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**The religious symbolism in the work of S.T.Coleridge *The Rime of
the Ancient Mariner***

Náboženská symbolika v díle S.T.Coleridge *Píseň o starém námořníku*

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I could not forget Rasmus, my significant other. Thanks for being on my side.

Abstract

Since *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was published in 1798, the disputes about its interpretation have been held. Some of the critics described it as a poem about morality; the other voices turned it into the political parallel. This thesis aims to show a different approach, namely through the religious overtones. The theoretical part consists of a general introduction to the interpretation of the symbols and of the insight into Romanticism and life of the author. The practical part includes a detailed analysis of the poem and interpretation of symbols. The thesis will also compare the author's view of certain aspects with those of his contemporaries. A comprehensive view of the extraordinary work meaning a significant milestone in the history of English literature and indicating a shift to modern poetry will be achieved by using several resources.

Anotace

Od první publikace *Písně o starém námořníku* v roce 1798 se stále vedou spory o jejím výkladu. Někteří kritici jí označují za báseň o morálce, další hlasy se přiklánějí k politické paralele. Tato diplomová práce si klade za cíl upozornit na odlišný přístup, a sice skrze náboženský podtext. Teoretická část se skládá z obecného úvodu k výkladu symbolů, z náhledu do období romantismu a života autora. Praktická část zahrnuje podrobný rozbor básně a výklad jednotlivých symbolů. V rámci diplomové práce bude také porovnán autorův pohled na určité aspekty s pohledy jeho současníků. Díky využití více zdrojů bude docíleno komplexního pohledu na neobyčejné dílo znamenající významný mezník v dějinách anglické literatury a signalizující posun k moderní poezii.

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1. General introduction

During the second year of my university studies I got to know the work of the great poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. After writing a short essay concerning his best known poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* it was suggested to me to elaborate on the topic. The deeper I became acquainted with the author's ideas, the more thrilled I got about them.

Coleridge surprises me constantly with his timelessness. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he reflects the outside world with a realistic view¹ that governed the enlightened 18th century, but at the same time he does not try to hide his strong faith. The way he combines these two contradictory areas makes me, a religious person living in the modern society, read his lines again and again. I remain in awe of his courage and determination to get himself out there and speak so passionately of need of God, though he was not always fully understood. Moreover, his ability to find the balance between deity and everyday life puts ordinary, many times discussed topics, into a completely new light and reveals unique meanings in them. And this is just the phenomenon that will be examined in the following pages.

The thesis is going to be built on the life and work of Coleridge himself and some of his ideas will be compared to those of other authors. After a general introduction into the era of Romanticism and the theory of symbols, close analysis

¹ see the chapter 1.3. on the theory of symbols

of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* will follow. My aim is to prove that this extraordinary piece of work is more than just a poem; in my opinion this is Coleridge's private confession of his relationship to God. The relationship that was, it is to be noted, very unusual and looks even nowadays quite controversial – a son of an Anglican vicar turned to Unitarian, and even Necessitarian, for almost two decades and came back with great enthusiasm, but also with own perspective. That was Coleridge; not possible to be pigeonholed, in the name of the movement which he belonged to. The movement to which failure was nobler than success and which devotees were able to excuse a great many, if it happened out of passion and wholehearted belief. As Traill says:

There is, I may assume, no need at the present day to discuss the true place in English literature of this unique product of the human imagination. One is bound, however, to attempt to correlate and adjust it to the rest of the poet's work, and this, it must be admitted, is a most difficult piece of business. Never was there a poem so irritating to a critic of the "pigeon-holing" variety. (p. 48)

It is a well-known fact that emotions and faith opposed the rationalism in Romanticism and someone may sense highlighting the aspect of faith as redundant. I believe that we need to see the whole picture first, in order to evaluate it correctly. John Keats rejected Christian faith and replaced it with the belief in art and nature². Percy Bysshe Shelley saw the truth in the doctrine of the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau who claimed that people are good by

² 'John Keats and Christianity'

nature but corrupted by the society. George Gordon Byron believed in freedom and responsibility for his own life and is regarded as one of the first Satanists. Goethe “did not accept the doctrines of any one of the established Christian churches.”³ Victor Hugo refused the service of priest in his last hour, because his “religion was not the Catholic religion”⁴ and “the question, whether Hugo’s religion was the Christian religion, if it was not the Catholic, must also be answered negatively.” (ibid., ix)

The religious faith was clearly a complicated issue in Romanticism. In *The Roots of Romanticism* Berlin is naming several great Romantics, but only to one of them he admits unshakeable faith. That man’s name is Johann Georg Hamann and Berlin says that “his belief in God and in the Creation were ... precisely the same ... as belief in his egg and his glass of water.” (p. 41) Besides Hamann, Heine was also connecting Romanticism and the religion when he said that it is “the passion-flower sprung from the blood of Christ ...” (ibid., 15). Nonetheless, for Coleridge “Christianity is not a Theory, or a speculation, but a Life. Not a Philosophy of Life, but a Life and a Living Process ...” (Newlyn, 195)

³ ‘Goethe’s Religion’, *From Journal of the History of Ideas*, p. 188

⁴ ‘Victor Hugo’s Religion as Drawn from His Writings’, *From Transactions and Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America*, p. viii

1.1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born as the tenth child of the Reverend John Coleridge and his second wife, Anne Bowden. From the early childhood Samuel's interests were directed towards his future career when, by his own words, he "took no pleasure in boyish sports"⁵ and instead, by the age of three, had read the Bible. Exaggerated it sounds, the religion played an important role in his life from the very beginning, since his father acted as an Anglican vicar. Until 1791, when he entered the Jesus College in Cambridge, he was about to follow in his father's footsteps. However, actions took different course during his studies. He got involved in the political life, eagerly followed the events after the French Revolution and kept a close eye on the trial against a social reformer William Fend, who openly criticized the Church. The influence of William Fend combined with Coleridge's rebellious mind changed the direction of his ways of thinking towards the Unitarianism. We read in Piper that in December 1794 Coleridge "proclaimed himself a Unitarian Christian and a believer in the automatism of man." (1959, p. 48) Later the very same month he wrote into a letter: "I am a complete necessitarian..." (ibid., p. 49) During 1796 – 1797 he was acting as a Unitarian preacher and even after he stayed devoted to this belief for almost next two decades.

⁵Coleridge's letters, No. 208'

Since Coleridge's religious beliefs immensely influenced his work, it is important to make the differences between the Anglicanism and Unitarianism clear. Both of them belong among the Christian movements. Anglicanism comes out of the Church of England. It worships the one true God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit⁶. This forms the very first of *The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, the doctrine of the Church of England issued in 1563:

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.⁷

On the contrary, Unitarians understand God as one person and they reject the idea of the Trinity for not being monotheistic. They see Jesus Christ as a man – an exceptional one, chosen by God and doing many miracles, though just a man. As such, his sacrifice would not be enough to appease God which is why Unitarians reject the idea of “the vicarious payment of a debt”⁸ as well. For Coleridge, the idea of Christ's atonement was especially repulsive. He perceived God as the infinite goodness and could not accept that the one he called Love would want anyone to experience such a terrible torment. Furthermore, Unitarians acknowledge everyone's free will and one's responsibility for his actions which would make the sacrifice useless. Piper says that Coleridge did not preach the Lord's Supper while serving in Shrewsbury and did not take the Communion even

⁶ 'Being an Anglican'

⁷ 'Articles I to VIII: The Catholic Faith'

⁸ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, chapter X.

after his return to the Anglican Church for those are the reminders of the Christ's sacrifice (1987, p. 25). For the time being, Unitarianism was therefore more morally acceptable for him.

In addition to the free will of everyone, Unitarians believe that people are capable of both good and evil. They deny the doctrine of predestination as well as the concept of original sin. The Anglican Church recognizes original sin as the sin of Adam that led to his Fall and tarnished the whole humankind, while "Coleridge makes it clear that he does not take the story of the Fall to be an historical event: he takes Adam to mean the human race, and considers Adam's Fall to express the universal condition of mankind"⁹, meaning "the seduction of the rational will by desire" (Hedley, 259). Coleridge understood original sin as "evil which originates in the will" (ibid., 254), which gives us clue for how to read the killing of the Albatross in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The Unitarianistic idea of One Life is to be found in the poem as well. This idea is best described in Coleridge's *Religious Musings*, first published in 1796:

There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind, /
Omnific. His most holy name is Love.¹⁰

Religious Musings was written while Coleridge served as a Unitarian priest. It presents his religious and political thoughts and his perception of Unitarianism. Unitarians see God in all creations around themselves. Coleridge got evidently

⁹ Hedley, *Coleridge, philosophy and religion...*, p. 261

¹⁰ 'Religious Musings'

inspired by Joseph Priestley, one of the major figures of the English Unitarianism, who wrote, that “the enlightened see God in every thing and may be said to see every thing in God.” (Ulmer, 380) The influence is clear not only in the above stated *Religious Musings* but also in Coleridge’s quote from 1802: “Nature has her proper interest, and he will know what it is who believes and feels that everything has a life of its own, and that we are all *One Life*.” (Bloom, 18)

Through Coleridge’s works, diaries, correspondence and the other documented statements we are able to trace the changes of his mindset. We know, he became Unitarian in about 1791 and came back to the Church of England in 1805. Between 1794 and 1800 we speak of the most intense period when he would lean towards the extreme form of Unitarianism called Necessitarianism. This school is based on the absolute surrender to God. Necessitarians are convinced that man is just a tool in God’s hands and has no free will and no responsibility for his actions. That also excludes the issue of guilt. We can read in Wu’s *Companion to Romanticism*: “Guilt is out of question ... I am a Necessarian, and of course deny the possibility of it.” (p. 137) Ulmer is quoting Coleridge on the issue of responsibility, saying that people are “not being free Agents, and therefore not more responsible Beings than the brute Beasts.” (p. 382) Unitarianistic theme of One Life remains even in this period and it reappears frequently in Coleridge’s poems. In *The Eolian Harp* from 1795 he thinks that “it should have been impossible / not to love all things in a world so fill’d” (Coleridge, 2009, p. 54). Just a couple of lines later he asks:

And what if all of animated nature/
Be but organic Harps diversly fram’d, /

That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps/
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze, /
At once the Soul of each, and God of all?¹¹

This poem distinctly influenced the American Transcendentalist movement and particularly its leader, Ralph Waldo Emerson. Coleridge's idea of One Life transformed into Emerson's Over Soul, which Cavanaugh explains as "a unity within which each man's particular being is contained and made one with all other" (p. 25). Transcendentalists believed in the inherent goodness of people and nature. A harmonious relationship with nature and the Over Soul may be achieved, as Emerson's later poetry suggests, by all people willing to hear the message through pure sources, such as the Aeolian harp. Cavanaugh says that Emerson sees the harp as more than just an instrument, but a symbol of beauty, wisdom, and divine harmony (p. 26).

