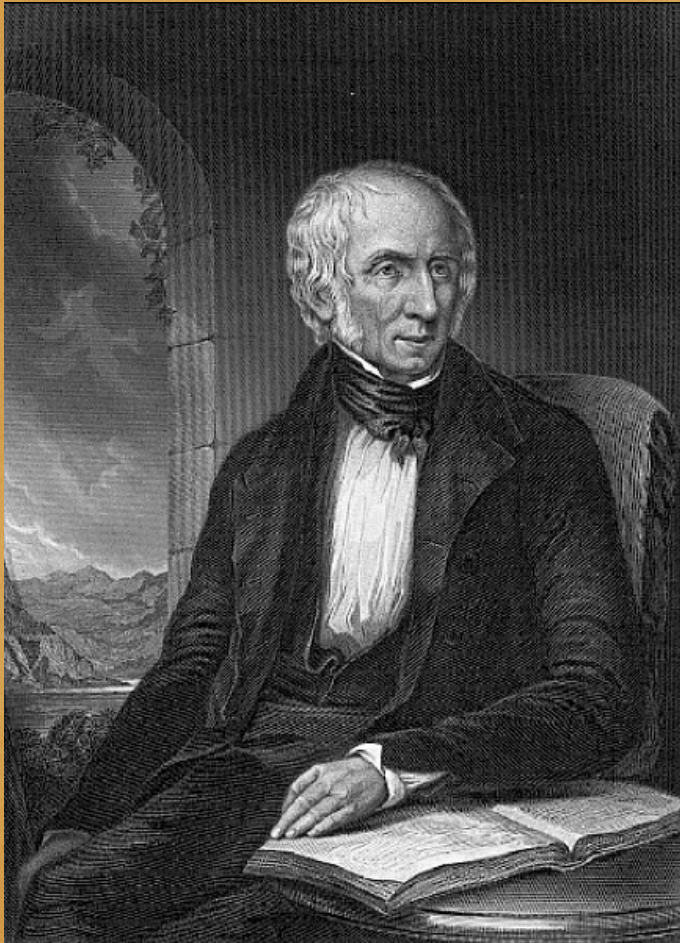


Humanities 4:
Lecture 25
Wordsworth and Coleridge

William Wordsworth



- 1770-1850
- Early death of both parents (at 7 & 13) and then the separation from his siblings
- Befriended Coleridge & Southey
- Traveled in Europe
- England's Poet Laureate (1843-50)

Select Bibliography

- *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) with Coleridge
 - Contains "Tintern Abbey"
- *The Prelude* (written 1798-99, but first published posthumously)
- *The Recluse* (finished by 1805, but too personal to publish)
 - Contains "Poem to Coleridge"
- *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807)
 - Contains "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"

Ode: Intimations of Immortality

Topics of Stanzas

- I-II: author looks back, wistfully, at past time, when nature could be seen freshly and in its glory.
- III: Amidst nature's joy, author has "a thought of grief". He calls on nature and a shepherd boy to help him fend it off.
- IV: Similar to III, but now author questions where the "glory", "visionary gleam" and "the dream" have gone.
- V-VI: A explains how our childlike apprehension of heaven dies away as we get older.

Stanzas, cont.

- VII: Describes how 6-yr old boy imitates episodes from adult life.
- VIII: Asks why boy strives so mightily to grow up.
- IX-X: Our memories of youth have not been extinguished, and one can still draw on this.
- XI: Closes with idea that even as an adult he can still enjoy nature's pleasures, in fact, even more so in certain respects.

Literary Form

- 11 Stanzas, of varying length (8-39)
- Variable rhyming schemes
 - Skipping lines
 - “Sight... light” (l)
 - Couplets
 - “...may,
By night or day” (l)
 - Within a line
 - “to me did seem” (l)
- Iambic lines of varying length (2-5)
“True wit/ is Na/ture to/ advan/tage dress'd,
What oft/ was thought,/ but ne'er/ so well/ express'd.”
Pope (“heroic couplet” with iambic pentameter)

Style

- Explicit emphasis on feeling, simplicity, and the pleasure of beauty (as opposed to rhetoric, ornament, and formality)
- Subject matter is everyday life (children, nature, day and night, emotions)

View of Human Nature

- Platonic conception of man
 - Knowledge of the forms at birth, which is then obscured, but we still have access to them through recollection, which allows him to reclaim the significance of his life after lack of emotional response to nature.
 - Advantages are gained through mature understanding
- Similarities with Rousseau
 - Man can be corrupted by civilization.
 - Immediate connection with nature through childhood is crucial.

W's Conception of Romanticism

- Nature or Solipsism
 - The “naturalistic” reading
 - The solipsistic reading
- Solution
 - Organic Relation between Self and Nature

Samuel Taylor Coleridge



- 1772-1834
- European travels, esp. Germany (tr. Schiller)
- Interest in religion (unitarian & pantheism)
- “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798)
- “Kubla Khan” (1798)
- Opium addict

“Dejection: An Ode”

Topics of Stanzas

- I-II: tells of the current state of the weather as warning of a storm on the seas, but does not alarm him as it should.
- III-IV: What should arouse his passions is not nature, but something within.
- V: Joy is praised as the spirit and power that enlivens us and marries us to nature.
- VI: In earlier times, he felt able to overcome obstacles, but now they affect him more, robbing him of his imagination and understanding.

Stanzas, cont.

- VII: describes the wind in its various manifestations (with personification)
- VIII: Sleep and the relief and joy it brings is described, esp. for the Lady.

Literary Form

- 8 Stanzas, of varying length (8-32)
- Variable rhyming schemes
 - I, ABBA CCDD EEFF GHGH IIJJ
 - II, ABBA CC DEDE FF GG HHII
 - III, AA BCCB DD
 - IV, AA BCBB CB DEDE
 - V, AABB CDCC CD EEFGFG
 - VI, ABAB CCDD DEDE FGFG FFHH
- Iambic meter of various length (trimeter through pentameter)

Content

- The source of human emotions lies exclusively in man, not in nature.
 - Joy and imagination in particular are prized.
 - Man must rectify whatever feeling of “numbness” or dejection he may feel.
- Focus on nature (rather than classical ideals) and on children (but less idealized)
 - Note that nature has things done to it.

Content, cont.

- Coleridge favors musical effects over plain language, unlike Wordsworth.
 - In VII, the lost child screams like the wind.
 - More of an emphasis on the exotic, strange or bizarre, again unlike Wordsworth.
- Like Wordsworth, Coleridge marks distinction between perspective of children and adults (and stresses negative features of the latter).