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Ancient Mariner as a Romantic poem — Theme

Coleridge and Wordsworth are the two great apostles of Romantic Movement in English literature. Their typical Ballads gave proper direction and purpose to this movement. They transformed the very shape of English Poetry and brought it to a new turn. The Romanticism is characterised by its heightened sensibility, love for Nature, revolutionary zeal, imaginative faculty, new experiments in verse, liberty and simplicity of diction, humanism and expression of Melancholy. The Romantic poets take little interest in their existing social problems and roam in the Medieval world of Supernaturals and wonders. Coleridge's Poetry reflects all these traits in abundance.

The Ancient Mariner is the master piece of Romantic poems and displays all the distinct features of Romanticism like 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel', it is also a dream poem, but Coleridge's artistic presentation of details imparts credibility to it. The central theme of the poem is the Cardinal belief about 'Sin', Suffering and Forgiveness. The Mariner commits a sin by killing Albatross, a bird that loves him. The Polar Spirit punishes him by condemning him to suffer from the agonies of loneliness. At last, he is forgiven, but he teaches the necessity of love and reverence to all creatures of God.

A. haque "He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small."

Like a true Romantic, Coleridge rejects reason and prefers impulse and imagination. His eyes roll from earth to Heaven and Heaven to earth. He escapes from the reality to the mystic world of dream. Ancient Mariner is the creation of his powerful imagination. Unlike Wordsworth, he believes that the impressions that we receive from the Nature are the reflection of our own thoughts.

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The following lines reveal Coleridge's pectoral ability, when he refers to the agonies of Mariner

" And every tongue, through utter draught,
Was withered at the root

We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot "

A. haque
Coleridge is a true predecessor of Keats in sensuousness. He records very minutely the colour of various objects of Nature. His images are derived from water, sky and changes of weather like Shelley, Coleridge also presents natural elements as symbols of his thoughts. Facts of human life are often expressed through objects of or process of Nature. In 'Kubla Khan' the river stands for life. Christabel is a struggle between Good and Evil. In this present poem, the wanton killing of Albatross is a violation of Natural sanctity that becomes a Christian emblem like a cross. The smooth sailing of the ship symbolises progress and success, while its motionlessness shows complete paralysis of will. Draught symbolises Mariner's miseries and rain represents nature's blessings, they are showered after Mariner blesses the water-snakes.

Coleridge's treatment of supernatural is the superb of all the Romantics. He links supernaturalism with human psychology. He blends natural with supernatural, raising us above terror that enchants rather than repels. The tale of Mariner is the tale of supernatural powers. Actually, the very centre of Coleridge's art lies in his faculty of evoking the mystery of things. He creates mysterious atmosphere in Ancient Mariner. Every natural phenomenon, the sun rise, the blowing of the winds, the rise of moon, the twinkling of stars, assumes mysterious character.

As a reaction against the poetic artificiality of the 18th Century and heroic couplet, Coleridge introduces old Ballad metre with a great mastery. His diction is free from artificiality. It has naturalness and simplicity of language. His style is simple and straight. His love for music and lyricism can be seen in

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the following lines.

" Alone, alone, all, all alone
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony. "

Though the critics level some charges against Coleridge, he is called the highest priest of Romanticism. His poetry is the most finished, supreme embodiment of all that is purest and most ethereal in the Romantic spirit.