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Submissions

This periodical is only as substantial as the material it contains: therefore, we more than welcome any contributions that members of the academic community might wish to make. Articles we would be most interested in publishing include those addressing Romantic literary studies with an especial slant on book history, textual and bibliographical studies, the literary marketplace and the publishing world, and so forth. Papers of 5–8,000 words should be submitted by the beginning of April or October in order to make the next issue, if accepted. Any of the usual electronic formats (e.g. RTF, Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, HTML) are acceptable, either by post or e-mail. Submissions should be sent to Dr Anthony Mandal, Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research, ENCAP, Cardiff University, Humanties Building, Colum Drive, Cardiff CF10 3EU. Wales (UK), *mandal@cardiff.ac.uk*.

Archaisms in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'

Margaret J.-M. Sonmez

In his work on Percy's *Reliques*, Nick Groom identifies an all-important link between eighteenth-century ideas of the ancient poets and poems and the Romantic ideal of poetic genius. Both are perceived as 'natural' while, at the same time, embodying an almost supernatural spark of creativity. 'By 1757', he writes, 'Thomas Gray had raised the popular conception of the mysterious figure of "the Bard" to that of a prophetic ancient poet'.[1] In the new search for true poetry, even the most revolutionary of Romantics seemed to concur that 'though truth and falsehood bee / Neare twins, yet truth a little elder is',[2] with references to the authority and example of 'our elder writers' and 'the elder bards' abounding in their theoretical works.[3] The link between authority and seniority, though rejected in the case of the more recent past, was argued for more strongly with regard to distant times, during which the mysterious workings of inspiration impelled writers in their productions of genius. Romantic and post-Romantic writers such as Coleridge, Keats, Tennyson, and Browning would take advantage of such associations, producing works that originated in, or appeared to originate in, 'olden days'. The origins of their stories would be semi-hidden, the original inspiration equally concealed, and the poems—and perhaps the poets themselves—would thus be endowed with something of the authority and 'canonical significance' attached to national treasures.[4] Conversely, unpopular or unfashionable elements in the works could be ascribed, through implication, to the 'original' version.

The paradigmatic example of a poem that is both (largely) associated with an 'inspired' bardic figure and set in the mysterious past is, without doubt, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. In this poem, all the issues mentioned above are fully operative and given a specifically Coleridgean twist. His archaisms, by which I mean all the devices employed to make the work seem to belong to the past, are used for purposes beyond mere association with the past. In fact, Coleridge's concerns with poetry in many ways run parallel to the theoretical issues arising from archaisms as used in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. It is the contention of this paper that, far from eliminating archaisms, Coleridge's textual revisions encouraged and added archaistic complexity to the

poem in order to collapse the boundaries between past and present, between inspiration, authority and text, and between poet and poem.

To this end, the main devices of archaism found in 'The Ancient Mariner' are discussed in an effort to illustrate how and why they are effective, and the paper will also show the effects of textual revisions on these archaisms through the eight versions published during Coleridge's lifetime.[5] Analysis of the different versions, in fact, reveals very little relevant data for the last three revisions, so most of the comments below deal with the versions of 1798, 1800, 1802, 1805 and 1817.[6]

Archaism

Archaisms are metonyms for the past: by a small part of the past—a word, a grammatical formation, a spelling—we are meant to understand the invisible presence and influence of the whole. When a writer distributes archaic material throughout his work, the reader understands that the whole of that work is meant to seemingly belong to the time when such material was normally found. Metonyms work through a fairly simple system of association (unlike symbols, for instance, where overt resemblance plays no part). The metonymy of archaism is mixed with something less straightforward, however, in that it is a stylistic device involving the reader in a form of 'double perception',[7] whereby a text from one period is perceived and identified as belonging to that time, while simultaneously its historical disguise is recognised and allowed to affect our responses to the text. It is a special case of Coleridge's 'willing suspension of disbelief' (*BL*, ch. xiv, p. 169)—and one that would hold special appeal for writers interested in conflating time through mental association, as Coleridge does in most of his poetic works. For this double perception and conflation of time zones to be effective, it is necessary that the archaisms of the text should not be too convincing: rather, they should appear to come from the past and at the same time provide signals of their own falseness.[8] As Walter Scott implicitly acknowledged, archaism is a self-deconstructing trope.[9]

As a literary device, archaism is most often described as a somewhat superficial pretence—almost an affectation—involving poetic diction. Conventional archaic language in poetry is as unpopular today as were conventionalised poetic expressions to Wordsworth and Coleridge when the experiment of the *Lyrical Ballads* came out. It is perhaps because of this unpopularity and perceived superficiality that the subject is not much studied and given very little credit as a worthwhile addition to a text. Jack Stillinger, for instance, reacts to the inherent superficiality of archaism, and specifically of linguistic archaism, when he suggests that in 'The Ancient Mariner' 'the archaic quality […] has probably been overstated […] very likely, it is the [first] version's exaggerated Gothicism, rather than the outdated language, that was responsible for the *impression* of archaizing'.[10] Archaising, though, has to be impression, precisely in order to maintain the parallel existence of two or more realms of time in the

one text. It is, moreover, a far more varied and frequently used practice than is generally acknowledged.

Pervasive and consistent archaism may be identical to a form of impersonation, so in order to be effective as a time-cruncher it needs to signal its own duplicity. Ensuring that the archaisms affect only some levels of parts of the text usually does this. In this sense archaism is genuinely superficial, but such superficiality need not imply lack of theoretical depth. Archaisms are in fact a very topical part of the games texts play, acting as 'wormholes' through which the text/reader is made to enter a different time zone;[11] they create a form of temporal intertextuality through which the text-of-now and the text-of-then are fused or interlaced, read together but understood separately. It can have a startling effect on the perceived identity of a piece of writing, which may be seen as simultaneously the very latest literary experiment and an old, old tale from long ago.

