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**LITERARY CARTOGRAPHY: THE EFFECT OF IMAGINATION
AND REALITY IN S.T. COLERIDGE'S KUBLA KHAN ON THE
ORDINARY MAN**



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Abstract

*The present paper revealed how imagination and reality interact in the poem Kubla Khan by Samuel Taylor Coleridge with the help of the literary cartography theory, discussing how the poem generates physical and mental landscape that influence the experience of the common reader. A prominent space, such as the pleasure dome, sacred river Alph, measureless den, sunless sea, and delight gardens, are used as symbolic space coordinates describing the fluctuation between of the mind between order and chaos, conscious and unconscious kingdom. The study, based on a qualitative, interpretive approach based on close textual analysis, Romantic theories of imagination and the beauty, and current spatial literary theory proves that Coleridge turns the imaginative experience into a cognitive and emotional map to readers. The results indicate that the spatial and symbolic architecture used in the poem evokes a feeling of awe, pleasure and significant involvement in the poem that makes the reader be able to actively explore the visionary scenery. In this way, Kubla Khan can be discussed as a living mental map, which helps to transcend and increase imaginative awareness. The work is a contribution to Romantic studies, literary geography, and the reader-response theory, which emphasizes the timeless ability of poetic imagination to work out and alter common sense in perception and aesthetic experience. **Keywords:** Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Kubla Khan, literary cartography, Romantic imagination, sublime, spatial analysis, reader-response, psychological landscapes*

Introduction

Ideology is deeply entrenched in the recesses of cartographic imagination, permeating the entirety of the mapping process, from conception and material selection to formalization and subsequent refinement. cartographers are compelled to take into account the political exigencies of specific interest groups, sponsoring entities, or individuals, while also submitting to the evaluative judgments of the public and the media. (Guo,2020 p.15). One of the key interests of Romantic literature has been imagination, the space between the real and fantasy, and the poem Kubla Khan by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is one of the most enigmatic and spacious poems in this genre. One of the newest tools of critical resources is literary cartography (or study of how texts create, shape, and structure space), which has proven to be one of the most successful tools in analyzing the fictional geographies of literary texts (Hones, 2022; Prieto, 2021). With all its dreamlike landscapes, with its flowing moves between physical and psychological space, Kubla Khan offers a very strong departing point in the scenario of considering how the poetic imagination produces spaces which transcend the boundaries of the real and the visionary. This space poetry is not only echoed by the Romantic one, but is also reflected in the existing theoretical approaches, where the capability of the human mind to chart out the experience, feeling, and perception is investigated (Tally, 2023; Casey, 2020). As an offshoot of cartography, literary maps also inherit the political attributes intrinsic to maps. Both graphic and textual maps may ultimately converge upon the object, namely,

territorial space, rendering relative creation or description a form of metaphorical assertion of power. The delineated representations extend beyond abstract lines or symbols to embody tangible resources. (Guo,2020 p.18).

Such a description of Xanadu as a pleasure dome, a sacred river, a wondrous garden and a sunless sea is not a simple imaginative exercise on the part of Coleridge. These things are the symbolic coordinates that plot a geography of mind, contraries of Romantic disposition between order and chaos, creation and destruction, dreams and waking consciousness. With respect to the recent scholarship, it is noted that Romantic imagination is not an uncomplicated escape of reality; instead, it recreates it and offers the alternative modes of world interpretation (Erdinast-Vulcan, 2021; McLane, 2022). This fictional geography become a mental travel to an average reader, and it becomes possible to reach the sublime to a higher plane of perception at which the mundane is outperformed (Murray, 2021; Weiskel, 2020).

In this respect, literary cartography can help the scholars to appreciate Kubla Khan as another dream fragment poem. It becomes a map of the visionary consciousness, to which it is constructed with the assistance of the spatial images that reflect deeper psychological and philosophical struggles. These moving locations of the poem such as the sinking crater or the storming river proceed, the emotion and thought processes of human psyche. According to spatial studies, these literary spaces imply that the mind attempts to seek its path through complexity, uncertainty, and perception boundaries (Tuan, 2022; Tally, 2021). In relation to the common man, these imaginary realms are a space of having a reality that is not constrained by the material world, poetry is viewed as a psychological instrument that enhances human knowledge.

