manuel de Diéguez, Michel Foucault, François Germain, René Girard, Lucien Goldmann, Charles Mauron, Jean Paul Sartre, and Jean-Paul Weber.[5] Sarah Lawall defines

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[4]Miller, pp. 305-306.

[5]Laurent LeSage, The French New Criticism (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967), pp. 9-11.

a group that she calls "critics of consciousness" and divides them into "the Geneva school": Marcel Raymond, Albert Béguin, Georges Poulet; and "Later Geneva School": Jean-Pierre Richard, Jean Starobinski, Jean Rousset, and Hillis Miller.[6] Lawall groups these critics together because of their emphasis on the element of consciousness in literature and criticism, and their direct opposition to American formalist tradition and the formalists' "objective" approach to a work of literature. LeSage's labelling of the same group as "French New Critics" becomes confusing and misleading, and a discrepancy can already be discerned in the way the critics are identified and distinguished. Lawall points to their emphasis on the writer as a unifying element, asserting that they all seek to "analyze the human consciousness in literature as its very focal point or genesis."[7] This is a key characteristic that Hillis Miller returns to frequently, and it seems to be the one identifying factor among the various critics that can be called phenomenological. Lawall adds in a footnote that this group of critics accepts the term "Geneva school," but that the epithet originally referred to linguists Charles Bally, Ferdinand de Saussure, and Albert Sechehaye--hence, another source of confusion in attempting to identify the phenomenological critics.[8]

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[6]Lawall, p. xi.

[7]Ibid., p. 3.

[8]Ibid.

Any study of this sort must resist the temptation to include all of the critics who in some way conform to a particular school at the risk of introducing too many variables. Those critics on the periphery of a school or movement, whose works do not completely agree with the general tenets of that school of thought, will pursue other concerns and will exhibit tenuous connections to other schools which would have to be identified and defined. For this reason, this study has been limited in the modern area to those critics considered to be most representative of the phenomenological movement as it is applied to literary criticism, and in the romantic period, to those works most frequently believed to express the theory associated with that period. Among the phenomenologists, critics such as Starobinski, Blanchot, and Barthes are classified as phenomenological because of their approach to language, which further distinguishes them as structuralist critics rather than purely phenomenological. Such critics will be omitted from this study because their inclusion would necessitate a separate examination of the beliefs and ideologies of structuralism. The critics examined here will be those that concentrate more particularly on an empathetic analysis of the writer's consciousness and the act of creativity: Gaston Bachelard, Albert Béguin, Jean Richard, Marcel Raymond. Of these critics, their works that have been translated into English will be the ones chosen for analysis: Bachelard's

Poetics of Reverie and Poetics of Space, and excerpts from Raymond's De Baudelaire au Surréalisme. Richard's Poésie et Profundeur and Beguin's Balzac Visionnaire and L'Ame romantique et le Rêve as they appear in Laurent LeSage's The French New Criticism. From the romantic period, the works examined will be Wordsworth's "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads," Shelley's "Defence of Poetry" (from Shelley's Poetry and Prose, Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers, eds., 1977 Norton critical edition), relevant portions of Coleridge's Biographia Literaria (John Shawcross's 1907 edition), and certain letters of Keats (from Hyder Rollins' 1958 edition of The Letters of John Keats).

CHAPTER I

MAJOR CONCEPTS OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Before comparing phenomenological critical theory as it is expressed by Bachelard, Richard and Béguin and the romantic philosophies of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, it will first be necessary to arrive at some general definition of phenomenology by outlining its major concepts. Although Hegel used the term as early as 1765, "phenomenology" as it is meant today is generally considered to have begun with the works of Edmund Husserl in the late 1800's and early 1900's.[9] Since then, philosophers have taken up various threads of his works and pursued them further, usually rejecting some part or parts of Husserl's initial explorations of man's consciousness and his response to the world. The other major philosophers responsible for defining and reshaping phenomenology since Husserl have been Martin Heidegger, Roman Ingarden, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, William James, and, to some extent, Jean-Paul Sartre. (As a creative writer as well as critic and philosopher, Sartre bridges the gap in phenomenology between pure theory and practical criticism, yet because his philosophy takes a

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[9]Joseph Kockelmans, "Some Fundamental Themes in Husserl's Phenomenology," in Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretations, ed. Joseph Kockelmans (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967), p. 24.

different direction than some of the other philosophers, his works are generally considered representative of Existential phenomenology--a slight variation on pure phenomenological thought.) For the purposes of this study, however, only the most salient features of phenomenology need to be described, as any extensive explorations of various branches of phenomenology would only serve to obscure the issues of comparison with romantic critical theory and are clearly beyond the scope of this preliminary study.

The three main tenets of phenomenology as a philosophical movement that have a bearing on literary criticism are (1) a rejection of pure science, (2) an emphasis on spontaneity and intuition, or in phenomenological terms, pre-reflective consciousness, and (3) a rejection of René Descartes's mind/body dualism and subject/object dichotomy in favor of a more integrated response to the world. The phenomenologists' concept of intentionality rejoins subject and object and views man's consciousness as interacting with the world.

The rejection of pure science on the part of the phenomenologists is best explained by William A. Luijpen in Phenomenology and Humanism as he explains the importance of the "lived world" in phenomenological thought:

> We must acknowledge the objectivity of this lived world. This step implies the renunciation of the claim that only the sciences can speak about a real world; that only scientific thought merits the label of objective validity. . . . The history of philosophy shows us how scientific experience

> gradually took the place of our spontaneous everyday experience of the world; the objects of the sciences replaced the ensemble of meanings of our lived-world. It is largely in Descartes's thought that the lived-world was destroyed in its spontaneous immediacy. . . . His methodological use of doubt is but a means for achieving a privileged status for scientific knowledge. This essentially constitutes the philosophy of scientism.[10]

This rejection of pure science as an inadequate means for responding to the world is fundamental to phenomenologists and has led them to attempt to explain how man does perceive himself and his world if not through science. Instead of "scientism," these philosophers advocate a renewed emphasis on intuition and pre-reflective consciousness in man's perception of the world, or reality. Herbert Spiegelberg describes one of the main objectives of Husserl's phenomenology as "the examination and justification of all our beliefs, both ordinary and scientific, by the test of intuitive perception."[11] Husserl's phrase, "back to the things themselves," is central to the philosophies of many phenomenological thinkers, as it epitomizes the necessity for a more immediate and unobstructed perception of the world. Luijpen further explains this rejection of pure science by observing that

> scientism seeks to replace our spontaneous everyday experience with scientific experience; it also seeks

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[10]William A. Luijpen, Phenomenology and Humanism (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1966), p. 13.

[11]Herbert Spiegelberg, "Husserl's Phenomenology and Sartre's Existentialism," in Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretations, ed. Joseph Kockelmans, p. 254.

> to replace the lived-world with objects of the natural sciences. . . . All phenomenologists are united in their struggle against these misconceptions and they demand that we accept reality as it appears immediately in our experience and without the subterfuge of all kinds of theoretical prejudgments.[12]

Another basic tenet of phenomenology is the rejection of the Cartesian duality of mind and body. Pierre Thévenaz is making a connection between modern linguistic methods and phenomenology as he summarizes the phenomenologists' view of man's existence in the world:

> The most solid point of agreement between contemporary linguistic analysts and phenomenologists is their joint rejection of any mind-body dualism and their concentration on the unitary character of man's behavior as an active unified organism in the world.[13]

This rejection then suggests that man should be considered a totality in his response to the world. It is this rejection of Descartes's mind/body split that seems to echo romantic theories of creativity which seek to embody both reason and imagination.