Metonyms for the past need not manifest themselves as forms of words only: anything very old-fashioned may be used and received as an archaism: the story, the details of life given within the story, the form in which the story is told, the look of the text on the page, and so on. Reading 'The Ancient Mariner', one is conscious, from its title onwards, of its formal archaisms. It is, in fact, mostly through the effects of such associative devices that Coleridge creates the illusion of an archaic past in this poem.[12] The content of the poem is only rarely used for this purpose, and never with any historical specificity: that is to say, while some historical practices are referred to, there are no direct references to datable events or personages. Nevertheless, archaism covers a broad range of devices in this work, which include the language, the genre, the presentation of the printed text (the look of the poem), and the content of the surrounding paraphernalia. There is also a scattering of references to out-dated beliefs and practices.

It is not simply the mariner who is ancient in the poem, for if he is ancient, then his rhyme must be old too. The wedding guest of the tale may be a little younger, but whoever is meant to have written down this ballad did so a long time ago, when the language was noticeably different from that of the last years of the eighteenth century when it was first published. From internal evidence we do not know the dates of creation of the various forms of this work, nor do we know who first told it, sang it, or put it into written form; it seems in some ways to be one of those legends whose truths are all the more powerful for having origins lost in the mists of time, like ruins 'invested […] with vague aspirations towards infinity and the past'.[13] External evidence may convince us that it is the production of one 'S. T. Coleridge', intent upon exciting our sympathies with elements of the supernatural (*BL*, ch. XIV, p. 168), but the poem itself hides its origins. The concealment is effected mostly through multiple and contradictory time elements: the tale is distanced from its reader (and its

real creator) by more than just an ancient bard-like figure: through a number of archaising features the text declares itself to be old.

Language

The most common understanding of literary archaism in English is that of verbal archaism. It involves the inclusion of old-fashioned vocabulary like 'grey-beard loon' (l. 11), old verbal endings (*–st*, *–th*), and grammatical changes such as the use of defunct question and negative forms: wherefore stopp'st thou me?' (l. 4), 'this body dropt not down' (l. 231), and so on. These features comprise the most frequently encountered type of archaism met in our literature, generally known as 'Spenserian' archaism. Since the eighteenth century (with its attendant interest in antiquarianism), writers have sometimes added a flavour of the past with some old-looking spellings: adding an extra *–e* to the end of a word, for example, easily creates icons of the past. Scholars who discuss written archaisms employ this very device to describe the sort of falsely past world that is being evoked by most archaisms: they use expressions which rely for their meaning entirely on their spelling: Geoffrey Leech at one point refers to 'olde worlde quaintness', while W. N. Parker speaks of the 'merrie England' depicted in *Ivanhoe*.[14] These expressions are used by a number of present day commentators in their descriptions of the 1798 'Ancient Mariner'. William Empson, for instance, sees Coleridge laughing at 'olde worlde sensationalism'.[15]

Archaisms of the Spenserian sort are found everywhere in the first printed version of 'The Ancient Mariner'. The individually archaic vocabulary items and outdated expressions are not specific in terms of the period or periods they characterise. At any rate, the general impression of pastness that is created by such words and expressions as *yea*, *i wist*, and *Ah wel-a-day* does not seem to be contradicted by any of the other formalities of the text, and the impressions they produce are of a period extending from Chaucer (*een* for 'eyes', *ne … ne* for 'nor', *yeven* for 'given') to the Reformation (exclamations and oaths referring to Mary act as metonyms for Catholicism and thence to the whole of pre-Reformation England). With the exception of a very few obscure expressions (*Pheere*, 1798: line 180; *weft*, 1798: line 83), these all belong to Leech's 'standard archaic usage': the repertoire of archaisms available to poets at any time from 1600 to 1900 and 'not based on the style of any one writer'.[16] Coleridge himself had already used such archaisms in his verse, notably in his 'Lines in the Manner of Spenser' (first published 1796).

The first published version of 'The Ancient Mariner' shows an even greater incidence of old-fashioned spellings and verbal endings than of old vocabulary. Unlike old words and expressions, they act almost purely as visual stimuli (David Hartley had claimed the essential importance of the senses in the associative faculty), leading the reader to associate what they are reading with a general image of texts from the past.[17] But on closer consideration it can be seen that they too bear only a very slight resemblance to the orthographic, verbal, or

grammatical forms actually used in any one period of the past: in other words, they too belong to 'standard archaic usage'. Compared to the language used at any of the periods possibly indicated by the archaisms in this poem, they are unrealistically regular. Furthermore, there are significant internal linguistic anachronisms, with the spellings, verbal endings, and, especially, grammatical forms being chronologically contradictory.[18] Analysis of these elements reveals that neither the spellings nor the verbal endings can be placed in any precise period that could coincide with the syntax of the poem, which is almost entirely late-Early-Modern, which is to say basically eighteenth-century. Archaic word forms in this poem, then, are an amalgam of marked or well-known features that characterise the language as 'old': they are at one and the same time immediately recognisable and somehow unconvincing.

