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„Tantric Philosophy in Romantic Poetry: the Concept of  
Self in Wordsworth’s ‘Lines Composed a Few Miles  
above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the  
Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798’“

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## **1. Introduction**

The attempt to define the concept of self was made throughout the past centuries by various scholars and in many different academic fields. The English romantic tradition, as well as the Indian tantric philosophy, regarded the attainment of ultimate self awareness as the basic condition to access universal truths. The search for a “grounded, unconditional” truth, which is “known by its own light” (Coleridge ch. XII) seems to be one of the most basic human endeavors throughout the course of history. One stance is that the ultimate understanding of the concept of self leads to the core of all knowledge. The Indian tantric philosophy, though often misunderstood as sexual practice, is occupied with the attainment of enlightenment, which is considered as the end of all human suffering. This experience ultimately results in a personal insight into the universal truth described above by Coleridge. Tantrism is a tradition that has been researched thoroughly in the last decades. Several scholars, such as Dyczkowski, Deshpande and White attempted to translate the ancient writings and provided thorough commentaries on the illustrated concepts. In the Western hemisphere, the romantic tradition was also involved with the elaboration of ultimate truths about existence and morality. With their focus on the divine power, which the Romantics encountered in nature, they occupied themselves with the description of the subjective experiences of the same. Their purpose was to experience God in communion with nature, to gain liberation from the disruption of everyday life and also, to find universal truths that exceeded the rational capacities of the mind.

These two complex philosophies, having emerged at different times and in different places, seem to share many concepts, as well as their basic understanding of the world. However, these two traditions were hitherto not thoroughly compared. Thus, the overarching research question of this paper is the following: “Which aspects of the tantric philosophy of monistic Kashmir Saivism can be found in the romantic tradition?” Through a comparative literary analysis, I refer to primary texts, such as scriptures of Vasugupta, Wordsworth and Coleridge. This thesis compares and contrasts the tantric philosophy with several core concepts of the English romantic tradition. The empirical part is an analysis of William Wordsworth’s famous poem “Tintern Abbey” with regard to the prior illustrated elements. This paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

- How is the tantric understanding of self similar to the romantic sense of the self?
- What does the concept of Sakti have in common with the romantic theory of aesthetics?

- How do these concepts convene in Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey?

I assume that the Romantics were on a deep spiritual quest that bears striking similarities to the tantric philosophy. Moreover, I suggest that the worldview they proposed was a monistic one, and that the dominant concepts of the two traditions, regarding their ideas of the self, art and life in general, are more deeply interfused than has been acknowledged so far.

In order to answer the previously introduced research questions, the paper is structured in three main chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the tantric philosophy and its most important concepts. Terms such as Siva, Sakti and the aesthetic theory of Rasa are illustrated. Moreover, the tantric understanding of the world and self is discussed. Since it is the aim of tantric philosophy to attain enlightenment, tantric practices that aim at its achievement are also depicted briefly.

The second chapter, then, establishes the historical context of the romantic period and illustrates the main features of the romantic tradition. The historical context of the time had an important impact on people's understanding of the world and the self. The turn towards nature and the ideas that developed are thus compared to the tantric path of enlightenment. Concepts such as Imagination, the Sublime and the theory of art are also elaborated, with reference to tantric concepts such as Rasa, Siva and Sakti. Accordingly, this chapter gives an overview of the correspondences and contrasts of the two traditions.

Lastly, the third chapter puts the established theory in to practice by analyzing the romantic poem "Tintern Abbey" with regard to dominant romantic and tantric elements. The lyric persona's concept of self is compared to the tantric concept of Siva and the question whether the speaker can be considered as enlightened is discussed. Also, the role of Dorothy is viewed from different angles. All in all, this chapter aims at encompassing the established theory through the analysis of an aesthetic artefact.

## **2. Tantric Philosophy- Kashmir Saivism**

Tantric philosophy in itself is a complex field of various traditions and branches. Therefore, this part of the paper aims at giving general insights into the definition of the word “Tantra” and its basic concepts. This thesis mainly refers to the tradition of “non-dual Kashmir Saivism”. It is a school of thought that developed out of saivist traditions, which consider Siva the source and core of all in existence. The following few pages will thus illustrate the historical background and the main concepts that define this monistic philosophy. The tantric concept of attainment of enlightenment, which is the ultimate self-realization, introduces an interesting stance on the philosophy of salvation and what true liberation means. Western understanding of self and concepts of Heaven are challenged, as the self in tantric understanding is not one’s individual personality. Christian tradition believes in the idea of ascending to Heaven after death, while the tantric understanding does not concur with this belief. Rather, the possibility of salvation during life is proposed and the realm of experience is of major importance. Furthermore, everything in existence is manifested by the force of Sakti. Sakti, Siva’s female counterpart, is thus the force of creation- a force that also manifests in aesthetic endeavor. By pointing out the main concepts of tantric philosophy, an overview is established in order to provide the framework for further progress in the attempt to answer the previously established research questions.

### **2.1. An Introduction**

The following chapter is an attempt to give an understandable overview of the rather complex system of Tantric philosophy. Basically, in contrast to other religions, tantric practices aim at the experience of expansion of consciousness through the feelings of joy and orgiastic pleasure, rather than condemning the body and its impulses as sinful or distracting. Another important aspect to understand tantric philosophy, is its view on energy. According to tantric texts, Siva, who is pure consciousness and the true source of everyone’s being, manifests himself in the objective world via a pulsation or energy that is called “Spanda”. As energy pulsates through the universe, and the source of this universe and its objects is Siva, different practices can be performed to become aware of one’s own godliness and to become one with the godhead and his vibrations.

#### **2.1.1. The working Definition**

The challenge in defining the term “Tantra” starts with its problematic connotations. The Western hemisphere seems to connect Tantrism mainly with sexual, promiscuous and immoral practices. This can be explained because Western scholars tentatively misunderstood the

concept of “tantra-sastra” with the concept of “kama-sastra” (Muller, *Triadic* 52). While Kamasastra is defined as “the science of erotics”, or “refined love making”, that has its purpose in the sexual practice itself, the Tantrasastra means “using the secret ritual” and is used as a means establish a new approach towards salvation (ibid.). Indeed, tantric practices affirmed “the transgression of norms” (Padoux 20). Thus, practitioners could include sexual acts in rituals. The purpose of these practices, though, was not to perform sex for productive reasons or with the goal in mind to have orgiastic experiences. Instead, it was performed to experience the feeling of unity with a higher power (Muller, *Triadic* 53). Sexual energy is considered pure creative life force (Larson 44), also called “Sakti”. The orgiastic state, which manifests the energy of Sakti, then becomes “a physical metaphor for this blissful, cosmic, creative wave that continuously surges at the core of all things” (Muller, *Triadic* 53) and grants the experience of enlightenment. The fact that sexual rituals are indeed part of tantric practices cannot be ignored, yet it should be emphasized that sex is not the focus of tantric ritual. Instead, it is only one small aspect that is used as means to serve the bigger purpose, namely, to attain salvation from the sufferings of daily life.

Apart from this common misunderstanding, even scholars have difficulties to define Tantrism. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, Tantrism cannot be considered a consistent system (Brown 1). Instead, it is a mixture of manifold discourses and practices that developed at different times in different places. Muller-Ortega states that it was a “broad religious movement” that extended through various old traditions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism (*Triadic* 49). Secondly, originally, no coherent system of beliefs termed “Tantra” existed. Rather, the term itself is a Western concept, invented by Western scholars in the nineteenth century (Padoux 17). And thirdly, the boundaries to other, non-tantric religious concepts are blurry (Brown 2). Accordingly, there is no official, coherent system of definitions or scriptures that define the tantric tradition.

The word “Tantra” generally means “extension” (Muller-Ortega, *Triadic* 50). This expansion is supposed to aim at an extension of consciousness, through which the practitioner experiences the core of his true being as inherent in everything that exists (White, *Tantra* 9). The purpose of Tantrism is therefore the realization of one’s true nature, which is God. Generally, it is a system that considers the entanglement of “man, the universe, the gods, and the tantric ritual” (Muller-Ortega, *Triadic* 50) as a universal truth.



A scripture is considered tantric if it differs from other traditional writings in various ways. Primarily, a text is tantric if it is unattached to the holy texts that form the basis of Hinduism, called “Vedas” (Muller-Ortega, *Triadic* 50). Moreover, texts suggest different practices and approaches to enlightenment than those proposed by Vedic writings (ibid.). These rituals, and this is what differentiates Tantra from other Hindu religions, aim at reconciling the idea of liberation with “the experience of joyful enjoyment in the world” (ibid.). Generally, Hindu religions try to gain freedom of consciousness through the rejection of physical joys and needs by withdrawing from society, fasting, or living in celibacy. In Tantrism, however, it is not the renunciation of the world and the condemnation of the body and its desires that leads to salvation. Instead, enlightenment is reached “by harnessing the desire [...] to the service of liberation” (Biardeau, qtd in Padoux 20). Hence, it is through embodied practice and experiences of ecstatic joy that enlightenment is attained.

Having mentioned the obstacles for defining Tantra and established a general understanding of its approach, I would like to introduce the following quote serves as a working definition of Tantrism for this paper:

Tantra is the Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways. (White, *Tantra* 9)

The question how these creative ways, the concept of self, and the individual’s mystic experience of unity with the godhead can be linked to various concepts of the romantic period, as well as in the aforementioned poem, will be explored in the course of this paper.

### **2.1.2 Historical Background**

The first tantric texts can be traced back to the ninth century (Lorenzen 32), although the exact origin is debated by scholars. This paper will focus on the Kashmir non-dual Saivism tradition. The findings of this tradition that are based on the research of several scholars, Abhinavagupta being one of the most important ones. As already discussed, tantric philosophy is widely spread and has countless branches. Hence, when referring to Tantrism in this paper, it considers the school of thought based on Abhinavagupta’s teachings, who, in turn, mainly focused on the Siva sutras that formed the base of non-dual Kashmir Saivism.

Saivism in itself consists of many different traditions and groups, but generally, followers of these sects considered the God Siva as source of all creation and desired union with him

(Muller-Ortega, *Triadic* 26). The non-dual Kashmir Saiva school of thought developed out of these traditions. The first writings of this theological system are dated around the first part of the ninth century. The founder of this tradition is said to be Vasugupta, who allegedly received the message of this tradition directly from Siva while meditating on a hill (Dyczkowski 11). The Siva-sutras are the outcome of this experience. They consist of about eighty aphorisms and form the base of the whole non-dual Saiva tradition, which became an independent branch that emerged from Saivism (Muller-Ortega, *Triadic* 44). Research on these Sutras has been thoroughly conducted in the past couple of years. The insights of these efforts are mainly based on the works of Abhinavagupta. He wrote his papers on the Siva sutras around the eleventh century (Lorenzen 32).

Just as many other tantric traditions, monistic Kashmir Saivism aims at elaborating human experiences with regard to the unity beyond the multiplicity of impressions this reality provides (Alper 347). This unifying force is said to be Siva (Dyczkowski 8). This philosophy is therefore non-dual, as the objective world, the mind and the metaphysic reality are not considered separate from each other. The awareness of Siva's presence within oneself and all of creation reveals a salvation from worldly limitations and grants the individual fulfillment in his pure being.

## **2.2. The Philosophy**

The tantric philosophy is defined by its aim to help people overcome their limited perception of reality and experience enlightenment while they are still alive. Reality and the concept of self differ tremendously from the common Western understanding. Instead of looking for salvation after death as a reward for enduring one's suffering, the Tantrikas believe that liberation can happen anytime and is simply the result of the insight into one's real self. The fact that we suffer from the perception of our reality is a result from the faulty identification of self with the ego-consciousness. This misunderstanding, thus, is what leads to pain. The reality that is filtered by our minds is not real and neither is the sense of self that identifies with one's character. Instead, it is exactly this identification that leads to agony. In order to be liberated, anguish does not have to be endured, nor do one's physical desires have to be condemned. Rather, suffering has to be overcome through the thorough acceptance of all manifestations one encounters. The ultimate reality can only be perceived if one steps out of the boundaries produced by the limited consciousness. This ultimate source is Siva. Accordingly, the

identification with Siva lifts the veil of ignorance and makes one aware of the world, as it really is. In this reality, the true self and all living objects are, at their core, one.

### **2.2.1. Attaining Enlightenment**

It has already been mentioned that Tantric practices aim at obtaining salvation through affirming the physical realm as well as the metaphysical dimension. In contrast to other religions, “both enlightenment and worldly success are expected”, meaning that worldly experiences such as love do not contradict the achievement of liberation but can accompany this state (Padoux 20). While other traditions often consider celibacy and the condemnation of physical needs and desires as a means to surpass the boundaries of consciousness in order to achieve an expansion of the same, tantric traditions seek this extension through the desires, pleasure and joy felt in the body. As Gordon White puts it, “rather than being impediments, the world and the human body become channels to salvation” (*Tantra* 10). Accordingly, the senses and the realm of experience are pivotal for tantric endeavor.

The physical body is not an illusion that has to be surpassed, neither is the world around us just a dream (White, *Tantra* 9). One needs to consider the following: if the world is regarded unreal and the physical body is only an obstacle on the path to salvation, religious practices tentatively aim at overcoming this illusory world by renouncing it. In contrast, tantric practices acknowledge the worth and realness of this world and overcome the illusion of separation by embracing it. The goal is not to transcend the world, but to realize one’s godlike nature through it. Instead of separating oneself even more from one’s perceived surroundings and physical needs, tantric practices aim at overcoming the false sense of duality by identifying with the innate core of all appearances in the world by engaging with them. Liberation, and with it, a sense of sovereignty, is achieved through the insight that one is the universe and one’s true nature is Siva, whose presence is interwoven in everything.

Pain and suffering can be considered as results of the lived duality that the individual is caught in before their awakening. It is not the world and our reality that is an illusion. Instead, it is the “Maya” that is unreal and which can be translated as “the shadowy world of daily life” (Dyczkowski 4). One is caught in the Maya by living in the illusion of separateness. The Maya is the construct created by the mind that veils us from our true being and generates a feeling of confusion. This confusion is caused by the fact that “people deluded by maya do neither apply the right logical argumentation, based on actual truth, regarding the self and its character, nor do they rely on the teachings of right preceptors” (Abhinavagupta 73). This means that the

Maya advocates a false sense of self and truth. Vasugupta described the attainment of enlightenment as the moment, of a “supreme state” that is achieved “when the disruption [...] (of his false ego) ceases” (87). Through the identification with our ego, we feel separate from our surroundings. The result of this misunderstanding is a constant feeling of separation and loneliness. Thus, it is not the world itself that is an illusion, but our limited perception of it, that is defined by the false sense of self.

The Maya, perceived by the conditioned mind, leads to the delusion of separateness. Consciousness is limited in the Maya due to three types of “impurity” (Dyczkowski 35). They define one’s sense of individuality and are “pleasure”, “pain” and “insensibility” (76). Accordingly, the individual is constantly characterized by what he likes, rejects, or ignores. The sensation of bliss can only be attained if the identification with one’s personality defined by these three factors is abandoned and one’s true nature is remembered. Basically, one has to identify with the underlying subject of the occurring sensations, instead of being defined by them. According to tantric philosophy, the world is a divine manifestation, the misunderstanding that has to be abandoned and leads to suffering is that it is not. Enlightenment can thus also be considered as a way of remembering, rather than becoming (Muller-Ortega, *Roots* 215). In order to reach liberation, one has to overcome his “ignorance” of the concept of “one’s real self” (Abhinavagupta 81). Once these principles are deeply understood, one becomes self-aware and thereby aware of the divine force within. This divine force is freed from any of these impurities, it is pure presence.

Tantrism furthermore considers the Maya as a system consisting of dichotomies. The philosophy “generates and functions within numerous and powerful oppositions” such as “purity and impurity; popular and elite; high and low; inner and outer; form and formlessness [...] the states of order and disorder;” (Muller-Ortega, *Roots* 225). In fact, this perceived duality is the illusion, as the world’s “objects, time, space and organs of knowing etc. cannot create any variety in its real essence, as their appearance depends itself on the stir of [...] the psychic luminosity of consciousness, the self of each and every living being” (Abhinavagupta 30). When one becomes aware of the ultimate reality, one acknowledges the non-duality of the universe by seeing the source of everything in every thing. The perceived oppositions lead to a sense of duality that marks the separateness of the individual from its cosmic self-realization. Mastering these dualities in an act of unification with one’s innate divinity is what happens when enlightenment is attained (Muller Ortega, *Roots* 225). This means that Tantrikas also

invite shadow aspects of life and the individual. By embracing and integrating both, light and shadow, the individual is free to step into the consciousness of liberation. According to Muller-Ortega, the enlightened being thus senses a presence that is also innate in one's objective surroundings (ibid.). This essence is Siva, the "all pervasive and eternal entity" (Abhinavagupta 32), that is present in everything, everywhere, anytime. The awareness of one's true self therefore automatically leads to an awakening from the illusion of duality and the resulting separateness. One comes to realize that everything in existence is unified by the power of Siva, which is also one's ultimate self.

