Kent Puckett: [00:00:00] And I had done an hellish thing, And it would work ’em woe: For all averred, I had killed the bird That made the breeze to blow. Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay, That made the breeze to blow! Nor dim nor red, like God’s own head, The glorious Sun uprist: Then all averred, I had killed the bird that brought the fog and mist; ’Twas right, said they, such birds to slay, That bring the fog and mist.

Jim Phelan: This is Jim Phelan, Director of Project Narrative at the Ohio State University, and I'd like to welcome you to the Project Narrative Podcast. In a typical episode, a narrative theorist selects a short narrative to read and discuss with me. Today I'll be talking with Kent Puckett, who has selected Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". Coleridge's poem was first published in the famous volume he wrote with William Wordsworth in [00:01:00] 1798, Lyrical Ballads, but Coleridge revised the poem in 1800, 1817, and again in 1834. Kent will read the 1817 edition, the one first published under Coleridge's name. Kent Puckett is Professor and Ida May and William J. Eggers Jr. Chair in the Department of English at the University of California at Berkeley. Kent's areas of expertise include narrative theory, the ,novel critical theory, film, and 19th century British literature and culture. Kent's books include \_Bad Form: Social Mistakes and the Nineteenth-Century Novel,\_ 2008, \_Narrative Theory: A Critical Introduction\_, 2016, a book which wins the Perkins Prize from the International Society for the Study of Narrative, for the best book published in that calendar year, 2016. Kent is also the author of \_War Pictures: Cinema, Violence, and Style in \_[00:02:00] \_Britain, 1939-1945, \_and the\_ The Electoral Imagination: Literature, Legitimacy, and Other Rigged Systems.\_ I'll the introduction by saying that I'm delighted to announce report, revel in the fact that I've now passed the editorial torch for the journal, \_Narrative, \_to Kent and Marta Figlerowicz,\_ \_and to add that Marta will be a guest on the August podcast. So Kent, welcome to the Project Narrative Podcast. Is there anything you'd like our listeners to pay special attention to as you read Coleridge's poem?

Kent Puckett: Yeah. Well, first of all, thank you so much for having me. It's great to have this opportunity and to think about Coleridge's poem as a narrative.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right, of course it is one, but, you know, it's status as a narrative or its place in the world of narratives that narrative theorists talk about is something that, I think, is interesting for us to consider here. Just a couple of things that I think are worth thinking about, and maybe we can come back to them; one is that I think it's, you've already mentioned this. I think it's important to keep [00:03:00] the poem's publication history...

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: In mind. Coleridge revises the poem in all kinds of different ways, particularly adding and taking away elements of paratext.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: Although he also changes the substance of the poem.

So, you know, the poem has its own kind of ancient mariner quality as it drifts between volumes and continues to tell its tale. So, there are things there that I think are worth thinking about. Another thing is to take that aspect of revision and carry it into our thinking about the poem, because, you know, on the one hand, this is a narrative, it's a ballad, it's an adventure story.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: You know, the mariner goes to sea, he tells the tale. And so it is a kind of one thing after the other. You know, it's important that stuff happens and a lot of stuff happens in the poem.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: On the other hand, it's a poem that repeats.

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: Right? There are repetitions, both of the kind of once upon a time and happily ever after variety, but then there are repetitions that occur [00:04:00] within the poem that you can't notice really, or at least reckon with, hard to, unless you reread.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: So this is a poem that both asks for a kind of reading and a rereading, and that's one of the things I wanna think about today. So I think those are two of the big things to consider as we start in.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. That's great. That's a really good frame. So, now here's Kent Puckett reading Samuel Taylor Coleridge's, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

Kent Puckett: Okay. And just to say, I'm reading the 1817 version, I'm not reading the pretextual elements, the epigraph that he starts with, and most importantly, I'm not reading, and in fact, I couldn't really read the prose gloss. So, and we can maybe talk about what's read and unread after the poem. Okay. Part one of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner".

It is an ancient Mariner, And he stoppeth one of three. 'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye, Now wherefore stopp'st thou me? The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide, And I am next of kin; The [00:05:00] guests are met, the feast is set: May'st hear the merry din.' He holds him with his skinny hand, 'There was a ship,' quoth he. 'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!' Eftsoons his hand dropt he. He holds him with his glittering eye— The Wedding-Guest stood still, And listens like a three years' child: The Mariner hath his will. The wedding-guest sat on a stone: He cannot chuse but hear; And thus spake on that ancient man, the bright-eyed mariner. The ship was cheer’d, the harbour clear’d, Merrily did we drop Below the kirk, below the hill, Below the lighthouse top. The Sun came up upon the left, Out of the sea came he! And he shone bright, and on the right, went down into the sea. Higher and higher every day, Till over the mast at noon— The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast, for he heard the loud bassoon. The bride hath paced into the hall, Red as a [00:06:00] rose is she; Nodding their heads before her goes, The merry minstrelsy. The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast, Yet he cannot chuse but hear; And thus spake on that ancient man, The bright-eyed Mariner.

And now the storm blast came, and he Was tyrannous and strong: He struck with his o’ertaking wings, And chased us south along. With sloping masts and dipping prow, As who pursued with yell and blow Still treads the shadow of his foe, And forward bends his head, The ship drove fast, loud roar’d the blast, The southward aye we fled. And now there came both mist and snow, And it grew wondrous cold: And ice, mast-high, came floating by, As green as emerald. And through the drifts the snowy clifts Did send a dismal sheen: Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken— [00:07:00] The ice was all between. The ice was here, the ice was there, the ice was all around: It cracked and growled, and roar’d and howl’d, Like noises in a swound! At length did cross an Albatross, Thorough the fog it came; As if it had been a Christian soul, We hailed it in God’s name. It ate the food it ne’er had eat, And round and round it flew. The ice did split with a thunder-fit; The helmsman steer'd us through! And a good south wind sprung up behind; The Albatross did follow, And every day, for food or play, Came to the Mariner’s hollo! In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud, It perch’d for vespers nine; Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white, Glimmered the white Moon-shine. “God save thee, ancient Mariner! From the fiends, that plague thee thus!— Why look’st thou so?”—With my cross-bow [00:08:00] I shot the Albatross.

Part Two.

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

And the good south wind still blew behind, But no sweet bird did follow, Nor any day for food or play Came to the mariners’ hollo! And I had done an hellish thing, And it would work ’em woe: For all averred, I had killed the bird That made the breeze to blow. Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay, That made the breeze to blow! Nor dim nor red, like God’s own head, The glorious Sun uprist: Then all averred, I had killed the bird that brought the fog and mist; ’Twas right, said they, such birds to slay, That bring the fog and mist. The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, The furrow stream’d off free: We were the first that ever burst Into that silent sea.[00:09:00]

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down, ’Twas sad as sad could be; And we did speak only to break The silence of the sea! All in a hot and copper sky, The bloody Sun, at noon, Right up above the mast did stand, No bigger than the Moon. Day after day, day after day, We stuck, nor breath nor motion, As idle as a painted ship Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where, And all the boards did shrink; Water, water, every where, Nor any drop to drink. The very deep did rot: O Christ! That ever this should be! Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs Upon the slimy sea. About, about, in reel and rout The death-fires danced at night; The water, like a witch’s oils, Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assured were Of the spirit that plagued us so: Nine fathom [00:10:00] deep he had followed us From the land of mist and snow. And every tongue, through utter drought, Was wither’d at the root; We could not speak, no more than if We had been choak’d with soot. ah! well a-day! what evil looks Had I from old and young! Instead of the cross, the Albatross About my neck was hung.

