

No twilight within
the courts of the sun.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.²

200

At the rising of the
Moon.

We listened and looked sideways up!

Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!

The stars were dim, and thick the night

The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;

From the sails the dew did drip—

Till clomb above the eastern bar

The horned Moon, with one bright star

Within the nether tip.³

205

210

One after another,

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,

Too quick for groan or sigh,

Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,

And cursed me with his eye.

215

His shipmates drop
down dead.

Four times fifty living men,

(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)

With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,

They dropped down one by one.

220

But Life-in-Death
begins her work on
the ancient Mariner.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—

They fled to bliss or woe!

And every soul, it passed me by,

Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

225

230

235

Part 4

The wedding guest
feareth that a spirit is
talking to him.

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!

I fear thy skinny hand!

And thou art long, and lank, and brown

As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,

And thy skinny hand, so brown."

Fear not, fear not, thou wedding-guest!

This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,

Alone on a wide wide sea!

And never a saint took pity on

My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!

And they all dead did lie:

He despiseth the
creatures of the
calm.

2. Ghost ship.

3. An omen of impending evil.

And the Albatross
begins to be
avenged.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

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-fires⁴ danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

A spirit had followed
them; one of the
invisible inhabitants
of this planet, neither
departed souls nor
angels; concerning
whom the learned

Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very
numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

And some in dreams assured were
Of the spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

The shipmates, in
their sore distress,
would fain throw the
whole guilt on the
ancient Mariner: in
sign whereof they
hang the dead sea
bird round his neck.

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

Part 3

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

The ancient Mariner
beholdeth a sign in
the element afar off.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.⁵

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,⁶
It plunged and tacked and veered.

4. Usually glossed as St. Elmo's fire—an atmospheric electricity on a ship's mast or rigging—believed by superstitious sailors to portend disaster. Possibly the reference is instead to phosphorescence.

organic matter in the sea (see line 123).

5. Knew.

6. A supernatural being that supervises the natural elements (but Coleridge may in fact have been using the term to mean water-sprite).

125

130

135

140

145

150

155

Again, this is
Chlorophyll

Like
13:1

The ship driven by a
storm toward the
south pole.

And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward ^{are} we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

The land of ice, and
of wondrous sounds
where no living thing
was to be seen.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken⁸—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!⁹

Till a great sea-bird,
called the Albatross,
came through the
snow-fog, and was
received with great
joy and hospitality.

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,¹
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moon-shine."

The ancient Mariner
inhospitably killeth
the pious bird of
good omen.

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—

John 3:16

Christ like
Jesus

why this??

Yet still the solitary humble bee
 Sings in the bean-flower! Henceforth I shall know
 That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
 60 No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
 No waste so vacant, but may well employ
 Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
 Awake to Love and Beauty! and sometimes
 'Tis well to be bereft of promised good,
 65 That we may lift the Soul, and contemplate
 With lively joy the joys we cannot share.
 My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook
 Beat its straight path along the dusky air
 Homewards, I blessed it! deeming its black wing
 70 (Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
 Had crossed the mighty orb's dilated glory,
 While thou stood'st gazing; or when all was still,
 Flew creaking o'er thy head, and had a charm
 75 For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
 No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

1797

1800

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner¹

IN SEVEN PARTS

Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum [sic] omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit, et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quae loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, nunquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tanquam in tabulâ, majoris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari: ne mens assuefacta hodiernae vitae minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus.

T. BURNET, *Archaeol. Phil.* p. 68.²

Part I

An ancient Mariner
 meeteth three
 gallants bidden to a
 wedding-feast, and
 detaineth one.

