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said to live four times longer than crows, and crows nine times longer than men, which would make the life expectancy of the average stag somewhere around 2240 years. Historical discoveries proved it beyond all reasonable doubt. Aristotle, for example, mentioned a stag captured by Agathocles, tyrant of Syracuse.⁵ Around its neck was a bronze collar placed there, according to the inscription, by Diomedes, son of Tydeus, in the mythical time shortly after the fall of Troy. It was dedicated by Agathocles in a temple of Zeus and later removed to a shrine of Artemis in the country of the Peucetians, where, presumably, it could still be seen. Pausanias had a similar tale of an ancient deer sacred to a goddess known as Lady found in Arcadia by Arcesilais, Leocydes' ancestor (*Description of Greece*, VIII, x, 9). It too had a collar and an inscription dated the year (unspecified) Agapenor went to Troy, which proved, Pausanias believed, that deer lived longer than elephants. Similar stories were told by Pliny and Solinus after him: "Vita cervis in confesso longa, post centum annos aliquibus captis cum torquibus aureis, quos Alexander Magnus addiderat, adoptertis jam cute in magna obesitate" (*Nat. Hist.*, VIII, 50; Solinus, XIX, 18). Roger Bacon mentioned a deer found on Mount Anonia wearing a collar with the following legend: "Hoc animal fuit in hoc nemore positum tempore Iulii Caesaris."⁶ Another stag with a similar inscription was ensnared in a net by Charles VI of France around the time of the Babylonian Captivity. Its tag read: "Hoc me Caesar donavit," which was interpreted by many as referring to Julius Caesar although others ascribed it to one or another of the more recent Holy Roman Emperors.⁷ Similar stories were told about Octavius Augustus, who was said to have posted his deer with a warning to hunters: "Noli me tangere, quia Caesaris sum." Aldrovandus knew of one of these, a doe so old that its collar was embedded by time in the flesh of its neck,⁸ and Petrararch came across another in a clearing, near a laurel. It was

⁵ *De Mirabilibus Auscultationibus*, 110 [840b 20]. Aristotle was not taken in by such fables, however; in his *History of Animals*, VI, xxvi [578b 20-25], he denied any exceptional longevity to deer as did Thomas Browne in his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, III, ix.

⁶ *De Retardatione Accidentium Senectutis*, ed. A. G. Little and E. Withington (Oxonii, 1928), p. 88.

⁷ Guaguinus' *History of France*, cited by Giosuè Carducci e Severino Ferrari, eds., *Le Rime di Francesco Petrarca* (Firenze, 1899), p. 275n. See also Johannes Harduinus ed., *Cani Plinii Secundi Naturalis Historiae* (Lipsiae, 1779), III, 453n and Ulysses Aldrovandus, *Quadrupedum Omnium Biscutorum Historia* (Bononiae, 1642), p. 809.

⁸ *Loc. cit.*

milk white, and its collar was of diamond and topaz (*Rime*, exc).

None of Walton's contemporaries, of course, would have flipped through a mental file of such legends while he read Piscator's account. More likely, they recollected the main idea with perhaps a few details from one or another of the versions and wondered as they read just how old the tag proved the fish really was.

Yale University

FRANK MANLEY

COLERIDGE'S "SPECTRE-BARK": A SLAVE SHIP?

In a collection of miscellaneous essays entitled *Winter Nights; or, Fire-Side Lucubrations* (1820), Dr. Nathan Drake alludes to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in a passage both challenging and as yet unnoted in the vast fabric of Coleridge commentary. The passage in point is from a memorial essay on Dr. John Leyden and is among Drake's remarks on Leyden's *Scenes of Infancy*, a youthful poem, begun in 1801 and first published in 1819, in which the poet revisits his native village. Drake commends Leyden's picture of the rural folk who often recount traditional legends of the sea and tells us, in a passage in which he quotes Leyden, that in their discussions these people lament the

... atrocious tyranny of man, in riveting his fellow creatures in the degrading fetters of a hapless slavery. The fate of the captive negro gives origin to an episode founded on the superstition of mariners, "that, in the southern latitude of the coast of Africa, hurricanes are frequently ushered in, by the appearance of a spectre-ship. At the dead of night, the luminous form of a ship glides rapidly, with topsails flying, and sailing straight in the wind's eye. The crew of this vessel are supposed to have been guilty of some dreadful crime in the infancy of navigation, and to have been stricken with the pestilence. They were hence refused admittance into every port, and are ordained still to traverse the ocean on which they perish, till the period of their penance expires."¹

Drake continues:

The crime of these ghostly navigators, is supposed, by Leyden, to have been that of first being a freight of bartered captives, and he has painted their destiny in colours truly awful and impressive. Yet has he been exceeded on this subject by a living poet, whose "*Rime of the Ancient Mariner*" is perhaps one of the most tremendous tales of supernatural horror in existence.²

¹ Nathan Drake, *Winter Nights; or, Fire-Side Lucubrations* (London, 1820), pp. 124-125; *The Poetical Works of the Late John Leyden, with Memoirs of His Life*, ed. James Morton (London, 1819), p. 373.

