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EMOTIONAL OBJECTIFICATION: IMPLICATIONS OF THE CONSUMER OBJECT IN ROMANTIC POETRY

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BY

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ABSTRACT

EMOTIONAL OBJECTIFICATION: IMPLICATIONS OF THE CONSUMER OBJECT IN ROMANTIC POETRY

BY ANNIKA SIAL

British Romanticism is commonly conceived as a turn to the interior and to nature in the midst of the major economic and social changes associated with the Industrial Revolution. Yet, the British Romantics also aimed to connect with one another and the reality of their age. As part of their grappling with industrial and consumer culture, the Romantics attempted to adopt the object as a mechanism of emotional expression in their poetry in order to create a new mode of communication which would allow them to best express themselves in an era which was fundamentally defined by the industrial object. In this thesis, I analyze how Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, as representatives of the British Romantic poets, utilized the object as a form of personal expression. The object's function as a figurative device was to act as a semiotic representation of the sentiments of the poet as the poet would displace their emotions onto it. Furthermore, the shared experience created by this emotional displacement served as a basis for a perceived connection between the poet and the object. The Romantics ultimately expanded the practice of emotional displacement beyond inanimate objects to marginalized bodies. However, the use of an object-oriented framework to use marginalized peoples to characterize Romantics' experience served only to further marginalize them as it emotionally objectified them.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the eighteenth and through the beginning of the nineteenth century, England was undergoing a cultural reckoning due to a series of major political, economic, and social changes. Chief among these changes was the Industrial Revolution, Britain's shift from an agricultural to a primarily manufacturing economy, which began in 1760 and reached its height about 20 years later (Pollard). In the years leading up to the Industrial Revolution, the British government began to orient itself more towards commerce as it became more beholden to the needs of a growing commercial/entrepreneurial class; coupled with Britain's already strong navy, the strength of the commercial class meant that British foreign policy prioritized obtaining raw materials abroad, from where agricultural products typically farmed in Britain could be exported. The shift of agricultural laborers to city centers and new technological developments also enabled the rapid and cheap manufacturing of mass-market products (Cloudsley).

The Industrial Revolution, more broadly, also had its dark sides: the pragmatic issues caused by the misapplication of resources and issues in transportation networks worsened social stressors associated with the change in the economic system (Pollard). While the nobility became more commercialized and a manufacturing bourgeoisie emerged, the working class moved to urban centers to find jobs in factories, and wealth inequality became more evident.

As industrial society developed and its problems became more evident, British Romantic literature arose as a response to the rapid changes of an industrializing society: M. H. Abrams, for instance, characterizes the Romantic period as "an age obsessed with the fact of violent and inclusive change," in part due to the spirit of change in France due to the French Revolution (Abrams 92). This sentiment of change also applied to the unyielding economic and cultural changes associated with the Industrial Revolution. At a societal level, these changes seemed too

massive and too fundamental for any one person to address: instead, the Romantics assessed the changes of the Industrial Age through the lens of the individual. What did industrialization mean to the individual? And what role would poets play in an industrialized society?

The most broadly accepted conception of the Romantic sees Romantic poetry as an escape from the stresses of industrial society. In this way, scholars who subscribe to this theory differentiate the emotionality of Romantic literature from what they characterize as the cold rationality of capitalism. Michael Löwy, for instance, explains that much of Romantic writing is fundamentally anti-capitalist, and is rather more aligned with Marxism, because it criticizes industrial civilization. He writes:

> The central feature of industrial (bourgeois) civilization that Romanticism criticizes is not the exploitation of the workers or social inequality - although these may also be denounced, particularly by leftist Romantics - it is the quantification of life, i.e. the total domination of (quantitative) exchange-value, of the cold calculation of price and profit, and of the laws of the market, over the whole social fabric. All other negative characteristics of modern society are intuitively felt by most Romantic anti-capitalists as flowing from this crucial and decisive source of corruption (Löwy 892).

Lowy emphasizes that the “quantification of life” is the polar opposite of the “anti-capitalist” Romantic philosophy. The Romantics, in Lowy’s conception, are the antithesis of “cold” and calculating industrialism; by identifying capitalist calculation as the fundamental “source of corruption” identified by Romantics, Lowy establishes a binary between the emotionality of Romanticism and the cold, detached nature of industrial civilization.

This binary, however, seems insufficient to explain, and perhaps even antithetical to, the fundamental Romantic drive to connect. Though the plight of isolation in an urbanized,

industrialized society is nearly ubiquitous in Romantic poetry, perhaps no poem is more direct with expressing it than Keats's Sonnet VII "'O Solitude! If I must with thee dwell," wherein Keats laments that if he must be in solitude, "Let it not be among the jumbled heap / Of murky buildings" (Keats) in the city. Keats presents a cosmopolitan vision of urban life, where buildings are insignificant and indistinguishable from one another in a way that reinforces the discomfort of solitude and creates a sense of isolation. This cosmopolitan isolation is particularly of concern to Keats because he considers it "Almost the highest bliss of human-kind, / When to thy [Solitude's] haunts two kindred spirits flee" (Keats). Solitude itself, then, does not prevent connection between "kindred spirits." Rather, solitude is a shelter from the oppressive, "jumbled," industrial city which allows people to wholly embody their individual identities and, as a result, can serve as a backdrop for genuine connection between people or things. The city, itself, as a manifestation of the society created by industrialization, is what prevents the connection and the feeling of the "highest bliss."

Similarly, in "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth describes his experience in London "in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din / Of towns and cities," where "the heavy and weary weight of all this unintelligible world" seems particularly burdensome, especially when compared to the lightness of being in nature (Wordsworth 300). Wordsworth, like Keats, presents a paradoxical image of a city which is both "lonely," divided into individualized, isolated rooms, and busy, as Wordsworth finds himself surrounded by a constant jumbled "din." But this constant "din" is not a form of connection with the community but rather makes the city "unintelligible" and more isolated than nature. While the "two kindred spirits" of Keats's Sonnet VII maintain their own identities but experience nature together, the city creates an environment where each person is indistinguishable from the next, creating an

"unintelligible" mess rather than a true relationship between two unique identities. This created a new form of isolation which was, in the words of scholar Tim Cloudsley, "heightened by the new intensified forms alienation takes on within capitalist society" (Cloudsley 617). Thus, the Industrial Revolution presented a new problem to the people living in Britain, who had to learn how to manage this entirely new form of urban, industrial isolation.

In Sonnet VII, however, Keats also proposes a solution: connection. According to Keats, solitude among nature is tolerable, but it's the comfort of connection between "two kindred spirits" which makes solitude beautiful and pleasurable as opposed to the dull, "murky" isolation of urban society. Karl Kroeber best describes the phenomenon as how the Romantic poem "overcomes alienation by a retreat to solitude… which will connect us actively to the world and fellow men" (Kroeber 301)

The major objective of Romantic poetry, then, was to facilitate connection within a newly isolated capitalist system. It is for this reason that Romanticism did not necessarily represent a turn away from the cold logic of consumerism. Instead, a key pillar of Romanticism is connecting the personal to the logics of the consumer society, creating its own "quantification of life" based upon perceived emotions and consciousnesses. The industrialization spurring Romanticism means that it is couched in a context of capitalism which it cannot shake: rather, Romanticism intends to create a new sense of connection, and perhaps even a new mechanism to connect, within an industrial society which is paradoxically isolated and yet, at the same time, blended together. In this way, Lowy's binary between capitalism and Romanticism is a false one because Romanticism aimed to answer perhaps the most important question of the age: how should people connect in a time that felt more isolated than ever?

