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A JUNGIAN READING OF "KUBLA KHAN"

S. K. HENINGER, JR.

Since Coleridge was obsessed with examining the workings of the mind, both his own and William Wordsworth's, his poetry would seem to require a psychological reading. "Kubla Khan" has been often subjected to Freudian analysis, replete with sexuality,¹ but Jung's postulate of the collective unconscious with its archetypal patterns provides a much more inclusive system within which to consider the poem.² Jung's apparatus permits the correlation of a large number of diverse facts, biographical and artistic as well as psychological.

According to Jung, poetry is the intelligible statement of submerged truths, the communication of archetypal patterns which reside within the collective unconscious.³ A poem is primarily an individual's expression of these commonly-shared ideas which well-up from the primordial region of the mind; and the first task of the poet, in the terms of another critic, is to light upon objective correlates in which he may embody these formless, almost ineffable, ideas. To quote a Shakespearean passage often cited by Coleridge and the Wordsworths,⁴ the poet's mind, "in a fine frenzy" of Platonic afflatus, "gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name"; "imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown." The symbols used by the poet bring into our ephemeral consciousness those time-less psychic experiences shared with our ancestors.

Coleridge frequently recognized the intrusion of archetypal patterns:

Oft of some Unknown Past such fancies roll
Swift o'er my brain, as make the Present seem,
For a brief moment, like a most strange Dream.⁵

Again in his notebooks Coleridge acknowledged the search for physical images by which to objectify his primordial ideas:

In looking at objects of Nature, while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering through the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking, a symbolical


² Maud Bodkin, under the explicit influence of Jung, has considered the Paradise-Hades contrast in "Kubla Khan" (Archetypal Patterns in Poetry [Oxford U. P., 1934]). Although I accept Miss Bodkin's working hypothesis (p. 1), our readings of "Kubla Khan" differ widely.


⁵ These lines appear in a letter to John Thelwall, dated 19 November 1796 (Letters, ed. Griggs, I.260). They were revised to open the "Sonnet Composed on a Journey Homeward; the Author Having Received Intelligence of the Birth of a Son, Sept. 20, 1796" (Complete Poetical Works, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge [2 vols.; Oxford, 1912], I.153).
language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing any thing new. Even when the latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling, as if that new phenomenon were the dim awaking of a forgotten or hidden truth of my inner nature.

And Coleridge shared Jung’s view that poetry is the communication of archetypal wisdom. In a well-known chapter of the *Biographia Literaria*, he claims: “Poetry is the blossom and the fragrancy of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language.” In his fully developed poetics, Coleridge included a supplementary concept of symbol, asserting that a symbol is valid because it is “the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal.” The task of reading “Kubla Khan,” more than most poems, then resolves into identifying the archetypal patterns, into exposing the abstract concepts beneath the objective correlatives. And the success of the poem has been due to each reader’s intuitive response to its primordial symbols, though few readers have been able to recognize them in conscious terms.

But not only does “Kubla Khan” exemplify the poetic method which depends upon the activation of residual archetypes within our minds. The poem itself is a description of a common psychological experience delineated by Jung as “the individuation process,” an integration of disparate elements by which the personality achieves identity and wholeness. Coleridge, prophetically, used the same term to pronounce his favorite dictum that the creative mind must find “unity in multeity”:

I define life as the principle of individuation, or the power which unites a given all into a whole that is presupposed by all its parts.

Jung likewise postulates that the integrated personality, what he calls “the self,” must reconcile the opposing forces in the individual psyche—consciousness and unconsciousness, good and bad, male and female—and in so doing, it transmutes them into a whole greater than the disparate parts. To achieve the integrated self requires the acceptance of all elements in the psyche, what is irrational and unsystematic as well as what can be reasonably explained.

There is ample evidence that Coleridge was painfully aware of the important roles played by both the conscious and the unconscious. In the 1790’s he desperately wavered between the empirical philosophy of David Hartley and what he called the “gorgeous nonsense” of Plato. The proper balance between knowledge from sense experience and intuitive knowledge gradually became the major concern of his poetic theory. For Coleridge they were not mutually exclusive. As he observed in the *Biographia Literaria*:

All the organs of sense are framed for a corresponding world of sense; and we have it. All the organs of spirit are framed for a correspondent world of spirit. (1.167)

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And on the next page, Coleridge again says that knowledge comes from two equally valid sources:

On the IMMEDIATE [i.e., what Coleridge has just called “our natural consciousness”], which dwells in every man, and on the original intuition . . . (which is likewise in every man, but does not in every man rise into consciousness) all the certainty of our knowledge depends.

