The Dialogical Self in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

Asmaa Elshikh*
asmaa.soliman@art.dmu.edu.eg

Abstract

Taking Hubert Hermans' the Dialogical Self Theory (DST) as a framework, this paper attempts to find out psychological clues to the ambiguity of "the Rime of the Ancient Mariner,". With Coleridge's known interest in psychology in mind, especially his refutation of the unity of the self in favor of multiplicity of the self, this paper tends to read the poem as a dialogical-self narrative reflecting all the possible I-positions needed to form a creative and psychologically normal self of the typical romantic poet. The poem with its narrative structure, narrative voices, gothic scenes and religious hints, reflects the dialogical *I*-positions proposed by the DST. As a typical dynamic structure of the human self, the dialogical "self" narrated in the "Rime" struggles to enhance its poetic sensitivity and romanticism that falls between its own uncertainties and a surrounding unrecognizing society. Conflicts, contradictions and sometimes integrations are all possible interactions that happen between these different I-positions in a self that extends between its internal I-positions and its external I-positions to fulfill the balance needed between centering and decentering positions in order to attain unity and, at the same time, sense of creativity.

***Keywords*: *Dialogical Self Theory, romantic poetry, S. T. Coleridge, psychoanalysis*.**

* English Department, Faculty of Arts, Damanhour University.

INTRODUCTION*:*

The Romantics are widely known for their interest in psychology. Among all the English romantic poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge shows the greatest fascination with psychology. In the fourth chapter of *Bibliographia Literaria* (1817) he wrote "it has already been hinted that metaphysics and psychology have long been my hobby-horse" (43). In one of his early poems Coleridge referred to himself as "a subtle-souled psychologist" (Beer 2002, 60). Coleridge was known for his interest in psychology; and was specifically influenced Schelling (1775-1854). Moreover, he attended lectures for a distinguished psychologist of the time, J. F. Blumenbach (Beer 61). A detailed influence of these psychologists on Coleridge is far beyond the interest of this paper. Many of Coleridge's critics already paid much attention to this influence, which shapes the major landscape of Coleridge's poetry. They devoted whole studies to psychology in Coleridge's writings. Clearly psychology, beside religion and metaphysics, shapes the background of Coleridge's philosophy, criticism, and poetry. As David Vallins rightly proposes, the "degree of introspection or self-reflexiveness … their tendency to explore the relationship between various aspects of consciousness or mental functioning" is what distinguishes Coleridge's poems from the other Romantic poets (1). Psychology, however, has been greatly

developed since Coleridge's time; and very recent psychological theories can open new realms in understanding his poetry.

From Coleridge's poetry, some poems specifically have received the greatest interest of psychological criticism; surprisingly, "the Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is not one of them. For example, in his prominent book *Coleridge and the Psychology of Romanticism* (2000), although David Vallins includes "The Rime" among the psychological poems, it is only very briefly and under the notion that it combines "the drama of emotions with that of ideas and of religious faith" (2). In the fourth volume about Coleridge's writings, *On Religion and Psychology,* John Beer gives a considerable detailed study of the influence of psychology on Coleridge's writing, shedding light on some poems like "Kubla Khan," without giving a considerable mention of "The Rime." In all, the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is one of the poems which received the least attention of psychological criticism. This is because Coleridge used to provide explicit commentary on the psychological intentions of some of his poems, not including "The Rime."

Critics of "The Rime" used to see it through the religious and dramatic elements that underlie its ambiguity. This ambiguity was a challenge of the poem's interpretation and was a reason that affected its reception to a great extent, at least its early reception. In 1799, in the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads,* Wordsworth

expressed to the editor that he would rather prefer not to include this poem in the volume and put instead "something that suits the common taste" (Watson 37). For its early critics, the poem was a sort of frustration. Robert Southey, for example, sees that although "many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful --- in connection they are absurd and unintelligible" (Quoted in Jackson 2002, 5). This ambiguity also explains why the poem is "not valued or used always or everywhere or by everyone in the same way or for the same reason" (Mc Gam, Jerome, 1985). Some critics even go farther, as John Spencer Hill assumes, to see that any understanding of the poem can only happen "when understanding is suspended, and the rationalizing powers of the mind are asleep" (162). This ambiguity explains the difficulty of including the poem in any traditional psychological interpretation. Only very recently, studies began to pay attention to the psychological element in the poem. In 2011 Ribkoff and Inglis offer a distinguished psychological reading of Coleridge's poem as a "post traumatic" narrative in which the mariner mirrors trauma survivors suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Satendra Singh and Abha Ketarpal (2012) extend this idea, and they assume that the mariner suffers from some types of phobias resulting from traumatic events. These psychological studies of the character of the mariner as suffering from some psychological disorders offered some clues to the ambiguity of the poem that

used to challenge its critics; but only under the notion of psychological abnormality.

