

BOOK REVIEWS

The Voice That in Madness Is Wanting

THOMAS ELSNER

Review of: Ross Woodman, *Sanity, Madness, Transformation: The Psyche in Romanticism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

There is something at work in my soul,
which I do not understand.

—Captain Walton in *Frankenstein*
(Mary Shelley 1818)

Dr. Ross Woodman is Professor Emeritus at the University of Western Ontario. His first book, *The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley* (1964) was followed by numerous scholarly articles. In 1993, The Keats-Shelley Association named him “Scholar of the Year.” His latest book, the subject of this review, is *Sanity, Madness, Transformation: The Psyche in Romanticism* (2005), an inspired excursion into the depth psychological heart of the Romantic opus.

If it is true that “the transformative power of the imagination resides in waking the sleeping soul upon Blake’s ‘Couch of Death’” (Woodman 2005, 202), then Ross Woodman has in this landmark work not only described how this awakening did and did not take place in Romanticism and Jung, but also awakened this sleeping beauty himself and allowed her to speak. No one has yet, to the best of my knowledge, written of the relationship between Romantic poetry and depth psychology with the profundity of insight and vividness of description that Woodman displays in this absolutely brilliant text.

Standing on the foundation of sixty years work in both Romanticism and depth psychology, he masterfully and fluently brings forth in detailed and vibrant imagery a multiplicity of extensive, wide-ranging historical and theoretical correspondences between these two, and other, fields. This book is replete with examples of the poetry it analyzes, allowing the language of mythopoetic imagination to fill its pages. In Woodman’s writing, the poet and professor (“two consciousnesses”) not only meet but also alchemize. This is a book that speaks to the imagination in us, not only the intellect, because it speaks from the poet in Woodman, not only the professor.

Woodman is interested in how the unconscious mind in creation, in the moment in which a work is unconsciously conceived, moves, as Shelley writes, “beyond and above consciousness” (Woodman 2005, 5).

Following in the footsteps of Jung, I view states of consciousness as arising out of an unconscious state. It is less with consciousness itself than with the process of rising to consciousness out of an unconscious state that I am concerned in the following pages. The rising to consciousness is the *praxis*, the making of the work. The unconscious is the *theoria* of it, not, however, as a conscious conception such as a critical theory may provide, but as what Blake calls a “moment: a Pulsation of the Artery” in which a work is unconsciously “conceived.” (4)

In pursuit of his goal of describing the process of rising to consciousness out of an unconscious state, Woodman displays a gripping and perhaps even unique gift of allowing the immediate power of the mythopoetic and aesthetic soul to live in close contact with the conceptually based psychological exploration of meaning. His fascinating prose never paralyzes the animal movements of the Romantic imagination with

the too-bright yellow light of psychological concepts. As a consequence, a living pulse of *cardiognosis* radiates throughout this absolutely stunning foray into the depths of the Western soul. We descend with the poets into the “land of the dead” to discover the roots of depth psychology as prophetically anticipated in their imaginative genius.

Sanity, Madness, Transformation is courageously written, for it brings analytical psychology into the academy where, as Woodman knows very well, “Jung remains on the lunatic fringe” (2005, 3). Yet this lunatic fringe is, according to Woodman, precisely where we need to remain when it comes to understanding the Romantic poets. As opposed to the rational sanity of Freud, Jung’s “lunacy” best serves the “madness of Romanticism” (205). In keeping with the spirit of Woodman’s work, I hope to engage his text in the second half of this review from within my own experience of that same Romantic/Jungian dialectical engagement with “lunacy” without which an experiential understanding of Romanticism is not possible.

Sanity, Madness, Transformation offers newfound connections between seemingly disparate fields, widening the scope of depth psychology’s traditional containers for collective psychic process (mythology, religion, folklore, and alchemy) to include not only Romantic poetry, but also deconstructionist literary theory and modern physics. Woodman brings Shelley, Blake, Keats, Wordsworth, and Coleridge together side-by-side, often paragraph-by-paragraph, with Jung, Derrida, and Wolfgang Pauli. And the amazing thing is that it *works*. Those with an interest in interdisciplinary studies will find it especially irresistible. In addition, there is a heuristic component; the author includes himself in his area of study and is explicitly autobiographical and self-disclosing, particularly in his discussion of the unconscious madness at play in his relationship with Northrop Frye, his teacher, a relationship he compares to Derrida’s relationship with Foucault (2005,

67ff.). “In certain respects,” writes Woodman, “this book, as it now at last stands, is, as I have suggested, a Jungian analysis, filtered through de Man and Derrida, of that ‘unrest’ that draws into its orbit critical theory, literary analysis, psychoanalysis, and autobiography” (19). The autobiographical piece gives this work the sense of being a *Biographia Literaria* for our own times.

