

Narrative as Rhetoric: Judgments, Progression, and Narrativity in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

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This paper attempts to investigate the narrativity of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner with reference to two layers of dynamics conceptualized by James Phelan: textual dynamics and readerly dynamics. In particular, the textual dynamics derives from the unstable relations between the Mariner and his situations, which in turn evoke multileveled responses from such narrative agents as the Mariner, and the Wedding-Guest, and audiences, namely, interpretive judgments, ethical judgments, and aesthetic judgments. Coupled with the interaction between narrative judgments, the textual dynamics not only consists of the progressive force of the poem but also increases its narrativity and makes it more narrative-like.

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Introduction

In *Outlines of English Literature* (1847), Thomas Shaw claims that

[o]f the poems by which Coleridge is best known, both in England and abroad, the most universally read is undoubtedly *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, a wild, mystical, phantasmagoric narrative, most picturesquely related in the old English ballad measure, and in language to which is skillfully given an air of antiquity in admirable harmony with the spectral character of the events (Bloom 140).

What Shaw argues still holds true today. Among Coleridge's many writings, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is the single most discussed and critically acclaimed. Meanwhile, it stands as a "testament to his extraordinary poetic powers." (Christie 7) For instance, undertaking a careful examination of the poem's meaning, form, and technical excellence, Gilberto

Sultch (192) concludes that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is “a tuneful expression of a wholesome moral idea, enriched by original and suggestive fantasy.” In Daniel McDonald’s (543–554) view, the poem is mainly about the supernatural reality the man is surrounded by. In his rejoinder to Charles Lamb’s remark that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a poem “fertile in unmeaning miracles,” Joseph C. Sitterson argues that “the poem’s miracles are unmeaning is not to conclude that the poem is unmeaning, or that the miracles are anomalous flaws in an otherwise interpretable poem.” (Sitterson 24) Equally illuminating is Joseph McQueen’s argument of seeing the poem as another expression of enchanted orthodoxy, which “affirms the participation of all things in the divine and that leaves room for many expressions of the numinous, not all of them benign.” (McQueen 21) Unlike the critics just mentioned above, A. C. Swanepoel connects the composition of Coleridge’s images in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and the underpinnings of German transcendental thought. He argues that the parallels between them, to some degree, suggest that “Coleridge was influenced by early idealist writing or that he did indeed—as he claimed—think simultaneously and independently the same thoughts as the important German idealist thinkers of his time” (Swanepoel 191).

I quite agree with Howard Creed (215) when he observes that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is “deceptively simple at one level,” but “becomes complex and difficult below the narrative surface.” Creed’s statement reminds us of what John Gibson Lockhart argues in *Blackwoods Magazine*: “[I]t is a poem to be felt, cherished, mused upon, not to be talked about, not capable of being described, analyzed, or criticized.” (Quoted in Stokes 3) Despite the risks listed by Lockhart, this paper attempts to explore *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* from the perspective of rhetorical narratology. Specifically, it intends to track textual dynamics and readerly dynamics that contribute to the narrativity of the poem. In doing so, I will take narrative judgments and progression as the foci of my investigation. But we need, in the first place, to examine the rhetorical nature of the poem and how such a single text possesses two audiences and multiple purposes.

Narrative as Rhetoric, and the Art of Indirect Communication

The synopsis of the poem goes like this. An ancient Mariner stopped one of the three Wedding-Guests to tell a story of his voyage. He had once happily started a voyage with his shipmates. Unfortunately, they

met a strong storm and were stuck in the borderless ice. To their relief, an Albatross came to their ship and brought the wind and fine weather. When the ship was pulled out of the ice by the wind, the Mariner shot the Albatross dead for no reason, which brought them one misfortune after another: there was no wind to pull the ship; there was no rain and therefore no water to drink. In the end, everyone on the ship except the Mariner was dead. The spell was not broken until the Mariner realized his crime and was repentant and remorseful, and he unconsciously blessed and prayed for the water-snakes. Saved by the Hermit and two sailors, the Mariner felt obliged and anxious to tell people his story.