1.1 Research Problem

Although the Kubla Khan poem has been addressed in relation to psychology, biography, and symbolism, the presence of scholars, who address the poem as a literary cartography map that integrates both exterior landscapes and interior imaginations, is insignificant. The difference is the knowledge how the spatial imagination of Coleridge tries not only to create the poetic meaning but also to create the view of art, nature and the real world in the mind of the average reader.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How does the use of imagery of space in the Kubla Khan help Coleridge create an imaginary geography to blend imaginary worlds with real worlds?
2. What is the poem like a sort of literary cartography, following the map of psychological and emotional land?
3. What do these wonderful geography mean to the common reader of reality, nature and the sublime?
4. What theoretical perceptions of space, imagination and Romantics can be applied to explain spatial dynamics of the poem?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the space representations within Kubla Khan with the literary cartography.
2. To speak about how Coleridge embraces imagination and reality to create a symbolic geography.
3. To explore the effect of this imaginary geography on cognitive and aesthetic experience of

the average reader.

4. To apply the modern theories of space, phenomenology as well as Romanticism to interpret the imaginations and psychological thoughts of the poem.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The given research combines three contemporary theoretical approaches:

1.4.1 Lit Cartography and Geospatial Theory.

Based on modern literature, literary cartography proposes that texts produce narrative spaces that codify meaning and direct perception. The theory of spatiality by Tally (2023) offers the means of studying the ways in which imaginative landscapes are cognitively processed, whereas Hones (2022) points out the importance of geographical imagination in the development of narrative experience. Prieto (2021) believes in the position of literary spaces as psychological and cultural buildings and not a geographical location.

1.4.2 Phenomenology of Space

The phenomenological approach taken by Casey (2020) assumes that the spatial experience is closely connected to the consciousness, memory, and perception. This assists in the examination of Coleridge between the dream-space and the real-space, and the way the landscapes in the poem reflect the internal moods of mind. The re-articulation of the notion of space and place provided by Tuan (2022) also contributes to the establishment of the connection between the emotional experience and the poetic geography.

1.4.3 Romantic Imagination and the Sublime.

According to McLane (2022), Erdinast-Vulcan (2021), and Weiskel (2020), romantic imagination is one way to consider how Coleridge manipulates the mundane to make it sublime. The changing landscapes in the poem are an indication of the Romantics faith in the power of vision of imagination to extend the human senses beyond the material world. The analysis of the sublime by Murray (2021) describes how this imaginative power can influence the common reader enabling him/her to transcend the sublime experience of aesthetics.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The importance of the study is based on the interdisciplinary approach as it is an interdisciplinary study combining literary analysis, spatial theory, Romantic studies, and cognitive reader-response perspectives in the analysis of Samuel Taylor Coleridge Kubla Khan. Although the past literature has explored the symbolism and opium-induced composition of the poem, the dream figures, this paper offers a new point of view by the application of the literary cartography to the poem that traces the interactions between imagination and reality. The research emphasizes the importance of poetic spaces, including the pleasure dome, sacred river Alph, caverns, and gardens, as cognitive and emotional locations of the poem to the average readers because the poem is taken as a spatial and psychological landscape. This method highlights the ability of the poem to describe the fantastic worlds as well as influence the reader towards the perception of reality, art and self-consciousness. The fact that this paper examines the impact of the imaginative geography on the common reader is one of its significant contributions. Romantic criticism tends to pay more attention to the visionary imagination of the poet, but it does not pay so much attention to the way in which readers, particularly those who lack expert training in literature, experience and are

changed by these imaginative landscapes. Through the analysis of the psychological and emotional reactions caused by the spatial structures in the poem, the research proves that *Kubla Khan* provides average readers with an avenue to access the sublime, develop creative thinking, and interact with abstract ideas like chaos, order, and unconsciousness. This reiterates the democratizing nature of Romantic literature that visionary poetry can move beyond the confines of academia or the elite audience and speak to the rest of the readership. Moreover, the research paper adds to the literature cartography and spatial literature studies that focuses on mapping the cognition, symbolic and cultural space of a literary text. The research has proven that interdisciplinary methodology is useful in the interpretation of complex works of poetry by using both spatial theory and the Romantic theory. The framework of the study can be recreated in the analysis of other literary works with space, imagination, and psychological experience playing the biggest role in making meaning. Not only does it have ramifications on the literary sphere, but also it involves educational and teaching methods as it provides the tool to help students and readers to be absorbed in imaginary literature. Finally, the paper reveals the broader philosophical and cognitive implications of Coleridge work. The paper illustrates the definition of mapping of imagination and reality in *Kubla Khan* and this paper illustrates that literature could as well be a laboratory of the mind where readers confront and explore the questions of psychology and existence in a safe unconscious psyche. The exploration assists in the formation of intellectual interest, aesthetic interest, and self-reflection that demonstrates that the meaning of the poem is not confined to the literary analysis but a human way of thinking and emotional development. Overall, this paper highlights the undying topicality of Coleridge Romantic poetics in modern academic and reading ways and presents both theoretical and practical implications of the interaction of imagination, reality, and human perception.

