CHAPTER II

S. T. COLERIDGE:

ROMANCE WITH SUPERNATURALISM
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Coleridge stands as a class by himself in terms of his distinguished poetic strains and noticeably romantic traits. It is, however, highly signified incorporation of supernaturalism that attributes a colour to his poetic production and makes it recognizably Coleridgean.

The unusual ability of Coleridge to employ supernaturalism in order to serve his romantic purposes gets critics to regard him as the poet of supernaturalism. However, supernaturalism is one of the elements in the romantic poetry and used by the romantic poets in one way or another, the way Coleridge manages to control this element in his poems is amazingly distinguished.

Before shedding light on the Coleridgean unique way of employing the elements of supernatural phenomena in his poems, the researcher considers it necessary to throw a brief and a quick look at the concept of supernatural(ism).

According to Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, the term supernatural or supranatural (Latin: super, supra "above" + natura "nature") pertains to being above or beyond what one holds to be natural. In the case of one who has strong scientific and atheist beliefs, the supernatural is anything unexplainable by natural law or phenomena. While one who holds mystical or heavenly beliefs may have no conception of supernatural phenomena, but might perceive the scientist's natural laws, on their own, as being sub natural.

In secular societies, religious miracles are typically perceived as supernatural claims, as well as spells and curses, divination, the afterlife,
and innumerable others. Such beliefs have existed in many cultures throughout human history.

Characteristics for the phenomenon claimed as supernatural are anomaly, uniqueness and uncontrollability, thus lacking reproducibility required for scientific examination. Supernatural themes are often associated with paranormal and occult ideas, suggesting for possibility of interaction with the supernatural by means of summoning or trance for instance.

The term "supernatural" is often used interchangeably with paranormal or preternatural; the latter typically limited to an adjective for describing abilities, which appear to exceed the bounds of possibility.¹

The term supernaturalism is the noun derived from the adjective supernatural, which is used for events and beings that are above the order of nature that are out or beyond the ordinary laws of cause and effect in the human world. The primitive and the medieval people were the strong believers of the supernatural. They looked at the phenomena of nature with awe and wonder. The Catholic legends and the mystic experiences of Christian saints sought to present the supernatural as holy truths. The literature of the Middle Ages, the romances and the ballads, freely exploited the supernatural or the marvelous, ghosts, witches, demons, ogres appear quite frequently in the medieval literature. Nevertheless, the supernatural in the medieval literature is crude, hair-raising, sensational and palpable².

With the Renaissance, the supernatural is presented in allegorical and symbolical cover so as to make it more natural and convincing. Yet much is merely sensational as may be seen in the plays of Shakespeare.

In the 18th Century, some novelists like Mrs. Radcliffe, Horace Walpole, Monk Lewis, and Beckford handled the supernatural elements skillfully. They presented supernatural scenes and characters in their
novels. But these novelists, who belonged to the school of horror, presented the supernatural element in gruesome and artificial horrible manner. They managed to produce atmosphere of horror and mystery of artificial methods, such as, ghostly shapes, noise and thunder. They actually depicted ghosts and witches playing with the souls of the innocent people. They aimed at causing panic and horror by means of supernatural machinery.

Hence devils were shown tearing human bodies. Their supernaturalism is dull and unconvincing in spite of the effort they made and the methods they employed to make it acceptable.³

The supernatural elements are represented and handled in Coleridge’s poems in a distinguished manner. He discarded the objective representation of these elements and adopted the subjective way where the readers can interpret the supernatural according to their intuition and beliefs. It means he handled the supernatural in a psychological manner. He also portrayed the effect of the human characters. Thus, he introduced subtle human and psychological method of treatment. It is not only that he succeeds in making the supernatural seem natural and, thus, in making it credible, he deals with the supernatural in a way in which he had never done before. Summing up his intentions, it was agreed that whereas Wordsworth would deal with the natural, Coleridge would deal with “persons and characters supernatural, or, at least, romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith.”⁴

One of the distinguished characteristics of Coleridge’s supernatural is that the scenes set for it are in distant times and remote places. Coleridge has made use of the supernatural in his three major poems The Ancient Mariner, Christabel, and Kubla Khan. It is significant that in all
the three poems, Coleridge takes us to distant times and remote places. *The Ancient Mariner* narrates the experience of an ancient Mariner voyaging around Polar Regions in unknown seas. *Christabel* takes us back to the Middle Ages, to the old moated with barons and bards. In *Kubla Khan*, the scene laid in the oriental city of Xanadu, in forest as “ancient as the hills”:

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

The remoteness of scene in all the three poems is quite deliberate. Such remoteness prepares readers to accept the supernatural easily. This explains why the appearance of an evil spirit in Leoline’s castle does not strike us improbable nor do we feel any inappropriateness in Kubal Khan’s hearing ancestral voices prophesying war amidst the tumultuous noises heard from the fountains as well as the caverns measureless to man. The moment the poet effects temporal and spatial remoteness, the rigorous logic governing the familiar world of reality is suspended and this way the poet feels free to create a new logic in a comparatively new world.5

**Gradual Introduction of the Supernatural Elements**

So as not to show any abruptness in introducing his supernatural elements Coleridge first takes his readers around familiar places and wins their faith in the narrative through vividly portrayed minute details; then he gradually drops minor hints at the supernatural. Finally, the entire scene is put on a supernatural look. As a result, the readers’ sensibility is so harmonious to the mood of the narrative that they readily accept whatever they are told. In *The Ancient Mariner*, there is a vivid description of the ship’s journey southward to the equator with a good wind and fine weather. Then a storm blast drives it towards the South
With the introduction of mist and snow, the scene takes on a weird look. Ice, mast-high, and as green as emerald, sends a dismal sheen and occasionally cracks and growls. In part II, the mariner announces:

We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Then the atmosphere is given some more supernatural touches. The breeze drops and the sea becomes perfectly still. The sun stands high in a hot and a cooper sky. Their ship looks as “idle as a painted ocean”. On account of intense heat, the mariner has a weary time. Their throats are parched and their eyes are glazed. It is such a background that the spectre ship is introduced with its ghastly crew of death and life-in-death. In *Christabel*, also, the supernatural atmosphere is very gradually built up. We hear the hooting of the owl as the castle clock strikes the midnight hour. The toothless mastiff bitch makes answer to the clock striking hours and quarters and is side to be able to see the coffin of Christabel’s dead mother. A thin grey cloud spreads on high and the moon behind it looks both small and dull. Geraldine is introduced in an air of hushed expectancy. But her evil nature is not revealed immediately. The poet gives short cumulative touches to suggest that she is an evil spirit. She collapses at the massive iron gate “belike though pain”. She refuses to join Christabel in prayer. The mastiff bitch makes an angry moan as she passed by the kennel. When they enter the whole, dying ashes give out “a tongue of light, a fit of flame”, the light of which Christabel is able to see Geraldine’s eye. Even at this moment the poet does not tell us that it is a serpent’s eye. Thus the poet prepares us fully well before revealing her reality as she exposes her ugly bosom and put a spell on Christabel.

The supernatural elements used by Coleridge are completely refined and subjective. One can find no palpability of objectivity when encountering these elements because the pleasure resulted by this
encountering is not seen by the eye; but rather felt by the mind through agitation or terror it excites in the mind. In the *Ancient Mariner*, the horror of the merchant’s face is conveyed by the terror it excites in the mind of the beholder:

> I moved my lips, the pilot shrieked  
> And fell down in a fit.

In *Christabel*, there is nothing that is visibly horrible, yet the sense of horror is constantly felt by the mind. “The evil spirit which haunts the body of Geraldine and tries to ruin the innocent happiness of Christabel is in the true traditions of vampires, and Coleridge infuses a mysterious dread into her… In her we see the embodiment of evil powers from another world and realize the helpless ordinary human beings are against them.” The serpent nature of the woman is conveyed by the horror she excites in the mind of Christabel. Hypnotized by the weird, fitful glances of her uncanny eye, Christabel can utter only a “hissing sound”. “Her poisonous nature flows from her eyes effuses from her whole body and is perceived instinctively by the mastiff bitch.”

> The mastiff old did not awake,  
> Yet she an angry moan did make.