Apparently, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* contains two basic narrative elements, the story and the storyteller, which according to Monika Fludernik (4) as well as Robert Scholes, Robert Kellogg, and James Phelan (4) define a text as a narrative. If viewed from a rhetorical perspective, the poem typically fits the rhetorical definition of narrative: “[I]he act of somebody telling somebody else on a particular occasion for some purpose that something happened.” (Phelan, *Living* 217) The Mariner is the narrator of this poem, and he tells the story of his voyage to the Wedding-Guest on the way to a wedding feast. Noteworthy is the fact that the Mariner tells the story with his own particular purpose. For an explicit illustration, consider the following five stanzas taken from the last part of the poem:

“O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on wide, wide sea:
So lonely ‘twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be.

“O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
‘Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company! —

“To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving fiends,
And youths and maidens gay!

“Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
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.” (50)

The quoted stanzas identify the narrator and the narratee respectively as the Mariner and the Wedding-Guest. Toward the end of his tale, the Mariner makes a comparison between attending a “marriage-feast” and walking to church. In the Mariner’s opinion, it is far sweeter to walk to church than to a feast. Everyone would pray together, and love and bless each other. In brief, the Mariner’s general purpose in telling this story is to make the Wedding-Guest love and respect all things created by God.

The last two stanzas of the poem fully disclose the impact of story on the Wedding-Guest:

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the Bridgeroom’s door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man
He rose the morrow morn. (50–51)

The immediate consequence of the Mariner’s telling his story is that the Wedding-Guest did not attend the wedding feast as he had planned. Instead, he was “stunned” by the Mariner’s story, and he felt forlorn. Owing to the Mariner’s tale, the Wedding-Guest became a changed man, as the poem says, “A sadder and wiser man / He rose the morrow morn.” (51) Seen in this light, the narrator-Mariner’s purpose has been more or less realized.

Though *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a single narrative text, it contains at least two audiences and multiple purposes, if we track the “character narration” strategy deployed by the poem. According to James Phelan, character narration is

an art of indirection: an author communicates to her audience by means of the character narrator’s communication to a narratee. The art consists in the author’s ability to make a single text function effectively for its two audiences (the narrator’s and the author’s, or to use the technical terms, the narratee and the authorial audience) and its two purposes (author’s and character narrator’s) while combining in one figure (the ‘I’) the roles of both character and narrator (Phelan, *Living* 1).

To phrase Phelan's point differently, there exist two tracks of communication in a narrative employing character narration: the narrator—narratee track, and the author—authorial audience track.

The success of the communication between author and authorial audience largely depends on the communication between the narrator and the narratee. In the poem, the Mariner played the dual role of a character participating in the story and the narrator who tells the story. As was said previously, he told such a tale to the Wedding-Guest to make him love and embrace all things created by God. It turns out that his purpose was realized to a certain extent, since the Wedding-Guest became a changed man after hearing his story. He realized that life is not about wedding parties at all, and took a more serious attitude toward life. What remains to be answered is the question about the implied Coleridge's purpose for telling such a story in the poem.

It is generally agreed that the concept of implied author is rather controversial in narratological studies, which is aptly demonstrated in the scholarship by Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (*The Implied Author: Concept and Controversy*), and most recently by Brian Richardson (*Implied Author: Back from the Grave or Simply Dead Again*). I will not dwell on the long and windy narratological debate on this issue in this paper. Instead, I will adopt a rhetorical approach to this concept which is redefined by Phelan in order to see how the implied Coleridge conveys his purpose to the authorial audience through the Mariner's tale telling. According to Phelan, "the implied author is a streamlined version of the real author, an actual or purported subset of the real author's capacities, traits, attitudes, beliefs, values, and other properties that play an active role in the construction of the particular text" (Phelan, *Living* 45). In other words, the implied author is closely related to the real author's values and traits, and it serves as a textual designer which makes the text come into existence, and he designs the text with a certain purpose, which is targeted at the authorial audience.