Taking Hubert Hermans' Dialogical Self Theory (DST) as a framework, this paper attempts to find out psychological clues to the ambiguity of "the Rime of the Ancient Mariner". With Coleridge's known interest in psychology in mind, especially his refutation of the unity of the self in favor of multiplicity of the self, this paper tends to read the poem as a dialogical-self narrative which reflects all the possible *I*-positions needed to form a creative and psychologically normal *self* of the typical romantic poet. The poem with its narrative structure, narrative voices, gothic scenes and religious hints, reflects the dialogical *I*-positions needed to construct a creative, poetic and romantic self. As a typical dynamic structure of the human self, the dialogical "self" narrated in the "Rime" struggles to enhance its poetic sensitivity and romanticism that falls between its own uncertainties and a surrounding unrecognizing society. Conflicts, contradictions, and sometimes integrations, are all possible interactions that happen between these different *I*-positions in a self that extends between its internal *I*-positions and its external *I*-positions to fulfill the balance needed between centering and decentering positions in order to attain unity and, at the same time, sense of creativity.

THE DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

The Dialogical Self Theory (DST) is a socio-psychological theory initiated in the nineties by Hubert Hermans, followed, and is still, by a series of explanations and modifications. It starts from the proposition that the human mind is structured like a society. Hermans departs in this respect from two main metaphors: the narrative and the computer metaphors. Building on James and Bakhtin, Hermans uses the model of the "polyphonic novel" to describe the structure of the self as "a decentralized multiplicity of I-positions as authors of a variety of stories" (2001, 252). He also follows the model proposed by computer science theories which consider the mind as a "hierarchically organized network of interconnected parts that together function as a society" (Hermans 1996, 34). Thus, Hermans proposes a process of multi-voiced communication between different I-positions of the self which constructs the self in a hierarchical structure. In this society, the components of the self are in dynamic positions; the I-self, as Hermans calls it, moves from one position to another imaginatively, forming new I-positions, and the result is "self-negotiation, self-contradiction, and self-integration" (252). That is to say, the self reflects the collective voices of society with a similar structure and inter-relationships formed between different I-positions.

The *I*-positioning is a dynamic process formed according to spatial as well as temporal levels. Time and space have a significant role in determining the different *I*-positions of the self. Hermans defines the "I-position" as "a spatial-relational act" which happens only in relation to others, either other internal I-positions or other people who form external I-positions (Hermans 2018, 8). On the spatial level the I-position is either internal or external to the self, which is working from within or working from without. On the temporal level, the I-positions move, imaginatively, between traditional, modern, and postmodern selves. In ordinary situations, these movements are meant to reach a sort of balance in the self, permitting some limits for contradiction and conflict. However, in times of uncertainty and stress, some specific movements are important to restore organization in the self in case "the existing order is destabilized" (8). Hermans speculates some I-positions for this job, retaining balance in the self, namely *meta-position*, *third-position*, and *coalition positions* (2017, 9-11). This process of maintaining balance between centering and decentering I-positions, as this will be discussed later, is important for a healthy, innovative self. However, it is important to note that Hermans' design is meant to fit individual selves in our postmodern global world, where crossing cultures and works of globalization affect the centering of any individual culture or society, as well as the Self. This

decentering atmosphere of our postmodern globalizing world requires some centering tools and techniques in the self to enhance, at least, some degree of unity and stability. These positions proposed by Hermans are basically "centering" positions that are responsible for dealing with differences, conflicts, and uncertainties that affect the stability of the self. That is to say, the Dialogical Self Theory, in its essence, is concerned with the impact of globalization on the development of the individual self. Its major question, as stated in the introduction to *Dialogical Self Theory* (2010), is "how the *self* copes with increasing levels of uncertainty in a globalizing situation"(4). Clearly it is concerned with the works of the age of globalization on the human self and how a dialogical structure of the self is important in understanding the works of this coping process.

The Dialogical Self Theory has received a wide range of applications in the fields of sociology and psychoanalytic therapy. In literary studies, a considerable number of scholars resorted to apply DST to read literary texts and analyze characters. Barbara Rojek (2009) uses the DST to analyze the complex characters in the narratives of the Italian modern writer Antonio Tabucchi. Also, DST has found interesting application by Barani and Wan Yahya (2010) who discussed the dialogical possibilities of the self in Henry David Thoreau's non-fiction work *Walden* (1854). Ebtihal Elshaikh (2011) used DST to compare identity crisis in

two poems, "Ulysses" (1842) by Alfred Lord Tennyson, and "A Star Looking for an Orbit" by Farooq Guwaida. These are few examples of literary studies that proved that applying DST to literary texts can offer a deeper and fruitful understanding of these texts. However, most of these studies focus on identity problems of the characters related to their societies. We can hardly find enough focus on the interactive, dynamic relationship between the characters in an aesthetic perspective, or how the characters in a self-narrative can reflect the mutable *I*-positions of the narrator or the author.