In *Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement* Coleridge describes a landscape that is close to his heart:

It seem'd like Omnipresence! God, methought, /
Had build him there a Temple: the whole World/
Seem'd imag'd in its vast circumference:¹²

¹¹ Ibid., p. 55

¹² Ibid., p. 57

Similarly, *Frost at Midnight* from 1798 is about the beauties of nature and about

That eternal language, which thy God /
Utters, who from eternity doth teach /
Himself in all, and all things in himself.¹³

For Coleridge, God was “nature’s Essence, Mind and Energy” as Piper states (1987, p. 25) and nature was “full of divine energy and the divine presence.” (ibid., 26) The theme of One Life, the unity of man, nature and God and need of universal love, was a lifelong interest of Coleridge and is crucial for *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Frost at Midnight was written not long after *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and in the last line we can feel that Coleridge was still under the influence of the Unitarian belief. However, Wu says that already in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* he was preparing for “later rejection of the mechanic Necessitarianism ... and his eventual return to Trinitarianism ...” (p. 67) The very same month that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was finished, Coleridge wrote: “I believe ... in Original Sin; that from our mothers’ wombs our understandings are darkened; and even where our understandings are in the Light, that our organization is depraved, and our volitions imperfect.” (Stokes, 93) That meant an impressive shift from the shared Unitarian view voiced by Priestley that original sin was

An arbitrary and unreasonable partiality in favour of some of the human race, and the most cruel and unjust severity towards others, as condemning

¹³ Ibid., p. 61

them to everlasting torments for crimes of which they could not be guilty, and expecting of them that which [God had] not enabled them to do.¹⁴

In 1794 Coleridge befriended Robert Southey and met his sister-in-law, Sara Fricker. They got married the following year but marriage was not happy and the couple eventually got separated. Thanks to his rhetorical abilities, Coleridge started his career of a radical lecturer, who did not avoid the topics as politics, religion or slave trade. It was just during one of the political lectures in Bristol when he met William Wordsworth.

The friendship with Wordsworth was very deep and significantly influenced one and the other. This relationship belongs among the most important and most fruitful of the English as well as the world literature. During just a couple of years the best Coleridge's works came into existence, including *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Traill uses an eloquent metaphor when speaking about the works written in this period, saying that "to pass from the poems written by Coleridge within these years to those of later origin is like passing from among the green wealth of summer foliage into the well-nigh naked woods of later autumn." (p. 39)

Hand in hand with popularity came also a certain amount of pressure. Coleridge was not able to handle everything on his own and started to use substantial amounts of laudanum as a treatment of his anxieties. Unhappy marriage with Sara, the gradual isolation from friends and growing addiction to laudanum and alcohol

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 97

led to the breakdown and Coleridge decided to change climate. As a place of recovery he chose Malta. That was where the Unitarianistic era definitely ended.

Coleridge was gradually and publicly distancing himself from the Unitarian concept. His quotes like: "To say that all is God is to deny God." (Newlyn, 195), could not be interpreted differently. Even though Piper says that

he [Coleridge] was converted to a belief in the Trinity in a sudden rush "at 1.30 p.m. on 12 February, 1805." ... The way it happened can be seen clearly in a note of 1805 that seems to mark his first reading of Schelling, in which he speaks of himself as seeking in objects of nature for a symbolic language for his own innate ideas which, even when it seems new, is "Logos, the Creator! and the Evolver!" (1987, p. 23)

What brought him back to the roots of Anglicanism was just realization of his own weakness. He felt urge for saviour who would forgive his sins and redeem him. "My faith is simply this," he said, "that there is an original corruption in our nature ... from the consequences of which, we may be redeemed by Christ." (Stokes, 95) Feeling guilty, despite of not believing in guilt represents in my mind a major paradox. Piper mentions that Coleridge "suffered from what can only be called neurotic guilt for most of his life (the patterns of such feelings are set early in life and in Coleridge's case there are signs in his childhood)." (1987, p. 47) Empson agrees: "He was a martyr to neurotic guilt, feeling guilty without believing he had good reason for it."¹⁵ The uncaused guilt was, evidently, what Coleridge wanted to write about in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, as Empson says (ibid., 40),

¹⁵ Bloom, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, p. 28

“because it was so familiar and such a burden to him.” (ibid., 29) Miall also points out that “Coleridge couldn’t explain the origin of the guilt which possessed him.” (p. 639) Empson notifies Coleridge’s observation from 1805:

It is a most instructive part of my life, the fact, that I have always been preyed on by some Dread, and perhaps all my faulty actions have been the consequence of some Dread or other on my mind, from fear of Pain, or Shame, not from prospect of Pleasure. So in my childhood and Boyhood the horror of being detected with a Sore head ... then a shortlived Fit of Fears from sex, then horror of Duns, and a state of struggling with madness from an incapability of hoping that I should be able to marry Mary Evans ... Then ... my marriage, constant dread in my mind respecting Mrs. Coleridge's temper, . . . since then every error I have committed has been the immediate effect of the Dread of those most shocking bad dreams—anything to prevent them. (Bloom, 29)

White says, that “the ultimate reasons for the guilt we suffer from are not to be found in any particular acts that we commit.” (p. 807) He adds:

The problem is not to discover what one has done wrong, but to determine wheter one’s guilt is either a symptom of disease or evidence of what Coleridge believed to be “the fundamental article of Christianity ... that an evil ground existed in my will, previously to any given act.” (ibid.)

Miall explains that guilt often originates in the relationship with parents, which could be Coleridge’s case. His mother is being described as a coldhearted person, who Coleridge loved and hated at the same time.

Trill tells us bit more:

Of the poet's mother we know little ... though reputed to have been a "woman of strong mind," she exercised less influence on the formation of her son's mind and character than has frequently been the case with the not remarkable mothers of remarkable men. She was ... an uneducated woman, industriously attentive to her household duties, and devoted to the care of her husband and family. Possessing none even of the most common accomplishments of her day, she had neither love nor sympathy for the display of them in others. ... she was a very good woman, though ... over careful of her sons in life (p. 2-3)

Coleridge's father influenced him much more than his mother, even though he died shortly before Samuel's ninth birthday. Miall indicates that children from 6 to 9 years of age respond worst to the loss of a parent. In this period they tend to believe the parent passed away for the lack of love on the child's part, which often results in lifelong guilt and dread of love.

Coleridge changed his view of the Holy Trinity as well. Once vigorous opponent, now claimed: "No Trinity, no God!"¹⁶; or "The Trinity ... is indeed the primary Idea, out of which all other Ideas are evolved ... it is the Mystery ... in which are hidden all the Treasures of knowledge." (Newlyn, 189).

He turned into the arch-enemy of Unitarianism and became the defender of true, orthodox Christianity. Some of his quotes on this topic would be: "Unitarianism in

¹⁶ 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge', *From the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography*

all its forms is idolatry”¹⁷ or “He, who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed by loving his own Sect or Church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all.” (ibid.) He was also outraged by people who demanded some evidence of God’s existence. Once he said: “Evidences! I am sick of the word. Make people *feel* the want of it!”¹⁸ And as a shining example for them he stated: “Not because I *understand* it; but because I *feel*, that it is not only suitable to, but needful for, my nature.” (Stokes, 100)

In the period after his stay in Malta, Coleridge avoided contact with Wordsworth and their mutual relationship was nearly destroyed when he hallucinated – under the influence of alcohol and laudanum – about the sexual affair between Wordsworth and Sara Hutchinson, a woman Coleridge fell in love with after the failure of his marriage. Gradually he was alienating from all his contemporaries and finally, in 1814, he found himself on the very bottom of the physical as well as mental powers with quickly disappearing financial sources. That was the moment when he admitted his weakness and entered the Church of England again. When a new hope arose in the form of a new generation, including Shelley, Keats and Byron, who admired Coleridge for his *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*, he started to work again. Since 1815, Coleridge was dictating what later came out as *Biographia Literaria* to John Morgan, a friend who gave him a shelter. In 1816 Coleridge came to the Highgate house and asked for the treatment of his addiction. He would stay there for the rest of his life, being genuinely happy after all those miserable years,

¹⁷ ibid.

¹⁸ ‘Coleridge the Anglican: Idea and Experience’

visited by many students and supporters, writing, lecturing and coming back to the public awareness. His addiction got under control; it was persisting, though not damaging his life. Samuel Taylor Coleridge died on 25 July 1834 of heart problems caused by destructive laudanum addiction.

1.2. Romanticism

People tend to make a link between the terms Romanticism and romance. However, this connection is misleading, since romance has in fact very little in common with Romanticism.

Wu gives us a definition saying that Romanticism is "... a literary-historical classification which labels certain writers and writings of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and the ideas characteristically found in those works (and often in later works, too)." (p. 3) 'Romantic' is the term coming from the early seventeenth century and meaning 'resembling the tales of romances'. (Wu, 5) The writers of the time would not have been flattered by this name. Blake implied that "Romantic is a bad name for the poetry of the nineteenth century because it sets you looking for a common quality when you ought to be reading or remembering individual poems." (ibid., 8) On the other hand, Shelley claims that while individual poems are the subject of literary history, we still need organizing concepts like Romanticism to think historically. (ibid., 9) Berlin agrees with him saying that "unless we do use some generalisations it is impossible to trace the course of human history." (Berlin, 20) Arthur O. Lovejoy argued that "the word 'romantic' has come to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing. It has ceased to perform the function of a verbal sign."¹⁹ Lovejoy is describing this as a "scandal of literary history and criticism." (ibid.)

