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Iron Maiden, Coleridge, and the Ancient Mariner

*A comparative analysis of stylistics in Iron
Maiden's and Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient
Mariner*



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Abstract

This essay is a comparative analysis of stylistics in Iron Maiden's adaptation of Samuel T. Coleridge's *Rime of the ancient mariner*. The essay employs the following concepts: the poetic function of language, the referential function of language, parallelism, and meter to investigate stylistic differences and conformity between the two texts. Furthermore, the essay also discusses how the stylistic elements affect meaning, especially regarding the theme of sin and redemption, and the extent to which the meaning of Iron Maiden's text conforms to, differs from, or is informed by Coleridge's poem.

Key words

Stylistics, the poetic function, the referential function, parallelism, meter, sin, redemption, isolation.



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1 Introduction

For millennia, literary texts have served as a reminder of what has been and those who have walked upon the Earth's surface prior to oneself. Albeit aged and perhaps irrelevant to certain aspects of modern day life, the literary canon has nonetheless inspired younger generations of writers, artists, and musicians for centuries. One needs only consider the success of modern adaptations and reiterations of the works of Shakespeare and Homer, among many others, to arrive at such a conclusion. Evidently, a wide array of newer literary works would not have been written without the precedent set by a writer's predecessors. Some of the modern adaptations and reiterations inspired by the classical literary canon belong to forms of entertainment which generally may not be thought to be interested in the canon. These forms of entertainment include the music genre heavy metal. One instance of such an adaptation is the well-known heavy metal band Iron Maiden's reiteration of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The poem was first written in 1797-1798 and released in the collection *Lyrical Ballads*. The ballad was then re-released with a glossary of notes and clarifications in 1817. The topic of this essay is to perform an analysis of stylistics in Iron Maiden's *Ancient Mariner* and Coleridge's 1817 version of the poem (including the glossary) from a comparative angle to conclude the extent to which Iron Maiden's adaptation conforms to or differs from the original.

The ballad begins with three young men headed to a wedding. Before they reach the wedding they are stopped by a mariner who tells them the tale of a sea voyage he undertook. One of the young men is unwillingly entranced as the mariner tells of his ship's unfortunate venture. First, the vessel was caught in a storm. Afterwards, it was trapped in a field of ice. The ship breaks free as an albatross appears and the bird is seen as a good omen by the crew. However, the mariner shoots the albatross and suddenly a lack of food, fresh water, and wind haunts the ship. Slimy creatures appear on the vessel and when another ship



appears on the horizon it turns out to be that of Death. The mariner is the only man left alive. Eventually he reaches land by help of his crew who has risen from death, and another ship carrying living people.

Traditionally, literary analyses of the poem focus on the albatross as it is essential to the narrative, a tradition this essay will adhere to. The albatross is of relevance as it plays a large part of the narrative in both Iron Maiden's and Coleridge's texts. Furthermore, focusing on the albatross opens up a venue of discussing its meaning in Iron Maiden's text compared to its meaning in the original poem, as well as how that meaning is constructed by matters of structure and poetic devices. To inform the discussion of meaning two analyses of the original poem will be employed. Namely, Agneta Lindgren's dissertation *The Fallen World in Coleridge's Poetry* and Robert Penn Warren's essay *A Poem of Pure Imagination: An Experiment in Reading*. The analyses are relevant due to the effort to decipher any coherency of meaning between Iron Maiden's and Coleridge's texts. Warren's analysis focuses on the theme of sin and redemption. Lindgren's, on the other hand, criticises certain aspects of Warren's analysis in favour of a more multifaceted interpretative approach. Hopefully, the differing perspectives will allow for a well-informed discussion. Furthermore, "Religious Thinker" by Mary Anne Perkins, a chapter from *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*, provides some insight into Coleridge's own thoughts on religion and may thus provide some beneficial contributions to the discussion of meaning.

In May of 1984, Coleridge's poem and its plot once more showed its face as Iron Maiden released *Powerslave*, the band's fifth studio album. *Powerslave* included the track *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, written by the band's bass player, Steve Harris. Adapting the poem, written in the form of a ballad (Khan 1), to a song seems fitting as a ballad is "a folk song or orally transmitted poem" (Baldick 35). Aside from this song, Iron Maiden appears to have been further affected by the literary canon to some extent. Specifically, the creations



Poe, Shakespeare, and Tennyson have influenced the band (Roberts 64). Furthermore, themes of mythology and the human experience have been of some interest to certain heavy metal performers, including Iron Maiden (68). Thus, Warren's focus on sin and redemption appears relevant to the comparison of meaning in the two *Ancient Mariners* as the theme is doubtlessly linked to the human experience. Historically speaking heavy metal lyrics have also been claimed to primarily focus on sex as well as "dark and depressing subject matter" (Kegan 3) – the latter further establishes the relevance of Warren's sin and redemption theme. Accordingly, they have often received criticism for being subliterate, simple, and primarily created to appeal to a universal crowd (4). This distinction between lyrical themes could be equated with the somewhat common, albeit declining, attitude that there are different types of culture; "high" and "low" – often referred to as fine and popular respectively due to the evaluative nature of the terms high and low. Kegan's positioning of lyrical themes in heavy metal may be seen as popular literature, whereas Roberts' positioning of Iron Maiden's lyrical themes appears closer to fine literature as they are stated to have been influenced by authors whose works are regularly claimed to transcend the quality of popular literature and culture. Evidently, there seems to be a limit in the degree to which heavy metal lyrics have been affected by the literary canon. At the very least, the emphasis has rather been put on the lyrics which fall into the category of low literature, or low culture.

It would appear that the creations of Iron Maiden have been affected by the literary canon in a manner which has not been heavily emphasised by contemporary society or within the field of literary studies. Hence, a comparative analysis of Iron Maiden's adaptation of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and the original poem could serve to re-evaluate the attitudes surrounding literariness in heavy metal lyrics. Furthermore, as there has only been a low amount of studies regarding the relationship between the literary canon and heavy metal music an analysis of the relationship between Coleridge's and Iron Maiden's *The Rime of the*



Ancient Mariner could serve as a stepping stone into greater depths of inquiry regarding the literariness of heavy metal.

The texts' use of Roman Jakobson's poetic and referential functions of language will be investigated in this essay. The functions are interested in how a message is structured – regarding syllable count, alliteration and such – as well as what a message is referring to and how, respectively (Jakobson 146 & 148). The poetic function appears relevant to a comparative analysis aimed to find recurrent patterns in two texts as it may provide insights into how the structure of the texts differ and conform to one another, and how this affects meaning. The poetic function also deals with matters of how meaning is generated through the use of structure and stylistic devices. Analysing difference and conformity in the poetic function of the two *Ancient Mariners* might highlight to what degree Iron Maiden adapted, reiterated, or plainly copied Coleridge's poem. This is of interest due to the previous discussion of whether heavy metal lyricism is to be regarded as fine or popular culture. A large degree of conformity in the adaptation of Coleridge's canonical poem would prove that Iron Maiden, a band central to the development of heavy metal, has drawn inspiration from one of the most well-known poems in the English literary canon – thus establishing a connection between the music genre and fine culture. Furthermore, aspects of Roman Jakobson's thoughts can be traced to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Attridge 46). Thus, employing his concepts seem fitting as this essay aims to analyse a Coleridge poem and a reiteration of it.

Additionally, as the scope of this essay is one of looking at how the structural and stylistic tendencies of Iron Maiden's adaptation of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* relate to the original poem by means of the referential and poetic functions, the concept of parallelism – also introduced by Roman Jakobson in the 20th century – becomes of interest. Parallelism is relevant as it is one of the ways in which the poetic function manifests



itself. Taking this approach allows the analysis to find different types of recurring patterns – parallels – in the independent texts and whether or not the parallels are present in both texts. In the article “Rime of a Metal Mariner”, Justin J. Roberts analyses how Iron Maiden’s text has been informed by Coleridge’s poem on a textual level, and how the musical components of the song is informed by the poem’s rhythm. As a number of the similarities and differences presented by Roberts are centred on how the Albatross is portrayed this essay, too, will focus on how the Albatross is portrayed. Investigating the purely textual aspects of the *Ancient Mariners* will allow for a deeper discussion informed by Roberts’ article. In addition to Roberts’ article, Gilbert Cosulich’s essay “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner: A Seminar Study”, a brief analysis of several aspect of Coleridge’s poem, will be used to further inform the analysis.

The referential function is of interest due to Iron Maiden’s text inherently referring to Coleridge’s simply because it is an adaptation – Iron Maiden’s song having the same name is in itself a reference to Coleridge’s poem. Furthermore, analysing the referential function in both texts may uncover whether or not the meaning of metaphors and attitude towards them differs between the two texts. As an example, a person referring to someone by nickname, rather than Mr/Mrs, indicates a more personal relationship, thus altering the attitude the first person is shown to have towards the person being spoken to. In the same sense, differences in referring to the albatross in the two texts could be an indication of different attitudes towards the bird. The referential function is also an interesting aspect to analyse as Iron Maiden’s reiterated parts are written in a third-person narrative perspective, whereas Coleridge’s poem alternates between third- and first-person perspectives (Roberts 68). The differing perspectives seem relevant as different types of narration alters the grammatical rules a message is bound to adhere to. In turn, the manner in which poetic devices may be employed is also affected; a first-person perspective warrants using “my”



rather than “his”, which affects how rhyme, alliteration, and several other devices may be used.