If I have entered into the authorial audience's position correctly, I think the implied Coleridge intended to utter his own religious faith, beliefs, and moral concerns. Notably, in this process, the poet fully displayed his imaginative power to the audience. The reason why the implied Coleridge had deliberately made the Mariner's tale frightening, ghastly or fearful was that he attempted to force the audience to accept his position and to become a changed man like the Wedding-Guest to embrace and love things created by God. To me, the implied Coleridge did so out of his own sense of responsibility as a poet to enlighten and educate the audiences for the good, to keep them from feeling alienated. Once he did this, he would be free from his inner agony. This is clearly shown in the following stanzas:

“Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

“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 (48).

On the surface it seems to be the Mariner who felt the pain and agony within his heart if he could not tell the tale for the sake of his repentance. In fact, it is the implied Coleridge who had the “strange power of speech” to tell the tale. And he felt a strong need to tell it to those who needed to hear it to become enlightened. This point is further evidenced by the gloss Coleridge added to the poem when it was published several years later.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner was written in 1797 and was included in *Lyrical Ballads* the following year. In the intervening years between 1815 and 1817, Coleridge continued working on the poem, the result of which was the gloss addition. Upon its significance, Huntington Brown remarked, “Through what is essentially a four-fold perspective, the poet achieves a refraction and humanization of impossible events: 1) the personality of the Mariner reporting; 2) the reactions of the Wedding-Guest who listens; 3) the moralizing of the pious antiquarian editor who comments; 4) by implication, the minstrel balladeer.” (Quoted in Dyck 591) From Brown’s perspective, the gloss makes the poem take on four-perspective and humanize a set of impossible events. To me, the gloss adds more weight to the poem’s religious and moral implications by making the story more explicit and clearer so as to help the audience to reap a deeper understanding of what has been revealed.

I agree with William Christie when he observes that “[a]t the same time as Coleridge reached out of his solitude in the church at Shrewsbury that day he was writing in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* what is surely the greatest poetic allegory of alienation and existential isolation in our language.” (Christie 6) In the mysterious and fearful universe, how to live and to survive well? How to avoid and to overcome the possible alienation and isolation in this world? Considering the Mariner’s voyage and subsequent

actions as an example, the implied Coleridge seems to suggest that it is a wise choice to have faith and believe in God and to love all the things created by God, because God loves them all.

Experiencing the Tale: Progression, Judgments, and Narrativity

As I said above, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* typically fits the rhetorical definition of narrative. But how narrative-like is this poem? This question leads us to the issue of narrativity, which is one of the central concepts in contemporary narrative theory and has caught a considerable amount of scholarly attention in recent years (Prince 387–388; Pier and García Landa, *Theorizing Narrativity*; Shang, “Narrativity” 99–109). Against the general background of transgeneric narrative studies, narrativity in poetry has already been recognized by such critics as Peter Hühn and Jens Kiefer (*The Narratological Analysis of Lyric Poetry*), Brian McHale (“Beginning to Think about Narrative in Poetry”), and Brian J. McAllister (*Narrative in Poetic Form*). Both Gerald Prince and Biwu Shang claim that narrativity contains two meanings: (1) a property that makes a text become narrative or differentiates narrative from non-narrative, and (2) the degree that indicates one narrative is more narrative-like than other narratives (Prince 387; Shang, “Narrativity” 99).

From a rhetorical vantage point, narrativity is “a double layered phenomenon, involving both a dynamics of character, event, and telling and a dynamics of audience response” (Phelan, *Experiencing* 7). The first layer refers to the report of a sequence of events, in which the characters and situations undergo some change. In particular, the report of the change “proceeds through the introduction, complication, and resolution (in whole or in part) of unstable situations within, between or among characters.” (7) The second layer refers to the twin activities of observing and judging performed by the audience. For brevity, “narrativity involves the interaction of two kinds of change: that experienced by the characters and that experienced by the audience in its developing responses to the characters’ changes.” (7)

