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Dreams have been of interest to people since biblical days and before. Freud called them 'the royal road to the unconscious' seeing dream theory as central to the development of a depth psychology. Later work has shown the significance of their imagery for thinking and creative endeavour generally. In this most engaging book, (about which, like everything Coleridgean, I find there is far too much to say), one can see how much Coleridge anticipated these discoveries and tackled issues related to them which are still problematic to us now. Not that the author explicitly sets out to demonstrate this. On the contrary, she seems to have aimed to let the material speak for itself and rigorously to keep herself out of it except for elucidating the text. I think this is a pity. But as she says in her introduction: 'It is through a contextual study of an astonishing array of materials in the notebooks and marginalia that the truly complex nature of the imagination emerges'; and this she has certainly provided. The book is worth reading for the collection of quotes alone. In addition, these are organised and elucidated in such a way as to cast light on a wide range of concerns that preoccupied Coleridge and led to some of his most original ideas.

In setting Coleridge's thoughts on dreaming in the context of the debates that were preoccupying his contemporaries, Ford presents a survey - valuable in itself - of the ideas, scientific and otherwise, that were current at the end of the 18th century. For instance, Baxter's views on dreams, as caused by 'Beings' outside us, are strongly contrasted with other views of them as springing from physical states, or like those of Erasmus Darwin, as representing a delusional world of the mind from which volition and reason have been suspended - a 'sub-human' world.

Coleridge's relationship with these ideas and many of their proponents makes engrossing reading, extending far wider than the matter of dreaming itself. In fact Ford shows how none of them adequately encompassed his concerns and he eventually came up with his own theory. 'His interest was in discovering the psychological, subjective processes of dreams and the complex links between subjective and physiological processes'. She quotes him as sharing De Quincey's belief in the significance of childhood experiences, saying, for instance, that 'most of his bad dreams took their inspiration from his 'uneasy days' at Christ's Hospital.' (p.75) Unlike Darwin, though, he also believed they could be positively linked to poetry and drama. Ford interestingly suggests that Coleridge's theory of dreams and of the unity of the self could not always stand up to the implications of his actual dreams and nightmares with their horrific, violent and sexual scenes, often related to physical pain and to opium. How could these awful things proceed from himself 'the sediment of the unconscious mind'? 'The pain sometimes seemed to him as if attacking him from outside, demolishing his 'I'. Indeed in the examples given, he is most often the passive victim - having his genitals bitten, for example, or being grabbed and beaten; and there is some suggestion that this reflects the awake Coleridge who is 'destined to experience pain rather than inflict it'. Whether this be so or no, we see how the conflict for him between his impulses and his image of himself raised the whole issue of the relationship between subject and object in the dreams. He spoke of 'the dreamatis personae in which the subject is recognised as an object', and in 'The Pains of Sleep: 'All confused I could not know! whether I suffered, or I did'. (p.143) Sometimes he could recognise how much of what appeared in his dreams did so because it was so discordant with his waking sense of morality and intent. He proposed that 'In dreams, conscience becomes the 'real' antithesis of the 'I' and the dream and its character oppose this conscience' (p.37 & 50)

This struggle to understand the relationship between the conscious will of waking life and the more or less unacceptable aspects that are revealed in dreams is a central theme of the book. The mind emerges as a space with a part that is 'below consciousness'; and with an 'ego nocturnus' very different from the 'ego diurnus' yet linked to it by this 'below-consciousness' life and the images produced there, a notion of unconscious conflict and of 'fracturing' or splits in the self which has only in our own time become widely recognised. (p.51)

The idea of the dream space, the language of dreams and the processes involved all convey the sense of an inner drama whose images are often seen to represent symbolically the significant figures and feelings of the dreamer, as when Coleridge notes how the ships with their naked masts and billowing sails of his dream 'instantly lead to Sara as the first waking thought'. (p.65) Elsewhere, Ford quotes his reference to the 'image forming or reforming power', as in poetry; and the 'whimsical transfer of familiar Names and the sense of Identity and Individuality to the most unlike Forms and Faces'. We also see Coleridge consciously using such processes - of what we now might call displacement, condensation, etc. - to disguise and encode the recording of his own dreams. Similarly we see him anticipating our current awareness of the continuous traffic between psyche and soma, the 'psychosomatic' as he dubbed it - and the tremendous part played by the imagination.