The titles of the eight chapters in this book, including the introduction and conclusion, give us a taste of its contents: “Jung and Romanticism: The Fate of the Mythopoetic Imagination,” “Frye’s Blake: The Site of Opposition,” “Blake’s Fourfold Body,” “Wordsworth’s Crazy Bedouin: The Prelude and the Fate of Madness,” “Shelley and the Romantic Labyrinth,” and “The Sanity of Madness: Byron and Shelley.” In each of these chapters, the primary theme of the book, its red thread, resounds clearly and plays over and again with a musician’s sense of variations: It is an examination of “the creative role of the imagination in the advancement of consciousness . . . in terms of its intimate association with madness” (Woodman 2005, 198). Romantic poetry and depth psychology are united by the “great Dream,” a collective dimension of the human soul that is behind artistic inspiration. The way into it comes through an active dialectical engagement whose goal is renewal and transformation by bringing the collective unconscious to a new consciousness of itself.

Jung’s psychology, like the vision of the Romantics that prophetically preceded it, is not a personal psychology concerned with ego development . . . This great dream was not, for Jung, a literal or personal dream. “It is,” he writes to Herbert Read, “the great dream which has always spoken through the artist as a mouthpiece.” “What is the great Dream?” he then asks. “It is,” he answers, “the future and the picture of the new world.” (Letters, 2:591)

This great Dream is not a dream of the past, but of the future. This is why *Sanity, Madness,*

Transformation is not only of historical interest, but also acutely germane to contemporary personal and collective reality. But more on this at the end of the review.

Woodman is an expert in drawing fascinating and convincing parallels between the Romantics and Jung. Just as the Romantics journeyed through “some untrodden region of [the] mind” (Keats 1994, 342) so did Jung a century later, and they all worked at this through the medium of myth and symbol as if it were an initiatory descent into the “land of the dead.” The discovery of the unconscious in Romanticism, as in depth psychology, came *through* delusion and madness, not in spite of it or instead of it. By going into states of delusion consciously with poetic or symbolic faith, the Romantics and Jung discovered psychic reality.

Shelley, that is, approached poetry in the same spirit that Jung in the 1930’s approached alchemy: to discover in it the projected life of the soul that scientific materialism had reduced to a delusion. Shelley, like Jung after him, went within himself to discover the psychic reality of delusion as it manifested itself in the realm of metaphor and myth. (Woodman 2005, 160)

The dangers inherent in this journey into the depths of the mind’s oceans, in this *auseinandersetzung* with the unconscious, are not insignificant; the threat of madness being the paramount danger, the threat of being overwhelmed by the autonomy and fascinating power of the archetypal images. Woodman stays in close connection to the relationship between madness and transformation throughout the book.

Woodman writes, “[Jungian analyst Wolfgang] Giegerich rejects the role of madness in the soul’s logical life. I embrace it” (2005, 242. Note 3). His thesis, clearly articulated and extensively argued with primary sources, is that the role of madness is intrinsic, endemic, and necessary to the creative process. Madness is understood as identification with the archetypal images; sanity is understood as disidentification from them through “poetic

faith.” By neither rejecting the archetypal dimension of the soul as superstition, nor identifying with it as literal truth, Romantic poets took the supernatural imagery of delusional states seriously but not literally. And the act of writing poetry became their means of disidentifying the poet’s ego from the archetypal psyche by giving it objective expression. Hence “poetry is the sanity of madness” (196).

If madness is the identification with the unconscious, sanity is the creative process arising from it as it separates itself out into those supreme fictions. (21)

and

As distinct from psychosis, madness, understood as Plato’s “divine madness,” is the creative power of psychosis when it is dialectically processed by the imagination. (199)

The difference between psychosis and divine madness (individuation) is a creative, imaginal *opus*. “The silence of madness,” writes Woodman quoting Derrida who quotes Foucault, “is the absence of a work” (2005, 108). For the Romantics as for Jung, this work (*opus alchemicum*) demands “a ceaseless dialogue” of consciousness with the secret life that is the message of the unconscious (6). This enacts “the transformation of the *deus absconditus* (i.e. the *natura abscondita*) into the *medicina Catholica* of alchemical wisdom” (89). The “crisis in Romanticism,” according to Woodman, is an addiction to delusion or possession by the archetypal psyche; the challenge of Romanticism lies “in consciousness . . . in bringing a critical consciousness to bear upon it [the unconscious]” (38, 98).