In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the textual dynamics consists of the unstable relations between the Mariner and his situations. The introduction, complication and resolution of the unstable relations drive the poem forward. The initial instability of the poem comes into existence when the ship meets a strong storm and it becomes stuck in the sea. But this instability is soon resolved by the arrival of the Albatross, who brings the wind and helps the ship out the storm. But the instability gets

complicated when the Mariner shoots the Albatross dead with his cross-bow. The wind stops blowing; there is no rain and the hot sun shines above. The instability becomes more complicated when Death and Life-in-death bet for the lives of the Mariner and his shipmates. Life-in-death bets for the Mariner's life and wins the bet, while Death betted for the lives of the Mariner's shipmates and also won the bet. As it turns out, all those people on the ship die except the Mariner. The solution to the instability does not come until the Mariner unconsciously blesses the water-snakes, who are God's creatures too. Let's consider the following four stanzas:

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

“Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

“O happy living things! No tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

“The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.” (28—31)

Both the Albatross and the water-snakes were God's creatures. At the beginning, the Mariner shot the Albatross dead without any deliberation, which complicated the instability between the Mariner and the difficult situation he was in. In the stanzas quoted here, the Mariner felt a spring of love gushing from his heart and he blessed the water-snakes unconsciously. The change of the Mariner's attitude toward God's creatures resulted from his experiencing life-and-death on the sea. To be more exact, it is repentance for the crime he committed that directly leads to his changing from a negative attitude to a positive attitude toward God's creatures. And this change brings the solution to the instability.

Just as “there is a progression of events, there is a progression of audience response to those events, a progression rooted in the twin activities of observing and judging.” (Phelan, *Experiencing* 7) For my purpose in this essay, I will mainly focus on the audience’s responses manifested in the activities of judging, the result of which are three types of narrative judgments, namely, interpretive judgments, ethical judgments, and aesthetic judgments. To put it in detail, “*interpretive judgments about the nature of actions or other elements of the narrative, ethical judgments about the moral value of characters and actions, and aesthetic judgments about the artistic quality of the narrative and of its parts*” (Phelan, *Experiencing* 9). In Phelan’s model, both the character and the audience could make three types of judgments, since a character’s actions include his judgments. As a matter of fact, characters’ judgments form an essential part in the progression of the poem.

We might cite the Mariner’s act of shooting the Albatross as an example. Upon the very nature of this event and the moral value of the Mariner’s action, the shipmates made different interpretive judgments. At first, they felt that the Mariner had done a hellish thing; while later on, they thought that there was nothing wrong in shooting the bird.

“And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work ‘em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
‘Ah wretch!’ said they, ‘the bird to slay,
Than made the breeze to blow!’ (15)

As is seen in this stanza, the Mariner’s shipmates thought that it was the Albatross that brought them the wind, and helped them voyage out of the storm and the ice. Viewed in this light, the Mariner’s shooting of the bird was considered hellish and evil. Expressed differently, the Mariner alone was the murderer and sinner; his shipmates held a rather negative attitude toward this act of shooting and therefore they were innocent in this crime. To the implied author and authorial audience, the shipmates were right in making this type of interpretation and evaluation. So, the mist went away and the wind continued blowing southward. However, given that the breeze continued blowing, the shipmates justified the Mariner’s shooting the bird and held a positive attitude toward his action, which caused them to become accomplices in the crime. They did not recognize the fact that the Albatross was a Godly creature and it was an evil thing to kill a creature loved by God. At this moment, both their interpretive judgments and ethical judgments went in the wrong direction. The change in their attitude toward the act of shooting, which directly led to the aversion of their fate, is rather explicit in the next stanza:

“Nor dim nor red, like God’s own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
The all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
‘Twas right,’ said they, ‘such birds to slay,’
That bring the fog and mist.’ (15)

When the Albatross was shot to death, the shipmates feared that it might bring them misfortune. However, the sun still rose as normal, and it was not dim or hot in any way. Given that, they began to accept that assumption that the Albatross deserved to be shot, since it brought them both fog and mist. Their interpretive judgments are wrong in that they saw the bird as the bringer of the fog, without realizing the fact that it was God who sent it to them to pilot them out of the stormy sea, not the other way round. Once they stood on the side of the Mariner and justified his act of shooting the Albatross, they became accomplices in this crime. They were not only wrong in not acknowledging the benignity and kindness of God, but were even more so in supporting the act of killing the bird created and loved by God. Viewed in this light, the characters’ judgments are more or less interwoven with the progression of the poem. As a matter of fact, their judgments contribute to the progression of the poem in the sense that these judgments further complicate the unstable relations between the Mariner and his difficult situations.