Phenomenological philosophy also seeks to eliminate the subject-object dichotomy inherent in Descartes's thought. Thévenaz explains that "phenomenology is neither a science of objects nor a science of the subject--it is a science of

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[12]Luijpen, pp. 14-15.

[13]Pierre Thévenaz, What Is Phenomenology? and Other Essays, trans. James M. Edie et al., ed. James M. Edie (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962), p. 21.

experience."[14] This blurring of the subject-object distinction develops into the phenomenologists' concept of intentionality: the assertion that man's consciousness is always directed toward something and cannot, therefore, be considered an entity separate from the reality it perceives. Robert Detweiler explains this concept by asserting that "consciousness is neither a condition nor a faculty but an act, and as such is always object-directed, always consciousness of something."[15] According to this definition, philosophy can no longer be a study of pure consciousness, but must be an examination of the consciousness as intentional, or directed toward something. Luijpen explains that most people seek an objective reality which lies beyond the realm of consciousness, thinking of the world as separate from the realm of thought. The phenomenologists, however, assert that a "world considered in the absence of consciousness is a nonsensical world."[16] Essentially, it is the perceiving consciousness that determines our reality.

Thus, the phenomenologists assert that consciousness is not merely passive; rather, it is man's active ordering of the surrounding world. Luijpen refers to this process of the consciousness's ordering as the active revelation of

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[14]Ibid., p. 19.

[15]Robert Detweiler, Story, Sign and Self: Phenomenology and Structuralism as Literary Critical Methods (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 8-9.

[16]Luijpen, pp. 29-30.

objects, noting that without this revelation of consciousness, man is without any world whatsoever.[17] This primary emphasis on man's perception of the world that is central to phenomenology underlies the criticism of the Geneva school. With an approach that seeks to examine and reconstruct a writer's creative consciousness, phenomenological criticism becomes a discipline in which philosophy and literature become inextricably bound together.

One difficulty in effecting a comparison of contemporary phenomenological critics and romantic thinkers is the fact that Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge and Keats are not only critics and aestheticians but also creative writers. Therefore, their analyses and descriptions of the creative process are drawn from their own experience. John Muirhead points this out when he observes that "Coleridge had reflected profoundly on the process by which the poetic images are generated in the mind. No psychologist has ever had a better opportunity of first-hand observation of it in his own mind."[18] The recent phenomenological critics, however, are considered primarily critics of other writers' works; that is, their observations and analyses concern the creative consciousness of another writer. Though both the romantics' and the phenomenologists' criticism attempts to put into

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[17]Ibid., pp. 31-33.

[18]John Muirhead, Coleridge as Philosopher (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930), p. 199.

practice those concepts that are borrowed from philosophy, the observations of the creative act by the phenomenologists are second-hand in contrast to the romantics who are writing about their own creativity. W. J. B. Owen points out that "Wordsworth's literary criticism springs from his creative writing; it is almost invariably an exposition or a defense of his own poetry."[19] Since there is not a direct parallel in the type of writing done by these two groups, this study will deal with the more philosophical writings of both groups in an attempt to compare their theories of literature and criticism rather than their practical criticism. To compare practical criticisms of members of the two groups would lead in another direction entirely and would introduce a third variable, the work being criticized, which in many cases determines by its nature or structure the type of criticism used. Another difficulty in dealing with practical criticism is the fact that so little of the phenomenologists' works have been translated from French into English.

A comparison of philosophy of literature is justified because of the overlapping of the fields of philosophy, criticism, and literature, especially in the twentieth century. Wallace Fowlie observes that since 1940 philosophy has been encroaching on other fields, especially criticism, and he notes that the writings of Gabriel Marcel, Jean Wahl, and

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[19]W. J. B. Owen, Wordsworth's Literary Criticism (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 1.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty are at times very close to criticism.[20] The close relationship of literature and philosophy is further developed by philosopher Edmund Husserl, who stresses "the significance of free variation in imagination as the basis for exploring essential relationships, and for such purposes, even the superiority of fiction over mere empirical observations."[21] Geoffrey Hartman observes that "if literature joins in the quest for truth or objectivity transcending it, the critic is something of a philosopher."[22] J. H. Van Den Berg explains phenomenology as a study of man's pre-reflective consciousness, adding that poets are the ones who can communicate that which takes place in this pre-reflective state. He further explains the difficulty that this study presents to the philosopher as he summarizes the aim of phenomenology:

> Matters which, prereflectively, were clear, become obscure after reflection. Phenomenology is that extraordinary and pretentious science which tries to solve these problems prereflectively. Pretentious, for how can one think about, reflect on, that which by definition, takes place before thinking, prereflectively? It seems an obvious impossibility.[23]

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[20]Wallace Fowlie, The French New Critic (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. 56.

[21]Herbert Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, vol. 2 (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 417.

[22]Geoffrey Hartman, Beyond Formalism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. ix.

[23]J. H. Van Den Berg, A Different Existence: Principles of Phenomenological Psychopathology (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1972), p. 75.

Thus, phenomenology seeks to return to man's immediate and spontaneous response to the world that is prior to analytical or intellectual abstraction.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPT OF LITERATURE

The first similarity apparent in romantic critical theory and phenomenological critical theory is the theorists' common concept of literature as more than mere reflection. Plato's discourses on poetry and the nature of literature which determined the direction of critical theory up to the romantic period defined literature as a reflection of the real world. Since Plato regards what we perceive through our senses as merely copies of ideas, then his pronouncements on art and literature assert that the work is therefore three times removed from what is "real":

> Well then, here we find three beds: one existing in nature, which is made by God. . . .There is another which is the work of the carpenter. . . . And the work of the painter is the third. . . . And so if the tragic poet is an imitator, he too is thrice removed from the king and the truth.[24]

This attack levelled at poets terming them copiers of copies prompts a number of responses from various aestheticians, but not until the romantic period did critical theory actually circumvent the restrictions of the mimetic theory of art. M. H. Abrams points out that the mirror is quite commonly

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[24]Plato, Republic, in The Dialogues of Plato, vol. 3, 3rd ed., trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), pp. 309-310.

used as a metaphor for poetry and its function, but that it is, in itself, not completely sufficient to define poetry:

> The long survival of the reflector as archetype demonstrates its aptness and suggestiveness as one point of departure from aesthetic theory. The endemic disease of analogical thinking, however, is hardening of the categories. . . . The history of modern criticism . . . may in some part be told as the search for alternative parallels--a heterocosm of "second nature," the overflow from a fountain, the music of a windharp, a growing plant--which would avoid some of the troublesome implications of the mirror.[25]

The primary difference between critical theory in the romantic period and the critical theory that preceded it is the fact that the romantics consider poetry as creation rather than reflection. Wordsworth, Shelley and Coleridge all express the view that poetry need not attempt to copy nature explicitly because it is an endeavor of a higher level than mere mimesis. Instead of being slave to imitation and having to reproduce a likeness of nature or reality, the artist or poet is now considered a creator. As Abrams observes, "The artist, from being a craftsman, became (in a momentous new aesthetic metaphor) a creator, for it was sometimes said that of all men the poet is likest God because he creates according to those patterns on which God himself has modelled the universe."[26] This anti-mimetic concept of poetry can be traced through the writings of Shelley

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[25]M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Critical Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 34-35.