Once this state is acquired, the tantric practitioner, who is considered "one-who-is-liberated-while-still-alive" (Muller-Ortega, *Triadic* 50) experiences God and bliss in each situation of his life. As Abhinavagupta states, the "annihilation of the impressions of multiplicity" leads to a "supreme state" (75). This elevated experience is described in the "Stanzas of Vibration" by Vasugupta himself as a sensation of pure self-enjoyment, since "it is the enjoyer alone who always and everywhere abides as the object of enjoyment" (106). Having acquired a sense of universal all-one-ness, the enlightened practitioner perceives his divine self in everything he encounters. Through this new way of awareness, he can consider "the entire universe as play" and is "undoubtedly liberated in this very life" (ibid.). The daily life is therefore filled with a universal joy that accompanies one's common experiences, as it is regarded a playful manifestation of one's ultimate self.

In conclusion, several obstacles have to be overcome to attain enlightenment. First, the illusion of Maya has to be questioned and abandoned. Secondly, the idea of separateness has to be dismissed. One has to acknowledge the unifying force that is inherent in the manifest oppositions of reality. As a consequence, this non-dual awareness makes the active recognition of Siva as the core of the universe possible, which leads to feelings of ultimate bliss in daily life. The ultimate act of self-awareness is the recognition of Siva as one's true and eternal self as the individual's real self. The means to acquire this self-awareness is through the sensations of pleasure and by embracing all aspects of reality as a product of the ultimate godhead's powers.

### **2.2.2. Spanda- the Vibration**

It has been discussed that Siva is the undercurrent of everything that exists in the universe. Yet, the question emerges, where the boundary between this unmanifest presence and the manifest reality exists.

Tantric philosophy considers the “Spanda”, which is described by Vasugupta as “the streams of pulsation” (97) as a manifestation of Siva’s activity. This pulsation leads to the creation and destruction of reality and its objects. It eventually collapses back into pure consciousness, just to evolve again and manifest as something new. This pattern can be compared to the extension of the heart that nurtures the body, which is followed by its compression and withdrawal (Muller-Ortega, *Roots* 218). Thus, Spanda can be considered the divine activity that solidifies in various ways and constitutes all layers of our tangible world.

It has to be noted, consequently, that manifest objects and consciousness are not separate from Siva. Rather, Spanda is his “self- manifestation” (Goudriaan 51), a movement of his presence. Spanda can be considered as the universal agent that manifests Siva’s consciousness, and “as the ongoing process of evolution and regression” (Muller Ortega, *Roots* 51). The physical realm is therefore not disconnected from God or consists of other substances, like the Cartesian worldview suggests. Alternatively, everything is Siva’s compressed energy that vibrates, expands into form and withdraws into stillness. This stillness is its source, the pulse is the source’s power. As Abhinavagupta puts it, “the whole universal existence consists of its divine powers” (91). Hence, Siva is manifest in the core of all beings of the objective world. The objects we perceive are a manifestation of divine agency.

### **2.2.3. The Tantric Practice**

The ritualistic aspect of tantric philosophy is pivotal when it comes to the attainment of enlightenment. The tantric understanding of the body has to be taken into consideration here. These traditions follow the notion that the physical body entails a “yogic body” that is a reproduction of the sacred force (White, *Tantra* 14). The purpose of these practices is to bring the individual into a state of harmony with existence, through using “body, mind and word” (Padoux 23). All of these aspects are appearances of Siva that vibrate on different levels in the energy vortex of Spanda. The tantric philosophy is defined by its understanding of the inherent interconnectedness between micro- and macrocosmos. The whole universe consists of a system of connection and complementary dependence between different layers of reality (Bäumer 18). Eventually, tantric practices should lead to the “realization of one's own inherent Buddha

nature” (White, *Tantra* 12). Thus, when performing a ritual, practitioners link themselves to the energy that vibrates within their surroundings, as well as in themselves (Brown 3). Furthermore, in contrast to other Hindu traditions, these practices were available to all social classes and sexes (Padoux 17). The tantric ritual is therefore an active process accessible to everyone who desires to connect with the all-inclusive consciousness of Siva, which ultimately leads to the remembrance of one’s true self.

The first procedure to be discussed is the one that works with sounds. This practice is performed in rituals with so-called “Mantras”, which are formulas that consist of certain sound patterns (Dyczkowski 79). These sound patterns reproduce specific energy levels of a deity and are strongly linked to the notion of Spanda (White, *Tantra* 12). As the pronounced sounds resonate on a certain level, it could be imagined that the yogic body of the individual starts to vibrate on the same level and triggers a deep remembering of the deity that resides in the body. Like an echo, the expressed sounds bring the body in unity with the divine entity that is addressed. Through the excessive repetition of certain vowels and consonants, the practitioner can surpass the experience of duality and come to the ultimate self-awareness of non-dual consciousness (Dyczkowski 7). These Mantras could be compared to our Western practice of incessant prayer when praying the rosary, as it takes the agent to states that are highly meditative.

Rituals with visuals are so called “Mandalas”, which are sacred diagrams (ibid. 79). These Mandalas are the manifestation of non-duality, since they combine “divine and demonic [...], human and animal impulses in the universe, as they interact in both constructive and destructive patterns” (White, *Tantra* 9). They integrate all aspects of the universe, merging Siva and all dimensions of being in one picture. Mandalas are constructed in the way that the deity’s symbol resides in the center of the grid, all other beings descending according to their level of consciousness are distributed toward the outer edges of the Mandala (ibid.). The individual meditates on the provided visual in order to eventually overcome their limited sense of self and begin to identify with the deity in the center point (11).

The last practice regards the movement of the body and is called “Yoga” (14). This physical activity intend to bring the body and senses into harmony, “to overcome, successively, the ignorant status of a body” (Böhler 124). Again, these rituals aim at the “actual assimilation of practitioner and [...] metaphysical entities” (De Michelis 18). Concisely, the definition and purpose of yoga has been formulated by Patanjali and can be translated as “a practice to calm

down the restless agitations of our embodied minds during their entanglement with the material world” (Böhler 119). The yoga practice is supposed to bring structure into the constant chattering of our minds that is strongly conditioned and influenced by our surroundings. This is done with the combination of movement, breath and stillness. The body is seen as something that is “exposed, substantially” (120) to the world that it inhabits. It is not a three-dimensional object or a closed system. Rather, it is always already affected by its surrounding, being influenced by and influencing its environment. To move in coordination with breath and stretch one’s limbs means to expand the body in harmony with the expansion of one’s consciousness (121). Thereby one might physically overcome the illusion of duality. Furthermore, the body is considered a “microcosmic replica of the universal macrocosm” (White, *Open* 3). One could imagine the body as having various cosmic manifestations, such as the sun and the moon, reflected in itself. These features illustrate once more that the body is not separate from the rest of the world and strongly connected to the spiritual realm. Through practicing yoga, the rigidity of mind and body become widened and the yogini ultimately experiences himself in his exposition and constant flow with the universe.

In conclusion, tantric practices aim at bringing attention to the divine presence within each individual and encompass highly ritualistic features. It is a process of de-identification with the ego or one’s thoughts. Ultimately, the yogini realizes that they create this universe and overcomes the perceived limitations of his mind.

### **2.3. The Concept of Self**

The concept of self has been widely discussed in Western discourse and has brought up many challenges in terms of clear definitions. This debate has ultimately led to the suggestion to stop discussing the issue of the self in general, since scholars do not share a common understanding of the concept itself (Olson 645). Tantric philosophy, on the other hand, has a very clear understanding of this phenomenon, as it considers the presence of Siva within each living being and object in the world as the real self. Sakti, which is also part of the concept of self, is the creating force, which can be understood as Siva’s power that manifests itself. In tantric understanding, the self one might primarily think of, which is one’s character, personal story, thoughts and feelings, is the source for suffering and the reason for our perception of duality.

#### **2.3.1. Siva- The Ultimate Self**

Indian philosophy has the general intention to foster the individual’s “self-realization”. This realization of self is acquired through tantric practices (Deshpande 34). In one word, the tantric



concept of self is the God Siva, whose power is the force of Sakti. The deity has been mentioned throughout the previous chapter, however, its understanding deserves to be regarded in more detail.

Siva is generally named “light of consciousness”, that “shines itself, without the aid of anything other than it” (Abhinavagupta 30). This self aware consciousness is the real self and is indestructible (Kallatabhatta, Rajanaka 93). Siva is therefore the “all pervasive and eternal entity, bearing all appearances and yet having no specific appearance by its very nature” (Abhinavagupta 32). Due to the difficulty of depicting Siva’s appearance, who is simply described as “universal pure consciousness” (51), he is compared to the sky and the ocean (Muller-Ortega, *Triadic* 144-146). While the sky is the infinite, unchanging presence on which the stars, the sun and the moon rise and set, the ocean is also vast and holds space for waves that ripple the surface.

This consciousness, one’s real self, differs from the ego. The identification with our ego, which is constituted by our personality, is only a product of Maya. Thus, the ego is simply “a part of the inner mental organ that processes, coordinates and identifies the sensory data supplied by the senses” (Dyczkowski 40), and not the ultimate self. It seems to be a tool that is installed to learn how to behave in our social environment and is therefore conditioned by cultural norms. The problem of the identification with one’s personality is that the real self is misunderstood. This wrong sense of self limits the individual to “karmic transactions” (ibid.) and leads to suffering. The purpose of tantric practice is to transcend the limitations of Maya through accessing the sensory data and finding the witness behind all the sensations that are perceived and assessed by the ego. The ego is therefore only the “notion of self” that stands in constant relation to its surroundings (ibid.). Identification with the present sentiment is a characteristic of the ego, the momentary experience of *being* happy or sad, while Siva’s presence is the underlying current of these everchanging identifications of states of self (39). The identification with Siva can occur “through an act of self-awareness” (40). It is the act of acknowledging that something is present beyond the thoughts and emotional and physical sensations. This being is Siva, who permeates everything and everyone.

As a result, Siva is presented as the solution to the problems the dualistic worldview poses. According to this understanding, things are separated into *res cogitans* and *res extensa* and therefore disconnected from each other (Deshpande 39). The world is split into “living subject”

and “dead object of perception” (Rzepka 10). The *res cogitans* can become aware of objects, but how can it become aware of itself? The answer in the tantric school of thought, lies in the assumption of an “all- pervasive and eternal entity” (Abhinavagupta 32). According to Vasugupta, Siva is both, the observing subject, as well as the observable object, since “the omnipresent Lord appears in two states in union with (his) supreme power whose form is knowledge and object. Elsewhere, apart from these (two states, he manifests) as pure consciousness” (96). Siva is therefore the perceiving subject, the object of experience and pure presence, all at once.

However, this pure presence cannot be cognitively grasped. The individual can only experience himself by dropping the wrong identification with the ego and transcend the limitations of Maya. The rediscovery of Siva “overwhelms the finite self” (Muller-Ortega, *Roots* 220) and results in a feeling of “astonishment” about the mistaken idea that there “should be anything at all different from the infinite Self” (221). The awakening therefore resembles the moment of remembering the universal truth and one’s real self in an act of abandoning the ego. The real nature of everything in existence can therefore be recognized through an act of mindless surrender that leads to a feeling of constant bliss.

### **2.3.2. Sakti- The Creative Force**

In addition to this omnipresent consciousness, the idea of Sakti is considered the female counterpart that stands in a “mystical union” with Siva (Muller-Ortega, *Triadic* 51).

Sakti is regarded a central element of tantric philosophy as she is illustrated in many tantric writings (White, *Tantra* 17). She is to be understood as the manifesting force of Siva and the “power which is operative in human beings” as both as life energy and “spiritual power” (Muller-Ortega, *Triadic* 51). Thus, Sakti is the power that creates and destroys our tangible and objectively observable world in all its forms. Since one of the research questions of this paper is to explore the relationship between Sakti and the romantic understanding of aesthetic experience, the focus of this chapter mainly lies on the aspect of Sakti and the Rasa theory.

#### **i) The Definition**

If one considers Siva as pure presence and pure light that shines without a cause, like the sun, Sakti is his power, the sun’s rays and heat. She is Siva’s “urge or impulse to express itself” (Larson 44). This desire can be compared to the need of an artist to manifest aesthetic artefacts for self- expression. The term Sakti is applied in manifold ways, from being the expression of God itself, to giving power to the meaning of words (45). Abhinavagupta describes that Sakti

“consists of the totality of every single thing that constitutes the endless variety (of manifestation)” and that she is “known as creative intuition” (qtd. Dyczkowski 277). Siva is “consciousness”, Sakti is his power that manifests “being” (Larson 54). Accordingly, the multiplicity of all reality are the manifold manifestations of Sakti.

The concept of Spanda is closely linked to the notion of Sakti. It has been illustrated that the vibration that manifests reality is called Spanda. Since scholars actually tend to use the two concepts synonymously (Dyczkowski 8), this paper will simply consider them as being the same element.

## **ii) The Awakening**

The ways in which Sakti can be experienced is described in different ways. The attainment of enlightenment itself is described as the force of a Sakti awakening (Kallatabhatta, Rajanaka 213).. This awakening opens the energetic system of the practitioner and expands his consciousness (ibid.). The experience of Sakti is available, according to Vasugupta, in “the state one enters when extremely angry, intensely excited, running, or wondering what to do” (100). In these moments, the mind is totally occupied with experiencing an overwhelming emotion such as anger or fear and therefore, the ego is abandoned. The process described, hence, consists of two steps. Firstly, the mind is overpowered by intense sensations. Secondly, it surrenders to a conceptualization of the former experience through the emergence of “creative intuition” (Dyczkowski 277), a voice that represents the ultimate truth. If the individual can become aware of this process, they reach new dimensions of clarity and gain access to universal truths.

Even though caused by emotions that might be connoted negatively, the practitioner who experiences Sakti opens himself to a unique delight that alters one’s state of awareness (Larson 50). These sensations are described as “blissful” and “illuminating” (53). They are furthermore connected to a feeling of “wonder and astonishment” as well as characterized by an “intuitive grasping” (ibid.). The emotions of a Sakti awakening are therefore joyful and all-encompassing, since they surpass the previously limited consciousness. The individual is touched by a force that emerges within themselves. This results in a feeling of extreme wonder. During this process, his mind is overruled by witnessing a force bigger than itself. Through the rising energy of Sakti, the practitioner can become aware of Siva within themselves and their surroundings.

### **iii) Sakti as Kali**

Nevertheless, Sakti does not only manifest as the force of creation, life and bliss, she is also associated with adjectives such as “destruction”, “death” and terror” (Kinsley 30). On the one hand, Sakti is thereby the force that creates our objective reality. On the other hand, she is the one that leads to the collapse and extinction of the same. This aspect of Sakti is depicted as “Kali” (28). She is illustrated as having a fear inducing appearance with wild, long hair, neither does she wear any clothes. To contribute to the disturbing look, she wears a necklace made of human heads and her lips are dripping from blood (23). Kali is the disordering principle of reality and, ultimately, seen as “death itself” (30). Feared by most, it is the integration of this reality of Sakti that ultimately helps one on the path towards enlightenment.

The ultimate goal of the tantric practitioner is to overcome their fear of these manifestations and consider Kali as a means to liberation as “the symbol of death but” but also “the symbol of triumph *over* death” (31 emphasis added). By accepting this other, volatile, frightening side of reality, another, all-inclusive consciousness is given room to develop. This consciousness does not only consider the nurturing aspect of the world, but also the innately present terror, the necessary elapse that follows creation. Thus, enlightenment can be attained by the all-encompassing acceptance of the given appearances of duality by assimilating Kali’s inevitable presence in one’s understanding of the world (33). Consequently, the ultimate unified reality can only be recognized by also acknowledging its shadow aspect.

### **iv) Sakti as the Creative Force- the Theory of Rasa**

With regard to the research questions of this paper, the most important aspect of Sakti is her manifestation as creative force in the aesthetic endeavor. All concepts that concern “artistic creativity and receptivity” are representations of Sakti (Larson 51). The issue of metaphysical aesthetics has especially been discussed in the “Natyasastra”, a scripture that was written in the fourth or fifth Century A.D. by the mystic Bharata (Gnoli XIV). The “Natyasastra” is an extensive document about the theory of drama that is primarily concerned with the theory of “Rasa”, which is translated as “taste” or “juice” (Larson 49). Rasa appears as an intense state of consciousness when the individual is engaged with artwork (ibid.). The primary goal of artistic artefacts is the evocation of this phenomenon (Deshpande 66). The study has been conducted from various viewpoints. While the “angle of a spectator” explores the inner mental process that the individual undergoes when experiencing an aesthetic artefact, the investigation

on the side of the dramatist and actor only considers the structure and rules of presentation of drama (Deshpande 65). It therefore gives no account of the psychological processes of the artist.

Since the “Natyasastra” focusses on the performance of drama, the question arises whether this theory is also applicable to poetry. It has been suggested that poetry can evoke Rasa if certain features of the Rasa theory are present in the poem (Saxena 403). Several scholars have successfully illustrated that this is indeed the case. Saxena, for example, applied the Rasa theory to poems of John Keats and Percy Shelley (404). Gnoli even declares that “rasa is simply the aim of poetry” (52). In fact, the “Natyasastra” focusses on the genre of drama because “the highest form of fine art is poetry, and drama is the highest form of poetry” (Deshpande 65). Even though drama is considered the highest art form, poetic endeavor serves as its base. Accordingly, it can be claimed that Bharata’s theory can also be applied in the analysis of poetry, if the occurrence of specific elements is taken in consideration by the artist.