The key theoretical concepts mentioned will be further discussed in the next section. Subsequently, there will be an analysis of Iron Maiden’s adaptation of Coleridge’s poem. Lastly, a conclusion of the findings and how they prove, or disprove, Iron Maiden’s literariness will be included.

2 Jakobson’s functions, parallelism, and meter

In this section, the concepts mentioned in the introduction will be discussed in deeper detail. Firstly, the referential and poetic functions, and how they are tied to one another, will be discussed. Secondly, parallelism and how it ties into the functions shall be clarified. As will be shown, these concepts are interested in how recurrent patterns affect a message and how meaning may be emphasised and clarified, or perhaps diminished and concealed, by employing different structural and poetic devices. As the poetic function and parallelism are interested in structural patterns meter becomes relevant. Hence, this section also features a brief summary of metrical patterns and what constitutes them. Lastly, the application of these concepts to the analysis of the two texts shall be established.

2.1 The referential and poetic functions

As previously mentioned, Roman Jakobson introduced the poetic and referential functions – alongside four other functions – in the essay *Closing Statement: Linguistics & Poetics*. He also introduced the concept of parallelism – which will be discussed under a separate subheading. The functions are interested in how different aspects of a message affect its meaning. Parallelism, too, is interested in how recurring patterns affect meaning. The interest



in how meaning is generated, and what constitutes an “effective”, perhaps striking is a better word, message ties these concepts into one another – but more on that later. Furthermore, Jakobson argues that it is hard to “find verbal messages that would fulfil only one function” (144). Thus, the connection between the poetic and referential functions appears obvious. Considering that the poetic function and parallelism take interest in similar areas parallelism, too, may be assumed to tie into how meaning is generated alongside the poetic and referential functions.

In his essay, Jakobson defines the referential and poetic functions as well their roles in verbal communication. The functions are based on the constitutive factors in any act of verbal communication (143-144) and thus, these should be mentioned first. Jakobson provides a model of what constitutes verbal communication, and how it relates to the functions of language. The different parts of his model are the addresser, the addressee, the message, the context, lexical code, and the channel through which a message is sent. These parts, in turn, each constitute a different function of language. However, as only two functions – the referential and the poetic – are of interest to this essay, the other functions will not be addressed.

The referential function is the primary task of most messages and it is oriented toward context (Jakobson 144). By this, Jakobson means that the referential function speaks of someone or something which is not necessarily physically present, even though it may be present as well (145). As the referential function focuses on a third person or object, it appears relevant to this essay as the mariner in the poem speaks of a plethora of third persons and objects. Furthermore, the referential function conveys some information regarding what is being referred to (Baldick 147). Hence, it may reveal certain elements of meaning in how different persons and objects are referred to. In affecting how meaning is generated, the referential function ties into the poetic function. As an example, the phrase “I saw a child



driving a car” immediately evokes certain attitudes as a child driving a car is likely seen as more dangerous – at the very least more uncommon – than an adult driving a car.

Furthermore, substituting ‘child’ with ‘adult’ affects the grammatical possibilities due to ‘adult’ enforcing the use of ‘an’ instead of ‘a’. The referential function thus governs the syntactic forms available to a message and, in doing so, it affects the possibilities to employ poetic devices in certain manners; ‘an’ and ‘a’ opens different catalogues of coherent sound patterns. Thus, the referential function affects the possibilities the poetic function has of manifesting itself.

The second function to be investigated in this analysis is the poetic function as “poetry [...] is a use of language in which the poetic function dominates any of the others [functions] which might be present” (Attridge 37). Thus, it should be quite common in both Coleridge’s ballad and Iron Maiden’s song. According to Jakobson the poetic function is oriented towards the message itself, and it focuses on structures and poetic devices within a message (146). Accordingly, devices such as metaphors, similes, alliteration, and rhyme are all manifestations of the poetic function. Structural aspects of a message – such as metre, ordering of words, and morphological consistency or inconsistency – are also entailed within the function. The inclusion of metaphors into the poetic function reveals a connection to the referential function: “When words are used metaphorically, one field of reference is carried over or transferred into another” (Bradford 23). In other words, a metaphor is a reference to an object, state, or emotion that is made by referring to something else and the referential nature of metaphors thus links the poetic function to the referential. Due to its interest in poetic devices and structural elements, the poetic function is relevant to the study of parallelism – which will be discussed in further detail below – as both concepts are interested in how these elements affect the effectiveness of a message.

According to Jakobson, a central aspect of the poetic function is that it focuses



on how poetic devices such as alliteration, alongside structural aspects such as recurrent sequence measures, affects the effectiveness of a message:

The symmetry of three disyballic verbs with an identical initial consonant and an identical final vowel added splendour to the laconic victory message of Caesar: '*Veni, vidi, vici.*' (148)

In poetry this is observable in the recurrent patterns of meter and word stress; patterns which make out the structural foundation of a poem's form (147). Thus, meaning may be emphasised and clarified – or diminished and concealed – by employing different structural and poetic devices in the same manner that Caesar's victory message gained splendour through the use of consistent sound patterns.

The previously mentioned relationship between the poetic and referential functions becomes increasingly clear when considering the process of arranging a message. According to Jakobson, the two basic modes in arrangement are selection and combination:

If 'child' is the topic of the message, the speaker selects one among the extant, more or less similar, nouns like child, kid, youngster, tot, all of them equivalent in a certain respect, and then, to comment on his topic, he may select one of the semantically cognate verbs – sleeps, dozes, nods, naps. [...] The selection is produced on the base of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymity and antonymity. (147)

The selection of a certain type of arrangement incorporates the referential function due to 'child', as mentioned previously, carrying with it different attributes than 'adult', while at the same time applying restrictions on what types of poetic devices may be used, and how.

Furthermore, the poetic function – or message – is affected by all other functions of language (Bradford 41), which further links the referential function to the poetic. Accordingly, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* would certainly lose several thematic properties if the albatross



had instead been a seagull or a pelican as these birds would carry with them other connotations.

2.2 Parallelism

In *Linguistics & Poetics*, Jakobson argues that parallelism is recurrent structural patterns – thus rendering the metrical aspect of this essay increasingly important – but also that the concept includes recurrent patterns of sound. He bases his argument on a thought presented by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Hopkins argues that any instance of an effect being “sought in likeness of things [or] sought in unlikeness” (Jakobson 155) could be deemed a parallelism. Thus, it appears as if not only recurrent patterns of sound and structure are parallelisms. The umbrella term also includes poetic devices such as metaphors, similes, etcetera – the one thing they have in common is that they seek likeness or unlikeness through comparison. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, parallelism is:

The arrangement of similarly constructed clauses, sentences, or verse lines in a pairing or other sequence suggesting some correspondence between them. The effect of parallelism is usually one of balanced arrangement achieved through repetition of the same syntactic forms. (Baldick 266).

This definition appears to agree with Jakobson’s thoughts on structural parallelism. Hence, the term parallelism will be assumed to contain recurrent patterns of structure and sound, as well as comparison being sought in likeness or unlikeness of things. The poetic function may then easily be linked to parallelism as both concepts are interested in the structural and poetic aspects of a message. Considering Jakobson’s modes of selection and combination: “The selection is produced on the base of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymity and antonymity” (Jakobson 147), reveals additional ties between parallelism and the two



functions. It implies that the poetic function and parallelism are incorporated in the arrangement of a sequence as the selection is based on what could be regarded as parallels; equivalence, similarity, dissimilarity, synonymity and antonymity – as presented in the previous quote – all emphasise instances of likeness or unlikeness being sought in comparison. By emphasising the likeness or unlikeness of different aspects of a message, the poetic function alters the meaning presented therein. If a child were to be compared to an adult, for the sake of unlikeness, the message conveying the differences may focus on physical or psychological attributes. Furthermore, any comparison – parallel – warrants a reference to the two elements being compared. One cannot compare a car to a boat without referring to either of the nouns or their qualities. Thus, the comparative nature of the parallelism contained within the poetic function relies on the referential function in order to convey meaning.

A comparative analysis of recurrent patterns – in other words instances of referential parallelism – in both versions of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* may yield results that conclude the degree to which Iron Maiden's version is stylistically derived from, coherent to, or differing from Coleridge's original. The selection of parallelisms to analyse is based around the notion of the Albatross as it is a major part of both the poem and the song – and often the centre of attention in analyses of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

2.3 Meter

Meter, in a literary context, is “the pattern of measured sound-units recurring more or less regularly in lines of verse” (Baldick 224). Each line is made up of a number of feet, which are categorised based on which syllable is stressed, and how many syllables it contains (Strachan 75). The feet, in turn, categorise in what type of meter a line is written. In *Closing Statement: Linguistics and poetics in retrospect*, Derek Attridge argues that “any form of versification



which uses syllables as a measure [...] has introduced a measure of equivalence along the sequence” (41). In other words, the metrical structure of a poem – especially if consistent – is designed around notions of equivalence, similarity, and dissimilarity between the lines of a poem. Accordingly, meter appears to tie into the poetic function of language, and parallelism, as Jakobson’s modes of selection and combination – which are informed by matters of the referential and poetic functions – are based on equivalence, similarity, and dissimilarity.

