

Noises in a Swound! [\[1\]](#)

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The above panel from Hunt Emerson's 1989 comic book rendition of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* depicts a sceptical response to a stanza of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's most famous poem.[\[2\]](#) In the stanza's opening two lines, an anaphora impresses upon the reader the familiar mental image of "ice," and thus "ice" literally becomes a verbal signpost. The subsequent verbs—"crack," "growl," "roar," and "howl"—in their capacity of personifying the ice become successively more indeterminate in their significations, and thus the cartoonist appropriately draws them in more meltable forms. The stanza ends with the enigmatic word "swound!," which has the widest associative latitude of all. The disruption of the incantatory rhythm—in this last line, unlike the others, no words recur—and the concluding exclamation point add a sense of urgency as the reader is forced to momentarily turn within (or, as the comic illustrates, to turn aside to a fellow reader) to grapple for a meaning.

Within a very short space, word and meaning have become increasingly attenuated. An anaphora that is childlike in its simplicity runs into the interpretative obstacle of a term that appears to be nonsensical but which is in fact archaic. The reader at the end of this stanza is obliged to doubt for a moment whether the disorientation he or she feels is caused by his or her own intellectual shortcoming (in not knowing what "swound" means) or the author's devices. Only when the Mariner falls into a "swound" and hears

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spectral voices in Parts V-VI of the poem can the reader contextually reconstruct a meaning for this word, which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as "a fainting-fit."[\[3\]](#) One of this term's psychological effects is to help slide the reader into the dream atmosphere that characterises the Ancient Mariner, and it offers an example of how style and content unify in the poem. In the sense that the meaning of "swound" initially appears obscure, it forces the reader to make

unconscious associations the very acts of which help usher in the poem's unconscious atmosphere.

Many critics have promoted the idea that the *Ancient Mariner* contains the germ of all Coleridge's thoughts, and the reader by a little ingenuity can reveal them.^[4] The object of this essay is to demonstrate the truth of this statement by using the "swound" stanza as a springboard for discussing two ideas central to Coleridge's thought—his philosophy of language and his notions concerning modes of dreamlike perception. Since these are indisputably massive topics, this essay will attempt to focus discussion as much as possible specifically on how the word "swound" works within the structure of the *Ancient Mariner*.

The initial placement of "swound" in the *Ancient Mariner* has an effect both comic and disturbing. This may owe partially to the ballad's metrical affinity with children's verse. (The nursery rhyme "Mary had a little lamb...", for example, echoes its metrical pattern.) Humour, in the Kantian "incongruity theory," often arises from unexpected slippages between frames of reference.^[5] Such a slippage occurs when the reader's preconditioned expectation of straightforwardness is frustrated by the Mariner's enigmatic exclamation "swound!" The preceding lines in Part I, particularly the repeated phrase "the ice was...", employ a simpler type of diction than the rest of the *Ancient Mariner*. The meanings of the obscure terms in this section—"eftsoons," for example (1817:12)—can be gleaned from the surrounding text with relative ease. In this context the Mariner's simile of the ice and the swound can come upon the reader as inconsequential, incongruous, and thus possibly humourous babbling. Once this reflex settles, however, the passage becomes more disturbing. The wedding guest's initial suspicions about the old man being a "loon" may have been confirmed. To a lesser degree, these suspicions were heightened a few lines earlier when the Mariner claimed he saw vividly green icebergs (1817:52).

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It is unlikely the reader would pause for long to guess what "swound" means. The ballad genre encourages quick reading, and it is more likely he or she would just continue with a slightly heightened sense of something awry and unsettling about the Mariner's story. If a reader did make a quick inference of meaning from context, one likely result would be to relate the swound's noises to those of the tempest mentioned a few lines earlier. The swound's "crack" and "howl" could reasonably be associated with the sounds of the "Storm and Wind" (1798:45). The term has a rich array of other possible verbal echoes, such as "sound," "wound," "shroud," "swoon," "swirl," or even the Elizabethan exclamation "Zounds!" (signifying "Zeus' wounds!"). It is amid these uncertain noises that the albatross comes glimmering into the next immediate stanza.