The presence of the ghost of the dead mother is felt by Geraldine’s cry of terror:

> Off, wondering mother! Peak and pine!  
> I have power to get thee flee.

Coleridge’s supernatural elements are, however, not presented directly to the readers. It is the readers themselves who have to infer themselves what they understand by the supernatural agency or element.

In *Christabel*, the supernatural is suggested by the midnight atmosphere, the lonely girl in a forest, the dead mother’s tomb, the mysterious appearance of Geraldine at that time and that place; all these elements suggest supernatural elements controlling the poem from the
beginning to the end. What Coleridge gives to his readers are merely suggestive glimpses of the supernatural:

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
Tu--whit! -- Tu--whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

By this introduction, readers start to guess about what is to come up. Their breaths quicken as they start to understand that there should be something horrible that will break the harmony of this midnight atmosphere. Thus, Coleridge’s supernatural elements become much more effective, interesting and enjoyable.

Vagueness

The supernatural of Coleridge is normally overwhelmed by mystery and vagueness. It is completely not apparent, or clear. For him, vagueness is an essential element of supernatural. His readers left guessing to solve the suspense and ambiguity of what they read in order to be able to get the pleasure behind the supernatural Coleridge presents or aims at. “What was it that Christabel saw on the bosom of Geraldine? Was it a wound? Or a mark of serpent? Or some foul disfigurement?”

The poet keeps his secrets and consequently increases the ambiguity and the curiosity of the readers which never clarified. Similarly, we do not know whether the angry moan of the bitch or the tongue of the flames were omens or mere accidents.

In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the vagueness is employed differently. It is used to hold the readers’ attention. They are kept seeking a clarification for this vagueness. In order to be satisfied with the sequence of events and solve the vagueness that surround these events, they are kept reading non-stop from the beginning to the end. In this Coleridgean masterpiece, one’s attention is skillfully hold from the very beginning by the mysterious personality of the ancient mariner, his faintly
illuminated features, his long grey beard, and his glittering eyes, stopping three wedding-guests detaining one of them, who together with us are strongly hold:

He holds him with his glittering eye--
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.
The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

Though the wedding-guest cursed himself for he was impatient to leave, he had no choice but to listen. The way the ship is driven in the southern direction looking like a person running with his head bent before an enemy chasing him closely and shouting at him, the empty, icy ocean it arrives at, the howling sounds that were like confused noises in swoon, and the seawater that was burnt like the oil by a witch emitting multi-coloured lights. All these supernatural elements are presented in a vague environment.

The Coleridgean supernatural, as one finds it, does not have any fixed or finite character. It is difficult to decide how much of it is real, and how much is merely subjective illusion, or pure hallucination. Thus, we cannot assess definitely what kind of creature Geraldine is. Is she a normal girl suffering from shame or a lesbian woman? Is she a serpent in the form of a woman or a delicate charming girl?

One cannot assess how much of the mariner’s experience is definitely true, and how much is mere hallucination. The dream-like nature of *Kubla Khan* turns the poem into an indefinite picture of an imaginary palace i.e. an open picture overwhelmed with fertile amazing imaginary nature. The “woman wailing for her demon lover”, the “ancestral voice prophesying war” and when the poet seems to break the bounds of human
kind and become a wild spirit of song. They are all supernatural indefinite fragments and we have to imagine what they might have been.

Coleridge’s supernatural, as the sensitive reader knows it well, has all the potentials of real. He makes the supernatural seem natural by the means of occult forces which his readers believe in.

In *Kubla Khan*, the sweet melody of the Abyssianin maid, if he could capture, would turn him into a mighty musician because, then, he would be filled with such a divine inspiration that could enable him to write a powerful description of the pleasure of Kubla Khan’s palace. Since he could be a mighty magician; his readers will consider his fragments description something natural, and acceptable.

In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the wedding-guest who was in a hurry having no time to listen to a stranger, was hold by the glittering eyes of the old mariner as if he were under a magic spell:

> The wedding-guest stood still,  
> And listens like a three years’ child.

In *Christabel*, Geraldine’s spell holds the tongue of Christabel and she can only produce a hissing sound. In *The Three Graves*, one of Coleridge’s minor poems, “it is the curse of the mother that dominates the lives of the married couple. Such force creates delusions. Things cannot be judged by normal standards.”

In order to create a convincing realistic nature for his supernatural, Coleridge humanizes it. His supernatural appears, not in a traditional blood-curding, and hair-raising form, but assumes the ordinary human personality. Thus, Geraldine, though a ‘demonic sublime’, has the features of a human female because she is beautiful girl, attractive and charming; the mariner, though has a magic glittering eyes, a normal person, suffers from committing a sin i.e. killing the albatross; Christabel, though a mysterious girl, suffers from shame and misery. So,
all the three characters have human elements and common human weaknesses. In *Kubla Khan*, the poet presents himself as a supernatural being:

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

A note of supernatural mystery runs through these lines and yet the whole description is psychologically accurate because when a poet is caught in a spell of creative inspiration, he transcends his ordinary existence and rises to the level of a supernatural being. Thus, we find that Coleridge makes his supernatural acceptable mainly through a faithful adherence to the dramatic truth of human emotions.

**The Fusion of the Natural and the Supernatural**

Another very important feature of Coleridge’s treatment of the supernatural is the clever and subtle blending of the natural and the supernatural. Indeed the two are so indistinguishably fused with each other that it becomes difficult to locate where the one ends and the other begins. Who will say with any definiteness whether the bloody sun (in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*) no bigger than the moon, standing right up the mast in a hot and copper sky, the death-fires dancing at night and the water burning green, and blue and white like a witch’s oil constitute natural or supernatural phenomena? Dose Christabel make a hissing sound because of womanly jealousy or because, under the spell of Geraldine, she has begun to acquire some of the evil Geraldine stands for? In *Kubla Khan*, the mighty fountain, being momentely forced, is definitely invested with supernatural energy but the similes employed to describe it are so familiar that we accept the fountain as quite natural:

Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.\textsuperscript{15}

And this perfect fusion leads to another characteristic to discuss below:

The creation of proper atmosphere is the triumph of Coleridge’s art. The most remarkable way in which Coleridge secures the willing suspension of disbelief is skillfully weaving for the appearance of the supernatural a proper atmosphere. For example in his \textit{Christabel} he manages, from the opening lines of his poem, to create a proper atmosphere for his supernatural elements presented later in the poem:

\begin{verbatim}
'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock,
Tu--whit!--Tu--whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.
\end{verbatim}

In the third stanza he returns back to his readers arousing some questions in their minds in order to get them to be ready to accept his supernatural character, Geraldine:

\begin{verbatim}
Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.
\end{verbatim}

Thus, realism is made to serve the purpose of fantasy; and the “realistic details of description are made to suggest queerness, grotesqueness, all gathering into a total impression of something enchanted, around us. Even unnatural events as mentioned by C. M. Bowra, are formed from natural elements, and for this reason will believe in them.”\textsuperscript{16}
Coleridge is said to have the most vigorous imagination among all the romantic poets. His imagination was bold to seize upon suitable facts from his readings, which was vast and varied, and portrayed them as if they had been literary present before his eyes\textsuperscript{17}.

In his poems, supernaturalism and supernatural phenomena are the roots out of which lines, stanzas, images, senses and themes are sent out. In some poems, for instance, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan*, and *Christabel*, the characters, setting and even the narrators are supernatural.

In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the curse of nature, which is supernatural, generates more supernatural phenomena. In other words, that curse leads the ship crew to heat and thirst getting their throats to dry and their lips to parch. They could neither laugh nor cry. They had been rendered speechless by utter drought. This leads the mariner to slake his throat by biting his arm and sucking his blood to be able to cry out that he could see a ship approaching them. Because of this curse, also, the sun appeared to be streaked with lines and the board together with the crimson red sun appeared to be peeping through the iron bars of a prison. Then, a skeleton ship approached them with a ghostly woman, looked like the spirit of death, and another figure seemed to be her mate. That horrible woman was Life-in-Death. She was a nightmare personified and was capable of curdling any man’s blood. Those two figures played at a dice which was won by that woman. Consequently, in the light of the moon, closely followed by a star, the two hundred living sailors dropped dead one by one so quickly that they could never utter a groan or heave a sigh. Their souls fled from their bodies making a hissing sound like the one made when the mariner shot the albatross with his cross-brow.
Being the only living one among the dead bodies, the mariner was surrounded by agony and desolation. Thus he decided to pray but whenever he tried to do so, some wicked whisper influenced his heart and made it as dry as dust. There was something mysterious about those dead bodies of the crew i.e. they were perspired but they did not either rot or give out any foul smell. Their eyes were still open as if the reproachful look with which they had died was still there. Thus it is clear that each single supernatural leads to another in a circular generating way.