As was mentioned in the introduction Coleridge’s poem is a ballad (Khan 1), a categorisation that seems fitting as it is written in primarily iambic tetrameter alternating with trimeter (Cosulich 189), the most common form for ballads (Baldick 35). Thus, the metrical analysis of Iron Maiden’s text will focus on whether or not tetra- and trimeters are used regularly. Furthermore, the analysis will also focus on whether or not Iron Maiden employs syllable stresses in a similar manner. Hence, these concepts must be defined.

According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, a trimeter consists of three feet and a tetrameter is: “a four-stress line” (Baldick 224). This means that a trimeter consists of three groupings of syllables with one syllable in each grouping being stressed, or ‘emphasised’. Accordingly, a tetrameter consists of four feet, or groupings, with each foot containing one stressed syllable, and a pentameter consists of five feet (224).

As mentioned above, Coleridge’s poem is primarily written in iambic feet which is a grouping of two syllables where the first syllable is unstressed and the second stressed (Strachan 81). A trochaic foot also consists of two syllables but here, the first syllable is stressed and the second unstressed, and trochaic feet are often used “in substitution in iambic verse” (88). Thus, there is a likelihood that Coleridge’s poem, despite its inclination towards iambic feet, also contains trochaic feet. As Coleridge’s poem generally conforms to iambic tetrameter and trimeter the analysis of Iron Maiden’s text will investigate whether or not it, too, makes use of these meters. However, as Coleridge does deviate from the metrical pattern



at times (Cosulich 189), other feet than the common iambic are also of interest. Namely, anapaestic and dactylic feet should also be defined. Both of these types of feet consist of three syllables. In an anapaestic foot, the first two syllables are unstressed while the third syllable is stressed (Strachan 94). In a dactylic foot, on the other hand, the first syllable is stressed and the following two unstressed (92).

The metrical aspects of Iron Maiden's text is of interest as poetry "is heavily dependent on formal and generic conventions which have developed and evolved through many centuries" (Strachan 2). Thus, if it conforms to the general metrical standards of English poetry, the literariness of Iron Maiden's text can easily be established. Accordingly, any such literariness is further emphasised if Iron Maiden's song conforms to the metrical patterns of Coleridge's poem.

2.4 Applying the theoretical concepts

The interest of this essay, as mentioned previously, is to analyse parallels and how they are constructed in Coleridge's and Iron Maiden's different versions of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and how differences and similarities between the two texts affect meaning. To achieve this goal, the analysis section will primarily focus on a central theme present in both texts – the albatross, to be precise. As the albatross is portrayed in four different stanzas in Iron Maiden's song the analysis has been divided into four sections, one for each stanza.

The analysis of the portrayal of the albatross will partially focus on metrical patterns. However, Jakobson's poetic and referential functions and how they alter the meaning and effectiveness of a text are also of interest. Especially seeming as the poetic function and parallelism are interested in how stylistic patterns – in other words structure and poetic devices - affect a message. Thus, structural patterns such as rhyme pattern and metre, as well as poetic devices such as alliteration and metaphor. will be analysed from a



comparative angle. The meaning and effectiveness of the parallelisms may be observed and analysed in regard to how the texts differ from one another or not.

However, relying on Roman Jakobson's concepts is not unproblematic. In the introduction to *The Stylistics Reader: From Roman Jakobson to the Present*, Jakobson's model for analysing stylistics is seen as somewhat lacklustre, especially regarding interpretation. Jean Jacques Weber argues that trying to ascribe a function or meaning to purely formal patterns – often done in Jakobsonian stylistic analyses – means that “a huge leap of faith is required to move from description to interpretation” (2). However, analysing the mentioned Jakobsonian concepts by focusing on the albatross could yield viable results without such leaps of faith. As a later model of stylistic analyses centred on Jakobsonian concepts argues: “a formal feature is only considered stylistically significant if it is functional, if it has a particular meaning or effect or value” (2). Considering the albatross' central role in the poem, especially regarding meaning, applying Jakobson's concepts appears viable. Additionally, Lindgren's and Warren's analyses of the poem will hopefully reduce the risk of any huge leaps of faith and establish the particular meaning of the albatross.

The findings will be concluded in an effort to summarize the extent to which Iron Maiden has been influenced by Coleridge's canonical and iconic text. Furthermore, the findings will be shortly discussed in light of Kegan's and Roberts' thoughts on heavy metal literariness, and alongside Cosulich's brief summary of the structural and stylistic tendencies of Coleridge's poem.



3 Iron Maiden's albatross

3.1 The albatross appears

The albatross' first appearance takes place in the third stanza of Iron Maiden's song:

"Through the snow fog flies the Albatross" (Line 9), and line 63-64 in Coleridge's poem: "At length did cross an Albatross/Thorough the fog it came". Iron Maiden's text condenses the events of Coleridge's from two lines to one and, interestingly enough, the albatross is said to fly through the 'snow fog' rather than coming through 'the fog'. This difference in word choice is in fact an instance of Iron Maiden showcasing some knowledge of the poem as 'snow fog' is used to describe Coleridge's line 63-64 in Gloss 7 of the poet's notes on the poem (Roberts 70). Thus, this line in Iron Maiden's text may appear to be somewhat non-conforming to the original even though it is, in fact, very related to Coleridge's poem. Iron Maiden's use of a note to the poem, rather than the poem itself, could be argued to reveal a larger degree of knowledge about Coleridge's poem than would be warranted by not choosing to use 'snow fog'. 'Snow fog' also adds atmosphere in the sense that it establishes the hostile weather conditions the ship is in. Fog tends to in the obscure line of sight, and the snow may be assumed to do the same due to being placed next to 'fog' – further amplifying the low visibility and harsh cold surrounding the vessel and its crew. In other words the snow fog isolates the ship and the crew. Thus, the snow fog actually indicates a theme that is present in the original poem – isolation (Lindgren 64). Line 9 of Iron Maiden's text amplifies the state of isolation the ship now finds itself in: "To a place where nobody's been". Perhaps the occurrence of isolation in both texts could be connected to the 'outsider' or 'outcast' status of heavy metal music that can be seen in how it was criticised by media during the 1980s. At the time – and to this day – Iron Maiden was one of the most famous heavy metal acts in the world. Yet they were famous within a genre often shunned by the general public. Warren, too, mentions that the mariner suffers from loneliness (22) which in itself is a form of isolation,



and Lindgren mentions the mariner's status as an outcast (78). Thus, isolation appears to have been experienced by both the ancient mariner, the band, and perhaps even Coleridge itself as the theme is present in his text.

Warren claims that Coleridge's poem uses the moon, or moonlight, in close proximity to positive events occurring whereas the sun is used in close proximity to negative events (29). Accordingly, he argues that the albatross approaching the ship from fog further indicates the positive connotations to the bird (33). Hence, Iron Maiden's albatross approaching from the snow fog introduces it as a positive aspect of the narrative. This claim does somewhat negate the interpretation of the fog as being negative. Warren's argument, however, is not that fog is positive in itself. Instead, aspects of the poem that are presented closely to reflections of sunlight are claimed to be positive and, as will be discussed below, the albatross is indeed positive despite of its approach through the snow fog and its negative effects.

Both texts alter the meaning of, and attitudes toward, the bird by employing the referential function. Line ten of Iron Maiden's text and line 66 of Coleridge's text make use of a nearly identical phrase: "Hailed in God's name hoping good luck it brings" (Iron Maiden) and "We hail'd it in God's name" (Coleridge). This implies that the bird is related to God, an entity seen as positive and benign regardless of religion. Contrasted with the snow fog obscuring the crew's vision – a straightforward metaphor that they have lost their way and are in a dangerous situation (isolated) – the godly albatross appears as a guide, there to help them escape their precarious situation, and easy to see despite the low visibility. Considering the literal and metaphorical loss of sight – the loss of a method of discerning which path to follow – the albatross then reveals the path the crew must follow. As the albatross symbolises God due to its ascribed godliness, its role as a guide symbolises following the path of God. It is hence implied that following God ensures safety, clear vision, and an escape from isolation –



redemption. Thus, the referential function alters the meaning of the albatross to be of a benign and positive nature as the bird, by appearing in its godly manner to guide the vessel and its crew to safety, is contrasted against the malignity of the snow fog which obscures the crew's vision and leads them into danger. Both the greeting of the albatross and its approach from reflected sunlight amplifies the positive nature of the bird.

The line preceding Coleridge's hailing of the Albatross: "As if it had been a Christian soul" (Line 65) is completely omitted in Iron Maiden's stanza. This somewhat decreases the godly qualities explicitly ascribed to the bird in Iron Maiden's text. However, the bird's good nature is emphasised in a different manner. Namely, Iron Maiden choosing to add "hoping good luck it brings" to what is essentially Coleridge's exact line puts further emphasis on the positive manner in which the bird is welcomed. Coleridge applies a somewhat similar emphasis in Gloss 7 where the bird is said to have been greeted with "great joy and hospitality". According to Roberts, this adding of emphasis shows that Iron Maiden is "seamlessly transitioning from poem to gloss to poem" (70), thus revealing that the band has written a reiteration that is highly dependent on the original poem.