When reading the stanzas about the coming of the Albatross and the Mariner’s shooting it, what are the audiences’ possible judgments of the bird, of the Mariner’s act of shooting, and of the characters’ judgments of the bird and the Mariner’s act? On seeing the Albatross, the Mariner and his shipmates welcomed it in God’s name; they saw the bird as a “Christian soul.” The bird had been a very good companion to the mariners, flying around the ship and coming to the mariners’ “hollo.” More importantly, with the arrival of the Albatross, the ice “split with a thunder-fit” (11) and the helmsman steered the ship through it, which proved that the Albatross was “a bird of good omen.” (12) Therefore, everyone on the ship should have been grateful to the bird, and they had been so for a while; as the gloss says, the bird “was received with great joy and hospitality” (11), the bird was fed with food that it had never eaten. The mariners’ attitude and the judgment of the bird’s coming win the approval of the audience, and the audience feels glad that the ship had been steered through the ice and the mariners on the ship were saved.

However, to both the audience and other mariners’ surprise, the Mariner suddenly shot the bird to death with his crossbow. As I said above, other mariners first showed their disapproval, but later they justi-

fied this action. Accordingly, the audience's attitude toward his interpretive and ethical judgments also undergoes changes. At the beginning, the audience agrees with the mariners' judgment of this act and assumes that he has been right in criticizing the Mariner and keeping a certain distance from him. Seen in this way, the rest of the mariners' ethical position was competing with the Mariner's. Yet when the shipmates chosen to stand with the Mariner and claimed that he did the right thing, the audience makes the negative judgments of his change of attitudes. Though later on, the shipmates regretted and watched the Mariner with hatred, it was too late.

As I have argued in "The Activation of Multi-leveled Responses," it is not only the characters and audiences, but also the narrators and implied author that could make all three types of narrative judgments (Shang, "The Activation"), which are most often interwoven and overlapping. The question we need to ask is what judgments the implied Coleridge makes in the progression of the poem? Take the added gloss as an example. It contains such lines about the Albatross and the Mariner's act of shooting the bird as "the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen," "The ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen," "His shipmates cry out against the ancient Mariner, for killing the bird of good luck," and "But when the fog cleared off, they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime" (11–13). Apparently, in the implied Coleridge's eyes, the Albatross was pious and it was a bird of "good omen." Expressed another way, the implied Coleridge made a positive ethical judgment of the nature of the bird and its acts. Turning to the Mariner, the implied Coleridge thought that he was inhospitable and committed a crime; while turning to the shipmates of the Mariner, he argued that their justification of the Mariner's act made them "accomplices in the crime."

As a narratee of the narrator Mariner, the Wedding-Guest's direct responses or judgment in particular merit our attention. At the very beginning, he was bound for a wedding feast. When stopped by the Mariner, the Wedding-Guest used the words "long grey beard and glittering eye" to describe him, which projects the Wedding-Guest's interpretive, aesthetic and ethical judgments of the Mariner. These judgments can be understood in three ways: first, the Wedding-Guest made an aesthetic judgment of the Mariner's appearance, who was not good-looking at all; second, based on the appearance of the Mariner, the Wedding-Guest made an interpretive judgment of the Mariner, assuming that he was not a nice man to talk with; and finally, the Wedding-Guest made a negative ethical judgment of the Mariner who held him from up attending the wedding feast.