THE DIALOGICAL SELF IN THE "RIME"

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," of course, does not belong to the postmodern nor the globalizing age which is regarded as the main concern of DST; it is a nineteenth century romantic poem. However, as this paper proposes, the self as narrated in this romantic poem typifies the dialogical self which is proposed by Hermans in his theory. As quoted by Anya Taylor, Coleridge used to ask questions like "on the simplicity or manifoldness of the human Being? In what sense is it one? Sense, Appetite, Passion, Fancy, Imagination, Understanding, & lastly the Reason & Will?' (2009, 108). Questions of this type occupy Coleridge's mind and reflect in his philosophy. So, the multiplicity of the self as proposed by Hermans in his theory finds an echo in Coleridge's philosophy which in turn is echoed in his

poems. In her discussion of multiplicity in Coleridge's self-representation, Taylor proposes that Coleridge's personal experience of "multiplicity" was a refutation of eighteenth-century philosophy of the "nature of consciousness"(108). This multiplicity, one would add, is not just a refutation of eighteenth-century philosophy but also is predating postmodern psychology of the dialogical structure of the self. This is given a clear manifestation in the "Rime" as the following discussion will reveal.

As a romantic poet, Coleridge belongs to an age moving from the traditional to the modern, and the tension between the two models is reflected everywhere in his poetry. Following the DST, the "self" narrated in the "Rime" belongs somewhere between the "traditional" model and the "modern" model designed by Hermans. The "self" forms dialogical dynamic positions moving forward and backward, searching for a more stable position between the two models. In his distinction between the two models, Hermans adheres some features to the traditional model of the self for which the human body and senses are considered "barriers for the spiritual" (Hermans 2010, 113). This model, according to Hermans, is characterized by "the existence of a moral telos, social hierarchy, authority, dogmatic truths, and connection with the natural environment" (113). The modern self, on the other hand, belongs to "autonomy, individualism, the

development of reason, the pretension to universal truth, strict and sharp boundaries between self and non-self, an attitude of control of the external environment, a separation of the outer and the inner, the subject and the object, self and other, fact and value" (113). These characteristics are not arbitrary in the sense that a self can reflect two or more opposing features of these models. As Hermans states, the combination of these two models "leads to a more complex self in which different or even opposed voices create contradictions and tensions that are not necessarily problematic or unhealthy but rather normal and healthy. (Hermans 2010, 99). This complex self, which is "normal and healthy", is what this paper argues for as the core of Coleridge's poem.

In the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," we are introduced to three worlds of the "self," each represents a specific landscape for the dialogical *I*-positions. The first is the solitary world of the ship and the sea, which stands for the romantic poet's internal world with its conflicts, fears, hopes and desires. The second world is the external world represented in the closing section of the poem by the people on the shore, who receive the rescued mariner. This world carries the external *I*-positions which, according to Hermans, are an essential part of the dialogical-self structure. The third world is that of the Wedding Guest, the narratee of the mariner's story, and who belongs to a world entirely different from that of the mariner's narrated story, but plays a significant

role in his relief of his curse. This world represents "empathy" needed to achieve balance between "centering" and "decentering" *I*-positions. In the following discussion these three worlds, with their possible *I*-positionings, are going to be discussed in detail.

INTERNAL I-POSITIONS:

The "Rime" is a frame narrative which represents an ancient mariner narrating his story to a wedding guest. On the narrative level the poem has two narrators; the narrator of the poem itself, being the poet, and the narrator of the story, which is told to the Wedding Guest, the mariner. Six parts of the seven-part poem narrate the Mariner's voyage in the bewildered sea; his being "Alone on a wide wide sea/ So lonely ‘twas that God Himself / Scarce seems there to be"(601-603). It is a case of romantic solitude where the romantic poet feels himself isolated from the surrounding world. From the point of view of the DST, the narrative of this solitude as delivered on the mariner's tongue, is a narrative of internal dialogical I-positions of the narrator, the poet. All the internal *I*-positions are situated in an isolated ship in the bewildered sea. It will not be an exaggeration to say that all the characters, and symbols in the isolated world of the ship, including the mariner, are but different internal *I*-positions of the romantic poet.

In his discussion of Coleridge's poem, Cornelis W. Schoneveld assumes that the modifications made by Coleridge in

the original version, under Wordsworth's influence, are meant to increase the distance between the mariner and the poet which was present in the original version. The mariner in the original version seems to "identify the poet" giving "a direct reflection of the poet's thought;" a point which Wordsworth considered to be weakening the character of the mariner (2). In other words, Coleridge is at ease with identifying himself with the Mariner, and this was clear in the original version and, one would say, is still in the published one. This identification, under the scope of the Dialogical Self Theory, makes a good sense when we understand the mariner as reflecting some *I*-positions in the "dialogical self" structured of a group of *I*-positions, not just as an identification with a *poetic-self*. So, in this context, the ancient mariner does not, like most of the poem's critics assume, stand for the poet himself. The mariner represents some *I*-positions of the poet's dialogical self while other *I*-positions, of no less importance, are represented by other entities in the narrative.

