Samuel Taylor Coleridge (icon; 21 October 1772 – 25 July 1834) was an English poet, Romantic, literary critic and philosopher who, with his friend William Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England and a member of the Lake Poets. He is probably best known for his poems *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, as well as for his major prose work *Biographia Literaria*. His critical work, especially on Shakespeare, was highly influential, and he helped introduce German idealist philosophy to English-speaking culture.

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**Discussion**

- Ask a question about *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
- Start a new discussion about *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
- Answer questions from other users
- Full Discussion Forum

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**Unanswered Questions**

- Was Coleridge a linguistic learner? How does this relate to his poetry?

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**Quotations**

- "Poor little foal of an oppressèd race! I love the languid patience of thy face."
  "To a Young Ass", li. 1 (1794)

- "Thou rising Sun! thou blue rejoicing Sky! Yea! every thing that is and will be free! Bear witness for me, whereso'er ye be, With what deep worship I have still adored The spirit of divinest Liberty."
  "France: An Ode", st. 1 (1798)

- "Or if the secret ministry of frost Shall hang them up in silent icicles, Quietly shining to the quiet moon."
  "Frost at Midnight", l. 72 (1798)

- "And the Devil did grin, for his darling sin Is pride that apes humility."
  "The Devil's Thoughts", st. 6 (1799)
Strongly it bears us along in swelling and limitless billows, Nothing before and nothing behind but the
sky and the ocean."

"The Homeric Hexameter" (translated from Friedrich Schiller) (1799)

In the hexameter rises the fountain's silvery column; In the pentameter aye falling in melody back.

"The Ovidian Elegiac Metre" (translated from Friedrich Schiller) (1799) File:Mont Blanc Massif.jpg|144px|thumb|right|Hast thou a charm to stay the morning-star In his steep course?

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (icon; 21 October 1772 â€“ 25 July 1834) was an English poet, Romantic, literary
critic and philosopher who, with his friend William Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in
England and a member of the Lake Poets. He is probably best known for his poems The Rime of the Ancient
Mariner and Kubla Khan, as well as for his major prose work Biographia Literaria. His critical work, especially
on Shakespeare, was highly influential, and he helped introduce German idealist philosophy to English-
speaking culture. He coined many familiar words and phrases, including the celebrated suspension of
disbelief. He was a major influence, via Emerson, on American transcendentalism.

Throughout his adult life, Coleridge suffered from crippling bouts of anxiety and depression; it has been
speculated by some that he suffered from bipolar disorder, a condition as yet unidentified during his lifetime.
Coleridge suffered from poor health that may have stemmed from a bout of rheumatic fever and other
childhood illnesses. He was treated for these concerns with laudanum, which fostered a lifelong opium
addiction.

**Early life**

Coleridge was born on 21 October 1772 in the country town of Ottery St Mary, Devon, England. Samuel's
father, the Reverend John Coleridge (1718â€“1781), was a well-respected vicar of the parish and headmaster
of Henry VIII's Free Grammar School at Ottery. He had three children by his first wife. Samuel was the
youngest of ten by Reverend Coleridge's second wife, Anne Bowden (1726â€“1809). Coleridge suggests that
he "took no pleasure in boyish sports" but instead read "incessantly" and played by himself. After John
Coleridge died in 1781, the then 8-year-old Samuel was sent to Christ's Hospital, a charity school founded in
the 16th century in Greyfriars, London, where he remained throughout his childhood, studying and writing
poetry. At that school Coleridge became friends with Charles Lamb, a schoolmate, and studied the works of
Virgil and William Lisle Bowles.

In one of a series of autobiographical letters written to Thomas Poole, Coleridge wrote: "At six years old I
remember to have read Belisarius, Robinson Crusoe, and Philip Quarll â€“ and then I found the Arabian
Nights' Entertainments â€“ one tale of which (the tale of a man who was compelled to seek for a pure virgin)
made so deep an impression on me (I had read it in the evening while my mother was mending stockings) that
I was haunted by spectres whenever I was in the dark â€“ and I distinctly remember the anxious and fearful
eagerness with which I used to watch the window in which the books lay â€“ and whenever the sun lay upon
them, I would seize it, carry it by the wall, and bask, and read."