Part Three.

There passed a weary time. Each throat Was parched, and glazed each eye. A weary time! a weary time! How glazed each weary eye, When looking westward, I beheld A something in the sky. At first it seemed a little speck, And then it seem’d a mist: It moved and moved, and took at last A certain shape, I wist. A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist! And still it near’d and near’d: As if it dodged a water-sprite, It plunged and tacked and veered. With throats unslack’d, with black lips baked, We could nor laugh nor wail; [00:11:00] Through utter drought all dumb we stood! I bit my arm, I sucked the blood, And cried, A sail! A sail!

With throats unslacked, with black lips baked, Agape they heard me call: Gramercy! they for joy did grin, And all at once their breath drew in, As they were drinking all. See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more! Hither to work us weal; Without a breeze, without a tide, She steadies with upright keel! The western wave was all a-flame. The day was well nigh done! Almost upon the western wave Rested the broad bright Sun;

When that strange shape drove suddenly Betwixt us and the Sun. And straight the Sun was flecked with bars, (Heaven’s Mother send us grace!) As if through a dungeon-grate he peer’d With broad and burning face. Alas thought I and my heartbeat loud. How [00:12:00] fas near and near are those who sails that glance in the sun like restless gossamer.

Are those her ribs through which the sun did Peer as through a gait? And is that woman all her crew, is that a death and are there two is death that woman's mate. Her lips were red. Her looks were free. Her locks were yellow as gold. Her skin was white as leprosy. The nightmare life in death was she who Thicks man's blood with Cold.

The naked Hulk alongside came and the twain were casting dice. The game is done. I've won. I've won both she and whistles. Th Ice. The sun's rim dips the stars rush out at one stride comes the dark with far heard whisper over the. Off shock. The specter bark. We listened and looked sideways up. Fear at my heart.

As I had a cup, my lifeblood seemed to sip. [00:13:00] The stars were dim and thick. The night the Spearman's face by his lamp gleaned white from the sails. The dude did drip till clone above the eastern bar, the horned moon with one bright star within the nether tip, one after one by the star dogged moon. Too quick for grown or sigh.

Each turned his face with a ghastly pang and cursed me with his eye. Four times 50 living men, and I heard nor sigh nor groan with heavy thump, a lifeless lump. They dropped down one by one. The souls did. From their bodies fly, they fled to bliss, owo and every soul had passed me by like the whiz of my crossbo, part four.

I fear the ancient mariner. I fear thy skinny hand and thou heart long and lank and brow as his rib sea sand. I [00:14:00] fear the Andy glittering eye and thy skinny hand. So brown fear, not fear, not thou wedding guest. This body dropped not down. Alone, alone, all, all alone, alone on a wide, wide sea, and never a saint.

Took pity on my soul and agony. The many men so beautiful, and they all dead did lie, and a thousand, thousand slimy things lived on and so did i. I looked upon the rotting sea and drew my eyes away. I looked upon the rotting deck, and there the dead men lay. I looked to heaven and tried to pray, but wherever a prayer had gushed, a wicked whisper came and made my heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids and kept them close. The balls like pulses beat for the sky and the sea. And the sea and the sky lay like a load on my weary eye, and the dead were at my feet. The cold sweat melted from their [00:15:00] limbs, nor rot nor wre did they. The look with which they looked on me had never passed away. An orphan's curse would drag to hell a spirit from on high, but oh, more horrible than that is the curse in a dead man's eye.

Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse and yet I could not die. The moving moon went up the sky and nowhere did a by the softly. She was going up and a star or two beside her. Beams be mocked. The sultry mane like April hor frost spread, but where the ship's huge shadow lay the charmed water burnt all way.

A still and awful red beyond the shadow of the ship. I watched the water snakes. They moved in tracks of shining white, and when they reared, the elfish light fell off in Horry flakes. Within the shadow of the ship, I watched their rich at tire blue, glossy green and [00:16:00] velvet black. They coiled and swam and every track was a flash of golden fire.

Oh, happy living things. No tongue. Their beauty might declare a spring of love gush from my heart and I bless them. Unaware. Sure. My kind and sank took pity on me and I blessed them unaware the self same moment I could pray, and from my neck, so free. The albatross fell off and sank like lead into the sea.

Part five. Oh sleep. It is a gentle thing, beloved, from pole to pole to Mary Queen, the praise be given. She sent the gentle sleep from heaven that slid into my soul. The silly buckets on the deck that had so long remained, I dreamt that they were filled with you. And when I awoke, it rained. My lips were wet, my throat was cold, my garments were all were dank.

Sure, I had drunken in my dreams and still my body drank. I moved [00:17:00] and could not feel my limbs. I was so light almost. I thought that I had died in sleep and was a blessed ghost. And soon I heard a roaring wind. It did not come in ear, but with its sound, it shook the sails that were so, so thin and Sr. The upper air burst into life and a hundred fire flag sheen to and fro.

They were hurried about and to and fro and in and out. The wand stars dance between the coming. Wind did roar more loud and the sails did si like sedge. The rain poured down from one black cloud. The moon was at its edge. The thick black cloud was cleft and still the moon was at its side like water shot from some high crag.

The lightning fell with never a jag, a river steep and wide. The loud wind never reached the ship yet now the ship moved on beneath the lightning and the moon. The dead men gave a groan. They groaned. They stirred an all up rows nor spanner moved their eyes. [00:18:00] It had been strange, even in a dream to have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsmen steered the ship moved on, yet never a breeze up blue. The Mariners all began work, the ropes where they were want to do. They raised their limbs like lifeless tools. We were a ghastly crew. The body of my brother's son stood by me knee, a knee, the body, and I pulled at one rope, but he said, not to me.

I fear the ancient mariner. Be calm. That wedding guest. It was not those souls that fled in pain, which to their courses came again. But a troop of spirits blessed for when it dawned they dropped their arms and clustered round the mast. Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths and from their bodies passed around round, flew each sweet sound, then darted to the sun.

Slowly the sounds came back again. Now mixed. Now one by one, sometimes a dropping from the sky. I heard the [00:19:00] sky lark sing sometimes all little birds that are how they seem to fill the sea in air with their sweet jargoning. And now it was like all instruments now like a lonely flute. And now it is an angel song that makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased. It's still the sails made on a pleasant noise till noon. A noise like of a hidden brook in a leafy month of June that to the sleeping woods all night. Sing it. A quiet tune. Till noon, we quietly sailed on yet never breeze did. Breathe slowly and smoothly went. The ship moved onward from beneath under the keel, nine fathoms deep from the land of mist and snow.