Finally, in his essay “On Poesy or Art”:

In every work of art there is a reconcilement of the external with the internal; the conscious is so impressed on the unconscious as to appear in it. . . . He who combines the two is the man of genius; and for that reason he must partake of both.10

The man of genius, Coleridge asserts, must have undergone the process of individuation; he must have successfully integrated the conscious and the unconscious.

Jung concludes from his clinical experience that awareness of the strivings to achieve individuation is per se archetypal. It is revealed in dreams and visions by numerous and varied images, all of which may be called archetypes of the self. Jung has also found a striking parallel between the individuation process and the stages of the opus outlined by medieval alchemy, and in Psychology and Alchemy11 he persuasively collates alchemical symbolism with the visual impressions of his patients. He insists that the serious alchemists were high-minded and intelligent men for whom the alchemical processes were largely symbolic: the end in view was not the creation of gold, but rather the successful reconciliation of opposites in the philosopher’s stone, a unity purified of all conflict and therefore incorruptible. Admittedly, the language of dreams and of alchemy is confusing; but the unconscious is never precise in the way that consciousness needs to be. Symbols, rather than direct statement, are the natural mode of its expression.

I propose that “Kubla Khan” is an expression of Coleridge’s attempt at individuation—an attempt recorded in symbols which commonly appear among the case-histories and alchemical treatises discussed by Jung.

All the images which represent the individuation process are interrelated, even interchangeable. Prototypical is the hermaphrodite, an obvious symbol of completeness joining male and female, which was dear to the alchemists. Usually, depiction of the alchemical hermaphrodite was further elucidated by the moon’s association with the female half and the sun’s association with the male.12 The

10 Printed with Biographia Literaria, ed. Shawcross, II.258.
11 (Bollingen Series XX; New York, 1953).
12 See Fig. 123, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 230. Reference to the illustrations in Psychology and Alchemy is essential to following the argument of this paper. Coleridge was familiar with alchemical and hermetic literature through his reading of Jakob Boehme; and on 19 November 1796 he wrote John Thelwall: “Accounts of all the strange phantasms that ever possessed your philosophy-dreamers from Tauth [Thoth], the Egyptian to Taylor, the English Pagan, . . . are my darling Studies” (Letters, ed. Griggs, I.260). Thoth was closely associated with, often synonymous with, Hermes Trismegistus. Coleridge had read about him in Thomas Maurice, The History of Hindostan (2 vols.; London, 1795), I.57–58 (where the name is spelled first “Taut” and then “Thoth”), and perhaps had followed Maurice’s
conjunction of sun and moon is the usual way to represent the effective joining of the two halves of the psyche.

Frequently the self is symbolized by geometric figures based on the number 4—what Jung calls “mandalas”13—such as the cross with equal arms, the square, or the circle on whose circumference are four equi-distant foci of interest. Within the mandala there are numerous dissimilar parts, all neatly organized into an interrelated and mutually dependent complex. As Coleridge would say, there is “unity in multeity.”

Jung notes that Lamaism has developed a strong tradition of lavish mandalas intended for contemplation by the devout. A typical Tibetan mandala reveals intricate details, but certain elements stand out: first there is a circle enclosing trees and other suggestions of an exotic garden, then a square representing the ground-plan of a temple whose center is marked by an elaborate medallion.14 There is an inescapable similarity between these mandalas and Coleridge’s Xanadu. When Kubla decrees a pleasure-dome, he encircles a precise area of fertile ground with walls and towers. In effect, Kubla constructs a mandala, with his pleasure-dome as its center. In the Gutch notebook, Coleridge recorded his own yearning for “some wilderness-plot, green & fountainous & unviolated by Man.”15

