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Romanticism and the Heart of the Human Condition

Man inhabits a symbolic world that, to the degree that he remains unconscious of it as symbolic, he assumes to be literal. He inhabits a mystery – the unknowable realm of the unconscious – symbolically represented as the sensible world in the human act of perception. So long as he remains unconscious of human perception as an act of creation, the mystery of creation contained in the symbol is not recognized (*Sanity* 24).¹

In the field of psychotherapy there is a growing body of methodology focusing on the connection and reintegration of the emotional and sensory response triggered by the human perception of reality. Emotions and feelings are seen as a psychophysiological language that allows the psyche to communicate with the physical body and the conscious mind in order to interpret what is perceived. Being able to integrate, accept and ultimately utilize this creative voice becomes necessary for the process of understanding acquired knowledge and information, aiding the capacity of a person to live life fully and make decisions. This epistemological process is one of the hallmarks of the British Romantic period with its rich artistic and literary conversation about the nature of the human mind. Its literature provides evidence of the richness of the human experience when the creative process of the psyche is portrayed in poetry and prose. This paper uses a theoretical lens that combines Western and Eastern psychoanalysis, as expounded by Carl Jung and Buddhist philosophy, to present Romanticism's quest for

understanding the role of the psyche in human experience and cognition. It suggests that a valuable contribution of the Romantic period is the development of a commitment to provide voice, space and validity to the creative and penetrative imagination as mind embodiment that manifests the inner landscape of the self when encountering reality. At the heart of this paper, works of either poetry or prose by Samuel T. Coleridge, John Keats, Percy B. Shelley and William Wordsworth will be explored in order to consider how they may have approached the subject consciously or unconsciously.

First, it is important to acknowledge existent skepticism about any transcendental intentions on the part of Romantic writers. Scholar Jerome McGann has argued, for instance, that scholarship on Romantic literature has been hijacked by unquestioned acceptance of its cultural reification, attributing to it a level of idealization that blinds critique of its contradictions (McGann 573-599). He argues that much of Romantic poetry alone should be subject to greater scrutiny for it is rather bound to its own Romantic ideology in its attempt to seem transcendental and ahistorical. Instead, he argues that much can be comprehended when looking at the events social, politico-historical and economic that trigger those works. Such possibility, he posits, has its difficulties because writers of that period preferred erasures and strategic displacements that disregard the circumstances that promote their writings, creating a contradiction on the very ideals they intend to convey in writing (573-599). His critique suggests that much of what is written in Romantic literature is bound to its own self-imposed limitations of ideology and therefore cannot be a true representative of the quest to express reality as it is experienced. While this present analysis does not desire to ignore that view, it chooses to narrow down the frame of study to focus on specific attempts when Romantic writers give expression to the creative imagination regardless of the external reality that is informing their perception. In other words, it

places its attention primarily in the actual process of inner inquiry. Romantic ideology as well as the socio-cultural foundation of these writers can certainly inhibit the scope of their personal exploration. However, such possibility could be said to exist in any group of writers interested on such project. An important argument can be made, however, for recognizing regardless of the limitations, the overall tendencies that came to the surface of literary work and that promoted an observation of the psychic act of interpretation. Additionally, even with its shortcomings, one example of the impact of the Romantic period is in the emergence of Jungian psychoanalysis affecting the fields of psychology, philosophy, and beyond.² The Jungian psychoanalytical lens provides, in return, a theoretical infrastructure from which to understand the writings and intentions of that period.

Jungian psychology has been selected in this essay as a lens coming from the Western tradition because of its valuable exploration of the nature of human perception and psyche. According to scholar Ross Woodman, Carl Gustav Jung “viewed the human act of perception as a creative act bringing into play a whole range of psychic activity to which matter as physical sensations located in the brain is mentally bound” (*Sanity* 23). To Jung, the “fact that an external sensation is perceived by the brain as a mental image that *is* the object tell us [far] more about the object than its sensible form as an object of the sense will allow” (*Sanity* 23). Thus, Jungian psychoanalysis argues that, “psychic life is for the greater part an unconscious life that surrounds consciousness on all sides” (Jung 57). A human being can only know who she is to the extent that she is aware of the symbolic nature of the world she is inhabiting – that is, it is dependent on her awareness that the world she sees is made of her perception and interpretation of it. The ultimate challenge then of getting to know the seer within, the one that triggers the act itself of perceiving, requires seeing into the very nature of the act of perception. That creative act Jung

labeled as the psyche (*Sanity* 25). The psyche is not conceived as an object or entity, but as an action instead, a process. It is the actual process by which the unconscious mind becomes embodied in a psychophysiological way that is manifested consciously as it interprets phenomena.