¹⁹ 'The Concept or "Romanticism" in Literary History. I. The Term "Romantic" and Its Derivatives', *From Comparative Literature*, p. 1

Berlin says that “the romantic movement ... was a passionate protest against universality of any kind.” (p. 8) The highest importance was put on such values as integrity, sincerity, dedication. Romantics were not interested in knowledge, science, politics or loyalty towards the king or republic, but they were always ready to fight for their beliefs and ideals, no matter what they were.

Romanticism is full of contrasts. There is conflict and peace, even harmony with the natural order and God himself. There are exotic and mysterious places, moonlight, haunted castles, darkness and terrors, but also familiar traditions. There are historical cathedrals and young, fresh, revolutionary ideas. There is desire to live, the energy, the will, and also there are suicides and wars. There are evil powers and visions of God. Also the opinions of those, who we consider Romantics today, did differ in the time. While Stendhal said “the romantic is the modern and interesting, classicism is the old and the dull” (Berlin, 14), for Goethe Romanticism was the “disease ... the battle-cry of a school of wild poets and Catholic reactionaries ...”, whereas classicism was “strong, fresh, gay, sound ...” (ibid.). For Nietzsche it was “not a disease but a therapy, a cure ...” (ibid., 15).

The bases of the European Romantic Movement are proceeding from the French Revolution and the reactions to it. That is why the fight in all its meanings and forms is such a frequent element. It reflects the hope, resistance, visions as well as disillusion and the hopelessness of the oppressed man. William Hazlitt saw the

French Revolution as a “central historical experience of his generation.”²⁰ Due to Berlin, it was just the French Revolution, what people, frustrated for not being able to fully express their ambitions, needed to get excited enough to give rise to the movement. Another driving force was the German opposition to the French. Germans and Frenchmen spoke different languages, literally and figuratively. The French were noblemen – barons, marquises, counts and abbés. They were supporters of science, precision and generality. Berlin says that these men condemned all that was unique and through the Enlightenment doctrine killed

that which was living in human beings, appeared to offer a pale substitute for the creative energies of man, and for the whole rich world of the senses, without which it is impossible for human beings to live, to eat, to drink, to be merry, to meet other people, to indulge in a thousand and one acts without which people wither and die. (p. 43)

Germans coming from the lower class felt humiliated and infuriated by French. That might have been the reason, why the Romantic Movement did not occur in France first, although the French Revolution was one of its roots, nor did it start in England (as many historians claim), but in Germany and from there it “travelled ... to every country where there was some kind of social discontent and dissatisfaction, particularly to countries oppressed by small élites of brutal or oppressive or inefficient men ...” (Berlin, 131). Berlin is also speaking of two men who he calls ‘the true fathers of Romanticism’ and they are Germans. The first is Herder and the second one is Kant. The latter one gained this position for his ideas on human freedom. He sees the will as what distinguishes human beings from the

²⁰ Wu, *A Companion to Romanticism*, p. 23

rest of nature. People can choose if they want to follow their desires or their duties, while the other things must follow some kind of schema. For Kant, “man is man because he chooses.” (Berlin, 69) For these ideas Kant can be regarded as a father of Romanticism, even though he hated it, as Berlin tells us. Kant “detested every form of extravagance, fantasy ... any form of exaggeration, mysticism, vagueness, confusion ... ” (ibid., 68) and was also a great admirer of the science (ibid.).

In England the Romantic Movement was expressed in the most passionate and influencing way. Nowadays we recognize two generations of the English authors of the period. The first generation Romantics, known as ‘the Lake Poets’, includes Coleridge, Wordsworth and Robert Southey. They are all connected to the Lake District in Northwestern England. The first generation is characterized by shift from Neoclassicism. The change is most notable in the usage of the themes of common life against the life of nobility used in Neoclassicism. The first generation poets also put great emphasis on the imagination and they glorify nature. The second generation Romantics, namely Byron, Shelley and Keats, were definitely influenced by the preceding generation; however, their aims and motifs were different. In the first place, they wanted to distinguish themselves. They did so by challenging the works of their predecessors, by trying to be better. Their goal was not to impress the other authors, but readers; the social issues were frequently used, such as criticism of the Reign of Terror, expressing the disillusionment over the twist after the revolution or rebellion against all forms of an institution. Byron himself might be seen as a major figure of the entire period – the term ‘Byronism’ is almost

synonymous with the concept of Romanticism and the work of French Romantics, with Hugo in the first line, was based for the big part on his legacy.

Coleridge not only belongs to the famous 'Lake School', but also into 'the Big Six' together with Wordsworth, Byron, Blake, Keats and Shelley; this fact only strengthens his privileged position. It is very obvious that not vainly was he called "the giant among dwarfs"²¹ by his contemporaries. Though he is received as a great poet and identified as the founding father of modern literary criticism, it has to be said that some negative comments to Coleridge appeared even in his time. After publishing *Biographia Literaria*, Byron let himself to be heard: Explaining metaphysics to the nation / I wish he would explain his explanation." (Newlyn, 7) And it was Hazlitt who made such a remark the other time that "he might ... have been a very considerable poet – instead of which he has chosen to be a bad philosopher and a worse politician ..." (ibid.). Also *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* caused a noticeable disturbance and confusion. Southey's review from October 1798 represents a typical reaction

This piece appears to us perfectly original in style as well as in story. Many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful; but in connection they are absurd or unintelligible We do not sufficiently understand the story to analyse it. It is a Dutch attempt at German sublimity. Genius has here been employed in producing a poem of little merit.²²

²¹ *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Other Poems of the Romantic Era*, p.10

²² Hill, *A Coleridge Companion...*, p. 153

But Southey was not the only one; in fact, the poem divided the literary world into two camps. On one side, defending Coleridge, there were people like Charles Lamb, who saw him keeping “the mind ... in a placid state of wonderments” (McGann, 36), on the other side there were numerous opponents, among others Southey or even Wordsworth, who, though the dearest friend, was not particularly happy with this piece:

From what I can gather it seems that *The Ancyent Marinere* has upon the whole been an injury to the volume, I mean that the old words and the strangeness of it have deterred readers from going on. If the volume should come to a second edition I would put in its place some little things which would be more likely to suit the common taste. (ibid.)

Eventually the poem was not replaced, but it was modified instead.

Romanticism is not only the philosophical and artistic movement. It is also a kind of the lifestyle. This trend first appeared on the twist of the 18th and the 19th centuries and it comes out of the English Gothic novel and the ideas of the German literary movement ‘*Sturm und Drang*’. As for the Gothic world, “there were two sources of Gothic imagery ..., Percy’s *Reliques* and the Gothic novels.” (Piper, 1987, p. 27) These novels, adds Piper, “contain powerful daemonic and sometimes demonic forces, and such forces can pose important questions, particularly in a world where God expresses himself as energy.” (ibid.) There was a huge increase in the publishing of Gothic fiction during Romanticism. The first novel in the genre

was *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole.²³ However, Gothic was applied on the architecture a long time before that and at the period it was popular to adjust the manors and the gardens in the Gothic style. Romanticism represents the opposite of the enlightened thoughts; in contrast to the rationality and desire for knowledge it puts the sense and imagination. The new trend also orders to free oneself from the classicist affectation and to start asking questions about the nature, one's heart and soul. We talk about so called 'renaissance of wonder' (Stříbrný, 365). Speaking with D. C. Parker: "Classicism is routine, romanticism is liberty."²⁴ Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer²⁵ is explaining that while classicism is connected to the past, Romanticism tends to progress. To support this statement, she quotes Stendhal, who wrote in 1823:

Romanticism is the art of presenting to people the literary works which, in the actual state of their habits and beliefs, are likely to give them the greatest possible pleasure. Classicism, on the contrary, presents them with the literature that gave the greatest pleasure to their great grandfathers. (ibid., 20)

Speaking of pleasure and aesthetics, Romanticism is connected to the term 'sublime'. Nicola Trott²⁶ says it induces the sense of height and signifies the highest in a particular category. The term has been used by Wordsworth to describe "the thrill of mountain summits" (ibid.). Coleridge ascribed the roots of the sublime to religion and was convinced about close relation between sublimity and the

²³ Wu, *A Companion to Romanticism*, p. 345

²⁴ 'Reflections on Romanticism', *From The Musical Quarterly*, p. 307

²⁵ 'Romanticism: Breaking the Canon', *From Art Journal*, p. 18

²⁶ Wu, *A Companion to Romanticism*, p. 77

symbol: "No object of Sense is sublime in itself; but only so far as I make it a symbol of some Idea. The circle is a beautiful figure in itself; it becomes sublime, when I contemplate eternity under that figure." (ibid., 84) Stokes tells us that "the sublime was originally a rhetorical category: the highest and most powerful language." (17) In his words, the example of archetypally sublime text would be Milton's *Paradise Lost*, "not just because it represented the unrepresentable divine, but also because of the genre, linguistic effect and daring use of figure and personification." (ibid.) Stokes says that sublimity can be found even in the images of terror and obscurity, as it is in the case of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in opposite to the lyrical sublimity in transcendental mode used, for example, in *Frost at Midnight*.

Literature has not only been the mirror of the society any more, now it has become the torch (*translation of the author; Stříbrný, 365*). A romantic character usually reflects its creator and quite often it used to be the source of inspiration for readers. Writers could rely on the readers' knowledge of the Greek philosophy and the Bible and profusely built their texts on these pillars. Mary Wedd says that "the twin forms of thought of Greece and of the Bible provided the basis of culture."²⁷ Even Coleridge wrote in 1802: "If there be any two subjects which have in the very depth of my nature interested me, it has been the Hebrew and Christian Theology and the Theology of Plato." (ibid.) The great influence of the King James Bible can be traced at the Romantic authors; even though some of them refused its doctrine, as Keats, who declared on his death-bed: "... I cannot

²⁷ Wu, *A Companion to Romanticism*, p. 62

believe in your book – the Bible.” (ibid., 70), it had some kind of impact on each of them. Wedd claims:

There can be no doubt that concern with religious questions was of very deep importance to writers of the Romantic period and it is impossible to read their work adequately without taking it into account. They confronted in their own lives and expressed in their writing the basic spiritual experiences and theoretical problems of a religious view of the world. Whether they felt closely in touch with a higher presence, or whether they were aware only of an obligation to defend the freedom of others, there was a sense of aspiration among them. Equally, they came face to face with the insoluble problem of evil and tried to assimilate it into their philosophy. (ibid., 70 – 71)

For Berlin, the main importance of Romanticism is to be found in the way it transformed the thoughts of the entire Western world (p. 1). He says that even nowadays its results are not only noticeable, but experienced in the everyday life in the form of liberalism, toleration and decency. (p. 147)

As previously mentioned, Coleridge, and thus Romanticism, significantly influenced the American Transcendentalist movement. We read in Gura that most Transcendentalists were New Englanders with connection to Harvard College and Boston; they were associated with Unitarianism and they leaned towards German Idealism. Frederic Henry Hedge says that the movement started like “occasional meetings of likeminded men and women.” (Gura, *in* Preface) The *Arcturus* magazine comments that “the new Boston school of philosophy held no very precise doctrines, did not have any one bond of union and unite differ.” (ibid.) The

Transcendentalist's message, as the one of Coleridge, was more ridiculed than understood, yet it influenced American culture. O. B. Frothingham says that the movement

though local in activity, limited in scope, brief in duration, engaging but a comparatively small number of individuals, left a broad and deep trace on ideas and institutions. It affected thinkers, swayed politicians, guided moralists, inspired philanthropists, created reformers. (ibid.)

