
The Supernatural In Romantic Poetry

Introduction

Majority of the representatives of English Romantic Poetry were well-known for their love for nature. The romanticists focused their poetic interest on the pure nature, particularly on its clear and often wild locality. Contrary to the classicists which understood nature as a space in which the order was implemented by humans themselves, the romanticists reject the tiniest possibility of human intervention and transformation of nature. The natural, according to Romanticism is something beyond human reach. To romanticists, nature represented a main source of inspiration and ethical comprehension of the essence of a human being. In nature they often found comfort and sense of life, and to some of them nature represented a manifestation of divinity or divinity itself. Romanticists saw nature as a destination far away from the cities, a breath of fresh air, a possibility, the feeling of being free and able to move anywhere, an ideal of a free, natural person. There was a strong reciprocal connection between a man and nature, and the nature itself did not attract people just because of its pure beauty, but also because it offered a possibility of moral and physical health. Majority of English towns were already highly polluted at the time when romanticists revolted against that annihilation of human race and first started advocating what is today called ecological consciousness. The poet's contact with the natural and the supernatural elements evoked the communication with the highest forces of the universe. Encountering nature produced the same type of feelings as encountering God. As the nature itself was an imperfect, confusing and beautiful phenomenon, the poet had a mission to bravely confront the chaos nature represented and try to incorporate poetic order into it.

Features of Supernatural and Gothic in Romantic Poetry

We can make a clear connection between supernatural elements in Romantic poetry and Gothic, as both of them are closely related. Gothic is often considered as a subgenre of Romantic poetry. The Gothic was in a way revived with the emergence of Romanticism, especially in England, in both literature and architecture. Thanks to its compelling blend of fascinating and frightening, Gothic inspired artists and in a way paved the way for supernatural in romantic poetry, as both Gothic and the supernatural referred to beings and events that do not fit within the expected confines of nature. One of the most recognizable features of Gothic which is also present in the Romantic poetry are castles. Their frightening exteriors, candlelit corridors and haunted hallways provide an ideal background for constructing so many Gothic and Romantic plots. Examples of supernatural beings include ghosts, spirits and phantoms, as well as witches, goblins and poltergeists, and may refer to any other occurrences that defy easy explanation or classification. Some poets seem to require readers to believe wholeheartedly in ghosts and spirits, while others offered logical explanations for seemingly supernatural events. The supernatural has of course been exploited for centuries, for examples texts such as "Macbeth" had the presence of witches and "Doctor Faustus" the devil himself. That Gothicism is closely related to Romanticism is perfectly clear, but it is easier to state the fact than to prove it tidily and convincingly. There is a persistent suspicion that Gothicism is a poor and probably illegitimate relation of Romanticism, and a consequent tendency to treat it that way. There are those, indeed, who would like to deny the relationship altogether.

Supernatural in the Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge(1772-1834)Upon publishing "Lyrical Ballads" Wordsworth and Coleridge decided they will each deal with a certain task, Wordsworth was to write about natural, while Coleridge dealt with the supernatural. This meant that there were actually two tendencies present among romanticists, one towards the real world, and the other towards the transcendental, supernatural word.

Early Life

Coleridge is widely considered as the initiator of the Romantic movement together with William Wordsworth. He was an extremely gifted and highly imaginative writer who had an appropriate mind for philosophical speculations, he was also a man of wide culture and a prominent literary critic. He had a major influence on English poetry in the generations after him. Coleridge was born in Ottery Saint Mary, Devonshire. He studied in London, at Christ's Hospital, where he met Charles Lamb, a critic and essayist who remained his friend for the rest of his life. In 1791 he was accepted at the Cambridge University, but left after two years without graduating. After settling in London he met Robert Southey, with whom he planned on establishing an ideal society in America based on a model of communism which would be comprised of only twelve men and women. They did not realize the idea and he ended up marrying Sarah Fricker in 1789. In 1797 he established a friendship with William Wordsworth. They then went on to publish "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798, a work which is deemed as a manifest of English romanticism. Coleridge and Wordsworth travelled around Germany, where they found interest in Immanuel Kant. Coleridge had problems with his lungs which led to a high consumption of opium, which then turned into addiction he could not overcome for the rest of his life. His excessive use of opium may why his works are pervaded by supernatural elements and why they may appear as a byproduct of hallucinations that occur after opium consumption.