“The Romantic alignment,” Woodman correctly notes, “between madness and genius in which ‘the No. 2 personality’ emerges from the dialectical encounter with madness is writ large in the work of Jung” (2005, 205). Wordsworth’s description of his creative process is an example of what those coming from the field of depth psychology

will be familiar with as Jung's dialogues with Philemon, which he wrote in his Red Book. As he begins to write the *Prelude*, Wordsworth becomes aware of the presence of "some other Being"; not only is his conscious intention at work, but also the influx of an autonomous imagination, which appears as if it were another person. Having been confronted by this "some other Being," Wordsworth's writing then becomes an attempt to reconcile through "dark" and "inscrutable workmanship" the "discordant elements" operative between the "two consciousness" in himself so that they could "cling together / In one society" (9) and realize "a soul in the process of making itself" (139). Wordsworth's description is a striking parallel to Jung's concept of the encounter with the No. 2 personality that forms the basis of individuation or, as Wordsworth puts it, "a soul in the process of making itself," the essence of the alchemical *opus*.

By extensively demonstrating how both Romantic poets and Jung processed states of madness through creative imagination, Woodman is able to convincingly ground his argument that both the Romantics and Jung were concerned with "a project that 'exceeds all that is real, factual, and existent; a project that 'acknowledges madness as its liberty and its very possibility'" (2005, 199). Woodman gives us many similar examples of parallels between the Romantics' process, imagery, and understanding, and Jung's.

One of the essential tasks of the Romantic poet explored in this book is to forge a metaphorical language that assured the poet, if not his readers, that he was in a two-way conversation with the dead. For Jung, as for the Romantics, the land of the dead became a highly workable metaphor of the unconscious. (5)

The function of a poem, [Shelley] insists, is to construct a body that can contain the psychic energy acting upon it. Following the alchemists, Jung calls this body the "subtle body." (7)

"Since the stars have fallen from heaven and our highest symbols have paled," Jung argues,

"a secret life holds sway in the unconscious. That is why we have a psychology today, and why we speak of an unconscious." This "secret life" is the domain of Romanticism explored in this book. (12)

Jung's seven-year intense engagement with Freud has its poetic analogue in Shelley's creative engagement with Keats's corpse in *Adonais* . . . (30)

Shelley's major work as a poet issues from his rejection of materialism in something of the same way that Jung's major work issues from his rejection of Freud's materialism. In each case, the rejection of materialism was experienced as both a curse and blessing because of the radical isolation that attended it. So severe was their sense of isolation from the "habitual" world that they became infected with the madness with which the "habitual" labeled their isolation, a madness they in turn identified with their "daemon" or genius. (38)

Jung's *Answer to Job* is a psychological account of Blake's prophetic vision in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. (89)

Blake's criticism of *Paradise Lost* mirrors Jung's criticism of Freud's dogma of sexuality; Jung enlarges the libido, even as Blake expands the "Vegetable Body," to include the "Fourfold" world of spirituality and mythopoeia." (92)

The dialectical structure that is Blake's "Allegory addressed to the intellectual powers" comes together in the infinite array of its "minute particulars" to enact the Jungian unconscious shaped by consciousness into the human form of God." (95)

In his own gropingly articulated way, Shelley anticipates not only Jung's work on alchemy, but the entire psychological system that emerged from it. Jung's break with Freud, it may well be argued, had its prototype in Shelley's and Coleridge's break with the "mechanical philosophy." (165)

Shelley's confrontation with the "dark abyss," particularly from the composition of *Alastor* in 1815 to the composition of "Mount Blanc" and "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" in 1816, covers a period of inner exploration that finds its counterpart in Jung's descent into the "dark abyss" after his break with Freud in 1912 . . . Its Romantic prototypes are to be found in the various descents

of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and Byron. (170)

This dream constellation [Jung's] is repeated over and over again in the poetry of the Romantics. The poet, that is, must descend to the land of the dead. (174)

What Blake saw in his reading of *Paradise Lost* Jung saw in the sexual psychology of Freud: the operations of a dialectical materialism that, as a "deus absconditus," he embraced, in opposition to his "Poetic spirit," as "scientifically irreproachable." (206)

Making connections between Romanticism and Jungian psychology is one of Woodman's *fortes*.