Coleridge's original audience reacted to his use of "swound" in a way not unlike the sailors pictured in Hunt Emerson's comic *Ancient Mariner*. An anonymous writer from the *British Critic* fixed upon this phrase in 1799 to give the poem a largely hostile review :

The author, who is confidently said to be Mr. Coleridge, is not correctly versed in the old language, which he undertakes to employ. 'Noises of a *swound*,' p. 9, and 'broad as a *wef*,' p. 11, are both nonsensical; ^[6]

The reviewer may be right in claiming Coleridge's use of the old language is incorrect, but not for the reason given. "Swound" is in fact a legitimate word dating to the thirteenth century, but the *OED* records no cases where it is modified by "of," as Coleridge had used it in the phrase

“noises *of* a swoond” in the 1798 text (*italics added*). The correct usage would be “*in* a swoond,” as the poem reads from 1802 onwards. The possessive article “of” in 1798 may give further evidence that Coleridge intended this word to be confusing. “Noises *of* a swoond” has greater interpretative flexibility, leaving open the possibility that the swoond might even be a living being amidst the ice floes.

Acceding to criticism from Wordsworth and others, Coleridge altered the 1798 verse “Like noises of a swoond” to “A wild and ceaseless sound” in the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*. This second edition eliminated most of Coleridge’s archaic diction and subtitled the *Ancient Mariner* “A Poet’s Reverie.” The subtitle was dropped in 1802, but Wordsworth continued to quietly modernise spellings up until the 1805 edition. Coleridge’s independent 1817 *Sibylline Leaves* kept many of Wordsworth’s changes, but a marginal gloss and motto were added which partially restored the *Ancient Mariner*’s original antiqued atmosphere. The “noises of a swoond” verse (with the change of *of* to *in*) reappeared in 1802. The other phrase ridiculed by *The British Critic*—the sun “broad as a weft” (1798: 83)—remained stricken, much to the chagrin of later

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critics like John Livingston Lowes, who in *The Road to Xanadu* (1927) devotes several pages to lamenting the loss of this simile that likens the sun to the flag of battle and distress at sea.^[7] The unique reintegration of “swoond” into the *Ancient Mariner* hints at this term’s structural importance.

Before further developing that last idea, however, it may first be helpful to review some of Coleridge’s linguistic philosophy. Particularly in the 1798 *Ancient Mariner*, the poet’s archaic diction and heaped-up supernatural imagery strikingly dissent against Wordsworth’s call for a poetry of the “language of real men” in the original Advertisement and 1800 Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. Much has been written about the collaborative origins of the *Ancient Mariner*, and Wordsworth’s separation from this composition in which he felt he “could only have been a clog.”^[8] In some sense, Coleridge seems to begin the *Ancient Mariner* by attempting to follow Wordsworth’s theory. The following lines are a case in point:

The Ship was cheer’d, the Harbour clear’d—
Merrily did we drop
Below the Kirk, below the Hill,
Below the Light-house top. (1798: 25-28)

“Kirk” was not archaic but rather a vernacular term (Scots and Northern dialect^[9]) akin to the Lake District language that Wordsworth extolled. The opening lines of the *Ancient Mariner* repeatedly seem to take this tack, but “swoond!” signals a sea-change, so to speak, in Coleridge’s linguistic style. It is perhaps the first disorienting effect within a composition that from this point forward becomes successively dreamier, and it sets a hazier tone for the next line: “At length did cross an albatross.”

In other words, the progressive attenuation of word and meaning in this stanza sets up the changing of the poem from a rational modern to an imaginative narrative mode. In *Coleridge’s Philosophy of Language* (1986) James McKusick briefly points to the “noises of a swoond” verse as a sort of microcosm of the poet’s entire linguistic philosophy.^[10] Coleridge, McKusick notes, explains his approach in *Biographia Literaria* (1817) by exhorting the poet not to repeat “the sort and order of words which he hears in the market, wake, high-road, or plough-field” but rather coin new terms or (as the poet does with “swoond”) revive old ones that have fallen out of use.^[11] Wordsworth and Coleridge diverged in approaches in that whereas Wordsworth sought to restore to everyday words their visionary sheen, Coleridge sought poetry that recovered ancient speech patterns he considered

more harmonious with thought.