However, Coleridge seems to have appreciated his teacher, as he wrote in recollections of his schooldays in
Biographia Literaria:

I enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a very sensible, though at the same time, a very severe
master [...] At the same time that we were studying the Greek Tragic Poets, he made us read
Shakespeare and Milton as lessons: and they were the lessons too, which required most time
and trouble to bring up, so as to escape his censure. I learnt from him, that Poetry, even that of
the loftiest, and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of
science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more, and
more fugitive causes. [...] In our own English compositions (at least for the last three years of our
school education) he showed no mercy to phrase, metaphor, or image, unsupported by a sound
sense, or where the same sense might have been conveyed with equal force and dignity in
plainer words... In fancy I can almost hear him now, exclaiming Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, Muse? your Nurse’s daughter, you mean! Pierian spring? Oh aye! the cloister-pump, I suppose! [...] Be this as it may, there was one custom of our master's, which I cannot pass over in silence, because I think it... worthy of imitation. He would often permit our theme exercises, ... to accumulate, till each lad had four or five to be looked over. Then placing the whole number abreast on his desk, he would ask the writer, why this or that sentence might not have found as appropriate a place under this or that other thesis: and if no satisfying answer could be returned, and two faults of the same kind were found in one exercise, the irrevocable verdict followed, the exercise was torn up, and another on the same subject to be produced, in addition to the tasks of the day.

Throughout his life, Coleridge idealized his father as pious and innocent, while his relationship with his mother was more problematic. His childhood was characterized by attention seeking, which has been linked to his dependent personality as an adult. He was rarely allowed to return home during the school term, and this distance from his family at such a turbulent time proved emotionally damaging. He later wrote of his loneliness at school in the poem Frost at Midnight:

"With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt/Of my sweet birthplace."

From 1791 until 1794, Coleridge attended Jesus College, Cambridge. In 1792, he won the Browne Gold Medal for an ode that he wrote on the slave trade. In December 1793, he left the college and enlisted in the Royal Dragons using the false name "Silas Tomkyn Comberbache", perhaps because of debt or because the girl that he loved, Mary Evans, had rejected him. Afterwards, he was rumoured to have had a bout of severe depression. His brothers arranged for his discharge a few months later under the reason of "insanity" and he was readmitted to Jesus College, though he would never receive a degree from Cambridge.

Pantisocracy and marriage

At the university, he was introduced to political and theological ideas then considered radical, including those of the poet Robert Southey. Coleridge joined Southey in a plan, soon abandoned, to found a utopian commune-like society, called Pantisocracy, in the wilderness of Pennsylvania. In 1795, the two friends married sisters Sarah and Edith Fricker, in St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, but Coleridge’s marriage proved unhappy. He grew to detest his wife, whom he only married because of social constraints. He eventually separated from her. Coleridge made plans to establish a journal, The Watchman, to be printed every eight days in order to avoid a weekly newspaper tax. The first issue of the short-lived journal was published in March 1796; it had ceased publication by May of that year.

The years 1797 and 1798, during which he lived in what is now known as Coleridge Cottage, in Nether Stowey, Somerset, were among the most fruitful of Coleridge’s life. In 1795, Coleridge met poet William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. (Wordsworth, having visited him and been enchanted by the surroundings, rented Albion Park, a little over three miles [5 km] away.) Besides the Rime of The Ancient Mariner, he composed the symbolic poem Kubla Khan, written by Coleridge himself claimed as a result of an opium dream, in “a kind of a reverie”; and the first part of the narrative poem Christabel. The writing of Kubla Khan, written about the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan and his legendary palace at Xanadu, was said to have been interrupted by the arrival of a “Person from Porlock” â€“ an event that has been embellished upon in such varied contexts as science fiction and Nabokov’s Lolita. During this period, he also produced his much-praised “conversation” poems This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison, Frost at Midnight, and The Nightingale.

In 1798, Coleridge and Wordsworth published a joint volume of poetry, Lyrical Ballads, which proved to be the starting point for the English romantic movement. Wordsworth may have contributed more poems, but the real star of the collection was Coleridge’s first version of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. It was the longest work and drew more praise and attention than anything else in the volume. In the spring Coleridge temporarily took over for Rev. Joshua Toulmin at Taunton’s Mary Street Unitarian Chapel while Rev. Toulmin grieved over the drowning death of his daughter Jane. Poetically commenting on Toulmin’s strength, Coleridge wrote in a 1798 letter to John Prior Estlin, “I walked into Taunton (eleven miles) and back again, and performed the divine services for Dr. Toulmin. I suppose you must have heard that his daughter, (Jane, on 15 April 1798) in a
melancholy derangement, suffered herself to be swallowed up by the tide on the sea-coast between Sidmouth and Bere (sic. Beer). These events cut cruelly into the hearts of old men: but the good Dr. Toulmin bears it like the true practical Christian, â€“ there is indeed a tear in his eye, but that eye is lifted up to the Heavenly Father.