[26]Ibid., p. 42.

and Wordsworth. Portions of Shelley's "Defence of Poetry" actually have phenomenological overtones, as his definition of poetry echoes the phenomenologists' concept of intentionality. Here he explains the relationship of poet, poetry, and the universe, suggesting the creative nature of poetry and the power of the poet to order reality around him. By use of his creative imagination, the poet is able to determine the universe that he perceives:

> . . . poetry defeats the curse which blinds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. . . . It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we know. It creates anew the universe. . . . It justifies the bold and true words of Tasso: "non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il Poeta."[27]

Clearly the role of the poet is redefined here as the concept of poetry is restated. Instead of being seen as a second-rate and less accurate copy of nature and the universe, poetry is now conceived of as an entity created by the poet, existing in and for itself rather than for the sole purpose of reflecting reality. Wordsworth echoes this same notion in his "Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads" when he examines the definition of a poet. Among other things, a poet is defined as "a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than

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[27]Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Defence of Poetry," in Shelley's Poetry and Prose, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1977), pp. 505-506. (No one deserves the name of creator except God and the poet.)

other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them."[28]

An obvious implication of this view of poetry as creative is the location of the material of poetry within the poet. Since he is a creator, the poet does not necessarily draw completely on the world around him for the substance of his poetry. In other words, the poet is now considered to draw on the feelings and attitudes within himself when composing poetry. Abrams asserts that Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow" definition of poetry suggests that "the materials of a poem come from within, and they consist expressly neither of objects nor actions, but of the fluid feelings of the poet himself."[29] Thus, in addition to being considered creation instead of reflection, poetry, according to romantic theory, is also an expression. This idea is clearly asserted by Coleridge:

> Fine arts . . . like poetry, are to express intellectual purposes, thoughts, conceptions, sentiments that have their origin in the human mind.[30]

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[28]William Wordsworth, "Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads," in The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, vol. 2, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944), p. 393.

[29]Abrams, p. 47.

[30]Samuel T. Coleridge, "On Poesy or Art," in his Biographia Literaria, vol. 2, ed. John Shawcross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 255.

Likewise, Shelley says that "Poetry in a general sense, may be defined to be 'the expression of the Imagination': and poetry is connate with the origin of man. . . . the power to compose poetry arises from within."[31] Wordsworth adds a hint of phenomenological intentionality when he asserts that a poet "has acquired a great readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels which, by his own choice, or form the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement."[32] Abrams underscores the importance of this new concept of poetry in the romantic period while simultaneously expressing a phenomenological view of the mind: "By substituting a projective and creative mind and, consonantly, an expressive and creative theory of art, various romantic critics reversed the basic orientation of all aesthetic philosophy."[33]

Thus, the idea of poetry as a creation and also as an expression of a human mind is central to the romantics' theorizing about poetry, and it determined the focus of much of their poetry and prose. Coleridge explains this human element in poetry while at the same time reiterating that poetry comes from within rather than from the external world:

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[31]Shelley, "Defence of Poetry," p. 480.

[32]Wordsworth, p. 393.

[33]Abrams, p. 69.

> Poetry also is purely human; for all its materials are from the mind, and all its products are for the mind.[34]

John Spencer Hill observes that "The germinal potency of Coleridge's theory of Imagination lies in his rejection of passive perception, his recognition of perception as integrative, poetic, and necessarily correlative with feeling."[35] Commenting on Coleridge's philosophy, J. H. Muirhead notes that what Coleridge "felt to be required was first a psychology that would explain the working of imagination as not merely a reproductive, but a creative process."[36]

It is precisely this need for a psychology explaining the creative imagination that the phenomenological critics--Bachelard, Raymond, Béguin, Richard--address themselves to. They are in complete agreement with the romantics in viewing poetry as creation. Gaston Bachelard believes that the image one finds in art is not a copy of nature, but is rather a subjective creation--a product of the preconscious mind.[37] In addition to agreeing with the romantics on the idea of poetry as creation, the phenomenologists are even more vehement in their assertion that literature is

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[34]Coleridge, "On Poesy or Art," p. 254.

[35]Imagination in Coleridge, ed. J. S. Hill (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowan and Littlefield, 1978), p. 3.

[36]Muirhead, p. 198.

[37]LeSage, pp. 14-15.

expression. Generalizing about the phenomenological critics that she groups in the Geneva school, Sarah Lawall says that these critics view "'authentic expression' as a struggle carried on in the mind's interior spaces, and as a mental discipline which seeks to comprehend experience by framing it in language. . . . The criticism aimed at this consciousness sees literature as an act or genesis and analyzes it as a drama taking place in the mind."[38] To Marcel Raymond, what is "most important in art [is] the creative genius expressing humanity through literature."[39] Sarah Lawall further observes that literature, to all of the phenomenological critics, is "an act, a choice of vision, an experience: it is the expression of a becoming personality."[40] It is on this point that the phenomenologists carry their theory a step further than do the romantics. With existentialism and phenomenology as a philosophical background and with the study of the mind opened up by psychology, it is not surprising that these twentieth century critics turn to the consciousness of the poet for the focus of their study. The phenomenological critics look beyond the idea of literature as a expression of a man to literature as the expression of an assimilating consciousness. The poet epitomizes all men

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[38]Lawall, p. 6.

[39]Ibid., p. 27.

[40]Ibid., p. 31.

as he attempts to order the world around him with an active, creative perception. The act of this creating perception is captured in the moment of poetry. In a similar explanation of the romantic theory of the imagination (using Wordsworth as representative) as creative and active rather than passive and receptive, Raymond Dexter Havens points out, "A striking feature of this new conception is that the imagination is by no means limited to poets and artists. It is as universal and as commonly used as any faculty, since it enters into all perception and is therefore employed by every person almost every moment."[41]

Bachelard echoes this universal concept of the creative imagination at work in poetry when he advocates a "study of the phenomenon of the poetic image when it emerges into the consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul and being of a man, apprehended in his actuality."[42] Hillis Miller explains the phenomenologists' definition of literature, while further distinguishing them from other critical systems: "for the Geneva critics literature is a form of consciousness . . . neither an objective structure of meanings residing in the words of a poem or novel, nor the unwitting expression of the hidden complexes of the writer's

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[41]Raymond Dexter Havens, The Mind of a Poet: A Study of Wordsworth's Thought (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1941), p. 207.

[42]Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: The Orion Press, 1964), p. xiv.

unconscious, nor a revelation of latent structure . . . of symbolization within a society . . . [literature] is the embodiment of a state of mind."[43] This concept of literature as creation and further, as expression, results inevitably in a closer examination of the poet than other critical systems warrant. If poetry is the expression of a human consciousness, then the critic must look at that source (i.e., the poet) in order to gain a full understanding of an appreciation for the expression. The phenomenological critics view literature as a self-contained human expression. Though the romantics and phenomenologists pursue different methods, they agree on the necessity of renewed emphasis on the writer. In his general introduction to the issues and movements in the history of critical theory, Hazard Adams sums up the romantic era with a series of observations that are equally appropriate for the phenomenological critics:

> But with the shift in emphasis toward the subjective, the poem came to be considered less in terms of what it copied in the world than what it expressed of its author. The relationship between author and work became a major critical issue. This orientation, including consideration of the creative process, can be seen in the work of Young, Schiller, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley. . . . Theories of creative spontaneity and preferences for feeling over rationality accompanied this development. . . . In the criticism of

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[43]Miller, pp. 306-307.

