



The Phantasmatic in romantic subjective experience and aesthetics

Imagination, the creative process and the psyche's inward turn, as exemplified in C. D. Friedrich and other relevant personalities from Dresden in the first half of the 19th century.

**A Master's Thesis for the Degree "Master of Arts" (Two Years) in
Visual Culture.**

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September 2010**

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Abstract

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The goal of this research is to assess the reach and characteristics of the *Phantasmatic* as a proposed concept, useful to understand fundamental aspects of the romantic subjective experience in artists, aesthetes and writers. This experiential level has been exemplified in artists that had been living or intermittently residing in Dresden during the first half of 19th century. Caspar David Friedrich was linked to Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert and the painter Georg Friedrich Kersting. Inquiries have been directed towards art works and written sources. The *Phantasmatic* embraces the interplay between mind, outer reality and perception and considers how absence, excisions and distances, as well as abstractions and fallacies occur.

Four main conceptual coordinates define the reach of the *Phantasmatic*. Two of them are related to factual experiential contexts and the individual psychological dimension. The role of imagination and the creative process in the individual's psyche will also be considered as interrelated to the artist's perception of factual surroundings. An intertextual analysis links the art works and written sources of the period. The analysis has been directed towards romantic iconographic motives and literary pieces such as Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Faust* and Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann's tale *Die Bergwerke zu Falun*.

The relation between the uncanny and the sublime experience is connected to issues of absence and the romantic obsession with metaphysical realms. The profound relationship between the personality's inward turn, the enhanced role of imagination, as well as the creative process has also been proposed. This introspective turn implies a *Phantasmatic* experience as outcome, a reduction of sensory perception and the individual's estrangements from his surroundings. The *Phantasmatic* can then define the subjective experience of romantic artistic creation.

This investigation shows the main relevance of the relation between C. D. Friedrich and G. H. von Schubert. It has provided the possibility to discover a shared teleology and '*Phantasmatic*' visions about the 'spirit's' role in natural processes. It has also provided evidence of an, until now, unseen iconography in Friedrich's oeuvre, which have been called 'dream images'. This imagery gives evidence of reached states of absolute inwardness and a symbolic lecture of dreams as providing messages from a hidden divinity under phenomena's sensible surface.

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Introduction: the Phantasmatic and Romanticism. A conceptual definition and the field of study in interrelation

I. The issue in question

The purpose of this thesis is to get further insight into the *Phantasmatic* as a relevant conceptual category which I propose, in order to analyze inferred phenomena as an underlying and recurrent issue in romantic art and aesthetics. It is revealed and considered here in selected empirical material and sources, pertaining to individuals who had been living in the city of Dresden or had also been closely connected to its cultural milieu during the first half of the XIX century. This spatial and temporal frame has as its goal to further restrict the field of study, and also to determine and secure the connections and relations between specific artworks and texts, emerging from a commonly shared and experienced historical/cultural context.

The goal is, however, theoretical and reflective rather than descriptive or informative in length and detail. It focuses instead on the sole consideration of individuals and their related cultural productions under the perspective of the chosen issue or problem. In this sense the thesis has as its objective the determination of some conceptual coordinates or analytic perspectives, and constitutes a way of considering and analyzing the empirical material and sources. It thus demonstrates its viability and usefulness as a proposed conceptual category by the results of the analysis (the correlation between theoretical approach and empirical material and sources is mutually necessary and validating).

II. Definition of the Phantasmatic

The Phantasmatic embraces the interplay of mind, outer reality and perception. It considers how the symbolic mediates, abstracts and substitutes factual reality. It positions itself in an inherent relation of alterity with the factual reality, despite the unavoidable and necessary role in its reading and interpretation. The four basic conceptual coordinates comprehending the diverse aspect of the *Phantasmatic* as a proposed conceptual category and involving the imagination are:

1- Particular evidences of fallacies are evident in world-views, cosmogonies and related teleologies regarding ‘things’ and ‘events’ and the sensed function and value of representations in general. It is thus in recognizable misunderstandings, false readings and cognitive reifications that the symbolic reveals itself as a phantom, i.e. a vain semblance of ‘form’, inferred to or felt as ‘true’ shape, identity or relation. This is either occurring on an epistemological, perceptual or psychological level, or in combination with any of them. This occurs in a culturally, socially shared and on a collective level, or manifested as a particular, subjective inference or reflection of the individual respecting outer reality and himself.

2- When having experienced and sensed distances or absences in time and space, (being concomitant with epistemological and psychic processes), the absence of factual, actual existence in the perception of the subject can be filled or replaced by the symbolic. Here, the last aspect acquires a more independent, ‘unbounded’ role respecting the Real. The sensed lack can generate in the individual feelings of mourning, melancholy or nostalgia.

3- Particular situations and experiences of isolation and/or correlated phenomena of alienation or disownment relate the *Phantasmatic* to factual experiential contexts and tie conducts and habits of behavior inside society. Marked excisions, felt and/or factual imprisonments or a splitting on this experiential level reflect and decisively shape ideas and discourses, and place the role of imagination in the *locus* of the absent or of the sensed lack. Identity is also defined in these contexts.

4- The *Phantasmatic* comprises an individual psychological dimension and depends on the polarities and necessities of the affective life, where the mental realm acquires an enhanced role and independence, and determines an individual captive in his own conceptual and/or imaginative representations, frequently tending to ‘demonize’ or ‘idealize’ the absent in spatial-temporal coordinates. A further deepening and closure of this psychological order determines a regressive turn of the self into a boundless mental realm that deals with unlimited forms, akin to and also related to those found in dreams. It is the ultimate stage or situation of the *Phantasmatic*, which indissolubly is associated or interrelated with the former aspects and here acquiring relevance by degree of intensity in this ‘terminal’ phase.

In the romantic artist/aesthete experience, the creative-imaginative process towards the artwork is evidently relevant, and is itself also embodying the *Phantasmatic* in its different aspects. This is valid in such a degree that it even defines

the basic characteristics of creation and creativity in the romantic period, at least in the ‘representative’ chosen cases.

The imagination becomes then a ‘nodal’ point of the *Phantasmatic*, and decisively shapes its activity in relation to perception and the symbolic, the feelings and emotions, and the individual’s epistemological situation.

The so-called turn or withdrawal into the self is here related to the *Phantasmatic*. This inferred process will be considered through the last two conceptual coordinates. It implies a regressive movement and intensification of the imaginary and ‘mental’ realm towards the inner self above the perceptual and the experiential, and prevents or establishes a distance respecting the active involvement and immediate ‘here and now’ of present realities. Doing so, internal reality posits itself in a relation of primacy and dominance respecting the external one.

III. *The hypothesis: inquires and goals*

III.1 *Hypothesis*

The *Phantasmatic* is located at the core of the romantic artist/aesthete/writer in his perception, understanding and experience of outer (the subject’s actual surroundings) and inner (mental) reality. Here the subject leaves his anonymity, becoming centrally embodied - however related to other individualities- in the figure of the painter Caspar David Friedrich, while he was living in the city of Dresden.

At the immediate experiential level, there is evidence in the contexts surrounding creation of isolation and estrangement. I infer to romantic artistic creation as dealing with absence, perceptual reduction and an enhanced role of imagination, its activity leads into the oneiric or dream-like and an inferred metaphysical realm, having clear phantasmagorical aspects and consequences. This implies deceptive connotations for the individual, as ‘readable’ in romantic accounts on artistic creation and on the psyche’s inner withdrawal. This last ‘stage’ leads, in turn, in the assignation of meaning to dreams, to *hypostasis* and/or *mystification*. The belief, the obsession and dominance of thought are related to the metaphysical and/or ideal sphere as something higher and purer, continuously desired, long searched for. This,

in an inverted pattern, is inferred to as the ultimate 'real' reality, leaving the individual in isolation and estrangement, and then chronically positing him in the distance and in absence of what he longs for. Therefore the subject is 'dominated' by mental, phantasmagorical representations of himself and the surrounding reality, and he is further encircled in a recessive, negative and reified 'atmosphere', characterized by absence, distorted symbolic mediation and enhanced distance from 'positive' phenomena and life. This same absence is concomitant and propitiates its 'filling' by the unbounded function of the symbolic and the imagination.

III.2 *Questions*

Considering the empirical material and the written sources of the period, I ask the following few synthetic questions:

1 - Which features can I further infer of the *Phantasmatic* as phenomena, as mainly referred to in the subjective realm?

2 - How does the *Phantasmatic* show itself in the individual psyche considering imagination (as related to artistic creativity and the experience of reality in inner and outer aspects)?

3 - Which processes can I further infer from the individual, regarding his interaction with his medium?

IV.1 *Research goals and the work's relevance*

My goals are defined by two basic objectives:

1 - To establish a further conceptual definition and exemplification of the *Phantasmatic* through the selected sources and artworks, in the levels and perspectives of the proposed analysis, in their necessary correlation and interaction.

2- To state the *Phantasmatic* as phenomena, comprising the psychic, perceptual and epistemological realms of experience. These are poignantly focused in the creative process and in the fundamental role of imagination in the artwork itself,

and are intrinsically correlated and concomitant to the ‘turn’ or ‘withdrawal’ into the self.

Although only developed partially, due to the academic length limits imposed on this work, the work’s relevance may partly relay the proposed consideration; the individual mind’s role as the clear, true field, the cultural and social ‘monad’, where the phantasmagorical representations occur, comprising the interrelated role of imagination, the symbolic and what is perceived (perception). It is therefore not necessarily an outwardly staged scene where the *Phantasmatic* could take place. On the contrary, it is in the diverse orders of absence, distance and excision where it finds a proper place. It is then possible to speak here of an ‘inner representation.’ The intention is rather to get further insight into certain aspects tied to subjective experience; artistic creation, psychological states, works of imagination and immediate contexts faced by the individual. These interrelated aspects characterized the romantic artist’s subjective experience, at least in the city of Dresden of the first half of the XIX century.

Respecting the relation between field of study, methodology and theoretical approach, this text is not centred solely on Friedrich’s oeuvre. It rather has the intention to restore cultural ties and their shared interests, sensibilities, ideas, teleologies and inter-connections between some of the epoch’s contemporary individuals, as in the case of von Schubert and Friedrich.

IV. Method and structure of the work

IV.1 *Method*

Since interrelated textual sources and artworks will be analyzed in connection with each other, the notion of intertextuality as methodological approach becomes thus necessary. Concerning the empirical material, my inferences will be done mainly at an iconological level. It implies connections to romantic art, aesthetics and philosophy. These connections will be mainly provided by the sources themselves. The

iconological analysis will be, however, organized in ‘groups’ of iconographic specificity; ‘the artist’s studio’, ‘caves and mines’ and the ‘dream images’ group.

The aim is not to give an extended and descriptive account of discourses respecting institutions and other social aspects, by relating them to the interplay of power and knowledge. However, when it seems appropriate, some very brief commentaries of institutional frame, discourse formations and their proposed ‘truth’ will be given, briefly quoting Michel Foucault. This might methodologically take some elements of discourse analysis into play. It will provide a linkage between correlated ‘subjective’ experiences, artistic manifestations and related texts.

IV.2 Structure

After the theoretical chapter, where basic theoretical grounds and ‘assumptions’, are succinctly quoted, follows the introductory chapter, which contextualises the main issues and hypotheses in romanticism. Next comes the ‘progressions’ chapter implied in the “withdrawal into the self”, imagination and the creative process.

The analytic chapter considers, in turn, the experiential contexts surrounding creation, and focuses on ‘the artist’s studio’ as an iconographical group, followed in the next subchapter by romantic literary metaphors. They are dynamically addressed to the psyche’s inward turn and artistic creation. Next to it, in the third and last subchapter, it’s considered the imagination’s innermost ‘realm’, proposing a differentiable, yet until now unseen iconographical group in Friedrich’s oeuvre. I call this group ‘dream images’. Intertextuality, as a mode of analysis, is present in the three sub-chapters. The conclusion deals with both the general ‘hypothetical’ inferences done previously, and the empirical findings and further theoretical insights as a result of the analysis.

V. State of current research

This text explores aspects that often are focused on separately. Its leading concept - the *Phantasmatic* - is also the main hypothesis of this thesis. Its main conceptual coordinates have been defined above. Former critical literature has not been

developed coherently under this concept's heading and therefore I have searched different fields of the literature in order to get documentation, conceptual aids and related approaches.

About romantic 'ghostly' iconography, I can mention *Gothic Nightmares: Fuseli, Balke and the Romantic Imagination*, essays by Christopher Frayling and Marina Warner (2006). Marina Warner's book *Phantasmagoria: Spirit, Visions, Metaphors and Media in the Twenty-first Century* (2006), gives a compendium of diverse imaginary and visual cultural forms dealing with issues of what has been perceived as 'soul' and/or 'spirit'.

Respecting displays of 'phantasmagoria' in domestic spaces, I read Helen Groth's *Domestic Phantasmagoria. The Victorian Literary Domestic and Experimental Visualty*. (2008)

More relevant for my purposes (see 'relevance of the work'), have been my readings on the romantic imagination and the creative process. Frederik Burwick and Jürgen Klein's compendium of different authors' essays titled *The Romantic Imagination, Literature and Art in England and Germany* (1996) and Forest Pyle's *The Ideology of Imagination. Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism* (1995). Regarding romantic institutions I found Theodore Ziolkowski's *German Romanticism and Its Institutions* (1990) very useful.

Concerning C. D. Friedrich, I can mention *Caspar David Friedrich - den besjälade naturen* (2009), a recent publication with insights into the painters Scandinavian connections.

VI. Sources and literature

Respecting my sources and empirical material, I will mainly focus on the relationship between particular examples of the pictorial/graphic oeuvre of Caspar David Friedrich, together with related biographical accounts and texts pertaining to or being connected to him. Those are provided by Sigrid Hinz's *Caspar David Friedrich in Briefen und Bekenntnissen* and Karl-Ludwig Hoch's *Caspar David Friedrich - unbekanntes Dokumente seines Lebens*. Regarding Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert's texts I have been consulting *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaften* (*Views Concerning the Dark Side of the Natural Sciences*) and *Die Symbolik des*

Traumes (The Symbolism of Dreams). Both can productively be linked to the Pomeranian painter (i. e. C. D. Friedrich), friend of this *Naturphilosophen* and also - for a while - a Dresdner citizen.

Few of Friedrich's paintings will be considered in detail. Rather I will organize them in different, but interconnected, iconographical groups.

Starting from a passage of *Ansichten...*, connections will be made into and between two metaphors of the withdrawal into the self and the creative process. These can be found in *Die Bergwerke zu Falun* by Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann and the first act of *Faust II* by Johann Wolfgang Goethe. From them I will go back to Friedrich's experiential situations and creative issues. I will finally go towards the inner psychological realm considering as 'ground' sources the works of von Schubert mentioned above.

From the critical literature I consulted, I can mention monographic texts, articles and/or essays about Caspar David Friedrich, from authors such as J. L. Koerner, W. Vaughan, H. Brösch-Supan, H. J. Neidhardt, P. B. Miller and S. Rewald.

Walter Benjamin, in the unfinished *Passagenwerk* (1927-1940, first published in 1982) conceptualized 'Phantasmagoria' as an illusory construction, display or representation, destined to impress, creating a false sense or vision of reality. It mainly refers to staged scenery with mythic dimensions, representative of modern industrial society and its merchandise. Despite the great importance of the conceptual notions deployed around this term in his work, my perspective has emerged from other insights and perspectives (see the conceptual coordinates I propose for the *Phantasmatic*.) I limit myself here to the subjective sphere, giving priority to the role of imagination as a dynamic process rather than focusing on the collective-social ambit or material culture (see also 'relevance of the work').