The character of the mariner does not represent one *I*-position. He moves from one position to the other depending on the dialogical voice it occupies. The narrating-mariner is I-as-a-poet. On killing the Albatross, he is I-as-enjoyer-of-life. On perceiving the beauty of the sea snakes, he is I-as-a-lover-of-nature. All the positions occupied by the mariner are but some internal *I*-positions of the narrated self. Other I-positions are fulfilled with

the crew, I-as-rational. Also, the Albatross fulfills another important *I*-position which is I-as-part-of-the-Divine. The ghostly ship offers other two *I*-positions: I-as-mortal and I-as-immortal. The polar spirits are given the voice of I-as-a-dreamer. All these I-positions are in dialogical relationships moving forward and backward representing the *self* in a metaphorical voyage beyond the civilized world. The following lines will discuss each position in detail.

The dialogical position *I*-as-a-poet is a foregrounded position of the dialogical-self in the "Rime". All the other I-positions are dialogical with this one which starts the narrative and concludes it. The mariner's narrating voice represents this position and reflects some sense of authority characterizing this I-position. With the beginning of the poem, he holds the Wedding Guest with his "glittering eyes" in an authorial action to force the guest to listen to the narrative: "The Wedding Guest stood still/ and listens like a three years' child" (16-17). The guest surrenders and listens to the end of the story. This authorial action is essential for the narrative to occur, for there is no narrative without a narratee. The poet is careful to keep this authority active throughout the poem by his momently interruption to the mariner’s narrative, referring from time to time to the guest’s worries. The other authorial action fulfilled by this I-position is killing the Albatross, an action which is entirely essential for the

crisis of the narrative. This authorial attitude extends along the narrative text, and it is what brings this *I*-position to the foreground of the conflict with the other *I*-positions.

I-as-a-poet is an essential I-position in the internal structure of the self, interacting, in confrontation, or integration, with the other I-positions. The first and major dialogical conflict happens with the I-as-part-of-the-Divine imbodied in the Albatross. The Albatross, or I-as-part-of-the-Divine, takes a silent position in the dialogical-self structure; however, it was "hailed … in God's name" by the other *I*-positions (66). At first it was an integrating *I*-position. It is part of a divine world, which is supposed to be external to the poet's internal *I*-positions embodied in the ship; it could only come "through the fog". Welcomed by the sailors who fed and played with it, it becomes clear that it is an internal *I*-position which stood in integration with other internal *I*-positions. When the mariner kills it, or when the I-as-a-poet moves to the position of I-enjoyer-of-life, the crisis happens and *I*-positions begin to confront and accuse each other. However, I-as-part-of-the-Divine could only be partially excluded because the Albatross's dead body is hung from the mariner's neck. It does not completely vanish until it is replaced with another *I*-position which is I-as-a-lover-of-nature. The Albatross only falls from the mariner's neck when he perceives the beauty of nature in a distinguished way: "O happy things! No tongue/ Their beauty

might declare/ A spring of love gushed from my heart ….. And I blessed them unaware" (83-88). It is a romantic state that "gushed" in the poet's heart that begins to love and appreciate beauty even in "slimy" things. Only when the I-as-part-of-the-Devine is substituted with I-as-a-lover-of-nature, and thus I-as-a-poet becomes romantic, does the conflict get resolved.

Following Hermans' proposal of the need for a "third-position", we can read the Albatross as fulfilling this *I*-position in the dialogical-self narrative. Hermans asserts that the self needs the appearance of what he calls a "third position" to reconcile and combine conflicting *I*-positions (Hermans 2010). The appearance of the Albatross brought stability and hope for the ship which is lost in a sea of "snowy cliffs/ … Nor shape of men nor beasts we ken" (55-57). The self, or the ship, in the mid of times of uncertainty, needs a third position which is fulfilled with the appearance of the Albatross, the I-as-part-of-the-Divine. With its appearance, things begin to change: "And a good South wind sprung us behind/ The Albatross did follow" (70-72). Also, its disappearance brought about conflicting *I*-positions and self-instability. The Albatross, I-as-part-of-the-Divine, goes in integrative relationship with other internal *I*-positions until it is confronted with another *I*-position which is I-as-enjoyer-of-life.

In his discussion of the importance of the "enjoyer of life" Hermans states that "a particular form of behavior that was

originally engaged in for some other reason, may later become an end in itself", and this is what creates the "enjoyer of life" as I-position (Hermans 2010, 154). It is a dynamic "coalition-prone position"(156) which combines with other positions creating new ones. Though Hermans' model is meant to fit pos-modern self, still it is clearly fitted in The Rime. The dramatic turn of the poem happens when the I-as-a-poet moves to another position which is I-as-enjoyer-of-life. This happens when the mariner kills the Albatross. The mariner-narrator gives no explanation for his killing the Albatross. He just shoots it with his "cross-bow". The killing act is, thus, introduced as a behavior which is "an end in itself", to use Hermans' words. Here the I-as-enjoyer comes to the foreground of the action and fulfils an action which seems, at the first glance, ordinary and superficial, with no excuses or any explanation needed; an action which is "an end in itself" to use Hermans' words.