The stanzas that these lines are found in, where the Albatross is first introduced in both texts, should also be analysed as meter, rhyme pattern and other stylistic parallels may thus be observed. Iron Maiden's stanza, the third in the song, appears as follows (each foot in brackets, each stress italicised):

[*Driven*] [*south* to] [*the land*] [*of snow*] [*and ice*]

[To a *place*] [*where no*][*body's been*]

[*Through* the] [*snow* fog] [*flies* the] [*albatross*]

[*Hailed* in] [*God's name*] [*hoping*] [*good luck*] [*it brings*].



The first and fourth lines are written in pentameter, the second in trimeter and the third in tetrameter. The stresses of the feet differ with iambic and trochaic feet (unstressed-stressed and stressed-unstressed respectively) making up the majority of the feet. There is also a dactylic foot (stressed-unstressed-unstressed) at the end of the third line, and “God’s name” in the fourth line makes up a spondaic foot – a foot consisting of two stressed syllables (Strachan 95). Coleridge’s corresponding stanza – stanza 16 – also includes a tetrameter. Namely, the third line of the stanza: “[As if] [it had *been*] [a *Chris*][tian soul]” (Coleridge Line 66). The rest of Coleridge’s stanza is written in trimeter. As a whole, Coleridge’s 16th stanza uses syllable stresses that emphasise the last syllable in each foot – in other words, the stanza primarily employs iambic and anapaestic feet. Evidently, there are not too many instances of parallels within the metrical aspects of these stanzas as Iron Maiden’s text, despite featuring tetrameter and trimeter, does not adhere to the recurrent patterns of syllable stress in Coleridge’s poem as strictly. Furthermore, Iron Maiden’s stanza relies quite heavily on pentameter which is not used in the poem’s corresponding stanza. Pentameter is, however, one of the most common meters in English poetry (Strachan 74) and thus, Iron Maiden’s stanza conforms to one of the traditions of the English literary canon. Regarding rhyme pattern, Iron Maiden’s stanza adheres to an A-B-C-B pattern, the same as Coleridge’s poem – which it mainly conforms to throughout (Cosulich 189). Thus, the recurrence of the rhyme pattern reveals a structural parallel between the texts.

Concerning rhythm, however, the structure of Iron Maiden’s song becomes of some interest. The instrumental constituent is written in common time – each bar consisting of four ‘pulses’, or beats – and the guitars and bass primarily play eighth and sixteenth notes in triplets (Roberts 72) – three notes dispersed equally over a single pulse. This allows for eighths to be played on and in-between each pulse, while sixteenths may be played on the pulse as well as three more times before the next pulse. The even amount of notes being



played alongside each bar having four pulses fits the tetrameter of the lyrics as many syllables are uttered in unison with a note – be it an eighth or sixteenth. In fact, in an iambic tetrameter, the use of eighths played in common time allows each syllable to coincide with a note being played. Furthermore, the notes being played in triplets allows for dactylic and anapaestic feet to be uttered simultaneously with notes being played. Aside from providing a coherent rhythmical pattern to both song and text, this phenomenon also proves that Iron Maiden, to some extent, “design their sound around Coleridge, using his poem’s rhythm as a guide for the songs rhythm” (Roberts 69-70).

Several poetic devices are present in both texts. One of these is the use of internal rhymes which can be observed in line 63 of Coleridge’s poem and line seven and nine in Iron Maiden’s text. Coleridge’s internal rhyme (underlined in the quote below) is used several times in the poem, but none in the song (Roberts 70): “At length did cross an albatross”. The rhyme adds quite some emphasis on ‘albatross’ as the preceding ‘cross’ introduces the sound ‘-ross’, thus adding a repetitive quality to the line. This repetitive quality presumably, much like the repetitiveness in ‘vene, vidi, vici’, renders the message more effective as it adds emphasis and rhythm (Cosulich 189). Furthermore, as rhyme is “an instruction to carry out a semantic comparison” (Attridge 42), the internal rhyme employed by the poem further implies that the bird is of godly nature due to the juxtaposition of “albatross” and “cross”, a highly religious symbol related to Christianity.

Iron Maiden’s internal rhyme, however, does not occur within a single line. Instead, it occurs between line seven and nine: “Driven south to the land of snow and ice/To a place where nobody’s been/Through the snow fog flies the albatross”. Both texts thus use internal rhymes, an aspect of the poetic function, to grant their messages a continuous sound pattern. According to Jakobson’s thoughts on the poetic function, and Cosulich’s thoughts on repetitive sound patterns, a continuous sound pattern alters the effectiveness of a message. In



fact, both texts also make use of the assonance between ‘fog’ and ‘God’, both words containing the same ‘o’-sound. This is another instance of a recurrent sound pattern imbuing the message with continuity and a pleasant rhythm. ‘Fog’ and ‘God’ are also presented in the same feet of their respective lines; the second. In poetry from before the 20th century stress and sound were often used to indicate meaning (Bradford 16). Hence, the placement of ‘fog’ and ‘God’, and their assonance, could be an indication of the fog being sent by God, which further emphasises the Christian theme that runs throughout Coleridge’s poem while conforming to the common use of biblical language in heavy metal. Accordingly, the parallel placement of God and fog strengthens Warren’s claim that reflected sunlight is an indication of positivity.

An interesting observation is that Iron Maiden has omitted both the internal rhyme “At length did cross an albatross” and the line “As if it had been a Christian soul”. Both of these hold quite some religious imagery, namely ‘cross’ and the explicitly stated ‘Christian soul’. According to Roberts:

Iron Maiden’s text treats the bird in a much more subdued role than Coleridge does. [...] Coleridge plays up the bird’s Christ imagery, the importance of the albatross made clear by its principal phonetic neighbour. (70)

Thus, Iron Maiden’s omitting of ‘cross’ and ‘Christian soul’ should reduce the amount of “godliness” seen in the bird. Perhaps downplaying the Christian imagery of the poem was Iron Maiden’s goal, as representatives of Christianity often claimed that the genre has a bad influence on young people, primarily due to the lyrics of the genre often dealing with occult themes and sex (Kegan 4). However, considering the biblical language often employed in heavy metal music, and by Iron Maiden in particular (Roberts 68), such a claim is uncertain at best. The omission might simply be a decision made to favour where the albatross came from – the fog sent by God, which amplifies the positive connotations to the bird – and the manner



in which it is greeted; “hailed in God’s name”. As these sequences also infer the godly nature of the bird the omission of ‘cross’ and ‘Christian soul’ does not necessarily downplay the Christian imagery. Instead, Iron Maiden’s text conveys similar imagery and meaning by use of different sequences.

As a whole, the Iron Maiden stanza introducing the albatross conforms to the same rhyme pattern as Coleridge’s corresponding stanza. Iron Maiden’s text also contains some similar stylistic devices which add emphasis and rhythm to it. Furthermore, the rhythm of their instrumentation appears to be structured with the meter of Coleridge’s poem in mind and the meter in the song is somewhat reminiscent of Coleridge’s as well. There are, however, differences in what is emphasised by the text, as Iron Maiden downplays the godly nature explicitly expressed to belong to the albatross. Instead, the band appears to imply the same nature by use of meter, internal rhymes, assonance, and references. Warren’s and Lindgren’s interpretations of Coleridge’s poem appear to hold some relevant conclusions regarding the thematic properties of Iron Maiden’s text. Namely, the theme of isolation and that Iron Maiden, much like Coleridge, employs the poetic function in the sense that reflected sunlight in proximity to certain aspects, in this case the albatross, symbolises a positive nature. Thus, the poetic function generates meaning through the use of reflected sunlight as a metaphor for positive attributes.

3.2 The albatross is killed

When next the Albatross is brought up in Iron Maiden’s text, its death draws near:

[The *mar*][iner *kills*] [the *bird*] [of *good*] [omen]

[His *ship*][mates *cry*] [*against*] [what he’s *done*]

[But *when*] [the *fog*] [clears they *jus*][tify *him*]



[And *make*] [themselves] [a *part*] [of the *crime*]

(Iron Maiden 1998: Line 13-16)

The first line of this stanza is written in primarily iambic pentameter, aside from the last trochaic foot. The rest of the stanza is written in tetrameter, thus conforming to the general meter of the text – considering the previously discussed stanza also holding two tetrameters this seems a valid conclusion. The tetrameters are written with syllable stresses at the end of each foot, thus employing primarily iambic but also some anapaestic feet. Furthermore, the instrumental aspect of the song continues to be played in common time while the guitars and bass continue to alternate between eighth and sixteenth notes, thus adding further rhythm and emphasis, much like the stanza discussed above. Coleridge’s poem generally conforms to iambic tetrameter alternating with trimeter in an A-B-A-B fashion (Cosulich 189). Thus, tetrameter being in majority in both this and the previously discussed Iron Maiden stanza, alongside the syllable stresses being placed at the end of most feet, reveals a parallel in the structural aspects of the texts. This stanza, perhaps particularly due to the similar stress patterns, alongside the tetra- and trimeter of the previously discussed stanza, clearly establishes that there are structural parallels between the two texts. Thus, the literariness of Iron Maiden’s text is once more revealed by how it continues to be informed by Coleridge’s poem.