Regarding romantic imagination and the creative process, aesthetics, philosophy and literary culture I have consulted, among others, F. Pyle, M. B. Helfer, T. Ziolkowski, A. Hauser, W. Hofmann, J. Neubauer, R. J. Richards and K. Hammermeister.

Respecting romantic art and iconographical/iconological issues I have read and consulted, among others, L. Eitner, H. Honour, R. Rosenblum, K. Clark, E. H. Gombrich and H. Focillon.

I. Sartre's psychology of imagination and other theoretical lines, from the perspective of my research

Because mental processes have a certain epistemological opacity if considered by themselves, it is my purpose to focus on the *Phantasmatic* as addressed in the experiential realm, which comprises the understanding and 'dwelling' of the romantic artist/aesthete subject inside reality. The inner and outer, mental and physical sides of experience, mutually and simultaneously correlated are implied. I will elucidate from the chosen textual sources and artworks, the relation between thought and experience, in order to get further insight into the mental order of representations concerning outer reality, the creative process and the romantic and/or aesthete artists own psyche during that period. I will focus on the creative and existential situations and living conditions, as occurs in the case of Friedrich and related artists. I will pay special attention to the role of imagination and its characteristics, necessarily tied to the creative process and the production of the artwork. The role of imagination will be considered as occurring in the 'in-between' field of perception, psyche and cognition.

However, it is not the aim to just link the analysis of sources and empirical material to current psychological teleologies or final explanations, but rather to define the *Phantasmatic* as phenomena in the circle of a constantly shifting, moving causality, wandering between psyche, perception and the epistemic/symbolic.

Because I consider the imagination a related and fundamental aspect of the *Phantasmatic*, my theoretical perspective deals more in depth with it, taking as a basic conceptual point of departure certain assumptions grounded in the phenomenological psychology of Jean Paul Sartre, as well as ideas from Sigmund Freud. They provide an outward reference to my own theoretical insights, when I shift between the mental/psychological, the imaginative, the perceptual and the symbolic/cognitive in my intertextual analysis. In other theoretical aspects, I rely on specific critical literature of the romantic aesthetics, art and philosophy. The following paragraphs deal with some theoretical 'grounds' regarding my current discussion taken from Sartre and Sigmund Freud.

Sartre considers imagination and perception opposed to each other. This does not imply to deny an obvious, fundamental connection between these realms, but instead points out antithetic 'qualities,' or the intrinsically different 'essences' of what

they ‘present’. Perception posits its objects as existing, while imagination presents them as ‘nothingness’. In the perceptive act a consciousness is overwhelmed by a number of impressions overflowing that consciousness with their infinite relationships. This implies the always present possibility of discovering new aspects and new relations. In short, *perception* implies learning from a sensible Otherness that the mind cannot provide by itself. Imagined objects can only present few relationships, only those relationships that consciousness can contain.

Consciousness itself is a single ‘synthetic’ act. It is not possible to detach imagination from it. Similarly, a mental image cannot be separated from the symbolic, neither have with it a sole external relation, as a player (implying the symbolic) using images as playing cards.¹ Imagination and the symbolic are instead intrinsically united:

“But the consciousness of the image is a synthetic form that appears as a determined moment of a temporal synthesis and organizes itself with other forms of consciousness, which precede and follow it, in order to form a melodic unity. Similarly, it is as absurd to say that an object is given as an image and as a concept separately, as to speak of a body that was solid and gaseous at the same time.”²

"But we have always been impeded by a conception that saw the image as a material trace, an inanimate element which later on would play *a posteriori* its symbolic function. We think [...] that the image’s symbolic function could not be deleted without making the image itself fade out."³

Sartre infers that this false notion has its cause due to an illusion of spatial immanence, mistakenly applied to mental phenomena. In their ‘sensible opacity’ and intrinsic temporality, or rather non-temporality, the visual pictures of imagination further reveal the opposed nature of a mental image respecting perception: “In a mental image there is an absence of time and of space. It is a shadow of time, which

¹ This metaphoric image reminds of Goethe’s critique of the French novelist Crébillon: ‘He treats passions like the pictures on cards, which can be shuffled and played, reshuffled and played once again without altering at the least.’ See Hofmann, Werner, ««The Dark Total Idea»: Schiller on the Creative Process.», in *The Romantic Imagination. Literature and Art in England and Germany*, p. 64.

² Sartre, Jean Paul., *L’ Imaginaire. Psychologie phénoménologique de l’imagination*, p. 130.

³ *Id.*, p. 27.

fits very well with this shadow of an object, in turn with its shadow of space.”⁴ There is not an actual individuation principle acting in them, as they are incapable of maintaining constant, coherent relations. Instead, they flow, disappear and emerge, and fuse together again inside - and between - them: “these ghostly objects are ambiguous, fleeting, both being themselves and something other than themselves, supporting contradictory qualities.”⁵

Sigmund Freud’s concept of the uncanny will be briefly addressed. Sartre’s view about the imaginary and symbolic interrelation and indivisibility can help to further understand this Freudian concept, respecting the ‘negative presentation’ implied in the sublime experience. The ‘taking as reality’ in the uncanny experience implies a sudden inversion of what is considered and valued as ‘imaginary’, and activates the full function and significance of what the symbolic can symbolize.⁶ The inferred union and (for me) the labile reversibility between the imaginary and the symbolic can be related to those psychic movements that lead to hypostatize and confound those orders, giving place to a substitutive, *Phantasmatic* ‘shape’. These can be related to the uncanny as well as to the romantic obsession with metaphysical realms and absolutes, either related to the sensible/imaginary or the ideal.

I consider the inward ‘turn into the self’ that is found in German romanticism as having clear philosophical voices in F. W. J. von Schelling, Novalis, G. W. F. Hegel⁷ and H. G. von Schubert (as I will show later on). There are romantic metaphors⁸ implying a vision and a conceptualization of this inward turn’s characteristics or nature. They infer this turn as a movement towards an innermost locus of the psyche, distanced or detached from sensory perception and rational control; a dreamy or oneiric realm. There are various mental phenomena, labelled by modern psychology, that can be related to the inward romantic ‘turn’, however sharing many ‘grey zones’ in between their respective boundaries⁹: ‘solitude’,

⁴ *Id.*, p. 173.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Freud, Sigmund, «The Uncanny», in *The Uncanny*, pp. 150-151.

⁷ Hegel, G. W. F, in Konx, M. T., *Hegel’s Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, pp. 517-520.

⁸ Regarding the analysis of the diverse romantic metaphors of the psyche considered in this study, I refer to Paul Ricoeur as a theoretical reference, concerning my study. One of his passages is revealing the potential ‘hypostatic function’ of the metaphor: “If metaphor consist in talking about one thing in terms of another, does it not consist also in perceiving, thinking, or sensing one thing in terms of another?” See, Ricoeur, Paul, *The Rule of the Metaphor. Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, p. 83.

⁹ The question here is whether, from a psychological perspective, one can reduce questions of creativity, meaning or moral choice to those of clinical cases, of just illnesses deserving treatment.

thanatos or death drive, alienation, schizoid disorder, and melancholy and/or depression are examples. Because of their inner complexity, inferable interrelatedness and ontological character as explanations of psychological phenomena (however of extreme interest), a full consideration of those aspects is beyond the extension and scope of this study.

II The *Phantasmatic* in romantic subjective experience and aesthetics

The subjective emphasis in romanticism is to great degree related to an inward 'movement' of the psyche towards itself; a centripetal, introspective one.¹⁰ That was not just a mere 'posture' or 'trend' widespread under the epoch, It was not uniquely a 'searched' for, fashionable situation (despite frequent exhibitionist purposes), but instead a part of a collective psychic state, an involuntary habit, an attitude belonging to a more 'common', daily experience. This cannot be thought of as a fixed, static relationship, but as a dynamic or progressive process. It can be ascertained through various biographical accounts and observations.¹¹ It implies an increased detachment and isolation from a direct, active and outward participation and involvement with external reality. It reflects an enhancement of the individual thought respecting its own subjectivity, where the 'thinking about itself' becomes the centrally and dominant issue and final outcome. This process is parallel or necessary in the romantic experience, sensing and understanding - consciously or not - of the creative process and its outcome; a searched for 'timelessness and encounter with the absolute'.¹² This is so if 'true' creation and/or transcendent intellectual activity are aimed for. The result of this introspective turn of thought, by 'himself about his own self' is, from this perspective, a closed, circular 're-presentation'. In romantic artistic and literary creation it emerges and expresses itself as a central issue. This

This, - I think- of this is an issue only referred to and contained in the sole individual's 'health'. See Dudley, Michael, «Melancholy or Depression, Sacred or Secular? », p. 88.

¹⁰ See Hegel, G. W. F., op. cit., p. 517-519; and Kelly, Thomas, *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, vol. IV, p. 178.

¹¹ Hegel, for instance, refers to an inferred sickness of the soul in modern (contemporary to him) occidental man, in contrast to his oriental counterpart, who is "...less self - seeking."; as if addressing his imagination and sensuous satisfaction more towards external objects, while "The west, on the other hand, is more subjective, and in complaint and grief sighing more and longing more." Hegel, G.W. F., *id.*, vol. I, p. 412.

¹² As Novalis expresses, "Ein ewiges Gedicht /Und unser aller Sonne/ Ist Gottes Angesicht."; 'An eternal poem - and the sun of us all is God's face.' See Helfer, Martha B., *The Retreat of Representation. The Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse*, pp. 111-112; and Kluckhohn, Paul- Samuel, Richard, *Novalis. Schriften*, p. 152.

‘representation’ must not be taken completely literarily; it’s rather related to the subject’s ‘inner world.’¹³

Romantic aesthetics has, as a final creative outcome, something that is ideational and/or metaphysical, invested in sensible forms, ‘clothed’ in them. However, considered solely, they are ‘entities’ invisible to the senses, also in opposition to what is in *existence* in sensible reality. As *nuomena*, they are *supra-sensible*, not perceptible as *phenomena*. Therefore, in the sense of concrete material existence, they can be characterized as absences or voids.

In *Goethe’s Faust*, the initial nocturnal scene - a literary motive widely used in romantic art - reveals the protagonist in the reduced enclosure of his private cultural world, in radical opposition to the natural one. His own alienation, resulting from a self-consuming and endless thought, becomes his mental ‘jail’, but overlapped by the physical one, it is implied in his working room’s boundaries. He is visited by phantasmagorical entities resulting from his own self-representations in the abstract and in an inherently reified symbolic cultural context. Here this space is aesthetically stressed as ‘nocturnal’ and ‘gothic.’

The excision, the gap between the nocturnal ‘saturnine’ state (indicating the sphere of thought, the necessary meditative state of intellectual and artistic creation) and the ‘Jupiterian’ state (if related to sensible phenomena and the material world’s vital activity) generates melancholy, mourning and longing. The active life seems in opposition to a search for knowledge culturally framed by texts, language and the magical, spiritual inspirations (but fleeting, deceiving ones), belonging to *Faust* in the confined space of his *Studierzimmer*.

Such conditions of life and ‘existential’ states of mind may well reflect, at least partially, the newly ‘structuring’ conditions; the external socio-cultural and economic contexts faced by romantic artists/aesthetes’ individualities at that time. They are masked in *Faust’s* text by a late medieval costume.¹⁴ The definitive divide between aesthetics and knowledge¹⁵, implied in Kant’s contemporary *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), and newly dominant assumptions about the role and value of the artist and his activity in society (parallel manifested to the changes introduced

¹³ Martha B. Helfer in analysing and paraphrasing Novalis, on his approach to *Darstellung*; “[...] to represent the unrepresentable, the pure ego [...]” *Id.*, p. 83.

¹⁴ The figure of Torquato Tasso has similarly been used by Goethe, Byron, and various artists, implying a strong empathy and identification, relying more on his life’s fate and unjust imprisonment, than on his literary oeuvre. See, Honour, *Romanticism*, pp. 264-267.

¹⁵ Hammermeister, Kai, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, p. 23.

by the industrial revolution) determine a new social and cultural ‘placement’, a ‘confinement’¹⁶ for the artist/aesthete/writer. The romantic ‘reaction’, implied in its existential attitudes, behaviours and aesthetics, can be considered symptomatic of those changes.

The withdrawal into the self also implies a ‘return’ to a ‘refuge’, a protective mental, psychological dwelling. The romantic artist seeks independence, freedom, and the organic unfolding of his imagination and fantasies. He departs and is in opposition of constrictive rationalistic demands of seemed alien, external and normative rules. This inward mental movement reflects interrelated circumstances, inside and outside the subject; as an active form of ‘self-reaffirmation’, but also reassured by/or favoured by concomitant social-cultural circumstances. The role, value and position of the artist becomes even more precarious and unstable, even in this seemingly ‘golden age’ of art and aesthetics. Defiance, searching for of independence and narcissistic inwardness are manifested, but also correlated to a gradual social ‘destitution’ of power and/or external influence. By this condition of felt and even searched for seclusion and priority of the *Ego*, the individual enhances a mentally constructed ‘centrality’, respecting the outside world. He addresses almost solely his individual experience, sensed as a ‘transcendent’ one. Inversely, his participation with the world outside decreases, in relation to the increase of self-introspective thought and feeling. This becomes the necessary and unquestioned path towards a purer aesthetic experience, and a more complete artistic accomplishment. This turn towards self-identity produces pleasure and becomes a mental habit. This self-reflective and intensely imaginative representation becomes an almost hermetic circle. Thus, the creative process enhances a subjectivity that consequently feels increasingly less understood by social surroundings. This schism had acquired in romanticism a denomination which could help to further elucidate the issue; art as a secret *Familiengespräch*, as Phillipp Otto Runge metaphorically defined it. A more widely used word, pertaining to the period’s university slang, *Philister*, meant in turn ‘philistine’ and had a negative connotation, directed towards the majority of individuals who were located outside of this reduced ‘family’ circle.¹⁷

¹⁶ See Foucault, Michael, «The Birth of the Asylum», in Rainbow, Paul, *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 141-167.

¹⁷ However, there were exceptions to this dominant aspect. A notable case is Horace Vernet’s picture *The Artist’s Studio*, showing 23 individuals, plus a deer, a horse and a dog. Despite this, the collective shared space of the studio as depicted in the painting is also one of socially excluded individuals;

Therefore, the constant reactivation of this ‘self-representation’ (with an intense activity of the imagination), implied an increasing detachment and distance (in psychological terms) from external links and anchorages. However, these did not always imply a retirement from actual social intercourse with other individuals. Through the guide of his own *Gefühl* the artist realizes inner, oneiric voyages in his unconscious, in order to get meaningful, mysterious motives and images and a purer, ideal self-fulfilment.

The inner circle of mediations, feelings, images and fantasies is a precondition for the artist’s aesthetic work, which thus becomes a positive existential, psychological place for him. But this inner placement can also reduce his grade of involvement with the outer world. As negative outcomes, solitude and isolation and a paradoxically sensed ‘presence’ of the ‘absence’, could give place initially to vague feelings of restlessness and ‘lack’, or eventually enhanced feelings of nostalgia, melancholia and mourning.