The spirit slid and it was he that made the ship to go. The sails at noon left off their to and the ship should stood still. Also, the sun right up above the mast had fixed her to the ocean. [00:20:00] But in a minute she began stir with a short, uneasy motion, backwards and forwards half her length with a short, uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go, she made a sudden bound. It flung the blood into my head and I fell down. In a swung how long in that same fit I lay, I have not to declare, but ear my living life returned. I heard and in my soul discerned two voices in the air. Is it he quote one Is this the man by him who died on the cross with his cruel bow?

He laid full low, the harmless albatross, the spirit who bit us by himself in the land of mist and snow. He loved the bird that loved the man who shot him with his bow. The other was a softer voice, as soft as quote. He the man have penance done, and penance more will do part six. First [00:21:00] voice, but tell me, tell me, speak again.

Th soft response renewing What makes the ship drive on so fast. What is the ocean doing? Second voice still is a slave before his Lord. The ocean half, no blast. His great bright eye, most silently up to the moon is cast. If he may know which way to go for she guides him smooth or grim. See you brother. See how graciously she looketh down on him first voice.

But why drives on that ship so fast without waver wind? Second voice, the air is cut away and closes from behind. Fly brother fly more high. More high, or we shall be belated for slow and slow. The ship will go when the Mariner's trance is abated. I woke and we were sailing on as in a gentle weather towards night, calm night, the moon was high.

The dead men stood together, all stood together on the deck for a charnel dungeon fitter, all fixed on me [00:22:00] their stony eyes that in the moon did glitter. The pang, the curse with which they died had never passed away. I could not draw my eyes from theirs nor turned them up to pray. And now this spell was snapped Once more, I viewed the ocean green and looked far forth.

Yet little saw of what had else been seen, like one that on a lonesome road, death walk, and fear and dread. Having once turned round, walks on and turns no more his head, because he knows a frightful fiend. Doth close behind, does close behind him, dread. But soon there breathed the wind on me, nor sound, nor motion made its path was not upon the sea.

In ripple or in shade. It raised my hair. It fanned my cheek like a meadow. Gale of spring. It mingled strangely with my fears, yet it felt like a welcoming. Swiftly. Swiftly flew the ship. Yet she sailed softly too. [00:23:00] Sweetly sweetly blew the breeze on me. Alone it blew. Oh, dream of joy. Is this indeed the lighthouse top?

I see. Is this the hill? Is this the Kirk? Is this my own country? We drifted over the harbor bar and I with Psalms to pray, oh, let me be awake, my God, or let me sleep away. The Harbor Bay was clear as glass so smoothly. Was it strewn? On the bay, the moonlight lay and the shadow of the moon. The rock shown bright, the Kirk no less.

That stands above the rock. The moonlight steeped in silent. This, the steady weather cock and the bay was white with silent light till rising from the same full many shapes. That shadows were in crimson colors came a little distance from the pr, those crimson shadows where I turned my eyes upon the deck.

Oh Christ. What saw eye there each course lay flat, lifeless, and flat, and by the [00:24:00] holy rude, a man all light, a serif man, on every course there stood this crif band. Each waved his hand. It was a heavenly sight. They stood as signals to the land. Each one, a lovely light. The Crif band each waved his hand. No voice did.

They impart no voice, but oh, the silence sang. Sank like music on my. Soon. I heard the dash of wars. I heard the pilots cheer. My head was turned perforce away and I saw a boat appear. The pilot and the pilot's boy, I heard them coming fast. Dear Lord, in heaven, it was a joy. The dead men could not blast. I saw a third.

I heard his voice. It is the hermit good. He sing it loud. His godly hymns that he makes in the wood he'll shrieve my soul. He'll wash away the albatross blood. Part seven. This hermit good lives in that wood, which slopes down to the sea. [00:25:00] How loudly his sweet voice he rears. He loves to talk with mariners that come from a far country.

He kneels at mourn at noon and eve he half a cushion plump. It is the moss that holy hides the rotted old oak stump the skiff boat neared. I heard them talk. Why? This is strange. I trow. Where are those lights? So many in fair that signal made, but now strange by my faith. The hermit said and they answered, not our cheer.

The planks looked warped. See those sails, how thin they are and Sr. I never saw aught to them, ot like to them, unless per chance it were brown skeletons of the leaves that lag. My forest broke along when the Ivy Todd is heavy with snow and the lec whoops. To the wolf below that eats the she wolf's young.

Dear Lord, it had a fiendish look. The pilot made reply. I am feared. Push on, push on, said the hermit. Cheerly. [00:26:00] The boat came closer to the ship, but I nor spa nor stirred. The boat came close beneath the ship and straight, A sound was heard under the water. It rumbled on still louder and more dread. It reached the ship, it split the bay.

The ship went down like lead. Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound, which sky and ocean smote like one. That half been seven days drowned. My body lay afloat, but swift as dreams myself. I found within the pilot's boat upon the world where sank the ship, the boat spun round and round and all was still saved at the hill was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips, the pirate shrieked and fell down in a fit. The holy hermit raised his eyes and prayed where he did sit. I took the oars, the pilot's boy who now doth crazy go laughed loud and long and all the wild. His eyes went to and fro. Ha ha quote, he full plane, I [00:27:00] see the devil knows how to row. And now all in my own country, I stood on the firm land.

The hermit stepped forth from the boat. Scarcely, could he stand? Oh, Shrieve me. Shrieve me. Holy man. The hermit crossed his brow. Say, quick, I bid. These say, what manner of man are thou forthwith? This frame of mind was wrenched with woeful agony, which forced me to begin my tail, and then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour, that agony returns until my ghastly tail is told. This heart within me burns. I pass like night from land to land. I have strange power of speech. That moment that I, that, that moment that his face, I see, I know the man that must hear me to him. My tail. I teach what loud uproar bursts from that door.

The wedding [00:28:00] guests are there, but in the garden, Bower, the bride and the bridesmaid singing are and hark the little vesper bell. Which bit of me to prayer. Oh, wedding guest. The soul have been alone on a wide, wide sea. So lonely was that God himself. Scarce seemed there to be, oh, sweeter than the marriage.

Feast to sweet or far to me to walk together to the Kirk with Goodly company to walk together to the Kirk and all together, pray while each to his great father, Ben's old man and babes and loving friends and youths and maidens gay. Farewell. Farewell. But this I tell to the thou wedding guest, he prayeth well who?

Loveth? Well, both man and bird and beast. He prayeth best who loveth Beth best. All things both great and small for the dear God who loveth us. He made and loveth all the Mariner. Whose eye is [00:29:00] bright, whose beard with age is whore is gone and now the wedding guest turned from the bridegrooms door. He went like one that half been stunned and is of sensed for Lorne.

A sadder and a wiser man. He rose the Morrow mourn.

Jim Phelan: Okay. Terrific. All right. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: That's a poem for you.

Jim Phelan: It really is. It's, it's, it's really nice to, you know, you read it silently and it's one thing, but, you know, just listen, as you read aloud, it really, it lands differently, I think. So there's a lot to talk about, and I, you know, eventually we want to get back to some of the contextual things you mentioned, the poem as part of \_Lyrical\_\_ Ballads\_, importance of the poem and the English literary history, but why don't we start with some of the formal features of the poem and maybe with voice and address, in part, because, you know, that very beginning of the poem sort of raises those questions well, just who is speaking?

