

## The Rime of the Ancient Mariner as Romantic Quest

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Like the hero's glittering eye, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* continues to exercise a spell on readers, luring each generation of critics toward attempting new interpretations. Given the illuminating, suggestive, but widely differing readings already in print,<sup>1</sup> any claim to a last word on a poem of such complexity is bound to be reductive. What I offer, then, is yet another perspective, namely, an examination of genre, from which the coherence of the poem,<sup>2</sup> its Coleridgean qualities, and its kinship with other Romantic poems will emerge.

The Romantic Quest,<sup>3</sup> like the Greater Romantic Lyric,<sup>4</sup> centers on the meeting of mind with experience, which often takes the form of sublunary mutability. The mind attempts to move beyond experience to restructured or—as Yeats would put it—radical innocence.<sup>5</sup> But the heroes of such quests as *The Rime*, *The Book of Thel*, *Alastor*, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," or of miniature quests like "The Crystal Cabinet," cannot reach the upper region of Imagination because they never fully defeat the principle of psychic fragmentation, of spiritual death which Milton calls Selfhood and Coleridge the Will in "its utmost abstraction."<sup>6</sup> The heroes thus remain doomed to the cycle of mutability. Romantic Quests combine a warning against such impasses in the progress of the mind with an implicit program for breaking through them. Ironically, neither the innocent questioner nor the experienced narrator understands the warning or acts upon the solution proffered by the events of the journey,<sup>7</sup> and the meaning of the quest remains to be shared by poet and reader.

Though *The Rime* follows the general pattern of Romantic Quests in terms of the hero's psychic pilgrimage, two aspects of the poem—the seeming completeness of the circular structure<sup>8</sup> and the imagery used to describe the Mariner's visionary moment—distinguish it from other Quests and mark it as part of Coleridge's oeuvre. Not all heroes attain the grace of imagination even momentarily. Some, like the poet in *Alastor*, see it and pursue it through and beyond the natural world. Others, like the knight-at-arms and the speaker in "The Crystal Cabinet," see it and lose it by misapprehending its nature. The Mariner and Thel, both virgins to the world of Imagination, have brief access to it but retreat shrieking or praying, Thel to her infantile valley and the Mariner to his repetition-compulsion.

The Mariner, more explicitly than other heroes, experiences the symbol-making power of the imagination to a degree granted rarely by Coleridge to even his poet-speakers. After his dark night of the soul, the Mariner briefly frees himself from mechanical modes of thinking Coleridge asso-

ciates with death, namely, the senses, memory, superstitious fancy—"loneliness and fixedness"<sup>9</sup>—in order to endow the images of horror created by such thinking with life, light, and beauty. The Mariner's imagination changes the sea and snakes from multiple mirrorings of his inner desolation to symbols, translucent with the light of the mind.<sup>10</sup>

Believing himself "under supernatural agency,"<sup>11</sup> the Mariner perceives only the strangeness, horror, and threat of the unknown:

The very deep did rot: O Christ!  
That ever this should be!  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about in reel and rout  
The death-fires danced at night;  
The water, like a witch's oils,  
Burnt green, and blue and white.

(ll. 123-130)<sup>12</sup>

The movement toward symbolization begins gradually, with sense perception, "The moving Moon" (l. 263), then sympathetic identification (line 265 is the first place in the poem where the moon is personified), then recognition of familiar and therefore endearing aspects of the alien seascape, "April hoar-frost," "hoary flakes" (ll. 268-276), and finally transformation of a fearful world into intelligibility:

Within the shadow of the ship  
I watched their rich attire;  
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,  
They coiled and swam; and every track  
Was a flash of golden fire.

(ll. 277-281)

In the absence of beneficent moonlight—"within the shadow of the ship"—but by the light of the imagination the slimmness changes to "rich attire" and the "death-fires," "still and awful red," to "a flash of golden fire." Coleridge invests intense imaginative moments in his poetry with precisely this kind of flash of light and richness of color, and attributes these transformations to the perceiving mind, not to natural phenomena. The memory of the damsel's song in *Kubla Khan* elevates the poet to sacred seer with "flashing eyes," whose song in turn erects "that sunny dome! those caves of ice." In "Frost at Midnight" the poet's imagination adds moonlight to an otherwise dark poem and penetrates "the secret ministry of frost" with the translucence of the symbol, "quietly shining" in the icicles. "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" contains an imagined sunset

where the poet's mind unites disparate elements of landscape by making them "shine," "richlier burn," "live in the yellow light," "kindle." And in "Dejection: An Ode," in which the poet laments the loss of imagination, outward illuminations such as the moon, the beautiful stars, the "green light that lingers in the west" are recognized as powerless to transform perception since "from the soul itself must issue forth/ A light. . . ."