Regarding referential parallelism, there is a clear distinction between the two texts. In Iron Maiden’s: “The mariner kills the bird of good omen” (Line 13), whereas in Coleridge’s the mariner says: “With my crossbow/I shot the Albatross” (Line 81-82). Once more, what appears to be a distinct difference, ‘the bird of good omen’, between the texts is another instance of Iron Maiden drawing on Coleridge’s gloss rather than the poem itself. In the glossary Coleridge states that “The ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen” (Gloss 9). This further reveals the bands knowledge of the original text and its



author's complimentary notes, and how it informed Iron Maiden's adaptation. 'Cross' and 'albatross' further implies the godly aspect of the albatross. Thus, Iron Maiden's omission of the internal rhyme results in a lesser degree of expressed godliness; an approach that begins to seem somewhat overarching in Iron Maiden's text.

Line 14 of Iron Maiden's text, "His shipmates cry against what he's done", acts as a summary of what Coleridge describes in line 91-96. Following this line, the mariner is forgiven by the crew in a summarised version of Coleridge's order of events: "But when the fog clears they justify him/And make themselves a part of the crime" (Iron Maiden line 15-16). This bears little resemblance to Coleridge's lines detailing the mariner being forgiven, but a striking one to another gloss: "Harris [the primary song writer] finds his guidance for this language in Coleridge's gloss 11: 'But when the fog cleared off, they justify the same – and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime'" (Roberts 71). Once more, what first seems a distinctive difference between the texts is actually another instance of Iron Maiden's text being informed by Coleridge's at a deeper level. According to Lindgren the gloss tends to generalise what occurs in the poem (52) and Iron Maiden's text, too, appears to generalise the events in these stanzas – perhaps due to being influenced by the gloss.

Finding clear similarities and differences in the recurrence and placement of stylistic devices between this Iron Maiden stanza and the relevant Coleridge stanzas appears difficult due to this one Iron Maiden stanza being a summary of several different Coleridge stanzas, as well as the gloss. Nonetheless, Iron Maiden employs assonance in the shape of 'cry', 'justify', and 'crime' as these words all make use of the same '-y' sound. As "repetition is perhaps the device most used" (Cosulich 189) in Coleridge's poem, and as this repetitiveness gives the poem "connections, emphasis and rhythm" (189), the same could be assumed of the above assonance in Iron Maiden's text; it gives their song connections, emphasis and rhythm. Thus, the poetic function is used to grant Iron Maiden's text unity of



sound by employing a repetitive sound pattern, much like Coleridge's poem does. Some evidence of Coleridge employing a repetitive sound pattern which grants his poem rhythm is present in the stanza where the crew blames the mariner for putting them in a dire situation due to killing the bird. More precisely, line 92 includes the phrase: "And it would work 'em woe" (Coleridge) which makes distinctive use of alliteration with 'wo-' initiating half of the words in the phrase. The same 'o'-sound appearing in 'woe' is also present in line 96 and 98, both ending on 'blow'. The alliteration and assonance – the 'wo-' and 'o'-sounds – add a rhythmical element and mark yet another instance where both texts employ similar strategies to create an effective and striking message. The assonance in Iron Maiden's text – 'cry', 'justify', and 'crime' – also ties the three together and emphasises their relevance to one another. Without a crime, there would not have been anything to justify nor anything to cry about. Furthermore, a crime often has consequences which implies that killing the albatross will have consequences. In a sense Coleridge's alliteration and assonance – "would work 'em woe" – also highlights that the act of killing the bird will have consequences, with 'woe' emphasising the negative nature of the consequences – a nature not as present in Iron Maiden's text. Furthermore, the fog clearing insinuates a shift in the vessel's surroundings. Considering the previous discussion of Warren's notion of direct sunlight as a signifier of negative connotations the now clear skies indicate that the situation has shifted from good to bad. The new lighting thus provides metaphorical foreshadowing of the also explicitly foreshadowed consequences.

There is also an observation to be made regarding the theme of sin in these stanzas. According to Warren the albatross' partaking of the crew's food, and its interactions with the crew, suggests that killing the bird symbolises the sin of murder: "The hunting of the bird becomes the hunting of man." (27). Furthermore, the godliness previously ascribed to the albatross is claimed to signify that "in the end we have, therefore, in the crime [murder]



against Nature a crime against God.” (27). Following this striking statement, Warren also mentions that the killing of the bird indicates the significance of religiousness in the poem (27). Thus, shooting the albatross further establishes the relevance of the themes sin and redemption – especially the former.

It would seem that the killing of the albatross, and the ensuing curse, is portrayed in quite different manners in the two texts. Coleridge’s poem employs lengthier portrayals of the curse, whereas Iron Maiden’s text summarises these portrayals – partly by aid of Coleridge’s glossary. Regarding meter, both texts make use of tetrameter with syllable stresses mainly placed at the end of each foot. The rhyme pattern in Iron Maiden’s text conforms to that of Coleridge’s poem, and both texts once more employ similar stylistic devices – internal rhymes and assonance – to imbue their lines with rhythm and emphasis. These differences, however, do not appear to affect the meaning of the texts substantially. The albatross is portrayed in a godly manner in both texts, and similar poetic devices are used to further emphasise its godly nature. However, Coleridge’s poem foreshadows the dire consequences of killing the albatross in quite a distinct manner, especially compared to Iron Maiden’s text. Nonetheless, both texts view the killing of the bird as a sinful act that will have consequences.

3.3 The albatross hangs

Following the killing of the bird, its next appearance takes place as the vessel is haunted by a curse – the consequence of the mariner’s sin. The curse brings a lack of water and wind to the Mariner and his crew. Iron Maiden portrays it accordingly:

[The *al*][batross *begins*] [with *its*] [*vengeance*]

[A *ter*][rible *curse*] [a *thirst*] [has *begun*]



[His *ship*][*mates blame*] [*bad luck*] [*on the*] [*mariner*]

[*Around*] [*his neck,*] [*the dead*] [*bird is hung*] (Line 19-22)

Once more, Iron Maiden conforms to the general meter of Coleridge's poem by primarily employing tetrameters constituted by iambic and anapaestic feet. The corresponding lines in Coleridge's poem, namely lines 119-122, where the curse is described, and line 143, where the bird is hung around the Mariner's neck, bear some resemblance to the Iron Maiden stanza above on a purely metrical level. In the poem, line 119-122 follows Coleridge pattern of alternating between tetrameter and trimeter in an A-B-A-B fashion, with syllable stresses mainly falling on the last syllable of a foot – a pattern that is also present in the Coleridge stanza where the mariner shoots the albatross.

An interesting difference here, highlighted by Roberts, is that Iron Maiden's text skips the development of the curse and, compared to Coleridge's, sees the albatross' revenge as beginning nearly the second it dies (71). Furthermore, using the phrase "The albatross begins with its vengeance" (line 19), and the swift move to vengeance rather than portraying the curse, is likely inspired by Gloss 14, in which Coleridge writes: "And the Albatross begins to be avenged".

Once more, there are both clear differences and parallels between the two texts as the order of events does not conform to one another, yet Iron Maiden's text is once more informed by one of Coleridge's glosses. Harking back to Lindgren, Iron Maiden's stanza – much like Coleridge's glossary – appears to have a tendency of generalising the poem.

A similarity between Iron Maiden's line 22 and Coleridge's line 142 (written in trimeter) is visible on a surface level: "About my neck was hung" (Coleridge). Although Iron Maiden's version of this line holds little structural resemblance the similarity is clear; Iron Maiden's text only has a small addendum to Coleridge's, specifically "the dead bird", which adds some emphasis and rhythm to the line due to both 'the' and 'dead' containing similar



‘e’-sounds.

Regarding rhyme pattern, Iron Maiden’s text employs the same as the two related Coleridge stanzas; A-B-C-B. The song does, in fact, even use a near identical rhyme in the same manner as the poem does: “A terrible curse a thirst has begun/[...]/About his neck, the dead bird is hung”(Iron Maiden line 20-22). Like Coleridge’s, this stanza ends on ‘hung’ which rhymes with ‘begun’ and ‘young’ two lines prior in Iron Maiden’s and Coleridge’s texts respectively. Furthermore, Coleridge’s stanza, consisting of line 139-142, once more employs the internal rhyme ‘cross’ and ‘albatross’: “Instead of the cross, the albatross” (line 141). Iron Maiden, too, employ an internal rhyme in their corresponding stanza (underlined): “A terrible curse a thirst has begun” (line 20). Once more, interpreting the poetic function reveals repetitive patterns which affect the rhythm, meaning, and efficacy of the message in both texts. Due to the previously mentioned notion of stresses being indicators of meaning, ‘curse’ and ‘thirst’ being placed at the end of iambic feet, thus stressing both words, indicates that they are related to one another. In other words, Iron Maiden’s internal rhyme emphasises that the ‘thirst’ is related to the ‘curse’, much like ‘cross’ and ‘albatross’ emphasises the notion of the bird as a godly creature. As the curse is the consequence of killing the albatross – a creature of godly nature – this internal rhyme suggests that the thirst, too, has been sent by God. If one was to mildly exaggerate the thirst could be concluded to be the result of the fog clearing. The blazing sun and Warren’s positioning of it as a metaphor for negative events transpiring does seem to be related to the thirst – after all, one tends to get thirsty on a sunny day.