A sensed affective gap is reflected in numerous artworks and literary pieces. Goethe even defined in few words the character of romanticism respecting nationality, addressing these feelings, located or drifting toward to the minus side:

“The so-called romantic of a nation is a tacit feeling of the distinguished in past form or, what is the same, feelings of loneliness, absence and departure”.¹⁸

This feeling appears as a remembrance, as something that has already happened or is going to vanish, idealized by the temporal distance. The transitional character of romanticism is highlighted here; the moment of farewell is strongly affective, and by the force of the sentiment, still preserved and recreated in the mind, but it also announces an unavoidable and definitive separation.

The sole reference to this issue reminds me, emblematically, of Caspar David Friedrich’s picture known as *The Evening Star*, painted sometime between 1830 - 1835. This picture, with the city of Dresden arising on the horizon meeting the twilight sky, outlining the figures of Friedrich’s family members situated in the -far-

formerly Napoleonic soldiers and young artists. In the context of the Restoration period in France, they were also lively ‘outsiders.’ See also about the uses and meanings of the terms quoted in this paragraph: Honour, Hugh, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-255.

¹⁸ Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, in G., L., *Goethe’s Werke*, X, p. 386.

middle distance, 'says' farewell in more than one sense. The coming darkness is not only related to external, 'picturesque' phenomena, but also alludes to the inner psyche's world.

The needed vital presences and participation of the individual in outer realities are seen now from the reached, culminant position of closed, complete introspection. The romantic artist seeks a substitutive affect of this absence in nature, which he sees as endowed with the divine, the metaphysical. This becomes a substitutive movement, a reification, and can be interpreted as an intent to repair the individual psyche's 'wound' or its splitting apart by an idea or ideas, which can be inferred in natural phenomena, but are actually not perceptible by the senses. The quest for ideal absolutes is then correlated to this process of inwardness and introspection, where the artist/aesthete reencounters his own feelings and 'experience' of the absolute or the divinity, as positive markers of his own identity or his individual soul. But this simultaneous situation of 'longing' for absolutes and introspective priority of the inner psychical realm has its 'dark' sides.

Edmund Burke, in his celebrated inquires about the sublime and the beautiful, relates the first concept to the sensory and experiential realm, indicating the magnitude and impact of experiential and sensory absences:

*"All general privations are great, because they are terrible; vacuity, darkness, solitude and silence."*¹⁹ He also points out that *"[...] an entire life of solitude contradicts the purposes of our being, since death itself is scarcely an idea of more terror."*²⁰

It is not accidental in this respect, that the protagonism and relevance of the idea and experience of the sublime had in romanticism. For Burke, perceptual 'privations', vacuity, isolation, obscurity and even intellectual uncertainty become sources of the sublime as subjective experience. This is also aesthetically reflected and mediated in artworks and literature. Infinity, eternity and divinity are sublime

¹⁹ Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical inquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and the beautiful, with an introductory discourse concerning taste, and several other additions*, p. 8.

²⁰ *Id.*, p. 22.

ideas precisely because of their conceptual and perceptual unclearness or inscrutability.²¹

For Kant, the sublime as experience carries a ‘presentation of the infinite’²² that results from a gap and inadequacy between sensorial perception of nature and the mental order of ideas. The sublime becomes a responsive reaction of the mind to this excision; therefore it is not pertaining to ‘inherent’ qualities residing in objects. Ideas cannot be objectively ‘presented’, but Kant argues that it is rather the movement of imagination that actually generates the ‘sublime’ feeling and sensibility about the unfathomable and boundless in itself. This, occurs either when the subject’s apprehension of sensible phenomena reaches its maximum and is still unable to constitute the whole of it in a single intuition²³, or when it is, through an abstract presentation (for example by speech, symbols or textual reading), posited negatively.²⁴ The imagination represents the idea of the infinite in natural scenery, when actual perception gives occasion to put the individual’s perceptual limits to the test. The symbolic reading can awaken the sublime experience because the imagination has eliminated the ties or limits assigned by perception through the symbol’s mediation. This can, however, expand the feeling of an idea’s magnitude in an unlimited and unbounded way. This happens in a negative manner, because this same divide of imagination from the sensible is by itself a ‘presentation’ of the infinite.²⁵

These experiences are clearly disruptive moments for consciousness and understanding, when a *supra-sensible* idea, a *noúmenon*,²⁶ powerfully and boundlessly manifests itself to the mind. This is felt and perceived by the individual as an independent *phenomena*, i. e. with an independence and a reality of its own (not pertaining to the mental realm). The imagination is neither free nor at play, even if due to its own action the possibility of the sublime experience, being part of the cause. Actually, it ‘feels’ constrained, as if directed from the outside.

The sublime and the uncanny experiences (this last term as Sigmund Freud has defined it), are possible entrances and paths that lead to the *Phantasmatic*. They both deal with forms and situations where the imagination loses its anchorage to both

²¹ *Id.*, pp. 29-32.

²² Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p. 129.

²³ *Id.*, p. 135.

²⁴ *Id.*, p. 156.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Id.*, p. 138.

sensible reality and referential rationality. The uncanny blurs the divide between fantasy and reality, and rests in the believing (at least in an unconscious manner) of the ‘omnipotence of thoughts’, as Freud found suitable to express.²⁷ This belief reflects an inversion of roles, where an unlimited capacity and power of the object (respecting the subject) is inferred; it leads to the idea of an actual possibility and existence of the supernatural realm, as if it were directly addressed to the subject itself, when he experiences it.

There are links, despite clear differences, between the experiences addressed in the concepts of the uncanny and the sublime. One could say that the uncanny counts as one of the experiences pertaining to the sublime. Both address an inferred boundless power respecting the subject, either super sensible or supernatural, and awake terror and fear because this entity is precisely pointing towards him, or because he is the actual observer.²⁸ The uncanny has the peculiarity of linking the realm of the individual mind with the phenomena outside it, as if there were a teleology in the events that magically -and negatively- could connect both levels.

Not alien is the idea of the capability of God, as teleological ruler of the given reality and as all-pervading influence, to ‘penetrate’ and disclose the individual mind. This faculty, as assigned to a *nuomenon* is significantly connected to the sublime and the uncanny, when sensed as directed to the own self which perceives, because it has a disruptive character respecting feelings, rationality, common sense, perception itself and the individual’s psychological economy and stability (this is, however, occurring in different degrees).

In this perspective, it’s not a surprise that the romantic ‘turn into the self’, dealing with a more ‘unbounded’ imagination and the narcissistic dominance of introspective thought, (projected towards external phenomena but however impeding a more open receptiveness and exchange, further recognizing its ‘otherness’), gave occasion for such subjective experiences and the interest in them.

For the artist/aesthete/writer, imagination and fantasy occupies the space of the absent or suppressed, either in personal and/or social, cultural terms. This implies as well what, for the subject, is desired or necessary, frequently at an unconscious level. It is then not independent of the relations and influence of socio-cultural

²⁷ Freud, Sigmund, «The Uncanny», in *op. cit.* p. 147.

²⁸ “Indeed terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime” Burke, Edmund, *op. cit.*, part II, Section II, p. 29.

surroundings; it changes its 'dimension' and quality according to the contexts it faces. The imagination becomes in romanticism an inflexion point between the different orders of absence, distance and substitution, an inherent *locus* for the *Phantasmatic* as phenomena. There, the residual and ambivalent remains emerge as 'shapes' into consciousness, pertaining to either the sensible or ideal sphere (or rather, in their intrinsic combination). Working between thought and perception, the imagination represents the given sensory experience, either when it is actually active or during its absence. This representation happens, not passively but instead, it is incessantly developing, dissolving, reuniting and fusing. Outside this intermediate position, imagination has also a *supersensible* vocation,²⁹ directed to negative representations of absolutes. In romantic subjective experience and aesthetics, imagination becomes the way and the recognized goal of artistic creation.³⁰

Hegel realizes this situation and aim in romantic art, but also the unavoidable linkage of imagination with perception. It's necessary to return to the latter (perception), where the mind recollects great parts of its source material. In this respect, if "[...] absolute subjectivity as such would elude art and be accessibly to thinking alone if, in order to be *actual* subjectivity in correspondence to its essence, it did not also proceed into external existence and then withdraw out of this reality into itself again."³¹ This is a positive moment for imagination, of 'absorption' and comprehension of the sensible, if, as a process, it is to be thought as cyclical and ever-recurring.

However, the magnified role that imagination has in the creative process - if one of its main functions is to call the absent or inexistent into actuality - marks solely a distance from the immediate present reality that surrounds the subject. The withdrawal into the self further enhances this divide (correlated to an inner 'truth's' search), and is seconded and concomitant to a process of artistic creation that, going parallel to this psychic movement, regressively posits the inadequacy between outer reality and the inner 'spirit' (if this 'spirit' tends towards an absolute inwardness³²). The increased seclusion and sensory reduction (which rather should imply a reduction of 'sensory attentiveness') is correlated to the purer supremacy of the sphere of thought and makes impossible, at a certain point, any 'positive' representation,

²⁹ Kant, Immanuel, *op. cit.*, p.151.

³⁰ Hegel, G. W. F. *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p.1127.

³¹ *Id.*, Vol. I, p. 519.

³² *Id.*, Vol. I, p. 518.

because of the exclusion of the sensible. If imagination presents to the mind the existent and the nonexistent,³³ a sensory reduction deprives it from perceptual 'material', enhancing the dependence on indirect, abstract sources of the psyche.

Creation and absence seem to be complementary states, even when very close one to the other. The artistic creation, at a certain moment and place, requires isolation and concentration, a disengagement of the artist from his environment. For this reason the fluent contact with the *Real* in its immediacy (if this reality is capable of bringing, providing stimuli and inspiration) greatly relieves the load of this vacuum that looms upon the artistic aim and its fulfilment. Inversely, in the introspective romantic mood, creation becomes *agony*, if it further isolates the subject. The quest is to conjure up the inner life (inexistent as an outward, sensible phenomenon) into presence as aesthetic work, increasingly depending on thought and abstract representations. The phantasmagorical circumstances and relations are thus implied in this inward turn, putting psychological pressure at the cost of creation. The negative activity of the unconscious, as related to fancy and imagination, is favoured and correlated here to the expulsive contexts of modernity.

The inward movement is also felt by the artist/aesthete as a voyage, implied in the creative process, as an inner route going in depth towards the subconscious. The absolute self-representation and self-identity is a covert aim but also (as an interrelated goal) the encounter with a metaphysical absolute. Significantly, the 'medium' of such a travel has been the night, metaphor of the soul, a 'world' conceived as perpetually placed in darkness.³⁴ The act of artistic creation becomes thus a descent into a nocturnal, inner realm. It is at this level, the unconscious one, where the imagination realizes the artwork, in close connection to the supra-sensible entities that give it sense. This implies, at least to a certain degree, a belief in the superior priority and validity of the ultimate inner reality, spiritually and transcendently revealed.

Isolation and sensorial reduction from the sensible world is required in order that Self-representation becomes fully accomplished. The encounter with the own representation - or inner reality - is compounded here with the encounter of the absolute (a necessarily negative one) by the above considered perceptual conditions. It

³³ Sartre, J. P., *op. cit.*, p. 24.

³⁴ See in this respect the romantic metaphor of the mine, and C. D. Friedrich's own account of artistic creation, considered in this text, in subchapter II.2, pp. 33-40.

emerges at the endpoint of the quest of the spirit, endowing the aim of a 'purer' and most complete self-fulfilment. Due to this negativity and closure, the desired meeting results are deceptive and/or disruptive or a no-return *locus* for the psyche. It occurs in this ambit of thought's 'supremacy', as detached from perception and rationality. The observant, 'seer' self, is here navigating in a quasi or dream-like state, inherent to the subconscious; one of an unbounded, uncontrolled imaginative domain, where feelings, memories, images and ideas fluctuate and interrelate in an inherent unstable and labile psychic condition.

The artist searches for a reality, a 'presence' or answer metaphysically placed further away from sensible phenomena. His quest leads towards the intention of a closer contact or insight into the *nuomena*, or the single experience and meeting of a transcendent and 'terrifying and timeless absolute' located inside him, his own 'transcendental self'.³⁵ In other words, what the subject is actually encountering is the symbolic, embodied here with a supreme, all-pervading, boundless power. This transcendent encounter, in its negativity and escape of factual spatiotemporal frames, is overlapped with the self-representation. This reflective 'image' (not in a literal sense) becomes an ambivalent double; it appears as the other self (the unconscious), as a menacing, metaphysical sign, pointing towards the subject's ego, or as dead image of the subject. Such results can be linked to the creative process and the artwork itself. What actually seems to be achieved is a lifeless immortality³⁶; the preserved but dead image of the individual.

This seems to reflect the *Phantasmatic* side of images, the lifeless 'nature' of artistic representations, when inner and outer world become reversible, endowed by the subject with a similar psychological, epistemological and perceptual condition. While the supreme goal of the artist is his own representation (i.e. his inner world), the progressive withdrawal he realizes inside himself, paradoxically makes that his own representation progressively acquires an inferred more independent life. At the same time, this aim of spiritual reflective fidelity and identity is unquestioned and excludes a possible return to outer realities. The subject's mind is therefore falling before his own representations, felt as boundless entities and thought of as outward

³⁵ Neubauer, John, «The Mines of Falun. Temporal Fortunes of a Romantic Myth of Time», *Studies in Romanticism*, p. 476

³⁶ *Ibid.*

‘existences’. These *supersensible* absolutes are endowed with imaginary power and dominion. A full awareness of the mind about itself can imply such risks.

III The artist’s experience of his inner creative path through romantic iconography and literary metaphors

III.1 The artist’s experience and the contexts of creation: isolation, confinement and introspection in the romantic artist

During romanticism³⁷ relevant content in art is being developed and searched for inside the artist’s own subjective sphere. However, this does not lead towards an ‘atomization’ of unrelated and disconnected ‘cases’ between the diverse artists and their works. Romantic art maintains a remarkably inter-textual coherence between aesthetic/artistic productions by different artistic personalities respecting current themes, sensibilities and ‘underlying’ iconological issues. The romantic artist purposefully addresses his own personal experiences in his works.³⁸ In fact, the complex interrelation and exchanging of ‘inner’ psychic and ‘outer’ reality is worthy of study. It is possible to trace similar and recurrent ‘climes’ and features characterizing, for example, the artist’s experience of inhabiting his referential environment. This is well exemplified in the case studies from the city of Dresden here considered. Through the artist’s aesthetic renderings, these ambits can further give insights into their own personal subjective situation, his feelings and understanding of reality and of himself.

In this respect, covert or explicit metaphors appear attached to certain iconographical motives, that otherwise could be interpreted solely as having a descriptive, ‘picturesque’ or realistic aim, as in the following case of the architectural interior with a window, as seen from the inside.³⁹

³⁷ The word ‘romantic’, often applied to a rather vague and imprecise field, here mainly addresses German romanticism during the first half of the XIX century, with special focus on the Dresden’s scene.

³⁸ Eitner, Lorenz, «The open window and the storm-tossed boat: An Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism», *The Art Bulletin*, p. 282.