² Drake, p. 125. Italics here and elsewhere in quotations are my own.

In the passage from *Scenes of Infancy* to which Drake alludes, Leyden pictures the punishment inflicted upon these early mariners:

... ere the moon her silver horns had rear'd,
Amid the crew the speckled plague appear'd,
Faint and despairing on their watery bier,
To every friendly shore the sailors steer;
Repell'd from port to port they sue in vain,
And track with slow unsteady sail the main,
Where ne'er the bright and buoyant wave is seen
To streak with wandering foam, the sea-weeds green,
Towers the tall mast, a lone and leafless tree;
Till, self-impelled, amid the waveless sea,
Where summer breezes ne'er were heard to sing,
Nor, hovering snow-birds spread the downy wing,
Fix'd as a rock, amid the boundless plain,
The yellow stream pollutes the stagnant main;
Till far through the night the funeral flames aspire,
As the red lightning smites the ghastly pyre.
Still doom'd by fate, on weltering billows roll'd,
Along the deep their restless course to hold,
Scenting the storm, the shadowy sailors guide
The prow with sails oppos'd to wind and tide.
The spectre-ship, in livid ghimpsing light,
Glares baleful on the shuddering watch at night,
Unblest of God and man! —Till time shall end,
Its stormy horror to the storm shall lend.³

It is impossible to determine the source of Drake's unique interpretation of Coleridge's "spectre-bark"; but the reading is entirely plausible for two reasons: (1) Before and during the time when Coleridge was working on the poem, he was vitally concerned over the slavery question. (2) Such a reading makes the moral tag at the end of the poem, often considered trite and intrusive, more nearly an organic part of Coleridge's creation and, in effect, a logical commentary upon the action. The object of this note is to suggest that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* owes something to Coleridge's expressed concern over the slavery issue and that this concern might well be an important part of the vast personal experience which Professors Lowes, House, and Schneider find mirrored in Coleridge's poetry. We know for fact that in 1792 he wrote a prize Greek poem on the slave trade. In 1795 he borrowed from the Bristol library copies of both Thomas Clarkson's essay on the *Impolicy of African Slave Trade* and the second volume of Bryan Edwards' monumental *History, Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*,⁴ the volume containing lengthy and vividly dramatic accounts of the misery among slaves in the islands and in transit and material which Coleridge used in *The*

³ Leyden, pp. 373-375.

⁴ Paul Kaufman, "The Readings of Southey and Coleridge," *Modern Philology*, XXI (1924), 319.

Destiny of Nations and *Religious Musings*.⁵ In the same year, Joseph Cottle recalls that Coleridge lectured in Bristol, "by particular desire," on the "Slave trade and the duties that result from its continuance."⁶ And in 1796, only two years before the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*, the poet expressed his indignation in *The Watchman* in an editorial imploring consumers in the British Isles to boycott West Indian rum and sugar; for, he added, in the islands "enormities, at which a Caligula might have turned pale, are authorized by our laws . . ."⁷ Two passages in Coleridge's article anticipate remarks in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and show that the poet was still concerned with the same problems as he set to work on his poem. He argued that if one continued to use West Indian rum and sugar

. . . does not the guilt rest on the consumer? And is it not an allowed axiom of morality that wickedness may be multiplied but not divided; and that the guilt of all attaches to each one who is knowingly an accomplice?⁸

Following the Mariner's deliberate slaying of the albatross and the subsequent disorder in the elements, his fellow crew members condemned his act; but when the immediate danger passed, Coleridge very carefully informs us in his gloss: ". . . when the fog cleared off, they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in crime." In Coleridge's impassioned plea at the end of his article, he asks the reader:

Would you choose to be sold, to have the hot iron upon your breasts, after having been crammed into the hold of a Ship with so many fellow-victims, that the heat and stench arising from your diseased bodies rot the very planks?⁹

One recalls the "rotting deck" upon which the Mariner stood and also two of Coleridge's unincorporated marginal additions to his picture of the spectre-bark in the Bristol Edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*: "This ship it was a plankless thing" and "A plankless spectre—and it moved . . ."¹⁰

Bernard Martin conjectures in *The Ancient Mariner and the Authentic Narrative* that Coleridge was, in all probability, familiar with two works by the Rev. John Newton and cites from Newton's *Authentic Narrative* (1764) passages describing the author's apostasy and self-inflicted penance which, Martin believes, foreshadow

⁵ John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu* (Boston, 1927), p. 493.

⁶ Joseph Cottle, *Early Recollections* (London, 1837), I, 20.