The spontaneous release of feeling occurs in *The Rime* at the symbolizing moment as explicitly as it does in the other poems. "It thrills my heart with tender gladness," "I am glad/ As I myself were there," "To such a deep delight 'twould win me" and the contrasting "I see, not feel, how beautiful they are" indicate Coleridge's awareness, so often stated in philosophic and religious terms, that imagination fuses thought and feeling—Head and Heart—and thus embraces a wider range of human potentialities than other modes of dealing with human life. The Mariner declares, "A spring of love gushed from my heart,/ And I blessed them unaware" (ll. 284-285). By means of parallels to previous events and perceptions, as in the description of sea and snakes, Coleridge contrasts the death-like faculties with the imagination. The image of love gushing like blood<sup>13</sup> recalls the earlier painful and ultimately destructive blood-letting, in which the Mariner bites his arm in order to find voice to herald the specter-bark. The spring of feeling fed by imaginative vision washes away the despair of a heart "dry as dust."

Since Coleridge gives the Mariner the unmistakable triumph of imagination, a key problem in *The Rime* remains the Mariner's subsequent failure of vision, and in examining the Quest pattern I propose a solution. Coleridge uses circular structures to give a sense of completion, a visionary gain in the Greater Romantic Lyrics in which the speakers' meditations successfully transform reality. In Coleridge's prose the wheel and *ouroboros* appear as symbols of a perspective from which God and the artist encompass "all Past and all Future in one eternal Present."<sup>14</sup> Because of its customary positive value, the circular structure in *The Rime* could be taken as a sign of the Mariner's return to normality. Yet in the Romantic Quest to return to the treadmill of nature's cycle suggests the hero's lack of psychic progress. Although, like the speakers of the Greater Romantic Lyrics, the Mariner begins his visionary experience from a specified locus to which he returns, what should be his imaginary gain makes him a perpetual exile from human society instead of integrating him within it. Moreover, his tale frames his adventure so that the circularity is marred when we learn that he moves "from land to land." His reception in his "own countree" and his subsequent wanderings point to his kinship with Romantic Questers who vainly seek a return to lost innocence instead of exercising their dormant or repressed imagination to forge the new Eden.

Often a dialogue or a first-person narrative, the Romantic Quest presents the visionary experience in flashback so that it becomes the prototype for that persistent Romantic

and post-Romantic journey "à la recherche du temps perdu." The question and answer of "La Belle Dame" and the tale and trembling of *The Rime* establish perhaps more successfully than the straight narrative that the naive questioner—the mind in a state of innocence—is in dire need of enlightenment lest he, too, become a specter-like victim of Life-in-Death. But his informant clearly fails to deliver the message in such a way as to free himself or his witness from the thrall of experience, called respectively "la belle dame" or the Polar Spirit, but meaning Selfhood. The method of narrating the experience then becomes inextricably linked with its message. We learn of the inefficacy of certain methods, such as the superstitious delusion of the Mariner or the Wordsworthian perception of the narrator in *Alastor*, by witnessing the fate of the hero and the teller, who will not bridge the gap between the psychic journey and their limited perception of its meaning.

The descent into experience (and descent describes the movement of *The Rime*—"below the kirk . . ."—as well as of "La Belle Dame" with its cave, of *Alastor* with its precipitous descent into the cavern, of *The Book of Thel* with the heroine's journey underground) shows the hero as a naive youth unprepared to meet nature at its most delusory, either in its seductive or threatening guise. Like other heroes, the Romantic Questers are young, and the Mariner is no exception. Struck by the incongruity of an illustration of the Mariner as an old man during the voyage, Coleridge says:

It is an enormous blunder in these engravings of De Serte . . . , brought here by Dr. Aitken, to represent the An. M. as an old man on board ship. He was in my mind the everlasting wandering Jew—had told this story ten thousand times since the voyage, which was in his early youth and 50 years before.<sup>15</sup>