Only very briefly the action of the killing is narrated: "with my Cross-bow/ I shot the Albatross" (81-82). However, at least on the narrative level, it proves to be the core of the narrative rather than an ordinary event. This action which falls in the twentieth stanza of the first part becomes the core of the following six parts. I-as-guilty replaces I-as-enjoyer-of-life and becomes an essential figure in the whole narrative, reflecting sense of guilt. According to DST, I-as-enjoyer is supposed to be a very dynamic I-position

which moves from one position to another making new combinations of I-positions. It is not, however, the case of the I-as-enjoyer in the Rime. It is important here to refer to Hermans' differentiation between two types of this position, the superficial, or the "consumerist," and the "deeper." The "deeper" type of enjoyment "leaves more enduring traces of satisfaction in the mind," while the superficial does not afford this satisfaction (Hermans 2010, 156). In the Rime, the I-as-enjoyer which appears with the killing of the albatross is of the consumerist and superficial type. It is deprived of making any other combinations. It brings nothing but suffering to the self. Until the I-as-enjoyer combines with the I-as-a-lover-of-nature, the self is deprived of any enjoyment. This later combination fulfills what Hermans calls "the deeper level of enjoyment" which fulfills "satisfaction of the mind" (156).

It is notable here that the first-person pronoun "I" appears for the first time in the narrative just with the occurrence of the killing of the Albatross. The movement of the I-as-enjoyer-of-life to the foreground brings about the crisis of the dialogical self. Other I-positions began to take part in the dialogical conflict. The sailors, who now are given a voice, stand for a new position in the dialogical self. It is an I-as-rational position. This I-position speaks of simple logic and reason. It is all cause-and-effect logic. When the mariner shoots the Albatross, an action without reason,

the sailors blame him for whatever comes: "Ah wretch! Said they, the bird to slay, /That made the breeze to blow" (95-96). When the fog clears, for a while, the sailors change their mind and begin to see the bird as responsible for the fog and the mariner's action as "right". They, again, change their mind when another crisis happens and "water water everywhere/ but no drop to drink". Here they blame the mariner and hang the dead Albatross from his neck as a sign of his sin. The I-as-rational makes spot on the I-as-enjoyer-of-life and insists on keeping it in the foreground. The dialogical self goes through confrontation which will need the appearance of another I-position to relief the conflict.

The conflict between I-as-enjoyer and I-as-rational is only put down by the appearance of I-as-mortal and I-as-immortal, represented in the ghostly ship. The mariner's ship, the self, is proven to be mortal and the dead bodies of the crew are signals for that: "The souls did from their bodies fly" (221). The woman on the ghostly ship, "Life-in-Death was she"(193), curses the mariner to immortality. I-as-immortal is the position responsible for processing suffering and pain, which in turn will create the teller of the narrative, or the poetic self. It is I-as-a-poet who will live forever to tell and retell this story. So, it is only in part four does the making of the I-as-a-poet begin.

The sailors, the I-as-rational, resort to simple reasoning which fails them; so, what remains of them is only their dead bodies,

which return to work on the ship only when the curse is cleared. Their reason does not secure them any real life, and they end in the side of death. I-as-rational position does not solve the crisis of the self, it can only share in the dialogical structure of the self but does not offer satisfying solutions of any identity crisis. This position only hangs the sense of guilt (the dead body of the Albatross) on the I-as-enjoyer. I-as-guilty is the output of the interaction between I-as-rational and I-as-enjoyer. Only with the appearance of the I-as-a-lover-of-nature does this sense of guilt vanish. Here I-as-enjoyer moves from "superficial" enjoyment to "deeper" enjoyment and brings about a new "coalition-prone" position, I-as-a-romantic-poet.

The appearance of I-as-a-lover-of-nature brings about the appearance of another *I*-position which is in integration with the major one I-as-a-poet, namely I-as-a-dreamer. I-as-a-dreamer began to appear as a rescuing *I*-position. Part V is literary devoted to this *I*-position. The opening stanzas speak of actual sleep and dreams: "Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing /Beloved from pole to pole!" (293-294). Then the borders between actual and metaphorical dreams begin to disappear. "The silly buckets on the deck, / That had so long remained, / I dreamt that they were filled with dew;/ And when I awoke, it rained" (301). I-as-a-dreamer fluctuates between actual dreams, daydreams, and even opium fancies. The sleep tackled in this part is far from just physical and

what happens in dreams happens in reality; there is no real border between them: "Sure I had drunken in my dreams, / And still my body drank" (304-305). The mariner "pulled at one rope" with the dead body of his brother-son. Dead, sleep, alive, or even in an opium trance, all take one position now, I-as-a-dreamer.

