

Religion and the Supernaturalism in S.T Coleridge's Poetic Craft: A Stylistic Inquiry of Select Verses

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Abstract: The current research study discovers the stylistic features in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's select stanzas of the poems—*Kubla Khan*, *The Eolian Harp*, and *Fears in Solitude*, with particular consideration to key ideas of the supernatural and religion. By using a stylistic approach, the current paper examines how Coleridge's use of imagery, diction, rhythm, and syntax guides the mystical and spiritual dimensions of his verse. As Brumfit and Carter (1986) observe, "Poetry offers a unique field for stylistic exploration, where the density of linguistic features amplifies the interpretive possibilities" (p. 21). This analysis validates how Coleridge's poetic language enhances both meaning and reader experience through its stylistic richness. In sum, the paper contributes to the new dimensions explored pertaining to religion and supernatural specifically in the broader domain of stylistic studies.

Keywords: Religion, Supernaturalism, S.T Coleridge's Poetic Craft, *Kubla Khan*, *The Eolian Harp*, *Fears in Solitude*

Introduction and Literature Review

Stylistics rests on linguistics and literary criticism as Wales (2014) asserts that, "Stylistics provides a method of linking linguistic description with literary interpretation." (p. 437). It offers a detailed line of inquiry to investigate the literary language present in the works of art. It enables researchers concerning to the comprehension of how linguistics' features, such as syntax, imagery, diction and narrative voice, construct meaning and aesthetic experience. The current research grants a literary stylistic analysis of selected poems by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, focusing particularly on the themes of the supernatural and religion, which are central to the poet's Romantic vision. Coleridge, a key figure of English Romanticism, is renowned for his exploration of mystical and metaphysical dimensions in poetry. Literary poems such as *Christabel* (1997), *Kubla Khan* (1997), *Fear in Solitude* (1997) induce supernatural imagination and moral-spiritual world through rich and haunting use of language. By employing stylistic tools grounded in the frameworks of Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short, the paper analyzes how Coleridge's poetic language enacts religious symbolism and supernatural atmospheres. The analysis is of paramount importance in exposing how the poet's diction choices, archaic language, and religious and supernatural use of imagery engage with the ideas of metaphysics. The study presents the argument that Coleridge's stylistic devices are not merely patterned for aesthetic purposes, but they are all of concern expressing transcendental perspectives along with spiritual anxiety. Thus, stylistics serves as a powerful lens through which to interrogate the symbiosis between language, belief, and imagination in Coleridge's poetry.

Stylistics is the study of how meanings are shaped through the use of linguistics choices in both literary and non-literary texts, by employing various theories and frameworks as analytical tools. It explores different linguistic levels, grammatical, semantic, lexical, pragmatic, and discourse to understand how scholars interpret and explain the written text. Stressing both written topographies and readers' cognitive developments, stylistics links linguistic analysis and literary studies. Based on linguistics, stylistics uses scientific methods, offering tools for analyzing how meanings have been constructed through the use of language. According to Crystal and Davy (1969) Stylistics is a discipline which studies nonliterary and

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literary texts in a new way. It plays important role in the teaching of English literature. It has been defined as sub discipline of linguistics that is concerned with the systematic analysis of style in language and how this can vary according to such factors e.g. genre, context, historical period and author. (p.54). Simpson (2004) states, “stylistics is a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language” (p.2). Tuner (1973) writes, “Stylistics is that part of linguistics which concentrates on variation in the use of language” (p.7). Leech and Short (1981), “Literary stylistics is the study of language as used in literary text with the aim of relating it to its artistic function” (p.15). They further argue that a text whether considered as a whole work or as an external form a word is the nearest we can get to a homogeneous and specific use of language. It is therefore the natural starting place for the study of style. In a text we can study style in more detail and with more systematic attention to what words or structure are chosen in preference to others. (p.12) In the Oxford English Dictionary, the term ‘supernatural’ is defined as “belonging to a higher realm or system than that of nature, transcending the powers or the ordinary course of nature”. It is a phenomenon which cannot be investigated in a scientific manner and its occurrence defies a natural cycle of cause and effect. Since it lies beyond the natural order and beyond human control, it is liable to entail mystery and feeling of fear and surprise. “The supernatural refers to manifestations or events that are beyond the scope of natural laws and scientific explanation, often involving ghosts, divine interventions, or mystical occurrences.” (Baldick, 2015, p. 326). According to Punter (2007) “In Romantic poetry, the supernatural functions not merely as a tool of fantasy, but as a means of exploring psychological and spiritual dimensions of human experience.” (p. 45). “Coleridge’s use of the supernatural does not aim to terrify, as in the Gothic tradition, but to create a world where the metaphysical and the material coexist.” (Jackson, 1981, p. 112) “The Romantic supernatural is deeply connected with subjectivity, dream states, and the sublime—what lies beyond reason and evokes awe or terror.” (Hoeveler, 1998, p. 28)

