

Imagery and symbolism in the rime of the ancient mariner essay sample

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Imagery in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of The Ancient Mariner" plays a significant role: it helps us to feel the atmosphere and sustain the willing suspension of disbelief. The imagery has also been complemented by the effective use of symbol of albatross.

From the outset the strong and passionate character of the narrator, the Ancient Mariner, has been created with the help of the images of "long grey beard" and "glittering eye"(l. 3) who has arrived at a wedding party not just to spoil it but to get rid of the feelings of compulsive guilt for having killed an innocent and benevolent creature like the Albatross. It is a story of disturbing the harmony in nature and then being punished for it. The old and compulsive narrator with "skinny hand"(l. 8) "grey-beard loon"(l. 10) engages the attention and force them to listen to his story of crime and punishment. The beautiful atmosphere of the wedding is created with images of the bride "red as rose is she"(l. 34)

In the sea a sudden and powerful storm-blast troubles the mariners: "tyrannous and strong (l. 42) and its impact is described as it "struck with his o'ertaking wings(l. 41-43) chasing the ship southward. The climate froze and was full of ice "green as emerald"(l. 54) which "cracked and growled, and roared and howled"(l. 61) The imagery is effective not only as visual but also auditory. The stagnation is vividly portrayed as "idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean." (l. 117-18) The albatross' sudden appearance is hailed as a "Christian soul", the representative to Jesus. "the ice did split with thunder -fit"(l. 69) "through fog-smoke white,/glimmered the white moon-shine."

With the superstition that “ the fiends, that plague thee thus”(l. 79), the old mariner killed the bird that “ brought the fog and mist.”(l. 100); then climate became hostile: “ all in a hot copper sky,/ The bloody Sun, at noon”(l. 111-12) and we have horrid images of “ slimy things did crawl with legs”(l. 125), “ The death-fires danced at night;/ the water like witch’s oils/ Burnt green, and blue and white.”(l. 128-30) “ the spirit that plagued us so”(l. 132) Then the mariners felt as if their tongues were “ choked with soot.”(l. 138) The cross which is symbol of purity and suffering is hung around the killer: “ Instead of the cross, the Albatross/ about my neck was hung.”(l. 140-41) In the use of both imagery and symbols Coleridge is successful.

Work Cited

Abrams, M. H. and Greenblatt, Stephen (eds.) *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* . 7th Ed. New York. W. W. Norton & Co. 2001. pp. 1580-0584

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