In this context, Ford's reference to the 'medical imagination' calls for some discussion. She seems to conclude that because Coleridge saw the imagination as the link between mind and body, between physical and psychological, then it must also be a physical entity. It is true he refers to it as an organ somewhere, but it is not clear if he meant that quite literally. Much more often he depicts it as a state of mind, the inner creatrix, which can both cause and cure physical states or transform psychic pain into somatic/physical expression and both of them into the mental imagery of dreams. However the term is clearly meant to include psychological as well as physical phenomena and to highlight the contrast with the 'poetic imagination.' If we accept it as such, it can serve as a vehicle for focussing on this hitherto relatively unexplored area of Coleridge's preoccupation - the relationship between the physical pain he suffered, the effect of this on his dreams, and the profound effect of both on his thinking.

We can also see him wrestling with the way 'mental passions' might be expressed by physical sensations and pains. 'But for a slight irregular Fluttering at the Heart, & a speck of coldness there, I should not have known that T.W's letter had *got into me* ... It should seem as if certain Trains of Feeling acted on me underneath my own consciousness.' (p. 180) He already had a sense of how, when such a disturbing thought or feeling, and the unconscious associations to it, cannot be metabolised or expressed via conscious imagery and words, it may find a somatic vulnerability through which to manifest itself. The examples of this and the whys and wherefores make much of the fascinating reading of the book.

So, some of the resonances between Coleridge's deliberations and the more recent developments in psychoanalysis do seem rather striking - not just in terms of classic dream theory and the crucial notion of unconscious conflict, but even more interestingly perhaps, in relation to later work about the 'inner world' of the mind and about the very process of thinking itself in which dream imagery is seen as central for the transformation of emotional experience into thoughts and thence into words or other symbolic forms. To what extent Ford herself is wanting to bring out these correspondences is never explicit. She sometimes seems remarkably in touch with them. But, as I suggested earlier, there is no direct information about her, even on the cover of the book. We can certainly be thankful that she is not wanting to analyse the dreamer in absentia - a very dubious undertaking. Otherwise though one has to guess the point of view which informs her interpretation of the material; and sometimes this inevitably affects the selection too. For instance, rather

disconcertingly, a quote from Frost at Midnight stops short - literally with a full stop - where there is usually a colon, after: 'mine eye Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:'- The next lines, which complete the thought are excluded:

'Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leapt up,
For still I hoped to see the stranger's face
Townsmen or aunt or sister more beloved
My playmate when we both were clothed alike.'

Ford is emphasising a cognitive, dreamy quality in the 'swimming book'. It is only if you add the rest of the sentence that the more emotional impact emerges fully, the sad feelings of loneliness and longing to see someone from home, especially this beloved sister - in fact already dead at that time. Then the book might be seen as 'swimming' not just in a dreamy way but through a mist of tears. Clearly there are different possible interpretations of this poem, as of other things; and clearly too, the interpretation of material can be influenced by its selection. So one does wonder what is the 'moving thought' or 'initiative', as Coleridge called it, that motivates the author's interest and approach.

But besides this reason for wanting to know more about Ford's own point of departure, it would also be interesting to learn more about her conclusions after all her work and thought. Perhaps her stance of personal anonymity is part of an aim to be objective, but it raises - and maybe reflects - some of the issues about subjectivity and objectivity that occupied Coleridge himself.

However, I do not want this observation to obscure my overall appreciation of the book. In fact it is hard to do justice to the complexity of issues it raises. At its core - for me anyway - is Coleridge's struggle, not only with his physical pain but with the shock and anguish of realising the beastliness, as well as the brilliance, that existed in himself and in human nature generally; and the implications of this when so much of it took place outside conscious control. At his best, he chose to try and get to grips with this conflict-ridden aspect of mind rather than deny it or will it away. His enduring efforts to analyse himself and his dreams were central in this lifelong project

Ford's book gives us a fascinating and lucid window into this struggle. It invites re-reading, let alone reading; and I see it as a major contribution providing rich food for thought and further exploration.