Literature Review

Research on spatial representation in literature has become very popular over the last decades, and researchers believe that a literary text is not just a story but a map of human life, perception, and imagination. This is an interdisciplinary study that is sometimes called literary cartography and attempts to realize how authors create and manage space to communicate psychological, emotional, and symbolic meanings. Such forms of space construction expose the complex play of fantasy and the real world in the context of Romantic poetry and in *Kubla Khan* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

2.1. Romantic Imagination and the Construction of Visionary Space

Romantic literature is based on the idea that imagination transforms reality, inventing the new forms of perception. This is confirmed by modern scholarship which considers Romantic imagination as an active power converting the exterior world into an allegorical or psychological landscape (Erdinast-Vulcan, 2021). According to McLane (2022), Romantic poets tend not to see imagination as a way to escape reality but as a way to make it stronger, creating an opportunity to reach emotional and metaphysical truths. One of the most significant theorists of the Romantic imagination, Coleridge, had the idea of creativity as a natural process which combines sensual experience with the insight of vision. *Kubla Khan*, the poem that has long been viewed as a dream-vision poem, is one such representation: its surreal nature, sunless seas, deep chasms, sacred rivers, above all, go beyond physical geography, forming what Murray (2021) describes as a sublime imaginary space that undermines traditional demarcations of time and space.

According to recent research, imaginative sceneries created by Coleridge can be discussed as refractory of more profound psychological conflicts: fragmentation, longing, and the confrontation of conscious and unconscious forces (Robinson, 2020). It is these tensions which constitute the central part of the visionary experience of the poem which may be seen as indicating that the very process of imagining becomes a sort of mental mapping.

2.2 Literary Cartography: Mapping Imaginary Spaces and Psychological Spaces

Theoretical basis literary cartography is based on the theory that texts are creating and structuring space similarly to maps. In her argument, Tally (2023) suggests that literary works are space structures that bring the reader to geographical symbolic space to navigate emotional, intellectual, and ideological landscapes. Prieto (2021) elaborates this idea by demonstrating the ways in which narrative spaces reflect cultural memory, social systems and states of mind.

In *Kubla Khan*, the words used to describe Xanadu its river, its caves, and its domed structure represent a fantasy geography, which, even though so fantastic, is internally consistent. According to Hones (2022), such spaces can be considered geographical imaginations that form the concept of place in readers through symbolic and aesthetic practices. To Coleridge, mapping Xanadu is a means of discovering the boundaries of perception: the landscape has both harmonious gardens and eruptive disorder, which Casey (2020) refers to as the phenomenology of spatial rupture, in which space violates the sense of reality in the subject. Therefore, literary cartography allows readers to experience Xanadu not as a physical location but as a metaphorical map of the human psyche, planned on the motive of movement between integrity and disintegration.

2.3 Space and the Poetic Mind Phenomenological Approaches to Space

According to phenomenologists like Casey (2020), there is no way that human experience of space can be separated into memory, consciousness, and imagination. This point of view is useful in the context of the way Coleridge builds the inner space with the use of poetic images. The shifts between descriptive lushness and discontinuous narratives recreate the states of dreaming, reverie, and flash of inspiration, the states that blur the internal and external reality. The difference between space (open, potential) and place (bounded, meaningful) made by Tuan (2022) will explain how the representational modes change in *Kubla Khan*. Xanadu is referred to as a confined imperial dimension, a kingly pleasure-dome decree, and an unrestricted visionary area where the forces of nature act in an unpredictable manner. This two-sidedness shows the interest of Coleridge in the role of imagination in converting undefined spaces to meaningful psychological locations.