McKusick concludes that Coleridge's linguistic theory released him from "the tyranny of Hartleyan associationism,...the intellectual arrogance of Horne Tooke's linguistic materialism,...the stifling narrowness of the Deists' mechanical universe,...[and] the sheer randomness of Locke's arbitrary signs" (150). With only slight extrapolation, all four of these elements can be discerned in the *Ancient Mariner's* use of "swound." In the first instance, Coleridge rebels against Hartleyan associationism by forcing his audience into an active rather than passive associative reading experience.^[12] In the second, Coleridge's reversal of Horne Tooke's methodology is analogous to his reaction against Wordsworth, whose ordinary-language doctrine may owe an unacknowledged debt to Tooke's 1798 *Diversions of Purley*.^[13] Coleridge's expansion of the Deist's clockwork universe is evidenced in the "noises in a swound" stanza's slippage from the rational world to an invocation of a supernatural dreamlike state (as will be later discussed) where cause-effect logic does not seem to apply. Finally, the poet's objection to Lockean randomness is inherent in his revival of archaic terms. The use of "swound" may create a useful first impression of embracing Lockean randomness by attenuating word and meaning, but a definition can in fact be contextually assigned later.

Coleridge would not have expected readers to recognise "swound," but possible bibliographic sources may shed light on how he himself conceived of the term. Lowes rejects an argument that Coleridge borrowed "swound" from Thomas Percy's 1765 *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, a highly influential antiquarian publication that spurred the Romantic revival of the ballad genre (498 n 64). Percy's *Sir Cauline*, a source for Coleridge's *Christabel*, exhibits three different spellings of the word within 28 lines (l. 172, 183, and 200). The tale concludes with Sir Cauline collapsing into a "swounde" from his injuries after slaying a monster who threatened his king. Thinking the knight has died, the princess "Christabelle" too falls into a "swound." Cauline awakens briefly to profess his love for her and then dies, and when Christabelle revives and finds her hero truly dead she suffers a third "swoun" within which she too dies. These variant "swounds" are relevant to the *Ancient Mariner* in stressing the idea of degrees between wakefulness and death, as well as in the term's apparently equal applicability to both physical and psychological trauma.

Lowes traces his best source for "swound" to a narrative of polar exploration. He cites an episode in Samuel Purchas' *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1617) wherein freezing men hole up in their ship's cabin and make a coal fire. As they sit bundled up and listening to the ice outside, the crew nearly dies of smoke inhalation before one sailor opens the hatch and "swounds" as cold air rushes in (147). Probably less relevant uses of "swound" also occur in Spenser

and Malory,^[14] but a highly appropriate source that critics seem to have overlooked appears in John Dryden's *Palamon and Arcite*:^[15]

His spirits are so low, his voice is drowned;
He hears as from afar, or in a swound,
Like the deaf murmurs of a distant sound:
Uncombed his locks, and squalid his attire,
Unlike the trim of love and gay desire;
But full of museful mopings, which presage
The loss of reason, and conclude in rage. (536-42)

This passage is from Dryden's rendition of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, and it describes the lovesickness of Arcite, who has spent a year pining away for Emily after being banished from her kingdom. Unlike the others, this reference describes "noises in a swoond," and the line is particularly conspicuous because Dryden breaks his heroic couplet meter. Any or all of the citations above could have informed the writing of *The Ancient Mariner*, and they are alike in conveying the idea of a possibly lethal threshold state of consciousness. Dryden's simile has the greatest affinity with Coleridge in that it evinces a groping aural perception comparable to the torpor experienced in dreams.

It should not be forgotten that the *Ancient Mariner* was actually based on a dream had by Coleridge's friend John Cruickshank, and Lowes appropriately singles out the dream as the central formative concept behind the *Ancient Mariner* as well as the best analogue to the poetic process of imagination.^[16] Coleridge made many attempts at classifying dream experiences, famously telling Keats in 1819 his ideas on their "Different genera and species."^[17] However, it should be said that these attempts were always of a tentative nature. "No explanation of dreams," Coleridge wrote in 1819, "...has in the least degree satisfied my judgement, or appeared to solve any part of the mysterious Problem."^[18] Before linking the "noises in a swoond" to the voices in the swoond of Parts V-VI of the *Ancient Mariner*, I will attempt to briefly discuss this physiological state as a perceptual degree within Coleridge's dream genera. At the same time I will try to keep in mind the poet's own unfinished thoughts on the subject and the advice of the 1817 motto of the *Ancient Mariner*, which significantly replaced the 1800 subtitle "A Poet's Reverie" (or

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"day-dream") with a warning against classifying the spiritual world.

