

## Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Concept of Imagination Between Theory and Practice

**A Research Paper by: Salman Haidar Jasim**

**Supervised by: Prof. Dr. Sabah Attalla Diyaiy**

**English Department/ College of Education- Ibn Rushd (2014)**

### **Abstract:**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's theory of Imagination is considered an essential theory in English literature because it added something new to the criticism in England. The classical critics did not know the importance of imagination before Coleridge because they relied on the reason only. The idea of this theory was resulted from Coleridge's listening to the poetry of William Wordsworth. Coleridge analyzes this theory in his *Biographia Literaria* when he tried to explain and join it with the activity of the intellect. Coleridge held his theory on two basics: psychology and knowledge, and these two basics are shown clearly in his critical book, the *Biographia Literaria*. This paper deals with the practice of Coleridge's theory of imagination on his masterpiece poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner".

### **Introduction:**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born in Ottery st Mary, Devonshire, on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1772 as the youngest of thirteen children. After his father's death, Coleridge was sent to Christ's Hospital school and Jesus College. In Cambridge, Coleridge befriended two other romantic poets, Charles Lamb and Robert Southey. The latter caused him to leave his study for the sake of political ambition. In 1795, he married the sister of Southey's fiancée, Sara Fricker, whom he did not love. Peter Westland said that Coleridge's marriage was not "a happy one"<sup>1</sup>. In 1795, he started a close friendship with Dorothy and William Wordsworth. Such friendship resulted the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, which was opened with Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and ended with Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*. Coleridge visited Germany in 1798 with Dorothy and William Wordsworth, and became interested in the works of Immanuel Kant. He studied philosophy at Gottingern University and mastered the German language. R. W. Harris mentioned that "Coleridge spent some months in Germany (1798-9) and thus to come under the influence of German transcendental philosophy"<sup>2</sup>. At the end of 1799, Coleridge fell in love with Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth's sister in law, to whom he devoted his poem *Dejection : An Ode* 1802. From 1809 to 1810, Coleridge wrote and edited, with Sara Hutchinson, the literary and political magazine, *The Friend*. From 1808 to 1818, he gave several lectures, chiefly in London, and was considered the greatest of Shakespearean critics. In 1810, Coleridge's friendship with Wordsworth came to a crisis, and the two poets never returned to their former relationship they had earlier. Suffering from neuralgic and rheumatic pains, Coleridge had become addicted to opium. In

1816, he published the unfinished poems, *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*, the *Sibylline Leaves* appeared in 1817. His most important production during that period was the *Biographia Literaria* in 1817. He found a permanent shelter in the house of Dr. James Gillman, and during that time he rarely left the house till his death on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1834.

Through his theory of imagination which seems to be his greatest contribution to literary criticism, Coleridge revolted against the concept of artistic imitation. To him, poetry was not imitation anymore, but creation—a creation based on the sensation and impressions received from the external world. Such impressions were shaped, ordered, modified and harmonized by the imagination of the poet and in this way poetic creation takes place. Coleridge introduced philosophy and psychology into literary criticism in order to study the process of this poetic creation and the principles of the creative activity. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* is described as “the greatest book of criticism in England”<sup>3</sup>.

He was “a poet, preacher, journalist, lecturer and playwright”<sup>4</sup>. His main work was to change the mechanistic psychology of the eighteenth century. He refreshed the ancient tradition of Platonism, and presented to England the new idealism of Germany. He led the revolution in literature which regards the imagination “as the sovereign creative power”<sup>5</sup>. In addition to that, he wrote and spoke about politics, religion, biology, language and education. And his career was a series of uncompleted Utopian projects, from his scheme with Robert Southey in 1794 for pantisocracy.<sup>6</sup>