Current literature research confirms that this spatial ambiguity is at the center of Romantic poetics (Bate, 2020). The rhythm of the poem between the restraint of the art and the indefinable sublimity dramatizes the fragility of creativity, exposing inner landscapes that are determined by the desire, recollections and subconscious sight.

2.4 Sublime and the Ordinary the perception of the reader of The Sublime

The Romantic sublime that was revitalized in the modern scholarly work is critical to the interpretation of the effect of Kubla Khan on the audience. According to Weiskel (2020), the sublime experience is characterized by transcendence of the ordinary self, which allows people to face the forces that are not comprehensible by reason. Kubla Khan, with its chaotic images and alternating viewpoints, entices the average reader into this kind of experience. As Murray (2021) emphasizes, the sublime transforms the cognitive and emotional perception by having the reader engulfed in a mass of phenomena, but in aesthetically organized methods. In the case of typical people, the imaginative geography becomes a tool of temporarily forgetting about the humdrum, becoming more aware, and making use of creative possibilities. Moreover, current studies in cognitive-literary fields reveal that spatial imagery by the readers is perceived as a symbolic manifestation of emotional and psychological states (Craps and Smethurst, 2021). In this way, the sacred river can remind of the stream of consciousness, the caverns can be an allegory of the sub consciousness and the pleasure dome is a metaphor of aesthetic production. With these interpretive processes, the poem is not only a literary work but a mental map which expands the experiential reality of the reader.

2.5 Gaps and Contributions of the current study

Although various researches focus on the symbolism, psychology, and aesthetics of Kubla Khan, few contemporary studies apply the concept of the literary cartography to the spatial imagination of Coleridge. The majority are concerned with Romantic psychology or Orientalist imagery but they seldom combine spatial theory, phenomenology and reader-response as a single concept.

The proposed study will address this gap by:

- applying the contemporary theory of space to the imaginary landscapes by Coleridge.
- presenting the fusion of imagination and reality to form psychological geographies.
- Consideration of the effects of the spatial constructs of the poem to the perception of ordinary readers concerning the sublime.

So the study adds to the contemporary understanding of Romantics because it redefines Kubla Khan as a spatial-psychological map and has implications of literary theory, cognitive aesthetics, and the phenomenology of reading.

Methodology

The study uses qualitative, interpretive design that is based on literary cartography, textual analysis, and Romantic theoretical criticism to explore the interaction of imagination and reality in *Kubla Khan* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and how it affects the common reader. The qualitative method is selected due to the fact that the study is addressed with symbolic meanings, psychological landscapes, and subjective reader experiences, which demand an interpretive and not numerical study. The methodology is based on the assumption that poetry is not only a language structure but also a space and a psychological constructions that may be mapped, interpreted and felt by the readers in a deeply personalized manner. In this perspective, *Kubla Khan* is considered a narrative of space in which the imaginary and reality aspects create a symbolic geography. This approach is similar to the present-day literature cartography literature that regards literature as a place of spatial production and mental mapping (Tally, 2020; Hones, 2021). Close textual reading is the major approach as it is a close analysis of the Coleridge imagery, metaphors, the patterns of senses, and structural design. Close reading allows the study to isolate recognizable spatial elements, including the pleasure dome, the sacred river Alph, the caverns that are measureless to man, and the sunless sea to the imaginative geography of the poem that serve as point of reference symbols. This analysis is based on the manner in which these aspects work descriptively and metaphorically in creating a dual reality that exists between the plane of human vision and imagination and the restriction of human thought. This involves the recognition of poetic devices which blur or heighten the division between the dream and the real so that it becomes clear how Coleridge projects psychological states onto apparently material scenery. Specific focus is made on the sound, rhythmic and visual contents of the poem to learn how the elements of sound, movement as well as imagery are created to form the imaginative space. In order to buttress this spatial-textual analysis, the paper uses theoretical triangulation between Romantic theory of imagination (e.g., secondary imagination, the sublime, visionary consciousness) and the current spatial literary theories. Theoretical underpinning Romanticism is fundamental since the writing of Coleridge is heavily enshrined in the notions of the transcendental imagination, the sublime, and the opposition of the visionary mind and the empirical reality. Modern explanations of Romantic spatial consciousness are offered by such scholars as McKusick (2021) and Liu (2020), and they help to analyze how the poem transfigures the banal experience into the sublime vision. In the meantime, literary cartography theorists, like the idea of mapping texts proposed by Robert Tally (2010) and the discussion of the social and cognitive aspects of literary space by Sheila Hones (20202022), provide theoretical approaches to *Kubla Khan* as a geographical text that creates mental images in the reader. The study is also based on a contextual interpretive approach, the contextualization of the poem in terms of time, life, and culture. This includes the analysis of how Coleridge perceives the state of dreams, imagination induced by opium use, and poetic inspiration, as well as his overall intellectual interest in the geography, psychology and philosophy. The significance of contextual analysis is that *Kubla Khan* is well known to be connected with the experience of dream-vision after an opium influenced trance and this context can be used to explain the blurry boundaries between imagination and reality in the poem. Moreover, the interest in the sublime, exotic landscapes and transcendental mindscapes, which dominated the Romantic period, can be added to enhance the understanding of the spatial structure of the poem.