Wordsworth and Coleridge, inquiry into the nature of poetry merged with inquiry into the nature of the poet.[44]

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[44]Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), pp. 2-3.

CHAPTER III

EMPHASIS ON THE WRITER

The second area of similarity between romantic critical theory and phenomenological critical theory is the renewed emphasis on the writer of a work of literature. The phenomenological and romantic view of literature as expression and creation results in this primary focus on the writer of a work. When attempting to define various critical approaches, one will ultimately deal with three variables: (1) the work itself, (2) the author, and (3) the reader. (Abrams adds a fourth variable, the universe, whose relation to the work and the writer is explained in the previous chapter.) Different critical approaches are generally distinguished by their emphases on one or two of these variables and their relative disregard for the remaining variables. Twentieth century formalist criticism is characterized by its singularity of purpose in dealing with the work independent of social, historical, biographical, or psychological issues. Phenomenological critics, however, point to the work of literature as a product of the writer's consciousness as their primary focus. Sarah Lawall, pointing out this emphasis on the writer, cites the phenomenologists' theory of literature as the cause: "Above all, the critics of consciousness look upon literature as the verbal

transcription of a coherent human experience. Literature, for them, uses the writer's perceptions and skill only to conceive a new, purely literary figure: the incarnate 'author' whose experience gradually takes form in the text. This 'author's' act of consciousness is the 'act of literature.'"[45]

Although the word "consciousness" does not appear in any of the writings representative of romantic critical theory, a distinct emphasis on the writer and his creative act as central to any consideration of literature is clearly apparent in the prose selections of Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. After justifying his exclusion of archaic and traditional poetic devices in his "Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads," Wordsworth then turns to the subject of the poet:

> . . . let me ask, what is meant by the word, poet? . . . He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm, more tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind.[46]

A parallel emphasis on the writer is evident in the phenomenologists' orientation. In an article on the critical methods of Jean-Pierre Richard, Robin Magowan points out the emphasis on the poet and even seems to echo Wordsworth's definition of the poet as a man writing to men:

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[45]Lawall, p. viii.

[46]Wordsworth, p. 393.

"Richard's is thus a criticism of essences . . . to reach the inmost being of the poet himself, as it has projected itself and taken form in his work. . . . Richard's judgments are rendered in human terms. The artist is a man writing."[47] Both the phenomenologists and the romantics offer a more personal approach to criticizing literature than most critical systems employ. Whereas formalist criticism views a work as an "object"--an entity that exists independent of the author--both the romantics and phenomenologists assert the necessity of dealing with the poet and his consciousness, first and foremost, in order to understand a work of literature. Coleridge explains this necessary link between poet and work in Chapter XIV of his Biographia Literaria when he asserts that

> What is poetry?--is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet?--that the answer to one is involved in the solution to the other.[48]

A major difference, however, between the romantics and the phenomenologists in this emphasis on the poet is the fact that one is more general and universal in scope while the other is particular. While the romantics address the question of what is a poet, the phenomenologists center their attention on a specific poet's consciousness and his intentional ordering of the world that is at work in his poetry.

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[47]Robin Magowan, "Jean-Pierre Richard and the Criticism of Sensation," Criticism, 6, No. 2 (1964), 157.

[48]Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, vol. 2, p. 12.

Magowan observes that in Jean-Pierre Richard's criticism, "The man and not the work is being judged, but the man is being judged in terms of his work, in terms of the images that possess him. The point of view is existentialist and human, and not aesthetic, or only secondarily so. The critic gauges the writer's animating force, his ability to give life to his materials, his essential creativity."[49]

Consonant with this renewed emphasis on the writer and this creative process is a view of criticism as creative. The phenomenological critics, pursuing the importance of the poet in criticism, propose an approach to literature that requires an empathetic reading of the work rather than a formal analysis. The phenomenological critic seeks to recreate in his criticism the mood and tenor of the poet's consciousness that is expressed in the work of literature. Hillis Miller explains this new concept of criticism that the phenomenologists share:

> For the Geneva critics, then, criticism is primordially consciousness of the consciousness of another, the transposition of the mental universe of an author into the interior space of the critic's mind.[50]

The purpose of this method of criticism then is to extend and augment what is done in the work being criticized. The critic must attempt to reproduce within his own mind the act

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[49]Magowan, p. 159.

[50]Miller, p. 307.

of consciousness of the poet and extend it into his own creative outpouring in the form of criticism:

> By fashioning himself into the proper replica he [the critic] is able by means of the essential sympathy existing between him and the poet's work to penetrate into the various substrata of sensations as they reveal themselves in . . . the poet's work.[51]

Magowan further points out that this type of criticism is valuable because it brings one close to the "animating impulses" behind a work of art and the artistic effort, thus illuminating "the initial effort of the writer which is to construct for himself a viable imaginary world."[52] Béguin explains this poet-critic relationship in the introduction of his L'Ame romantique et le Rêve: "It is then 'our" experience--if it is true that the experience of poets that we adopt becomes absorbed into our personal essence. . . --it is our experience that I hoped to find in the study that I undertook."[53] Extending this concept of literary criticism even further, Béguin even envisions the possibility of stream-of-consciousness criticism.[54]

Criticism, by the phenomenological definition, is no longer an analytical searching for the correct interpretation or explication of a work; it is instead an empathetic

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[51]Magowan, p. 159.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Lawall, p. 170.

[54]Ibid., p. 67.

process that requires of the critic some measure of creativity and subjective involvement. By this definition, criticism is more a discovery than a judgment.[55] Hillis Miller suggests that the definition of criticism for the Geneva school is "literature about literature," indicating the creative nature of their criticism, or "consciousness of consciousness," pointing to the more intimate poet-critic relationship.[56] Thus, criticism is no longer detached, viewing a work from the outside, but instead criticizes the work from the inside out. Bachelard notes that the "phenomenological method leads us to attempt communication with the creating consciousness of the poet."[57]

This notion of criticism as creative is a distinguishing characteristic of the phenomenological critics, and may be considered a new approach to literature that is original with them. Although the romantics do not posit a theory of criticism as creative, their preference for a certain amount of subjectivity and personal involvement in criticism is apparent. Coleridge begins his criticism of Shakespeare, "Shakespeare's Judgment Equal to his Genius," with a more personal description of Shakespeare's genius, rather than offering any sort of formal explication of his

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[55]LeSage, p. 5.

[56]Miller, p. 305.

[57]Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie, trans. Daniel Russell (New York: The Orion Press, 1969), p. 1.

works. In a letter to John Taylor (February 27, 1818), Keats voices an opinion similar to the phenomenologists' advocation of critic identifying with poet:

> I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by singularity--it should strike the reader as a working of his own highest thoughts and appear almost a remembrance.[58]

Keats's idea is remarkably similar to Bachelard's explanation of empathetic reading:

> The psychological nuance: "I should have written that," establishes us as phenomenologists of reading.[59]

Elaborating on the poet-critic relationship, Bachelard explains in more detail how this identification with a poet is effected, and he also reasserts the expression theory of literature dealt with in the previous chapter:

> The image offered us by reading the poem now becomes really our own. It has been given us by another, but we begin to have the impression that we could have created it. It becomes a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses; in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a becoming of our being. Here expression creates being.[60]

Bachelard is also pointing out the relationship between the two functions of poetry (creation and expression) that the romantics do not exactly clarify.

