

**English Literature of the Romantic Period, 1798-1832**  
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**English Romantic Poetry 1: Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

Hello everybody, we continue the sessions on English Romantic poetry. Today's session is devoted to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the other big romantic of the first-generation 1772 to 1834 Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

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Poems: Dejection: An Ode; 'Kubla Khan; The Eolian Harp

Coleridge was deeply influenced by psychology and many of his works are informed by his reading in this area. In Coleridge, emotion, imagination are merged with philosophical meditations on both emotion and imagination, just as he seeks to explicate them in his literary criticism. Coleridge explored the blurring of conscious and unconscious states, mixed reason with passion and even faith (the Ancient mariner would be such a poem) and dramatized emotions. He adopted the language of the senses very effectively, as Kerry McSweeney's book notes. Coleridge, unlike WW, is interested in the psychology of emotions. He has both sets, feeling and thought, as David Vallins explains it: emotions, intuitions and sensations and 'intellectual or imaginative creativity which they describe as involving an active interpretation or reorganization of the materials of perception and sensation'.

Coleridge wished to unify sentiment, the intuitive and feeling with the rational. In the Notebooks STC would write of "every sense, each thought, & each sensation/Lived in my eye, transfigured, not suppress'

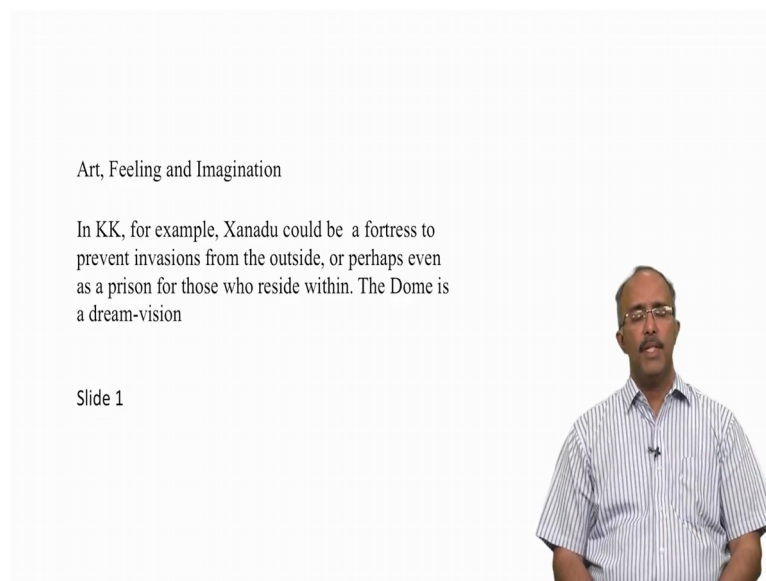


Some of the points as part of the discussion include dejection An Ode, Kubla Khan, the Eolian Harp. Coleridge was deeply influenced by psychology, philosophy and much of his work is informed by his reading in these areas, and you will see influence of it in even his pros work like biography or literary. Coleridge differs from Wordsworth, emotions, imagination are merged with philosophical meditations and he wants to build a theory of emotions and imaginations. And much of what we have heard in previous sessions on primary and secondary imaginations, fancy and imagination comes from this kind of influence from philosophy and psychology. Coleridge explored the blurring of conscious and unconscious states, mixed reasons and passion and event said at some point if you recall poems like the ancient Mariner.

He adapted the language of the senses very effectively as Kerry McSweeney's book notes. Coleridge unlike Wordsworth is interested in the psychology of emotions, he has both feeling and thought as David Vallins explains it; emotions, intuitions, sensations and also intellectual

or imaginative creativity. Coleridge wished to unify sentiments, the intuitive and feeling with the rational. In the notebooks the famous Samuel Taylor Coleridge notebook he would write, "of every sense, each thought and each sensation lived in my eye, transfigured not suppressed". The keyword that is "transfigured" it is modified. Some of you may recall what he has said, it is the mixing and merging of imaginations, sentiments and nature and passion that constitutes imagination. It is not simply imitating, it is the ability to modify it to make it your own.

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Our 1<sup>st</sup> theme in our Coleridge is art, feeling and imagination. In Kubla Khan, one of Coleridge's most famous poems, Xanadu could be a fortress to prevent invasions from the outside or perhaps a prison inside, the dome is a dream vision.