In *Kubla Khan*, the dome of pleasure, that Kubla Khan decreed to be built, is the root out of which other supernatural images emerged. It would be built where Alph, which may refer to ‘alpha’ the first letter in Greek and seen as the beginning of life in Christianity, ran through caverns measureless to man down to a sunless sea:

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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.
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Each supernatural leads to another one or requires the other to make the picture clear. The twice miles of fertile land that were girdled with walls and towers is pregnant with enchanted natural and supernatural images:

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So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.
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Through the description of the up-normal beauty of that place, that had a magic haunting, unconscientiously we are led to the supernatural image of the woman wailing for her demon –lover. That charming place is as enchanted as what is beneath a waning moon that was haunted by woman wailing for her demon-lover:
But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

Coleridge goes on to the lifeless ocean where Kubla Khan can hear voices coming from far, showing reference to an afterlife prophesying the coming of war seeming to signify the destruction of the pleasure-dome and loss of life:

Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

That pleasure-dome was rare indeed and supernatural by itself because it was a combination of a summer and a winter palace; ice combined with sunshine. It was sunny and had caves of ice:

It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

Towards the close of the poem, the poet professionally created another atmosphere for his supernatural when he pretended to see, in a vision, an Abyssinian maid playing on an ancient stringed instrument singing of Mount Abora. He imagined that if it were given to him to revive the damsel celestial symphony, he would erect with his song an aerial fabric similar to Kubla’s pleasure-dome:

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
As a result of that, he would go beyond human boundaries to have a magic nature. Then his hearers would be awe-struck at his inspired appearance and would draw a magical circle round him to prevent him from approaching them in that state of fine frenzy:

And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread.

Thus the supernatural nature he would get i.e. the glittering eyes and the floating hair generated a new supernatural: His hearers would believe that he had been fed on honey-dew and the milk of paradise. Honey-dew means “manna-dew” i.e. drops of manna, a mysterious sort of comestible on which Jehovah is said to have fed the Israelites when they were on their way to Canaan. Therefore, it stands for the ambrosia of celestial inspiration:

For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

*Christabel* is an ideal supernatural poem from the beginning to the end. The very beginning setting gives us an impression that what is coming is something not normal. What is attempted in this poem has been said to be the most difficult in the whole field of romance. “We are made aware of supernatural forces which lie in wait on every side”:

Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
Tu--whit !-- -- Tu--whoo !
And hark, again ! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.
--- Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:
In the midnight; in the rare forest where no wind could be felt; no wind enough to move either the ringlet curl from Christabel’s cheeks or the last red leaf that was hanging so high and so light:

The night is chill; the forest bare;  
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?  
There is not wind enough in the air  
To move away the ringlet curl  
From the lovely lady’s cheek—  
There is not wind enough to twirl  
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,  
That dances as often as dance it can,  
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,  
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Then, she could hear a strange moan as near as near can be which made her together with the readers so frightened that they could pray:

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!  
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!  
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,  
And stole to the other side of the oak.

This gloomy gothic atmosphere introduces the appearance of the strange character of Geraldine whose beauty is dreadful:

What sees she there?  
There she sees a damsel bright,  
Dressed in a silken robe of white,  
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:  
The neck that made that white robe wan,  
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;  
Her blue-veined feet unsandal’d were;  
And wildly glittered here and there  
The gems entangled in her hair.  
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see  
A lady so richly clad as she—  
Beautiful exceedingly.

The un-natural character of Geraldine introduces unnatural reality of her with Christabel.

The themes Coleridge presents in his poetry are the typical themes of Romanticism i.e. themes characterized by superiority of supernaturalism over nature, individuality over society, imagination over reality, and
emotions over reasons. What distinguishes Coleridge is his unique ability to present all his themes in a supernatural cloak. As John Keats seeks his identity via beauty, Coleridge, seeks it via supernaturalism. Though Coleridge’s literary works are highly interpreted, this study is an attempt to create possibilities of new interpretations in the recent ideological context. Female impact on his poetry (love), feminism, sensuality and vampirism are the themes that have never explored adequately as yet. There still some notions to explore here i.e. the effect of frustration of the dreamy-like Coleridge in the field of love on his versification, early streams of feminism from the Coleridgean point of view and sensuality via supernaturalism.

S. T. Coleridge suffered a lot in his life. As a child, he quarreled a lot with his brother who could not hold his jealousy of him because of the affection showered on him by his parents. After one quarrel he spent the night on the bank of a stream which was the beginning of the continuous ill-health in his later life. The death of his father when he was still nine and staying at Christ’s Hospital away from his family affected him so much and strengthens his need for warm feelings and love which he failed to gain.

As a young man, he lived in a state of loneliness, solitude and unsettled state of mind resulted from his abortive passion for Mary Evans, his rashly marriage to Sarah Fricker and the frustrated consequences of that marriage. As a mature man, he tortured himself by loving Sarah Hutchinson though he knew previously that he could not even think of divorcing his wife.

Though Coleridge is unable to get a mutual love, the impact of his female relations, on his versification cannot be ignored; and though his love for Mrs. Morgan’s sister Charlotte Brent and for Mrs. Anne Gillman is faint and reduplicated, his love for Mary Evans, and Sarah Hutchinson
is pure, true and original and his friendship with Dorothy Wordsworth is highly fruitful and his marriage to Sarah Fricker, though traditional, is genuine and responsible. Three main female relations will be examined here to show their impact on Coleridge’s poetical works.

Earlier in life, after the death of his father in 1781, Coleridge attended Christ’s Hospital where he befriended several boys including Tom Evans. He and other friends visited Tom’s home where Coleridge met Mary Evans, Tom’s elder sister, with whom he fell in love. Although he failed to profess his feelings to Evans during their early relationship, he held her in affection until 1794 when Evans dissuaded his attentions.

Evans became Coleridge's first love “whom for five years I loved—almost to madness”, he wrote in one of his letters. Although he felt passionately about her, he did not share with her his feelings, and when he happened to see her leaving a church in Wrexham in 1794 he turned sick and all but fainted away. The relationship lasted only a short while, and in October 1795, she married Fryer Todd.

When Coleridge made plans with friend and future brother-in-law, Robert Southey, to emigrate to the banks of the Susquahanna, Evans wrote to Coleridge imploring him not to go. The letter reopened old feelings for Coleridge, inspiring the poem Sonnet: to my Own Heart, which he published in his "three earlier and three later collections, as well as in Sonnets from Various Authors and has also received the title On a Discovery Made too Late. In this poem, Coleridge addresses his most vulnerable organ: ‘Reason’ probes the heart, asking why it fails to keep the fullest sense of ‘Hope’ in mind. As pointed out by Debbie Lee, Coleridge sees the white, western woman as a disease-carrier; and localizes the oppressor in the form of a sublime, maternal (English) being. Furthermore, he exposes his burgeoning, weak nature—a bleeding
heart, and an infantilized body, juxtaposed by the confidence of “madman of Genius!” This is Coleridge at his purest, his truest emotional form:

Thou bleedest, my poor Heart! and thy distress
Reasoning I ponder with a scornful smile
And probe thy sore wound sternly, though the while
Swoln be mine eye and dim with heaviness.
Why didst thou listen to Hope’s whisper bland?
Or, listening, why forget the healing tale,
When Jealousy with feverous fancies pale
Jarr’d thy fine fibres with a maniac’s hand?
Faint was that Hope, and rayless! — Yet ’twas fair
And sooth’d with many a dream the hour of rest:
Thou should’st have lov’d it most, when most opprest,
And nurs’d it with an agony of care,
Even as a mother her sweet infant heir
That wan and sickly droops upon her breast!