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[58]John Keats, February 27, 1818, letter to John Taylor, in The Letters of John Keats, vol. 1, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 238.

[59]Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, p. 21.

[60]Ibid., p. xix.

The phenomenologists' advocacy of creative involvement with the author of a work might seem to suggest that their criticism is actually biographical (because of the emphasis of writer rather than formal aspects of a work) or psychological (because of emphasis on the writer's consciousness). However, phenomenological criticism can be differentiated as separate from either of these two approaches. It is not a writer's personal life that the critic seeks to reconstruct; it is his consciousness or intentionality when perceiving the world. Bachelard demonstrates actually a rejection of the writer's biography as he explains that the poet's reverie and the product of his reverie are the subject of critical study:

> What can be the use of a biography which tells us the past, the heavy past of the poet?[61]

It is the poetic image and its moment of creation that the phenomenological critic seeks to explain, since this moment or act is, by their definition, the essence of a work. Paraphrasing Raymond's theories, Sarah Lawall says that "a reader's task is to become so intimate with a work that, under the guidance of a 'central intuition,' he is able to approach this same process [artist's creation] and to appreciate the necessity of its various figures of speech."[62] Examining Raymond's works on Rousseau, Lawall concludes that

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[61]Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie, p. 8.

[62]Lawall, p. 25.

it is "Rousseau the embodied author who is uppermost and not Rousseau the historical person."[63] Béguin also makes a distinction between phenomenological criticism and the existing approaches. In an article in Esprit, he says that criticism had too long been deformed to serve history, psychology or sociology.[64] The phenomenological critics are interested in a more basic approach that deals with the work of literature and the creating consciousness that it represents.

Just as it can be separated from biographical criticism, the phenomenological approach to literature can also be distinguished from psychological criticism. Although phenomenological criticism, which has as its focal point the writer's creativity and act of consciousness, must rely on psychology at some points, it cannot be termed psychological criticism. Again, the critic is concerned with the poet existing in his works rather than with his personality. Bachelard points out the inadequacy of psychology's scientific approach when dealing with literature:

> In all psychological research, we can, of course, bear in mind psychoanalytical methods for determining the personality of a poet and thus find a measure of the pressures--but above all of the oppressions--that a poet has been subjected to in the course of his life. But the poetic act itself, the sudden flare-up of being in the imagination, are inaccessible to such investigations.[65]

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[63]Ibid., p. 28.

[64]Albert Béguin, in Esprit (March 1955), as quoted in LeSage, p. 47.

[65]Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, pp. xiii-xiv.

Bachelard further distinguishes phenomenological criticism from psychological criticism when he points out that the poetic "reverie" he seeks to define is not the same as the nocturnal dreams that psychologists study in order to learn about one's personality. He proposes that it is by applying the methods of phenomenology that one can make the distinction between dream and reverie: dream refers to the nocturnal wanderings of the mind, and reverie to the pre-reflective, intuitive state of consciousness wherein man is best able to respond to the world.[66] This distinction between dream and reverie then further demonstrates how phenomenological criticism varies from psychological criticism. Whereas psychologists are concerned with the subconscious (that which a person is unaware of) and the way the subconscious is revealed in dreams, the phenomenologists focus their attention on the pre-conscious state of mind--the state of mind that a poet is especially aware of.

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[66]Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie, p. 10.

CHAPTER IV

POET'S CREATIVE PROCESS

In addition to agreeing on the necessity of examining the writer as part of a work of literature, the romantics and phenomenologists also express similar theories concerning the creative process of the poet. After having established that both groups consider literature as an expression of the poet's consciousness or of his inner feelings, it would seem logical that both groups also seek to explain how this act of expression on the part of the poet takes place. The romantics are known for their vivid descriptions of the creative process that invariably emphasize the spontaneity and the intuitive, pre-reflective attitude that they associate with the writing of poetry. The most often repeated of these definitions is, of course, Wordsworth's assessment of poetry that has very nearly come to represent the romantic idea of creativity: "For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."[67] Another assessment of the creative process that echoes this involuntary element of writing poetry is Keats's observation of how poetry should occur in the poet's mind. Keats reiterates the spontaneous aspect and introduces a new simile to describe the instinctive nature of poetry:

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[67]Wordsworth, p. 387.

> if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all.[68]

Likewise, Shelley repeats the necessity of spontaneity in the process of composing poetry, offering yet another metaphor that suggests along with the spontaneity, the transitory nature of the inspiration that underlies creativity:

> Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry." The greatest poet cannot even say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power rises from within, like the color of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure.[69]

Shelley is also pointing out the difference between poetic endeavor and the more rational disciplines.

These descriptions of the creative process by the romantics should next be compared to the phenomenologists' view of the creative process. The phenomenologists share the view that poetry is spontaneous, or in their more modern terms, the product of pre-reflective consciousness and intuition. This similarity between the two groups is evident when one compares the romantic definitions with Bachelard's metaphor for "the poetic act itself, sudden image, the flare-up of being in the imagination."[70] Along with this

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[68]Keats, February 27, 1818 letter to John Taylor, in The Letters of John Keats, vol. 1, pp. 238-239.

[69]Shelley, "Defence of Poetry," pp. 503-504.

[70]Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, p. xiv.

notion of creativity as spontaneous is the implication that it is not wholly within the control of the poet-creator. The whimsical and fleeting nature of the inspiration behind the creative act is implicit in Shelley's metaphor of the "fading coal" (see above). The same idea is the theme of his "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty":

> The awful shadow of some unseen Power
> Floats though unseen amongst us,--visiting
> This various world with as inconstant wing
> As summer winds that creep from flower to flower.
> Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
> It visits with inconstant glance
> Each human heart and countenance;
> Like hues and harmonies of evening,--
> Like clouds in starlight widely spread,--
> Like memory of music fled,--
> Like aught that for its grace may be
> Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.[71]

Once again, Bachelard echoes the romantics--here, in their suggestion that the inspiration that spurs the creative act is uncertain, fleeting, and sometimes wholly beyond the poet's grasp: "Forces are manifested in poems that do not pass through the circuits of knowledge."[72]

Since the poetic act, according to the phenomenologists and the romantics, should be spontaneous, "a flare-up of being," it must be the product of a non-intellectualized, pre-reflective state of consciousness. Bachelard explains that "the poetic image, in its simplicity, has no need of

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[71]Shelley, "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," in Shelley's Prose and Poetry, p. 93.

[72]Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, p. xvii.

scholarship. It is the property of a naive consciousness; in its expression, it is youthful language."[73] This non-intellectual, naive consciousness that Bachelard posits as necessary for the flare-up of the poetic image is termed "reverie":

> All the senses awaken and fall into harmony in poetic reverie. Poetic reverie listens to this polyphony of the senses, and the poetic consciousness must record it. The poetic image is suited to what Friedrich Schlegel said of language: it is "spontaneous creation." It is such élans of the imagination which the phenomenologists of imagination must try to revive.[74]

The reverie that Bachelard proposes as essential for the composition of poetry bears a striking resemblance to Wordsworth's description of the state of mind necessary for creativity:

> I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins.[75]

Although both the phenomenologists and romantics demand that poetry be spontaneous and natural--the expression of feelings of consciousness--this is not to say that

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[73]Ibid., p. xv.

[74]Friedrich Schlegel, De l'origine du langage, 3rd ed., trans. Ernest Renan, 1859, p. 100, as quoted in Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie, p. 6.