So how do you wanna start talking about that?

Kent Puckett: Yeah. I, think [00:30:00] that's a great question. I mean, clearly, you know, and it becomes, it's clear throughout, right, you know, how the poem is managing address, who's speaking, who are they speaking to? How does the poem both perform the act of addressing and the act of receiving, how does it do that as a performance, right, and then how does it do it on the page?

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right. And I think this is one of the things that's really interesting about an exercise like this, reading it aloud, you know, brings out one aspect, maybe the ballad aspect.

Jim Phelan: Okay.

Kent Puckett: Right, I mean, this is the, the idea of this as an oral performance, but as a text, watching what Coleridge does with just, for instance, quotation marks.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: What speech is marked or tagged as quoted speech, and that really moves around, so, you know, but especially when we get to the end of the poem, when we realize that it's not only an act and address, but a poem that's really thematized and made urgent, the question of address. Strange power of speech, I have to tell my tale.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: You know, it's very interesting, right? 'cause I'm gonna tell this tale, [00:31:00] fine, yeah, how many narratives are that way? But then he says, I told my tale, I had to tell it.

Jim Phelan: Right, right.

Kent Puckett: And now I have this release, right?

Jim Phelan: But it's only temporary, right?

Kent Puckett: Yeah. Right. Exactly.

Jim Phelan: Then it comes over me again and I have to tell it again. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: I have to tell it again when I see the right person.

Jim Phelan: Right. Right.

Kent Puckett: I will become the addressor once more.

Jim Phelan: Right. That's interesting, like so, because there's three wedding guests, you know, in the beginning, right, and then he picks one. He somehow knows who the audience has to be.

Kent Puckett: Yeah.

I think that's right. I mean, it's interesting the poem, in some sense, this is, you know, just feels like the overdetermined sort of symbolic register in which Coleridge is working, right? There are a lot of threes, the wedding guest is one of three, he talks about, you know, listening like a three year child. The hermit is the third of three, you know, et cetera.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: And so there's a way in which the vaguely christological backdrop is at work here.

But then, also, I think the way that Coleridge is leaning into the fairytales rule of three.

Jim Phelan: Right. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Supposed to happen three [00:32:00] times, but I think it's also interesting, you know, so we can not dismiss, but we can sort of write some of the threeness of it off.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: In that way, but I think you're right. I think that the feeling that the wedding guest is the one.

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: You know, that the wedding guest has to hear it, and that part of the strange power, right, of the mariner as narrator is that the narrator knows the narratee.

Jim Phelan: Right, right. This combination of the compulsion to tell and the selection of the, of the audience, right.

Kent Puckett: Yeah.

Jim Phelan: And then the way it goes, and I mean, it also interesting like that at the end of the poem when he is talking about, all right, I told my tale to the hermit, right, all right, that's what we just heard, right?

Kent Puckett: Yeah.

Jim Phelan: And then it's like, okay, and yeah, and I have to keep doing it, and so that's why you've heard it and that's why we've all heard it, right?

Kent Puckett: Yeah.

Jim Phelan: So that, sort of, the repetition of what we've just heard kind of built into, you know, the ending of the poem there is, is quite striking to me. [00:33:00]

Kent Puckett: You know, I think that sense of compulsion, it's interesting and, I don't wanna get too far away from this, but, you know, when you think about other poems in \_Lyrical\_\_ Ballads\_.

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: You know, clearly William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were thinking about this question of compulsion in different ways, and the force of the poem as something that acts on the mind, both as a willing and sometimes an unwilling receptor. And just to point to two poems that I think are useful to read alongside...

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", there's "Strange fits of passion".

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: "Strange fits of passion I have known, and I will dare to tell, but in the lover's ear alone, what, once to me, befel."

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: Right. And then as the poem goes on, he tells this kind of horrible story about, you know, riding along and he's going to visit his lover Lucy, and then he is like, oh my God, what if she's dead?

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Right. Yeah. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: He has this like, horrible thought, but what's really interesting about this is that, you know, you imagine the speaker a little bit of an ancient mariner here, right, [00:34:00] saying, well, you know, I'm only gonna tell the story to a lover.

Jim Phelan: Right, right, right.

Kent Puckett: And implicit there is, are you a lover?

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: Right, and like, who's gonna say no, right? Of course, you know, everybody's right, you know, yes, I love, I'm capable of love.

Jim Phelan: Right, right.

Kent Puckett: But then you're locked in, and the poem then after you say, yes, I'm a lover, I am the narratee, it turns out, without you knowing, you've signed on to this darker contract.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: 'Cause the lover is also the one who has terrible thoughts.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: And the other example, and I won't go into more of, but, but it's just "Goody Blake and Harry Gill", where, you know, Goody Blake, you know, she's, she's being harassed, she's getting some sticks out of a hedgerow for her fire, and she's being harassed by the landowner, Harry Gill, and she says, points up to the moon and says, "you will be cold".

Jim Phelan: Uhhuh.

Kent Puckett: Right, and once he hears that, he's cold.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: He didn't wanna hear it, but he couldn't help but hear it.

And so this idea of poetry and narrative and speech as having a strange power that is both supernatural in this instance and maybe natural or [00:35:00] psychological, this is very much on their minds.

Jim Phelan: I think one thing...

Kent Puckett: it's really simple to the whole volume.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Maybe about the layering in " Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is, you know, for us as an audience, right, on the one hand, you know, being drawn in, in the way that the wedding guest is, but then also moving more to an observer position, especially when the wedding guest speaks, right?

To have the observation of this scene of telling and listening, right? So, it is this kind of doubling where we're both, you know, occupying that position of the listener, but then also occupying the position of the observer of the telling, and it's just, it's quite interesting, I think.

Kent Puckett: Yeah. No, I, think that's right, and, you know, one of the things I think that's worth thinking about with this, right: Who are we? Are we the observer, or are we a guest?

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Or both?

Kent Puckett: Can we be both? It's interesting because the wedding guest remains the wedding guest after the wedding is over.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Like goodbye wedding guest, well, there's no wedding. [00:36:00]

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Right.

Kent Puckett: Is he the wedding guest forever? You know, always the bridesmaid and never the bride, right? You know, so this this sense of, you know, if we wanted again to sort of stick with this problem of addresser and addressee, you know, if we take wedding guest, as we learn to over the course of the poem, as a kind of euphemism for addressee.

Jim Phelan: Right. Okay.

Kent Puckett: Because when the term wedding guest, whenever it appears afterwards, it's like, don't worry, wedding guest, this is the, the wedding guest interrupts and don't worry, wedding guest. I'm talking to you, wedding guest. Yeah, you are my audience, wedding guest.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Wedding guest starts to stand in for being the receiver of the tale.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: Right? He remains the wedding guest, he remains the receiver after the tale has been complete. And so, the question for us is, what both kind of narrative, but also what ethical, what social, you know, what form of responsibility carried over from this poem afterward? You know, do we remain the receiver of "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" after the [00:37:00] poem is over?

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: You know, has it, has it changed us? Has it done something to us?

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: And this is something you think, you know, again, in a poem like " Goody Blake and Harry Gill", when the message changes the person, right?