It is an ancient Mariner
 And he stoppeth one of three.
 "By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
 Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

1. Coleridge describes the origin of this poem in the opening section of chap. 14 of *Biographia Literaria*. In a comment made to the Reverend Alexander Dyce in 1835 and in a note on "We Are Seven" dictated in 1843, Wordsworth added some details. The poem, based on a dream of Coleridge's friend Cruikshank, was originally planned as a collaboration between Coleridge and Wordsworth, to pay the expense of a walking tour they took with Dorothy Wordsworth in November 1800. Before he dropped out of the enterprise, Wordsworth suggested the shooting of the albatross and the navigation of the ship by the dead men; he also contributed lines 13-16 and 226-27.

When printed in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), this poem was titled "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and contained many archaic words and spellings, which, Wordsworth believed, hurt the sales of their volume. In later editions Coleridge revised the poem, in part by pruning those archaisms. He also added the Latin epigraph and the marginal glosses written in the old-fashioned style of 17th-century learning.

2. I readily believe that there are more invisible than visible Natures in the universe. But who will explain for us the family of all these beings, and the ranks and relations and distinguishing features and functions of each? What do they

Lyrical
 Ballad
 Lyric = personal
 experience
 Ernest
 Ballad =
 story

Mariner
 stops
 there

And what if all of animated nature
 Be but organic harps diversely framed,
 45 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?

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
 Darts, O beloved woman! nor such thoughts
 50 Dim and unhallowed 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 dispraised
 These shapings of the unregenerate⁴ mind;
 55 Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
 On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling⁵ spring.
 For never guiltless may I speak of him,
 The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
 I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels;
 60 Who with his saving mercies healed me,
 A sinful and most miserable man,
 Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
 Peace, and this cot, and thee, heart-honored Maid!

1795

1796

This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison

In the June of 1797, some long-expected Friends paid a visit to the author's cottage; and on the morning of their arrival, he met with an accident, which disabled him from walking during the whole time of their stay. One evening, when they had left him for a few hours, he composed the following lines in the garden-bower.¹

Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
 This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost
 Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
 Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
 5 Had dimmed mine eyes to blindness! They, meanwhile,
 Friends, whom I never more may meet again,
 On springy² heath, along the hill-top edge,
 Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
 To that still roaring dell, of which I told;
 10 The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
 And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
 Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock

4. Spiritually unredeemed; not born again.

1. The time was in fact July 1797; the visiting friends were William and Dorothy Wordsworth and Charles Lamb; the accident was the fault of Mrs. Coleridge—"dear Sara," Coleridge wrote, "accidentally emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot"; and the bower consisted of lime (i.e., linden) trees in the garden of Thomas Poole, next

door to Coleridge's cottage at Nether Stowey. Coleridge related these facts in a letter to Robert Southey, July 17, 1797, in which he transcribed the first version of this poem. In the earliest printed text the title is followed by "Addressed to Charles Lamb, of the India-House, London."

2. Elastic, I mean [Coleridge's note].

novel's storytellers have over their auditors. When he died, Coleridge left his friends with the sense that an incomparable intellect had vanished from the world.

Coleridge's friends, however, abetted by his own merciless self-judgments, set current the opinion, still common, that he was great in promise but not in performance. Even in his buoyant youth he described his own character as "indolence capable of energies"; and it is true that while his mind was incessantly active and fertile, he lacked application and staying power. He also manifested early in life a profound sense of guilt and a need for public expiation. After drug addiction sapped his strength and will, he often adapted (or simply adopted) passages from other writers, with little or no acknowledgment, and sometimes in a context that seems designed to reveal that he relies on sources that he does not credit. Whatever the tangled motives for his procedure, Coleridge has repeatedly been charged with gross plagiarism, from his day to ours. After *The Ancient Mariner*, most of the poems he completed were written, like the first version of "Dejection: An Ode," in a spasm of intense effort. Writings that required sustained planning and application were either left unfinished or, like *Biographia Literaria*, made up of brilliant sections padded out with filler, sometimes lifted from other writers, in a desperate effort to meet a deadline. Many of his speculations Coleridge merely confided to his notebooks and the ears of his friends, incorporated in letters, and poured out in the margins of his own and other people's books.