A warning to the reader, however, is due here: *Sanity, Madness, Transformation* is not an easy read. This is, in part, because the book is not only a *description* of the dialectical encounter with madness, but also an *example* of the subject that is its theme—Woodman's own *krater*, or alchemical mixing vessel, within which to experience, observe, contain, and transform the lunacy of the soul. Woodman's book is *itself* a "dark and inscrutable workmanship"; a strange power of lunatic (*luna*) speech, like that of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, rings from within his sophisticated scholarly language. Undisputedly a scholarly book, *Sanity, Madness, Transformation* also speaks the mythopoetic language of the great Dream. This is, at the same time, the book's greatest difficulty and its greatest value.

My real engagement with Woodman's book came about on this level of the great Dream. My interest, even fascination, with this text has much to do with the fascinating power of archetypal imagery; the book constellated this in me as I read about it! I was not primarily intellectually drawn in, but rather discovered in reading a constellation within myself similar to that which was "unconsciously conceived" in the Romantics. Woodman's concern with the way in which Romantic poetry is unconsciously conceived becomes vivid, living, through experience. I want to

bring this experience in here, as I stated at the beginning of this review, in the spirit of an engagement with "lunacy" without which an understanding of Romanticism might remain merely intellectual.

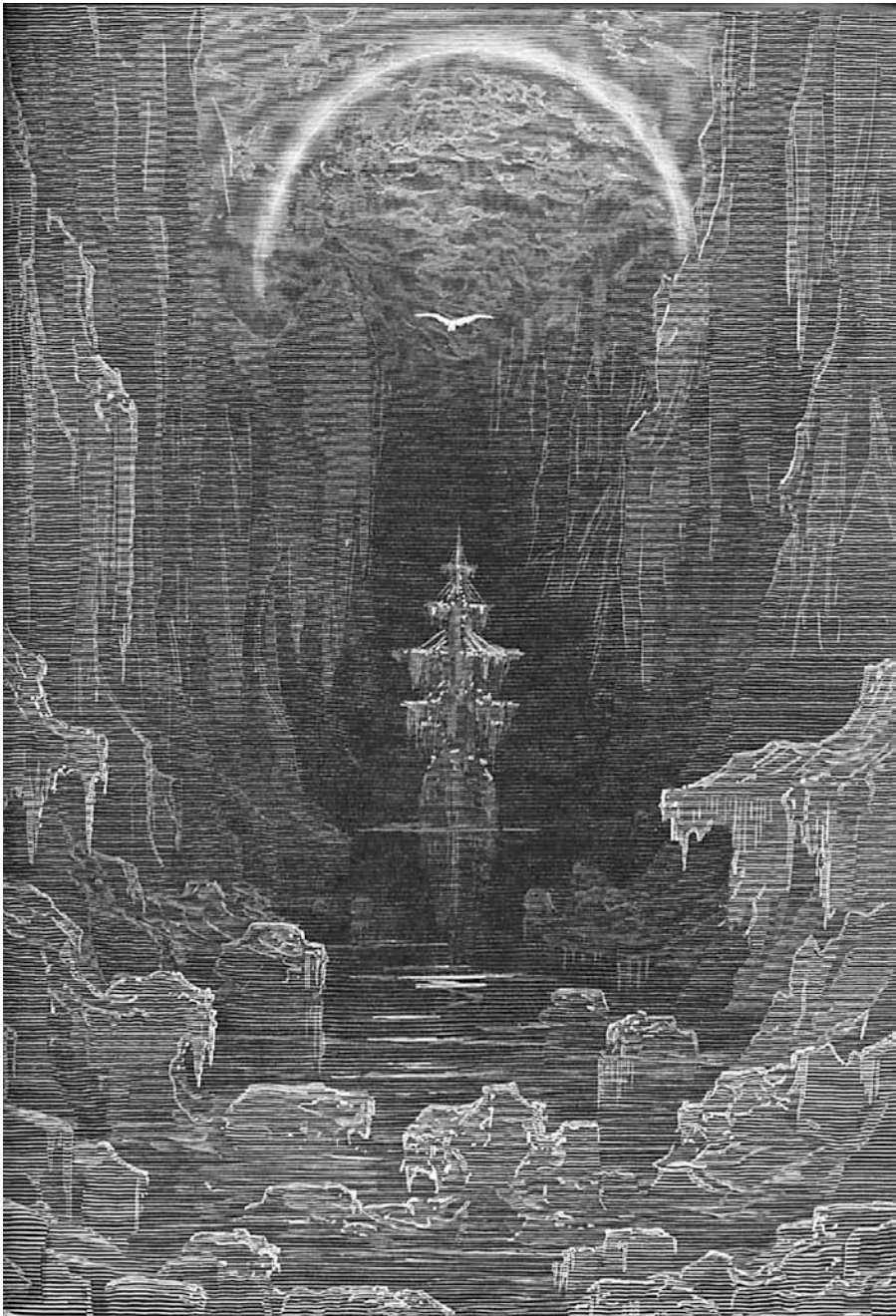
About two years before I read *Sanity, Madness, Transformation*, I completed a diploma thesis for my training as a Jungian analyst on Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. During that time I recorded a series of dreams that pertained to the process and content of my work. I recognized those dreams in Woodman's book. That's what really hooked me, that level of symbolic reality. Those dreams had previously seemed strange, obscure, incomprehensible, but as I read Woodman's text, they began to take on a sense of objective reality. Here I drew close to the "lunacy" that Woodman writes of!

