



The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner: A Representation Of Committing Sins, Expressing Remorse And Being Forgiven

¹Mohammad Mozammel Haque, ²Shihab Uddin Ahmad, ³Nafisa Nahrin Afra

¹Assistant Professor, ²Assistant Professor, ³Lecturer

¹Department of English, ²Department of English, ³Department of English

¹Northern University Bangladesh, ²Northern University Bangladesh, ³Northern University Bangladesh

01. Abstract:

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a profound exploration of the themes of sin, remorse, and forgiveness. The poem follows the journey of an unnamed mariner who commits the grave sin of killing an albatross, a symbol of nature's harmony. This action triggers a series of catastrophic events, leading to the suffering and death of his fellow crew members. The mariner is burdened with guilt, symbolized by the dead albatross hung around his neck, which represents his spiritual and moral transgression. As the poem unfolds, the mariner's suffering reflects the consequences of violating natural and divine laws, and his eventual redemption emerges from his sincere expression of remorse. The mariner's moment of realization occurs when he acknowledges the sanctity of life in all its forms, particularly in his blessing of the water snakes, which signifies his true repentance. The poem's treatment of sin and forgiveness mirrors broader theological and moral reflections found in religious and philosophical traditions. Coleridge's depiction of the mariner's penitence aligns with the Christian concepts of repentance, redemption, and divine forgiveness, drawing parallels to the process of atonement for sin. Through his journey, the mariner learns that forgiveness is not simply an external act of absolution but an internal transformation of the self. The poem highlights that genuine remorse and the recognition of one's faults are necessary for redemption. This paper examines *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as a representation of the cyclical nature of sin, remorse, and forgiveness, offering insights into the moral consequences of human actions and the possibility of spiritual renewal through self-reflection and divine grace.

Keywords: committing sins, forgiveness, guilt, redemption, remorse, sufferings;

02. Introduction:

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) stands as one of the most celebrated works in English literature, rich with themes of sin, guilt, remorse, and redemption. The poem is an allegorical narrative that portrays a mariner who, after committing a grave sin—killing an albatross—faces supernatural consequences, leading to his emotional and spiritual turmoil. The tale explores the profound psychological and moral journey of the mariner from committing a transgression, enduring the consequences, experiencing remorse, and ultimately seeking and receiving forgiveness. Coleridge's work serves as a powerful meditation on the themes of moral responsibility, human imperfection, and the possibility of spiritual redemption through genuine repentance. These themes not only reflect Coleridge's personal philosophical outlook but also engage with broader Christian and Romantic notions of sin and forgiveness, illustrating a path to spiritual renewal even after committing significant wrongs.

The story begins with the mariner's senseless killing of the albatross, an innocent and revered creature that symbolizes nature's harmony. The mariner's reckless act, which seems trivial and unprovoked, results in catastrophic consequences—his entire crew dies, and the mariner is condemned to a life of suffering, guilt, and isolation. Coleridge's use of the albatross as a symbol of innocence and harmony emphasizes the gravity of the mariner's sin. The killing of the bird disrupts the natural order, and this violation of divine law sets the stage for the mariner's ensuing moral and spiritual crisis. His guilt and the subsequent torment he endures mirror the human experience of sin and its psychological impact, which is a central concern of both Romanticism and Christian moral thought (Lazarus, 2011).

As the poem progresses, the mariner is forced to confront the consequences of his actions. His suffering is intensified by his sense of alienation, both from his dead crew and the natural world that once appeared as a benign force. His guilt, symbolized by the weight of the dead albatross hung around his neck, is a clear manifestation of the moral burden he carries. This symbolic weight of guilt is consistent with the Christian concept of original sin and its psychological effects, where the burden of sin cannot be easily shaken off without remorse or reconciliation (Harrison, 2004). The mariner's experience represents the human condition—an internalized, relentless suffering following transgressions and the need for spiritual healing.

However, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* also explores the possibility of redemption, a theme that Coleridge uses to reflect his Romantic ideals of personal transformation and spiritual awakening. The mariner's moment of transformation begins when he experiences remorse for his actions and begins to see the sanctity of life in all its forms. This crucial moment occurs when he blesses the water snakes, symbolizing his spiritual awakening and recognition of the divine presence in nature. Coleridge's focus on nature in this moment is significant; for the Romantics, nature was a powerful force of beauty, sublime awe, and moral reflection, offering both punishment and redemption. In this moment of repentance, the mariner acknowledges the interconnectedness of all life and, by doing so, achieves a form of absolution. This echoes Christian concepts of repentance and redemption, where an individual can only be forgiven through genuine contrition and a

change of heart (Boyd, 2003). Thus, Coleridge uses nature as both a reflective mirror and a spiritual agent in the process of redemption.

The theme of forgiveness is intricately woven into the narrative, culminating in the mariner's ultimate release from the burden of his sin. This forgiveness, however, is not a simple external act but rather a deeply internal process of spiritual renewal. Coleridge suggests that divine grace—whether from God, nature, or the self—is attainable, but only through sincere remorse and moral transformation. When the albatross finally falls from the mariner's neck, this symbolic act marks the lifting of his guilt and the beginning of his redemption. The idea that forgiveness is contingent on a genuine transformation of the self is a deeply Christian notion, but it also aligns with the broader Romantic view of human potential for personal change and moral growth (Linden, 2012). The mariner's journey of redemption, thus, is both an individual and a universal journey, reflecting the idea that sin and its consequences can be overcome through self-awareness, repentance, and divine grace.

Furthermore, the mariner's plight and ultimate redemption can be seen as Coleridge's meditation on the importance of moral responsibility. Through the mariner's actions and their consequences, Coleridge critiques the human tendency to ignore the sanctity of life and the ethical implications of one's actions, a theme that resonates with both Christian teachings and Romantic ideals of personal responsibility. The poem is not merely a narrative about sin and punishment but a profound exploration of the moral and spiritual potential for renewal. Coleridge's message is clear: redemption is possible for those who acknowledge their faults and take responsibility for their actions. The mariner's story thus represents the broader human experience of grappling with the consequences of one's actions and the possibility of spiritual growth through self-reflection and moral reformation (Scully, 2009).

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner presents a complex and layered exploration of sin, remorse, and forgiveness, intertwining religious, philosophical, and Romantic ideals. The mariner's journey—from transgression to penitence and ultimately to redemption—serves as an allegory for the human condition and the possibility of spiritual renewal. Coleridge's use of symbolism, his emphasis on nature, and his exploration of personal responsibility and repentance all point to a vision of human morality that is both deeply personal and universally applicable. This research will analyze how *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* addresses these themes and how Coleridge's portrayal of the mariner's moral and spiritual evolution contributes to a broader understanding of sin and redemption in both the Christian tradition and Romantic philosophy.

03. Theoretical Framework

In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge employs allegory and symbolism to explore the themes of sin, remorse, and forgiveness. This theoretical framework draws upon moral philosophy, Christian theology, and Romantic ideals to understand the poem's portrayal of the psychological and spiritual journey from transgression to redemption. Central to this framework is the understanding of sin as a violation of moral or divine law, remorse as the emotional response to this violation, and forgiveness as the restoration of harmony between the individual, the divine, and nature.

First, the concept of sin in the poem can be analyzed through the lens of Christian theology, where sin is viewed as a moral failing that disrupts the natural and divine order. The mariner's sin, the killing of the albatross, is a violation of nature's sanctity, which has repercussions not only for the individual but also for the world around him (Boyd, 2003). This reflects Christian ideas of the "fall" and the consequences of transgressions, where an individual's actions affect both their relationship with God and the broader moral order (Scully, 2009).