The purpose of poetry, and any aesthetic artefact according to Indian tradition, is to produce the experience of Rasa. This concept describes the feeling that arises when the audience is “aroused aesthetically” and enters an “aesthetic state of consciousness” (Larson 49). Rasa can be defined as “a form of mental cognition [...] or of imagination [...] or of remembrance” of an experience, “which nevertheless, is manifested in a different manner to its ordinary nature” (Gnoli 60). According to Gnoli’s interpretation, it is the very essence of a basic emotion that is relived through the means of imagination. This essence is similar, yet not identical with the originally felt emotion. It is characterized by a sense of tranquility that accompanies the act of remembrance.

In order to understand Rasa, it has to be clarified that Rasa is not an emotion in itself, nor is it part of what we consider our normal reality (Saxena 375). Rather, it is considered as a “supermundane rapture” that is different from the experience of remembering something in the ordinary state of mind (Pollock 202). Essentially, the level of consciousness of the individual who savors Rasa is almost mystic. Rasa is not comparable to a normal memory, as it only exists in the aesthetic realm. The represented artefact illustrates the causes for the most basic human affections and actions. Through this depiction, one is granted with the opportunity to consciously reflect on these patterns of human life in a safe environment. A special aspect of Rasa is that universal, yet subjective emotions are objectified through the aesthetic artefact (411). The individual identifies with the represented events and emotions and relives them

again. Yet, Rasa is characterized by being accompanied by a state of blissfulness. This blissfulness is achieved because the individual is personally detached from the experience he witnesses (Deshpande 99). As a consequence, the audience encounters an extramundane and joyful sensation (Larson 50). In contrast to everyday incidents and cognitive processes that concern one's real life, the aesthetic experience is defined by its undercurrent of objectivity. The addressee deeply knows that they are not truly affected by what they experience and feel. Thus, the emotions become "purified" through the medium of the artefact (Saxena 374). Rasa can only be evoked under artificial circumstances, and not be generated in everyday life. According to tantric philosophy, it can only be caused by aesthetic elements (Pollock 6). The experience of Rasa is therefore the taste of a purified basic emotion, which is caused by the elements presented in the aesthetic artefact. In addition, it concurs with a feeling of bliss, as the perceiver is able to vividly remember a familiar sensation without being truly affected by its consequences.

There are nine Rasas, which are based on "permanent feelings" (Larson 50). These permanent feelings are assumed to be inherent in every human being (ibid.). They are called "bhavas" and are supposed to be "delight, laughter, sorrow, anger, heroism, fear, disgust, wonder" and "serenity" (ibid.). Rasa, therefore, is the mirror of these emotions in the realm of aesthetic experience. Consequently, these permanent feelings translate into the nine Rasas, which are "the erotic, the comic, the pathetic, the furious, the heroic, the terrible, the odious, "the marvelous", and the "quietistic", which is called "Santa" Rasa (ibid.).

As these nine basic emotions are accompanied by yet another "thirty-three accessory feelings", it already becomes evident that the theory of Rasa is a highly complex system (Thampi 76). The "Natyasastra" defines that the specific evocation of a particular Rasa is determined by several elements. These elements have to be chosen consciously by the dramatist (Deshpande 66). The concepts a performance consists of are the "situation presented on stage", "mimic changes" performed by the actor, "transient emotions" and "basic emotions" (ibid.). These clearly defined concepts need to be "harmoniously united together" (ibid.). The "Natyasastra" even suggested specific use of meter that correlates with certain emotions (Ghosh LIV). It can thus be claimed, that the system described in the "Natyasastra" is rationally and strictly structured. Thus, the path of evoking a specific Rasa in the audience is meticulously described. This paper shall not go into a, what Saxena called, "complex dovetailing of various elements"

(402) and will therefore mainly refer to secondary sources that systematically illustrate the theory.

There are two Rasas that are worth mentioning, as they correlate with concepts dominant in romantic lyricism. The first Rasa is “the erotic”, which is caused by the emotion of “delight”. It has the “nature of ‘lovely’, radiant attire” and “comes about from stimulant factors such as [...] flower garlands” and “the experience of strolling in the garden” (Pollock 52). This Rasa seems to find its romantic counterpart in the concept of the Beautiful. The more important Rasa this paper also shortly discusses is the so-called Santa rasa. As will be illustrated, this Rasa is the one that is evoked by romantic poetry. The Santa rasa is generally considered the “basic rasa”, while all other Rasas are only results of the same (Deshpande 99). The connotations of this Rasa are sensations of “tranquility, repose” and “serenity” (Thampi 79). The experience of Santa rasa is described as being devoid of any uncomfortable feelings and is comparable to an enlightened experience. When experiencing the Santa Rasa, the addressee becomes one with Siva (Deshpande 98). The Santa rasa is therefore the experience of being one with the ultimate consciousness and causes a sense of tranquility.

Essentially, Rasa is also characterized by one’s sensation of being freed from the limitations of the ego. This feeling of “perfect tranquility” is the result of the withdrawal of the ego (Thampi 79). Abhinavagupta allegedly compared the aesthetic experience with the experience of the mystic (Larson 52). The similarity between these states of consciousness stems from the momentary abandonment of one’s “ego consciousness”, which is defined by the engagement of a new way of sensibility (50). For a moment, the agents are able to perceive a sense of reality that transgresses their normal awareness. Larson illustrates the similarities between the mystic and the aesthetic experience and states that “[b]oth experiences are described as being blissful and illuminating. Both are characterized by wonder and astonishment [...]. Both experiences involve an intense tasting or relish (rasa), and both involve an intuitive grasping” (53). Yet, commentators on Abhinavagupta contradict each other when they consider whether the ego vanishes completely or is, to a certain degree, still present in the aesthetic experience. On the one hand, Deshpande claims that the perceiver of a poem is bereft of “*all* elements of individuality”, and that the individual “*completely* forgets himself” (83-84 emphasis added). It would thereby be the same sensation that the mystic experiences. This statement seems debatable, since it is the sense of personal disengagement that makes the experience of Rasa possible in the first place. In order to maintain a reflective stance, a sense of self still has to be

intact, at least to a certain degree. On the other hand, Saxena states that the aesthetic experience differs from the mystic one since the ego is not “utterly undone” (378). The recipient of the aesthetic experience is still guided by his “reflexive consciousness”, the ego, though silenced, is still there. Accordingly, the main difference to the mystic experience is the level of the ego’s presence. In the mystic experience, any sense of self is totally lost as the Yogin is “completely overpowered”, while in the aesthetic experience, the aesthete is not (Pollock 202). This personal distance enables the perceiver to taste otherwise highly subjective and chaotic feelings in an ordered, conscious sense and thereby “gain [...] mastery over them” (ibid.). It is thus also the purpose of poetry to foster the process of gaining insights in the realm of human experiences (ibid.). The aesthetic experience does grant the individual insights into higher truths and expands their consciousness. Therefore, the evocation of Rasa results in some sort of enlightened experience, even if it is phenomenologically not exactly the same as that of the mystic. In any case, the enlightened experience provided by the aesthetic artefact does lead the recipient to new states of consciousness and, consequently, guides them towards new levels of self-awareness. One could therefore conclude that the evocation of Rasa serves the purpose of personal growth, in the sense that the witness consciousness, which is the awareness of the ultimate self, is reinforced.

As has been mentioned, the “Natyasastra” does not describe the psychological processes of the poet. While the theory thoroughly illustrates the audience’s inner experience and defines the necessary psychological predeterminations they have to fulfill, it does not depict any inner processes the poet might undergo. Instead, it focusses on a meticulous description of the structure of the artefact the artist has to adhere to in order to awaken a certain Rasa. There are no accounts that describe the poet’s mental or emotional process or that define any character traits the addresser has to embody. Yet, it has been discussed whether the poet himself experiences Rasa or not. Originally, the common opinion was that art is the “expression of the author’s own emotion” (Pollock 5). Thus, the poet’s sensations are the dominating aspects in an aesthetic artefact (6). Allegedly, Bhatta Tota, Abhinavagupta’s teacher, did state that all individuals included in the perception and production of an aesthetic artefact share the same experience (ibid.), a stance that is also described by other scholars, such as Deshpande (87) and Sundararajan and Raina (791). According to this understanding, the poet must have had the experience of Rasa if his artefact can evoke Rasa in the audience. Yet, this view has been abandoned as Indian philosophers claimed that “Rasa cannot be a response to the real world”, but only to aesthetic elements (Pollock 6). It was exactly the fine line between the two realities,



that of the aesthetic experience, and that of daily life, that scholars were concerned about (ibid.). Rasa, it seems, can only be the result of artwork. Consequently, it can be argued, that the poet does not experience Rasa.

The only way in which Rasa *could* be experienced in day-to-day life was if the experience of the original emotion “could exist even after cognition of the aesthetic elements has ceased” (Pollock 202). One would have to have the ability to consciously remember and relive experiences even if their cause has already vanished. Interestingly enough, the romantic ability of the act of “Imagination” does exactly that. The poet, in romantic theory, has the capacity to reflect on past experience and to reproduce the resulting emotions in their consciousness. Through this process, they can experience a relish of past sensations that differs from the immediate experience. The aspect of Imagination and its meaning for the aesthetic endeavor will be discussed more thoroughly in the second part of this thesis.

While the psychological process of the poet is not discussed, the “Natyasastra” does provide a thorough account of the addressee’s process in the aesthetic experience. The audience does experience Rasa and has to embody certain character traits that enable him to do so. The major predisposition the audience has to fulfill is to be in the state of “Sahrdaya”, which refers to “the imaginative or sensitive reader” (Larson 51). Sahrdaya is someone who has “a pure reflective capacity of heart” (Deshpande 87). The open heart of the reader mirrors the emotions depicted by the artefact and makes the sensations available to them. The individual who embodies this open reflectiveness can experience true joy because he is able to relish in a state of all-encompassing, monistic consciousness (Sundararajan, Maharaj 789). It is claimed that this experience of Rasa is defined by the achievement of “a state of harmony” that is established “between the emotion of the poet and that of the reader” by the artefact (Deshpande 89). In order to have this experience, the recipient has to fulfill three conditions. The first is a “clean heart” (87) that is able to reflect the portrayed emotions. The second is the “capacity to become one with the object presented” (ibid.), thus, the ability to surrender one’s familiar ego and to identify with the aesthetic element presented by the poem. And the third is that “he must himself experience the emotion in the poet’s heart” (ibid.). The identification with the illustrated events ultimately leads to the sensation of the same emotional experience the poet must have had or intended to communicate. The aesthete, hence, has to have a certain sensitivity to be able to empathize with the reality depicted in the poem. Accordingly, it could be suggested that the audience has to adapt to the poet’s reality in order to appreciate an aesthetic artefact. They have

to be receptive for the input provided by the aesthetic artefact in order to have a meaningful experience.

Rasa is therefore the remembrance of specific emotions, like an echo that is caused by events presently demonstrated in the poem or performance. Accordingly, it is not the very same event the individual relives, rather, it is a vivid representation in the mind that makes the person taste the experience in an imaginative way. A connection between the experience of Rasa and the romantic “Preface” will be established in the course of this paper, as these two concepts are strikingly similar. Apart from an imaginative ability, the audience, according to the Rasa theory, has to have an openness of heart to take in the emotion presented and be able to remember and mirror them in his cognition. This purified tasting leads to a feeling comparable to the experience of enlightenment.

To conclude, the surrender to Sakti can lead to the recognition of oneself as Siva. Furthermore, it has been illustrated, that the body and its sensations are not separate from spirit. Rather, one’s true identity lies in both forces, the pure presence of consciousness and the manifold manifestations of the same as different aspects of Sakti. The awakening of Sakti manifests as a voice of reason and is caused by intense emotions. She is thus also the messenger of the ultimate truth that can be perceived in elevated states of awareness.

Additionally, she emerges in the aesthetic experience, which has been discussed in the “Natyasastra” and is connoted with the purpose of providing expanded states of sensibility by illustrating primal human experiences. The poet’s challenge is to evoke the intended Rasa by following prescribed structures. The audience, who experiences Rasa, also has to fulfill certain conditions. The basic Rasa, which is the Santa rasa, is the relish of pure bliss. According to Indian understanding, an emotion triggered by a real life event cannot result in the experience of Rasa, due to the immediacy of the sensations and the resulting decreased self-consciousness. According to this stance, only aesthetic elements can cause Rasa to arise. Having accounted for the key features of Tantrism, the next part of the paper attempts to combine the two discussed theories and deduct correspondences and contrasts between them.

### **3. Romanticism**

The romantic era was coined by terms such as “mystic”, “emotional”, “bold” and encompassing “lots of contrasts” (Reinfandt 11). Additionally, it was characterized by a clear tendency to turn

towards nature and a skepticism against the predominant mindset of believing in the mind's ability to deduct universal truth claims. The Romantics aimed at finding the real self, a self that would pervade the goings on of the time and give access to ultimate truths. Taking into consideration the information provided in the previous chapter, one might already find the tantric mindset evident in this very brief description of Romanticism. It does indeed seem to be the case, that the Romantics chose a path of self development that was similar to the tantric path of enlightenment. Furthermore, the self they aimed at uncovering in their communion with nature bears similarities to the concept of Siva. Lastly, the whole aesthetic theory established by William Wordsworth in the "Preface" of "Lyrical Ballads" resembles the theory of Rasa. Additionally, I suggest that his theory actually describes a very important missing link between the aesthetic experience and the real world. This link is the concept of Imagination. It will be illustrated, that the words Wordsworth chooses to describe this process concur with the tantric description of the evocation of Rasa. Even the purpose of poetry concurs in both traditions. Therefore, the next chapter will attempt to answer the following research question: "Which aspects of tantric philosophy can be found in the romantic tradition?" By tracing the historical developments of the time and looking for similarities to the tantric path, the question how the tantric understanding of self is similar to the romantic sense of self will also be answered. Then, the romantic aesthetic theory will be taken into consideration. Concepts such as the Sublime established by Edmund Burke and the theory of aesthetic experience provided by William Wordsworth will be compared and contrasted with the various manifestations of Sakti and the Rasa theory. The research question: "What does the concept of Sakti have in common with the romantic theory of aesthetics?", shall therefore be answered as well.

### **3.1. Romanticist Poetry**

The main features of the romantic epoch are relatively easy to establish if its values and connotations are compared to the epoch of Classicism. While Classicism was the age that considered the "virtues of intelligence" (Bush 114) the highest good and strove for objectively observable truths, the romantic movement leaned towards adjectives such as "individual, imaginative" and "spontaneous" (Reinfandt 9). The whole romantic tradition can be described as a "revolt against reason" (Bush 114), a counter reaction to the neo-classical age that focused on empirical truths and progress. The general focus shifted from an emphasis on the powers of rationality towards the importance of mental states and sentiments. Moreover, the question about the *possibilities* of real knowledge grew more important. Consequently, the Romantics argued in favor of opportunities for transcendental experience. As William Blake puts it, "man's

perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception. He perceives more than sense [...] can discover” (2). Due to this assumption, the existence of a “Spirit of Prophecy” was emanated as the “one source” that provides new dimensions of consciousness (Blake 1). Ultimate truths, therefore, would be provided by a divine entity that transcended the, previously highly valued, cognitive abilities.

Out of the Romantic mindset, art and philosophy prospered, which focused mainly on “nature, truth, and imagination” (Blades 176). Besides, it was strongly concerned with the role of the individual in relation to its surroundings, with a focus on nature (Bainbridge 148). This led to a paradigm shift from a focal point of attempted objectivity towards a dominant emphasis on subjective experience (Reinfandt 11). In short, the romantic age was a movement that was concerned with the field of individual experience. This experience was explored in creative and sensitive ways. The force of nature was the focal point for this event, and it was there that the access to a metaphysical reality was assumed. The aforementioned paradigm shift can be summarized as follows:

the turning from reason to senses, feelings, imagination, and intuition; from the civilized, modern, and sophisticated to the primitive, medieval and natural; from preoccupation with human nature to preoccupation with the aesthetic and spiritual values of external nature [...] from the expression of accepted moral truth to discovery of the beauty that is truth (Bush 114).

These developments were all invoked by a very volatile historical context, in which the predominant values were challenged and artists of the time started to look for new anchor points that would supply answers for existential questions.

### **3.1.1. Historical Background**

The age of reason and the movement of Romanticism that followed, took place in a very unstable political and economic context. Britain was at war with France, which started 1793 and went on until the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte, twenty years later (Bainbridge 22). These wars happened on a “global scale” and had a direct impact on British citizens, as they were fought, not by hired soldiers, but by the population itself (ibid.). The French Revolution, first considered a positive development, resulted in major disillusion for its former supporters. Due to violent events, such as the September Massacre in 1792 and the execution of the former emperors, followers of the revolutionary movement were highly disturbed. Ultimately, this disappointment lead to a new sense of nationalism (21) and a search for anchors of morality.