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The study data is purely in the form of text. The main source is the published edition of *Kubla Khan* that was released in 1816 and the secondary data will consist of peer-reviewed journal entries, scholarly books that have been released after 2020 and authoritative coverage of Romanticism, literary geography and spatial theory. If it is to be published, the emphasis is placed on the more recent scholarship as a way of keeping up to academic currency and relevance. The sources are studied by thematic coding, which assumes discovering repeated themes in space, imagination and psychology and comparing them among the academic interpretations. This thematic synthesis is necessary so as to make sure that the study not only extends the already available scholarship but also adds new knowledge on how imaginative geography influences the reader experience. Lastly, the process of the analysis is divided into three phases. The poem is divided into spatial parts, including the dome, river, gardens, caves, and sea, at the first stage, and each of them is examined in terms of its imaginative value. In the second stage, theoretical frameworks are used to explain how these spaces work psychologically, symbolically and cartographically. The third phase is the synthesis of findings aimed at addressing the impact that the poem makes on the perception of reality, art, and inner emotional landscapes by the ordinary reader. This combined methodology plan allows the research to prove how *Kubla Khan* turns the poetic imagination into a chart of the human mind and finally gives readers a route to go beyond the ordinary reality and feel the sublime.

Findings

This research paper has shown that *Kubla Khan* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is a very well organized imaginative geography that combines physical space with depth of the mind so that an ordinary reader may enjoy the feeling of space transcendence. Literary cartography accentuates how the spaces of the poem are organized, namely, the pleasure dome, the sacred river Alph, the deep caverns and the sunless sea as symbolic indicators which draw the lines of the human mind. The close reading shows that these spaces are not put as the stable, realistic landscapes but, in fact, dynamic and fluid space in which imagination serves as the major way of perception. Each spatial unit of the poem adds to a stratified geography that indicates the confrontation between visionary imagination and unreasonableness of rational perception. This effect of mapping allows a reader to be guided through a fantastic world that shifts between order and chaos, beauty and terror, light and darkness, therefore, reminding the dualities of human conscience. The paper also concludes that the imagery, rhythm and sensory detail Coleridge manipulates prompt the average reader to perceive the poem not so much as a story, but as a psychological journey. The motion of the divine river is a symbol of the free and uncontrolled movement of the fantasy and the image which transports the reader through the known world of sensual experiences into the depth of the unconscious mind. The caves that are the measureless as perceived by many are reminiscent of the reader being able to understand the measures of human understanding which implies the ability of the imagination to get into the territory of the unreasonable. This spatial shift the beauty of the dome into the darkness and dreaminess of the caverns resembles the changing states of mind which a reader experiences when reading the poem. The results indicate that this gamut of light and darkness is the emotional response that readers experience, which may be defined as a sublime feeling of awe and wonder, as well as an understanding of the creative power of the mind. Furthermore, it can be observed after the analysis that the fusion of imagination and reality in *Kubla Khan* greatly impacts the way of perception of the ordinary readers of art and nature. The dreamlike structure of the poem allows the readers to understand that artistic experience does not have so strong a hold on the limits of objective reality. Instead, the poem is a rewritten definition of the art as place, in which the