The person goes from being who's not cold to someone who is cold.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: You know, once a poem is in your head, once it's gone into the lover's ear, can it ever be taken out again?

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: And I think the sense of narrative contract in the way that, you know, that Roland Bart talks about the, the narrative contract.

Jim Phelan: Sure.

Kent Puckett: You know, to what degree is this about playing with these ideas of willing and unwilling.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. No, and I think, you know, just to continue in that same line, right, the idea that we do have the ending of the poem talking about a change in the wedding guest, right? The, "he rose the morrow morn a sadder and a wiser man", right?

Kent Puckett: Mm-hmm.

Jim Phelan: Well, what about us, right? Are we, what about us? Yeah.

Kent Puckett: That's the question here, for sure. Yeah. Right, you know, like, what did we learn? Were we supposed to learn anything?

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: [00:38:00] This is a question of course that comes up with this poem, partly because you can see Coleridge playing with the allegorical, where it almost feels, so much is available for an allegorical reading.

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: But it's both doing more and less than that, right? And so, you know, I think that that feeling of a kind of ambiguous demand, I think, is really interesting. And, you know, there's a famous story that's recorded in one of the books of Coleridge's \_Table Talk\_ where Anna Barbauld says to him, well, you know, the poem's great, but the problem is that it has no moral.

Jim Phelan: Uhhuh.

Kent Puckett: You know, it just seems fantastical, it has no moral. Like what do you...

Jim Phelan: Right, right.

Kent Puckett: Really, be good to animals is, can that be what this is about?

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: And, you know, and Coleridge responds, oh, no, no. The problem isn't that it has no moral, it's that it has too much of them.

Jim Phelan: Too much. Right.

Kent Puckett: And so, and that, yeah, any moral would get in the way of being a poem of pure imagination.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. And I think, you know, like it's interesting that Coleridge says that because he does, you know, [00:39:00] moralize at the end, right? He prayeth well who love with, well, both man and bird and Beast, he pray the best, who love with best, all things both great and small.

Right? For the dear God who love with us, he made in love with all ,right. And it's like, okay, but you know, there's like a gap between that and, you know, all this intense, weird and amazing stuff that we've heard, right? You know, so, so it's, you know, the fact that college would say, well, you know, maybe I, it has too much moral or too explicit or whatever, you know, I, I, I can relate to that, you know?

Kent Puckett: Yeah, yeah. I think, you know, it's interesting to think about, 'cause when he says, you know, and this is from the \_Table Talk\_, which, may or may not be exactly what he said, but yeah, when he says, the problem is that it has too much moral and too much moral gets in the way of it being a poem of pure imagination, on the one hand, you wanna say, oh, well here's this kind of proto aesthetic, like, I want it to be purposeless purposiveness. I want it to be [00:40:00] art for art's sake. Pure imagination .

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: I think though that I wanna read that in a different way, which is to treat it not as a moral, but a kind of metamoral.

Jim Phelan: Okay. Right. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: That there is a, a moral in some sense to imagining a poem that has no moral. Right?

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: And this gets, and, you know, we can talk more about this, imagination is of course, like a huge word for, for romanticism. Right. But it's an enormous word for Coleridge in particular.

Yeah. And in the \_Biographia Literaria\_, which appears at the same time as the 1817 version of "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", you know, he sort of culminates at the middle of the book if it, you know, it has that, that's a book that we could also have a great narratological discussion about.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: But, you know, it sort of culminates in his famous and, kind of almost comically truncated discussion of the difference between fancy and imagination.

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: And that's a really important distinction for him. One that gets to what's [00:41:00] both aesthetically, but I think also ethically at stake with differentiating between good and bad poetry, good and bad art.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. So when, say more about that. Yeah. What, how does that distinction work, or remind me?

Kent Puckett: Yeah. So I think that, you know, the difference if we wanna simplify it, is he's really making a distinction ,one that's, you know, sort of very familiar in some sense between, mechanical ways of understanding art when it's successful and organic ways of thinking about art when it's successful.

Jim Phelan: Okay. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: So, So the fancy for him is based in a certain way. And, and, and he believes the fancy, it's a faculty of the mind that allows us to associate ideas and to arrange our associations, right, sort of based on what comes into the mind. For sense, and this is all coming from British empiricism lets us sort of take a lot of sense data in and rearrange it to a certain extent.

Jim Phelan: Uhhuh. Okay.

Kent Puckett: And so there's a way in which the faculty of fancy for, for us narratologists, you know, sort of gets pretty quickly to a kind of [00:42:00] story discourse mode.

Jim Phelan: All right.

Kent Puckett: You know, the story is the stuff that comes into the mind. And fancy can arrange it, it can make it shorter, it can make it longer, it can make stuff that comes later come before; it arranges, but it doesn't make anything new.

Jim Phelan: Okay. Right.

Kent Puckett: And, one of the reasons Coleridge writes the Biographia Literaria is because he thinks that his friend Wordsworth that, not his poetry, but his poetic theory is a little too committed to a theory of mind based in fancy, on the association and then the subsequent manipulation of ideas. This is why it's important for him to introduce the idea of imagination. On the one hand, imagination is an innovation for him because it means that it's possible to make new stuff. The mind when it's working in that mode, which is closer to a divine mode, it's actually doing new things.

Right? It's making things sort of out of nothing. But the other thing that the imagination does is it forces us, or encourages us, or allows us to start thinking about poems, not just [00:43:00] as a sequence of one thing after the other, but to look for the organic whole.

Jim Phelan: Right. Okay. Right.

Kent Puckett: The imagination that both allows us to produce these whole things that are, are, you know, as the saying goes, greater than the sum of their parts.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: Right. But then also the imagination of what lets us get at that. You know, something very interesting about, you know, thinking, and this goes back to some of the things we said at the very beginning, thinking about this as a poem of fancy.

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: Right, which would be a poem of one thing happening after another.

Jim Phelan: Yeah, yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right. And then as a poem of pure imagination, which would seem to demand a different kind of reading in a different understanding of what the ends of narrative.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: So we can take this, this throwaway, you know?

Yeah. You know, too much moral, it gets in the way of pure imagination.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: There's a meta moral there.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Yeah. Right.

Kent Puckett: And it's a meta moral about how we think about our minds in relation to the world.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. And the idea of that, the successful organic [00:44:00] whole can be adequately summarized in a moral, right.

There's something like that, it's sort of yeah...

Kent Puckett: Doesn't mean that it's not there.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Right, right, right. It just means that it's gonna be incomplete and inadequate.

Kent Puckett: Or to, you know, sort of anticipate, you know, and this is, I think, where we're thinking about Coleridge's place in the history of literary criticism.

Another way to put it that's maybe more in the register that we tend to use is that, it's there, but it's not available for paraphrase.

Jim Phelan: Okay.

Kent Puckett: The moral is about the heresy of paraphrase.

Jim Phelan: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Right. Good. That's that where, that's metamoral.

Kent Puckett: Yeah. So the new critics, the new critics, when they say, well, okay, you know, well, a poem is a poem is a poem.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: You can't paraphrase it, you can only perform it, it can only be, right? When we trace that back to Coleridge, I think it's less of a, of a kind of aesthetic axiom.

Jim Phelan: Uhhuh.