Some more recent critics identify commercial culture as part of the British Romantics' answer to this question. Benjamin Myers, in particular, identifies the commodity revolution as central to not only Wordsworth's subject matter but also his language. He explains how Wordsworth's Prelude discusses "the ways in which economic discourse can contaminate all other forms of discourse. The ballads "dangle from dead walls" because they are examples of language deadened by the commodity culture, and rather than be deadened himself by the commercial culture of London, Wordsworth must find a way of transcending that culture while still participating in it" (Myers 85). Myers claims that Wordsworth successfully transcends commercial culture through depiction of the financial sublime, the poet's transcendence to a complete understanding of commercial exchange. Even Wordsworth's sublime, therefore, does not move beyond or reject commerciality. Instead, it celebrates commercial culture as emblematic of a form of uniquely fluid communication. Wordsworth finds refuge in the beauty of the financial sublime as he does the natural sublime. Thus, Myers finds depiction of financial transactions as a way of transcending the limitations of contemporary communications in "The Prelude" are Wordsworth's way of attempting to conceptualize capitalism without falling victim to its rationalization of language. He successfully situates Wordsworth's work within the Industrial era, claiming that the financial sublime also served as a mechanism for communication and connection, but neglects the major question of the commercial object.

The commercial object is significant because, in addition to interpersonal isolation, Romantics also faced the population's growing sense of isolation from objects and their labor. The rise of mass-market products as part of the Industrial Revolution yielded a consumer revolution which entirely reshaped the way that individuals interacted with consumer goods and

perceived objects.[1] This is because industrialization made the consumer object a major facet of daily life for the first time: urbanization, a slight rise in the average standard of living, and longer working hours, among other factors, created a domestic market for mass-market products (Cloudsley). In contrast to the prior model of largely creating objects at home or sourcing them from within the community, individuals were suddenly detached from the production of the objects they used in daily life. This trend was particularly evident in early nineteenth century clothing production. The first ready-to-wear clothes were put to market during the Industrial Revolution. While clothing artisans and tailors certainly still existed and played a major role in the creation of clothing for nobility at the time, the average person became more distant from the production of their clothing due to textile manufacturing, the growth of the second-hand clothing market, and the development of the sewing machine (Fine and Leopold). The shift in clothing production demonstrates a more generalized migration of the production process from the home towards the commercial arena. Ultimately, this industrialization of production increased the isolation of a laborer from the product they produced because it yielded the phenomenon that Marx would later term alienation, the production of an object "as something alien, as a power independent of the producer" (Marx 29). In addition, the distancing of the average consumer from the creation products they consumed due to the growth of mass-market and secondhand consumption in the lower classes meant that people were fundamentally more isolated from the very objects they consumed in their daily lives.

[1] The relationship between the growth of supply and demand during the British Industrial Revolution is hotly debated amongst economic historians. For further discussion of the role of economic demand in the Industrial Revolution, see Mokyr, Joel. "Demand vs. Supply in the Industrial Revolution." *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1977, pp. 981–1008, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2119351.

Industrialization and the growth of consumerism, as a result, fundamentally changed the definition of the object. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, consumer culture simply did not exist: as opposed to industrial-era commodities, goods were largely made in the household or by tradesman rather than in a mass-production setting. During the Industrial Era, however, people began to purchase factory-made objects, which were cheaper and easier to obtain than those that had traditionally been handmade (de Vries). As a result, in the individuals no longer assigned value to objects based on the time and effort that went into creating them and instead established a new set of seemingly arbitrary standards that determined the consumer demand for a product: de Vries, for instance, writes that these were in part influenced by the industrialist's effort to at once train his worker as a laborer and a consumer. Yet, this transition left the true value of the object in lurch: what defines an object, really, and how should humans interact with them? What does it mean to be alive, and how are objects distinct from the living? And where does all this leave artists, whose roles were seemingly usurped by the industrial machine? The objective of this paper, therefore, is to understand how the Romantic poets answered these major questions of the age and evaluate the implications of these answers on their communities.

The isolation from objects in the industrialized context was yet another form of jumbled, cosmopolitan isolation that minimized the perceived identities of objects and distanced them from the people that consumed them. The high Romantic poets, as a result, came to define objects as physical items lacking consciousness as they, too, became more distant from the creation of the objects they consumed.[2] This new object was static, entirely manufactured and

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[2] The high Romantic poets largely operated from within a context of relative privilege and wealth in that they were, for the most part, not agricultural laborers or factory workers, making them especially distant from the production of the objects with which they interacted.

nonliving such that Romantics treated the term as "the recipient of an action such as the object of a verb" (Gaull 10), according to scholar Marilyn Gaull. Thus, the Romantics adopted a highly consumer logic: much like the industrialists who redefined objects to augment their demand, Romantics also redefined the object by disallowing objects agency or emotional identities of their own and instead characterizing them based on their relationship with humans.

In this thesis, I will argue that the industrialized object's new lack of unique consciousness made it a prime candidate for semiotic and aesthetic expression in an industrial age. In order to write to the dilemmas of British society after the Industrial Revolution, Romantics adopted the object as part of their poetic vernacular. The object became a literary device to convey interior emotions and connect the poet to the exterior in a world that felt increasingly isolated: the high Romantic poets displaced their emotions onto objects in their poetry, assigning their own emotions to the objects. In this way, Romantics combated the isolation of industrialized society by using their poetic practice to develop relationships with the objects society was now centered around.

This framework would become fundamental to high Romantic literature, I discovered, as the Romantics began to displace their emotions onto various entities as a way of mimicking the connections they perceived experiencing with nature and in the pre-industrial ages. The high Romantic poets extended their practice of displacing their emotions onto objects beyond the limits of what would traditionally be considered objects, particularly to marginalized bodies.[3] Just as they displaced their emotions onto objects to facilitate a connection, so did they attempt

[3] For the purposes of this paper, the terms "marginalized" and "under-privileged" refer to people who were not of the dominant or ruling class in Britain in the mid-eighteenth century. This could include any individual who was not a wealthy, white man such as women, ethnic minorities, and impoverished people, among others.

to connect with othered peoples by displacing their own emotions onto them. In using an object-oriented framework to describe human beings, however, the Romantic poets also objectified the human subjects of their poetry. This process, which I term emotional objectification, occurred as a result of Romantic poets' displacement of their emotions onto marginalized bodies.

As a result, emotional objectification often culminated in the further marginalization of its already-marginalized subjects. When the Romantic poets displace their emotions onto an object, they also eliminate its capacity for consciousness, instead using it only as a projection for their own emotions. Like the commercial object, the people and objects described by the Romantic poets were no longer allotted space to have identities of their own. They were instead defined by the way that the poets chose to interact with them. And though Romantic poets identified consciousness as what distinguished objects from living beings, emotional objectification moved living, marginalized peoples firmly into the category of the nonliving, as they were no longer assigned consciousness or the ability to think on their own. Emotional objectification, as a result, limited marginalized peoples' ability to express and advocate for themselves. Emotional objectification tends to characterize Romantic poets' descriptions of marginalized people but not privileged ones because, as men who were part of the privileged class, themselves, the high Romantics never had to question whether those afforded privilege had the capacity of consciousness. For under-privileged people, however, the practice of emotional objectification served as a manifestation of this question.

The practice of emotional objectification also means, however, that the sense of connection created by poets displacing their emotions onto an object was hollow. Without recognizing the identities of the objects they aimed to connect with, Romantics could not truly connect to them. Rather, their connections to both consumer objects and marginalized peoples

was a false one dependent on the shared experience of individual emotions projected onto the objects. The false connections of Romantic poetry failed to address the dilemma of connecting during the industrial age. Rather, they served to continue to perpetuate the depersonalization of industrial society as they rendered Romantic poets unable to truly connect.

