

## LUKE STRONGMAN

### Captain Cook's Voyages and Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

The debt that Samuel Taylor Coleridge's romantic ballad *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) owes to George Shelvocke's *A Voyage Around the World By Way of the Great South Sea* (1726) was first claimed by William Wordsworth and has been well documented by Fruman,<sup>1</sup> Holmes,<sup>2</sup> Hill,<sup>3</sup> Lamb<sup>4</sup> and others. Further, the influence of Cook's *Voyage towards the South Pole and round the world performed in His Majesty's ships the Resolution and Adventure in the years 1772, 1773, 1774 & 1775* has been suggested by Moorehead<sup>5</sup> and Smith.<sup>6</sup> This article posits that the familiar four-step account of the ballad's creation – that the idea arose through a suggestion to Coleridge from William Wordsworth following the relation to Coleridge of an unusual dream of his friend, John Cruikshank, and was inspired by Coleridge's reading of the journal of George Shelvocke and the conversational influence of William Wales (an astronomer and meteorologist on board Cook's *Resolution* in 1772) upon Coleridge as a schoolboy – is in fact a partial account. Cook and Banks' journals and the paintings of William Hodges and George Forster deserve greater credit as sources of inspiration. In the original 1789 version of Coleridge's ballad the figure of the mariner gains definition from Coleridge's familiarity with the journals of Captain Cook's voyages.

Coleridge's familiarity with the South Pacific journals of discovery, as well as the European literary influences more accustomed to enlightened British readers of the early nineteenth century, such as Erasmus Darwin, John Dryden, and William Wordsworth, infused Coleridge's writings with an awareness of the journeying towards the icy poles of both southern and northern hemispheres. Moreover, examination of the eighteenth-century Antarctic maritime literature, in conjunction with a close reading of Coleridge's earliest version of the ballad, throws into relief, first, the limitation of Shelvocke's influence upon its composition, and second, the role that Cook's officers, navigators and artists played in influencing the composition of the poem.

Coleridge wrote *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in an allegorical mode so that his ballad would be set outside time. His pursuit of a literary poetic in his later *Biographia Literaria*<sup>7</sup> was influenced by his reading of Antarctic accounts in the eighteenth-century narratives of voyaging and discovery insofar as these writings inspired metaphors and diction in the *Biographia* to describe states of literary detachment. The journals of South Pacific adventure prompted in Coleridge's romantic literary imagination elements of the sublime and poetical estrangement, reflection upon which gave rise to the literary "miracle of rare device,"<sup>8</sup> the willing suspension of disbelief.<sup>9</sup> Yet aside from his poetry Coleridge remained silent about these influences in his own work, because he sought to critique the work of other poets by reference to the Arctic, and his own work by reference to the Antarctic. The frozen south had been an imagined space since Cook crossed the Antarctic line on 17 January 1773; because it is the most fluid and changing of the earthly landmasses, attempts to describe it in both narrative and cartography have always been incomplete.

Through the representation of the sub-Antarctic sublime, the geographical space where imagination gives way to awe in the responses that Antarctica inspires in the literary creation, Coleridge's ballad not only traverses the subjective/objective dichotomy but gives rise to the concept of post-romantic literary detachment. Imagining the sub-Antarctic provided icy inspiration for Coleridge to postpone sentiment or to render the subjective landscape in the ballad as receptive to an idealised, though inhospitable, state. The indifference of nature may be anthropomorphised by the poet as an underlying nihilism, something put out of mind, too terrible to contemplate; or it may be rendered sublime – as one pole at the limit of human comprehension that offers not only physical but metaphysical challenges for the reader. Of course, as a late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century romantic, Coleridge thought to bring such ideas of the ungovernable natural world back into the imaginative fold as counterpoint to the attempts of enlightenment science to harness the natural environment for human use. By rendering an awe-inspiring landscape in aesthetic terms, Coleridge could point to a poetic that sought to represent literary experience neither wholly as the representation of an actualised physical state in nature, nor as subjective feeling in terms of imaginative rules. The instability of such constructions not only looked ahead to Freud but also brought into question the role that cultural norms play in the creation of the eighteenth-century literary topos.