Coleridge and Evans met again for the last time in 1808 but the pregnant romantic images he wrote for her will stand for the pure romanticism of the 19th century and represents specific phase in Coleridge’s poetry which is completely free from the medieval effects.

Coleridge married Sarah Fricker, the sister of his friend, Southey’s fiancée. She was a lady who neither emotionally nor intellectually was a suitable partner for him. This marriage was a result of his initial enthusiasm for forming a careless community together with his Oxford friend, Southey, with whom he had engaged unpractical scheme called ‘Pantisocracy’, which is a utopian community where all are equal and all rule, with the aim of reforming the human race. “They decided that twelve gentlemen of good education and liberal principles would marry twelve ladies, migrate to Susquehanna, somewhere in America, and form a careless community. To earn their living they proposed to work on the farms two hours a day and devote the rest of their time to literary pursuit;” 24 but their plan had to be given up.

Thus, Coleridge got married in the interest of “ Pantisocracy” but realized soon its ridiculousness. He was still attracted to Mary Evans to
whom he earlier made a passionate appeal for marriage; but she offered him only a sisterly affection. Realizing his ridiculous mistake, Coleridge tried to convince his friend Southey to help him to break off his engagement to Sarah Fricker that was so rashly made, but Southey out of his regards to his future sister-in-law, prevailed him to abide by his word which Coleridge did to keep and had to repent for it throughout his life.

The two spent enough time together in 1795 to realize their mutual incompatibility and bitterly quarreled with each other. In the meantime the idealized sensitive generous and open hearted, Coleridge, tried to prove as a good husband as was possible. What concerns us here is the effect of Sarah Fricker on his poetic production.

In August 1795, before his marriage and when his emotional state was good because his relation with his future wife, Sarah, was a pleasant relation, the poems he composed are of the finest of what was written in English romantic poetry about human relation with nature. *The Eolian Harp* is a good example for such type of poetry.