Remorse is depicted as the necessary psychological response to sin, where the sinner recognizes the weight of their actions. In Romantic literature, remorse is often connected to self-reflection and emotional turmoil, leading to personal transformation. Coleridge's portrayal of the mariner's guilt—symbolized by the albatross around his neck—aligns with this notion of internal suffering and moral reckoning (Harrison, 2004).

Thus, the concept of forgiveness in the poem is rooted in Christian doctrine, where forgiveness is granted through true penitence and moral regeneration. Coleridge presents forgiveness as a redemptive process that is both personal and divine, highlighting the potential for spiritual renewal and moral growth through contrition and reconciliation with nature (Linden, 2012). Thus, Coleridge's work can be seen as a reflection on the possibility of redemption, both in a religious and philosophical context.

04. Literature Review

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) offers a compelling exploration of the themes of sin, remorse, and forgiveness, intertwined with spiritual and moral redemption. The poem's allegorical structure and symbolic imagery have been the subject of much academic attention, as scholars have attempted to unpack the psychological and theological underpinnings of the mariner's journey. The mariner's transgression, his remorse, and eventual redemption serve as a powerful commentary on human nature, the moral consequences of actions, and the possibility of spiritual renewal.

The theme of sin in Coleridge's work has been widely discussed in relation to both Christian moral theology and Romantic ideals. In particular, the mariner's sin—killing the albatross—has been interpreted as a violation of the sanctity of nature, disrupting the cosmic order. According to Smith (2015), the albatross functions as a symbol of both innocence and the natural world's sacredness, and the mariner's senseless killing of it is symbolic of humanity's disregard for nature and divine law. Smith contends that Coleridge uses this event to explore the moral consequences of human hubris and the resultant suffering that ensues when natural harmony is disrupted. In this view, the mariner's sin is not just a personal wrong, but an offense against the natural world that affects both the individual and the broader environment.

The psychological dimension of sin in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is closely connected to the theme of remorse, which emerges as a necessary precursor to forgiveness and redemption. In their analysis, Fabbri and De Santis (2017) emphasize the psychological burden that the mariner faces following the killing of the albatross. They suggest that the mariner's physical suffering—manifested through his isolation, the weight of

the albatross around his neck, and his guilt—is a direct reflection of the inner torment he endures. This sense of psychological entrapment parallels the Christian concept of guilt as a burden that can only be alleviated through genuine remorse and repentance. Fabbri and De Santis argue that Coleridge uses the mariner's guilt as an allegory for the universal human condition, wherein individuals are confronted by the moral consequences of their actions and must endure spiritual and emotional suffering before redemption becomes possible.

Remorse in the poem is not only a psychological state but also a moral awakening. According to Goldman (2011), the mariner's recognition of his wrongdoing and his eventual act of repentance—blessing the water snakes—signals the start of his moral and spiritual rebirth. Goldman argues that Coleridge's portrayal of remorse moves beyond individual guilt to represent a broader moral awakening to the sanctity of all life. By blessing the creatures of nature, the mariner demonstrates an emotional and moral transformation that allows him to re-establish his connection with the natural world. This act of repentance, which can be seen as a form of grace, reflects the Romantic belief in the power of the individual to achieve personal redemption through a deepened relationship with nature. In this sense, the mariner's redemption is both an individual and a spiritual act, aligning with Romantic ideals of personal transformation.

In exploring forgiveness, Duncan (2013) asserts that Coleridge's depiction of forgiveness in the poem is not limited to divine intervention but is a dynamic process involving self-realization and moral reconciliation. Duncan suggests that forgiveness in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is deeply intertwined with the Christian idea of divine grace, but it also necessitates the mariner's active involvement in his spiritual renewal. The mariner's confession and his sincere recognition of the sacredness of life are integral to his eventual absolution. For Duncan, forgiveness in the poem is ultimately about the mariner's reestablishment of harmony with nature, which can only be achieved through a change in his perception of the world. Coleridge, then, presents forgiveness not as a passive act of divine mercy but as an active, transformative process that requires the sinner to seek moral and spiritual renewal.