J. A. Saxton dares to say, that "the very existence of the United States is transcendental for its right to be a nation was broadly and unequivocally legitimated upon the instinctive truth of the principle of the equality and brotherhood of universal man." (ibid.)

1.3. Theory of symbols

In his *Collected Papers* from 1932, C. S. Peirce stated: “The word ‘symbol’ has so many meanings that it would be an injury to language to add a new one.”²⁸ Throughout the history, the symbol has appeared in a legion of different contexts as if everyone would need to speak up to the topic. Surprisingly enough, nobody is really speaking about the nature of the symbol. Now and then, we can only trace some passing references, as in Nagel, who says: “By a symbol I understand any occurrence ... usually linguistic in status, which is taken to signify something else.”²⁹ Also Edgar Wind³⁰ is convinced that “symbol ... speaks by allusion; it says one thing and means another....” To the opposition we could stand the proposition of D. G. James: “The symbol is not something which stands for another thing; it is the way the object is given precision to our minds ... it is a way of seeing the object which comes to clarity for us only in the form of symbol.”³¹

It has been said above there are many types of symbols. Berlin divides them into two categories – conventional symbols and “symbols of a somewhat different kind.” (Berlin, 100) Conventional symbols were invented by society and usually a set of rules is connected to their meaning and usage; as an example could serve the traffic lights. As we read in Berlin that the doctrine of symbolism is the central one of the whole Romantic Movement, we do not really think about such a kind of symbols. “What these people meant by symbolism was the use of symbols for

²⁸ Swiatecka, *The idea of the symb*, p. 7

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.8

³⁰ ‘The Eloquence of Symbols’, *From The Burlington Magazine*, p. 349

³¹ *ibid.*

what could be expressed only symbolically and could not be expressed literally.” (ibid.) For Romantics everything relates, with “... the finite standing for the infinite, the material standing for the immaterial, the dead standing for the living, space standing for time, words standing for something which is in itself wordless ...” (ibid., 104) and altogether it creates the notion of depth that is fundamental for all their works.

Probably the most common symbol is the one for thinking, a word. We can argue that Nagel’s statement only fits for words as a way of referring to an object. On the other hand, James’s declaration takes into account the existence of the whole variety of symbols. As an example, we can think about logo of a sports club. If we are fans of the club, we connect the logo with a particular team and seeing it, we know exactly what it stands for. But some of us are not interested in sport and we are not able to match the logo with the team. Even though we still understand the function of the logo, which confirms that a symbol can act individually.

For Coleridge, symbol is what enables a man to ‘see’ (Swiatecka, 57). He says the “symbol is a sign included in the idea which it represents; that is, an actual part chosen to represent the whole ...” (ibid., 50) And he adds even more:

Symbol ... always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and ... abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative. The other are but empty echoes which the fancy arbitrarily associates with

apparitions of matter, less beautiful but not less shadowy that the sloping orchard or hillside pasturefield seen in the transparent lake below.³²

That is why the words are always symbolic for him. One could say that Coleridge would tend to James's statement. This is also supported by his other thoughts about the symbol. Daniel Fried noted that for Coleridge the symbol "was allowing the general to shine through the particular."³³ That is where the symbol is differing from allegory; in case of the latter one the hidden reality is not clear. The distinction between these two is one of the central problems of Romanticism. Berezin wrote an article *On Symbol and Allegory*³⁴ where he refers to Schelling and his elaborated distinction. For Schelling "the meaning of the symbol is to be found in its form; it concretizes ideas. Allegory, on the other hand, means a thing other than itself ...; it is merely a sign "pointing" towards the ideas."

However, in both cases our knowledge of these 'pointing signs' is essential. In *Symbols or Concepts?*, Ehrenberg is speaking about mathematics, but when he says: "Mathematical language is a convenient shorthand only when the symbols and concepts have become familiar. Until then, using symbols to convey the concepts tends to be counter-productive."³⁵, we can totally relate to it.

³² 'The Statesman's Manual', *From The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, p. 489

³³ 'The Politics of Coleridgean Symbol', *From Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, p. 777

³⁴ *From The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, p. 202

³⁵ *From Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series D (The Statistician)*, p. 191

The English philosopher Joseph Butler claimed that “everything is what it is and not another thing.”³⁶ In much the same spirit, Coleridge believed that the most essential aspect of the symbol is its ability to point beyond itself and to keep its concreteness at the same time. In *The idea of the symbol* we can read that

Coleridge was ... certain that the man of common sense is right who holds that what he sees is the table itself ... not the phantom of a table from which he may argumentatively deduce the reality of a table which he does not see. (Swiatecka, 32)

His ideas seems very modern and ahead of his time; even more if we compare the preceding lines to those of Carlyle, who claimed couple decades later the “symbol is not ... the representation of what creation is ‘really’ like ... but a reflection only of a – possibly mistaken – belief and feeling about it: the projection of a suspect, subjective consciousness only.” (ibid., 88) It is no wonder that during the last two centuries it was just the concept of the symbol that has become one of Coleridge’s most influential contributions to the discourse of literary criticism.

Coleridge believed that “nature and the Bible were two forms of the Word of God ...” (Piper, 1987, p. 9) and the natural and biblical symbolism were his lifelong interests. There was an old mystical belief, shared by several romantics that the voice of God speaks through nature. For Coleridge the religious symbolism was a way how to describe the basic feelings as “despair, isolation, joy, love, fear, agony, guilt ... and release.” (ibid., 10) All of those we will find in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as well as “the ecstasy of discovering God in the beauty of the forms of

³⁶ Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, p. ix

nature ..." (ibid.) Edward J. Machle³⁷ states few connecting elements according to which we can describe a religious symbol. He recognizes three of those elements: limited publicity, meaningfulness within a group of believers and high importance for the group. When applying these criteria, Machle finds three types of religious symbols. The first one is a ritual, then a myth and the last is a paradox. While the two former ones are quite clear, meaning of a paradox might be vague. We speak of a paradox when we put several contradictory or illogical statements next to each other. As Slater puts in *Paradox and Nirvana*:

Philosophy is fascinated by the Clear Idea. Paradox clings to the Confused Image – perhaps, also, to the Confused Idea. It discerns either that all has not been said or that all cannot be said. As against primitive Myth, it insists that the ultimate religious term is beyond familiarity; as against logic, it insists that it is beyond definition. (ibid., 168)

An example of a Christian paradox is the Trinity; one God in three persons.

Tillich considers using of the ordinary, literal, non-symbolic language inappropriate when speaking of God. (Ford, 104) He defines religious symbol as an entity designating God and/or being-itself. (ibid.) We read in Ford that the core of Tillich's thoughts lies in the statement that "Every religious symbol negates itself in its literal meaning, but it affirms itself in its self-transcending meaning." (ibid.) Tillich defines three types of religious symbols: God, symbols characterizing God's nature and actions and "natural and historical objects that are drawn as holy objects..." (ibid., 113)

³⁷ 'Symbols in Religion', *From Journal of Bible and Religion*, p. 164

Piper tells us that “the most important element of a literary symbol is the feeling ...” (1987, p. 16) And this is where Coleridge comes to the scene with his best. Unlike his contemporaries, he did not provide any explanation to his metaphors. As I. A. Richards stated, “we can neither recapture what his insight gave him nor develop it further, unless, in new terms perhaps, we make a similar effort of thought.”³⁸ Coleridge essentially bequeathed the readers only to the powers of their own imagination. That can be iffy, since the reader is still more and more used to be presented with clear texts. But the beauty of Romantic poetry is just in being “wild, impracticable, and yet contains something which captivates fancy.” (Wu, 5) Coleridge commented on this topic, that “Poetry gives most pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood.” (Hill, 152) Plenty of times, Coleridge emphasized the issue of imagination. He believed that one can “give the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination.” (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, chapter XIV) The best possible explanation we get from different lines in *Biographia Literaria*:

The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead. (p. 202)

³⁸ ‘Coleridge’s Concept of Symbolism’, *From Studies in English Literature*, p. 620

As so many times before we see two parts of the whole, one of them is reflecting in a way the other one. And once again the word *unify* appears. It has already been established that Coleridge definitely connected natural and supernatural worlds, a physical and spiritual life, real and symbolic images. In the poem *Destiny of Nations* he says: "All that meets the bodily sense I deem / symbolical, one mighty alphabet."³⁹ Some of the Romantic philosophers came with the idea of the State as a vibrant community; Berlin speaks of "the intimate binding together of the entire physical and spiritual needs of a nation, of its entire physical and spiritual riches, of its entire internal and external life, into a great energetic, infinitely active and living whole"(p. 124). What goes through all of these thoughts as a notional silver thread is just the unity and overall harmony. Unity "which includes man, nature, God." (Rahme, 625)

³⁹ 'Coleridge's Concept of Symbolism', *From Studies in English Literature*, p. 623

2. Analysis of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner was published for the first time in 1798 as a part of collection *Lyrical Ballads*. Coleridge is remembering the birth of the idea about the collection in *Biographia Literaria*:

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours ... the thought suggested itself ... that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves. ... With this view I wrote THE ANCIENT MARINER ...