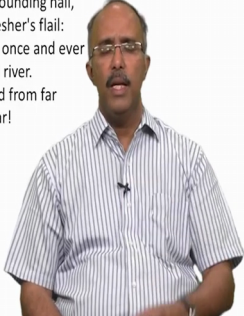
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In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree :  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea...

With walls and towers were girdled round:  
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery...

Coleridge, 'Kubla Khan'

A savage place! as holy and enchanted  
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon-lover  
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil  
seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants were  
breathing,  
A mighty fountain momently was forced:  
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst  
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,  
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:  
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever  
It flung up momently the sacred river.  
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far  
Ancestral voices prophesying war!




Here is your poems 1<sup>st</sup> section, starting with the famous, in Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree; and there is description of the walls, the gardens and later he moves it into description of a savage place which is described as holy and enchanted and the description of the river which is thrashing and panting, and this is description of the entire sequel with very strong verbs; the fountain momentarily falls and burst and things like that.

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A damsel with a dulcimer  
In a vision once I saw:  
It was an Abyssinian maid,  
And on her dulcimer she played,  
Singing of Mount Abora.  
Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,  
That with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!

Coleridge, 'Kubla Khan'



After that there is a parallel vision that emerges in the poet's mind and that is our focus coming up on your slide now. A damsel with a dulcimer in a vision once I saw. It was an Abyssinian maid; and on her dulcimer she played singing of Mount Abora, could I revive

within me her symphony and song, to such a deep delight twould win me that with music loud and long, I would build that dome in and, that sunny dome those caves of ice.


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But whether the vision of the Abyssinian maid emerges from the tumult of stanza 2 (with the violent images) is a moot point. This stanza (3) is more pleasant, dreamed by the poet-singer. The sensual effects of this newly-created paradise are far more aural than visual, and the sounds that emanate from the dulcimer are much softer and very different from the sounds of the fountain in the second stanza. Critics have argued that the poem is divided between the pagan half and the Christian half, resembling Coleridge's own intellectual and philosophical ambivalences.

the woman wailing for her demonlover, for erotic possession by an unknown primal other, and who personifies the "daemonic" aspect of Coleridgean imagination. This woman is in sharp contrast to the idealized figure of the Abyssinian maid.

But STC modifies the ability of art to recreate the world. He introduces the conditional 'could' in the crucial section of the poem.

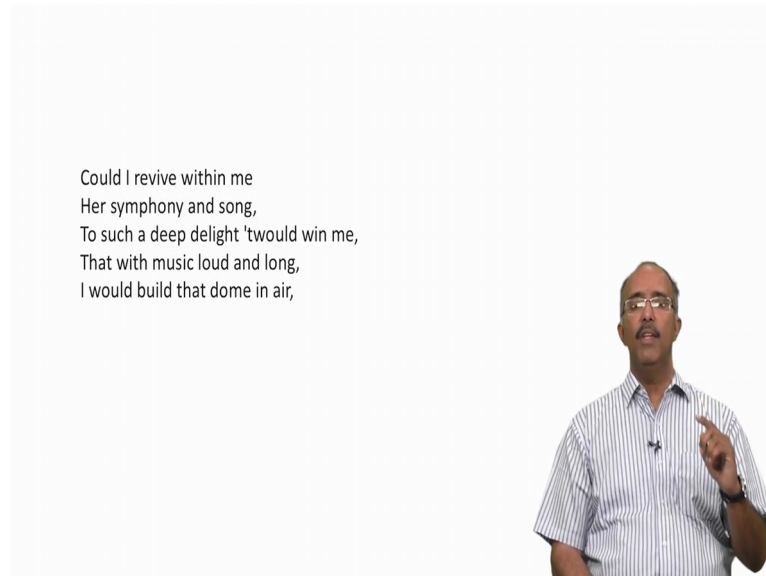
Slide 3



Whether the vision of the Abyssinian maid emerges from the tumult of stanza 2 with a violent imagery like I just said of water thrashing about rolling down the mountain, the noise, it is a moot point. This stanza is more pleasant in a dreamed state. And the sensual effects of this newly created Paradise are far more aural than visual. The sound that emanate from the dulcimer are softer and different from the sound of water flowing down the mountain and the caverns under the garden as Coleridge has famously described. Critics have argued that the poem is divided between the pagan half and the Christian half, resembling Coleridge's own intellectual and philosophical ambivalences.