Interestingly, in Jung's work, "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity," he defines the psyche as a feminine principle of "unfolding life" (*Sanity* 24), which finds its counterpart in the Buddhist tradition and is hinted at by several Romantic writers. More on this will be explored later, for now, it is interesting to highlight that while psyche is defined as the act of the creative imagination, the mystery that is the seer or observer who is doing the perceiving is denoted by Jung as the soul. So that the ultimate quest that is attempted by the process of awareness of the act of perception is to see the soul, to encounter the true and personal "I" that is experiencing and feeling, the one that lives and *is* by virtue of being affected by reality. Jung further argues that such encounter means connecting with our unconscious aspect (*Sanity* 24).

Although Jung provides a language within the Western context to examine the literature of the period, he himself was a product of British Romanticism. Thus, to Jungian psychology this paper adds the parallel views from Buddhist philosophy. Buddhist philosophy and psychology are considered indigenous and prescientific, meaning that their emergence predates any formal, scientific quest in the East (Padmal 236-254). Instead, Buddhist thought developed outside of any context linked to modern scientific study like the one we are more familiar in the West. Therefore, it provides a perspective that intersects and often mirrors Jungian psychology, while also providing a platform for validating the view of Romantic literature as an indigenous and nonscientific exploration of the psychic creative act of mind embodiment in its own right.

Buddhist psychology converges with Jungian psychoanalysis in significant ways that will be lightly touched upon herein. Like Jungian psychology, it asserts that “[what] one perceives, one reasons about. [And what] one reasons about, ‘one turns into *papanca*’” (Padmal 236-254). *Papanca* refers to the act of conceptualization of the world. The conceptualized idea of objects as existent is a product of having reasoned over what has been perceived. One of the most basic teachings in Buddhist thought is the *Twelve Links of Dependent Arising*, or the *Twelve Nidanas*, that carve out the steps by which the illusion of a separate self that perceives is acquired. These twelve links explain how things come to be, are, and cease to be. What is more, they explain the trajectory that leads to the development of the ego (Trungpa 73-82). According to this teaching, no beings or phenomena exist independently of other beings and phenomena. It is, instead, a basic sense of ignorance of the interconnectedness of existence that triggers a sense of separation and the arising of duality – of the idea of self and other. The end result is that the world that is experienced is a world of illusion that is dependent on the mistaken assumption of separation – the ego-self perceiving and believing that anything it comes into contact with is separate from it and something to which it must form a feeling and a reaction. Buddhist thought takes then the step of identifying further the factors that influence reasoning, such as craving, aversion and other tendencies that color how the ego perceives reality (Thera 83-85). For instance, if one has aversion to cold weather, one’s ego-self may perceive winter as dreadful, depressing and oppressive. But, if one has a preference for cold temperatures, one might be more inclined to perceive, formulate, and express the beauty of the wintry landscape, the coziness of sitting next to a fireplace or enjoying the views of a hibernating world.

In Buddhist psychology, the ego is seeing as intruding the field of sense perception. By using mindfulness techniques that allow a person to methodically become aware of the one that

perceives, one can arrive at the realization that there can be an observer that is free from ego (Mangalo 130-140). Buddhist philosophy then argues that upon seeing the nature of the observer, one can further realize that it is also a construct based on an initial erroneous sense of separation. When a person is able to transcend that state of separation, it realizes the emptiness of self and phenomena. Here emptiness is a concept that is more complex than what the English meaning of the word is able to offer. By emptiness, it refers to the ground itself that is empty of all concepts and from which all phenomena arises. It is not an actual place or state, it is rather the innate creative potential in its act of unfolding – in the words of Jung, the actual instant of “unfolding life.” In Buddhist psychology, emptiness, just like the act of “unfolding life” in Jungian psychoanalysis, is described as a feminine archetype and principle: *Prajnaparamita* or the *Perfection of Transcendent Wisdom* (“The Heart Sutra” 153-156).

