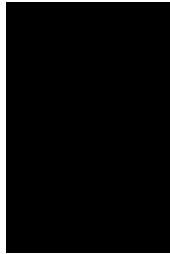


Coleridge: Organic Unity & “The Eolian Harp”

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Coleridge among the Romantics

- > Biography
- > Hayter: “opium [used regularly from 1796], which had given or promoted the dreams, had taken away the power to profit from them poetically.”
- > Least threatening of the Romantic poets
 - Makes fewest claims to prophetic fire
 - Unceremonious display of rich mind & sensibility
- > Quintessentially Romantic
 - Captures the world of supernatural
 - Remarkable and touching intimacy



Imagination

Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria*

- > A living organism consists of many parts, but one life courses through them all; they work together to serve that one life or living principle.
- > Concept of Organic Unity: Imagination struggles to idealize and to unify. (pp. 487-88)
 - ... “the spirit of poetry” must “circumscribe itself by rules”; it must “embody [itself] in order to reveal itself.”
 - “The organic form,... is innate” (488).
- > “What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other....”
- > “Poet... brings the whole soul of man into activity.”

Imagination

- Primary and Secondary Imagination
 - Primary = living and prime agent (poetry)
 - "primary IMAGINATION ... is the living Power and prime Agent of all human perception... a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."
 - Secondary = an echo of the former (poem)
 - "The secondary Imagination ... is an echo of the [primary], co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation."
- Example: a wind chime.
 - Wind = Primary imagination, Poetry
 - Chime = poet / conscious will of the Secondary Imagination
 - Music = Secondary Imagination, poem

"The Eolian Harp" (1796)



- Conveys the workings of a benign intelligence (lines 1-9)
- Avoids didacticism to become simply appreciative of place (9-12)
- Silence broken only by sound of harp (15-17)
 - Establishes parallel
- As wind rises, syntax becomes more elaborate (17-25).
- Puts own stamp on transference of external sensation to internal life. (26-34)
 - Result is complexity of response.

- All things (human & natural) celebrate life of interconnection, then returns to self & Sara (30-35).
 - Result is sense of universal benevolence
 - Creates pattern Wordsworth will use in "Tintern Abbey."
- Synthesizing work of God, work of poet, love of man & woman, all together in love-filled universe.
 - His mind becomes like the harp (41-43).
 - Passive brain breaks into active & creative thought (44-48).
- Sara's reproof (49-54) does not slow or stop his flight of imagination.
 - Two reasons: gift from God & acknowledgement of demands of human company.