Coleridge occupied a special rank in English literature in both fields ‘poetry and literary criticism’. He was considered one of the most important figures in English poetry. He was regarded a professional critic since he wrote an influential piece of literary criticism, the *Biographia Literaria* (1817). It was a volume composed of twenty four chapters of autobiographical notes and dissertations on various subjects, including literary theory and criticism. There, Coleridge expounded his definitions of the nature of poetry and the imagination. He made a famous distinction between primary and secondary imagination on the one hand and between imagination and fancy on the other.<sup>7</sup> Robert Con Davis and Laurie Finke, in their book *Literary Criticism And Theory* wrote the following statement:

In his *Biographia Literaria*, we find him to be the artist who is scrupulously conscious of his role and the theoretical import of his work; and we also find him the philosopher who deliberately chooses to render his theory in rhetoric uncommon to philosophy itself. Nevertheless, though he may seem for this to be more readily familiar, he is the significantly less familiar early romantic poet. Disciplined

in the German Enlightenment philosophy of Kant and bold enough to appropriate Schelling, Coleridge is a late eighteenth-century literary who is, however, the nineteenth-century forerunner of those more conventional romantic types, Byron and Shelley. It was Coleridge who argued that the artist's assumption of a lofty alienation—a peculiarly English gloss on Kant's notion of “disinterest”—is necessary to the godlike creative activity that is the artist's role. As Artist, we can perhaps think of Coleridge as a man of his times as well as the first truly modern aesthete.<sup>8</sup>

#### The Imaginative Voyage of The Ancient Mariner

In the autumn of 1797, Coleridge began writing *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which appeared in the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). The poem is a work of pure imagination and a literary imitation of medieval ballads. It has its source in religious and mystical experiences and is unique among Coleridge's important works. It is unique in its “archaic words and the Latin epigraph”<sup>9</sup> that begins it. The Latin epigraph of the poem alludes to a populous universe of invisible nature. The poem follows Coleridge's view of poetry in which he believes that the poet should “bring the whole soul of man into activity”<sup>10</sup>. It reveals his erudition in showing the similarities among different descriptions of nature and the respective states of the Mariner's mind.

*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is based on a story which is rich in symbolic significance. Therefore, it is open to interpretation on various levels. It can be read on two ways; superficially as a literal story, and more deeply as a metaphysical one. According to Robert Penn Warren, there is one important theme that can lead the reader to the metaphysical reading. It is Coleridge's concept of imagination.<sup>11</sup> The poem is a psychological study of guilt, punishment, remorse and partial forgiveness. The Mariner tells the Wedding-Guest the story which is a narrative of what happened to him in the past. The voyage begins with the merry departure from a port in England, but a strong storm pushes the ship to the south pole. The voyage of the Mariner into the wide sea is similar to Coleridge's voyage during his poetic creation, and the Mariner is a great poet, though bewildered:

I pass, like night, from land to land;  
I have strange power of speech;  
That moment that his face I see,  
I know the man that must hear me:  
To him my tale I teach.<sup>12</sup>  
(CP, 1552, L, 586-590)

Both the Mariner and Coleridge discovered wild and strange truths, and both struggled to make others see them. The Mariner is a creation of

Coleridge's imagination in a visionary world on an imaginary voyage. He becomes symbolic of all human experiences. He is "a person set off from the rest of his kind by the experience he has lived through"<sup>13</sup>. The experience ends with the Mariner's departure from the physical world. The Mariner stands for a romantic poet who has a story to tell. The Guest is classical before meeting the Mariner. The ship's departure from England to the land of ice represents Coleridge's departure to the world of imagination.