[75]Wordsworth, pp. 400-401.

poetry should be mindless and simplistic. The romantics are frequently charged with producing works that are the product of emotions only and are therefore less valid because they do not involve the intellect or reason. Those who share this view of romantic poets are guilty of a superficial reading of their works, because a thoughtful, meticulous reading of their theory will demonstrate that the concept of poetry represents a synthesis of both thought and feeling. Several of the romantics posit this theory that poetry should incorporate both the powers of the intellect and the emotion or passion of inspiration. Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow" definition is qualified in the sentence that follows, pointing to the necessity of thought as well:

> For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply.[76]

Similarly, Coleridge also proposes that both intellect and feeling have a place in poetry. Instead of seeing the two as separate enterprises of the mind, Coleridge seems to suggest that the two are interdependent. The three excerpts below from Coleridge's letters bear testimony to this synthesis of reason and passion:

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[76]Ibid., pp. 387-388.

> A poet's Heart and Intellect should be combined, intimately combined and unified.[77]

> My opinion is this--that deep Thinking is attainable only by a man of deep Feeling. . . .[78]

> I feel strongly, and I think strongly; but I seldom feel without thinking or think without feeling. . . . My philosophical opinions are blended with, or deduced from, my feelings. . . .[79]

This interrelation of thought and feeling and the need for a more spontaneous, intuitive attitude that the romantics refer to are central to phenomenological philosophy. The phenomenological philosophers stress the necessity for a more spontaneous and intuitive realization of the world, arguing that man's immediate perception of the world rather than a scientific analysis is the only true reality there is. Maurice Merleau-Ponty explains Husserl's phrase, "back to the things themselves," by saying that "To return to the things themselves is to return to that which precedes knowledge."[80] The immediate, intuitive consciousness that the romantics posit as essential for composing poetry is necessary for man's perception of himself and his reality.

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[77]Coleridge, September 1802 letter to William Sotheby, in Imagination in Coleridge, ed. J. S. Hill, p. 44.

[78]Coleridge, March 23, 1801 letter to Thomas Poole, in Imagination in Coleridge, ed. J. S. Hill, p. 35.

[79]Coleridge, December 1796 letter to Thelwall, in Imagination in Coleridge, ed. J. S. Hill, p. 12.

[80]Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "What Is Phenomenology?" in Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretations, ed. Joseph Kockelmans, p. 359.

Robert Detweiler explains that although the concept of intuition is rather poorly defined in phenomenological philosophy, it should be considered not as a mystical faculty, but as "an attitude of utter openness combined with persistent thinking-back . . . that leads one to original perceptions of the world."[81] The synthesis of emotion and reason can also be seen in Merleau-Ponty's thought, as Wallace Fowlie explains that Merleau-Ponty sought to avoid the two extremes of either a total dependence on reason or a total exclusion of reason.[82]

Another basic tenet of phenomenological philosophy evident in the romantics' concept of creativity is the synthesis of subject and object. Both groups seem to be reacting against the philosophy of Descartes that posits a consciousness that must first be aware of itself before being aware of the world. "Descartes and Kant detached the subject, or consciousness by showing that I could not possibly apprehend anything as existing unless I first of all experience myself in the act of apprehending it."[83] The phenomenological philosophers seek to rejoin subject (perceiver) and object (the thing perceived) and prove that the two do not exist independently. Abrams notes this same

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[81]Detweiler, p. 10.

[82]Fowlie, p. 69.

[83]Merleau-Ponty, p. 359.

predilection in romantic thought when he asserts that the romantics' concept of a projective and creative mind

> . . . was an essential part of the attempt to revitalize the material and mechanical universe which had emerged from the philosophy of Descartes and Hobbes. . . . It was at the same time an attempt to overcome the sense of man's alienation from the world by healing the cleavage between subject and object.[84]

Coleridge points out the necessity for a subject-object synthesis when he describes man's act of perception:

> All knowledge rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject. . . . For we can know only that which is true: . . . and the truth is universally placed in the coincidence of the thought with the thing, of the representation with the object present.[85]

Whereas the phenomenologists assert the importance of man's interactive perception of reality, Coleridge calls the object that is perceived "nature" instead of reality. Translating and adding to Schelling's System of Transcendentalism and Idealism, he then proceeds to explain the interdependence of subject and object:

> Now the sum of that which is merely objective we will henceforth call nature, confining the term to its passive and material sense, as comprising all the phenomena by which its existence is made known to us. On the other hand the sum of all that is subjective, we may comprehend in the name of self or intelligence. . . . Now in all acts of positive knowledge there is required a reciprocal concurrence of both, namely of the conscious being, and of that which is in itself unconscious. . . . During the act of knowledge itself, the objective and

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[84]Abrams, p. 69.

[85]Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, vol. 1, p. 359.

> subjective are so instantly united, that we cannot determine to which of the two the priority belongs.[86]

Coleridge extends this idea of joining subject and object to literature and to his theories of creativity. Hazard Adams notes that Coleridge sees the artist joining subject and object in an act "analogous to God's creative," and thus represents man's ability to "reconcile himself with nature."[87] In his "On Poesy or Art," Coleridge explains the application of this theory to poetry:

> In every work of art there is a reconcilement of the external with the internal; the conscious is so impressed on the unconscious as to appear in it. . . . He who combines the two is the man of genius; and for that reason he must partake of both. Hence there is in genius itself an unconscious activity; nay that is the genius of the man of genius.[88]

It was Descartes's subject-object dualism that separated man from nature and reality, and Coleridge observes that this rejoining of subject and object is the poet's method of reconciling man to nature. He repeats a phenomenological view of man's mind as intentional, as he notes the ability of poetry to project the ideas of man onto the reality he perceives. This is the meaning-giving process of intentionality:

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[86]Ibid.

[87]Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams, p. 451.

[88]Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, vol. 2, p. 258.

> It is, therefore, the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into everything which is the object of his contemplation; color, form, motion, and sound are the elements which it combines, and it stamps them into unity.[89]

The idea of joining subject and object is central to phenomenological philosophy, as it seeks to redefine Descartes's cogito. Robert Detweiler points out that "the insights of phenomenological intuition . . . result from the unified effort of undifferentiated subject and object."[90] In other words, man must be an active, participating consciousness that is one with reality. The notion of man as participating in the shaping of reality is explained by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty as "intentionality," meaning that consciousness is always directed toward something and cannot be separately conscious of itself, as Descartes proposed. Kockelmans explains Husserl's intentionality as "an act that gives meaning. Thinking itself first gives meaning to the object."[91] He goes on to explain that man's perception actually determines the object perceived, which is the definition of intentionality: "the character of . . . [an] object is co-determined by the character of the act in which

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[89]Ibid., p. 253.

[90]Detweiler, p. 10.

[91]Kockelmans, "Some Fundamental Themes in Husserl's Phenomenology," p. 34.

the object appears."[92] Intentionality is succinctly defined by Remy Kwant interpreting Merleau-Ponty's philosophy: ". . . being, reality, is accessible to us only by virtue of our unveiling presence."[93]

The concept of intentionality is applied to aesthetics when Bachelard describes the poet's projecting consciousness: "In the field of imagination . . . images that are thought to be taken from the world about us yet are only projections of an obscure soul [poet]."[94] In two more instances Bachelard asserts the poet's intentionality in ordering the world around him:

> I shall prove that imagination augments the values of reality.[95]
>
> The task remains for the mind to make systems, to arrange diverse experiences in order to attempt to understand the universe.[96]

With a knowledge of intentionality in the modern phenomenological sense, it is interesting to note that the romantics' idea of the poet's relationship to the world around him is phenomenologically intentional. Echoing the phenomenologists' descriptions of a creative and directed

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[92]Ibid.