Therefore, in this paper, I will argue that objects were deeply embedded into the traditions of high Romantic poetry because poets displaced their emotions onto objects as a way to connect with them in the face of a commercializing society through analysis of the works of Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.[4] As the high Romantic poets adopted emotional displacement into their poetic vernacular, they also began to implement the practice onto marginalized peoples, effectively objectifying these marginalized groups and limiting their own capacity for speech and expression. Without recognizing the sense of connection created by emotional displacement as false, however, Romantic poets used their poetry to help them understand how they should interact with the objects and marginalized peoples around them.

[4] In spite of being major figures in British High Romanticism, William Blake, Percy Shelley and Lord Byron were excluded from this paper because their poetry generally does not place a primary focus on objects: while relationships with objects do appear in their poetry and could be the subject of another paper, these are beyond the scope of this thesis.

DISPLACEMENT OF EMOTIONS ONTO OBJECTS

It is commonly accepted that Romanticism is defined, at least in part, by a turn to the interior. In his foundational work of criticism, *the Mirror and the Lamp,* M. H. Abrams, for instance, argued that Romantic literature was not mimetic, like the mirror, but rather a "projector" (59), a lamp which, based on its own sentiments and experiences, could cast its own, subjective light on the objects of its writing. This interpretation is vital to the contemporary understanding of Romanticism as a turn to the interior amidst a world that was facing major changes in every sphere.

The Romantic version of interiority is not entirely isolated. Instead, it requires a fundamental connection to the external through the process of perception and experience. In pursuit of connection in a society they perceived as increasingly isolated, Romantic poets sought a new form of expression suitable to the changes of the Industrial Revolution which would allow them to cut beyond the murkiness and ambiguity of consumer society. The best medium to create connection was the new focus of industrialized society: the consumer object. Romantics displaced their emotions onto objects as a way to express themselves in a consumer-focused era. To the Romantics, this served as a mode of connection to an increasingly isolated industrial society. In practice, however, it perpetuated a false mode of connection by using the same consumer frameworks of the Industrial Era, which minimized the identities of the objects they create in order to create a more arbitrary sense of demand and increase their economic value.

Of the high Romantic poets, Keats most explicitly connected himself to the object. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats connects to the urn by reframing the story sculpted onto it to fit his personal belief system and narrative. In general, Keats's work is often read as a response to his fraught personal life, an effort to find a meaning for life amongst witnessing the serious

illnesses and deaths of his loved ones and strangers throughout his childhood and in his capacity as an apothecary. His sentiments about mortality are particularly evident in "Ode on a Grecian Urn." He, for instance, reiterates how the love depicted on the urn is "For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd, / For ever panting, and for ever young" (980), repeating the word "for ever" to emphasize the apparent eternity of life on the urn in comparison to the temporary nature of human life, which Keats details as a rapid descent into "old age" (980). Similarly, in his 1926 essay, Raymond Havens argued that the urn represents the immortality of the feelings evoked by art in comparison to the temporary nature of human mortality. James W. Hamilton expanded on this idea when he wrote that Keats used poetry as part of his mourning process. This broadly-accepted understanding of the ode as a manifestation of Keats's concerns about mortality following the deaths of his family, however, depends fundamentally on Keats's capacity to displace his emotions onto the urn as an object: Keats projects his perspective, including his fears about mortality, onto the urn by describing the urn as centered around the concern of mortality.

Keats's choice to focus on the Grecian Urn is particularly interesting because the urn is not objectively a consumer object as it would have been conceived in the nineteenth century. Grecian urns were not mass-produced but rather created and painted by-hand. And yet, Keats recreates the conditions of the consumer society in the urn by omitting discussion about its creators; the urn's paintings would have been painstakingly created by an artist in service of their own beliefs or ideas, but Keats characterizes the urn itself as the "Sylvan historian," erasing the role of its creator. However, this does not make the urn only a symbolic mode of aesthetic expression. The urn is also a physical object: Keats reiterates its physicality by repeatedly referring to its "shape" (Keats 979, 980). In this way, Keats mimics the conditions of realized industrial objects by limiting the connection of the artist to the finalized product, just as the

industrialization minimized the connection of the artisan to the manufactured object. Furthermore, the transformation of the urn into a consumer object through the erasure of its artist perhaps reflects a fear about the role of the artist in consumer society.

Nor does Keats necessarily offer the urn, itself, agency over the history it portrays: when Keats asks questions about the subject matter of the urn, the urn cannot answer. Instead, it is an "unravish'd bride of quietness" and a "foster-child of silence and slow time," neither of whom have the capacity to act or speak for themselves (Keats 979). The "unravish'd" bride cannot control whether she becomes ravished by someone else's hand and the "foster-child" does not have agency over their decisions/guardianship, just as the urn cannot control how the history it displays is perceived by its observer. In this way, like the bride and the foster-child, the urn's identity is derived not from its inherent characteristics but rather from how it is acted upon. Keats instead seeks the answers to his questions from his own imagination: he writes that melodies "unheard are sweeter" than those that exist in reality, highlighting his interest in his imagination over the physical truth of the object. In this way, he transforms the urn into a consumer object, defined by its human use, the way he perceives it, rather than an innate identity or its process of creation. This process allows renders the urn isolated from the process of its creation to act upon by displacing his own emotions onto it. In practice, however, the urn was not necessarily meant as a "historian:" instead, the urn is given its identity and role by Keats's own perception.

When Keats speaks as the urn in the last lines of the poem, he blurs the lines between the urn's identity and his own. Keats writes that the urn says to man "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' – that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know" (980). By setting off the words he ascribes to the urn with quotation marks, Keats clearly distinguishes between the voices of the

narrator and the urn. The urn claims that "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'" implying that Keats's subjective descriptions of the story on the urn, through describing its beauty, reveals an objective truth. When Keats speaks as the narrator, evoking the people addressed by the urn as "Ye… on earth," he also distinguishes himself from those he addresses, suggesting that he, unlike them, is not "on earth." Through this shared address, which even reads, due to the inclusion of the em-dash, as two halves of a common sentence, Keats creates an ambiguity between the urn and the narrator, as an extension of himself.

Vernon Lee's theory of empathy partially accounts for this ambiguity, suggesting that the process of viewing art combines the viewer's perception with the reality of its physical form. Lee's theory of empathy suggests that perception of external objects is a combination "of the activities of the perceiving subject with the qualities of the perceived object" (Lee and Anstruther-Thomson 21). While Lee's theory provides a vital explanation for why Romantic poets like Keats may have presented objects as an extension of their own emotions, she ultimately recognizes this process as "another of those various mergings," (Lee and Anstruther-Thompson 21) implying the merging of the subject and the object as two distinct entities. Building upon Lee's theory, Richard Fogle argues that Keats "conceives of the poet as a neutral being who takes on the characteristics of the object he contemplates- an idea which plainly suggests empathetic projection" (171). Yet, in "Ode to a Grecian Urn," the poet's relationship to the urn seems to be the opposite: rather than Keats being a neutral entity which takes on the qualities of the urn, the urn takes on Keats's ideas to form a new identity, not shaped by the original intent of its creator or its inherent nature but rather the conceptions of its perceiver. In this process of redefinition, Keats's ideas about mortality and whether art lasts beyond death become inseparable from the true physical qualities of the urn. Rather than making up a separate

component, as Lee suggests, the urn is fundamentally dependent upon Keats to provide it meaning and consciousness: the urn does speak at the end of the poem, but the urn does not have the capacity to speak beyond the art carved onto it without Keats's speaking for it in his poem. Thus, when he creates the ambiguity between himself and the urn, it is not because Keats is a neutral being that is able to take on the capacity of the urn, but rather the opposite: because Keats characterizes the urn as a consumer object, isolated from the sentiment of its creator, it loses its meaning, becoming fundamentally neutral and able to take on Keats's ideas as part of its identity. It is in this way that Keats defines the object as something which has physicality but is fundamentally neutral, without vitality of its own. Thus, it is the role of the poet, in Keats's conception, to connect to the object by displacing his own voice onto it, using it as a semiotic object as well as a literal one.