The mandala, although it has appeared in all cultures throughout the world, represents a psychological feat personal to its maker. It is a microcosmic repetition of the macrocosmic pattern. When a man recognizes his microcosmic nature, when he realizes that he contains within himself the pattern of opposing forces evident in the ordered universe, then the process of individuation may begin. An illustration from a Renaissance edition of Albertus Magnus shows microcosmic man incorporating the four elements, within a perfect sphere integrating the sun- and moon-worlds, the conscious and the unconscious.16 This is Coleridge’s definition of the imagination: “a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.”17 By instinct man seeks the goal of ordered wholeness. Success in this quest is the essential discovery of the God within, the full experience of the archetype of self.

footnote reference to Bishop Richard Cumberland’s edition of Sanchoniatho’s Phoenician History (London, 1720), where the cosmology of Thoth is elaborated. Coleridge had no doubt also read the locus classicus for Thoth, Plutarch’s essay “Of Isis and Osiris.” Thomas Taylor, “the English Pagan” and a member of Coleridge’s own college at Cambridge, had translated much Pythagorean literature as well as Platonic and Neo-Platonic works.

14 See Fig. 43, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 96. The Lamaist mandala is a cognate of the Buddhist stupa in India, a domed shrine within a square enclosure. In England the best-known example is probably the stupa of Amaravati partially excavated by Colin Mackenzie in 1797, and now in the British Museum (see Douglas Barrett, Sculptures from Amaravati in the British Museum [London, 1954]). Coleridge may have known about such sacred structures through his extensive reading of travel literature or through personal acquaintance with British Indians, though I have been able to establish no precise connections. The clue probably resides within the cryptic reference to Major James Rennell in the Gutch notebook (The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn [London, 1957], I.241).
15 Notebooks, ed. Coburn, I.220.
16 Fig. 117, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 222.
For its maker, then, the mandala provides a charmed circle around the innermost personality. Its purpose is two-fold: it shuts in, and therefore focuses the psychic processes; and it shuts out, and thereby excludes extraneous disturbances. Construction of the mandala directs interest and attention to an inner sacred domain; it establishes a protected area within which the conscious mind can come to grips with the unconscious.

Jung has found that mandalas occur in the dreams of patients “often as the most obvious compensation for the contradictions and conflicts of the conscious situation.” We know that the period of autumn 1797 to spring 1798, when “Kubla Khan” was written, was exceptionally turbulent, even for Coleridge. With a deadline set for the Lyrical Ballads and with plans for the German trip rapidly maturing, Coleridge felt no small pressure to finish Christabel. In addition, there were financial crises, which culminated in the tormented decision to accept the Wedgwood annuity rather than the pulpit at Shrewsbury; there were friendship crises with Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb, and a fresh attack from Southey; and there were crises in his political thinking with France’s invasion of Switzerland an actuality, and the invasion of England a threatening possibility. On May 20th Coleridge wrote to his confidant, Thomas Poole:

So many unpleasant & shocking circumstances have happened to me or to my immediate knowledge within the last fortnight, that I am in a nervous state & the most trifling thing makes me weep. To escape these distracting influences, Coleridge went to the farmhouse between Porlock and Linton to finish Christabel. In effect, he was seeking a protective mandala for meditation; and, I suggest, his failure to find it is recorded in “Kubla Khan.”

Even a rapid reading of “Kubla Khan” shows that the things described in the

18 The mandala, as Jung uses the term, has unmistakable connections with the charmed circle proscribed by the magician as a preliminary to conjuration; see Grillot de Givry, Witchcraft, Magic, & Alchemy, tr. J. C. Locke (London, 1931), pp. 104 ff. Moreover, “Kubla Khan” proclaims an affinity with conjury in the vignette of the woman wailing for her demon lover, and again in the exorcism of the paradise-drunk man, “Weave a circle round him thrice.” It is tempting, therefore, to say that the River Alph has associations with the alpha and omega repeatedly inscribed within the sorcerer’s circle, and that “twice five miles of fertile ground” pertains to the pentacle, the five-lined symbol which the sorcerer placed inside his circle to represent the microcosm-macrocosm; see Francis Barrett, The Magus (London, 1801), pp. 105 ff., and Eliphas Levi, Transcendental Magic, tr. A. E. Waite (London, 1923), pp. 85–87, 291–296. It is even possible that Mount Abora derives from Abracadabra, the supreme incantation of the conjurer; see Levi, Transcendental Magic, pp. 274–275, where Abracadabra is explained in terms of the pentagram and alpha. Such fanciful etymology would simply be Coleridge’s poetic adaption of the popular syncretic philology practised, for example, by Thomas Maurice in The History of Hindostan, by Jacob Bryant in A New Analysis of Ancient Mythology (London, 1774, and later eds.), and by Charles François Dupuis in the Origine de Tous les Cultes (Paris, 1795), which Coleridge was reading in November 1796 (see Letters, ed. Griggs, I.260). “Abora,” then, would be a syncretic form of Abracadabra, Abaris, Abola, Astaboras, Amara, etc. (see John Livingston Lowes, The Road to Xanadu [2nd ed.; Cambridge (Mass.), 1930], pp. 373–376).