For instance I dreamt the following:

Coleridge is an artist and the meaning of his art, the inspiration for all of his creativity, is the Assumption of Mary, that Mary would be added to the Trinity and that this would happen in reality.

I could not help but wonder: Could the Assumption of Mary—understood symbolically—*really* have anything to do with Coleridge's art? I soon discovered that Jung recognized that the Assumption of Mary was a symbol of paramount import, not only as a recognition of the Feminine principle, but also as expressing the Western equivalent of the union of Yin and Yang in Tao. For him the Assumption was a Wedding Feast, an image of the *hierosgamos*, and the secret of the alchemical *coniunctio*. Therefore, when over two years later I read that Woodman mentions more than once the symbolism of the Assumption of Mary in his analysis of the Romantics, I was highly interested.

Mary ascended "body and soul" into Heaven to join the Trinity as the Fourth; Woodman compares this imagery to Blake's vision of the "human form divine" and the "Fourfold body." He interprets it from the psychological side as pointing to "the fully human form of



Gustav Doré (1832–1883), Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Illustration Seven, 1875

consciousness" (Woodman 2005, 100), the imaginal perception of the physical body.

The "papal bull of Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, promulgating the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary [is] the psychic movement from Three to Four . . . Blake's Fourfold Body . . . raising the unconscious operations of the physical body to the imaginal perception of it" (100, 104).

And

. . . the crucifixion enacts the incompleteness of the incarnation as it is embodied in the dogma of the Trinity, the threefold as distinct from the fourfold as the symbol of the wholeness that constitutes the actualization of the Godman, Blake's "human form divine." . . . For Jung, this absorption of the Trinity into the psyche's unfolding life lay in the symbolic completion of the Trinity as the threefold in the fourfold as the symbol of wholeness. The fourfold, he argues, is the fully human form of consciousness . . . (24–25)

According to Woodman, the image of the Assumption of Mary as the Fourth also symbolizes one of Coleridge's most important ideas, that of the "primary imagination," the unconscious participation of the imagination as a co-creative factor in the perception of physical reality.

As I read such passages and remembered my dream, I began to have the impression that there was a symbolic truth expressed in the "delusion" or "madness" of the dream that could be used as a realistic basis for further research. Whether or not this impression was justified is a matter for the reader to decide, but I offer it here primarily as an example of the kind of experience that Woodman is writing about in the Romantics and Jung. With such experiences I feel *inside* the book, not neutral or only critically outside of it. Such experiences give value to a book.

Another puzzling dream of mine showed up in Woodman's text.

A group of us are in a class that has to do with Coleridge and the Ancient Mariner. A woman mathematics teacher is teaching this class. She says,

"Now, what we are working on is a very difficult problem of physics."

What could my work with the *Ancient Mariner* have to do with a problem of physics?

I had no idea at the time, but as I read *Sanity, Madness, Transformation*, Woodman seemed to agree totally with the female mathematics teacher of my dream.