It was slightly revised in 1800 and in 1817 the glosses were added. We read in Sitterson, that they were Coleridge's "way of further clarifying the poem's true meaning, unclearly realized in the earlier versions of the poem." (p. 17) In my opinion, they in fact made the poem more difficult to interpret, but also more vivid and they intensified the Christian idea as well. Sitterson would probably agree, due to his comment that "we should look to the gloss as only one part of "The Ancient Mariner," rather than as a privileged, extra-poetic commentary on its meaning." (p. 21)

As an example, Sitterson uses the gloss appearing at the end of the part IV:

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and every where the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival. (Coleridge, 2009, p. 16)

While Sitterson recognizes the beauty and the indisputable qualities of the gloss, he denies the possibility of it being intended to clarify the meaning of the actions within the poem. (p. 24)

The plot of the poem has been summarized by Coleridge himself in the opening argument:

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.⁴⁰

Although it could look like an adventurous poem about the seamanship and despite the fact that E. Bradford called it “probably the greatest sea poem in history”⁴¹, it would be misleading or naive to simplify things so much. The truth is that in 1798, when the poem was written, Coleridge was totally unexperienced

⁴⁰ Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* ..., p. 5

⁴¹ From Nebo Literature

when it came to sailing⁴². On the other hand he was aware of the popularity of the sea cruises. Gose argues that “the tale deals with no literal geographical voyage. Rather it is emblematic of the Romantic urge to explore the eternal soul and the temporal emotions.”⁴³ Tim Fulford says that

Coleridge’s achievement in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was to ... make it [*the popular narrative of exploration*] an articulation of mental as well as physical voyaging ... But the inward self is itself shaped by social and political conditions and crystallised in the action of the poem are Coleridge’s political anxieties.⁴⁴

In this point Fulford does not have to be necessarily right. We can read in Stříbrný that Coleridge tried to depict supernatural phenomena in a way they would evoke reality and cross the border between Life and Death (*translation of the author*, p. 371). That is why he used this particular environment: the effects of the pressure under which is put one’s mind during the long isolation on the sea were well known. In *The Enchanted Flood* W.H.Auden says: “The shore life is always trivial. The sea is where the decisive events, the moments of eternal choice, of temptation, fall and redemption occur.”⁴⁵ In 1800 Coleridge named the poem ‘a poet’s reverie’ with explanation that it should produce “a state of mind ... in which internal, mental, images were projected onto the external world.” (Newlyn, 52) Other sources of inspiration could be found in a friend’s dream of a skeleton ship⁴⁶ and in a Methodist poem combining a sea-voyage with the last judgment (Piper,

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Bloom, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, p. 18

⁴⁴ Newlyn, *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*, p. 49

⁴⁵ Piper, *Singing of Mount Abora*, p. 49

⁴⁶ From Nebo Literature

1987, p. 26). There was also a Christian legend about a wandering Jew, who was condemned to the immortality by Jesus for taunting him on his way to crucifixion. This legend began to spread in 13th century and soon it was well known through the whole Europe, which makes it very likely to be known by Coleridge.

During the time, the Mariner has been depicted, among others, by four French artists: Romantic Gustave Doré (1875), Cubist André Lhote (1920), Expressionist Mario Prassinos (1946) and Surrealist André Masson (1948)⁴⁷. As we read in Scott⁴⁸, “of the numerous illustrations of Coleridge’s poem by other artists, Doré’s are by far the best known and most widely reproduced.” In the 19th century, Doré was a world famous illustrator. Hubert tells us that “he usually gave overwhelming dimensions to his books” (p. 80). He emphasizes that “Doré ... had a strong sense of nature ... emphasizing the inscrutable depths of the forest, the storm-struck sky, the sea ripped wide open. Nature ... dramatized to the extreme ... knew no bounds.” (p. 81) At this point he was on the same wave with Coleridge, which might had been the reason why he chose his poem and why he got so interested in the work that he himself even paid for the whole outlay. At first that seemed foolish, but eventually everything turned well. While the edition did not especially succeed with the British public, it immediately became a bestseller in America, selling tens of thousands of copies. Compared to the British one, “the American edition was beautifully produced, skillfully marketed and moderately priced at ten dollars.” (Scott, 3)

⁴⁷ ‘The Ancient Mariner’s Graphic Voyage through Mimesis and Metaphor’, *From The Yearbook of English Studies*

⁴⁸ ‘The Many Men so Beautiful: Gustave Doré’s Illustrations to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*’. *From Romanticism*, p. 1

The importance of the illustrations may be questioned. One may say they are subordinate to the text or, as Antony Burgess puts it, “the draughtsman’s art is great ... but it is put to the service of another art.”⁴⁹ However, Scott is explaining that “the illustrator is seen as translating the complexity of the written word into the lucid, immediately apprehensible meaning of the image.” (p. 2) In other words, illustrations give the work a new dimension and enable the reader to grasp and appreciate the particular piece better. That was also one of Doré’s main aims – “... to make visible the most dramatic moments of ... events” (Hubert, 81) and by that help readers to understand more. Orientation within the text was, in case of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, even more simplified by connecting the plates (the illustrations) to specific lines. Altogether there were forty-two plates painted for the poem.

There is one particular problem that Doré had to deal with when illustrating *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Coleridge is working with intertextuality a lot. The parables of the Mariner with a wandering Jew, Jesus Christ and Cain are well known. It is difficult to incorporate the same allusions into the illustrations. However, Doré manages so when including “conventional Christian iconography ... visual symbols of the cross, the church and troops of heavenly angels.” (Scott, 4) His illustrations even intensify the religious undertones. Some of the plates are to be seen in the attachment of the thesis.

⁴⁹ ‘The Many Men so Beautiful: Gustave Doré’s Illustrations to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*’, *From Romanticism*, p. 2

The first image presenting itself in Coleridge's poem is the wedding and the Mariner who stopped one of three men going to the ceremony. Numbers play an important part in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. In here, three is the number of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The scene is a parable with the biblical story of ten virgins. They were waiting for a bridegroom to come and let them in the wedding. He was late and the virgins were waiting till late night. Five of those virgins did not bring the oil to keep their lamps burn and as the result they had to leave to get new oil, because their lamps burned out. Meanwhile the bridegroom came, five remaining virgins entered the wedding and the door was shut. When the other five virgins returned, the master of the house did not allow them to come in. Matthew's gospel, in which this parable occurs, says: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." (Mat, 25:13) This parable tells us about the importance of faith. The bridegroom, Christ, is coming and we must be ready, because those who will hesitate will not be let in the Kingdom of Heaven. The young man in Coleridge's poem is also anxious of missing the wedding.

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. (Coleridge, 2009, p. 6)

The scene offers two solutions – the first one, unequivocal, is directly based on the parable and shows the Bridegroom as Christ, wedding as the Kingdom of Heaven and the young man as the biblical virgin. But later in the poem we learn that the Mariner is presented as Christ-like figure as well. That would explain Mariner's gift

of speech and his powerful impact on the young man. As the first image, this parable sets the tone of the entire poem; it puts it in the religious context and implies the issue of search for the true faith in order to receive salvation.

The Mariner is telling the story of his life and the Wedding-Guest is forced to listen. The tale starts as the ship is leaving the harbor and heading for the Line. The ship is the symbol of the Church with Jesus as a captain, the priests as officers and believers as the crew.

At first everything seems to be all right, later the storm comes and drifts the ship towards the South Pole. When describing this land of ice, Coleridge uses an interesting metaphor saying: "And ice, mast-high, came floating by, /as green as emerald." (Coleridge, 2009, p. 7) We could quite easily anticipate that the green ice points to the transition to an unknown world. In fact, the line is far more sophisticated, as the emerald hides deep religious symbolism⁵⁰. It is connected to the name John. In the history, there were three great men of this name to whom the interpretation of this symbolism could belong – John the Apostle, who was told to be "the one who does not meet the Death", John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. Moreover, the emerald denotes the immortality. For example, the legend of the Holy Grail says it was made of one piece of emerald. The green colour even deepens this aspect, since it is closely connected to transcendentalism and the hope for the afterlife. In Doré's illustration (the plate 6), the ship is a central element. With its majestic look it may remind us of a church. Above the

⁵⁰ 'Význam drahokamů v hermetismu', *From LOGOS 1934-1940*, p. 36 (translation of the author)

ship, the Albatross is floating. Scott is pointing out that there is a similarity to a dove present at Christ's baptism (p. 4). Over both the Albatross and the ship something is arching suggesting a rainbow, the Sun or the Moon, but, most of all, the halo that intensifies the specialty and holiness of the entire tableau.

The ship gets stuck in the ice and the great Albatross is coming to the scene.

At length did cross an Albatross, /
Thorough the fog it came; /
As if it had been a Christian soul, /
We hailed it in God's name. (Coleridge, 2009, p. 8)

There is another white bird in the Bible that symbolizes the Holy Spirit. It is stated in Mark's gospel: "And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him." (Mark, 1:10) That is why the sailors, as they see a white bird, understand it as an omen of good luck. Also it is said that "The ice did split with a thunder-fit;" (Coleridge, 2009, p. 8), right after the Albatross appeared. Furthermore, the bird guides the ship just like the Holy Spirit guides the lives of Christians. Birds are usually perceived as symbols of the human soul. There are many types of birds with slightly different meanings; except the above mentioned dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit there is also the blackbird, a symbol of sin or the crane showing loyalty. Both the eagle and phoenix represent resurrection.