Lee was not the only critic to consider how individuals perceive objects. Victorian literary critic John Ruskin ascribed the perception of objects as emotional not to empathy but rather to the pathetic fallacy, the practice he defined as falsely assigning human emotions to non-human objects under the influence of great emotion. Further, Ruskin emphasizes that this practice is a fallacy, writing that "it is always the sign of a morbid state of mind, and comparatively of a weak one. Even in the most inspired prophet it is a sign of the incapacity of his human sight or thought to bear what has been revealed to it" (Ruskin). Ruskin's explanation of ascribing emotions to objects as a fallacy, however, is insufficient to explain authors' use of the object as a literary tool to characterize their experiences. In practice, ascribing emotions to objects is not "a sign of the incapacity of his human sight," but rather a rhetorical technique which authors used to express themselves and connect in an age that was defined by the object.

In fact, in *Biographia Literaria,* Coleridge argues that the ability to enliven objects is a core capacity of the poet. He writes:

> The imagination, then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. 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 I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting 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 recreate; 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 496).

According to Coleridge, the chief capacity of the poet is his imagination, which is "essentially vital" and, in combination with perception, grants vitality to the nonliving objects humans constantly perceive and interact with in their daily lives. The poet's ability to give life to objects through their poetry, then, is part of their fundamental definition: just as perception and vitality are necessary to write poetry, so is the object is necessary for poetry. Coleridge's "objects" are defined by being "essentially fixed and dead" at the point of perception. By describing the object as "fixed," he defines objects as constant and unchanging. Yet, this description is in some way oxymoronic to the term that succeeds it: Coleridge's description of the object as essentially "dead," as opposed to nonliving, suggests that the object has the capacity to be, and was at some prior point, alive. Yet if the object is fixed and lacking consciousness, it should not have the capacity to shift between individualized states of life and death. Thus, the object, in Coleridge's

conception, exists in a liminal state between having the capacity to be alive, when projected onto by a poet, and being entirely nonliving by nature.

Instead of objects being granted life through the creativity involved, it is the human process of reconceptualizing the object through the secondary imagination, in Coleridge's conception, which gives the object a secondhand "vital[ity]." The object exists to be acted upon because it is "dead" and lacks an emotional identity of its own; in contrast, Coleridge describes humanity as fundamentally vital, such that humans are able to affect the world around them using their imaginations.[5] He reiterates the power of human imagination over objects by repeatedly using it in a subject construction: the secondary imagination reconceptualizes the dead object "to recreate… to idealize and to unify," fusing it with human life to grant it a secondhand life.

The object, on the other hand, is not fundamentally capable of life, emotion, and consciousness itself. Rather, Coleridge's process of recreation is rooted in the breakdown of the object from its original form, as it "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates" in order to be recreated. In the section's title, Coleridge also characterizes the imagination as the "esemplastic power", a term he coined describing the ability to "shape into one" (Coleridge 496). It's clear, then, that the secondary imagination serves not only to "recreate" the object but also to "unify" it with the poet's own primary perception of the world. The process of unification through the secondary imagination creates a sense of connection between people because Coleridge claims that the

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[5] Coleridge further explores this claim in one of his table-talks, wherein he claims that humans are unique due to their possession of souls: see Coleridge, Samuel "Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge." *Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Romantic Period*, edited by Julia Reidhead and Marian Johnson, W. W. Norton and Company, 2018, pp. 510.

primary imagination is driven by a universal connection to God, "the infinite I am." It is in this way that Coleridge displaces his emotions onto objects in a way that parallels Keats's treatment of the Grecian urn in its aforementioned eponymous ode. Just as Keats blurs the lines between the voices of the narrator and the urn, allowing his personal interpretation to displace the urn's inherent identity, Coleridge proposes that poetry infuses the nonliving object with the poet's vitality, thereby displacing the poet's emotions and experiences onto the object in lieu of its own identity.

Coleridge's discussion of the object as a vehicle for the emotion written in poetry is particularly important because of how he embeds the logic of the industrial into his language: in *Biographia Literaria,* he also writes that imagination is fundamentally important because in "energetic minds truth soon changes by domestication into power; and from directing in the discrimination and appraisal of the product becomes influencive in the production" (Coleridge 496). Coleridge here relates the imagination that shapes perception into poetry to a commercial, industrial process, wherein a "product" is designed and manufactured but is reformed through its process of "directing" and "appraisal" once it goes to market. Coleridge's use of this commercial language, and particularly the repetition of "product" and "production," in his description emphasizes the industrialized depersonalization of the object. Further, by utilizing the passive voice, Coleridge disconnects the object from its human creators, mimicking the effects of the industrial production process. This demonstrates how industrialization affects the poetic process's relationship with material: when the poet uses their imagination to redefine the object through "discrimination and appraisal," they are changing its very identity as defined in its "production."

Coleridge puts these theories into practice in “the Eolian Harp,” wherein he transforms the harp into an expression his love for Sara Fricker and the importance of poetry. Coleridge describes the lute as:

> Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
> How by the desultory breeze caressed
> Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
> It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
> Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
> Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
> Over delicious surges sink and rise (Coleridge 444),

Through his description of the how the lute is played, Coleridge highlights the lute’s lack of agency. The harp is a physical object with no distinct characteristics of its own and is only a “simplest lute” passively “placed,” “caressed,” and “swept,” its own notes not symbolic of its own voice but rather its “yielding” to the actions of its player. An unknown force places the lute “in the clasping casement,” leaving it unable to even stand on its own, as it is restrained by the grip of the casement. Even Coleridge’s description of the music’s “delicious surges,” makes the music the lute creates a sensory object, defined by a being “delicious” as perceived by a person. Further, Coleridge’s use of “delicious” is particularly interesting because he uses an adjective associated with taste to imply the literal consumption of the lute’s music: just as the consumer metaphorically consumes the object in industrial society, and defines it not based on its process of creation but rather its consumer value, so does the narrator consume the product of the lute

and define it based on his subjective experience of the consumption.[6] It is in this way that Coleridge defines the lute as an object, which does not have agency or an identity of its own.

By characterizing the lute as an object, Coleridge minimizes its identity, thereby making room to displace his own emotions onto it. This is most evident when Coleridge describes how the lute is played "by the desultory breeze," caressing the lute "Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover." Coleridge uses references to women and the physical sensation of touching as a euphemism referring to intimacy with Sara Fricker, to whom the poem is addressed. In spite of the lute's physicality and identity as a musical instrument, Coleridge displaces his desire for Sara onto it, giving the lute a new identity not as an instrument but rather as a manifestation of his desire.

Furthermore, when Sara rejects his advances, Coleridge explains that "Well hast thou said and holily dispraised / These shapings of the unregenerate mind;" (Coleridge 445). In describing "shapings of the unregenerate mind," Coleridge explains how his mind has shaped the perception of the objects described in the poem. In particular, because he refers to his mind as "unregenerate, " he likely refers back to his description of the "desultory breeze" caressing the lute "like some coy maid half yielding to her lover" due to the phrase's sexual euphemism. Coleridge recognizes, therefore, that it is his own "unregenerate mind" which has created this image of the lute as a sexual object based on his sentiments toward Sara. Thus, Coleridge establishes clearly that he displaces his emotions onto the lute.