The voyage begins as a collective experience in *The Rime*. The departure establishes a *contretemps* between the sailors' expectations and the unfamiliar world they enter, and it foreshadows the inadequacy of their responses. They set out "merrily," oblivious to the portents of the drop "below the kirk" and of the sinister sunrise. Beyond the range of familiar protections such as religion, community, and the watchful eye of the lighthouse, the sailors nevertheless cling to the conventions of the world they left. They judge seascape and events according to Christian superstitions when these cannot explain their predicament. The universe perceived by their limited modes of thinking remains threatening and incomprehensible. A measure of the narrator's lack of psychic progress in *The Rime*, as well as in "La Belle Dame" and "The Crystal Cabinet," is his unchanged perspective in the retelling. For the youth and the knight the former enchantments have not lost their attractions, just as for the Mariner the terrors of the journey retain their full power. The storm which drives the sailors toward the unknown is still "tyrannous and strong"

(l. 42), the ship still a victim pursued so closely that it “treads the shadow of his foe” (l. 47).

The turning point of the Romantic Quest, referred to as the crime in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, occurs just after the hero confronts a dimension of life, a possibility hitherto undreamed of in his limited knowledge.<sup>16</sup> The crime in Romantic Quests appears as a response so wrong, a resistance so stubborn to the vision that it brings irreversible devastation, blasting hero and nature, transforming youth’s early paradise into a nightmare entrapment in experience. Underlying this pattern of events critical to the Quest is the theme of sexuality, specifically of sexual violence. This inclusion need not surprise since the Quest contains elements of the rite of passage, but these become modified by the interiorization of obstacles and goals in Romantic poetry. The sexual aggression of the hero, who in “The Crystal Cabinet” tries to seize the three-fold vision “with ardor fierce & the hands of flame,” in “La Belle Dame” shuts the lady’s sorrowing eyes “with kisses four,” and in *The Rime* shoots the albatross, suggests an assertion of willful Selfhood at a moment when the mind should have acquiesced to the unknown and expanded instead of retracting its vision. The hero commits the crime of wanting to possess and dominate the object which excites his interest and which could have awakened his sympathetic imagination. Even the poet in *Alastor* makes the error of seeking the infinite in finite form; then how much greater the lapse of imagination of the other Questers who not only pursue but aggressively attempt to imprison vision within fixed, and to them comprehensible, form.

For Coleridge rigid boundaries around the object, the image, destroy its potential to become symbol:

The image-forming or rather re-forming power, the imagination in its passive sense, which I would rather call Fancy . . . this, the Fetisch and Talisman of all modern Philosophers . . . may not inaptly be compared to the Gorgon Head, which *looked* death into every thing . . . but the Soul differences itself from any other Soul for the purposes of symbolical knowledge by *form* or body only—but all form as body, i.e. as shape, and not as forma efformans, is dead . . . Is it any excuse to him who treats a living being as inanimate Body, that ~~he~~ we cannot arrive at the knowledge of the living Being but thro’ the Body which is its Symbol & outward & visible Sign?—

From the above deduce the worth & dignity of poetic Imagination, of the fusing power, that fixing unfixes & while it melts and bedims the Image, still leaves in the Soul its living meaning—(Nb, III, 4066) Rigid definitions of words bring death to poetic language: “Whether or no the too great definiteness of Terms in any language may not consume too much of the vital & idea-creating force in distinct, clear, full made Images & so prevent originality” (Nb, I, 1016). As to the Mariner’s act, Coleridge’s comment about a real incident of bird shooting from a ship, “It is not cruelty/ it is mere non-feeling from

non-thinking” (Nb, II, 2090), damns minds which commit such acts to living death. Coleridge places a primacy on feelings which may have been obscured by his efforts to create a system of philosophy. In the poetry, the surfacing of feelings for his child, his friend, his beloved trigger the union of Head and Heart which characterizes the imaginative moment. In the absence of affective presences the poet is left prey to dejection over his loss of imaginative power. Feelings play an equally catalytic role in Coleridge’s formulations of a philosophy of the mind: “A metaphysical Solution, that does not instantly *tell* for something in the Heart, is grievously to be suspected as apocry [p] hal.”<sup>17</sup>