Another interesting aspect of this Iron Maiden stanza and the relevant Coleridge stanzas is the manner in which the referential function is employed. Iron Maiden, by use of a third-person perspective, are forced to structure their message accordingly: “About his neck, the dead bird is hung” while Coleridge, here employing a first-person perspective, structures



his lines accordingly: “With my crossbow/I shot the albatross”. Difference in narrative perspective alters the grammatical forms allowed when referring to third person objects. Hence, Iron Maiden would likely have been unable to achieve structural consistency by switching from a third-person perspective to a first-person perspective, which would have forced them to write “My shipmates blame bad luck on me/Around my neck the dead bird is hung”, or something of the sort, were the perspectives to be switched in these specific lines. This sequence sounds odd, perhaps because the repetitive use of ‘his’ also helps shape the rhythm of the message, although the same could be argued for ‘my’. However, ‘his’ also constitutes an internal rhyme with ‘is’ in the latter line. Accordingly, the referential aspects appears to alter the possibilities the poetic function has of affecting a message. The effect is one of providing unity of sound and form, in turn rendering the message more pleasing to eye and ear.

Evidently, this Iron Maiden stanza draws on Coleridge’s corresponding ones; there are clear similarities in regards to metrical patterns, rhyme pattern, and internal rhymes. The most distinct difference is that Coleridge portrays the relevant events in a lengthier manner, and that Iron Maiden’s text is written from a different narrative perspective – in turn affecting the possible rhymes and other devices that may be used due to having to conform to another set of grammatical structures than Coleridge’s poem does.

3.4 The Albatross sinks

The last time the albatross is mentioned, the curse it brought is lifted as the mariner once more prays for all creatures made by God; thus once more ‘finding’ God – and redemption. In Iron Maiden’s 14th stanza, it is presented accordingly:



[Then *the*] [spell *starts*] [to *break*]

[The *al*][batross] [falls *from*] his *neck*]

[Sinks *down*] [like *lead*] [into] [the *sea*]

[Then *down*] [in *falls*] [comes the *rain.*] (Line 63-66)

This stanza follows the general pattern of primarily employing tri- and tetrameter. Iron Maiden's stanza also conforms to having a majority of iambic feet, with only the last foot of the stanza being anapaestic. Coleridge's corresponding stanza, made up of line 289-292 (see Appendix A), begins with an iambic tetrameter but lines 290-292 are written in trimeter, primarily iambic. Thus, this Iron Maiden stanza seems to bear several structural parallels to Coleridge's corresponding stanza. Regarding rhyme pattern, Coleridge's stanza conforms to the general pattern of the poem; A-B-C-B (Cosulich 189). Iron Maiden's stanza once more does not conform to this pattern and employs an A-B-C-D pattern instead. Thus, the structural parallels in these stanzas appear to be quite consistent regarding matters of meter and syllable stresses but not regarding the rhyme scheme. However, much like the earlier Iron Maiden stanza with an A-B-C-D rhyme scheme, this stanza does contain some assonance at the end of lines which nearly constitute rhymes. Namely, the lines ending in 'break' and 'rain' make use of the same 'e'-sound, thus adding some unity of sound to the lines. Furthermore, Coleridge's first line: "The selfsame moment I could pray" (Line 289) ends on the same 'a'-sound that 'break' and 'rain' do. Thus, this could be an instance of Coleridge's poetic elements informing Iron Maiden's stanza.

Iron Maiden's stanza is also quite repetitive with 'falls' and 'down' appearing two times each within lines 64-66. This repetitiveness, much like earlier instances of repetition, adds emphasis in the sense that the albatross' fall is followed by rainfall – the rain harking back to the drought that the curse brought and proving that it has been broken. In fact, the repetitiveness of these lines, when considered alongside the inconsistent rhyme pattern,



subtly implies that Iron Maiden's text is more concerned with conforming to Coleridge's story rather than his structural patterns. Considering that the poem is a ballad and that ballads are primarily centred on storytelling (Baldick 35), Iron Maiden sacrificing form for plot development arguably indicates knowledge of this poetic tradition.

According to Lindgren, one of the themes of Coleridge's poem is consequences (78). The same theme is clearly present in the Iron Maiden stanza above – and some of the previous stanzas discussed. Generally, Iron Maiden's text, and this stanza in particular, retains the central role of consequences in the poem. Regarding the stanza above, each line introduces a new consequence; the curse breaks and is followed by the albatross falling of the mariners neck and then the bird sinks. Instantly, rain starts to fall which presumably blocks out the sun. The spell breaking and the rain quenching the mariner's thirst is no doubt a positive event. Considering Warren's notion of the sun as a symbol of negative occurrences, the rain blocking out sun the sun and its negative connotations no doubt signals that what is occurring in this stanza is positive. Indeed, the mariner has now been redeemed for his sinful acts.

Regarding word choice and how they parallel one another, the initial line of this Iron Maiden stanza once more conforms to a gloss – namely, gloss 34 (Roberts 74) – in which Coleridge states that: "The spell begins to break". Thus, Iron Maiden's knowledge of the poem once more transgresses its mere surface levels. Furthermore, "like lead into the sea" (Iron Maiden line 65, Coleridge line 292) is present in both texts which, evidently, is another instance of Iron Maiden's text being informed by Coleridge's poem. The alliteration of 'like lead' and the assonance in 'lead' and 'the' – in other words aspects of the poetic function – also renders this line quite striking as it creates an appealing rhythm.

An interesting difference between the two stanzas is that Coleridge's is written in past tense: "The albatross fell off, and sank" (Line 291) whereas Iron Maiden's is written in



present tense: “Sinks down like lead into the sea” (Line 65). As tense refers to a point in time this could be seen as an instance in which the referential function is employed. Referring to time differently places varying options on the grammatical forms that may be employed in the texts. Thus, this could affect the poetic function due to altering the possibilities for end rhymes, assonance, and other stylistic devices, although it seems to do little of the sort for these stanzas. Once more, however, the first-person perspective in Coleridge’s poem allows for the use of ‘my neck’, while Iron Maiden’s use of a third-person perspective warrants the phrase ‘his neck’ instead. Furthermore, Coleridge’s first-person perspective aims the consequences of partaking in sinful behaviour at the mariner in particular; he suffers the consequences due to the action of shooting the albatross. Iron Maiden’s perspective, on the other hand, suggests that the crew as a collective bears the guilt and thus, must suffer the consequences; even though the mariner could have been stopped from committing a sin, the collective he is part of did nothing to stop him. Hence, they too must suffer as a result of their inaction. In fact, this is highlighted rather well in a previous stanza where the shipmates “make themselves a part of the crime” (Iron Maiden line 16). This is related to the downplaying of explicitly stated religiousness mentioned earlier as none of these themes – collective guilt and the consequences of committing a sin – are explicitly stated. Instead, they are implied as a result of the referential aspects of the message constraining the devices and forms the poetic aspects of the message may employ to alter meaning. Furthermore, considering the previous downplaying of clearly religious imagery alongside this discussion reveals that Iron Maiden’s text approaches religiousness in a manner differing from Coleridge’s. Iron Maiden’s albatross is given its godliness by the ship’s crew, they blame the mariner for his actions once the consequences are revealed, and they enforce a punishment – hanging the bird around the mariner’s neck. Thus, Iron Maiden’s text implies that godliness, and religiousness, is not necessarily inherent. Instead, it is granted when a collective agrees



that something is, in fact, godly. Lindgren also mentions that the mariner not having a name could be an indication that he represents any and every human (71) which strengthens the notion of collectivism that is present in Iron Maiden's text.

Collectivism is, of course, also present in Coleridge's poem. However, the poem does not offer the same focus on collective guilt as Iron Maiden's text does. Instead it approaches religiousness in a manner marked more by individuality. While the albatross is still ascribed godlike qualities by the crew, and the mariner's punishment is enforced by the crew, the focus is put on the mariner's sinful acts and his personal guilt – the crew is simply trying to make right what the mariner did wrong. Iron Maiden's text instead focuses on emphasising how the entire crew was part of shooting the albatross, in turn showing a more 'inclusive' view on religiousness.