In the autumn of 1798, Coleridge and Wordsworth left for a stay in Germany; Coleridge soon went his own way and spent much of his time in university towns. During this period, he became interested in German philosophy, especially the transcendental idealism and critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and in the literary criticism of the 18th century dramatist Gotthold Lessing. Coleridge studied German and, after his return to England, translated the dramatic trilogy Wallenstein by the German Classical poet Friedrich Schiller into English. He continued to pioneer these ideas through his own critical writings for the rest of his life (sometimes without attribution), although they were unfamiliar and difficult for a culture dominated by empiricism.

In 1799, Coleridge and Wordsworth stayed at Thomas Hutchinson's farm on the Tees at Sockburn, near Darlington. It was at Sockburn that Coleridge wrote his ballad-poem Love, addressed to Sara. The knight mentioned is the mailed figure on the Conyers tomb in ruined Sockburn church. The figure has a wyvern at his feet, a reference to the Sockburn worm slain by Sir John Conyers (and a possible source for Lewis Carroll's Jabberwocky). The worm was supposedly buried under the rock in the nearby pasture; this was the 'greystone' of Coleridge's first draft, later transformed into a 'mount'. The poem was a direct inspiration for John Keats' famous poem La Belle Dame Sans Merci.

Coleridge's early intellectual debts, besides German idealists like Kant and critics like Lessing, were first to William Godwin's Political Justice, especially during his Pantisocratic period, and to David Hartley's Observations on Man, which is the source of the psychology which is found in Frost at Midnight. Hartley argued that one becomes aware of sensory events as impressions, and that "ideas" are derived by noticing similarities and differences between impressions and then by naming them. Connections resulting from the coincidence of impressions create linkages, so that the occurrence of one impression triggers those links and calls up the memory of those ideas with which it is associated (See Dorothy Emmet, "Coleridge and Philosophy").

Coleridge was critical of the literary taste of his contemporaries, and a literary conservative insofar as he was afraid that the lack of taste in the ever growing masses of literate people would mean a continued desecration of literature itself.

In 1800, he returned to England and shortly thereafter settled with his family and friends at Keswick in the Lake District of Cumberland to be near Grasmere, where Wordsworth had moved. Soon, however, he was beset by marital problems, illnesses, increased opium dependency, tensions with Wordsworth, and a lack of confidence in his poetic powers, all of which fuelled the composition of Dejection: An Ode and an intensification of his philosophical studies.

Later life and increasing drug use

In 1804, he travelled to Sicily and Malta, working for a time as Acting Public Secretary of Malta under the Commissioner, Alexander Ball, a task he performed quite successfully. However, he gave this up and returned to England in 1806. Dorothy Wordsworth was shocked at his condition upon his return. From 1807 to 1808, Coleridge returned to Malta and then travelled in Sicily and Italy, in the hope that leaving Britain's damp climate would improve his health and thus enable him to reduce his consumption of opium. Thomas de Quincey alleges in his Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets that it was during this period that Coleridge became a full-blown opium addict, using the drug as a substitute for the lost vigour and creativity of his youth. It has been suggested, however, that this reflects de Quincey's own experiences more than Coleridge's.

His opium addiction (he was using as much as two quarts of laudanum a week) now began to take over his life: he separated from his wife Sarah in 1808, quarrelled with Wordsworth in 1810, lost part of his annuity in 1811, and put himself under the care of Dr. Daniel in 1814.
In 1809, Coleridge made his second attempt to become a newspaper publisher with the publication of the journal entitled The Friend. It was a weekly publication that, in Coleridgeâ€™s typically ambitious style, was written, edited, and published almost entirely single-handedly. Given that Coleridge tended to be highly disorganized and had no head for business, the publication was probably doomed from the start. Coleridge financed the journal by selling over five hundred subscriptions, over two dozen of which were sold to members of Parliament, but in late 1809, publication was crippled by a financial crisis and Coleridge was obliged to approach "Conversation Sharp", Tom Poole and one or two other wealthy friends for an emergency loan in order to continue. The Friend was an eclectic publication that drew upon every corner of Coleridgeâ€™s remarkably diverse knowledge of law, philosophy, morals, politics, history, and literary criticism. Although it was often turgid, rambling, and inaccessible to most readers, it ran for 25 issues and was republished in book form a number of times. Years after its initial publication, The Friend became a highly influential work and its effect was felt on writers and philosophers from J.S. Mill to Emerson.