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[6] For further discussion of the significance of consumption as a mode of being in Romantic literature, see Tagore, Proma. "Keats in an Age of Consumption: The 'Ode to a Nightingale.'" *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol. 49, 2000, pp. 67–84. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30213047.

Coleridge further displaces his sentiments onto the lute when he describes how "many idle flitting phantasies, / Traverse my indolent and passive brain, / As wild and various as the random gales / That swell and flutter on this subject lute!" (Coleridge 445). Coleridge draws a comparison between his "passive brain," controlled by arbitrary ideas and fantasies, and the "subject lute," played by the wind. In order to use the harp as a mechanism of semiotic expression, Coleridge displaces his emotions onto the it, creating a parallel between his experiences and those of the lute. Further, through his use of simile, he uses this perceived characteristic of the harp to draw a connection between them. In this way, Coleridge proposes a relationship between his mind and the harp, which he posits are controlled in the same way by external forces. This allows him a sense of connection to the harp founded upon his belief that the lute is also controlled by external forces; because this connection is created via displacing his emotions onto the lute, however, the sense of connection is a false one.

According to Coleridge, the connections he establishes through his poem use the power of imagination, as defined in *Biographia Literaria*, to enliven nonliving objects. He writes that "it should have been impossible / Not to love all things in a world so filled; / Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air / Is Music slumbering on her instrument" (Coleridge). In writing that "the mute still air / Is Music," Coleridge demonstrates the capacity of the imagination to imbue life upon nonliving objects. "The mute still air" is described as an object in that it is "mute," incapable of the consciousness necessary to independently choose to play music and described only by sensory characteristics to demonstrate Coleridge's perception of it rather than its own identity. Thus, while the air Coleridge initially describes lacks a fundamental identity and agency, making it an object, Coleridge's imagination allows it to escape beyond object status. "Music slumbering on her instrument" is, on one hand, personified in a literal sense, as Music is

described as “her” and assigned the human state of “slumbering.” This liminal state, however, also allows the music to escape objecthood in a metaphorical sense: because Music is “slumbering,” she has the capacity to choose to wake and play her instrument. In this way, because she is allotted power over her state of being, she is no longer trapped in the realm of being an unidentifiable consumer object.

Yet, the process of imagination is only a thinly veiled guise for the displacement of Coleridge’s emotions onto the air. Being assigned these emotions gives an appearance of allowing the air to escape object status by granting it agency, but it is still by nature neutral and passive, as it is not allowed its own unique identity based on its true characteristics as opposed to its perceived ones. Though Coleridge does assign the air power over the music it plays, he ultimately describes it only as a sensory object: the air, with the power to control the lute, becomes “Music,” a uniquely human conception of sound which is not truly created by the wind. This description demonstrates how the object is defined by humans’ interaction with it as a manifestation of the effects of emotional displacement: throughout the poem, Coleridge’s various instances of emotional displacement onto the lute (whether it be “shaping” the lute in the image of Sara or using the lute to characterize his brain) serve as a vehicle for his emotion to take the place of the true identity of the lute.

In this way, Coleridge uses a false sense of shared emotion to build an emotional connection to the objects around him. Coleridge writes that the experience of observing the air as music allows him to “love all things.” Thus, the experience of connection through the imagination gives Coleridge the ability to connect with and have a perceived empathy for the objects around him. His poetry imbues the lute, and all the objects around him, with a perceived life as it becomes a living “thing” rather than a nonliving object as it is described at the

beginning of the poem, "that simplest lute" with no characteristics in and of itself, only defined by the actions of its player and, by extension, Coleridge's writing about it.[7] The life assigned to the lute is false, however, as it is founded upon characterization of the lute which is more related to Coleridge's emotions than it is to the lute itself. This false characterization also leads to a false sense of humanity and identity for the lute which, in practice, is no closer to being allocated a genuine, living identity at the end of the poem than it was at the beginning when it more directly served as a vehicle for Coleridge's emotions.

Coleridge reiterates the importance of the process of emotional displacement, guised as imagination, for the process of societal connection. He questions "And what if all of animated nature / Be but organic harps diversely framed, / That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps / Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze, / At once the Soul of each, and God of All?" (Coleridge 445). Coleridge again describes the emotional displacement and the allocation of life that occurs alongside imagination as he recreates the process of imagining that the objects around him are "organic harps diversely framed." When Coleridge implements this process of imagination, his subjects "tremble into thought," thereby being granted life via the capacity for consciousness. Yet, this time, Coleridge describes not only how this process creates a personal connection but also demonstrates a universal sense of connection through a relationship with God. In describing the breeze of imagination which stirs the "organic harps" to life as "At once the Soul of each, and God of All" Coleridge references the unifying "I am" which drives the primary imagination and facilitates connection between people. Because the breeze is impelled by the "God of All," it

[7] Marilyn Gaull describes "thing theory" as distinct from "object theory" in that "Things are often living" while "objects are not." For the purpose of this paper, I use Gaull's operational definition of "thing" to categorize references of "things" to be distinct from references to "objects." See

is able to bring together the souls "of each" in the process of imagination to facilitate a connection. In this way, emotional displacement onto objects not only allowed Romantic poets like Coleridge to connect to the objects, themselves, but also to other people who, in turn, perceived and displaced themselves onto the same objects.

Wordsworth expands upon this framework of using objects for societal connection in his unpublished poem "the Ruined Cottage," wherein displacement onto its titular object facilitates connection both between the people observing it and its past residents. This is because Wordsworth uses the wanderer's description of the degradation of the cottage to represent how the wanderer perceives the degradation of Margaret, its former owner. In telling the story, the wanderer, and Wordsworth in parallel, displaces his sentiments onto the cottage. The teller's perception of Margaret's story becomes the story of the cottage: the cottage loses its identity as an individual object and is instead only described an extension of the teller's impression of its residents.

In the beginning of the poem, the narrator finds a ruined home. He describes "a ruined house, four naked walls / That stared upon each other" (Wordsworth 321). For a poem that is especially explicit and intentional about its extensive use of description, the house here seems to lack much detail and description: what does it mean for the house to be "ruined?" What does it look like? The narrator overlooks the poem's titular cottage because he has no preconceived notions about it, no emotions to displace onto it. He even identifies the cottage as a "house," seemingly distinct from the cottage of the title. By breaking the house down into its elements, "four naked walls," Wordsworth also strips the cottage down to its barest essence, demonstrating a process of perception not shaped by emotion but rather simply defined by the components of which it is made up. In contrast, the wanderer recognizes that he sees "around me here / Things

which you [the narrator] cannot see" (Wordsworth 321). Wordsworth highlights the wanderer's emotional displacement onto the cottage by demonstrating the discrepancy between his perception of the cottage and the narrator's. The only difference in what the narrator and the wanderer are capable of seeing is framed only by the difference in their understandings of the cottage: while the wanderer knows the history of the cottage and its residents, and thereby is capable of displacing his emotions onto it, the narrator, at the beginning of the poem, does not.