The woman wailing for her daemon lover for erotic possession of the lover by an unknown primal other, and personifies the daemonic aspects of Coleridge's imagination. This woman is in sharp contrast to the idealised figure of the Abyssinian maid. So we have two woman there; the woman who is wailing for her daemon lover and the Abyssinians maid with the dulcimer. Coleridge modifies ability of art to recreate the world. He introduces a conditional "could" go back to the slide.

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Could I revive within me her symphony and her song? That is he is not saying I will, he is saying I will. There is a condition, could I revive within me all of that and let us see that again, “Could I revive within me her symphony and song to such a deep delight twould win me that with music loud and long I would build a dome in air. If I can revive a song I can build a dome, if I can recall the memory of the song I can build a dome. What he is saying is it is art, the song is art and in my mind mainly imagination, art and imagination revives the world that is in these lines starting with “could I revive within me” to “I would build the dome in air” what I am proposing is its art and imagination can revive the world, not that the dictate not the rule or order from the Emperor of Kubla Khan, art and imagination revive the world, but this depends suggests Coleridge on memory.


The language of the senses and sentiments are clearly centre to Coleridge as well and that is our next theme. The Eolian harp dedicated to Sara Coleridge open with the following and here it is on your slide now.

(Refer Slide Time: 6:05)

My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined  
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is  
To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o'ergrown  
With white-flower'd Jasmin, and the broad-leav'd  
Myrtle,  
(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)  
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,  
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve  
Serenely brilliant (such should Wisdom be)  
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents  
Snatch'd from yon bean-field! and the world so  
hush'd!  
The stilly murmur of the distant Sea  
Tells us of silence.

on the midway slope  
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,  
Whilst through my half-clos'd eye-lids I  
behold  
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on  
the main,  
And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;  
Full many a thought uncall'd and  
undrain'd,  
And 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, "The Eolian Harp"




My pensive Sara they soft cheek reclined thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is to sit beside our cot, our court overgrown with white flower jasmine and he goes on talking about the effect of nature and things like that.

(Refer Slide Time: 6:21)

STC moves from visual to aural, from limited views and perceptions to expanding ones here. The speaker becomes aware of silence through the one exception to it – the 'stilly murmur of the distant sea'. Stillness, silence and soft aural interruptions continue throughout the poem.

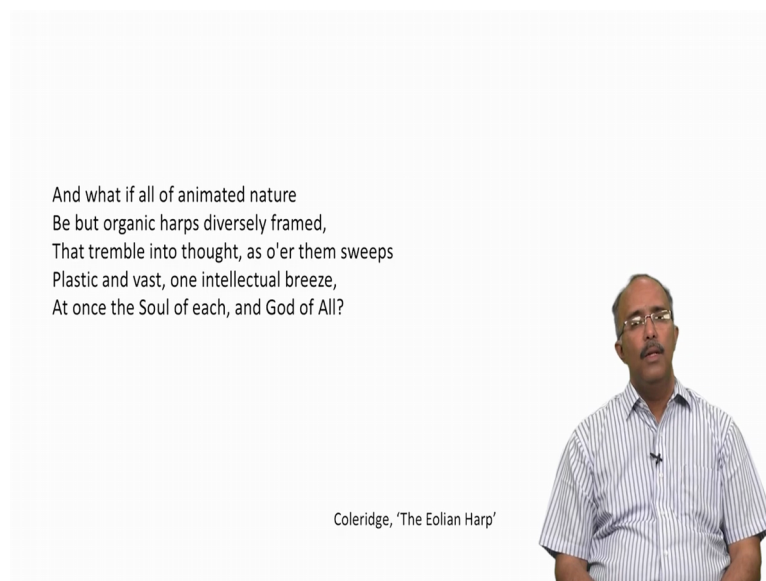
But what is important is the expansion of consciousness in the poem. In Stanza 1 the speaker refers to 'world so hushed!' Later, this becomes 'a world so filled;' Something animates the consciousness and limbs of the speaker:



Notice what he is doing, in the 1<sup>st</sup> section after poem my pensive Sara, he is talking about the move focus on the visual and then moves to the aural, from limited views and perceptions to expanding ones. By the time this section ends, he has moved on to something much vaster of Yaundar hill I stretch my limbs at noon he says, sun beams dance and he is already referred to the distant sea which tells of silence, Coleridge more from visual to aural, from limited views and perceptions to expanding ones.