³⁹ Notably, this architectural opening to light and air is shown in romantic pictorial and graphic rendering as marking the divide between exterior-interior. The view is seen from some standpoint

We consider two related ichnographical sub-groups dealing with interiors and the individuals inhabiting them, being either those pertaining to artists/aesthetes and/or to intellectuals; crafts with diffuse boundaries and great degree of interrelatedness during the romantic period. These find expression in painterly and graphic renderings of motives such as the atelier, studio or working room (*Studiezimmer/Arbeitszimmer*). The theme of Faust's *Studiezimmer*, of literary origins, addresses the introductory scene in Goethe's tragedy, and it is also a covert metaphor (done perhaps unconsciously, through the romantic artist's empathy and closeness of Goethe's existential issues projected onto his literary character) respecting contemporary 'romantic' subjective experiences.

Both motives poignantly refer to the contexts, situations and 'nature' of artistic creation, as an outward artistic/aesthetic or intellectual activity, but also as an implicit, 'present' subjective interiority; the inner world of the self, metaphorically addressed, projected onto the architectural interior's visible features. Artistic creation is featured by an enhanced role of thought, imagination and concomitant 'isolation'. The lonely dwelling of the artist/intellectual is felt as a confinement, an exile from a 'real' or 'ideal' life, which is occurring somewhere else. Correlated to it, the subject's consciousness, posited in a conflictive relation to the immediate present, introspectively withdraws into itself, towards the imagined and to the ideal, but factually distant or absent from his immediate experience.

Two opposed aspects of the *Arbeitszimmer* can be inferred. One aspect is its function as a protective space, which enables the unfolding of reflective and systematic thought, daydreaming and fantasies. The other aspect reveals this same space as cut off from the inferred flow, amplitude and phenomenological diversity of life outside, both social and natural. Consequently, one of the emerging issues is the reduced sensual involvement and participation, the felt estrangement from a desired active life.⁴⁰ This negative architectural 'closure' is metaphorically the subject's own

located in the architectural space inside. Frequently, this correlated contrast between opening and closure, an outer extended - intuited as infinite - against the reduced sphere of the domestic, becomes the main artistic issue in itself, reciprocating and intensifying its contrasted qualities by immediate opposition. See Eitner, Lorenz, *id.*, pp. 284-286.

⁴⁰ See Freud's notion of the substitutive function of these reveries considering the active play of early childhood, and also how daydreaming as an active subconscious function whose aim as "wish-fulfilment is to 'correct' an unsatisfactory reality." Freud, Sigmund, «The Creative Writer and Daydreaming», in *op. cit.*, pp. 2-28.

consciousness. It is a visual expression (overlapped by factual spatial features) of a divide reflecting the self-understanding - or rather intuition - of the inner situation of the artist's own consciousness. This excision predisposes the individual to sense a lack of needed (inferred as absent or insufficient), 'vital' existences and presences. His aesthetic perception gives account of a reified deadly atmosphere. It is therefore (regarding such depicted interiors as meeting factual architectonic features) that the causality of such a gap cannot be assigned solely to architecture, but instead to practiced forms of behaviour and thought. They find their hypostasis or 'distorted' reflection in external cultural objects and shapes.

Then, what is actually faced by the romantic subject can be defined as a paradoxical 'presence' of the 'absence', a perceived void or felt lack. This is correlated to already considered mental processes, where consciousness 'withdraws' into itself searching for an 'inner' locus where to dwell.

The consequences of a more continuous seclusion and a further retirement of the individual to the realm of thought are visible in Georg Friedrich Kersting's ⁴¹ interpretation of Goethe's celebrated tragedy, depicting its initial scene: *Faust in his Study* (1829). Faust's drooping head, resting on one hand, is clearly addressing the melancholic state of mind.⁴² However, the painter's interpretation only shows a 'sweet' melancholic mood, and does not reach the piece's dramatic character, the polar alternatives and his longing inside his 'prison' (his study room felt as a dead, alienating 'cultural world'):

"And yet you ask, why your heart beats with such tremors in your breast? Why an unexplained pain inhibits all my life's energies? Instead of living Nature, where God once created Man, smoke and mould surround me, you dead beasts and bones?" ⁴³

⁴¹ The painter Georg Friedrich Kersting (1785-1847), had studied, like Friedrich, at the academy in Copenhagen, continuing his studies in 1808 in the Dresden Academy. He shared a trip with Friedrich to the Riesengebirge in 1810. He was later working at the porcelain fabric at Meissen, being visited by Friedrich several times. Kersting developed as ichnographical motive the so-called *Innenraumbilder*; interiors of actual or fictive personalities, where their social condition, craft and character was expressed relevantly through architecture as well as furniture and domestic objects. Those aspects of his oeuvre have evidently much importance for the main issues considered in this text. See Vaughan, William-Börsch-Supan, Helmut-Neidhardt, Hans Joachim, *Caspar David Friedrich. 1774-1840. Romantic Landscape Painting in Dresden*, p. 94; and Glaesmer, Jürgen, (ed.) *Traum und Wahrheit. Deutsche Romantik*, p. 322.

⁴² See Panofsky, Erwin, *Saturn and Melancholia*, pp. 286-287.

⁴³ Goethe, J. W., *Faust I*, p. 24.

The estrangement addressed in this passage, is felt as an actual imprisonment. 'Living nature,' the ample and vital phenomena outside, becomes in the interior a still-life or *nature morte*. This reflects *Faust's* inner, existential situation, symbolically addressed in the animal bones and in the overall, dominant decay which are implicit as sadly outcomes of the deceiving abstractions in the search of knowledge pursued by him.

Two drawings of Carl Gustav Carus,⁴⁴ *Faust in his Study Chamber* and *Faust's Dream*, point quite directly to those last disturbing aspects. In the latter work, the displaying of an ample flying parade of spectral figures in the background contrast with the sleeping magician's dark silhouette in the foreground surrounded by the multiple artifacts and objects - among them a skeleton - inside the crowded room. It also shows an upper window and a half moon covered by clouds. Significantly, there is no such dream in the literary piece itself. The nocturnal and ghostly motive that Carus has shaped makes 'literal' and perceivable (from my perspective of analysis), one of the fundamental underlying issues in Goethe's drama.

III. 1.1 C.D. Friedrich in his studio: inferences on the painter and his surroundings through G. F. Kersting's pictorial rendering

Kersting has also left portraits of Friedrich depicted in his representative and characteristic ambiance, the painter's studio. One shows Friedrich while he is contemplating his work (a canvas of an unknown subject is seen from the back). Another portrait shows him sitting while painting a landscape with a waterfall. I focus on this last work, now located in the *Hamburg Kunsthalle*.

The room is presented without objects except for the necessary ones for the craft. Rulers, brackets and palettes are hanging on the wall and cannot be considered to have a clear decorative purpose. This emptiness, sharply contrasting with Kersting's

⁴⁴ Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869), was of profession a doctor, moving to Dresden in 1814. After meeting Friedrich in 1817, he developed a pictorial oeuvre strongly influenced by Friedrich's iconography, and closely echoing many specific works of Friedrich, but with a differentiable brushwork and his own particular, expressive manner. He shared scientific interests with Goethe, whom he met in 1821 at Marienbad, establishing a lifelong friendship. Later he developed a personal aesthetic theory concerning landscape painting as *Erdlebenbildkunst* (Pictorial art of the life of the Earth); Prause, Marianne, *Carl Gustav Carus, Leben und Werk*, pp. 9-18; and Eitner, Lorentz (ed.), *Neoclassicism and Romanticism, 1750-1850. Sources and Documents*, Vol. II, pp. 48-52.

depiction of Faust's *Arbeitszimmer*, (as we have previously seen) was also contrary to the practices of most of the artist at that time.⁴⁵ In order to compare, and because of its ichnographical closeness, it is relevant to refer to *The Painter Friedrich Matthäi in his Studio* (1812), also painted by Kersting and also depicting a contemporary artist living in Dresden. The spatial structure is very close to the one in Friedrich's portrait, but in this case (together with a huge canvas leaning against the wall, on the right side of the painting) are also presented two busts (probably casts of classical female heads) by the window's upper margins. Upon a table are standing what seems to be small wax models. The display of projected shadows is more sharp, varied and complex than in C. D. Friedrich's naked studio. The shadows become a special motive of interest for Kersting, considering the relevance he gave them in many of his portraits. It also seems to indicate, more or less consciously, a 'trace' of the psyche's inner realm. The emptiness of Friedrich's studio is not an aesthetic choice like it is for Kersting, but instead factual conditions which are confirmed by contemporary testimonies. A reason for this certainly resides in Friedrich's opinion that every 'outward' object should disturb his inner pictorial world.⁴⁶ Even the window, considering its function, works solely as a light source, hiding the sight of any possible 'distracting' vista.⁴⁷

Nothing is thought to deflect the painter's attention in his work, reflecting both a conscious choice and a will to get the deepest concentration. This attitude, confirmed in the outcomes of his creative work, evidences a vision of nature recreated at a distance, based on memories imaginatively recreated and combined, now in process of becoming a painted image in the closed and narrow urban space of the artist's study. So, in this context, the binary nature-artist is highly subjective, rather mediated through an individual imagination that sees its creative, visionary outcomes as 'nature'. The motive is absent as an actual, outward phenomena. It has its source in inner images, thoughts and feelings. This excised, distant situation of the painter respecting his motives reflects and induces a constant, daily renewed yearning of the

⁴⁵ As was the case with another - older - painter in Dresden: Franz Gerhard von Kugelgen. Jensen, Jens Christian, *Caspar David Friedrich, Leben und Werk*, pp. 23-24.

⁴⁶ Regarding David d' Angers account, see Hinz, Sigrid, *Caspar David Friedrich in Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, pp. 218-219, respecting the account of Wihlhem von Kugelgen: Jensen, Jens Christian, *Caspar David Friedrich*, p. 23-24.

⁴⁷ What was actually seen from the atelier's window was the shoreline of the river Elbe, running immediately in front of the building. The address: An der Elbe 33. Malmanger, Magne, «Dresden och den tyska romantiken ur ett norskt perspektiv», in *Caspar David Friedrich - den besjälade naturen*, p. 83.

absent or distant natural phenomena, spiritually endowed. This chosen relational situation had the creative function of reawaken the nostalgia for these landscapes. The longing itself determines the appropriate 'spiritual' climate - inherently romantic - and disposition for the artistic activity. Gradually, as an apparition, the work acquires shape, concreteness and becomes an 'answer' for the artist's quest, a sensible apparition of the divine.

The artist is longing for something which is actually residing in himself. Nature and the inner 'I' become reciprocal terms. In Friedrich's own words: "The artist's feelings are his law. Pure sensibility can never be unnatural, pure sensibility is always in harmony with nature."⁴⁸ Also von Schubert's words illuminate this respect: "Nature seems in reality to be in complete accordance with the poet who hides himself in us..."⁴⁹. This last sentence is extracted from a study from this *Naturphilosophen* on the symbolic language of dreams, an issue that becomes even more relevant concerning Friedrich, as I will later consider more in detail.

Friedrich alerts the artist against a purely 'external' rendering of nature which doesn't have an 'inner vision': "The artist should not only paint what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him. If however, he sees nothing within him, then he should also omit to paint that which he sees before him. Otherwise his pictures will resemble those folding screens behind which one expects to find only the sick or even the dead."⁵⁰ Friedrich does not conceive artistic creation as a pantheistic surrender to external nature, however borrowing from her the words, i. e. the *hieroglyphs* or syntactical components; often in the form of direct, precise studies traced in pencil from life. On the contrary, it is the inward look, through the spiritual 'inner eye'⁵¹ (i.e. through subjective imagination) that nature and 'inner self' and also their 'semantics', are to be found, in the endpoint of the painter's imaginative and creative inner journey.⁵²

Friedrich's understanding and position concerning artistic creativity determine his conscious choices concerning his own sensual and physical isolation, thus eliminating every distracting element that could disturb his goal; the imagination's own, inner realm. Nothing inhibits the continuous reproduction of the artist's closed

⁴⁸ Hinz, Sigrid, *id.* p. 89.

⁴⁹ Schubert, Gotthilf Heinrich, *Die Symbolik des Traumes*, p. 30.

⁵⁰ Hinz, Sigrid, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁵¹ *Id.*, p. 94.

⁵² See Kluckhohn, Paul -Samuel, Richard, *op. cit.*, II, p. 417, and Neubauer, J., *op. cit.*, pp. 475-476.

and ever-recurring, cyclic circle of self-representation. The ‘dialog’ with a transcendent reality beyond sensible phenomena (even more by its sole subjective character as an imagined and ‘interiorized’ nature) can become a *soliloquy*.

The subjective imagination, depending in great degree on outer contact with realities as perceived by the senses, is highly influenced and sensitive referring to the contexts it faces, metamorphosing itself, chameleon-like. By reproducing experiences faced in these factual contexts, its ‘imagery’ and the feelings tied to them, raise mental equivalents in the mind. Being involuntary and unconsciously constituted, imagination reframes continuously new perceptions in their degree of poignancy in the mind and how they are ‘felt’ and epistemologically related to other ‘collected’ experiences. These images are now being disentangled into another ‘pattern,’ that by definition cannot be reality’s own.⁵³

The romantic imagination, of which Friedrich is a concrete example, faces a continuously reproduced situation of isolation, loneliness and longing, due to its withdrawal into a further reduced circle of experience. The artist’s consciousness seems now to ‘ingest’ the voids and absences in his representations; felt and perceived in the factual contexts that surround him. The meeting of this perceptual climate, felt as negative, and the concomitant, involuntary ‘emergences’ of the unconscious seem to reorient the artist to these aspects that now captivate his mind. Through symbolic, metaphoric means he can signify it; a nocturnal world, truly *Phantasmatic*, which appears in the artist’s studio, indicating an advancement of the mental realm over the ‘purely’ sensible. Absence and privations prevail over existence and ‘positive’ phenomena.

The *Studio Window in Moonlight*, (ca. 1820) by Carl Gustav Carus, has this deadly still-life effect as *stasis*. It seems as if it is pointing out the necessarily unfulfilled and recessive nature of the artist’s creative quest, in a ‘moment’ of exhaustion and withdrawal. The studio, symbolically ‘overlapped’ to the self as a metaphor, has here an unwelcome, negative dominance, as if it were expressing the private, hidden and feared side of artistic activity. Visual perception, implied in the window, is now veiled; the outside is hidden, and just the oblique moonlight’s rays reach the inside, filtered through the curtain.

⁵³ Sartre, J. P. *op. cit.* p. 20.

Similar phantasmagorical dimensions reappear in *The artist's studio in Dresden*, a watercolour of Johann Gottfried Jentzsch.⁵⁴ Here, the secret life of the unconscious seems revealed in the interior space, through the display of projected shadows, where unfolded rays cover its entire surface. As in Kersting's *Man Reading by Lamplight*, or *The Painter Friedrich Matthäi in his Studio*, the projected shadows have an interest as a peculiar relevant motive. Here this interest goes much further; the net of projected shadows becomes the motive itself. The painter, sitting in front of a table in one of the corners of the room, next to one of the windows, seems to be engulfed by those nocturnal displays with a life of their own which are 'working' at his back. This watercolour, of remarkable graphic qualities has, one could say, a *Hoffmannesque* character. The boundaries between fantasy and reality seem to become precarious and unstable. The shadows' independent activities seem to increase in accordance to the passive and static mood of the person sitting; the artist himself introspectively immersed in his own oneiric, mental realms.