Discussion

This section presents a stylistic analysis of chosen stanzas from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poetry, with particular focus on how language constructs themes of religion and the supernatural. Drawing on linguistic frameworks, the analysis explores lexical choices, grammatical structures, and discourse features to uncover the deeper meanings embedded in the text. By examining Coleridge’s deliberate use of stylistic devices, the study aims to reveal how poetic language not only shapes atmosphere and tone but also reflects the poet’s philosophical and imaginative engagement with the religious and supernatural dimensions of human experience.

Supernaturalism and Religious Elements

In the poem ‘Kubla Khan’ by S.T Coleridge supernatural phenomena are roots out of which stanza, lines, scenes and religious themes are sent out. The poem like “Kubla Khan” the settings, characters even the narration are supernatural. In order to investigate the poem with respective to stylistic analysis let us delve into the following stanza to further deconstruct religious and supernatural representation:

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan,
A stately pleasure dome decree
Where ALPH, the sacred river ran
Through Caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.*

By stylistically analyzing the stanza, it can be noticed that each supernatural element leads to another to make the religious sensibility very clear for instance the doom of pleasure (semantically foregrounded) the Kubla Khan ordered to build is the basic root out of which many supernatural images come out. It would be constructed where the sacred river Alph ran which refers to Alpha that is very first letter in the Greek and looks as the starting of life in the religion of Christianity and another phrase ‘moved through caverns’ countless to man down to the sea which is sunless through the strange use of imagery and the description of the pleasure dome creates some supernatural sense that had a magic haunting and create some religious sensibility. The pleasure dome on a sacred river was a very rare thing certainly and supernatural by itself because it was a blend of winter and summer. The poet uses parallelism in a

harmonized way to create the harmony in the stanza e.g. ice blends with sunlight. It was a sunny doom and had caves of ice. So stylistic analysis of this poem reveals that S.T Coleridge professionally produces environment for his supernaturalism to give it a religious touch. As a result of that the poet takes the reader beyond human thoughts to have a magic nature. It is Coleridge's unique ability to present his religious theme through supernaturalism. Based on the Lexical Level 'Xanadu' a mythical city and exotic connotes otherworldliness or paradise, evoking almost divine setting. 'Kubla Khan' A historical figure elevated to a mythical status, resembling a godlike creator figure. Pleasure dome, blends sensuality with grandeur 'pleasure' hints at earthly delight, while 'dome' (often associated with churches or temples) adds a sacred dimension. 'Alph, the sacred river': The name Alph echoes Alpha, the beginning possibly a reference to God in Revelation: "I am the Alpha and Omega". Sacred explicitly links the river to religious reverence. "Caverns measureless to man": Suggests a supernatural or divine depth, spaces beyond human comprehension. "Sunless sea": Implies a mysterious, perhaps underworld-like destination, shadows of the afterlife or a supernatural abyss.

Coleridge's poetic work when analyzed stylistically reveals the frequent use of non-customized linguistic items and language pattern which persuade the readers to attach some type of meaning with those linguistic items. The elements of linguistics even when they appear to be irrelevant also help the first reaction and obligation of creative effect of the message that the artistry expresses.