In general, then, the formal aspects of the first published version (1798) provide clear and visual archaisms that stimulate the mind's association of the poem with the period of the first flowering English Literature—the period spanning the late middle ages and Renaissance. It is, indeed, as Coleridge is said to have claimed, a language 'intelligible for [the] […] three centuries' up to 1798 ('Advertisement', *LB*, 8); but it is not identical with the English of any of those three hundred years: it merely seems like it. The poem in this respect encourages identification *with the past* and leads us at the same time to understand that it is not truly *from the past*: the allusions made by the language are to an overtly fictitious and literary past, not to a historical one, and Coleridge's readers are made consciously to suspend their disbelief.

Modern scholarship has identified in this dichotomy a good source for criticism: Empson says that 'the facetious archaisms urgently needed removing', but adds that 'we pay a heavy price for it'; Bygrave calls it 'a pastiche medieval ballad'.[19] It also provides a good source for deconstruction, but our contemporaries are not the first to focus on it: critics in the late 1790s were no less alert to the internal contradictions of the language, which they saw as a grave fault. Robert Southey, in an anonymous review of October 1798, wrote: 'We are tolerantly conversant with the early English poets; and can discover no resemblance whatever, except in antiquated spelling and a few obsolete words'.[20] One year later, another reviewer commented that '[t]he author […] is not correctly versed in the old language, which he undertakes to employ […] but the ancient style is well imitated, while the antiquated words are so very few, that the latter might with advantage be entirely removed without any detriment to the effect of the Poem'.[21] The archaisms were seen as extraneous to the story, a case of a good story but the wrong diction. The fusion of language and content that was so important to Coleridge had not yet been argued in public, and it seems that no one then, and not many scholars more recently, have been prepared to consider the archaisms as integral to the poem as creative event.[22] With 'his god Wordsworth' (Charles Lamb; quoted in *LB*, xl) joining the chorus of dissent, and with a character that was always ready to believe the worst of himself and

to accommodate himself to please his friends, Coleridge set about changing the unpopular archaisms.

For the second (1800) published edition, many commentators argue that Coleridge swept away all or most of his archaisms,[23] although the more careful of them note that what was purged consisted mainly of some spellings and a few words.[24] Comparison of the 1798 and 1800 texts shows that Coleridge removed a number of words and expressions that had been singled out for unfriendly comment (*Broad as a weft*, *noises in a swound*, both criticised by the *British Critic*, and *Eftsones*).[25] He rewrote many, but by no means all, of the old verbal endings in their modern forms,[26] and de-archaised the spellings of 'ancient' and 'mariner' throughout the text, and changed the so-called archaic spelling of the exclamation *O* (without the h) to the standard *Oh*. *Ne* is converted to *nor* throughout, but seemingly by the printer rather than Coleridge, as this alteration was not in Coleridge's list of corrections sent to the printer for the second edition. These, together with a few other incidental respellings are the most frequent orthographic changes found in his revisions of 1800. This, then, is what scholars are in fact referring to when they say that he discarded most of the archaisms present in the original edition.

It is not a short poem, so the spelling and morphological changes, plus the replacement or excision of certain words amount to a fair number of changes, but still only to a small proportion of the original verbal archaisms in the poem. Some of the most evident archaisms, including all of the most frequently occurring group of verbs in the poem—the auxiliaries—retained their antique forms, as did all second-person singular pronouns (*thee*, *thou*, *thy*, *thine*), all affirmatory expressions such as *i wiſt* and all exclamations (for example, *gramercy*, *wel-a-day*). These were kept in the second and all subsequent versions,[27] as were the old irregular verbal forms such as *clomb(e)* for *climbed*, *upriſt* for *uprose*, *whiles* for *whilſt*, and the expressions *ſterte* (in 'a gust of wind sterte up behind'; l. 198) and *gan* (as in 'gan work the ropes', 'she gan stir'). The third and fourth (1802, 1805) published versions saw a few more occasional archaisms mopped up, but nothing systematic, while at the same time some new lines were added which included archaisms such as *eftsones* (in l. 12, this time). The major rewritings of 1817 and 1834 made very little difference to this level of archaism, although there is the strange case of the reappearance of one instance of the old spelling 'marinere' (l. 517). In fact very few formal alterations to the words are made after 1800, and almost none to the archaisms.[28] In short, Coleridge and his printers did not remove anything like all the verbal archaisms from the first edition. He/they removed, on my calculation, a mere nineteen percent. It remained a poem situated in an unspecified past and the language continued to be an important component in this act of situating.

Historical References

Before moving on to more complex instances of archaism, those few references that situate the Mariner's tale in an identifiable historical period should be mentioned. The period is a broad one and the allusions are indirect. Perhaps the most frequent are to Catholicism, appearing throughout the poem in exclamations and prayers to Mary and in references to confession and absolution (ll. 574–85), along with the strange, more Romantic than Catholic, 'penance' of his recurrent compulsion to tell his tale. The presence of that essential medieval component, the hermit, also sets the tale well before the Reformation. The absence of Renaissance technology is also notable if negative evidence: all three of Bacon's diagnostics of the modern age are absent, though only two could have a place in the story: the compass and gunpowder (there is no mention of the former, and the crossbow was made obsolete by early forms of the gun). More specifically, the fact that the ship was the first to enter the Pacific Ocean (l. 105) places the voyage before Magellan's 1520 discovery. No reviewers or critics objected to these historical references, which remained unchanged in all editions, with some added support from the gloss, to be mentioned later.