Remarkably, in the process of hearing the Mariner's story, the Wedding-Guest's judgments of the story and the Mariner undergo changes in the progression of the poem. He beat his breast and was rather eager to leave, when hearing the sound of a bassoon from the wedding. In other words, compared with the wedding, the Mariner's story was not attractive to him. In the part where the Mariner said that everyone on the ship was dead except him, the Wedding-Guest immediately responded:

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sound.

"I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown." (26—27)

As is seen from the stanza above, the Wedding-Guest was afraid that the person talking to him had been a ghost. It seemed to be the Mariner's glittering eye, and his skinny brown hand that caused the Wedding-Guest's fear. In fact, it was the hellish act of the Mariner's shooting the bird and the death of his shipmates that frightened the Wedding-Guest. In this light, the judgment of the Mariner is simultaneously interpretive, ethical, and aesthetic. By interpretive judgment, I mean that the Wedding-Guest saw the Mariner as a ghost; by ethical judgment, I mean that the Wedding-Guest considered the Mariner's act of shooting the bird to be vicious and immoral; and by aesthetic judgment, I mean that the Wedding-Guest regarded the Mariner's appearance as ugly and his story as frightful.

To me, narrative judgments are closely related to the notion of a "rhetorical triangle," which mainly involves the multileveled nature of narrative communication. According to Phelan, narrative communication is much like a feedback loop with three elements involved: authorial agency, textual phenomena, and readers' responses. Phelan argues that the meaning of a narrative is produced in "a feedback loop among authorial agency, textual phenomena (including intertextual relations), and reader response." (*Living to* 18) This conception assumes that texts are designed by the author with a purpose of affecting readers in particular ways, and these authorial designs are realized by such means as language, techniques, and structure that readers use to understand them, and that readers' responses are the testing ground for how these designs are created through both textual phenomena.

Though the Mariner comforted the Wedding-Guest by saying "Fear not, fear not, / thou Wedding-Guest" (27), it was his very intention that

he would frighten his listener by telling the story. In doing so, the audience, or the Wedding-Guest in this particular case would be persuaded by this tale and learn from this religious and moral lesson, while in more than one place, the Wedding-Guest attempted to stop the Mariner from continuing his tale. Notably, the implied Coleridge also engaged in such a process of the interaction between the Mariner and the Wedding-Guest by his interpretation and comment in the gloss. For instance, in the gloss, he not only explained the Wedding-Guest's fear by saying "[t]he Wedding-Guest feareth that a spirit is talking to him," but also explained the Mariner's comforting words by saying "But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance." (26–27) The added explanation and comment will influence the audiences' judgment of both the Mariner's telling and the Wedding-Guest's response. At first, we are not sure whether the Wedding-Guest was really scared by the Mariner or it was only an excuse to get rid of the Mariner and go on to the wedding feast. But the gloss and the implied Coleridge's judgment contained in it will guide the audiences to interpret the Wedding-Guest's fear: he was scared because he had thought the Mariner was not a man of flesh-and-blood but a ghost.

The interaction of the judgments by narrators, characters, audiences and implied author further complicate the unstable relations between the Mariner and his situation. Viewed in this way, narrative judgments and narrative progression are rather interwoven and inseparable. Though the Wedding-Guest complained occasionally that "I fear thee, ancient Mariner" (33) and intended to go to the wedding feast, he gave up his original plan and learned the lesson from the tale. Finally, he became a "sadder and wiser man." The change in the Wedding-Guest reflects the change in his judgment of the Mariner's tale. At first, he felt rather bored when hearing such a story. Then, he felt frightened by listening to the Mariner. Eventually, he thought it would be wise to take the Mariner's suggestion, to stay far from the marriage feast and to love all things created and blessed by God. Such a radical change reflects the change in the Wedding-Guest's judgment of the tale, which has gone from negative to positive.

In such an interwoven process of progression, the authorial audiences actively responded to and made judgments of those judgments made by the character narrator the Mariner, and the narratee the Wedding-Guest, and the implied Coleridge. For instance, with regard to the judgments of the Mariner and his judgments, though the authorial audience might make a negative judgment of it, he was wondering whether or how his situation would improve. For this, the Wedding-Guest shared the same position.

