

Mariners Lost in their Albatrosses by Jayendrina Singha Ray

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean.

– Samuel Taylor Coleridge



It was an attempt at being Woolf,
At being her style,
At being Cixous —
Free flowing, water-like
When impulse unchecked flew ahead
With the Martian spirit
Unstopped, unchecked, Free.

He held her with those glittering eyes,
There was a 'me', said he

'Lost '.She could not choose
But sat mesmerized on her seat
And in her impulse
promised him her patience —
A land of rivers, sunshine and mirth.

And then the storm blast came.
Within, in anticipation of without
Eating one another and eaten —
Flying and falling and flying again.
They watched the birds in their free flight
There was water and there was ice
And Fire lay in between.

Islands joined by a creek,
Ships on a stagnant sea,
Their Albatross was their need —
Then they became it — The Albatross
Stuck between the sky and ocean
It was one that sought release
And in circles it flew.

'Fly, bird, fly,
Until you reach the answer'
The islands broke
Floating past —
Sadder and wiser.
Ancient Mariners

Joined to their Albatrosses.

(Inspired by *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Lord Alfred Tennyson)

Jayendrina Singha Ray is a student of English Literature, pursuing a research degree. Her poems have been published in some journals, including *Contemporary Literary Review India*. She intends to be a writer/illustrator in future.

'Mariners Lost in Albatrosses' is inspired by Alfred Tennyson's poem 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. A lot of the lines have direct parallels with his poem. It is about two people (from separate castes) in love, who like islands drift apart due to social constraints. This is a poem about crossing boundaries set by social norms (and hence the release that the theorist Helene Cixous talks about, and the free-flowing stream of consciousness method followed by Virginia Woolf). The act of crossing boundaries however, does not result in a fulfillment of their love. Being social beings, they have to drift apart with the guilt of transgression. Like Tennyson's mariner they are left to wallow in the guilt of transgression and the pangs of separation.

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