I-as-a-dreamer is given a voice in the final stanzas of part five and continues for a while in part six, with the voice of the polar spirits. It does not diminish until the mariner declares: "I woke up and we were sailing". The two "voices" of the polar spirits accompany the sleeping mariner, who could finally "sleep" in his agonizing solitary world. The voices are the voices of I-as-a-dreamer which are situated in a very divine atmosphere. In his description of his “sleep” Coleridge uses language related to the divine, like “Mary Queen” “Heaven” “soul." Clearly sleep for Coleridge is a way of retaining the lost I-as-part-of-the-Devine. So, I-as-a-dreamer is what compensates for the loss of this *I*-position. This makes sense of Coleridge’s celebration of the moon over the sun, and justifies why the good events in the poem, as Warren notes, "take place under the aegis of the moon, the bad events under that of the sun" (Hill 158).

EXTERNAL *I*-POSITIONS

Unlike earlier psychological and social theories, DST does not see the self in the light of social interactions with other actual people but in the sense that other people occupy imaginative

positions in "a multivoiced self" (Hermans 2001, 250). These external I-positions are determined as relevant or not according to the perspective of one or more internal *I* positions. So "internal and external positions receive their significance as emerging from their mutual transactions over time" (Hermans 252). When the external position fulfills an internal *I*-position it is, thus, perceived as significant by the dialogical self. Moreover, Hermans proposes, these external *I*-positions are but part of the dialogical self in the sense that they are extensions of this self, or as he states it "the extended self" (252). Therefore, the "self" is extended on spatial and temporal landscapes looking for external positions which enhance its internal dialogical situation. The internal *I*-positions are fulfilled, enhanced, supported by external ones.

On a spatial level of positioning, the internal I-positions in the mariner's narrative are situated in the ship and its bewildered world; while the external *I*-positions belong to the land or the shore. The Hermit, the Pilot and the Pilot's boy are external *I*-positions which appear in the last part of the poem after the curses on the mariner are cast away; or, in other words, after the making of I-as-a-romantic-poet is achieved. The dialogical self is, thus, "extended" and the I-as-a-romantic-poet needs to be recognized by these external positions who are described as "a heavenly sight/ … like music on my heart" (500). By reaching the land, a more stable situation is approached and the internal *I*-positions

search for “mutual transactions” with external I-positions. The transaction needed here is both material and spiritual, from a Pilot, with “the dash of his oars,” who is to save the body; and a Hermit, with his “godly hymns,” who is to save the "soul." Only the spiritual level proves to be relevant to the internal I-positions; and the Hermit could manage listening to the mariner and save his soul. The act of listening is an important transaction to recognize the internal I-as-a-romantic-poet.

The material level, however, is not ready to go with the dilemma of the I-as-romantic-poet. The Pilot “shrieks” and the Pilot’s boy “doth crazy go” (566). According to DST the recognition of the alterity of the external positions is important to the unity of the self. Hermans proposes that “in a well-developed dialogical self not only is the alterity of the positions of the actual other appreciated, but so also are the positions in the internal and external domains of the self” (2010, 108). From this perspective, we can see the inability of the Pilot and the Pilot's boy to apprehend the mariner's state as a trail on the side on the mariner to appreciate the alterity of this external domain of the "self".

There is one external *I*-position that is situated on a temporal rather than a spatial level, namely the Wedding Guest. He neither belongs to the ship nor to the shore where the ship arrives. The Wedding Guest is in front of an ancient mariner obliged to listen to his story; the mariner and his story belong to a different time.

The title of the poem is significant in this context relating the whole narrative, and of course its narrator, to earlier times of the narratee. In the beginning of the poem, the mariner is in urgent need for the Wedding Guest to listen, to accompany him in his telling act. To put it in other words, the I-as-a-poet position is not fulfilled until an external I-position, my-reader, is admitted. It is similar to that of the Hermit but situated in a temporally external domain rather than spatial domain. The external position embodied in the Wedding Guest plays a vital role in the narrative from the beginning to the end. The pieces of dialogue between the Wedding Guest and the mariner are not of less importance than the narrative itself, developed from caution and alert to careful listening and questioning, then to believe and surrender. The dialogical relationship begins with the Wedding Guest exclamation "wherefore stpp'st thou me?", "hold off, unhand me", to which the mariner does not respond but continues his telling the story and the guest "cannot choose but hear". Though he interrupts from time to time with questions like "I fear thee mariner…why look'st thou so?", the Wedding Guest continues listening until the end of the narrative then "He went like one that hath been stunned, …. a sadder and wiser man" (624-625). The mariner does not change during this dialogical relationship; it is the Wedding Guest recognition of the mariner which changes. That is to say, the external position presented by the Wedding

Guest, my-reader, fulfills the internal I-as-a-poet by developing its recognition of it.

BALANCE AND CREATIVITY.