He addresses the poem to his future wife, Sarah, whose beauty mixed with the beauty of nature. His attractive way of description and incomparable ability to draw the natural scene is highly impressive:

```
My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our cot, our cot o'ergrown
With white-flowered jasmin, and the broad-leaved myrtle,
(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve
Serenely brilliant (such should wisdom be)
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatched from yon bean-field! and the world so hushed!
The stilly murmur of the distant sea
Tells us of silence.
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After drawing the picture of the natural-human beauty and colouring it using a unique paints of both nature’s beauty and human’s, the poet
moves to the eolian harp that was considered an indispensable possession for every poet and normally it was placed in a casement. That position of the harp near the window attracted the romantic poet, Coleridge, looking at the lute which was lying length-close embrace of the window, asks his future wife to listen to the lute which is lovingly touched by the wayward wind and is producing a sweet musical sound and compares the music of the lute with the light protestations of a shy girl, objecting to her lover’s embrace and yet yielding to his solicitations. Her protestations get the lover to embrace her further and with greater vigour and passion. Similarly, the musical sounds produced by the lute tempt the wind to pass through it more forcibly and produced a louder musical sound. Then the wind blows more forcibly and the strings of the lute produced a louder music:

And that simplest lute,
Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caressed,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes.

He thinks that all the objects of this living universe can be considered as organic harps of different shapes and sizes and at the touch of breeze the strings of the harp come to life and produce sweet musical notes, in the same manner all the objects of this universe are stimulated and inspired to when they are swept over by the moulding and shaping spirit of God. For him, the spirit of God gives life and movement to all the objects of nature. They are subordinated to it in the same manner as the lute subordinated to the breeze:

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely 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?
Not only does this poem describe the human relation with nature, it refers to Coleridge’s religious philosophical point of view i.e. nature is means of God. It leads humanity to have real faith in God the creator. As a reaction to such a philosophy, his Sarah, who was a devout Christian and does not like his pantheistic ideas about the all-pervading one soul in this universe, looks at him seriously and reprovingly. The beliefs of pantheism differ from those of Christianity. Her darkened looks seem to be saying to him that he should leave these ideas and be faithful to God. He responds to her reproving saying that she should reject his pantheistic thoughts because they are as short lived as bubbles of water that are formed and instantly destroyed on the fruitless fountain of philosophy which if noisily flowing is futile and cannot be compared with deep-rooted beliefs of religion:

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O belovéd Woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallow’d dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
Meek Daughter in the family of Christ!
Well hast thou said and holily disprais’d
These shapings of the unregenerate mind;
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.
For never guiltless may I speak of him,
The Incomprehensible!

Philosophy, which depends on reasoning, cannot understand the incomprehensive nature of God that can be understood only by religion which calls for the recognition of God as He is believed to be.

The rest of the poem shows the poet’s firm faith in religious beliefs and accept God’s reality in his heart. He also praised the merciful God who was merciful to the sinful, most miserable, wildered and dark man, Coleridge. He confesses God’s mercy on him. God granted him peace of mind, his cottage and Sarah, his heart-honoured beloved:
……save when with awe
I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels;
Who with his saving mercies healéd me,
A sinful and most miserable man,
Wilder’d and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace, and this Cot, and thee, heart-honour’d Maid!

The well-selected vocabulary, the variety of aesthetic visual and audio natural images, the pleasant flow of the poem together with the carefully order of the ideas, make this poem to worth to be called “the most perfect” of Coleridge’s early poems. Thus, Sarah, the future wife of Coleridge, whose love Coleridge thinks he wins this time after suffering severely from a previously lost love, stands behind this naming.

Both The Eolian Harp and Lines Written at Shurton Bars are addressed to Sarah Fricker, his fiancée then, to comfort her about their relation that was opposed by many and after some hesitation and uncertainty on Coleridge's side which caused him to leave her for London over the course of a few months.

Lines Written at Shurton Bars is a poem that incorporates a reflection on Coleridge's engagement and his understanding of marriage. It also compares nature to an ideal understanding of reality and discusses isolation from others. Coleridge begins his poem by incorporating a quote from William Wordsworth, a poet that he would become close friends with following 1795:

Nor now with curious sight
I mark the glow-worm, as I pass,
Move with "green radiance" through the grass,
An emerald of light.

The poem continues with words that express Coleridge's closeness to Fricker and are an attempt to comfort her before their wedding:

O ever present to my view!
My wafted spirit is with you,
And soothes your boding fears:
I see you all oppressed with gloom
Sit lonely in that cheerless room —
Ah me! You are in tears!

Further into the poem is an image of alienation:

And there in black soul-jaundic'd fit
A sad gloom-pamper'd Man to sit,
And listen to the roar:
When mountain surges bellowing deep
With an uncouth monster-leap
Plung'd foaming on the shore.

The poem ends with the soon to be experienced act of conjugal love:

How oft, my Love! with shapings sweet
I paint the moment, we shall meet!
With eager speed I dart —
I seize you in the vacant air,
And fancy, with a husband’s care
I press you to my heart!
'Tis said, in Summer’s evening hour
Flashes the golden-colour’d flower
A fair electric flame:
And so shall flash my love-charg’d eye
When all the heart’s big ecstasy
Shoots rapid through the frame!

The poem is a love poem that focuses on nature and scenery. The lines focusing on consummation suggest possible doubts within Coleridge on his ability to go through with a real sexual act and a real relationship as opposed to an idealized fantasy. Another cause of concern for Coleridge within these lines is the possibility of having to give up poetry for his marriage. These lines also incorporate the word "flash", which is connected to Jacob Boehme's view of love and to Coleridge's understanding of love as acting in a similar manner to the sunrise. Other psychological concerns that appear in the poem and in his other poetry include feelings of melancholy and alienation. In regards to solitude, the poem is connected to the use of nature in William Collins's *Ode to Evening* as a means to discuss isolation.
In particular, Fricker's loneliness is compared to that of a lonely man and to the opening of a rose in order to convince her that her sorrow is not as bad as that experienced by others.\textsuperscript{35}

After marrying Sarah Fricker in autumn 1795, Coleridge left her, as she was pregnant, at Clevedon and began to travel throughout England. Though he would write home constantly and was concerned about her state of health, the feelings of guilt, along with a fever, affected him greatly and caused him to express these feelings in a letter to Josiah Wade on 10 February 1796: "My past life seems to me like a dream, a feverish dream! All one gloomy huddle of strange actions, and dim-discovered motives! Friendships lost by indolence, and happiness murdered by mismanaged sensibilities."\textsuperscript{36}

This touching description of his past life, including his marital life, refers to the amount of suffering he was living in after his marriage especially if the readers put into their considerations the fact that a recent married man, who is nearly to be a future dad, supposed to be happy because these moments supposed to be the best in any one’s life.

As he wrote \textit{The Eolian Harp} to commemorate coming to his home at Clevedon, Coleridge composed \textit{Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement} or \textit{Reflections on Entering into Active Life} on leaving it.\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement} was a poem written in 1796 after his marriage. Like his earlier poem \textit{The Eolian Harp}, the poem discusses Coleridge's understanding of nature and his marital life. Coleridge in this poem seems to be suffering from problems that developed after the previous poem. Above all, the poem focuses on man's relationship with nature in its various aspects ranging from experiencing an Edenic state to having to abandon a unity with nature in order to fulfill a moral obligation to mankind. The discussion of man's obligation to each other leads into a discussion on the difference between the life of a
philosopher and the life of a poet. By the end of the poem, the narrator follows the philosophical path in a manner similar to what Coleridge sought to do.

The poem begins with an idealization of a "Valley of Seclusion":

In the open air
Our Myrtles blossom'd; and across the porch
Thick Jasmins twined: the little landscape round
Was green and woody, and refresh'd the eye.
It was a spot which you might aptly call
The Valley of Seclusion!

The poem continues with a goodbye to the valley and asks if his (Coleridge’s) life of pleasure was appropriate:

I was constrain'd to quit you. Was it right,
While my unnumber'd brethren toil'd and bled,
That I should dream away the entrusted hours
On rose-leaf beds, pampering the coward heart
With feelings all too delicate for use?

The narrator describes the reasons why he is leaving Clevedon along with the allowance of remembering his former life there after his work is done:

I therefore go, and join head, heart, and hand,
Active and firm, to fight the bloodless fight
Of Science, Freedom, and the Truth in CHRIST.
Yet oft when after honourable toil
Rests the tir'd mind, and waking loves to dream
My Spirit shall revisit thee, dear Cot!

The response to the poem from critics was mostly positive with many of them emphasizing the religious aspects of the poem in their analysis.

The themes of Reflections are connected to Coleridge’s The Eolian Harp as the scene for both is the same. The land of Clevedon is praised and seen full of life, and it serves as contrast to escaping from the real world into fantasy and pondering about the abstract. Both poems also describe Coleridge's relationship with his wife and feelings of sexual desire. The imagination aspects of the poem represent an unwillingness to accept nature on its own and reject the conclusion of The Eolian Harp.
Although the land of Clevedon can bring one closer to God, one cannot just simply exist in such an area but must seek out truth\textsuperscript{39}.