Even so, it is only when measured against his own potentialities that Coleridge's achievements appear limited. In an 1838 essay the philosopher John Stuart Mill hailed the recently deceased Coleridge as one of "the two great seminal minds of England": according to Mill, Coleridge's conservatism had, along with the very different utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham (the other seminal mind identified in Mill's essay), revolutionized the political thought of the day. Coleridge was also one of the important and influential literary theorists of the nineteenth century. One of his major legacies is the notion that culture, the nation's artistic and spiritual heritage, represents a force with the power to combat the fragmentation of a modern, market-driven society and to restore a common, collective life. This was an idea that he worked out largely in opposition to Bentham's utilitarianism, the newly prestigious discipline of political economy, and the impoverished, soulless account of human nature that these systems of thought offered. And in *Biographia Literaria* and elsewhere, Coleridge raised the stakes for literary criticism, making it into a kind of writing that could address the most difficult and abstract questions—questions about, for instance, the relations between literary language and ordinary language, or between poetry and philosophy, or between perception and imagination. Above all, Coleridge's writings in verse—whether we consider the poetry of Gothic demonism in *Christabel* or the meditative conversation poems like "Frost at Midnight" or "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison"—are the achievements of a remarkably innovative poet.

The Eolian Harp¹

Composed at Clevedon, Somersetshire

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

1. Named for Aeolus, god of the winds, the harp has strings stretched over a rectangular sound-box. When placed in an opened window, the harp (also called "Eolian lute," "Eolian lyre," "wind harp") responds to the altering wind by sequences of musical chords. This instrument, which seems to voice nature's own music, was a favorite household furnishing in the period and was repeatedly alluded to in Romantic poetry. It

served also as one of the recurrent Romantic images for the mind—either the mind in poetic inspiration, as in the last stanza of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" (p. 791), or else the mind in perception, responding to an intellectual breeze by trembling into consciousness, as in this poem, lines 44–48.
Coleridge wrote this poem to Sara Fricker, whom he married on October 4, 1795, and took

The shades of evening were growing thicker around us as my conductor finished his long narrative with this moral—"Ye see, birkie,¹ it is nae chancy thing to tak a stranger traveller for a guide, when ye are in an uncouth² land."

1824

1. Clever young man.

2. Strange.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

1772-1834

In *The Prelude* Wordsworth, recording his gratitude to the mountains, lakes, and winds "that dwell among the hills where I was born," commiserates with Coleridge because "thou, my Friend! wert reared / In the great City, 'mid far other scenes." Samuel Taylor Coleridge had in fact been born in the small town of Ottery St. Mary, in rural Devonshire, but on the death of his father he had been sent to school at Christ's Hospital in London. He was a dreamy, enthusiastic, and extraordinarily precocious schoolboy. Charles Lamb, his schoolmate and lifelong friend, in an essay on Christ's Hospital gave a vivid sketch of Coleridge's loneliness, his learning, and his eloquence. When in 1791 Coleridge entered Jesus College, Cambridge, he was an accomplished scholar; but he found little intellectual stimulation at the university, fell into idleness, dissoluteness, and debt, then in despair fled to London and enlisted in the Light Dragoons under the alias of Silas Tomkyn Comberbach—one of the most inept cavalymen in the long history of the British army. Although rescued by his brothers and sent back to Cambridge, he left in 1794 without a degree.

In June 1794 Coleridge met Robert Southey, then a student at Oxford who, like himself, had poetic aspirations, was a radical in religion and politics, and sympathized with the republican experiment in France. Together the two young men planned to establish an ideal democratic community in America for which Coleridge coined the name "Pantisocracy," signifying an equal rule by all. A plausible American real-estate agent persuaded them that the ideal location would be on the banks of the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania. Twelve men undertook to go; and because perpetuation of the scheme required offspring, hence wives, Coleridge dutifully became engaged to Sara Fricker, conveniently at hand as the sister of Southey's fiancée. The Pantisocracy scheme collapsed, but at Southey's insistence Coleridge went through with the marriage, "resolved," as he said, "but wretched." Later Coleridge's radicalism waned, and he became a conservative in politics—a highly philosophical one—and a staunch Anglican in religion.