II. 2 *Metaphors of the withdrawal into the self and the creative process: E. T. A. Hoffmann's Die Bergwerke zu Falun and Goethe's conception of the creative quest in his Faust*

As has been shown earlier, romantic poetry and aesthetics had a tendency to present and sense the movement, the tension of imagination and the way the self can imagine it as an inward 'descent'.⁵⁵ Two of Caspar David Friedrich's pictures, his *Motif of Meissen*, and *Hut in the Snow*, both from the year 1827, can be considered correlative and an interdependent pair. These paintings can reveal a further step 'down' into this withdrawal and inner immersion. The first painting, an interior, depicts the entrance to a dark chamber, receiving only indirect illumination through the window in the room next door, outside a narrow patch of light reaching the floor beside the entrance's lower step. Interpreting this image in ways similar to the previous examples, as a metaphor of the artist's subjective self, we face a further recession of

⁵⁴ Johann Gottfried Jentzsch (1759-1826) Beginning his studies at the drawing school at the porcelain factory in Meissen, he later got a permanent contract in 1800 as a decorative painter at the Royal Theatre in Dresden. Between the years 1802 - 1803 he travelled to Italy, where in Rome he met Angelica Kauffmann. In 1817 he became a teacher at the newly founded school of industry and architecture at the *Kunstakademie* in Dresden. Glaesmer, Jürgen, (ed.) *op. cit.*, p. 321.

⁵⁵ Ziolkowski, Theodore, *German Romanticism and Its Institutions*, p. 28.

the subject regarding the outside. It implies also a further ‘darkening’, a privation of the ‘enlightenment’ provided by the window. This source of light signifies the division between outer and inner reality and it is also implying *perception*, positing the window as our ‘view’ or ‘eyes’ towards the external world. It is then when metaphorically speaking, the soul becomes almost deprived of light, inhabiting an ample, nocturnal space of its own. The divide has now receded from direct sensory perception and consciousness in direct interrelation into an inner frontier between conscience and unconsciousness; a deeper mental, private realm is now the retired existential ‘chamber’ inhabited by the artist.

The other picture, showing a wooden hut that seems almost the entrance to the underworld, is placed in a snowy landscape. It could be considered a similar but inverted metaphor. Highly negative conditions are expressed on the outside and intuited on the inside. The rustic building, with its half opened doors and sinister aspect, instead of suggesting a refuge from adverse weather conditions, seems to become a possible trap for an imaginary unwary traveller. An ambiguity, or rather a paradoxical and double-sided meaning, emerges in Friedrich’s ‘hut’; a shelter in a hostile environment, but also a possible, sinister mausoleum for a lonely life. The resulting discomfiture or *Unbehagen*, as Heinrich von Kliest addressed it regarding *Monk by the Sea* (1810), is almost literal here; what should be a welcoming ‘*Heimlich*’ becomes *Unheimlich*; an entrance leading into an unknown abyss.⁵⁶

Both the *Motif of Meissen* and *Hut in the Snow* address a ‘habitation’ and/or a passage into a further seclusion, an entombment, a sort of oppressive ‘acquaintance’ with death’s realm. These experiences, as projected in art, become *Erlebniskunst*⁵⁷ (i. e. art coming from experience), and might be therefore linked to the artist’s feelings and perceptions as regards the creative process and the inward turn of the psyche.

Friedrich has expressed these negative aspects very clearly (necessary for him being involved in artistic creation):

⁵⁶ “For Kleist it is precisely the resulting discomfiture or *Unbehagen* as he calls it, in his first important departure from Brentano’s original language, that is the special point and power of the picture. (Freud significantly will use the same word, although its translation as “discontent” in *Civilization and its Discontents* hardly renders the metaphysical qualm of the German.)” Phillip B. Miller, «Anxiety and Abstraction: Kleist and Brentano on Caspar David Friedrich», *Art Journal*, p. 207.

⁵⁷ Koerner, Joseph Leo, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape*, p. 13.

‘Why the question, if often put to me, do you choose so often as a subject for painting death, transience, and the grave? In order to live one day eternally, one must submit oneself to death many times.’⁵⁸

This almost daily submission to death implies that if imagination itself is the true quest of the romantic artist, what is actually performed is the imaginative act of sensing the nearness of death or ‘being’, intentionally or not, inside its realm. Friedrich’s words can be further understood by the necessary reciprocity of feelings and affective participation in his motives while alluding to psychological processes involved during creation.

Friedrich’s account does not stand alone during the Romantic era. In literature, Goethe’s *Faust* and Hoffmann’s *Die Bergwerke zu Falun* also address a similar understanding of the psyche’s inward turn in artistic creation with similar *Phantasmatic* features. They also, as in the case of the Pomeranian painter, infer this path which is dealing with absences, sensory reduction and estrangement from life. These literary pieces share similarities in the features of their metaphorical figures, with the descent into either an infinite and extemporal realm or to Earth’s depth. In both of them the encounter or apparition of ‘literal’ phantasmagorical figures is rendered. They are at the same time causes and outcomes, of the implied issues and subjacent meanings by them carried, as metaphorical images of the mind and/or the artistic representation, as in the case of the ghostly theatrical representation in *Faust*.

In the first act of *Faust II*, a voyage to a secluded ambit of inner ideas (called in the piece ‘the mothers’) and imagination - both disentangled and disconnected from direct experience and/or sensory perception and outside spatiotemporal limits - is posited as the unavoidable, necessary condition for true creation. Only from this deep, inner realm surrounded by nothingness, is it possible to bring out the phantasmagorical representation implied in the artwork. Thus, in this infinite, timeless realm of consciousness, imagination replaces perception. There, the artist can enjoy the recollection of images of the past, of the no longer existent, and reach the bottom to get from the noumenal ideas what is vital and fertile in them, in order to give shape and coherence to the imagination’s fleeting semblances.

⁵⁸ Hinz, S., *op. cit.*, p. 84.

A radical differentiation between perception and imagination is clearly rendered by Goethe, pointing out the latter dynamic but lifeless character. They are not 'original', as the images have their source in life's outwardly sensible, positive phenomena, but reminiscences of past perceptions. Being constituted as mental phenomena, these images unfold in an inherently unreal temporality, where the echoes of past existences can be gathered:

"In your name, mothers, enthroned in the unlimited, and in living eternal solitude, yet sociable. Around your head, life's images move, without life. What was once, in all its gloss and brightness, is stirring there; because it intends to be eternal."⁵⁹

The ideal-imaginary⁶⁰ outcomes from *Faust's* metaphysical voyage - *Helena* and *Paris* - that he, emerging from a cave, displays in the 'proscenium' are then denominated 'Geister' and 'Gespenst'. The entire representation, (surging from the hazy mist emanating from the tripod he took from the mothers), is characterized by Mephistopheles as 'Fratzengeisterspiel' (translatable as 'ghost game or display').⁶¹ Even the search of classic beauty outside classical times becomes romantic; a creation done in absence, horror and loneliness, and for this same reason, phantasmagorical. Goethe addresses such emptiness as having an oceanic character: "She led me [Helena] through the horror, the wave and waves of solitude, to reach this firm beach."⁶² Thus, it is through absence, positing and artistic goal outside of direct experience and perception (and therefore only reachable in a symbolic/ ideal and imaginary way) that the artistic process towards creation is understood here by Goethe. This sensory, experiential distance from the existent and present, makes paradoxically those mental creative outcomes acquire enhanced reality and nearness. Therefore, in this scene from *Faust II*, imagination, related to a past gone by, is also closest to the poet's mind. The creation and reception of an ideal entity becomes, through the works of imagination, part of him more than ever. He has rescued, brought to life, a banished idea pertaining to his innermost being.

⁵⁹ Goethe, J. W., *Faust II*, p. 223.

⁶⁰ It is important to consider the unity of consciousness as Sartre thinks of it, when he considers the indissoluble interrelatedness of the symbolic and imagination.

⁶¹ Goethe, J. W., *id.*, p. 227.

⁶² *Id.*, p. 228.

An incident occurred in the year of 1720 at the Swedish mine in *Falun*, resulting in the recovery of a young miner's dead body fifty years after his death. It was considered by Heinrich Gotthilf von Schubert, in his series of public lectures entitled *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (aspects concerning the dark sides of natural sciences).⁶³ They were held in Dresden in 1807-1808, while -it is remarkable - in the book with the same name (the lectures were published in 1808) also appeared an interpretation of the *Times of Year*, a cycle of paintings done by Friedrich at that time (he had also become a close friend of the *Naturphilosophen*).⁶⁴ The case awoke public curiosity because of its peculiarities; the young miner's body had been 'petrified,' preserved due a vitriolic solution in the mine's depths. When finally rescued fifty years later, it was recognized and claimed by his former fiancée.

The popularity and interest awakened by Schubert's story can be further understood and contextualized by the symbolic and metaphoric use of the figures of the miner and the mine-cave in German Romanticism. If mining was an expansive economic activity during the period, still in a pre-industrial form, it became also a widely used romantic visual metaphor of the soul. This image implied a 'deepening' process, where the 'I', ego or consciousness descended into a perpetual night, in search of 'treasures', or, in other words, precious metals, stones and/or minerals or natural 'hieroglyphs', where destiny was supposedly written. The images symbolized an 'inner truth', a 'purer self' or 'transcendental self' or, as Novalis has said: "[...] the eternity and its universe, the past and future."⁶⁵ The underworld, accessible or open through the mine's mouth, becomes the transition towards the 'soul-world', placed in the inorganic realm of death, not accessible to daylight. This can be better understood considering how for the romantic mind underground and the world above the surface are parallel and correlative. In the first it is the soul, the unconscious, the night, the inorganic realm, death and timelessness; while in the second, the upper world, under the daylight and the organic life with all its changefulness and fugacity, reigns instead consciousness.

One example close to Friedrich (pertaining to a friend of the painter Kersting), is from Theodor Körner's poem '*Bergsmannsleben*'. It expresses the daily spiritual 'death', but also rebirth, of the miner in his working life:

⁶³ Schubert, H. G., *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaften*, pp. 215-216.

⁶⁴ *Id.*, pp. 303-309.

⁶⁵ Kluckhohn, Paul -Samuel, Richard, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 417.

“Into the eternal gloom descends the miner, ruler of the subterranean world. Companion of the still night, he breathes deep in the womb of heart that no heavenly light illumines. Newly born each morning, the sun follows its course. Undisturbed sounds the mountains ancient charm: *Glück auf!*”⁶⁶

Thus expressed, the parallelism with Friedrich’s experience of artistic creation ‘as a daily submission to death’ is striking. It reveals the miner’s figure as a source of identification for all those concerned in the search of the treasures - or the abysses - of the soul. The dangers being implicit of such introspective ‘digging’ towards a ‘purer self,’⁶⁷ I consider this figure relevantly addressed by the romantic artist/aesthete attitude and understanding of the processes involved in artistic creation. There is a daily renewed intentionality, a work which implies risks and an outcome in such a descent. The precious metals and secrets of the underworld become the artist’s ‘spiritual treasures’, i.e. the aesthetic experience and/or the artwork.

The image of the cave appears in Friedrich’s last series of *Seasons* or also called *The Cycle of Life* (1826) which consists of seven sepias, organized forming a narrative. One of the sepias, *Skeletons in a Stalactite Cave*, alludes to the extinction and re-absorption of human corpses into the earth’s geological matrix and its assimilation into an inorganic realm of death, implied in the skeletal remains of the man-woman couple, also symbolically posited. The ultimate consequences of an ‘inner longing’ could also be implicit in this underground burial image. This longing’s characteristic nature was explained by von Schubert in his lectures in 1808, referring to Friedrich’s earlier cycle of the *Times of Year* (now banished), mentioned above.

The ‘final’ encounter between the aged bride and her young but lifeless lover referred by the chronicle of *Falun* awoke various reactions, especially in literature. The mine’s function, both the image of the soul and the labour, implied a quest for a *purer* self, and became a structuring metaphor in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Bergwerke zu Falun*. This work seemingly puts as an underlying issue this inward turn, here exchanged by a psychological ‘drive’, where its final outcome emerges as a tragic, deceiving teleology for the individual. Artistic creation and the artist’s life are also symbolized through the miner’s figure and his activity. The lifeless self-representation

⁶⁶ Ziolkowski, Theodore, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁶⁷ Neubauer, J., *op. cit.* p. 476.

and the absolute accomplishment, both implied in the preserved body, have as an external outcome a return to the inorganic realm of death. That perfect copy of the self in itself, as in the case of the embalmed Swedish miner, may also symbolize the work of art, the result and cost of the artist's strivings in his creative path.

Von Schubert, when commenting about the earlier cycle of *Times of Year* done by Friedrich, refers to a constant inner 'longing' present through the cycle of human life. It can remarkably be correlated to this search of a *purser* self, a seemingly contradicting force inside the 'I' in regards to 'earthly' life and sensible reality:

"At last the mind understands that the abode of that longing, which has guided us so far, is not here on earth. [...] So, when we contemplate the formation of the human mind and its development to the cradle to the grave, amidst earthly striving another higher one may be perceived which even seems to contradict the first and which, at least in the bustle of life, can only rarely or never blossom. The lofty world of poetry and the artist's ideals, even more the world of religion, can never fit completely into our life on earth and tends to resist a fusion with its elements."⁶⁸

This striving of the withdrawal into the self establishes in Schubert an already fixed teleology. In Hoffmann's narrative account of the young miner's life path, this striving becomes a self-destructive drive, and as to the final fulfilment of the wishes of the individual, of a deceptive, treacherous nature. The writer marks quite well the psychological steps that lead the tale's main character toward phantasmagorical experiences. The mourning of an absent, deceased mother, and the resulting melancholic state, the *shadowy* condition of the soul, propitiates a ghostly 'counsellor'⁶⁹ by its own gloomy character. The spectral, father-like entity gives seemingly 'good' advise to the miner-artist, as if intending to offer a cure, but when followed by the young miner, leads him to his ruin.

Here, as in the case of Goethe's *Faust*, the absent and/or extinct, determines the initial striving of the psyche, organizing the imaginary and generating or structuring phantasmagorical entities. In *Faust*, they can emerge solely through the aid of ideas located in a supra-sensible realm and solely through the will of the artist.

⁶⁸ Schubert, H. G., *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaften*, pp. 308-309.

⁶⁹ The 'counsellor' is the phantom of an old miner, called *Torbern*, the. See Hoffmann E.T. A., «Die Berwerke zu *Falun*» in *E.T. A. Hoffmann Poetische Werke*, V, pp. 204-206.

In Hoffmann's tale, the phantoms of the young miner's mind (who seem to hypostatise the recently dead mother and a dead absent father) are related to a self- 'destructive yearning',⁷⁰ towards or concomitant to them. This situation even generates a further recession where, in the reduced perceptual field of the introspective turn, what is 'seen' inside the soul deflects the mind towards the metaphysical, the absolute. Therefore, the old ghostly miner tells his future fellow worker Elis Fröbom:

"[...] it may be well be that in the deepest tunnel, by the feeble light of the mine lamp, man's eyes see more clearly; indeed, in becoming stronger and stronger the eyes may be able to recognize in the marvelous minerals the reflection of that which is hidden above the clouds."⁷¹

III.3 Friedrich's internal imagery and H. G. von Schubert's 'Die Symbolik des Traumes'; nocturnal landscapes and dream images

The eventual 'spiritual' condition and relationship to the outer world reached by Friedrich towards the end of his life is defined by another metaphor which he applies to himself:

"I am not so weak as to submit to the demands of the age when they go against my convictions. I spin a cocoon around myself; let others do the same. I shall leave it to time to show what will come of it: A brilliant butterfly or a maggot."⁷²

This utterance is clearly indicating an end-point in the inner seclusion and withdrawal of Friedrich's personality, and is also correlated to the circumstances of his life in Dresden. Negative criticism of his work and new aesthetic trends, together with advancing overall changes in society, culture and politics, increasingly posited him at odds with the historical present. Illness and problems with his relatives and family certainly also enhanced previous personal psychological dispositions, for

⁷⁰ " [...]die verstörende Angst des shensüchtigsten [...]"; see *id.* p. 208

⁷¹ *Id.*, p. 205; and Lange, Victor, *E.T.A Hoffmann Tales*; p.168.