In both Jungian and Buddhist psychoanalysis, in order to realize the real “I” that experiences life, any mechanism of repression that exists in order to support the needs of the ego must be eliminated, or at least recognized so as to transcend them. The mechanism of repression involves a consistent literal interpretation of reality that undervalues the actual effect of the psyche on the moment of encounter with reality. It also involves the attachment to prior mental formulations that color new encounters with expectations and tendencies from past ones, so that one is never free to experience any particular moment anew. The process of surrendering such repression involves radical awareness of the action of perception as it happens. For example, if one comes in contact with an object using the senses, one must take a moment to notice how the body and mind make sense of what is being perceived, recognizing the feelings and emotions that arise while noticing that the observer is not one with the creative act but rather the witness of it. Upon noticing the creative act of the unconscious while being integrally aware of the witness,

the seer, it can be established that one is actually living one's life fully in that present moment. Psychotherapeutic techniques of mindfulness are established that support and guide practitioners to develop such capacity, both in the West and within the Eastern context of Buddhist practice.

Now, how do these parallel and yet distinct schools of psychoanalysis as well as their techniques for developing awareness, inform the analysis of Romantic literature? They offer us the theoretical narrative that can explain important tendencies in poetry and prose towards observing the very act of creative imagination. Within these lenses, it can be possible to observe attempts by Romantic writers to practice their own form of mindful attention to the act of perception, or what the scholar Alan Richardson describes as the observed "'embodied' or 'corporeal' accounts of the mind (Richardson xvi). As he further suggests, it helps us to see the complexity in the "Romantic fascination with the brain, the nerves, and the continuity between body and psyche" (xiv).

The first Romantic text to receive this paper's attention is *Biographia Literaria* by Samuel T. Coleridge, in which he expounds the way a writer of his time sees the application of philosophical and religious principles to poetry and criticism (Coleridge 432-628). He reflects on the true nature of poetic diction, and the real poetic character of the poet (433):

The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to

unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead (Coleridge 516).

It is important to notice how Coleridge ends this passage by suggesting that unless an object is perceived, its very existence is compromised. It is “dead,” he writes. Buddhist thought concurs with his assessment and highlights the importance of understanding that duality and separation may function as a way for consciousness to become aware of itself. Once awareness is established, the interdependence between self and other implies that nothing in phenomena has intrinsic existence separate from the perception of it by the observer. Here too one should include as an interesting observation that, according to scholars, Coleridge coined the term “psycho-analytical” in 1805 to refer to the psychology that looks into the act by which consciousness becomes conscious of itself as action (*Sanity* 25). That term was meant to contrast with literal, “mechanical philosophy” (25) by which the psyche was banished “to a land of shadows, [surrounding] us with apparitions, and [distinguishing] truth from illusion only by the majority of those who dream the same dream” (Coleridge 511).

As a result of the rationalism and mechanized sense of order stemming from the Age of Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and from Classicism and Neoclassicism, we see indeed in Romanticism the questioning of the infallibility of what is considered true, real, correct, and normal, the questioning of the literal interpretation of reality (Black xxxv-lxiv). Romantic thinkers and writers rejected the idea that there was only one rational way to see the world where intellect was the sole mechanism to engage with it. What colored human perception became the underlying basis for engaging with the world; and, if one was to understand anything, the basis for grasping an idea had to come from relying on the subjective, emotional, spontaneous, imaginative, and creative impulses. These impulses, when examined, were seen as reflecting an

innate drive also found in nature and deeply rooted in the acceptance of change. The creative and visionary potential was exalted, giving way to fascination with the exotic, esoteric, foreign and mysterious. John Keats' letters provide a clear example of the attitude of the romantic thinker. He makes particular effort in describing what he is personally experiencing in the moment as an avenue for suggesting his philosophical view. At the beginning of his letter "To George and Georgiana Keats," (Keats 855) he describes how he is feeling that morning. He writes, "I am in a sort of temper indolent and supremely careless... My passions are asleep from my having slumbered till nearly eleven and weakened the animal fibre all over me" (855). He goes on to suggest that such state is one to relish and feel blissful about because it "is a rare instance of advantage in the body overpowering the Mind" (855). So, for him, the capacity to numb the intellectual mind in order to become more aware of the instinctual, current creative state of the psyche is something to cultivate. When in the same letter he goes on to comment on how other animals go about their lives, he highlights how, in comparison, we humans tend to intellectually question our actions, leaving no room for experiencing the present moment as is. He writes, "[the] pity is that we must wonder at it" (856). Keats expresses lament over the lack of importance given to the spontaneity with which words are spoken. He criticizes how society dissects and continually revises thought to the point that the original impulse that led to such thought is lost. And in this way, the real and true instant in which reality is experienced is also lost.