Between 1810 and 1820, this "giant among dwarfs", as he was often considered by his contemporaries, gave a series of lectures in London and Bristol â€“ those on Shakespeare renewed interest in the playwright as a model for contemporary writers. Much of Coleridge's reputation as a literary critic is founded on the lectures that he undertook in the winter of 1810â€“11 which were sponsored by the Philosophical Institution and given at Scott's Corporation Hall off Fetter Lane, Fleet Street. These lectures were heralded in the prospectus as "A Course of Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton, in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry." Coleridge's ill-health, opium-addiction problems, and somewhat unstable personality meant that all his lectures were plagued with problems of delays and a general irregularity of quality from one lecture to the next. Furthermore, Coleridge's mind was extremely dynamic and his personality was spasmodic. As a result of these factors, Coleridge often failed to prepare anything but the loosest set of notes for his lectures and regularly entered into extremely long digressions which his audiences found difficult to follow. However, it was the lecture on Hamlet given on 2 January 1812 that was considered the best and has influenced Hamlet studies ever since. Before Coleridge, Hamlet was often denigrated and belittled by critics from Voltaire to Dr. Johnson. Coleridge rescued Hamlet and his thoughts on the play are often still published as supplements to the text.

In August 1814, Coleridge was approached by Lord Byron's publisher, John Murray, about the possibility of translating Goethe's classic Faust (1808). Coleridge was regarded by many as the greatest living writer on the demonic and he accepted the commission, only to abandon work on it after six weeks. Until recently, scholars have accepted that Coleridge never returned to the project, despite Goethe's own belief in the 1820s that Coleridge had in fact completed a long translation of the work. In September 2007, Oxford University Press sparked a heated scholarly controversy by publishing an English translation of Goethe's work which purported to be Coleridge's long-lost masterpiece (the text in question first appeared anonymously in 1821).

In 1817, Coleridge, with his addiction worsening, his spirits depressed, and his family alienated, took residence in the home of the physician James Gillman, first at South Grove and later at the nearby 3 The Grove, Highgate, London, England. He remained there for the rest of his life, and the house became a place of literary pilgrimage of writers including Carlyle and Emerson.

In Gillman's home, he finished his major prose work, the Biographia Literaria (1817), a volume composed of 23 chapters of autobiographical notes and dissertations on various subjects, including some incisive literary theory and criticism. He composed much poetry here and had many inspirations â€“ a few of them from opium overdose. Perhaps because he conceived such grand projects, he had difficulty carrying them through to completion, and he berated himself for his "indolence". It is unclear whether his growing use of opium (and the brandy in which it was dissolved) was a symptom or a cause of his growing depression.

He published other writings while he was living at the Gillman home, notably Sibylline Leaves (1817), Aids to Reflection (1825), and Church and State (1826). He died in Highgate, London on 25 July 1834 as a result of heart failure compounded by an unknown lung disorder, possibly linked to his use of opium. Coleridge had spent 18 years under the roof of the Gillman family, who built an addition onto their home to accommodate the poet.

Carlyle described him at Highgate: "Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle ... The practical intellects of the world did not much heed him, or carelessly reckoned him a metaphysical dreamer: but to the rising
spirits of the young generation he had this dusky sublime character; and sat there as a kind of Magus, girt in mystery and enigma; his Dodona oak-grove (Mr. Gilman’s house at Highgate) whispering strange things, uncertain whether oracles or jargon.”

Poetry

Despite not enjoying the name recognition or popular acclaim that Wordsworth or Shelley have had, Coleridge is one of the most important figures in English poetry. His poems directly and deeply influenced all the major poets of the age. He was known by his contemporaries as a meticulous craftsman who was more rigorous in his careful reworking of his poems than any other poet, and Southey and Wordsworth were dependent on his professional advice. His influence on Wordsworth is particularly important because many critics have credited Coleridge with the very idea of “Conversational Poetry”. The idea of utilizing common, everyday language to express profound poetic images and ideas for which Wordsworth became so famous may have originated almost entirely in Coleridge’s mind. It is difficult to imagine Wordsworth’s great poems, The Excursion or The Prelude, ever having been written without the direct influence of Coleridge’s originality. As important as Coleridge was to poetry as a poet, he was equally important to poetry as a critic. Coleridge’s philosophy of poetry, which he developed over many years, has been deeply influential in the field of literary criticism. This influence can be seen in such critics as A.O. Lovejoy and I.A. Richards.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Christabel, and Kubla Khan