When the wanderer tells the story of the cottage's residents to the narrator, then, he frames to cottage as a reflection of the condition of the family within. When he explains that Margaret is dead, for instance, he immediately references the cottage of a visual description of the desolation of her death:

> She is dead,
> The worm is on her cheek, and this poor hut,
> Stripp'd of its outward garb of household flowers,
> Of rose and sweet-briar, offers to the wind
> A cold bare wall whose earthy top is tricked
> With weeds and the rank spear-grass (Wordsworth 322)

Unlike the narrator's initial description of the "house," which was direct and relatively colorless, the wanderer's description is deeply emotional. In this way, the wanderer displaces his emotions onto the cottage: while the cottage, in and of itself, is simply a "ruined house," the wanderer sees it differently because of his deep emotional ties to Margaret and her family. No longer a "house," the remains are described as a "hut," their identity reduced in size and significance with Margaret now dead. While the wanderer reveals that the house was colorful and lively when Margaret was alive, with an "outward garb of household flowers" representing the homeliness and sweetness of

the cottage during Margaret's life, when the wanderer felt positively towards it, his description of the cottage after her death is dismal and desolate. The hut is relegated to a "cold bare wall" contaminated by ugly "weeds and rank spear-grass." In describing the hut as "cold" and "bare," the wanderer recreates the conditions of the dead Margaret, whose body would also be cold. And just as her tomb may be overgrown, so is the cottage covered in weeds. It is in this way that the description of the house parallels the wanderer's perception of Margaret's life. The cottage itself does not have control over any of these states: it is passively "Stripp'd" and its roof "tricked." Like the urn and the harp, the cottage is not allocated power over itself and thus must depend on the poet for its identity. As a result, the wanderer, as the story-teller, connects to the cottage by assigning it an emotional significance which reciprocates his longing for Margaret.

As the wanderer tells the story, he continues to displace his emotions onto the cottage, using it as a semiotic marker for the state of the family. When Margaret returns to her home and meets the wanderer, she reveals that she had lost her son and has been emotionally distressed and appears physically ill, as "Her face was pale and thin, her figure too / Was chang'd" (Wordsworth 327). This degradation in Margaret's physical state was paralleled, in the wanderer's telling, by the reciprocal degradation of the cottage. Retrospectively, the wanderer describes seeing that, on that day:

> "The spot though fair seemed very desolate,
> The longer I remained more desolate.
> And, looking round, I saw the corner-stones,
> Till then unmark'd, on either side the door
> With dull red stains discoloured and stuck o'er
> With tufts and hairs of wool" (Wordsworth 326).

The evolution in the wanderer's description of the cottage demonstrates how his perspective on Margaret's health is shifting; this manifestation of the wanderer's perspective in the cottage clearly demonstrates the displacement of his emotions onto the cottage. The wanderer's recollection of the cottage in the midst of Margaret's unhappiness is starkly different from the colorful "outward garb of household flowers" which he recalled as having characterized the house prior. Rather, this vision of the house is degraded, with the wanderer repeatedly describing it as "desolate" to emphasize how truly empty and hopeless it felt. The "dull red strains" on the corner stones are perhaps even intended to evoke the idea of blood and demonstrate the very human nature of its physical degradation. Certainly, houses don't bleed, but the wanderer's construction of the cottage as so intimately tied to his perception of Margaret's state that it takes on a human expression of pain/illness in and of itself highlights how the imposition of his emotions onto the cottage displaces its own identity. Nor is this degradation repairable: the "tufts and hairs of wool" neither repair nor guise the red stains, but perhaps serve as gauze for the metaphorically bleeding wound. The cottage does not, by nature, have human physical characteristics, but, in service of being a point of connection for the wanderer, its own characteristics are displaced to make way for manifestations of the wanderer's human nature.

By the end of the poem, through the telling of the story, the gap between the emotional context of the narrator and the wanderer has closed: the narrator now has the same knowledge as the wanderer and is able to see what he "could not see" at the beginning of the poem. The narrator expresses that he "was mov'd… / by that Woman's suffrings" (Wordsworth 330) and thus has grown to share in the sentiments of the wanderer's tale. As a result, when he sees the cottage after hearing the story, the narrator, too, begins to displace the story onto the cottage when he views it. He sees:

At length [towards] the [Cottage I returned][8]

Fondly, and traced with milder interest

That secret spirit of humanity

Which, 'mid the calm oblivious tendencies

Of nature, 'mid her plants, her weeds, and flowers,

And silent overgrowings, still survived (Wordsworth 330).

As opposed to the ruined house the narrator describes at the beginning of the poem, which is seemingly detached from all emotion as it is only described as having four walls, the cottage here has become an embodiment of the sentiment the narrator has developed toward its prior resident. The cottage is imbued with "that secret spirit of humanity" and the nature which has overcome it appears noteworthy and beautiful, as it is no longer overcrowded with just the "weeds and rank spear-grass" described by the wanderer at the beginning of the poem but also "plants" and "flowers." The difference between the wanderer's initial description of the "hut" and the narrator's perception of the Cottage demonstrates the impact of personal perception, and thus the displacement of emotions, on the perceived identity of an object: while the wanderer, in the absence of Margaret, sees the house as a representation of what he is missing, the narrator, who has never met Margaret, sees the house as a point of connection to her "secret spirit of humanity." Thus, the wanderer displaces his feelings of longing and loss onto the cottage while the narrator projects his perception of Margaret's strength despite the many hardships she faced. These two projections both reject the identity of the cottage in and of itself to instead use the emotions they falsely ascribe to it in order to connect more closely to it and, as a result, Margaret.

[8] The words in brackets were added in later versions of the manuscript.

Thus Wordsworth, like Keats and Coleridge, identifies an object as a neutral physical entity which is defined primarily by its human use as opposed to any inherent characteristics. The cottage, for instance, is defined more by how Margaret interacted with it than it is its true nature. This is because humans, and particularly poets, interact with objects like the cottage by displacing their emotions onto them as opposed to mutually empathizing with them. Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth each treat the object as a core part of their poetic vernacular, using the object to characterize their emotions, which can only occur when the object's own identity is disregarded eliminated. In this way, the Romantic poets demonstrated how the role of poets in the commercial world was to assign meaning to the commercial objects which are inherently meaningless. They also served to create connection in an increasingly isolated world: the process of displacing emotions onto it creates a perceived shared sentiment which often culminated in a false sense of connection with the object. Thus, the British Romantics use a perceived common feeling, created by the displacement of emotion, to justify feeling connected to an object. By extension, the common use of and connection to the object, like the wanderer's, the narrator's, and Margaret's shared connections to the cottage, also facilitated connection between people. Thus, the Romantics' use of objects as a part of their poetic vernacular served to answer one of the most questions of the age as they became an impetus of connection within the isolated Industrial Era.

DISPLACEMENT OF EMOTIONS ONTO MARGINALIZED BODIES AND EMOTIONAL OBJECTIFICATION

As the British Romantic poets experimented with the inclusion of the object as part of their poetic vernacular, they also needed to test its limits as both a connector and a mechanism of personal expression. Simultaneously, the Industrial Revolution and corresponding growth of British imperialism had also revealed growing divisions in a variety of societal spheres, including between genders, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic classes, among others (Cloudsley). These divisions often represented a boundary between the wealthy, white male historical ruling class and various marginalized identities, who faced worse conditions at work and in the sociocultural sphere. In the face of these societal divisions, the British Romantics looked to their practice of displacing emotions to more directly facilitate perceived connections between one another, as representatives of relative privilege, and between themselves and individuals from marginalized groups. Thus, the Romantic poets looked to expand the object-emotional displacement construction beyond inanimate objects to marginalized bodies.

Treating marginalized peoples as objects, however, would have far-reaching and potentially disastrous consequences. The process of displacing personal emotions onto an object to facilitate connection necessitates the object in question to not have a strong identity itself. For entities with identities or the capacity to express themselves, treating them as objects in the emotional displacement framework would destroy these powers, effectively turning them into objects as their capacity for expression and perceived identities are moved aside in favor of a poet's perception of them. Further, the false connections established through this process of emotional objectification could do major harm to individuals who are part of the marginalized group in question by reinforcing harmful misconceptions.