Another aspect conveyed in this one letter is Keats' effort in expressing how our human attempts at self-mastery are futile for we keep forgetting that we are bound by nature to die. He expresses how we are bound to experience the impermanence of every circumstance, including our life. He gives multiple examples from nature of how things are constantly in flux. He ends his elaboration by using the analogy of a rose that experiences the constant shift from winds to

extreme heat. He writes, “[the rose] cannot escape it, it cannot destroy its annoyances – they are as native to the world as itself” (Keats 857). Here one can perceive the importance of an individual’s ability to be free from attachment to one way of perceiving the world and rather become a champion of change, a change deeply rooted in the way we see ourselves connected and bound to be like nature. His words and ideas here are identical to the Buddhist perspective with regards to its principle of impermanence (Thera 83-85). In fact, his examples stemming from nature reflect the indigenous way in which Buddhist philosophers seek insight by looking into nature for an analogy. According to Buddhist philosophy, the nature of existence is one of constant flux and change, nothing is permanent, and our attempt to grasp, crave and attach to its illusory permanency is what binds us into suffering (83-85). Keats seeks freedom by reconnecting with nature and its natural principle of impermanence, by tapping into the present moment where the creative act of perception is performed.

Keats further presents his philosophical attempt to come to terms with the meaning of the human experience. He tries to create a composite of the human world where he describes its elements as “Intelligence,” the “Human Heart”, and the “world or elemental space” (Keats 857). Intelligence is equated with the mind, with rational, intellectual thinking. The world or elemental space is defined as the external circumstances that a human being encounters from moment to moment. And, the human heart, as the “hornbook,” the compass, that which must guide us as we “make use of the world” (857). And here, “to make use of the world” is explained as being able to “feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways” (857). So, he is not referring to an entity in and of itself. When he refers to the human heart, he refers to the action of feeling and suffering as the very act that triggers and stimulates creative imagination, as the only way to understand the meaning of our existence. Feeling, emotion, and the creative outburst that comes as a response to

external forces are placed at the center of what should be most important and valued. Noticing the Jungian act of “unfolding life” is thus recognized as the main reason for living.

The next set of works analyzed come from Percy B. Shelley who is a second generation Romantic writer, presenting in his lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound*, his take on the mystery of the “Jungian understanding of the unconscious as unconscious symbolically made known to consciousness” (*Sanity* 28). In it, Demogorgon, representing the unconscious, is described as “a mighty Darkness / Filling the seat of power; and rays of gloom / Dart round, as light from the meridian Sun, / Ungazed upon and shapeless – neither limb / Nor form – nor outline; yet we feel it is / A living Spirit” (*Prometheus Unbound* 2.4.2-7). Then, Shelley describes the creative act of perception as beginning with “imageless,” “ghostly forms,” “shadows of all forms that think and live” (1.198), and that, once bound by the senses and brought into the conscious, places the unconscious beyond our reach. In his view, the creative mind bound to the senses “struggles in vain to ‘oversoar’ the limits of the image; working with words in the act of composition, it is denied its ‘imageless’ object” (*Sanity* 29-30). His near desperation, due to his sense of failing to tap into the unconscious because of the persistence of the senses in clouding his view, is also present in his poem *Adonais*:

Oh gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
 Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
 Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
 Date the unpastured dragon in his den?
 Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
 Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear? (“Adonais” 744)

He attempts to follow here the steps of Keats (whose death this poem is its elegy), and wonders whether death may provide the freedom to the psychic experience that cannot be found when bound to this reality. This is an example of how oftentimes the inquiry into the human condition leads a Romantic writer to express failure rather than exhilaration at mastering the conscious realization of the psyche especially when encountering deep darkness. This scenario is considered quite common by Woodman who states:

The tragedy of Romanticism was its failure, through a lack of scientific or objective understanding, to bring together the opposites. Unable to withdraw its projections in order rationally to control them it repeated the errors of alchemy.... [The] dragon slew the unarmed psyche or forced it against the wall where in desperation it was tempted to slay itself ("Shaman" 54).