Coleridge's notebook writings on dreams are voluminous. At one point he planned a major work on the subject and a novel to be called "The Dreams of a Solitary."^[19] His frequent analogy between dreams and the poetic imagination seems natural, and the advantages of using the dream purely as a literary device are numerous: They allow the author to disavow his words, advance plots without extricating characters from them (because dreams can end abruptly), and import divine intervention and other exotic elements. Yet it would be mistake to assume Coleridge's fascination with the subject was this simple. It undoubtedly also involved opium and the poet's persistent medical troubles. While Coleridge may not have been an addict during his *annus mirabilis* of 1797-98, he had experienced periods of dependency, and "noises in a swoond" could easily be linked to the abnormal sensitivity to sound that characterises opium use.^[20] Coleridge's three greatest poems begun in 1797-98—*Kubla Khan*, *Christabel*, and *The Ancient Mariner*—have dreams as their thematic link. *Kubla Khan* is most obvious, as the poet disavows his verses in a prefatory note by attributing them to a dream. *Christabel* differs in that an overt acknowledgement of the poem's dream atmosphere is postponed until the "Conclusion to Part I."^[21] Coleridge thought that this poem "more nearly realised" the imaginative ideal attempted in *The Ancient Mariner*,^[22] and the *Mariner's* appeal to dreams fits somewhere between these two. It is neither prefatory nor an afterword, but rather the reader is coaxed into the dream mood less explicitly, and the experience (excepting the short-lived 1800 "Poet's Reverie" subtitle) is unlabelled. "Swoond" has a pivotal position in introducing the idea of dream perception, and at several later points "dreams" are alluded to in attempts to explain the poem's surreal action:

And some in dreams assured were Of the Spirit that plagued us so:	(1798: 127-28)
Sure I had drunken in my dreams	

And still my body drank. (1798: 305-06)

O dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see? (1798: 479-80)

But, swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat. (1798: 554-55)

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Jennifer Ford, in *Coleridge on Dreaming* (1998), notes that to understand literary dreams of the Romantic Age modern readers must be aware of the debate during that time period about their mystical nature. The 1797 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which Coleridge is known to have consulted, acknowledges in its entry on dreams several writers who attribute these experiences to the “agency of some spiritual beings,” but it ultimately labels such explanations “implausible.” Britannica editors presented the conclusion that:

Dreams are affected by state of our health, by the manner in which we have passed the preceding day, by our general habits of life, by the hopes which we most fondly indulge, and the fears which prevail most over our fortitude when we are awake. From recollecting our dreams, therefore, we may learn to correct many improprieties of our conduct.[\[23\]](#)

As Ford notes, the prevailing notion of the dream had changed from that of the early eighteenth century in two important ways: First, dreams now belonged to the realm of the psychological and subjective. Secondly, they were imbued with a moral dimension; they could teach us “to correct many improprieties of our conduct” (Ford 22). An expression of this moral dimension is effectively pronounced in the conclusion of *The Ancient Mariner* (even to the point of its being “too obtrusive,” in Coleridge’s famous reversal of Mrs. Barbauld’s critique that the poem lacked a moral).[\[24\]](#)

The Romantic poet was thus at a cross-roads in the history of dream interpretation. No longer were dreams perceived as essentially mystical. To some readers they could be miraculous events inspired by God or imagination, but others would attribute them solely to the dreamer’s physiological state (Ford 9). Coleridge clearly aligns with the latter camp, while Wordsworth presents the opposing viewpoint in *Peter Bell*. Begun five months after *The Ancient Mariner*, Wordsworth’s ballad pointedly echoes the passage wherein the Mariner falls into a swoon while looking at the sun (1798: 398-407) by having Peter Bell, at the end of Part I of his poem, swoon shortly after gazing at the moon. Wordsworth signals his rejection of dreamlike poetry by having Peter immediately awaken from the “happy respite” of his “trance” and proceed to the more sober work of living in a world of sensory consciousness.[\[25\]](#) Wordsworth similarly favours a more clinical outlook on dreams when his Arab dream of *Prelude* V becomes a vehicle for self-analysis.[\[26\]](#) Put generally,

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the contrast between the two poets’ distinctive methods of arriving at imaginative truth is somewhat like that of the Eastern and Western prophets; the Eastern world depicts its holy men with eyes serenely closed in contemplation, while martyrs in Western art gaze outward with their eyes wide open. Similarly, Wordsworth’s *Peter Bell* advises us to employ the imagination with acute vision. Coleridge’s poetry not only sometimes refers to itself as a dream but also aspires to make its audience (in the words of *Kubla Khan*) “close your eyes in holy dread.”