Much was said of the consequences of the Mariner's sinful act; namely, shooting the Albatross. The poem is about a man who shoots an albatross in which Herman Melville in an eloquent passage calls the Albatross "that white phantom which sails in all imaginations, carrying a sense of supernatural"<sup>14</sup>. The Albatross, a symbol of good luck to the sailors, flies around the ship, and a wind from the south propels the ship out of the frigid regions. The Mariner kills the bird in bad faith, subjecting himself to the hostility of the natural forces that govern the universe. The white Albatross, with whose whiteness Coleridge is fascinated, is associated with human nature and joy. It symbolizes the life of creation and freedom, imaginative isolation and the Mariner's guilt. It is the Christian soul that saves the crew from ice and suffering. The bird is hailed as "a Christian soul / in God's name"(L: 65-66). It comes to the Mariner's ship, eats human food and plays with the crew. The Albatross which comes to help the mariners is killed. By shooting down the Albatross, the Mariner breaks the bond between himself and the life of nature, and he becomes spiritually dead. The act of shooting "sets the forces of the invisible world in motion"<sup>15</sup>. The sympathy between nature and the voyagers ends and the bond between man and nature is broken. Shooting the Albatross is often identified with the original sin and the fall of man. If so, the Mariner stands for man's sad pilgrimage on the earth with all his intense suffering, perplexity, loneliness and horror of life-in-death. The Mariner's sin is his "self-assertion against the order of the universe."<sup>16</sup> It can also be interpreted as "a sin of ignorance,"<sup>17</sup> as that of Cain who "neglected to make a proper use of his senses"<sup>18</sup>. The Mariner fails to consider what might be the truth about the order of the universe. After shooting the Albatross, nature becomes hostile. From the world of ice and snow, they come to the world of fire and heat, symbolizing spiritual death, alienation and suffering, "The death-fires danced at night"(L: 128).

The aim of the voyage seems unaccountable as the shooting appears motiveless. The Mariner has no reasons for killing the bird. His motives are never described, but it is quite clear that he does not want to go to the South Pole. He is an almost totally passive figure and he acts only three times:

In shooting the Albatross, in blessing the water-snakes, and in biting his arm. And only the last of the three can be called a purposeful act, the other two actions seem as nearly purposeful as human action can be.<sup>19</sup>

His fellow mariners reject him, marking him with the sign of his own guilt: "Instead of the cross, the Albatross/ About my neck was hung"(L: 141-142). Coleridge believes in "the one Life within us and abroad,"(*The Eolian Harp* 26). The Mariner seems treacherous to the idea of 'one Life' and, therefore his imagination dies with the death of the Albatross, and revives with the revival of the capacity to see and appreciate the beauty of nature. Imagination perceives the beautiful forms of nature, and the communication with nature leads to a profound love of nature and God's creatures.

*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a ballad which falls into seven sections. As it is fairly suggested in an article in *British Critic*, "the opening of the poem is admirably calculated to arrest the reader's attention, by the well-imagined idea of the Wedding Guest, who is held to hear the tale, despite of his efforts to escape:"<sup>20</sup>

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?"

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."  
(CP, 1537, L: 1-8)

He holds him with his glittering eye\_\_  
The Wedding-Guest stood still,  
And listens like a three years' child:  
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a store:  
He cannot choose but hear;  
And thus spake on that ancient man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner.  
(CP, 1537, L: 13-20)

Afterwards, the Mariner tells him of his senseless crime, the shooting of an albatross. In this respect, Walter Jackson Bate writes, "It is less the simple act of shooting the albatross than it is the Mariner himself that

makes us feel that it was so fearful and guilty a dead.”<sup>21</sup>The Wedding guest, who is appalled by the horror on the Mariner’s face, cries out:

“God save thee, ancient Mariner!  
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!-  
Why look’st thou so?”-With my cross-bow  
I shot the ALBATROSS.  
(CP, 1539, L: 79-82)

Coleridge does not give reasons for the Mariner’s act. He leaves it to the reader to guess whether it is in a mood of annoyance, anger or mere frivolity. What matters is precisely the uncertainty of the Mariner’s motive. C. M. Bowra says that the murder of the albatross “illustrates the essential rationality of crime, which we may explain by motives but which is in many cases due to a simple perversity of the will.”<sup>22</sup> This crime is against humanity, nature, the order of the world and the sanctified relations of guest and host. The bird, which has been hailed in God’s name, and is entirely friendly and helpful, is recklessly killed, “With my cross-bow/ I shot the ALBATROSS.” (L: 81-82)

Coleridge, wisely, adopts the old English ballad form to convey the feelings of an ancient time. He repeatedly mentions that form and content cannot be separated from each other. The form as Coleridge believes “develops itself from within”<sup>23</sup>, and “arises out of the properties of the material”<sup>24</sup>. Therefore in evaluating a work of art, the whole work ‘the combination of the form and content’ should be taken into consideration.