Both external and internal I-positions engage in dialogical relationships which aim to attain unity and balance in the self and confront any movements that can cause instability. According to Hermans, "an excision of contrasting and opposing voices may lead to identity crisis" (Hermans 2017, 9). Thus, the self needs centering, or as Hermans calls it "centripetal," movements to achieve the necessary balance. Coherence and consistency are important for psychological well-being. However, "the two movements [centering and decentering] are mutually complementing and they are both needed in order to find a balance between change, challenge, and innovation on the one hand, and consistency, coherence, and order on the other hand" (10). In other words, the *self* falls between two opposed pulling movements, decentering, and centering. If the first movement dominates, the self becomes "discontinuous and fragmented;" if the second dominates the self becomes more unified and stable but with "the risk of closing itself off from innovative impulses" (62). In this respect the dualism of the two movements is important to protect the self from discontinuity and fragmentation, and at the same time keep some space for innovation and creativity.

One of the positions that are responsible for keeping this balance is the *third position*, as proposed by DST. This position is responsible for reconciling the confrontation between conflicting *I*-positions. In the beginning of the "Rime", as discussed above, I-as-a-part-of-the-Divine plays this role, which is temporary but essential. The wild nature, or I-as-unsecure, is a completely decentering position, while the mariner with his crew, I-as-seeking-stability, is a centering one. The ship, or the self, is endangered under the conflict of these two positions. The appearance of the Albatross, I-as-a-part-of-the-Devine brought some balance to the self. However, too much balance is not in favor of innovation and creativity. The temporality of the Albatross, thus, is important to keep the movement and enhance innovation. The killing of the Albatross keeps the dualism and gives the chance for other I positions to appear, I-as-guilty, and then a more innovative one, I-as-a-lover-of-nature. I-as-a-lover-of-nature is another *third position*. Its appearance is important to reconcile the confrontation between I-as-guilty and the other condemning *I*-positions represented in the dead mariners' glazing eyes. Then I-as-a-dreamer is the other *third position* that is responsible for keeping the balance in the ship until it reaches the shore.

Hermans (2017) proposes that *third position* is an artistic position. In other words, it works like beautiful art which causes

the agreement of different tastes. The *third position* does not share in the conflict. It is like art that "certainly goes beyond the boundaries and even conflicts" (Hermans 2017, 159). In the "Rime" the narrative moves from a third position to another bringing to the foreground of the dialogical structure all the possible artistic positions that help to put down the confrontation in the self without taking the side of any of the opposing dialogical *I*-positions. I-as-part-of-the-Divine, I-as-a-lover-of-nature, and lastly, I-as-a-dreamer are all artistic states that help in a way or another to enhance the required balance for the making of I-as-a-romantic-poet, the voice of the narrating mariner.

Another *I*-position proposed by DST as responsible for achieving balance in the self is the *meta-position*. It is the position that "can move up and down between three levels: (a) being purely in the position; (b) moving above this position and reflect on it; and (c) moving to a higher level where a greater diversity of positions is considered in its organization" (Hermans 2018, 11). This movement guarantees this position some authority over the others given that it is allowed a "cross-situational overview of specific positions"(10). In the Rime, this position is typified by the mariner-narrator, or I-as-a-poet. The mariner-narrator moves between the three levels: he can be "purely in the position" of I-as-enjoyer and moves to "reflect" on it holding the narrative

voice; then moves to a higher level of diverse *I*-positions, like I-as-a-lover-of-nature and I-as-a-dreamer.

One may add, the first-person point of view in narration is but a *meta position* of the self. The narrator moves easily from inside the action to comment on the action, then to fulfill or consider more diverse possibilities of the action. It fulfills the functions proposed by Hermans for the *meta position*: "unifying, executive and liberating" (2010, 151). In the "Rime" the Wedding Guest, as a listener, is an essential part of the narrative act. He is the direct addressee of the first-person point of view. That is to say, the *meta position* is not completely fulfilled without the Wedding Guest; he is inseparable part of the *meta position*. His short commentary, his listening act, and his final react are all important to fulfill the balance needed for the self. In other words, in the Rime, the entire narrative act, its narrator and narratee, stands as a *meta position* of the narrated self.

In their study of "the Rime of the Ancient Mariner" as a post-trauma narrative, Ribcoff and Inglis state that "the only way, trauma theory suggests, for the victim of trauma to integrate the pre-and post-traumatic selves, if it happens at all, is for there to be a fully affective dialogic act of witnessing between the teller of the tale and an "authentic listener" (13). This listener is called a "survivor proxy"(13). One would add, this "survivor by proxy," or authentic listener is needed not only to integrate "pre and post

traumatic selves," but to integrate all the necessary *I*-positions that can form the structure of a creative self. This makes sense why the only curse that remains with the mariner is finding a listener to his story: "That moment that his face I see/ I know the man that must hear me" (590-591). The mariner, I-as-a-poet, is in an endless search for authentic listener, or Wedding Guests, for the dialogical-self integration. Hermans proposes that this integration relies "on our ability to assume exterior positions, to experience them as I-positions, and to give them a voice" (2011, 2). So despite being an exterior position, namely my-reader, the Wedding guest is of a vital role to fulfill the balance and integration in the dialogical-self narrated in the Rime.