As Bernard Smith suggests in *European Vision and the South Pacific* of William Hodges, the antipodean romantic painter of Cook's second voyage in the *Resolution*,

whereas [eighteenth-century neoclassical painter, Richard] Wilson looked back to a Nature controlled by the gods of classical mythology, Hodges looks toward exotic mirabilia to create an effect 'akin to the supernatural'; whereas Wilson peoples his landscape with Apollo and the children of Niobe, Hodges peoples his with both noble savages and animals of a romantic country discovered by the enterprise of British seamen. Some twenty years later Coleridge was to present himself with quite a similar problem in literature, and to solve it by comparable means. And it seems likely that William Wales's scientific enthusiasm for the study of the atmosphere became a source of inspiration to both painter and poet.<sup>10</sup>

The representations of the sublime Pacific island, sky and seascapes in William Hodges' paintings are implicated in the creation of Coleridge's ballad. Coleridge too sought to create an effect "akin to the supernatural," an effect which Wordsworth was to distance himself from in the pursuit of his own plainer aesthetic despite his complicity in the dream-like influences on the poem's conception. The first and second verse of part three, lines 139-48 of the 1798 version of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, could have been inspired by William Hodges' *A View of Cape Stephens (New Zealand) in Cook's Straits with Waterspout*, painted in 1776, twenty-two years before Coleridge began the poem (see Figure 1):

I saw a something in the Sky  
No bigger than my fist;  
At first it seem'd a little speck  
And then it seem'd a mist:  
It mov'd and mov'd, and took at last  
A certain shape, I wist.  
A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!  
And still it ner'd and ner'd;  
And, an it dodged a water-sprite,  
It plung'd and tack'd and veer'd.<sup>11</sup>

Hodges' representation of waterspouts in Cook Strait could also account for both "And strait the Sun was fleck's with bars" (line 169) of the seventh verse and the image of vertical water of part four, verse twelve, lines 264-68:

Beyond the shadow of the ship  
I watch'd the watersnakes:  
They mov'd in tracks of shining white;  
and when they rear'd, the elfish light

image

Figure 1:

William Hodges, *A View of Cape Stephens (New Zealand) in Cook's Straits with Waterspout*, 1776.

(National Maritime Museum, London. Ministry of Defence Art Collection.

Reference #: BHC1906.

Image in public domain.)

Bernard Smith recounts how Hodges may have developed the plein-air painting style by looking through the great cabin windows of Cook's *Resolution*. However, Hodges' painting offers a visual source with a more dramatic implication in Coleridge's poem. The painting has the figures of both a European woman and a Māori man positioned in the foreground, with their backs to the viewer, the latter gesticulating to the *Resolution* as it negotiates the waterspouts at the painting's horizon line. Coleridge's original 1798 version of the poem reads, verses seven and eight, lines 173-80:

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)  
How fast she neres and neres!  
Are those her Sails that glance in the Sun  
Like restless gossameres?  
Are these her naked ribs, which fleck'd  
The sun that did behind them peer?  
And are these two all, all the crew,  
That woman and her fleshless Pheere?

Coleridge was affected by the writings of Dryden and Rousseau, but whereas their concept of the "noble savage" sought to locate in the exotic other of the South Seas the redemptive possibilities of deist harmony in nature, Coleridge was concerned in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* primarily with the European sense of corruption. This theme was established in his poetry by 1795.

That Coleridge had been attracted to the exotic is evident from the orientalist motifs of *Kubla Khan* (probably also written in 1798 but not published until 1816). He was swayed in his formative years as a poet by the Christian Pacific adventurer Captain Wilson's account of "The Interesting and Affecting History of Prince Lee Boo," a native of the Pelew Islands, as related by Keate.<sup>12</sup> Coleridge recorded in the 1792 poem, *To a Young Lady with a Poem on the French Revolution*, the deep impression that the melancholy tale of the young prince's death in England had made upon him in his youth. In the weeping over the tomb of Prince Lee Boo, Coleridge represented the exotic Prince of the South Sea Islands as an inaccessible figure, as a victim of nostalgia in neoclassical memory of a former magnificence, symbolising the world of natural virtues: "Calm, as the rainbow weeping in the West."<sup>13</sup> However, in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge modified the sense of neoclassical longing for the exotic. He sought to present an evangelical allegory of a moral world through which the reader, in imagining the sailors' plight, reaches to the light of Christianity. The ballad's subtle personification of a moral wilderness interprets exotic seascapes and primitive apparitions in conformity with moral and theological precepts. Here Coleridge was influenced by William Lisle Bowle's *The Spirit of Discovery: or, the Conquest of the Ocean* (1804).