Genre

The genre or sub-genre of the poem is another and more theoretically loaded way in which the Rime is presented as older than it really is. In this case we are dealing with the ballad, an old-fashioned poetic sub-genre that sets up mental associations with the past in a way that is at once more pervasive and yet less specific than those stimulated by the reproduction of certain linguistic forms or by historically meaningful references. Just as the archaic language is spread throughout the poem, so the ballad form and ballad-like content of the poem continue to feed into the reader a sense of historical depth, some pervasive sense of the almost mythic power of ancient traditions and traditional tales.[29]

This was the first poem in the *Lyrical Ballads with a Few Other Poems* of 1798. Most of the poems in this collection imply an oral past, as is inherent in both parts of the title. The oral past evoked by the majority of the poems in this volume is a relatively simply conceived past—some event involving speech that occurred in the past and is now being related or repeated in the poem. As James Treadwell has noted, 'dialogues are perhaps the most characteristic feature of [the poems]'.[30] 'The Ancient Mariner' is, however, the only piece in that collection to present itself as the reproduction of an older *written* tale, the older writing being itself based upon some oral original lost in time. In this sense, and when combined with its metre and construction, it conforms to present-day readers' expectations of a ballad more than do any of the other poems with which it was first published.[31]

The text type 'ballad' is defined as much by what ballads are thought to be as by what they really are. A historical understanding of these verses includes many pieces that would not now be seen as typical ballads, and that is the same of any

present day collection that claims to be comprehensive—the group, text-type, or sub-genre is very eclectic. By Coleridge's time, as now, one of the word's two principal meanings for most people was that of an old song or rhyme dealing with a simple story of adventure: long before the conception of *The Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge himself used the term to refer to the narrative songs his sister used to sing to him and to those sung by professional singers heard from his nurse's arms.[32] Traditional ballads were meant to be the products of centuries of oral transmission, unadulterated by fashions or printers. At the same time, new ballads with up-to-date social and political comment were popular, and mostly associated with towns. Ballads were the people's literature and could be used in populist movements: Groom provides an example of ballads being used to 'rally a lynch mob' in 1756, and comments that on the one hand the incendiary possibilities of the urban ballad added to the bad reputation of the sub-genre, while on the other Percy's intrusive editorialising of the ballad in a way tamed the sub-genre, fixing it as the matter of harmless antiquarian interest.[33]

The eighteenth century had seen a growing interest in old and dialectal literature and the publication of several ballad collections. D'Urfey published his *Old English Ballads* between 1723 and 1727, William Thomson produced his *Orpheus Caledonius* (1725), and Ramsay his *The Evergreen* (1724) and *Tea Table Miscellany* (1724–34), while Edward Capell published *Prolusions or, Select Pieces of Antient Poetry* in 1760 and John 'Don' Bowles his Miscellaneous *Pieces of Antient English Poesie* in 1764—but this last seems to have been commercially unsuccessful. Most influential was the publication in 1765 of Bishop Percy's three-volume *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, which claimed to reproduce the mediaeval and early ballads he had come across by chance in a seventeenth-century manuscript volume (plus some others), but which in fact contained many silent alterations and additions. That such volumes and the poems they contained had been popular is witnessed by the fact that there was even a minor fashion for fake ballads, which gave rise to what Brett and Jones call 'the pseudo ballad style of the eighteenth century' (*LB*, xx). More generally, that the old and remote was popular (and money-generating) can be well enough understood when we consider that as early as the eighteenth century there was a 'tendency to cloak new ballads in an appearance of antiquity'.[34] Coleridge lived in the age of Chatterton's Rowley forgeries and of Macpherson's Ossianic productions (1762–63),[35] he himself wrote a 'spirited imitation of Ossian's poetry' in a letter to his friend Mary Evans,[36] and expressed great admiration for the works of both these literary impersonators. These various works, then, were what 'ballads' meant to Coleridge's generation; they were acknowledged by Wordsworth to be, in some sense, inspirational,[37] and the links between the contents of Percy's *Reliques* and 'The Ancient Mariner' have been more than once noted by present day scholars.[38] Trevor Jones notes that traditional ballads had started going out of fashion in about 1790, though efforts such as Joseph Ritson's work on *Robin Hood* (1795), the continued production of editions of Percy's *Reliques* (a fourth edition came out in 1794), and the enthusiasm for Scott's *Minstrelsy of*

the Scottish Border (1802–03), and *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) indicate that fashion and popularity may not have been the same thing.[39]

Published collections of ballads, then, strongly implied ancientness; but Coleridge shows a 'rather persistent practice of giving with one hand while taking away with the other'.[40] The second edition of this poem provided a rewriting of the title*: The Ancient Mariner: A Poet's Reverie*. Charles Lamb hated this (*LB*, 277), finding the distancing device of the subtitle, (possibly intended to provide a device to account for the poem's perceived fragmentary quality) unnecessary and demeaning to the timeless truths of poem, and most critics (e.g. *LB*, 273) assume that the new title was somehow Wordsworth's fault.[41] As Lamb noted, it creates a very strange status for the poem, which is now claimed to be the rhyming rendition of some sort of a dream featuring the words of an ancient mariner, and which is also a lyrical ballad. It is reverie, rhyme, lyric and ballad: this is narrative and generic over-specification on a spectacular scale. It is also an unlikely mixture (reverie does not mix well with the public and verbal nature of ballad) that undermines the fictional past of the poem, situating the creative act at any time in the past or present, although the formal aspects of language can still act as an archaising force within the poem. This subtitle was removed in 1802, or rather an attempt to remove it was made, but due to a printer's error it was left on the half-title of the first page, so two different titles are in fact found in the 1802 and 1805 editions. 1817 saw this corrected, and the restoration of the full original title, but in modern spelling.