Feeling the need to seek out truth creates a separation between the mind of a poet and the mind of a philosopher. The poem reconciles the two by allowing the pursuer of truth to reflect on his time of simply enjoying nature and God’s presence. However, the philosopher aspect is dominant and the individual must go out and try to help humanity. Nature can be soothing, but the narrator must reject the Edenic quality of nature because such a state is not yet appropriate\textsuperscript{40}.

The Edenic imagery figures into many of Coleridge’s poems and is reinforced with the image of myrtle trees and takes on many forms within his poetry. In \textit{Reflections}, to dwell in an Edenic state is a paradise in which the narrator leaves voluntarily because he cannot ignore the problems of the world like a coward. Instead, the individual is compelled to join with mankind and even the lowest form of benefiting mankind is superior to doing nothing at all\textsuperscript{41}.

Briefly, Sarah stimulates Coleridge to dictate his readers his philosophy on religion, nature and the difference between the life of the poet and that of the philosopher in a skillful and impressive romantic poetic language.

Sarah Hutchinson is sister-in-law of Wordsworth. After their return from Germany, the Wordsworths stayed at a farm in Durham with the family of Hutchinson, where both Wordsworth and Coleridge fell in love with the Hutchinson’s two daughters. Wordsworth loved Mary and married in 1802. Coleridge met Sarah Hutchinson and immediately fell in love with her. She was a young lady of great understanding and sympathy which got her to be a good wife for a sensitive person like Coleridge. If he could marry her, he would be happier and his life would be much more fruitful peaceful and comfortable. But since he held the sanctity of his
marriage with Sarah Fricker inviolable and could not even think of divorcing her, his passion for Sarah Hutchison only added more and more to his suffering and misery.

It was his ballad-poem *Love* that Coleridge addressed to his love Sarah Hutchinson. This poem was a direct inspiration for John Keats’ famous *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*\(^42\). In *Love*, Coleridge states his identification of love. For him, love is the supreme passion of human-beings and all other human feelings and passions are mere subordinators to it. All thoughts, passions and feelings of delight that move the human body are merely attendants of love and keep the holy flame of love burning in the heart of man:

> All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
> Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
> All are but ministers of Love,
> And feed his sacred flame.

The poet had a great love for Genevieve who stands for Sarah Hutchinson since the poem is addressed to her:

> The moonshine, stealing o’er the scene
> Had blended with the lights of eve;
> And she was there, my hope, my joy,
> My own dear Genevieve!

It is said that the origin of the name Genevieve was the name of the daughter of Coleridge’s School-nurse for whom Coleridge wrote the poem *To Genevieve* when he was still fourteen\(^43\):

> Maid of love sweet Genevieve,
> In beauty’s life you glide a long;
> Your eye is like star of eve,
> And sweet your voice as seraph’s song.

The poet goes on describing the romantic scene where his Genevieve was present leaning against a statue of an armed knight as she was listening to the poet who began to play on his harp and sing an old song in the lingering twilight:
She leant against the arméd man,
The statue of the arméd knight;
She stood and listened to my lay,
Amid the lingering light.

Then he moves to describe the emotional state of his dear Genevieve; she is so happy in her life. She suffered only few sorrows but she loved him a lot when she heard his old song which described a very pathetic and moving story. She listened to his song with a flitting blush and downcast eyes feeling conscious that the poet was gazing at her face:

I played a soft and doleful air,
I sang an old and moving story —
An old rude song, that suited well
That ruin wild and hoary.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace;
For well she knew, I could not choose
But gaze upon her face.

Coleridge continues narrating the old story of his song. It was the story of the knight who carried the mark of a burning torch on his shield. That night had a deep love for a lady who rejected his love. He loved her for ten years and she kept on scorning him cruelly for ten years. The poet narrated the story of the knight in a deep and low pleading tone in a way expressed his deep love for Genevieve. Such a symbolic way of declaring his love got Genevieve to continue listening to him intently and to excuse and forgive him for gazing too lovingly on her face and this is the first indication that she starts to yield to the poet’s love:

Upon his shield a burning brand;
And that for ten long years he wooed
The Lady of the Land.

I told her how he pined: and ah!
The deep, the low, the pleading tone
With which I sang another’s love,
Interpreted my own.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes, and modest grace;
And she forgave me, that I gazed
Too fondly on her face!

Starting to sympathize with him and respond to his story, Genevieve, encouraged him to expect more from her. Thus, he goes on narrating his old song of the knight: The cruel scorn of the lady towards the night drove him mad. He left his home and wandered lonely, having no rest day and night, into mountain-woods. A fiend in the shape of an angel tried to tempt him, but he realized that it was a fiend and remained firm and constant in his love for that lady:

But when I told the cruel scorn
That crazed that bold and lovely Knight,
And that he crossed the mountain-woods,
Nor rested day nor night;

That sometimes from the savage den,
And sometimes from the darksome shade,
And sometimes starting up at once
In green and sunny glade, —

There came and looked him in the face
An angel beautiful and bright;
And that he knew it was a Fiend,
This miserable Knight!

Once, the lady attacked by a band of some ruffians who wanted to molest her. The knight, without knowing what he did, saved her heroically. When the lady saw that her rejected love risked his life to save her from the worst dishonor, she repented for her past cruelty. She nursed him and tried to remove the cruel scorn, which caused his madness, from his mind. Though she did her best, all her efforts proved useless and the knight died on the yellow forest leaves:

And that unknowing what he did
He leaped amid a murderous band,
And saved from outrage worse than death
The Lady of the Land!

And how she wept, and clasped his knees;
And how she tended him in vain —
And ever strove to expiate
The scorn that crazed his brain; —

And that she nursed him in a cave;
And how his madness went away,
When on the yellow forest-leaves
A dying man he lay.

Before being able to utter the last words of the knight, the poet’s voice was affected and faltered and his harp stopped. Genevieve’s soul was also disturbed with pity. Her sympathy with the knight gave her enough courage to express her love for him:

His dying words — but when I reached
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,
My faultering voice and pausing harp
Disturbed her soul with pity!

All impulses of soul and sense
Had thrilled my guileless Genevieve;
The music and the doleful tale,
The rich and balmy eve.

Coleridge drove from the story of the knight to his own story and described in details the emotional state which was a mixture of fears, hopes, gentle wishes and the virgin pride. All these emotions combined together to show Genevieve’s love for him:

And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng,
And gentle wishes long subdued,
Subdued and cherished long!

She wept with pity and delight,
She blushed with love, and virgin-shame;
And like the murmur of a dream,
I heard her breathe my name.

Her bosom heaved — she stepped aside,
As conscious of my look she stepped —
Then suddenly, with timorous eye
She fled to me and wept.

She half enclosed me with her arms,
She pressed me with a meek embrace;
And bending back her head, looked up,
And gazed upon my face.
The old story of the lost love of the knight helped Coleridge to gain the heart of his love, Genevieve, who becomes his bride:

’Twas partly love, and partly fear,
And partly ’twas a bashful art,
That I might rather feel, than see,
The swelling of her heart.

I calmed her fears, and she was calm,
And told her love with virgin pride;
And so I won my Genevieve,
My bright and beauteous Bride.

Reviewing Coleridge’s circumstances in and before 1801, the date of writing this poem, leads to the following conclusion: The old and sad song of the story of the knight could be a symbolic story stood for Coleridge’s lost love, Mary Evans, and his Genevieve was a symbolic character for Sarah Hutchinson whose heart Coleridge wished to gain at least in his poetry.

His love for Sarah Hutchinson inspired him also to write To Asra addressing it to Sarah Hutchinson. In this poem, the poetic voice reveals his deep and complete love frankly to his addressee. That love not only did dwell in his heart, it overflowed through every part in his body:

Are there two things, of all which men possess,
That are so like each other and so near,
As mutual Love seems like to Happiness?
Dear Asra, woman beyond utterance dear!
This Love which ever welling at my heart,
Now in its living fount doth heave and fall,
Now overflowing pours thro’ every part
Of all my frame, and fills and changes all.

The rest of the poem is a description of his eternal love he gave her. That love overflowed like the vernal waters that spring up through snow. It is great beyond the power of growth. It is always young because it is not subjected to the law of time and aging. His love together with his Asra, are all subjected to eternity. Neither his love nor his Asra could grow old:

Like vernal waters springing up through snow,
This Love that seeming great beyond the power
Of growth, yet seemeth ever more to grow,
Could I transmute the whole to one rich Dower
Of Happy Life, and give it all to Thee,
Thy lot, methinks, were Heaven, thy age, Eternity!

Not only in this poem did Coleridge mention frankly the name of his beloved Asra, he did so in the poem A Day-Dream which seemed to be addressed to her too. In this poem he closed his eyes to see a dream in which he will spend a night with his two loves i.e. Mary and Asra:

My eyes make pictures, when they are shut:
I see a fountain, large and fair,
A willow and a ruined hut,
And thee, and me and Mary there.
O Mary! make thy gentle lap our pillow!
Bend o’er us, like a bower, my beautiful green willow!

In his daydream he would do what he could not in the real world. Coleridge would celebrate a night with his previous and present love, Mary and Asra, together in one room drawing a unique love setting:

O ever — ever be thou blest!
For dearly, Asra! love I thee!
This brooding warmth across my breast,
This depth of tranquil bliss — ah me!
Fount, tree and shed are gone, I know not whither,
But in one quiet room we three are still together.

Though Mary rewarded his love with sisterly emotions as he described in this poem:

And Mary’s tears, they are not tears of sorrow:
Our sister and our friend will both be here to-morrow.

Coleridge was still suffering the heat of her love side by side with the love of Asra. He dreamt of Asra’s eyelash playing on his cheek and Mary’s hands on his brow:

Thine eyelash on my cheek doth play —
’Tis Mary’s hand upon my brow!
But let me check this tender lay
Which none may hear but she and thou!
Like the still hive at quiet midnight humming,
Murmur it to yourselves, ye two beloved women!
In *Separation* the poet drew a very nice picture for his love for Asra too. That picture is too wonderful to break. That love was a treasure too expensive to lose:

> I seek the wealth you hold so dear!
> The dazzling charm of outward form,