To present what is (I will argue) the original form and meaning that Coleridge intended for his poem, and in particular for the figure of the ancient mariner, it is necessary to examine the influences on his imagination and the rewritings the poem underwent; to point to the disparity between the original 1798 version and the better-known and accepted revised version. The influence of Cook's and Joseph Banks' journals of the second voyage of discovery in the South Seas will be shown to have a greater prominence in the original version of the poem than is revealed by the traditional account of the influences upon Coleridge of Wales and Shelvocke. The poem had its genesis in Wordsworth's relation to Coleridge of the dream of his friend John Cruickshank, and Wordsworth, rather than Coleridge, is on record as having read Shelvocke.<sup>14</sup> In the earlier versions, composed in 1797-98, Coleridge revealed an intent different from that published in 1817, one in which the role of the albatross is desanctified by the mariner and would not have assumed alone the function of central metaphor for the mystery of the poem.

Ostensibly written in the fashionable gothic mode in the hope of earning five pounds from the *Monthly Magazine*, the story of the ancient mariner begins in *medias res* as a crime against nature, for which the crew are punished by the laws of the universe. Coleridge had a thematic interest in the Wandering Jew and the banishment of Cain, and continues in the ballad the thematic undercurrents of his play *Osorio*, renamed *Remorse*, which was written in 1797, the year he also began *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. He populated his ballad with phantoms and spirits. Coleridge's ballad projects a morality onto nature, offering an intentional fallacy that confronts the paradox of nature's indifference. It represents nature in a way which is beyond good and evil and which anticipates the Nietzschean paradox that human action in sublime folly may be beyond morality, or Hegel's notion that metaphysical trial may also be part of a spirit world.

Adair writes in *The Waking Dream* that Coleridge "[s]uspends disbelief in mystery which lies beyond the normal by appealing to our observation of natural things."<sup>15</sup> Despite its gothic cast, Coleridge's prose has a regency brilliance that continues to form the sumptuous composition of opposites evident in the orientalist *Kubla Khan*. Yet, in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, there is no attempt to describe the setting or detail the characters of the crew except for the mariner. The ballad has a psychological motivation, yet no attempt is made to connect individual scenes or describe the catastrophe that befalls the ship as anything other than the responsibility of an imagined world caught in the maelstrom of nature. The environment of the ballad and its literary imagination are one.

It is generally agreed that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was influenced by Wordsworth's describing to Coleridge their mutual friend John Cruickshank's dream. The central figure of the poem is not just a mariner but an ancient navigator. The epithet "ancient" offers a clue to the navigator's identity in the context of eighteenth-century journals of antipodean voyaging, as the European mind ascribed to favoured Polynesians a neoclassical status.<sup>16</sup> Founded on reflections upon a dream, Wordsworth suggested that Coleridge explore in the poem a crime that would bring upon the navigator "spectral persecution," and that the ship would henceforth be navigated by dead men. The influence of Captain George Shelvocke's *A Voyage Around the World By Way of the Great South Seas* revealed in the Fenwick note (1843) to Wordsworth's *We are Seven*.<sup>17</sup> Shelvocke's journal describes the albatross as an ill omen, whose killing brings relief to the crew. Yet the albatross in Coleridge's ballad is firstly described as the "Pious bird of good omen," and received in part one, verse seventeen of the 1798 version: "As if it had been a Christian soul, / We hailed it in God's name."

In Coleridge's ballad the *killing* of the albatross is the ill omen, symbolised by the dead bird, which is hung around the neck of the mariner as a totem. Thus the ballad explores the moral pattern of sin and expiation. "Suppose," said Wordsworth, "you represent [the ancient mariner] as having killed one of these birds on entering the south seas, and that tutelary spirits for those regions take upon them to avenge the crime."<sup>18</sup> The ballad thus explores, in a vision of frozen music, the poetic rendering of primitivistic emotions and customs that were remote from British domestic experience. When the albatross is finally cast out and sinks beneath the waves, in the epigram to the additional stanzas of the 1798 version, it is described as a "lonesome spirit of the south pole."

