



Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems

By Jack Stillinginger

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Jack Stillinginger establishes and documents the existence of numerous different authoritative versions of Coleridge's best-known poems: sixteen or more of *The Eolian Harp*, for example, eighteen of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and comparable numbers for *This Lime-Tree Bower*, *Frost at Midnight*, *Kubla Khan*, *Christabel*, and *Dejection: An Ode*. Such multiplicity of versions raises interesting theoretical and practical questions about the constitution of the Coleridge canon, the ontological identity of any specific work in the canon, the editorial treatment of Coleridge's works, and the ways in which multiple versions complicate interpretation of the poems as a unified (or, as the case may be, disunified) body of work. Providing much new information about the texts and production of Coleridge's major poems, Stillinginger's study offers intriguing new theories about the nature of authorship and the constitution of literary works.

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Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems By Jack Stillinger Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #5702857 in Books
- Published on: 1994-05-12
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.50" h x .85" w x 6.38" l, 1.31 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 272 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Stillinger's proposal, elucidated with such candour and sceptical good sense is surely to be welcomed..."--*The Wordsworth Circle*

From the Back Cover

Textual pluralism holds that there can exist more than one authoritative version of a literary work, and that only by viewing the collective versions can the constitution of a work be seen. In *Coleridge and Textual Instability*, Jack Stillinger establishes and documents the existence of numerous different authoritative versions of Coleridge's best-known poems: sixteen or more of *The Eolian Harp*, for example, eighteen of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and comparable numbers for *This Lime-Tree Bower*, *Frost at Midnight*, *Kubla Khan*, *Christabel*, and *Dejection: An Ode*. Such multiplicity of versions raises interesting theoretical and practical questions about the make-up of the Coleridge canon, the ontological identity of any specific work in the canon, the editorial treatment of Coleridge's works, and the ways in which multiple versions complicate interpretation of the poems as a unified (or, as the case may be, disunified) body of work. Providing much new information about the texts and production of Coleridge's major poems, Stillinger's study offers intriguing new theories about the nature of authorship and the composition of literary works.

About the Author

Jack Stillinger is at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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