



The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism

James Engell

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In a work of astonishing intellectual range, James Engell traces the evolution of the creative imagination, from its emergence in British empirical thought through its flowering in Romantic art and literature. The notion of a creative imagination, Engell shows, was the most powerful and important development of the eighteenth century. It grew simultaneously in literature, criticism, philosophy, psychology, religion, and science, attracting such diverse minds as Hobbes, Addison, Gerard, Goethe, Kant, and Coleridge. Indeed, rather than discussing merely the abstract notion of the imagination, Engell examines the community of thinkers, especially in England and Germany, who joined to pursue and develop what became the most fascinating and suggestive concept of modern Western thought. For as the imagination became the dominant subject of literature, its meanings multiplied. Finally it came to be seen as the crown of artistic creation and as the mediator in the ongoing dialectic between matter and spirit, materialism and transcendentalism.

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