William Walsh in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* asserts that:

I stress the medium because discussions of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* habitually ignore this vital element of the poem. They concern themselves with the poem’s origin and antecedents, with its references, symbols, its scaffolding of myth. Even the best of such discussions, Robert Penn Warren’s, an argument as temperate as it is understanding, refers to everything but the qualities of the medium itself. The rhythm has the minimum of conditions. It is mobile and unclogged. The simple ballad line, an alternation of four or three beats, disposed into two phrasal units, is admirably suited in its economy and speed to drive the narrative forward... The rhythm, even at the most intense moments of the poem, is never far from the movements of speech and falls into actual speech with perfect naturalness:<sup>25</sup>

Coleridge also borrows from this form, the use of alliteration and repetition. A good example of alliteration is seen in the lines of this quoted stanza:

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,

The furrow followed free;  
 We were the first that ever burst  
 Into that silent sea.  
 (CP, 1539, L: 103-106)

It is clearly illustrated that the repetition of ‘f’ sound in the first two lines of the stanza brings to mind the soft progress of the ship into the silent sea, producing actually the very sound of the water while the ship is passing through. Then there is the dominance of ‘s’ sound in the next two, implying the deep, freezing silence everywhere.

The second section of the poem describes the Mariner’s entrance to the silent sea while the ship ceases to move. It goes:

All in a hot and copper sky,  
 The bloody sun, at noon,  
 Right up above the mast did stand,  
 No bigger than the Moon.  
 (CP, 1540, 111-114)

The ship was becalmed, fastened in a thick, unmoving medium and watched by a small sinister bloody sun from a copper sky. The true ship is compared to a painted ship in the middle of a painted ocean to emphasize its motionlessness:

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

Water, water, everywhere,  
 And all the broads did shrink;  
 Water, water, everywhere,  
 Nor any drop to drink.  
 (CP, 1540, L: 115-122)

Allan Grant admits that “these lines are deeply embedded in the minds of many people who have only the sketchiest notion of the poem itself because they crystallize a profoundly human experience of the paradox of suffering endured in the sight of plenty.”<sup>26</sup> Actually paradox, conflict and alternating extremities represent the essence of the voyage. Another aspect of the poem could be detected in its direct and explicit similes. They have an almost medieval brilliance. Walsh states :

though they are intense and decorative and in a curious way miniature ... they are used in the service of a sophisticated intention. . . They are, that is, for all their apparent ‘separatism’ as decorative working at any given point,

closely incorporated into the texture of the poem and charged with the significance of the developing theme.<sup>27</sup>

In the stanza which follows, Coleridge transfers to the physical world the corruption and the helplessness which are the common attributes of guilt. The world which faces the Mariner after his crime is dead and loathsome. The ship ceases to move and the sailors are tortured by thirst. The only moving things in the hideous sense are the slimy creatures on the sea and the death-fires which dance at night. The immediate results of crime are portrayed in the image of a dying universe which is haunted by menacing phantoms.

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.

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.  
(CP, 1540, L: 123-134)

The third section shows how the 'hellish thing' he has done results in the death of all his shipmates, and plunges him into physical suffering and mental agony. Death wins all the crew except the Mariner, who is unable to die. He is surrounded by the bodies of his dead shipmates.

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.