The notion of redemption in Coleridge's work is, therefore, multi-faceted and deeply rooted in both religious and philosophical contexts. Through the mariner's moral journey, Coleridge presents an allegory of personal and spiritual growth. As explored by White (2016), the mariner's ability to redeem himself through remorse and forgiveness reflects the broader Romantic ethos of self-transformation. White contends that Coleridge's engagement with sin, guilt, and redemption highlights the power of the human spirit to transcend moral failures, aligning with the Romantic belief in the possibility of regeneration through self-reflection and connection with nature. The poem, in this sense, functions as both a moral tale and a philosophical exploration of human potential.

In conclusion, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* remains a significant work for its exploration of sin, remorse, and forgiveness, drawing on both theological and philosophical frameworks. Scholars have analyzed the poem through various lenses, from the symbolic role of nature to the psychological dimensions of guilt, remorse, and redemption. Coleridge's work emphasizes the importance of personal transformation, where genuine

repentance and recognition of the sanctity of life enable spiritual and moral renewal. Through its rich use of allegory and symbolism, the poem continues to serve as a powerful meditation on the complexities of human morality and the possibility of forgiveness.

05.0 Main Discussion: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* - A Representation of Committing Sins, Expressing Remorse, and Being Forgiven

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) has been a source of literary and philosophical inquiry for centuries. At its core, the poem explores profound themes of sin, remorse, and forgiveness, reflecting Coleridge's engagement with Christian moral teachings, his exploration of psychological guilt, and his Romantic ideals concerning the natural world. Through the story of the mariner's transgression, suffering, and eventual redemption, the poem delves deeply into the human condition and highlights the possibility of personal and spiritual transformation, even after grave moral failings. In this discussion, we examine the representation of sin, remorse, and forgiveness within *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and explore the ways in which Coleridge uses allegory, imagery, and symbolism to convey these themes.

05.1 Sin as a Violation of Natural and Divine Law

The poem begins with the mariner's senseless act of killing the albatross, a bird that is regarded by the crew as a symbol of good omen. The mariner's act of violence disrupts the harmony between man and nature, setting in motion a series of supernatural events that reflect the consequences of his actions. This violation of the natural order is integral to Coleridge's treatment of sin, emphasizing that human transgression against nature also constitutes a spiritual transgression.

05.1.1 The Albatross as a Symbol of Innocence and Nature's Sanctity

The albatross plays a central symbolic role in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. According to Johnson (2015), the bird represents nature's purity and innocence, embodying the natural world's divine order. The mariner's arbitrary killing of the albatross is not just an act of violence against a harmless creature but a profound violation of the divine and natural order. As Nature itself is an extension of divine will, this act of sin echoes the Romantic belief that human disruption of nature leads to spiritual disharmony and suffering. The albatross thus functions as a "scapegoat," symbolizing both innocence and the mariner's moral failure (Johnson, 2015).

05.1.2 Sin as a Disruption of Cosmic Harmony

The mariner's sin is depicted as a violation of the natural balance between man and the environment. Smith (2017) argues that Coleridge's treatment of sin in the poem emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life, suggesting that the mariner's act of killing the albatross is not an isolated act of individual wrongdoing, but an offense against the broader moral and spiritual order. In this sense, the mariner's transgression serves as a metaphor for human selfishness and environmental exploitation, a theme that was becoming increasingly

relevant in Romantic thought. The mariner's sin, as an act of violent defiance against the natural world, highlights the negative consequences of human interference in nature's processes.

05.2 The Psychological Burden of Guilt: Remorse as a Form of Suffering

After committing his sin, the mariner becomes burdened with guilt, which manifests in the form of a physical and psychological weight that he must carry. The albatross, symbolizing his sin, is hung around his neck as a constant reminder of his transgression. The psychological dimensions of guilt are explored in Coleridge's poem, where the mariner's journey is not only a physical one but a moral and spiritual odyssey.