The friendly atmosphere is severed when the Mariner shoots the Albatross. “... With my cross-bow/I shot the ALBATROSS.” (Coleridge, 2009, p. 9) There is one Albatross, one Saviour, same as God is one. One is the number of unity. The Albatross was killed with a bow and an arrow. The arrow symbolizes martyrdom which is another implication of Albatross being an image of Jesus Christ. Although we know that the Mariner shot the Albatross, he is not to be seen in Doré’s illustration (the plate 8). Instead, the arrow is flying from the invisible bow that we can only sense on the deck of the ship. This invisibility is implying the collective guilt over the death of the Albatross, same as the death of Jesus Christ was not the work of a single man but rather the crowd. Moreover, Scott is referring to the tombstones below the Albatross as to the inevitable fate of the humankind (p. 11). Stokes highlights two important aspects of killing the bird: no apparent reason for it and no immediate consequences (p. 87). Piper says that killing shows callousness towards the beautiful living forms of nature (1987, p. 53). Stříbrný describes it as the act of individual’s will that bears the pride and aggression (*translation of the author*, p. 372). That is why the man should rely on God, Stříbrný adds (ibid.). Empson sees the scene from a very different perspective and he presents his unique point of view in the essay advocating the Mariner:

Nobody who had been reading travelers’ reports in bulk could doubt the motive of the Mariner after that; he shot it for food. All good explorers try out new sources of food; it is part of their scientific aspect, which gives them the dignity of Faust; and the darker Albatross mentioned in the anecdote of Shelvocke, which is just small enough to be hung round a man's neck, does, I am told, make a tolerable soup which would help to keep off scurvy. Probably this soup was made and drunk, so that only the

externals of the Albatross were hung round the Mariner's neck later on; it would be easier to do.⁵¹

At first the other sailors belittle the significance of the act, but as the events are turning worse, they begin to blame the Mariner. "Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,/ That made the breeze to blow!" (Coleridge, 2009, p. 9)

"Nor dim nor red, like God's own head, / The glorious Sun uprist: / ..." (ibid.). That is just one of twelve references to the Sun appearing in the poem. In Christianity, the Sun is perceived as God in a tangible form, because the life and the light come with both.

The ship enters the Pacific Ocean and there it suddenly stops.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, /
The furrow followed free; /
We were the first that ever burst/
Into that silent sea. /
Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down, /
'Twas sad as sad could be; /
And we did speak only to break/
The silence of the sea! (ibid., p.10)

⁵¹ Bloom, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, p. 23

The ocean had already appeared in Coleridge's poetry before *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, but it had always been associated with the infinite in a context of ecstasy. The Mariner was to find the sense of infinity both as omnipresence and beauty and as isolation and horror (Piper, 1987, p. 48).

Water, water, every where, /
And all the board did shrink; /
Water, water, every where, /
Nor any drop to drink. (Coleridge, 2009, p.10)

When reading these lines, we might remember the Greek myth about Tantalus, who was punished cruelly for his sins. He had to stand in the pool of water under the fruit tree, but was not able to take either a sip of drink or a bite of food. Also the crew of the ship is soon deprived by deadly thirst. We see Coleridge directly relating the Sun to God, and so is doing Bloom. He relates extremely hot weather to God's excessive presence and his wrath.

The colors are of great importance in the Christian tradition. Each of the liturgical celebrations and ceremonies has its own color (green, white, blue ...). Blue signifies heaven; green stands for hope and life; white is for purity. It is interesting that Coleridge is using just these three, overall very positive colors, while describing "the death-fires" on the 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. (Coleridge, 2009, p. 10)

The possible explanation might be the effort to show the prospect of better future and God's presence in every moment.

The sailors hang the dead bird around the neck of the Mariner.

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks/
Had I from old and young!/
Instead of the cross, the Albatross/
About my neck was hung. (ibid., p. 11)

Here comes one of the clearest motifs of the poem. The Mariner is used as Christ-like figure. He is forced to carry the burden in the form of the dead bird, just as Jesus had to carry his cross. The cross is the most universally accepted symbol of the Christian faith. It symbolizes the sacrifice that Jesus Christ underwent for the humankind. There are many different kinds of crosses, but we can divide them into two categories which are the Greek type (all the arms are equally long) and the Latin type (the T-shape cross). Altogether there are over 400 types of crosses. The Catholic Church uses the cross with Jesus as a reminder of his death for our sins, but some other churches use an empty cross because they focus more on Christ's birth. There are also other hints pointing towards similarity between the Mariner and Christ. Both of them were sacrificed in the moment when inexplicable events happened and both of them were convicted by the people of their own kind. Interestingly enough, the Albatross is possible to be seen as Christ-like figure as well. Both of them brought hope to the people, both of them were dear to God and both of them were killed despite being innocent. That would give us three Christ-like figures – the Mariner, the Albatross and the Bridegroom from the very

beginning of the poem. I am convinced that it is Coleridge's Unitarian belief speaking that makes him see God in every thing.

Hubert speaks of Doré's illustration (the plate 15):

the representation of the mariner clearly originates in traditional images of Christ on the cross. And this analogy is confirmed by ... plates, providing close views of the facial features of the sufferer. Thus Doré has made visible a major theme in the text: guilt, martyrdom, repentance. (p. 82)

Scott is also referring to the lines of ropes as to the suggestion of the Mariner's prison of his previously mentioned guilt (p. 6).

When another ship appears on the horizon, the crew bursts in joy.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked, /
We could nor laugh nor wail; /
Through utter drought all dumb we stood! /
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood, /
And cried, A sail! a sail! (Coleridge, 2009, p. 12)

The greater is the horror of realizing that it is nothing but a ghostly ship with no one but Death and Life-in-Death aboard.

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

Her lips were read, her looks were free, /
Her locks were yellow as gold: /
Her skin was as white as leprosy, /
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she, /
Who thicks man's blood with cold. (ibid., p. 13)

The connection between the Sun and God has already been established. When the ghostly ship comes and shades the Sun, it tears the crew off God and leaves them with nothing but sorrow and death.

The two figures, Death and Life-In-Death, play dice for the lives of the Mariner and the rest of sailors. Two is the number of division. Dice is a symbol as well. It comes from the part of Bible, where the soldiers were rolling dice for Jesus' clothes and it refers to passion. The Death wins the crew and all the sailors die, damning the Mariner with a wordless curse.

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. (ibid., p. 14)

Piper points out that both Coleridge and Wordsworth were interested in the effects of a curse upon the victim, and they were also both interested in the

healing powers of nature (1987, p. 50). Newlyn develops further the issue of a curse. She noticed that the Mariner accepts his fate after he is cursed by the rest of his crew, because he knows he violated certain taboos. He killed the Albatross and later also touched the body of the other sailor, while this one was living-dead. These taboos are based mostly on superstitions. Empson says that Coleridge

positively wanted to write on superstition. A basic impulse of the Romantics was to escape from the eighteenth century, their enlightened parents in fact, so as to experience if only through history and travel books the variety of the world. Superstitions were found everywhere on these journeys, and a Romantic would often adopt one; but Coleridge (as is obvious in the first draft of the *Mariner*) was quite ready to laugh at old-world sensationalism. He needed superstition in poems for a philosophical purpose; to examine the psychological function which gave it this universal appeal. (Bloom, 21)

Due to John Adlard, Coleridge was interested in traditional superstitions since his childhood and he was familiar with the ballads based on the native folklore which stemmed from it. (Liggins, 91) The crew curses the Mariner, because they believe he is the reason why the weather had changed. The superstition springs from the extreme conditions, sense of being helpless, even the fear. It also stems from the feeling of "having placed our summum bonum⁵² ... in an absolute Dependence on Powers and Events over which we have no Controll." (Newlyn, 48) Empson also adds:

It was a splendid invention to kill all the Mariner's comrades and leave him alive with their dead eyes still cursing him, because he is then forced to

⁵² 'The highest good' (*note of the author*)

blame himself more than we feel he deserves. They have died because he shot the Albatross, though he could not have guessed that the Spirit would use them as weapons to torment him. Also they have died because he called a ship to help them, biting his arm to be able to do it; this was a phantom ship containing Death, but he could not have known. After the gods had done him this injustice, he would not show good feeling or good taste if he did not overblame himself to an almost lunatic degree.

(Bloom, 30)

The Mariner is left alone with the dead comrades and his punishment continues. He is looking at the water snakes in the sea and finds them repellent. He is losing the ability to pray.

The many men, so beautiful! /
And they all dead did lie: /
And a thousand thousand slimy things /
Lived on; and so did I. /
I looked upon the rotting sea, /
And drew my eyes away; /
I looked upon the rotting deck, /
And there the dead men lay. /
I looked to heaven, and tried to pray; /
But or ever a prayer had gusht, /
A wicked whisper came, and made /
My heart as dry as dust. (Coleridge, 2009, p. 15)

Even when oscillating between Unitarianism and Anglicanism, Coleridge remained supportive of prayer and it is one of the repeating motifs in his poems. Malcolm Ware even considers *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to be a poem about a prayer. He says that "... in Coleridge's sweeping moral conclusion, the word *love* is

of only secondary importance. Coleridge tells us quite plainly that the ability to pray *follows* love. “(304) The preceding lines of the poem are also expressing the loneliness and complete alienation of the Mariner. Saying with Purser: “... few people will have known better than Coleridge himself what it was to feel called to this state of being and how much reluctance and hungering for worldly good was involved. “(252)

The curse is present for seven days and nights and serves as the first part of the Mariner’s way towards redemption. Seven is the number of spiritual perfection. After that he changes his perception of the water snakes and finally finds the partial absolution.

Within the shadow of the ship /
I watched their rich attire: /
...
O happy living things! no tongue /
Their beauty might declare: /
A spring of love gushed from my heart, /
And I blessed them unaware: /
Sume my kind saint took pity on me, /
And I blessed them unaware. /
The self-same moment I could pray; /
And from my neck so free /
The Albatross fell off, and sank /
Like lead into the sea. (Coleridge, 2009, p. 17)

The snakes are used in here as a liberating image telling us it was just appreciation of other creatures that could redeem the Mariner. That is quite powerful and

definitely very interesting motif. In the Christian imagery, the snake has always been used as a symbol of evil. Coleridge, however, uses it as a savior to show that appreciation of nature can bring us the true sense of spirituality. For Coleridge, God discovered in the beauty of nature was never different from God discovered in Scripture (Piper, 1987, p. 51). The Mariner's problem lies in his icy callousness towards the other forms of life. His cure rests on a change in his way of seeing the world (ibid.). Harter says:

Up to this point, the mariner has been alienated from nature, God, and others. He has been tortured by nature and her spirits and unable to pray. The crew hangs the Albatross around his neck as an emblem of his crime, and this marks him as the Jonah responsible for their fate. Now, for a brief moment, the mariner is able to forget his suffering, to escape the confines of his own ego, and to see and appreciate the beauty of the water-snakes. There is a change of vision and heart: he now feels love towards nature and blesses the snakes spontaneously. (p. 177)

Christopher sees blessing of the water snakes as one of the balancing aspects of the poem. The others are the ability to sleep after a sleepless week, the rain after the period of exhausting heat, wind after the period of becalming and the aurora in the sky indicating the supernatural character of all these events (p. 118).