A related but rather different element in the creation of time-depth is that of anonymity. Ancient and traditional literature is mostly anonymous from accident or convention or, as for ballads, due to origins in an oral tradition. Since the Renaissance, authors wishing to conceal their identity have generally preferred the use of pseudonyms of varying degrees of transparency.[42] By Coleridge's time, even this disguise was outmoded: in an article in the *Friend* of 19 October 1809 he called his an 'age of personality' in which a 'real name' is used in place of 'a bashful Philalethes or Phileleuteros' on title pages (*BL*, ch. 11, p. 23, n. 1). By his time, complete anonymity was already associated with texts from the early or pre-Renaissance period.

Even though anonymity was not conceived as an essential part of the poem (up to March of 1798 he was thinking of publishing 'The Ancient Mariner' under his own name in a volume of his own poems), it is has its part to play in the distancing of the poem from the present of the reader. What eventually happened, however, was that not only was the poem published together with those of Wordsworth, but Coleridge absolutely insisted upon the volume being anonymous, though not for reasons in any way connected with archaism.[43] Wordsworth and Coleridge took pains to ensure the anonymity of the *Lyrical Ballads*. So worried were they that their identities may be discerned by attentive readers of the first edition that they went so far as to stop the press halfway through printing in order to replace 'Lewti', which had previously

appeared under Coleridge's name,[44] with 'The Nightingale', which had not (see *LB*, viii).

Whatever the reasons, the poem in its early printed versions was genuinely anonymous, and the main narrator was and remains for all times, of course, a completely undatable and unnamed 'ancient mariner'. Along with its ballad form, the anonymity of the first published version of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' may be considered as playing a not insignificant role in the creation of an illusion of distant origins.

The Surrounding Paraphernalia

The anonymity, while being an archaising force, was in no way fraudulent. There was no Chatterton- or Walpole-like attempt to pass off the work as genuinely old.[45] In fact, those careful readers who looked at the prefatory matter before turning to the main text would find an (equally anonymous) 'Advertisement' whose second paragraph emphasises the novelty of the poems in the volume by drawing attention to the fact that they are 'experiments' and by talking about the purpose behind them and how they should be approached by the readers. The penultimate sentence of this 'Advertisement' draws attention to the existence of an unnamed living author and, specifically, to the artifice of the archaisms in the poem, saying that 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere was professedly written in imitation of the *stile*, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets'.[46]

The 'Advertisement'—which, Empson suggests, may have itself been an archaising element in the publication ('having an Argument at all came to seem tiresomely olde-worlde')[47]—was included in the first two editions of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Its role in undermining the effects of archaisms in 'The Ancient Mariner' is reinforced in the second edition (1800) by the Preface, which replaced the Advertisement altogether from the third edition (1802) onwards.

Far more damaging to the illusion of anonymous and timeless origins, however, are the patronising and derogatory remarks that Wordsworth made in the note added to the poem in the 1800 edition, which could hardly be ignored by any person reading the poem:

> I cannot refuse myself the gratification of informing such Readers as may have been pleased with this Poem, or with any part of it, that they owe their pleasure in some sort to me; as the Author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the Poem […] The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; […] Yet the poem contains many delicate touches of passion […] beautiful images […] unusual felicity of language; and the versification, though the metre is itself unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied. (*LB*, 276–77)

By now the readers had been lead to believe that the poems in the volume were, as the title page of 1800 put it '*Lyrical Ballads*, by W. Wordsworth', and the

Preface attributed 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' to a 'friend'—though readers may, as Neil Fraistat suggests, have read this as pretence.[48]

Although it might seem that the extraneous matter written by Wordsworth is diminishing some of the time-depth from Coleridge's poem that anonymity would otherwise give it, we should note that the Advertisement was included with Coleridge's consent, and that Coleridge himself, as we have already seen with the addition of the words 'a Reverie' to the title, and as was his habit with many of his poems, presents with his piece many puzzling or contradictory elements in respect of its origins. When, in 1817, the poem was finally published under Coleridge's own name, it was in the collection of his works tellingly entitled *Sibylline Leaves*. Although 'The Ancient Mariner' remained, officially at any rate, anonymous until 1817, much of the mystifying and distancing effects of the ballad form and of anonymity had been complicated by the paraphernalia surrounding the poem. Prior to the 1817 version, then, it is to elements within the poem that we must turn for explanation of its effective evocation of past times.

There is general agreement that the most important rewriting 'The Ancient Mariner' underwent was the addition, in the 1817 version, of the gloss. The textual repercussions of this are important, and its effect on the subsequent history of interpretation (or misinterpretation) of the poem has been extremely powerful and enduring and, according to some scholars (for example, Frances Ferguson) regrettable. Many others agree that the gloss is a positive addition to the meaning of the Mariner's tale or even to the meaning of the text in its entirety.[49] For our limited purposes, focusing on archaisms, we find that, just as the poem for the first time appears under Coleridge's own name, the gloss opens up a new layer of time. Not only does its presence alter the visual aspect of the text and recall 'the archetypal glosses—those in the margins of early printed editions of the Bible',[50] but it also creates another illusory level of pastness, a time after the ancient traditional (oral) origins of the ballad and its (late-medieval/early-Renaissance) written version, and before the 1817 audience. There is now an intervening (fictitious) editor, a hand that writes descriptive and interpretive comments in the margins.