> The power of gold, the pride of birth,
> Have taken Woman’s heart by storm —
> Usurp’d the place of inward worth.

> Is not true Love of higher price
> Than outward Form, though fair to see,
> Wealth’s glittering fairy-dome of ice,
> Or echo of proud ancestry? —

This poem is a clear confession for his pure passion and the bitterness of separating his Asra regarding that separation unbearable punishment:

> O! Asra, Asra! couldst thou see
> Into the bottom of my heart,
> There’s such a mine of Love for thee,
> As almost might supply desert!

> (This separation is, alas!
> Too great a punishment to bear;
> O! take my life, or let me pass
> That life, that happy life, with her!)

Coleridge’s female relations, though apparently fail to be perfectly fulfilled, they eventually succeed in one way or another to play main role in adding delicate tones, shaping, and even ripening his poetic career. As his poems to Mary full of images of sorrow and pain, the poems addressed to Sarah Fricker are much more philosophical where nature glorified and religious faith emphasized; whereas his poems to Sarah Hutchinson draw his philosophy on mature love. They are typical for pure love poems where the lover is tantalized by the hope of union and the frustration of separation.
Sensuality and Vampire via Supernaturalism

Sensuality is one of the themes that draw perfectly Coleridge’s poetic proficiency and his unique creativity. One of the features that distinguish Coleridge of the romantic poets and even of all the English poets is the smartness he skillfully mastered to employ supernatural phenomena in order to embody and serve sexual purposes.

Being able to sink into the depth of Coleridge’s poems and to peel the duplicated lyres that cover their ripen fruit required a full consideration of historical and the psychological makeup of these poems. Such consideration can help the reader to gain insight into interpretive choices and various subconscious details included in the poem of which even the poet himself might be unaware.

Christabel and Kubla Khan are of the most ambiguous, mysterious and highly complicated poems in English poetry so far. These two poems will be discussed here as examples of Coleridge’s sexuality via supernaturalism.

Christabel “contains undeniable insight into Coleridge's own personal fears and desires, and even that the content of the poem itself may explain why the author was incapable of finishing it despite having said that the plan for the entire poem was complete in his head”44. On the surface, the poem seems to be a strange mysterious tale; but in the depth it can be interpreted as autobiographical confession. The distinct choices the poet made i.e. the gothic setting, the midnight time, the two main female characters, the naming of these characters, can be read as a thickly veiled autobiographical disclosure. “For instance, Coleridge makes a deliberate attempt to distance the story from himself by placing it within the confines of a stereotypical and otherwise not very compelling gothic past right from the opening line: '"Tis the middle of the night by the castle clock.". Such gothic setting enables Coleridge to explore and present the
most sinful sensual themes in an acceptable manner. Coleridge tries to infer and distance himself together with any autobiographical details; but “fortunately, for the modern critical reader accustomed to Freudian theory, dismissing autobiography from any work of literature is anathema.”

The reason that Coleridge found so necessary to distance himself from the poem is that in fashioning what can affirmatively be termed a "lesbian vampire" story, Coleridge is actually creating a story about the complex relationship between two men. Indeed, the relationship is not between just any two men, it is between Coleridge himself and his friend and fellow poet William Wordsworth. Obviously, Coleridge could not have distanced himself from that topic much further than by dressing it up as a horror story taking place between two beautiful women in an appropriately gothic setting.

The distancing effect is immediate and successful and instantly mandates that the poem is beyond any radical interpretation. Or is it? As stated earlier, even the seemingly benign act of naming characters can often be a clue in piecing together the mystery surrounding the interpretation of a poem. In this respect, Coleridge makes choices so subtle that it is quite possible to overlook their importance. One of his first choices was to give his apparent villainess a feminized form of the male name Gerald, which derives from the Old German for "spear-mighty" or "spear-ruler." Clearly, Gerald is a decidedly virile name from which to turn into a woman's name. Beyond that, in order to align with his rhyme scheme Coleridge imports onto the name a peculiarly harsh pronunciation.

As intriguing as this is, it is nothing compared to the choice Coleridge made when naming his heroine. This is obviously a unique name in and of itself; neither now nor at the time the poem was written was Christabel
a common name. In addition to its being unique, it is an interesting choice for a female character since it amounts to a compound name resulting from combining the names of two men: the Biblical figures of Christ and Abel. Further adding to the subtlety is the fact that both Christ and Abel are figures of suffering and torment.

 Appropriately, Christabel does suffer in the poem. She is certainly haunted by the guilt rising from the fact that her mother's death came quickly upon her own birth. This is clear in lines 190-191:

   …Woe is me!
   She died the hour that I was born.

She also suffers guilt and shame after she realizes she has lain with Geraldine. Lines can 369-370 can show that:

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

According to Camille Paglia, Christabel is such a victim of suffering and torment that she is "a sacrificial victim, whom we actually see led to the alter and laying herself down nude upon it." In connection with that assessment of the character Paglia goes on to explicitly point out that "Christabel is Coleridge". If so, then it follows that Coleridge must see himself as a suffering victim, perhaps at the hands of his own Geraldine. Could his Geraldine have been, in fact, Wordsworth? Interestingly, Stephen Weissman uses very similar language to what Paglia uses to describe Christabel when he(Paglia) says of Coleridge, "his poem 'Christabel' began to express his Christ-Abel feelings of being the sacrificial victim". Weissman later repeats himself when he writes, "Like Christ or Abel, and like Christabel, Coleridge was caught in the process of becoming the 'innocent victim,'. Obviously, Coleridge’s choice of a name for his heroine was not made
lightly, but indeed reflected an intense awareness of his own feelings of victimization.

Coleridge's feelings of being a victim was deep-seated and hardly limited to his feelings toward Wordsworth, but the poem is unmistakably about, at least in part, his intricate relationship with the eventual Poet Laureate of England, and the ambivalent emotions he felt toward his friend. At first, Coleridge was intimidated by Wordsworth’s poetic gifts. He wrote a letter to Robert Southey in which he actually said that Wordsworth was the only man to whom he felt inferior. To another friend he wrote, "But here you will meet too with Wordsworth, 'the latch of whose shoe I am unworthy to loose,'". Clearly, this relationship is mirrored in the poem. Christabel is abased by her decision to sleep with Geraldine, a surprising act of sexual deviance considering that she has been described as a lady and devout and who is betrothed to a knight. Yet Christabel must accept responsibility for her part in the relationship. She is the submissive member, true, but after all, it is she who is wandering around the grounds of the castle alone at night. It is she who not only invites Geraldine back to the castle, but actually carries her over the threshold. And, finally, it is Christabel who finally decides to accept Geraldine's invitation into sexual initiation.

Geraldine may be the one who places events in motion, but Christabel shows no compulsion to run away from her subconscious desires. The actions are decidedly commensurate with Coleridge's decisions to maintain his relationship with Wordsworth. Both Christabel and Coleridge play an active part in residing within what would now be termed an "unhealthy relationship." But how could Coleridge confront these uncomfortable feelings that were bubbling to the surface? Like any poet, he naturally turned to his creative muse. He discovered the perfect
genre in which he could express his feelings toward Wordsworth without worrying whether what he was really expressing would be too obvious.

Coleridge's association with Wordsworth was almost the perfect illustration of a vampiric relationship, and lent itself easily to being depicted as such with the only caveat being that it would be presented in the likeness of a vampiric relationship between two women. The opinion of Weissman can be considerable when he writes that "The vampire motif employed to explain the relationship between Christabel and Geraldine fits equally well the friendship between the two poets." Weissman then goes on to give a sublime example of how this comparison might be made. He asks whether it was possible that Coleridge felt "at least unconsciously, that he was allowing himself to be sucked dry of his creative juices so that Wordsworth might slake his thirst for literary immortality." There can be no doubt that Geraldine is supposed to be some sort of vampiric creature i.e. "the reanimated body of a dead person believed to come from the grave at night and suck the blood of persons asleep; or a woman who exploits and ruins her lover". The following are vampiric features added to the character of Geraldine: "the midnight hour, the full moon, the spectral appearance of Geraldine, the importance of Christabel's touch, Christabel's invitation to the castle, Geraldine's fainting at the threshold, her refusal to pray, the old mastiff's growling acknowledgment of an evil presence, the blazing-up of the embers as Geraldine passes, Geraldine's weakness when she sees the carved cherub (a Christian icon of sorts) on the ceiling of Christabel's bed chamber."

But why the tale is left incomplete? Perhaps Coleridge was just incapable of facing the feelings he had begun to explore in the first part of the poem. Or, maybe after completing the first part it only then began to creep into his consciousness what he had been subconsciously creating in
Christabel. Another possible explanation may be that he realized the only acceptable ending was to have Christabel escape from being under the dominion of Geraldine's power, and that was something he just was not capable of writing because he was still so firmly under the influence of Wordsworth himself.\textsuperscript{58}

Not only in Christabel, can sexual elements be traced, in Kubla Khan, which was written a little bit earlier, the same elements can be found but here they were treated and presented differently. If homosexuality undertones and vampire images have been, consciously or unconsciously, smartly implicated in Christabel; in Kubla Khan the images from nature and supernatural were handled to depict erotic sexual experiences.

The poem can be broken into three sections: section one the first part of the poem, from 1 to 11, a description of the beauty and fertility of the pleasure-dome. Section two, from 12 to 36, an exploration and experiencing the pleasure-dome. Section three, the last part, is about the consequently relief resulted by that pleasure. These three sections represent the three steps of having sex. First a beautiful and fertile woman, then romancing the woman and experiencing the sensations of foreplay, then intercourse, and finally the moments of relaxation that follow.\textsuperscript{59}