In Wordsworth's famous poem "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth displaces his emotions onto his sister Dorothy in an act of attempted connection. "Tintern Abbey" has no paucity of criticism: one chief topic of debate is the role of Wordsworth's sister Dorothy, to whom he speaks at the end of the poem. Some critics, like Heidi Thomson, write that Wordsworth's reference to Dorothy is an act of inclusion and connection, while others, such as Marjorie Levinson, argue that it is a more selfish representation that creates only a shallow connection. I argue that, like the High Romantic connection to objects, more broadly, Wordsworth's treatment of Dorothy in "Tintern Abbey" represents a genuine effort to connect but, in the process, suppresses the capacity of Dorothy, as a proxy for women more broadly, to express herself.

This is because Wordsworth objectifies Dorothy by displacing his emotions onto her, thereby presenting her as an object that is unable to think or act by itself. When he watches Dorothy witness the magnificent view of nature, he observes that:

> in thy voice I catch
> The language of my former heart, and read
> My former pleasure in the shooting lights
> Of thy wild eyes. Oh! Yet a little while
> May I behold in thee what I was once (Wordsworth 302)

Wordsworth's description of Dorothy displaces his emotions onto her. He repeats several times that he sees emotions in her that he considers his: he sees "the language of my former heart" and "My former pleasure." He even explicitly writes that he sees in her what he once experienced. By categorizing the emotions he witnesses in Dorothy as his own, he emotionally objectifies her: just as an object is defined by how a person acts upon it, Dorothy is defined by how Wordsworth

sees her instead of by her own description of her experience. Wordsworth does not even classify her emotions as her own: they are his, simply displaced into another body. Much like Keats views the story in relief on the Grecian urn but only recognizes the aspects that translate to his own experience pertaining to mortality, when Wordsworth hears Dorothy's voice, he does not recognize what she says but only hears a perceived shared experience in her tone. He even assumes the progression of her future experience based on his own, without taking into account the impact of her perspective, describing "When these wild ecstasies shall be matured into a sober pleasure" (Wordsworth 302). Because he declaratively describes "when" this change will inevitably take place, as opposed to conditionally, Wordsworth fails to account for Dorothy's individual personhood, instead treating her as a static object which will definitively go through the same change as him because it doesn't have an identity of its own. In this way, Dorothy, as through the practice of emotional objectification, is treated as a tool for Wordsworth's own personal expression rather than an individual in her own right.

Dorothy's emotional objectification, however, serves as the impetus for Wordsworth's perceived connection with her. In creating a false shared experience through the displacement of his experience onto Dorothy, Wordsworth creates a connection between himself and Dorothy. He describes how "we stood together" (Wordsworth 302) to see Tintern Abbey. His description of Wordsworth also consistently uses the collective pronouns "we" and "us" to describe their experiences together, as he writes about how nature "inform[s] / The mind that is within us" (302). He even describes a single collective "mind," bridging the physical gap between himself and Dorothy to create an existence out of their shared sentiment. This connection, however, is a false one: because these sentiments were displaced onto Dorothy, they usurp her own emotions,

preventing Wordsworth from genuinely connecting to her just as he failed to genuinely connect to the cottage in "the Ruined Cottage."

Critic James Soderholm, however, through an analysis of "Tintern Abbey" as well as Dorothy Wordsworth's final poems, argues that Wordsworth's evocation of Dorothy at the end of the poem likely served as a genuine connection between brother and sister. Yet, Wordsworth, himself, recognizes the limits of their false connection. He writes that "If I should be where I no more can hear / Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams / Of past existence – wilt thou then forget" (Wordsworth 302). Wordsworth wonders if, when Dorothy is no longer in his sight, she will no longer remember their connection. His concern implicitly suggests, however, that Dorothy would not be able to connect to him when she is communicating through only her words (via letters etc.) and her perspective is less ambiguous, making Wordsworth unable to emotionally objectify her. Rather, it is Dorothy's physicality, her "voice" and "eyes" onto which he was able to displace his emotions. This clearly demonstrates the effect of emotional displacement: Wordsworth can only displace his emotions onto Dorothy when she is in sight of his imagination. The practice of having been emotionally objectified itself, however, further diminishes the credibility of her words, such that Wordsworth is not able to trust that she will not "forget" their connection through words alone.

Keats, similarly, treats Isabella as a passive object in his poem "Isabella, or a Pot of Basil." Through his depiction of Isabella as a manifestation of sentiment without agency over the events of her life, Keats is able to displace his emotions onto her. In Keats's telling of Boracchio's tale, Isabella's descent into madness is prompted entirely by events which she doesn't control or even witness: her brothers' murder of Lorenzo. Similarly, her further degradation, ultimately leading to her death, is prompted by her brothers' destruction of the pot

of basil, to which she did not consent; the culmination of Isabella's life is defined not by her but by her brothers, making her appear as an object defined by the actions of another. Louise Z. Smith interprets the poem as a consideration of Keats's "the role of imagination as mediator between dream and reality" (302). In this way, Keats's imagination imbues Isabella with the feeling of loss and the impact of mortality. Yet, this process of emotionally objectifying her limits her capacity to express and act for herself, and conveys to the reader that women are objects shaped by the perceptions of men.

The Romantics' practice of emotionally objectifying the marginalized subjects of their poetry was not just limited to women, however. In "Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth uses the presence of "Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods, / Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire / The Hermit sits alone" (299) to characterize his perception of the landscape. Wordsworth displaces onto them his sentiment of tranquility and wonder, describing them as "beauteous forms" (300) upon seeing Tintern Abbey. Thus, based on his own experience, Wordsworth treats the "Hermit" and the "vagrant" as poets who choose to be excluded from society as opposed to marginalized people who are involuntarily removed from it. Wordsworth's positive description of their circumstances as "beauteous" limits their capacity to express discontent in the circumstances of homelessness and isolation.

Emotional objectification of lower classes was a major theme in Wordsworth's work which influenced his approach to style and form. In the "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," Wordsworth describes how he chose to use language more associated with the lower class: "Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-

exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated" (Wordsworth 305). Wordsworth fetishizes the lower class, treating them as a manifestation of his desire for dissociation with the industrial city as opposed to humans with identities in their own right. When Wordsworth describes the condition of "low and rustic" life, he claims that "our feelings exist in a state of greater simplicity." He utilizes the pronoun "our" to describe a phenomenon to which he is not privy, creating ambiguity between himself and the poor to lend credence to the emotions he displaces onto them. As a result, this displacement of Wordsworth's personal sentiments onto "low and rustic life" results in their objectification, wherein individuals in lower class are used as a tool to express Wordsworth's emotions, defined by Wordsworth's fetishized perception of those in poverty as more in tune with their emotions rather than their personal reality.

And while Wordsworth's tone and style are certainly a departure from the highly formal, structured poems of the 17th century, he also does not necessarily utilize the style of "low and rustic life." Nor did Wordsworth's use of "rustic" language constitute an ethnography or genuine examination of lower classes' use of language: in fact, Wordsworth's appropriation of "rustic" language came alongside a silence on the work of writers from the lower classes, according to Scott McEathron. Thus, it is clear that Wordsworth's use of "rustic" language represented an objectification of lower-class peoples that originated from ignorance or intentional disregard of lower classes' identity and culture. In spite of using and praising their language, Wordsworth does not afford people of "low and rustic life" an opportunity to express themselves, but rather expresses the emotions he perceives in place of them. This clearly demonstrates how the process of emotional objectification can suppress the voices of the marginalized people who are often subject to it.