There can be little doubt that the shooting of the albatross comes from Shelvocke, probably via Wordsworth. Here follows the original quotation from Shelvocke's *A Voyage Around the World By Way of the Great South Sea*:

[N]or one Sea-bird except a disconsolate black Albatross, who accompanied us for several days, hovering about us as if he had lost himself, till Hartley, (my second Captain) observing in one of his melancholy fits...that it might be some ill omen. That which, I suppose, induced in him the more to encourage his superstition [concerning] the continued series of contrary tempestuous winds, which had oppressed us ever since we had got in the sea...he, after some fruitless attempts, at length, shot the Albatross, not doubting 'perhaps' that we should have a fine wind after it...<sup>19</sup>

Thereafter, Shelvocke described the crew on the *Speedwell* as "without a companion" in the contrary winds about Chile. However, there is both more and surprisingly less to Shelvocke's influence on Coleridge than the origin of the albatross motif. The preface to the *Voyage* is consumed by the account of rivalry and ill-will on the high seas between Shelvocke and Captain Clipperton of the *Success*. Shelvocke's apparent paranoia can be seen as parallel to the creative relationship between Wordsworth and Coleridge. On page xxviii of his Preface, Shelvocke notes the "malevolent disposition of Captain Clipperton towards me, the reason of which I could never discover." Aside from mirroring aspects of the competitive relationship between Wordsworth and Coleridge, a suggestion of unjustified malevolence haunts Shelvocke's journal as it does the spectral dissonance of Coleridge's poem. However, this metaphysical disquiet may have had a physical cause. Jonathan Lamb has suggested that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a ballad which sought to describe the condition of scurvy which was perhaps the source of Shelvocke's original discomfort. However, this reading plays down the mystery of identity at the heart of the ballad.<sup>20</sup>

If *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* gained the albatross and a sense of metaphysical menace from Shelvocke, it did not gain the atmosphere and setting of the southern ice entirely from Shelvocke's *Voyage*. Antarctica does not appear on the map that prefaces Shelvocke's book. There is no mention of ice in the text, as there is in Coleridge's poem. Shelvocke's voyage took the crew of the *Speedwell* to South America, and to St Catherine's Island, Chile and Brazil. The crew were cast away on the island of Juan Fernandes in May 1720, but throughout their voyage encountered no ice.

image

Figure 2:  
Map from the Preface of George Shelvocke, *A Voyage Around the World By Way of the Great South Sea. Performed in 1719, 20, 21, 22 in the Speedwell of London. On his majesty's commission to cruise on the Spaniards in the late war with the Spanish Crown.*  
New York: Da Capo Press, 1971.  
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.  
Reference #: B-K 834-MAP

To claim that the genesis of the poem is neatly contained in the source of Shelvocke *Voyage* and Wordsworth's relation to Coleridge of John Cruickshank's dream would be a mistake. That the influences on Coleridge extended beyond Shelvocke and included Cook and Banks' accounts of the sub-Antarctic from Cook's second voyage is evident from a variety of sources, biographical, contextual and textual. Biographical evidence is provided by Bernard Smith's account of the conversational influence of William Wales upon Coleridge as a schoolboy. Wales was astronomer and meteorologist onboard Cook's *Resolution* in 1772 and later a mathematics master at Christ's Hospital during Coleridge's time at the school. It would be natural that Wales would have regaled his young and impressionable pupils with stories about his voyage in the southern seas onboard the ship.