Long-awaited sleep and rain come hand in hand with the redemption. The rain indicates the purification from sin. It is also a symbol of God's impartiality, because it falls on everyone and so does God's love. Christopher interprets the rain as an alternative of baptism. (ibid.)

At the same time the spirits make the dead bodies come back to life and the ship is put into motion. Later the Mariner faints when the ship is being carried away by another spirit. When the Mariner is unconscious, two spirits are debating his fate.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man? /
By him who died on cross, /
With his cruel bow he laid full low /
The harmless Albatross. /
The spirit who bideth by himself /
In the land of mist and snow, /
He loved the bird that loved the man /
Who shot him with his bow.' (Coleridge, 2009, p. 21)

In the preceding lines we see another very strong biblical image. 'The spirit' is nobody less than God himself and the Christ-like figure is the bird this time. It is said in John, 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God loved his son, Jesus Christ, same as he loved the Albatross. Piper suggests it is strange that God also loved the man who killed his son and shot the bird (1987, p. 58). But that is the greatness of God's love, and that is the message that Coleridge was trying to pass on. Saying with Stříbrný, the salvation can only come through the Christian love towards all the living (*translation of the author*, p. 372). Coleridge states very clearly towards the end of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*:

He prayeth well, who loveth well /
Both man and bird and beast. /
He prayeth best, who loveth best /
All things both great and small; /

For the dear God who loveth us, /
He made and loveth all. (Coleridge, 2009, p. 29)

As the Mariner comes to consciousness once again, he beholds the shore of his native country.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass, /
So smoothly it was stewn! /
And on the bay the moonlight lay, /
And the shadow of the Moon. (ibid., p. 24)

The Moon is another example of very frequently used symbols. While the Sun depicts the furious God, the Moon represents his forgiving side. Really terrible things happen during the day, such as the Death and the Life-In-Death coming or the killing of Albatross, whereas the night is the time when the curse is broken and when the Mariner is returning to his native country, as the lines above say.

The spirits let the souls of other sailors go and they sink the ship. The Mariner is saved by the old Hermit, the Pilot and his son, who are sailing around in a little boat.

I moved my lips – the Pilot shrieked /
And fell down in a fit; /
The holy Hermit raised his eyes, /
And prayed where he did sit.
I took the oars: the Pilot's boy, /
Who now doth crazy go, /
Laughed loud and long, and all the while /
His eyes went to and fro. /

“Ha! ha!” quoth he, “full plain I see, /
The Devil knows how to row.” (Coleridge, 2009, p. 27)

The influence of the Mariner on people around him is striking. Also it is interesting that the boy calls him the Devil in here, though we classified him earlier as a Christ-like figure.

Back on the land the Mariner is asking the Hermit: “O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!” (ibid., p. 28) But he must repent for the rest of his life.

Since then, at an uncertain hour, /
That agony returns: /
And till my ghastly tale is told, /
This heart within me burns. /
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. (ibid.)

The tale he has to tell is about the love, vision and joy that are coming hand in hand (Piper, 1987, p. 57).

O sweeter than the marriage-feast, /
'Tis sweeter far to me, /
To walk together to the kirk /
With a goodly company!-
(Coleridge, 2009, p. 29)

3. Conclusion

The topic of the presented thesis is religious symbolism in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*; the incredible poem through which its author Samuel Taylor Coleridge expressed how the divine love can heal pain and suffering, the poem about states of mind, agony and joy, the hell and heaven of life.

In 1819 John Gibson Lockhart stated in the *Blackwood's Magazine*:

It is a poem to be felt, cherished, mused upon, not to be talked about, *not capable of being described, analyzed, or criticised*. It is the wildest of all the creations of genius ... its images have *the beauty, the grandeur, the incoherence* of some mighty vision. The loveliness and the terror glide before us in turns.⁵³

Stříbrný is surely thinking about terror as well, when he is describing *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as the parable of the evil that reached the old world of piety and drives a man to ... terrible things (*translation of the author*, p. 371). Piper adds it is “also a story of redemption” (1987, p. 58), continues by saying that “Coleridge created his own myth expressing the experience of love as the way of escape from isolation and suffering to joy” (p. 59) and ends with the implication that “it is this which makes it one of those great, enduring poems that for the ordinary reader need no analysis.” (ibid.) J. W. R. Purser acknowledges the quality of both the author and the poem when saying that “Only a mind stimulated by the belief that

⁵³ Stokes, *Coleridge, language and sublime ...*, p. 85

it is expressing some truth of importance could have produced a fantasy so well-knit, lively, and in every way convincing.” (249)

The vision stated at the very beginning of the thesis was to summarize the appropriate information about life and ideas of the author and to use this knowledge in the analysis of the poem. Coleridge’s religiousness has been set as the area of the main interest. The aim was reached, I believe. The aspect of faith has continuously been pointed out through the whole work, whether it was Coleridge’s strong belief or the changes in his view of the religious matters or the religious symbolism included in the poem and its illustrations. The emphasis has been placed on the evidence supporting presented ideas. As such various authors’ quotes and statements were used, interpreted and compared.

The chapter about Romanticism hopes to break the ingrained prejudices and half-truths about this period by showing some fragments of the controversy on which the movement was built. Schueller says that Romanticism

is the reconciliation of opposites and the manifestation of free will as compared with necessity; it is the rediscovery of nature, and at the same time a kind of religious pantheism; it is the renascence of wonder, and while it involves freedom, it also results in gloom and disaffection. It stresses subjectivity, but at the same time is allied with the spurious objectivity of science. Escaping into what the individual desires, it celebrates suicide, which is the apparent denial of life, though it also celebrates life in its richness and multiplicity. (p. 360)

Schuessler eventually draws a conclusion when finding a common aspect:

Romanticism is the tendency to break the confines, the rules, the limits, to go beyond that which has been crystallized. ... Romanticism is the higher degree of everything achieved by whatever means, and in realizing itself it destroys what frustrates it, and especially if these are conventions. (ibid.)

Breaking the rules and going beyond the limits make Romanticism more revolutionary than the French Revolution that is commonly believed to start the movement.⁵⁴

The literary symbol turned to be so broad that a separate paper could be written about that. For the purposes of this thesis we only touched the sides that closely related to the discussed issue. For Coleridge, a source of religious symbols was nature, therefore the attention was placed on natural symbolism and other Coleridge's poems were put into the light. Furthermore some space was given to the concept of unity.

The second part of the thesis consists of the analysis of the poem.

The central theme of the poem can be described as an alienation of a man and his search for unity through spiritual redemption. The idea of unity is the basic motif. Marry Anne Perkins speaks about the "search for principles upon which human community, fragmented by the degeneration of morality and intellect, might be

⁵⁴ It is not completely surprising that the punk movement bormed in the United Kingdom in the late 1970's named itself New Romanticism, because punk is nothing but disregard for conventions.

restored.”⁵⁵ Coleridge himself once called God “the moral world’s cohesion” (Wu, 136) and said that without him “we become/an Anarchy of Spirits!, a mass of isolated and disunited individuals, each a sordid solitary thing.”(ibid.)

C. M. Bowra says, that “the poem is a myth of a guilty soul and marks in clear stages the passage from crime through punishment to such redemption as is possible in this world.”⁵⁶

Gose observes that

the poem is filled with Christian trappings. It begins with a church wedding and ends with an admonition to pray in church. In between we have mention of Christ, Mary Queen, Heaven, Spirits blest, Him who died on the cross, penance, Dear Lord in Heaven, a holy hermit, and shrieving. Finally, Coleridge indicates that the Albatross is important to the theme of the poem because it symbolizes a Christian soul. (Bloom, 9)

Stokes even specifies:

The poem is filled with religious motifs that demand a view of sin as criminality: blessing, shrieving, penance, confession and intercession, for instance. These are all practices alien to Unitarianism, in that they look backwards to expiate deeds, rather than forward to reform future conduct. (p. 94)

⁵⁵ Newlyn, *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*, p. 188

⁵⁶ ‘The Ancient Mariner Baptised: ...’, *From The South Central Bulletin*, p. 117

Schueller further notes that Romanticism

has some of the qualities of religion: It wants to forsake the world as it is and create a new one; it desires the amelioration of the world's ills, social, political, moral; the concrete recommendations for change may differ and even contradict one another (p. 363)

As mentioned in the very introduction to the thesis, the religion, or rather Christianity was of a great importance for Coleridge. In his lectures and essays he urged others to search the truth:

Christianity is especially differenced from all other religions by being grounded on facts which all men alike have the means of ascertaining, the same means, with equal facility, and which no man can ascertain for another. Each person must be herein querist and respondent to himself; Am I sick, and therefore need a physician? – Am I in spiritual slavery, and therefore need a ransom? – Have I given a pledge, which must be redeemed, and which I cannot redeem by my own resources? (McGann, 57)

He insisted on necessity of the authority of the Church “that would serve as a source and a corrective to individual belief and explain its contemporary demands”⁵⁷, while demanding possibility of the private interpretation. We read in Wendling, that Coleridge believed that “the Faith may be and must be the same in all who are thereby saved,” though “every man, more or less, construes it into an intelligible Belief thro’ the shaping and colouring Optical Glass of his individual Understanding.” (ibid.) Also his trust in the Bible as the Word of God is absolute, though once more he highlights the importance of the individual mind’s input:

⁵⁷ Wendling, *Coleridge's Progress to Christianity: ...*, p. 28

Every sentence found in a canonical Book, rightly interpreted, contains the dictum of an infallible Mind; - but what the right interpretation is, - or whether the very words now extant are corrupt or genuine – must be determined by the industry and understanding of fallible, and alas! more or less prejudiced theologians. (McGann, 43)

McGann says that Coleridge as a committed Christian saw the Bible as the world's central literary event. (p. 56)

In the beginning of the thesis, we have also established uniqueness of the Coleridge's perspective. To support this, I am going to showcase the opinions of two of the most prominent Romantic authors – Lord George Gordon Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Of the later one speak Gingerich as of the poet of revolt (p. 444). First he drew attention to himself with the essay called eloquently *The Necessity of Atheism*. His aim there was to prove non-existence of God. He went even further in the poem from 1813 *Queen Mab*, where he attacks Christianity. He says that religion fills “earth with demons, hell with men, and heaven with slaves.” (Gingerich, 447) About Heaven he says that

Those who believe that Heaven is, what earth has been, a monopoly in the hands of a favored few, would do well to reconsider their opinion: if they find that it came from their priest or their grandmother, they could not do better than reject it.” (Miller, 577)

He does not stop even before God, saying that “this Spirit, which has existed from all eternity and from which flows all life, has no power to make things. That it

created the world is a pure superstition.” (ibid., 449) Eventually Shelley concludes that “the mind cannot believe in the existence of a God.” (ibid.)