Coleridge's most prominent use of emotional objectification provides an insight into the effects of emotional objectification as it details how a poet uses orientalized peoples as an object of expression. In recent years, orientalism in Romantic literature has become a major subject in scholarship, with a variety of interpretations of the culture of exoticism and manifestations of imperialism. Susan Taylor proposed that the variety of discussions around the East in British Romanticism demonstrate how orientalism reflected the issues in British society, even those which did not directly pertain to the East. This flexibility of the oriental subject to be framed within British societal issues demonstrates their objectification, as their identity is minimized in order to address British societal issues. It is within this framework that Coleridge's treatment of his oriental subject in "Kubla Khan" presents the emotional objectification of an oriental entity, who also serves more broadly as a model for the treatment of ethnic minorities as objects in Romantic literature as a whole.

In the first paragraphs of "Kubla Khan," a poet falls asleep while reading that "'Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto: and thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall'" (Coleridge 464). Coleridge does not present further historical background on the Khan Kubla or the Mongol dynasty to which he belonged. Rather, the Khan Kubla is defined entirely by his creation of a large palace and garden in a world that remains starkly uncharacterized. Coleridge reveals to the reader, as a result, the first inklings of the Khan Kubla's objectification, as the world he inhabits seems shallow and his identity not worth discussing.

In spite of this, when the poet falls asleep, he recognizes that the very idea of the Khan Kubla as an oriental object spurs poetic thought: Coleridge writes that the poet "has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if

that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the corresponded expressions, without any sensation of consciousness of effort" (464). Coleridge's description of the poet's "vivid confidence" in being able to write following his dreams pertaining to the Khan Kubla demonstrates how t__. The poem's perception of the Khan Kubla, however, is shallow: he appears as an flat "image" rather than a three-dimensional person. Further, Coleridge's description of the poetic process as the "images" appearing as "things" demonstrates how the poet's imagination allows the apparently shallow Khan Kubla to become a living thing as the "Kubla Khan," as the poet titles him in his own poem (Coleridge 465). The Mongol ruler's newly assigned identity as the "Kubla Khan," however, usurps his true historical identity as "the Khan Kubla." Reversing his title eliminates the identity and the history of the historical Khan Kubla, allowing the poet to objectify him. Humphrey House, for instance, proposes that the poem ends with the poet effectively becoming a holy person himself through his recognition of a fusion of pleasure and holiness in part one. Though it is the Khan Kubla who initially embodies this role, his objectification through the poem's displacement of a new history onto him allows the poet to take on the role in his place. This creates a false connection between the poet and the Khan Kubla, as they both share in the beauty of the dome in spite of the horrors outside it.

According to Keats, individuals, like Dorothy, Isabella, and the Khan Kubla who were objectified through Romantic poetry, constitute objects when they don't have a soul. In a letter to his siblings George and Georgiana, Keats describes that "in the highest terms for human nature… There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in millions – but they are not Souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself." (Keats 1025). The Soul, which defines "human nature," is established through the presence of an "identity." Yet, the very nature

of an object as something which is defined by the actions of another means that it cannot be "personally itself." According to Keats, the Soul is made up of "*Intelligence* – the *human heart* (as distinguished from intelligence or Mind) and the *World* or *Elemental space* suited for the proper action of *Mind and Heart* on each other for the purpose of forming the *Soul*" (Keats 1025). Keats distinguishes the "Elemental space," presumably a space categorized by the presence of objects, as a setting in which the Mind and Heart" are able to form the Soul. It is clear, then, that objects are not an active participant, nor do they have souls, but rather serve to characterize the experience of humans who do have souls: this parallels Keats's treatment of the Grecian Urn, for example, because he displaces his sentiment onto the Urn in order to speak as it, using it to characterize his mode of life. When British Romantics emotionally objectify marginalized peoples by displacing their emotions onto them, the British Romantics propose that these marginalized peoples, too, are soul-less. Thus, their power in society and capacity for expression are both limited, as they are ascribed neither the "Mind" nor the "Heart" that would have made them worth listening to, in the eighteenth-century British conception. Nor do the Romantics' failed attempts at connection serve to address this issue: rather, the British Romantics falsely connect to marginalized peoples under the guise of them being objects in order to connect to other upper-class, privileged peoples.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps it was the sentiment emotional objectification created of marginalized bodies being unable to express themselves which ushered many Romantics towards conservatism later in life. Though Keats died young, Wordsworth and Coleridge both lived to become moderate conservatives in their late lives. Scholar Wallace W. Douglas characterized Wordsworth's conservatism as embedded in his support of the Tories, "the anti-industrialist party which seemed most likely to preserve the landed interest" (387-388). It may have been the repeated practice of emotional objectification, which encouraged Wordsworth to look at lower classes as objects lacking both a personal identity and the capacity to express themselves, which led him to significantly supporting the upper-class, with whom he could more genuinely connect. Similarly, according to Thomas H. Landess, Coleridge's conservatism was characterized predominantly by his belief in the need for a large government to regulate morals and religion, such that he called "the abandonment of the savage state an ABSOLUTE DUTY" (qtd. in Landess 858). Perhaps the objectification of religious minorities and peoples with different moralities than his own led Coleridge to believe that their practices were so unacceptable, and the people with those identities so lacking agency that they were incapable of changing them, that the government must regulate them.

Certainly, this trajectory demonstrates the dangers of emotional objectification, both in the eighteenth century and in a contemporary context. Emotional objectification originated in a pursuit of connection, both by improved personal expression and by sharing ideas and experiences with the dominant material of the era, in a time of increasing isolation and division. To adapt to the Industrial Era and consumer culture, the British Romantic poets began to use objects as part of their poetic toolset. These objects served a dual purpose: for one, the Romantic

poets displaced their emotions onto them as a mode of expression. They also served as a connector: when Romantics would displace emotions onto these objects, the perception of a shared emotion or experience allowed the poet to develop a sense of connection to the object, and the shared experience of that connection allowed people to connect to one another. This capacity defined the poet's role in the industrial era: the poet served to provide meaning to the seemingly meaningless objects defined by industrialism. In this way, the poetic use of the object would allow the poet a perennial relevance in a society that began to shift away from artisans and hand-made artistry.

Yet, the practice of displacing emotion onto marginalized bodies ultimately worsened the very divisions Romantics had initially intended to address. Romantics expanded the practice of displacing emotions onto objects to animate objects, particularly marginalized people. Amidst the growing divisions of the Industrial Era, the emotional displacement onto people would theoretically serve as a mechanism of connection. However, the process of displacing emotions onto an object necessitates that the object in question is not allocated emotions or ideas of its own which could conflict with those it was assigned. The Romantics did not attempt to displace their emotions onto the privileged class of which they were a part because they recognized their peers as possessing identities and thoughts in their own right. In contrast, marginalized bodies seemed a suitable candidate for the displacement of emotions because of their perceived lack of consciousness. However, the Romantics failed to create meaningful connections through this process. The connections, like those to objects, were false, as Romantics' displacement of emotions onto an object depends on the rejection of its genuine identity: the perceived shared experience is simply the poet's own experience displaced onto the object rather than a true instance of empathy. Furthermore, in practice, displacing emotions onto marginalized bodies

only served to further reinforce the conception that under-privileged peoples lack consciousness and minimize their capacity for self-expression.

The legacy of emotional objectification certainly continues to have a major impact on contemporary society. All of the marginalized entities I discussed in Chapter II of this paper, including women, impoverished people, and ethnic minorities, continue to face issues with people who are unwilling to listen when they advocate for change in their communities.

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