But not only the political situation stirred the dominant world view. On account of scientific developments, the economy and social structure changed rapidly and resulted in a new social geography (Reinfandt 19). The invention of the steam engine facilitated new possibilities of mass production and under the umbrella term of the Industrial Revolution, several changes occurred in fast speed. Firstly, the population grew tremendously. London's population alone increased to twice its size within just a hundred years (61). Enclosure, which meant privatization of common land, led to rural poverty. Hence, the cities with evolving factories offered jobs and large towns emerged. Consequently, a new middle class was established, and at the same time a working class formed that lived under horrible conditions (62).

Within all this disarray, romantic poetry started to engage in questions of the relationship between the anonymous, industrialized society and the identity of the individual. Just as the tantric philosophy considers contrasting forces and seeks to unify them, the focus of the romantic revolt was to find the balance between the evolving cities and constant nature, the relationship between cognition and inspiration, and objective truths within subjective experiences. This shift of focus, from the rational to the emotional and the objective to the subjective, "constituted a revolutionary change" (Bush 115) and, this paper suggests, ultimately led to a philosophy that had the intention of making liberation accessible to the common people, just like the tantric practice.

### **3.1.2. The Romantics on the Path of Tantrism- Uncovering the True Self**

The romantic age was a time full of shifts in value and belief systems. The external world had changed rapidly and the individual was left with disappointed hopes and little social structure to rely on. Thus, philosophical branches developed that were concerned with the role of the individual and especially, the relationship between soul and body. Descartes made the famous distinction between things that think and objects, a dualistic statement that led to major debates about relations of the body and mind (Bullough 92). However, this idea was strongly criticized by the Romantics (Blake 1).

According to this idea of dualism, the body and mind are two separate entities, which are temporarily connected. Of course, the question arose on how to bridge this gap between the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*. The philosopher John Locke, then, proposed in his work "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1690) the concepts of thought and experience as means to connect these two distinct entities (Bainbridge 148). He illustrated the mind as a clean

sleight, which primarily exists without any predeterminations. Thus, the mind is programmed by experience and converts these experiences into theoretical concepts and rational conclusions (ibid.). The device that connects body and mind, therefore, is the individual, physical experience. However, the possibilities of these experiences are limited. Therefore, poets such as William Blake argued, “if it were not for the [...] prophetic character the philosophic & experimental would soon be at the ration of all things” (1). Accordingly, there must be a source beyond the basic human realm of experience that provides new insights and truths.

In addition to this emphasis on experience, the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau introduced his theory of men, which stood in harsh contrast to the contemporary understanding of the “civilized man” (Bainbridge 149). He claimed that, in opposition to the common understanding of children being born with the Original Sin, children were innately innocent. Hence, the ultimate surrounding for the originally good man is a life in nature as a “‘noble savage’, free of depression, pollution, discord” (Blades 174). Accordingly, the individual would not prosper in the urban environment, but would unfold his whole potential in nature. The Romantics agree with this proposal. Wordsworth also believed, that in “low and rustic life”, away from urban society, “the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity” (*Preface* 239). Formerly defined by its role in society and the power to subdue nature through the force of rationality, the idea of the individual was now rather unclear. As Rzepka puts it, “it became increasingly difficult for the self to find a recognizable place in English society” (23). Thus, turning their backs on the cultivated society after major disappointment in what seemed to be cultural progress, the poets of the time were left with a “contemplation of a great void” (Bush 116). This great void was ultimately to be filled with answers that the Romantics hoped to find in nature.

For the Romantics, the desire to find ultimate truths would be fulfilled in their communion with nature. The individual was not supposed to find reason and purpose in society through rationality, but, as Blake postulates, in nature, where the “permanent Realities of every thing” are to be found (Blake 545). Nature was thereby considered the anchor point for a perception of infinity. They were driven by their will to uncover the innate order that rules beyond the visible appearances of the objective world. It was the process of imagination that should foster the process of finding the “transcendental order” (Bowra 22). As Samuel Taylor Coleridge declared, “we are to seek therefore for some absolute truth [...] a truth self-grounded, unconditional and known by its own light. In short, we have to find somewhat which is, simply

because it is. [...] It must be one which is its own predicate, so far at least that all other nominal predicates must be modes and repetitions of itself” (ch. XII). The romantic quest was thereby the discovery of the elementary source of truth and all being. Apparently, it was nature which could distribute awareness of this ultimate presence to overcome the trauma of the, at that time, devastating presence. Wordsworth described the hope he feels despite “the magnitude of the general evil”, as he has “deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities [...] of certain powers in the great permanent objects” (*Preface* 243). He found faith in his believe in immortal and everlasting forces that reside within the objects of our reality. The disillusionment and suffering caused by the historical events led to a critical stance towards the reality that human progress manifested and resulted in a search for a transcendental power and reason. A quest, very similar to the purpose of tantric philosophy.

As discussed in the previous chapter, tantric philosophy considers our reality as real, but delusional. The so- called Maya is the world as we perceive it through the limitations of our mind, which is therefore, an illusion. Accordingly, the identification with our rational conception of the world is the cause of suffering. One should note the evident contrast to the predominant Western mindset here. Originally, the belief in the mind’s capacity to grasp ultimate truths dominated the understanding of the world. Ultimately, the romantic movement challenged this idea. In Tantra, the mind is the cause for the misunderstanding of our reality. The process of awakening is basically conducted in three stages. Firstly, the practitioner has to stop identifying with Maya, or at least, come to the awareness of questioning the same. Secondly, an expansion of one’s consciousness has to be performed to the degree of understanding that makes evident that the world we live in is produced by a force inherent in everything in existence. Thirdly, one must conclude that ultimately and independent of will and reason, this force is our true self. The human agency, driven by the ego, is what leads to the recreation of Maya and has to be dropped. Consequently, the realization that it is our innate godlike nature, Siva, who creates our reality through the force of Sakti, leads to a state of bliss. Enlightenment can be attained by stepping out of the perception of separateness from our surrounding and overcome duality.

Interestingly enough, it seems to be the case that the Romantics performed this movement towards liberation due to their historical context in various ways. They started to abandon their “ignorance of the nature of ultimate principles, namely, God, the Self and Maya” (Dyczkowski 4) and turned towards a force they considered bigger than themselves. The insight that this

reality is ultimately not the “paradise on earth” (Bainbridge 21), as was originally anticipated as the result of the French Revolution, could be compared to the drop of identification with Maya. Blake described the crippled mind as the result of being ignorant of the ultimate truth. He postulates that, “the giants who formed this world into its sensual existence and now seem to live in it in chains, are in truth, the causes of its life & the sources of all activity, but the chains are, the cunning of weak and tame minds, which have power to resist energy” (39). The giants he speaks of are thus the initial creators of the world and all that exists. One can assume that they stand for a divine force. However, they are confined by the “cunning” minds of people. The individual’s cognitive powers, the “tame mind” therefore prevents the recognition of the real source of reality. The mind is therefore an obstacle on the path towards the awareness of universal truths and God. These insights led to the acknowledgement of the possible insubstantiality of the world they lived in, or at least, to the search for alternative realities, value systems and a higher truth.

The second step, after not identifying with “the shadowy world of daily life” (Dyczkowski 4) anymore, was the abandonment of their illusion of separateness. According to Blake, “the notion that man had a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged” (38). Therefore, the idea of duality ought to be dismissed. However, not only the body-mind relation was re-evaluated. A rejection of the industrialized society took place, and human beings and nature were considered as inherently intertwined (Merten 218). The view on nature as a force that needs to be cultivated, or as serving as a muse and manifestation of beauty, defined the individual as a part of a dualistic system. Humanity was not considered an interconnected element, but rather a superordinate force that could use nature to serve its needs (ibid.). Stepping out of the supremacy of reason, and not identifying with the values of rational progress anymore, a new connection for the definition of self was established. It was the connection with nature that defined the true self (Reinfandt 289). Instead of thinking nature and humans as two separate concepts, the Romantics saw these forces as integral parts of each other. This approach towards perception of reality as interdependent is thus another similarity to the tantric philosophy. The Romantics considered an inherent connection between the human being and everything that surrounds them, just as tantric philosophers regarded the universe as interconnected on micro- and macrocosmic layers. Reinfandt states that the human “Geist” is, according to the romantic principle, formed by nature and thereby part of it (18). The choice of the word “Geist” is interesting to note here. It is not the mind that is depicted, but rather an active, intuitive awareness. Rather, it is the conception of present reason that goes beyond the workings of the



rational mind. However, the human consciousness resembles the spirit of nature, which is created by God. Hence, these two entities are strongly connected. As a consequence, it could be suggested that the individual's consciousness is also created by a divine force. As Merten puts it, "both the observed scenery and the observing subject are creatures, as it were, of the same nature" (219). Thus, they are constructed by the same source and seem to define each other. At their core, they are the same. This new viewpoint on nature and the self, lead to a monistic understanding of the world. The human being is not separate, not independent of nature. Rather, it is an innate part of it, and vice versa. The individual even finds the core of his real self, as it resonates in nature. Arguably, an expanded level of non- dual consciousness was manifested that is, again, very similar to the goal of tantric practice.

Another goal of the Romantics was to reach "bewusste Subjektivität" (Reinfandt 14), which could be translated as self- awareness. Having lost its reference point of definition within society, the question about the real self was raised. According to the theory of Hume, it was common understanding that the self can only become aware of itself if it is an observable entity depicted in the mind. Yet, if focused upon, it seemed to disintegrate into incoherent chunks of mental events, instead of one graspable, unified entity (Rzepka 11). Kant established a shift in perception of the self. He pointed out, that it was not an observable object, but a force granting the individual the possibility to observe in the first place (12). Instead of being an incoherent construct of perceived experiences, the self was considered the unifying force of the experienced sensations. It was the self as the observing, embodied mind that made a sense of self possible for the individual.

The problem of the definition of this self was its questionable reliability. Descartes pointed out that the mind's judgements can fail and are thus always fallible (Rzepka 14). Even though the self in this conception was "felt to be 'true', was not felt to be 'real'" (ibid.). The Romantics agreed with this view, and also believed that the human being that was limited by his perceptions would never acquire new insights (Blake 1). Moreover, they would not accept that the real human self was bound by the capacities of the mind. Thus, the mind ought to be abandoned and thereby the level of consciousness should become elevated. Blake stated that "the doors of perception" need to be "cleansed" (39). If this was achieved, "every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite" (ibid.) If one could free himself of the limited perceptions observed by the mind, one could become aware of an eternal force. Therefore, they sought for the universal "spirit" (Coleridge ch. XII), the ultimate witness they considered the real self.

Wordsworth also describes this power in his poem as “blessed mood” (*Tintern Abbey*, 36). For the Romantics, it was “the Immediate Inspiration of God” (Blake 552) that was the only source for universal truths. The human mind’s tendency for error and dim repetition could thereby be overcome in communion with the “immediate, which dwells in every man” as the “absolute” (Coleridge ch. XII). This force was to be found in nature, through the power of the senses and the transformational act of Imagination.

This paper suggests that the romantic idea of the real self is in concordance with the tantric concept of Siva. The Romantics were aware of a “spirit as the One”, which was present within each individual, as well as in the tangible world (Powell 11). The Romantic’s quest was therefore to discover this spirit within themselves (ibid.). Coleridge claims that the ultimate self could only be found as being present within object and subject of perception, simultaneously (ch. XII). It could not be traced in any of the two entities alone. The real self, accordingly, is the inherent force that resides in all levels of creation, the *res extensa* and the *res cogitans*. This statement can directly be compared to the definition of Siva provided by Vasugupta, who claims that Siva manifests as “knowledge and object”, as well as “pure consciousness” (96). Therefore, Siva, too, is the unifying force behind the experiencing subject and the object of experience. Besides, he functions as the real and ultimate self. Consequently, both traditions defined the self as the innate consciousness present in all manifestations of reality. Moreover, both philosophies describe the experience of self awareness as resulting in an act of constant self-recognition, as the “spirit in all the objects which it views, views only itself” (Coleridge ch. XII). Vasugupta, too, explained that the remembrance of one’s true being generates the understanding that “the enjoyer alone [...] always and everywhere abides as the object of enjoyment” (106). Once the real self is discovered, the individual, who identifies with God, perceives nothing else but himself and is thereby filled with a prevailing joy. The Romantics therefore, too, dismissed the dualistic worldview and assumed a monistic reality. It is therefore the third step the Romantics took towards enlightenment to recognize Siva within themselves. The question of relationship between self and world was tentatively answered with an identification with nature and, accordingly, with the spiritual force that was to be found there. Self-awareness, thus, was the process of identification with a higher power, that is very well illustrated in “Tintern Abbey”. The Romantics became aware of their true self, and thus, of Siva. This experience of one’s true self is also the goal of tantric practices. Yet, the question arises whether the means to accompany this self-awareness are similar.

The practices that lead to the recognition of one's true self seem to differ in tantric philosophy and the romantic tradition at first sight. While Tantra performs practices that concern the visual senses, sound and moving the body in a highly structured and ritualistic manner, the Romantics engaged with nature to achieve an expansion of consciousness without any structured practice. On the one hand, it could be argued, though, that these practices in their general sense did not differ at all. They have several aspects in common. For one, the rational supremacy did not provide satisfactory answers for neither tradition, and the importance of the senses was emphasized. The poet is only capable of experiencing nature through his senses, in that he has to move in nature, hear its sounds and see the landscape. The Tantrikas also criticized the strong limitations that the mind imposed on the possibilities of experience and rather believed in the truth provided by the senses. Out of this mindset a new sense of subjectivity emerged. The individual was not defined by their rational identity, but by becoming aware of an inherent consciousness that was the core of their being that they could access via their senses. Accordingly, romantic interaction with nature has the same goal as tantric practices, which is to become aware of the inherent godhead. Furthermore, it engages in the same physical activities. The speaker in "Tintern Abbey", for example, is deeply engaged in his sense experience as, he declares "again I *hear* these waters", "once again do I *behold* these steep and lofty cliffs" and "once again I *see* these hedge-rows" (2-15 emphasis added). Another example is taken from Keats' "Endymion", where the lyric I describes how nature would provide the cure for the dullness of his senses as "a homeward fever parches up my tongue", "upon my ear a noisy nothing rings" and "before mine eyes thick films and shadows float" (320-324). The "running springs", the "linnet's note" and the "heaven's light" (321- 325) would release him from his numbness, as "in our green earth sweet contents" (314) one finds the source for peace and bliss. The sensual experience of nature is thus a pivotal predisposition to be able to encounter feelings of delight. In comparison, tantric practices also work with auditive and visual triggers to cause enlightened experiences. Therefore, it could be claimed that the Romantic communion with nature that leads to a mystic experience is very similar to the performance of tantric procedures. On the other hand, it could be argued that tantric rituals are highly ritualistic and willful, while romantic experience is not, which is correct. Moreover, tantric practitioners use artefacts and sequences of sound and movements that are produced for the purpose of aforementioned rituals. Yet, even the tantric tradition acknowledges the possibility of spontaneous experiences of elevated consciousness. For example, physical sensations can cause intense emotions, which in turn might result in the rising of Sakti and a mystic experience. The rise of these emotions is often unintended and even defined by its immediacy. The Romantic

experience in “Tintern Abbey”, for example, describes exactly such a process, including the utilization of the aforementioned senses. Apart from the ritualistic nature of most of the tantric practices, the means to achieve a mystic experience proposed by Romantic poets can thus be considered quite similar to the performance of tantric rituals. These sensations are thus processed through the act of “Imagination”, which shall be illustrated in the course of the next chapter.

It can thus be suggested that the romantic path towards enlightenment encompasses steps of self- awareness similar to the tantric approach. Firstly, their historical context forced them to undergo similar stages of development to attain salvation as is described in tantric writings. Secondly, the concept of Siva is strikingly similar to the ultimate spirit the Romantics were looking for. Their endeavor’s effect, which is the ultimate recognition of the inherent godlike spirit, seems to be the same as the outcome of tantric rituals. Thirdly, the Romantics had these experiences by surrendering to their senses and transcended the physical realm by embracing it. Despite the fact that tantric approaches are generally much more structured, ritualistic and consciously performed, they also accept the possibility of mystic experience caused by intense emotions. Thus, the approach to achieve expanded states of consciousness bears striking similarities.

### **3.2. The Power of Sakti in Romantic Lyricism**

Tantric philosophy was concerned with the philosophy of aesthetics and the transmission of metaphysic experiences to an audience. The Romantics were involved in the question of the philosophy of aesthetics as well, and, especially, the role of poetry as a cultivating resource (Hühn 285). Cultivation in their sense does not depict the rational education through science and social norms, but rather a process that should connect the reader to a higher force and enable the individual to experience new levels of consciousness as a moral anchor point (Merten 226). The understanding for the philosophy of aesthetics is pivotal for a deeper consideration of the literary products of that time (Bainbridge 171). Accordingly, this chapter attempts to explore the following research question: “What does the concept of Sakti have in common with the romantic theory of aesthetics?” The notion of the Sublime as a source for mystic experiences, as well as the process of Imagination, are characteristic for the romantic interpretation of nature and the creation of poetry. I suggest that the two aesthetic theories have several features in common.