*And from the sun and from the breezy air
Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame
And he with many feelings and many thoughts
Made up a meditative joy and found
Religious meanings in the form of nature
And so, his senses gradually wrapp'd
In a half sleep he dreams of better worlds
And dreaming hears the still O singing lark
That singest like an angel's the clouds. (p. 110)*

The stylistic analysis has been conducted with the selected stanza of the poem "Fear in Solitude" by S.T Coleridge. In this stanza, an attempt has been made to analyze some of his supernatural foregrounded images denoting the recurrent theme and style of the poet. In this stanza two words of the speaker in the first line are foregrounded to present the nature which are the sun and the breezy air. In this structure, the notion of the nature which has a sweet influence is given prominence. It reveals that the nature's attitude is very much positive, therefore speaker's world is stated in a contrastive manner. So, the phrasal pattern is used to produce a semantic sense. In the first lines, all natural words are used to define the positive effects of nature or God. In the next lines, the meditative joy, religious meaning, half sleep, dreams of better world, singing like an angel, in the clouds present the imagined perception of religion that how sweet the religion is. And the singing like an angel refers to the artistic visualized world of angels, who are superficial in their role. Therefore, by using two different contrasting foregrounded images like Skylark and the angel the real and the imaginary, to effect of showing two different worlds the one presents the world of reality and the other presents world of imagination which people create, the one is real, and the other is unreal. By using such contrast between the real and the supernatural Angels, the poet has created a religious sense among the readers. In the above lyrics what is visualized is not truth but the deceptive world, the imaginative world with the concept of Angels who are not the inhabitant of this planet. The angels which are beautiful are not found in real world. In order to express angels, who are sweet the writer uses different elements to express the concept of religious beliefs. The term 'singest sweet' is deviant in nature as it does not have coherence with the belief of angel's deviant in term of custom that we must have some information about the spiritual creatures. In order to prove the fact that the angels are sweet in nature, the writer uses such strange element to give the concept of religious sensibility. In this stanza, the poet uses religious images to reveal the religious vision. All these Lexical items the 'singest', 'the meditative joy', 'breezy air' and positive linguistic items like sweet influence are described in terms of positive phrase, which also denies the reality of these appealing features of the fictional world. In this way, the poet produces a pattern of semantic link which exposes religious sensibility.

*And what if all of animated nature
He had organic Harps diversity fram'd
That tremble into thought as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast one intellectual breeze
At once the soul of each and God of all. (p. 145)*

"Foregrounding in stylistics refers to the use of stylistic devices that stand out from ordinary language and thus draw special attention to particular features of the text." (Leech, 1969, p. 57). Stylistic analysis of the above stanza of 'Eolian Harp' reveals Coleridge's appealing way of description of foregrounded images and unique ability to create a religious sensibility by the frequent use of supernatural imagery. The poet travels to the 'Eolian Harp' that was measured as indispensable custody for any writer or poet and commonly it was sited in a skylight. The real location of the harp appealed S.T Coleridge towards itself; he observes that all the things or objects of his real world and can be taken as organic harps of many designs or forms and at the touch of gentle air the filaments of the harp convert into life and produce different musical notes. He compares it with objects of this universe. He said that all the objects of the universe are stimulated and are inspired when they are swept over by molding and shaping spirit of God, by using powerful breeze which is superficial in nature which exists but remains invisible. The fact that the breeze has some superficial role without being visible move the harp produces the sound and then he compares it semantically with the power of God.

The word spirit of God which is quantitative type of foregrounding is based on the content. The spirit of God also produces semantic sense that the God's spirit provides life and movement to all the universes. By using the metaphor, the poet compares the breeze with the spirit of God in their role by defining the fact that as the lute is subordinated to breeze, similarly the living objects of the universe are subordinated to the spirit of God. The poet, by using superficial imagery and through metaphor has created religious sensibility. This poem not only reveals the human relation with nature or God but also refers to S.T Coleridge's spiritual and philosophical point of view, nature in means of God. It guides humans to have a strong belief in God, the creator. The stanza reveals the poet's faith in religion and accepts God's sovereignty by his heart. By writing such a poem by using supernatural elements, the poet also appreciated the sovereignty of God who was kind to the sinful, wildered, depressed and dark man. He also accepts the kindness of God to him. It is God who provided him peaceful mind and the most beautiful thing which is life. The well selected foregrounded images and use of non-customized linguistic items make the flow of the poem very much pleasant and perfect. He uses a paradox to highlight the elements which are superficial in their nature e.g. spirit of God.