⁷² Vaughan, William-Börsch-Supan, Helmut-Neidhardt, Hans Joachim, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

instance the search of solitude. The metaphor implied significant outcomes - maggot or butterfly - indicating a possible transformation, a *metamorphosis* that could or could not take place. To 'spin a cocoon' upon oneself points toward a further reduction of the existential *locus*, a secluded life in shadows that could lead to a new form of being.⁷³

This also has other signified levels of meaning, regarding Friedrich's cultural *milieu*, which are also applicable to romanticism in a more general way. In *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft*, Schubert addressed - as previously pointed out - a sensed 'inner striving' or instinct which resides in all nature's living creatures, towards a 'higher life.' It produces in living creatures critical moments, where a 'pulsation' towards higher forms can lead the organism into dissolution. The striving is, according to Schubert, manifested in particularly relevant moments and, regarding mankind, they 'awaken' the individual psyche's 'higher life.' This inner 'growing' and development destroys its surroundings and it has, according to Schubert, a semblance to the butterfly's growing wings, if they finally injure their own being.⁷⁴ These particular moments, aiming for a better future, are also the most destructive if, following Schubert: "[...] the highest moments of the individual also works its own destruction,"⁷⁵ They being remarkably accomplished in the psyche's inward turn, are also correspondingly perceived as an essentially working principle inside nature:

"And the spirit of nature seems weary of its first day's work, to go in depth inside itself and in a tranquil contemplation, get ready for new works. Such silence and estrangement from the surrounding world seems in general to characterize the end of life, and the preparation for a higher one. And even the human soul, tired of its striving in the outside world, rests at last in itself."⁷⁶

The maggot-butterfly symbolism has further connotations, when considering the ideas exposed by von Schubert in his *Die Symbolik des Traumes* (the symbolism of dreams) from 1814. The book proposes, among other aspects, that the multiple images and shapes pertaining to the natural world and the very way nature 'behaves',

⁷³ This line of interpretation can be confirmed in his work, the woodcut *Boy Sleeping on a Grave* (c. 1803-1804) and a sepia, a later work, *Spring* (1826), the second work in *The Cycle of Life* considered above, where there is a symbolical use of the butterfly as a free soul.

⁷⁴ Schubert, G. H., *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaften*, pp. 249-250.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Schubert, G. H., *id.*, p. 264.

have direct correspondence with the 'language' and nature of dreams, expressing the reciprocity between inner 'I' (i. e. the unconscious) and 'outer' nature. This language made use of obscure *hieroglyphs*, and is frequently used by the 'higher prophetic region', the one the divinity uses when addressing mankind.⁷⁷

In order to understand natural phenomena (the deeper meaning supposedly underlying it) the subject must look into its symbolic forms, infer its language, rather than consider their outward appearances in themselves.⁷⁸ A natural phenomenon might carry, in this conception, a prophetic message, potentially readable and understandable. In his romantic conception of nature, von Schubert considers insects as comparative 'late arrivals'⁷⁹ in natural history, where a 'hostile principle' is manifested in 'apocalyptic' shapes and destructive behaviour. However, according to Schubert:

"[...] what is most characteristic in this younger animal world is that the individual beings not appear in the original basic form, pertaining to their species, but they spend instead most of their existence in an unrecognizable larval, disfigured state and need, therefore, a new, higher birth - a *metamorphose* - to return to their own proper condition, or that of the birth parents."⁸⁰

This late form of being is considered to have a prophetic meaning, announcing a distant future of happiness for mankind:

"With the multi-coloured and gorgeous beings, that from death and the imperfect and decayed larva's form are newly reborn, leave the earth where they crawled in complete freedom, exempted from their former bodies' gross necessities, equipped with the most beautiful wings in the brilliance of a newly acquired, unspoiled sky, soaring above a - for them - new earth (many larva/insects are blind or inhabit places inaccessible to light). In all these images we see the friendliest and most promising omen for yet distant, but beautiful times awaiting our race. [...] the hostile principle

⁷⁷ Schubert, G. H., *Die Symbolik des Traumes*, pp. 24-55 .

⁷⁸ Schubert, G. H., *id.*, p. 25.

⁷⁹ "Insects and in great measure also worms, had been considered by many as later arrivals and younger than the rest of nature." *id.*, p. 41.

⁸⁰ Schubert, G. H., *id.*, p. 42.

seems extinct, and the large book, containing God's first revelation, ends with consoling words of peace.”⁸¹

The last part of this ‘large book’ refers to the realm of the insect species, forming part of an entire ‘*Naturbibel*’.⁸² Schubert also refers to another symbolism implicit in the insect world, where the enhanced role of single individuals can be recognized - i.e. prophets - endowed with the faculty of representing the collective realm, the nation. Such a kind of prophetic role, as possibly assumed and assigned by Friedrich to himself in accordance to Schubert’s ideas, is not unthinkable:

“In the language of dreams and in the higher prophetic region, an expression is used frequently, that the part represents its entire nation, and the single individual is put into the public domain. We can find this way of expression above all; and almost exclusively, in the youngest period, or in the animal world, or with the insects.”⁸³

He refers to the bee-queen as an example of this representative value, one that has an ‘almost magical character.’⁸⁴

However, the most important implicit relation between Schubert and Friedrich is the inferred emphasis concerning dreams, as it is a crucial issue regarding the sources of his artistic imagery in respect to the artist’s inner withdrawal. I find in Friedrich’s oeuvre evidence of his direct, private dream experiences, as expressed in certain iconographic motives and pictorial renderings. This could show the unfolding of a ‘hieroglyphic language’, using similar symbolic forms and metaphors, as those addressed by Schubert in *Die Symbolik des Traumes*.

In certain paintings of Friedrich there is a ‘visionary’ element, due to an overall effect of strangeness. This is due to either an unconventional composition or because of an enhanced simplicity. Sharpness frequently recedes in favour of atmosphere and tonal fusion, giving insubstantiality to the images, consequently often giving a feeling of loss of weight. The motives also distinguish themselves by their bareness and isolation of contextual references, enhancing a sense of cognitive impenetrability and strangeness. Diminished tactile values make them more

⁸¹ Schubert, G. H., *id.*, pp. 44-45.

⁸² Schubert, G. H., *id.*, pp. 51.

⁸³ Schubert, G. H., *id.*, p. 43.

⁸⁴ Schubert, G. H., *id.*, pp. 548-49.

evanescent, and help sense a feeling of distance, as something remembered or seen through memory. There is also a frequent concentration of light that in subtle gradients make the motives 'mysterious' because of the way they *emerge* from the overall homogeneity of tone. Effects of direct sunlight are rare, and if they appear, are not convincing as such. Instead, an indirect illumination, as if 'filtered' through a misty air, dominates, being often twilight-like. Nocturnal climates or motives are frequent. An atmospheric vision prevails, giving a sense of silence and remoteness.

I can quote as examples the *Sailing Ship* (c.1815), *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (c. 1817), *Farewell* (1818, destroyed in the fire of the *Glaspalats* in Munich in 1931), *Patches of Fog* (c. 1818-1820), *Autumnal Landscape with a Collector of Twigs* (1824, destroyed in the fire of the *Glaspalats* in Munich in 1931), *North Light* (1835-36), *Rest during Haymaking* (1834) and *Neubrandenburg in Flames* (1835). These paintings, among many others in Friedrich's oeuvre, have, by either their range of motives or by their often intimate pictorial treatment, an own and particular 'aura'.

An early and revealing example is the painting known as *Picture in Remembrance of Johann Emanuel Bremer* (c.1817). Painted three years after the publication of Schubert's book, it has the quality of 'internal' image, as if seen through memory. It is a 'remembrance', a sensorial echo, a veiled image, with a remarkable unity of tone and effect. Tactile values are also attenuated, as well the formal definition and sharpness, in favour of an all-prevailing nocturnal atmosphere in tender moonlight. Knowing in advance the connection with von Schubert, one cannot avoid recalling his words while contemplating the painting:

"In childhood we still see by the green bank of the brook nothing but flowering shrubs; in youth, beyond the stream, a few scattered huts, in manhood, beyond the bank of the river, a large city. In old age we see a churchyard."⁸⁵

A port city with several towers and a large fleet of ships is visible on the horizon depicted in the background. At least a common shared ground of understanding about the significance, imagery and symbolism of dreams might have occurred between Friedrich and Schubert, the two friends and Dresden citizens.

⁸⁵ Schubert, G. H., *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft*, pp. 305-306.

This painting is not an isolated phenomenon in Friedrich's oeuvre. *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*, from the same year, also reveals similar visionary character. The central motive, the male twins (they are seen from the back in similar clothing and postures), inadvertently and imperceptibly emerge into visibility from a dense realm of darkness, seemingly in order to disappear into the shadows again. Such a pictorial interpretation of dream imagery was certainly suitable for romantic aesthetics. The search for inner feeling, echoes of past experiences, being private and felt as more spiritual, made them also less communicable to the public.

Schubert found a close affinity between the 'language' of dreams and the one of poetry:

"The language of images and hieroglyphs, of which the higher wisdom serves itself in all its revelations to man, is certainly similar, as well as the closely related language of poetry, far more in respect to our dreams picture language, than the prose in our awake state's close, present condition."⁸⁶

Then, the dream's imagery and the aesthetic realm of poetry are seen as having a similar quality, 'logic' and frequently even shared source; the divinity, expressing and making use of a now obscured language of symbols to communicate itself with mankind. Some of this commonly shared vocabulary of *hieroglyphs*, have almost the same meaning in both poetic and/or allegoric language. He gives examples:

"A path going between thorn bushes or through a steep mountain, means in dreams as in ordinary poetry, unpleasantness and obstacles in our life [...] Flowers in this language mean delight; a dried hill - lack; imprisonment in the fortress - bedridden; the doctor visit - illness, lawyers - expenses; seeing someone travel on water - to be separated for a lifetime."⁸⁷

Such imagery reminds us in Friedrich's oeuvre of works such as *Farewell* (now destroyed) where a female *Rückenfigur* at the seashore is waving her handkerchief to a sailing ship in the distance.

⁸⁶ Schubert, G. H., *Die Symbolik des Traumes*, p. 14.

⁸⁷ Schubert, G. H., *id.*, pp. 6-7.

I do not pretend, however, just to ‘adjust’ or ‘fit’ into Friedrich’s painting interpretations of dreams as mentioned above, projecting them into his work. Instead, I want to point out that an oneiric dimension, or rather an intentionality of evoking the world of dreams in painting, had a surprisingly central but quite unnoticed - role in many of Friedrich’s paintings. This, in accordance with, or in close relation to Schubert’s ideas, and is surely having the painter project much of his own oneiric, inner experiences into them.

This also implies that daydreams and flights of fancy (or the conscious search for these or similar states of mind), intervened decisively in the creative processes of such imagery, thus grounded in personal experiences. As concomitant to the withdrawal into the self, it is the immersion into the world of dreams or the acquaintance with similar internalized representations. There were also moments when the timeless, transcendent and absolute were searched. It coincided with the already mentioned reduction of perceptual attentiveness, or even its disconnection - as in dreams - concerning outer reality.

This is not as valid when the picture is actually ‘painted’, but rather related to the ‘inner inspiration’ just before the act of painting. Carus poignantly states: “He never began a painting until it stood lifelike before his mind [...]”⁸⁸ Friedrich’s own remarks, if we give them literal, truth-like value, can further confirm this: “close the bodily eye, in order to see with the spiritual one and thus, bring to the light of day what he had seen in darkness in a work of art that ‘may react upon others from the outside inwards.’ ”⁸⁹

A further insight can be also gathered from Vasili Andreyevich Zhukovsky’s account:

“Friedrich has now given a task: someone wants to have two pictures -one representing an Italian landscape in all its luxuriant magnificent beauty, the other -the awe inspiring nature of the north. It is the second that Friedrich has undertaken to paint; he does not know what it will be. He is waiting for the moment of inspiration, which frequently comes to him, as he told me, in a dream. “Sometimes,” he said, “I try to think and nothing comes out of it; but it happens that I doze off and suddenly feel as though someone is rousing me. I am startled, open my eyes, and what my mind

⁸⁸ Vaughan, William-Börsch-Supan, Helmut-Neidhardt, Hans Joachim, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁸⁹ Hintz, Sigrid, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

was looking for stands before me like an apparition - at once I seize my pencil to draw; the main thing has been done.”⁹⁰

Even further, considering Schubert’s ideas about the provenance and nature of the symbolic as acting in dreams, a phantasmagorical dimension also appears in the sense and order of what is thought of as ‘true’ reality and the conscious, ‘awake’ state of mind. The hieroglyphic language of dreams is then reversed.

“[...] meanwhile can it with all reasons be asked, if not precisely, if this imagery is not the real awake state of language in the higher region, where as awake as we consider ourselves to be, we are, on the contrary, sunk in fact into a long millennial sleep; or just sunk into our own dreams we experience the echo of God's language, like the sleeping subject, hearing just few incoherent words of the surrounding people’s loud voices.”⁹¹

Another order of inversion, considering the relation between imagery and its meaning in dreams, is also inferred and has a prophetic value in consideration of future events. Thus, according to Schubert, to dream about wedding can imply death and to dream about death could inversely imply a future wedding.⁹² Highly important events or ‘personalities’ appear frequently in ‘denigrating’ or seemingly ‘banal’ costumes or situations, because of the subject’s ‘hidden poet’s’ contradictory spirit. Images of desolation, poverty and suffering could mean its opposite, or refer to large scale events. This language thus endows manners of expression with ‘a tone of irony’.⁹³

Paintings such as *Autumnal Landscape with a Collector of Twigs* could be possible ‘ironies’ or symbols of events of an opposite sense or nature, or thought to be so. The aesthetic work done by Friedrich, respecting this dream imagery, surely implied reflection as well; the painter’s search for the understanding and the rendering of the content of its messages.

It can also be suggested that *Sailing Ship* from the year 1815, is a dreamy vision, a reflection of the painter’s estranged self in a ghostly Otherness, who returns -

⁹⁰ *Id.*, p. 237.

⁹¹ Schubert, G. H., *Die Symbolik des Traumes*, pp. 14-15.

⁹² Schubert, G. H., *id.*, p. 30.

⁹³ Schubert, G. H., *id.*, pp. 18-20.

or perhaps departs - into the nocturnal, timeless realm of death, after an encounter with the 'terrifying' absolute. This 'uncanny' alienated self might well be the result of the search for this 'transcendental' self,⁹⁴ the absolute buried in it.

IV. Further reflections on the previously analyzed and the Phantasmatic. Friedrich's 'dream images' and Schubert's conceptions in the painter's art and life: A shared teleology and a personally assumed metaphor

The deeply psychological connoted process of the personality's inner regression, implied and traceable in romantic art and aesthetics, has been considered correlated to the artistic creative process, making it possible to organize artworks in an interpretative line; teleology. It enables a further insight about into the romantic subject's experiences and conceptions, as related to the historical present inhabited by him. These aspects will enable us to look for further insights about the *Phantasmatic*, either addressing specific romantic contexts, or respecting the singularities and characteristics of the phenomena this word signifies.