As for Byron, his link to the Satanism has been already mentioned. Moreover, Stavrou says that

He evinces little tolerance of religion’s irrationality, smugness, absolutism ... He quarrels with the misuses of religion rather than with man’s aspiration for the ineffable and the transcendent. Specifically, he arraigns religion for the following reasons: its distortion of reality; ... the disparity between the altruism it professes and the materialism it practices; its singular success in inspiring Christians to butcher, plunder, and enslave their non-Christian fellows; its overemphasis on ceremony, ritual, and protocol; ... its depreciation of the here and now, of terrestrial delights and human creations; its intestine altercations and sectarianism; its aura of sanctity preserved by renouncing the present ends of humanism for the historic ends of mysticism; and its abrogation of the individual’s liberty – not only in religious, but in all, areas. (p. 574)

Stavrou calls Byron’s determination to accept literary nothing on faith “in part temperamental, in part the romantic rebel’s heritage.” (ibid.)

Due to my initial proposition I was supposed to prove that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is Coleridge’s confession of faith. The premise was supported by a number of evidence in terms of different quotes and facts. The emphasis was put on the usage of the reliable sources and compliance of the setting of the thesis. A lot had been said about Samuel Taylor Coleridge and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

before this thesis and much more will be said in the future, therefore any deflection would have extended the precisely set topic beyond its scope. Taking everything into consideration, I believe my research proved that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is not about politics nor exploring and not even about morale, but about the importance of the Christian love and the life according to God's commandments. M. H. Abrams would agree with me, as he observes that

The Ancient Mariner is neither an allegorical fable nor a symbolist poem. The persistent religious and moral allusions, however, both in the text and in the glosses ... invite us to take the Mariner's experience as an instance of the Christian plot of moral error, the discipline of suffering, and a consequent change of heart. The Mariner's literal journey, then, is also a spiritual journey... (McGann, 60)

Resumé

Tématem mé diplomové práce byla náboženská symbolika v básni *Píseň o starém námořníku*.

Samotný nápad vyšel z kratší seminární práce z 2. ročníku, ve které jsem porovnávala právě tuto báseň s dílem Karla Jaromíra Erbena *Záhořovo lože*. V té době mě dílo S. T. Coleridge velmi upoutalo, v první řadě díky neobyčejně silným obrazům a zvukomalbě.

Musím přiznat, že proces psaní diplomové práce nebyl pro mě jednoduchý. Téma, které jsem si vybrala, není obvyklé a nemohla jsem se tedy inspirovat podobnou prací některého z bývalých diplomantů. Zároveň jsem se po celou dobu potýkala s nedostatkem literatury. V tomto ohledu jsem byla nucena vypomoci si elektronickými zdroji, u nichž jsem se však vždy snažila zajistit dostatečnou odbornost a kredibilitu. Velkým pomocníkem mi byly portály JSTOR a Google Books.

Práci jsem začala psát v angličtině především z důvodu, že dostupná literatura, ať již tištěná či elektronická, je právě v tomto jazyce, a tak rozhodnutí vyplynulo přirozeně ze situace.

Prvním krokem bylo získání literatury vztahující se k tématu a její prostudování. Jednalo se jak o knihy životopisné, tak literární i filosofické. Během čtení jsem se

snažila vést si výpisky, abych se později mohla snáze orientovat. Výpisky jsem používala také k vytváření jakýchsi hrubých osnov jednotlivých kapitol. Přestože jsem si musela vystačit s poměrně omezeným počtem zdrojů, snažila jsem se porovnávat myšlenky jednotlivých autorů, bylo-li to možné a zároveň přidávat i vlastní pohled na danou problematiku. Hojně jsem jako podklady pro některé ze svých závěrů používala Coleridgovy výroky.

Při psaní samotném jsem postupovala chronologicky, neboť se nezdálo, že jsem díky poznatkům z jedné kapitoly mohla obohatit či okomentovat tu následující. Zároveň bylo pro mě psaní takto přehlednější.

Coleridgův osud i jeho dílo se mě opravdu dotýká. Být géniem není zřejmě tak jednoduché, jak si mnozí myslí a naopak to s sebou nese velké množství trápení a úzkostí. Jak uvádím již v úvodu k diplomové práci, oslovuje mě rovněž jeho silná víra v Boha a nebojácnost, s jakou ji šíří do světa. Mnohé z jeho myšlenek působí odvážně i dnes, což teprve v roce 1798, kdy byla *Píseň o starém námořníku* vydána poprvé.

Pro výklad symbolů v druhé části práce jsem se několikrát obrátila k základnímu křesťanskému pramenu, Bibli. Citáty z ní nejen vhodně doplňují, ale i osvětlují význam Coleridgových podobností.

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Appendix

List of attachments

Doré, Gustave. Plate 6: *The ice was all around*. From Artsty Craftsy.

<http://www.artsycraftsy.com/dore/rime_ice.html

Doré, Gustave. Plate 8: *I shot the Albatross*. From Artsty Craftsy.

<http://www.artsycraftsy.com/dore/rime_shot.html>

Doré, Gustave. Plate 15: *Each cursed me with his eye*. From Artsty Craftsy.

<http://www.artsycraftsy.com/dore/rime_curse.html>

Doré, Gustave. Plate 20: *I watched the water-snakes*. From Artsty Craftsy.

<http://www.artsycraftsy.com/dore/rime_watersnakes.html>

Doré, Gustave. Plate 28: *In crimson colors came*. From Artsty Craftsy.

<http://www.artsycraftsy.com/dore/rime_crimson.html>

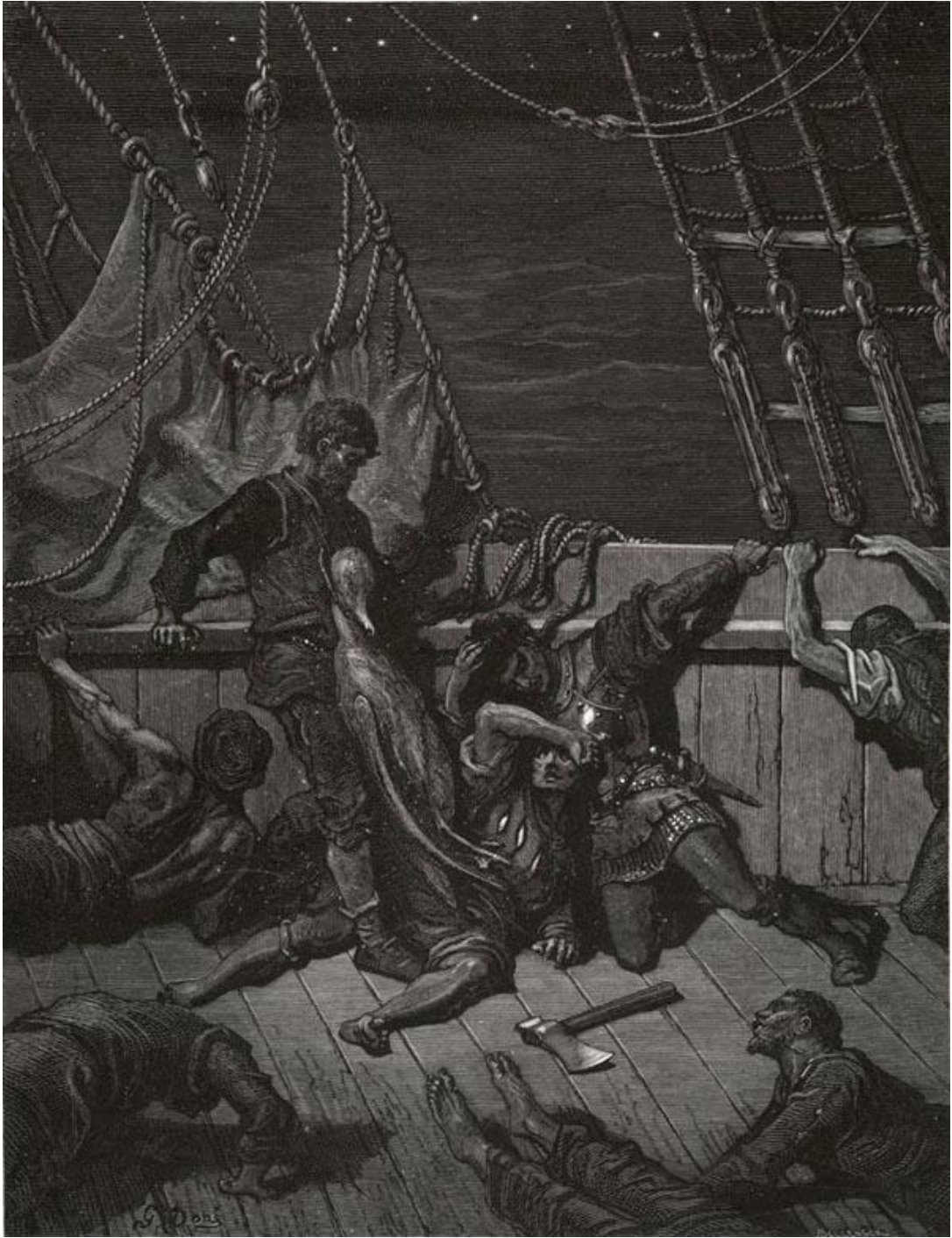
Portrait of Coleridge in Bristol in 1795. From Holmes, Richard. *Coleridge. Darker Reflections*. London: Flamingo, 1999.

Statue of The Ancient Mariner in Watchet, Great Britain. From

<http://www.maritimequest.com/misc_pages/monuments_memorials/ancient_mariner_statue.htm>













Coleridge in Bristol, aged twenty-two by Pieter van Dyke, 1795