The naturalist Joseph Banks also journeyed to the Pacific with Cook. In his journal entries between January and April 1769 Banks writes numerous reports of albatrosses killed for scientific curiosity and for food. Here is an interpretative account from pages 63 to 65 of the journal. On 4 January, Banks comments: "Unwell. I had been unwell these three or four days, and to-day was obliged to keep to the cabin with a bilious attack, which, although quite slight, alarmed me a good deal, as Captain Wallis had such an attack in the Straits of Magellan, which he never got the better of throughout the whole voyage." By 5 January Banks is better. He comments: "Well enough to eat part of an albatross shot on the 3rd." Banks adds: "...they were so good that everybody commended and ate heartily of them, although there was fresh pork on the table." On 26 January, Banks notes that albatross were "less plentiful at latitude 41o 8." On 3 March, Banks kills six more albatross. He notes the varieties he has killed: *Procellaria velox*, *velificans sordida*, *melanopus*, *lugens*, *agillies* and *Diomedea exulens*. Banks then recalls that he had killed 62 birds. Of the last bird he kills, Banks comments: "The albatross was very brown, exactly the same as the first I killed, which, if I mistake not, was nearly in the same latitude on the other side of the continent." On 7 March, Banks concludes: "No albatrosses have been seen since the 4th and for some days before that we had only now and then a single one in sight, so we conclude that we have parted with them for good and all."<sup>21</sup>

In Banks' journal, the shooting and consumption of albatross are shown to be a normal and everyday activity in the sub-Antarctic latitudes that the *Resolution* traversed between January and April 1769. Albatross were also an accepted part of everyday life onboard the *Endeavour*, as objects either to be shot or cooked. As in Banks' journal where the albatross is seen as either a curiosity or as food, in Coleridge's poem it is not the ancient mariner himself who is "poisoned" by the albatross but rather the narrator who ascribes to it a heathen purpose; in fact, the mariner himself is at all times quite accustomed to the bird, even when he describes the albatross as an adornment about his neck as is revealed in part two, verse fourteen. The span of the voyage of the poem is equivalent to Banks' accounts of the latitudes traversed by the *Endeavour* in their encounter with albatross, and while this does not prove a direct relation between the two texts, it does suggest that there is more to the iceless expanse than can be drawn from Shelvocke's *Voyage* alone.

Bernard Smith alluded to the similarity between the painterly effects of ice achieved by Hodges and the literary effects of Coleridge's poetry. It is entirely possible that the Antipodean and Antarctic paintings of Hodges and Forster following Cook's second voyage were known to Coleridge and were an influence on passages of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, especially those sections of the poem descriptive of icebergs. As Smith explains:

Still more unusual visual effects awaited Hodges in the Antarctic. For many months the *Resolution* worked its way among the ice in high southern latitudes where the normal pictorial components of classical landscape were simply not to be found. Instead of foreground copses framing prospects of pastoral happiness and plenty, and backed by blue hills and golden skies, Hodges found only ice, water, mist and light from which to compose his drawings.<sup>22</sup>

Smith's textual account of Hodges' sketches and drawings, in relation to verses twelve-fifteen of the first part of Coleridge's 1798 poem, lines 49-60, suggest contextual allusions to the oil paintings of William Hodges and George Forster:

Listen stranger! Mist and snow,  
And it grew wond'rous cold:  
And Ice, mast'high, came floating by,  
As green as Emerald.  
And thro' the drifts the snowy clifts  
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:  
It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd,  
Like noises of a swound!

image

Figure 3:  
George Forster, *Ice Islands with Ice Blink*, 1772-73.  
Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

Both poem and Forster's picture may be compared with an extract from Cook's journal of the second voyage of 1774:

In the situation we were in, just the Southern half of our horizon was illuminated, by the rays of light reflected from the rise to a considerable height. Ninety seven ice hills were distinctly seen within the fird [sic], besides those on the outside, many of them very large, and looking like a ridge of mountains, rising above one another till they were lost in clouds...Such mountains of ice as these, were, I believe, never seen in the Greenland seas; at least, not that I ever heard or heard of; for that we cannot draw a comparison between the ice here and there.<sup>23</sup>

The "here and there" of Cook's journal equates nicely with the "here and there" of line 58 of the first part of Coleridge's poem. It is evident from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, as from the later *Biographia Literaria*, that Coleridge could have at least read extracts from the journals of Cook and Banks from their first and second voyages in the Pacific and seen the images produced by Hodges and Forster from the antipodean voyages onboard the *Endeavour* and the *Resolution*. Coleridge too would have been aware of the differences that existed in the last decades of the eighteenth century between the better-known northern accounts of Arctic ice and the lesser-known but more dramatic accounts from Cook's journeying.