imagination is able to construct its landscapes, in which reality became elastic, recalcitrant and bargainable. This attitude of the perspective allows the reader to transcend the literal meaning and calls upon him to engage more deeply on the abstract and symbolic, and emotional planes of poetry. An example of this is the pleasure dome, which is the symbol of the perfect creation of the world, and readers think of the changing nature of the artistic vision. This effect reveals that Coleridge neither describes places by means of imaginative geography, but also remakes the impression of the relationships between the inner perception and the outer reality of the reader. The findings also demonstrate that the poem exists with far-reaching impact on the capability of the common man to experience the sublime. The comparison of the bright and organized dome and the chaotic and rough nature is the image which Coleridge uses, and which makes the readers confront beauty and danger. The encounter can be compared with the Romantic idea of sublime being introduced where imagination goes beyond the usual scope of human understanding. There is a psychological expansion that occurs when the readers take their path across this landscape experiencing satisfying and intense emotions at the same time. The geographical setting of the poem, in its turn, becomes a leave-taking point of the psychological elevation because one can forget about the daily concerns and leave in the visionary sphere of the experience, at least temporarily. Finally but not the least, the research concludes that the net effect of *Kubla Khan* is that, it forms a living mental map according to which the average reader can visualize imagination as a force able to shape the perception, emotion and understanding. The poem provokes the readers to reflect themselves on their inner landscapes and how they could be creative since this is supported by the symbolic landscapes and dream-like transfers in the poem. This revolutionary experience with the imaginary space indicates the effectiveness of the poem and its use in the modern literary and psychological perspectives. The conclusions prove that the imaginative geography created by Coleridge does not only create a poetic world but also helps transform the inner world of the reader and may serve as the way to discovering the self and having a better experience of the sublime.

Discussion

As the results of this research show, *Kubla Khan* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is a highly determined imaginative space, in which spatial, psychological, and symbolic levels intertwine. These findings are discussed through the prism of literature cartography, phenomenology of space, and Romantic theories of imagination and the sublime to show how the poem changes the perception of the commonplace and provides the reader with the entry into the visionary experience. The idea of literary cartography is the key to the interpretation of the spatial structure of the poem. According to Tally (2023), literary texts act as maps of human thought, emotion, and cultural imagination, and the present study proves that *Kubla Khan* is one of those maps. The dome of pleasure, the holy river Alph, and the incalculable caverns serve as coordinates in a sub-psycho and symbolic space, the flow of the human mind between rationality and unreasonableness, consciousness and unconsciousness. Through such spaces, the common readers have no choice but to be both spectators of the poetic terrain and also to be involved in the creative experience. The spatial structure of the poem lets readers feel that they are experiencing some kind of mental cartography, where symbolic sceneries are emotional and cognitive territories (Hones, 2022; Prieto, 2021). The given point of view supports the idea that literary works are not only descriptive but also cognitive tools, which can organize the inner world of the reader.

The results of the research also prove the importance of phenomenology in the interpretation of

poetic space. Casey (2020) and Tuan (2022) state that it is impossible to separate spatial experience and consciousness and emotional perception. Coleridge creates spaces that cause strong subjective experience in *Kubla Khan*: the running river, explosive chasms and opposite landscapes lead the reader to his consciousness toward stability and instability and order and disorder. These spaces cannot be defined as fixed but rather are relational and dynamic in nature reflecting the dynamism of the human thought and emotion. This is in line with the phenomenological understanding that space is lived in as opposed to being measured. With the help of the involvement in these imaginary worlds, the average reader comes to a better understanding of the fact that the mind can explore the psychological and emotional landscapes outside the material world.

One of the themes discovered during the discussion is the encounter of the imagination and the reality, the theme of Romantic poetry. As McLane (2022) and Erdinast-Vulcan (2021) note, the Romantic imagination is not just the one that flees the reality but heightens the perception to the extent of sublime vision, turning the banal experience into sublime one. The results reveal that *Kubla Khan* is a poem that obscures the distinction between dream and waking consciousness: the pleasure dome is a symbol of artistic creation that is controlled and the wild river and the depth of the cavern symbolize the uncontrolled and anarchistic imagination. To the average reader, this duality creates cognitive interest and pathos, enabling an experience of the sublime as something sensual and not as theoretical. According to Murray (2021), the sublime is described as awe-inspiring and transcendence, and in the poem, dynamic spatiality, a shift between the ordered beauty to the anarchy of the unknown, is exactly what produces such experiences.