This hand has been seen as imitating a seventeenth-century editor, with the imposition on earlier chaos and superstition of a rational ordering of events into an interpretable moral system of crime, punishment, and salvation. The model for this editing activity is meant to be the gloss in *Purchas' Pilgrim*, where the original unordered travellers' tales are explained and given meaning by the editor's comments, though it is very possible that it was not just *Purchas Pilgrim*, but the appearance and issues raised by a whole cluster of editions of old or forged texts that inspired Coleridge to add his gloss: other favourites of Coleridge's include Chatterton's Rowley poems, Percy's *Reliques,* and Ossian's works, all of which were published with much authenticating paraphernalia—in the latter two cases in the form of heavily annotated editions and 'cluttered' pages.[51]

The explanation that the gloss impersonates a seventeenth-century editorial hand is open to question, however, because the language of the gloss can scarcely be said to belong to that time. The frequency of *–th* verbal endings is too high for such a late date, as are occasional features such as the word *fain*, the exclamation *lo!*, the expression *ever and anon*, and the belief in the 'grace of the holy mother'. Furthermore, the gloss is typographically identical to the footnote to lines 226–27 in which the 'voice' of the implied 'real' author (that is, the Coleridge of the *Sibylline Leaves*) talks about how the line came to him during a delightful walk with his friend Wordsworth. In fact, typographically the whole poem belongs to the age of enlightenment—as, one may add, do the typically Sternean or Swiftian paratextual games played with the (earlier) Argument, the gloss, and the footnotes .[52]

Conclusion

The words and spellings so objected to by the first reviewers are in many ways the least radical of Coleridge's archaising devices in the poem. His revisions to this layer of archaism have been shown in this paper to involve only a small proportion of the words, and scarcely to affect the archaistic tone of the poem at all. Subsequent revisions to the printed versions can be seen as having greatly enhanced the archaism of the work, and concomitantly to have increased both the fairy-tale nature of the story and, perhaps more importantly than this, to have pushed back the implied moment of original creation of the story to ever more distant and irretrievable times in the past.

In 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', Coleridge provides a strong contrast to poems such as Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', in which the source of inspiration is the overt subject of the poem, by implying that, as with traditional oral literature, dreams and reveries, and such scattered utterances as the original sibylline leaves, there is no known or knowable source of the original story. Lawrence Lipking has noted that 'the reader who had turned to the first pages *of Lyrical Ballads* [...] had been *purposely* cast adrift. *The Ancient Mariner* opens a book whose title is an oxymoron, whose author is anonymous and whose archaic language and actions, like Chatterton's, seem to suggest a hoax'.[53] The story claims to be traditional and originally the matter of oral transmission (the ballad form, the mariner–narrator) before being recorded in writing by some hand of the pre-Renaissance times and then copied (at, perhaps, many removes) by a Renaissance editor (post-1520), and finally printed in up-to-date typography in 1798, with an Argument and footnotes in a late-eighteenth-century 'voice'. Finally, however, the whole illusion of a distant oral past and complicated and unrecorded textual history is undermined from the very first appearance of this poem and through all its revisions by internal anachronisms and especially by the paraphernalia surrounding the text (or the 'paratext', as Genette's terms it) in the forms of the 'Advertisement' (1798), the Preface (1800, 1802, 1805), and Coleridge's footnote to lines 226–27. The archaisms are an integral part of the

poem because its temporal and authorial complexity is an essential part of its language of 'significance [...] in sense of association' (*BL*, ch. II, p. 12), to ancient truths and mysteries.

The issue of when a piece of literature was first created is close to the issue of inspiration, a question always of profound interest to writers and scholars alike. It gives rise to a multitude of fictional framing devices and narrative strategies, and can be seen as the fundamental question of much critical activity, theorising and textual bibliography. It is the focus of much if not most of both Wordsworth's and Coleridge's literary explorations, both in poetry and in prose. In their writings, we see on the one hand an effort to identify the source of creative urge and ability, and on the other hand the need for it to remain somehow mysterious: in their conclusions, both Wordsworth and Coleridge resort repeatedly to metaphors and references to mystical entities. Tellingly, perhaps, Wordsworth's entity is the 'more comprehensive soul' of the material, historical, and ultimately personal poet (1802 Preface; *LB*, 255), whereas Coleridge's lies in the multiform, ahistorical, and impersonal reflections of 'the infinite I AM' (*BL*, ch. XVI, p. 255). Placing the creative moment, the locus of original genius, in an inaccessible time, and using the ephemeral nature of oral tradition to ensure that it can only be inaccessible and impersonal, the work becomes timeless, and timelessness is akin to infinity. What truths the poem embodies, then, are timeless and perhaps infinite; this is what Coleridge idealises as 'poem'. The disappearance of the poet within the timelessness of the poetic entity is all one with his definition of the poem as the poet (and vice versa) and the strong synthesising tendencies that are found in his philosophical system. At the same time, in creating the illusion of a distant oral past, and making sure that the readers know it is an illusion, the poet has acquired 'the right and privilege of using time and space as they exist in the imagination, obedient only to the laws which the imagination acts on'.[54]

Notes

1. Nick Groom, *The Making of Percy's 'Reliques'* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), p. 61.
2. John Donne, 'Satyre III' (*c.* 1593–97), ll. 72–73.
3. 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads: Wordsworth and Coleridge*, edd. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 249; S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. George Watson (1817; London: Dent, 1975), ch. XVI, p. 184. Subsequent references are to these edns, and will be indicated by the abbreviations *LB* and *BL* respectively.
4. Matthew Scott, 'The Return to Poetics—A Review–Essay', *Romanticism on the Net* 12 (Nov 1998), § 3. Online: Internet (1 Dec 2002): <*http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/scott.html*>.
5. Namely, those published in 1798, 1800, 1802, 1805, 1817, 1828, 1829, and 1834. Of the eighteen separate 'versions' identified by Jack Stillinger, he admits that the printed ones are 'more important than the rest'—*Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1994), p. 61). Steven Bygrave states that there were only six versions published in Coleridge's

lifetime, ignoring minor changes to the 1828 and 1829 editions—*Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Plymouth: Northcote House and the British Council, 1997; Writers and their Works series), p. 1.