Coleridge fervently believed that dreams possessed their own language, grounded in images—possibly archetypal in nature, though he does not detail it—and very often expressed through physical pain within sleep (Ford 56, 83). Throughout Western history dreams have been identified for their duality; Virgil's gates of false and true dreams in *Aeneid*. VI, for example, present a Classical view of their divided nature. At the risk of oversimplification, it might be said that Coleridge's classifications of dream experience include differentiations made between ordinary dreams, visions, reveries, and night-mairs, and these are often further subclassed as to source—opium, or moods of pain or joy—and effect, i.e. ecstasy or terror. However, these divisions were almost always blended, and, as noted earlier, never conclusive or systematic (Ford 84-87).

Coleridge's most definitive notebook entries on dreams do not occur until 1819, by which time he was convinced of the scientific legitimacy of at least one form of semiconscious perception—mesmerism, or “magnetic sleep” as it was then called.^[27] The *Ancient Mariner*, though it was subtitled “A Poet's Reverie” (or “day-dream”) in 1800, is best considered not as the expostulation of an amorphous, single level of dream consciousness but rather a compendium of many levels. Coleridge often bundled his genera within one another, as is demonstrated by *Kubla Khan*'s subtitle “A Vision in a Dream.” Within the Mariner's tale, there are several shifts in language concerning dream species. Retelling and thereby reliving his story may constitute the Mariner's “reverie,” and “visions” within “dreams” within this “reverie” are perhaps exemplified in the sailors' dreams of the pursuing polar Spirit and the Mariner's anticipatory dream of rain (1798: 127, 303).

In the 1817 *Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge significantly inserted the word “Night-Mair” at the point of the poem where Life-in-Death arrives (l. 193). Paul Magnuson elaborates extensively on this species of dream in *Coleridge's Nightmare Poetry* (1974), and he suggests that the “noises in a swound” refer to a “transition point where the consciousness is regaining its contact with reality yet is still in the nightmare.”^[28] While the swound doubtless signifies a threshold of consciousness, “nightmare” is perhaps not the best word to describe it. Some better terms are given in Parts V-VI of the *Ancient Mariner*

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when the Mariner and then the spectral voices in his swound describe his state:

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare; (1798: 408-09)

“For slow and slow that ship will go,
“When the Marinere's trance is abated.” (1798: 443-44)

*The Mariner hath been cast into a trance; for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive
northward, faster than human life could endure.*
(marginal gloss, 17: 426)

The Mariner is said to be in a “fit” and in a “trance.” This realm of mind seems far removed from and probably more beneficial than the nightmare. Ford relates that when Coleridge wrote about dreams in his notebooks, he characteristically used a personal “lexico-grammar” of German, Greek and Latin (67). He did this to stretch language to its limits and discuss things for which was no existing nomenclature, and his re-coining of the term “swound” should perhaps be thought of in this light.

There are two incidences of awakening within the Mariner's tale. He wakes from dreaming of water-buckets “filled with dew” and finds rain in Part V. Then in Part VI he emerges from

his “swoon” and locks eyes with the spectral crew. Shortly after he turns his eyes away, “the spell is snapt”(1798: 458). A clue to the nature of this “spell” may lie in the Second Voice’s reference to the Mariner’s “trance.” The *Ancient Mariner* is loaded with allusions to the hypnotic power of the eye that can easily be associated with Coleridge’s fascination with mesmerism.^[29] The fall into the “swoon,” immediately preceded by the Mariner watching the golden sun sway back and forth, calls to mind the modern stereotype of the hypnotist waving a pendulum (a gold watch gliding back and forth, for example) before a patient to induce hypnotic sleep. Likewise, the anaphora of “the ice was...” reproduces a hypnotist’s repeated cadences. Mesmerism was thought in Coleridge’s time (at least temporarily) to be a valid form of healing, and the Mariner’s swoon seems ultimately more of a healing experience than the nightmare posited by Magnuson. The swoon experience of Parts V-VI in many ways is the *Ancient Mariner*’s climax; it is the point at which his fate is decided. If the poem is considered an exploration of the dream—in its capacities as an analogue to the poetic imagination or otherwise—the swoon has the sense of being the deepest type of sleep the Mariner experiences. Interpreting it as a mesmeric trance, or “magnetic sleep,” is by no means the only relevant reading. However, the combination of swoon and trance would

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have allowed Coleridge to invoke dream perception while neutralising the reflexive scepticism that many readers (including Wordsworth) attached to the dream. Just as the swoon would heighten the life-and-death gravity of the situation, the trance would imbue the experience with a contemporary medical legitimacy.