Additionally, the debate brings out the radical influence of the imaginative geography to the average reader. The paper concludes that *Kubla Khan* encourages readers to redefine art, nature, and even perception itself due to the presence of the spatial and symbolic structures in it. The poem shows that spaces of imagination are dynamic places of meaning-making, in which symbolic landscapes offer cognitive and emotional scaffold. As an example, the regular beauty of the dome is in contrast to the natural forces, which are destructive and violent, and this is how the human imagination and forces of nature are combined and contrasted. This duality increases how much the reader admires the poem as a psychological map and a philosophical reflection on the human perception, imagination, and art creation (Robinson, 2020; Weiskel, 2020).

Lastly, the role of reader involvement in meaning creation is highlighted in the discussion. Although Coleridge acts as the architect of the spaces and symbols, the average reader of his work fulfills the imaginative task of travelling through the landscapes of the poem in his or her mind. This is connected to the current body of cognitive-literary research that highlights the active contribution of the reader to creating meaning out of the textual spaces (Craps and Smethurst, 2021). Through the imagery, rhythm, and space structures of the poem, the readers get a sense of pleasure as well as a perception change: the barriers between reality and imagination are blurred, and common consciousness is lifted to the state of vision. By so doing, *Kubla Khan* is a Romantic ideal of art as a form of cognitive and emotional growth and is therefore valid in confirming that Coleridge remains relevant to date in his interpretation of the dialogue among imagination, spatial perception and human experience.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that *Kubla Khan* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is a complex and multi-layered imaginative geography where space, symbolism and psychology are carefully traced to create a

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transformative aesthetic and cognitive experience to the average reader. Using the cartographic method of literature, the poem shows that poetic space goes beyond space, which is a physical space to form a symbolic landscape that reflects the human mind. The pleasure dome, the sacred river Alph, the endless caverns, and the sunless sea work together both as physical images and as symbolic images (the mechanisms of imagination, perception, and the unconscious mind). This twofold role of imagination depicts the Romantic ideal of imagination as not escapist of reality, but as a system in which reality is redefining and amplifying and perceiving at various levels of consciousness.

As it may be observed in the analysis, the spatial configurations in the poem are the most important aspects in making the sublime experience. These differences between the ordered and the chaotic space, the light and the darkness, the natural and the artificial landscape include the readers in both emotional and cognitive senses in such a way so that they could swing between the familiar and the extraordinary. Such engagement can be categorized under the Romantic theories of imagination and the sublime as highlighted by authors like Murray (2021) and McLane (2022) which highlights the power of visionary poems to expand the way humans perceive things. The researchers conclude that common readers are not just spectators, they are active members of the imaginary geography and travel through the symbolic landscape of the poem and feel the emotional and psychological echo. By so, they experience a high level of aesthetics that makes them think about the connection of the mind, art and reality.

Moreover, the analysis shows that *Kubla Khan* is an illustration of how literature can be used as a mental and spatial instrument, which is able to influence the perception of the readers on both internal and external worlds. Mapping the imagination and reality onto the coherent, however dynamic, the poetic space, Coleridge is able to make his readers interact with the abstract notions of creativity, unconscious working, and human perception in a concrete and experience-based manner. The results indicate that the creative geography created in the poem does not only enhance the interpretation of literature but also helps in the development of personal and psychological understanding and thus, closes the gap between the analysis of the literature and the reader.

Another important issue suggested by the research is the wider relevance of literary cartography in modern literary research. This paper uses the spatial theory and phenomenological approaches to a Romantic text in order to highlight the merits of considering interdisciplinary approaches to poetry. The approach demonstrates that literary spaces are not aesthetic instruments only but also intellectual ones based on which readers can navigate through complex emotional and intellectual terrain. In this respect, *Kubla Khan* is the paradigm to analyze how a work of literature can at once create imaginative space and frame human consciousness, providing further contributions to the research on Romanticism, reader-response theory and cognitive literary criticism.

To conclude, this paper confirms that *Kubla Khan* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is not just a dream-vision poem, but rather a living mental map of the human imagination, between the real world and the visionary one. The use of ordinary readers can access the sublime by means of its spatial, symbolic, and psychological architectures and their ability to reflect on creative thinking and redefine the limits of perception. The analysis of the relationship between literary space, imagination, and reader experience by anticipating it provides a contribution to the literature of literary cartography and the continuation of the timelessness of Romantic poetics in explaining the complex relations between art, mind, and reality.

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