### **3.2.1. Tantric Elements in the understanding of the Sublime and the Beautiful**

Two transcendental concepts that occur in nature deserve further investigation. The first one is that of the “Sublime”, causing the feeling for a greater power and providing the understanding of nature with an interesting twist. The other, opposing, concept is the “Beautiful”.

Just as tantric principles work with dichotomies, the romantic approach towards nature was highly contrasting. The tantric philosophy, as has been illustrated, works with opposing forces and embraces every aspect of this reality to attain enlightenment, including shadow aspects of the self and life. Comparatively, in their quest for self-awareness and communion with a higher power, the Romantics seemed to feel drawn towards the threatening, fear inducing side of nature, which was “dark and hostile, harmful to the unprotected and impoverished” (Merten 217) alongside its nurturing aspects. This feature of nature was the concept of the Sublime. Accordingly, the Romantics also worked with dichotomies and acknowledged the shadow aspects of nature. An important step to grant them access to transcendental experiences.

The Sublime was apparently experienced by many artists as they sauntered the Alps on their travels (Merten 217). Seeing nature in its overwhelming grace lead to an “overpowering” experience that provoked fear (Vaughan ch.2). The idea of the Sublime was established by Edmund Burke, who, like several other writers of the time, intended to “range and methodize some of our most leading passions” (qtd. in Philips XXI). He, in accordance with the romantic tradition, looked for the cause of these leading passions in nature. The two concepts he thus installed were the “Beautiful” and the “Sublime” that would ultimately lead to a “new kind of subjectivity” (Philips IX). These judgments would also determine the way in which the individual understood themselves in their relation to nature.

The definition of the Sublime was established by Burke in his work “A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful”. He characterized it as being “productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling” (36). This phenomenon stood in opposition to the concept of the “Beautiful” (113). Apart from other attributes that characterize the Sublime, “terror” is considered its “ruling principle” (54). According to Burke, the word terror is often synonymously used with words such as admiration and astonishment (ibid.). He also uses the wording “delightful horror” to describe the feeling that is evoked by the Sublime. Therefore, the Sublime triggers an existential fear that dissolves the chaotic realm of experience into a pure feeling of astonishment. Accordingly, the highest “passion” stimulated by the Sublime is the feeling of surprise (53). This sensation is so intense

that the mind is completely absorbed in the experience. In this state, it is incapable of processing anything else but the immediate impression (ibid.). As a result, the mind cannot conceive of anything else. One could argue that the individual is therefore dissolved in an egoless experience. All in all, experiencing the Sublime in nature produces an emotion so overwhelming that the individual reaches new states of consciousness.

This experience of the Sublime can be compared to the awakening of Sakti. The rise of Sakti is also caused by intense emotions, in situations “when one is angry, frightened, extremely elated or in any other state of psychic intensity” (Dyczkowski 277). Fear, thus, is also considered one of the causes for mystic experiences in the tantric tradition. Larson furthermore states that the rising of Sakti is paired with the feeling of “astonishment” (53). Astonishment seems to be a key term for the experience of the Sublime, as well as the sensation of Sakti rising. Accordingly, both concepts are provoked by overwhelming emotions, and the definition of these feelings concur in both traditions. Even the result of these two experiences are the same. The awakening of Sakti, as well as the experience of the Sublime lead to an utter immersion of the mind with its sensations. This enables the individual to have ecstatic experiences of oneness with a greater force. Consequently, it could be argued that the experience of the Sublime is similar to a Sakti awakening.

Besides, the Romantics became aware of the raw and dark power of nature, a force they considered as highly fascinating. They did not focus on transferring just the beautiful, peaceful aspects of nature, but had the courage to emphasize its shadow aspects too. In embracing these aspects, nature became a mirror of reality that could be considered in all its facets from a safe viewpoint (Bainbridge 172). Nature was not only considered a safe haven and motherly force that stood in opposition to the evil, industrialized society anymore. Instead, it also encompassed dangerous, threatening, even volatile forces that were uncontrollable and fear inducing, yet extremely fascinating. In acknowledging nature’s full potential, a fear arose that provided a more holistic viewpoint on nature. Nature was not only a nurturing entity that was meant to be cultivated. Instead, it was something immensely powerful, as well as destructive, that held a power unseizable by the human mind.

As the Sublime emphasizes the destructive, fear evoking aspects of nature, so does Sakti when she manifests as the Goddess Kali. Sakti is the creating and destroying force in the order of creation, the power that manifests Siva’s will in all beings. Showing itself as the force of Kali,

she encompasses the threatening, dark, volatile and fear inducing aspects of reality. The choice of words is noteworthy here, as Kali was connected to the concept of terror, and Burke also chose to ascribe the word terror to the Sublime. Kali was thus the aspect of reality that makes one aware of the force of destruction. She causes the feeling of terror and seems to have been conceptualized by the Romantics as the Sublime.

Contrastingly, the Beautiful causes the sensation of love instead of fear (Burke 83). Its characteristics are “smoothness” (103) and “fragility” (105). The idea of the Beautiful considers the soft, delicate aspects of nature. It can be found in objects such as trees flowers (103). Thus, it is the counterpart to the rough concept of the Sublime. Keats describes the beautiful in as a thing that is “a joy forever” (1) that “moves away the pall from our dark spirits” (12). Objects, such as “the sun, the moon, trees old and young” (13) and “daffodils” (15) embody the feature of the Beautiful. The beautiful therefore manifests as a feeling of joy and delight. The comparable Rasa would be the “erotic” Rasa, which is the mirror of the basic feeling of delight. This Rasa is also associated with feeling of love and shows in “lovely attire” (Pollock 52).

The “remarkable contrast” between the Sublime and the Beautiful is illustrated by Burke as follows:

sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; [...] the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive (103).

In this field of opposing forces, it is the magic of nature to function as the unifying power, which serves as the vessel that combines these seemingly incompatible phenomena. Also, the individual is capable of indulging in the experience of both of these concepts and thus transcends their limited sense of self.

Since Burke gendered these two elements, it is worth trying to compare these two ideas with the tantric ideas of Siva and Sakti, which are also considered as male and female forces of creation. Does the tantric gender conception concur with the romantic interpretation? Even though the definitions and descriptions of these concepts are strikingly similar, the gender depictions are different from each other. Burke defined the Sublime as masculine. In contrast, the Beautiful was ascribed feminine features (Bainbridge 172). Both of these oppositions are manifest in nature, which is the unifying force behind these appearances (Burke 114). The Sublime as the harsh and dominant force is masculine, the Beautiful with its smoothness and

delicacy encompasses feminine features. Considering tantric theory, though, the connotations of feminine and masculine aspects differ.

When the general descriptions of these phenomena are regarded, the following conclusions can be drawn. Siva, as the male part of creation, is the silent, omnipresent consciousness. In the tradition discussed in this paper, he is not volatile, nor dangerous or dark. Rather, Siva is the frame holding the picture, the presence behind the manifestations of life. Siva can therefore be compared to nature itself and does not conform to the understanding of the Sublime. It has been illustrated that the Sublime bears similarities to the female Goddess Kali, which is a manifestation of Sakti. It would therefore have female attributions. The Beautiful does seem to adhere to the idea of the erotic Rasa, as it evokes a sense of felt tranquility and love. Since Rasa is also connected to the power of Sakti, the Beautiful would also be ascribed to the feminine gender. Consequently, in the tantric sense, the male force is the all-encompassing nature, its various manifestations are female. It appears, that the dichotomies of gender are articulated differently in tantric and romantic tradition. The tantric tradition opposes presence with action while the Romantics contrast fragility with immensity. Thus, no coherent accordance can be depicted.

Resultingly, there are several tantric elements that occur in the romantic perception of the Sublime. Essentially, the understanding of Kali in the tantric tradition is strikingly similar to the romantic concept of the Sublime. They both emphasize the destructive and dark aspects of creation. Furthermore, the sublime experience, induced by extreme emotions of fear, is comparable to the experience of Sakti as it leads to expanded states of awareness. The Beautiful can be compared to the erotic Rasa, as it causes the relish of love. However, the established similarities according to the characterizations of these phenomena do not persist when it comes to the attribution of gender. Ultimately, the Sublime activates a sensation of an overwhelming power, that can be transformed through the process of Imagination. This process gives meaning to the Sublime and is not “cognitive in the ordinary sense” (Powell 12). Rather, the Romantics presented a new understanding of cognition that surpasses dull mental workings, which is the concept of Imagination.



### **3.2.2. The Concept of Imagination- the Rise of a Divine Force**

In the romantic epoch, the focus shifted from the empirical enquiry into knowable things towards uncovering the workings of the mind and the question of possibility of knowledge. The Romantics searched for universal truths in subjective experience, instead of objects (Rzepka 10). The Sublime had a pivotal meaning for the Romantics, as it resulted in an intense subjective experience. Processing this experience, that ultimately results in the creation of a meaningful poem, takes place through the act of Imagination. In this act, the individual reaches a conceptual understanding of the primarily sensual experience and finds truth in an “organized mental universe of percepts” rather than in the “physical universe of objects” (ibid.). Essentially, it is the subjective experience that becomes transposed into insights into objective truths by a creative process.

Imagination is basically the ability to relive past experiences. It describes the ability of “carrying on a given feeling into other situations” (Stone 112). One has the capacity to vividly imagine, and therefore relive previously felt sensations while their cause does not have to be present. It is thus the poet’s applied ability to transfer the mystic, overpowering experiences into something tangible, even after the external cause for the experience has vanished. Coleridge calls the “primary Imagination” the “living power and prime agent of all human perception” (ch. XIII). This description indicates a divine force that creates our reality and is the primary cause for any experience. The “secondary imagination”, as specified by Coleridge, is the individual’s recreation and unification of these perceptions (ibid.). By connecting with this “magical power”, the poet “diffuses a tone and spirit of unity” and essentially weaves the multiplicity of experiences into a unified sense memory (ibid.). This memory is thus transformed into a poem. Like a perfumer that distills the flower with its manifold components and creates the resulting fragrance, the poet combines several impressions and merges them into a piece of art. Hence, Imagination is the act of converting chaotic sensations and emotions into a purified representation of the same.

The resulting “poetic thought”, however, is not comparable to the traditional understanding of rational thinking (Stone 111). In lieu thereof, it is an intuitive grasping of former experiences (116). While an intuitive and non-volitional process, it is “co-existing with the conscious will” (Coleridge XIII). In contrast to Locke’s theory, which regards the mind as a passive recipient of sense impressions, the Romantics considered Imagination the “vital activity of the mind” (Bowra 3). Nonetheless, it is not discursive thought that is addressed, but the workings of

cognition guided by a divine force that arises in an autonomous and spontaneous manner (Stone 119).

The Romantics did regard Imagination as a manifestation of a spiritual force. It was thus a powerful process that emphasized the mind's active ability to observe and manifest simultaneously (Bowra 8). They valued Imagination as "the soul that is everywhere, and in each", as the unifying force behind multiple appearances of reality (Coleridge XIV). Blake postulated that Imagination was "a representation of what eternally exists" (554) and considered it "the Divine bosom" that is the source and endpoint of all creation (545). Considering these statements, one could argue that this force is yet another manifestation of Sakti, which emphasizes its divine character. Sakti has been described as the power of Siva that manifests and destroys our reality. She is present in everything in existence. Moreover, she grants the individual insights into a transcendental, all-encompassing reality in which all of creation is united. She is caused by overwhelming experiences and perceived through a sense of joy. Out of this joyous state, a visionary insight into universal truths is perceived. One could suggest, that nature, which causes intense emotions, leads to a rise of the energy of Sakti. These blissful experiences, and the insights gained through them, seem to be conceptualized in the act of Imagination. The creative intuition evoked by the rise of Sakti is relived, or, as Wordsworth puts it "recollected in tranquility" (260). The practice of Imagination thus converts real life experiences into a purified emotion. Consequently, this filtered insight is made available for others through the aesthetic artefact that is produced.

The creative process in the romantic sense therefore consists of the primary experience of the Sublime or other intense emotions, that is conceptualized through Imagination. This experience thus can be transposed into a poem, which serves the purpose, as will be discussed, of granting the common people access to universal truths. In the tantric tradition, the practitioner first experiences overwhelming emotions, which can also be the feeling of Sakti as Kali. These sparks result in an expansion of consciousness. It can therefore be stated, that tantric elements of a Sakti awakening can be traced in the creative process of the Romantics. To what extent the tantric idea of Sakti as creative intuition and Rasa agree with the romantic understanding of Imagination and its outcome will be illustrated in more detail in the next chapter by providing concrete examples of Wordsworth's aesthetic theory.

### **3.2.3. The Preface, a Theory of Rasa?**

What is regarded the “romantic revolt” tentatively started with the publishing of “Lyrical Ballads”, a compilation of poems published and commented on by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth (Bush 117). The “Lyrical Ballads” were republished twice, once 1800 and 1802 with the addition of a “Preface” that was concerned with the phenomenology of poetic endeavor (Merten 219). It can thus be considered “one of the most famous manifestos of British literary Romanticism” (ibid.) as it encompasses various poems alongside a lengthy discussion of the purpose of poetry, the personality of the poet, and the features of the language to be used in poems. Therefore, it counts as an important source of the theory of poetic aesthetics and the purpose of Romantic Poetry.

The role of the poet was generally contemplated in the theory of aesthetics (Vaughan ch.2). In the romantic period, the poet was considered as “a prophet and oracle, a pilgrim of eternity and infinity” (Bush 116). The position of the poet in society was therefore not that of an entertaining artist. Neither was he a person creating art that was regarded as high culture and intended for the high society. Instead, he was seen as a “translator” (Wordsworth 251). The poet steps into the role of a medium that communicates higher truths in a tangible manner. His purpose is to communicate his own mystic experiences in a tangible way. The transcendental experience of a higher power is supposed to be translated into the language of common man. It was the common understanding that the poet represents “in sich das Allgemein- Menschliche” (Hühn 287). He is thus a medium that stands for the ordinary man, but with the ability to experience a higher power and, in turn, the skill to make his experiences available to everyone.

The artist’s ability to function as a translator however, is dependent on the choice of language use. Thus, the language use in poetry was also specified in the “Preface”. In contrast to custom prevalent at the time, the “Preface” emphasizes the importance to use “language really used by common men” (ibid.) and abandons the idea of using complicated figures of speech, diverse rhyme schemes and specific choice of meter. Instead, Wordsworth argues that using common language is “more permanent and a far more philosophical language” (239) and chooses to neglect “poetic diction” (245) in the “Lyrical Ballads”. This choice was consciously made because simple language was supposed to be “the direct expression of feeling” (Bush 126), since it was not censored by norms. The content and choice of words, so Wordsworth, are powerful in themselves and thus not in need for further emphasis through complexity (258).

This approach opposes the theory of Rasa. As previously discussed, the “Natyasastra” forms a coherent system of highly structured patterns for the performance of plays. Thus, the emergence of Rasa is predetermined by strict rules. The evocation of a specific Rasa depends on the structure of the aesthetic artefact. It has been elaborated that the romantic experience of enlightenment, though similar to the tantric path in many other aspects, lacks the structured and planned features that tantric practices encompass. Consequently, the romantic approach of writing poetry dismisses the need for structure and elaborate rules once again.

In contrast to common people, the poet’s character is defined by a heightened sensitivity towards embodied human experience. Wordsworth describes the poet as someone who embodies a “more lively sensibility [...] and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind” (249). Furthermore, he “rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him” (250). According to these descriptions, the poet has a heightened awareness for sensations and a strong connection to a divine entity is present at the core of his being. He is not to be seen as disconnected or very different from ordinary men but could be considered as a human who vibrates on higher levels of consciousness.

It also characterizes the poet, however, that he “bring[s] his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes [...] and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs” (ibid.), meaning that the poet tries to adapt to the emotional level of the common people. As will be shown, the purpose of poetry, in Wordsworth’s tradition, is generally achieved by adjusting to the people. It is therefore the poet who has to be able to empathize with the audience, who has to have an openness and flexibility towards the emotional and rational range of the addressee. In the Indian tradition however, it is the audience that has to have “like heart, and like mind” as the poet (Sundarajan 789). Here, the audience adapts to the poet, not vice versa. Consequently, the answer to the question whether the poet should adhere to the emotional reality of the audience, or the audience should adjust to the emotional reality of the poem, differs in the two theories. While the romantic poet focusses on making his work easily accessible for the audience by identifying with their reality, the tantric theory requires the audience to identify with the reality of the poet represented in the poem.

The special features of the poet’s personality are also connected to the process of creating poetry. His ability to engage more actively in his sensibility and perceive his feelings is strongly accompanied by his capacity to reawake sensations and experiences that happened in the past,

in short, his readiness to surrender to the process of Imagination. The openness the poet embodies in experiencing life leads to the possibility of imagining events lively, “without immediate external excitement” (Wordsworth 250). Therefore, the external source does not have to be present in order to imagine past experiences in a vivid manner. This process of Imagination thus leads to the creation of a poem. However, it is not only his expanded aptitude to experience human sensations in general, but his ability to think “long and deeply” (ibid.), that makes the poet an artist. The process of contemplation leads to a revival of the formerly experienced powerful perceptions, a sense of imagining things that are absent. The act of contemplation though, is not a willful rational activity. Rather, Wordsworth speaks of an “organic sensibility” (240) and “mechanic [...] impulses” (241), that “arise in him” (250), which the mind follows. Therefore, the poet’s personality is inclined to have a readiness to perform the act of Imagination, while the thinking part of the process seems to be guided by some intuitive force that is not only led by rational agency.