In the correspondence between Jung and Pauli, now published as *Atom and Archetype*, the unconscious processed by the psyche actively enters its scientific engagement with matter in a manner that has literally transformed the globe into a radically new perception of it, which, far from new, is the perception of the Romantic poets that Coleridge, in the name of metaphysics, first consciously psychoanalysed. (2005, 28)

There *is*, according to Woodman, a very difficult problem of physics in Coleridge's theory of imagination, and as it turns out, this even underlies the original meaning of the word *psycho-analytical!* In 1805, Coleridge coined this word in a notebook entry to describe how, since the primary imagination is the prime agent in all perception, the *physical world* is susceptible of being psycho-analyzed (Coburn 1979, 4; Woodman 2005, 25). Coleridge also coined the word *psycho-somatic* (Coburn, 4). I later discovered many statements in Coleridge's writings such as, "where . . . the nurture and evolution of humanity is the final aim there will be soon be seen a general tendency toward, and earnest seeking after, some ground common to the world and to man" (as cited in Abrams 1971, 269). Woodman sees Jung and Pauli's collaboration on the problem of psyche and matter in the twentieth century, for instance their discussion of the role of the unconscious in quantum physics, the idea of the psychoid, and the theory of synchronicity, as grounded in Romanticism.

The dialectical movement from Three to Four in Blake's vision became, in Jung's work with Pauli, the same dialectical movement now understood in terms of the role of the unconscious psyche as it



The Eighth Planet (Thomas Elsner, by permission)

synchronistically influences the subatomic motions of matter in quantum physics. (2005, 206)

My dreams now seemed to constellate around a central theme, namely the relationship between psyche and matter, expressing the problem in ways that I did not intend, as if, as Wordsworth writes, there were “some other Being” involved, the autonomous activity of the creative imagination, Jung’s Number Two personality.

Is it madness to take such dreams seriously as a basis for further research?¹ If one identifies with them unconsciously, yes. But according to Woodman, “sanity is the creative process arising from [the unconscious] as it separates itself out into those supreme fictions” and is “dialectically processed by the imagination” (2005, 21, 199). Such dreams are to me examples of Woodman’s idea of how conscious states are “unconsciously conceived” and also how the message of the unconscious requires *work*; the images of the unconscious require transformation and integration through a “ceaseless dialogue” with consciousness (6).

I’ll give just one further example of a correspondence between my dreams and Woodman’s text. This example will open up some of Woodman’s deeper material. Again in this third and final dream, as illuminated through Woodman’s text, symbols appeared that had significant parallels to those found in the Romantics.

The image in “The Eighth Planet,” show above, appeared in a dream and was painted by the dreamer. The round objects are the seven planets. Seven planets are above and an eighth in the center as a new creation, a half-material, half-immaterial object that is being formed as blood pulses into it from the arteries below. Obviously this is a strange image, just the sort of madness or lunacy that makes one a bit uncomfortable, yet just the sort of thing the Romantics seemed to have experienced, especially Blake as we will see. Indeed it could be argued that these archetypal symbolic dreams are the primary source material for Romanticism. Again, I offer this as my own experience of the subject matter of Woodman’s book.

I cannot pretend I was not amazed when I discovered this dream in Woodman's text. Referring to Blake's vision in his poem *Milton*, Woodman draws attention to Blake's symbolism of the "Starry Eight" and the "opening of the Eighth Eye of God" that is mediated by the "Seven Angels." He relates this imagery to the movement from Three to Four as symbolized also by the assumption of Mary into the Trinity, thus transforming it for all practical purposes into a Quaternity. For Blake the "Seven Eyes" that become the "Eight" is the creation of the New Jerusalem, identical to Blake's act of creative expression. The "Eight" is opened through the blood the poet pours into his or her creation (the poem itself) and unconsciously conceived in "less than a Pulsation of the Artery."

The "Seven Eyes" as the Threefold now become the Fourfold or "Starry Eight." This "Starry Eight" is Ololon, the New Jerusalem, the wedding garment of Blake's illuminated text "written within & without in woven letters." The writing itself is "clouds of blood" and "streams of gore", that is to say, a "Garment of War" understood as ceaseless "Mental Fight" . . . All of this in its eternal "Form" is revealed to Blake in "less than a Pulsation of the Artery." (Woodman 2005, 8, 15).

Woodman goes on to describe how, for Blake, the opening of this Eighth eye expresses God (the unconscious) becoming conscious of itself as human, and he compares this process to that taking place both in Jung's *Answer to Job* and in a successful Jungian analysis.