Kent Puckett: And it's more, you know, an incompletely, but hard won assertion about value.

Jim Phelan: Interesting.

Kent Puckett: Right, and [00:45:00] I think it's one of the things that's important to see, but the heresy of paraphrase for Coleridge isn't just poetry's good, don't mess with it.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right, it's that this is a way of being in the world and maybe being with an albatross.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right. Don't paraphrase the albatross. Maybe, you know, like the, is the crossbow paraphrase?

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Is the crossbow a kind of accurate but incomplete decoding.

Right. And this again, gets to important questions for us as thinkers about narrative. Well, well, what do we look at when we look at a narrative? Are we looking at something that can be decoded, something that can be translated, paraphrased? Well, yes, of course we are.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Like, we'd be outta work if we didn't think that. On the other hand, are we also looking for something that can feel a little mystical, but isn't necessarily, and I think this is one of the things that's key about the whole project of \_Lyrical Ballads\_. And, and in some senses, the project of the ancient mariner is that, it's really a theory of [00:46:00] mind in relation to perception, ideation, and I would argue narrative construction.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: That's at work in a poem like this.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. That might be a good segue to, to think about the poem as a lyrical ballad, as, as you know, obviously as you've said, you know, has this strong narrative, organization even. The very fact that we have the doubleness of the narrative of the told and the narrative of the telling is sort of, you know, calls attention to the various features of the telling, including the poetry, you know, the kind of line that we have, the kind of stanza that we have, the kind of repetition that we get.

So maybe we could talk a little bit about that lyric, narrative relation in the rime. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think, you know, and I won't go too much into this 'cause we could be here all day, right? But, one of the things that's always, always struck me as so interesting about the project of the volume \_Lyrical Ballads\_ is the fact [00:47:00] that, you know, the, the title sort of anticipates some of these questions about fancy and imagination that we're talking about, right?

'Cause, you know, a lyric isn't a ballad, ballad is lyric a lyric, right? And, famously, you know, Wordsworth refers to the volume as an experiment, right? And sort of what's experimental is, the kind of brash overcoming of what's apparently contradictory or oxymoronic about just saying lyrical ballad.

You know, it's like saying, you know, I just invented something called vanilla chocolate.

Jim Phelan: Yeah, yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right. And just insisting on it, yeah, right?

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: I made, here's my hot cold.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right. Well, there it is. Yeah. So, you know, when you think about it, the invitation to hold two contradictory ideas in the mind at the same time is really present in the title.

And I think it gets to, I mean, there are a lot of ways to think about it; one is the relationship between the performatively archaic, you know, the ballad.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Which, you know, Wordsworth and Coleridge like many other were reading, Thomas Percy's [00:48:00] \_Relics of Ancient English Poetry\_ and sort of steeping themselves in this emerging folk and we would say maybe proto ethnographic tradition.

Jim Phelan: Okay.

Kent Puckett: Where imagining that there is a poetry that's not written by anyone in particular.

Jim Phelan: Yeah, yeah.

Kent Puckett: Somehow written by the culture.

Jim Phelan: Right, right.

Kent Puckett: Right. And that, you know, these things tend to be highly narrative, they tend to be chockfull of events.

They're kind of proto picaresque, proto adventure tales. So on the one hand there's this kind of, again, performatively, archaic move towards a one thing after the other kind of narrative tradition, which is really sort of, I think, emerging for a whole bunch of reasons as a cultural force at the end of the 18th century.

But then there's also the lyric.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right, you know, the idea of a lyric that's maybe less about, following events as they follow one from the other and more about the character of the speaker.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: And a character of a speaker, a singer of a [00:49:00] song, that suffuses the totality of the song.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Yeah. Right.

Kent Puckett: The speaker is sort of everywhere and nowhere at once.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Right. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: So these are two very different ways of thinking about the aesthetic character of a poem or, or a narrative.

Jim Phelan: Right. And that speaker may be focused less on about events and more about feelings, ideas, situations, you know, that tone kind of thing.

Kent Puckett: Yeah. Right. Like sort of like a tone, of feeling, a vibe as, as they say now, a vibe.

Jim Phelan: A vibe.

Kent Puckett: Right.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: Yeah, no, I think, I think that's right. And so, there are different ways of organizing the act of reading, right. And I think that, you know, as a ballad, and this gets back to some of the kind of, fairytale rule of three stuff, everything has to happen three times. There are always three bears or three knocks at the door, et cetera. et cetera. Yeah. You know, the fairytale feel of this poem, or the folk tale or the ballad feel of it is very present, and, you know, we can see it in the kind of once upon a [00:50:00] time, happily ever after structure of it.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right. On the one hand we have the wedding guest at the beginning.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: The wedding guest is one kind of person, and then at the end of the poem, right, he hasn't gone anywhere, he's sipping on the same rock. Right. But he, at the end, he's wedding guest two or wedding guest prime.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: He's wedding guest and then sadder and wiser wedding guest, right. And so, this is, you know, like Peter Brooks', you know, sort of great sense of, you know, Freud's master plot. We start in one place and end in the same place, maybe with a difference.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Same, the same but different.

And of course the same thing happens with the Mariner himself, and it's, it's really clear the way it works out with the Mariner, right, you know, early on when, when the Mariner first leaves with his shipmates, and this is at, at about line 21.

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: And the, the boat leaves the bay, the ship was cheered, the harbor cleared, merrily did we drop below the kirk below the hill, below the lighthouse [00:51:00] top. We can imagine as you're moving over the horizon, right? You, you're seeing in that order, right, you see the Kirk and then you drop below the hill, and then you drop below the lighthouse.

Right? It's all a matter of what things are highest.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: As you start to sort of drift away. When, many, many, many stanzas later, right, the mariner finally gets to, to come back, right? We get a sort of repetition with a difference of that line.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right? This is at about line 4 65 or so.

So, they've come after all the experiences, kills the albatross, blesses the seas, snake seas, snakes. Right. Meets death, right, meets spirit and then says, oh, dream of joy. Is this indeed the lighthouse top? I see. Is this the hill? Is this the kirk? Is this my own country? It's a chiasmis.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right?

We go from kirk, hill, lighthouse to [00:52:00] lighthouse, hill, kirk.

Jim Phelan: Right, right.

Kent Puckett: So I mean, in that way that we want to abstract narrative into a kind of pure form, it's very much the AA prime.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right, it's a chiasmis. We get to the mirror image. Yeah. Yeah. And so, you know, on the one hand, you know this feeling that, you know, we could do a very, and I think you could a very propan kind of reading, right?

The hero leaves the hero returns. Mm-hmm. Once upon a time, happily ever after. Same, same, but different. Right. And I think seeing what happens in between, right, all of the events that occur, all of the adventures, all of the, the sort of dilatory dilation that keeps same, temporarily separated from same, but different.

Mm-hmm. Right. Is the stuff of the poem and, you know, in a way, then you end up, you know, if we wanna just think in terms of beginning, middle, and end, a very clear folk structure.

Jim Phelan: Yes. [00:53:00]

Kent Puckett: We start on the one side with a Yeah. And then there's the middle event, right, which is both the setup and the crisis.

