

Archetypal approach in Coleridge's selected work: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner & Christabel

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Abstract:

Human psyche has always been considered as a cradle for designing our personality and perspective. With constant change in our ways of thinking and perceiving things there are certain symbols and motifs known as Archetypes that have been passed on from ages to ages to human psyche and has been a part of human's collective unconscious. The researcher's aim with this paper is to look through the Coleridge's famous works with an Archetypal approach and how Coleridge has made use of these archetypes even when the idea of archetypal criticism emerged quite late i.e in 20th century. The paper also focuses on how these archetypes have played a role to give a direction and form to literary text.

Keywords: Archetypes, Collective unconscious, Human Psyche.

I. Archetypal Criticism and its origin: An introduction

Literary Criticism is an area of Literature where we analyze a piece of work under the light of its strengths and shortcomings. Archetypal Criticism is one such form of literary criticism where we try to find continuously recurring ideas including character, themes, symbols, motifs and situation used in different piece of work that has been written in early past to the very present.

The fatherly figures whose seminal work lead to the birth and developments of this literary branch are Sir James George Frazer, a Scottish anthropologist and Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of analytical psychology. Both of them were from different literary backgrounds but their works were fons et origo for Archetypal Criticism.

Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough talks about various mythical and religious archetypes that have been used and repeated universally. In his work we have a discussion of mythical figures including, Artemis, Hippolytus and Orestes working as an archetype for mythical intervention. In religious archetypes, he states death, rebirth and religious sacrifices to complete one's wishes. In Frazer's The Golden Bough, we have the myth of goddess Artemis who is an epitome of fertilization, she fertilizes nature but in order to do so "**she who fertilizes nature must herself be fertile**" and Hippolytus proves to be an archetype for human sacrifice "**fair but mortal youths who paid with their lives for the brief rapture of the love of an immortal goddess.**"

“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate”

Carl Jung

Carl Jung was a Swiss psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology. He worked with Sigmund Freud for a period of time as an early supporter because of their shared interest in the unconscious. But later on there was divergence in their opinion regarding the certain theories in psychoanalysis including their opinion regarding the role of Libido, nature of unconscious and human behavior etc. For Freud Libido is **"the energy, regarded as a quantitative magnitude... of those instincts which have to do with all that may be comprised under the word 'love'."** (S. Freud, [Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, 1959](#)). In other words Libido is a kind of psychic energy also known as drive that resides strictly in our unconscious part but plays a major role in designing our personality and behavior. All of this roots out of our sexuality as per Freud. This is where the split began between Jung and Freud. Jung was not in support of this notion. He believed that human personality and behavior are not just ruled by his sexual instinct, there is more to it.

A person's identity and personality is largely the outcome of his Unconscious divided into two layers i.e Personal unconscious and Collective Unconscious.

Wherein the concept of personal unconscious was quiet similar to that of Freud but the concept of collective unconscious was somehow different from the core idea of Freudian psychology as Jung believed that collective unconscious is largely made up of our deep-seated beliefs and natural instincts that are inborn and have same meanings even in different culture across the world because they are being passed on in human species throughout epochs and ages.

Carl Jung gave some of the key theories in this field including, personality theory and the Jungian Archetypes. Some examples of Jungian archetypes are:

The Persona: The word has its origin from Latin language, where it refers to “character” played in a theatrical performance. Acc. To Jung Persona is a kind of social mask that we wear in order to make ourselves socially acceptable that suppresses our natural instincts and impulses and makes us behave according to social norms.

The Shadow: This archetype represents the hideous side of our personality. It includes all our sexual drives, instincts, weaknesses, repressed desires, emotions like anger and hatred are settled down in our unconscious. It is somehow similar to Freud's Id.

The Anima or The Animus: This archetype deals with the psychological aspect of gender roles. Jung believed that since men and women have been sharing live for so long that they have imbibed certain characteristics of each other. Anima is the feminine aspect of male psyche and animus is masculine aspect of female psyche. The combination of two is known as syzygy.

Woman is compensated by a masculine element and therefore her unconscious has, so to speak, a masculine imprint. This results in a considerable psychological difference between men and

women, and accordingly I have called the projection-making factor in women the animus, which means mind or spirit. (From *The Syzygy: Anima and Animus*, Collected Works, 9ii, par. 28f.)