Wordsworth thus illustrates the process of manifesting good poetry as:

the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, similar to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins. (260)

The individual perceives an extraordinary experience, which is reproduced in a new way through the act of Imagination. At this point, the poet starts to create the poem by reviving the embodied experience in his mind. The sensation that is revoked is similar to the one that was reflected upon. These descriptions indicate, that this newly felt emotion, the vivid imagination, is comparable to the tantric concept of Rasa. Rasa is also defined as a “form of mental cognition [...] consisting of [...] imagination [...] or of remembrance” (Gnoli 60) and thus, to be considered as an imaginative experience. The poet, it could be claimed, experiences Rasa after all.

This paper suggests, that the aspect missing in tantric theory is the feature of Imagination, which is the character trait that ultimately differentiates the poet from common people and thus, makes him a medium for the divine experience. Wordsworth describes the poet as someone who is

affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet [...] do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real

events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves. (ibid.)

He depicts a process of imagined revival of previous experiences, that yet have a purity that transcends normal experiences. They are not identical, yet more intense than the emotions that are ordinarily felt. I suggest, that this specific ability is the bridge between everyday experiences and the evocation of *rasa*.

However, it has been claimed that *Rasa* can only be caused by aesthetic elements as they are a mental image of the emotion depicted on stage. This image can, according to tantric understanding, not persist if the external cause has ceased (Pollock 202). However, the Romantics are defined exactly by their ability to revoke sensations caused by an external cause, even if the outside event or object is not present anymore. The ability of partaking in the process of Imagination enables the poet to relive certain experiences “without immediate external excitement” (Wordsworth 250). A purified emotion arises within the poet. Coleridge believes as well, that poetry “is the blossom and the *fragrancy* of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language” (ch. XV, emphasis added). In comparison, *Rasa* is also considered the taste, the nectar of the original emotion. The act of Imagination thus seems to transform an emotion caused by a real event into the according *Rasa*. Taking Wordsworth’s phenomenological account of the creation of poetry into consideration, one could accordingly assume that the poet can indeed experience *Rasa*, and it is exactly this ability that establishes him as a translator between two forms of reality.

It can thus be claimed, that the emotion “recollected in tranquility” (260), which is the act of Imagination described by Wordsworth, results in the evocation of *Rasa*. This is possible because the process of Imagination is caused by a divine force, which resembles the phenomenon of a *Sakti* awakening. *Rasa* is the essence of the previous experience that is revived in the individual and, as a result, is tasted again. It is the essence, the juice of the former experience that is perceived. Consequently, the following similarities can be observed within the tantric theory of aesthetics and the romantic creative endeavor. Both accounts start with the description of the experience of intense emotional states. These sensations are contemplated, and feelings “similar” to the previously experienced emotions emerge. Also, both illustrations claim that the intuitive, yet mental state of Imagination or *Rasa* is where “successful composition begins” (Wordsworth, *Preface* 260). It can be concluded, that the concept of Imagination and the *Rasa* theory phenomenologically concur.

Finally, the poet is characterized by his willingness to transpose his individual experience into a universally available insight. He “has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels” (250), and thus, is able to put his individual experiences into words that ultimately create a meaningful poem. The focus of poetry was the “poetische Objektivierung von Subjektivität” (Reinfandt 22). This means that the individual experience was to be communicated in a way that rightfully claimed to contain objective truths. These experiences, in turn, should be available for everyone. The poem, accordingly, served as a vessel for mystic experiences. The purpose was the education of a broad audience, meaning that the common people should gain access to these expanded states of consciousness and the resulting insights. This goal corresponds to the tantric goal of poetry, which is the evocation of Rasa.

The purpose of poetry is to trace the workings of our psyche when it is confronted with intense sensations. As Wordsworth puts forward, a poem serves to “illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement” (Wordsworth, *Preface* 241). The individual experiences joy by following the perceptions of “similitude and dissimilitude” (259) of the mind. Furthermore, poetry intends “to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature” (ibid.). Accordingly, the reason to create poetry is to illustrate the workings of the mind from a distanced viewpoint. In this process, a new sense of self is created, which can bear witness to the experiences it encounters without being attached to them. Hence, the “primary laws of our nature” (238), which are the very basic workings and manifestations of our human reality, can be observed. This purpose is also in concordance with the result of the aesthetic experience in Tantrism. As was demonstrated, the experience of Rasa grants a safe experience of the depicted emotions and thereby, the addressee is able to “understand and clarify human situations” (77). The poem, as an aesthetic artefact, illustrates human emotions and causes the audience to perceive these emotions as well. Nevertheless, the distance towards the experience is established by the artefact, and thereby, the audience can surrender to each experience without resistance.

The witnessing of common experiences provides “immediate pleasure” (251) to the readers, by evoking in them an “acknowledgement of the beauty of the universe” (252). By emphasizing his understanding of “deep impressions of indestructible qualities” evident in the tangible world, Wordsworth seeks to find these everlasting powers. Since the mind was corrupted by

historical events, Wordsworth considered it the purpose of poetry to rediscover the “native and naked dignity of man” by providing the common people with the “first and last of all knowledge” (253). The unchangeable truths observable in nature should reeducate the disrupted mind and make the individual conscious of their true self. It was the individual’s purpose to become one with the force innate in nature, and the poet’s ultimate achievement thus, to bring this “soul of nature closer to man” (ibid.). Poetry, hence, is the distribution of universal truths. The immediate pleasure and joy evoked in the audience serves as “mental nourishment” for people who do not share the same degree of sensibility the poet possesses (Merten 226). The intention is thus an authentic sharing of the poet’s subjective experience.

The topics that should be illustrated in poetry were also in alignment with its purpose. The issues depicted were that of simple “rustic” life (Wordsworth, *Preface* 239), because poetry’s interest was to show the authentic, basic human experience. In these encounters with nature, the simplicity of the real experience was maintained and not distorted through social norms. In accordance with Rousseau’s spirit, Wordsworth argued that the illustrations of simple life were situations that supplied “better soil” in which the “essential passions of the heart” could “attain their maturity” (ibid.). The power of poetry was not produced through the means of complexity, but by illustrating experiences of common people, in rural surroundings, through the use of simple language. The force of poetry was thus defined by plain, intuitive and authentic descriptions of basic sensations, rather than by sophisticated cognitive accomplishments.

It can thus be concluded that Wordsworth’s idea of a poet is that of a person with heightened sensitivity. His intention is to let others profit from his ability to transcend common understanding of reality. He functions as a translating stance between the divine truth and the people. The process of creating poetry is guided by the mystic act of Imagination, which, as has been shown, is comparable to a Sakti awakening in the tantric philosophy. The result of this process is thus a sensation that makes the individual taste the previously felt emotions, which is strikingly similar to the tantric concept of Rasa. Ultimately, the goal of poetry is to evoke an overwhelming feeling in the reader and to make experiences of mystic communion and joy available to a broad audience. The Romantics therefore share the goal of poetry with the tantric tradition, which is to evoke unique sensations in the addressee.

Even though many similarities were established between the romantic and the tantric approach, the ideas presented in the “Preface” differ from the understanding of aesthetic artefacts



exemplified in the “Natyasastra” for several reasons. Firstly, because of its lack of intentional structure. Secondly, because Wordsworth focusses on the poet’s character, while the theory of Rasa emphasizes the importance of the audience’s state of consciousness. The “Natyasastra” argues that the addressee has to embody certain capacities, Sahrdaya, and the artefact has to have a specific inherent structure to evoke Rasa. The poet’s character traits were not considered. Conversely, Wordsworth claims that the poet has to have a heightened degree of sensitivity and that simplicity of structure and purity of depicted events is the means to emphasize the immensity of the communicated experiences. One could conclude that the two theories have quite different approaches to acquire the same purpose. This shared aim of poetry is, as has been argued, the evocation of Rasa. Hence, it could be suggested that the Preface can indeed be considered a theory of Rasa, suggesting a new path towards its experience.

#### **4. “Tintern Abbey”: Applying the Theory**

In this final and empirical chapter of analysis, the question how the previously introduced and discussed concepts convene in William Wordsworth’s famous poem “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13th, 1798” are explored. The romantic genre is generally concerned with various contrasts, such as the relation between self and world, city and nature and unity and separation (Hühn 283). The meditative poem’s main concern is the perception of a divine force in nature, a force, that brings the individual closer to his real self and provides the feeling of peace in an unstable environment. Furthermore, the importance of the senses that perceive the surroundings and establish a unified experience between past, present, and future are pivotal features of the poem. Being considered a biographical poem, the feminine aspect, impersonated by Wordsworth’s sister Dorothy also plays an interesting role in the lyric I’s understanding of self. All of these aspects presented in the poem will therefore be regarded with reference to tantric elements. I will also examine “Tintern Abbey” and its function as a metapoem on the creative process. I assume that the coming of age of the lyric I not only reflects the personal growth, but also portrays the aesthetic experience itself, as well as the Rasa theory.

##### **4.1. A General Overview**

The poem “Tintern Abbey” gives insight into Wordsworth’s personal life as it refers to actual events, which were tours with his sister Dorothy in the years 1793 and 1798. This part of the

chapter will provide a brief overview of the revolutionary's life and give general information on the poem "Tintern Abbey".

#### **4.1.1. The Poet- William Wordsworth**

William Wordsworth is considered one of the major poets of the romantic epoch. This has several reasons. With his "Preface", he installed a theory that caused intense debates around the purpose and characteristics of poetry and the definition of the poet himself. Writing about mystic experiences with the focus on nature, Wordsworth is "often credited with the rediscovery, even the reinvention, of nature" (Gaskell 173). Furthermore, his approach to mainly focus on subjective experience (Hühn 283) contributed to the general paradigm shift from an objectively rational towards a subjectively emotional value system.

Wordsworth's love for nature was rooted in his upbringing and became apparent throughout his path of life. He was born in 1770 in Lake District, England (Hühn 283). After the loss of his mother in 1778, his father, a lawyer, passed away in 1778, leaving him and his siblings as orphans (Roberts 215). His childhood was already shaped by his passionate love for nature, in which he found recompense for the troubles he had to face at such an early age (Bowra 20). In 1787, he attended the University of Cambridge. His studies were followed by a journey through France in 1790 (Hühn 284), where he came in touch with the revolutionary ideas dominant at the time. First inspired by the atmosphere of departure caused by the Revolution, he was in turn deeply disappointed as the resulting historical events caused loss of lives and lead to even more despair. Thus, his political view throughout his life was considered rather patriotic and conservative (ibid.). In turn, he was influenced by Rousseau, which becomes apparent in his works, as he attempts to undermine the intellectual supremacy and emphasizes the importance of primordial feeling and the power of nature (Evans 124). An inheritance in 1795 freed Wordsworth from financial sorrows and enabled him to focus solely on his poetic endeavors (Roberts 215). Being very close to his sister Dorothy, he lived in Somerset when he met Samuel Taylor Coleridge, with whom he shared a strong connection in the field of creating and, ultimately, "redefining" poetry (ibid.). The first product of this friendship was the publishing of "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798, in which the famous poem "Tintern Abbey" was printed. In the second edition, 1800, the previously demonstrated "Preface" was published (Hühn 284). His sister Dorothy also played an important role in the poet's life. Apparently, it was her who encouraged him to follow his calling as an artist and reinforced his love for nature (Rzepka 21). In 1799, Wordsworth moved back to Lake District and settled in the village Grasmere. He

married Mary Hutchinson in 1802 and faced general appreciation by his fellow colleagues and in society. As Coleridge states, “year after year increased the number of Mr. Wordsworth’s admirers [...] Their admiration [...] was distinguished by its intensity, I might almost say, by its religious fervor” (ch. XIV). Wordsworth was thus considered a successful artist and celebrated by his audience. After being declared “poet laureate” in 1843, he died in 1850 (Hühn 285).

In many of his poems, and especially in “Tintern Abbey”, nature serves as a focal point that is illustrated and presented to the reader as something extraordinary. It is a force that motivates the spirit and mind to experience something beyond itself. This experience should ultimately connect the spirit of nature with the spirit of men and result in a feeling of unification with the divine (Bowra 20). Wordsworth was thus considered “poet of nature and the senses”, as he obtained his insights from embodied sensations with his encounter in nature (Keith 131). Guided by a deep trust in a purpose provided by the beyond, he considered nature as the solution for the problems people were facing at the time. As Wordsworth himself states:

Reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonorable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it which are equally inherent and indestructible (*Tintern Abbey* 243).

Being a seeker of universal truth throughout his life, Wordsworth was one of the most important characters considering the romantic tradition. His wish was to find “inherent and indestructible” forces in nature and to “serve society” (Evans 125) by making these ultimate truths available.

This paper suggests that this quest, that already became evident in the romantic movement itself, is basically the same as the tantric goal to attain enlightenment. The next part of this paper investigates how the elements illustrated throughout the last two chapters, and the according conclusions, can be applied in the analysis of an aesthetic artefact. Therefore, what follows is a detailed analysis of Wordsworth’s poem “Tintern Abbey” in consideration of concepts such as the Sublime, Rasa and Sakti.

#### **4.1.2. The poem- Background and Themes**

The poem “Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1798”, was published as the final poem of “Lyrical Ballads” and counts as one of Wordsworth most impressive autobiographic poems (223 Merten). The title

itself, which reminds one of a journal entry, already hints at the strong subjective character that can generally be found in romantic poetry (Reinfandt 52). Looking at Wordsworth's life, the poem can indeed be traced back to visits of the Wye with his sister Dorothy, the first one in 1793, the second five years later, in 1798 (Löffler, Späth 156).

Considered a "lyrical meditation in blank verse" (Merten 223), it consists of six stanzas and one hundred fifty-nine lines. It is marked by several inversions and insertions, which emphasize the unpredictability of the lyric persona's thoughts, while the use of iambic pentameter provides a regulating effect (Reinfandt 53). These two opposing stylistic devices already mark the nature of the poem as it describes the relation between change and consistency as one of its main themes.

## **4.2. Analysis**

The analysis of the poem "Tintern Abbey" is conducted in six steps. It has been stated, that the tantric tradition emphasizes opposing forces in order to pinpoint the creating force inherent in all of them. This tantric element, I suggest, is evident in the poem "Tintern Abbey". Therefore, I start with an illustration of the dichotomies and paradoxes used in the poem that ultimately point towards a constant presence that gives meaning to all the appearances in nature. In the second part of this chapter, the question whether elements of tantric ritual can be found in the lyric persona's mystic communion with nature are explored. Then, the lyric speaker's development is traced with regard to the notion of self. This self might be similar to the concept of Siva. Since the established understanding of self supposedly concurs with Siva, the question whether the lyric persona reaches a state of enlightenment is investigated thereafter. The penultimate chapter discusses elements of Sakti that appear in the poem. A different approach is taken in the last chapter. I attempt to analyze "Tintern Abbey" as a metapoem, since several aspects, such as the speaker's coming of age and the presence of his sister might be interpreted as elements of aesthetic theory.

### **4.2.1. Dichotomies- Finding Non-duality in a System of Oppositions**

The poem "Tintern Abbey" has one dominant theme, which is the innateness of the divine in all aspects of creation. The poem, however, is filled with oppositions and "dexterous paradoxes" (Blades 44). It seems to be the case, that these paradoxes and contrasts serve the purpose of emphasizing the unifying force *beneath* the various manifestations and perceptions of reality. Having visited the Wye twice before, the lyric persona has undergone personal

progress and meditates on his experiences in nature. As has been illustrated, one main feature of the tantric tradition is its emphasis on opposites. The goal is to become aware of the unifying presence behind these opposing presentations. “Tintern Abbey”, therefore, also encompasses several antagonisms.

The first contrast established in “Tintern Abbey” is the illustration of seemingly alive elements in connection with stillness. The “waters, rolling from their mountain-springs with a soft inland murmur” (Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* 3) are described as being animated. The waters that “roll” make human sounds by murmuring, a personification that implies that nature expresses, in a whisper, a message to those willing to hear. This vivid image of a spring of fresh water is opposed, as the “lofty” cliffs “connect the landscape with the quiet of the sky” (3-8). The sky as still and quiet is connected to the lively waters by the sublime mountains, which, with an almost human movement, seem to actively reach towards the sky. This creates a unified picture, linking spirited elements to pure presence. Another example like this is to be found in lines 16-18, as the lyric persona sees these “hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines of sportive wood run wild [...] and wreaths of smoke sent up in silence” (16-18). Again, the “sportive woods run wild” suggest a feeling of dynamic movement and liveliness that is contrasted by the smoke, “sent up in silence”. These dichotomies of energies communicate a feeling of unity in multiplicity and already foreshadow the presence of a spirit inherent in these manifestations.

