The Recurrent Images Producing an Impression of Supernatural Presence, Suspense and Fear in Coleridge's Poem " The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

Balyasnikova Marina Aleksandrovna
Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

The Romantic Poetry of the early nineteenth century abounds in suggestive images, which spring from intense emotions and rich imagination, from vague associations and undefineable yearnings characteristic of the Romantic spirit. Another important link is with the idealistic philosophy of the period. According to this philosophy the ideas present to our minds are realities, and not the material world. We perceive nothing but ideas, which are a series of sensations, perceptions and emotions. These ideas are dependent upon our minds.

Elistratova in her detailed work on the heritage of English Romantics and modern times lays stress on the source of all fantastic visions, myths and pantheistic animation of nature in contemporary philosophic and aesthetic concepts, representing a definite stage in their historic development. The importance attached to their historic relevance shows the role of images in this particular period of English poetry and literature [2]. Wilson Knight in his study of some Romantic images has an entirely mystic approach [8,98]. He becomes aware not of the images themselves but of the background, on which he confers a purport of mysticism: the caves in the starlit dome in , the womb of the earth in and in are all linked together by the author on moment of darkness before birth. This shows an interesting point of view, but a mystic apprehension of the world can hardly be said to dominate Romantic poetry.

Coleridge's skill in conjuring up a strange atmosphere is felt in , where he sweeps us into an imaginary world. There is a variety of images here, yet all tend to produce a single impression, that of a supernatural presence, of magic, suspense and fear. The sweeping spell of the first part, taking us straight into the story of the Ancient Mariner, is conveyed through the quick, abrupt movements, as of dropping or striking, displayed in the following lines:

or in the quick movement of the sun, rising and going down in four lines:

Further, the Storm- blast , and the ship driving fast in the sea storm southward, the image conferring a supernatural motion on the ship. The floating ice is and the glimmer of the moon is , both changing the usual colour of these objects, hinting at the green reflection of the sea and the pleness of the moon just before a storm.

The second part has also images of this abrupt motion, as for example in these lines:

There is also a feeling of heaviness in the picture of the sky, in the motionless scene of ' , in the crawling slimy things upon the and in the

description of the water burning green, blue and white . The images stir one both with their unusual colour, as that of cooper or oil, and with the suggestion of touch, the water feeling thick, stagnant and sticky, as if being painted, the Albatros is hung on the neck of the Ancient Mariner. Later in the poem, this feeling of heaviness continues to torment him. It turns into weariness, expressed in the image of the sea and the deck looking ‘ ’ the sea and sky lying like ‘ on his eyes.

In Part IV the charmed waters burn with , and this description of the sea contains more life than the burning green of the second part, for the magic soon turns to the breaking of the spell. The angelic spirits, driving the ship with supernatural motion appear also in crimson colour.

The image of the moon adds to the ominous atmosphere, carried or even in the day-time, when

In its immobility the sun is part of the motionless picture of the painted ocean and ship. The sailors curse the Ancient Mariner by , and further, the dead men, brought back to life, give a groan , or fix on him their stony eyes, glittering in the moon.

The skeleton of the ship, which the Ancient Mariner sees (in Part III) with its ribs looking like bars against the sun, evokes a strange atmosphere, in which the presence of death seems near. This prepares us for the for the coming of Life-in- Death personified. For a second time in Part VII, the ship appears as a skeleton when it approaches the shore and strikes the Hermit, who sees it coming, as a thing so strange that nothing could be compared to it except ‘, having a fiendish look. The ship sinks into the ocean waters with an abrupt movement, characteristic of the whole poem, conveying a sense of dropping of a great weight:

The images of the poem create an effect of supernaturally swift motion, unusual immobility and haunting. Many of the associations strike us with their suggestion of something very strange, and they act on the imagination in many ways, as for example the burning of the ocean like the : the image is related to magic and evil spirits in the association with a witch, while the idea of oil stirs one not only with its suggestion of colour quickly changing its tint, but also of heaviness, of something sluggish and thick, or even of the oily taste that it may occasionally imply. Thus, it acts at once on the different senses. The picture of the ‘ ‘ presents not only a motionless scene, but through the repetition we see both the ship and sea, stuck to a point of lifelessness, giving a sense of supernatural immobility.

Most of Coleridge’s recurrent images tend to create an atmosphere, and they take the reader’s imagination directly into the mood of his poems. They stir one with their suggestions of supernatural power, of magical presence. The effect is often achieved by sudden and abrupt movements, by conferring supernaturally fast motion on usual objects, or by presenting a motionless picture to the point of lifelessness and unnatural immobility. Another time the images are associated with magic and demons, such as the skeleton of the ship or the witch’s oils. The atmosphere in Coleridge’s poems is imbued with strangeness and suspense. The imagination of the reader is wholly under the spell of the supernatural haunting, pervading the story. The atmosphere, however, appears not so much as a background, but as an essential emotional element. A striking thing in Coleridge’s imagery is the simplicity and economy of language and style, the suggestion being often compressed in a verb, or a single concrete image.

References

1. Дьяконова Н. Я. Английский романтизм. Проблемы эстетики. — М., 1978. — 520с.
2. Елистратова А.А. Наследие английского романтизма и современность. — М., 1960. — 728с.
3. Coleridge S. T. Complete Poetical Works, 2 vol.- L., 1912. — 1022p.

4. Coleridge S. T. Biographia Literaria, L., 1939. — 982p.
5. Cornwell J. Coleridge: Poet and Revolutionary. — L., 1989. — 432p.
6. Frye N. A Study of English Romantics. — N.Y., 1968. — 344p.
7. Holmes R. Coleridge. — Oxford, 1982. — 134p.
8. Knight G. W. The Starlit Dome. — L., 1941. — 305p.
9. Mc Gann J. J. The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation. — Chicago, L., 1983. — 584p.
10. Walsh W. Coleridge: The Work and the Relevance. — L., 1967. — 95p.