Four times fifty living men,  
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)  
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,  
They dropped down one by one.  
(CP, 1542, L: 212-219)

Bowra believes that the night when the Mariner's companies die "symbolizes the darkness in the soul when it suddenly finds itself alone and robbed of familiar ties"<sup>28</sup>. In the fourth section, the thirsty Mariner finds

himself alone on a rotting sea. He tries to pray, but his heart is dry as his throat. Raymond L. Brett says that “From the valley of dry bones in the *Book of Ezekiel* to Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, dryness has symbolized spiritual barrenness...”<sup>29</sup>

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide wide sea!  
And never a saint took pity on  
My soul in agony.  
(CP, 1543, L: 232-235)

Here, Coleridge conveys the full implications of his state by drawing attention to his sense of utter helplessness and solitude. Bowra believes that it is “the anguish of a man who feels himself abandoned both by God and man and faced with the emptiness of his guilty and tormented soul.”<sup>30</sup> The repetition of ‘the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky’ conveys the deep weariness and intolerable suffering of the Mariner:

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.  
(CP, 1543, L: 248-252)

He gradually learns that freedom of motion still exists somewhere:

The moving Moon went up the sky,  
And nowhere did abide:  
Softly she was going up,  
And a star or two beside \_\_  
(CP, 1544, L: 263-266)

The beauty of that accompanying image of the universe paves the way for the spring of love that gushes from the heart of the Mariner. He sees the beauty of the water-snakes:

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,  
They coiled and swam; and every track  
Was a flash of golden fire.  
(CP, 1544. L: 272-281)

When the Mariner blesses the water-snakes, he actually begins to re-establish relations with the world of the affections. The Mariner's heart goes out in love toward God and nature. He is suddenly able to pray. The albatross, the symbol of his burden of guilt, drops from his neck:

The self-same moment I could pray;  
And from my neck so free  
The Albatross fell off, and sank  
Like dead into the sea.

(CP, 1544, L: 288-291)

It is in the fifth section, the gentle peace of heaven slides into his soul. The ship starts its mysterious motion that carries him home:

Oh sleep! It is a gentle thing,  
Beloved from pole to pole!  
To Mary Queen the praise be given!  
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,  
That slid into my soul.

(CP, 1544-1545, L: 292-296)

Then like the spectre ship in part III, the Mariner's ship now moves through the sea without the aid of wind; the bodies of the dead crew are inspirited to run the ship:

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.

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.

(CP, 1545-1546, L: 327-340)

The dead men stir in death. Coleridge, with a masterly economy and exactness, epitomizes the weird situation:

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.  
(CP, 1546, L: 341-344)

Afterwards the ship is carried north to the Equator by the south polar daemon, When it reaches the line it is fixed to the spot:

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.  
(CP, 1547, L: 383-388)

As the ship moves towards the Line, the Mariner hears heavenly music in the air that flows into his soul and delights him. He is on the way to recovery. In the sixth section, the Mariner is haunted by the presence of his dead comrades. He feels that he is pursued by some fearful power of vengeance:

The pang, the curse, with which they died,  
Had never passed away:  
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,  
Nor turn them up to pray.  
(CP, 1548-1549, L: 438-441)

These lines have a strong effect in heightening the Mariner's isolation. Then a breeze ripples the sea and takes him back to his native country. As the ship returns to harbor, the Mariner sees the three objects 'light-house, hill and church':

Oh! dream of joy! Is this indeed  
The lighthouse top I see?  
Is this the hill? Is this the kirk?  
Is this mine own countree?  
(CP, 1549, L: 464-467)

Coleridge creates a wonderful paradoxical situation which reveals the extreme excitement and happiness of the poor Mariner, constantly dangling between hope and despair. He prays to God:

We drifted o'er the harbor bar,  
And I with sobs did pray\_\_  
O let me be awake, my God!  
Or let me sleep alway.  
(CP, 1549, L: 468-471)

Another brilliant simile which has a significant role in developing the profound theme of the whole work:

The harbor bar was clear as glass,  
So smoothly it was strewn!