6. For the sake of convenience, all line references to 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' are from E. H. Coleridge (ed.), *Coleridge: Poetical Works* (Oxford: OUP, 1969).
7. E. L. Epstein, *Language and Style* (London: Methuen, 1978), p. 5.
8. As, indeed, all literary creations claiming to be other than literary creations (e.g. epistolary/diary novels) have to ensure that they are not confused with real letters or diaries, and so on. To adapt George Steiner's observation, 'we need to know a good deal more than we do about the epistemological tactics whereby a [work of literature] […] divides itself from reality, yet, if the [writer's] authority prove sufficient, will insinuate into reality new possibilities of order and relation'—*Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 153.
9. In his 'Dedicatory Epistle' to *Ivanhoe*, ed. W. M. Parker (1830; London: Dent, 1959), pp. 17–21.
10. Stillinger, p. 61 (my emphasis).
11. To move from the vermicular to the serpentine, we may note Coleridge's much-quoted statement that poetry aims 'to make those events which in real or imagined History move on a strait line, assume to our Understandings a Circular motion—the Snake with its Tail in its Mouth'—quoted in Zachary Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), p. 54.
12. That is to say, his use of old forms of words and expressions, and of an out-dated metre constitute the bulk of his archaising, along with other, perhaps more subtle effects of paratextual formal elements such as titles, notes and the gloss of 1817 and later.
13. Mario Praz, 'Introductory Essay' to *Three Gothic Novels*, ed. Peter Fairclough (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 16.
14. Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (Burnt Mill, Harlow: Longman, 1969), pp. 13–14; Parker, Preface to *Ivanhoe*, p. v.
15. William Empson. 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner': Modern Critical Interpretations*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), p. 1.
16. Leech, p. 13.
17. David Hartley (1707–57), English philosopher and physician, whose *Observations of Man* (1749) introduced the theory of 'psychological associationism'. Hartley's ideas were fascinating to Coleridge for a few years (to the extent that Coleridge named his son Ernest Hartley, after him), especially at the time of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*. However, Coleridge moved away from Hartleian explanations, which he later perceived as too mechanistic soon after the *Lyrical Ballads* were published. See David Miall, 'I See It Feelingly', in *Coleridge's Visionary Languages: Essays in Honour of J. B. Beer*, edd. Tim Fulford and Morton Paley (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), p. 153.
18. Any period that employs spellings such as *emerauld*, *auncyent*, *yeven*, and *Marinere* would definitely display much more frequent use of 'excrescent' final *e* and many other spellings not represented in the poem, and, most importantly, would demonstrate an irregular orthographic system, whereas in the present case there is great consistency in all spellings. In addition, in the poem we find that all second-person verbs terminate with the old *–st* endings whereas use of third-person *–th*

is variable, which did not occur in the development of the modern inflexional morphology; on the contrary, *–st* was lost earlier than *–th*, and so texts in the intermediate period demonstrate a variable presence of the second-person ending while continuing to use the *–th* spelling consistently for third-person singular verbs. At the same time, the extensive use of periphrastic *do* belongs to a period later than that of the regular *–st* and *–th* verbal endings.

19. Empson, p. 23; Bygrave, p. 18. However, Richard Holmes speaks of the 'resonant archaisms of the *Mariner*'—*Coleridge's Early Visions* (London: Penguin, 1989), p. 170.
20. In the *Critical Review*, vol. 27; quoted in *LB*, 318.
21. In the *British Critic*, vol. 11; quoted in *LB*, 324.
22. See, e.g., M. H. Abrams's discussion in his essay on Wordsworth and Coleridge's diction, and especially his explanation that for Coleridge, '[t]he supreme imaginative passages—the poetry of a poem—are no longer regarded as the disposition and adjustment of words […] They are regarded as acts of the mind in which the universe of sense is created anew and made into a whole compounded of subject and object ("the idea, with the image"), by a process blending both "the natural and the artificial". And the unity […] becomes in "poetry" a unity by organic synthesis, in which the parts lose their identity by the nature of their relation to the other parts and to the whole'—*The Correspondent Breeze: Essays on English Romanticism* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1984), p. 16.
23. See, e.g., Alun Jones and William Tydeman, *Coleridge, 'The Ancient Mariner' and Other Poems: A Casebook* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1973), p. 15; Leader, p. 122.
24. Brett and Jones, while noting in their Introduction that 'the archaic spellings were all changed' (*LB*, xlii), state in their note that Coleridge made changes '*towards* the removal of archaisms of vocabulary, spelling, and of quaintness of style' (*LB*, 274; my emphasis).
25. A longer list of such excisions can be obtained from Stillinger, p. 63.
26. *Thee*, *thou* and *–st* verbal endings, although still a part of some speakers' spoken dialect at this period, were not a part of Coleridge's; nor were *–th* spellings a usual part of his written habits, as his notebooks show (there is only one instance of a *–th* ending in the notebooks covering this period, and it is crossed out and altered in STC's hand. See *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), vol. 1: 1794–1804; entry 1.4: ' I will show ~~thou~~ you the card'.
27. Though 'wel-a-day' (l. 139) was respelled as 'well-a-day' in 1802 and all subsequent printed versions.
28. MS corrections and additions attributed to STC and the gloss of 1817 and subsequent editions show no great effort to avoid these sorts of archaism after the first list of corrections for the 1800 edition. There is, for instance, the case of the archaic (or possibly dialect) form *clomb* (l. 209) which appears (as *clombe*) in 1798 and 1800 and remains (respelled 'clomb') in the subsequent versions, including a MS a in spite of substantial rewriting of the three stanzas surrounding it. The *OED* notes that 'From Spenser and his contemporaries *clomb* passed into later poetry, and occasionally appears in prose, especially in writers familiar with the strong clam, *clom* or *clum* in dialect use.
29. At the same time, the use of old-fashioned language and references to the past in an equally old-fashioned sub-genre is just the sort of decorum that Coleridge

required of 'legitimate' poetry—i.e. poetry in which the parts 'mutually support and explain each other' (*BL*, ch. XIV, p. 172).