He describes these in terms of nature, showing the great contrast of the peacefulness and the climax. First, he describes the palace, or her body, as “holy and enchanted” (14), and then, in contrast to the purity of this image, describes the woman as “wailing for her demon-lover” (16). He uses this image of the “woman wailing for her demon-lover” (16) to describe the look of the pleasure-dome in the moon. This peaceful image depicts the rhythmic feel of a passionate foreplay, which precedes the contrasting image Coleridge gives of intercourse, “as if this earth in fast
thick pants were breathing” (18). What follows this, in lines 19 to 24, is the description of his climax. “It is hard to even decipher what part of the palace of garden he is describing as he details the “mighty fountain” (19) as it “flung up momentarily the sacred river” (24), portraying the man’s orgasm”. Using these images of water, he distinguishes the intensity of the climax from the relaxing release that follows, as he again mentions the sacred river, but this time it is “meandering with a mazy motion” (25-26). “This image is like the sperm, as if they are swimming peacefully upstream”. The tone shifts again to a more powerful image when they reach the “caverns measureless to man” (27), and sink “in tumult to a lifeless ocean” (28), which perhaps refers to how incredible it is that when fertilization occurs a life is created out of something that was previously lifeless.

Coleridge then zooms out the metaphor in lines 31 to 36, looking again at the larger picture of the palace, this time describing the “shadow of the pleasure-dome” (31). Perhaps he mentions the “shadow” to show that he is reminiscing on his experience, completing this section with another image of great contrast, “It was a miracle of rare device, a sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!” (35-36), and thus ends the metaphor of the palace.

The metaphor then shifts in the final section, in lines 37-54, again using a woman, although this time having little connection to the palace. Here he describes the song of a female musician, illustrating “a damsel with a dulcimer,” (37) whom he saw in a vision. Whereas the previous sections used the palace as a metaphor for an experience with a woman, this woman seems to be the metaphor, symbolizing the experiencing of creative inspiration.
The connection lies in the intensity of the experience; the woman’s song in the vision was so incredible that it brings back the sensation of intercourse, inciting in him a desire to “build that dome in air” (46). The poem has previously set up the dome as being linked to sexual pleasure, yet here he is talking about the desire to “revive… her symphony and song” (42-43), now discussing the pleasure provided by art, and as he alludes to a ritual traditionally used to protect poets, it shows that his pleasure here is as a result of poetic inspiration. The delight this inspiration provides is so incredible that it turns him into a madman, that “all should cry, ‘Beware! Beware!’ His flashing eyes, his floating hair!” (49-50). The notion of “flashing eyes” and “floating hair” could also be linked to the sexual imagery Coleridge employs in the poem, as a man in the height of passion.

Such theses on Coleridge’s poems and such way of analysis and readings that underscore what is deeper than the peels came into existence much more lately i.e. mostly during the modern time. They overtly prove the greatness of Coleridge’s literary texts. This greatness, as John Joughin thinks, can be measurable to the literary texts’ capacity to resist critical interpretation and to keep generating new readings. Another important reading of Coleridge’s corpus can be his reading of his predilections for feminism. Will Rogers asserts that women are not the weak, frail little flowers that they are advertised. There has never been anything invented yet, including war, that a man would enter into, that a woman wouldn’t, too.

The term feminism can be used to describe a political, cultural or economic movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women. Feminism involves political, cultural and sociological theories, as well as philosophies concerned with issues of
gender difference. The first wave of feminism starts during the 19th century and early 20th century.

One of the facts worthy of mention here is the fact that what turned Coleridge’s life into a disaster is not his mistakenly marriage but the laws against divorce and the impossibility of a second marriage. Laws against divorce are shameful for men and humiliation for women. These laws, which are against the principles of feminism, deprive Coleridge from gaining a real warm mutual love and increase Coleridge’s interest in women and his weakness towards women.

Anya Taylor studies Coleridge’s interest in women and describes him as a person who “watches women’s faces and breasts, and he hears women’s intonations, songs, poems, and snatches of conversation in dialogue. He is alert to their presence. Even in old age, he blushes when he looks at women; he interprets the feelings in their harps, and thinks of music itself as female.” This special interest in women and everything related to them should be given a special study and particular consideration.

It is this interest about which this study concerns. It will examine some of Coleridge’s works from the point of view of feminism. i.e. the female characters in his works, the way of treating and presenting them, whether they are simple, main or stereotype characters, whether they represent good or bad qualities, whether his female characters are usually protagonist or antagonist……etc.

Coleridge shows, tacitly, throughout his literary works a notable sympathy with women who live in a manly unjust society where women do not have the right to choose even the way to live or to achieve their personal desires. Anya Taylor comments on this sympathy:

Coleridge’s sympathy with women’s lives and his identification with the fragility of their boundaries as persons, leads him to explore this region of self-forming
or self-losing. Pursuing the issues in poems to women who were seduced and destroyed, he begins in 1798 a long struggle to chart these disintegrations in his “Christabel,” a poem that circles around and around the perils of young womanhood. It is significant that the poem hears the heroine being silenced, crying out briefly for justice, then being abandoned, a pattern that began in “The Ballad of the Dark Ladie” where the girl’s last words cry out against incarceration in the dark.

The narrative masterpiece poem, *Christabel*, embodies Coleridge’s feminist attitude by means of the two female characters i.e. Christabel, and Geraldine. He tried to hit upon the limitations and boundaries that surround women. Christabel is merely a sample of female victims of these boundaries. She should defend her loyalty to her knight meanwhile she cannot resist her female nature of yielding herself; for which she has to suffer the pain of sin and shame. Geraldine, on the other hand, though beautiful and attractive, is a man like woman tries to seduce the innocent Christabel to an illegal relation. Such kind of relation is one of the rights for which feminists call: “Some of us are becoming the men we wanted to marry,” as the feminist Gloria Steinem comments.

Supernaturalism and gothic atmosphere are Coleridge’s devices to treat this sensitive theme in away enables him to distance himself from the scene. “The poem embodies the principles, and at the same time suggests their limitations. The poem and the principles that it embodies are rooted in Coleridge’s affinity with women.”

Coleridge treats, in one way or another, female themes and involves female characters in his three masterpieces: *Christabel*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and *Kubla Khan*. In *The Rime*, the supernatural female character i.e. Life-in-Death woman is seemingly beautiful:

> Her lips were red, her looks were free,
> Her locks were yellow as gold;

She is horrible because “Her skin was as white as leprosy” and she is:
The nightmare Life-in-Death was she,  
Who thicks man’s blood with cold.  

This supernatural woman won the game which means that she wins to have the right to punish both the crew of the ship and the ancient mariner by dooming them to live in death as a result of their sin against nature which is killing albatross. This female character is characterized to play a significant role in the poem i.e. by means of her; the message of the poem is effectively delivered:

He prayeth well, who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.

The Life-in-Death woman wins at the dice and manages to defend, her partner, death. Consequently, she wins to decide the destiny of all those men i.e. the crew of the ship together with the ancient mariner. Coleridge gives this woman the right to win, to defend and to decide, in other words, he gives her the individuality the woman of the 19th century lacks and for which feminism movement calls.

In *Kubla Khan*, there are two women. The first one is a charming loving woman. Coleridge could find nothing but a woman to describe the holiness and the bewitching beauty of the place of the pleasure-dome. The charming and the bewitching effect of that place on a person are as the effect of a woman wandering about in search of her demon-lover in the dim light of a waning moon. The other woman here is characterized in the, Abyssinian maid, who is the source of a divine inspiration for the poet; her sweet song and the special music she will play will turn Coleridge into a divine supernatural creature:

His flashing eyes, his floating hair!  
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

The pleasure in the palace of the pleasure-dome can be fulfilled only by the existence of a woman whose fertility and delicateness is capable of changing a normal man like the poet into a divinely creature.

In brief, Coleridge’s female characters, in these three masterpieces, tend to indicate his own feminist trends. A woman can be a victim (Christabel), an up-normal manly woman (Geraldine), mighty (Life-in-Death) a charming creature (the haunting beloved waiting for her lover) and a creative source of inspiration (the Abyssinian maid). Consequently, if Coleridge has to be classified from the point of view of feminism in these poems, he proves to be a feminist poet. Coleridge’s romanticism, if can be pointed out in the light of the preceding discussions, transcends the movement and encompasses the issues that signify the creative and critical discourses produced all over the globe today.
NOTES


3- Ibid., pp.40-41.

4- Ibid., p.41.


6- Ibid., pp. 23-24.


8- R. L. Varshney, ed., pp.41-42.

9- Ibid., p.42.

10- Ibid.

11- Ibid.

12- Ibid.

13- Ibid.

14- Ibid., p. 43.

15- Rajinder Paul, p. 25.

16- R. L. Varshney, ed., p.43.


18- Ibid., p. 286.

19- Ibid., p. 108.


24- Rajinder Paul, p. 2.

25- Ibid.


27- Ibid., p. 146.

32. Rosemary Ashton, p. 75.
37. Ibid., pp. 80-81.
40. Ibid., pp. 48–49.
46. Ibid., pp.3-4.
48. Ibid., p. 342.
49. Ibid., p. 250.

51- Rosemary Ashton, p. 104.

52- Stephen Weissman, p. 173.

53- Timothy Sexton, pp. 5-6.

54- Stephen Weissman, p. 287.

55- Ibid.


58- Timothy Sexton, p.7.


60- Ibid.

61- Ibid.

62- Ibid., pp. 2-3.

63- “Feminism”, *Definitions of Feminism on the Web*, [http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&defl=en&q=define:feminism&sa=X&ei=EyN3TbDpJ4rVrQfhl7cG_Cg&sqi=2&ved=0CBkQkAE](http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&defl=en&q=define:feminism&sa=X&ei=EyN3TbDpJ4rVrQfhl7cG_Cg&sqi=2&ved=0CBkQkAE), Wed. Feb. 9 2011.


67- Anya Taylor, p. 63.