19 Psychology and Alchemy, p. 27.

vision fall into two distinct groups: those associated with the sun and those associated with the moon. On one side are the sunny pleasure-dome, the gardens bright, and the forests with their sunny spots of greenery; on the other are the sacred river which flows down to a sunless sea, a chasm associated with a waning moon, and caves of ice (which an entry in the Gutach notebook directly links with the moon). In "Kubla Khan," then, there are symbol-clusters depicting the sun-world of the conscious and the moon-world of the unconscious; and we can expect the theme of the poem to deal with some relationship or intercourse between these two areas. In fact, Kubla constructs his mandala for this express purpose.

The first five lines of the poem baldly present the respective foci of the two symbol-clusters, the pleasure-dome and the River Alph. The dome, the center of the mandala, is characterized as a "pleasure-dome," with emphasis on its sensual, and therefore physical and conscious nature. Yet it is also "stately," which implies its seriousness and rules out mere frivolous pleasure.

The River Alph is part of the water-system circulating from "a sunless sea"—an image which Jung notes is a common symbol for the collective unconscious. The river runs "through caverns measureless to man," so that man is aware of its constant motion and its immensity, but he cannot fully comprehend it. The river cannot be measured since, as a component of the moon-world of the unconscious, it is beyond perception by the senses. The name "Alph" inevitably suggests alpha, the first, the beginning, the innate. "Alph" also has Biblical connotations, since God is said to be the alpha and the omega; and this connotation is strongly reinforced by the immediate apposition of "sacred river."

The next movement (beginning with line 6) describes what Kubla does to construct his pleasure-dome and what the mandala contains. First Kubla measures off a plot of ground and constructs a bastion. The extravagant fullness stresses the sensuous nature of the pleasure-area. Each of the senses is titillated: the "gardens bright" impinge upon the sight, the "sinuous rills" appeal to the hearing, "incense-bearing tree[s]" sate taste and smell, and the general lushness acts upon the sense of touch.

Having constructed his mandala, Kubla has done all within his conscious power to induce the hoped-for integration. Now he can only wait for the assertive emergence of the unconscious—and significantly the first major stanzatic break occurs at this point.

From the interval of Kubla’s suspended activity, suggested by the stanzactic break, the poem turns to develop the associations of the River Alph, flowing into the poem from the collective unconscious. Our attention is first directed to a "deep romantic chasm," recalling the earlier statement that beneath the surface world of consciousness is a "sunless" region whence flows and to which returns

21 Notebooks, I.240. Coleridge, of course, intended to write "Hymns to the Sun, the Moon, and the Elements," and in fact collected much material for the project; see Notebooks, I.174 and notes. Probably in connection with this project he was reading "The Book of Thoth," copiously endowed with sun and moon symbolism.

the sacred river. We are next told that this is "a savage place!"—an advance hint of the violence soon to appear with the fountain. Furthermore, the area is

... as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

The adjectives "holy and enchanted" point up the sacredness and mystery surrounding the place. The picture of the woman wailing beneath the moon reinforces the vague but powerful feelings of savageness, inscrutability, perhaps desecrated holiness. But in the logical structure of the poem the picture functions primarily to associate the chasm, and subsequently the river, with the moon. The vignette of the frenzied woman serves to identify the chasm as an entrance-way to the moon-world of the unconscious, while at the same time reiterating the mystery and sacredness ascribed to moon-things.