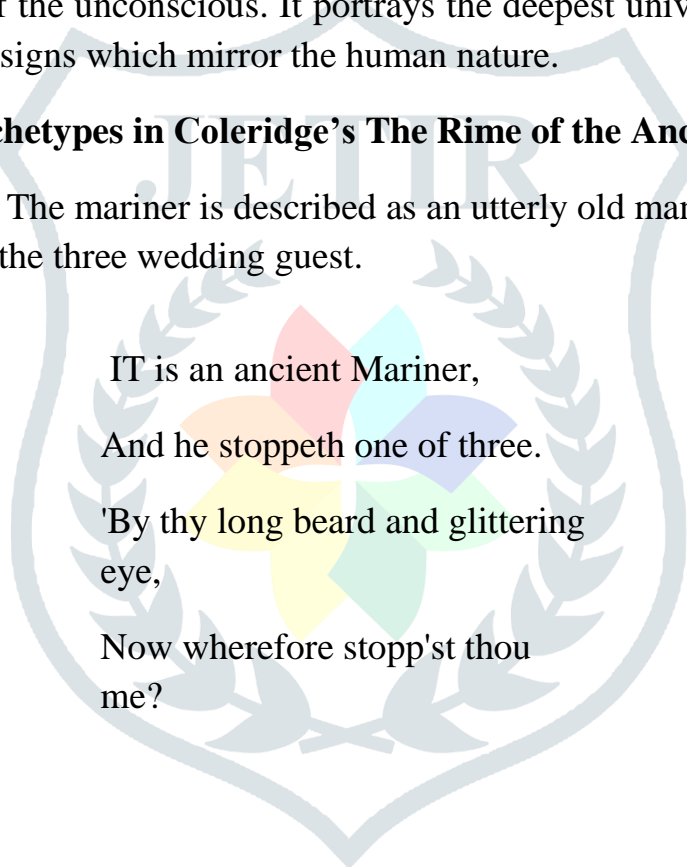
The self: It is the blend of consciousness and unconsciousness of an individual that helps to determine one's personality.

Though Freud and Jung sow the seed for archetypal psychoanalysis but it was watered to its full bloom by Maud Bodkin, an English classic scholar who with her book "Archetypal Pattern in Poetry" (1934) applied the theory of archetypes in literature for the first time. Later the plant was groomed by various other theorist and critics including Northrop Frye who took Archetypes in literature to its maturity stage.

The present paper intends to analyze Coleridge's selected work under the microscopic view of Achetypal approach , because in the context of a number of great archetypal images, it dramatizes decoding the language of the unconscious. It portrays the deepest universal desires of mankind depicted through mythic signs which mirror the human nature.

II. Character Archetypes in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

The outcast Archetype: The mariner is described as an utterly old man with skinny hand and glittering eyes by one of the three wedding guest.



IT is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long beard and glittering
eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou
me?

After reading the poem ahead we get to know that the mariner shot the Albatross out of his impulsiveness that lead to the curse of Spirit befall on him. The crew hung the albatross around his neck as punishment for his deed, they had wrath and despise in their eyes every time they looked at him. Mariner lived a life full of loneliness and agony on the ship with a crew of two hundred people from young to old. Even after the arrival of Skeleton Ship, the crew died one by one and Mariner was serving his Life-in-death punishment he could steel feel the hatred in the eyes of his crew, when they were all lying dead.

The Explorer Archetype: One of the character archetype that we usually found in the works is of an explorer, someone who is naturally driven to push the walls and explore the unknown for the sake of adventure. This type of character Archetype is curious in nature, restless and

sometimes unreliable. For Eg. Sal Paradise (On the Road), and Huckleberry Finn (The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn).

Coleridge's Ancient Mariner can also be categorized as an explorer because he went on a journey on the ship left his native country to explore the new world, he is curious and self driven too, as the act of killing the Albatross out of nowhere justifies the statement.

The Sage Archetype: It is one of the major Jungian Archetypes. This type of character has the virtue of wisdom and insight. It represents the spiritual aspect of our personality. Usually they act as source of knowledge and information for those who enquire.

For eg. Athena in The Odeyssey.

In The Rime of the Ancient Mariner we have the character of Hermit, who possesses all the characteristics of sage archetype. It is in the sixth part of the poem that reader is introduced with the character of Hermit. He is described as someone who has firm faith in God, he sings godly hymns. The mariner expects that the hermit will show him the way of his redemption. He seeks knowledge from him regarding how he can serve for his penance and can free his soul from guilt.

"O shrieve me, shrieve me, 575
holy man!"

The Hermit cross'd his brow.

"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?"

The hermit shows his insight as he asks the Mariner to tell his story, and thus shows him a way get his soul free from the feeling of continuous agony and guilt feeding on his soul.

The innocent Archetype: As the name itself declares this archetype constitutes the qualities of innocence and purity of soul. They are kind and moral but are represented as vulnerable and naïve too.