The speaker becomes aware of silence through the one exception to it, the murmur the stilly murmur of the distant sea he said. So stillness, silence and soft aural interruptions continue throughout the poem. But what is important is the expansion of consciousness here, initially the world is hushed, later it becomes the world is so filled. Something animates the consciousness, what is that? The perceptual expansion from the narrow vision to a field vision, from a limited hearing to something else, from the immediacy of the cottage to the distant sea, the perceptual expansion leads Coleridge speakers to ask this coming up on your slide.

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What if all of animated nature be but organic harps diversely framed, that tremble into thought as over them sweeps plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze, at once the soul of each and God of all.



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The poem expands and contracts: from Sara and the cottage to the cosmos and back again. There is a desire to seek something more universal, but it keeps returning to Sara as well.

The Aeolian harp was an image for the human mind as a receptive instrument stirred only by external forces, responding to stimuli. Later, STC was unhappy about the image, and wished to present the mind as active.

The poem then is about the expansion of sense-perception, of becoming at one with the world.

But what if the sense-perceptions diminish? This would become the subject of STC's famous Dejection: An Ode, a poem that mourns the loss of Imagination.  
Slide 6



The poem one can argue expands and contracts from Sara and the cottage to the cosmos and back again. There is a desire to seek something more universal, Coleridge speakers wants to speak about universal but keeps returning to Sara. The Aeolian harp in Coleridge is an image for the human mind, it is the receptive instrument moulded, moved, affected by external forces primarily nature. However, in his later works Coleridge was not very happy about it because he began to believe that in the Aeolian harp image the mind is rather passive, the mind waits for something to affect it to move it, he wanted something more active that did mind as active and dynamic.

But in this particular poem of course the poem is about the expression of sense perception of becoming at one with the world. But Coleridge was also troubled by something else, what happens when our sense perception diminishes. In Dejection An Ode, another famous Coleridge poem this will be the central question, what happens when the sense perception when imagination is lost, coming up on your slide excerpts from Dejection An Ode.



(Refer Slide Time: 9:10)

All this long eve, so balmy and serene,  
Have I been gazing on the western sky,  
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:  
And still I gaze—and with how blank an  
eye!

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I see them all so excellently fair,  
I see, not feel how beautiful they are!


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My genial spirits fail ;  
And what can these avail  
To lift the smothering weight from off my  
breast?

I may not hope from outward forms to win  
The passion and the life, whose fountains  
are within.

new Earth and new Heaven,  
Undreamt of by the sensual and the  
proud—  
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous  
cloud—  
We in ourselves rejoice!

Coleridge, 'Dejection: An Ode'




He says, all evening watching the western sky but what does he say at the end of that, and still I gaze and with how blank an eye. It is now blank, I see but I do not perceive, he is making a distinction. Then he says, I see them all quite silently fair, I see not feel how beautiful they are. And then he says, my genial spirits fail imagination has failed. Having discovered that the perceptions are failing he comes to this conclusion, “I may not hope from outward forms to win the passion and the life who fountains are within”.

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Then he realizes:

I may not hope from outward forms to win  
The passion and the life, whose fountains are  
within.



Remember what I have just said, Coleridge proposed in the Eolian harp that the mind is like a harp and the external stimulate that fall on the mind cause the mind to ignite to become active, but he was unhappy with it because it assumed that the mind is just one block of

something like a stone or a couch potato or something like my colleagues would say just like a potatoes there you know no response to anything. Coleridge| thought that was little uncharitable towards the mind, he wanted to represent the mind something more active something more dynamic. In this particular poem he says, yes I am seeing but I am not feeling, the failure with imagination he then says it is not because of nature, it is not that nature has failed, my imagination has failed my mind has failed I am not perceiving things.