The suppression of Heart in the Mariner’s act reaches its greatest limit since the Mariner transfixes the albatross, in death. As a herald of life in the otherwise desolate seascape, the albatross, whose strangeness Coleridge intensified in revision,<sup>18</sup> could have served as a mediating link to the frightful alien world. The Mariner’s crime separates him from his companions, and, starting with the confession “With my crossbow/ I shot the albatross” (ll.81-82), the narrative shifts from collective experience to the more familiar Quest pattern of personal agony. Yet the sailors’ presence raises questions about their relation to the Quest. If they only serve to mirror the Mariner’s torment after the crime, as indeed the entire universe seems to do until his partial atonement, then objections about their fate would seem as irrelevant as objections about Coleridge’s choice of the sun as a baleful influence. But the sailors participate in the Quest, and their fate, though seemingly disproportionate with their guilt, can be seen as part of the Quest pattern. Starting off merrily, then overwhelmed by fear, the sailors exhibit the “recalcitrance in the mind”<sup>19</sup> which refuses imaginative growth. While the Mariner recognizes the albatross as a presence significant enough to need killing, the sailors trivialize both bird and crime. Their judgment is accidental rather than prophetic; they change their minds three times about the meaning of the crime, each time basing their moral stance on which way the wind blows. Their dreams about the Polar Spirit show their continued reliance on superstitious conventions which are called upon to explain their adventures. Their negation of experience dooms them to the Coleridgean limbo in which minds remaining passive before the universe see only death, the reflection of emptiness within.

For the Mariner, as for Browning’s Childe Roland and Keats’s knight, companions ironically intensify the sense of isolation in a universe of nightmarish horror. But, while Childe Roland and the knight share guilt with their predecessors in the Quest and see their own horror mirrored in their companions’ fate, the Mariner endures the added guilt of having caused the other sailors’ death. This distinction allows the Mariner that short-lived imaginative vision which represents a unique departure from the general Quest pattern. Trapped in nature’s cycle, weeping babes and disconsolate knights can neither return to happy innocence nor move toward Imagination. Coleridge’s Mariner hears his crime amplified two hundred times—“And every soul,

it passed me by,/ Like the whizz of my cross-bow" (ll. 222-223)—and sees his guilt in the undecaying corpses' eyes. The sailors' presence serves as a sort of affective center, which, however grotesque, forces him to acknowledge that the outer corruption has an inner source, that the fearful unknown mirrors the undreamed-of possibilities within. As he surveys his state, the Mariner finds that the rotting sea and ship and the curse in the dead men's eyes correspond to the inner desiccation—"heart dry as dust"—and malevolence—"wicked whisper" instead of prayer. When he tries to shut out the horror by closing his eyes, he finds the same images pursuing him in that radical retreat from experience, where for "seven days, seven nights" he sees nothing but "that curse," the mirror of his guilt.

The Mariner's recognition allows him to progress imaginatively farther than other Quest heroes, and certainly farther than his companions. But the imaginative moment is followed by another retreat from vision, this time not characterized by a violent assertion of Selfhood like the killing of the albatross, but by a lapse into unregenerate modes of thought, namely, superstition. Immediately after blessing the snakes, the Mariner attributes his release to a kind saint or the Virgin, as he later attributes his continued punishment to the Polar Spirit. On the voyage home he expresses nostalgia for the earthly paradise through similes between supernatural events on the high seas and the pastoral beauty of skylarks' songs and hidden brooks. His perception, however, remains essentially unchanged; Coleridge lets us measure the Mariner's lack of growth through parallel passages of the departure and return, in which the ship is and remains a victim pursued by "a frightful fiend" (l. 450). His homecoming, like that of other Quest heroes who return to the initial starting point, shows the impossibility of his reintegration. Though his mind longs for innocence, his experienced eye detects corruption in natural forms (ll. 520-522, 534-537). His presence devastates (ll. 560-561, 564-565), and, despite his professed holiness, he negates the one sacrament which in "Dejection" becomes the chief metaphor for the mind's redemption of nature.

The Mariner's refusal to acknowledge the marriage ceremony which not only frames but disrupts his obsessive narrative hints at the nature of the crime and punishment in the Romantic Quest. The Romantic poets would hardly let their heroes off lightly after such regressive blunders on the imaginative and sexual level. Shelley's Poet, Keats's knight, and Coleridge's Mariner all move from early youth to specter-like old age without the benefit of fertile manhood, and Blake devises a similar fate for the youth in "The Crystal Cabinet" through the more radical regression to "weeping Babe"; his Thel remains the "Virgin."