30. 'Innovation and Strangeness; or, Dialogue and Monologue in the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*', *Romanticism on the Net* 9 (Feb 1998), § 4. Online: Internet (1 Dec 2002): <*http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/innovationsLB.html*>.
31. Dani Zweig, *Early Child Ballads*, § 4. Online: Internet (1 Dec 2002): <*http://www.pbm.com/~lindah/ballads/early_child*>. 'Love', Ellen Irwin', and 'Lucy Gray', are the other poems that have ballad-like qualities in metre, and/or subject matter, but only 'The Ancient Mariner' demonstrates a combination of what has become known as ballad metre, subject matter, construction, and features of old writing. See also *LB*, xxiv–xxv.
32. See Holmes, pp. 6 and 172.
33. See Groom, pp. 24 and 41. By the eighteenth century, the ballad already had a poor reputation in canonical terms, the term ballad being 'half-pejorative, signifying a verse that could not sing for itself but needed to be carried by a tune' (Groom, p. 22). The contents of even non-political ballads were scarcely to the taste of the opinion-makers, either, being mostly 'eating, drinking, fornicating, singing, and killing' (p. 59).
34. Zweig, § 11.
35. Only one Rowley work was published in Chatterton's lifetime (in 1769), the forgeries were revealed in 1777 and 1778 and editions of the poems of 'Thomas Rowley' published in 1778 and 1782.
36. Holmes, p. 46.
37. 'I do not think that there is an able writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the *Reliques*; I know that it is so with my friends; and for myself I am happy on this occasion to make a public avowal of my own'—quoted in *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, 18 vols (1907–21), vol. 10: The Age of Johnson, 'The Literary Influence of the Middle Ages'. Online: Internet (1 Dec 2002): <*http://www.cf.ac.uk/bartleby.com/220/1014.html*>.
38. See e.g. Bloom (ed.), p. 1; Jones and Tydeman, p. 13.
39. See Trevor Jones, *Street Literature in Birmingham: A History of Broadside and Chapbook* (Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic, 1970), p. 9. Scott's *Last Minstrel* sold 44,000 copies in twenty-five years, thus placing itself in S. H. Steinberg's list of best-sellers—see *Five Hundred Years of Printing* (1955; 3rd edn, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 343.
40. Frances Ferguson, 'Coleridge and the Deluded Reader: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*', in Bloom (ed.), p. 67.
41. If so, then he may have changed his mind. The deletion of the subtitle in the marked copy of 1800 that was used by the printer of 1802 is 'perhaps by Wordsworth'—Stillinger, p. 64.
42. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane Lewin (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), p. 39.
43. 'Wordsworth's name is nothing—to a large number of persons mine stinks' (quoted in Holmes, p. 188).
44. In *The Morning Post* of 13 April 1798.
45. Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1765) claimed to be a story found, in a black-letter printed text of 1529, 'in the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of

England'—'Preface to The First Edition', in *Three Gothic Novels*, ed. Fairclough, p. 39.

46. *LB*, 8 (original emphasis).
47. Empson, p. 24.
48. *The Poem and the Book: Interpreting Collections of Romantic Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 52. One must be careful, nevertheless, not to blame Wordsworth more than he deserves: Coleridge took on the editing of the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* and, one assumes, could have added his name to the title page had he so wished, and removed or insisted on alteration to Wordsworth's note. Throughout the period of this editing Coleridge was the dominant part of the friendship, being full of energy while Wordsworth was slightly depressed and lacking in energy. The issue of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's responsibility for the text as promoted by the Preface is discussed in Genette, p. 184, who says that Coleridge was 'strenuously shoved aside by his distinguished colleague' in the Preface, a view to which many scholars are pleased to subscribe, but which is probably somewhat misleading, as the situation seems to have been more complex.
49. Stillinger, p. 72, provides a brief overview of the major critical assessments of the gloss.
50. Ferguson, p. 66.
51. See Groom, pp. 78–79, and 147.
52. Coleridge's enjoyment in this sort of subterfuge is also found in his anonymous poem in the *Morning Post,* gleefully referred to and reproduced in *BL* (ch. 1, p. 15, n. 1) as a satire of the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, but in fact originally published in imitation of Pye—see Leader, p. 123. This playfulness is also manifested in the fake letter written to himself in *BL,* urging him to stop his philosophical review (ch. XIII, pp. 164–65).
53. 'The Marginal Gloss', in Bloom (ed.), p. 77 (my emphasis).
54. Elliott B. Gose, jun., who ascribes this to *Biographia Literaria*, referring perhaps to STC's definition of Fancy as 'a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space' (ch. XIII, p. 167)—see 'Coleridge and the Luminous Gloom: An Analysis of the "Symbolical Language" in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*', in Bloom (ed.), p. 7.

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