Though under composition since the early eighteenth century, the *Biographia Literaria* was published in 1817. However, in the *Biographia* Coleridge mentions not the Antarctic of the southern ocean but rather the ice of the northern hemisphere. British readers would have been more familiar with a northern metaphor, yet Coleridge chose to refer to northern ice in his prose but reserves southern ice for his own poem. In the *Biographia* he discusses the poetry of Erasmus Darwin by means of an image of the frozen north: "During my first Cambridge vacation I assisted a friend in a contribution for a literary society in Devonshire, and in this I remember to have compared Darwin's work to the Russian palace of ice, glittering, cold and transitory."<sup>24</sup> In his comparison with the palace that Empress Anna had constructed in St Petersburg in 1739-40, Coleridge sought to damn with faint praise Darwin's poem, *The Temple of Nature* (1802), in which the author expresses ideas of Zoonomia or the Laws of Organic Life. The feelings inspired in his own poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, could not, according to Coleridge's literary schema, be compared with Darwin's work; the latter was "glittering, cold and transitory," a man-made confabulation, while the other represented the sublimity of the unknown south. Coleridge sets his own poem beyond the critique of the *Biographia Literaria*.

My claim is that, in the composition of the *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Cook, Banks, Hodges and Forster were more of an influence on Coleridge than has previously been recognised. My further hypothesis is that the identities of both mariner and crew in the earlier version of the poem published in 1798 were influenced by Coleridge's reading of Cook and Banks' journals, and by the accounts of encounters with natives in Tahiti and the Pacific – in particular with the person of Tupaia, the Tahitian who accompanied Cook south on his voyage after leaving his homeland for the *Endeavour* in 1769. The interpretation of the albatross in Shelvocke's *Voyage* is reversed; in his account the bird is an ill omen, in Coleridge's it is a good omen whose death bodes ill for the crew. The act of shooting the albatross is not

a Christian act but a "savage" one, signified by the wearing of the dead bird's neck and by the turbulence of the seas henceforth (part two, verse fourteen):

Ah! Well a-day! What evil looks  
Had I from old and young!  
Instead of the cross, the Albatross  
About my neck was hung.

The albatross may have come from Wordsworth via Shelvocke but this does not account for the descriptions of ice in Coleridge's ballad, nor does it make allowance for the known influence of Wallis upon Coleridge from his youth. In the later version of the poem, Coleridge revised parts five and six and omitted 46 of 263 original lines. Given that the ancient mariner in Coleridge's poem is a navigator, rather than a ship's captain, the argument can be made that it is more likely from the excluded verses that Coleridge had in mind Tapaia of Tahiti, who accompanied Cook and Banks on the first voyage of the *Endeavour*, as the original model for the dispatcher of the winged Christian soul. Tupaia was an *Orio* or navigator-priest, a darkskinned Polynesian who could, in Coleridge's first version of the poem, take the metaphorical blame for killing the albatross.

What is the evidence for this? First, there is the visual congruency of Hodges' painting, *A View of Cape Stephens (New Zealand) in Cook's Straits with Waterspout* and its "woman and fleshless Pheere." Second, while the albatross represents a Christian soul, it also suggests a totemic necklace worn by the ancient mariner, and thus not only a transgression of Christian values but also an act of idolatry. Smith recounts Coleridge as claiming: "Christianity brings immense advantages to a savage."<sup>25</sup> Tupaia was quick-witted and picked up much from Cook and his crew; in Coleridge's ballad, the figure perhaps based on him need not actually fire the crossbow but merely take the blame for firing it, as is implied in the stanzas that Coleridge omitted from the 1817 version.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, the albatross is briefly personified as Christian only in lines 61-64 of verse one in the 1798 version: "At length did cross an Albatross, / Through the fog it came; / As if it had been a Christian soul." However, in neither Shelvocke's account nor Banks' journals is any albatross symbolised as Christian. In Shelvocke's narrative the albatross is an omen of foul passage, and in Banks' journal it is a scientific specimen or source of food; only in Coleridge's account is the albatross identified fleetingly as a Christian portent. The shooting of the albatross is a "savage" act rather than a Christian act; if the albatross is shot by a man who, in so doing, is identified as "savage," then that man becomes thereafter a symbol of cultural difference and transgression.