And on the bay the moonlight lay,  
 And the shadow of the Moon.  
 (CP, 1549, L: 472-475)

In his book, *Coleridge: The Work and the Relevance* Walsh comments on the same aspect of the stanza:

It is the homeliness and clarity of the glass which carries the mood in this stanza: homeliness because the Ancient Mariner is on the edge of rediscovering his own country and of being welcomed into the human community signaled by the light-house and the kirk, and clarity because the transparency of the glass figures the grace and light which now transfigures the density and guilt of the Ancient Mariner's world.<sup>31</sup>

In the seventh section a monstrous sound that shakes sea and sky, sinks the Mariner's ship like lead. The Mariner is miraculously rescued by a pilot and his associates. He begins his tale with an agony of spirit that seems to depart with the narration of his tale. But:

Since then, at an uncertain hour,  
 That agony returns:  
 And till my ghastly tale is told,  
 This heart within me burns.  
 (CP, 1552, L: 582-585)

According to Bate: "this is a poem of exploration and discovery as well as of guilt and partial redemption."<sup>32</sup> By thoughtlessly slaying the albatross, the Mariner comes into contact with mysterious forces in the universe. He makes a mistake, and he is certainly punished. If he is a guilty man, he is also a hero simply because he has gone further in experience than others. Bate believes that "violating laws acquire a depth of experience that others lack."<sup>33</sup> Bate thinks that the Mariner's offense against this moral order in the universe, 'the act of killing the albatross' is:

essentially an act of thoughtlessness, of idleness of mind and conscience: an attempt to fill out the moment, to make it pass more intensely, by an idle assertion of the will, of selfhood, of sense of power, that will impress both one self and the others.<sup>34</sup>

The rescue and the final sinking of the ship break rudely into the dreamlike atmosphere. Once he tells his story, the Mariner is for a short time at peace but he must continue to live under the compulsion to tell his tale again and again to ordinary mortals who have no glimpse of that other world. The Mariner is not fully restored to ordinary life again. Such an experience changes him utterly to be a wiser man:

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,

Whose beard with age is hoar,  
Is gone: and now the Wedding- Guest  
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,  
And is of sense forlorn:  
A sadder and a wiser man,  
He rose the morrow morn.  
(CP, 1553, L: 618-625)

Through the primary imagination, Coleridge perceives the world in his own way. With the secondary imagination he selects his personal experiences. He orders, reshapes and remodels them into objects of beauty. In fact, Coleridge's imagination reveals itself in the balance of the opposites of guilt with remorse, suffering with relief, hate with love, grief with joy, familiar with unfamiliar, reality with dream, the warmth of human ties with the cold solitude of the haunted soul. Coleridge believes that life has both its dark and bright sides. He sees that the two are closely interwoven, and that he must introduce both into his poem. Besides, as Bowra suggests:

he saw life not analytically but creatively and he knew that any work of creation must itself be an extension and an enhancement of life.. [Coleridge] must preserve the mystery and the enchantment which he knew in his finest moments, and for him these came alike from the beauty of the visible world and the uncharted corners of the human soul.<sup>35</sup>

Coleridge considers the presence of fancy necessary along with the primary and secondary imagination, for it is "no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space"<sup>36</sup>, without which there is no memory and experiences upon which the artist could use his higher faculties of imagination.

The skillful use of the subject-object relationships in Coleridge's theory of imagination is fused in the following stanza:

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.  
(CP, 1547, L: 389-392)

The same thing could be seen when the albatross drops from the Mariner's neck as soon as he is able to pray:

The self-same moment I could pray;  
And from my neck so free

The albatross fell off, and sank  
Like lead into the sea.

(CP, 1544, L: 288-291)

Coleridge's artful handling of this subject-object relationship reappears in different ways, particularly when the Mariner sees the ocean, when he leaves his country and when he comes back home. Through these different views transformation in the Mariner himself could be detected and both sights could be interpreted as the objectified projections of his mental state.