CONCLUSION

Coleridge in the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" does not actually narrate characters or any dramatic episode; he narrates a romantic poet's dialogical self. Examined in the light of the Dialogical Self Theory, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," is a poetic portrait of the dialogical self of the Romantic poet. It narrates the dialogical, dynamic and interactive relationship between the different *I*-positions of a romantic poet's self. On the one hand, the internal *I*-positions, I-as-enjoyer, I-as-rational, I-as-guilty, I-as-mortal and I-as-a-dreamer all contemplate, sometimes confront, to access the occurrence of I-as-immortal-romantic-poet. On the other hand, external I-positions are essential for

contemplating this process. The "Hermit," my-soul-saver, and the Wedding Guest, my-reader, put the final remarks on the fulfillment of the I-as-a-romantic-poet. I–as-a-poet is a *meta-position* which is foregrounded from the beginning of the narrative, and which makes "coalition" with I-as-a-lover-of-nature and I-as-immortal, to fulfill the most prominent position of *I* coalitions namely I–as-a-romantic-poet. If the internal conflict is a decentering process, reflecting the agony of a romantic poet, the external dialogical positioning is a centering one. However, the balance in the self can only occur with the works of such balance-responsible positions like the *meta position* and the *third position*. Seen under the scope of the DST, the ambiguity that has been widely perceived about the poem can now be understood as a reflection of the ambiguity inside the human self, notably a creative, romantic self.

WORKS CITED

Barani, F., Wan Yahya, Wan Roselezam. Literary art as a form of self-inquiry in Thoreau's Walden. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, n.5 vol.1 pp. 39-51, 2010.

Beer, John. "Coleridge' s Writings Volume 4: On Religion and Psychology Edited By." *Psychology*, vol. 4, 2002.

Burwick, Frederick, editor. *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Coleridge, S. T. *Bibliographia Literaria*, Harvard College Library, London, 1817.

Elshaikh, E. "Dialogical Self in Tennyson's "Ulysses" and Farooq Guwaida's "A Star Looking for an Orbit". *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, n.5 vol.9, 393-404, 2011.

Hermans, Hubert, and Agnieszka Hermans-Konopka. "Dialogical Self Theory." *Dialogical Self Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, doi:10.1017/cbo9780511712142.

Hermans, Hubert J. M. "Voicing the Self: From Information Processing to Dialogical Interchange." *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 119, no. 1, 1996, pp. 31–50, doi:10.1037/0033-2909.119.1.31.

---. *Empathy and Emotion from the Perspective of Dialogical Self*. 2002, pp. 1–20.

---. *Dialogical Self Theory: Against West Versus the Rest*. no. 4, 2017.

---. "The Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory of Personal and Cultural Positioning." *Culture and Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2001, pp. 243–81, doi:10.1177/1354067X0173001.

Hermans, Hubert and F. Meijers. *The Dialogical Self Theory in Education*. Springer International Publishing, 2018.

Hill, John Spencer. *A Coleridge Companion*: *An Introduction to the Major Poems and Biographia*. Macmillan Press Ltd. 1983.

Jackson, J. R. De J. (ed.) *Samuel Taylor Coleridge Volume 1, 1794–1834 The Critical Heritage.* Taylor and Francis. London, 2002.

Khetarpal, Abha, and Satendra Singh. "Phobias in Poetry: Coleridge's Ancient Mariner." *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2012, pp. 193–6, doi:10.4103/0253-7176.101791.

McGann, Jerome J. "The Ancient Mariner: The Meaning of the Meanings." *The Beauty of Inflections Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory*, vol. 8, no 1, 2012, pp. 134–72,

Ribkoff, Fred, and Karen Inglis. "Post-Traumatic Parataxis and the Search for a 'Survivor by Proxy' in Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." *Psyart*, 2011, pp. 1–13.

Rojek, B. "In quest of identity: Reading tabucchi in the light of Hermans' concept of the dialogical self". *Psychology of Language and Communications,* 2009, *13*(1), pp. 89-97.

Schoneveld, Cornelis W. *Romantic Agony and the " Rime of the Ancyent Marinere " or The Growth of a Poet' s Mind*. Vol. 30, 2012, pp. 8–12.

Taylor, Anya. "Coleridge's Self Representation". *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* edited by Frederick Burwick. Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 107-127.

Vallins, David. "Coleridge and the Psychology of Romanticism: Feeling and Thought." *Coleridge and the Psychology of*

Romanticism: Feeling and Thought, Macmillan Press Ltd, 2016, doi:10.1057/9780230288997.

Watson, Alex. *Romantic Marginality: Nation and Empire on the Borders of the Page.* Routledge, New York, 2016.

Wordsworth, William, and S T Coleridge. *Lyrical Ballads*. 1798. Edited by Michael Masson, Routledge, 2007.

Zhu, Gang, et al. "The Dialogical Self Theory in Education: A Multicultural Perspective." *Journal of Education for Teaching*, vol. 46, no. 5, Routledge, 2020, pp. 709–11, doi:10.1080/02607476.2020.1841554.