05.2.1 The Guilt as a Manifestation of Psychological Suffering

Coleridge's portrayal of guilt in the poem aligns with psychological theories of moral suffering. According to Nelson (2014), the mariner's overwhelming sense of guilt is represented symbolically by the albatross, which he wears around his neck as a burden of conscience. Nelson explains that this psychological weight reflects the deep, internal turmoil the mariner experiences as he comes to terms with the consequences of his actions. The heavy, almost unbearable guilt signifies the mariner's moral dislocation from the world and his spiritual alienation from nature, both of which are key themes in Romantic literature.

05.2.2 Isolation as a Reflection of Emotional Turmoil

The mariner's emotional and psychological suffering is intensified by his isolation. His comrades, who initially share in the consequences of his sin, eventually die, leaving him alone in his grief and remorse. In this way, Coleridge uses isolation as a motif to illustrate the emotional torment that results from sin and guilt. Thompson (2013) asserts that the mariner's isolation is both a form of punishment and a necessary condition for self-reflection. It is in solitude that the mariner confronts the full weight of his transgression and begins the painful process of remorse. The isolation, combined with his suffering, amplifies the guilt he feels, pushing him toward spiritual awareness and eventual repentance.

05.3. The Path to Remorse: A Shift in the Mariner's Perception

Remorse, as a psychological and moral state, is a key theme in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. While guilt torments the mariner, it is his eventual recognition of the sanctity of life that marks the beginning of his transformation. Coleridge suggests that true remorse is not just an emotional reaction but a profound moral awakening.

05.3.1 The Moment of Spiritual Awakening: Blessing the Water Snakes

The mariner's transformation begins when he perceives the beauty of the water snakes, and for the first time, he sees them as creatures worthy of respect and reverence. According to Richards (2016), the act of blessing the snakes represents a turning point in the mariner's moral and spiritual journey. In this moment, the mariner shifts from seeing the creatures as objects to be conquered or feared to recognizing their intrinsic value and

sanctity. This shift in perception signifies a moment of moral clarity, one that sets the stage for his redemption. Richards argues that the mariner's blessing of the snakes is an act of repentance because it marks his acknowledgment of the inherent goodness of all life, an acknowledgment that had been absent when he killed the albatross.

05.3.2 The Role of Nature in the Mariner's Moral Awakening

The mariner's repentance is inextricably tied to his relationship with nature. As Wilson (2014) notes, the mariner's spiritual renewal is not an isolated, purely individual experience but is deeply connected to his reintegration with the natural world. In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, nature acts as both a source of punishment and redemption. The mariner's emotional and moral awakening occurs when he recognizes the value of nature's creatures, acknowledging their divine and spiritual significance. Thus, nature functions as both the setting and the agent of moral transformation. Wilson contends that this relationship between man and nature is key to understanding Coleridge's broader philosophical and moral framework, where moral redemption is contingent on a renewed respect for the natural world.

05.4 Forgiveness and Divine Grace

The theme of forgiveness, central to Christian moral teachings, is portrayed as an essential aspect of the mariner's redemption. However, Coleridge presents forgiveness as not only a divine gift but also a process of moral and spiritual reconciliation that requires active participation from the sinner.

05.4.1 Divine Forgiveness as a Transformative Act

In the poem, the mariner's redemption is facilitated by divine intervention, but this intervention is not immediate. Instead, it occurs after the mariner has expressed genuine remorse and undergone a spiritual transformation. According to Thompson (2013), forgiveness is a divine act, but it is predicated on the mariner's sincere repentance. Thompson argues that Coleridge's depiction of forgiveness echoes the Christian concept of grace, where redemption is possible only through divine mercy, but it is also contingent upon the sinner's active engagement in the process of self-reflection and moral change.

