

Scientific and Mythical Approach to S.T. Coleridge's *the Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

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ABSTRACT

For the first time in the history of English literature, a new age emerged with its quite different styles and thoughts from its previous one which took the people's unconscious mind into the world of nature and its mysterious beauty. It gave rise in the field of literature to self expressions, love for nature, the use of common man's language and so and so on. This was the age of Romanticism, or the Romantic Age. This age produced many eminent literary figures among them was a most prolific and distinguished one; S.T. Coleridge who with another well-known personality, William Wordsworth, wrote a world famous book Lyrical Ballads (1798). Contrary to the Neo-classical age, it put stress onto the free expressions in the poetry, and rejected the use of sophisticated words, as well as the rules of writing a poem. Full of natural beauty and adventures, this age also saw the development in scientific thoughts which were going parallel to its mythical one. This paper, "Scientific and Mythical Approach to S.T. Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" discusses both the approaches in the context of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" with a brief outline of Romanticism, Mythology, Science, Neo-classicism, and the Nature.

1. Introduction

No one can escape the questions that the world is struggling to survive under the air of highly industrialized, capitalized, materialized and technologized society. Since when the move of the people stepped out of the natural world, a very peculiar fear to them began to appear which not only brought threats to the human beings, but also to the nonhuman organisms. For the extreme will for wealth and money, the modern society has started neglecting the nature and its reserves which are limited. Exploitation of the natural resources at a greater speed, admittedly, has pushed the whole human race into the room of perils. Global warming, degradation in ozone layer, contaminated air, water, etc. are the problems in front of the people's eyes that are becoming a challenge day by day for them, today. When this began to happen, and when the people understood its ghastly consequences upon the entire entities of the Earth, they became serious, and began to work for preserving the environment. Their inclination towards the nature started working.

To consider the issues, intellectuals from every field of study, came together, and contributed, or are contributing to tackle the hazards with their own findings. As for the literature, and its scholars, their roles in this field are worthy of note. In the history of English literature, Romanticism or the Romantic Age is a period where the authors, and especially, the poets, like William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, William Blake, W. B. Yeats, with many others touched the untouched world through their power of imaginations and personal experiences. Romanticism which is defined as "a literary, artistic, and philosophical movement originating in the 18th century, characterized chiefly by a reaction against emotions, and marked specially in English literature by sensibility and the use of autobiographical materials, an exaltation of the primitive and the common man, an appreciation of external nature, a predilection for melancholy and the use in poetry of older verse

forms." (Merriam-webster)." This becomes clear from the definition that the writers of this particular age through their literary pens drew the people's unconscious mind to think scientifically over the excess use of the natural splendor.

Contrary to the Neo-classical Age, the age of Romanticism, as the above definition entirely depicts, talks of Natural beauty, its significance to the human life, the Neo-classical Age is completely against it. Neoclassicism, which is "also Neo-classicism; from Greek neos, "new" and Greek klasikos, "of the highest rank" was a western cultural movement in the decorative arts, literature, theatre, music, and architecture that drew inspiration from the art and culture of classical antiquity." (Wikipedia). With the definition, there appears a rift between the Neo-classical age and the Romanticism.

It is not so that scientific perception just emerged in the age of Romanticism, it had been breathing since the existence of the human race. However, it is true that it was under the unconscious and stereotypical mind of the people. It was subjugated by the orthodox school of the society. But later, Science which by definition is "a systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe" (Wilson, 71), provoked the superstitious thoughts of the people to be rationalistic, to be scientific. And this transformation in them invoked them to consider the nature scientifically, rationally going against spiritually or mythologically. However, this development in scientific mind started treating nature as other. This otherness brought into it disaster which the present world is passing through.

Clapping goes to the literary intellectuals, as well as those who are from other disciplines that have taken the nature into their consideration. Yes, the nature, which is defined as "Nature, in the broadest sense, is the natural, physical, or material world or universe. "Nature" can refer to the

phenomena of the physical world, and also to life in general. The study of nature is a large, if not the only, part of science. Although humans are part of nature, human activity is often understood as a separate category from other natural world." (Frederic & Denis), being the most important part of it, the humankind has now begun to make the most use of it. And this overuse of natural resources has disturbed the whole ecosystem of the planet by bringing imbalance into it.

S.T. Coleridge (21 Oct 1772- 25 July 1834)[5], who was a pioneer to the mysterious world of nature, through his eminent literary products, tried to snatch the mysteries which it possesses. "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*" which is his great work is here considered in two ways, that is, scientifically and mythologically. Mythology, according to the definition, "may either refer to the study of myths in general, or a body of myths, regarding a particular subject. Today, the study of myth continues in a wide variety of academic fields, including folklore studies, philosophy, psychology, and anthropology." (Von Franz). It is a central part of the human culture across the world. Their myths keep them united and move them to respect their own culture, but it started losing its value with the rise of science which not only disturbed its glory, but also its essence to the human race.

2. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Published in 1797-98, it is the longest major poem by Coleridge that predominantly narrates a story of some mariners who go for a sea voyage. During their journey into the vast sea, they face a lot of difficulties. Except one who kills the *Albatross* all die in their journey. This adventurous journey pin point to the entire theme of the Romantic Age where stress was on self expressions, love and worship of nature, subjectivity and emphasis on individualism, spontaneity, and liberty from rules in writing poetry etc. Besides these themes, the poem consists scientific and mythological approaches, too. The following lines are definitely the evidence for these perceptions:

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,

We hailed it in God's name.

In Christianity, this is a holy bird. Everybody admires it. This is overt from the above lines where the mariners call it by God's name. Definitely, they treat it like God. This is the mythological point of view of the poem. Later when the mariner kills it and the rest of his companions argue over the death of the *Albatross*, one can here see the confictions between the rationalistic and mythological perspectives of the poem.

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work' em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.

Without any questions, the poem with other meanings, deals with the science and the myths that show the developments of the scientific and rationalistic mind in the late 18th and early 19th century society.

3. Conclusion

Having innumerable meanings in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", Samuel Taylor Coleridge with his simple and flexible language, has clearly drawn the picture of his time which had started looking forward to rationalistic thoughts not entirely neglecting the myths which is "a folklore genre consisting of narratives that play fundamental role in a society, such as foundational tales or origin myths. The main characters in myths are usually gods, demigods, or super natural humans." (Bascom 9). While studying the ballad, all elements of myths come together before the sights.

As for the scientific or rationalistic thoughts, the ballad shades light even on that. When the mariners kill the bird *Albatross*, and the weather becomes favorable for them, their mythical mind which was earlier against the killing of the bird, takes a turn into the rationalistic notions. This is the main spot where one can meet the Coleridge's scientific idea that had begun prevailing over the age.

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