With this preparation, the fountain appears. The chasm with its "ceaseless turmoil" describes the agitated workings of Kubla's unconscious. The most striking characteristics of the emergent fountain are the suddenness and the surprising magnitude of the upheaval. The mighty eruption is accompanied by the ejection of "huge fragments," reflecting the chaotic, irrational nature of the unconscious. The eruption swells in volume until the river itself arises. This development is accompanied by "dancing rocks," indicating that the violence is subsiding into a more ordered process, and also suggesting the element of pleasure which Kubla has decreed in his pleasure-dome.

Aided by onomatopoetic effects, the poem now moves from convulsive agitation to languid quietness. All the sound and fury quickly melts into lazy music:

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran.

The unconscious is brought into contact with the conscious; the two halves of the psyche are intermingling. But there is no purposeful result. There is no interfusion. The river wanders aimlessly through the forest and the planted valley, and after flowing five miles reaches the center of the enclosed plot. Here is the pleasure-dome itself. But since there is no way to restrain the river, it

... reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean.

The river has returned to its habitual place in the "sunless" world of the "lifeless ocean." The attempted integration of conscious and unconscious has failed. Turmoil prevails.

In this confusion, which he could not prevent and which he does not understand,

... Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

This is the war that Kubla had hoped to elude by constructing his protective walls. By this prophecy Kubla knows that his bastion will be breached and his
pleasure-dome destroyed. This war might derive from the distractions of everyday living, the distractions which Coleridge sought to escape by going to the farmhouse between Porlock and Linton. The war might quite literally represent fears of actual war, fears which Coleridge had but recently voiced in his poem “Fears in Solitude.” Perhaps the war is caused by Coleridge’s personal shortcomings; we know that he was at times embarrassingly self-incriminatory.

Pertinent to this passage is an illustration from Robert Fludd’s Summum bonum showing baneful spirits attacking a bastionlike mandala.23 The four archangels defend it, while homo sanus at the center kneels in prayer. This alchemical device is astonishingly apt because on 9 October 1797 Coleridge wrote Thomas Poole:

Frequently have I, half-awake & half-asleep, my body diseased & fevered by my imagination, seen armies of ugly Things bursting in upon me, & these four angels keeping them off.24

Another suggestion to explain this disruptive war, then, is the concept of Original Sin, with its constant conflict between the body and the soul, between the senses and the spirit, between the conscious and the unconscious.25 Since the prophesying voices are “ancestral,” they may very well belong to our first ancestors, Adam and Eve, who from their own unsettling experience proclaim the folly of seeking to know the unknowable, the futility of seeking to integrate the unconscious.

But in “Kubla Khan,” whatever the cause, integration is not effected. The disappearance of Alph is accompanied by destruction of the pleasure-dome, and the vanishing river carries off the remains of the building. The last of the scene presents the dome of pleasure precariously floating toward its demise. All is lost; and after the disappointing destruction, Kubla can only look back wistfully:

It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

“A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice” presents the paradox of integration, the paradox of the reconciliation of opposites. Kubla’s dome was to contain both sun-values and moon-values; it was to be the indissoluble conjunction of sun and moon. The religious overtones of the word “miracle” stress the wondrous, God-sent nature of this ideal union of conscious and unconscious.

But now the mandala is shattered. The feeling of incompleteness at this point stems from the unfulfillment of Kubla’s plan for individuation. Because the poem describes a process with (in this case) no end-product, it gives the impression of being unfinished. And this impression, be it noted, is an integral part of the poem,

23 Fig. 50, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 103.
24 Letters, I.348.
25 For a long period in the 1790’s, Coleridge seriously considered writing “The Origin of Evil, an Epic Poem” (Notebooks, I.161 and note). In Maurice, The History of Hindostan, Coleridge could have read: “The position of Adam by the Almighty in an abundant and beautiful garden... has been considered as an ingenious Oriental allegory, to account for the origin and introduction of evil into the world” (I.386). (The pagination of the Library of Congress copy of Maurice, which I have used, does not jibe with the pagination of the copies used by Coleridge and Miss Coburn in her edition of the Notebooks, though all are dated 1795.)
because it stresses dramatically the disrupting war which thwarts Kubla’s hoped-for integration.

The most serious break in “Kubla Khan” occurs after line 36, where vision gives over to first-person narrative. The final eighteen lines form an epilogue in which Coleridge despondently comments on the meaning of his vision.