The killing of the albatross, right, the either the emergence or the revelation of an original sin that has already been there, and then the blessing of the sea snakes. He kills an animal, he paraphrases the bird, and then he looks at the snakes and he says, they're beautiful.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: I can't paraphrase them.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: I respect them. I love them. And so we have like a kind of little middle, right. We, so we go from a through a prime, and in the middle we have a kind of bifurcated kind of crisis event.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: In that sense, you know, easy peasy.

Jim Phelan: Right, right.

Kent Puckett: You know, like it does the ballad thing, it gives us a beginning, a middle, and an end.

But there's more, there's more going on.

Jim Phelan: Yeah, absolutely.

Kent Puckett: I think this is where,~ I~ that's like maybe the fancy side of things. The question is, do we wanna look for the imagination side of things?

Jim Phelan: Yeah. And to that, I think we do [00:54:00] need to talk at least a little bit about the supernatural part, right? I mean that in that middle, and the juxtaposition of the realism and the natural and the supernatural.

I mean, we're very much a, a sort of a scene that we, you know, plausibly imagine, realistic scene, the wedding about to happen, et cetera, the interruption, all that. And we come back to that, as you say, but in this middle we have the albatross and the sea snakes, but then we also have, death and life and death and all these things that, the shipmates all perish, but then their spirits rise and, yeah, these kinds of things, right. So.

Kent Puckett: Yeah, there's a lot. Yeah, there's a lot to follow. There are three ways to think about it. Well, actually there are a million ways, but we're gonna go with three, because three...

Jim Phelan: We'll stick with the rule of three.

Kent Puckett: Exactly. So one is to kind of, distinguish between form and content, right? In "Rime of the Ancient Mariner". Let's accept the kind of ballad story and say, okay, this is about a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: It's about the A and the A [00:55:00] prime, and then something in the middle.

Okay. Once it does that, everything else is gravy. Right? Like, let's, let's throw all kinds of stuff in there. Death. Why not? Right? Okay. The structure can manage it. It's a good one. And this is one of the reasons why Wordsworth and Coleridge and so many others were captivated by these ballads.

Like, what a sturdy good form. Right? I mean, this is why it felt like, you find these collections of balance and you're not just finding good stories, you're finding the kind of bones of a culture.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right? And let's put all kinds of stuff on those bones. Why not, you know? And so we want to think about the sturdiness, the almost archaic quality of the structure, and then the modernity of the form.

Okay, let's, let's start getting some philosophy. Let's get some psychology, let's get some new theology, we can throw it all in there and it'll hold. Right?

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: But that might be one way. So like, the naturalness of the narrative structure, right, and it can take the weight of a lot of supernatural ice.

Jim Phelan: Okay. Yeah. Right.

Kent Puckett: That could be [00:56:00] one way we think about it. Another way we can think about it is in terms of what Coleridge understood as a kind non opposition or non-contradiction between the natural and the supernatural.

Jim Phelan: Oh, good.

Kent Puckett: Well, you know, in when he was sort of thinking back in the \_Biographia Literaria\_ about what Wordsworth and he had done in, in \_Lyrical Ballads\_, you know, he talked about it in terms of a division of labor.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: Right. Wordsworth was gonna get to write about ordinary life, but he was gonna write about ordinary life in an extraordinary way.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Good.

Kent Puckett: Either because he was gonna do more work to notice, he was gonna pay more attention to the daffodil stone, the tree, the leach gatherer than anyone else would've.

This is why he's a poet.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right. Or he would write about characters who, for other reasons, saw the world differently. Children, the superstitious.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: There's the, the idiot boy. Right. People whose [00:57:00] minds, for whatever reason, work a little bit differently than we expect usually in typical poetry. So one half of the poems were gonna be about seeing the ordinary world, the natural world in extraordinary detail, and this is where we can see Wordsworth sort of anticipating Shklovsky, you know? Yeah.

Jim Phelan: Absolutely.

Kent Puckett: Wanted to see the stone as stony. Yeah. See the, the daffodil as daffodily.

Jim Phelan: Yeah, exactly. Right.

Kent Puckett: Coleridge was gonna do the other thing, which was he was gonna write about supernatural events. And of course, the ancient mariner is a prime example, but he was going to write about extraordinary events as seen from ordinary minds.

Jim Phelan: Good. Okay.

Kent Puckett: Right, what does the appearance of an extraordinary event, and we can think about this maybe in terms of some, you know, more recent discussions about unnatural narrative.

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: Right?

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Okay. Well, what happens, you know, okay, so there are ghosts, there's death and life and death, there's movement [00:58:00] without wind. There's all this stuff that happens. Day

turns the night, night turns the day, blah, blah, blah. These things can't happen. Okay. We accept that, Coleridge accepts that at some level.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: But what would that look like to a nor... quote unquote normal mind.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: To an ordinary mind. To a natural mind. Right? Yeah. So as opposed to seeing the poems as divided between the real and the unreal. What we wanna see is them as two modes of realism.

Jim Phelan: Okay.

Kent Puckett: The realism of the object.

What is the stone really? Mm-hmm. Then, and this is where I think the volume needs to be Coleridge, the realism of the mind.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Okay.

Kent Puckett: Because the mind isn't just something that either perceives or does not perceive reality. It's part of reality.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right. And so that's where I think the natural and the supernatural, or, you know, as the phrase is natural supernaturalism, right? Yeah. Is actually a way of thinking in pretty capacious and important terms [00:59:00] about realism as something that extends out beyond the object. Mm-hmm. And the subject's relation to the object.

Yeah. And more is something that we need to understand as part of perception, what is the reality of perception. And so it's not a question of realism or not. Yeah. It's really the, setting up a way of understanding. Realism as a project that needs to overcome what appears like the opposition between, natural and unnatural.

Extraordinary and ordinary lyric and ballad.

Jim Phelan: Okay, good. And that takes us the imagination, that takes us back to the narrator and then narrative. Yeah, exactly. Good, good.

Kent Puckett: And then, well, the, and then the third way, 'cause we need to complete the, the

third one. Yeah. Third way, would be maybe more internal to the poem itself, and to think about, if we wanna think about this in terms of we could say verisimiltude.

Jim Phelan: Okay.

Kent Puckett: And the relationship between verisimilitude and the fairytale.

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: Right. Because the, what makes the fairytale [01:00:00] very similar is when it does exactly the thing we've said it does, which is AA prime.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Now life doesn't always work that way, but fairytales do.

And if they don't do that, you know, as prop would tell us, they don't feel very similar, they might feel more real, but the verisimilitude will break down. I think what's so interesting about this is that if we accept that AA prime is the key thing here, one of the things that's crucial is that the poem is filled with repetitions.

Jim Phelan: Yes.

Kent Puckett: Right. With little AA prime relationships. Yes. Right. And once you start looking for them, and you'll only catch all of them if you could catch all of them through the process of rereading.

Jim Phelan: Right, right, right.

Kent Puckett: You see, the sun came upon the left, the sun now came up upon the right, the wedding guest here beat his breast.

The wedding guest, he beat his breast every day for food or play. Came, came the bird to the Mariner's Hollow, and then. Nor any day [01:01:00] for food or play came to the Mariners Hollow right down, dropped the breeze, the sails dropped down. You get all of these... it's almost like this unfolding encyclopedic catalog of forms of repetition.