Woodman further highlights an intention by Romantic thinkers to try to master the archetype of the healer in the form of the Shaman – one who can master the spirit world and submit it for the benefit of the natural conscious world. An interesting aspect that Woodman discusses is how the shaman is perceived in Romanticism as the master of anomaly and chaos, which indeed seems as the most fruitful ground for the exploration of unrestrained emotion and sense perception. He highlights the challenge in the effort of the writer to explain how the ability in a child to explore the world of unconscious raw sensation can be tapped and mastered by the adult man. Most frequently, as he expresses in the excerpt above, the subject of a poem may end up in utter psychological suicide without being able to merge the two aspects of projections/perceptions made and the journey that takes us to them ("Shaman" 51-82).

The Romantic period is filled with attempts at gaining mastery or at least a full picture of the nature of the self as an instrument of perception, projection and interpretation. In this case,

with *Adonais*, Shelley gives us a glimpse of the struggles writers like him may have encountered since the creative act of the psyche would have involved looking into excessive darkness without proper methods to approach it.

Shelley's works fortunately also provide other interesting contributions to our current inquiry. Scholar Julia Carlson offers a compelling take on Shelley's use of similes as a device that allows him to convey to the reader his view regarding attachment whether it be material, emotional or intellectual, and further, his emphasis on the cognitive dimension of love as the product as well as a defining characteristic of the unconscious manifested thru imagination (Carlson 76). In his poem, *The Mask of Anarchy*, he writes on the 38th stanza: "Shake your chains to earth like dew / Which in sleep has fallen on you ("The Mask of Anarchy" 755). Then, in *Epipsychidion*, he expresses his dislike for the burden of being attached when, for instance, he deems as oppressive a "life partnership with 'one chained friend'" (Carlson 78). Carlson reconsiders the function of Shelley's use of "chains" as a possible attempt by this writer to develop his recognition that personal "enslavement [is] intimately linked to habits of the mind, that the latter must become conscious before they and the histories that they perpetuate can be changed" (Carlson 78). This idea echoes basic Buddhist philosophy that delineates the source of suffering to be ignorance about the nature of the mind and the self – by not seeing clearly the binds that one creates due to habitual patterns that continue to promote duality. As Woodman expresses, Shelley becomes "increasing conscious as he writes that the mind in creation is slowly consumed by its own operations" (*Sanity* 30).

One final Romantic writer this essay introduces in the analysis is William Wordsworth. His poem, "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798" (*Tintern Abbey* for short) opens with the speaker's

declaration that five years have passed since he last visited this location, encountered its tranquil, rustic scenery, and heard the murmuring waters of the river. He recites the objects he sees, and describes their effect upon him: the “steep and lofty cliffs” (Wordsworth 221) impress upon him “thoughts of more deep seclusion” (221); he leans against the dark sycamore tree and looks at the cottage-grounds and the orchard trees, whose fruit is still unripe. He sees the “wreaths of smoke” (221) rising up from cottage chimneys between the trees, and imagines that they might rise from “vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,” (221) or from the cave of a hermit in the deep forest (221). His attention to sharing what he encounters and how he encounters it echoes what would be described as the invitation of any form of mindfulness technique. In fact, within the realm of human experience, this form of unwavering awareness for the perception of reality as it takes place in every instant is regarded in many Buddhist psychoanalytical circles as the primordial, the only way to live the present moment (Padmal 236-254). Scholar David Collings provides the provocative argument that Wordsworth’s writing aims to promote literature’s capacity “to reflect on affective mobility” (Collings 172), to promote the actual sensory exercise of exploring emotion and mood when encountering reality. He further asserts:

This attention to feeling as such eventually leads him to conceive of an affective state without emotional content, a state of pure receptivity and affective aspiration, of primary affect, which arises in response to mere being. Wordsworth’s interest in this dimension of affective life indicates that he was increasingly drawn to reflect on the most basic levels of experience, a reflection that takes him through the mobility of mood and the problem of embodied and gendered subjectivity, both of central concern over a century later to psychoanalysis... and the origins of

personhood in a mode of relation, toward a barely articulable condition at the threshold of existence itself (172).