In the epilogue, Coleridge first recalls another vision, in which he saw “a damsel with a dulcimer.” Jung has noted that in each man’s unconscious there is an inherent feminine element which stands in a compensatory relationship to his conscious—just as deep within each woman there is a compensatory masculine element. For man, Jung calls this inherent femininity the “anima,” “the unknown woman who personifies the unconscious.” In classical times this psychological factor took the form of the Muse, whose presence was essential to the composition of poetry; in alchemy, it was represented as the soror mystica, the female helper who assisted the alchemist in his opus. An illustration from a seventeenth-century hermetic text shows the brother-sister pair, and in the alchemies, symbolizing the conjunction there taking place, are the sun and moon. The individuation process, in a sense, is the integration of these masculine and feminine facets of the personality.

The mysterious Abyssinian maid, then, is Coleridge’s soror mystica, the requisite helper in his opus. With her assistance, he could

... build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!

Could he revive the harmony and pleasure induced by her presence within him he would be able to effect the desired integration of the sun- and moon-worlds. The Biographia Literaria provides a prose gloss for this passage:

Grant me a nature having two contrary forces, the one of which tends to expand infinitely, while the other strives to apprehend or find itself in this infinity, and I will cause the world of intelligences [i.e., Plato’s reality] with the whole system of their representations [i.e., physical images] to rise up before you. (1.196)

The translucence of the infinite through and in the finite would provide the requisite symbols for the communication of primordial knowledge.

Then the poet would become an archetypal figure whom Jung labels “the old wise man.” This figure has extended his awareness of the unconscious farther than other men, and he feels compelled to share his insight with others. The Ancient Mariner, after his experience with the unconscious in the moon-drenched Land of Mist and Snow, becomes such an archetypal figure.

But Coleridge is cynical about the possibility of communicating this insight to others. Even though the “sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice” were revealed as a paradigm to all, the hearers would close their eyes with holy dread. They would be frightened, and so would “cry, Beware!” and “weave a circle round

26 Integration of the Personality, pp. 17 ff., 73 ff.
27 Ibid., p. 121; cf. Golden Flower, p. 115.
28 Fig. 124, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 231.
29 Integration of Personality, pp. 87–88.
him thrice,” cutting him off from society, leaving him isolated within his mandala. Even if Kubla had successfully integrated the disparate halves of his psyche, it would have been a meaningless, or at best a totally personal, experience.

Looking back over “Kubla Khan,” we can distinguish various units in the poem’s construction. Far from having the loose associative development of an actual dream, this vision is rationally presented in neat units. The opening five lines of the poem introduce the two major symbols: first the pleasure-dome, and then the River Alph. The next six lines describe the walls and towers, the gardens, and the forests—all adjuncts to the sunny pleasure-dome. After a stanzaic break the poem turns to the moon-things in the vision, to Alph and its attendant phenomena: the chasm, then the fountain, and finally the sacred river itself. At line 25 there is the coming-together of moon- and sun-things, immediately followed by the tumultuous disappearance of the river. The destruction and removal of the pleasure-dome is reported in a four-line indented unit, and the vision is closed by a firm couplet of regretful reminiscence. The epilogue completes the poem, rather bitterly recapitulating the significance of the vision and conditioning our response to it. The poem is a finished whole. Greater logicality or economy is difficult to conceive.

“Kubla Khan” is an extraordinarily apt illustration of Jung’s theory that the personality individuates itself through a process of integrating the conscious with the unconscious. But not only does Coleridge illuminate Jung. By juxtaposing “Kubla Khan” and Jung’s research, we can see that Xanadu is Coleridge’s mandala. We can say what the poem is about: the mysterious, almost inscrutable, workings of the psyche. Under the tutelage of Jung, we can follow the instructions which Coleridge gave for understanding Wordsworth’s “Ode on Intimations of Immortality,” instructions which apply with equal pertinence to “Kubla Khan”:

The ode was intended for such readers only as had been accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their inmost nature, to venture at times into the twilight realms of consciousness, and to feel a deep interest in modes of inmost being, to which they know that the attributes of time and space are inapplicable and alien, but which yet can not be conveyed save in symbols of time and space. For such readers the sense is sufficiently plain.30

30 Biographia Literaria, II.120.