To see how the *Ancient Mariner*’s two occurrences of “swoon” may interact within the reader’s mind, it may be useful to turn back to the illustrations provided by Hunt Emerson.^[30] Alluding to comic pictures may seem unscholarly, but it can be particularly appropriate in this case because Coleridge insisted that the dream language he sought to recreate was a language expressed in images rather than words:^[31]



The reader’s mind is drawn back to the beginning of the story to reconstruct a definition. This connection may not take place as immediately or consciously as it does for the comic Mariner, but the echo of “swoon” becomes an important structural link. In its first occurrence the word is hypnagogic, and in the second it is hypnopompic. In other words, the former adds to the creation of an atmosphere of drowsiness preceding sleep; the latter recreates the atmosphere of dispelling sleep and the semiconsciousness preceding awakening. The “noises in a swoon” create a lulling effect that slides the unwitting reader into a dream state, and the “fall into a swoon” demands upon the reader the heightened sensitivity that accompanies a struggle to awaken.

The “noises in a swoon” verse is one of the *Ancient Mariner*’s great imaginative touches, but its intended effect is highly dependent on the reader not immediately affixing meaning. This is an instance in which a modern commentator’s footnote can work against the spirit of the poem. A demonstration of the uncertainty surrounding this term can be found in the 1999 Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism edition of *The Ancient Mariner*, which takes the highly unusual step of providing two different footnote definitions for the two occurrences of swoon: The first “swoon” (1798:60) is defined in a footnote as “swoon,” and the second (1798:407) is defined as “blackout.”^[32] This would imply an inconsistency in Coleridge’s usage, and that is not the

case. Rather, the initial *noises* in a swoon anticipate the spectral *voices* in a swoon. The poet's intentional obscurity is, again, evidenced by his use of the article *of* in the first edition and his willingness to reintegrate the word into the poem after it had been criticised as nonsensical. Providing any footnote may detract from this line in which Coleridge deliberately gave his audience a word he knew they wouldn't understand in order to have them later reconstruct a meaning. In this narrow sense, I would posit that Hunt Emerson's comic offers a more faithful interpretation of the poem than the

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Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism edition.

In conclusion, Susan Eilenberg has argued that it was “the mixture of the strange and familiar, more than the strangeness itself, that disturbed contemporary readers” of the 1798 *Ancient Mariner*.^[33] The “swoon” stanza fixated upon by the *British Critic* should be thought of as a miniaturisation of this disturbance. Like the texture of what it describes, the stanza is an ice-patch that begins slipping the reader from familiarity into strangeness. Its positioning is subtle enough (and the word harmless-sounding enough) that the audience cannot know the Mariner's meaning, and instead continues onto the next verse—where the word “albatross” occupies the same position as “swoon”—with a nagging sense of something awry. The term's second use completes the search for meaning. Together, the twice-repeated word “swoon” is part of a larger ring structure linking these sections of the *Ancient Mariner*, particularly evident in the 1817 edition, and specifically situated at the poem's hypnagogic and hypnopompic thresholds. When the Mariner awakens from his swoon/trance, he sees some of the same things he saw just before first hearing the “noises of a swoon.” The emerald-green ice (1817: 54) is echoed in the “ocean green” (which may explain why the ocean is not blue) (1817: 447), and there are paired six-line stanzas about death's pursuit: The phrase “As who pursued with yell and blow/ Still treads the shadow of his foe” (1817: 46-47) is echoed in, “Because he knows, a frightful fiend/ Doth close behind him tread” (1817: 454-55). Finally, the kirk, hill and light-house top reappear (1817:469-70) and prompt the Mariner to “pray—/O let me be awake, my God!/ Or let me sleep alway” (1817:473-75). In this sense, the “noises in a swoon” have a significant structural placement in the poem, not only for the change they signal from common to archaic poetic diction but also for the way in which the ambiguity of the phrase reflects a threshold of dream perception. This may give some explanation of why Coleridge ultimately restored this unique line after it had been removed from the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*.

[1] The author wishes to acknowledge Graham Davidson for his constructive comments that strengthened this essay prior to publication.

[2] Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, illustrated by Hunt Emerson (London: Knockabout Comics, 1989) 9. The 1817 version of the poem (ll.57-60) is referred to here, but subsequent citations will additionally refer to the 1798 and 1800 texts, specifying the dates.