In part three, lines 183-87, of the original version, Coleridge had written:

His bones were black with many a crack,  
All black and bare, I ween;  
Jet-black and bare, somewhere with rust  
Of mouldy damp and charnel crust  
They're patched with purple and green.

Coleridge was aware of the role of ethnic identity in literature, for in his Shakespeare lectures of 1811-12 he distinguished between Othello's identity as a Negro or Moor: "Iago's speech to Brabantio implies merely that he [Othello] was a Moor, i.e. black."<sup>27</sup> In his original 1798 version of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* the "fleshless Pheere" whose bones were "jet-black and bare" could have been modelled on the Polynesian navigators Tupaia and Omai, as the poet had greater familiarity with Cook and Banks' journals than has been presumed or thus far documented in Coleridge scholarship. By 1816, however, Coleridge's emphasis had shifted to the concept of "life in death," in which the shooting of the albatross is no longer treated as a "savage" act, or in terms of a romantic reading of the paradox of native encounter, but is given a more consciously metaphysical weighting. Thus, in the version of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* published in 1817, Coleridge had modified the Polynesian and Antarctic influences gleaned from his knowledge of Cook's voyages which were evident in the 1798 version of the ballad in favour of emphasising the theme of spiritual allegory.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Professor Mark Williams and the organising committee of the "Imagining Antarctica Conference" held on 4-6 September 2008 at Canterbury University, Christchurch, New Zealand, at which this paper was first presented, and to Associate Professor Annemarie Jutel of Otago Polytechnic for advice about manuscript preparation. I also acknowledge the following sources for images reproduced: Fig. 1: William Hodges, *A View of Cape Stephens (NZ) in Cook's Straits with Waterspouts* (1776), National Maritime Museum, London. Ministry of Defence Art Collection. Reference #: BHC1906. Image in public domain. Fig. 2: Thanks to the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand for permission to reproduce the preface map of George Shelvocke's *A Voyage Around the World By Way of the Great South Sea. Performed in 1719, 20, 21, 22 in the Speedwell of London. On his majesty's commission to cruise on the Spaniards in the late war with the Spanish Crown*, from the facsimile edition of 1971. Reference #: BK-834-MAP. Fig. 3: Thanks to the Mitchell Library State Library of New South Wales for permission to reproduce George Forster, *Ice Islands with Ice Blink* (1772-73), Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney. Reference #: PXD11 N. 30. All enquiries relating to this image should be referred to the Mitchell Library.