The connotations of city and nature are another instance of contrasting elements. The city is strongly connoted in a negative sense. In the lyric persona’s everyday life, when the “fretful stir unprofitable” (52) and the “darkness” of the “dreary intercourse of daily life” (131) had “hung upon the beatings of [his] heart” (54), his only salvation was to remember the Wye (“how oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee” (55)). Living in the city was thus characterized by a sense of heaviness and suffering. Nature, in contrast, can therefore:

So inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men  
[...] shall [...] disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings (125-134)

Thus, nature causes feelings of “quietness and beauty” that “feed[s]” the individual with “lofty thoughts” and thereby stands in a strong opposition to the world of men that is characterized by

“evil tongues, rash judgements” and “sneers of selfish men”. She brings about a feeling of ease, peace, and comfort that prevails against the negative features of humanity.

Not seeking the company of men, the individual finds all-one-ness in his aloneness in nature. While he speaks of being in “lonely rooms, and mid’the din of towns and cities” suffering from “hours of weariness” (25-27), it is nature that brings forth a “blessed mood, [...] in which the heavy and weary weight of all this unintelligible world, is lightened” (38-40). One might assume that cities, crowded with people and filled with opportunities to interact with others, could be the source for connection. However, the dichotomy evident in the poem is the fact that the lyric speaker feels least lonely when alone in nature, while he feels most separated when surrounded by other people. The connection the romantic is looking for cannot be provided by other humans. Instead, it is nature that causes a deep sense of belonging.

Nevertheless, the question of aloneness is another apparent paradox. While the lyric I appears to be alone in nature, he is actually accompanied by his sister. One only becomes aware of another person being present as the speaker addresses someone else in the last part of the poem, after a long meditation on past experiences, “for thou art with me here [...] my dearest friend, my dear dear friend” (114-116). Yet, the lyric I does not consider the other person as an individual, but simply an extension of himself, a mirror of his former reality (“may I behold in thee what I was once, my dear dear sister” (120-121)). It is this confusing idea that highlights another dichotomy- his aloneness in nature while not really being alone. One could argue that the very source of all creation is the same, even his sister Dorothy. Accordingly, the fact that she is not considered a separate human being, but someone in a symbiotic relationship with the speaker, points towards the enlightened state of the lyric persona, as he might understand reality as all-one-ness. This all-one-ness even encompasses his sister and therefore, she is no individual but a part of the whole universe that the speaker identifies with. Nevertheless, the aspect of enlightenment and Dorothy’s role will be discussed in more detail in the following parts of the chapter. However, as another person is present in the moment of reflection, it seems unjustified to declare that the speaker is alone.

Accordingly, several oppositions are described in the poem “Tintern Abbey”. On the one hand, nature is attributed by encompassing lively elements, as well as elements of stillness and silence. Furthermore, the hostile features of the city are contrasted by the nurturing feeling caused by nature. Another aspect worth mentioning is the fact that the lyric persona feels less

alone when actually being alone than in the center of a populated area. The contradiction that the lyric persona is secluded in nature, while obviously meditating in his sister's presence, points towards a state of enlightenment that will be discussed in due course. For this section however, it suffices to focus on the unification of paradoxes that occurs in the poem. Accordingly, the tantric element of the use of oppositions is existent in "Tintern Abbey". Beneath all these apparitions and perceptions however, the lyric persona senses a spirit, present in all these manifestations that grants the individual peace.

#### **4.2.2. The Mystic Communion with Nature- a Tantric Ritual**

Wordsworth was also called the "poet of nature and the senses" (Bush 131). Looking at the poem "Tintern Abbey", and the depiction of embodied sense impressions described by the lyric persona, this statement seems accurate. I propose that the individual acquires an expansion of consciousness via accessing his senses. As a consequence, he ultimately transcends them. This process is similar to the tantric practice previously described in chapter 1.2.3.

The focus of romantic achievement was the depiction of a balance between the objectively perceivable reality and the subjective experience of the same. The engagement of the senses forms the base for the experience of nature. Furthermore, they cause a meditative process that results in an enlightened experience. The tantric philosophy also suggests an approach in which "the world and the human body become channels to salvation" (White *Tantra* 10). As will be illustrated, this is what happens in "Tintern Abbey".

The poem begins with a thorough description of the individual's surroundings, while the focus, ultimately, does not lie on the place itself but on the description of his physical experience of it. The lyric persona describes nature by using sense impressions, stating that "five years have passed [...] and again I *hear* these waters", "once again do I *behold* these steep and lofty cliffs", and "once again I *see* these hedge-rows" (Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* 1-15 emphasis added). The engagement of the senses is strongly emphasized in the first part of the poem and serves as a starting point for the reflective meditation that follows. The facticity of embodiment suggested by this description makes the audience aware of the lyric persona as a human individual who is emerged in an everyday experience.

The second part of the poem describes a shift of focus from an external reality towards internal processes. The observation of the lyric persona's surroundings lead him to the awakening of memories. The lyric persona thus declares that the memories of nature have served him, as:

Oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration:- feelings too  
of unremembered pleasure (25-31)

The embodied experiences, such as visual and auditive sensations suddenly lead to an inward reflection of emotions that are of "unremembered pleasure". Thus, the physical experience causes the memories of blissful emotions. These tranquil emotions were caused by nature, and "to them I may have owed [...] that blessed mood, in which the affections gently lead us on" (36-42), until one passes away. The employment of the senses accordingly leads the speaker to an experience of an emotional state that is blissful and filled with ease.

This experience is the experience of enlightenment, as the lyric persona describes the feeling of the "blessed mood" (41) as granting insight into existential truths while being connoted with the sensation of peaceful bliss. The interesting aspect is the synaesthesia chosen to describe the feeling of ultimate understanding, as the lyric I articulates that, "while with an eye made quiet by the power of harmony [...] we see in to the life of things" (47-49). The eye, a visual organ, would usually be shut or closed. Yet, it is "made quiet". Seemingly, the process of silencing would rather be connected to auditive senses. The complete shutdown of the senses, consequently, is the condition for ultimate knowledge and marks a transcendence of physical limitations. Furthermore, the feeling "of aspect more sublime" (37) enables the individual to experience everyday life in a peaceful way as, "the burthen of the mystery [...] is lightened:- [...] until, the breath of this corporeal frame [...] almost suspended, we are laid asleep in body, and become a living soul" (38-46). The insight gained thus, remains throughout one's life and enables the individual to enjoy life in all its glory.

Hühn postulates that the lyric persona's sense of self is defined by his "ganzheitlich *sinnhaften*" experience of nature (289 emphasis added), whereas "sinnhaft" could indeed be understood as "through the senses". The lyric I's utter surrender to his senses consequently causes a meditation that leads to pivotal insights and understanding. The individual's identity is found



in his experience with nature, in that he describes his true being as “a sense sublime [...] whose dwelling is [...] in the mind of man: a motion and a spirit, that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thought, and rolls through all things” (Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* 95-102). He therefore becomes aware of a presence that is innate in everything in existence, as well as within himself. The lyric persona experiences altered states of consciousness, which start with the engagement of the senses. The physical sensations that enable the individual to perceive his surrounding consciously lead to an inward reflection and emotions of tranquility and joy. Through these emotions, the senses are ultimately abandoned and the lyric persona experiences access to pivotal truths, as well as the awareness of a divine presence that is innate in everything in existence. Through this presence, he finds “the soul of all my moral being”, and thus, his real self.

In the final section of the poem, another shift of focus takes place, as the speaker addresses his sister, and, again, describes physical sensations. In line 114, he addresses a “dearest friend”, in whose “voice I catch the language of my former heart and read my former pleasures in the shooting lights of thy wild eyes” (116-119). He therefore refers to hearing the other person’s voice and actively looking into her eyes. After his mystic experience, he arrives again in the realm of physical limitations and perceives reality through his embodied senses. Yet, the insights he has gained were universal and transformative. They seem to have been life-changing, in that the speaker does not consider his sister separate from himself, but rather as an extended version of his less developed, past self. This extension might point towards a changed state of awareness, in which the individual is now aware of the unity apparent in manifold forms of existence. He therefore sees his sister as part of himself, and not as a separate entity.

This process is similar to tantric practices, which also work with the engagement of senses such as sound and visual stimulation. The ultimate goal of these practices, as has been laid out, is the remembrance of Siva as the final source of all in existence and true universal self. The practitioner consciously engages with the artefact, which can be a Mandala, Mantra or the structure of Yoga poses. Through these physical experiences, he consequently reaches extended states of consciousness and, subsequently, his being enters into a state of harmony with the divine frequency. Consequently, the experience of communion with nature described in “Tintern Abbey” does bear similarities to the tantric rituals. Even if the process is not performed in a structured manner with an artefact designed for this specific purpose, the individual experiences a state of enlightenment through the employment of his senses. It is not a mandala

or yoga poses, but nature that inspires the senses of eyes and ears and triggers an enlightened experience. The world, intense emotions, and the body are used to transcend themselves. The lyric persona conclusively perceives himself as unified with a greater force, which causes feelings that are similar to the ones described in the tantric process. Whether these feelings and the sense of self also concur with tantric ideas of self, which is Siva, will be illustrated in the next part of the chapter.

#### **4.2.3. The Concept of Self- a Recognition of Siva**

The concept of the lyric persona's self is established in several steps. The speaker's self-awareness develops with nature as an anchor point, as it seems to encompass a higher spirit. Additionally, nature, as a constant variable in the ever-changing consciousness of the addresser, mirrors the development of the self in its different stages. Firstly, the intuitive state of experiencing nature as a child is described. Secondly, the critical age of adolescence in which the individual is confronted with society is reflected on. Lastly, the ultimate self is discovered, that, through an act of self recognition, finds its core resonating in the grace of nature. This self, as it is defined by the speaker, resembles the tantric understanding of Siva.

The structure of the poem, which consists of an out-in-out focus, was termed by M.H. Abrams as "The Greater Romantic Lyric" (Hühn 299). "Tintern Abbey" starts with a description of the surrounding scenery, with reference to past experiences the speaker has had five years ago ("five years have past", "and again I hear" (Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* 1- 2)). At this stage, the lyric persona lets the addressee participate in the action, as he describes what he sees and hears. He does, however, not provide an inside view into his feelings or emotions in the first few lines of the poem.

After this description and outward focus, a shift happens in the second stanza, in which the speaker indulges in a deep meditation on nature and the "gift" (Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* 36) it has granted him with. The audience therefore witnesses the speaker's inward process and the feelings nature evoked in him. In "lonely rooms" and "hours of weariness" he spent in his urban environment, the emotions he had experienced in nature become alive as he feels "sensations sweet", "along the heart" (25- 28). These sensations serve as a liberation from the "heavy and weary weight of all this unintelligible world" (39) and give insights into higher truths ("we see into the life of things" (49)). Nature as a resource for the spirit guides the human being who is tired of the "joyless daylight" and the "fretful stir" (52). In times of depression and hopelessness, the speaker is filled with hope when reminiscing about his encounters with nature.

Through this meditation, the lyric I becomes aware of the transformation his perception of self has undergone. He reflects on his connection with nature as a boy, adolescent, and finally, as a grownup man. According to Rzepka, “the poet of 1793 sought to lose his sense of himself in Nature [...], [t]he self of 1792 wished, above all, to escape the world of outwardness that had entrapped it” (84). In these states, the lyric I’s self seems to be defined by a sense of lack. These two stages of being are thus characterized by an urge to escape something, which is either himself, or society and its crippling norms. The lyric persona originally feels “like a man flying from something he dreads” (73) and thereby represents the escapist mindset often associated with the Romantics. However, I suggest that the poet of 1798, the lyric persona who is present in the poem, is consequently defined by a sense of abundance, as he ends up finding “the thing he loved” (74). Instead of being driven by the need to escape, the speaker is filled with a sense of arrival. Instead of wanting to rid himself of something, he gains his real self and thereby finds peace with the two elements he previously desired to be liberated from.

The first memory depicts a boy who loses his sense of self and completely dissolves in his communion with nature. The reflection starts with a description of the lyric persona running around the Wye as a young boy, “when like a roe I bounded o’er the mountains” (Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* 67), and “nature then [...] to me was all in all.- I cannot paint what then I was” (72-75). The speaker describes a perception of self in nature that is completely immersed in experiencing it, as the colours and sounds “haunted me like a passion” that caused “aching joys” and “dizzy raptures”, “an appetite; a feeling and a love” (77- 80). The lyric persona’s unease becomes apparent in these utterances as the addressee witnesses a person who is not peacefully centered, but rather illustrated as someone who is lost in his overwhelming experience of nature. The speaker seems to have been deeply touched by his surroundings. Yet, he appears discombobulated and not in control of himself. Still, the lyric I associates feelings of love and belonging with this state of consciousness (“a feeling [...] that had no need of a remoter charm” (80)), which is why he recollects these memories with “somewhat of a sad perplexity” (60). The melancholic feeling described in these lines points towards the fact that the speaker, at last, has outgrown this state of consciousness and has lost this intuitive connection to nature.

The poem continues, as the lyric I states that “this time is past” (83). A fact that the lyric persona does not really regret, for “other gifts have followed; for such loss, I would believe abundant

recompense” (87-88). The time spent in the city and his ability to remember his experiences of nature has resulted in a sense of clarity, a clarity which he lacked in his years of “thoughtless youth” (90). The memories of nature served him as mental nourishment in times of desperation. Yet, experiencing cultivated society must have been important for the lyric speaker’s personal growth, as he perceived “oftentimes the still, sad music of humanity” (ibid.) and, in turn, started to feel “a presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts” (94). Instead of getting his mind full of worries and uncertainty, he became mindful of his unique connection to nature.

The development of the lyric I seems to have its roots in an animal-like nature (“I cannot paint *what* then I was” (75 emphasis added)), in which the individual was unreflected, unconscious, and in a state of total immersion with nature. As a boy, being filled with “coarser pleasures” (73) and characterized by “animal movements” (74), there was no self-awareness. Rather, he completely dissolved in the intuitive experience of nature.

Only through the experience of society, the “fretful stir unprofitable” (52), a more mature remembrance emerged, of a presence being innate both in himself, as well as in nature. It seems that the life in the city crystallized a sense of self, an ego, that created the possibility to distance the speaker from his direct experiences. Only through the detached perspective, he could differentiate between the self and its immediate experiences. Consequently, the lyric I is able to extract the presence that is innate, both in nature, and himself and gain a deeper understanding of both concepts. The ability to reflect on past events and to revive them through the act of imagination seems to be the beginning of an awakened self-awareness that recognizes one’s real self reflected in nature:

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear,- both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize  
In nature and the language of the sense,

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being (93-111)

Nature serves as an echo that resonates with the speaker's real self. There is a being inherent in himself, which grants him a sublime feeling, and which he recognizes in the "blue sky", as well as "the round ocean and the living air" (98) and even in the "mind of man" (99). The possibility of acknowledging this presence is determined by the act of reflection.

Ultimately, therefore, the speaker revisits the Wye again, and is able to find "the anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, the guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul of all my moral being" (109-111) there. This "guide" is inherent in everything in existence in that it "impels all thinking things [...] and rolls through all things" (99-101). Instead of a complete loss of sense of self in his engagement with nature, he is now present at the same place, endowed with a new awareness. This awareness, I suggest, is the presence of Siva.

In order to compare the description of the divine illustrated in "Tintern Abbey" with the concept of Siva, it is useful to recap a few characterizations of the latter. According to tantric philosophy, Siva manifests as "finite objects, and, secondly, the revelation of the intrinsic nature of those finite objects, the self-luminous unconcealable and mysterious Self" (Muller-Ortega *Triadic* 145). Accordingly, Siva is the one that creates reality and is also inherent in its manifestations. This concept of an all-encompassing universal being is comparable to the sky and the vastness of the ocean. The manifestations of reality are the waves that are part of the ocean and move it, yet the ocean itself remains unchanged, just as the sky is still present behind clouds. The unchanging presence, and ultimately every human's real self, is therefore, Siva.

The "spirit" (Wordsworth 100) referred to by the lyric speaker in "Tintern Abbey" seems to have evident similarities with the all-inclusive consciousness which Tantra considers as the ultimate source of all reality. As aforementioned, Siva is compared to the sky and the ocean, and so does the lyric persona describe the entity "dwelling" (97) in the "round ocean" (98) and the "blue sky" (99). What is strikingly similar as well is the illustration of this spirit as something that "impels [...] all things" (100-102). He is inherent in "all thinking things, all objects of all thought" (101) and also in the speaker himself. The "presence", which is also a term often used to describe Siva, ultimately is the "guardian of" the lyric persona's "heart, and soul of all my moral being" (110-111). The lyric I recognizes his real self in nature and becomes

aware of a divine presence. The experience of, as I suggest, Siva, therefore grants the speaker a new sense of self, a sense of liberation and peace.

#### 4.2.4. “That Blessed Mood”- a State of Enlightenment

The poem encompasses several tantric elements, in that it depicts dichotomies and, to a certain extent, describes a tantric practice. Furthermore, I suggested that the entity the lyric persona finds in himself and in nature is strikingly similar to the concept of Siva. Now, having stated that a tantric practice is performed and the recognition of Siva achieved, the question arises whether the state of consciousness the lyric persona is in can be considered an enlightened state. Quite a few instances affirm this assumption.