We have seen clearly defined romantic iconographic motives. In the case of the so-called 'dream images' group, its identity is consequence and result of the perspective of analysis itself. I infer a recurrent climate, a way to handle the pictorial resources in order to express a poetic mood and quality of the dream-like, an implicit oneiric dimension grounded in personal experiences. I interpret it as a valid empirical finding which discloses a particular trend in Friedrich's art and can help to get further insight about into some decisive features of romanticism. Such findings sharpen the period's 'Otherness' concerning our present in its aesthetic and conceptual particularities, revealing unexpected depths, complexity and discontinuities in their multiple manifestations.

As I have pointed out, the artist's studio or 'private' interior becomes *locus par excellence* for phantasmagorical experiences. Its architectural space marks a very precise frontier between the general and the particular, the subjective and the collective. Being in itself a dwelling place, the feelings of imprisonment, the resulting

⁹⁴ Neubauer, J., *op. cit.*, p. 475- 447. The transcendental self and empirical self were the divisions assigned to the human mind in Schelling's philosophy. See also, Hammermeister, Kai, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

factual isolation and alienation and/or the related longings for an ever unrealized freedom and plenitude, cannot be assigned to its bare architectural shape. The subject internalizes the space and makes physical an excision that rather resides in the mental order. However, mental and physical seclusion overlap here, reflecting daily repeated routines of behaviour. In the case of Friedrich, I see his worship and ‘dialog’ with the metaphysical and constant introspective routine implied in creative work, as a possible causality of this seclusion. By their sole autonomous and ‘closed’ character, these ideas imply a ‘cut’ and detachment from immediate reality. A new regime of social placement, habits, attitudes and commonly shared ideologies could also be another ‘cause’, as well a new assigned function and place for the works of fantasy/imagination in the new social regime.⁹⁵ From this meeting point in between the ideal/symbolic, the individual psyche, the outward, sensible reality is seen by the artist, who projects the ‘jail’ metaphor into these daily inhabited spaces. The existential, psychological dwelling overlaps the concrete architectural features. But as a metaphor of the subject’s existential condition, it can translate itself to other shapes, being independent of the specifically architectonic.

Regarding the process of the inward turn occurring in the artist, it can be described as the search for a psychological dwelling, a refuge, which due to the resulting isolation, becomes an exile, which eventually develops into a feeling of imprisonment.⁹⁶ This is a paradoxical process, where what is searched for becomes, as factual outcome, it’s opposite. The romantic longing for a ‘fatherland’, spiritually and/or concretely searched for (which was placed poignantly in a heavenly domain by Schubert⁹⁷), has intrinsically deceptive results, transforming the *Heimlich* into the *Unheimlich*. The uncanny element is rather this inversion, if ‘home’ (tied to individual identity), becomes the expression of the romantic artist’s alienated self, by this felt ‘advancement’ of death’s realm into the very individual existence. In that sense, the

⁹⁵ E.T.A. Hoffmann seems to point out such issues, when he implicitly considers that madmen and saints belonged to the same psychological type, but this was interpreted differently during the medieval and the romantic period. In his tale *The Serapion Brother*, a supposedly lunatic, living an eremitic life claims to be the saint of same name who had died a martyr a hundred years earlier. It can be seen as positing an analogy between these cultural-social ‘exceptional’ types and the artists own personality, seemingly - and dangerously – close in defining psychological features. Poignantly, Foucault addresses religious fanaticism as related to frequent clinical cases, inside the asylum, the ultimate place of confinement of madmen during the XIX Century. See Ziolkowski, Theodore, *op. cit.*, p. 206-212, and Foucault, Michel, «Madness and Civilization», in Rabinow, P., *op. cit.*, p.146.

⁹⁶ See at this respect, Rewald, Sabine, «Caspar David Friedrich’s ‘Window with a View’: a Mystery Solved», *The Burlington Magazine*, p. 304.

⁹⁷ Schubert, G. H., *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaften*, p. 308.

here considered renderings of the artist's *Studio-Arbeitszimmer* can be understood as inner 'portraits' of the artists themselves. In the same way as the *Sailing Ship* (1815), - already mentioned - can be considered a spiritual traveller's portrait inside his soul, sailing his withdrawal's inner route.

The caves and mines metaphor refers - as I have stated in the previous chapter - to the quest for a purer self and to the artist's creative activity, both implying the romantic aesthetic experience's inner processes. Considering poetry, the 'spiritual' and aesthetic route followed by the subject was also described as an *enshrinement* and/or *entombment*.⁹⁸ The outward frame in the image of the mine is here the subject's own consciousness, making clear a routine of daily immersion - through the figure of the miner - into his own 'deep' soul or the unconscious, by night permanently hidden. It is at this unconscious level, implicit in the romantic quest, through this 'submission' to death, which Friedrich speaks of, where the artist's imagination performs the creative process and the resulting artwork. He expresses this unconscious state, concerning the work of another painter, but it can properly reflect his own attitude towards artistic creation, as solely guided by the 'rule' of the artist's feeling:

"It is doubtful whether the artist altogether knew what he depicted here in this panel, and even more doubtful whether he could have expressed it in words. That which we praise here as well thought-out and cleverly arranged may, in fact, have been achieved by him unconsciously; for the artist was transformed by pure harmoniousness while executing this picture, and his feeling become his law. Only his disposition, his spiritual exaltation, could have brought forth such a fruit as this picture. Just as the pious man prays without speaking a word and the Almighty hearkens unto him, so the artist with true feeling paints and the sensitive man understands and recognizes it; while even the less sensitive gain some inkling of it."⁹⁹

The 'longing' and the creative search in romanticism are affectively connoted. But the relation between the feeling - imagination and the unconscious and the self-introspective turn has other implicit aspects, according to the underlying meaning of

⁹⁸ Pyle, Forest, *The Ideology of Imagination. Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism*, p.60.

⁹⁹ Vaughan, William-Börsch-Supan, Helmut-Neidhardt, Hans Joachim, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

the mine's metaphor. The feeling as sole guide can also imply a deception in respect to the desired goals; the inner, 'purer' own identity and/or a mystified encounter with a transcendent, supersensible timeless absolute. The searched purification and self-representation may occur at the cost of the stability and even the life of consciousness.¹⁰⁰

In Hoffmann's tale *Die Bergwerke zu Falun*, these aims are being mystified by unconscious drives of an inherent self-destructive character. An affective lack leads the feeling-guided subject towards an essentially deceptive illusion or phantom that seems to replace the absent - a dead mother - as an 'affective' hypostatization.

The accomplishment of the artwork, as final outcome of the artistic imaginative expansions - not always of positive character because it is being guided by feeling - can demand such a price. This fate appears to be indicated in this seemingly 'foundational' romantic 'myth.' The petrified miner's figure, as a perfect image of himself, has transcended the barriers of time but in a rigid, lifeless, inorganic form. Such are the costs implicated by the combination of feelings, imagination and desire towards a *Phantasmatic*, unreal object.

In this respect, Goethe's proposed mythical figure of the poetic/artistic creative quest, is also related to an unavoidable loneliness, absences and resulting phantasmagorical representations. They are inexistent as phenomena, being actually presented as the shadowy forms of former existences, vanished long before in the remoteness of time. In his *Faust II*, the creative quest is rather imaginative - ideal. It is dealing both with an imagery related to what - empirically and concretely - once was but no longer exists, as well as with an inherent metaphysical - ideal - element. This last element also crosses and follows a strange path through spatiotemporal coordinates, reaching finally - and acting inside - *Faust's* mind. The posited goal thus becomes to bring again Helena's own image to life, in a phantasmagorical manner, symbolising classical beauty or its *Ur-form*; this, in accordance with ideational principles beyond, placed *a priori* of experience (a possibility implied through the abstract faculty of thought) and imaginative 'reminiscences'. For such a goal, *Faust* must go down into an empty underworld, disengaged of spatiotemporal categories, where a plurality of 'mothers', that is, supra-sensible ideas, reign. Then, both imagination and art metaphysics converge on a path of absence, loneliness and

¹⁰⁰ Neubauer, J., *op. cit.*, p. 476.

introspection. Artistic creation becomes a phantasmagorical experience for the individual and the artwork, at its best, a semblance or a trace of life.

The maggot-butterfly metaphor used by both Friedrich and von Schubert determines the psyche's final closure and eventual *metamorphosis*, an ultimate self-transformation. To 'spin a cocoon' upon oneself implies a gradual diminution of positive perception and, inversely, an increasing immersion into the nightly soul-realm, as a final stage of inwardness (detached from any positive perception and having a seemingly unbounded role and power) where the individual is captive in his own representations. In Friedrich's case, imagination becomes concretely the medium and goal of art, in a surprisingly literal manner. The 'dream images' group corroborates, not an implied 'pantheistic' celebration of life in Friedrich's art, but, surprisingly, a distanced situation from sensible and concrete nature. The innermost self-identity of the painter's artistic representations is then performed in an inner, private psychic realm, 'contained' in it. For Friedrich, this oneiric moment becomes the one of innermost contact with nature, the divinity and his own spirit in an appropriate timelessness. The attentiveness of the artist for such inner imagery and its 'spiritual' content is understandable, according to his postures regarding life, nature and art. This predisposition might have been greatly enhanced and influenced by the works of Schubert, especially through his '*Die Symbolik des Traumes*'. This text posits an extremely anthropocentric view of the universe, as if solely disposed in order that mankind could get a mirror image of his own representations and imposed teleology; however, incapable of recognizing in nature an Otherness and independence of such projected meanings. The divinity organizes, according to Schubert, a large 'book of nature' whose hieroglyphs, forms and images, are being thought as solely addressed to mankind, because he is the only living creature who has the 'key' for its understanding.¹⁰¹

When confronted with nature, it is rather toward absolutes, metaphysical entities or utopias, where the romantic imagination and feeling strives for 'ideal' accomplishment. Therefore, this natural scenery is posited as 'scripture', a mediation of something beyond, always unreachable and reawakening the individual's longing by its absence. Schubert depicts images that remind of the frequent and general features in Friedrich's landscapes:

¹⁰¹ Schubert, G. H., *Die Symbolik des Traumes*, p. 36.

“The sight of a high and lonely mountainous region, or the twilight, arouse in us dreamy ideas of a higher spiritual world and a yearning, which unsuccessfully accomplishes its full satisfaction in our present being.”¹⁰²

This longing (*Sehnsucht*) becomes, in the divine teleology of self-transformation promoted by Schubert, cause of every living creature’s striving towards ‘higher’ forms of life, arriving - through mankind - to the sphere of *Geist* and then, into a metaphysical unity with God. This, as I have considered in the previous chapter, is thought of and perceived by Schubert as an actual natural phenomena, a self-contradictory breakthrough inside life’s processes, generating at once a new form of being and the destruction of an older one:

“All at once awakens a complete natural force, which manifests itself as sensitivity and motion, [...]. Thus, the flower has, even in the moment of death, a clear premonition and even the living expression of a higher life. An unfolding vital organ and its inner deeply hidden powers wake up and put into action operations - often we recognize them from such expression - which in a wonderful way goes beyond our nature’s usual boundaries. The awakened Psyche’s higher life, now unfolds in the middle of its old surroundings, destroying them, like the butterfly’s growing wings destroys its own being, some faster, and some slower. In this way works the individual creature’s highest moment its own destruction, because an upcoming higher state intervenes in the previously less developed. Here certifies nature, through clear facts, the immortality of the internal source of life, and sees an existence transit into another, a becoming one reach into the last.”¹⁰³

Neubrandenburg in Flames (1835), one of the last and unfinished oils painted by Friedrich, has been intuited as an apocalyptic vision, connoting a negative message.¹⁰⁴ In fact the evening light, usually giving a promise of hope and fulfilment, is disturbed by the smoke arising from the city’s burning buildings - even reaching its main temple, the *Marienkirche* - and the unexpected ‘symbolic’ rays of light are

¹⁰² Schubert, G. H., *id.*, p. 35.

¹⁰³ Schubert, G. H., *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaften*, pp. 249-250.

¹⁰⁴ Vaughan, William, *Friedrich*, p.300; and Brösch Supan, Helmut-Jähnig, *Caspar David Friedrich. Gemälde, Druckgraphik und bildmässige Zeichnungen*, pp. 488-499.

symmetrically radiating from a still unseen sun, hidden under the horizon in the city's midpoint.

Another possible reading, in the light of the above quoted passage, is that the painting is a prophetic account of Friedrich's own death, seen as a *metamorphosis*, a simultaneous birth and disintegration inside his own being. The arising sun 'burns' the city. Following Schubert's lines, it may well present the growing of a 'higher life' inside his consciousness, which is destroying his older 'spiritual' surroundings and simultaneously, awakening a new being that 'strives out' from nature or from an older cultural environment into a higher, absolute spirit.

The painting can as well show, in an inverted view, the consequences of the *Phantasmatic*: the sacrifice and immolation of life and actual existence in favour of a proposed and pursued transcendent, metaphysical reality, hidden under - or even contradicting - sensible 'appearances'; always positing its inherent absence as a devouring supremacy above existence, life and given phenomena.