In 1795 Coleridge met Wordsworth and at once judged him to be "the best poet of the age." When in 1797 Wordsworth brought his sister, Dorothy, to settle at Alfoxden, only three miles from the Coleridges at Nether Stowey, the period of intimate communication and poetic collaboration began that was the golden time of Coleridge's life.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
 And the sails did sigh like sedge;⁶
 And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
 The Moon was at its edge.

320

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
 The Moon was at its side:
 Like waters shot from some high crag,
 The lightning fell with never a jag,
 A river steep and wide.

325

*The bodies of the
 ship's crew are
 inspired, and the
 ship moves on;*

The loud wind never reached the ship,
 Yet now the ship moved on!
 Beneath the lightning and the moon
 The dead men gave a groan.

330

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
 Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
 It had been strange, even in a dream,
 To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
 Yet never a breeze up blew;
 The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
 Where they were wont to do;
 They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
 We were a ghastly crew.

335

The body of my brother's son
 Stood by me, knee to knee:
 The body and I pulled at one rope,
 But he said nought to me.

*But not by the souls
 of the men, nor by
 daemons' of earth or
 middle air, but by a
 blessed troop of
 angelic spirits,
 sent down by the
 invocation of the
 guardian saint.*

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"
 Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
 'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
 Which to their corses⁸ came again,
 But a troop of spirits blest:

345

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,
 And clustered round the mast;
 Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
 And from their bodies passed.

350

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
 Then darted to the Sun;
 Slowly the sounds came back again,
 Now mixed, now one by one.

355

6. A rushlike plant growing in wet soil.
 7. Supernatural beings.

*The lo
 from th
 carries
 as far a
 obedie
 angelic
 still re
 vengea*

*The
 fello
 invis
 of th
 part
 and
 relat
 othe
 long
 the
 hath
 to th
 who*

1,000,000

And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

And envieth that
they should live, and
so many lie dead.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

But the curse liveth
for him in the eye of
the dead men.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse of a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

In his loneliness and
fixedness he yearneth
towards the journeying
Moon, and the
stars that still
sojourn, yet still
move onward; and
everywhere the blue
own natural home,
is a silent joy at their

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

And they all longed to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their
water unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there

Her beams bemoaned the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt away
A still and awful red.

By the light of the
Moon he beholdeth
God's creatures of
the great calm

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black

This may be
literally se
rather but
in regular
apprehension

240

245

250

255

260

265

270

275

At its nearer approach, it seemeth him to be a ship; and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

A flash of joy;

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy!⁷ they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

And horror follows.
For can it be a ship
that comes onward
without wind or tide?

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;⁸
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

It seemeth him but
the skeleton of a
ship.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?⁹

And its ribs are seen
as bars on the face of
the setting Sun. The
specter-woman and
her death-mate, and
no other on board
the skeleton-ship.

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that woman's mate?

Like vessel, like
crew!

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

Death and Life-in-
death have diced for
the ship's crew, and
she (the latter)
winneth the ancient
Mariner.

The naked hulk¹ alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
"The game is done! I've won! I've won!"
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

No twilight
the courts of

At the rising
Moon,

One after another

His shipmates
down dead.

But Life-in-Death
begins her work on
the ancient Mariner

The wedding guest
feareth that a spirit
talking to him.

But the ancient Mar-
iner assureth him of
his bodily life, and
proceedeth to relate
his horrible penance.

He despiseth the
creatures of the
calm,

2. Ghost ship.

9. Filmy cobwebs floating in the air.

Luke
1:31

Possibly
a reference
to Luke 1:31

Contrasted
Blessing
disguise?