[93]Remy Kwant, "Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology," in Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretations, ed. Joseph Kockelmans, p. 388.

[94]LeSage, p. 163.

[95]Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, p. 3.

[96]Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie, p. 14.

perception, Abrams says that "What is distinctive in the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge is not the attribution of a life and soul to nature, but the repeated formulations of this outer life as a contribution of, or else as in constant reciprocation with the life and soul of man the observer."[97] The romantics themselves assert the intentionality of the poet's consciousness. Shelley observes that "all things exist as they are perceived; at least in relation to the percipient."[98] Shelley's analogue of the Aeolian lyre can actually be interpreted as a metaphor describing phenomenological intentionality, since he points out the active role of man in producing "harmony" rather than just the sound of the lyre by itself:

> Man is an instrument over which a series of external impressions are driven, like the alterations of an ever-changing wind over an Aeolian lyre. . . . But there is a principle within the human being, and perhaps within all sentient beings which acts otherwise than in the lyre, and produces not melody alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them.[99]

Bachelard relates Shelley to phenomenological philosophy when he observes that "the real world is absorbed by the imaginary world. Shelley gives us a veritable phenomenological

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[97]Abrams, p. 64.

[98]Shelley, "Defence of Poetry," p. 506.

[99]Ibid., p. 480.

theorem when he says that imagination is capable of 'making us create what we see.'"[100]

The creative powers of the imagination are similarly pointed out by Coleridge and Wordsworth. Coleridge observes that the second of "two cardinal points of poetry [is] . . . the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of the imagination."[101] Coleridge's definition of the poet's imagination can be seen as that faculty which is intentional, in phenomenological terms:

> The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other. . . . He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends, and (as it were) fuses each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name imagination.[102]

John Spencer Hill attributes Coleridge's theory of imagination as an ordering and shaping power to his reaction against the philosophers who term the mind as mechanical and uncreative.[103] Wordsworth also expresses a similar intentional theory of the imagination as capable of ordering and determining that which it perceives:

> The principal object, then, proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and . . . to throw over them a certain

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[100]Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie, p. 13.

[101]Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, vol. 2, p. 364.

[102]Ibid.

[103]Imagination in Coleridge, ed. J. S. Hill, p. 3.

> coloring of imagination whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect.[104]

Thus, by virtue of their joint reaction against the subject-object dichotomy in Descartes and the prevailing theories of the mind or consciousness as passive rather than creative, both the phenomenologists and the romantics express their theories of intentionality. One difference that should be pointed out, however, is in the way in which both groups refer to man's intentionality or creative consciousness. The romantics view this ordering and shaping faculty (imagination) as rather mystical and inspirational, attributing it only to poets or those with poetic sensibility. The phenomenologists, on the other hand, assert that the creativity of man's consciousness is an everyday event, saying that man's pre-reflective consciousness is constantly ordering, shaping, and determining by his own perception the world in which he lives.

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[104]Wordsworth, p. 386.

CHAPTER V

POETRY IN RELATION TO SCIENCE

After these three areas in which the romantics and phenomenologists share similar views have been established, the question arises as to why there are so many striking affinities between the two groups. The primary reason for their similar philosophies is the fact that both may be seen as rebelling against the same narrowly scientific attitude begun with Descartes and perpetuated by various philosophers and disciplines through to the twentieth century. For both the phenomenologists and the romantics critical theory is in many respects an effort to reassert the validity of poetry--a seemingly emotional endeavor--in a world of science and in the twentieth century, technology, where reason and analytical thought are often considered to be superior and more intellectually demanding than poetry and the arts. Among the romantics, the rejection of pure science is usually accompanied by an explanation of the role and function of poetry in culture. This attempt to justify poetry in the face of science and reason is clear in Wordsworth's "Preface." He also explains the task of the poet to be of a more humanistic and therefore superior attitude than the man of science:

> The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his

> solitude. The poet, singing a song in which all human beings rejoice with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science. . . . poetry is the first and last of all knowledge.[105]

Coleridge distinguishes poetry from science by assigning poetry the immediate objective of pleasure rather than truth.[106] Shelley offers another distinction between science and poetry when he points out the descriptive nature of science as opposed to the creative aspect of poetry: "Reason is the enumeration of qualities already known; imagination is the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. . . . Reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things."[107] In this statement Shelley provides an almost existentialist concept of the imagination as the meaning-giver--the faculty of man's mind which assigns meaning to an otherwise meaningless world. In his "Defence of Poetry," Shelley seeks to legitimize poetry to those who hold reason in higher esteem:

> But poets have been challenged to resign the civic crown to reasoners and mechanists on another plea. It is admitted that the exercise of the imagination is most delightful, but it is alleged that that of reason is more useful.[108]

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[105]Ibid., p. 396.

[106]Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, vol. 2, p. 10.

[107]Shelley, "Defence of Poetry," p. 480.

[108]Ibid., p. 500.

Shelley then proceeds to defend poetry against the strictly utilitarian point of view. This defense then leads him to examine the role and function of poetry in a culture, arguing for the moral nature of poetry. Shelley repeats Wordsworth's concept of poetry as the highest form of knowledge and establishes it in a position superior to science:

> Poetry is indeed divine. It is at once the center and circumference of knowledge; it is that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought.[109]

In fact, Shelley's beginning statement above seems to indicate that poetry is associated with spiritual things--almost other-worldly.

Although the phenomenological literary critics are not concerned with justifying the existence of poetry in society, they do seek to justify it as an expression of man's best mental efforts, and an appeal to a more intuitive, non-intellectual level than do the sciences. Whereas the romantics are addressing the more general issue of poetry's position in culture, the phenomenological critics are primarily involved in devising a system whereby poetry may be studied and the inadequacy of scientific thought for such concerns may be explained in such a system. Raymond learned to reject rationalism in lieu of unconscious observation and a phenomenological method of learning: "'I submerged myself

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[109]Ibid., p. 503.

in irrationality. . . . I detached myself completely from something I will call simply rationalism.'"[110] Bachelard, who began his studies in science and philosophy, has thrown over these disciplines in an attempt to apprehend more fundamentally the essence of poetry:

> A philosopher who has evolved his entire thinking from the fundamental theories of the philosophy of science, and followed the main line of the active, growing rationalism of contemporary science as closely as he could, must forget his learning and break with all his habits of philosophical research if he wants to study the problems posed by the poetic imagination. . . . The long day-in, day-out effort of putting together and constructing his thoughts is ineffectual. One must be receptive.[111]

In the place of analytical, calculated examination of poetry, Bachelard posits a more pre-reflective intuitive perception of the poetic image as he explains his own process whereby he arrived at this new approach to poetry. Bachelard explains this new approach as he reiterates the necessity of the critic's involvement in the criticism of poetry:

> In my earlier works, . . . I did, in fact, consider it preferable to maintain as objective a position as possible . . . and faithful to my habits as a philosopher of science, I tried to consider images without attempting personal interpretation. Little by little, this method, which has in its favor scientific prudence, seemed to me to be an insufficient basis on which to found a metaphysics of the imagination.[112]

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[110]Lawall, p. 26.

[111]Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, p. xi.