*Woe is Me
She died the hour that I was born
I have sinned said Christabel
Now heaven be praised if all be well (p. 167).*

Short (1996) states "Stylistics examines not just what is said, but how it is said, and what effects that has on the reader or listener." (p. 8) Stylistic analysis of the above stanza of the poem 'Christabel' shows the comparison of 'woe with me' that produce the semantic sense that like the biblical figure Christ further adding to the subtlety is the fact that Christabel is also a victim of suffering and plague, that she is presented in the poem as the sacrificial victim like the Christ. Coleridge's presenting Christabel as a prey was very complex and hardly restricted to his religious feelings. The concept of sin in the stanza can easily be understood in the context of religion (Christianity). Confession is a very common and religious practice, and, in every church, there is confession room, where the Christian share their guilt or confess their guilt. So same concept can be revealed through stylistic analysis by applying semantic technique and the religious sensibility is mirrored in the poem. Another foregrounded image 'heaven' which is superficial in its role to give the religious effect through the poem. By using the parallelism in the form of irregularity and the contrast of sin can be noticed through the concept of heaven. There is no doubt by using of the character of Geraldine which is considered to be some type of vampire creature i.e. The revived body of a person who is dead assured to come out from the grave at nighttime and sip the blood of the persons asleep or a woman who ruins or destroys her lover.

*What sees she there
There she sees damsel bright
Drest in a silken robe of white
that shadowy in the moon light shone
the neck that made that white robe wan.*

When this stanza is stylistically analyzed, we observe that the strange non customized linguistic elements are used in abnormal way to describe the unnatural character of Geraldine which is a superficial character in his role whose beauty is dreadful. The theme characterized by superiority of supernaturalism over reality can easily be seen by noticing the strange images in the stanza, which distinguish Coleridge by using his unique ability to present his theme of religious sensibility in a form of supernatural cloak. As John Keats pursues his uniqueness via beauty and Coleridge finds it via supernaturalism, by using of parallelism in the form of irregularity, he foregrounded the evil and morality side by side i.e. 'the shadowy in the moonlight' shows the contrast between the dark and the light, which are the correspondents of each other in the form of evil and good. Good in the form of moonlight and evil in the form of shadow (the darkness). In "Christabel" the vampire features or superficial features are included e.g. the midnight hour, the moonlight, the dead person Geraldine, the importance of Christabel's invitation to castle, her refusal to pray, the old mastitis growling acknowledgement of an evil presence, Geraldine's weakness, when she sees the carved cherub (Christian icon of sorts) on the ceiling of Christabel's bed chamber (p. 92). The interaction of supernatural creatures Geraldine with the carved cherub, a type of Christian icon, reveals that by using the supernatural elements or imagery, the poet has created religious sensibility. It is a unique art of Coleridge that by rise of supernaturalism in his poems in ordinary way, he creates a religious sense. Such work on Coleridge's poems and such a way of stylistic analysis that is deeper than the peels came into existence much more lately i.e. mostly during the time of modern era. They overtly verify the perfection of Coleridge's work. Such prominence can be countable to the poetic works and have capacity to resist critical explanation and to produce readings which are totally new. Coleridge has deep interest in religion and its description with the help of supernatural elements and characters. It also considers some of the selected works from supernatural point of view and how by using superficial imagery and foregrounded images to aware the readers about religious sensibility. In most of his work the supernatural characters are antagonist or protagonist, and the poet exposes tacitly throughout his poetic works a notable kindness with Christ, a biblical figure and which is also a superficial in his role or work. In sum, the above analysis of the stanza also brings into light; 'Woe is me!' is an archaic and Biblical expression, evoking lamentation and spiritual distress. It immediately signals emotional and religious weight, reinforcing Christabel's vulnerability. Words like 'sinned', 'heaven', and 'praised' reflect religious register, suggesting that the speaker's internal turmoil is framed through a Christian moral lens. This contributes to the theme of religious sensibility.

Conclusion

This study has examined and concluded how Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poetic language employs stylistic techniques to portray religious and supernatural elements. The analysis has shown that his use of specific vocabulary, and structural patterns enhances the mystical quality of his verse. Coleridge's frequent references to sacred symbols, uncharted landscapes, and metaphysical imagery reflect a deep preoccupation with spiritual and otherworldly themes. The stylistic choices he makes are not merely decorative; they are central to the way meaning is conveyed, and atmosphere is built. By combining literary and linguistic insights, this paper has exposed how Coleridge crafts a poetic experience that leads readers into realms of imagination, uncertainty, and transcendence. His ability to intertwine the seen with the unseen, the sacred with the strange, marks his contribution as both innovative and enduring within the Romantic tradition.

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