

Frost at Midnight

S.T. Coleridge

Introduction

Coleridge wrote "Frost at Midnight" in 1798 to celebrate the birth of his son, Hartley. The poem is a conversational poem that is written in blank verse; which is poetry written with regular metrical but unrhymed lines. "Frost at Midnight" could be seen as autobiographical poem because Coleridge discusses his childhood experience in a negative way and asserts the need to be reared in the lap nature. He believes that his son will enjoy greater freedom and healthier life if he was raised in the country side. In "Frost at Midnight," the poet asserts the importance of countryside; nature, in the formation of individual personality and also in inspiring the poet to write poetry. Coleridge's creed of nature has developed under the influence of Wordsworth.

Analysis

First Stanza

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange

And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.