The Mariner's paltry consolation for being shut out of the marriage-feast—after all, *he* is not a guest—contains disturbingly disjunctive language which stands in contrast to the imaginative moments in *The Rime* and other Coleridge poems. Although the Mariner turns his back on the wedding for the sweetness of walking "together to the

kirk/ With a goodly company" (ll. 603-604), once there his company sunders into "each" who prays "to his great Father" (l. 607) so that the sense of community dissolves.<sup>20</sup>

The Mariner lists and catalogues humans and others of God's creatures into distinct groups. This categorizing activity belongs to the same kind of mental function as the Mariner's crime, though it differs greatly in degree; it attempts to fix the infinite into dead forms. The dire outcome of the former act ought to warn the Mariner against this parcelling-out of God's world. One could argue, of course, that what sustains these categories is the Mariner's awareness of God's love. But the notion that one is constrained to love because God does, which may make respectable orthodox doctrine, negates the Mariner's only moment of genuine vision, and the Mariner remembers the sudden "spring of love" in the telling. As "Dejection" movingly shows, constraint, "outward forms," do not awaken feelings, "whose fountains are within." Love, joy, gladness of the heart come spontaneously when the imagination creates a beauty hitherto nonexistent in nature. Coleridge's crowning metaphor for a universe animated by love is marriage. In "Dejection" the speaker accepts responsibility for the universe of life or death created by the mind: "in our life alone does Nature live:/ Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud" (ll. 48-49). Small wonder then that the Mariner's hypnotic constraint, which keeps the Wedding Guest from the marriage-feast, renders the Guest "of sense forlorn:/ A sadder and a wiser man" (ll. 623-624). Like the Mariner, the Wedding Guest falls from innocence into experience without reaching the joy of Imagination.

In *The Rime* the hero's ultimate failure to make sense of his voyage accounts for his punishment, as it does in other Romantic Quests where the hero is also the narrator. He dooms himself to repeat the rime more than "ten thousand times" until he understands its meaning, until he sees that his freedom from Life-in-Death lies in his power to transform death into life.

Like kindred Quests, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* shares the characteristics of the genre while retaining the unmistakable signature of its author. Since the focus of this paper has been *The Rime*, the uniqueness and subtlety of the other Quests were necessarily slighted. Yet when examined together these poems reveal the insistent presence of major concerns of Romantic poetry: the role of the imagination in enabling man to come to terms with the unknown in the universe and the self, and the necessity of imaginative growth for reaching one's full humanity.

#### NOTES

1. Among the most distinguished interpretations which continue to furnish present-day criticism with insights for buttressing arguments or with positions to challenge are Robert Penn Warren's "A Poem of Pure Imagination," *Selected Essays* (1941; rpt. and revised 1951), pp. 198-305; Humphry House's "The Ancient Mariner," *Coleridge: The Clark Lectures 1951-1952* (1953), pp. 84-113; and Harold Bloom's brief treatment in *The Visionary Company*, 2nd.

ed. (1961; rpt. 1971), pp. 206-212. The most acute recent readings are Paul Magnuson's, in *Coleridge's Nightmare Poetry* (1974), and John Beer's, in *Coleridge's Poetic Intelligence* (1977).

2. Several critics regard the universe of *The Rime* as irrational and incomprehensible. See Edward Bostetter's "The Nightmare World of the Ancient Mariner," *SiR*, 1 (1962), 241-254; A. M. Buchan's "The Sad Wisdom of the Mariner," *SP*, 61 (1964), 669-688; James D. Boulger's "Christian Skepticism in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*," *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, eds. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (1965), pp. 439-452; Daniel McDonald's existential interpretation of the Mariner's experience in "Too Much Reality: A Discussion of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,'" *SEL*, 4 (1964), 543-554; L. M. Grow's, in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner: Multiple Veils of Illusion," *Notre Dame English Journal*, 9 (1973), 23-29; and Norman Fruman's, in *Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel* (1971), pp. 298-300, 354, 365, and 411.

3. See Harold Bloom's brief but suggestive "The Internalization of Quest Romance," *The Yale Review*, 58 (1969), 526-536, for a definition of the Romantic Quest.

4. See M. H. Abrams' definitive treatment of the genre in "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," *From Sensibility to Romanticism*, pp. 527-560.

5. Though many critics discuss *The Rime* as a psychic journey, the most sustained treatment of the poem as psychodrama appears in Bloom (*The Visionary Company*) and Beer; its relation to ritual is explored in Mark Littmann's "The Ancient Mariner and Initiation Rites," *Papers on Language and Literature*, 4 (1968), 370-389.