1. N Fruman, *Coleridge: The Damaged Archangel* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1972).
2. R Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: Harper Collins, 1998).
3. JS Hill, *A Coleridge Companion: An Introduction to the Major Poems and the Biographia Literaria* (London: Macmillan, 1983).
4. J Lamb, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner: a Ballad of the Scurvy," in *Pathologies of Travel*, eds R Wrigley and G Revill, Clío Medica/The Wellcome Series in the History of Medicine, vol. 56 (New York: Rodopi, 2000), 157-77.
5. A Moorehead, *The Fatal Impact* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966).
6. B Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1985).
7. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and opinions*, ed. and intro. George Watson (London, New York: JM Dent & Sons, 1817/1956).
8. This is a phrase from Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*.
9. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Kubla Kahn, or a Vision in a Dream Fragment' (Electronic Text Centre, Virginia University, 1816) [http://etext.virginia.edu/stc/Coleridge/poems/Kubla\\_Khan.html](http://etext.virginia.edu/stc/Coleridge/poems/Kubla_Khan.html) last accessed 3 April 2009, Verse 3, line 5.
10. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 69.
11. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' original version, (Electronic Text Center, Virginia University) [http://etext.virginia.edu/stc/Coleridge/poems/old\\_Rime.html](http://etext.virginia.edu/stc/Coleridge/poems/old_Rime.html). Pt. 3 last accessed 3 April 2009). All quotations hereafter are from this edition.
12. G Keate, *An Account of the Pelew Islands* (London, 1788).
13. *The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Vol. 2, eds. Derwent Coleridge and Sara Coleridge (Leipzig: Barnhard Tauchnitz, 1860), 19.
14. *The Poetical Writings of William Wordsworth*, eds E de Selincourt and H Darbishire, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 260.
15. P Adair, *The Waking Dream: A Study of Coleridge's Poetry* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967).
16. E Best, *Polynesian Voyagers: The Maori as Deep-Sea Navigator, Explorer, and Colonizer*, Dominion Museum Monograph no. 5 (Wellington: Dominion Museum, 1923).
17. De Selincourt and Darbishire, *Poetical Writings of William Wordsworth*, 260.
18. Ibid.
19. George Shelvocke, *A Voyage Around the World By Way of the Great South Sea. Performed in 1719, 20, 21, 22 in the Speedwell of London. On his majesty's commission to cruise on the Spaniards in the late war with the Spanish Crown* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 72.
20. An alternative hypothesis might hold the purposeful dissonance of sections of the ballad to be Coleridge's creative response to his worsening relationship with Wordsworth. As A S Byatt writes, "The literary effects of the quarrel [in 1812 over a mutual friend, Sara Hutchison] were better for Coleridge than for Wordsworth if only because the friendship had been slowly decreasing Coleridge's belief in his own gift." See A S Byatt, *Unruly Times: Wordsworth and Coleridge in their Time* (London: Vintage, 1997, 50).
21. *Journal of The Right Honourable Sir Joseph Banks, ed. Sir Joseph Hooker* (London: Macmillan, 1896), 63-68.
22. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 59.
23. James Cook, *The Journals of Captain Cook*, ed. Phillip Edwards (London: Penguin, 1784/1999), 331-32.
24. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (ed. Watson), 10.
25. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 147.
26. Cook's journals of the second voyage on board the *Resolution* in 1772 offer further evidence of the presence of Polynesians near the Antarctic ice in the person of Omai, who accompanied Cook from Tahiti.
27. *Coleridge on Shakespeare: The Text of the Lectures of 1811-1812*, eds R Foakes and J Collier (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia,



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Samuel Taylor Coleridge—poet, critic, opium addict—wrote his Rime of the Ancient Mariner in 1798, a time when long poems still began with a short synopsis called the “Argument.” I have always loved Coleridge’s weird poem, with its archaic language recalling medieval travel stories, and its globetrotting narrative reaching back to Odysseus and the recent tales of Captain Cook, and forward to the imperial age to come. In subsequent editions, Coleridge would edit out some of the antique language, bowing to pressure from adherents of his friend and colleague William Wordsworth, who promised the wo The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a famous narrative poem in seven parts by the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was first published anonymously in September 1798 as The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere in Lyrical Ballads. The author was not publicly identified until 1817 when The Rime of the Ancient Mariner was included in Sibylline Leaves, a collection of Coleridge’s poems. It is an ancient Mariner, And he stoppeth one of three. ` By thy long grey beard and glittering eye Now wherefore stopp’st thou me? The bridegroom’s doors are opened wide, And I am next of kin; The guests are met, the feast is set: Mayst hear the merry din.’ He holds him with his skinny hand. “There was a ship,” quoth he. ` He holds him with his glittering eye - The Wedding-Guest stood still And listens like a three years’ child: 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. “The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared, Merrily did we drop Below the kirk, below the hill, Below the lighthouse top. The sun came up upon the left. Coleridge wrote The Rime of the Ancient Mariner in an allegorical mode so that his ballad would be set outside time. His pursuit of a literary poetic in his later Biographia Literaria (7) was influenced by his reading of Antarctic accounts in the eighteenth-century narratives of voyaging and discovery insofar as these writings inspired metaphors and diction in the Biographia to describe states of literary detachment. The journals of South Pacific adventure prompted in Coleridge’s romantic literary imagination elements of the sublime and poetical estrangement, reflection upon which gave ri The poetical works of S.T. Coleridge, ed. Henry Nelson Coleridge (London : W. Pickering, 1834). PR 4470 E34 VICT Rare Books. Argument. How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country. PART I. 1It is an ancient Mariner, 2And he stoppeth one of three. 3By thy long grey beard and glittering eye



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