

Coleridge's Imagination

'The Romantic movement' can be correctly interpreted as the revolt of imagination against reason, intellect and prosaic realism. The romantics believed, as Bowra puts it, that the creative imagination should be closely connected with a peculiar insight into an unseen order behind visible things. Their effort was in Samuel C. Chew's words, "to live constantly in the world of the imagination ~~above~~ above and beyond the senseless, phenomenal world." For them the creations of imagination were "forms more real than living men". The part that imagination plays in the poetry of Coleridge is too obvious to need any elaboration. The writer of 'Kubla Khan', 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel' answered well his own description of the ideal poet!

" His flashing eyes, his
floating hair!
Weave a circle round
him thrice,
And close your eyes
With holy dread
For he on honey-dew
hath fed,
And drunk the milk of
Paradise.

Shelley himself would have
been envious of such a ro-
mantic poet! Dorothy Words-
worth wrote about Coleridge
" He has more of the poetic
eye in fine frenzy rolling
than I ever witnessed." Swi-
nburne compared him to those
" footless birds of paradise"
which spend all their lives in
perpetual flight and subsist
only on falling dew.
While in his creative work
Coleridge worked with his tee-
ming but delicate imagina-
tion tempered by an unerring
artistic sense, in his criticism
he made a strong plea for the

imaginative freedom of the poet. In his 'Biographia Literaria' he gave an authoritative definition of the nature and function of imagination. In putting a special stress on imagination as against dry rationalism, Coleridge emerged as a true representative of the 'Romantic movement' in England.

The end.

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