Another possible interpretation of this Iron Maiden stanza focuses on an aspect of the poem brought up by Lindgren, and mentioned earlier in this essay – that the mariner is an outcast. To reiterate, Iron Maiden, and the genre heavy metal, were considered to be outcasts by many in the 1980's. In the chapter "Religious Thinker" in *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*, it is stated that one of the poet's principles was to not adhere to any single dogmatic view of the universe, "whether that of revolutionary radicalism, evangelical bibliolatry [...] or established Anglican convention" (Perkins par. 1). At times his refusal to adhere to dogma led to critics dismissing "his religious and theological arguments as muddled metaphysics" (par. 2). In other words, Coleridge's actions and thoughts on religion were often shunned by parts of the general public. This is undoubtedly reflected by the mariner, a character who acts on his own instead of according to the crew's attitude towards the bird. When the crew accepts the mariners act - in other words when a dogmatic view of the act is adopted - they all suffer for it. Indeed, a central theme in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is "the theme of the self-imposed separation of the human individual from the rest of



creation” (par. 3). Accordingly, Iron Maiden’s text could be interpreted as praising outcasts who act based on their own will and desire. Considering the bands status as outcasts opens up for an interpretation of their song in which it praises the genre heavy metal and its shunned status. Even though the general public did not approve of their music (acts) they kept creating it anyway.

As a whole, this Iron Maiden stanza conforms to Coleridge’s in matters of meter and syllable stresses, while employing a different rhyme pattern. Furthermore, it employs repetitive stylistic devices similar to those generally used by Coleridge. It is also informed by Coleridge’s gloss once more, which provides further insight into the bands knowledge of the poem. Furthermore, the differing narrative perspectives affects the grammatical possibilities of the referential function, in turn affecting how poetic devices –the poetic function – may be used to add emphasis and rhythm. This has the effect of unifying the sonic properties of the text, thus rendering it consistent and easy to follow. Additionally, the narrative perspective alters the underlying meaning of the texts; Coleridge’s first-person approach emphasises that a person’s sinful action is met by dire consequences for that person, while Iron Maiden’s third-person approach emphasises that one person’s sinful action is the result of the collective’s inaction, in turn both the person and the collective suffer the consequences.

4 Conclusion

Iron Maiden’s text, when portraying the albatross and matters related to it, appears to share quite a few structural and stylistic elements with Coleridge’s poem. One of the more prevalent similarities is that both texts tend to conform to tetrameter, sometimes alternating with trimeter, which is generally written in feet that stress the last syllable – iambic and anapaestic feet – although there are exceptions where trochaic and dactylic feet are also used, and a



single spondaic foot. As mentioned by Roberts, the instrumental aspects of Iron Maiden's song seem to have been designed around Coleridge's poem with the four 'pulses' of each bar being filled with triplets – quite similar to dactylic and anapaestic feet – that are played as eighth and sixteenth notes which, on a rhythmical level, ring quite similar to trochaic and iambic feet.

Iron Maiden's rhyme scheme, however, does not appear to be as strict as Coleridge's. Whereas the poem mainly conforms to an A-B-C-B pattern, two of the four Iron Maiden stanzas discussed above instead make use of an A-B-C-D pattern. Regarding other matters of stylistic devices, Iron Maiden's text makes use of assonance and internal rhymes to quite a large extent – often to emphasise certain aspects of the narrative (one of the more obvious ones being "A terrible curse a thirst has begun"). Coleridge, too, adds emphasis and rhythm by use of internal rhymes, namely 'cross' and 'albatross'. Thus, Iron Maiden employs the poetic function to emphasise both plot and rhythm. According to Cosulich, Coleridge's poem also employs stylistic devices that mainly deal with repetitive sound patterns to add emphasis and rhythm to his text. Hence, Iron Maiden's text may be claimed to have drawn inspiration from Coleridge's use of these stylistic tendencies.

Regarding the referential function, its effect on the texts is observable in how narrative perspective – first-person in the poem and third-person in the song – alters the possibilities of constructing a text due to the grammatical constraints the use of a certain tense places on language. Underlying meanings, too, are affected by the referential function. This is easily seen in how Iron Maiden downplays the godliness of the albatross by omitting several references to it that are made in connection to godly qualities. Additionally, the possible interpretation of Iron Maiden's text focusing on a collective view of religion and Coleridge's focusing on the individuality of religion is also conveyed by matters of the referential function. However, the omission of explicitly stated Christian imagery does not necessarily



downplay the underlying religious themes as the song employs stylistic devices similar to Coleridge's to ascribe the bird its godly qualities.

Further research on this subject could include an analysis of how the lyrics of the song are emphasised by the vocal and instrumental performance, analysing a larger portion of the song compared to the poem, or by investigating other Iron Maiden songs in an attempt to prove that the band has drawn inspiration from other areas of the literary canon, as argued by Roberts.

While several of the observations made on how the meaning and language of the different texts are similar have already been made by Roberts, this essay has found several other similarities, primarily on the structural and stylistic level. It has also managed to add to Roberts' discussion in the sense that his article says little of how the explicit religious imagery omitted by Iron Maiden is still present, manifested in the poetic function. Considering the similar nature of the texts on the investigated levels, Iron Maiden's song appears to have been heavily influenced by Coleridge's poem. Furthermore, the Christian imagery employed by both texts, and the focus on consequences following sinful acts, appears to be centred on the individual in Coleridge's poem, whereas Iron Maiden's text brings into light the consequences a sinful act has on the collective in which it is committed. Lastly, the interpretation of Iron Maiden's text in which it praises outcasts – in turn praising themselves and heavy metal music as a whole – reveals that the adaptation is not only influenced by the poem. There are also traces of Coleridge's own thoughts on the issues of dogmatic world views.



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Appendix 1

Iron Maiden's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

(Transcribed from the leaflet in the 1998 reissue of *Powerslave*)

Hear the rhyme of the ancient mariner

See his eye as he stops one of three

Mesmerises one of the wedding guests

Stay here and listen to the nightmares of the sea.

And the music plays on, as the bride passes by

Caught by his spell and

the Mariner tells his tale.

Driven south to the land of snow and ice

To a place where nobody's been

Through the snow fog flies the albatross

Hailed in God's name hoping good luck it brings.

And the ship sails on, back to the north

Through the fog and ice and

the albatross follows on

The mariner kills the bird of good omen

His shipmates cry against what he's done

But when the fog clears they justify him



And make themselves a part of the crime.

Sailing on and on and North across the sea

Sailing on and on and North 'til all is calm.

The albatross begins with its vengeance

A terrible curse a thirst has begun

His shipmates blame bad luck on the Mariner

About his neck, the dead bird is hung

And the curse goes on and on and on at sea,

And the thirst goes on and on for them and me.

“Day after day, day after day,

we stuck nor breath nor notion

As idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean

Water, water everywhere and

all the boards did shrink

Water, water everywhere nor any drop to drink.”

There, calls the mariner,

there comes a ship over the line

But how can she sail with no wind

in her sails and no tide.

See onward she comes



Onwards she nears, out of the sun

See she has no crew

She has no life, wait but there's two

Death and she life in death,

they throw their dice for the crew

She wins the Mariner and he belongs to her now

Then crew one by one

they drop down dead, two hundred men

She, she, Life in Death.

She lets him live, her chosen one.

“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 hump,

they dropped down one by one.”

The curse it lives on in their eyes

the Mariner he wished he'd die

Along with the sea creatures

but they live on, and so did he.



And by the light of the moon
He prays for their beauty not doom
With heart he blesses them
God's creatures all of them too

Then the spell starts to break
The albatross falls from his neck
Sinks down like lead into the sea
Then down in falls comes the rain.

Hear the groans of the long dead seamen
See them stir and they start to rise
Bodies lifted by good spirits
and they're lifeless in their eyes

And revenge is still sought, penance starts again
Cast into a trance and the nightmare carries on.

Now the curse is finally lifted
And the Mariner sights his home
Spirits go from the long dead bodies
Form their own light and
the Mariner's left alone.



And then a boat came sailing towards him

It was a joy he could not believe

The pilots boat, his son and the hermit.

Penance of life will fall onto Him.

And the ship sinks like lead into the sea

And the hermit shrieves the Mariner of his sins.

The Mariner's bound to tell of his story

To tell his tale wherever he goes

To teach God's word by his own example

That we must love all things that God made.

And the wedding guest's a sad and wiser man

And the tale goes on and on and on and on.



Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

PART I

An ancient Mariner meeteth
three gallants bidden to a
wedding feast, and
detaineth one.

IT is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide, 5
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand, 10
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

The Wedding-Guest is
spell-bound by the eye of
the old seafaring man, and
constrained to hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child: 15
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner. 20

'The ship was cheer'd, the harbour clear'd,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Mariner tells how the
ship sailed southward with
a good wind and fair
weather, till it reached the
Line.

The Sun came up upon the left, 25
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon——' 30
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Wedding-Guest heareth
the bridal music; but the
Mariner continueth his tale.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes 35
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;



And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner. 40

The ship drawn by a storm toward the South Pole. 'And now the Storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow, 45
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roar'd the blast,
The southward aye we fled. 50

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

The land of ice, and of fearful sounds, where no living thing was to be seen. And through the drifts the snowy cliffs 55
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around: 60
It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd,
Like noises in a swound!

Till a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog, and was received with great joy and hospitality. At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hail'd it in God's name. 65

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steer'd us through! 70

And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen, and followeth the ship as it returned northward through fog and floating ice. And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud, 75
It perch'd for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmer'd the white moonshine.'



The ancient Mariner
inhospitably killeth the
pious bird of good omen.

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—'With my crossbow
I shot the Albatross.

80

PART II

'The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

85

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

90

His shipmates cry out
against the ancient Mariner
for killing the bird of good
luck.