In The Rime of Ancient Mariner Albatross can be characterized as one such archetypal character used in the work. He is symbolical representation of Jesus, as Jesus came down from heaven to save mankind the Holy Spirit in form of albatross came to pave way for the mariners. As described in the poem,

At length did cross an Albatross,

Through the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name. (TRAM, I. 61-64)

The albatross brought good omen to the ship, he was there for food and his love for the mariner. But as this Archetype most often falls prey to malicious intention the albatross too is shot down by the mariner with his cross bow leading to his death.

III. Situation Archetypes in Coleridge's *The Rime of Ancient Mariner*

The Journey: It is also one of the Jungian Archetype broadly known as monomyth, or the hero's journey where hero heads on to a journey in search of some adventure or truth, while on his way he must endure hardship, he will go through agony physical or mental. It is his own courage and sometimes some divine intervention that helps him to complete his journey and overcome the hurdles and tribulations he met on his way. The journey could be physical or mental and may be both but at the end of the journey Protagonist returns as a wiser and more mature man.

In *The Rime of The Ancient Mariner* our protagonist went on a journey that was physical and mental as well. Mariner's physical journey began when he left his native land with a crew of two hundred people but later his ship went astray because of some mishappenings he met on the way. At first it was the storm that drew them southwards later, later when he killed the Albatross it was the curse of the spirit that befall on the ship leading it to an uncharted part of the sea.

We were the first that ever burst 105

Into that silent sea.

And,

Day after day, day after 115
day,

We stuck, nor breath nor motion;

As idle as a painted ship

Upon a painted ocean.

Later the Mariner was able to complete his journey once he reached his stage of initiation as he turned into a wise and enlightened man. He saw his native land again from the shore after he was saved on a boat by the Pilot and the hermit.

Other than the physical journey if we talk about the Mariner's spiritual journey, his journey began right from the moment when out of his impulsiveness he shot the innocent Albatross. The whole crew was dubious for the result of the act but later as the sky began to get clear the crew members praised him for his act.

'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay

That bring the fog and mist. (97-98)

The Mariner because of his ignorance was clueless about what sin has he how he will repay for this heinous act. After the ship stood motionless in the sluggish sea and the crew ran out of food and water with their throats parched and lips baked cause of heat and lack of water they realized where the things went wrong as their act of repentance they tied the albatross around the ancient mariner's neck.

In the moment of realization the mariner praised slimy things crawling on the ship that leads him to his penance and he ends up as a noble and wise man. This is how his spiritual journey from ignorance to enlightenment comes to an end.

IV. Coleridge's Christabel – An Introduction

Christabel is a poem written by Coleridge while he was working on some poems published in *Lyrical Ballad*. The poem was published in parts and Coleridge added 'Conclusion' part around

four years later of the first publication. The poem tells the story of an innocent maiden Christabel who meets a mysterious stranger, Geraldine a *femme fatale* and brings her home as she thinks of her as a damsel in distress. Later with the passing time Christabel realizes what wrong she has done.

V. Archetypes in Christabel

The Innocent: As in Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner we have Albatross who depicts the innocent character archetype, Christabel is the one in the aforementioned work who depicts the innocent character archetype.

Christabel is presented as an innocent, naïve and virginal maiden that have not yet familiar with the sinister world she lives in. She has a beautiful soul and possesses no malicious intention. She goes to pray in the woods at midnight hour for the safety of her knight whom she is betrothed with. She meets Geraldine there who seems as a lady from a rich clad, when Geraldine tells Christabel of her misery Christabel tries to help her out.

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand,

And comforted fair Geraldine

Christabel brings Geraldine home with a good heart whose only intention was to keep Geraldine safe. But an Archetypal character representing innocence has to fall victim at the hands of evil, Christabel goes through the same, the next morning when Christabel rises from her bed she realizes she has done something wrong, and so her statement shows.

'Sure I have sinn'd!' said Christabel,
'Now heaven be praised if all be well!'

Christabel made her journey from innocence to experience within a night. She is now aware of the character of Geraldine. She knows Geraldine has baleful intentions but now she is under bewitching spell of Geraldine cause of which she is unable to express her feelings to her father. It was her innocence that leads to her fall, her innocence that she could never realize what evil really is.

Good versus Evil: The theme of good versus evil prevails throughout the text. The character of Christabel is presented as pious as Jesus whereas that of Geraldine is portrayed as serpentine figure full of evilness. Coleridge calls Christabel with the names as “The lovely lady Christabel” and “youthful hermitess”.

She is an innocent daughter of a noble old Knight, who went to woods at the midnight hour to pray for the one she is betrothed to. Christabel offers aid to Geraldine even when she was a complete stranger to her. She takes her in her castle. Christabel's character is well explained in the lines:

Thou heard'st a low moaning,
 And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair;
 And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
 To shield her and shelter her from the damp air.