Coleridge is probably best known for his long poems, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Christabel. Even those who have never read the Rime have come under its influence: its words have given the English language the metaphor of an albatross around one’s neck, the quotation of “water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink” (almost always rendered as “but not a drop to drink”), and the phrase “a sadder and a wiser man” (again, usually rendered as “sadder but wiser man”). Christabel is known for its musical rhythm, language, and its Gothic tale.

Kubla Khan, or, A Vision in a Dream, A Fragment, although shorter, is also widely known. Both Kubla Khan and Christabel have an additional “Romantic” aura because they were never finished. Stopford Brooke characterised both poems as having no rival due to their “exquisite metrical movement” and “imaginative phrasing.”

The Conversation poems

- The Eolian Harp (1795)
- Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement (1795)
- This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison (1797)
- Frost at Midnight (1798)
- Fears in Solitude (1798)
- The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem (1798)
- Dejection: An Ode (1802)
- To William Wordsworth (1807)

The eight of Coleridge’s poems listed above are now often discussed as a group entitled “Conversation poems”. The term itself was coined in 1928 by George McLean Harper, who borrowed the subtitle of The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem (1798) to describe the seven other poems as well. The poems are considered by many critics to be among Coleridge’s finest verses; thus Harold Bloom has written, “With Dejection, The Ancient Mariner, and Kubla Khan, Frost at Midnight shows Coleridge at his most impressive.” They are also among his most influential poems, as discussed further below.

Harper himself considered that the eight poems represented a form of blank verse that is “…more fluent and easy than Milton’s, or any that had been written since Milton”. In 2006 Robert Koelzer wrote about another aspect of this apparent “easiness”, noting that Conversation poems such as “… Coleridge’s The Eolian Harp and The Nightingale maintain a middle register of speech, employing an idiomatic language that is capable of being construed as un-symbolic and un-musical: language that lets itself be taken as ‘merely talk’ rather than rapturous ‘song’.”
The last ten lines of "Frost at Midnight" were chosen by Harper as the "best example of the peculiar kind of blank verse Coleridge had evolved, as natural-seeming as prose, but as exquisitely artistic as the most complicated sonnet."

The speaker of the poem is addressing his infant son, asleep by his side:

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

In 1965, M. H. Abrams wrote a broad description that applies to the Conversation poems: "The speaker begins with a description of the landscape; an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape evokes a varied by integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely interwove with the outer scene. In the course of this meditation the lyric speaker achieves an insight, faces up to a tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem. Often the poem rounds itself to end where it began, at the outer scene, but with an altered mood and deepened understanding which is the result of the intervening meditation." In fact, Abrams was describing both the Conversation poems and later poems influenced by them. Abrams' essay has been called a "touchstone of literary criticism". As Paul Magnuson described it in 2002, "Abrams credited Coleridge with originating what Abrams called the 'greater Romantic lyric', a genre that began with Coleridge's 'Conversation' poems, and included Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, Shelley's *Stanzas Written in Dejection* and Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, and was a major influence on more modern lyrics by Matthew Arnold, Walt Whitman, Wallace Stevens, and W. H. Auden."

In addition to his poetry, Coleridge also wrote influential pieces of literary criticism including *Biographia Literaria*, a collection of his thoughts and opinions on literature which he published in 1817. The work delivered both biographical explanations of the author's life as well as his impressions on literature. The collection also contained an analysis of a broad range of philosophical principles of literature ranging from Aristotle to Immanuel Kant and Schelling and applied them to the poetry of peers such as William Wordsworth. Coleridge's explanation of metaphysical principles were popular topics of discourse in academic communities throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and T.S. Eliot stated that he believed that Coleridge was "perhaps the greatest of English critics, and in a sense the last." Eliot suggests that Coleridge displayed "natural abilities" far greater than his contemporaries, dissecting literature and applying philosophical principles of metaphysics in a way that brought the subject of his criticisms away from the text and into a world of logical analysis that mixed logical analysis and emotion. However, Eliot also criticizes Coleridge for allowing his emotion to play a role in the metaphysical process, believing that critics should not have emotions that are not provoked by the work being studied. Hugh Kenner in *Historical Fictions*, discusses Norman Furman's *Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel* and suggests that the term "criticism" is too often applied to *Biographia Literaria*, which both he and Furman describe as having failed to explain or help the reader understand works of art. To Kenner, Coleridge's attempt to discuss complex philosophical concepts without describing the rational process behind them displays a lack of critical thinking that makes the volume more of a biography than a work of criticism.