In Blake's particular case . . . the opening of the Eighth Eye of God . . . is God's full recognition of himself as "Human." Jung enacts the slow and painful opening of the Eighth Eye in his *Answer to Job* as Job's struggle with the "deus adscanditus," the dark unconsciousness of God as it rises towards consciousness in Job's afflictions . . . The God of Jung's *Answer to Job* . . . is also Jung's model analysis and undergoing a successful Jungian analysis as his ultimate recognition of himself as his own redeemer. (2005, 88–89).

Blake's opening of the Eighth Eye expresses "a fully awakened human consciousness" releasing us from the vision of an external image of nature that is present in the Seventh Eye (90).

Blake, in obedience to them as the eternal Fourfold Human (the four Zoas), becomes the prophet of a fully awakened human consciousness, which he describes as the Eighth Eye. Embracing "the Human Existence itself," not just a "portion" of it "discerned by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in [Blake's] age" (MHH 4).^[2] Blake's vision enacts its opening as the shaping of the eternal form of human consciousness prefigured because, as the Seventh Eye, it remains bound as natural religion to the natural cycle. It is not yet fully "Human." (90)

The Eighth Eye of God is the "Human" becoming conscious of its own consciousness and this opens up (as in the previous dreams) a very difficult problem of physics; "Blake, in announcing the opening of the Eighth Eye, is also announcing the end of Newtonian physics" (90).

As I read through Woodman's book it seemed that my dream imagery—the Assumption of Mary as the movement from Three to Four, the relationship of imagination and physics, the "Starry Eight"—also appears in Romanticism where it complements what Coleridge calls the "mechanical philosophy" of Cartesian/Newtonian science (Coleridge devotes large parts of his *Biographia Literaria*, 1817/1985, to this). As Jung would put it about a century and a half later in his correspondence with quantum physicist Wolfgang Pauli, "both idea and matter are removed from their 'in and for itself being' and adapted to this third medium, namely, the psyche of the observer . . . the middle position . . . the wholeness of man holds the middle position" (Meier 2001, 100, 101).

Other cultural material could be used to amplify the dream image of the eighth planet in addition to Blake's poetry; this all goes to Jung's discovery of a collective unconscious and Woodman's thesis that it is *this* dimension of the

psyche, this “great Dream,” that is the foundation of Romanticism and of Jungian psychology. This eighth planet is the “Eight Climate” in Shi’ism, Corbin’s “spiritual body and celestial earth,” the creation of the alchemical “stone which is not a stone,” the “mystical earth of Hurgalya” (Corbin, 1977). Another example would be the *triton eidos* of Plato, the psyche of the observer as the third medium that unites spirit and matter. A conceptual analogue relevant to clinical theory and practice is Jung’s individuation process, namely, the creation of the irrational actuality of the unique individual emerging from potential and becoming real through a relationship of ego and archetype. This is the Great Wedding. Woodman takes up the *mysterium coniunctionis* again, both recognizing and building upon his spiritual ancestors, and herein lies this book’s most precious value.

Sanity, Madness, Transformation is a book for our times. Not simply a historical study, it touches a level of psychic reality that is constellated now and has immediate political and psychological relevance. Can we as a culture develop a standpoint toward the human soul that goes beyond either religious fundamentalism or rationalistic cynicism? Can we build upon the work opened up by the mythopoetics of the Romantics and Jung and learn to see religious realities, neither as literal facts nor as superstitious delusions, but as psychic reality? In this way we might begin to make conscious the secret life of the unconscious and develop a new standpoint, perhaps a new mythology, that adequately reflects the contemporary reality of the Western mind. Our survival might depend upon it. As Woodman writes in the conclusion:

In the mythopoetic achievement of the Romantics . . . dwells . . . the birth of a modern consciousness which the twenty-first century must finally learn to inhabit if human life is to continue, not without God, but with a conscious understanding of the human. (2005, xx).

The Romantic sense of poetic faith, as opposed to religious faith or materialistic reduction, is

a much-needed antidote for the madness we see all around us today, both in the form of identification with the unconscious in religious fundamentalism and its consequent terror as literal enactment of that madness, as well as in the materialistic rejection of the unconscious as delusion. In contrast, Woodman’s approach to the unconscious is based on Coleridge’s “willing suspension of disbelief.” This approach encourages neither identification with, nor rejection of, archetypal imagery, but rather “poetic faith,” symbolic understanding, and ceaseless dialogue. It is here that we discover “the voice that in madness is wanting.”