Later on when Christabel realizes true character of Geraldine she tries to warn her father in this regard but is not able to tell her as now she falls prey to the dark magic that Geraldine has spelled on her. There is contrast, clearly visible between the two women.

The reader becomes aware that there is something wicked about the character of Geraldine as Coleridge drops certain hints throughout the poem reflecting bad omens that includes Knight Sir Lionel's old mastiff's strange behavior. When Christabel reaches to the castle with Geraldine, another sign is she felt weak and groans while crossing the iron gate but after crossing it she walks as if nothing ever happened to her it might be cause traditionally it was believed that iron gates were used to ward off vampires and other ungodly presence. Geraldine even wards off the spirit of Christabel's mother who was earlier acting as Christabel's guardian angel. Next morning when Christabel wakes up the first thing she said was 'Sure I have sinn'd!' and reader gets the idea that something wrong has happened with Christabel as she has spent her night with Geraldine. The same emotional intonation is found in the ending of the poem when Christabel takes Geraldine to meet Sir Lionel and the knight embraces Geraldine the same way he embraced his daughter, Christabel had visions telling her that something is not right as summed up in the lines:

Upon the soul of Christabel,
 The vision of fear, the touch and pain!
 She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again—
 (Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee,
 Thou gentle maid! such sights to see?)

She wanted to tell her father about the signs she has been receiving that things are not going the right way but as she was bewitched under the spell of Geraldine so all she could to be come up with “All will yet be well!”

All these instances sums up the evilness lurking in the character of Geraldine and shows how her presence is already causing turmoil in the lives of people mentally as well as emotionally.

Dream Archetype: Jung believed that archetypes are not learned behavior but have been unconsciously passed on through various generations that include various

motifs, symbols and theme reflecting human psyche. Dreams are one of the archetypes that Jung believed reflects human unconscious.

In Coleridge's *Christabel* dreams have been used quite a few times as a device to give reader the insight of future. In the opening of the poem when we find *Christabel* worshipping the huge oak tree at midnight hour it was because she dreamt of her betrothed knight to be trouble:

“She had dreams all yesternight/Of her own betrothed knight;/And she in the midnight wood will pray.” (Lines 27-29)

So it was the dream that lead to first course of action in the poem. There are other instances too where dreams has been used as a device to portray the upcoming danger. Even the character of *Geraldine* is portrayed as she looked like a dream that one cannot explains with words but can only be familiar with their own eyes. Coleridge again uses this archetype to emphasize on the character of *Geraldine* through *Christabel* as she ponder over *Geraldine* while herself being half asleep and sometimes dreaming but “dreaming fearfully”. The word *Dreaming Fearfully* again gives us the insight that whatever *Christabel* is assuming about *Geraldine* is not very upright.

In Part II of the poem we have a new character *Bracy The Bard*. Bard's own character can be categorized as sage archetype as he provides insight and tries to pour some ideas of future mishappenings to *Sir Lionel* through the signs he has been observing recently. Bard also gets the intuition that something wrong is happening or is about to happen through the dream he had last night. *Bracy* dreams of a dove named as *Christabel* being entrapped by a green snake in the woods. He dreamt of this exactly at the same time when *Christabel* met *Geraldine*. As a reader one would easily get the notion that Dove here symbolize *Sir Lionel's* daughter *Christabel* and the snake refers to *Geraldine* who is casting her spell on the young maiden. When the Bard tells of his dream to the Knight, Knight interprets the dream as the dove symbolize *Geraldine* and the ones who kidnapped her are represented as snake. The interpretation of the dream made by *Sir Lionel*, a man of such high rank, gives us the idea that the man is not in his right minds and somehow it is the spell of *Geraldine* that is working on him which makes him so ignorant that he could not sense the danger swaying around his only child.

All these instances portrays that Coleridge has made use of dream archetype time and again throughout the poem to provide reader as well as the characters in the poem the hints of evil lurking around them.

VI. Conclusion

Archetypes have prevailed in literature from ages. The paper tries to analyze poems by Coleridge namely “The ancient Mariner” and “Christabel” and find out the archetypal patterns that imprints both of the aforementioned works. Even though when Coleridge was writing the work the archetypal theory was not in existence in the field of literature. The paper looks at the works through the glass of archetypal criticism and find out the universal aspects that have been prevailing in human psyche through the ages. There are few archetypes including the character archetypes i.e the innocent, the evil, the sage, the explorer and some situation archetypes as the journey and good versus evil have been discussed and how they color the whole work has been explored. The researcher hopes that the paper will help readers to analyze the works from psychological perspective while focusing on universally recurring images that represents human unconscious and also depicts how archetypes determines the form and functionality of a literary text.

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