⁷ *The Watchman* (March 24, 1796), 106.

⁸ *ibid.*, 107. Coleridge reports to John Thelwall, in a letter dated May 13, 1796, that he and Poole have, in protest, renounced the use of sugar.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ These additions are cited by Sister Eugenia Logan in *A Concordance to the Poetry of S. T. Coleridge*.

Coleridge's Mariner. Newton's narrative and Coleridge's poem describe similar crimes committed at sea. The attitude of the crew in both changes from disinterest or actual approval to censure. The moment of repentance and its self-inflicted consequences are identical: Coleridge's Mariner continued throughout his life to teach by his own example, and Newton taught by public confession as in the *Authentic Narrative*. A second work by Newton, *Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade* (1788), is an indictment of slavery which enjoyed wide circulation because of the author's personal reputation and first-hand experiences on a slave vessel. In this work, Martin detects what he calls the "Ancient-Mariner-Strain"; for Newton felt that to purge himself of the guilt incurred on this vessel he was "bound in conscience to take shame to himself by a public confession."¹¹

Two works which Coleridge almost certainly knew before he wrote *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and which left their mark on his poem—and poems by Leyden and Southey (see n. 11) which he in turn influenced—all treat the theme of slavery in a dramatic frame similar to Coleridge's. Even if one were inclined to accept Lowes' judgment that the poem is a "literary fairy-tale" and that the Mariner's "valedictory piety" is superfluous or to agree with Oliver Elton's contention that the entire poem is an "old wives' tale," he would still be compelled to admit, however grudgingly, that beginning with the Life-in-Death episode the poet must have had some allegory in mind which at least partly justified the sweeping and patently moral conclusion:

He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast

Any reading may be offered for consideration which makes for a closer unity of text and moral. The consequences of violence against "bird and beast" are graphically displayed; and Drake's

¹¹ *Posthumous Works of John Newton* (London, 1805), II, 249. Newton's reference to "the heat and smell of these rooms" in which slaves are confined during his passage recalls Coleridge's mention of the "heat and stench arising from . . . diseased bodies" in *The Watchman* editorial. A sense of guilt comparable to Newton's and to the Ancient Mariner's is evident in Southey's "The Sailor, Who Had Served in the Slave Trade" (1798). Southey reports in his preface: "In September, 1798, a Disenting Minister of Bristol discovered a sailor . . . groaning and praying in a cow house. The circumstances which occasioned his agony of mind are detailed in the annexed ballad . . . By presenting it as a Poem the story is made more public, and such stories ought to be made as public as possible." The distressed sailor, like the Ancient Mariner, cries, "I have done a cursed thing . . . / It haunts me night and day." He relates that on board a ship carrying three hundred slaves, he was ordered by the master to lash a negress who sulkily refused to eat.

reading of the "spectre-bark" may suggest that Coleridge, by referring to a slave ship, wished to demonstrate the consequences of violating the natural bonds of man to man, to justify thereby the moral stated, and to give his allegory a universality and scope quite consistent with the traditional Romantic concept of the oneness of nature and with Coleridge's own mature theory of the transcending unity of all creation.

Louisiana State University

MALCOLM WARE

TWO LETTERS OF THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

Relatively few letters of Thomas Love Peacock appear to have survived or been published—there are only seventy-nine in the most recent collection¹—and any additional letters such as those printed here for the first time are correspondingly valuable. The initial letter is to Peacock's unfortunate daughter Mary Ellen (1821-1861), wife first of Edward Nicolls (d. 1844) and second of George Meredith.²

Address: Mrs Meredith
care of Lady Nicolls
3, Woodlands Terrace
Shooter's Hill Road,
Blackheath.

Postmarks: WESTBURY JA 15 1857 TU JA 1 1857 [partly illegible]

Dear Mary Ellen,

I enclose the check. I do not find the sentence in Greek. I have therefore made it an Iambic senarius, with the liberties allowed in

¹ *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock*, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith and C. E. Jones (London, 1924-1934), VIII, 155-260. But see also *ibid.*, p. 506, where six others are mentioned. Eight letters to Hogg have subsequently been printed by William Sidney Scott in *The Athenians, Being Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson Hogg and His Friends Thomas Love Peacock, Leigh Hunt, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Others* (London, 1943), pp. 85-36, 39-40, 48-49, 52, 60-61, and *Shelley at Oxford, The Early Correspondence of P. B. Shelley with His Friend T. J. Hogg Together with Letters of Mary Shelley and T. L. Peacock and a Hitherto Unpublished Prose Fragment by Shelley* (London, 1944), pp. 57-61, later reprinted in *New Shelley Letters* (London, 1948), pp. 97-98, 101-102, 108-116, 119, 125-126.

² I wish to thank Mr. R. Norris Williams, 2d, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for their kind permission to print this letter.