The epigram to Jung’s *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* is a quotation from Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

He looked at his own soul with a telescope.
What seemed all irregular, he saw and shewed
to be beautiful Constellations, and he added to
the Consciousness hidden worlds within worlds.
(1965, v).

These lines from Coleridge sum up the essence, not only of Jung’s work, but also of Ross Woodman’s work as well. Everywhere in Woodman’s landmark book the “the voice that in madness is wanting” is speaking for those who have ears to hear.

ENDNOTES

1. For a recent and detailed exploration of this question, see R. Romanyshyn’s *The Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind*.
2. MHH is Blake’s book *the Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. 1971. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Abt, T. and E. Hornung. 2003. *Knowledge for the Afterlife: The Egyptian Amduat—A Quest for Immortality*. Zurich: Living Human Heritage.

- Auden, W. H. 1951. *The Enchafed Flood or the Romantic Iconography of the Sea*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Bateson, G. 1951. *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction*. London: Longmans, Green.
- Bindman, D. 1978. *The Complete Graphic Works of William Blake*. New York: Thames and Hudson.
- Coleridge, S. T. 1985. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Oxford Authors Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coburn, K. 1979. *Experience into Thought: Perspectives in the Coleridge Notebooks*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Corbin, H. 1977. *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ellenberger, H. 1970. *The Discovery of the Unconscious*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hughes, T. (Ed. and Introduction). 1996. *A Choice of Coleridge's Verse*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Jung, C. G. 1965. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Revised Edition. Ed. A. Jaffe. Trans. R. Winston and C. Winston. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Keats, J. 1994. *The Complete Poems of John Keats*. New York: Modern Library.
- Meier, C. A. (ed.). 2001. *Atom and Archetype: The Pauli/Jung Letters 1932–1958*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Romanyshyn, R. 2007. *The Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind*. New Orleans: Spring Journal Books.
- Shelley, M. 1992. *Frankenstein*. New York: Penguin.
- Trilling, L. 1950. *The Liberal Imagination*. New York: Viking Adult.
- Wikman, M. 2004. *Pregnant Darkness: Alchemy and the Rebirth of Consciousness*. York, ME: Nicolas-Hays.
- Wolfe, T. 1956. *The Letters of Thomas Wolfe*. Ed. E. Nowell. New York: Charles Scribner and Sons.
- Woodman, R. 1964. *The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Woodman, R. 2005. *Sanity, Madness, Transformation: The Psyche in Romanticism*. Ed. and Afterword by J. Faflak. Toronto, CA: University of Toronto Press.

THOMAS ELSNER is a Jungian analyst in private practice in Santa Barbara, California, a member of the C.G. Jung Study Center of Southern California, and adjunct faculty at Pacifica Graduate Institute. *Correspondence*: 2020 Alameda Padre Serra #103, Santa Barbara, CA 93103, 805-892-5151, telsner@cox.net.

ABSTRACT

Ross Woodman's *Sanity, Madness, Transformation: The Psyche in Romanticism* (2005), is a comparison of Romantic poetry and Jungian psychology. It offers new connections and insights into the relationship of both these fields with areas of study as diverse as deconstructionist literary theory and quantum mechanics. The book's primary concern is with an examination of "the creative role of the imagination in the advancement of consciousness . . . in terms of its intimate association with madness" (Woodman 2005, 198). Woodman examines the way in which the Romantics both identified with the archetypal products of the unconscious in states of madness and also creatively processed those states through the imagination as poetry. He compares this to Jung's encounter with the unconscious. In this review I compare my own dreams with the imagery found in Woodman's book in order to open up the question of the contemporary relevance and meaning of the Romantic imagination. The psychological and social relevance of the Romantics is found not only in the way in which their work anticipated Jung's, but also in their sense of "poetic faith" toward what we might today call the archetypal dimension of the unconscious, as opposed to religious faith or materialistic reductionism.

KEY WORDS

alchemy, assumption of Mary, William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Henri Corbin, deconstructionism, depth psychology, Jacques Derrida, dreams, Northrop Frye, Wolfgang Giegerich, C. G. Jung, John Keats, madness, materialism, mythopoetics, Wolfgang Pauli, primary imagination, psychoanalytic, quantum physics, Romantic poetry, Romanticism, Percy Shelley, Ross Woodman, William Wordsworth