Why look'st thou so?" — With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross.

Part 2

The Sun now rose upon the right:²
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

His shipmates cry out
against the ancient
Mariner, for killing
the bird of good luck.

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

But when the fog
cleared off, they
justify the
crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist;
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze con-
tinues; the ship
enters the Pacific
Ocean, and sails
northward, even till
it reaches the Line.³

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

The ship hath been
suddenly becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

And the Alb
begins to be
avenged.

Adam
and Eve
(Genesis)

A spirit had fol
them; one of th
invisible inhab
of this planet, n
departed souls
angels; concern
whom the learn
Jew, Josephus, a
numerous, and

The shipmates, i
their sore distress
would fain throw
whole guilt on th
ancient Mariner:
sign whereof they
hang the dead sea
bird round his nee

The ancient Marin
beholdeth a sign in
the element afar off

4. Usually glossed
spheric electricity
believed by supe
disaster. Possibl
phores

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!"
Eftsoons³ his hand dropt he.

The wedding guest is spellbound by the eye of the old sea-faring man, and constrained to hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The wedding-guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.⁴

The wedding-guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk,⁵ below the hill,
Below the light house top.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the line.

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon⁶—"
The wedding-guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Wedding Guest heareth the bridal music; but the mariner continueth his tale.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The wedding-guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

do? What places do they inhabit? The human mind has always sought the knowledge of these things, but never attained it. Meanwhile I do not deny that it is helpful sometimes to contemplate in the mind, as on a tablet, the image of a greater and better world, lest the intellect, habituated to

the certain from the uncertain, day from night. Adapted by Coleridge from Thomas Burnside's *Archaeologiae Philosophicae* (1692).

3. At once.

4. I.e., the Mariner has gained control of the

The ancient
inhospitable
the pious
good ome

7. Always
8. Kne

Flings arching like a bridge;—that branchless ash,
 Unsunned and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
 15 Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
 Fanned by the water-fall! and there my friends
 Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
 That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
 Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
 Of the blue clay-stone.³

20 Now, my friends emerge
 Beneath the wide wide Heaven—and view again
 The many-steepled tract magnificent
 Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
 With some fair bark,⁴ perhaps, whose sails light up
 25 The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles
 Of purple shadow! Yes! they wander on
 In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
 My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
 And hungered after Nature, many a year,
 30 In the great City pent,⁴ winning thy way
 With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
 And strange calamity!⁵ Ah! slowly sink
 Behind the western ridge, thou glorious sun!
 Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
 35 Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!
 Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
 And kindle, thou blue ocean! So my Friend
 Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
 Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
 40 On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
 Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
 As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
 Spirits perceive his presence.

A delight
 Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
 45 As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,
 This little lime-tree bower, have I not marked
 Much that has soothed me. Pale beneath the blaze
 Hung the transparent foliage; and I watched
 Some broad and sunny leaf, and loved to see
 50 The shadow of the leaf and stem above
 Dappling its sunshine! And that walnut-tree
 Was richly tinged, and a deep radiance lay
 Full on the ancient ivy, which usurps
 Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
 55 Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
 Through the late twilight: and though now the bat
 Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters,

3. Cf. Dorothy Wordsworth's description of the "low damp dell" in her *Alfoxden Journal*, February 10, 1798 (p. 405).

4. Despite Coleridge's claim, Charles Lamb emi-

"dead Nature." For Lamb's love of city life, see the letter to Wordsworth in the supplemental ebook.

5. Some ten months earlier Charles Lamb's sister Mary had stabbed their mother to death.

An ancient Mariner
 meeteth three
 gallants bidden to a
 wedding-feast, and
 detaineth one.