And I had done an hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averr'd, I had kill'd the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

95

But when the fog cleared
off, they justify the same,
and thus make themselves
accomplices in the crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averr'd, I had kill'd the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

100

The fair breeze continues;
the ship enters the Pacific
Ocean, and sails northward,
even till it reaches the Line.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow follow'd free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

105

The ship hath been
suddenly becalmed.

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!

110

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

115



And the Albatross begins to be avenged. Water, water, everywhere,
 And all the boards did shrink; 120
 Water, water, everywhere,
 Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
 That ever this should be!
 Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs 125
 Upon the slimy 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. 130

A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible
 inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor
 angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus,
 and the Platonic Constantinopolitan,
 Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very
 numerous, and there is no climate or element without
 one or more. And some in dreams assuréd were
 Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
 Nine fathom deep he had followed us
 From the land of mist and snow. 135

And every tongue, through utter drought,
 Was wither'd at the root;
 We could not speak, no more than if
 We had been choked with soot.

The shipmates in their sore distress, would fain throw
 the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner: in sign
 whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck. Ah! well a-day! what evil looks
 Had I from old and young! 140
 Instead of the cross, the Albatross
 About my neck was hung.

PART III

'There passed a weary time. Each throat
 Was parch'd, and glazed each eye.
 A weary time! a weary time! 145
 How glazed each weary eye!
 When looking westward, I beheld
 A something in the sky.

The ancient Mariner
 beholdeth a sign in the
 element afar off.

At first it seem'd a little speck,
 And then it seem'd a mist; 150
 It moved and moved, and took at last
 A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
 And still it near'd and near'd:
 As if it dodged a water-sprite, 155
 It plunged, and tack'd, and veer'd.

At its nearer approach, it With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,



seemeth him to be a ship;
and at a dear ransom he
freeth his speech from the
bonds of thirst.

We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I suck'd the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

160

A flash of joy;

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

165

And horror follows. For can
it be a ship that comes
onward without wind or
tide?

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal—
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

170

The western wave was all aflame,
The day was wellnigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad, bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

175

It seemeth him but the
skeleton of a ship.

And straight the Sun was fleck'd with bars
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!),
As if through a dungeon-grate he peer'd
With broad and burning face.

180

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

And its ribs are seen as bars
on the face of the setting
Sun. The Spectre-Woman
and her Death-mate, and no
other on board the skeleton
ship. Like vessel, like crew!

Are 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?

185

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

190

Death and Life-in-Death
have diced for the ship's
crew, and she (the latter)
winneth the ancient
Mariner.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
"The game is done! I've won! I've won!"
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

195



No twilight within the courts of the Sun.	The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out: At one stride comes the dark; With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea, Off shot the spectre-bark.	200
	We listen'd and look'd sideways up! Fear at my heart, as at a cup, My life-blood seem'd to sip! The stars were dim, and thick the night, The steersman's face by his lamp gleam'd white; From the sails the dew did drip—	205
At the rising of the Moon,	Till clomb above the eastern bar The hornéd Moon, with one bright star Within the nether tip.	210
One after another,	One after one, by the star-dogg'd Moon, Too quick for groan or sigh, Each turn'd his face with a ghastly pang, And cursed me with his eye.	215
His shipmates drop down dead.	Four times fifty living men (And I heard nor sigh nor groan), With heavy thump, a lifeless lump, They dropp'd down one by one.	220
But Life-in-Death begins her work on the ancient Mariner.	The souls did from their bodies fly— They fled to bliss or woe! And every soul, it pass'd me by Like the whizz of my crossbow!	
	PART IV	
The Wedding-Guest feareth that a spirit is talking to him;	'I fear thee, ancient Mariner! I fear thy skinny hand! And thou art long, and lank, and brown, As is the ribb'd sea-sand.	225
	I fear thee and thy glittering eye, And thy skinny hand so brown.'—	230
But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.	'Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest! This body dropt not down. Alone, alone, all, all alone, Alone on a wide, wide sea! And never a saint took pity on My soul in agony.	235
He despiseth the creatures of the calm.	The many men, so beautiful! And they all dead did lie: And a thousand thousand slimy things Lived on; and so did I.	240



And envieth that they
should live, and so many lie
dead.

I look'd upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I look'd upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I look'd 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.

245

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky,
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

250

But the curse liveth for him
in the eye of the dead men.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they look'd on me
Had never pass'd away.

255

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

260

In his loneliness and
fixedness he yearneth
towards the journeying
Moon, and the stars that
still sojourn, yet still move
onward; and everywhere
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.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide;
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

265

By the light of the Moon he
beholdeth God's creatures
of the great calm.

Her beams bemoock'd the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charméd water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

270

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watch'd the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they rear'd, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

275

Within the shadow of the ship
I watch'd their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,

280



And the rain pour'd down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side;
Like waters shot from some high crag, 325
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The bodies of the ship's
crew are inspired, and the
ship moves on;

The loud wind never reach'd the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon 330
The dead men gave a groan.

They groan'd, they stirr'd, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise. 335

The helmsman steer'd, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools— 340
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pull'd at one rope,
But he said naught to me.' 345

But not by the souls of the
men, nor by demons of
earth or middle air, but by a
blessed troop of angelic
spirits, sent down by the
invocation of the guardian
saint.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!'
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest:
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corpses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest: 350

For when it dawn'd—they dropp'd their arms,
And cluster'd round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies pass'd.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound, 355
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mix'd, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing; 360
Sometimes all little birds that are,



How they seem'd to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute; 365
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the Heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook 370
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sail'd on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe: 375
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

The lonesome Spirit from the South Pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The Spirit slid: and it was he 380
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fix'd her to the ocean: 385
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go, 390
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.

The Polar Spirit's fellow-demons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong; and two of them relate, one to the other, that penance long and heavy for the ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare; 395
But ere my living life return'd,
I heard, and in my soul discern'd
Two voices in the air.

"Is it he?" quoth one, "is this the man?
By Him who died on cross, 400
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." 405

The other was a softer voice,
 As soft as honey-dew:
 Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,
 And penance more will do." 410

PART VI

First Voice: "But tell me, tell me! speak again,
 Thy soft response renewing—
 What makes that ship drive on so fast?
 What is the Ocean doing?"

Second Voice: "Still as a slave before his lord,
 The Ocean hath no blast;
 His great bright eye most silently
 Up to the Moon is cast— 415

If he may know which way to go;
 For she guides him smooth or grim. 420
 See, brother, see! how graciously
 She looketh down on him."

The Mariner hath been cast
 into a trance; for the angelic
 power causeth the vessel to
 drive northward faster than
 human life could endure.

First Voice: "But why drives on that ship so fast,
 Without or wave or wind?"

Second Voice: "The air is cut away before,
 And closes from behind. 425

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
 Or we shall be belated:
 For slow and slow that ship will go,
 When the Mariner's trance is abated.' 430

The supernatural motion is
 retarded; the Mariner
 awakes, and his penance
 begins anew.

I woke, and we were sailing on
 As in a gentle weather:
 'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high;
 The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
 For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
 All fix'd on me their stony eyes,
 That in the Moon did glitter. 435

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
 Had never pass'd away: 440
 I could not draw my eyes from theirs,



Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse is finally
expiated.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And look'd far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

445

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turn'd round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

450

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

455

It raised my hair, it fann'd my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

460

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sail'd softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

And the ancient Mariner
beholdeth his native
country.

O dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

465

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep away.

470

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

475

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steep'd in silentness
The steady weathercock.

480

The angelic spirits leave the And the bay was white with silent light



dead bodies,

Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

And appear in their own
forms of light.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turn'd my eyes upon the deck—
O Christ! what saw I there!

485

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

490

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

495

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but O, the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

500

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turn'd perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

505

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

510

PART VII

The Hermit of the Wood.

'This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

515

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:

520



It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat near'd: I heard them talk,
"Why, this is strange, I trow!" 525
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?"

Approacheth the ship with wonder. "Strange, by my faith!" the Hermit said—
"And they answer'd not our cheer!" 530
The planks looked warp'd! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along; 535
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young."

"Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply) 540
I am a-fear'd"—"Push on, push on!"
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirr'd;
The boat came close beneath the ship, 545
And straight a sound was heard.

The ship suddenly sinketh. Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reach'd the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead. 550

The ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat. Stunn'd by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drown'd
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found 555
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound. 560

I moved my lips—the Pilot shriek'd
And fell down in a fit;



The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And pray'd where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laugh'd 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."

565

570

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepp'd forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

The ancient Mariner
earnestly entreateth the
Hermit to shrieve him; and
the penance of life falls on
him.

"O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!"
The Hermit cross'd his brow.
"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?"

575

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrench'd
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

580

And ever and anon
throughout his future life an
agony constraineth him to
travel from land to land;

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

585

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.

590

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

595

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God Himself
Scarce seeméd there to be.

600

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,



To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!— 605

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay! 610

And to teach, by his own
example, love and
reverence to all things that
God made and loveth.

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 615
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar, 620
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turn'd from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunn'd,
And is of sense forlorn: 625
A sadder and a wiser man
He rose the morrow morn.