[112]Ibid., p. xiv.

The phenomenological critics are clearly drawing from the philosophers in phenomenology in their rejection of pure science as the only method of understanding the imagination, or for that matter, the processes of the mind in general.

This rejection of science in matters of the imagination by the phenomenological critics is a direct outgrowth of the phenomenological philosophers' views on science. While the phenomenological critics echo the romantics in a rejection of science when considering matters of the imagination, the phenomenological philosophers bear a resemblance to romantic thought in their justification of creative endeavors on a more general level. The phenomenological philosophers assert that man's immediate and precognitive perception of the world is actually the basis on which scientific systems are built. They seek to reestablish the importance of man's intuitive perceptions, arguing against those who posit science as the only truth. Therefore, it is not science itself that the phenomenological philosophers reject; they are only reacting against the attitude that holds science in supremacy and invalidates all other disciplines. William Luijpen distinguishes between science and scientism:

> When science had degenerated into scientism, we were asked to believe that there would be only one way to talk objectively about reality and this way was exemplified by the physicist. . . . We had to accept the fact that our spontaneous and ordinary

> experience of the world would have to be replaced by a system of scientific experiences.[113]

Rather than setting up science in opposition to other disciplines, the phenomenological philosophers seek to assert the primacy of man's immediate intuition and argue that science must actually defer to the perception by the senses as a means of comprehending the world before subjecting it to the rigors of scientific analysis. In explaining this orientation of the phenomenologists toward pre-cognitive perception before scientific scrutiny, Alfred Schuetz says that "the basis of meaning (sinnfundament) in every science is the pre-scientific life-world (Lebenswelt) which is the one unitary life-world."[114] Merleau-Ponty also points out that phenomenology is not a criticism of the sciences,--it does not seek to question the validity of physical laws or mathematical equations, but rather seeks to quell the absolutism that scientism exerts over other disciplines.[115] Thevenaz explains that instead of rejecting science altogether, phenomenology "situates" science and then seeks to go beyond the confines of objective measurement to a more original, intuitive perception.[116] Thus, the phenomenological

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[113]Luijpen, p. 7.

[114]Alfred Schuetz, "Phenomenology and the Social Sciences," in Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretations, ed. Joseph Kockelmans, p. 452.

[115]Luijpen, p. 6.

[116]Thevenaz, p. 18.

philosophers bear a close resemblance to the romantic tradition that asserts the importance of feeling and further seeks to prove the importance of poetry--a product of the intuitive perception and an enterprise equally as valid as any other forms of study. This romantic tradition is most succinctly demonstrated by Wordsworth when he says, "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science."[117]

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[117]Wordsworth, p. 396.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Although several similarities may be observed between the romantics and the phenomenologists, the phenomenological critics' frequent use of some rather vague terms borrowed from psychology or philosophy may draw objections from the more traditional schools of critical theory. It is the purpose of this study to demonstrate that the phenomenological philosophers and critics are frequently expressing in more modern terms the ideas and theories associated with the romantic period. This similarity of romantic and phenomenological attitudes may not be altogether surprising when one considers that phenomenology is not entirely new. Merleau-Ponty points out that the basic tenets of phenomenology have been around as early as the 1800's and are evident in the works of a number of writers and thinkers. He adds that "phenomenology . . . existed as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as a philosophy. . . . It is less a question of counting up quotations than of determining and expressing this phenomenology for ourselves which has given a number of present-day readers the impression, on reading Husserl or Heidegger, not so much of encountering

a new philosophy as of recognizing what they had been waiting for."[118]

As happens with any critical system, the question arises as to the validity of the more subjective and personal approach to literature shared by the romantics and phenomenologists. A difficulty with the romantics' emphasis on intuition and imagination is a tendency to make poetry sound almost divine and other-worldly in the attempt to justify poetry in an increasingly rational and utilitarian world. The processes of poetic creation are still, of course, a veritable mystery to those seeking to analyze scientifically the creative act. The phenomenological critics do not assert the spiritual or divine nature of poetry as do the romantics since they substitute the more modern term consciousness for imagination. Whereas the romantics speak of a mystical faculty of genius, the phenomenologists refer to man's consciousness as creative but not necessarily mystical. Raymond points out the fact that existential phenomenology can be dangerously close to being too mystical: "One more step, and an existential intuition would open the way to a metaphysical or mystical experience."[119]

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[118]Merleau-Ponty, p. 358.

[119]Marcel Raymond, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Deux Aspects de sa vie intérieure," Annales de la Societé Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 29 (1941-1942), as quoted in Lawall, p. 29.

A fault in the phenomenologists' creative criticism is the possibility that a critic could use literature to demonstrate whatever philosophy he holds rather than directing his attention to the work. Since phenomenological criticism requires of the critic a more personal involvement and emotional identification with an author and his works, there is the danger in practical criticism of the critic choosing only the works with which he can empathize or those that coincide with his personal views, thus limiting the scope of his criticism. Conceivably the phenomenological critic could choose literature too selectively and reshape it to demonstrate a view he already holds. Lawall points out that this tendency to make literature conform to one's own predetermined philosophies is actually more characteristic of existential criticism and can be used as a means of distinguishing existential criticism (uses literature to demonstrate a personal philosophy or world view) and phenomenological criticism (examines literature as an act of consciousness).[120]

There are, in fact, several accomplishments of the phenomenological approach to literature. It is useful in returning the focus of criticism to the writer's role in a work of literature, and thus effecting a reaction against formalist criticism in its most extreme forms. Phenomenological criticism rebels against those who propose that

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[120]Lawall, p. 37.

critical methods can be calculated, scientific and completely objective. The phenomenological critics argue that a scientific analysis of literature quells the creativity of both writer and critic. Phenomenological criticism also serves the function of uniting separate disciplines in an age when narrow specialization too often prevails. Phenomenological criticism has drawn from the methods and ideas in psychology and philosophy and thus expanded the very concept of literary criticism. Perhaps it is most commendable that phenomenological criticism borrows from these other disciplines without making literature subservient to any other field of study. Whereas critics of previous schools frequently have tried to relate literature to other disciplines (psychology, sociology, anthropology, religious studies, history), the phenomenologists have succeeded in relating other disciplines to literary criticism. Lawall emphasizes the phenomenologists' studious avoidance of making literature conform to other disciplines: "For these critics, the text is not a formal object, a political tool, a biographical clue, an historical document, a psychological symptom, a sociological 'myth,' or a religious revelation. They believe that literature is a self-contained human expression."[121] As a result of this constructive borrowing from other fields and the return to the fundamental idea of

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[121]Ibid., p. ix.

literature as a human expression, phenomenological criticism may, in fact, contribute to other disciplines. One editor observes of the phenomenological approach to literature that "this method of thought has already produced a brilliant monograph on the enjoyment of beauty; it if continues to combine rigour of analysis with closeness to actual experience, it may well contribute more to descriptive psychology in aesthetics."[122] Repeating and restating the romantics' concepts of literature and descriptions of the creative process, the phenomenologists seek to apprehend the essence of poetry, stating that the methods of phenomenology are best suited for such an approach. J. H. Van Den Berg describes phenomenology as an attitude whereby man should experience before analyzing the world and concludes that because of their inherent ability to live this attitude, "poets and painters are born phenomenologists."[123]

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[122]The Earl of Listowel, Modern Aesthetics: An Historical Introduction (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1967), p. 136.

[123]Van Den Berg, p. 76.

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