1. Coleridge describes the opening section of *Literaria*. In a comment Alexander Dyce in 1835 "Are Seven" dictated in 1835 some details. The poem planned as a collaboration Wordsworth, to pay the expenses before he dropped Wordsworth suggested the tross and the navigation of men; he also contributed li-

Facil
 unive
 rabbit,
 Quid
 ambiv
 diffite
 melior
 nae vi
 cogitat
 vandus

It i
 An
 "By
 No

1797

75

70

65

60

With white flowered jasmin, and the broad-leaved myrtle,
 5 (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
 10 Snatched from yon bean-field! and the world so hushed!
 The stilly murmur of the distant sea
 Tells us of silence.

And that simplest lute,
 Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
 How by the desultory breeze caressed,
 15 Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
 It pours such sweet upbraiding,^o as must needs
 Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
 Boldlier swept, the long sequacious^o notes
 Over delicious surges sink and rise,
 20 Such a soft floating witchery of sound
 As twilight Elfin's make, when they at eve
 Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
 Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
 Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,²
 25 Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!
 O the one life within us and abroad,
 Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
 A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
 Rhythm in all thought, and joyance³ every where—
 30 Methinks, it should have been impossible
 Not to love all things in a world so filled;
 Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
 Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

And thus, my love! as on the midway slope
 35 Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
 Whilst through my half-closed eye-lids I behold
 The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,^o
 And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;
 Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
 40 And many idle flitting phantasies,
 Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
 As wild and various as the random gales
 That swell and flutter on this subject lute!

to a cottage (the "cot" of lines 3 and 64) at Clevedon, overlooking the Bristol Channel. He later several times expanded and altered the original version; the famous lines 26–29, for example, were not added until 1817. Originally it was titled "Effusion XXXV" and was one of thirty-six such effusions that Coleridge included in a 1796 volume of verse; revised and retitled, it became what he called a "conversation poem"—the designation used since his day for a sustained blank-verse lyric of description and meditation, in the mode of conversation addressed to a

silent auditor. This was the form that Coleridge perfected in "Frost at Midnight" and that Wordsworth adopted in "Tintern Abbey."
 2. Brilliantly colored birds found in New Guinea and adjacent islands. The native practice of removing the legs when preparing the skin led Europeans to believe that the birds were footless and spent their lives hovering in the air and feeding on nectar.
 3. An archaic term for enjoyment, coined in the 16th century by Spenser and reintroduced by Coleridge.

4. Spiritually unredeemed.
 1. The time was in fact friends were William and Charles Lamb; the a Mrs. Coleridge—"dear accidentally emptied a s my foot"; and the bower linden) trees in the garden

An annual allowance of £150, granted to Coleridge by Thomas and Josiah Wedgwood, sons of the founder of the famous pottery firm, came just in time to deflect him from assuming a post as a Unitarian minister. After their joint publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, Coleridge and the Wordsworths spent a winter in Germany, where Coleridge attended the University of Göttingen and began the lifelong study of German philosophers and critics—Kant, Schiller, Schelling, and Fichte—that helped alter profoundly his thinking about philosophy, religion, and aesthetics.

Back in England, Coleridge in 1800 followed the Wordsworths to the Lake District, settling at Greta Hall, Keswick. He had become gradually disaffected from his wife, and now he fell helplessly and hopelessly in love with Sara Hutchinson, whose sister, Mary, Wordsworth married in 1802. In accord with the medical prescription of that time, Coleridge had been taking laudanum (opium dissolved in alcohol) to ease the painful physical ailments from which he had suffered from an early age. In 1800–1801 heavy dosages during attacks of rheumatism made opium a necessity to him, and Coleridge soon recognized that the drug was a greater evil than the diseases it did not cure. "Dejection: An Ode," published in 1802, was Coleridge's despairing farewell to health, happiness, and poetic creativity. A two-year sojourn on the Mediterranean island of Malta, intended to restore his health, instead completed his decline. When he returned to England in the late summer of 1806, he was a broken man, a drug addict, estranged from his wife, suffering from agonies of remorse, and subject to terrifying nightmares of guilt and despair from which his own shrieks awakened him. By 1810, when he and Wordsworth quarreled bitterly, it must have seemed that he could not fall any lower.