Therefore, the tension of this poem lies in the unequal knowledge among the audiences, the narrator, and the implied author. Both the character narrator the Mariner and the implied Coleridge know that the Mariner was finally saved by his repentance, while the narratee the Wedding-Guest and the authorial audience were in the dark about it. It needs to be pointed out that both the narrator the Mariner and the implied Coleridge deliberately withheld the information from the narratee the Wedding-Guest, which helps to increase the curiosity and expectation of the audiences and in turn calls for the audiences' participation in the tale. It was not until the final moment that all narrative agents shared the equal knowledge that the Mariner unconsciously blessed the water-snakes and came to his repentance, which helped him to be saved. In this way, the tension of the poem underwent complications and finally got resolved.

Conclusion

To sum up, as the character narrator of the story, the Mariner experiences the tale directly; while the authorial audience and the narratee the Wedding-Guest indirectly experience the story with interpretive, ethical, and aesthetic responses and judgments, which also undergo some changes in the progression of the poem. All these judgments, tensions, and instabilities fall into the general rhetorical design of the implied Coleridge. To phrase it another way, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* contains a high degree of narrativity, because both the textual dynamics and readerly dynamics of the poem are strong. What I have done in this paper is merely a tentative attempt to uncover the rhetorical nature and dynamics of the poem. Since the actual audience will enter into the position of the authorial audience differently, unlike the reluctant Wedding-Guest of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, I, as a rhetorical theorist and pluralist, welcome and look forward to hearing other critics' tales of experiencing this poem.

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Pripoved kot retorika: sodbe, potek in pripovednost v *Pesmi starega mornarja* Samuela Taylorja Coleridgea

Ključne besede: angleška poezija / Coleridge, Samuel Taylor: *Pesem starega mornarja* / retorična naratologija / pripovedna struktura / narativnost / sodbe

Pesem starega mornarja Samuela Taylorja Coleridgea ustreza retoričnim definicijam pripovedi – »dejanja, ko nekdo komu drugemu ob določeni priložnosti in z nekim namenom pove, da se je nekaj zgodilo« (Phelan, *Living* 217). Z umetnostjo posredne komunikacije, tj. pripovedovanja lika v retoričnem smislu, pesnitev umetniško artikulirano pove enako zgodbo z dvema različnima namenoma na dveh relacijah, in sicer v odnosu pripovedovalec–pripovedovanec in v odnosu nakazani avtor–avtorsko občinstvo. Uspeh komunikacije med avtorjem in avtorskim občinstvom je v največji meri odvisen od komunikacije med pripovedovalcem in pripovedovancem, kar omogoča mornarjeva dvojna vloga v pesnitvi: hkrati je lik, vključen v zgodbo, in pripovedovalec, ki zgodbo pove. V nanašanju na retorično teorijo pripovedi Jamesa Phelana želi pričujoči sestavek raziskati pripovednost pesnitve na dveh ravneh dinamike: ravni besedilne dinamike in ravni bralske dinamike. V specifičnem primeru poskuša sestavek pokazati, da besedilna dinamika izhaja iz nestabilnih razmerij med mornarjem in njegovimi položaji, kar sčasoma izzove večplastne odzive različnih agensov pripovedi, in sicer mornarja, svata in občinstva; gre za interpretativne, etične in estetske sodbe. Interakcija omenjenih sodb med pripovedovalcem, liki, občinstvom in nakazanim avtorjem dodatno zapletejo neobstojna razmerja med mornarjem in njegovim položajem. V tako prepletenem procesu napredovanja avtorsko občinstvo dejavno reagira na omenjene sodbe lika-pripovedovalca mornarja, pripovedovanca svata in nakazanega avtorja Coleridgea, ter si ustvari sodbe o njih. Besedilna dinamika v povezavi z interakcijo med pripovednimi sodbami ni le kompatibilna s progresivno močjo pesnitve, temveč okrepi njeno pripovednost in jo približa pripovedi.