According to tantric philosophy, the identification with Siva results in an enlightened cognitive state. This state is consequently defined by a feeling of bliss and joy that accompanies all situations of everyday life, a feature, that the speaker mentions in “Tintern Abbey” as well:

Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings (125-137)

Even though it is nature the lyric persona is referring to, it is the inherent force, the divine grace that is immanent within nature, that holds the power of providing “quietness and beauty” that “neither evil tongues [...] nor all the dreary intercourse of daily life” can disturb. By recognizing Siva in nature, the lyric I is blessed with a constant feeling of “cheerful faith” that cannot be disrupted by common life, and in which “the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world is lightened (37-41). The addresser’s description of his experience indicates that he is “one-who-is-liberated-while-still-alive” (Muller-Ortega *Triadic* 50), which is, by tantric definition, an enlightened person.

The issue of time also points towards an all-inclusive state of consciousness, hence, towards a state of enlightenment. Here, the lyric persona finds past, present, and future unified in his current encounter with nature. This becomes apparent in the following statement:

With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again:  
While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
That in this moment there is life and food  
For future years (Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* 61-67)

The picture that “revives” is the imagination of the speaker’s self as a young boy. In this situation, the speaker is perceiving nature with “present pleasure”, feeling peacefully safe when thinking about the future, while he is remembering his past self. Thus, a unification of past, present, and future is depicted. As a result, the speaker transcends the limitations of time. He does not leave time and space behind, instead, past, present and future blur into the present moment of experience. By referring to nature as a consistent focal point, the dimensions of past, present, and future become unified in the momentary experience of a mystic union with nature. The speaker encounters an all-one-ness in his perception of time, as he merges all three dimensions into his encounter with the Wye.

The last aspect that should be considered is the peculiar observation that the lyric persona does not count his sister Dorothy, who is with him during his meditation, as an independent individual. Even though this could be regarded as an indication of the addressee’s self-centeredness and arrogance, I propose that the kind of self-centeredness this viewpoint hints at is a tantric one. The speaker declares:

For thou art with me here upon the banks  
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,  
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
The language of my former heart, and read  
My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while  
May I behold in thee what I was once,  
My dear, dear Sister! (114-120)

Accordingly, Dorothy appears to be a manifestation of his past self. In her, he beholds his “former pleasures” and in her “wild eyes” he recognizes “what I was once”. This perception points towards an all-encompassing self-centeredness, seeing the real self, Siva, in all objects. Due to the enlightened state of perceiving reality in a non-dual manner, this awareness does not consider another human apart from oneself. Through the self-centeredness and identification

with Siva, the individual is able to perceive Siva in other beings. The lyric I might see himself in Dorothy, as she is just another part of his real self, another manifestation of Siva, that ultimately, is not different from him. The state of enlightenment is defined by a sense of identification with the whole. As a result, this whole would also include his sister. The speaker recognizes his real self in her, just in a different state of consciousness. Therefore, I suggest, that the awareness of unification with his sister might just be another feature that portrays the speaker's enlightened state.

Regarding the aforementioned examples, this paper concludes that the speaker does embody a state of enlightenment in the tantric sense. The identification with Siva, which takes place through his communion with nature, leads to an all-encompassing and joyful understanding of the world that is in alignment with the tantric idea of enlightenment.

#### **4.2.5. Elements of Sakti**

It has been illustrated that Sakti is the creative force that functions as Siva's manifesting power. She emerges in various ways. Also considered Siva's female counterpart and his lover, she is the creative aspect of the divine force.

The most obvious possibility for an illustration of Sakti would be Dorothy. This assumption could be made for several reasons. One reason is her being a woman, which could make her the lyric persona's female counterpart. She "functions as a complex metaphor in the poem: of nature, female muse, lover" (Blades 54). Moreover, Dorothy does indeed personify a female extension of the lyric persona, as has been mentioned above. Nevertheless, Sakti is described as consisting of pure bliss and is the divine creative force. Being a symbiotic extension of the speaker, Dorothy does not cause sensations of euphoria, neither does she cause the lyric I's real self experience. Therefore, she is not a means for ultimate self recognition. Instead, it is the lyric persona's self experience in nature that consequently makes him realize that his real self is reflected in Dorothy. Furthermore, Sakti is characterized by her creative force. Dorothy does not personify any power of creation and lacks any sense of agency. One can therefore conclude, that the persona of Dorothy does not bear many similarities with the concept of Sakti.

More likely, it is nature which portrays the element of Sakti. The "beauteous forms" (Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* 22) have caused "feelings of unremembered pleasure" (31), which can be compared to sensations of bliss. Through nature, the speaker becomes aware of a "sense sublime of something far more interfused" (95), a presence that is innate in everything in



existence. Therefore, she serves as a “spotless mirror” (Goudriaan 55), that makes the lyric persona aware of the “soul of all my moral being” (Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* 110), in short, conscious of his real self. Caused by intense emotions of “dizzy raptures” (84) and “aching joys” (83), that reminds one of the description of a Sakti awakening, the lyric persona is able to gain access to the ultimate self-awareness.

Additionally, nature is referred to as being female (“Nature never did betray [t]he heart that loved *her*” (122) emphasis added). Nature is an active agent, as she can “inform the mind that is within us” (126) and, as has been claimed in the first part of this chapter, is animated (“these waters, rolling from their mountain spring” (3), “these orchard-tufts [...] lose themselves” (11-13), “sportive wood run wild” (16)). Even though the creative aspect of nature is only depicted in that nature causes certain states of consciousness but does not appear to produce anything apart from “unripe fruits” (12), nature seems to be Siva’s manifestation installed as a tool for the true self-discovery. The Romantics use her as a mirror to become aware of their innate being, which is Siva.

Thus, the poem depicts nature as the lively female aspect of creation. It is her that enables the individual to encounter his real self by producing altered states of awareness. Thus, features of the concept of Sakti are ascribed to the understanding of nature in the poem “Tintern Abbey”.

#### **4.2.6. A Metapoem on the Aesthetic Experience**

Lastly, tantric elements might become noticeable when considering “Tintern Abbey” as a metapoem on the process of aesthetic experience. It has been illustrated, that tantric elements are present in the romantic aesthetic theory established by Wordsworth, as the evocation of Rasa seems to be the intended result in both theories. The lyric persona’s personal development could be regarded as a metaphor for the description of the production of a poem. Moreover, it emphasizes the act of Imagination as a pivotal tool for transforming real life incidents into Rasa.

The interesting section of the poem for this part of analysis starts in line fifty-seven, in which the speaker begins to describe his experience of nature as a child. The vivid illustration of the “haunted” (76) boy, intuitively connected with nature and experiencing a passionate “appetite; a feeling and a love” (79) shows a person who experiences intense, uncontrolled emotions. This state of awareness is “followed” by “abundant recompense” (87-88). The state of “thoughtless youth” is abandoned as the lyric persona’s sensibility develops into “elevated thoughts” (94)

that are interspersed with a “presence [...] whose dwelling is the light of setting suns” (94-97). The reflection on his past experiences result in a clear view on his sensations and the according insights.

Wordsworth described a poem as the result of “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” that “takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility” (Wordsworth 260). The process described in “Tintern Abbey” illustrates exactly that. The powerful feelings experienced by the lyric persona as a child are recollected in the present moment. As the lyric persona meditates on his previous experiences, that were pre-reflective and primal, he becomes aware of a serenity that has since then settled within him. Through the process of Imagination, the intense sensations became purified, and a “sense sublime” (95) emerges within the speaker. I propose, that this feeling, this taste, is the rise of Santa Rasa, a feeling of tranquility and bliss. Thus, the intense primal emotions are transformed through the process of Imagination and result in an “exhortation” towards his sister Dorothy, a reminder to honor nature and the divine force that is to be found there.

The lyric persona functions as a translator of his spiritual experiences and communicates them to Dorothy, his audience (“For thou art with me here [...] thou my dearest Friend” (113-115)). In her, he recognizes his former, more simple self (“May I behold in thee what I was once” (120)). Wordsworth stated that the character of the poet is defined by him being not separate from men, but as having “a more comprehensive soul”, with a “greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels” (250). Accordingly, the speaker considers his sister a person similar to him, but, to a certain extent inferior, since she has fewer capacities to grasp the reality now available to him. This suggestion could also be emphasized by the fact that, “in after years” (137) she shall think of him, “and these my exhortations” (146). She shall not, as the speaker, reflect on her own experiences, but on the insights supplied by him.

Thereby, he provides his insights that caused the recognition of a source for the ultimate truth and moral reference point in nature. The purpose of poetry, both in Wordsworth’s understanding, as well as in Indian theory, is to make sensations of sublime bliss available to the common people. Dorothy, therefore, embodies the ordinary individual while the lyric I personifies the poet providing extraordinary observations to his audience.

Accordingly, the process of the creation of poetry is emphasized as the lyric persona remembers his overwhelming experiences as he stands in nature with a sense of peacefulness. Profound sensations are thus reawakened through the act of Imagination. The result of this act is a declaration on the blessings of nature as “’tis her privilege [...] to lead from joy to joy” (123-125). Nature, accordingly, “impress[es] with quietness and beauty” (127) in a way that makes one inviolable to all the aspects of “the dreary intercourse of daily life” (131). His sister ought to remember that, and, by remembering him, will be granted “healing thoughts of tender joy” (145). Consequently, she will also be able to taste the Santa rasa, yet again through the act of Imagination (“wilt thou remember me” (145), “nor [...] wilt thou then forget” (149, 155)). She is furthermore educated, for she learns that the source for ultimate truth and purpose is to be found in nature. Dorothy thereby personifies the general audience, that ought to profit from the described experience.

The parallels to the process of aesthetic theory thus become apparent in the development of the lyric persona’s personal growth. The story that is depicted in “Tintern Abbey” serves as a metaphor for the composition of a poem. Intense sensations become transposed by the act of Imagination. The outcome of this reflection is an insight into a spiritual realm that provides pivotal truths of human life. These truths are thus communicated to the audience, who should profit from the poet’s, or, in this case, the lyric I’s, endeavor. The delightful state of self-awareness described concurs with the Santa Rasa, which is supposed to affect the audience, personified by Dorothy.

## **5. Conclusion**

The main purpose of this paper was to establish correspondences and contrasts between the tantric philosophy and romantic poetry. Several tantric elements were traced in the romantic tradition. Accordingly, the primary research question, “Which aspects of (monistic Kashmir Saivism) tantric philosophy can be found in the romantic tradition?”, can be answered as follows. As was expected, concepts such as Siva, Sakti and the Rasa theory are similar to the romantic understandings of self, the process of Imagination, and the aesthetic theory proposed by Wordsworth.

The following paragraphs provide a more detailed account of the findings of this thesis. It was stated that the self as a divine force, that is evident in all objects of creation, is in strong concordance with the definition of Siva. Both are the presence of pure consciousness as well as the core of the whole universe. The real self is God, as the primal cause of life and the source

for ultimate truth, in both traditions. Accordingly, the ultimate understanding of self appears to be comparable in the tantric and the romantic philosophy.

Furthermore, the theory of Rasa, which is a manifestation of Sakti, bears several similarities to the romantic theory of aesthetics. The emergence of a creative energy in the process of Imagination can apparently be linked to the power of Sakti. The intense feelings caused by either a tantric ritual or, in the case of the Romantics, by the experience of nature, transform the individual's consciousness and make them more available to witness an ultimate reality. This overwhelming experience is in turn transformed through the act of Imagination, which is considered as being guided by a divine force. Furthermore, this paper argues that Imagination appears to be the process that transposes a real life emotion into a purified taste of this emotion. This relish, thus, is Rasa. The accounts of this phenomenon given by Indian scholars are comparable to the creative process described by Wordsworth.

Moreover, Indian aesthetics serve a similar purpose as romantic creative endeavor. The intention is to provide an environment in which the audience is able to witness basic human emotions in a detached manner. Through this distanced stance, the embodied experience is supposed to be accompanied with a state of joy. Ultimately, this delightful feeling results in enlightened states of consciousness. Both theories, therefore, aim to provide mystic experiences to the audience.

Lastly, the lyric persona's self introduced in the poem "Tintern Abbey" is defined by various tantric elements. Depicted dichotomies point towards the underlying current of consistency that becomes apparent in the course of the poem. The speaker's individual growth is primarily constructed by his human sensations, but ultimately, the lyric persona identifies with the divine entity he rediscovers in nature, as well as in himself. The tantric practice also begins with an engagement of the senses, but ultimately leads to a transformative experience beyond the physical limitations and results in an identification with Siva. Resultingly, the poem describes the creation of an aesthetic artefact and, in this illustration, refers to the concept of Rasa.

Nevertheless, two main contrasts between the two theories became apparent as well. Firstly, the tantric tradition is highly structured and intentional, while the Romantics emphasized the intuitive and simple approach towards nature and art. This means that tantric practices are defined by clear rules and provide almost a step-by-step guide to the depicted rituals.

Additionally, the “Natyasastra” consists of meticulous descriptions of all the features inherent in the aesthetic theory. Every presented element serves an intentionally chosen purpose. In opposition, the Romantics were concerned with making art available to the common man by adapting to their standards. The simplicity of topics, language, and form was propagated, especially by William Wordsworth. Nature was met in a conscious, yet spontaneous manner. The intuitive surrender to the emerging emotions was not defined by structured rituals. Thus, the idea of the concept of structure differs substantially in both approaches. Secondly, the gender attributes of the tantric school of thought and the romantic period do not concur. While the Romantics connoted femininity with features such as love, delight, and beauty, the tantric understanding of Sakti as the female force encompasses all aspects of creation, which also includes the force of death, terror and destruction. The masculine character traits, according to the romantic tradition, are defined by a sense of immensity, power, and violence. Interestingly enough, the tantric tradition considers Siva, who is pure presence and a light without a source, the ultimate masculine force. While the tantric tradition considers male force as presence and feminine force as power, Romanticism opposes disruption with delight. One can conclude, that despite their striking similarities, the romantic and the tantric tradition do have opposing views on specific elements.

This paper, thus, revealed the occurrence of several tantric instances in the romantic poetry theory. Having established several similarities, as well as contrasts, between romantic poetry and the tantric philosophy, it might serve as an incentive for further analyses of romantic poems with regard to tantric philosophy. Furthermore, the claim that Imagination could be the missing link between real life experiences and the aesthetic realm might deserve further examination.

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## **7. Appendix**

### **Abstract English**

The manifold concepts of the romantic epoch have been thoroughly researched from various angles in the past decades. Due to its enhanced availability, the philosophy of Tantrism was also met with growing interest in the academic field, and scholars started to engage with its approach. Both theories seem to share their understanding of a monistic worldview, and most importantly, their concept of self. Additionally, their aesthetic theories appear to have several features in common. However, previous work has failed to address the evident similarities between these two traditions. This paper therefore examines the similarities and contrasts between key concepts of these two philosophical branches. Tantric elements, such as “Siva”, “Sakti” and “Rasa” are compared to core features of the romantic theory, such as “Imagination”, “the Sublime”, and the aesthetic theory established by William Wordsworth in his “Preface” of the “Lyrical Ballads”. By conducting a contrastive literary analysis with reference to tantric literature, such as the “Spanda of Vibration” by Vasugupta, and the works of William Wordsworth, Edmund Burke, and other romantic poets, elements of Tantrism that occur in romantic poetry are explored. Furthermore, the romantic poem “Tintern Abbey” is analyzed with regard to the previously illustrated elements. The result of this research is the acknowledgement of parallels and contrasts between two seemingly unrelated schools of thought.

## **Abstract Deutsch**

Die vielfältigen Konzepte der romantischen Epoche wurden in den letzten Jahrzehnten weitgehend recherchiert. Wegen ihrer verstärkten Verfügbarkeit erfuhr auch die Philosophie des Tantrismus wachsendes Interesse, und Wissenschaftler begannen nach und nach, sich mit den Konzepten dieser Tradition zu befassen. Beide Theorien teilen ihr Verständnis eines monistischen Weltbildes, und vor allem, ihre Auffassung vom Konzept des Selbst. Außerdem weisen die ästhetischen Theorien dieser beiden Philosophien einige Gemeinsamkeiten auf. Trotzdem hat es die bisherige Forschung verpasst, diese auffälligen Ähnlichkeiten zu adressieren. Die vorliegende Arbeit wird daher Parallelen und Kontraste zwischen den Schlüsselementen dieser beiden philosophischen Zweige erarbeiten. Tantrische Elemente, wie zum Beispiel „Siva“, „Sakti“ und „Rasa“, werden mit Kernaspekten der romantischen Theorie verglichen, wie zum Beispiel „Imagination“, „the Sublime“ und der ästhetischen Theorie die von William Wordsworth im „Preface“ zu den „Lyrical Ballads“ verfasst wurde. Durch eine kontrastive Literaturanalyse, die sich auf tantrische Literatur, wie beispielsweise Vasugupta's „Spanda of Vibration“ sowie Werke von William Wordsworth, Edmund Burke, und anderer romantischer Dichter bezieht, wird daher das Vorkommen tantrischer Elemente in romantischer Dichtung erforscht. Darüber hinaus wird das romantische Gedicht „Tintern Abbey“ von William Wordsworth in Hinblick auf die zuvor beschriebenen Elemente analysiert. Das Resultat dieser Forschungsarbeit ist das Herausarbeiten der Parallelen und Unterschiede, die zwischen diesen beiden Traditionen bestehen.