Under these conditions Coleridge's literary efforts, however sporadic and fragmentary, were little short of heroic. In 1808 he debuted as a speaker at one of the new lecturing institutions that sprang up in British cities in the early nineteenth century. His lectures on poetry, like his later series on Shakespeare, became part of the social calendar for fashionable Londoners—women, excluded still from universities, particularly. He wrote for newspapers and single-handedly undertook to write, publish, and distribute a periodical, *The Friend*, which lasted for some ten months beginning in June 1809. A tragedy, *Remorse*, had in 1813 a successful run of twenty performances at the Drury Lane theater. In 1816 he took up residence at Highgate, a northern suburb of London, under the supervision of the excellent and endlessly forbearing physician James Gillman, who managed to control, although not to eliminate, Coleridge's consumption of opium. The next three years were Coleridge's most sustained period of literary activity. While continuing to lecture and to write for the newspapers on a variety of subjects, he published *Biographia Literaria*, *Zapolya* (a drama), a book consisting of the essays in *The Friend* (revised and greatly enlarged), two collections of poems, and several important treatises on philosophical and religious subjects. In these treatises and those that followed over the next fifteen years, he emerged as the heir to the conservatism of Edmund Burke, an opponent to secularism and a defender of the Anglican Church, and an unapologetic intellectual elitist with an ambitious account of the role elites might play in modern states, outlined in his discussions of national culture and of the "clerisy" who would take responsibility for preserving it.

The remaining years of his life, which he spent with Dr. and Mrs. Gillman, were quieter and happier than any he had known since the turn of the century. He came to a peaceful understanding with his wife and was reconciled with Wordsworth, with whom he toured the Rhineland in 1828. His rooms at Highgate became a center for friends, for the London literati, and for a steady stream of pilgrims from England and America. They came to hear one of the wonders of the age, the Sage of Highgate's conversation—or monologue—for even in his decline, Coleridge's talk never lost the almost hypnotic power that Hazlitt has immortalized in "My First Acquaintance with Poets." Mary Shelley appears to have been haunted by the memory of the evening when, a small child, she hid behind a sofa to listen to Coleridge, one of her father's visitors, recite *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and a stanza from that poem of dark mystery found its way into *Frankenstein*, just as her recollections of that visitor's voice contributed to her depictions of the irresistible hold her

novel's storyteller with the sense that Coleridge's friend rent the opinion, Even in his buoyant energies"; and it lacked application of guilt and a need will, he often adap acknowledgment relies on sources to dure, Coleridge hours. After *The Ancient Mariner* the first version of required sustained *Biographia Literaria*, from other writers Coleridge merely collected letters, and poured

Even so, it is one of his achievements appeared the recently deceased according to Mill, the philosophy of John revolutionized the important and influential legacies is the notion presents a force with the society and to restore largely in opposition to political economy, and systems of thought raised the stakes for address the most difficult relations between philosophy, or between verse—whether we meditative conversation "My Prison"—are the

My pen is
Thus on
To sit bes

1. Named for Aeolus, god of winds, has strings stretched over a box. When placed in a harp (also called "Eolian harp" or "wind harp") responds to sequences of musical tones which seems to voice nature's favorite household furniture was repeatedly alluded to

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!⁹

360

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

365

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

370

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

375

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

380

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

385

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.

390

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not¹ to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

395

"Is it he?" quoth one, "Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,

The lonesome spirit
from the south-pole
comes on the ship
as far as the line, in
obedience to the
angelic troop, but
all requireth
urgency.

The Polar Spirit's
fellow demons, the
invisible inhabitants
of the element, take
part in his wrong;
and two of them
raise, one to the
other, that penance
long and heavy for
the ancient Mariner
has been accorded
to the Polar Spirit,
who returns with
him.