In Biographia Literaria and his poetry, symbols are not merely "objective correlatives" to Coleridge, but instruments for making the universe and personal experience intelligible and spiritually coherent. To Coleridge, the "cinque spotted spider," making its way upstream "by fits and starts," [Biographia Literaria] is not merely a comment on the intermittent nature of creativity, imagination, or spiritual progress, but the journey and destination of his life. The spider's five legs represent the central problem that Coleridge lived to resolve, the conflict between Aristotelian logic and Christian philosophy. Two legs of the spider represent the "me-not me"
of thesis and antithesis, the idea that a thing can not be itself and its opposite simultaneously, the basis of the
clockwork Newtonian world view that Coleridge rejected. The remaining three legs are exothesis, mesothesis
and synthesis or the Holy trinity: represent the idea that things can diverge without being contradictory.
Taken together, the five legs with synthesis in the center, form the Holy Cross of Ramist logic. The cinque-
spotted spider is Coleridge's emblem of holism, the quest and substance of Coleridge's thought and spiritual
life.

Coleridge and the influence of the Gothic

Coleridge wrote reviews of Ann Radcliffe’s books and The Mad Monk, among others. He comments in his
reviews: "Situations of torment, and images of naked horror, are easily conceived; and a writer in whose works
they abound, deserves our gratitude almost equally with him who should drag us by way of sport through a
military hospital, or force us to sit at the dissecting-table of a natural philosopher. To trace the nice
boundaries, beyond which terror and sympathy are deserted by the pleasurable emotions, â€œ to reach those
limits, yet never to pass them, hic labor, hic opus est."
and "The horrible and the preternatural have usually seized on the popular taste, at the rise and decline of
literature. Most powerful stimulants, they can never be required except by the torpor of an unawakened, or the
langour of an exhausted, appetite... We trust, however, that satiety will banish what good sense should have
prevented; and that, wearied with fiends, incomprehensible characters, with shrieks, murders, and
subterranean dungeons, the public will learn, by the multitude of the manufacturers, with how little expense
of thought or imagination this species of composition is manufactured."

However, Coleridge used these elements in poems such as The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1798),
Christabel and Kubla Khan (published in 1816, but known in manuscript form before then) and certainly
influenced other poets and writers of the time. Poems like this both drew inspiration from and helped to
inflame the craze for Gothic romance.

Mary Shelley, who knew Coleridge well, mentions The Rime of the Ancient Mariner twice directly in
Frankenstein, and some of the descriptions in the novel echo it indirectly. Although William Godwin, her father,
disagreed with Coleridge on some important issues, he respected his opinions and Coleridge often visited the
Godwins. Mary Shelley later recalled hiding behind the sofa and hearing his voice chanting The Rime of the
Ancient Mariner.

Further reading

Close readings of all of the Conversation Poems. Detailed, recent discussion of the Conversation Poems.

- Reid, N. Coleridge, Form and Symbol: Or the Ascertaining Vision (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006).
- Stockitt, Robin, Imagination and the Playfulness of God: The Theological Implications of Samuel Taylor
  Coleridge’s Definition of the Human Imagination (Eugene, OR, 2011) (Distinguished Dissertations in
  Christian Theology).

External links

- Poems by Coleridge from the Poetry Foundation. Retrieved 2010-10-19
- Coleridge archive at the Victoria University. Retrieved 2010-10-19
- Works of Coleridge at the University of Toronto. Retrieved 2010-10-19
- Friends of Coleridge Society. Retrieved 2010-10-19
- Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge from the Internet Archive. Retrieved 2010-10-19

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GFDL.
Thomas De Quincey’s biography on Samuel Taylor Coleridge appeared in the eighth edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica (see the Britannica Classic: Samuel Taylor Coleridge). John Bernard Beer The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. Learn More in these related Britannica articles: tragedy: Coleridge. But it is not certain that what was good for the revolution was good for tragedy. Coleridge in his critical writings of 1808–18 said that: William Wordsworth: Coleridge and Lyrical Ballads.