

Coleridge's "Ballad of the Dark Ladie": The Story between the Lines

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Abstract:

The focus of this article is "The Ballad of the Dark Ladie," a short fragment by the English Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). Critics often overlook the piece in their reading of Coleridge although it has an interesting story between the lines. Besides enriching the unfinished surface one, the submerged tale carries significant revelations about Coleridge's literary relationship with foreign cultures and elements, the Dark Lady in this particular case. The present study intends to divulge the hidden tale in the text and to use its revealed construct to throw light on Coleridge's engagement with the Other in his literary experience. It employs a formalist reading of the text and pays attention to point of view. It also invokes culture and allegory in the process of eliciting the significance of the embedded tale. My reading intimates that Coleridge's imaginative aspiration towards the exotic Other is more congenial to his poetic creativity than other modes of the imagination. It also suggests that this Other might as well be the Orient. However, despite such harmony, Coleridge has his own personal concerns about his romantic quest of the Orient.

Keywords: Coleridge, Dark Lady, Orient, Romantic