Possession of a profound and philosophical mind that can speculate and ponder over the mysteries of life is another aspect of Coleridge. His deep insight into human nature, his deficiencies and merits, his sufferings and delights actually give the poem its permanent value. The ancient Mariner is not completely forgiven for his crime against nature and humanity because he hears "Two voices in the air" (L: 397), the first voice condemns the Mariner, while the second says that "The Man hath penance done/ And penance more will do" ( L: 408- 409 ). Therefore, the Mariner is frequently "released from his cycle of guilt and punishment only to collapse back into it again."<sup>37</sup> Coleridge's realism is a special form of poetry which reflects his love for the sensible world with its lights and shades, colors and sounds. He possesses a high degree of cardinal quality of poetry which he calls "the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature."<sup>38</sup> He is by no means photographic. His eye for nature is for its more subtle charms and less obvious appeals, that is why he takes great pleasure in choosing the details. This can be seen in the image of a ship where thirst is prevailing:

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.

Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.  
(CP, 1540, L: 111-122)

The Mariner is condemned to live with his crime as a punishment, and he should confess and be reminded of his two hundred dead companions. Each mariner's death reminds him of the arrow that fired at the Albatross. His redemption seems dependent on repeated confession. The confession represents retribution and penance. The Mariner's punishment is "the finest dramatic portrait of self-disgust in English literature since *Hamlet*"<sup>39</sup>. Hamlet is unable to love the world and "the Mariner like a medieval penitent, is consumed by a sense of his own unworthiness before the reproach of a world of beauty."<sup>40</sup>

The images of the 'moon', 'bloody Sun', 'hot and copper sky', bring to mind the red color which is associated with cruelty and vengeance. Everything is motionless and futile and the absence of rain has caused the ship's planks to shrink and warp. Those images give color, music, and perspective to his poem, sustaining its enchantment.

The Wedding- Guest is "a sadder and a wiser man". (L: 624) After listening to the story, he learns that life is a voyage of discovery that leads man from innocence to sin. He realizes that love is needed to redeem mankind. The theme of imagination is significant, for the weather, which is a state of the Mariner's grace constitutes a symbolic index to his relationship to nature. The opening descriptions of the wind, the Albatross, the roaring ice and the glimmering moonshine represent the imaginative world that Coleridge longs for.

Coleridge believes that a symbol presents the eternal in a temporal. A symbol's task is to objectify the story of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Coleridge shapes his symbols into a consistent whole and subordinates them to a single plan. The Mariner's suffering through the voyage symbolizes man's suffering through his life. The Mariner's loneliness in the sea symbolizes man's general loneliness, the Mariner's unreasonable shooting of the bird symbolizes man's bloodshed and slaughters throughout history. The albatross hung around the Mariner's neck symbolizes the heavy burden of his conscience. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* appeals to our nature that delights in superstitions and in the supernatural. "A symbol...is characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the universal in the general; above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal."<sup>41</sup>

There is an association between Coleridge's imagination and the moonlight. Coleridge believes that the moon symbolizes the supernatural radiance which arouses imaginative excitement. The moon and moonlight are associated with creativity in conjunction with subtler process of the mind. Most critics agree upon the order and joy expressed by the moon and the stars.

## Conclusion

The poem gathers good, evil and faith in an imaginative voyage through a conflict. The Albatross is the good omen because it is the reason behind breeze blowing and pleasure for the sailors. The ancient Mariner is the reason behind poverty in the poem because he kills the bird to create a silent sea, ship and silent people as well. Faith is also presented in the poem through mentioning Jesus Christ and his blood as a sacrifice for the sake of humanity. Christ is the same as the bird because they are good omens. Coleridge depends the colour of the sun with Christ's blood, and the painted ship with true ship to express the stop of life after the sin.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>-Peter Westland, ed., *The Romantic Revival 1780-1830 Vol. IV* (London: The English Univ. Press, 1950) p. 76.

<sup>2</sup>- W. Harris, ed., *Romanticism and the Social Order 1780-1830* (London: Blandford Press Ltd, 1969) p. 212

<sup>3</sup>- Rene Wellek, *A History Of Modern Criticism 1750-1950,II* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1965)p.151.

<sup>4</sup>- Shiv K. Kumar, *British Romantic Poets, Recent Revaluations* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1968)p.81.