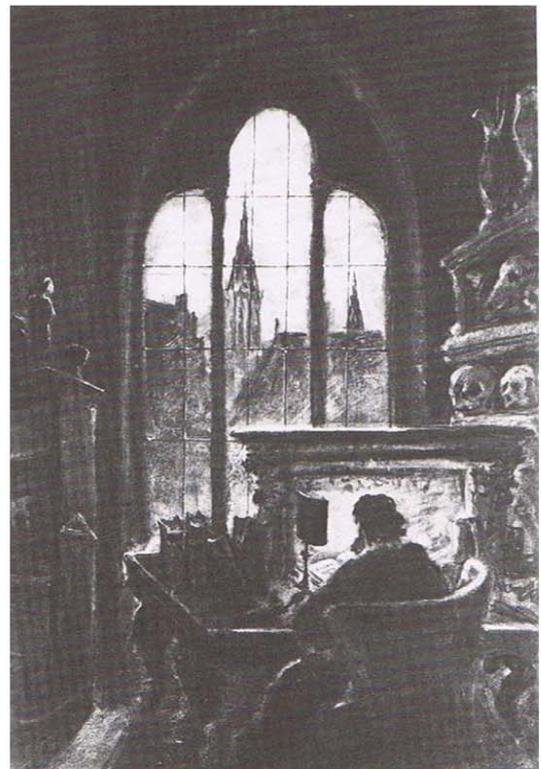
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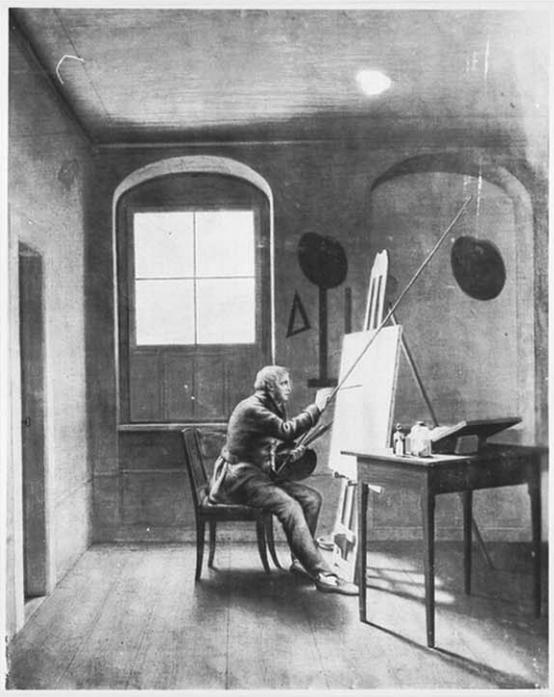
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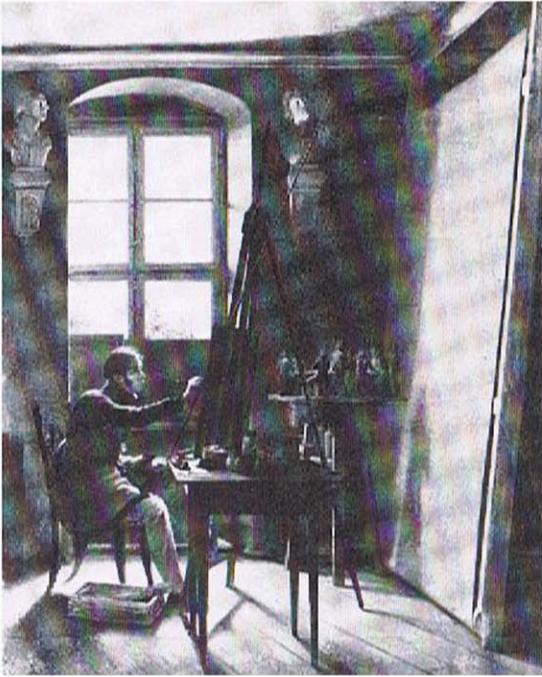
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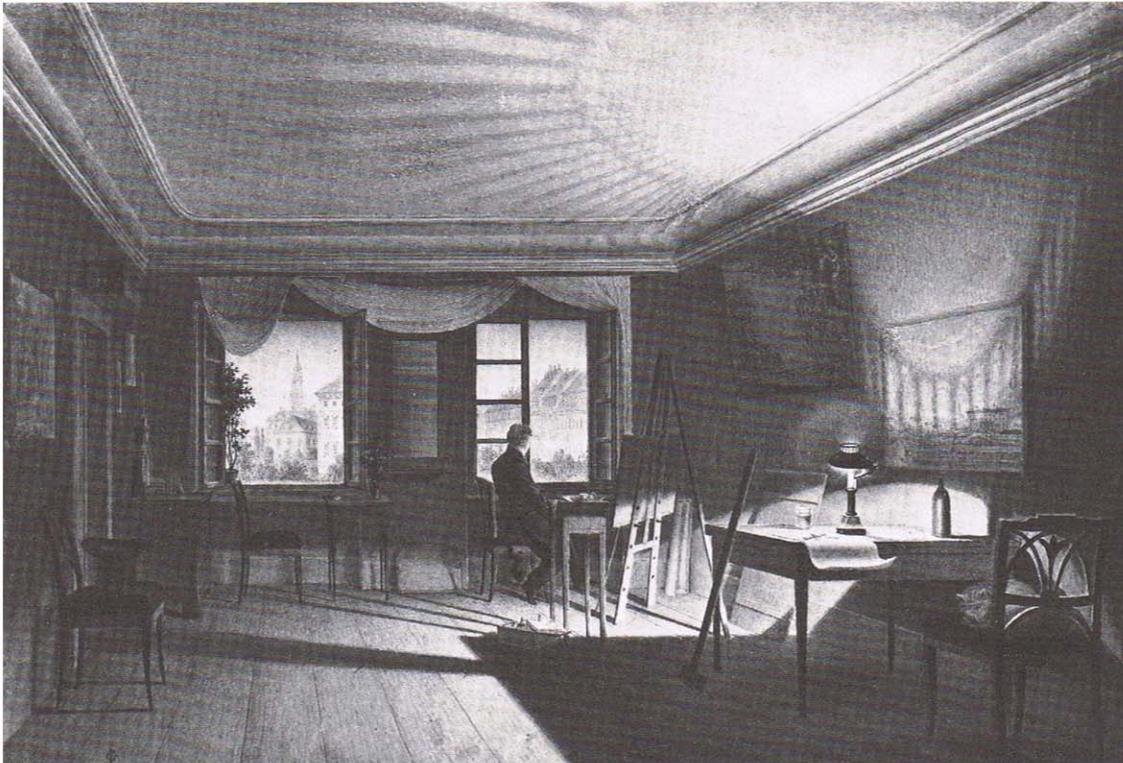
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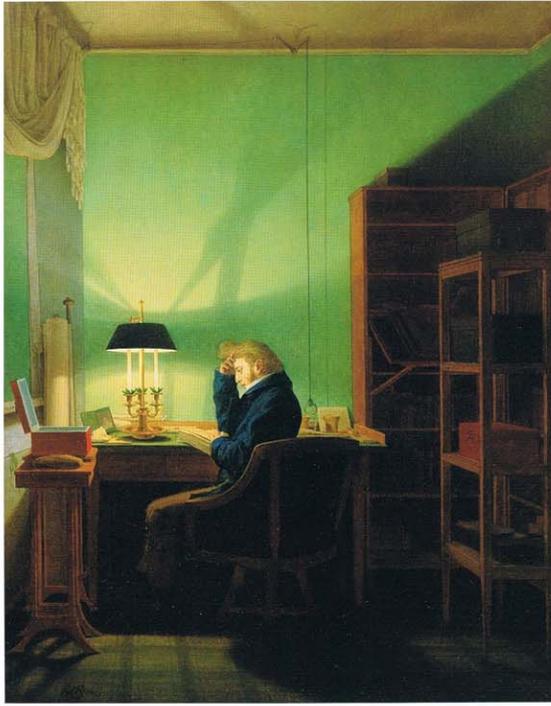
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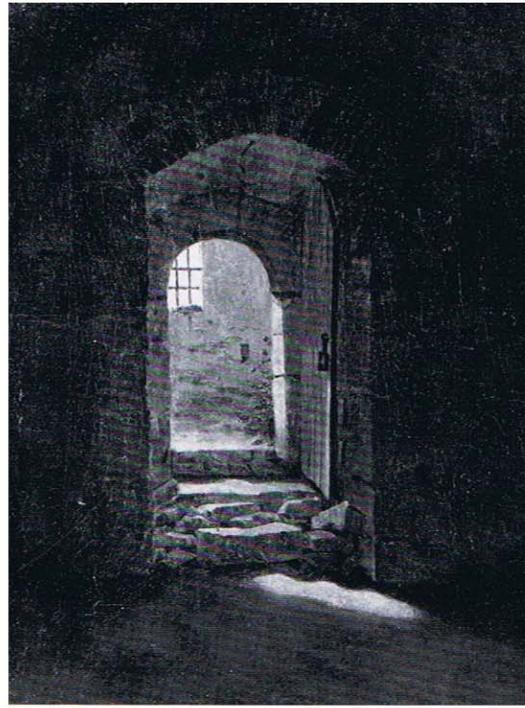
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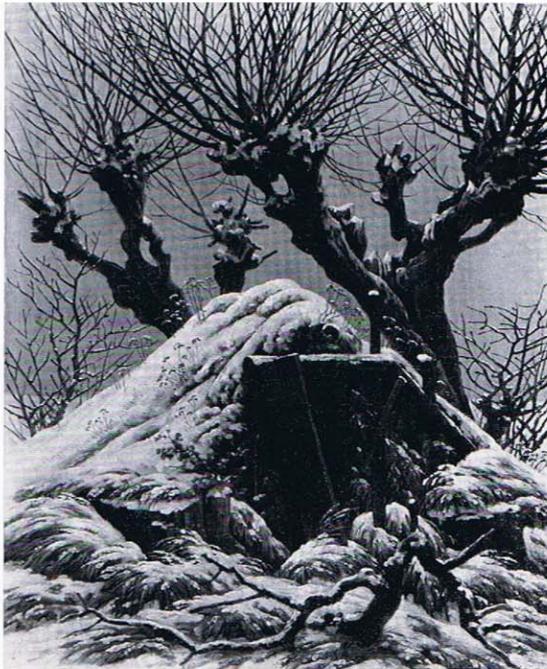
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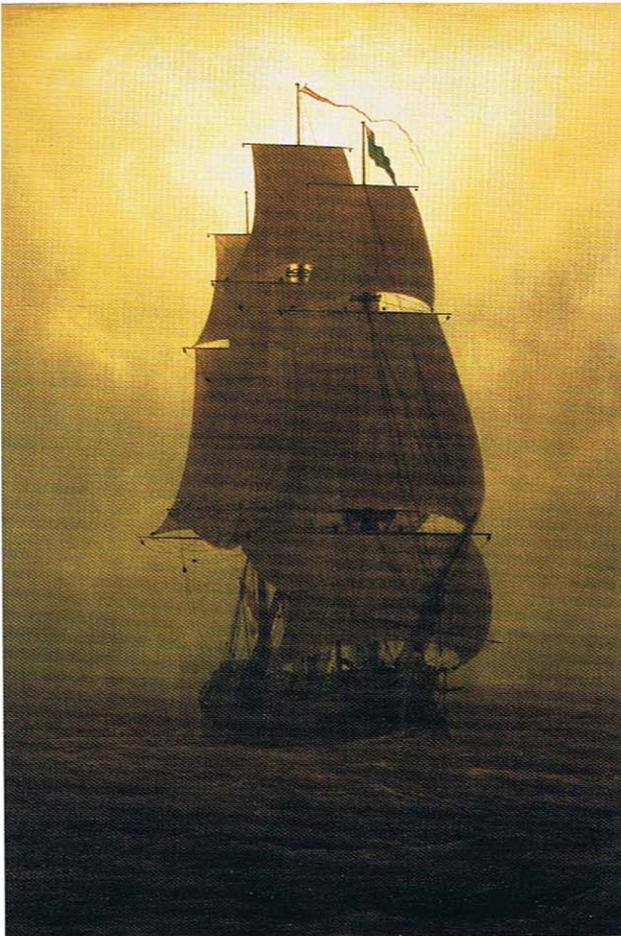
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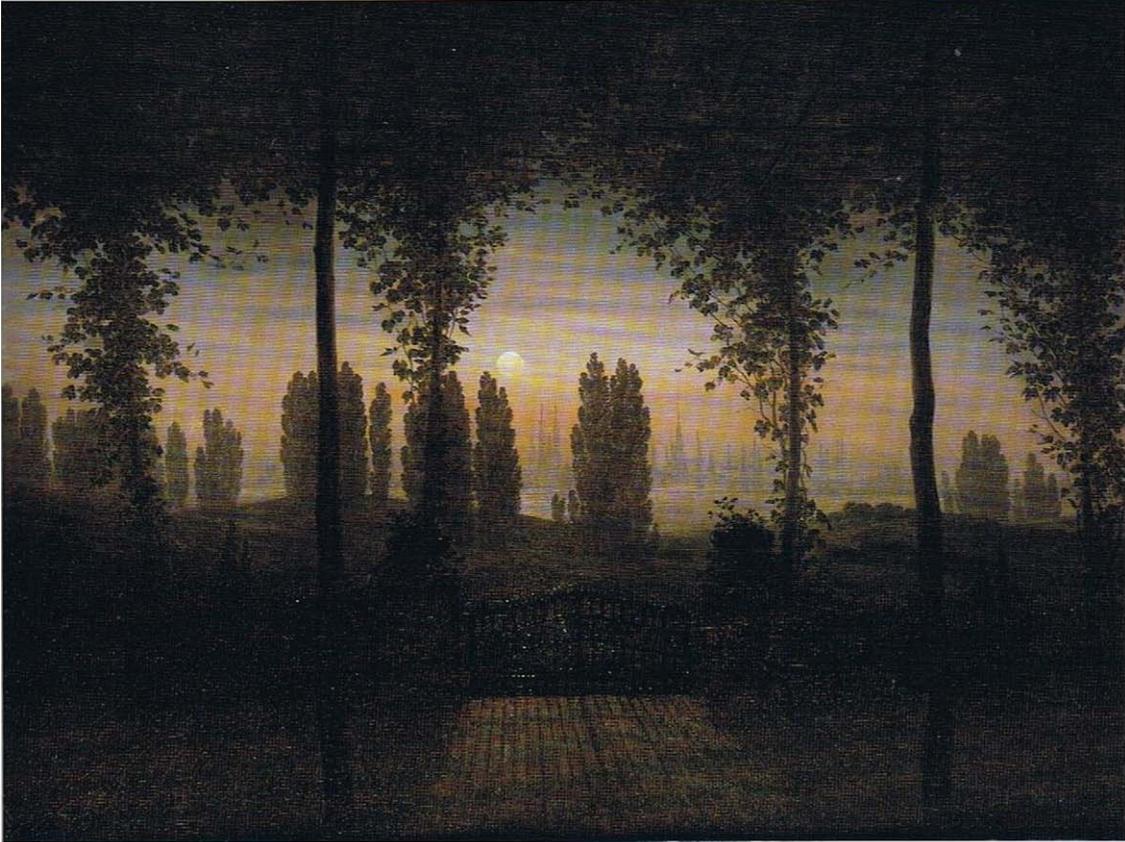


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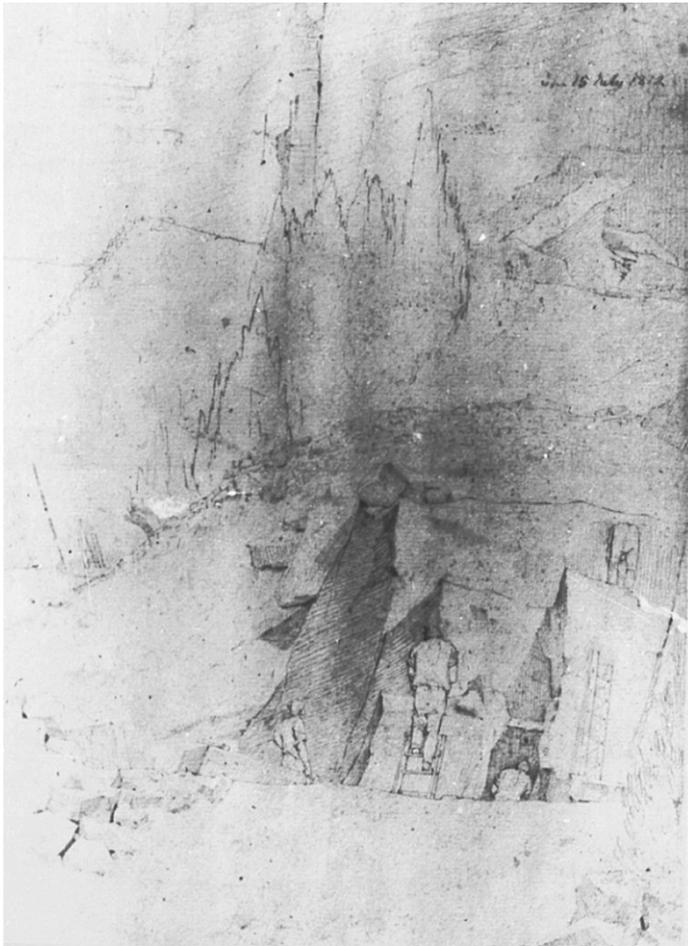


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