[3] Simpson, J.A. and E.S.C. Weiner, eds. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 20 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) XVII: 439.

[4] For example, see Seamus Perry's *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999) 281; James Boulger's *Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969) 3; and Leslie Stephen's *Hours in a Library*, 3 vols. (London: Smith Elder, 1892) III.358.

[5] Kant's “incongruity theory” of humour is presented in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790).

- [6] *The British Critic* 14 (October 1799) 364-69; reprinted in *Romantic Bards and British Reviewers*, ed. John Hayden (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971) 6.
- [7] John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*. 1927. (London: Constable & Co., 1930) 261-69.
- [8] William Wordsworth, *Fennick Note* to 'We Are Seven,' dictated 1843; reprinted in Duncan Wu's *Romanticism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Ltd., 1994) 482.
- [9] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, ed. Paul Fry (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999) 28 n 27.
- [10] James McKusick, *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language* (London: Yale UP, 1986) 149-50.
- [11] CC 7 (BL 2) 82; McKusick 149.
- [12] McKusick (172) contrasts Hartleyan associative passiveness with Coleridge's notions about the active/creative associative impulse in children. Similarly, a reader must read "swound" actively to construct a meaning.
- [13] See Marilyn Butler's *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 18, 27.
- [14] The earliest recorded literary uses are Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* XX.xxii.838: "Syr Gauwayn synked down vpon hys one syde in a swounde"; and Spenser's *Fairie Queen* IV.vii.9: "When she lookt about, and nothing found But darknesse and dread horroure,... She almost fell againe into a swound."; *OED* XVII:439.
- [15] John Dryden, *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. George Saintsbury. 18 vols. (London: Wm. Paterson, 1882-92) XI. *Palamon and Arcite* I:536-42. Dryden's rendition of Chaucer is not known to have been in Coleridge's library, but this does not preclude the possibility that Coleridge had read it.
- [16] James Boulger, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969) 11.
- [17] John Keats, *John Keats*, ed. Elizabeth Cook. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) 468.
- [18] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 1957-90) IV.5360.
- [19] Jennifer Ford, *Coleridge on Dreaming* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 3.
- [20] The poet's sensitivity to the knocker from Porlock in *Kubla Khan* and lines 351-71 of the 1798 *Ancient Mariner* may also demonstrate this sensitivity to sound.
- [21] While hints may alert the reader earlier, the "Conclusion to Part I" states openly that Christabel has been "with open eyes...Asleep, and dreaming fearfully!" within a "trance" that possibly combines somnambulism and mesmeric hypnotism (l. 292-312). Susan Luther's *Christabel as Dream-Reverie* (Salzburg: Universitat Salzburg, 1976) further elaborates on the poem's dream nature.
- [22] CC 7 (BL 2) 7.
- [23] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1797, vol. VI: 120-121, as reprinted in Ford (22).
- [24] CC 14 (30 May 1830) 272-73.
- [25] William Wordsworth, *Peter Bell: 1819*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth. (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1992) 37-41. I cite this version rather than the 1798 MS favoured by *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth* because the 1819 *Peter Bell* in this case better demonstrates echoes with *The Ancient Mariner*. See the conclusion to Mary Jacobus' *Tradition and Experiment in Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads (1798)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976) for a fuller explication of the relation of these two ballads.
- [26] Douglas Wilson persuasively argues this in Chapter 6 of *The Romantic Dream* (London: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1993).
- [27] Coleridge wrote in 1819 that he no longer needed "additional proof" of the facts of animal magnetism (*Notebooks* IV 4512); Ford 107.
- [28] Paul Magnuson, *Coleridge's Nightmare Poetry* (Charlottesville, Va.: Virginia UP, 1974) 57.

[29] The *Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age* (ed. Iain McCalman, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999, p. 408), for example, credits Coleridge with reviving public and poetic interest in the phenomenon of animal magnetism.

[30] Emerson 43-44.

[31] See Coleridge's *Notebooks* (III 4409, May 1818): "The language of Dreams...is a language of Images and Sensations," and (*Marginalia* III 376), "Do not all these Images bear the very character and impression of *the DREAM*?"; Ford 56-57.

[32] *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, ed. Fry, 30 (note to 1798:60) and 58 (note to 1798:407).

[33] Susan Eilenberg, "Voice and Ventriloquy in the 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner.'" *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. ed. Paul Fry (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999) 296.