Literary and feminist scholarship have already placed a great deal of importance to the stylistic way in which Wordsworth's sister, Dorothy, wrote her journals – most of whom were material that inspired William Wordsworth's own writing since they lived and spent a great deal of time together. Much of that analysis has concluded that her writing portrays identity formation on her part, in which, there is no separation between her and what she experiences. Non-duality appears as a principle that is intuitively supporting Dorothy Wordsworth's worldview.³ Perhaps it should come at no surprise that her brother, at least in his approach to writing during the earlier half of his life, may have come to recognize unconsciously that the creative act of the psyche is not meant to be one in which qualifiers and statements of effect need to be drawn all the time as if something is perceived as external from oneself, but rather, that he can become one with the object being observed. So much so that, being able to recall those perceptions of what he has seen at different points in his life aids his ability to access tranquil states. The subject of memory is in fact quite important in Wordsworth's work, reappearing in later poems as well. In *Tintern Abbey*, the speaker describes how his memory of these "forms of beauty" (Wordsworth 221) has worked upon him in his absence:

These forms of beauty have not been to me,
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But 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... (221)

Memory offers “tranquil restoration” to his mind, and even affects him when he is not aware of the memory, influencing his deeds of kindness and love (Wordsworth 221). He further credits the memory of the scene with offering him access to that mental and spiritual state in which the burden of the world is lightened, in which he becomes a “living soul” (221) with a view into “the life of things” (221). This radical approach of disassociating from the current state of living in an urban setting, for instance, and instead allowing his psyche to recall a creative act and thus relive an experience found pleasant or calming, provides a fascinating literary take on what in psychoanalysis corresponds to the ability to control and utilize the sense of perception in order to provide support to the self.

While acknowledging that he is different now from when he was a boy, Wordsworth does not mourn it, however, for though he cannot resume his old relationship with nature, he has been amply compensated by a new set of more mature gifts. He can now sense the presence of something far more subtle, powerful, and fundamental in the light of the setting suns, the ocean, the air itself, and even in the mind of man; this energy seems to him “a motion and a spirit that impels / All thinking thoughts... / And rolls through all things” (Wordsworth 222). For that reason, he says, he still loves nature, still loves mountains and pastures and woods, for they anchor his purest thoughts and guard the heart and soul of his “moral being.” The language of the poem is striking for its simplicity and forthrightness; the young Wordsworth is in no way concerned with ostentation. He is instead concerned with speaking plainly and confining the poem’s imagery largely to the natural world as he experiences it.

Scholar Michael Cooke considers the romantic view as one where the challenge that is presented is one of understanding how human beings can attain the capacity to openly perceive reality as well as to be able to openly define what is been observed. He speaks of the interest by Romantic writers to explore the metaphysical drama of desiring and struggling simultaneously between annihilation and omnipotence. The result is often the presentation of a paradox in their words where one can notice different approaches to reconcile the way seemingly opposing forces pull us to communicate or approach something in a given emotional way (Cooke 435-453). Regardless of any success or perceived failure, this Romantic attempt to conduct “direct and revelatory encounters with the psyche” (“Shaman” 81) is evidence, for a contemporary audience, of the boldness that these writers found necessary in order to circumvent reason, logic, and dogma, and to restore the importance of validating creative imagination as an instrument to understand consciousness. From Coleridge’s philosophical inquiry into the definition of imagination to Keats’s search for expressing the spontaneity of a moment, its impermanence and the nature of unfolding reality. From Shelley’s struggle to release himself from the preconditioned bonds of mental habits and conceptualized ideas of self, to Wordsworth’s invitation to see with emotional embodiment how and what things are in the moment while being one with them. Their vision and commitment to write about the creative act of perception, whether consciously or unconsciously, foreshadows what would become a field of psychoanalysis and an avenue, both spiritual and secular, that integrates principles from West and East to encounter the realm of the unconscious and the mystery of the seer who lives and encounters every moment.

Notes

1. The full title of this work by Ross Woodman is *Sadness, Madness, Transformation: The Psyche in Romanticism*. It has been abbreviated here and throughout the paper for space saving convenience.

2. To see the full scope of his philosophical studies into psychology and beyond, please refer to *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung* now available also in digital edition (see Works Cited section).

3. A brief but illustrative study on the subject can be found in the short paper “Dorothy Wordsworth: Feminist Self-Awareness and Strategic Essentialism” by Akiko Oncken. Full reference can be found in the Works Cited section.

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