6. Compare Blake's line in *Milton*, "I in my Selfhood am that Satan" (Plate 14, l. 30, in *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David Erdman with commentary by Harold Bloom [1965; revised rpt. 1970]), with Coleridge's description of fragmented faculties: "in its utmost abstraction and consequent state of reprobation, the Will becomes satanic pride and rebellious self-idolatry in the relations of the spirit to itself, and remorseless despotism relatively to others" (*Lay Sermons*, ed. R. J. White [1972], p. 65). *Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, 6 [1972], p. 65.

7. Irene Chayes in "A Coleridgean Reading of 'The Ancient Mariner,'" *SiR*, 4 (1964), 81-103, discusses the irony of *The Rime*, which results from the gap between "ordinary, naive knowledge" of the Mariner and the events he experiences on "the sea of speculative thought" for which he is unprepared.

8. R. H. Fogle in "The Genre of the Ancient Mariner," *Tulane Studies in English*, 7 (1957), 111-124, argues that *The Rime* does not belong to the Quest genre because of the circular structure, the closure (p. 122). In "Coleridge and the Deluded Reader: 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,'" *Georgia Review*, 31 (1977), 617-635, Frances Ferguson sees the structure as a circling around the insurmountable problems of knowledge.

9. Note the contrast between "all the products of the mere reflective faculty" which partakes of "DEATH" (*Biographia Literaria and Aesthetical Essays*, ed. J. Shawcross, 2 vols. [1907], I, 98) and "life and progressive

power" (*Biographia*, I, 104n.); between the *discursive* understanding" acquiring "a knowledge of superficialities without substance" and "the imagination, impregnated with which the understanding itself becomes intuitive, and a living power" (*Lay Sermons*, p. 69).

10. The relation of symbol and translucence in Coleridge's theoretical writings appears most clearly in the definition of the symbol in *The Statesman's Manual* (*Lay Sermons*, p. 30) and in *On the Principles of Genial Criticism Concerning the Fine Arts* (*Biographia*, II, 238).

11. Note Coleridge's implication of passivity in superstitious delusion and his interest in the psychological reality of delusion discussed in *Biographia*, II, 5.

12. *Poetical Works*, ed. E. H. Coleridge (1912; rpt. 1919). All references to Coleridge's poetry are to this edition.

13. The original meaning of the word "bless," according to the OED, is "to make 'sacred' or holy with blood."

14. *Collected Letters*, ed. E. L. Griggs (1956), IV, 545.

15. *The Notebooks*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (1957-1962), I (Notes), 45. All further references to this edition will be cited as *Nb* in the text and will include volume and entry number in that order.

16. House, and R. L. Brett in "Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*," *Reason and Imagination* (1960), interpret the crime as a separation from nature in the order of the Fall. Fogle in "The Genre of the Ancient Mariner," E. B. Gose in "Coleridge and the Luminous Gloom: An Analysis of the 'Symbolic Language' in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'" (*PMLA*, 75 [1960], 238-244), and Warren see the albatross as a Christian emblem of the sacramental "one Life" and attribute the crime to Satanic self-idolatry, a view also shared by G. Wilson Knight in "Coleridge's Divine Comedy," *The Starlit Dome* (1960), who sees the bird as a guide to the divine killed by "motiveless malignity." Sara Dyck's more recent "Perspective in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'" (*SEL*, 13 [1973], 591-604) equates the "one Life" with the ordered universe disrupted by the Mariner's crime.

17. *Collected Letters*, II, 961; see also *Nb*, III, 3935.

18. Coleridge revised line 67 from "the Mariner gave it biscuit-worm" to "it ate the food it ne'er had eat" to emphasize the albatross's status from pet to unfamiliar visitor.

19. Bloom so defines the antagonist within the mind which must be defeated in order for the hero to progress to Imagination in "The Internalization of Quest Romance," p. 530.

20. Chayes contrasts the compulsion to pray in the moral to the "miraculous utterance" of the vision (p. 101), but she does not relate it to the Mariner's turning away from the marriage ceremony. Other critics argue for a positive meaning in the moral the Mariner imparts to the Wedding Guest: see Carl Woodring's "The Mariner's Return," *SiR*, 11 (1972), 375-380; Stephen Prickett's "The Living Educts of the Imagination: Coleridge on Religious Language," *TWC*, 4 (1973), 99-110; George Gilpin's *The Strategy of Joy: An Essay on the Poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. James Hogg, *Romantic Reassessment*, Salzburg Studies in English Literature (1972); Beer's *Coleridge's Poetic Intelligence*.