And then he says, I may not hope from outward forms to win the passion and the life whose fountains are within. We need to find ourselves our imagination within it has to be inside us, so even though there are visible forms present even though there is beauty present, even though there are great and grand sites there is no emotion, no heart connected with appearance of nature that is the visible language in nature has no communicative force no passion no life. Here Coleridge links perception with both sensorial and reflective abilities to see and to feel. Despondent at the loss of imagination he wonders, what happens when this fail, what happens when I am unable to connect to nature and that is what he is conclusion.

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The absence of feeling is also then the absence of thought, in STC's poem. Unlike WW, there is no transcendence of the setting. He requires external stimulus (outward forms), but is unable to obtain these.

But when he claims the fountains are within, STC has acquired an answer. If feeling and perception have failed, then the only option is reflection. Creativity may yet come through philosophical reflection:

new Earth and new Heaven,  
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—  
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—  
We in ourselves rejoice!



It is the absence of feeling which is also the absence of thought, unlike Wordsworth there is no transcendence of the setting. He requires external stimulus but is unable to obtain them, it is not that he is not in the lap of nature, it is because his own imagination has failed. When he claimed the fountains are within, Coleridge has acquired an answer as to whether he should transcend himself or anything if feeling and perception have failed and only option is reflection to think. Creativity may yet come through philosophical reflection.


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Scholars have claimed that 'the creative power of the mind depends...on a deep underlying state which Coleridge calls Joy,' (Dorothy Emett, cited in Vallins)

This turning into oneself is a key moment – for it returns to the power of the mind. The fountains refer to intellectual activity. In a state where the outward organic perceptions simply do not give access to the vital forces, the mind may construct a false sense of reality. Paul Magnuson writes:

Coleridge's turn from the figure of the passive poet as nature's instrument to one of the active, imaginative being is not merely a matter of his dejection and severe self-criticism. It reflects, rather, a shift in his thinking from a materialism he associated with David Hartley to a philosophy in which mind constructs the world.

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A man with glasses and a mustache, wearing a light-colored striped short-sleeved shirt, is shown from the chest up. He is looking slightly to the right and has his right hand raised to his forehead, adjusting his glasses. The background is plain white.

Scholars has claimed that the creative power of the mind depends on a deep underlying state which Coleridge calls Joy, Dorothy Emett comments cited in Vallins by Coleridge. Turning into oneself is a key moment for it returns to the power of the mind to be able to reflect, so it is not just sensuous, passionate, sentimental or responses, it is reflection. In other words, Coleridge is returning not only to pure imagination but intellectual activity. In a state where the outward organic perception simply do not provide access to the vital forces, the mind may construct a sense of reality. The well-known cleric called Magnusson writes, Coleridge's turn from the figure of the passive poet as nature's instrument to one of the active imaginative being is not merely a matter of dejection, it is a shift from materialism to philosophy in which mind constructs the world.

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But STC, as critics note, vacillates between various readings of Nature and inspiration too. David Ward writes:

On the one hand 'Nature' is the generous parent, responding to the child by giving 'Joy' as a dower. On the other hand we are the source of life in 'Nature': we *receive* from her, but in the first place we *give* her life. The active 'Soul' is the creator, equally, of 'Nature' and of 'Joy'.]



Coleridge, as critic notes, vacillates between various readings of nature and inspiration and you have a quote here from David Ward when he says, “on the one hand nature is a generous parents responding to the child” but there is also a sense that we need to acquire skills of reflection. Now you will notice in what we have said so far about Coleridge, Coleridge is not giving primacy to imagination as be all and all of the poetic mind, he is insisting on intellectual activity. So where he 1<sup>st</sup> where he began by speaking about everything outside expanding, later he will argue in Kubla Khan the dulcimer the music from the dulcimer which inspires him that recalling, art, imagination are the key factors in our recreation of the world that is the world is partially the product of, nature is partially the product of an active mind.

We receive from nature that we also have to give to nature. In dejection An Ode called the (( )) (14:10) famous writes, “ Oh lady, we receive but what we give as in we can only receive from nature what we give, this is called its major contribution the shift from the passive acquisition of things (( ))(14:24) the mind to transforming the mind into a collaring of imaginative thinking. Reflection is central therefore to Coleridge’s idea to poetry itself, thank you.