Analysis of the Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge

In 1796 Coleridge published ten series of a political magazine "The Watchman" as well as his first collection of poems "Poems on Various Occasions". In the next two years, however, in period of 1797-1798, Coleridge wrote some of his best works, such as his famous "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" which appeared as a part of "Lyrical Ballads". The first part of the uncompleted poem "Christabel" appeared in 1816, in which, inspired by the medieval themes, he wrote about vampires. A fragment of "Kubla Khan" also appeared in the same year, the part which was conceived, as he himself said, during a dream due to high consumption of opium, which was interrupted by a visitor. Supernatural in the poem "Kubla Khan" Coleridge was a poet who was able to easily dive into the world of the unreal, supernatural and exotic. In his poems one can see many of his traits, virtues, characteristics, fears, hopes and disappointments. That can particularly be noticed in the poem "Kubla Khan" which he wrote after a dream caused by the usage of opium. The songs starts with the description of the castle built by Kubla Khan. The structure lies on an area of ten miles with many towers, walls, gardens and parks in which everything was perfect. Then there is the sacred river Alph running down to a sunless sea. In the second part of the first vision, everything changes. We see the river Alph again flowing tortuously through forests and valleys making a huge noise. The first vision ends with voices predicting war.

The second vision starts with a fabulous description of the palace and how the garden was well arranged and the poet also connects the impossible; palaces and caves, the sun and ice. Then

the poet remembers an Abyssinian maid singing a song about Mount Abora, the maid represents a symbol of poet's inspiration, she is his muse and divine inspiration. In the final act poet becomes a potentially dangerous being, overwhelmed by the strength of inspiration and the people around him consider him a lunatic who lost his mind.

Supernatural in the Poem "Christabel" The sole plot of this poem demonstrates Coleridge's vocation for supernatural and fantastic. The poem starts with a description of a mysterious night. Christabel, the daughter of Sir Leoline is praying beneath the huge oak tree where she meets Geraldine, a beautiful girl which claims that she was abducted by a group of knights. She seems frail and gentle at first sight, so Christabel suggests to bring her home with her, but then goes on to show how she possesses supernatural powers. Here we notice many supernatural elements like when Geraldine silences the dog barking at her as if it saw a ghost, when she fends off the guardian spirit which was in fact Christabel's mother, and when she cannot cross the water. In the second part, Geraldine depicts herself as a daughter of Sir Leoline's old friend, and he offers her to stay with them. Geraldine manages to bewitch Christabel and her father, as they both lacked someone, Christabel grew up alone and fragile, without a motherly figure and her father could never forget the loss of his wife. Geraldine manages to completely bewitch Christabel, commanding her to undress herself and go to bed. When Christabel realizes what has happened, she tells everything to her father but he still refuses to banish her as she represents a comfort for him.

Supernatural in the Poem "The Rime of Ancient Mariner" The poem starts with a meeting of an old man and a boy invited to a wedding. The old man narrates how he once, while travelling, killed an albatross without any particular reason and how he thought that from that very moment he brought a curse to the ship, whose crew then died, all but the old man. The old sailor, the only survivor was convicted to return alone to the homeland with the help of gruesome group of dead man resurrected by the heavenly spirits. Only when the sailor realizes the beauty of sea snakes and gives them blessings is the curse lifted, and the ship, steered by the group of angels returns back to the harbor. Yet, he has to face consequences for killing the albatross by traveling from country to country, teaching love, compassion and respect towards all God's creatures.

Summary

To be able to conclude we must mention that Coleridge was not the only romanticist using supernatural in his works, there were dozens of poets including Lord Byron, John Keats and others. But it can be said that Coleridge was the one who was the most obsessed and fascinated with the supernatural forces, and he tried wholeheartedly to evoke and conjure them up in his works. His three songs analyzed above show us his obsession with the supernatural and how his spiritual strength was focused on figures and characters of the transcendental and supernatural world, in the way that he wanted for the supernatural to somehow become a metaphor for deep human experiences, which were not easily represented by the material world but with the help of the language of the image, to which Coleridge was prone because of the high usage of symbolic imagery and myths.