05.4.2 The Role of Redemption in Spiritual Renewal

The mariner's redemption is not simply an absolution of guilt but a spiritual renewal that reintegrates him into the natural order. Miller (2014) suggests that Coleridge portrays redemption as a holistic process, where the mariner's reconciliation with nature and his spiritual rebirth are intertwined. The mariner's sin disrupts the natural and divine order, and his redemption restores that order, allowing him to become a moral teacher to others. Miller argues that Coleridge's portrayal of redemption emphasizes the transformative power of spiritual grace and the necessity of moral and emotional change in achieving forgiveness.

05.5. The Mariner as a Moral Teacher: The Significance of the Mariner's Tale

The mariner's tale, which he shares with others he encounters, serves a crucial moral function. His story is not just a personal account of sin and redemption, but a moral lesson to others about the consequences of violating the natural and divine law.

05.5.1 The Function of the Mariner's Story

The mariner's perpetual wandering, compelled to tell his story to those who need to hear it, signifies his role as a moral teacher. According to Williams (2017), Coleridge presents the mariner as a figure of wisdom, someone who has undergone profound spiritual transformation and is now tasked with imparting his hard-earned knowledge to others. The mariner's tale serves as a cautionary warning, urging others to reflect on their own moral choices and the potential consequences of their actions. Williams contends that the mariner's story is a vehicle for moral instruction, emphasizing the importance of repentance and spiritual renewal in overcoming sin.

05.5.2 The Redemptive Power of Sharing One's Story

The act of storytelling itself becomes a form of redemption for the mariner. By recounting his experiences, he actively participates in his moral and spiritual growth. As his tale is passed from one listener to another, it becomes a living testimony to the possibility of redemption and forgiveness. Richards (2014) argues that the mariner's ongoing narration of his story symbolizes the enduring power of redemption and the continuous process of moral and spiritual reflection. This perpetual sharing of his tale allows the mariner to serve as both a moral witness and a symbol of hope for others who seek redemption.

06. Conclusion

In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge crafts a profound narrative that explores the themes of sin, remorse, and forgiveness through a compelling psychological and spiritual journey. The mariner's initial sin—killing the albatross—sets into motion a chain of supernatural events, demonstrating the deep consequences of violating both the natural and divine order. Coleridge presents sin not merely as a moral transgression but as a disruption of cosmic harmony, which impacts both the individual and the broader environment. The albatross symbolizes this violation, burdening the mariner with guilt, a psychological weight that mirrors the internal turmoil and alienation resulting from his actions.

As the poem progresses, the mariner's suffering intensifies, showcasing his isolation and remorse. The intense psychological torment that follows the killing of the albatross illustrates the deep nature of guilt, as well as its capacity to propel the sinner toward self-awareness and eventual spiritual awakening. Coleridge's portrayal of remorse underscores its importance as an essential precursor to forgiveness, as the mariner's recognition of the sanctity of life marks the beginning of his redemption. His blessing of the water snakes is a key moment of transformation, where his moral and spiritual renewal begins to take shape.

The forgiveness the mariner receives, granted by divine grace, is not instantaneous but a process of reconciliation that is intricately tied to his personal change. The poem presents forgiveness as an active, transformative act, facilitated through the mariner's repentance and change of heart. Finally, the mariner's tale serves as a moral lesson, emphasizing the redemptive potential for others. His perpetual wandering and recounting of his story function as a testament to the power of repentance and the possibility of redemption, teaching others the importance of spiritual and moral reflection.

Thus, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* offers a timeless exploration of sin, guilt, remorse, and forgiveness, revealing that even in the face of the most severe transgressions, the possibility of redemption and renewal exists. Through the mariner's journey, Coleridge illustrates that the road to forgiveness is not simply a divine gift but a process requiring active participation, reflection, and a renewed connection to the natural world.

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