<sup>5</sup>- Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>- Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>- Mhtml: file//E:\Samuel Taylor Coleridge-Wikipedia,*The Free Encyclopedia*. Mht[accessed/5 april/2013]

<sup>8</sup>- Robert Con Davis and Laurie Finke, ed, *Literary Criticism And Theory, The Greeks To The Present* (New York: London Inc., 1989)p.446.

<sup>9</sup>- M.H. Abrams ed *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (New York, London: Norton and Company, 1987),p.1536.

<sup>10</sup>- J. Shawcross, ed. *Biographia Literaria II*(London: Clarendon Press, 1907) p.12

<sup>11</sup>- Robert Penn Warren, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, A Poem of Pure Imagination* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1946) p. 21

<sup>12</sup>- Abrams, p.1537.

<sup>13</sup>- Marshall Suther, *The Dark Night of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960) p. 90

<sup>14</sup>- Herman Melville, *Moby Dick, of the White Whale* (London: Collins, 1955) p. 201

<sup>15</sup>- John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu: A study in the Ways of Imagination* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964) p. 201

<sup>16</sup>- Humphry House, *Coleridge* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953) p. 98.

<sup>17</sup>- Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>- Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>- George Watson, *Coleridge the Poet* (London: Routledge, 1966) p.95-96

<sup>20</sup>- J.R. and J. Jackson ed, *Coleridge: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970),p.58.

<sup>21</sup>- Walter Jackson Bate, *Coleridge* (London: Macmillan co, 1968), p.58.

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- <sup>22</sup>- C.M. Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination* (New York. Oxford Univ. Press, 1961),p.69.
- <sup>23</sup> - William Walsh, *Coleridge: The Work and the Relevance* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967),p.113.
- <sup>24</sup> - Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> - Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> -Allan Grant, *A Preface to Coleridge* (London: Longman, 1972) p.121.
- <sup>27</sup> - Walsh,p.114.
- <sup>28</sup> - Bowra,p.70.
- <sup>29</sup>- Raymond L. Brett, *Reason and Imagination* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), p.175.
- <sup>30</sup> -Bowra,p.62.
- <sup>31</sup> - Walsh, p.115
- <sup>32</sup> - Bate, p.57.
- <sup>33</sup> - Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> - Bate, p.60.
- <sup>35</sup> - Bowra, p.72.
- <sup>36</sup> - Shawcross, I. p.202.
- <sup>37</sup>- J. Peck, and M. Coyle, ed. *How to Study Romantic Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1988) p. 84
- <sup>38</sup> - Shawcross, II,p.6.
- <sup>39</sup> - George Watson, *Coleridge the Poet* (London: Routledge, 1966) p. 102
- <sup>40</sup> - Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup>- Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manuel* (London: 1816),p.437.

## مفهوم الخيال لدى صامويل تايلور كولرج بين النظرية والتطبيق

بحث مستل لطالب الماجستير: سلمان حيدر جاسم

بإشراف: أ. د. صباح عطا الله ضيائي

جامعة بغداد/كلية التربية ابن رشد للعلوم الإنسانية

### الملخص:

تعدُّ نظرية الخيال لدى صامويل تايلور كولرج نظرية مهمة في الادب الانكليزي؛ لأنها اضافت شيء جديد الى النقد في انكلترا . النقاد الكلاسيكيين لم يعرفوا اهمية الخيال قبل كولرج لانهم اعتمدوا على العقل فقط. فكرة هذه النظرية كانت قد نتجت من استماع كولرج لشعر وليم وردزورث. كولرج حلل هذه النظرية في سيرته الادبية عندما حاول ان يوضحها ويربطها مع فعالية العقل . كولرج اقام هذه النظرية على اساسين: سايكولوجي ومعرفي ، وهذين الاساسين موضحان في كتابه النقدي السيرة الادبية. هذا البحث يتعامل مع تطبيق نظرية الخيال لدى كولرج على قصيدته التي تعتبر تحفة فنية " البحار القديم".