Jim Phelan: Yes. Yes. Exactly.

Kent Puckett: The direct repetition, inverted repetition, right, bad repetition, repetition that is in fact opposition. Right. And I think one of the most, the, the key moments is, in part two after he's killed the bird, and you get in these two stanzas one after the other around 95.

Jim Phelan: Mm-hmm.

Kent Puckett: Right. So he kills the bird. And, you know, everybody's mad at him. And they say, I had done a hellish thing and it would work. 'em Whoa. For all a bird I had killed the bird that made the breeze to blow. Ah, wretch said They no bird to slay. The bird to slay that made the breeze to blow all a bird.

I had killed the bird. And then immediately afterward, nor dim, nor red, like God's own head, the [01:02:00] glorious sun up wrist. Then all a bird I had killed. The bird that brought the fog and mist was right. They said they such birds to slay that bring the fog in mist. This is, I think, a key moment in the poem because it's a version of the AA prime.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: It's a version of the kirk, the lighthouse in the hill. But it's a bad one where people are like, you know, I mean, and we can imagine all versions of it. Like, oh, I look at that picture and I'm like, oh, that's a bad thing.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: And then, you know, my interests align a little bit differently.

That's a good thing.

Jim Phelan: Right, right.

Kent Puckett: This is bad faith.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Right. It's also striking that, he changes the stances here, right. We, I mean the, instead of the four line stanza, we get the six line stanza, and then that repeats, right, and we have the repetitions within the stanza. So, but that sort of calls the tension to this, you know, this repetition, this working with the AA prime.

Yeah.

Kent Puckett: No, no, that's, great. And, and I think, I think this is, you know, in [01:03:00] a way, there's so much more, I mean, every one of these moments you could talk about forever, right. But I think, if you started to kind of map it all out, you know, and I was thinking about a kind of, SZ version of this, where you'd do a version of Protic code with every one of these repetitions.

I mean, it would just be, it would be like a, like a weave.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right. There'd be so many of them because they just have, I mean, the more you, the more you look, the more you find these modes of repetition. And I think that, you know, on the one hand, you know, and this gets back to that kind of natural supernatural question, like, well, what's this stuff doing here?

What's the middle of the poem telling us? Like, how does it fulfill, but how does it also exceed or trouble, like the formal logic. The content isn't just icing to fill the structure, but something more, something different. And I think, you know, on the one hand, you know, we could, we could kind of go back to a kind of Damian moment and say, well, here's blindness and insight.

You know, here's the poem working against itself. Yeah. Okay, fine. And that's true. I think that's, available as a...

Jim Phelan: It's available. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: But I, [01:04:00] I think it gets more to that question about the meta moral of the imagination, right? That the modes of repetition that appear within the poem, all the different varieties, the demand and the simple presence of all of these AA prime moments, right, which you can't catch unless you reread. They get back to something that I think Coleridge is really invested in, in the nature of the poem, which is the fact that it's temporality, the fact that it's demand is one that it can be satisfied initially by the forward motion, the ballad.

Jim Phelan: Okay.

Kent Puckett: Right, and that's good. That's part of it.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Right. But it also that if, if you're gonna get saved, you can't just see the seas snakes once.

You have to do it again. You have to go back. You have to start thinking more broadly. Remember when he gets on the ship and the ship finally takes him home, the ship leaps [01:05:00] forward, and then it jumps back.

Jim Phelan: Uhhuh, Uhhuh.

Kent Puckett: And then it leaps forward.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: There's one thing from the Biographia Literaria, which I think is worth being here where

he's saying, what does a good poem do?

Right? What does a good, we could say, what does a good work of art, what does a good narrative do? And he says, of the good poem, the reader should be carried forward, okay, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution, but by the pleasurable activity of mind, excited by the attraction of the journey itself.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power or like the path of sound through air, at every step he pauses, half recedes.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: And from the retrogressive movement collects the force, which again carries him forward.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: [01:06:00] Right? On the one hand, that's the ship.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: Ship moves forward and moves back and moves forward again.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: He's on a poem. Right. More to the point, he's on a good poem. And of course when he says that's what a snake is, when the Mariner looks over the side of the boat and he says...

Jim Phelan: He's blessing the snakes.

Kent Puckett: It's a snake. Yeah. Beautiful. But it's not just beautiful because it's a good poem. It's a beautiful poem and it's a beautiful thing because it's the thing that makes you read twice.

Jim Phelan: Right.

Kent Puckett: And I think that's the thing is that, it is an AA prime. It's a folktale. It carries us forward.

It has adventure. It has forward momentum. That's good.

Jim Phelan: Yeah.

Kent Puckett: There's the fancy we need fancy. Fancy is good. Right. But there's also the imagination.

Jim Phelan: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Kent Puckett: And it's the imagination that forces us as readers not merely to accept the tale, but to engage.

Jim Phelan: Exactly. Yeah. Right, right.

Kent Puckett: You know, and maybe that's where, you know, to be sadder and wiser is both to be, is to have been the [01:07:00] unwilling addressee, but then yeah, to exert the force of will, which allows us to see more.

Jim Phelan: Right, right. Yeah, no, and that ties it so well to what you, your point about the repetitions, you know, and the way the moving forward, the moving back, the, you know, the pleasurable activity of the progress through the poem. And so that may be a, a good place to end. But is there anything else that you'd like to touch on that we, I mean, obviously there's so much more that we could have gotten to, but, Yeah, yeah, we do, we do need to call an end, I think.

Kent Puckett: Yeah. You know, I mean, one of the things that, that, that we didn't talk about and we could have is the question of fictionally. We've been talking around it in some

sense, but, you know, it is from Coleridge that we get the phrase, the willing suspension of disbelief. And so, you know, I would just invite listeners to think about how some of what the poem is doing in the terms that we've been talking about it both give us a chance to maybe put a different kind of pressure on the willing and the unwilling.

Jim Phelan: Yeah. Right.

Kent Puckett: Right, 'cause it's so important to what's happening here, but [01:08:00] then also I think more broadly to think about what it means to take Coleridge seriously. Not just as someone who coined a phrase, which we rely on when we talk about fictionality, but someone who had an imaginative and we might say meta moral vestment in the willing suspension of this. Like to what degree would taking some of that seriously maybe differently inflects some of the debates that people are so productively having now about the nature, the history, the status, the ethics of fictionality. But that, that will be for, uh, the next time ~I, ~I catch you with my glittering eye.

Yeah. Right. Excellent. Right. Well

Jim Phelan: It was a pleasure to be caught in your glittering eye and so I wanna thank you very much for, you know, coming on the podcast and taking us through Coleridge as well as you did.

Kent Puckett: So great.

Jim Phelan: I also wanna thank our listeners and say that, as always, appreciate your feedback, which you can send, [01:09:00] via email at [projectnarrative@osu.edu](mailto:projectnarrative@osu.edu) or to our Twitter / X account, our handle there is @PNOhioState. I'd also like to remind listeners that you can find more than 40 additional episodes of the podcast at the Project narrative website or on Apple Podcasts.

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